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Effective Teamworking and Communication (BMSW4009_CARD)

Contents Page

1. Introduction
2. Findings
 - Defining Teamwork and Identifying My Role
 - Impact of Theoretical Models on My Teamwork Experience
 - Effective Communication and Conflict Management
 - Difference Between Groups and Teams
3. Conclusion
4. References

Introduction

Teamwork is a crucial aspect of any workplace, allowing individuals to collaborate effectively toward a common goal. According to Katzenbach and Smith (1993), a team is "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable." Effective teamwork requires communication, an understanding of roles, and the ability to work collaboratively in different situations. Teamwork also fosters creativity, problem-solving, and personal development, making it an essential skill in professional settings.

Reflecting on my personal experience, I naturally assume the role of a coordinator in teams, as described by Belbin's (1981) Team Roles. I excel in organising tasks, ensuring everyone's strengths are utilised effectively, and maintaining a balanced approach. However, I sometimes struggle with delegation, preferring to take on extra responsibilities myself. This report reflects on my experiences, linking them to key teamwork theories and identifying areas for personal growth.

Findings

Defining Teamwork and Identifying My Role

One of my most memorable teamwork experiences was working on a group project where we had to create a presentation. Initially, our team went through Tuckman's (1965) Stages of Team Development:

- **Forming** – We introduced ourselves and assigned roles. Initially, communication was polite but reserved as we were still getting to know each other.
- **Storming** – Disagreements arose regarding workload distribution. Some members wanted to take on creative tasks, while others preferred research roles, leading to initial conflicts.
- **Norming** – We set clear communication guidelines and developed mutual respect for each other's strengths.
- **Performing** – We worked efficiently, resolved conflicts effectively, and successfully presented our project with confidence.
- **Adjourning** – We reflected on our performance, discussing lessons learned and how we could improve for future teamwork situations.

Through this experience, I recognised that my role aligned with Belbin's Coordinator role, as I helped facilitate discussion and ensure collaboration. However, I also noticed that I occasionally took on too much responsibility, which aligns with Belbin's Completer-Finisher tendencies. This experience highlighted the importance of trusting teammates to contribute equally and balancing responsibilities fairly.

Impact of Theoretical Models on My Teamwork Experience

Learning about different teamwork theories has helped me better understand my strengths and areas for improvement.

- **Transactional Analysis (Berne, 1964):** I realised that my interactions in the team often followed the Adult-to-Adult communication style, which helped maintain professionalism. However, there were instances where the Parent-to-Child dynamic emerged when some members needed constant guidance. Recognising this pattern allowed me to adjust my communication style to foster independence among my teammates.
- **Drama Triangle (Karpman, 1968):** At one point, a conflict arose when one team member took on the "Victim" role, feeling overwhelmed. Another played the "Rescuer" by trying to handle their tasks. Understanding this model helped me address the issue by encouraging open discussion and reassigning tasks fairly. Moving forward, I intend to help teammates develop resilience and take ownership of their responsibilities rather than reinforcing unhelpful dynamics.
- **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943):** Maslow's model suggests that individuals need to feel a sense of belonging before they can perform at their best. During teamwork experiences, I noticed that when team members felt included and valued, they were more engaged and productive. This reinforced the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive team environment.

Effective Communication and Conflict Management

Communication was crucial in our teamwork experience. Active listening played a significant role in ensuring that everyone's opinions were valued. Reflecting on this, I see that:

- **Listening and Coaching (Rogers, 1951):** Effective listening allowed us to resolve misunderstandings and create a collaborative environment. I focused on paraphrasing and summarising key points to ensure clarity and understanding within the team.
- **Conflict Resolution Strategies (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974):** When disagreements occurred, I used the compromising style to ensure all voices were heard while maintaining progress. At times, I also applied the collaborating approach, which involved integrating different perspectives to reach the best possible outcome.
- **Nonverbal Communication (Mehrabian, 1971):** I realised that nonverbal cues, such as body language and tone of voice, played a crucial role in team dynamics. By maintaining open body language and positive facial expressions, I was able to create a more inclusive and supportive environment.

Difference Between Groups and Teams

Understanding the distinction between groups and teams has influenced my approach to collaboration. A group consists of individuals working independently with minimal coordination, whereas a team works interdependently toward a shared objective (Salas, Dickinson, Converse, & Tannenbaum, 1992). In my experience, teams foster greater accountability and collective problem-solving. Recognising this helped me shift my focus from individual performance to ensuring cohesive teamwork.

Additionally, teams require a higher level of trust and collaboration. Lencioni (2002) identified five dysfunctions of a team, including the absence of trust and fear of conflict, which can hinder team performance. During my project, I noticed that initial hesitancy to share opinions stemmed from a lack of trust. Encouraging open and constructive feedback helped build a more effective and engaged team.

Conclusion

Through this reflection, I have learned that teamwork requires a deep understanding of communication, roles, and group dynamics. Theories such as Tuckman's model, Belbin's Team Roles, and the Drama Triangle have provided insight into my strengths and areas for improvement. Moving forward, I aim to:

- Improve my delegation skills to avoid taking on too much responsibility, ensuring a fair distribution of tasks.
- Use active listening and coaching techniques to foster better communication and mutual understanding within teams.

- Recognise and address team conflicts earlier using appropriate strategies, such as conflict resolution models and emotional intelligence.
- Foster a supportive team environment by promoting trust, inclusion, and psychological safety.

By applying these lessons, I can become a more effective and adaptable team member in future professional settings.

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