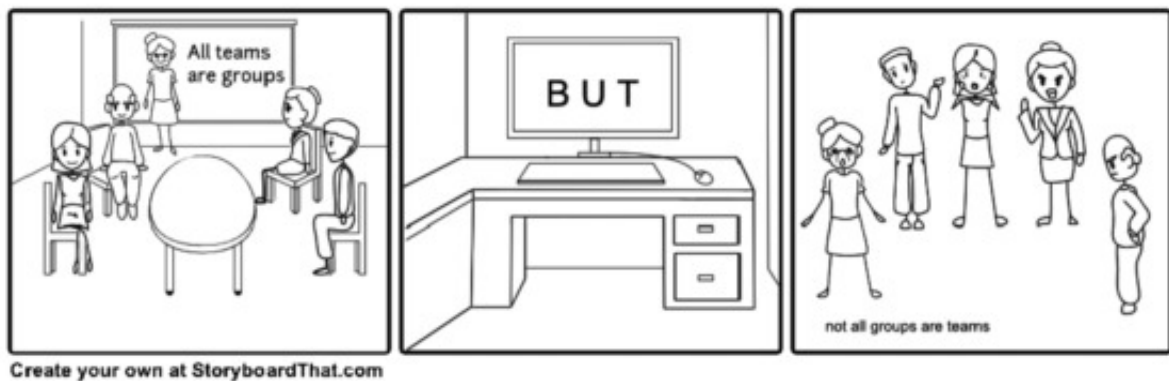# Study unit 10

Groups and teams

10.1   BACKGROUND

Teams are special kinds of groups, where team members have complementary competencies, are committed to a common purpose, and have a shared mission and collective responsibility. Teams share a synergy that is absent from groups. Consider the example of a soccer game. A group of friends come together to play an informal soccer game on a Sunday afternoon. At this game, all the players are playing for fun and to keep fit. However, when the same group of friends compete in a tournament against other teams, they are no longer a group, but a team.

Create your own at StoryboardThat.com

10.2   STUDY UNIT CHALLENGES

We are challenging you to:

- distinguish between groups and teams in an organisation
- explain the important role that groups and teams play in a contemporary organisation
- differentiate between the various types of informal and formal groups that we find in an organisation
- explain why people join groups
- depict and explain the stages in group and team development
- identify a group's stage of development according to the stage characteristics
- explain the different variables that influence group and team behaviour
- describe a work team in terms of its characteristics
- defend the use of teams in an organisation
- differentiate between problem-solving, self-managed, cross-functional and virtual teams
- recommend ways of introducing teams in the workplace

> **Work through Chapter 18 in the prescribed textbook.**

10.3   KEY CONCEPTS

- **Cohesiveness** refers to group solidarity the way in which a group stands together as a unit rather than as individuals.
- A **group** refers to two or more individuals who are interacting and interdependent, who come together to achieve a particular purpose.
- A **norm** is a generally agreed-upon standard of behaviour, which group members are expected to follow.
- **Status** is the perceived ranking of one member relative to other members of the group.
- A **work group** is a unit of two or more people who interact primarily to share information and make decisions that will help each group member perform within his or her own area of responsibility.
- A **work team** consists of a small number of employees with complementary competencies who work together on a project, are committed to a common purpose, and are accountable for performing tasks that contribute to achieving an organisation's goals.

10.4   INTRODUCTION

We know that organisations are able to create value, which their competitors cannot, through the uniqueness of their human resources. Individuals in organisations are the "activating resources" because they activate the other resources such as financial (going to the bank to organise a loan), physical (switching on a machine) and informational resources (by accessing and using information).

In modern organisations, these individuals form formal or informal groups. People join groups to satisfy their need for security, status, self-esteem, affiliation and power, and to achieve goals they cannot achieve on their own. In this study unit, we will investigate how managers can best use groups and teams to create value in their organisations.

10.5   TYPES OF ORGANISATIONAL GROUPS

Figure 10.1 depicts the two categories of organisational groups and the types of groups within them.
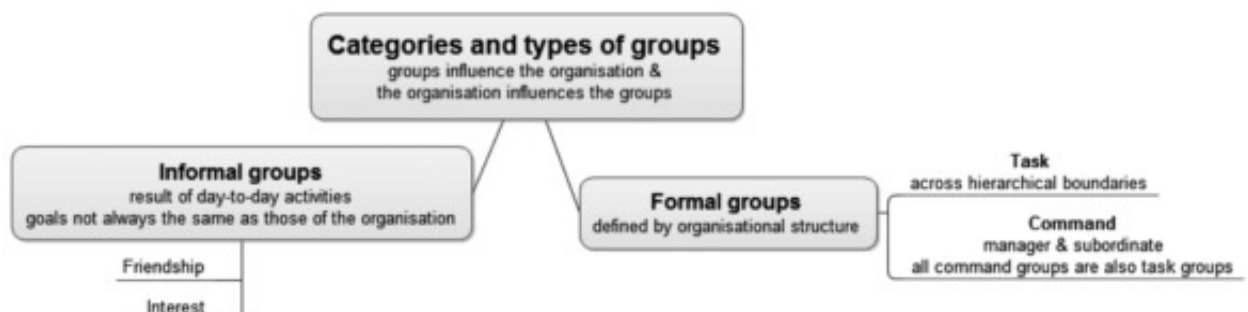

Figure 10.1: Categories and types of groups

Formal or **work** groups have the following characteristics:

- The skills of the group are random and varied.
- They have a strong leader.
- Individual members are held accountable and rewarded.
- Group performance is the sum of the performance of all group members.

10.6   STAGES IN WORK GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Work groups develop in stages, over time, into well-functioning groups. The mind map provided in Figure 10.2 summarises the different stages in work group development.
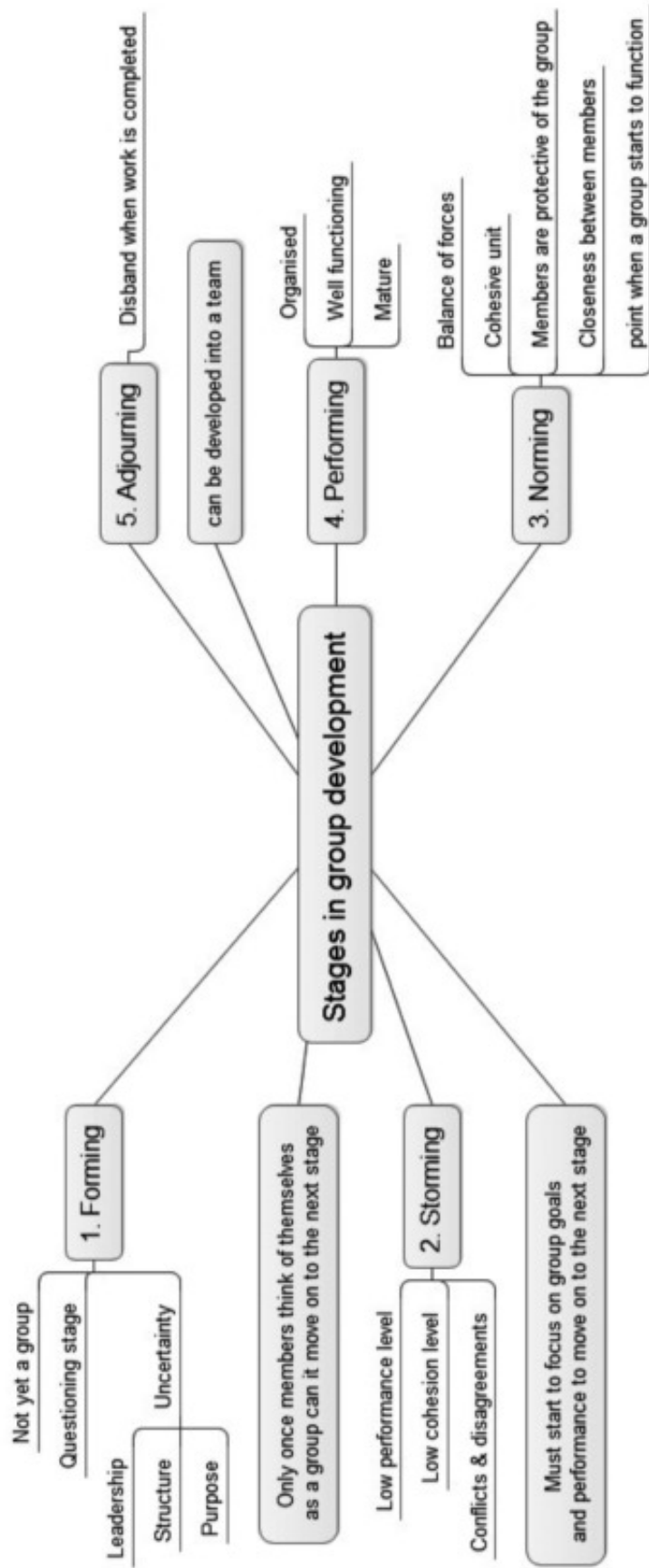
Figure 10.2: Stages in work group development

10.7 THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE WORK GROUP PERFORMANCE

Group behaviour is affected by a number of variables, and the the Group Behaviour Model (see figure 10.3 and figure 10.4) show the relationship between these variables. According to the **group behaviour model,** the following factors or variables influence the level of group performance:

- organisation context
- group member resources
- group structure
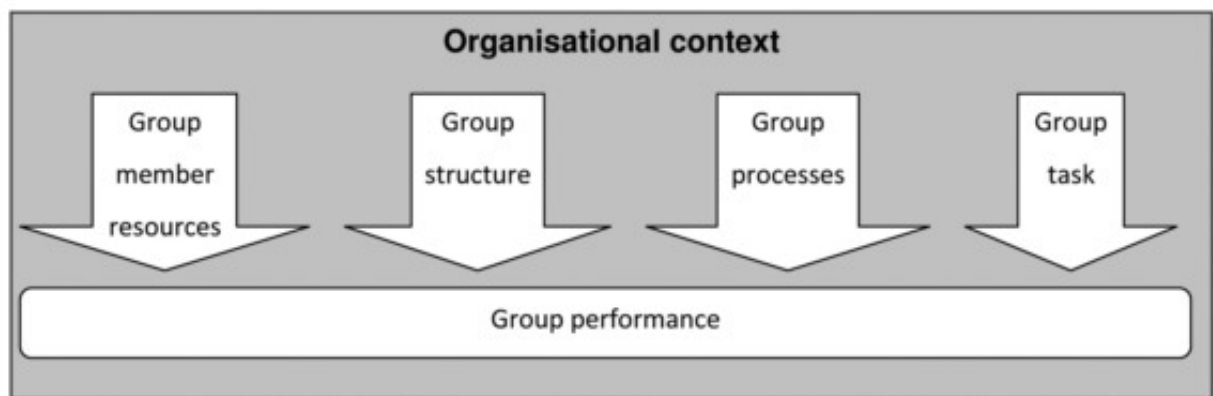- group processes
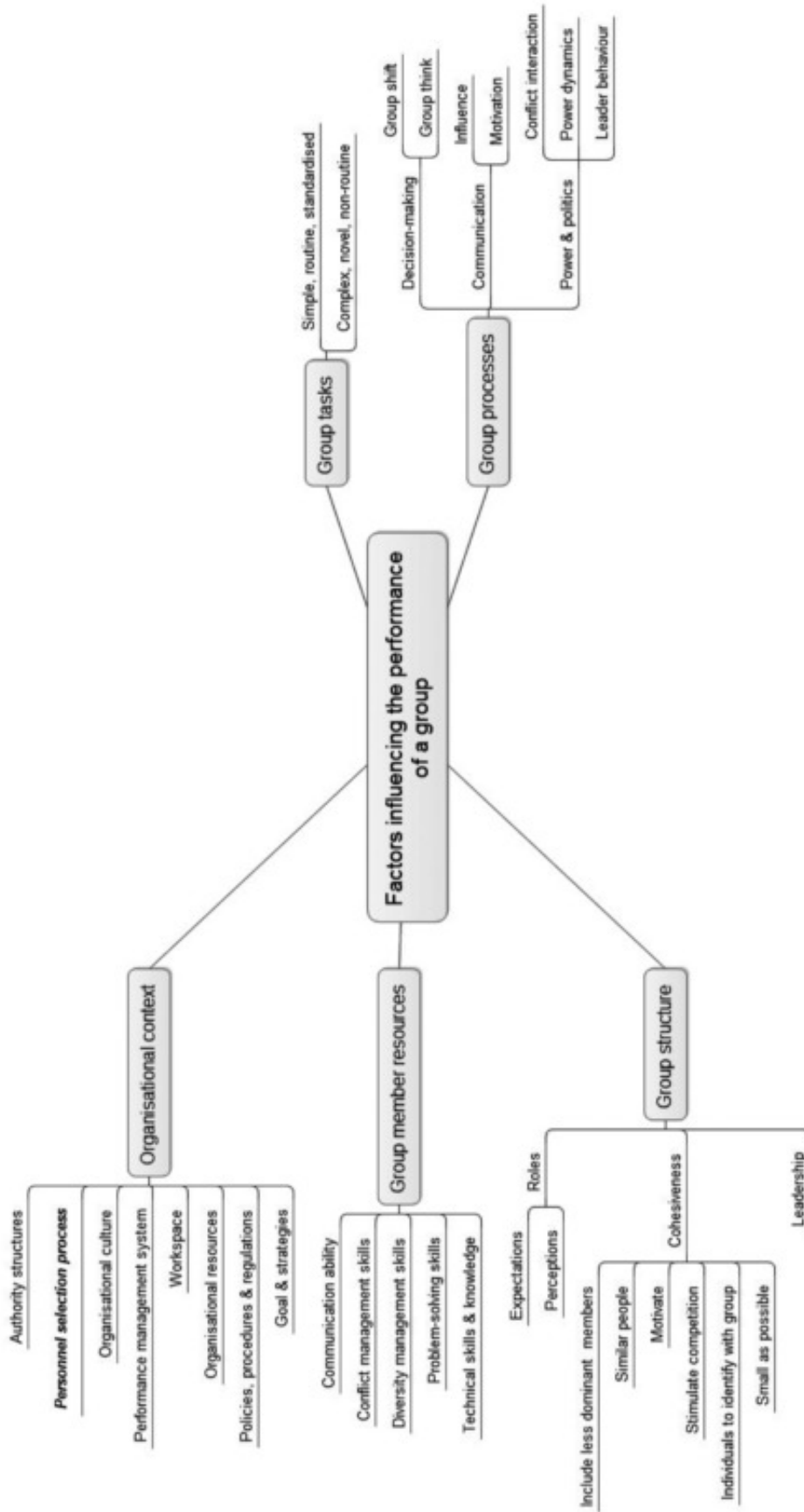- the group task

Figure 10.3: The Group Behaviour Model

Figure 10.4: A mind map of the Group Behaviour Model

10.8   TEAMS

Teams differ from groups in a number of specific aspects. Note that teams are not the answer to all organisational problems, but under the correct conditions, and in specific types of organisations (such as 'new' organisations) they can be very effective because:

- teams enhance the creativity and innovation of their members, resulting in better problem-solving abilities
- teams reduce the time required for product development
- self-managed teams reduce cost and respond faster to customer requests
- excellent quality of work is the result of shared accountability in teams

Teams have the following characteristics:

- complementary competencies
- commitment to the common purpose
- shared mission and collective responsibility
- individual and mutual accountability
- synergy between members
- shared leadership
- equality of members

10.9   TYPES OF TEAMS

Table 10.1 lists four types of teams in organisations, and the features that differentiate them.

Table 10.1: Types of team and their characteristics

Type of team	Characteristics
Problem-solving teams	- same department - meet on a regular basis - focus on the improvement of quality, efficiency and work environment
Self-managed work team	- function autonomously - make and implement decisions - full responsibility for outcomes
Cross-functional teams	- members are at the same hierarchical level - solve complex problems - members are usually from the same organisation, but can include members from another
Virtual teams	- geographically dispersed members - communicate and accomplish tasks using telecommunications and information technology

10.10   TEAM MEMBERS

Teams are most effective when they are comprised of members with complementary

knowledge, competencies and personalities Organisations often use Belbin's Team Selection Method to compose their teams, ensuring that their skills are complementary and unique.

Belbin suggests that teams should have the following team members in order to be well balanced:

Roles		Characteristics
The chairperson		• Presides over and coordinates efforts • Disciplined, balanced & well focused • Good judge of character
The shaper		• Highly strung • Outgoing • Dominant • Drive & passion
The plant		• Introverted • Intellectually dominant • Source of original ideas
The monitor/evaluator		• Analytically intelligent • Tactless and cold • Less involved
The resource investigator		• Popular member • Extrovert • Sociable & relaxed • Brings new contacts and ideas
The company worker		• Practical organiser • Turns ideas into manageable tasks • Charts, schedules and plans
The team worker		• Popular & uncompetitive • Supportive, listening, encouraging & harmonising • Glue that keeps the team together
The finisher		• Checks details • Worries about due dates • Creates a sense of urgency

10.11 HOW TO CREATE A TEAM

Organisations can change groups into teams by:

- aligning the **selection process** and criteria with team requirements
- providing team **training**
- realigning **reward systems** to reward both individuals and teams

10.12 CONCLUSION

Different kinds of groups exist in an organisation. Formal groups include command groups and task groups, whereas friendship groups and interest groups are examples of informal groups. A work team is a special kind of group, and it differs in a number of ways from a work group. Organisations use various kinds of teams, including cross-functional teams, problem-solving teams, self-managed teams, and virtual teams.

Now that we have reached the end of MNG2602, I trust that you have gained a holistic perspective of the challenges faced by contemporary organisations and will be able to use your knowledge in the organisation in which you work.

10.13 ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

If you have access to the internet, you should consider visiting the following websites. This is NOT COMPULSORY, but these websites all contain interesting information and examples about the content in this study unit.

- Belbin's teams

  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5oB8PhS64Q
  http://www.belbin.com/

- Successful teams

  http://humanresources.about.com/od/involvementteams/a/twelve_tip_team.htm
  http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xqdfr7_3-tips-you-need-to-learn-in-building-a-successful-team_news

- Groups and teams

  http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/differences-between-work-groups-and-teams.html
  http://education-portal.com/academy/lesson/groups-mobs-teams-in-organizations.html

Interesting **tweeple** that you could follow on Twitter:

@EntMagazine

@eshipclub

10.14   ASSESSMENT

This section contains self-assessment questions that you can use to assess your knowledge of the study unit.

SECTION A: CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across

2.   _____ is the third stage in-group forming.

3.   Teams are characterised by a _____ between team members.

4.   An organisation's structure define _____ groups..

5.   Teams reduce the _____ required for product development.

6.   A _____ refers to two or more individuals who are, interacting and interdependent, and who come together to achieve a particular purpose.

Down

1.   According to Belbin's categories of team members, the _____ checks the details and creates a sense of urgency in the group.

3.   Group _____ is the factor in the group behaviour model that considers the cohesiveness of a group.
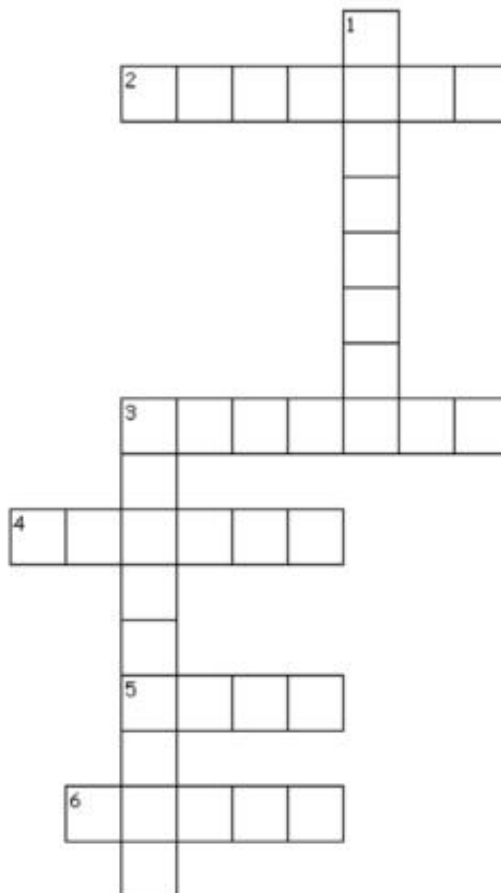
SECTION B: PRESCRIBED TEXTBOOK

Try to answer the review questions in the prescribed textbook.

SECTION C: TUTORIAL LETTER 101

Complete the questions that relate to this study unit from the assignment found in Tutorial Letter 101

10.15   END OF STUDY UNIT CASE STUDY

Read the following case study and answer the questions that follow.

The Putco Team

Putco has created a new task team responsible for upgrading the bus services offered in Gauteng. The task team is characterised by conflicts and disagreements, and is still not performing as desired owing to low levels of cohesion. The following people, among others, have been included in the task team:

Karen feels that "Effective communication and the management of information between team members remains a constant challenge as we attempt to identify and change processes to ensure efficient practice. I constantly have to turn outlandish ideas into management solutions".

Wian is an accountant. He has been included in the new task team because of his ability to see the flaw in an argument and to work with data.

Kate is introverted and intellectually dominant. She supports the work of her team by introducing an original system for dealing with emails. She says, "We were duplicating work, leaving emails unanswered or giving conflicting information to managers. The solution was to introduce a new system where all emails to
our team go to one central mailbox. We flag the emails we are dealing with in our designated colour and send updates on any projects we are working on for the others to read. In this way, nothing gets duplicated or missed out and everyone can easily see what everyone else is doing."

Mari has been included for her sales ability and sociability.

Dougie feels that "Passionate debate is a healthy trait for a team to have as it ensures that all aspects of an issue, or a solution, are discussed thoroughly. However, disputes need to be managed, otherwise they can be destructive. Disputes allow people to challenge one another's point of view and allow the team to fully explore all options available to them." He is characterised as a good listener and as someone that works through others.

Sipho is highly-strung and outgoing. He feels that "a team should have drive and passion for what it is doing; without this passion its efforts will surely fail."

10.16   STUDY UNIT REVIEW QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions based on the Putco case study:

10.1 The Putco team is going through various stages on its way to become a fully functional team. At which stage of group development do you think they are at present?

10.2 Would you classify the Putco employees described in the case study as a group or a team? Substantiate your answer.

10.3 Identify the team role of each of the employees described in the case study by using the Belbin method.

10.4 The Putco team lacks certain role players, according to the roles Belbin identifies as crucial to include in an effective team. Advise the Putco management on what type of people they should add to the team.