

Working and learning in groups

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Agenda

1. Learning processes
2. Self-directed learning in groups
3. Group-dynamic processes
4. Group development



1 Learning processes

Definition Self-Directed Learning

....is a form of learning in which " (...) the actor can gravely and momentarily influence the essential decisions of whether, what, when, how, and whereupon to learn" (Weiner, 1982, p. 103).



1 Learning Processes

Everyday learning and self-direction

- "Everyday learning is mostly problem solving with learning as a side effect" (Berg, 2006, p. 6).
- Learning as a social process (Berg, 2006, p. 1):
 - Synchrony of action creates community and is a source of motivation
 - Presenting what you have learned to others helps to verify and consolidate knowledge
 - Discussing what you have learned with others allows you to test your own thoughts against the arguments of others, get to know new ideas and identify gaps in your own knowledge.
 - Application of what has been learned in an everyday context with others → Professional action = interaction
 - Feedback about one's own competence gain from others enhances self-awareness → promotes learning and enables experiences of difference



1 Learning Processes

Areas of self-control

- "Self-directed learning attempts to combine everyday learning and planned learning. Ideally, learners join together because they discover in their everyday work that they lack certain knowledge or skills." (Berg, 2006, p. 6)
- According to Greif & Kurz (1998, p. 27), possible areas of self-control are:
 - Learning tasks and learning steps
 - Rules of task processing (individual and group)
 - Learning aids, learning methods or learning tools
 - Time investment and repetition in the processing of tasks
 - Form of feedback and expert assistance
 - Social support from colleagues and learning partners

Very high degree of autonomy vs. high learning effort



1 Learning processes

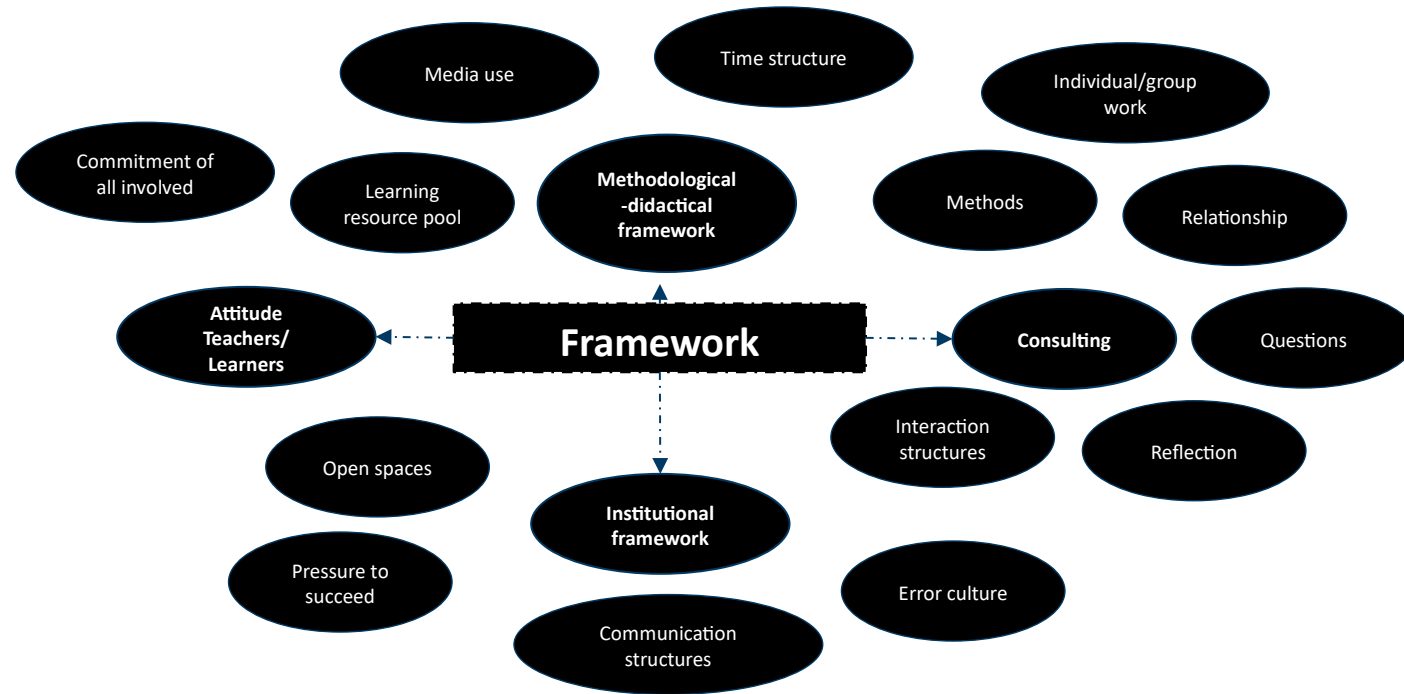
Characteristics of Self-Directed Learning

1. Learning autonomy
 2. Self-organization
 3. Control processes
 4. Learning content and methods
- Self-determined learning in a didactic enabling structure through experience-making in action → development of action competence and self-organization skills
 - Learners: learning motivation and cognitive learning strategies crucial
 - Teacher: Didactic pre-structuring of learning content
 - ✓ Adaptation to the individual situation of the learner
 - ✓ Level of teacher-learner interaction



1 Learning processes

Framework for Self-Directed Learning



(Dietrich, 2001, p. 59)

1 Learning processes

The challenge of self-directed online learning

- Structural disorientation
 - "Lost in Hyperspace"
- Conceptual disorientation
 - Lack of integration of information into own knowledge structure
- Cognitive overload = any secondary load over reading effort
 - Finding information
 - Organizing information
 - Selection of pages/topics to be viewed
- Quality assurance - evaluation of the content for the company
 - Learning "invisible" and not "documented"
 - Learning outcomes hardly demonstrable
 - Loss of control

Rensing (2009, p. 24)



2 Learning groups

Definition group

*"A group consists of a plurality of individuals who are in direct interaction over time, are characterized by role differentiation and shared norms, and are united by a sense of we."
(Rosenstiel, 1995).*



2 Learning groups

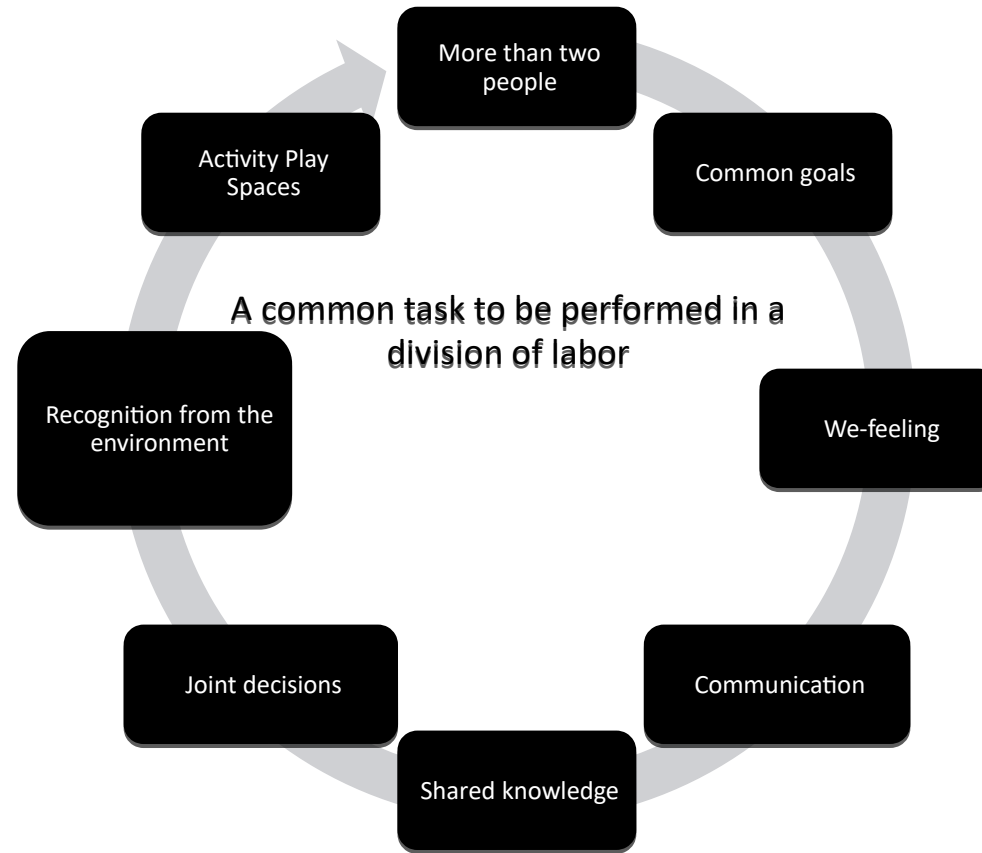
Group work / teamwork

- Terms are typically used synonymously (Schmid, 2016, p. 12)
- Determining characteristics for group work according to (Hacker, 1996, p. 61):
 1. Joint, proportionally executable order for more than two workers
 2. Joint action organization for order fulfillment
 3. Joint decisions based on the group's scope of activity in terms of time and content
 4. Communication for coordination and action organization
 5. Minimum level of commonly shared goals and knowledge required, the so-called shared or common activity guiding representations (Shared Mental Models).
- "Teamwork is a coordinated, cooperative, and interdependent dynamic team process in which team members achieve their common tasks through shared and agreed-upon goals" (Schmid, 2016, p. 13).



2 Learning groups

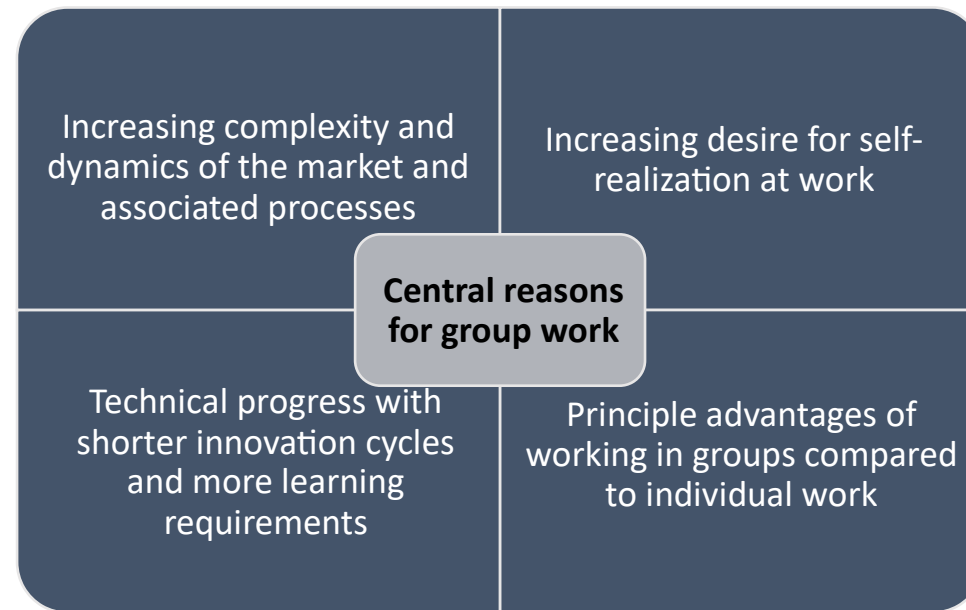
Definition characteristics group work



(Wegge, 2004)

2 Learning groups

Central reasons for group work



(Wegge, 2004)

3 Group dynamic processes

Loss of motivation in group work

Social Loafing (Wegge, 2014, pp. 963-964).

- Shared responsibility for group outcome may lead to poorer performance → loss of motivation due to lack of volitional self-regulatory processes
- More pronounced when...
 - ✓ individual performance results cannot be evaluated by the person him/herself or by other persons (group members, superiors)
 - ✓ performance tasks are judged to be rather unimportant or meaningless
 - ✓ there is no clear standard for assessing group performance
 - ✓ working together with unknown persons
 - ✓ it is expected that the other group members will perform well
 - ✓ their own contributions to the group result are superfluous
 - ✓ the number of (collaborating) group members is (too) large

Antidote: Make individual performance identifiable and pursue clear performance standards.



3 Group dynamic processes

Loss of motivation in group work

Free Riding (Wegge, 2014, p. 964-965)

- A person's conscious decision to reduce effort when it is believed that one's efforts are redundant
- Goal of the behavior: not to consume own resources unnecessarily
- More pronounced when...
 - ✓ Group is (too) big - loafing
 - ✓ Performance of the best in focus is → weaker perceive their performance as redundant
 - ✓ Performance of weaker is in focus → better perceive their performance as redundant

Antidote: Highlight the relevance of each individual contribution.

3 Group dynamic processes

Loss of motivation in group work

No longer being the fool - Sucker Effect (Wegge, 2014, p. 965)

- Feeling that enough is enough and deciding to "no longer want to be the stupid one" (Kerr, 1983) → usually in response to free-riding, attempting to establish "justice"
- Person reduces their effort because they feel that others in the group are not putting in enough effort for the group outcome, even though they basically have the skills to do so

Antidote: Active cooperation of all parties involved in equitable distribution of work tasks and communication of problems.



3 Group dynamic processes

Loss of motivation in group work

Social Inhibition (Wegge, 2014, pp. 965-966).

- Spectators and co-actors can cause performance degradation in an individual
- Creates feeling of pressure and inhibition
- More pronounced when...
 - ✓ complex, still rather unpracticed tasks to be mastered (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter & Salomon, 1999)
 - ✓ evaluation fears are pronounced = fear of performing poorly in front of others and being rejected

Antidote: Try to avoid such situations. Consciously reduce pressure in complex tasks. Create a culture of error.



3 Group dynamic processes

Loss of motivation in group work

Soldiering (Wegge, 2014, p. 966)

- Deliberate reduction of performance as an expression of protest against another, status-higher group that makes unjustified demands on one's own group
- The goal is to show that standards defined by others are not legitimate
- More pronounced when...
 - ✓ performance targets are constantly being increased and are therefore more difficult to achieve
 - ✓ other forms of protest do not seem reasonable as a reaction
 - ✓ the identification of the person as a group member is high

Antidote: Set realistic, reflected demands or negotiate them together with the group.



3 Group dynamic processes

Loss of motivation in group work

Groupthink (Roos, 2017)

- Strong group cohesion can lead to group members making worse decisions than possible because they defer or adjust their opinions, for example, to maintain group harmony
- Process of flawed decision making that occurs as a result of intense pressure among group members to reach agreement
- More pronounced when...
 - ✓ groups are very homogeneous → mixed, intercultural groups can have a protective effect here if necessary
 - ✓ no sensitization takes place through e.g. encouragement of free expression or external observers

Antidote: Examine information and options for action from multiple perspectives so that ill-informed and insufficiently justified decisions are not made prematurely.



3 Group dynamic processes

Loss of motivation in group work

Characteristics of Groupthink (Nerdinger, Blickle & Schaper, 2014).

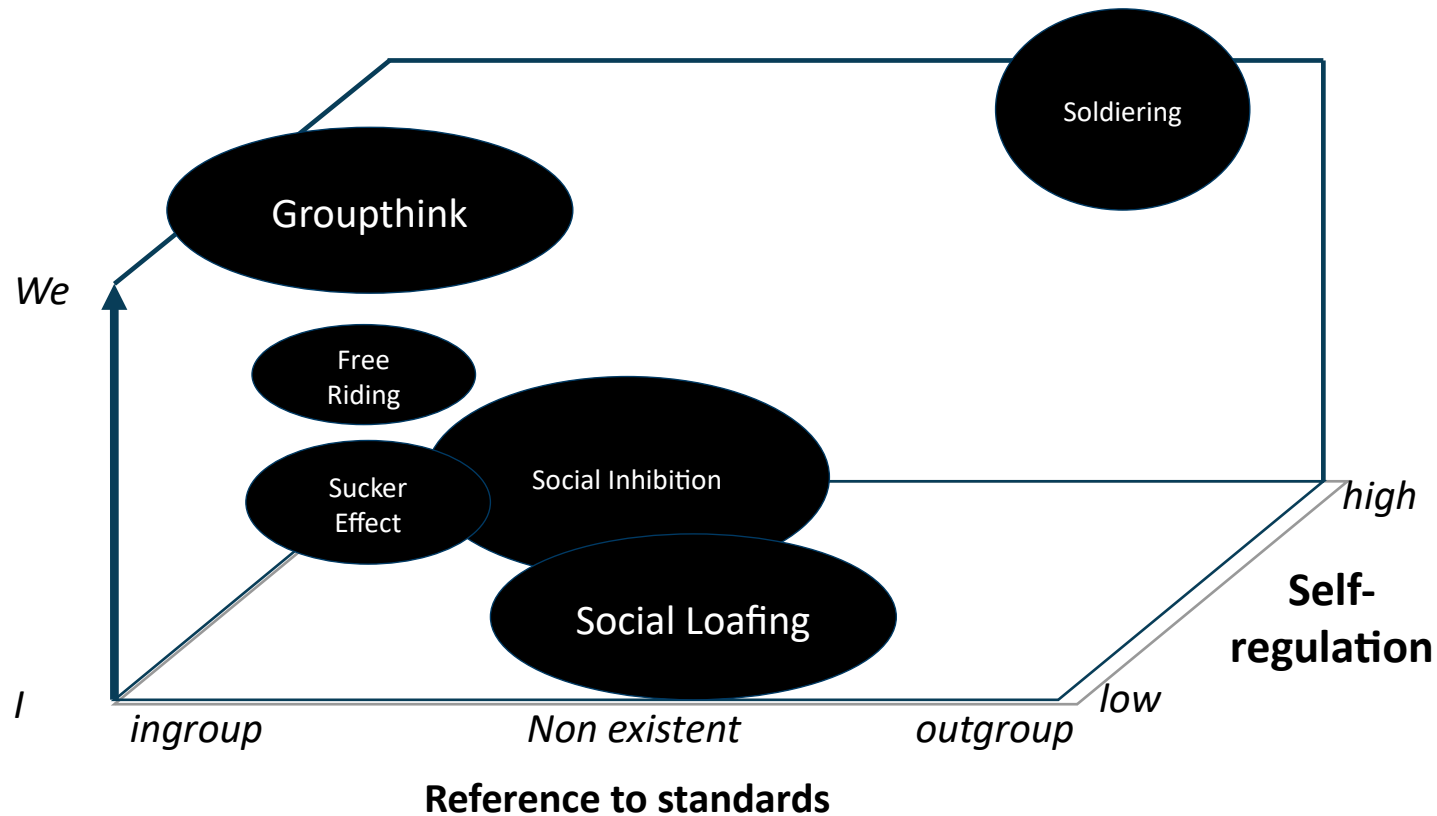
- **Overestimation of the group**
 1. Illusion of invulnerability
 2. Belief in representing high moral standards
- **Narrow-mindedness**
 1. Collective rationalizations
 2. Stereotyping outsiders
- **Uniformity pressure**
 1. Self-censorship
 2. Illusion of unanimity
 3. Peer pressure
 4. Self-appointed sentiment guardians



Example: Bay of Pigs fiasco in the Cuban crisis

3 Group dynamic processes

Dimensions of loss of motivation



(Wegge, 2014, p. 963)



3 Group dynamic processes

Motivational gains through group work

Presence effects - Mere Presence (Wegge, 2014, pp. 967-968).

- Presence of spectators or co-actors can significantly enhance performance, more so on simple tasks (Blascovich et al., 1999)
- Arises from a variety of influences
 - Focusing attention on yourself
 - Stimulation of evaluation fears
 - Changes in excitation processes
- Presence of other people can:
 - ✓ Lift inhibition processes
 - ✓ Stimulate competitive intentions
- Person experiences and defines himself rather as a distinctive individual



3 Group dynamic processes

Motivational gains through group work

Köhler effect (Wegge, 2014, pp. 968-967; Roos, 2017).

- In groups with differences in performance to a small degree
- Weaker ones try harder to avoid negatively influencing the group result→ motives: sense of responsibility or evaluation anxiety
- High-performing group members as role models
- Enables higher output than with addition of individual outputs

- Women are more likely to exhibit the Köhler effect based on the consideration that "my group needs me."
- Men based on the reasoning of "I can do this just as well as the other guy" (Kerr, et al., 2007).



3 Group dynamic processes

Motivational gains through group work

Sacrifice effect - social compensation (Wegge, 2014, p. 969)

- One group member (often a high achiever) puts in extra effort even though or because other group members are not making a significant contribution to the group's success
- Possible causes (Karau & Williams, 1993):
 - ✓ Protect inefficient members
 - ✓ Compensate for weaknesses in order to shine with own contribution (becomes particularly visible)
 - ✓ Poor group performance as a threat (when identification is high).
- Prerequisite: appreciation and achievability of the group goals.



3 Group dynamic processes

Motivational gains through group work

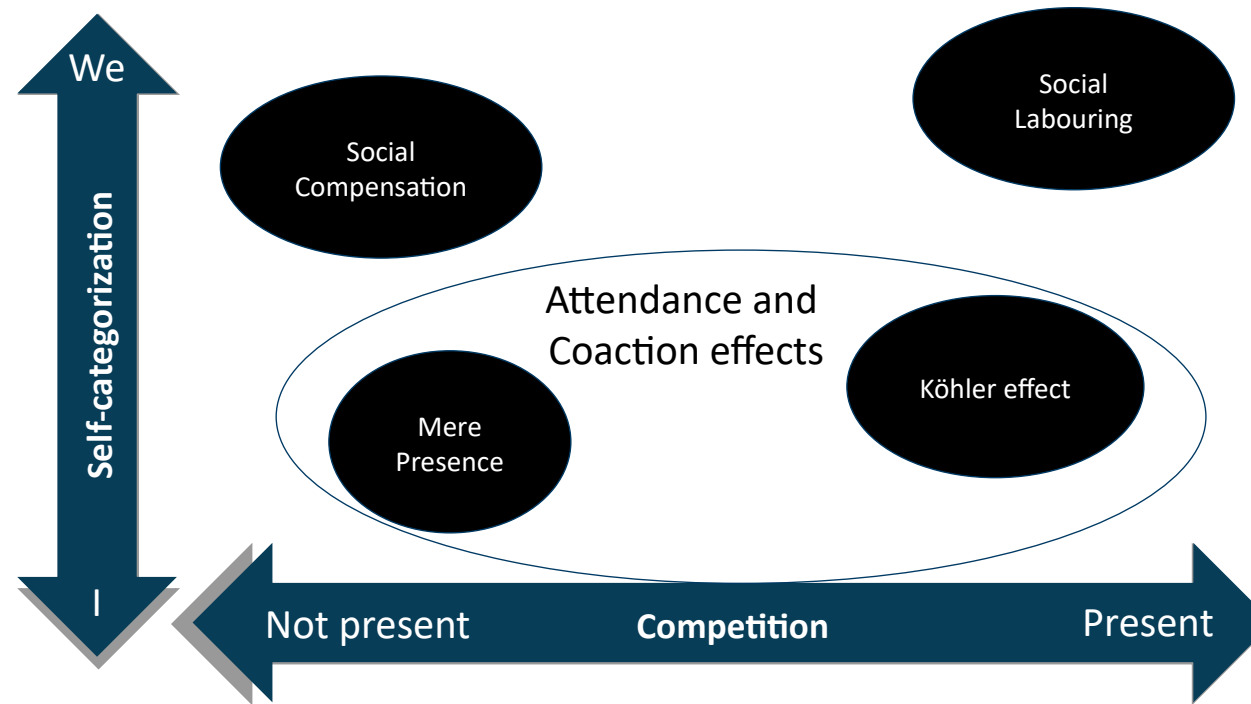
We Are Better Than Them - Social Laboring (Wegge, 2014, pp. 969-970).

- Promotion of motivation through a high level of identification with one's own group, which holds a competition with another group and wants to win
- Intergroup comparison must be possible
- So far only experimentally detectable
- Competitive pressure, so that significant performance gains should occur among members who identify particularly strongly with the team or the task at hand



3 Group dynamic processes

Motivational gains through group work



(Wegge, 2014, p. 967)

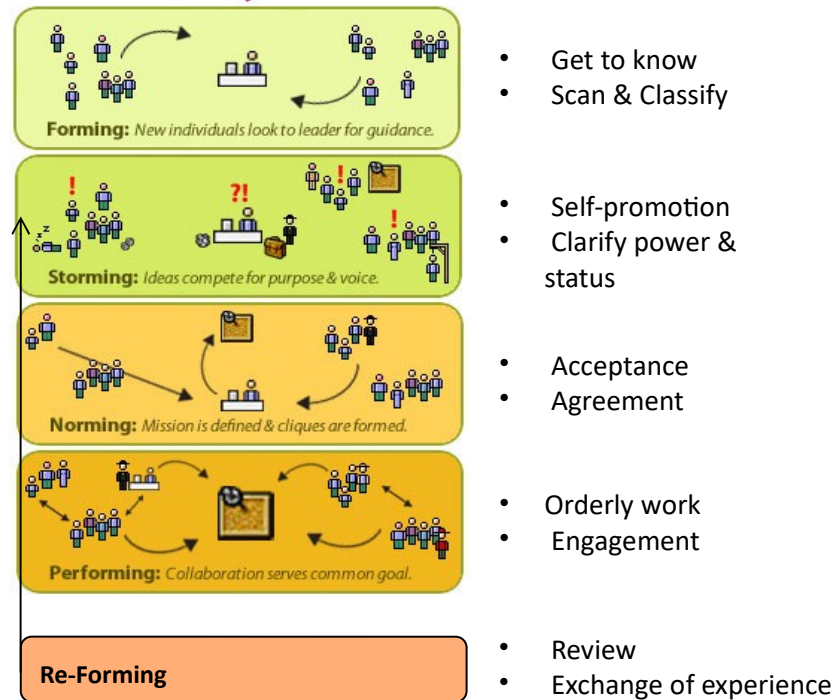
4 Group development

Phase model of group development

Tuckman model
(1965)

(Source:
<http://shannonswenson.com/wp-content/uploads/online-communitylifecycle.jpg>)

Supplementary
evaluation and reflection
phase (Stahl, 2002, p.
50)



(Nerdinger, Blickle & Schaper, 2014)

4 Group development

Support through group contracts

- From the university setting for collaborative group project work
- The following aspects are to be discussed:
 - Basic expectations of the project
 - Selection of tools (which one for which purpose?)
 - Rules of communication and for conflict management
 - Majority decisions? Veto right?
 - Experience background: what prior knowledge/experience can be brought to role performance?
 - Clarify the distribution of roles in the group
 - Time availability of individuals (who can work when, when not? work on weekends? how often and on what occasion synchronous meetings?)





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Thanks a lot for your attention.

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