

Some Things that Influence Groups Dynamics

Group learning can involve knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The group dynamic is concerned with how the members of the group interact with each other and it can take on its own identity. Factors affecting the group dynamic include:

- The **individual members**, personalities, learning styles (activists are active and reflectors are quiet) personal comfort, emotional status and their experience of previous groups.
- The **group itself**, the numbers, the stage of the group life that they are at.
- The **classroom environment**, physical effects, size, chairs, seating arrangements.
- The **facilitator**, the position that facilitator sits within the group, the skills of the facilitator and the facilitative style being used at the time.

Stages in the life of a group

Tuckman's model comprises several stages when group members are:

Forming – Conform, hide emotions, superficial relationships, find out about each other, depend on leader for what has to be done

Storming – Emotions expressed, listening deteriorates, outsiders rejected, competition, fragmentation, sub-leaders, factions, personal freedom v group authority

Norming – Flexible & accept change, conflict worked through & resolved, listening, asking opinions, helping each other, commitment to leadership, some compromise of personal freedoms, personal norms replaced by group norms

Performing – Pride in task and group, individual commitment, everyone involved, direct talking, support & challenge, productive, decisive, group develops a sense of itself as a culture

Informing – Group communicates with outside world, communicates with other groups, considers the group's future

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Adjourning ... Mourning

Freeman's model of group life stages: infancy, adolescence, adulthood

Heron's model: winter, spring, summer, autumn (harvesting the good work done in the group)

The stages do not necessarily progress in order, and groups may return to a previous stage.

The style that the facilitator adopts can be very influential. For example in the early stages of a group the facilitator needs to be more authoritative; the group will become anxious if the facilitator adopts an autonomous style. Later, the facilitator can encourage the group to develop by adopting a more relaxed style, with the group taking responsibility for its own development.

Some Facilitator Interventions

The Facilitator needs to pay attention to the group processes of:

- 1 task
- 2 process
- 3 support for individuals

Heron's three modes of authority and power

The Facilitator can use different styles of authority:

- Hierarchy: "I decide"
- Co-operation: "We decide"
- Autonomy: "You decide"

It is best to vary the style according to the stage the group is at.

The Facilitator can intervene by:

- 1 **Saying** something (see below)
- 2 **Doing** something (stand up, alter posture, hand gesture, eye contact, etc)
- 3 **Change** the group process (new task, have a break, ask someone to do a task, etc)

Heron's Six Categories of Intervention

This is a list of some useful ways the facilitator can help the group process.

Authoritative	Facilitative
Prescriptive - Giving advice/direction <i>"I think it's important that we talk about X today"</i>	Cathartic - expressing emotions <i>"Some of you seem reluctant to approach it in this way. Help me understand how you feel."</i>
Informative - providing information <i>"In such cases, you can do X and Y, I'll tell you more about them."</i>	Catalytic - exploring, drawing out and eliciting self-discovery/problem-solving <i>"I can see your difficulty with this. Can you remember a time it went well? Tell me more. Anything there can help us here?"</i>
Confronting – challenging <i>"I notice you are avoiding talking about..."</i>	Supportive - validating, affirming worth and value of the other person <i>"It sounds like you handled that in a mature professional way. I can see it wasn't easy."</i>