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## COMMUNICATING IN SPORT GROUPS AND TEAMS

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### Abstract

*The educational process is usually running their course as a group or team activity. The group has its own evolution and marks some specific stages, being different from a team as development and targets. Communication in sportive groups has a certain specificity related with the group maturity, the student's experience, the teacher style, or the exercising atmosphere created in the player's interaction. Being aware of this various aspects and differences inside a sportive groups and teams may be helpful for increasing the coaching or teaching efficiency. Even in professional sport teams, which more often are multicultural groups, the importance of goals, optimal motivation and common effort in exceptional conditions induce tolerance, unity and cohesion, facilitating communication.*

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### 1. Introduction

The easiest way a group can be defined is as two or more people that interact for achieving a common goal. In educational context the group is not formed spontaneously but it is a formal studying group, established by the organization (authorities outside the group as the faculty secretary) and focused on individual efforts in direction to achieve the educational aims proposed. Besides formal groups, in all organizations, and particularly in those which meet a large number of young people, appear informal groups. They occur naturally, as response for an association needs based on common interests as a certain leisure activity can be. According to their rules of behavior and the influence which exert on its members, informal groups could have a positive or negative influence on professional results of pupils, students or athletes which form the sportive group.

### 2. Group

Analyzing the amount of definitions relating to groups, Peter Hartley (1997), highlights four aspects of behavior in groups:

1. a common fate - from the very beginning the students are in the same group because they complete the same faculty, for a time all members of the group will carry out common activities by the same program, they will hire in pursuit of the

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same purpose and finally they will be part of the same professional group;

2. social structure - inside of group will be assigned and members will assume roles and responsibilities, and in time, there will be adopted specific norms of behavior, accepted and followed by the members of the group;

3. interaction - a group cannot exist without its members that interact between them, they can interact with each other in different ways;

4. recognition - members of the same group know each other as being part of that group. Brown gives a neat definition related to recognition: "a group exists when two or more people define themselves as members of it and its existence is recognized by at least one another group" (2000, p.3).

A sport team, a group of teenagers or students of a class, has all the characteristics of a small group: interaction, social structure (norms and rules), a common fate and a common purpose. These groups are lasting sometimes for the study period long and interpersonal interactions have frequency and intensity. Long participation at common task, consolidates this type of group, determining the members to recognize themselves (not only formal or administrative) as being part of that group.

Group is functioning as a critique instance for the evolution of each member, in this way, comparisons with others helps the individual to identify his own capacity and performance. Comparing high school stage, college students depend less on teacher appreciation, but interactions into the student group are more important to consolidate the self image and for defining self esteem level. The experiences and knowledge accumulated in a group gives greater reliability in the judgments about the own self and the others.

Researchers on forming and behaving small groups have identified a series of stages in their evolution. There have been formulated several theories but all tend to develop similar models of development of the group. One of these theories belongs to Tubbs and contains four stages:

1. Orientation - in this stage, the members know each other, they start to talk about the task they have to reach and they examine the limits and opportunities.

2. Conflict - it is appreciated as necessary for development of group because it allows it to evaluate different ideas and avoid conformism and routine.

3. Consens - is the stage that put an end to conflict because the group members reach to a compromise, select the valuable ideas and agree on alternatives.

4. Conclusion - in this stage it adopts a solution and the members of the group reaffirm their support for the chosen strategy.

Fisher's theory includes as well four stages and everything seems to be a variation of the one already described above:

1. Orientation - members of the group they already know each other and experience primary tension before to establish the rules of communication and know what are the expectations of those around them and in what concerns them.



2. Conflict - is the stage in which secondary tension appears, about the task given. Members of the group will be in disagreement and will discuss ideas. The conflict is constructive because it helps the group to progress.

3. The results appear for the task that group has to reach and they evidence the social structure.

4. The consolidation - in this stage, the group members claim their decisions using like support both verbal and nonverbal code of communication.

The most often quoted theory about the evolution of groups is that of Tuckman. Initially (1965) this theory has included also four stages, but in 1977, Tuckman comes back and add another one.

1. Forming - a period of confusion and insecurity where each team member learns about the others and about the task. The situation is often ambiguous and members become aware about the functional interconnection with teammates.

2. Storming or conflict - a period of conflicts in connection with the task and competition between the members of group in order to obtain a status inside. Confrontation and criticism occur often at this stage. Organisation based on roles and responsibilities is one of this very moment problem.

3. Norming - there are established explicit or implicit rules that help the growth of the group cohesion and the consensus about the target. The compromise is sometimes necessary. The interdependence is recognised and the information and opinions flow free between members of the group.

4. Performing - having a social structure already done, the group focuses the energy about reaching the target. The creativity and mutual assistance are the important themes for this stage.

5. Adjourning - a tennis team or a student group have a long existence and they break down after the purpose has been reached. In this stage, there are used rituals that affirm the already success of the group, like ceremonies, degree parties or victory celebrations.

### **3. Teams**

As we already seen, a group is dynamic. Even where the group action follows the rules and precise norms like teaching methods, the members are in a continuous competition for higher positions. Before reaching this stage what differences the group and the team is this dynamic force.

In a team, the positions are already occupied, each person has a certain task. In a handball team, for example, one player is goalkeeper, one is thrower, another one is play maker and each of them knows his place and role in the team. All complete each other to obtain points for their own team. After the game finishes, the team can become a group, inside which can exist or not competition for certain positions.

A professional group in education has usually around 24 students, but a group to take account for might have at least 3 members. The third person can generate the



dynamic process inside the group. Another argument should be that in a two members group it can't form subsidiary groups.

A sport team, can have at least 2 members for table tennis or badminton, 3 for streetball, 5 for basketball, 6 for volleyball, up to 15 for rugby teams. The differences between groups and teams are described in the following table after Ruckle (2000):

**Table 1 Group and team differences**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Team</b>
At least 3 members	At least 2 members
Dynamism, creativity	Order
Hierarchy	No hierarchy
Ruler	Team leader
Supra- and subordination	Equality
Membership feeling	Team tasks come primary
Offers reliability	Uses individual qualities
Relationship persists after group dissipation	Adjourns when the team reason disappears

Team work reaches positive values when the individual knowledge and qualities complete each other for a common goal. Working in a team could be considerate an objective in physical education classes, especially at the higher education level. It is a valuable skill, which fulfils the employers' requirements related to integration in a team and performing as a member of it.

#### **4. Communicating in physical activities**

The freshmen student groups, which came at sports classes, are formed by young people, of the same gender and age and they don't know each other. They are in the first stages of forming group relations when they come for the first lessons.

The student's involvement in sports lessons will function like a certain team facilitator. On my observation, common physical tasks usually contribute to an easier acceptance and interpersonal communication. The predominance of verbal or nonverbal communication between teacher and students on one hand and between teammates on the other is depending on the competence degree. In the introduction lessons prevalent is nonverbal communication, student attention being focused on the demonstrated actions that is about to be learned. The leader demonstrates the acts and actions that will be followed to transmit the correct informations about accuracy, coordination, speed of the tempo and fluence of the movement. A correct demonstration create the premise of a correct formation and a good knowledge. In this stage of learning, a correct image is better than one thousand words.



In the consolidation stage, is predominated the verbal communication. The teacher gives explications and corrects the students exercise. When the technical level is higher the teacher's verbal content is lower and the information source is the students and his own execution. This information will be more accurate when the subject has more knowledge about translating his sensations and feelings associated with exercise.

During a game in a sport competition, the specific language is a code of visual and auditive gestures. The succes is depending of the consolidated tactical teammates relations and sincronisation of their actions. In this situation, the nonverbal communication is prevalent. This code has the advantage to be all knowed, can be delivered at long distance and understood 4.5 times more rapidly than speaking. The referees signs and signals have meanings for competitors, coaches and audience wathever if they speak different languages.

The teacher communication style will determ the class working climate. An open climate will inspire trust, enjoyment and will support the students to maintain it. A pleasant and supportive work climate will help students to take part enthusiastically in physical education classes. Working in a friendly group, watching other people exercising, receiving constructive feed-back and assistance could motivate people intrinsically to join a sport team.

An inflexible behavior will conduct to a suspicious attitude, sober climate and a defensive students attitude. The specialist affirm that in an emotionally positive enviroment, the information is easier abstracted, but within the stress conditions, fear and excesive effort the inhibition is facilitated. The students, as well, by their positive, neutral or negative attitude, improve or stop the communication, enhance or inhibit the learning - teching process.

A team strives to outperform other teams in competitions. Risk conditions, that sometimes sport involves, goes to cohesion inside the team or group. When victory and sometimes physical integrity depends on teammates, the spirit of solidarity grows between the team members. Even in professional sport teams that more often are multicultural groups, the important objectives, optimal motivation and common effort in special conditions brings tolerance and unity, making communication easier (Pop, 2014).

The images that we have about others are highly conditioned by our own culture. Physical culture has a special form of communication that makes cooperation and communication possible even in multiethnic or multicultural groups.



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