

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Group dynamics

The popularity of the study of group dynamics is largely due to the impetus provided by the work of Kurt Lewin and his students. In fact, Forsyth regarded Lewin as the ‘parent’ of group dynamics. He was the first to use this term to represent “both the powerful processes that influence individuals when in group situations and the study of these processes”.<sup>1</sup> The term *group dynamics* was further refined by Cartwright & Zander as “a field of inquiry dedicated to advancing knowledge about the nature of groups, the laws of their development, and their interrelations with individuals, other groups, and larger institutions.”<sup>2</sup>

Is group dynamics a subfield of sociology or psychology? Forsyth observed that “group dynamics seems to have two sides. To some, the field is sociological, for it focuses on groups of people and how these groups influence and are influenced by societal forces. Others, however, maintain that group dynamics is a profoundly psychological science; the focus is on individuals’ thoughts, actions, and emotions, and these individuals just happen to be in groups rather than alone.”<sup>3</sup> Ivan Steiner however, added a third perspective to this issue. He believes that the study of group dynamics is a combination of both sociology and psychology.

Based on this belief, Steiner derived two ways in which group dynamics can be studied. The first method is termed as the *individualistic approach* and it focused on

the individual in the group. This approach seeks to explain the behaviour of the individual in the group and is keen to find out if social behaviour is truly determined by psychological processes. A contrasting approach is known as the *group oriented approach*. In this approach, “the individual is presumed to be an element in a larger system, a group, organization, or society. And what he does is presumed to reflect the state of the larger system and the events occurring in it”<sup>4</sup> Forsyth agreed with Steiner’s comment that the group-oriented perspective was more applicable to the sociological research while the psychological researchers favored the individualistic orientation.<sup>5</sup>

Shaw however, felt that the real issue of this field is not the roots of group dynamics but rather the proper approach to the analysis of groups.<sup>6</sup> Cartwright & Zander agreed with this view and said that a good analysis of any group should answer four main questions: “(a) What is the proper relation between data collection and theory building? (b) What are the proper objects of study and techniques of observation? (c) What are the basic variables that determine what happens in groups? (d) How can the many factors affecting group life be combined into a comprehensive conceptual system?”<sup>7</sup>

As the study of group dynamics is a relatively new area of research, it is perhaps inevitable that some experts in this field find it hard to agree on certain basic issues. However, as the purpose of this study is to explore the workings of group dynamics in the NEMP for music (1996), it will be appropriate to define group dynamics as a

subfield of sociology and to apply Steiner's individualistic approach to the study of this field.

## **2.2 Peer influence**

Peer influence become more significant as a child grows older. Erikson supported this idea by noting that "the world of peers assumes a position of equal importance to that of adults; peers are needed for self-esteem, and serve as a criteria for the measurement of the boy's or girl's own success or failure, and among them, the child finds another source of extra-familial identification."<sup>8</sup>

Bany and Johnson agreed with Erikson's view. They believed that every group has their own norms which is a kind of peer-group influence. In their opinion, norms can be defined as an evolution from "group interaction and may include customs, traditions, codes, values, standards, rules, fad, and fashions. They are concerned with expected behavior in matters of consequence to the group"<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, "norms are not the behavior itself; rather, they represent what people in groups think behavior ought to be or what they expect it to be."<sup>10</sup>

This opinion is congruent to Bonner's argument that "norms are a regulator of behavior for members of a group."<sup>11</sup> For many children, the fear of disapproval from their peers is a strong motivational factor to conform with the group's norms. These norms may sometimes be against the child's natural instincts. Thus it will be interesting to see the workings of peer influence in the group and team tasks in the NEMP for music (1996).

### **2.3 Spatial arrangement**

Spatial arrangement is found to have an important effect on the quality interaction of a group. Shaw noticed a direct link between seating preferences and self-perception.

He observed that “ persons who perceive themselves to have relatively high status in the group select positions that are in accord with this perception.”<sup>12</sup> This observation is supported by Strodbeck and Hook and Hare and Bales. The latter found that “subjects who scored high on a pencil-and-paper measure of dominance tended to choose the more central seats in the group situation.”<sup>13</sup>

The importance of centrality of one’s position in the group is echoed by Bany and Johnson . They pointed out that “when a person’s position was found to be low in centrality relative to other members of the group, that position was found to be a follower position and there was little opportunity for the member to experience prestige, activity, or self-expression.”<sup>14</sup>

Besides the link with the perceived status of the individual, there is also a close link between spatial arrangements and leadership. The position an individual sits may determine his chances to be a leader in the group. A study conducted by Howells and Becker confirmed this statement. In this study, they found out that “ the spatial position determines the flow of communication, which in turn determines leadership emergence.”<sup>15</sup>

Besides the interperson distance which affects individual and group behaviour, spatial arrangements also affects the communication within a group. Stienzor found that “persons in groups were more likely to interact with others if they could see them as well as hear them.”<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the findings also indicated that “interaction between persons in groups was not only affected by the content of what was said but by such nonverbal factors as gestures, postures, and the total physical impressions that individual made on one another.”<sup>17</sup>

These research proves that spatial arrangement does affect group dynamics to a large extent. Hence, it will be helpful to keep these opinions in the mind while studying the role played by spatial arrangement in the NEMP for music (1996).

#### **2.4 Attributes of group leaders**

Another factor which might have affected the results of the NEMP for music (1996) could be the influence of certain attributes of the group leaders. Ralph Stogdill discovered a close relationship between leadership and weight , height, and measures of physique through extensive studies conducted. He concluded that physically superior men have a slightly better chance of becoming leaders than others. However, he noted that there is no evidence that size is related to the performance of leaders.<sup>18</sup>

As mentioned in chapter I, the children who participated in the group and team tasks of the 1996 NEMP for music attended the same school as their group members. Consequently, there is a possibility that they know each other’s musical ability before taking the test together. Forsyth claimed that the dynamics of a group can be altered

by the emergence of leaders. One of the criteria for leadership listed by him is task abilities. He believed that “possessing skills and abilities that (1) are valued by the other group members or (2) increase the group’s chances for achieving success also gives an individual an edge during leader emergence.”<sup>19</sup> Goldman and Fraas supported the idea that “groups are more accepting of leaders who have previously demonstrated task ability.”<sup>20</sup>

## **2.5 Gender**

The gender of the group members has a large influence on the group dynamics as well. Shaw also noted that “women and men behave differently in groups, and this has important implications for group process. Differences in behavior are usually assumed to be due to role differences imposed upon men and women by the culture in which they live.”<sup>21</sup> Bartol and Martin confirmed this view when his studies revealed that men outnumber women in the leadership.<sup>22</sup> Crocker and McGraw also added that “the lone man in an otherwise all-female group often becomes the leader, whereas the lone woman in an otherwise all-male group has little influence.”<sup>23</sup> The difference in gender behaviour stems from childhood. Mead agreed that “role differences are molded by culture during infancy and childhood”<sup>24</sup>

The difference in gender personality leads to a difference in interaction behaviours. Males are generally stereotyped as aggressive and self-assertive while females are perceived to be more reserved and timid. Reitan and Shaw stated that “...females play a relatively submissive role, whereas men play a relatively dominant role. These

considerations suggest that women should conform to the norms of the groups more than men.”<sup>25</sup>

The groups and teams in the NEMP for music (1996) consist of boys and girls.

Therefore, it will be beneficial to the research to look into the role played by gender and how that affected the group dynamics.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Group dynamics is a new field of study but the literature for it is already extensive.

Some people may argue that it is a subfield of sociology while others may perceive it to be a subfield of psychology. As it is a large field of study, four main areas of concern are included in this study. These are peer influence, spatial arrangement, attributes of group leaders and gender.

## REFERENCES

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