

GROUP DYNAMICS

For Ciclo Formativo LOE Grado Superior
Técnico Superior en Enseñanza y Animación Socio-deportiva (TSEAS)

Concepción Lago Alonso



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THANKS

I would like to express my thanks to my lovely hubby for being so inspiring in so many ways.

I would also like to thank my students to whom I have taught the subject 'Group dynamics' in Spanish since 2004 and who have taught me to teach over the years.

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INTRODUCTION

This book reflects Spanish legislation (Royal Decree 653/2017-23 June) that establishes the core of the curriculum for **Advanced Specialist Training in Social-Sport Education and Coaching** (in Spanish: *Ciclo Formativo LOE Grado Superior / Técnico Superior en Enseñanza y Animación Socio-deportiva* (TSEAS) and focuses on the curriculum for **Group Dynamics** (*Dinamización grupal* in Spanish).

I have written this book for first-year students with the dual aims of improving student knowledge of English and group dynamics. This book provides prospective advanced specialists in social-sport education and coaching with a sound theoretical basis in group dynamics while they master their English.

Using *content and language integrated learning* (CLIL) to integrate English into the curriculum, rather than treating English as a separate subject, motivates students to learn English while studying group dynamics. Group dynamics is a subject that vocational training students usually enjoy as they are interested in gaining practical knowledge and understanding how groups work. Lessons are practical and interactive. Students come away with the theory on how to work with people in the most effective way, and also gain the necessary confidence because of the mixture of lectures, videos, and practical exercises that keep students engaged, interested, and amused.

Lessons on group dynamics are the ideal environment for encouraging students to improve their communication skills, as they include a full range of oral activities: discussion; presentation; acting in plays and dialogues; making advertisements and journals; TV and radio programmes; role playing; mime and drama; games; repeating in chorus; songs; writing stories; and many more exercises that simulate real-life communication situations and push students to speak English in class.

Of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), speaking seems to be of greatest interest for vocational students. They need to talk a lot, using language that it is relevant, easily understandable, and with an acceptable level of accuracy. Speaking requires some degree of real-time exposure to an audience, and students are often inhibited and worried about making mistakes, scared of criticism, losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts. I am sure that using oral interaction in small groups and pair work, making a careful choice of topics and tasks to stimulate interest, and making students aware of the purpose of the activities and conditions for success, will create a pleasant learning environment that will put students at ease – the right way to instil confidence for speaking English.

Although learning English involves hard work and is sometimes frustrating, I am sure that students will learn a great deal while they enjoy themselves – the aim of any teaching methodology.

The nine chapters include examples of exercises that students can do in lessons. It is not the aim of this book to provide readers with activities. Perhaps, I will write another book in the future with this purpose.

Finally, I hope that students enjoy this book as much as I have enjoyed writing it!

Let's now move on to the book structure and more technical aspects.



This book focuses on the topics in group dynamics required by *Advanced Specialists in Social-Sport Education and Coaching*. It is divided into nine chapters. At the beginning of each chapter, there is a list of the topics dealt with in the various sections. At the end of each chapter, there is a set of questions that students can use to check whether they have understood the contents, and how much of the information they can remember. Answering these questions functions as a useful review of the content.

The glossary, located at the end of the book before the bibliography, provides brief definitions of most of the terms associated with group dynamics that are used in the book. Although some of the terms are explained where they first occur, such terms are further explained.

The bibliography at the end of the book provides a comprehensive list of all the mentioned books, articles, and websites.

What is group dynamics?

Group dynamics is a sub-discipline of psychology and sociology that describes the actions, processes, and changes that occur within and between groups. As a science, group dynamics focuses on fundamental common features shared by groups and on how individuals behave in groups. The term group dynamics was coined in 1939 by the socio-psychologist Kurt Lewin, the first scientist to describe the energy, vitality, and activities within groups. Since then, thousands of research papers have been written on the topic.

The widespread interest in groups is due to the fact that groups are more effective than individuals in performing tasks. Groups have more resources and thus more ability to efficiently perform tasks, and make better decisions than any single person.

In sport, group dynamics is a domain with principles and rules, and involves a general group-sensitive approach and attitude to improving athletes and team performances. Group dynamics is also relevant in sport and physical activity because groups are pervasive and influential in competitive, educational, and recreational settings. From a practical perspective, taking advantage of the processes that affect life in groups can produce great advantages.

Why is group dynamics important for any qualified exercise professional?

Fitness instructors, personal trainers, and coaches are all teachers of sport, and will benefit from a knowledge and understanding of the group processes that create a positive atmosphere when working with groups. Positive characteristics such as mutual trust, confidence in oneself and in the group, empathy within the group, and the building of a group identity, have a positive effect on morale, motivation, and the self-image of group members. Moreover, the development of a positive attitude to sport and physical activity, to the training process, and to themselves as sportspeople improves performances.

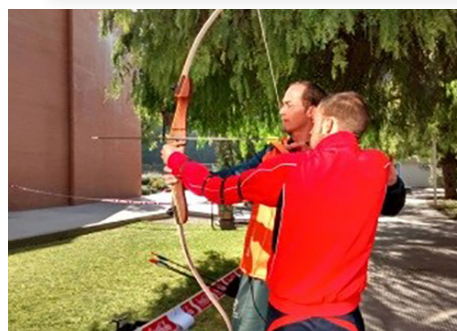




Anybody working in the field of sports (including competitive and recreational sports), and leisure-time exercise, needs considerable expertise in dealing with people. Group dynamics, the way in which members of a group react with each other, can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of training. Good relationships between members of the group and coaches, as well as pleasant and inspiring environments, means that the time spent together in exercise classes will be a constant source of success and satisfaction for coaches and participants alike.

A training group made up of the coach as the central figure and athletes as active members, is a powerful social unit that is larger than the sum of its parts. The key question is why should coaches pay attention to group processes during the lifetime of a group? What is the coaches' job? Is their task simply to efficiently teach sport techniques?

Coaching can simply be seen as a matter of designing tasks and activities, and running the training session smoothly. However, the job involves something else. When positive group development processes are developed by coaches, these can provide the driving force to pursue group goals. Success in a training session depends on what is going on inside and between coaches and athletes. Strategies and techniques used to promote good group interaction are vital elements in the teaching/training process.



Sport, a mass phenomenon

The dynamic group environment in sport and exercise is clear. While elite professional leagues and the Olympic Games are the events on which the media focuses attention, for every professional athlete there are thousands of participants who use the same sport for their personal fitness needs. Recreational sport enthusiasts are those who enjoy activities such as hiking, canoeing, skiing, aerobics, CrossFit, or Pilates classes. This sport category also extends to those who play a sport as a member of a community-based league, such as senior tennis championships or mixed 3x3 basketball tournaments. Participation in endurance events is increasing, with more middle-aged men and women training for running, cycling, swimming, triathlon, and obstacle race events. There are thousands of running events held worldwide annually with thousands of amateur athletes on the start line. Marathons and half-marathons have become a focus for growth, with the creation of new mass participation events that race (for example) across African deserts or over the iconic Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge in New York. Not to mention open water marathon swims in oceans, seas, bays, lakes, and rivers throughout the world.

Disparate groups of individuals daring to push the limits of their own development in equally disparate disciplines, sports, and events can all benefit from group dynamics. While performance in most sports is



dominated by physical capacities and technical and tactical proficiencies, successful athletes also need well-developed social and psychological skills, and these make a great difference to performance.



The need to spend time on group dynamics

There is a need to bring group dynamics to life for physical exercise professionals. Whether they manage a soccer team, an athletic or a golf club, it is important that they develop an awareness of the practical aspects of this topic that will make them more confident and more successful coaches. Wider understanding of the principles of group dynamics and systematic discussion of the major issues and tenets of the field will help them create group strategies to implement in the training session easily on a daily basis, provided they realise their potential. The more time coaches invest in group dynamics activities aiming for socialising, group building or engendering motivation, the less they will worry about crisis management.

A well-known saying attributed to Kurt Lewin states that 'There is nothing so practical as a good theory'. Many coaches personally experience the truth of this statement and it is clear that the aim of learning the subject **group dynamics** is both the theoretical and practical knowledge. Thus, in this book we consider and explore sources of socialisation through sport, group characteristics, and the main stages of group development, the importance of status and roles; and the functions and features of various leadership styles. We will address practical points such as how to make training sessions the right environment for learning, how to improve communication skills, how to read body language, and how to handle conflict. We will explore highly useful terms, such as teamwork, group cohesiveness, and group structure. An awareness of group dynamics is at the heart of teaching anything, particularly sport and physical exercise. This knowledge helps fitness instructors, personal trainers, and coaches become great professionals.





Chapter 1

THE PROCESS OF SOCIALISATION

The sections in this chapter are:

1.1 What is socialisation? – Definition of socialisation and the importance of cultural transmission of sportive heritage

1.2 Agents of socialisation: primary and secondary socialisation – Description of the main agents of socialisation, the role played by families and peer groups, institutions of education and the mass media in the process of socialisation

1.3 Socialising through sport: an agent of socialisation – Competitive and recreational physical and sport activities for people of all ages and all physical condition

1.4 Learning values through sport – Sport is a character building experience, a bridge to social integration that improves people's quality of life

1.1 What is socialisation?

Human beings are social. Indeed, ever since we learned to behave in a way that is acceptable in society, we have evidence of how social we are. The philosopher Aristotle marked out our social traits over 2,000 years ago: *'Man is by nature a social animal; society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god'*, he wrote. Much of what he said stills stands. Very few people live in social isolation.

Socialisation is a lifelong process in which a person acquires and internalises the culture of the society in which he or she lives. Being essential for the development of individuals who can participate and function within their society, the socialisation process ensures that society's cultural features are handed down to future generations. The UNESCO has defined **culture** as the *'set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs'*.

Regarding sport, Spain has a rich heritage of traditional sports. Our **traditional games and recreational sports**, which are an important part of our culture, are a source of interest for those who work as recreation and leisure time instructors. These professionals can help keep this huge variety of unique and original games and sports alive. Indeed, some of these games fight for survival, at least, as free spontaneous games, because they are played mainly outdoors, and in our cities, due to the loss of space to buildings and cars, there is no room to practise traditional games nor recreational sports. Playing with



family and friends in the street has become dangerous. Moreover, the ever-growing invasion of screens that grab the attention of younger generations makes it difficult to find space for the traditional games that entertained previous generations. However, there are grounds for optimism: in an attempt to safeguard cultural identity, city-planning policies have been adopted to create a co-existence between cars and street-play; and most importantly, the protection and promotion of traditional practices in leisure centres and schools can play a key role in rediscovering traditional games and recreational sports.

Keywords: socialisation, culture, traditional games and recreational sports



ACTIVITY 1.1: Match the beginnings with the endings of the sentences:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>a. Human beings are ...</p> <p>b. Very few people live...</p> <p>c. Socialisation is...</p> <p>d. Spain has a rich heritage of...</p> <p>e. The socialisation process ensures that...</p> <p>f. Playing with family and friends in the street has...</p> <p>g. The ever-growing invasion of screens that grab the attention of...</p> | <p>1. lifelong process in which a person acquires and internalises the culture of the society where he or she lives.</p> <p>2. become dangerous.</p> <p>3. society's cultural features are handed down to future generations.</p> <p>4. younger generations makes it difficult to find space for the traditional games that entertained previous generations.</p> <p>5. social.</p> <p>6. traditional sports.</p> <p>7. in social isolation.</p> |
|--|--|



ANSWERS: complete with the appropriate number, as in the example, and then write down the complete sentences in the following text box.

a	b	c	d	e	f	g
5						

a. Human beings are social.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.

1.2 Agents of socialisation: primary and secondary socialisation

- How does the process of socialisation occur?
- How do we learn to use the objects of our society's material culture?
- How do we adopt the beliefs, values, and norms of our culture?

This learning takes place through interaction with various agents of socialisation: family, peer groups, educational institutions, and the mass media.

The socialisation process begins shortly after birth.

- **Primary socialisation**, the process that occurs in early childhood through adolescence, takes place at home.

- ◊ The **family** is the first agent of socialisation. Parents provide their children with the first system of values, social norms, and beliefs. Ideally, children are unconditionally loved and accepted during primary socialisation; the family





plays a key role in making children aware of the different cultural and social elements, laying the groundwork for all future socialisation.

- ◊ **Peer groups** made up of people who are of similar age and social status, and who share common interests, are the second agents of socialisation. Children, teenagers, and adults, as members of smaller groups, learn how to act in a way that is appropriate whenever they encounter new situations and new groups whose norms, customs, assumptions, and values may differ from their own.
- **Secondary socialisation** (and peer group socialisation as well) takes place outside the home. Peer group socialisation begins in the earliest years, such as when, for instance, children in a playground teach younger children the norms about taking turns to shoot a basket, or the rules of a game. This process continues as children become teenagers. Indeed, peer groups provide adolescents with the first major socialisation experience outside the realm of their families. Peer groups are important to adolescents in a new way: they begin to develop an identity separate from their parents and exert independence. Additionally, peer groups provide opportunities for socialising – since teenagers usually engage in activities with their peers that differ from the activities they do with their families. Here is where exercise professionals intervene, they must aim high to offer young people a wide variety of sport activities to do in their spare time, ensuring that they learn while having fun, feeling happy and satisfied, and sharing experiences with their peers.



As said above, hardly anybody lives in social isolation. We are humans. As such, most of us enjoy being around other people and spending time with people in a friendly way. We love to meet and talk to different people, laugh, chat, and share ideas, especially at social events. As we grow old, adults socialise with peers and also outside their own age group. Participating in sport improves their social condition as they make friends and maintain a healthy and active social life.



Educational institutions are the playgroups, nursery schools, primary schools, high schools, and institutions of higher education, such as universities, polytechnics, technical colleges, and colleges of education. Educational institutions, where students learn what they need to be successful in life, are a space of interaction between equals that encourage and develop socialisation. Schools require very different behaviour from families, and children must act according to new rules. At school, children learn how to function in groups, how to deal with adults, and how to handle new norms and expectations. The process of socialisation and the personal development of individuals continues throughout their academic life.

The mass media, sources of information such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the internet, reinforce cultural norms and values – and help shape our identities. Nowadays, hardly anyone can understand the world without the myriad of social networks at our disposal, such as Facebook,