

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Analysis of data

The statistical results obtained from observing a sample of 135 video-tapes of the NEMP tasks, as revealed in Chapter III, showed that group dynamics exerted a significant effect on all the groups studied. Since the group and team activities required the children to work as a group, a significant level of group dynamics can be anticipated. However, it is noted that the extent of the group dynamics differed from group to group and also from task to task.

One of the main aspects of group dynamics is peer influence, and this was found to be happening in all groups. Most of the children observed, tended to follow each other's movements or in some cases, one child took the leadership role. This influence was greater in the group activities - *Musical Sticks*, *Team Machine* and *Beat and Rhythm*.

These three activities required the children to respond to the music with physical movements and it was apparent that their musical responses were significantly influenced by each other's actions. The nature of the tasks required created movements which would directly reflect the children's responses to the music and reveal their musicality.

Although peer influence was also noticeable in the team tasks, the effect was not as strong. The children tended to be more concerned about their individual exploration

of the sounds produced by the percussion instruments than to watch the actions of their peers.

Gender differences is another important element of group dynamics. The extent varied between tasks and the ages of the children. This was shown by the difference in boys' and girls' dominance of the group in the various activities.

At year 4, the boys played a dominating role *Team Machine*, *Line Music* and *Animal Parade* whereas at year 8, they dominated *Musical Sticks*, *Beat and Rhythm*, *Line Music* and *Radical Rhymes*. This difference might be due to the fact that at year 4, the girls were not that conscious of how they would be regarded by the opposite sex and also, they appeared to be less disturbed by the presence of the video recorder in the room. Therefore, they were more spontaneous in their responses to activities like *Musical Sticks* and *Radical Rhymes*, which required them to reveal more of their musicality.

However, the year 8 girls were obviously more conscious of themselves and were more reserved in their actions. These might have curbed their spontaneous responses to certain activities and resulted in the boys dominating these activities. This change of role of gender dominance in different activities at different age groups and tasks was shown clearly in *Musical Sticks* and *NZ Tourism Video*.

Another aspect of group dynamics present in this study was spatial differences. They seemed to be present in all activities except *Musical Sticks* in year 4. Spatial factors included the number of children in a group and the seating pattern of each group.

The seating pattern of each group was interpreted as an indication of their social relationship to each other and the extent they were influenced by each other physically or musically. If the children were sitting in close proximity with the group member(s) whom they felt most comfortable with, they were then categorised as being in a *seating clique*. An example of a seating clique is 4TC S007. G1 and G2 worked as a pair while G3 was ignored most of the time. The results showed that the children at year 4 were in a greater number of seating cliques than the children at year 8 in most activities except for *Line Music* and *Radical Rhymes*.

Leadership was yet another aspect of group dynamics present in this study.

Significant levels of leadership emerged in all activities except *Musical Sticks* and *Beat and Rhythm*. In this study, a child is termed as a *leader* of the group if he or she was able to exert some form of influence either on the actions or on the musical responses of his or her group members.

The results showed that all the leaders had influence on the actions and the musical responses of their group members except the leaders *Musical Sticks*. In this particular task, the children tended to be more focused on their own actions than to be influenced by others in the group.

There were many kinds of leaders which emerged in this study. While most leaders were found to be good musically¹, there were others who were distinctly weak and completely misled the group.² Some leaders were strong and aggressive³, while others were very mild and weak.⁴

Contrary to popular belief that leaders tend to be physically bigger and better in whatever they do, this did not necessarily apply to this study. Not all the leaders were the biggest in the group and as seen earlier, certainly not all of them were the most musically able of the group. In fact, the results seemed to suggest that the quality of a leader was more dependent on personality and charisma than musical ability.

The quality and requirements of a leader in a group depended largely on the nature of the activity. For example, in *Team Machine*, a leader was required to initiate group discussions as the children were expected to be part of a team machine. On the other hand, in an activity like *Beat and Rhythm*, the children mostly followed the instructions on the video and so had little time to look at their peers.

¹ For example, 8GB F010

² For example, 4TB S039

³ For example, 4TB S016

⁴ For example, 8GA F010 and 8TC F007

4.2 Discussion

The teacher administrator (TA) played a key role in affecting the group dynamics within each group. For example, one TA⁵ was strict and even scolded the children while they were interacting thus influencing the dynamics of that group. The atmosphere of this group was at times tense and there was a lack of spontaneity.

On the other hand, some TAs appeared to be friendly and supportive. One⁶ exuded enthusiasm and this came through clearly with the children in her group being more relaxed and freer in their responses. The interaction of this group was enhanced and the children seemed to enjoy carrying out this task. Overall, it was noted that the attitudes and mannerisms of the TA did make a difference in the behaviour and performance of the group.

Other TAs actually participated in the task and thus significantly affecting the results. For example, in one group with only three members⁷, one of the teachers joined in the activity as a fourth group member. This influenced the dynamics of the group very much as the children obviously relied on her as their leader and seemed to follow her musically as well.

Another way the TA had influenced the group behaviour and the musical responses of the group members was by instructing the children on what was to be done. The ideas were provided for the children to a certain extent and this hindered the musical

⁵ 4GB S097

⁶ 4TC S009

⁷ 4GC S010

responses which the group might otherwise have developed. In one instance⁸, the TA encouraged the children to respond to the music and when they delayed in their responses, the TA gave suggestions and provided certain clear instructions on the actions to be done.

In another example⁹, the TA helped to direct the thoughts and ideas of the group by giving the children leading questions and helping them to write down their answers. Moreover, instead of letting the children divide the work among themselves as part of a group interaction process, the TA distributed the tasks to each child. No doubt such TAs meant to help the children. However, by interfering with the interaction process of the group, they actually hindered the role of group dynamics and this influenced the results.

Another way which the TAs had affected the dynamics of a group was when they tried to give the instructions while the instruction video was being played. In such cases¹⁰, when first listening to the music, the children had less opportunity to explore their natural responses. It also minimised the contact between the group members at this stage because they had to pay attention to what the teacher was saying in addition to listening to the music.

The instructions provided by the TAs for each activity ^{with} was also crucial to the overall responses of the task. One example of this was the *Beat and Rhythm* task. Although

⁸ 8GB F031

⁹ 4TB S097

¹⁰ For example, 8GA F005

the TAs had read the same instructions to the groups, some were more vigilant in the carrying out of these instructions.

According to the *Teacher Administrator's Manual* (p.104), the instruction was “When the screen is red - everyone plays the same beat. When it’s yellow, one person plays a rhythm, and the rest of you play the beat.” Most of the children in this activity started by following the demonstration rhythm provided by the instruction video. While some TAs were not bothered by the lack of creativity of the children’s rhythm, some others insisted that each of the rhythms played by the member had to be different from the others.

Due to the different ways this task had been administered, it was very difficult to gauge the creative potential of each child. Therefore, it seems important that instructions be standardised with the TAs before tasks are administered.

As the research method used was observation studies, it was vital that the whole task had to be recorded properly with each child within the range of the camera.

Unfortunately, this was not always the case. Some video-tapes¹¹, did not have all the children in the range of the camera. Some of the recordings¹², had inadequate lighting and were so dark that it was difficult to determine some of the actions and interaction of the children. There were also some video-tapes¹³, which the discussion was not recorded at all.

¹¹ For example, 4GA S005 and 8GA F001

¹² For example, 8GA F005

¹³ For example, 4GA S039

Another factor which had affected the group dynamics of the tasks was the noise of the surrounding. The acoustic environment was very noisy and this made it hard for the group to interact with each other successfully. For example, the noise factor in 8TC F010 meant that the group members needed more effort to pay attention to what was being said.

Sometimes, other TAs administered tasks within close proximity of the task being viewed. On one occasion¹⁴, the group interaction was affected by this factor. The task, *Line Music*, required the children to explore the sounds of different percussion instruments. While the children were experimenting with the instruments, they were stopped by the TA who was administering another task nearby. The awareness that they were not alone in the room inhibited the children's activities. The children were more reluctant to try out the instruments and they appeared to be very conscious of the other people in the room. When the TA told them to keep the volume down, the communication of the group stopped abruptly and this changed the dynamics of the group.

Apart from problems with the acoustic environment, there were also many other types of disruptions. These ranged from other teachers coming into the room while the task was being performed, to a whole class of pupils being brought into the area.

¹⁴ 8TA F003

Another disruptions include one group member leaving the group while the task was being performed.¹⁵ When the members left the group, the group dynamics changed. For example, in 8TA F031, the leader (B2) left the room for a while and during this time, the leadership was momentarily transferred to G2 before returning to B2 again when he came back to the task.¹⁶

The nature of the task itself affected group dynamics. Some required more group co-operation. For example, activities like *Team Machine* and *Radical Rhymes* generated more group dynamics than activities like *Musical Sticks* and *Beat and Rhythm*. The former placed a greater emphasis on group work while the latter required more individual effort.

Some activities seemed to be more appropriate for year 4 than year 8. For example, activities like *Musical Sticks* and *Beat and Rhythm* were enjoyed by children in year 4 but not that much at year 8. Given such activities, the year 8 children looked enthusiastic and bored.¹⁷ On the other hand, activities like *Team Machine* and *Radical Rhymes* seemed to be enjoyed by children at both levels.

Thus, we can see that group dynamics did play a role in the NEMP for music (1996). Based on the results of this study, certain recommendations will be made in the following chapter.

¹⁵ For example, 8GA F099 and 8TA F031

¹⁶ The seating arrangement of this group is G1 G2 B1 B2

¹⁷ For example, 8GC F007