

UNIVERSITY OF
FORT HARE

Eastern Cape Education
Department

***Distance
Education
Project***

*Core Education Studies
Course*

Helping Learners Learn

Umthamo 1

*Classroom Management:
Group Work*

(Pilot Edition)

September 1998



**UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE
DISTANCE EDUCATION PROJECT**

**CORE EDUCATION STUDIES COURSE
Helping Learners Learn**

Umthamo 1 - Classroom Management: Group Work

First Pilot Edition - 1998

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Helping Learners Learn

Introduction



Every year, three imithamo of your Core Education Studies course will be on the topic “Helping Learners Learn”. We hope that lemithamo will help you create situations in the classroom which will enable your learners to learn more actively and effectively. Each umthamo will guide you in planning lessons and reflecting on what has happened in those lessons.

In the first year, the two imithamo you will study are:

- Classroom management: Group work;
- Teacher roles: Creating a learner-centred environment.

Both of lemithamo are concerned with the general topic of **learner-centredness**. We hope that the second umthamo will build on and add to the first. The first umthamo, on group work, will give you an opportunity to try out a learner-centred style of classroom organisation. The second umthamo will take a more general look at the differences between learner-centredness and teacher centredness, and will also look at the roles that you play as a teacher.

Each umthamo has a number of activities in it. Many of these involve planning and trying out lessons in your classroom. Most of them involve writing down your ideas in response to a question or task.

We suggest that you EITHER:

- Get yourself a hard-covered exercise book in which you do your written work for this strand “Helping learners learn”,
OR
- Use A4 paper and put it into your concertina file.

NB. Whether you write in a book, or on paper, please remember to head your work with the date, the title of the strand and the umthamo, and the number of the activity.



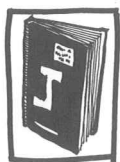
In the general introduction, we have spoken about a concertina file, and a portfolio. We suggest that you keep everything in your concertina file, including your exercise book (or your papers) and learners’ work which you want to submit as part of your portfolio.

At the end of the year, you will select from the concertina file the items you want to submit. If you have written in a book, you can make a note in the front of the book, of the pages you would especially like your “appraiser” to look at.

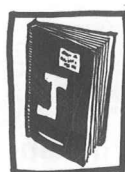


Once again, we have used the icons which have been used in previous imithamo. The icon in the margin indicates that you should read and think about a reading. Some readings are at the end of the umthamo. The readings in the *HLL (Helping Learners Learn)* imithamo are a very important part of the imithamo. You should make sure that you read them.

Other icons indicate whether you should carry out a particular activity in your classroom, or in your face-to-face group with your umKhwezeli. There are also icons to show when you are to work in your journal, and when you should store work in your concertina file.



We would like to encourage you to record in your journal anything exciting or interesting which happens in your classroom, or while you are working on tasks set in the imithamo. If you feel that something has changed in your thinking, or that you are very impressed by a certain idea, write it in your journal. If you are unhappy about something, or have an unanswered question, write that in your journal too. As time goes on, you may have a chance to resolve the problem, or find an answer to the question, by sharing with a colleague, or in your face-to-face group.



Journal



**Thinking
and
Reflecting**



**Written
Report**



**Classroom
or School**



Key Activity



**Reading
and
Thinking**



Discussion



**Face-to-face
umkhwezeli**



**Concertina
File for
Portfolio**



Time



Umthamo 1 - Classroom management: group work

In the umthamo about learning, you found that there are many things that the learners in your class can do well. They can also think very quickly, and make good decisions, when they need to respond to an emergency. They have many powerful memories, and they have a theory of the world in their heads, which is changing and developing all the time.

Your learners learned many of these things by listening to, and talking to, other people, and by doing things together with brothers and sisters, friends, parents, teachers and neighbours.

In lomthamo, we will think about, and try out, ways of organising learners into groups in the classroom, in order to help them to learn more actively and effectively.

We would like to suggest that you also work together with a partner, or a small group of teacher-learners, as you work through this umthamo. Discuss the information and the questions together before you write anything down; watch one another's lessons, and give one another feedback.

Intended outcomes:

When you have completed lomthamo, you should be able to:

- **Plan an activity involving small group work;**
- **Organise and implement the activity;**
- **Critically evaluate what happened and why it happened.**

Classroom management patterns

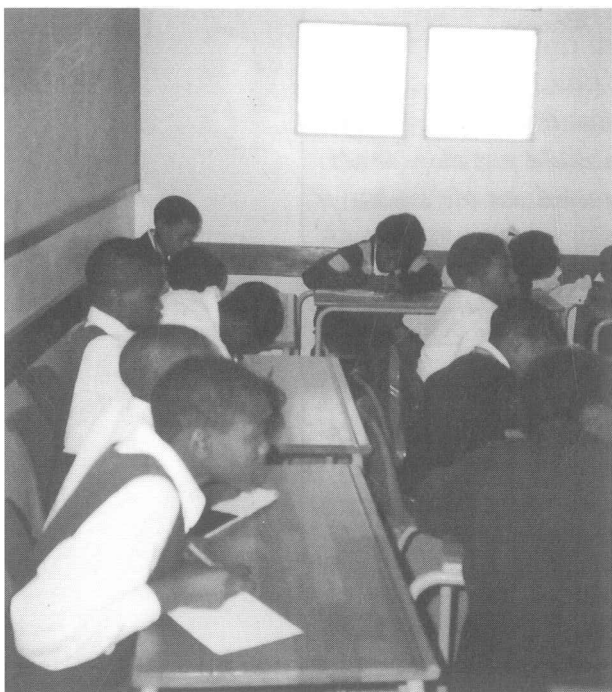
Look at the following pictures of classrooms, and then do the activities on the next page. Put your written answers to the activities into your concertina file.



Teacher – whole class



Pair work



Individual work



Small group work



Activity 1.1

Discuss these questions with a partner, or a group, and then write down your answers.

- Which of the 4 ways shown in the diagram above is your *favourite* way of managing learning in the classroom? Why?
- Which of these 4 ways of organising your classroom do you like *least*? Why?



Activity 1.2

Discuss the following with a partner or a group, and then write down your answers.

Which do you think would be the best way of organising your classroom for each of the following lessons? Give a reason for your choice, for each lesson. The first one has been done for you. If you disagree with the answer, do it again, giving your ideas. (When you write the answers to this question, write them in 2 columns, as we have done below, one for the method of classroom management, and one for the reason.)

1. You want your learners to do story sums (word problems) in Maths.

<i>Method of classroom management</i>	<i>Reason</i>
<i>Small groups</i>	<i>I would use small groups so that 3 or 4 learners could put their heads together to work out the sums.</i>
<i>Individual work</i>	<i>Once the learners had understood the type of problem, I would let them do some sums on their own.</i>

2. You want your learners to know the early history of their own town or village.
3. You want your learners to practise dialogues.
4. You want your learners to learn about the results of soil erosion.
5. You want your learners to do a science experiment.
6. You want your learners to discuss the characters in a story they have read.



Activity 1.3

How often do *you* use each of the classroom management patterns? Next week, count the number of lessons, or hours, you spend using each, and write them down. At the end of each lesson, write down which management pattern you used, and for how long. At the end of the week, add up the times for each management pattern. Then draw a table like the one below, and fill in your hours (or lessons) in it.

<i>Method of classroom management</i>	<i>No. of hours/lessons</i>
<i>Teacher - whole class</i>	
<i>Individual work</i>	
<i>Pair work</i>	
<i>Small group work</i>	



Using a variety of appropriate management patterns



Activity 1.1 has shown that different management patterns suit different purposes. Activity 1.2 has also given you a chance to look at the ways in which *you* manage your classroom.

As you go through this course, we will suggest that you try new ways of helping your learners to learn. This will include trying classroom management patterns which you may not use very often at the moment. You will have a chance to see what differences they make to the way your learners learn. As you put these ideas into practice, you will develop new skills. We suggest that you discuss what you are doing with other members of your staff, and with your face-to-face group.



By the end of the course, we hope you will feel comfortable using a variety of teaching styles and classroom management patterns. At the end of the course, repeat Activity 1.3, and see whether the time you spend using each classroom management pattern has changed.

This umthamo will focus on using small groups. Remember that pairs are also a type of the group – the smallest of groups. We will look at reasons *why* it is often helpful to learners to give them the opportunity to learn in a group. We will also look at *how* you can organise and run group work, and look at *what* skills you need.



Unit 2

WHY use group work?

It often seems much easier, especially if you have a large class, to simply teach the lesson to the whole class without disturbing the learners and re-arranging the desks. You are probably wondering whether there is a *good* reason for group work, whether group work is worth the effort.

In this section, we will look at reasons why different teachers use groups, so that you can decide for yourself whether to use groups in your classroom.

Start by reading the descriptions of 4 lessons, which appear below. In each lesson, the teacher uses group work. As you read, think about the teacher's reason for using group work. (In future drafts of this course, we would like to replace some of these descriptions with stories about *your* lessons. We look forward to reading the reports of your Key Activity lessons, and selecting from them.)

050



READING 1: GROUP WORK IN FOUR CLASSES

1. Group work in religious studies

"I had chosen to study the very long story of Joseph (from the Bible) with my Grade 8 learners. I had already told them the story, briefly. I now wanted them to look at the characters in the story, and conflicts and dilemmas they found themselves in."



The first thing we did, as a class, was to "modernise" the story, setting it in present-day South Africa. We gave the characters in the story new names, and set it in rural Eastern Cape and Johannesburg. I had divided the story into sections, and I now divided the class into groups of 6 to 8

learners each. Each group was to convert their section into a scene from a play. They could use song, dance, mime and drama, and present it in a mixture of languages, if that seemed appropriate.

The final “production” was a great success, and was performed for other classes in the same standard. It gave the learners a chance to co-operate and be creative, and it brought out different strengths and talents of individual learners.”

2. Group work in the language classroom

“I had serious problems with a Grade 9 class which did not want to take part in oral lessons. So I decided to try an activity involving register* – the register the learners themselves use outside the school. I made the first few utterances in “tsotsi-taal” or slang as I entered the classroom. As they giggled with surprise and amusement, I explained the use of “register”. Then I divided them into groups, and asked each group to give me a simple English sentence. Then they had to use the same sentence, but in a form firstly to suit their baby sister, then their mother/father, then their peers, and finally the principal of the school (using any language). Points were given to the groups that did well, so this motivated them to get involved constructively so as not to let the group down. In this way the learners were all actively participating and doing a lot of thinking and recalling of that which was already known to them.”

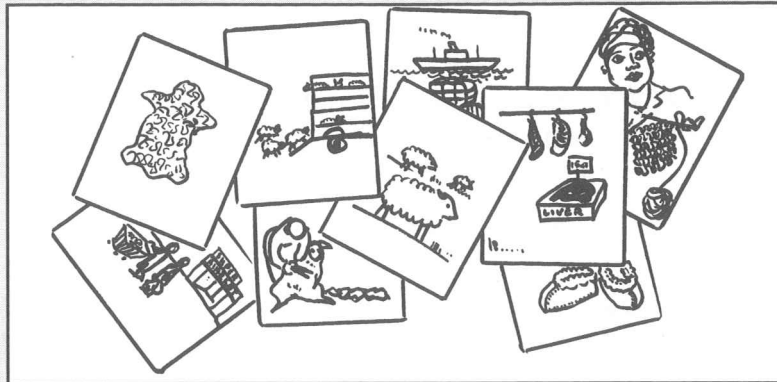
(from ... ELTIC. 1996. *Activities for multilingual classrooms*. Diteme tsa thuto activities book.)

*different language styles used in different situations, and with different people

3. Group work in a geography lesson

“I wanted my Grade 5 Geography class to have practice in organising and presenting information, and translating it from pictures into language. I also wanted to give them an opportunity to work co-operatively.

I divided the class into groups of 4 or 5 learners, and gave each group a set of pictures relating to sheep or cattle farming.



Each group was to work co-operatively to arrange the pictures in the right order, and to write a suitable label for each picture. They pasted the pictures onto a sheet of cardboard. Each group then reported back to the class, describing their sequence of pictures. Other groups commented on different decisions they had made

As a follow-up activity, each learner wrote a paragraph on the type of farming shown in her/his group's chart."

(from...Belinda van de Griendt. 1997. Unpublished paper submitted for Dite me tsa thuto course)

4. Group work for democracy education

"Round about the time of the elections, I felt that my learners needed to form some understanding of democracy. ... My first step was to give a lesson on what a democratic state is and fundamental human rights in a democratic state. Next I prepared workcards describing situations which were not democratic. Each workcard ended with the question, "Is this democracy?" My learners were divided into groups. We discussed the process through which they needed to go, when having their group discussions. The process was as follows:

- 1. Elect a group spokesperson.*
- 2. Read the workcard in English.*
- 3. Translate the workcard into the languages of your group.*
- 4. Discuss the situation described, using any language.*
- 5. Group spokesperson reports back in English.*

The translation part of this exercise was very helpful, because it helped learners discover what words in English they thought they understood, but didn't actually."

(from ... ELTIC. 1996. Activities for multilingual classrooms. Dite me tsa thuto activities book.)

0:40

Activity 2.1

Why do you think each of the four teachers described in the reading chose to use group work for presenting their particular lesson or activity? The first answer has been done for you. If you disagree with the answer, write your own answer. Then write your answer for the other 3 lessons described in the reading.

1. The religious studies lesson

The teacher wanted all learners to participate actively, and experience for themselves the characters and conflicts of the story. She also needed a way of dealing with a very long story. By dividing it up and giving each group a section to deal with, it became more manageable.



0:40

Reasons for using group work

2.1 Helping learners learn more effectively

If you decide to use group work in a particular lesson, it should be because you believe that your learners will learn better in a small group. You have already started looking at what we know about learning in the strand of this course called **Learning about learning**. In making a decision about how to organise your class, you need to think carefully about how learners learn.



Learning is a very active process, and learners develop a “theory of the world in their heads” as they solve problems which are connected with what they already know. They learn particularly well when they are working together with others who know a little more than they do. They learn through talking about what they are doing, through explaining their point of view to others, and debating which way is best to solve the problem.

By looking at how four teachers used group work in their classrooms, you have found out for yourself some of the reasons for using group work. Compare your answers and our ideas. (Remember, you might have thought of something that we have left out!)

a. Increased participation and involvement

Group work usually gives more of the learners in your class a chance to take part actively, and to talk, than whole class work. This means that it gives them more chance to *make sense of the world* for themselves.

- The religious studies teacher let every learner become one of the characters. This meant they could become personally involved in the difficulties, or dilemmas, the characters were experiencing; they could understand the story from the inside.
- The language teacher enabled her unwilling learners to talk in their oral lesson. They felt freer to speak in the small group, and the task was directly related to their lives and the way they talked every day.
- The geography teacher gave all the learners a chance to be involved in ordering the information. Each could discuss the right order for the pictures and present his/her point of view. They could therefore make much better sense of the topic through being active.
- The person teaching about democracy gave every learner a chance to think about democracy by discussing a real-life situation. They could also use languages they knew to clarify the meaning of certain terms. Each learner was involved personally in the discussion.

b. Working co-operatively

In a group, every learner is personally involved, and every learner is also interacting with other learners. For every point which is discussed, some learners will know more than others, and different learners will have different ideas. This also helps learners to *make sense of the world*.

Group work also teaches learners how to work together as a team. This means that:

- they learn to deal with disagreement,
- they learn to accept that people have different views,
- they learn to respect each other's strengths and weaknesses,
- some of them learn to exercise leadership,
- they learn that each has special talents and skills,
- they learn to co-operate and share ideas in order to produce a better result.

In groups, learners find that each has something to learn from the other. Each can use her/his special abilities to help those who have different abilities. Learners help one another, gaining confidence and skill, and building self-reliance and a sense of responsibility. This frees you, the teacher, to deal with other issues, or to help specific individuals

All the above increases a sense of community, and encourages working together towards a common goal, rather than competing as individuals. This is good training for democracy.

In the lessons described above:

- The Grade 5's co-operated to produce a sequence of pictures and information.
- The religious studies learners co-operated to produce a play. Each discovered and used specific talents and skills: musical, dramatic, leadership, organisation, etc.
- The Grade 7's co-operated to clarify concepts and reach conclusions about democracy.

c. Allowing for individual differences

In group work, learners do not all have to move at the same pace on the same task. Learners can work at their own pace, and teachers can go round from group to group, helping groups or individuals with certain aspects of the task. Teachers can also set up a number of different kinds of tasks to suit individual needs and abilities. For example, she might give learners who enjoy drawing one task; learners who enjoy writing another, while learners who are good at speaking might prepare and present a role-play.

Each learner will make meaning for him/herself out of the task in a different way, and in his/her own time.

2.2 Access to resources

Scarce resources can be made to go further by grouping learners, and further still by allowing groups to use the resources in turn. Now read about three more lessons where teachers made use of groups.



READING 2: MAKING SCARCE RESOURCES AVAILABLE

1. A natural science lesson

"I wanted all my learners to have hands-on experience with a number of experiments relating to Digestion. However, I did not have enough equipment for each learner to do the experiment at the same time. There was not even enough equipment for several groups to do the experiment at the same time.

I set out 6 different experiments round the room, and divided the learners into 6 groups. Members in each group were given different roles, and different parts of the experiment to do. Each group completed one experiment, and then passed on to the next. If they had to wait between completing one experiment and starting the next, they wrote up results and conclusions from completed work. One member wrote the experiment up, while others helped decide what she should write."

(from: Kerry, T. & Sands, M. 1982. *Handling Classroom Groups*. MacMillan Education)



2. A mathematics lesson

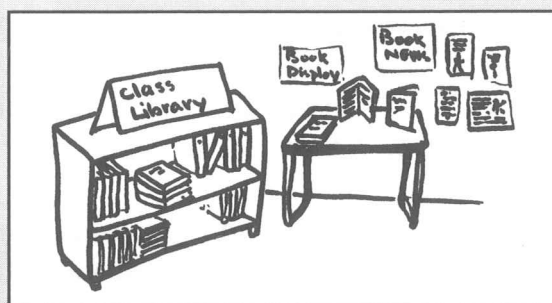
I found that for certain sections of the maths syllabus, there were not enough examples in the text-book to give learners the practice that they needed. I made sets of work cards, on which I wrote extra examples which I got from other text books and from my own head. There were eight copies of each work card.

Once I had taught the learners a specific section, and they had done the examples in the text book, I would have a lesson in which they worked on their own on the work cards.

The class would divide into groups of 8. (They all knew which group they belonged to; I had divided them according to their maths ability). The group leader would fetch a set of work cards and hand them out to the learners in that group. Once the members of the group had finished the work card, the leader would go and fetch an answer card. He/She would read out the answers to the group and they would mark their work. They would then move on to another set of cards.

I would take the opportunity to go round from one learner to another, concentrating particularly on those who seemed to be finding the problems difficult. Learners who had got the answers to the problems on the work card wrong, could ask for help from me.

3. A reading lesson



My Grade 4 class has a class library, which has sets of reading books in it. There are 8 copies of each book, and discussion questions have been pasted into the back of each book. Many of the books contain a number of short stories, and questions have been set on each story.

When we have a reading lesson, the class divides into groups. At the beginning of the year, these groups are formed on the basis of their reading ability. (Later, when everybody's reading has improved, I may re-group them into mixed ability groups.) Each group is given a set of readers. Some days, I ask them to read aloud, in turns, to the group; on other days, I ask them to read silently, to themselves. When a group has finished a story, they discuss the questions which have been set on that story. I will sometimes ask them to write down some of the answers in their exercise books once the discussion is over.

While the groups are reading, I spend some time going from group to group, assessing their progress. I will sometimes join a group that is struggling, and let them read aloud while I assist them with areas where they are having difficulty.

Multigrade teaching

In some schools, *teachers* are very scarce resources. Some teachers have to teach a number of grades at the same time. We call this 'multigrade teaching'. They cannot treat the whole class as one group. They have to attend to the learners in one grade, while other learners have to work on their own. Group work can be used in such classes. After a short introduction and instructions, the learners can be divided into groups and work independently. The teacher can then give her attention to another grade. She still needs to keep an eye on the other groups, however.

0:40



Activity 2.2

1. How has the teacher, in each of the 3 lessons described in Reading 2, used division of the class to give the learners access to scarce resources? Discuss your ideas about this with a partner or group.
2. In which of the 3 lessons are the learners really engaged in **group work**? Which lessons involve the learners in **individual work**, even though they are divided into groups? Discuss your ideas with a friend.

0:50



Individual work in groups, and true group work

You have probably realised that the Maths lesson was not really a group work lesson, even though the learners were divided into groups. The learners were still working on their own, not co-operatively. We are not saying that there is anything wrong with this; a teacher can help learners learn by giving them access to scarce resources, whether they are working on their own, or in groups. Working independently can also help learning in very specific ways.

It is important to realise though, that the key characteristic of true group work is **interaction**. If you want learners to feel the special benefits of working in a group, you need to set up an interactive task.

Setting up an interactive task

Types of activity which take advantage of the interactive and co-operative features of group work are tasks which involve and encourage one of the following:

- Discussion
- Problem-solving
- Drama and other creative projects where the pooling of “bright ideas” can help
- Field-work
- Experiments
- Project work

In an interactive task, group members work together co-operatively, each one making a contribution of his/her own towards the completion of the task.

Here are some examples of tasks where every group member has something to contribute, or where each member goes and finds something out which s/he later contributes to the group task.

1. Story-telling/Essay-writing

Each member of the small group has a different picture. The group task is to put the pictures together in the correct order to form a story. Before they put them in order, each group member describes her/his picture. (A similar task could be given using sentences or paragraphs, instead of pictures. In this case, members would read their sentences/paragraphs before the group puts them in order.)

2. History

Put learners into groups to dramatise a historical event they have learnt about. Each learner takes a different part. One learner could direct the dramatisation.

3. Structured discussions

One way of ensuring that each group member has a contribution to make is to give them roles, as described later (3.5), e.g. chairperson, scribe, reporter. The chairperson has the specific role of ensuring that everyone contributes to the discussion.

4. **Sharing about lifestyle and culture**

Each member tells others in the small group about an aspect of their lifestyle, e.g. weddings, funerals, how their mothers cook pumpkin. They can also share experiences around a theme, e.g. crime, herding cattle, adventures with neighbours. These sharings can be built into stories, essays, theme presentations, posters, drawings, etc.

5. **Researching local history**

Each learner can go home and try to find out something about the history of her/his village/ town/ area by talking to older people. Back in class, each learner tells the small group about her/his findings, and these findings are put together to form a 'history'.

0:50



Activity 2.3

Look at the examples in **Readings 1 and 2** with a partner or small group, and see what the teacher did, in each case, to ensure that every group member had something to contribute. In some cases, the teacher may not have done this. This would mean that some learners may not have been fully involved in the learning process.

0:50



Activity 2.4

1. So far, in this section, we have been talking about the *advantages* of group work. What do you think are the *disadvantages* of group work? Discuss them with your colleagues.
2. Can you think of ways to overcome some of these difficulties? (Discuss this with colleagues at school, and bring your ideas to your face-to-face group.)

4:30

Unit 3

HOW to use groups

0:20

3.1 Ways to use groups

What you have read so far seems to show that there are 3 basic ways to use groups. Of course, you might think of another way of using groups, and that is fine. Here are the 3 ways that we have thought of:

1. Each group works on the same task, problem, or set of questions to discuss. When they have had enough time to complete the task, a spokesperson from each group reports back to the whole class. (e.g. the language lesson, the geography lesson, the democracy lesson)
2. Each group works on different aspects of the same task or topic. Once they have had enough time to complete their section of the task, the findings are combined, or one group teaches the others about one aspect of the topic. (e.g. the religious studies lesson)
3. Groups work in turn on different tasks. Eventually all have a turn at each. (e.g. the natural sciences lesson, the maths lesson and the reading lesson)

Activity centres

In multigrade classes, it can be very useful to set up activity centres, one for each subject, e.g. mathematics, science, language, social studies, etc. At each centre, learning materials are available and cards with group activities can be present. When one grade does group work, the teacher sends those learners to a specific centre, where they work. As the day goes on, the teacher sends different grades to different centres.

1:00

Key Activity (Part 1)

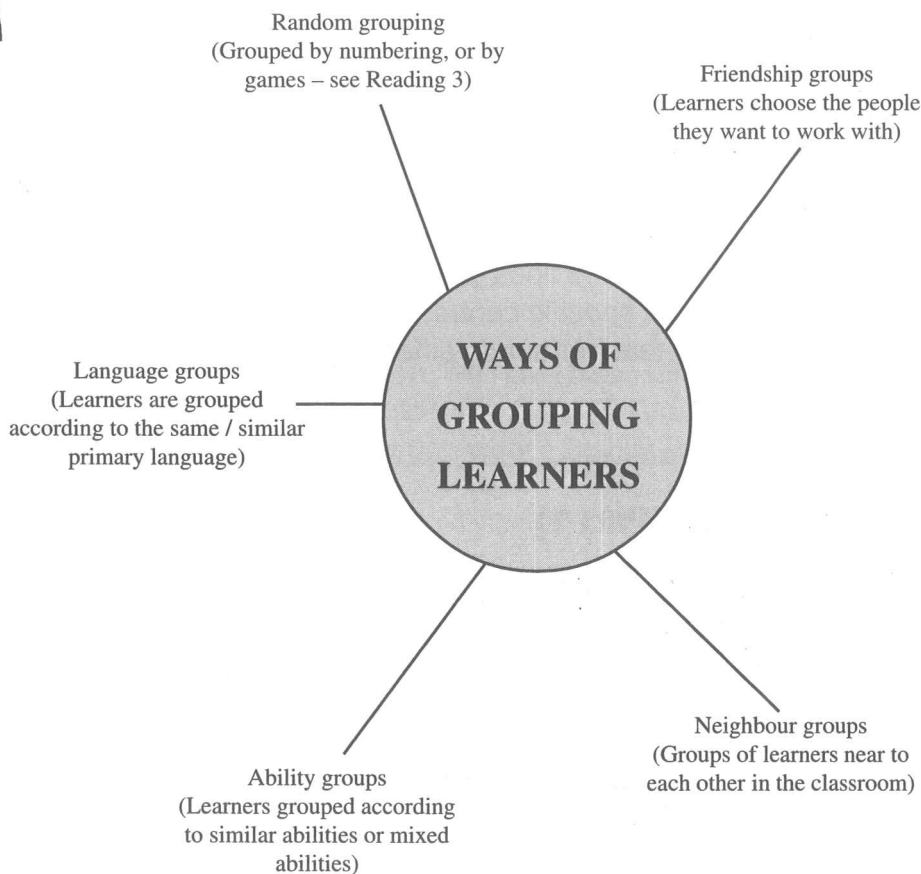
At this stage, we would like you to make a start on your Key Activity. Most of the activities which you will do from now on will have a section which helps you with your preparation for the Key Activity. We suggest that you write all your notes in preparation for the Key Activity on the same page/ piece of paper. Start using that page/ piece of paper now. Write notes in answer to the following questions.

1. Within one of your lessons for the coming week, identify an activity which could be done by learners in small groups (4-8 learners). If you wish, the whole lesson can be done in small groups. Describe the activity/ lesson briefly, on your page.
2. Think about what you want your learners to know/ be able to do by the end of the lesson/ activity. These are *the outcomes for the lesson/ activity*. Write them down.
3. Why do you want to use group work in this lesson/ activity? In what ways will group work help the learners to learn more effectively? Write *your reasons* down.
4. How are you going to make sure that the task you set up is truly an “interactive task”? Describe *the interactive task* at you are planning.



3.2 Ways of grouping learners

The mind map below presents 5 ways of deciding which learners should go together in a group. Study the mind map carefully, and think about these ways that it suggests.





Activity 3.2

1. Read Reading 3, at the end of this umthamo.
2. Discuss with a friend or colleague the advantages and disadvantages of the 5 ways of grouping learners given in the mind map.

For instance, letting friends work together could be good because the learners are used to one another and like one another. This means that they should be able to work together easily.

On the other hand, there are disadvantages to friendship groups. Because the friends are used to playing together, they may find it difficult to take the task seriously. In addition to that, if they always work with their friends, they won't get a chance to work with, and get to know, other people in the class.

Think about what could be good and bad about the other 4 ways of grouping learners.

3. Now decide how you will group the learners in your class for your **Key Activity**. Write down your decision on your **Key Activity** page, together with your reasons for your choice.

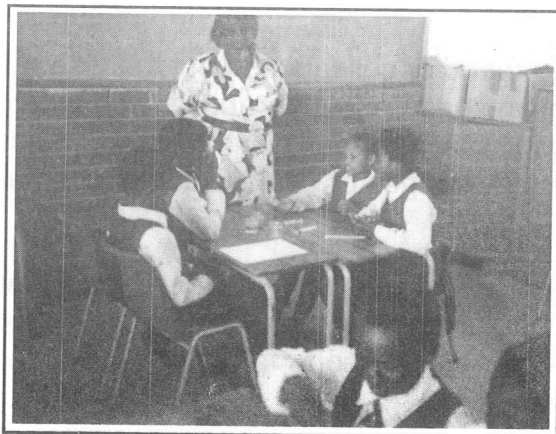


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3.3 What size should small groups be?

In classrooms where learners usually sit in pairs, often with double desks, it is probably best to have groups of 3 to 8 learners (not more).

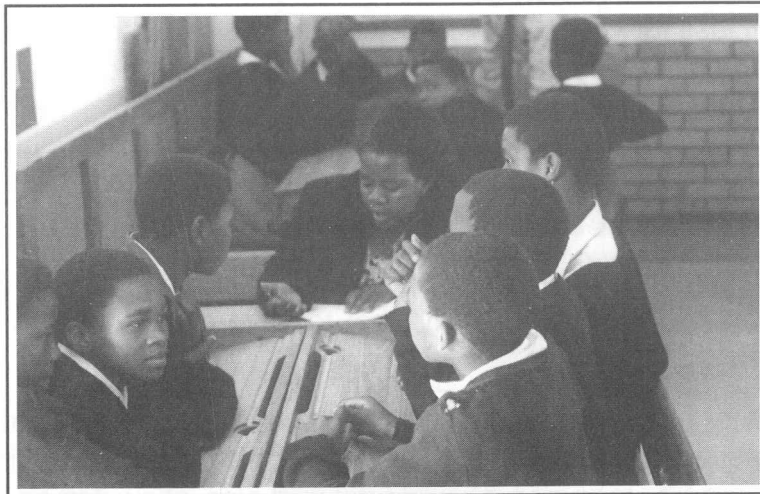
Smaller groups (3 or 4 learners) are easy to organise, because all you need to do is to put 2 double desks, or 2 pairs of learners, together. Smaller groups also allow for each learner to participate a lot, because there are fewer learners.



Bigger groups (7 or 8 learners), on the other hand, are easy to monitor and manage because there are fewer groups in the classroom. However, you need to move more furniture to get your groups in place. Another disadvantage of bigger groups is that there are usually a few learners who are left out of the activity in a group of 7 or 8.



A group of 5 or 6 might have some of all the advantages mentioned above.



Activity 3.3

1. Talk to a friend or colleague about the disadvantages and advantages described above. See whether you agree with what has been written. Maybe you can think of other advantages or disadvantages of smaller and bigger groups.
2. How big will your groups be for your **Key Activity** lesson? Write down your decision on your **Key Activity** page. Give your reasons for working with groups of that size.





3.4 Should groups be permanent or flexible?

You may know teachers who organise their classes into permanent groups, i.e. whenever there is group work, the same learners work together. On the other hand, there are teachers who re-organise their classes into different groups every time they have a group activity.

Permanent groups

If your learners always work in the same groups, it is very easy for them to move into groups. They know how to move the furniture, and who they will work with. The learners also become used to one another, and this may make it easier for them to work together.

One disadvantage of permanent groups is that particular groups may get “labelled”. They may think of themselves as “the stupid group” or “the clever group”. Others may also think of them in these ways, and it is often difficult for a person from that group to change, or to see her/himself differently. Another disadvantage is that learners always interact with the same people, and never have a chance to find out about other people, or share ideas with them.

Flexible groups

If you decide to let learners work in different groups every time you do group work, they will have the chance to work with a lot of different people. They will also find that in different groups they discover that they have different talents. In one group, for instance, Lulu might find she is the leader, while in another group s/he has time to discover her acting talent, because a different person is taking the lead.

The disadvantage of changing your groupings on a regular basis is that it is more time-consuming. It takes time to put the learners into their new groups, and it takes time for them to get used to working together.



Activity 3.4

1. Talk to a friend or colleague about the advantages and disadvantages of permanent and flexible groupings. Do you agree with what has been written? Maybe you can think of disadvantages and advantages which have not been mentioned here.
2. How would you like to work in your class, in the future: with permanent or flexible groups, or with a combination? Write down your decision, and some reasons for it, on your **Key Activity** page. Explain whether the groups you use for your Key Activity will be the permanent groups in your class, or whether you will change them and use different groupings in the future.



3.5 Organising learners within their groups



It is important that you should give your learners guidance as to how they will organise themselves within the group, giving certain people specific roles. Here are some roles which might be needed in a group for particular purposes. One person can sometimes perform 2 or more roles.

Someone:

- who makes sure that everyone contributes, in order to get the task done (a chairperson);
- who writes down the decisions of the group (a secretary);
- who reports back to the whole class on the group's work (a spokesperson);
- Who keeps note of the time (a time-keeper);
- Who makes sure the group stays on the task;
- Who directs the role-play;
- Who is in charge of music;
- Who looks after the costumes and the props;
- Etc.

Activity 3.5

1. Discuss with a colleague the roles that would be needed in the group work activity in the Language lesson described in *Reading 1*. Choose from the list above and add your own ideas.
2. Decide which roles will be needed in the groups which you will set up for your **Key Activity**. Make notes about these roles on your **Key Activity** page. Explain why you think that these roles will be necessary. Say whether you will appoint learners for the different roles, or whether you will allow them to choose learners for each of the roles. (You may, of course, decide that it is not necessary to have special roles in your groups.)





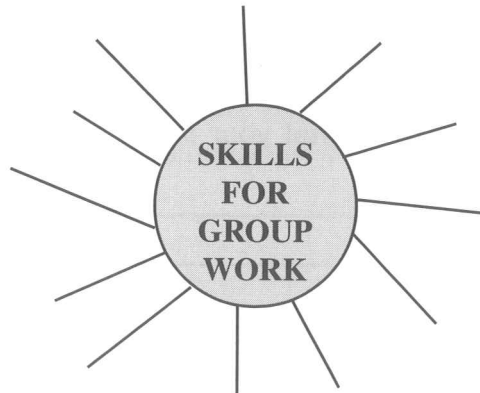
Unit 4

WHAT skills do I require for group work?



Activity 4.1

1. What are some of the skills you might need to use group work effectively in your classroom? Copy the mind map below, and write down all the ideas you can think of on it. (Add as many branches as you need.)



2. Here are our ideas of some of the skills that a teacher requires for successful group work. Read them, and compare our ideas with yours.

- *planning ahead*
- *giving clear instructions to learners*
- *motivating, inspiring and encouraging learners to co-operate*
- *organising the learners into groups*
- *organising changes from one stage of the lesson to another*
- *maintaining focus on the task*
- *dealing with restless or disruptive group members*
- *watching the interactions of learners in the groups*
- *checking on progress*
- *intervening to deal with problems, or to help where learners are unsure what to do*
- *questioning*
- *summarising and reinforcing what has been learned*
- *organising homework, follow-up and packing up*

3. What skills will you need in your **Key Activity** lesson/activity? Write down your ideas on your **Key Activity** page. Make notes about those skills which you have, and are comfortable using. Also make notes about the skills which you think you still need to develop, and which might be difficult for you.





Key Activity (concluded)

You have decided on an activity or lesson in which you will use group work, and you have made notes on a number of aspects of the lesson.

1. **Before you give the lesson**, use your notes to write a plan for the activity or lesson under the headings suggested below.
2. **After you have given the lesson**, think about it, and answer the questions which appear under the heading "Thinking about my lesson", which follows the plan.
3. Write in **your journal** your *feelings* before and after the lesson.



PLAN

1. **Title of lesson or task**
2. **Grade and class**
3. **Outcomes:** What do you want your learners to be able to do by the end of the activity/ lesson?
4. **Reasons:** Why are you using group work?
5. **Stages:** Describe the stages of the activity/ lesson.
6. **Grouping the class:**
 - a) How will you divide the class into groups? Why?
 - b) What size will the groups be? Why?
 - c) Will these groupings remain permanent for future lessons, or will you change them? Why?
7. **Classroom arrangement:** Make a drawing of the way you will arrange the desks in your classroom.
8. **Interactive task:** How will you make sure that each group member has something to contribute to the completion of the task, and that they work co-operatively?
9. **Roles:** What roles will be given to learners within each group? Will you assign the roles, or will group members choose?
10. **Skills:** What skills will you need to use? For what parts of the activity/ lesson?



THINKING ABOUT MY LESSON

1. **Outcomes:** Did learners achieve the outcomes? How do you know?
2. **Reasons:** Would you use group work again for this kind of activity? Why?/ Why not?
3. **Stages:**
 - a) What went well? Why?
 - b) What didn't go well? Why?
 - c) What would you change if you gave this lesson again?
4. **Grouping the class:**
 - a) Did you find this a good way of grouping the class? Why? How would you group the class if you gave this lesson again?
 - b) Do you think that the size of the groups was right? Why?/ Why not?
 - c) Have you changed your mind about permanent/ flexible grouping? Why?/ Why not?
5. **Classroom arrangement:** Did you arrange the classroom as you had planned? Draw a diagram of the way you arranged the classroom, if it was different from the way you had planned. Why did you change your plan?/ Why not? How would you arrange the classroom if you gave this lesson again?
6. **Interactive task:** Was each learner actively involved in the group activity? Give some examples of what they were all busy with.
7. **Roles:** Was it helpful for specific learners to have roles within each group? Why?/ Why not? What will you do next time?
8. **Skills:**
 - a) What did you cope well with?
 - b) When did you feel you needed more skill? Why?/ What skills did you need?

Unit 5: Conclusion

In this umthamo we looked at how different classroom management patterns can support or hinder effective learning. We focused on planning, organising and using small groups to promote increased participation and co-operation among learners.

Teachers often feel that group work is noisy and disorganised, and that no real learning takes place when they divide learners into groups. We hope that this umthamo helped you to design an interactive task with a clear purpose, so that each learner had a role to play in her/his group, and was actively involved in the learning process. We hope that you were able to use some of the ideas on how to group your learners, and that you felt that your skills in handling group work were developing. Above all, we hope that you *enjoyed* the group work lesson that you organised!

We look forward to hearing about your lessons in the face-to-face sessions, and from your abaKhwezeli.

Later imithamo in this strand will take you deeper into the concept of “learner-centredness”, and give you a chance to explore ways of using the learner’s world as a resource for learning.



Activity 5.1

Look back at the outcomes at the very beginning of this umthamo (They are re-printed below.). Do you think you have achieved these outcomes? On a piece of paper, answer “Yes” or “No”, and give a reason for your answer if you need to. Remember to head the paper, and to add it to the other pages in your concertina file.

Can you:

- Plan an activity involving small group work?
- Organise and implement the activity?
- Critically evaluate what happened and why it happened?

APPENDIX

READING 3: WAYS OF GROUPING LEARNERS

This reading consists of extracts from an article written by a teacher of English to adults. It gives ideas on different ways of forming groups in the classroom.

Fighting the territorial imperative: some ideas for allocating groups and pairs

Bruce Pye is head of the English Department of the City of Nuremberg Institute of Adult Education. He is involved in teacher training at local, regional, federal and state level, as well as teaching. He is co-author of 'On the Way' (Klett Verlag forthcoming).

Recent years have seen much discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of pair work and group work in the language class. Whilst many teachers of traditional frame of mind undoubtedly still need convincing, it is probably true to say that for the majority of teachers today, especially of adults, pair and group practice have become part of their established methodology. Nevertheless, even the most convinced and enthusiastic teachers will encounter problems with organising pairs and groups. This article concentrates on one such problem - getting the students into pairs or groups before they actually start on the task.

Neighbours

The most common strategy for allocating pairs or groups is to ask the students to work with their immediate neighbours in the class. The advantages of this procedure are speed, ease and minimal 'disruption' of the class; one or two students may have to move, but most will stay in the same place. The disadvantage is that students have a limited number of immediate neighbours (two with a horseshoe or similar seating arrangement, three or four with groups of tables), so there are a limited number of other students with whom they will come into contact. As students tend to sit in the same place every week this disadvantage becomes more apparent the longer the course goes on. Indeed, considerable problems may arise - some students grow to resent always having to work with a person they don't much like or who is much 'better' or 'worse' than they are, others form cliques and will not co-operate with other class members. Clearly this basic format needs variation: students must move so that they work with everyone else in the group.

My students won't move

At this point a further problem arises: "My students don't like to move." It seems to be a fact of life that in any group of adults which meets regularly for any purpose whatever and sits down, the group members lay claim to their own seats ...

Quite basic feelings of security seem to be involved in this behaviour. For this reason it is not a good idea for the teacher simply to ask student A to go and work with B, C to work with D, etc. Whilst they may fully agree with the teacher that it is a good idea to talk to other people in the class, most students in the position of A or C will feel imposed on when asked to move. Moreover, they will be performing the task 'away' while B and D enjoy home advantage. When teachers ask students to move like this, be it with all the charm and reasonableness they can muster, it is unlikely that they are helping students overcome their natural inhibitions. Actually they are beating them down by virtue of their authority: the student does not want to move but he wants even less to disappoint or disobey the teacher. It is better if the teacher can motivate the student in such a way that he can forget his misgivings. Partner-finding activities can help here.

Find your partner

The procedure is as follows: give each student a small card with, say, a time of day on it (clock face or numbers). Tell the students that another member of the group has an identical card; they must find this person by asking questions. They are not allowed to show the card to the others or to shout out what is on it. When they have found the matching card they have found their partner for the next activity. The pair should then sit down together (preferably on the nearest two chairs). You will then tell them what they have to do, if you haven't told them already. The first time or two you do this make sure the students know they are looking for their partner for the next bit of work, otherwise some pairs will split again and go back where they came from. If the next phase involves the book, it is a good idea to have students take books, pens, etc. with them when they move. This encourages them to sit down and get on with it and means that the tables are less cluttered and not obviously 'taken' - you want the whole classroom to become 'safe territory' for everybody.

Allocating groups

The same principles as for partner-finding can also be used for allocating groups Once your class is used to moving around and working with different people in this way, it actually becomes much easier to allocate groups and pairs by request. An easy way to allocate groups whilst ensuring that immediate neighbours are in different groups is to count students off 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 1 - 2 - etc. round the class and to put all the 1's together, the 2's together and so on. After a break in the lesson you can simply ask students to go and work with someone they have not worked with for some time, or even to form their own groups.

(from: *MET Volume 10 No 4 Summer 1983*)

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Van de Griendt. 1997. *Unpublished paper submitted for Diteme tsa thuto course.*

"The classroom ethos in which collaboration can flourish is one where there is a consistency in the way in which teachers deal with issues related to classroom management and with matters relating to learning. Ways of working with groups as well as ways of learning in groups need to be the subject of negotiation between the teacher and the pupils. A powerful element in this negotiation process is the development of a shared understanding about the feelings generated by the requirement to collaborate with one's peers and an awareness that these feelings are responsible for certain kinds of behaviour when working in group settings."

*(Group Work in the Primary Classroom -
Maurice Galton & John Williamson.
1992. London:Routledge)*