

CHAPTER V

FACILITATION OF HUMAN INTERACTION

According to Flanders (1971):

Good teachers are good because they view teaching as primarily a human process involving human relationships and human meanings... (Flanders, 1971, p. 172).

Certainly, everything a teacher accomplishes is based upon his ability to facilitate and maintain effective human interaction and direct it toward goals.

Bany and Johnson (1970) define facilitation as the managing process of organizing and coordinating the willing efforts of children to achieve their own and educational objectives. Facilitation consists of

...those patterns of teacher activities which assist the group in working out shared objectives, in building internal group unity, and in gaining cooperation for meeting organizational needs and objectives (Bany & Johnson, 1970).

Facilitation depends upon an ability to 1) create the conditions for work, 2) establish behavior standards and discipline, 3) promote effective communication, 4) handle conflict and direct change, and 5) counsel individuals.

Creating Conditions for Work

One of the teacher's first tasks in the classroom is to create the conditions which will enable students to work. Students need: 1) physical materials and tools, 2) freedom

from tension and fatigue, 3) adequate time, 4) social conditions and work organization, 5) emotional security and freedom from threat, and 6) good morale with a sense of positive direction, mutual support, sense of contribution, progress, and challenge. This will require, among other things, consistency, empathy, respect, concreteness, and leadership in resolving conflict, restoring morale, and helping meet and adapt to changes in the environment. If conflict can be handled constructively the process of resolving the conflict can strengthen group cohesiveness and cooperation. Morale must be maintained or otherwise the group compensates. This necessitates direction and action on the part of the teacher.

Student leaders must be utilized effectively also. However, if the teacher tries to assign leaders and give them power, he will isolate them from the group. Natural student leaders have influence because of their ability to represent and meet the needs of their peers. (Ibid.).

The key factor in the creation of all these conditions is the establishment of an emotionally sound climate. Educational settings can have basically four types of climates in terms of the emotional factor: climates of affection, rejection, inconsistency, and over-protection. In a relationship of affection a child:

...learns that he can depend upon others for support

and help. Such a child gains a certainty of his own worth and thus is freed from his own anxiety. He is able to express affection for others and to work to progress toward growth and maturity. In short, his interactions with others confirm and reinforce his conception of his own value, thereby providing himself with a firm feeling of security (Perkins, 1969, p. 112).

In an atmosphere of rejection the child feels uncertain of his own worth and:

...consequently, feels threatened, anxious, and in constant conflict. Burdened by these emotions, he cannot make optimum progress in learning and development and often behaves aggressively. Thus, the child who tries intentionally to hurt others or himself or behave in other ways which are sure to result in punishment is really grasping for crumbs of attention as a substitute for the affection or acceptance he has been unable to secure. Such a child is emotionally crippled: he has simply not learned that he can gain love and acceptance by socially acceptable behavior. (Ibid.)

In a relationship of inconsistency:

On some days the parent (or teacher) may be over-indulgent, generous, and affectionate toward the child; at other times, for no apparent reason, the parent (or teacher) may be critical, punishing, hostile, or rejecting. This inconsistency deprives the child of adequate perceptual cues to the behavior desired of him. Not knowing for sure how this parent (or teacher) will respond to his behavior in any given situation, he becomes anxious and immobile. Although he is loved and valued at times, the overall inconsistency of the treatment he receives from his parents creates within the child an uncertainty and a fear of taking chances - qualities that are inimical to learning and the development of a well-integrated personality (Ibid. pp. 112-113).

Another harmful relationship is produced by over-protection which consists of:

...establishing no firm or realistic limits for their behavior or acceding to their every whim. As a result, they become overdependent and self-centered and gain a distorted perception of their own importance (Ibid. p. 113)

differences, as well as assist the disturbed child to understand his behavior and the consequences. (Ibid. p. 67)

In addition, it should be realized that when children work together face to face, problems are bound to come up no matter how good the group or appropriate the environment. (Ibid., p. 71).

However, the teacher can't ignore a discipline problem. First, a teacher must question whether the problem is an individual or group problem. If the individual gets support from the group, it is a group problem. If the individual gets no support from the group, then there are several questions that can be asked: 1) whose norms is the student deviating from - teacher's or group's? 2) does the deviate perceive the group norm accurately? 3) does he wish to conform but the tolerable behavior desired is too narrow for his skill? 4) are the norms ambiguous so that the person doesn't perceive them accurately? 5) is the individual achieving his goal in the most effective way? (Henry, 1960, p. 160).

Some general principles that help minimize discipline problems are as follows:

1. Construct a clear, functional set of rules that your students understand.
2. Focus more on students who are behaving themselves than on those who break the rules.
3. Arrange your program so that any student can earn

Certainly, then, it is important for a teacher to strive to establish a relationship of affection rather than of rejection, inconsistency, or overindulgence. It is only when the proper emotional tone for work is provided that a teacher can begin to help a class group institute behavior standards and discipline.

Establishing Behavior Standards and Discipline

When a teacher establishes relationships based on behavior standards and discipline can be established. Discipline implies a standard of behavior. Bany and Johnson (1970) define a standard as "...a commonly accepted understanding of what is appropriate behavior in certain specified situations (Bany & Johnson, 1970, p. 177)." Standards are not restrictions on freedom of behavior, but guidelines as to appropriate behavior. The intent of standards is to allow each child the most possible freedom of action for himself without infringing on the rights of others. They provide for an economy of operation and reduce problems. As viewed by Bany and Johnson standards are not a list of prescribed ways of behaving which are punishable if not followed. Instead, they are desirable ways of behaving toward which to work (Ibid.).

In cases of extremely emotionally troubled children, the teacher should take steps to assist the class groups to tolerate and accept the individuals who behave in extraordinary ways. The teacher must enable groups to tolerate

4. Statement and exploration of boundary condition (what cannot be done and what is desirable)

5. Examination of all suggestions on how to meet conditions in the situation.

6. Action commitment on part of class members who must carry out the plan.

7. Daily progress examination which determines effectiveness of plan and which compares plan against actual course of event. (Ibid., p. 189).

If the students have trouble reaching an agreement, the teacher should lead them in:

- 1) listing points of agreement
- 2) listing points of disagreement
- 3) clarifying points of view (perhaps paraphrase)
- 4) asking for an agreement on testing out several plans of action to see what works
- 5) withdraw problem (Ibid., p. 242)

Most important to class group goal attainment is the teacher's skill in helping group members make an accurate analysis of the tasks required and problems involved.if positive work oriented behavior is desired...it is important for the group to have a goal that requires well defined tasks.

Before an action is taken by a group, the teacher must help it determine whether the goal is operational (Ibid., p. 269)

When members have satisfying relations and opportunity to interact, release tensions, form friendships, gain prestige and recognition, formal and informal structures, students will be more likely to work to achieve task goals (Ibid., p. 276).

Class groups respond more readily to the opportunity to plan and work together and share experiences than they do to a system of individual rewards. Also, the group will be higher in task motivation when the group as a whole receives favorable evaluations than if individual members receive comment on individual performance (Ibid., p. 269).

approval and privileges if he learns and behaves.

4. When reprimands are necessary, make them clear and firm.

5. When punishment is necessary, be sure it is restitution rather than retribution.

6. Plan carefully so that transitions are smooth and expected.

7. Use enough variety in your teaching to keep attention and motivation optimal.

8. See that lessons progress fast enough to keep students alert and interested.

9. Establish different procedures for handling routine matters.

10. Keep track of disciplinary progress that your class makes so that you have a feeling of accomplishment too. (Allen, 1971, p. 195).

It is important to realize that there is actually little leeway for children to make decisions about establishing policies. However, there is call for establishing a common agreement on how to carry out policies and achieve objectives (Bany & Johnson, 1970, p. 179). The management task is not to establish standards, but to reach decisions as to the best ways of meeting prescribed conditions (Ibid. p. 189).

Below is a seven step group-decision process for determining how to reach behavioral goals (standards).

1. Statement of policy or desired conduct for a specific situation under consideration.

2. A clarification of situation which includes a clear exposition of factors involved.

3. A request for some plan of action which will enable members of the class to meet required conduct.

The class group also needs to be guided in evaluation procedures. The central question should be, "Is there progress in the desired direction?" "Perception of progress towards goals is more important than actual progress (Ibid., p. 276)."

Providing objective data that a goal is reasonable will produce maximum commitment. If the overall goal is tentative, then the initial psychological situation is less demanding upon the group because the students are not asked to buy the goal, but instead to participate in defining the goal. As the class proceeds and the goal becomes well-defined, fact-finding can provide objective data for establishing a realistic goal (Henry, 1969, p. 222).

Conway (1973) has said that effective goal setting should include:

1. Directing attention toward the future
2. Looking at alternative courses of action
3. Projecting consequences of action
 - a. Eliminating negative consequences for greater long run aim
 - b. Projecting and evaluating feasibility of alternatives
4. Determining priorities of alternatives
5. Integrating alternatives into a coherent plan of action
6. Committing oneself to the plan of action
 - a. Having a sense of faith in the rightness of choice
 - b. Having confidence
 - c. Temporarily giving up other possibilities

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When groups are told that they are good groups and assured that members will get along well, if frequent favorable group appraisals are made, unity increases, and cooperation develops quickly (Ibid.).

Students will cooperate and make an effort to maintain group standards if they have good feelings about the group. Such feeling is demonstrated by unity.

The job of establishing unity may be seen as consisting of seven tasks:

1. To create a positive group identity
2. To enhance members liking for each other by having friendly supportive relationships.
3. To make each member feel that he belongs and is a worthwhile member and has something to contribute.
4. To help establish common goals.
5. To establish that personal needs, gains, and prestige can be fulfilled by functioning with the group.
6. To provide skillful leadership in problem solving in handling conflict, changing inappropriate behavior, and in changing or adapting to conditions. (Ibid.)
7. To provide skillful leadership in problem solving in handling conflict, changing inappropriate behavior, and in changing or adapting to conditions. (Ibid.)

Promoting Effective Communication

Unity and willingness to conform to group standards will be influenced by the amount and quality of communication. Thus, the promotion of effective communication in the classroom is important. The teacher needs to be able to recognize interaction patterns. Sometimes, in group meetings, individuals have "hidden agendas" that are not part of the recognized formal agenda before the group. Basically, in a group discussion, an individual's purpose may be to 1) persuade and win, 2) unload feelings, or 3) solve a problem and clarify opposing points of view. A person's behavior may also represent effective, ineffective, and maintenance interaction patterns.

In competent goal setting, 1) conflicting alternatives are resolved, 2) Quality of goals are important

- a. toward potential at a maximum rate
- b. provide novelty and challenge
- c. not toward destruction
- d. biological, spiritual, psychological needs are taken into account.

In this goal setting process, it is important for the teacher to make honest and favorable appraisals of the group as a whole to the group without singling out individuals.

In addition, the teacher needs to assess group expectations toward teacher behavior, procedures and school work. A teacher will be most effective if he matches student expectations. An expectation is an understanding of a role and a goal (Blanchard and Hersey, 1972). Thus, a teacher needs to begin by filling the teaching role as students see it and matching their goals (a teacher may wish to change student expectations, but must begin where the students are).

The teacher should let the students know that the work will be hard, but assure them that they will be able to do it. Also, if possible, the teacher should try to establish that the class situation will be highly satisfying. Opportunities should be provided for members to interact so they can assess reactions of other members. Feelings should be channeled into positive actions. Opportunities should be granted for contribution and to express opinions. (Bany and Johnson, 1970).

Another factor in communication which the teacher should watch is verbal interaction. Verbal communication is a significant stable measure. People who talk tend to be powerful, liked, and informed. People who talk are more involved and have a stake in the conversation. A group directs more communication to the deviate than the conformist. Talking exposes interaction of ideas and provides data. It is interesting to note that aggressive behavior and conflict also communicate some important positive information. Under frustration, a unified and organized group will enter more conflict and disruption than less open and unified groups. Aggression may result from the blockage of a highly motivated person's striving for a goal. So, aggression may indicate high motivation. It also may indicate degree of organization, since organized groups show more directly aggressive reactions than indirect. Also, groups working together in decision making will tend to show negative emotional expressions before positive ones, but this is necessary exploration to find shared values and points of difference and therefore serves a useful purpose. It is important to realize that conflict can be an integrative process when it opens, or causes to open channels of communication. (Many and Johnson, 1970, 369-370).

Besides watching for kinds of interaction indicated by

Two ways to move discussion along by agreeing on definitions are:

- 1) Stipulation. People can simply agree to use a word consistently in a specific way.
- 2) Use of an authoritative source. Discussants can use a dictionary or other authoritative source to find support for the particular use of a word. (Ibid).

Factual claims can be supported by:

- 1) showing that it is "common knowledge" or "common sense" (logic)
- 2) personal observation (examples)
- 3) reference to an authoritative source (and statistics)
- 4) showing that a factual claim is consistent with a number of other well-established claims (Ibid., p. 36-37)

It is always important, however, to question the quality of the authority. Is the quoted authority an expert in the field? Is he stating an opinion? Does he have a bias? Do other authorities disagree? Etc.

A teacher needs skill in recognizing these various components in order to effectively guide a discussion, ask appropriate questions, keep the discussion from bogging down, and help issues get resolved and clarified.

Generally, some things to look for in a discussion are:

Helpful

definition given or asked
evidence or example given or asked
analogy given
inconsistency challenged
irrelevance questioned
issue stated (factual, definitional, etc.)
summary given or asked
stipulation made
concession made

Destructive

claim repeated
irrelevant statement
insensitive statement
issue changed abruptly
unclear statement
no evidence given
inaccurate facts
personal attack
loaded words
other propaganda devices
or emotionalism

(Ibid., p. 46).

communication, the teacher should check the pattern of communication. Is it teacher to pupil? What is the level of depth of the communication? Is it on a cognitive level (exchange of ideas) or an affective level (expression of emotions and feelings)? The teacher can also check goal behavior by watching the communication. Are students talking about a task goal, group maintenance goal, or individual goals (like someone trying to be recognized as humorous, intelligent, etc.).

All in all, group member roles in communication can be categorized under five rubrics:

- 1) initiating ideas or actions
- 2) regulating and controlling actions
- 3) giving information about ideas or attitudes
- 4) supporting ideas or group members engaged in them
- 5) evaluating ideas or activities (Gibb, 1960, p. 131).

The tasks that must be accomplished by the problem-solving or learning group may be classified into the following five sub-divisions: Problem-formation, idea getting, idea testing, choosing among ideas, and planning action (Ibid., p. 130).

Unfortunately, many people let a discussion just ramble because they are not aware that a discussion can be any different. Often, decisions are made by 1) plop, 2) authority, 3) minority, 4) majority voting, 5) consensus, or 6) unanimous decisions. The last two are the most preferable.

In summary, communication is an important indicator of the effectiveness of group function. A teacher should watch

the kinds of interactions indicated by communication, and the patterns and levels of communication that develop. Aggressive behavior and conflict may indicate that the group is motivated, involved, and organized. Knowing this, the teacher's task is then to direct the behavior into appropriate channels.

Handling Conflict and Directing Change

Sometimes, open conflict occurs between individuals who are members of the group. The question for the teacher is to determine whether the conflict involves the whole group or not. If the group supports the conflict, then the whole group should be involved in handling of the conflict. Bany and Johnson summarize the steps in the process of resolving conflict.

1. Set guidelines for discussion.
 - (a) Everyone may speak, but only one person may speak at a time.
2. Clarify what happened.
 - (a) Ask what happened or what caused the conflict to occur. (Rephrase or restate if the statement is not clear. Put the word or phrase on the board.)
 - (b) Keep to the facts. Get agreement that this is what happened, and not how each person feels about the situation or why the situation occurred.
 - (c) Ask individuals in the group if they agree to what happened. By the time agreement is reached as to what occurred, the emotional tone in the group should be somewhat lowered.

3. Explore differences in points of view.

- (a) (Why people feel as they do or how they view situation). Put phrases or statements on the board. The teacher does not comment except to keep the group on the topic. If someone states, "I think we should..." the teacher responds, "Why do you feel as you do?" Put nothing down if it is not on the point. Wait for answers, but stay with the question. Persons of all ages tend to give solutions.
- (b) Line up the points of agreement and disagreement. (They need not be sentences or phrases - just one word on the board). There will be many points of agreement, as feelings are involved. State the areas of agreement and disagreement clearly.
- (c) Get everyone to agree where they agree and disagree.

4. Identify the cause or causes of the conflict.

- (a) Teacher states the real cause of the conflict or states that the problem seems to be (1) _____, (2) _____, (3) _____.
- (b) What does the class think?
- (c) Does everyone agree this is the cause of conflict? Source of disagreement?

5. Achieving agreement and resolving the conflict.

- (a) We agree that this is the problem - (or these are the causes of conflicts).
- (b) "Could it be that this...had anything to do with the conflict?" "Or this...?" "What do you think?" (Teacher diagnoses as long as it is not threatening.) (At this point the children may all be so friendly that all that is needed is a restatement of the clarification of all trouble and a positive appraisal of the group performance in resolving the conflict. Use no remarks containing ifs, buts, or except for a few!)

6. Plan of action.

- (a) Can we prevent the incident from recurring? Or, what can be done? - (not how).
- (b) Ask for suggestions, ideas - a plan, not punishment.
- (c) Will the suggestions work? Examine them.
- (d) Get agreement on a plan of action - a trial plan to see if the plan will work.
- (e) Redefine or restate the plan of action. "We do this, etc., and we see if it will work." Emphasize the trial aspect.

7. Appraisal.

- (a) Make positive appraisal of group efforts. (Bany and Johnson, 1970, p. 393-395).

One of the important things to keep in mind is that when individuals get into conflict, if the group encourages, enjoys, or gets involved, then it is a group problem. But, if the group ignores, is disinterested, or wants the conflict to stop, then it is the individual's problem and should be handled as such. Avoid moralizing in either case. Keep in mind that children do not know why they behave as they do when a class is reacting, so don't ask why (Ibid.).

Often "removing the cause of inappropriate behavior is not enough to change behavior (Ibid., p. 277)."

...it is possible for teachers to inherit a class which has developed an inappropriate behavior pattern, the cause of which no longer exists. Usually the patterns of behavior that become an established way of reacting can be classified as antagonistic, hostile, aggressive, apathetic, or indifferent (Ibid.)

Teachers cannot hope to change an established way of