

# Educational Implications of Group Dynamics

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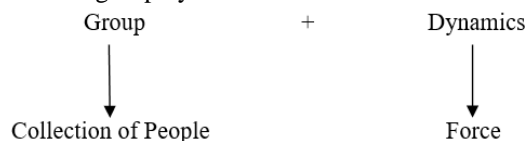
**Abstract:** Group dynamics is concerned with the study of techniques and procedures for affecting the structure of behavior of a social group. Thus in group-dynamics changes are brought in the behavior pattern of its members. Groups have an attribute that can affect its structure, objectives and activities. If a change takes place in favors of one aspect, it also affects other aspects. The change occurring in a group is called by the name of dynamic. A good teacher always keeps an eye on factors affecting group dynamics for better development of the personality of his students. The paper focuses on the educational implications of group dynamics.

**Keywords:** Group Dynamics, Educational Implications.

## 1. Introduction

Group have an attribute that can affect its structure, objectives and activities if need be. If a change takes place in favors of one aspect, it also affects other aspects. The change occurring in a group is called by the name of dynamic. Kurt Lewin was the first person who worked scientifically and popularized the term Group dynamics around 1930. He established the Centre for Research on Group Dynamics in 1945. This centre studies the group dynamics with a view to understand the dynamics of group and, made investigation is the field of group goals, group decisions, group cohesiveness, group integration, group standard and norms etc.

The terms group dynamics consists of two words:



## 2. Meaning of Group

By group we mean any collection of human beings who are brought into social relationship with one another. Group formation becomes more active if the interest of members of group become common. Group is not a mere collection of people but it is a social unit of interacting personalities who think, feel and act together and who have some common aims, interests, stimulations, emotions and loyalties.

### 1) Meaning of Dynamics

The term 'Dynamics' is derived from a Greek word, which

means 'force'. A phrase group dynamics refers operating in a group.

### 2) Group Dynamics

The word 'Group Dynamics' refers to the forces operating in a group. It invades the area of changes that take, place within the group(s) due to operating forces in that group: 'Group Dynamics' implies an interactive psychological relationship in which group members develop a common perception based on shared feelings and emotions. In simple words, Group Dynamics is the study of the forces exerted by the group on the individual or by the individual on the group. Group dynamics is concerned with the study of techniques and procedures for affecting the structure of behavior of a social group. Thus, in group-dynamics changes are brought in the behavior pattern of its members. Group dynamics implies changes that take place within groups. It is a field of inquiry dedicated to advancing knowledge about the nature of groups, the laws of their development and their inter-relations with individuals, other groups and larger institutions. It can also be defined as a system of behaviors and psychological processes occurring within a social group (intragroup dynamics), or between social groups (intergroup dynamics). The study of group dynamics can be useful in understanding decision-making behavior, tracking the spread of diseases in society, creating effective therapy techniques, and following the emergence and popularity of new ideas and technologies. Group dynamics are at the core of understanding racism, sexism, and other forms of social prejudice and discrimination. These applications of the field are studied in psychology, sociology, political science, epidemiology, education, social work, business, and communication studies.

In the context of education and educational psychology we would accept group dynamics as the study of the forces exerted by the group on the individual or by the individual on the group. If a change of membership occurs in a group, certain features of the group will change and certain others will remain stable. Certain factors in a group will bring uniformity of thinking among its group members Group influences the individual i.e., his attitudes, value, beliefs, sentiments, emotions, aspirations character and personality and the individual influences the group.

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### 3. Characteristics of Group Dynamics

The following are the characteristics of group dynamics:

1. Behavior of group members influences and causes a change in the behavior of others.
2. Group implies a sense of oneness, sense of dedication and loyalty, sense of limitation and sympathy etc.
3. Group members have common goals, interests and values.
4. Each group has its own norms, customs, traditions and rules.
5. Ties of mutual obligation bind the members of the group with each other.
6. Group goals, group policy and group characteristics influence the members of that group.
7. Group has always an inner strength with an objective that constitutes a challenge to the group.

#### 1) Factors in Group Dynamics

Following factors generally affects group dynamics (Fig.1) A good teacher always keeps an eye on these factors for better development of the personality of his students.

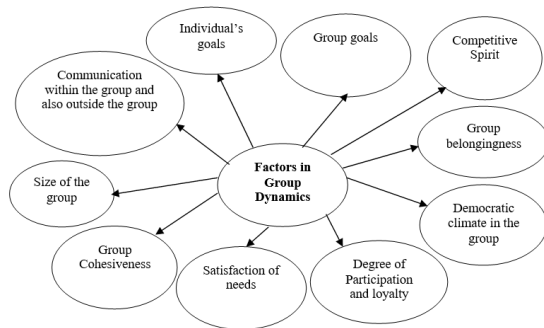


Fig. 1. Factors in Group Dynamics

1. *Individual goals and group goals:* All groups have some goals. Individuals voluntarily join groups because personal goals can be satisfied in the group. Before a child enters the class-room, goals have been formulated by curriculum design. Those who do not accept the goals will exclude themselves from the group. It happens in the cases of problem children, dropouts and who are expelled from school. For example, goals should be modified so that more pupils would accept them. Having a distinctive and modified goals serves to attract the group people.
2. *Cohesiveness:* The term cohesiveness refers to the degree to which the members of a group desire to remain in the group. A group is said to be cohesive when it is bound together by common goals, when the backgrounds of members are similar and when the group remains intact despite changing conditions. The members of a highly cohesive group, in contrast to one with a low level of cohesiveness, are more concerned with their membership and are therefore more strongly motivated to contribute to the group's welfare, to advance its objectives, and to participate in its activities. Factors influencing cohesiveness are:

- i. *Goals:* Goals are a factor in cohesiveness. Commonly accepted goals contribute to cohesiveness, but cohesiveness makes more probable the acceptance of group goals.
  - ii. *Size of the group:* The size of the group influences cohesiveness. Size of the group must be large enough to present diversity of views and small enough to allow for the participation of all members.
  - iii. *Communication:* Group cohesiveness is also dependent upon effectiveness of sub-unit communication. Socio-metric groupings increase group solidarity and the members feel comfortable with one another.
  - iv. *Participation and loyalty:* A greater degree of participation in group activities increases cohesiveness.
  - v. *Competition:* Spirit of interpersonal competition should be inculcated in the pupils, as we are living in the age of competition. It will help them in meeting the exigencies of life.
3. *Democratic procedures:* The successful group action is influenced by democratic procedures – maximum involvement and participation of members in group activities and in the determination of objectives, encouraging and reinforcing interpersonal contacts and relations respecting for the individual specialist, using technique of persuasion, warmth and affection.
  4. *Need Satisfaction:* Group action is dependent for success on the existence of common needs.
  5. Tuckman later added a fifth stage for the dissolution of a group called adjourning. (Adjourning may also be referred to as mourning, i.e. mourning the adjourning of the group). This model refers to the overall pattern of the group, but of course individuals within a group work in different ways. If distrust persists, a group may never even get to the norming stage.

#### 2) Tuckman's Stages of Group Development (Fig. 2)

The Forming-Storming-Norming- Performing model of group development was first proposed by Bruce Tuckman in 1965, who maintained that these phases are all necessary and inevitable in order for the team to grow, to face up to challenges, to tackle problems, to find solution, to plan work, and to deliver results. This model has become the basis for subsequent models.

#### 3) Forming

The team meets and learns about the opportunities and challenges, and then agrees on goals and beings to tackle the tasks. Team members tend to behave quite independently. They may be motivated but are usually relatively uninformed of the issues and objectives of the team. Team members are usually on their best behavior but very focused on themselves. Mature team members being to model appropriate behavior even at this early phase. The forming stage of any team is important because the members of the team get to know one another, exchange some personal information, and make new friends. This is also a good opportunity to see how each member of team works as

an individual and how they respond to pressure.

#### 4) *Storming*

Tolerance of each team member and their differences should be emphasized; without tolerance and patience the team will fail. This phase can become destructive to the team and will lower motivation if allowed to get out of control. Some teams will never develop past this stage; however, disagreements within the team can make members stronger, more versatile, and able to work more effectively as a team. Supervisors of the team during this phase may be more accessible, but tend to remain directive in their guidance of decision-making and professional behavior. The team members will therefore resolve their differences and members will be able to participate with one another more comfortably. The idea is that they will not feel that they are being judged, and will therefore share their opinions and views. Normally tension, struggle and sometimes arguments occur. This stage can also be upsetting.

#### 5) *Norming*

In this stage, all team members take the responsibility and have the ambition to work for the success of the team's goals. They start tolerating the whims and fancies of the other team members. They accept others as they are and make an effort to move on. The danger here is that members may be so focused on preventing conflict that they are reluctant to share controversial ideas.

#### 6) *Performing*

By this time, they are motivated and knowledgeable. The team members are now competent, autonomous and able to handle the decision-making process without supervision. Dissent is expected and allowed as long as it is channeled through means acceptable to the team. Supervisors of the team during this phase are almost always participating. The team will make most of the necessary decisions. Even the most high-performing teams will revert to earlier stages in certain circumstances. Many long-standing teams go through these cycles many times as they react to changing circumstances. For example, a change in leadership may cause the team to revert to storming as the new people challenge the existing norms and dynamics of the team.

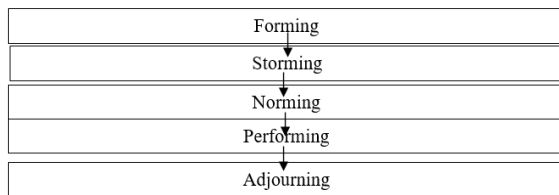


Fig. 2. (Stages of Group Development, Bruce Tuckman)

#### 7) *Learning or Educational Implication of Group Dynamics*

Group dynamics is an educational method which is being specially attempted these days. Its aim is neither to produce leaders nor to find ways in which a person can get work done by a group. Its purpose is to promote democratic activities. It is based on the assumption that only those persons can help in social progress who have learnt to make a most precious sacrifice for the welfare of the people and prepared to do the same. It is also supposed that qualitative as well as quantitative

individual differences in the abilities of persons are present. Every member of the group takes active part in the activities of the group. It is for this reason that the total work done by a group is more than the sum of work done by them individually. With its very nature, functioning and utilization the mechanism of group dynamics can prove a valuable asset and boon in the field of learning and education in the manner given below:

1. The techniques used in Group Dynamics are such in which there is little mutual conflict. Conflict hinders in the proper working of group because it does not allow defining and having independent thinking for solving the problem. When we think alone we tend to accept our own thoughts. On the other hand when we express our own thoughts before a group, we have to give reasons for the way we think. With the help of this type of experience we come to know those thoughts and feelings of a member about which we did not know earlier. We learnt to think by paying more attention to facts and aims. It may not appear to be good in the beginning but exchange (give and take) is good for us.
2. On account of the proper utilization of the mechanism of group dynamics, when the members of a group develop familiarity and closer, the feelings of enmity decrease and may even come to an end. Not only this, their place is taken up by new feelings of respect for others and other persons too start thinking about us in good terms. In this way group dynamics teaches us to solve with the help of others, the problems the group is facing. More work is accomplished through cooperative learning in a group than done individually. This is the major contribution of the proper handling of the mechanism of group dynamics in a learning process whether organized in a formal classroom situations, project work or other off campus activities.
3. The mechanism of group dynamics may also serve the purpose of education and teaching-learning objectives by providing proper knowledge and feedback of the utilization of the process of group dynamics, on the part of the well-wishers of the children. By the study of group dynamics, parents, teachers and counselors become able to guide and lead the children in a better way in all the group situations of learning and behaving. On one hand, group dynamics make them cautious to keep proper consideration of the individual differences and specific abilities of the students and on the other hand it makes them utilize the techniques of group dynamics for making the children work in the group despite wide variations and differences in abilities and learning potentials for the ultimate realization of the individual as well as group learning objectives.
4. Group dynamics has another useful learning and educational implication in the fact that it helps in the proper organization and functioning of variety of formal and informal groups responsible for the learning and education of the children like school,

classroom, laboratory workshop, excursion or field trips etc. It is possible for the very reason that in its all forms Group dynamics pays attention to the questions concerned with dynamics of group life. It tells us what are the different centripetal and centrifugal forces that try to change the structure of the group? How does an influential member or a leader bring change in the composition or working of the group? What are the pressures that a group may exert in bringing uniformity of thinking, feeling and acting among its members? If a change of leadership occurs in group which other features of the group will change and which will remain stable? What changes in group encourage creatively or heighten productivity? In what conditions does democratic structure of the group change into an autocratic one or vice versa? In what respect the group structure and behavior is influenced, if there is change in the size of the groups or in the objective of the groups?

In this way there are a number of questions that related to the enquiries made about the possible changes in the group life on account of some variations, interactions, inner communication and pressures that are experienced with the group or exercised by other groups or factors outside the group general it tries to answer the following types of questions related with the change that take place without the group.

1. What kinds of groups tend to change?
2. Under what conditions do they change?
3. What is the direction of changes likely to be?

By imparting the answer of such questions and presenting a body of information and knowledge, Group dynamics, thus, aims to make the educational groups serve believe ends and bring dynamics changes in them in order to attempt their legitimate goals related to better learning and education to the students.

Supported by the appropriate techniques of group dynamics the educational groups, whether formal or informal may play their effective role in helping the students in the realization of the aims and objectives related to bringing desirable behavioural changes in the cognitive, conative and affective domains of the behavior. Thus apart from the development of academic skills and acquisition of academic success, "group dynamics techniques', as A.I. Gates (1946) emphasizes, "are capable to offer the best means available for the development of social skills essential for democratic living, better social understanding and preparing the individual members of the group for democratic citizenship".

In this way, it can be safely concluded that knowledge, skills and attitude formed through the mechanism of group dynamics among the learners, parents, teachers, educational administrators and counselors are certainly going to effect the process of learning, direction and education of the children in a better way in the benefit of the individual learners as well as the class and school as a social group.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper presented an overview of Educational Implications of Group Dynamics.

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