Content Title: Group Dynamics and Cohesion

Key points

- The group dynamics and group performance
- Cohesion
- Social Loafing

Definition Of Group - 'two or more persons who interact with one another such that each person influences and is influenced by each other person.' Moorhead and Griffin (1998)

All successful teams tend to work together to achieve a goal. Coaches/leaders must be aware of the social processes operating within a group. This interaction is known as **group dynamics**.

According to Carron (1980) groups/teams which interact well will have the following characteristics:

1. A collective identity
2. A sense of shared identity
3. A clear structure for communication

A successful team maximises these characteristics.

An effective coach will use their knowledge of group dynamics to get the best out of their team.

According to Steiner:

ACTUAL GROUP PERFORMANCE = POTENTIAL PRODUCTIVITY – LOSSES DUE TO FAULTY PROCESSES

Potential Productivity = The group's best performance when all factors are strong.

Faulty Processes = Factors that can go wrong in team performance i.e. co-ordination losses (**Ringlemann effect** – when team cannot maintain their effectiveness e.g. tactics break down. More likely to occur with larger groups) and motivation losses (**social loafing** – a player 'coasting' thinking that other players will make up for their lack of effort, thinking that their lack of effort will not be noticed).

Actual Productivity = Team performance at a given time.

Definition Of Cohesion – 'the sum of the forces that influence members in whether to remain part of a group.' Festinger et al (1950).

Task Cohesion – relates to way in which a group will work together to complete a task successfully – very important in interactive sports such as rugby and netball.

Social Cohesion – involves the social relationships within the group. Many groups develop sub-groups e.g. cliques, reciprocal pairs, isolates and the rejected.

Practical Application/Explanation

How Coaches Minimise Faulty Processes:

- Lots of practice so that all team members know their role and are confident in being able to implement tactics/strategies.
- Over-learning of set plays.
- Use extrinsic rewards appropriately to optimise motivation.

How to Increase Cohesion:

- Establish common goals within group.
- Ensure shared experiences, team bonding exercises.
- Use rewards.
- Create a desire for success.
- Encourage democratic leadership involving athletes in the decision making process.
- Keep team together and give time for cohesion to develop.
- Ensuring that a coach has an understanding of personalities within the group.
- Coaches/leaders remain positive towards players.

How to Avoid Social Loafing:

- Value individual contributions
- Use notational analysis to monitor individual's contributions to a performance.
- Positive reinforcement of good performances.
- Giving individuals specific roles and responsibilities.
- Foster good team spirit through valuing everyone's contributions.
- Improve team spirit/cohesion through social activities.
- Emphasise group goals.

Exam Style Questions

1.   What is meant by the term cohesion and how could a coach help a team to become more cohesive?   **(4)**

Answers