DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 042 705 SP 004 139

AUTHOR Dinkmeyer, Donald
TITLE The "C" Group: Focus on Self As Instrument.
INSTITUTION De Paul Univ., Chicago, Ill. School of Education.
PUB DATE [69]
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.70
DESCRIPTORS *Discussion Groups, *Laboratory Training, *Teacher Education, *Training Techniques
IDENTIFIERS C Groups

ABSTRACT

A new technique for teacher education has been developed in response to the belief that teacher education's number one priority is to be concerned with the emerging self of the teacher trainee. Research on effective teaching has revealed that it is not what the teacher is taught that is the critical factor but the way in which the knowledge and attitudes, beliefs and feelings, are internalized. Thus experiences must be developed which provide students the opportunity to see the relationship between theory, methods, and self, permitting integration of the person. The "C" group model grew out of a need for inservice education with personal involvement and an opportunity to test out new ideas and exchange with colleagues the results of new approaches. The new approach, piloted at Northeastern College (Chicago), was labeled "C" group because many of the factors which make it effective begin with "C": collaboration, consulting, clarifying, confronting, being concerned, caring, and being committed. It differs from "T" group by going beyond focus on the self to application of specific teacher-child procedures. The five to eight voluntary members of a group meet with a professionally trained group leader for periods of at least 1-1/2 hours to provide time to warm up, report results of past commitments, get into new concerns, and permit time to develop new commitments, and evaluate what is happening to them as persons and professionals. (JS)

THE "C" GROUP: FOCUS ON SELF AS INSTRUMENT

Don Dinkmeyer,
DePaul Univ., Chicago

The Setting, the Situation

Research into the helping professions has always been plagued by lack of adequate data defining effectiveness. The search to find the determinants of good teaching has had limited success.

A National Education Association review of all the research available on good and poor teaching was forced to the conclusion that "there is no method of teaching which can be clearly shown to be associated with either good or poor teaching" (Ellena, Stevenson, & Webb, 1961).

The key to nature of effective helping relationships is not to be found in what the helper knows or the method he uses. This has confused and discouraged educational researchers.

A close inspection of teaching reveals the critical nature of communication. The teacher must possess the capacity to respond effectively immediately. Confronted with attention getting behavior, apathy, rebellion, or an unwillingness to try, the teacher must be capable of opening up communication. Creating a climate of openness, trust, and mutual purpose is basic to the teaching task. Obviously, this is not acquired through memorization, but is the function of a person capable of developing a helping relationship.

The teacher is not a dispenser of knowledge, or a walking encyclopedia. If we look at the emphasis placed on factual knowledge, cognitive skills, and academic grades in teacher

education, we might assume a correlation has been established between straight intellectual competence and the ability to facilitate learning. This, despite the fact that we have observed intellectual giants at all levels of instruction, who could not communicate with the potential learner. They knew the material, but could not inspire, motivate, and involve the learner.

At the same time, we have noted teachers who exhibited average scholarship but who had the capacity to stimulate helping relationships which permitted them to transmit this knowledge. They may not have been able to recall for purposes of a test, all of the characteristics of Carl Rogers' Helping Relationship (Rogers, 1961), but more important, they embodied the characteristics as part and parcel of their interaction with students. They became persons who related with students in a manner which increased the possibility of learner involvement in the educative process. In the words of the current generation, there was no "communication breakdown" and the students were "turned on." Their classrooms generated excitement and involvement to the extent that ideas, concepts, feelings, and values replaced the necessity for drugs or any other "prop" to escape boredom and manufacture excitement.

Combs and his colleagues at the University of Florida (1969) recently published the results of ten years of exploration regarding the helping relationship. They hypothesized that the primary tool with which teachers work is themselves. This is referred to as the "Self as instrument" concept. Effectiveness is always a function of the way in which the teacher

combines his knowledge and understanding with his own unique way of using self to be helpful to others.

This, then, explains why research in knowledge, skills, methods, and similar channels has been both confusing and discouraging. Apparently it isn't what the teacher is taught that is the critical factor, but the way in which the knowledge and attitudes, beliefs and feelings, are internalized. We behave on the basis of how we perceive and our perceptions are always a personalized product of our biased apperception. No stimulus comes pure from the professor's pen or lips without being interpreted and translated by the filter of the student's perceptual field.

Thus, knowledge seldom produces change in behavior. Neither the addition or subtraction of courses in educational methodology, the development of fields of special academic competence, or any other surface manipulation has the possibility of/affecting ultimately teacher effectiveness. Instead, we must deal with the meanings and beliefs which are derived because these are the factors which organize perception and influence behavior.

The Comb's studies demonstrated a statistically significant difference between groups of effective and ineffective teachers. The effective group of teachers were more concerned with:

1) internal than external frames of reference.

2) people rather than things, and

3) with perceptual meanings rather than facts.

They were sensitive to the feelings of students, perceived them as persons, not objects to be taught, studied, or analyzed.

They were more concerned with the persons and their reactions than with the material they were presenting.

The effective teachers tended to view themselves as identified with others, capable of solving problems, dependable, and more worthy than unworthy. In simple terms they had developed feelings of adequacy which enabled them to take a courageous approach to the tasks of life. They were not hampered by their own insecurities, doubts, fears, and anxieties which neurologically short-circuited their capacity to be fully functioning persons and professionals. They possessed positive attitudes towards themselves and their potential. They had not been emotionally crippled by society, the culture, or even the mistake-centered classroom which places an emphasis on assessing faults, liabilities, and mistakes.

The effective teachers tended to see others as friendly, well intentioned, and capable of dealing with their problems successfully. This contrasted with seeing people as undependable and sources of discouragement. If one is to perceive others positively, he, himself, must feel wanted, accepted, and valued. This feeling is generated best by the classroom atmosphere in teacher education, but can only be completely enhanced by the type of climate fostered in the therapeutically designed group.

Effective teachers were different from ineffective teachers in their perception of the teaching task. The effective teachers saw the purpose of teaching as one of freeing rather

than coercing or controlling. They emphasized process oriented experiences in contrast to subject matter goals.

Teacher Education and the Emerging Self

If research and theory are to influence practise, teacher education must reconsider priorities. It appears that it is more important to facilitate the education of persons who are able to use self to maximize development, than to consider the content of course experiences. The traits we desire in teachers will not be developed in traditional courses alone. We must become concerned with the obvious, the personality of the teacher. Procedures for building more adequate persons are already known; they must be incorporated into the education of teachers. We have long talked about the whole child. Is it time to recognize the necessity of educating the whole teacher? The teacher must be able to interrelate her attitudes, perceptions, feelings, and values with her developing skills and knowledge. Anything less than an approach that combines the affective and cognitive domains in education will be ineffectual. We will continue to educate teachers who theoretically understand the helping relationship, but have not internalized the concepts so they are part of their behavior. It would seem apparent that they would continue to educate children who know about character, morals, values, creativity, and democracy, but have not experienced them to the extent that they become a functional part of their lives.

I am proposing that teacher education's number one priority is to be concerned with the emerging self of the student preparing for teaching. Experiences must be developed which enable students to encounter themselves, their feelings, attitudes, and perceptions. The opportunity to see the relationship between theory, methodology, and self should permit the opportunity for integration of the person. In some instances it will help the student become aware he is not capable of teaching effectively due to present limitations as a person.

The "C" Group and Teacher Education

Experience with in-service programs for teachers in the schools convinced the author that teachers are not helped significantly through the lecture or discussion approach. There must be personal involvement and an opportunity to test out new ideas, see how they fit with one's personality, and exchange with colleagues the results of new approaches. It was also apparent that the school had unique resources which were not being utilized. There was no organized procedure which encouraged the experienced teacher to help the beginning teacher. Certainly there were few channels for the new teacher to share her ideas with her more experienced colleagues.

Each teacher was an island, rising or falling on the basis of her present capacities. Opportunities for professional growth in education were limited when compared with the sharing procedures developed in other professions. This situation

stimulated the development of teacher groups in a school district. The groups were voluntary and were designed to help the teachers:

1) Develop an understanding of the practical applications of the dynamics of human behavior

2) Acquire an understanding and awareness of self and the teachers role in teacher-child conflict

3) Become acquainted with new ideas, procedures, and to profit from the feedback and values of group thinking (Dinkmeyer & Arciniega, ni)

The group approach to in-service was both effective and attractive to teachers and administrators. The criterion for success was teacher involvement and requests from other teachers to establish additional groups.

The "C" group recognizes a very basic learning principle. If one is to assist another to learn and change, there must be access to the affective and cognitive domains. Feelings, values, and attitudes must be openly revealed and considered when discussing facts, and theory. The dichotomy between one's emotions and intellect, which is often present in learning, could not be permitted. There had to be a combination of the didactic and experiential approach, which enabled the teacher to understand what kept her from functioning more effectively.

The new approach was labeled "C" group because many of the factors which make it effective begin with a "C": collaborating, consulting, clarifying, confronting, being concerned, caring,

and being committed. It is not to be confused with a "T" group in that it goes beyond consideration of the process and self to examination of the transaction between teacher and child and the application of specific procedures. It also confronts the teacher with how her attitudes and feelings may keep her from changing. A process which combines the didactic and experiential approach is thereby achieved.

The specific factors which are components of the "C" group include:

- The group collaborates, works together on mutual concerns.
- The group consults. The interaction within the group helps the members develop new approaches to relationships with children.
- The group clarifies for each member what it is he really believes and how congruent or incongruent his behavior is with what he believes.
- The group confronts. The group expects each individual to see himself, his purposes, attitudes, and be willing to confront other members of the group.
- The group is concerned and cares. It shows that it is involved with both children and group members.
- The group develops a commitment to change. Participants in the group are concerned with recognizing that they can really only change themselves. They are expected to develop a specific commitment which involves an action they will take before the next "C" group to change their approach to a problem.

(Dinkmeyer & Muro, in press)

The "C" group usually restricts itself to 5-8 members to secure maximum participation and involvement. Larger groups do not permit adequate opportunities for interaction. The groups are most effective when they can be scheduled for a minimum of 1-1/2 hour periods. There must be time to warm up, report results of past commitments, get into new concerns, and permit

time to develop new commitments and evaluate what is happening to them as persons and professionals. The setting must permit circular seating and should provide a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere which facilitates trust and openness.

The leader usually begins the first group by clarifying purposes. The participants have been selected from those who understand the objectives of a "C" group and who have a concern, are willing to share it, are committed to personal change, and altruistically desire to help their colleagues. Readiness must be established in the group; it cannot be assumed! It is often helpful to use a group exercise such as Henry Otto's DUE experience (Otto, 1967). This experience encourages members to become better acquainted. They talk about the experiences which have been formative in the development of their personalities, and share what they consider to be the happiest moment of their lives. This experience always stimulates feelings of mutuality, belonging, and caring. Alienation disappears when the members appear as real persons!

The second meeting may begin by going around the group to get a brief description of the kind of situation or child that concerns them most. The leader helps the group start with a problem that is common and can be universalized. The specific behavior of a child is discussed, and the teacher's interaction and feelings are revealed. The group helps the person become more aware of himself by processing feedback regarding his behavior, attitudes, and feelings. New approaches involving behavior modification, logical consequences, and

teacher attitudes are discussed. The ideas are always related to a specific child and discussed in terms of the teacher's capacity to modify her own behavior and attitudes. Eventually the teacher is encouraged to make a commitment about a specific change she will institute before the next meeting. The leader tries to involve as many members as possible in presenting their concerns. Focus is on helping all involved in the group to grow as persons and professionally.

The leader of the "C" group must be trained in group dynamics, group counseling, psychodynamics of behavior problems, and have had supervised experience in leading teacher groups. This is a distinct role in group leadership, and requires skills in structuring the group, utilizing group mechanisms to facilitate group development (Corsini, 1957), being sensitive to feelings and attitudes, the capacity to enable the group to become cohesive, and certainly the ability to help develop specific solutions to behavior or learning problems. The leader does not have to be an expert in child psychology, but he must have expertise in enabling colleagues to help each other.

This general "C" group model has been piloted in the student teaching department at Northeastern College, Chicago, Illinois. Preliminary feedback suggests that it can be a useful tool in facilitating teacher development. Certainly if we are realistic we must recognize the inefficacy of a purely cognitive approach to developing persons who must function in a helping relationship. If the child is to become open, honest, involved, altruistic, and committed to the democratic values, he must

have available teachers who as persons are models for this approach to living, and who also provide him with opportunities to be involved, free from anxiety, perceptive, imaginative, creative, and spontaneous. These personal qualities, acquired in the group, are personally experienced and valued, and hence internalized in the person and the teaching process. It is only the fully functioning person who can meet the current challenges which exist in education.

References

Combs, Arthur W. et al. Florida Studies in the Helping Professions. Gainesville, Fla: University of Florida Press, 1969. University of Florida Monographs, Social Sciences--No. 37.

Corsini, Raymond J. Methods of Group Psychotherapy. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957.

Dinkmeyer, Don and Mike Arciniega. "Affecting the Learning Climate Through Group Consulting With Teachers" unpub.

_____ and James Muro. Group Counseling: Theory and Practice. Itasca, Il.: Peacock Publishing Co., in press. (chap. 10, p. 11-12)

Ellena, W. J., M. Stevenson, and H. V. Webb. "Who's a Good Teacher?" Washington, D.C.: American Association of School Administrators, National Education Assn, 1961.

Otto, Henry. Group Methods Designed to Actualize Human Potential. Chicago: Stone-Brandel Center, 1967.

Rogers, Carl. On Becoming a Person. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1961.