



Groups and Me: A Chance to Reflect

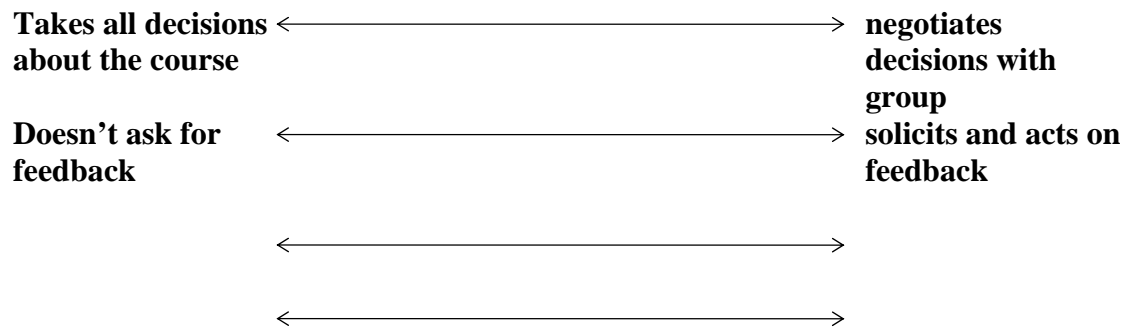
1. Think of any kind of group you have belonged to which you really enjoyed and benefited from. Jot down some of the characteristics of this group, and the reasons why belonging to it was a positive experience for you. *Also make some notes, just for yourself, on how you behaved in this group and what you contributed to it.*
2. Think of any group you have belonged to which you really didn't enjoy or which didn't function well. Jot down some of the characteristics of this group, and the reasons why belonging to it was a negative experience for you. *Also make some notes, just for yourself, on how you behaved in this group and what you contributed to it.*
3. Now form groups of 4/5, share your experiences and draw up two parallel lists of positive and negative features of group behaviour. Prepare to present your findings on an overhead transparency.

Thinking Question 1 (to make notes on during the presentations): What do successful groups have in common? What are the typical features of unsuccessful groups?

Thinking Question 2 (to ponder on after the presentations): How far does individual behaviour contribute towards the success or failure of a group in achieving its objectives? To what extent does leadership make a difference?

4. Let's now shift the focus specifically to groups or classes with the specific purpose of *learning*. Think of a teacher or tutor who has really helped you to learn successfully in a group or class setting. Look at the pairs of characteristics below and put a cross on the continuum between each pair to show where this tutor was located. There's space for you to add more pairs of characteristics if you wish.

dominant	←—————→	low-profile
Strict	←—————→	easy-going
directive	←—————→	non-directive
subject-oriented	←—————→	people-oriented
remote, distant	←—————→	Approachable
a talker	←—————→	a listener
always knows	←—————→	sometimes admits to not knowing



5. Compare your findings with others in your group of 4/5 and make a few notes on the different teaching styles you have identified. Discuss and be ready to report back on these questions:

- *What are the essential differences between teaching and facilitating learning? Which is best suited to working with teachers?*

This is an activity intended to help participants to reflect on their previous experience of belonging to a group. I use it near the start of a course to start participants thinking and to help prepare them to talk and work together. The 'continuums' part of the activity is intended as a thinking tool at this early stage, no more, and definitely not as a basis for judgment or judgmental comment.
(Rod)