ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of group dynamics in the various tasks of The National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) for music (1996). The objective of this paper is to look at group dynamics from four main areas which have been considered as the most relevant to the focus. These are

1. peer influence in a group setting,

2. spatial arrangements in the group situation,

3. physical characteristics and the musical abilities of the group leaders, and

4. gender of the group members.

A total of one hundred and thirty-five tapes, providing a random sample of ten percent of the entire NEMP sampled population, were viewed. Sixty-eight at Year 4 and sixty-seven at Year 8. These observations were represented in a tabular form before they were analysed according to the four areas noted above.

The main findings of this study were

1) A significant level of group dynamics existed and played a part in determining the results of the NEMP music tasks. However, its importance varied from group to group and also from task to task.

2) The presence of peer influence affected the actions and the musical responses of the group members.

3) The domination of a certain gender in a particular activity depended on the age of the child and the nature of the activity.

4) Spatial factors did affect the actions and the musical responses of the group.

5) A leader did emerge from most of the groups. He/she was not always the most musical child but was almost always the most aggressive or charismatic. Some were good musical leaders while others were not.

6) The TA's attitude and mannerism, the noise in the environment, the level of disruptions present during the performing of the task, the nature of the task itself and the appropriateness of each task to the age group affected the group dynamics.

7) It may be preferable to administer some of the tasks on an individual basis.

The results shown in this study reflect the importance of the group dynamics within the NEMP group and team music tasks and this information will prove to be useful in the administering of future NEMP tasks.