GUIDELINES FOR GROUP WORK IN
AN UNDERGRADUATE LEARNING PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

It is required of higher education institutions in South Africa to provide for the development of general skills such as the ability to function in a team, and to apply group work as a method of instruction. After implement ation of group work in the new five-year medical curriculum at the University of the Free State, it was realised that ineffective group dynamics and the inexperience of staff and students warranted clear and comprehensive guidelines for group work. For the development of these, opinions of students and staff involved, as well as inputs by experts on group work and literature findings, were evaluated. Their responses are reported and guidelines for effective group work are suggested.

Keywords: Group work, undergraduate education, effective groups

1.   INTRODUCTION

Saroyan (2000:90) asserts that the traditional lecture method of instruction does not promote any of the seven principles of good practice, i.e. promoting contact between students and faculty, cooperation amongst students, active learning, providing immediate feedback, emphasising the time spent on a task, respecting diversity, and communicating high expectations. Lectures also do not develop higher-order thinking skills and conceptual understanding amongst students. Group work is a possible alternative method of instruction and can be regarded as a small group of students who work together to learn and achieve the outcomes of a learning programme. Working in small groups has several advantages such as improvement of the level of students' academic achievement (Bligh, 2000:8; Boschee, 1989:9), active involvement in their own learning process (Tribe, 1994:26) and their ability to solve problems (Bligh, 2000:13; Crosby & Hesketh, 2004:16). Gibbs (1995a:30) emphasises that "Students need to have learning time allocated to the development of the skill. If you simply tell them that they should spend time on developing their teamwork skills it obviously isn't going to happen".

Furthermore, graduated students who enter the labour market are no longer employable only on grounds of their knowledge in a certain subject field; employers increasingly expect them to have general skills such as the ability to work in a team (O'Sullivan *et al.*, 1996:57). Students need to learn to work and live in a participative milieu and must therefore learn to function effectively in a democratic environment (Reynolds, 1994:24). Tribe (1994:25) states that group work provides an opportunity for students to develop these important skills necessary for employment. Thus, it appears mandatory for institutions of higher education to provide opportunities for the development of effective group work skills.

Higher education institutions in South Africa are obliged to provide for the development of general skills such as the ability to function in a team and

communicate effectively. The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) has included these critical cross-field outcomes in its objectives for medical education in South Africa, and suggests small group learning as one of the teaching strategies (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 1999:10). The University of the Free State (UFS) implemented a revised five-year medical curriculum in 2000, based on the guidelines of the HPCSA, and has thus implemented group work as one of the instructional methods in this programme (Bezuidenhout *et al.*, 2000:148). The aim is to assist students in the development of interpersonal, leadership, communication and teamwork skills, thus achieving the outcomes of the learning programme.

However, many concerns about group work as instructional method have been described in the literature, e.g. that group work is not working, students do not like it (Davis, 1993:153), students think they do not learn anything (Crosby, 1997:8), problems with group dynamics (Jaques, 2000:40), inexperienced facilitators (Ledingham & Crosby, 2001:76), and problems with the assessment of group work (Gibbs, 1995a:3). Soon after implementation, the UFS experienced problems similar to the abovementioned (cf. Bezuidenhout, 2002). From a report on the evaluation of the implementation of the new M.B.,Ch.B. learning programme (a research project conducted from 2000-2004), it is clear that neither students nor staff found group work a useful instructional and learning tool, due to the current uncertainties and the inappropriate way in which it was used. Group work received relatively negative feedback in the responses of the students to questionnaires which were used as part of this evaluation of the learning programme. Questions about group work included how group work helped the students to achieve the outcomes of a module and how well the facilitators handled group work. Lecturers' opinions on their experiences of the new learning programme were also garnered, and some comments made by them reflect a concern that group work was not functioning optimally (cf. Bezuidenhout, 2002).

For group work to be effective, clear and comprehensive guidelines are necessary. However, few models with clear guidelines exist for group work in higher education. Rudduck (1976:10) asserts that "There is little evidence of institutions making policy decisions about ways of helping students learn to work effectively in groups". Most models described in the literature only address a specific aspect of group work, e.g. the model for task group effectiveness (Gladstein, 1984:500-503) which supports a dynamic, open-systems approach to group work due to the fact that many factors could influence the outcome of the group work. The group-effectiveness model described by Schwarz (1994:20) aims at assisting facilitators to identify changes which need to be made to improve the effectiveness of groups. However, it does not provide for all the aspects of group work. In 1998, Van Til and Van der Heijden described the seven-step PBL model on support of a problem-based learning (PBL) approach (Van Til & Van der Heijden, 1998:7). The seven steps involve clarifying concepts, defining the problem, analysing the problem, problem analysis, formulating the learning objectives, self-study and discussion. The problem with these models is that they are not suitable for a hybrid tuition system where group work is used in combination with lectures, as is the case at the UFS.

The aim of this study was thus to develop clear and comprehensive guidelines for effective group work in an undergraduate learning programme within a hybrid tuition system. The first step entailed an opinion survey amongst the students and staff

involved, so as to determine their views on various aspects of group work in the medical programme. Although their opinions provided valuable information, the students and staff could not be regarded as experts in group work. In order to validate information and due to the fact that few models with clear and comprehensive guidelines are described in the literature, it was deemed necessary to obtain the opinions of experts on the different aspects of group work by conducting a Delphi study. The Delphi technique is a structured judgment method of research which involves indirect interaction between experts on the subject under study (Woudenberg, 1991:131). A series of questionnaires are used to obtain the opinions of the experts until consensus has been reached or the responses have reached stability (Critcher & Gladstone, 1998:432; Dajani *et al.*, 1979:83). The most important characteristics of the Delphi technique include anonymity, expert input, physical separation of participants, as well as iteration and controlled feedback (Crisp *et al.*, 1997:117; Dils & Ziatz, 2000:90; Goodman, 1987:729; Woudenberg, 1991:133).

This study thus entailed a detailed literature study, an opinion survey and a Delphi study which were done as described below.

2. METHODS

An extensive literature study was done to determine the factors that contribute to effective group work. A questionnaire (used in both the opinion survey and the Delphi study) was subsequently designed, containing statements about group work that respondents had to rate on a 5-point Likert scale according to importance. The statements were divided into six sections, viz. composition of groups, training of students and staff, group work sessions, support regarding group work, assessment of group work, and guidelines for the implementation of group work. The respondents had to decide about the importance of aspects such as the use of a specific method to form groups, appointing group leaders, group work guides for students and staff, the inclusion of several aspects in the training for group work, the expertise of facilitators in the subject field, having mentors for groups, etc. The results from these formed the basis for the design of a group work model. Open-ended, categorised questions were also included in the questionnaire, which offered respondents a few options to choose from, e.g. their preference for the number of members per group, methods to form groups, lifetime of groups, time for training, number of facilitators, time for feedback, etc. The purpose of these questions was to obtain additional information regarding group work for the design of specific guidelines. Although most questions were asked of all the respondents, some were only asked of the relevant respondent group (e.g. only the students were asked whether they knew what their roles in the group entailed). The outcome of these categorised questions is the focus of this article. The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Free State approved the study (ETOVS number: 60/01).

The opinion survey of this study included all lecturers and facilitators involved with the M.B.,Ch.B. learning programme at the University of the Free State during 2001, as well as all the first year and second year medical students (only the first two years of the programme were running at that time). A total of 127 first year students and 75 second year students were given questionnaires after a group work session to obtain as many completed questionnaires as possible. The questionnaires for the staff

were delivered by hand to 60 staff members. They were requested to complete the questionnaire and return it to the first author by internal mail.

A modified Delphi technique was used in the second step of the study, since the possible indicators for the group work model had been identified from the literature and were included in the first questionnaire of the Delphi study as different items, rather than asking participants to identify indicators in the form of open-ended questions, as in a classic Delphi study (Murry & Hammons, 1995:430). Seven experts in group work and medical education were invited to participate in this study, of whom four were national and three international experts. A large sample was not necessary since the panellists represented a heterogeneous sample group, coming from different educational stratifications (Clayton, 1997:378). All of them were recommended by colleagues, which can be regarded as proof of their experience and expertise (Brockhoff, 1975:295). The seven participants were contacted by electronic mail and, after the purpose of the study was described and the Delphi technique explained, were requested to participate in the study. Each of the seven had between 10 and 30 years of experience in medical education. The participants were anonymous to one another during the entire course of the Delphi study and correspondence with each individual was handled separately. The questionnaire containing the statements about group work (adjusted after the survey), was sent to each participant in the Delphi study and all items on which at least 80% consensus was reached, were excluded in subsequent rounds of the Delphi. After round two, items on which stability had been reached (less than 15% change in responses, thus if none or only one respondent changed his/her opinion), were also excluded from the questionnaire. Five rounds were necessary to reach either consensus or stability on all the items in the questionnaire. In each round, feedback was given on the responses of the previous round.

In order to determine the preferences of the respondent groups for the categorised questions, the statistical mode was determined for each question. For the opinion survey, the responses of the first and second year students, as well as the staff, were analysed separately to allow comparison, while the analysis of the Delphi responses was done manually. These categorised questions only appeared in the first two rounds of the Delphi study, because their purpose was not to reach consensus amongst the Delphi panellists (as for the statements in the questionnaire), but rather to obtain additional information on group work. The guidelines for group work were eventually determined by comparing the results from the literature, opinion survey and Delphi study with one another. The opinion survey provided an insight into the needs and opinions of the students and staff who are actually involved in the set-up for which the group work model will be designed. However, since they were not experts in group work, their opinions could not be regarded as sufficient for a complete framework for a group work model. Thus, the opinions of the experts in group work and medical education provided an additional (objective and educated) insight into what a model for group work should look like. The literature continually played a central role in the process of determining guidelines for group work, but the opinions of the Delphi participants, as well as the preferences of the respondents at the UFS, were taken into consideration. The problems identified in the report on the evaluation of the implementation of the new M.B.,Ch.B . learning programme (cf. Bezuidenhout 2002), as well as the available physical and manpower resources in the faculty (as indicated by certain categorised questions in the questionnaire) were

used as reference points to determine the feasibility and relevance of a certain guideline.

The guidelines which resulted from this study address different aspects of group work, i.e. composition of groups, training for group work, group work sessions, support for group work and assessment of group work. The responses of the students, staff and Delphi participants thus appear according to these aspects in the following tables.

3.   RESULTS

Tables 1-5 show the responses of the first and the second year medical students, as well as the staff and Delphi panellists to the different categorised questions. The suggested guidelines, which resulted from analysing the responses to a particular question while also taking the literature and resources at the UFS into consideration, are indicated in the last column of each table.

Table 1: Opinions on group composition

QUESTION	1ST YEARS	2ND YEARS	STAFF	DELPHI	GUIDELINE
Size	5-6	4	5-6	7-8	5-6
Even/odd	Even	Even	Even	Even	Even/odd
Language	Same	Same	Same	Mixed	Same
Gender	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Population group	Mixed	Same	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Age	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Academic achievement	-	-	-	Mixed	Mixed
Method	Students choose	Students choose	Randomly	Randomly	*Phase I: randomly Phase II: randomly & students choose
Lifetime	1 year	Entire course	1 year	6 months	Phase I: semester Phase II: year
Choosing leaders	Groups choose	Groups choose	Groups choose	Groups choose	Groups choose
Time as leader	Per module	Per week	Per module	Per week/ module	Per module

*At the time of the study Phase I was the 1st year, and Phase II the 2nd & 3rd year of the programme

Table 1 presents a summary of the responses to the categorised questions on group composition. It is interesting to note that the 2nd year students preferred small

groups. Although the Delphi panel preferred mixed groups in terms of language, the UFS has parallel medium instruction, and therefore groups need to be either Afrikaans or English.

Table 2: Opinions on group work training

QUESTION	1ST YEARS	2ND YEARS	STAFF	DELPHI	GUIDELINE
When to repeat (for students)	Beginning of year	Beginning of year	Beginning of semester	Beginning of semester	<u>Phase I:</u> beginning of semester <u>Phase II:</u> beginning of year
Knowledge about group roles	Yes	Yes	-	-	
Competency to compile group tasks	-	-	No	-	
Sufficiency of training	Yes	Yes	No	-	<u>New staff:</u> full training course <u>Other staff:</u> regular advanced training

The opinions of the respondents on certain aspects regarding the training of students and staff for group work appear in Table 2. The majority of staff members did not think that they had received sufficient training for group work, and thus, most of them also did not think they were competent to compile tasks for group work.

Table 3: Opinions on group work sessions

QUESTION	1ST YEARS	2ND YEARS	STAFF	DELPHI	GUIDELINE
Satisfaction with venues	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Use current venues
Sufficiency of resources	No	Yes	No	-	Ensure appropriate resources
Knowledge of group tasks	-	-	Yes	-	Tasks, purpose and outcomes must correlate
How to compile group tasks	-	-	No	-	Appropriate training
Common goal vs. individual accountability	Individual accounta-bility	Both	Individual accountability	Common goal	Both
Sufficiency of facilitators	No	Yes	No	-	Use tutorless group work methods

Facilitators moving around	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Facilitators could move around
Preferred number of facilitators	Two per class	Two per class	Two per class	One per group	Two facilitators per class
Constant times for group work sessions	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	3-hour sessions should be scheduled
Flexible session	-	-	-	Yes	Sessions should be flexible
Time for group work	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	-	3 hours are sufficient
Who should provide feedback	Lecturer	Lecturer	Groups	Groups & facilitator	Groups, facilitator oversees
Schedule feedback	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Schedule feedback
Best time for feedback	Same session	Next session	Same session	Same session	At end of session
Provide feedback	-	-	Yes (50%) No (50%)	-	Feedback is essential

Table 3 represents the preferences of the respondents regarding several aspects of group work sessions. Most students and staff at the UFS did not think that the resources available for group work were sufficient, and also thought there were not enough facilitators for group work. However, most of them preferred two facilitators per class. It is not surprising to note that the students preferred the lecturers to provide feedback on group work. Although the majority of staff members did regard feedback as important, only 50% of staff members actually did provide feedback at the time of the study. This could be due to the fact that they allowed the different groups to do it, rather than providing the feedback themselves (as indicated by their preferences for the groups to provide feedback).

Table 4: Opinions on the support for group work

QUESTION	1 ST YEARS	2 ND YEARS	STAFF	DELPHI	GUIDELINE
Sufficiency of support	No	No	No	-	Students and staff need support
Type of support for staff	Academic	Academic	Academic, organisational, administrative	Academic, organisational, administrative	Academic, organisational, and administrative
Preference to choose mentor	Yes	Yes	-	-	Students could choose mentors

Availability as mentor	-	-	No	-	Senior students could act as mentors
How to form learning groups	Students choose	Students choose	Students choose	Students choose	Students choose learning groups
Preference to study alone	Yes	Yes	-	-	Group work not appropriate for all types of learning

The responses to the questions on support for group work are represented in Table 4. Most staff members and students thought that they did not receive sufficient support for group work, and although students preferred to choose their own mentors, most lecturers were not available to act as mentors. Even though group work could provide much support to students for academic and social needs, most students preferred to study by themselves.

Table 5: Opinions on group work assessment

QUESTION	1ST YEARS	2ND YEARS	STAFF	DELPHI	GUIDELINE
Group task assessment frequency	After module	After module	After session	After module	Every module (varied approaches)
Mark allocation: group task	All same mark	All same mark	Individual contribution	Individual contribution	Individual contribution: ±5-10% of group mark
Preference for confidential peer assessment	Yes	Yes	-	-	Confidential peer assessment according to criteria & ground rules
Group process assessment frequency	Once a year	Once a year	After session/ once a month	Once a month	Assessment: MEA112* module Evaluation: other modules
Mark allocation: group process	All same mark	All same mark	Individual contributions	Individual contributions	80%/20% division for group/individual contribution

*MEA112 is the generic skills module

The opinions of the respondents on group work assessment are summarised in Table 5. Both the group task and group process should be assessed. "Group task" refers to the work completed by a group such as an assignment, report or project, and "group process" refers to the dynamics in a group (how a group functions to

complete a task). Most respondents preferred less frequent assessment of the group process in comparison with the group task. The group process is only assessed in the general skills module (MEA112), whereas the group task (outcome of the group work) is assessed in different ways in the other modules. The guidelines determined are not prescriptive since the nature of modules, and how groups can be assessed in each, are different. Assessing the group process is time-consuming – hence the guideline that it can only be evaluated (without awarding marks) in modules other than MEA112. Although the students preferred that all members in a group receive the same mark for the group task and process, the staff members and Delphi panel indicated that individual contribution should be taken into consideration, as is the case in the literature (Gibbs 1992:28).

The suggested guidelines for group work which appear in the last column of the preceding tables are based on the responses of the participants in the study, the findings from literature, and the set-up at the UFS (as explained in section 2).

4. DISCUSSION

An attempt has been made to provide guidelines for more effective group work through this study. Several aspects of group work, viz. the group composition, training for group work, group work sessions, support for group work, and the assessment of group work, have been addressed.

4.1 Group composition

The literature emphasises that large groups tend to be ineffective (Bligh, 2000:151; Jaques, 2000:102). Most authors prefer a group size between four and six members (Bligh, 2000:156; Coelho, 1994:37). The guideline for group size at the UFS was set at 5-6 members per group. Although most respondents preferred groups with an even number of members, it is not always possible or advisable (Race, 2000:34), and thus, the guideline makes provision for odd or even numbers of members per group. According to most authors, a heterogeneous mix of group members regarding factors such as gender, age and population group is advisable (Boschee, 1989:66; Coelho, 1994:52; Jaques, 2000:158). This is also indicated for the situation at the UFS, excluding the language of instruction (see comments to Table 1).

The literature is equivocal regarding the best method to form groups (cf. Boschee, 1989:30; Gibbs, 1995a:8; Jaques, 2000:158; Miller *et al*., 1994:35-38; Race, 2000:31). For the UFS, it was decided to form groups randomly in the first year to imitate a real-life situation, and for Phase II, students could be allowed to form their own groups of three, after which two such groups could be joined randomly to form groups with six members. Group leaders are essential to successful group work (Bligh, 2000:160), and although students could choose their own leaders, it is best to assign different leaders for each module. This will provide opportunity for more students to fulfil this function (Boschee, 1991:90).

A semester is the minimum time needed for a group to experience all the different phases of the group process (Barrows, 1992:17). In the first year, students should be given the opportunity to work in more than one group, and thus, new groups need to be formed for the second semester. More senior students (in Phase II) need to

focus more on the completion of group tasks. Therefore, the groups could exist for a year at a time.

4.2   Group work training

The literature emphasises that training for students and staff regarding group work is important, so as to provide them with the rationale behind group work (Race, 2000:14), the skills to do it properly, and to influence their attitudes towards group work positively (Brown & Atkins, 1988:50; Nasmith *et al*., 1997:239). Reid *et al.* (1989:37) emphasise that "Simply arranging the classroom furniture into groups will not result in effective group work". Certain aspects addressed during group work training need to be repeated to students. This could be done according to problems or needs, and could be done at the beginning of the second semester in the first year (because students are still relatively inexperienced), and, if necessary, at the beginning of each year for more senior students.

A full basic training course is needed for new members of staff, while existing staff could attend regular, advanced training courses according to needs (Holcomb, 1996:87). Students' comments and experiences of group work could provide useful information to lecturers and facilitators during these training sessions (Steinert, 2004:292). Inexperienced staff members could receive "on the job" training by joining experienced colleagues whilst facilitating (Ledingham & Crosby, 2001:79). Training sessions could be accompanied by guides for group work to students and staff (Gibbs, 1995b:25; Tribe, 1994:30-31).

4.3   Group work sessions

There is agreement in the literature that a proper physical environment is important for effective group functioning. Jaques (2000:186) states that 'The style of interaction present in a learning group could be influenced to a large extent by its general environment'. A circular, square, C- or U-shaped arrangement of chairs, around a table, is the best set-up for group work (Crosby & Hesketh, 2004:17; Tiberius, 1999:92; Unsworth, 1976:37). Staff members should be resource developers to ensure that sufficient resource materials are available for group work sessions (Harden & Crosby, 2000:341).

Authors have different opinions regarding the expertise of facilitators, although many studies assert that the ideal is for facilitators to be experts in both the content of the topic under study and group work facilitation (Crosby, 1997:18; Davis & Harden, 1999:137; Barrows, 1992:43). If this is not possible, the facilitator should rather be an expert in group work facilitation. Barrows (1992:44) emphasises that "As the skill of the tutor is the backbone of the small group learning process, it is not acceptable to have a teacher who is an expert in the area of study, but a weak tutor". Ideally, one facilitator should be appointed per group, but in a set-up where human resources are limited, facilitators could move around between groups (Crosby, 1997:20). One could also use tutorless groups (e.g. cross-over groups or fishbowls) to overcome this problem (Gibbs, 1995b:29). Although three hours should be enough to complete group work on a specific theme (Jaques, 2000:183), the time allocated for group work should be determined by the task to be completed.

"Feedback is an essential activity for helping trainees reach their maximum potential at their particular stage of training" (Hesketh & Laidlaw, 2002:245). The best time for feedback is at the end of the particular session, since this would discourage students from leaving early (Race, 2000:94). Students should be allowed to present their work as part of the feedback. This contribution not only assists in developing presentation skills, but also holds students accountable for their work (Hagberg, 1999:3). Both the common goal of the group and the individual accountability of the members are crucial for effective group work (Slavin, 1990:17).

4.4 Group work support

Support for group work is essential to its success. Dimock (1987:25) asserts that students need support for optimal group performance and satisfaction; while Tiberius (1999:150) emphasises that lack of support for staff members can decrease their motivation and enthusiasm. Many suggestions regarding the means of providing support for group work have been made in the literature, such as mentors (Galbraith & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2000:135; Harden & Crosby, 2000:339), peer support groups (Heron, 1993:159), self-help groups (Gibbs & Habeshaw, 1989:193) or peer-assisted learning (Wadoodi & Crosby, 2002:241). Members of staff can be supported by providing necessary guides for group work (Ledingham & Crosby, 2001:79) while rewarding teaching excellence in order to maintain staff members' enthusiasm (Tiberius 1999:152). The feasibility of specific means of support should be considered at a particular learning institution, but irrespective of the approach followed to provide support for group work, it is the responsibility of every institution for higher education to do so.

4.5 Group work assessment

"If you want students to take teamwork skills seriously then you need to identify and assess them" (Gibbs, 1995a:31). Assessment of the group task is "about gaining a profile about what each member of a group has learnt or contributed" (Jaques, 2000:214). It is essential to ensure effective group work, since it provides useful feedback on the input (contents), the process (teaching) and the output (student performance) (McAleer, 2001a:306).

The final outcome of a group work session (i.e. the group task) as well as the group process should be assessed. Group dynamics, and the way in which the members function to complete a group task, are fundamental to its success. Assessment of the group process would make students aware of its importance (Felder & Brent, 1994:15; Holen, 2000:486). Several ways to assess the group task and process exist and the method chosen should suit the purpose of the specific assessment. The group task can be assessed by means of posters, presentations, reports, etc. (Cramer, 1994:73; Dimock, 1993:49; Gibbs, 1995a:22). The group process on the other hand, can be assessed through observation, interviews or checklists (Dimock, 1993:39; Jaques, 2000:238). A portfolio also appears to be a useful way of assessing the group process (Harris *et al*., 1994:137), but ground rules and assessment criteria should exist to ensure fair and valid assessments (Jaques, 2000:233). Feedback on the assessments is essential to enhance student learning (McAleer, 2001b:297).

The allocation of marks for assessment of group work is problematic, but individual members should be held accountable for their contributions. This could be done in several ways, e.g. an 80/20 divide of the mark for the group/individual contributions respectively (Jaques, 2000:230), or by assigning a mark 5-10% above or below the group mark to members according to their contributions, provided that the average of the marks is equal to the original group mark (Gibbs, 1992:28). Cramer (1994:80) supports the opinion that a "combination of individual grades and group grades can achieve the goals of collaboration without sacrificing individual accountability". Thus, institutions should ensure that a specific, but appropriate, approach is being followed towards the assessment of both the group task and process.

It is thus evident that, for effective group work and to achieve the outcomes of a learning programme regarding general skills such as team work, appropriate guidelines are necessary to direct both students and staff.

5. CONCLUSION

Team work is a reality of everyday life. A lack of skills in this regard compromises employees' ability to function effectively in a democratic environment, and students' ability to get involved in their own learning process and solve problems. Skills can be obtained through group work as a method of learning and instruction, provided that clear and comprehensive guidelines are followed. This study attempted to provide such guidelines. Opinions of students and staff involved in undergraduate medical education at the University of the Free State, as well as literature findings and expert inputs were considered on composition, training, support, sessions and assessment of group work. Further research is warranted to establish the effectiveness of these guidelines.

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