Critical Analysis of Group Process

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This paper is a critical analysis of the group process during the “planned community change” group project in an online community health nursing course at Ferris State University. This goal of this project was to create a fictional program to address a community health problem. Group members Cheryl Howard, Joan Kronlein, Natalie Russell & Danielle Williams worked together for approximately four months to develop a group presentation. A group is a social system composed of individuals with unique communication styles. According to Tuckman, the stages of group processes include forming, conflict, norming, working and adjourning (Kearney-Nunnery, 2008). During this process, there were several areas dealing with group dynamics from which I learned a great deal.

Group Stage of Forming

Group Concepts

In the forming stage of groups, introductions are made, the group is structured, goals and parameters are defined. The forming stage develops trust and encourages a sense of the group (Kearney-Nunnery, 2008). Group leadership is a pivotal part of a smoothly functioning group. Defined roles prevent misunderstanding and help communication (Kowalski, 2011).

Personal Experience

At the beginning, our group worked together to compose a group contract. This was a requirement of the project. This activity helped the group members to get to know each other, define our roles and learn about each other’s personality and communication styles. Each of us volunteered for a role within the group: leader, time keeper, organizer, and note taker. We determined ground rules and developed a very concrete plan, complete with a time table. There were no arguments and we communicated easily. A group member stated, “Cheryl always is
positive about the work and effort we put into the information we are sharing on the discussion board” (J. Kronlein, peer evaluation, 2012).

Analysis

Initially the group contract was completed only to fulfill a class requirement and seemed to be a nuisance. However, the process of creating the contract proved to be extremely useful because we all got to know each other and define our roles. This helped us to form a sense of trust and purpose together. Then the contract proved to be invaluable as the weeks went by because it helped to structure our group work as we all got busy with other projects and personal obligations during the semester. All the group members are working nurses with busy schedules. Referencing the contract was an effective, non-threatening way to keep group members on track. I was the group leader. Joan was a wonderful time keeper because she was kind and encouraging but make sure we stayed on target. Danielle & Natalie were great supporters. I learned that a mutually agreed upon group contract was a very effective way to structure a small group.

Group Stage of Working

Group Concepts

The working stage of groups involves the leader becoming less involved and members take more responsibility for managing the group (Kearney-Nunnery, 2008). An effective team has a high level of participation and communicates openly (Donahue, 2011). Bringing conflicts and problems out in the open can facilitate change. The role of the leader is to refocus and clarify the purpose of the group (Kearney-Nunnery, 2008).

Personal Experience

In the working phase of the group, we struggled to maintain momentum. We had all done an enormous amount of research and planning. Putting it all together was overwhelming.
Everyone, including myself, seemed to be going through personal issues that complicated the matter such as excessive work demands, sick family members, and big projects in other classes. As the group leader, I tried to focus our group and motivate the group members. A group member commented, “Cheryl was able to keep our group appropriately focused on the project” (J. Kronlein, peer evaluation, 2012). Although everyone had a positive attitude and got along well, it seemed that Joan and I became the main contributors near the end of the project.

Analysis

I feel that I should have done a better job being direct with the group members who were not contributing as much near the end of the project. At times it is difficult for me to deal with problems and conflicts directly. I tried strategies to encourage cooperation such as offering suggestions and initiating portions of the project with a request for others to follow up. Sometimes these strategies worked and sometimes they did not. As a result when the momentum of our project slowed down and some group members were not contributing despite my encouragement, I ended up doing more than my fair share due to the project deadline being less than a week away. A group member stated, “Cheryl was a team player and did more than her share of the work… Cheryl was very self-directed she showed a great deal of focus and picked up the slack during the final week of the project” (D. Williams, 2012). I have very high standards and I wonder sometimes if I expect too much. It is also possible that others do not share my work ethic.

By nature, I am a leader. I don’t deal well with disorganization and tend to step in to create order. However I have learned from past experience that following is also an important role. I often worry when I am in a leadership role that I am being domineering so I work very hard to be a team player. I have received almost all positive feedback but also some negative
feedback too. One group member said, “Cheryl is awesome to work with! Always positive and understanding. Open to everyone’s thoughts and ideas. Really good leadership capabilities!” (N. Russell, peer evaluation, 2012). While another group member stated, “Cheryl was a very close monitor of the progress of others. She was constantly checking in with the group to ensure tasks would be completed …it seems that she is used to taking charge” (D. Williams, peer evaluation, 2012). This constructive criticism is valuable because it helps me to focus on the strengths and weakness of my capabilities both as a nurse follower and a nurse leader.

**Action Plan**

Through this group process, I have learned that it is extremely important to structure a group in the formative stage. Mutually agreeing upon group contract or plan is an effective way to define goals, roles, and time frames. My action plan is to initiate a group contract the next time that I am part of a small group or group project. I would like to try this in a work setting as a nurse. I am looking forward to evaluating the outcome and effectiveness of a group contract in my work to see if it is successful in a different setting.

This group process has also helped give me more insight into my leadership capabilities. I have learned that I need to be mindful and respectful of other group member’s roles. I have also learned that I need to practice being direct when I have a problem with another group member if I feel they are not doing their fair share. My action plan is to identify a group situation that is encountering a problem; then make a concerted effort to be courteous, but direct with communicating my concerns. In order to assess the effectiveness of being respectful and more direct, I will evaluate the response that I get from group members to determine if the outcome is positive within the group’s dynamics.
References

