

Group dynamics can help you when working in groups assignment



Critically discuss how an understanding of group processes/ group dynamics can help you when working in groups as part of your master programme and in your career. By katfount It is generally acceptable that successful teams arising long-term, after hard work. But what do they mean by “ team”?

According to Pattison (2013), there is a differentiation between the terms group and team, because groups need time and effort in order to be transformed into teams, having common sense of purpose as a starting point for their progress. This essay will address three main theories, concerning the development and the format of successful teams.

Students, especially postgraduate ones, are requested to deal with various group assignments, having the opportunity to learn how to cooperate with their peers. The groups are usually multicultural with different educational and social background. Therefore, it is essential to find ways in order to communicate and collaborate, respecting the cast of mind of each culture. A similar situation exists also in working environments, where employers, consider “ teamwork skills” as essential requirement for hiring new employees (Levin, 2005). According to Levin (2005), team-mates tend to adopt a specific role that reflects better their personality.

This statement is based on Belbin’s Team Roles Model, consisting of nine different roles. The “ Co-ordinator” has leadership skills and identifies the advantages and disadvantages of the others but lacks of creativity. The “ Shaper” is also a passionate leader but he possibly can hurt people’s feelings with his criticism. On the other hand, the “ Plant” is very intelligent, trying to find new and innovative ideas, sometimes unorthodox ones, but he is less sociable, and “ The Resource Investigator” is also clever and he tries to find

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ways to make useful external contacts for the future. It is common for this type of leader to miss his passion soon.

A real “ Monitor – evaluator” Judges each aspect of team’s work, forming an overall view of the situation. In other words, this role Judges everything and everyone with an “ unpleasant” way. As regards the “ Implementer”, this role acts like a soldier in a battle, but lacks of decision making abilities. Similarly, the “ Team Worker” supports his colleagues, finding ways to maintain a close connection etween them but dislikes being the leader. Furthermore, the “ Complete- finisher” pays much attention to the details in order to avoid mistakes, finding ways to organise every single detail.

Finally, the “ Specialist” is characterised by his valuable working experience, which gives a professional dimension to team’s work. A common mistake for him is to stick to the technical details and to neglect other serious aspects (Levin, 2005). The above mentioned theory can work extremely well in every group but could you imagine what happens if one of these roles is missing? To make atters worse, Belbin’s Team Role Theory can be successful only in case that none of the nine roles is missed of the same team, because if there are, for instance, two or more Implementers, it could be impossible for this team to work properly.

Another regarding to the lifecycle of teams. Each team should pass through four different stages: Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing. According to Levin (2005), Forming is the first stage, where new people are meeting and set a leader, who tries to from the team’s strategic plan, while during Storming is quite difficult for the roup to make decisions because each

member has its own point of view and the leader should make efforts to avoid the conflicts and generate ideas.

During the next stage, Norming, there is cohesion between the members, who can easily make decision and identify the strengths and weaknesses of group's work. It is common for this stage the members to socialise outside the working environment, strengthening their bond. Finally, during Performing the group works ideally, as the team roles are distinguished, each member expresses ideas and then make a Joint decision. As regards the leader, his role is more to oversees rather than decide. Tuckman added a fifth stage, called Adjourning, which describes what is happening when teams come to an end.

To be more specific, during this stage the teamwork is finished successfully and members tend to go your separate way, feeling insecure for this change. In spite of that, Tuckman's Team Development team theory is considered as an overgeneralization because it is not easy to clarify when one step ends and another begins. It is possible one step to overlap the other, depending on the work's volume. Moreover, this theory does not take into consideration the special characteristics of each member like the educational background, the working experience or the personality, which affect people's ability to work successfully.

An equally significant aspect of team's development is the cultural background as it is quite difficult for people from different cultures to collaborate effectively. This is the reason why Geert Hofstede has tried to examine the features of cross cultural team work. According to Hofstede

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(2010), there are five different dimensions of culture. The first index is called Power distance (PDI) and it is referred to the inequality of power among the members of a team, as they accept a different degree of power, forming, consequently, a hierarchy.

As far as Individualism (IDV) is concerned, this dimension measures whether the bond between the members of a team is strong or not. In general terms, it describes the fight between individualism and collectivism. The third dimension is called Masculinity (MAS), being related to the characteristics of each gender, as it is believed that women and men build different working skills as members of a team. Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) has to do with the people's feeling of insecurity and anxiety about future ventures.

Finally, there is a new index, the Long term orientation (LTO), suggesting that people from cultures with long term orientation tend to believe that everything is a matter of good timing and planning, as opposed to short term orientated cultures, which pay respect to tradition and values. Like any other theory, also this has a grey area as Hofstede did not include some important stimuli, which affect people's behaviour and contribute to the formation of a culture, such as the political, educational or professional background of a person that affects his behaviour in the community.

Moreover, people of the same nations could have different cultures, depending on individual beliefs. To sum up, through my short experience as a member of a multicultural team, I managed to realize the transaction from one step to the other. In my opinion the daily contact with the group strengthens member's relationship and through the problems that they

should face, they build a strong bond. Although, the key to success is firstly to listening to others opinion and then to have clear team objectives, being comfortable with conflicts, having trust, respect and common sense of purpose.

Following this technique the success is guaranteed and this is a valuable “treasure” for the future ventures in the world of work. REFERENCES

Hofstede, G. H. et al. 2010. Cultures and organizations: software of the mind: intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival. 3rd ed. New York; London: McGraw-Hill. Levin, P. 2005. Successful teamwork! : For undergraduates and taught postgraduates working on group projects. Maidenhead: Open University Press. Pattison, L. 2013. Professional Skills and Employability. United Kingdom: Pearson, Higher Education.