Assignment : Test & development

Topic : Evaluating Group Work & Participation

What is evaluation?

Evaluation is a process that critically examines a program. It involves collecting and analyzing information about a program’s activities, characteristics, and outcomes. Its purpose is to make judgments about a program, to improve its effectiveness, and/or to inform programming decisions. (Patton, 1987)

Definition

Evaluation consists of objective assessment of a project, programme or policy at all of its stages, i.e. planning, implementation and measurement of outcomes. It should provide reliable and useful information allowing to apply the knowledge thus obtained in the decision making process. It often concerns the process of determination of the value or importance of a measure, policy or programme.

GROUP:

A group can consist of any number of people.

People in groups interact, engage and identify with each other, often at regular or pre-determined times and places.

The group members share beliefs, principles, and standards about areas of common interest and they come together to work on common tasks for agreed purposes and outcomes.

People in groups are defined by themselves and by others as group members, in other words individuals are aware that they are part of a group.

What IS Group Work?

Group work is a form of cooperative learning. It aims to cater for individual differences, develop students' knowledge, generic skills (e.g. communication skills, collaborative skills, critical thinking skills) and attitudes.

Konopka (1963) defines groupwork as a method of social work that is utilized in order to `help individuals to enhance their social functioning through purposeful group experiences, and to cope more effectively with their personal, group or community problems`. This definition shows a tradition within groupwork of helping individuals with problems. Brown provides a modernised and more comprehensive definition of group work (1994, p.8). He states that `groupwork provides a context in which individuals help each other; it is a method of helping groups as well as helping individuals; and it can enable individuals and groups to influence and change personal, group, organisational and community problems` (original emphasis). He goes on to distinguish between `relatively small and neighbourhood centred` work and `macro, societal and political approaches` within community work, explaining that only the former may be properly classified as groupwork.

Thus the role of groupwork can be seen as one which places emphasis on sharing of thoughts, ideas, problems and activities.

Stages of Group Development:

Groups, like individuals are each unique with their own experiences and expectations. However many commentators studying group development and dynamics have recognised that group development, as a generalisation, is more predictable than individual behaviour. Thus many theories of group stage development have been cultivated, some linear, others more cyclical, and it must be stressed that no definitive model of group stage development exists.

Two of the most useful theories of group stage development are those discussed by Tuckman (1965), and Rogers paper on encounter groups (1967). These models, like others (for example Heap, 1977) propose that as groups develop and change they pass through stages which may be conceptualised. Tuckman’s model has been used extensively within youth work theory and practice and is an excellent model for attempting to analyse individual and group behaviour. A brief synopsis of each stage is outlined below, with examples from personal practice.

Stage 1: Forming

The first stage of this group process is joining, referred to as engagement by Rogers. This phase involves significant testing, and trial and error. Initial concerns about openness and support within the group are manifested by a lack of cohesion and a difficulty in sharing thoughts, feelings and experiences with each other. An internal appraisal of group value and how each individual belongs to the group are key features of this stage. Anxiety, isolation, inadequacy and frustration are common emotions felt by group members at this early stage in the life of a group, as well as being emotionally threatened by members of the group who are perceived to be stronger or better. Thus the group seeks to create a comfort zone in which individuals are not keen to upset the status quo for fear of alienation.

Oppressive behaviour is least likely within the formation stage of a group as individuals generally look to create a comfort zone and do not wish to rock the boat. Often frustrations will be built upon between individuals who disagree strongly, but this will generally not surface until storming begins.

A knowledge and understanding of the feelings and emotions felt by group members in this stage is helpful, if not essential, to the effective structuring of a programme to work towards the desired outcome for the group. For example both the YAM and PTV groups I had experience with were set up to encourage social interaction and personal development. Having an awareness of group stage theory enabled my colleagues and myself to structure the early encounters for the groups to be;

a) Fun and enjoyable – to encourage continued attendance;

b) Relaxed - offering the promotion of effective communication and allowing members to get to know each other a little whilst gaining in confidence and trust.

To this end ice breakers, introduction and communication exercisers such as those provided by Brandes and Phillips (1979), Bond (1986), Leech and Wooster (1986) and Dearling and Armstrong (1994) were used. As Dynes describes `[games] stimulate the imagination, make people resourceful and help develop social ability and co-operation` (Dynes, 1990).

Stage 2: Storming

This stage sees group members begin to confront each other as they begin to vie for roles within the group that will help them to belong and to feel valued. Thus as members begin to assert their individual personalities, the comfort of the forming stage begins to come under siege. Members experience personal, intra and inter group conflicts. Aggression and resentment may manifest in this stage and thus if strong personalities emerge and leadership is unresponsive to group and individual needs, the situation may become destructive to the group’s development. Indeed there is a high potential for individuals to abandon the group during this stage, as for some the pressures created by the group may become too much of a strain.

The potential for oppressive behaviour is strong within the storming phase as group members vie for preferred roles and release frustrations built within the forming period. This personal oppression should be discouraged whilst it is understood that a degree of conflict is necessary if the group is to further develop.

In the YAM group this stage was represented by a rebellious streak within the young people and much of the storming was directed towards the adult leaders. Boundaries within the group were tested as the group explored how far they would be allowed to go and what they could get away with. One or two individuals in turn challenged this behaviour as they felt it was unfair and could jeopardize future activities.

The PTV group’s storming phase was altogether different. Two of the group with strong personalities began to vie for intra-group leadership. Each used their own abilities to strengthen their claim to lead the group, whilst also sabotaging and undermining the other’s efforts in an attempt to usurp the leadership role. This situation caused a degree of infighting and at one point created two sub-groups, one following each of the `pretender` leaders.

It is important to be aware that conflict will take place within all groups, and if handled well this conflict can produce benefits for the group in terms of development, objective and task setting, and ultimate outcome. Thus conflict is not inherently something to be feared or avoided.

Stage 3: Norming

During this stage the group begin to work more constructively together towards formal identified or informal tasks. Roles begin to develop and be allocated within the group and although these may be accepted, some members may not be comfortable with the role or roles which the have been allocated. During this stage sub-groups are likely to form in order that a supportive environment is once more created. Acceptable and unacceptable behaviours within the group are created and reinforced and thus the `norms` for this group become fabricated.

The storming and norming phases of group development are inextricably linked, as it is often through the storming and challenging that acceptable group norms become set.

It is important that a youth worker works hard during this stage to ensure oppression against individuals within the group do not become the acceptable norm, as then all group members will oppress these individuals. Thus, individual oppressions must be challenged and emphasis placed on challenging attitudes and opinions but not group members.

The YAM group settled into group norms quite quickly, however some of the roles that were adopted were challenged by the co-leaders as they were seen to be obstructive to the group and individual’s objectives. One young person (J.) who was often badly behaved at school, was previously known to other group members. As these young people expected poor behaviour from J. this was the role which he adopted. This was challenged within the group context and it was pointed out that alternatives to this behaviour were available.

Stage 4: Performing

This stage sees the group performing effectively with defined roles, in fact at this stage it could be said that the group has transformed into a team. It is now that decisions may be positively challenged or reinforced by the group as a whole. The discomfort of the storming and norming phases has been overcome and the group has a general feeling of unity. This is the best stage for a group to complete tasks, assuming that task, rather than process and individuals, are the focus of the group.

An excellent example of performing within the PTV group came during a residential week. One of the group (A.) admitted to a fear of heights and thus did not want to take part in an abseiling exercise. The whole group supported this decision but offered encouragement and support in order to promote participation. One individual (M.) spent time and energy showing leadership and helped A. to overcome his fears. A. took part in the abseil, being assisted by M. and encouraged by the whole group.

Potential exists within this stage for oppression to begin if one or more group members does not appear to fit in with the group’s view of its task, or is not performing as effectively as expected. Again it is important to challenge this if it occurs and to show how each member can benefit the group, through achievement of task, leadership, reviewing, moving on, or by monitoring the groups process.

Stage 5: Mourning

The final stage in the life of a group ultimately is its termination. Though often overlooked, this stage in group development is equally important to positive outcomes. The ending of a group can be a very unhappy and distressing time for some members, as they may feel some extent of dependency on the group. Garland et al. describe some of the typical responses to the ending phase as:

· Denial – `forgetting` the time of the groups termination.

· Regression – reverting to a less independent state of functioning.

· Need expression – in the hope the group will continue.

· Recapitulation – detailed recall of past experiences within the group.

· Evaluation – detailed discussion on the value of the group experience.

· Flight – destructive denial of any positive benefit of the group, or a positive disengagement towards other interests.

Potential exists within this stage for members to be oppressed as scapegoats, that is blamed or at fault for the ending of the group. This can be minimised by constant focusing and refocusing on group end points and staged celebrations of group achievements.

With the PTV group it was relatively easy to develop strategies to minimise the effects of the groups termination. The group’s life span was structured to a tight time-scale and end point from the outset. This was reinforced by getting the group to maintain a counting down chart which was marked off each day. The end of the group was marked by a large presentation to which friends and relatives were invited. The presentation marked a clear ending for the group from day one, whilst also serving as a celebration of all the groups achievements during its existence. Thus the end did not come as a `surprise`, and was something to look forward to.

As we have seen the value of a theoretical understanding of conceptualising this group stage theory in youth work and other helping professions, lies in enabling group workers to `tune into the group’s processes and respond appropriately` (Preston-Shoot, 1987).

ASSESSING GROUP WORK AND PARTICIPATION:

Assessment not only gauges what students have learned, it shapes how many students approach learning. This means that the assessment methods used for groupwork can not only gauge student performance but, if well designed, also encourage students to contribute their best to the group. Therefore, assessing groupwork starts with aligning the topic aims, learning outcomes, and assessment.

**Aim**: To develop groupwork skills.

Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate the ability to work with others to achieve timely delivery of a product

(The product may be any type of assignment e.g. report, presentation, business plan, creative work etc.

Assessment: Assess their ability to work in a group + assess the product

METHODS FOR EVALUATING GROUP WORK AND PARTICIPATION:

INTRODUCTION

Students should be made aware of evaluation before starting the project

EVALUATION METHOD

Criteria (product and/or process)

PRODUCT VERSUS PROCESS:

1. Assessing the product - measuring the quantity and quality of individual work in a group project.
2. Assessing the process - evaluating individual teamwork skills and interaction.

Evaluation by instructor versus by group members

1. By instructor - instructor assigns all marks.
2. By group members - group members evaluate their contributions to the group and assign marks.

**Product assessment by instructor**

EQUALLY SHARED MARK.

All group members receive same grade

ADVANTAGES:

* Easiest to implement - does not require any additional work aside from marking the projects.
* Appropriate if group work mark is a minor part of total mark for the course.
* Group responsibilities are enforced - group succeeds or fails together.

DISADVANTAGES:

* Individual contributions are not reflected in the distribution of marks.
* Poor students may benefit from the work of hard-working students.
* Good students may be dragged down by poor students.
* Does not motivate students.

EXAM QUESTIONS.

1. Questions should be specifically about the project, and are answerable only by students who have been thoroughly involved in the project.

ADVANTAGES:

* May increase interest in the project - students may be more motivated to learn about the work of their fellow group members.

DISADVANTAGES:

* Students may ignore group in order to study.
* For the exam on their own.
* May mean additional work for instructor when preparing the exam questions.
* May not be effective - students may be able to answer the questions by simply proofreading.
* The project.

SPLITTING TASKS.

* Project must be divisible into multiple tasks of the same complexity.
* Each student is responsible for one task.
* Final mark is part group mark (e.g., 50%) and part individual task mark (e.g., 50%)

ADVANTAGES:

* Objective way of determining individual participation.
* Individual component grade may provide additional motivation.

DISADVANTAGES:

* May increase interest in the project - students may be more motivated to learn about the work of their fellow group members.
* Students may ignore group in order to study for the exam on their own.
* May mean additional work for instructor when preparing the exam questions.
* May not be effective - students may be able to answer the questions by simply proofreading the project.

DIRECT EVALUATION.

* Instructor judges individual merits
* Oral interviews
* Periodic reports
* Meeting minutes
* Observation

ADVANTAGES:

* Oral interviews are a good way of getting information on individual participation.
* Enables instructor to give each student more specific feedback.

DISADVANTAGES:

* Very time consuming.
* Information obtained is often subjective and/or may be inaccurate.
* Class size may make it infeasible.

**PRODUCT ASSESSMENT BY PEER EVALUATION.**

Issues with peer evaluation:

1. Should we use self-assessment?
2. Should instructor adjust marks?
3. Should it be done individually or collectively by consensus?

DISTRIBUTION OF A POOL OF MARKS:

* Award the group a mark equal to (group mark) X (no. of group members).
* Let group divide marks among themselves.

Example for distribution of a pool of marks

Group project mark: 70

No. of group members: 4

Instructor awards 280 points to group

Advises students that difference between marks must not be greater than 20

Group members divide marks by consensus as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Student | Mark |
| A | 80 |
| B | 60 |
| C | 75 |
| D | 65 |
| Total | =280 |

ADVANTAGES:

* Easy to implement.
* Peer assessment may motivate students to.
* Contribute more to the group.

DISADVANTAGES:

* Open to subjective evaluations by students (e.g., giving friends high marks as opposed to those who contributed the most).
* Opens the doors to personal conflicts between group members.
* May foster competition.
* May be difficult for students to evaluate each other without objective criteria.

INDIVIDUAL WEIGHTING FACTOR.

* Points awarded for a list of tasks.
* Individual mark = (group mark) X (peer assessment factor).

Example for individual weighting factor

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| List of tasks | Hassan | Ali | Hamza |
| a.Literature search | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| b.Analysing the literature | 4 | 5 | 1 |
| c.Writing a report | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| d.Group presentation | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Individual totals | 11 | 12 | 7 |

**Rating scale**

1 -Did not contribute in this way

2 -Willing but not very successful

3 -Average

4 -Above Average

5 -Outstanding

Peer assessment factor = (individual total) / (average total)

Average of individual totals = 10

If project mark = 60

Individual marks:

Hassan = 60 \* (11/10) = 66

Ali = 60 \* (12/10) = 72

Hamza = 60 \* (7/10) = 42

ADVANTAGES:

* Provides students with objective criteria by which to judge individual contributions.

DISADVANTAGES:

* Time consuming for instructor.
* Rating scale may be misinterpreted.
* Tasks all have the same weight.

**PROCESS ASSESSMENT.**

List of skills to assess, such as:

* Adoption of complementary team roles.
* Cooperative behavior.
* Time and task management.
* Creative problem solving.
* Use of a range of working methods.
* Negotiation.

**Process assessment by instructor.**

Direct evaluation of team behavior using teamwork logs - sample questions:

* What steps have you taken to organize your teamwork?
* What steps have you taken to monitor the effectiveness of your team?
* What steps have you taken to improve the effectiveness of your team?
* What problems have you encountered in working as a team and how did you tackle them?
* If you were to embark on a second, similar task as a team, what would be different about the way you go about working, and why?

ADVANTAGES:

* Makes students reflect on their operation as a team.
* Logs provide plenty of information that can be used as a basis for assessment.

DISADVANTAGES:

* Reviewing logs can be very time-consuming.
* Students may need training in order to be aware of what goes on in the teams.

**Process assessment by peer evaluation.**

INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT:

1. How members view each member of the team.
2. Use lists of key group work traits.
3. Average of individual marks must be the same as the group mark.

Example for individual assessment

3 group members (Hassan, Ali, Hamza), no self-assessment

Student name: Hassan

Evaluated by: Ali (marks selected are in boldface in this example)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Aspects of team functioning | Well below average | Bellow average | Average | Above average | Well above average |
| 1.Forming good team cohesion | -2 | -1 | 0 | **1** | 2 |
| 2.Leadership, managing meetings | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | **2** |
| 3.Planning and allocating tasks | -2 | -1 | **0** | 1 | 2 |
| 4.Generating ideas and solutions | -2 | **-1** | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 5.Tackling team social problems | -2 | -1 | **0** | **1** | 2 |
| 6.Organising individuals to do jobs | -2 | -1 | **0** | 1 | 2 |
| 7.Helping team members to finish jobs | -2 | -1 | **0** | 1 | 2 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Instructor’s mark for team project | Sum of evaluation marks | Individual mark for Hassan given by Ali |
| 60% | +3 | 63% |

Student name: Hassan Evaluated by: Hamza

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Aspects of team functioning | Well below average | Below average | average | Above average | Well above average |
| 1.Forming good team cohesion. | -2 | -1 | 0 | **1** | 2 |
| 2.Leadership, managing meetings. | -2 | -1 | 0 | **1** | 2 |
| 3.Planning and allocating tasks. | -2 | -1 | **0** | 1 | 2 |
| 4.Generating ideas and solutions. | -2 | **-1** | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 5. Tackling team social problems. | -2 | -1 | 0 | **1** | 2 |
| 6. Organising individuals to do jobs. | -2 | -1 | **0** | 1 | 2 |
| 7. Helping team members to finish jobs. | -2 | **-1** | **0** |  | 2 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Instructor’s mark for team project | Sum of evaluation marks | Individual mark for Hassan given by Hamza |
| 60% | +1 | 61% |

Hassan’s final mark: (63+61)/2=62%

Advantages:

 Gives a personalized view of each member’s contributions.

 List of traits provides students with objective criteria.

Disadvantages:

 Time consuming and complex; instructor must check result.

 List of traits may not give a true measure of the group work process.

 Students may misinterpret traits.

REFERENCES:

 Gibbs, G. Learning in teams: a Tutor Guide. Oxford, 1995.

 Lejk, M. Et al. A Survey of Methods of Deriving Individual Grades from Group Assessments. In Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education . Vol. 21, No. 3, 1996.