

## **Learning Unit 5**

### **Lead and function in a team**

After completing this Learning Unit, you will be able to lead and function in a team, by successfully completing the following:

- Actively lead and participate in group learning situations.
- Take up responsibilities in the team and apply group work conventions in learning situations.
- Practise conflict management and negotiating techniques in diverse contexts.
- Ensure that team work results in meaningful products, outcomes or goals.

## **Lead and function in a team**

In this unit we will discuss how to lead as the leader of a team as well as how to interact effectively as a team member in order to meet outcomes or goals.

- The purpose of a team

*A team is a distinguishable set of two or more individuals who interact dynamically, interdependently and adaptively to achieve specified, shared and valued objectives.*

Bowers, C. A. , Salas, E and Weaver, J. L.  
*Coordination and Virtual Environment, 1997*

As you can see from the definition, the purpose of the team is to achieve "specified, shared and valued objectives". There are many activities as well as learning situations that a team will perform together in order to meet objectives.

### **5.1 Actively lead and participate in group learning situations**

Team learning situations in which a team will work together include:

- **Meetings** - Meetings may be team get-togethers or meetings held with trainers, other departments or institutions.
- **Site or field visits** - Site or field visits are business visits that you need to undertake in an official capacity - in other words as a representative of your organisation, not in a personal capacity - to another organisation or division.
- **Excursions** - Excursions are generally more relaxed than field visits, in other words they are outings that include a leisurely objective, for example a team-building excursion. In this instance, the objective is to build the team, but also for the team to have fun together.
- **Discussions** - Discussions are informal; in contrast to meetings, which are formal. A team can hold discussions in order to offer advice, gather information and so on.
- **Activities** - Activities are tasks that the team performs together. In the learning context, activities include exercises and group activities that a team does together to enhance learning. Role plays are one example of learning activities.
- **Workshops** - Workshops can be either:
  - business-oriented events, for example strategies workshops at which the strategy of a team is discussed and decided, or
  - learning-oriented events at which the team will learn new skills or gain knowledge

In order for a team to operate effectively in all of these activities, it is important that all members have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the team. We will now look at the roles in a team and the responsibilities that go with each role.

### **5.2 Take up responsibilities in the team and apply group work conventions in learning situations**

When leading or functioning in a team, you need to take up responsibilities in the team and apply group work conventions in learning situations. This could include you doing any or all of the following:

- **Turn taking** - Certain conventions should be adhered to in group work and turn taking is one of the areas in which there needs to be some measure of control. There is a danger of an imbalance between types of members of a group, based on learning styles and personalities such as extroverts and introverts. This may result in there being team members who "do the work" versus "those who do not".

Clear instructions regarding who does what and where needs to be clear to maintain some balance.

- **Supervision** - Supervising is an informal and less structured method of learning. The leader supervises the team members as they complete assigned tasks, and gives guidance and regular feedback. The focus is on supervising and managing.
- **Mentoring** - Mentoring can be formal or informal. The focus is on guiding the team members. Formal mentoring programmes usually include programme goals, schedules, training and evaluation. In informal mentoring, the role of the leader is to guide, and not control the activities of the team member.
- **Rotation of roles** – Rotation of roles involves team members performing differing roles for varying lengths of time. The objective is to give team members exposure to different tasks. It is also an opportunity for the team members to develop and gain new skills and knowledge. The leader may use the opportunity to assess a team member’s potential when performing the following tasks:
  - **Conducting** - This role includes the organisation of information sessions; training workshops; brainstorming and/or mind mapping activities. The activities included in this role may vary.
  - **Chairing** - Chairing the team’s learning activities means that you will have to guide them. Make sure that they stay on track with the assignments, discussions and other activities. This role also means that you would take the role of chairperson at all the meetings that are held.
  - **Recording** - If you are given the role of recording, you are responsible for recording the milestones or achievements of the team and/or individuals within the team. You would also record attendance at the various meetings or functions that your team attends. Your function would also include the recording of all assignments completed and submitted, together with the uncompleted tasks and/or assignments.
  - **Reporting** - One of your team will be required to report back to management on the progress, the activities and problems that the team may have faced.

### Steps in effective teaching

The steps of effective teaching, whether by mentoring, supervising or rotating of roles, include:

- choosing the learning objectives
- providing a discovery experience that helps the learner understand the need for the skill
- demonstrating or explaining the skill
- allowing the learner to practise the skill
- evaluating the process
- Reflection questions for the team chairperson, supervisor or leader

After each team activity, ask yourself:

- Did I honour my obligations to other team members?
- Did the team cooperate, communicate, and lead appropriately? Did all team members get the relevant information about the team’s work?
- How can team members and the team as a whole act more effectively?

### 5.3 Practise conflict management and negotiating techniques in diverse contexts

Dealing with interpersonal relationships in a team is a complex subject that doesn't always get adequate attention. Each individual in a group has a particular and unique personality style, which has been shaped by the experiences of their whole lifetime. People have different things that motivate them. There are "driver" types and quiet people, expressive, and analytical, reserved, shy, and reactive types, and many others.

Understanding yourself and others in the team enables everyone to work together effectively to achieve the outcomes and goals of the team. Let's break this subject down into the following topics:

- getting to know yourself
- getting to know each other
- dealing with conflicts
- negotiation

#### ***Working with personality style conflicts***

One of the most common sources of conflict and tension in teams is the friction between the "doers" and the "talkers". This is very common and is often a source of frustration.

A healthy community has a balance between task (action) and process (communication). You need process to determine the direction to go and how to work together; you need task orientation to accomplish all the jobs needed.

Picture a task and a process as the wings of a bird. If one wing is shorter than the other, the bird flies around in circles. If there is mostly task and little process, the friction between people will erupt into communication problems, and the resulting conflicts will prevent tasks from moving forward. With too much process, everybody spends much of their time on feelings, and the tasks that need doing do not get done. However, when task and process are balanced, both wings are working at maximum efficiency to carry the community in the direction it wants to go.

#### ***Resolving conflicts***

Conflicts and miscommunications happen, they are part of life. Not everyone thinks, acts, or responds in the same way, and members come under stress at different times, which causes differences in tolerance and patience. Not everyone in the team has the same level of commitment, honesty, or even integrity.

It is important to define a process that resolves problems and encourages members to talk about the issues behind the conflict in a controlled and reasonable way, even if these issues are intensely personal. Many people are conditioned to avoid conflict at any cost. They believe that conflict is bad and indicates failure. It is hard to overcome this tendency to avoid conflict, and conflict resolution training is a good first step. Conflict is healthy and a normal part of any human relationship. One of the most important elements of all successful teams is a clearly defined process for dealing with group and personal conflicts.

Sometimes conflicts cannot be resolved and must simply be respectfully accepted as differences.

If you ignore conflicts between individuals, it is common to find these conflicts coming into meetings as hidden agendas. The more frank and open you are while communicating, the less conflict will exist, and the less severe it will be when it does occur.

Sometimes meetings become really intense, and negotiations and discussions become counterproductive. The whole meeting environment becomes too emotionally charged to reach a solution. Conflicts can be emotionally draining, and meetings dealing with conflict can leave you

Version 1 (Mar 2013)

feeling drained and exhausted. Group conflict resolution is a very demanding process, and sometimes you simply may not be up to it. Under these conditions it is often best for the facilitator to break the meeting or adjourn to another time, perhaps with a homework assignment for each individual to brainstorm all the pros and cons of the issue to bring back to the next meeting.

### 5.3.1 Conflict management techniques

One approach to managing conflict is Endelburg's "4 Rs Method" as presented below:

1. **Reasons.** The causes or reasons for the conflict are investigated and openly, yet respectfully discussed.
2. **Reactions.** Team members look at their own reactions to the conflict. If those reactions are destructive, rather than constructive, individuals can self-correct and take the necessary steps to recommit to team success.
3. **Results.** If the conflict is not resolved, what might happen? How might the team work together to resolve the conflict in a constructive manner?
4. **Resolution.** Which approach to conflict resolution could be used to effectively resolve the conflict? (Engleburg, 2003).

Here are some more strategies that have proved useful in resolving various types of conflict.

- Look for opportunities to practise using them before you really need them!

Begin conflict communication with "I" statements that reflect how you feel. The "I am feeling ..." statements create a group process where individuals feelings are out front. For example, here are two ways to say the same thing. "I need to know the details so that I know exactly what it is I am required to do", and "You never give me the details and just expect me to know what to do!" In the first sentence, the individual is expressing his or her needs, which can then be discussed and worked around. In the second sentence, others may think the speaker is criticising them, and may react defensively, and it is unclear what the speaker's needs are.

Learn to identify what another person needs, and learn how to gracefully ask another person to define what they need.

A key question in working with conflicts is "why"? Why do you feel so strongly about this? Why are you shouting? Why are you so anxious about this issue? Why do you think that way? Learn to ask for clarification when an issue becomes a conflict.

Determine whether the disagreement is over facts or over the respective people's feelings about the facts. Ask questions to discover the underlying assumptions, values, and attitudes. Separate feelings from facts by using the phrases like: "To me; in my opinion; it appears to me". When people feel intensely about issues, it is important to ask them: "Why do you feel so strongly about this?" Keep asking that until the real issues emerge. Often the real issues are buried, and the current issue in dispute is only the carrier for feelings left unexpressed.

Do not make it personal. If you disagree about an idea or concept, frame the discussion around the idea, not the person. Say: "I don't agree with that idea", not, "Your idea is stupid".

Try reversing the roles. Agree to argue the other side for 15 minutes and then express the other viewpoint as persuasively as you can. This can be an effective way of keeping a single issue conflict from escalating into a larger conflict. If you do this with integrity, you will find that, amazingly enough, the other side's opinions have some validity.

Is it really an either or issue? Put both sides away and brainstorm alternative ideas. Often conflicts arise because of boxed thinking, when the participants believe that there is only a limited solution. Conflict occurs when people believe there is only one way. Breakthrough happens when people discover there is a third way, a fourth way, and a fifth way.

Do a trial solution. "Let's try this for three weeks and then evaluate it." Often a group has to make decisions without adequate knowledge or experience. Doing a trial solution and then evaluating the results can often lead to future changes and can also reassure reluctant participants, since the decision is not permanent.

If people get visibly angry, stop the discussion. If you cannot discuss the issue without anger, you need mediation. Get professional arbitration help early in a conflict if there is real visible anger. If people get visibly angry, and if you take a "time-out" meeting adjournment, make the time-out last at least one hour, and preferable two hours. The hormones released by anger take at least 90 minutes to dissipate, and these hormones will not let the body be calm, no matter what.

If you are arguing about details or specifics, back up a step to a bigger concept. Sometimes people who won't agree about the details can agree on a concept or goal. Then the details can be sorted and placed in relationship to the agreed concept or goal. It is often a good idea to define and agree on goals first, then try to find agreement on details that support the goal.

Rather than try to find the right answer, throw out the bad answers, the things you agree won't work. This might narrow the focus and also bring up something you hadn't thought of before.

### 5.3.2 Negotiating techniques

Although there are common patterns, there is no single best way to deal with conflict. Disputes arise for different reasons and every group or team is unique. Often negotiation is the most effective response to conflict. When both parties stand to gain something, each has some power, and there is interdependency.

Negotiation offers flexibility and viability that other responses, such as avoidance and confrontation, lack.

The process of negotiation involves listening to both sides, seeking out common areas of interest and agreement, and building on them so that individuals can understand each other's points of view.

There are four essential steps you need to apply to resolve disagreements effectively in a negotiation process.

- **diagnosis** – recognising areas of understanding and areas where differences exist
- **initiation** – bringing the disagreements to the surface
- **listening** – hearing not only what the other person is saying, but the emotional aspects as well
- **problem solving** – a process with numerous steps includes gathering data, considering its impact, examining alternatives, identifying solutions and developing a plan of action

Bring the parties together and, with the help of a third party, ask the following questions:

- What is the problem, as you perceive it?
- What does the other person do that contributes to the problem?
- What do you want or need from the other person?
- What do you do that contributes to the problem?

- What first step can you take to resolve the problem?

Each party should be questioned while the other listens, asking questions only for clarification. Then the parties discuss a mutual definition and understanding of the problem. They should be allowed to express their feelings and get hostility out of their systems at this stage, but both parties must be willing to admit partial responsibility for the problem. This requires good listening, low defensiveness, and an ability to stay in a problem-solving mode. The parties should reach agreement on what steps will be taken to resolve the problem, and this agreement should be put in writing to prevent later misunderstandings.

Revealing the sources of conflict early on enables people to understand the facts of the dispute before emotions get the upper hand. This may help them to see their areas of agreement more easily. When agreement areas are identified, people can then work toward arriving at a consensus and develop a process for resolving problems in the future.

Conflict within a team is virtually inevitable at some point. In order for a team to work effectively together towards achieving outcomes or goals it is essential that effective conflict resolution strategies are applied.

## **5.4 Ensure that team work results in meaningful goals, products or outcomes**

There is a morale building component within any team work that is subtle but essential for successful team work. This is the clear message that what they are engaging in will result in something that is meaningful for themselves as well as for the team. These include the need to gain consensus, complete tasks within a good time frame and allow this transfer of knowledge to be effective.

### **5.4.1 Reaching consensus**

Getting to know each other is an essential element of being able to work together as a team. As you get to know one another, you develop an appreciation for others and the contribution each person can make to a team.

Many groups neglect this, assuming that the task is more important than their relationships. It may be easy to incorporate social activities as part of business meetings, but the group should also hold purely social gatherings, where the point is to have fun. Share stories of where you grew up, important turning points in your life, people you admire. Another way is to get each member to interview another and write up a brief biography. These stories can be kept in a notebook for future members to read and add to. Spend time talking and learning about one another.

### **5.4.2 Completing tasks**

Teamwork is a good way to ensure the timely completion of any work, with the maximum possible efficiency. Like any project that an individual might take on there will be milestones. This is no different in team work, where there will be milestones that need to be completed before the next team member may continue. Time management is therefore critical.

There might also be cases where team members are given sets of work simultaneously to make sure that deadlines are met. Clear and constant planned communication between team members regarding the progress will limit conflict, should some tasks appear to be behind schedule.

### **5.4.3 Transferring knowledge**

Any group or team will function more successfully if they use certain types of knowledge; this will also lead to better completion of tasks. This concept also falls within the field of Knowledge Management.

Two types of knowledge are important here:

- **Tacit knowledge** – this is knowledge that group members have within their minds, based on experience and is often difficult to share because the people who possess it do not often ~~access it to~~ communicate it. This knowledge often provides context for ideas, experiences, people, and places and is not easily captured.
- **Explicit knowledge** – this is more structured knowledge, such as data elements that are organised in a particular way for future retrieval, e. g. documents, databases, and spread sheets or unstructured information, that is not referenced for retrieval, e. g. e-mails, images, audio or video selections.

Meaningful dialogue must be established in order to obtain tacit knowledge whereas explicit knowledge is far more easily obtainable.

Take the following steps to ensure effective knowledge transfer:

- Determine how the knowledge will be transferred.
- Transfer the knowledge.
- Test knowledge transfer by observing its recollection and use.



***Class Activity 5: Lead and function in a team***

Please follow the instructions from the facilitator to complete the formative activity in your Learner Workbook.



***Reflection***

Individually, complete the formative activity in your Learner Workbook.



***Facilitator Observation Checklist***

The facilitator will provide you with feedback about your participation during the class activities in your Learner Workbook.

## Summative Assessment

You are required to complete a number of summative assessment activities in your Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide. The Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide will guide you as to what you are required to do:

- Complete all the required administration documents and submit all the required documentation, such as a certified copy of your ID, a copy of your CV and relevant certificates of achievement:
  - Learner Personal Information Form
  - Pre-Assessment Preparation Sheet
  - Assessment Plan Document
  - Declaration of Authenticity Form
  - Appeals Procedure Declaration Form
- Place your complete Learner Workbook (with the completed Class Activities) in the specified place in the Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide.
- Complete the Knowledge Questions under the guidance of your facilitator:



### **Knowledge Questions**

Individually, complete this summative activity in your Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide.

- Complete the other summative assessment activities in your workplace:



### **Practical Activities**

Individually, complete this summative activity in your Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide.



### **Summative Project**

Individually, complete this summative activity in your Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide.



### **Logbook**

Individually, complete this summative activity in your Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide.

Once you have completed all the summative activities in your Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide, complete the Assessment Activities Checklist to ensure that you have submitted all the required evidence for your portfolio, before submitting your portfolio for assessment.

## **References and Further Reading**

- Armeccin, G; Behrman, JR; et al. (2006): *Early Childhood Development through an integrated Program: Evidence from the Philippines*. World Bank, Impact evaluation series; no. IE 2 Policy, Research working paper; no. WPS 3922.
- Cantwell, N. (2006): *Children without parental care: Qualitative alternatives*, Early Childhood Matters 105, Bernard van Leer Foundation.
- Early Childhood Care and Development Group (2002): *Early Childhood Indicators*, Coordinator's Notebook Issue 25.
- Early Childhood Care and Development Group (2002): *HIV/AIDS and Early Childhood*, Coordinator's Notebook Issue 26.
- Orrego, M. E. (1994) *Life is difficult - Let's play first! Celebrations as a vehicle of building family and community life*, Zero to Three bulletin Vol. 14.
- Richter, L. (2004): *The impact of HIV/AIDS on the development of children*, Published in Monograph no 109, Dec 2004 A Generation at risk? HIV/AIDS vulnerable children and security in South Africa.
- Sherr, L. (2005): *HIV and young children: An annotated bibliography on psychosocial perspectives*, Working papers in Early Childhood Development: Young child and HIV/AIDS sub-series 34, Bernard van Leer Foundation.
- Shonkoff, J. P. (2004): *Science, Policy, and the Young Developing Child, Closing the Gap Between What We Know*, Published by Ounce of Prevention Fund.
- World Health Organisation (1999): *A critical link: interventions for physical growth and psychological development*.
- Engleberg, I. , Wynn, D. , & Schuttler R. (2003). Working in groups: Communication Principles and Strategies (3rd ed. ). Boston: Houghton Mifflin, p. 154.
- [http://www.unicef.org/southafrica/resources\\_3786.html](http://www.unicef.org/southafrica/resources_3786.html)
- <http://www.lollydaskal.com/leadership/learn-from-others/>