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DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL LIFE THROUGH GROUP ACTIVITIES

Loutsos, S., Kretara, D., Stathopoulos, N., Menoutis, V.

This poster is an attempt to conjoin the principles of group analysis with the teaching practice in elementary and secondary schools. Thus, how the philosophy of group analysis can contribute in improving the quality of knowledge and develop the school life?

According to the teaching practice in Greek schools group activities are not often applied. The formal curriculum does not include instructions for group teaching methods inside the classroom or systematic group activities run by the school as a whole. The applications depend on the teacher's mentality and mood. They are usually applied in health or environmental education programs in which they use the experience as a teaching method. Of course, the teaching practice is different among the countries. It is likely for some schools to use consistently more group work as a teaching method. Given the benefits of group methods in education the involvement of group analyses in schools is examined. Beyond this, both the conductor of therapeutic analytic groups and the teacher who applies group methods in the classroom share common characteristics.

Some basic principles of group analysis are:

- The group structure (time, place, membership and money)
- The setting
- Matrix
- The group as a whole
- The 'T' situation
- Expression of feelings in here and now

According to the goals of contemporary education, the modern school should focus on academic achievements and the development of personality and social skills. The

school as-a-whole is necessary to have clear goals and develop appropriate teaching methods which use experience. Structured activities motivate and involve teachers and pupils. This depends on the class function and the school policy.

The impression of the dominant teaching practice in Greek schools is that it lacks in some of the above points. It seems to follow an older educational path in which action proceeds of knowledge. In Plato's writings is already stressed the importance of action in the process of learning. The ability of discovering the substance of things exists inside everybody. This can be achieved when the process teaching – learning leads the learner to search and discover. Education (Paedia) says Plato is not the process to put the light into children's eyes, in contrary, to turn their eyes into the light in order to face the truth on their own. Many years later J. Dewey and his colleagues applied in the work school the problem teaching method. This method is based on the principle of learning through acquirement of new experience and the continuous rebuilding of experience during time.

A living organization as school community needs to activate in order to think, to bring in conscious and endurance a unique view about subjects that concern the school unit.

The teacher who runs group methods in the classroom should:

- Focus on the educational process in order to establish and enjoy the relationship with his/her pupils.
- Develop continuously his/ her professional status by:
 - I. Communicating and cooperating with other colleagues
 - II. Participating in experiential groups or educative programs
 - III. Educating his/her pupils in action by his/her own attitude towards creative processes that promote dialogue, expression of feelings and personal opinion.

Thus the teacher achieves to:

- Increase the level of his/her self - confidence
- Develop his/her personal traits
- Promote changes

- Be flexible to confront tricky situations in the classroom
- Intervene in the curriculum in programming the educational material, new teaching methods
- Meet pupils special needs

The requirements of the conductor of a group analytic group are summarized in:

- Ethical integrity
- Responsibility
- Genuine interest for the subject (psychological bent of mind and gift)
- Reception to the current social problems and situation
- Ability to express problems and bring them in consciousness
- Intelligence
- Capacity for understanding and become understood in simple terms
- Commonsense
- Capacity to listen receptively
- Control of his/her own bias and expectations
- Capacity to have very active and open mind in what is being observed
- Honesty
- Mentally and emotionally balanced

It becomes obvious that both professionals, the therapist and the teacher, share common points in order to become efficient. Most of them concern personal development through continuous ego training in action.

Task Groups in the Classroom

According to the principles of progressive education, working in groups respects and uses the differences among pupils, emphasizes in the process of learning and not in the context. Evidences of research have shown that knowledge acquired in this way is better established. Pupils act in the learning material, analyze and produce knowledge. They make hypotheses that confirm or reject, explain, make conclusions, lists, decisions developing critical mind. Furthermore, they develop abilities and

cognitive strategies that allow them to explore effectively every subject. They are practice in management techniques. They recognize the value of different points of view.

Class arrangements and organisation in a group ensures pupil's participation in the learning process. The application of group teaching methods meets effectively each individual's special educational needs, respecting and identifying his/her special traits and characteristics ('idioprosopia'). The level of self - esteem is increased as pupil becomes more responsible and faith is given in his/her own skills for the discovery of knowledge.

Requirements for a well functioning group in class

- Equipment and arrangements in the setting of class
- Discussion and application of rules that are necessary for a group in order to function and produce work. These rules may change or be modified through dialogue in the group
- Teacher becomes a co-researcher who reinforces, inspires and is inspired, participates in an equal level in some actions, motivates and creates desire for learning
- Teacher practices in effective cooperation through different activities
- Participation of pupils in their evaluation through questionnaires and free discussion in the group. The criterion should extend to the participation, not only to the performance

Possible resistances into the application of an educational model is inspired from the principles of group analysis

- Society that resists to changes and tends to isolate, discriminates and reinforces competitive modes of action
- The curriculum
- The entire school society. Parents tend to focus on knowledge and development of professional skills putting aside social skills and personality

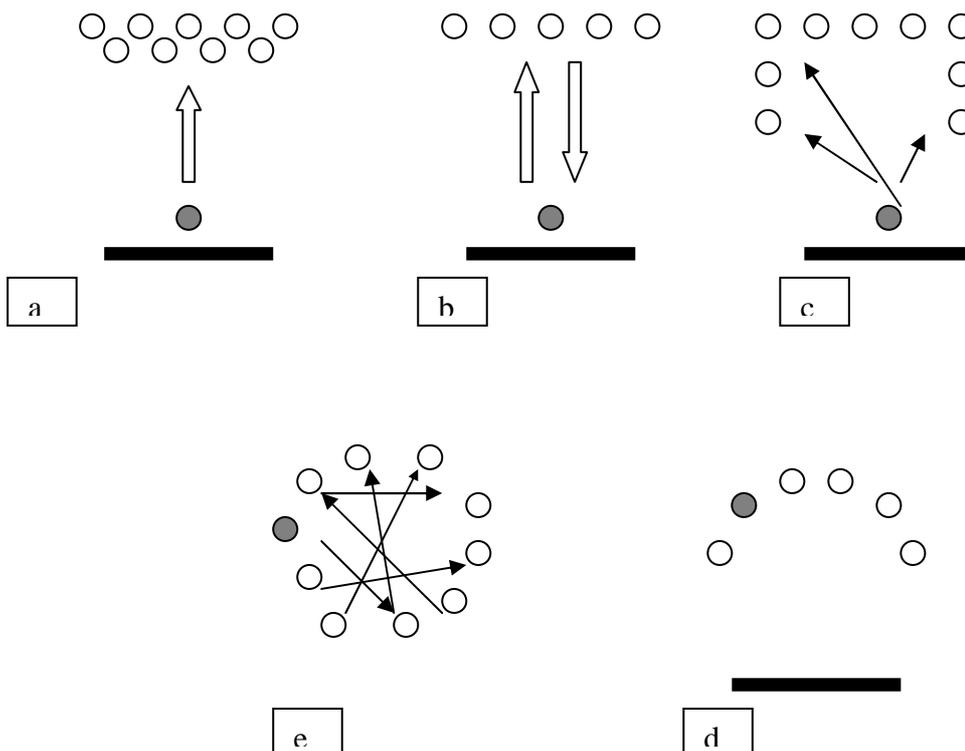
development. Teachers perceive their role more as scientists and less as pedagogues.

Particularly in high schools that tend to be connected with academic achievements the above model seems to have a long way to go. It is always risky for school that function in such an innovative way to become alienated from the surrounding community and fail like the example of Summerhill.

On the other hand a school policy based in the above philosophy and follows group activities is likely to achieve:

- Establishment of knowledge through an attractive learning process
- Facilitation of communication
- Promotion of dialogue
- Improvement of relationships among the members of the school community
- Integration of 'different' pupils (deviant, special needs, ethnical or religious minorities)
- Prevention of mental disturbances

a) lecture, b) discussion in the classroom, c) arrangements of seats in a Π-form, d & e) arrangement of seats in a circle-form



In the d and e arrangement

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