

Activity 6
Report of Group Work Sessions

MODEL GROUP WORK REPORT: AN EXAMPLE

Report of Working with a Group of Students

Introduction

I was placed for my field work in a well-known co-educational public (private) Senior Secondary School. In the school, all the students of IX had Special Activity Period of **one** hour. As **part** of my assignments, I was allocated 14 students of class IX all girls, and told by my supervisor that I was free to devise **any** programme for the group.

The First Meeting with the Group: Wednesday

Venue: Playground Duration: One Hour

As some other group was using the classroom. I told the group members to **gather** under a tree in the play field. They agreed and in a short time we all were sitting **under** a tree.

I introduced myself as a social worker, placed under Mrs. B – their School Social Worker, for one academic year. I confirmed from them that they were aware of the existence of **the** School Social Worker in their school. I then asked their names and wrote them in my diary. The **names** of the members were:

- | | |
|-----------|--------------|
| 1) Nisha | 8). Aarti |
| 2) Jia | 9) Tanushree |
| 3) Shikha | 10) Bharti |
| 4) Renu | 11) Sanya |
| 5) Meena | 12) Priya |
| 6) Adeepa | 13) Shuchi |
| 7) Taruna | 14) Suman |

I carried out a brief conversation, learning about their family backgrounds. I **learnt** that eight students **had** one or both of their parents working in jobs while the rest (six) were from **business** families. Four of the business families were joint families, with two or more **married** brothers staying together. Two students, whose parents were in jobs, lived with their paternal grand parents.

I told them that they were free to plan some activity of their interest for **one** hour. They looked confused and kept quiet. Then Nisha asked, "Can we study in this period?" I asked the others, "Is that **what** you want to do in this period?" Most of them shook their head, a little **uncertainly**. I told them that I had considered taking up activities of their personal interest that they could **do** together in this **small** group. Shikha asked **me** whether I meant games or art sessions. I said that they could **consider** these also. **She** suggested that they play Dumb Charades. The group agreed, **They made** three teams and began to play, acting out words and asking the other teams to guess the right word. Two of the teams fared badly and they soon lost interest.

Before closing the meeting, I asked them **whether** they would be willing to try out an activity of my choice in the **next** class. They agreed. We dispersed, deciding to **meet** at the **same** place on the **next** field work day, that is, on Friday.

Observations

- 1) Members belonged to the **same** class and, therefore, were **friendly** with each other in a general way.

- 2) They were confused as to the purpose of the present period.
- 3) Most of the members tended to remain non-responsive and passive.
- 4) There was absence of interaction with each other, except among a few pairs.
- 5) Members seemed to have 'accepted' the worker and were willing to let her introduce new activities of her choice.

Future Plans

- 1) To introduce activities which
 - a) generate interactions among the members
 - b) provoke thoughts and encourage sharing of views in a non-threatening atmosphere
 - c) facilitate reflection, analysis and sharing of views and feelings on topics which were relevant to them, like understanding self, interpersonal relationships, leadership and team-work, etc.
 - d) facilitate development of rules of conduct within the group meetings.
- 3) To help the group take charge of their group meetings.
- 3) As the members are teenagers, to maintain my role as that of a facilitator rather than that of a leader or a teacher.

Second Meeting

Day: Friday

Venue: Playground

Duration: One Hour

No. of Members Present: 13

The Session

I reached the field, the usual venue of the session, but found no member. Puzzled, I went towards the classroom. Priya at once came to me and said, "Ma'am, our classmates are very bad. They have made my friend Tanushree cry". At my enquiry, she explained that Sanya purposely omitted Tanushree's birthday from the Bulletin Board of the class.

When I reached the classroom, there was heated argument going on. Sanya was crying and Tanushree was accusing her loudly. Girls were divided, some supporting Sanya and some Tanushree. I pointed out that the name of Tanushree could be added now. Sanya was angry because Tanushree had complained to the class teacher. I got both of the girls to see that it was really a minor point. Tanushree agreed to say sorry to Sanya and the teacher and Sanya apologized for having missed out Tanushree's name. I then asked whether we could start with our session. They agreed to move to the field.

I introduced the activity "Understanding Oneself and Others". Members were asked to recall what made them happy. After a few minutes of individual thinking, they were asked to sit in groups of three/four and share their thoughts and feelings about what gave them happiness or satisfaction. Shikha took over the task of forming groups, which apparently were based on her knowledge of who were friends. As such, the sharing and discussion was lively and frank. The three groups gave the following group responses:

- Studying hard and scoring good marks
- Helping the needy
- Meeting their mother after more than half a day at school.

their choice. After the 'voting', it was found that the majority wished to talk about 'friends' but some votes indicated the desire for talking about their future'. I asked Aarti whether it was acceptable to her and she consented to follow the group decision.

I suggested that they form two groups, selected at random. They picked up slips with names and formed two groups. I offered two themes to work on: 'friends' and 'career options for girls' and asked if it was alright. Shikha said that would be good because the two groups would then have different things to talk about.

I asked them to choose the topic. There was silence for a while. Both groups looked at one another. The first group with Tanushree chose the theme of 'friends'. The other group agreed to discuss 'careers'. I then told them to select their leaders. In the first group, Nisha recommended Shikha's name as the leader. Tanushree made a face but as others agreed to the suggestion she kept quiet. In the second group, Aarti suggested that Sanya should represent them and all the members agreed..

The two groups were given 20 minutes to discuss the issue and then share their views in the larger group. I pointed out to them that for fruitful discussions it was a good practice to establish some ground rules right in the beginning. All the members kept silent. I told them that they could decide that every member would have to express one's opinion and that they could formulate some procedure to ensure that. The two groups could have their own rules.

The two groups sat in circles in two parts of the field but close to each other. The group discussing 'careers' started off immediately. Sanya told the group that each member would speak briefly by turn. The discussion, she said, could take place after everyone had spoken. The members nodded their acceptance of her instructions. In the group on 'friends', there were heated arguments as to who would speak first or for how long. Tanushree said that the theme was her suggestion and therefore she should open the discussion. Nisha pointed out that as Shikha was the leader, she should begin. I intervened and suggested that they could pull out chits to select the name of the speaker. That seemed to sort out the difficulty and the members started talking about the topic.

The groups occasionally found themselves stuck, not knowing how to proceed. I kept moving around and put in a word or a pointer to help move the discussion on additional or new dimension. After I noticed that discussions were becoming forced. I suggested them to come in the larger group although there was still some time left from the allotted period.

I asked the members how did they feel during this activity. Shikha said, "Ma'am, the groups were not properly formed. All the members were not speaking or they could not speak properly." I said to her group members, "What do you have to say to Shikha's comment?" Suman said (a little defensively I felt), "Ma'am, it is the first time I have spoken in the group. But I felt happy being a part of this activity." I asked the others about their experiences during the activity, Taruna said, "We had thought that we were talking about our friends – classmates or girl friends. Some of our group members started talking about boyfriends. I didn't like that. I don't like talking about these things. If my parents got to know that we were talking about boyfriends, I shall be scolded." Tanushree and Nisha immediately commented that there was nothing to be ashamed of talking about boyfriends. They were grown up and there was nothing wrong in liking boys. I asked the other group that even if they had not discussed the theme of 'friends', they could tell their views now and we could talk about 'careers' during the next session. Priya said that all the boys in their class were not decent. Some of them were 'cheap' and passed 'dirty comments'. She felt that having boyfriends was not necessary. Jia agreed with Priya but said that some of the boys were nice and she didn't mind talking with them. In fact, she added, boys like Bharat were intelligent and she discussed her problems in Matlis with them, particularly with Bharat. Meena whispered something in Renu's ears. I pointed out that whispering in the group was not correct. At my insistence she acknowledged that the class felt that Jia was a particular friend of Bharat. Jia started to speak angrily but I intervened that the purpose of the group activity was to get an opportunity to discuss an issue that they could relate to. Everyone was free to express but it did not mean that the speaker

should be ridiculed. I said that we should, in the group sessions, agree to say things frankly but not to hurt anyone. I mentioned to Jia that what Meena said was related to the subject on which the discussion was about. Meena nodded, looking relieved. I asked the group whether they believed that they should not talk to the boys of their class just because they are boys. Tanushree said, "Ma'am, it is our parents who tell that the girls should not mix with boys." Adeepa said, "Girls also act differently when they are with boys. Nidhi, who is my friend, ignores me when she is with boys."

I said that there were reasons why girls and boys started 'noticing' each other at a particular age, the teenage. There were further reasons why parents felt that there was need to keep girls separate from or not too close to the boys. Sanya commented that if parents were concerned about keeping girls separate, why did they send them to a co-educational school. I said that it was an important observation and perhaps needed further thought. I commented that we were generating too many issues without getting any answers and how did they feel about it. Aarti said that she felt happy about the whole thing. It was the first time that they were able to talk about these things freely. Suman, Bharti and Shuchi felt that they had spoken for the first time in the group. In the class activities, only a few of the more active and bold ones participated. I expressed my satisfaction at their finding the sessions useful. I pointed out that we had missed discussing the experiences of the second group. Sanya said that it was all right and that they could discuss those things in the next session.

Observations

- The activity gave an opportunity to make members conscious of need for formulating norms of conduct. Democratic decision making process was introduced.
- Sanya manifested leadership qualities by setting norms in clear terms and commanding obedience. Shikha, speaking as the leader, pointed out the importance of members' skills with regard to the activity and need to form the groups keeping these in mind.
- I had to play an active role in managing conflict, though not very serious; in assisting the members set rules for performance, rules for expression of feelings and giving and receiving feedback.
- The group members were beginning to 'accept' each other
- The school atmosphere made it easier for the worker to get her 'suggestions' obeyed and maintain an appreciable degree of order in the activity. The members saw her as one of the 'teachers', albeit friendly, non-threatening and not oriented to disciplining. I recalled that in the community placement last year, I had tough time asserting my authority as a group leader in a group of adolescent girls of roughly the same age range.
- I wonder whether it was ethical my leaving the group members with so many questions without giving them opportunity for resolving some of the doubts. The members, however, seemed to welcome the very opportunity for having talked about these concerns and feelings.

Future Plans

- 1) To get the feedback of the discussion – content and the process – in the second group

Session 4

Wednesday

(Missed the sessions due to an assignment in the College. Therefore was meeting the group after a fortnight)

Venue: The Field

Duration: One Hour

Members Present: 12 (Adeepa and Renu were absent)

I reached the field a few minutes late as I had to give some message to Mrs. B. There was a lot of pleasurable excitement among the members. Sanya told me that they had been asked to prepare role-plays on any topic. There was going to be a competition with the students of the other section of IX class. Priya complained that they had been waiting for me for so many days. I explained the reason of my absence and clarified that I had sent the message to Mrs. B and hoped that she told them. Bharti said that they had been told about my absence but the only thing was that they missed me and their sessions with me. I told them that I was happy that they enjoyed their group sessions and asked as to what were they going to do about the role-play. Shikha said, "Ma'am, I had suggested that we could act out the points discussed by the other group on 'careers'". I appreciated Shikha's idea and asked the group about it. Sanya said that she agreed to Shikha's suggestion and her group was willing to develop the script. Shikha said that it was a matter of the entire group's prestige and they had to give tasks according to members' expertise. Jia agreed to this and added that they could divide tasks and give responsibilities to members according to their choice or skill. Shikha asked as to who could prepare the script. I intervened to suggest that they could first clarify their thoughts and solutions of the issues before these were presented in the form of a role-play.

Sanya said that they had good discussion last time in which every member had spoken about their views or feelings. The most of the group members felt that choosing careers for girls was as important as for boys. There were a couple of members like Shuchi and Meena who had reservations about a career for girls. According to them, girls had to ultimately get married and look after the family and domestic chores. Talking about 'fancy' careers and getting into competitive world was unnecessary. Others, of course, disagreed and maintained that girls could and should take up vocations of their choice. Aarti said that in extreme cases girls could take up vocations, which could be taken up along with domestic responsibilities. She gave example of her aunt who switched from a 9 to 5 office job to a school job as she could avail of vacations.

I pointed out that they had enough material to put into the role-play. Shikha and Sanya asked Jia to take help of Aarti in preparing the script. Tanushree was asked to take up the task of allocating different roles. Sanya told me that Tanushree was very good in dramatics. This pleased Tanushree and she started talking with Jia about the characters needed in the play. Shikha told the others that nobody should fight about the allocations because it was a matter of group's prestige and whoever suited a particular role should be allowed to do so. The others agreed and I watched their deliberations. After the session's time was over, I told them that they could keep working on the role-play and it could be rehearsed in the next session. The group agreed, still talking animatedly.

Observations and Analysis

- Competition did wonders to group's acquiring an identity, and developing group norms.
- The group seemed to have taken over a lot of responsibility of conducting their own sessions.
- Sanya and Shikha emerged as two group leaders with distinct leadership qualities. Where Shikha was more concerned about the task achievement, Sanya attended to the members' interactions and opinions.

Individual members seemed to be getting a sense of satisfaction in belonging to the group. The opportunity for expression, recognition and participation helped them feel good about being part of the group.

- My responsibility of directing the group reduced in proportion to the group's taking it over.

Concluding Comments

The members presented the role-play in the school assembly and were praised for their presentation. The group sessions continued till the end of the year. Total number of sessions conducted during the period

September – December were 10. Beside general discussion on themes like 'interpersonal relationships', study tips, communication, and stress management; following events were organized:

- a) A talk on personal hygiene by a lady doctor (attended by all the girls of IX class. The group members had a follow-up discussion during their sessions.
- b) A talk by an activist on the needs and problems of the physically disabled.
- c) Group members spent the session time playing with students of the Special Education Section of the School.

The Farewell Session

The last session took place just before the winter break. Although I was still continuing my field work in the school, my assignment with the group had ended. I mentioned the same to the group. The group protested to this but I pointed out that I was still available in case they needed me and, in any case, they would soon be having their terminal exams.

I asked them as to how they felt about being members of this group. Each member, shared **how** they had been reluctant or dissatisfied initially and how they gradually enjoyed being together and doing **things** different from any other group in their class. Adeepa said that she had found new friends among the group members. Jia said that they had learnt many new things. Others also nodded happily. I wished them all the best for their exams and life in the future. We shook hands and said goodbye.

Group Work Session 1

