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**Group work vs. Team work – is there a difference?**

***“The success of one student depends on the success of all” -Cooperative Learning Groups***

Defined by five elements:

1. positive interdependence, a student’s success is dependent on the success of other students in the group
2. face-to-face promotive interactions; a student actively promotes the learning of another student by encouragement, concern, and feedback.
3. individual accountability,
4. social skills, and
5. group process.

The purpose of a cooperative group is to ensure that every individual within the group develops her or his academic and social skills to the maximum. Cooperative learning environments have been shown to be better learning environments than individual or competitive ones and are intended to develop a student's social skills and group processing skills. (Bartlett, 1995)

**Three basic types of groups:**

**Formal** -selected by the professor for the length of time necessary to perform a specific educational task-research a paper or prepare a class presentation. Students work together until completion of a final presentation or paper.

**Informal** -Short term; used to clarify or reinforce points made in a lecture or after a classroom exercise. An instructor may stop for five minutes partway into a lecture to emphasize a point or issue for instance and again at the end of the lecture to allow students time to check and summarize the major points of the lecture with the two or three students sitting around them.

**Base** -formed for the duration of the term to do assignments and serve as a support group for members. Here an instructor may assign a series of position papers, reports, case studies, or simulations and have the same students work together throughout the term. Base groups may be formed by either the instructor or by the students themselves.

**Suggestions for Student Roles**

Recorder: document the group's discussions.

Checker: make sure that everyone in the group understands the group’s work.

Encourager: help to motivate and to be supportive of individual efforts.

Elaborator: make connections between the group's past and its present work.

A team has “A *small number of people with complementary skills* who are committed to a *common purpose, performance goals*, and a *common approach* for which they hold themselves *mutually accountable*.”

Bruce Tuckman's four stage **forming, storming, norming, performing** model:

In the early 1960s, researcher Bruce Tuckman recognized the interpersonal and task-structured characteristics inherent to a majority of the team oriented subjects he was reading about in some recent psychoanalytic studies involving therapy groups. He documented four stages going from (1) orientation/testing/dependence, to (2) conflict, to (3) group cohesion, to (4) functional role-relatedness and coined the terms: 'forming,' 'storming,' 'norming,' and 'performing' (Tuckman 1984). Tuckman's model of the developmental sequence in small groups has been adopted as a helpful starting point about possible stages or phases within different small groups

**Forming** –team members are introduced

**Storming** –the team transitions from “as is” to “to be”

**Norming** –the team reaches consensus on the “to be” process

**Performing** –the team has settled its relationships and expectations

**\*Adjourning** –the team shares the improved processes with others

The Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing stages may seem obvious but are in fact, often difficult to recognize

- Participants want to move to the Performing stage without passing through the first 3 stages.
- The Forming stage is relatively easy.
- The Storming stage is difficult and many times getting 'stuck' there is the cause of the team's failure.
- Norming; as team members begin to work out their differences, they now have more time and energy to spend on the project.
- Performing; This is the level where the team is a high-performance team. Performing seems easy once the storming-norming process is complete. The team is now an effective, cohesive unit. You can tell when your team has reached this stage because you start getting a lot of work done.

References:

Robin L. Bartlett, A Flip of the Coin. A Roll of the Die: An Answer to the Free-Rider Problem in Economic Instruction. *The Journal of Economic Education*. Vol. 26, No. 2 (Spring, 1995), pp. 131-139 [Taylor & Francis, Ltd.](#)

Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1183368>

In your groups, discuss the features you might find in the following stages. What words (expressed through feelings and behaviors) might be used to describe what might occur in each stage?

### 'Forming' a group

- The "polite" stage in which the team starts to form.
- Everyone is trying to figure out what the team concept is.
- Initial "silent" leaders may take the rein.
- The team is usually positive –for the most part –for the initial meetings.
- No one has offended anyone at this point yet!

**Forming includes feelings and behaviors of-** Excitement, anticipation, and optimism.

Other examples of feelings and behaviors associated with **forming**:

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### 'Storming'

- The 'honeymoon' is over.
- The silent leaders may be clashing for control of the group.
- People disagree and may blame the team concept, saying it doesn't work.
- Management or instructor needs to do a lot of coaching to get people to work past their differences, may take separate 1-on-1's with people.

**Storming** within a group includes feelings and behaviors of- Resisting the task; Disagreement or blame for the team concept; saying it doesn't work.

Other examples of feelings and behaviors associated with **storming**:

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### 'Norming'

- The team is starting to work well together, and has turned around from the 'storming' phase.
- They may start to "brag up" the team concept to others who aren't in the team and will be very positive about their role/team group.
- Often, the team will bounce back and forth between "storming" and "norming" when issues crop up.

In a group setting **Norming** includes feelings and behaviors of- A sense of team cohesion, spirit, and goals.

Other Feeling/Behavior Examples that might be found in the **norming** stage:

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### 'Performing' within a group

- This is the level where the team is a high-performance team.
  - They can be given new projects and tasks and accomplish them successfully, and very seldom fall back into the "storming" phase.
  - At this level, the team is taking on new work on their own, and selling it to other teams.
- In a group setting. **Performing** includes feelings and behaviors of- close attachment to the team.

Other Feeling/Behavior Examples:

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### \*Notes:

While not having the rhyming characteristics of the first four stages, a fifth stage, *Adjourning*, involves dissolution. It entails the termination of roles, the completion of tasks and reduction of dependency (Forsyth 1990: 77). Also feelings can be describes as a type of 'mourning' given the loss of cohesion and comfort that is sometimes felt by former participants. The process can be stressful - particularly where the dissolution is unplanned (*ibid.*: 88).

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To learn more: <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/tuckman.htm>

### **Suggested Answer Key for Activity:**

For this exercise students will be asked to associate the feelings and behaviors associated with the 4 stages found Bruce Tuckman's four stage **forming, storming, norming, performing** model: Processes rarely follow true 'paths' or stages, because we as human beings are the variable. Without proper guidelines, structure, support and continuous opportunities for reflection, teams that are comprised of less secure populations and peer groups may continue working aimlessly within a state of flux. Therefore, groups are likely to show significant deviations from the path laid out by stage theories and 'stages' may be missed. In light of the number of other ways of naming a phase via feelings and experiences this exercise, through a reflective process, can illustrate what the stages 'might' look like and can help to temper expectations.

### **Other examples of feelings and behaviors associated with *forming*:**

#### **Excitement, anticipation, and optimism.**

**Pride** in being chosen for the project.

A tentative **attachment** to the team **Suspicion** and **anxiety** about the job.

**Defining** the tasks and **how they will be accomplished.**

**Determining** acceptable **group behavior.**

Deciding what information needs to be gathered.

Abstract discussions of the concepts and issues, and for some members, impatience with these discussions. There will be difficulty in identifying some of the relevant problems.

### **Other examples of feelings and behaviors associated with *storming*:**

Resisting the tasks.

Resisting quality improvement approaches suggested by other members.

Sharp fluctuations in attitude about the team and the project's chance of success.

Arguing among members even when they agree on the real issues.

Defensiveness, competition, and choosing sides.

Questioning the wisdom of those who selected this project and appointed the other members of the team.

Establishing unrealistic goals. Disunity, increased tension, and jealousy.

### **Other examples of feelings and behaviors associated with *norming*:**

An ability to express criticism constructively.

Acceptance of membership in the team.

An attempt to achieve harmony by avoiding conflict.

More friendliness, confiding in each other, and sharing of personal problems.

A sense of team cohesion, spirit, and goals.

Establishing and maintaining team ground rules and boundaries.

### **Other examples of feelings and behaviors associated with *performing*:**

Members have insights into personal and group processes, and better understanding of each other's strengths and weakness.

Constructive self-change.

Ability to prevent or work through group problems.

Close attachment to the team.

The team is now an effective, cohesive unit. You can tell when your team has reached this stage because you start getting a lot of work done.