
A Process-Oriented Approach to Learning Process-Oriented Counselling Skills in Groups

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the teaching of process-oriented counselling skills in a group. The interweaving of theory and practice is discussed. The need for and a method of integrating the personal and professional growth of group members with the experiential and conceptual learning of counselling skills are outlined. The congruence of the content and the educational approach is an important element in the training. The development and significance of the community of learners, an intrinsic dimension of the training, are also described.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article décrit l'enseignement en groupe de compétences de counseling axées sur le processus. On y discute de la façon dont la théorie et la pratique s'entremêlent. On y trace par ailleurs les grandes lignes du besoin d'intégrer la croissance personnelle et professionnelle des membres du groupe à l'apprentissage expérientiel et conceptuel des compétences en counseling, et de la méthode pour y arriver. La congruence entre le contenu et l'approche pédagogiques est un élément important de cette formation. La croissance et l'importance de la communauté des apprenants font partie intrinsèque du programme et sont aussi décrits.

INTRODUCTION

When you have means of reflecting on yourself, then you do not lose sight of the conditions and feelings of others. If you have no means of reflecting on yourself, then confusion comes into play when you act. —Lao-tzu (Cleary, 1991, p. 130)

In this article I will provide an overview of the approach that I developed and employed to teach counselling skills in a group. The approach has multiple goals, including learning process-oriented counselling skills, gaining integrated experiential and conceptual knowledge, personal growth, learning about group process and development, and the connection between individual and group growth. I will describe the approach to learning, not the counselling method itself, although the approach is reflective of the counselling method. As well, I will describe some basic assumptions about this approach; the training group as a community development experience; some process-oriented terminology; leader/facilitator/trainer skills; ideas about deep democracy, diversity, and individual differences; participants and the selection process; group structure and development; the relationship between the personal/emotional environment and the physical environment; the leader's attention to relationship details and self-

care; learning methods and related ideas; ethical considerations; and personal growth and personal therapy.

Groups are like a microcosm of life, a community unfolding, and represent a great possibility of what can be (Cohen, 2003). Groups can demonstrate the best of human potentials, and alternatively, all too often, the worst. A group in which training takes place can provide a lived model of optimal possibilities for participants. Every person carries in their unconscious an archetypal image of community. Every group simultaneously represents the possibility of a step toward this inner model and the possibility of a further integration of the inner community of disowned parts in the individual. War and peace are outcomes of what happens in groups and between them. Any constructive learning about relationship, groups, and ourselves is a potential step forward in the evolution of humanity and consciousness. Ideally, a group within which counsellors are trained will demonstrate and further these possibilities through the training provided in the content and structure provided within each meeting and throughout the entire training experience, and in modelling the process itself.

What usually takes place more privately between people is exposed in groups in a more public space. In the process-directed educational environment that I have developed, communication is about personal and curriculum matters with group members as witnesses and participants. In this approach, both the feelings and the ideas that arise are dealt with as integrated parts of the group's work. The opportunity to learn from all the members of the group in an interrelated academic and personal way is a central characteristic of this approach.

The program is experientially and conceptually based. The program provides hands-on experience, personal growth opportunity, descriptive language, counselling skills, and a conceptual framework. Feedback is encouraged, is part of the ongoing process of evaluation and change, and creates a lived experience that is reflective of the counselling model. Participants have invariably described these training experiences as meaningful and in some cases life changing. I have used the process-oriented approach to education in groups in both academic and non-academic environments, and in this article I have focused on a program to teach process-oriented counselling skills. My intent is to convey the essence of an experience that has been invariably positive.

The conceptual framework is drawn from counselling theory and practice. A process orientation in groups (Cohen, 1996a, 1996b; A. Mindell, 1992, 1995) that is consistent with viewing events within space and time as a systemic totality (Bateson & Bateson, 1988) is preferred over, but does not exclude, focusing on the individuals within the context. From a gestalt framework (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951) there is attention to the background process, and work is done with this element to facilitate integration, growth, and learning. An invitation to examine the potential of the Shadow (Jung, 1989) encourages looking into personal material that is avoided in most educational approaches. The existential approach (Frankl, 1985) is embedded in the program with continual encouragement to look for personal meaning and to follow what is

most passionate for the learner. Learning is about and from these diverse perspectives. There is an ongoing interactive developmental process between the group and the individuals.

Development of the whole person is basic to the approach and includes the emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual dimensions. Support for the emergence of a person's true nature is an intrinsic part of the training. Palmer (1998) says about therapy, "Good methods can help a therapist find a way into the client's dilemma, but good therapy does not begin until the real-life therapist joins with the real life of the client" (p. 5). The ongoing discovery of this "real-life" therapist is a major aspect of the training.

In the training experience, a distinction is made between doing and being. Most of education is concerned with content and goal achievement; doing. In this approach the emphasis is on being, but not to the exclusion of doing. The intent is to work toward a seamless integration of the two. The idea of being refers to the person who performs an action. Being includes their in-the-moment experience, their sense of identity, and their awareness.

There is a strong emphasis on contact and intimacy. The idea of multi-dimensional communication construction in-the-moment (Cohen, 2003) is described as "[a] critical dimension of excellent communication that will lead to meaningful dialogue, contact, and increased intimacy is the ability to listen and express simultaneously" (p. 3). This includes possibilities of contacts that are intellectual, emotional, kinesthetic, visual, auditory, and spiritual. The experience of intimacy and contact within multiple realms of interaction potentiate complex human encounters, and over an extended time frame, rare levels of intimacy can be co-created.

Fehr (2003) quotes a participant in a therapy group regarding "the necessity of being constantly aware of what may seem to be even the most minor of interactions or events, as these may be clues to some underlying issues which should be examined" (p. 31). This statement suggests that in any group there are significant underlying dynamics and processes. A group trained for this level of sensitivity is an ongoing laboratory and experience of the topics addressed in the training. Personal material that arises is available to be used as part of the learning process.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

I believe that students want to learn and have a capacity and desire for self direction. I assume that the educator is knowledgeable, passionate, and interested in the subject matter and in learners as students and as human beings. The educator's role is to facilitate student interest and their sense of belonging to the educational community. Metaphorically the educator might think of himself or herself as an alchemist whose task is to tend to the raw material of the ground of the student's not-knowing and create the conditions within which the transformation to gold is optimal on both a personal and academic level. The educator facilitates creative and meaningful personal and academic connections between

students. This task includes attending to the flow of experience, in a sense being a Taoist, noticing when things are working well, keeping the space protected and flowing, and noticing when there is a lack of flow and in those circumstances attending to the *knots* of experience and facilitating their undoing. The educator has two primary tools: awareness and facilitation skills.

Throughout this article I use the terms educator, facilitator, and leader somewhat interchangeably. These three roles can be described as tendencies of emphasis with different emphases emerging as the situation dictates. *Educator* suggests a person who has responsibility for access to specific and expert knowledge. *Facilitator* is the role that supports learners in their humanness and the group's efforts to work together to discover knowledge. *Leader* is the role that points the learning and the group in certain directions. Each role is important. The ability of the person to embody and move fluidly between roles will impact the learning of the group.

THE TRAINING GROUP AS A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE

My ideas about training in groups developed out of my experience working with adolescents in residential treatment where a modified version of Jones' (1968) ideas about therapeutic community, which I describe below, were employed. I saw that disturbed adolescents could make effective use of this approach and that staff were even more adept with it. The benefits in terms of communication, collaboration, and community development were apparent. From there I went on to use these ideas in educational and training environments, where I found that the approach was highly facilitative on human and pedagogical levels.

The training is framed as taking place within a developing community. This provides a significant part of the learning and is fostered by facilitating the relationships between participants. The relationships are seen as real. The feelings for each other and the relationships are valued. Projection and transference issues also arise and are used situationally as learning opportunities and part of the community's experience.

The community development process includes encouragement of expression of a range of feelings and ideas. Learning to express, receive, and respond to feelings and ideas is valued. For example, there is encouragement and modelling of expressions of anger, for taking unpopular positions, and for standing in the heat. Conflict is valued as an opportunity for growth, and methods are demonstrated in the context of the group. This is different than most educational groups, where conflict is frequently avoided and seen as detrimental to the educational process. The leader recognizes and creates opportunities to learn about working with conflict and the potential to grow and create intimacy through such experience.

As Miller (1993) states, "community implies connection among beings" (p. 119). The group is a community in development. Jones (1968) captures the essence of what is desired:

The democratic, egalitarian structure of a therapeutic community ... becomes a sort of living laboratory where crises, instead of being seen as troublesome and unnecessary, can be turned to good effect as learning situations. (pp. 10–11)

A therapeutic community, by attempting to make use of the optimal potential ... and by creating learning situations where this potential may be developed, represents both a goal ... and a philosophy. This situation calls for leadership with sensitivity to the needs of others ... the capacity to develop potential becomes the most important aspect of leadership ... The most important attribute of a leader in this context is his capacity to preserve the wholeness of an organization, while at the same time encouraging flexibility, self-examination, social learning, and change. (pp. 25–26)

Jones is a seminal thinker and pioneer in his work with this model of groups and organizational structure. If this model is workable in a psychiatric setting where it was developed, then, as has been my experience, surely those who are not subject to such extreme states can make even better use of this approach. These ideas embody the highest principles of respect for individual uniqueness, integrity, responsibility, and potential.

Yalom (1995) talks about the dual tasks of any group:

First they must determine a method of achieving their primary task—the purpose for which they joined the group. Second, they must attend to their social relationships in the group so as to create a niche for themselves that will not only provide the comfort necessary to achieve their primary task but will also result in additional gratification from the sheer pleasure of group membership. (p. 295)

In a training group, as in therapy groups, the two tasks are overlapping, informative of each other, and facilitative of the group's development as a community. Relationships that developed between participants have continued beyond the training group as living testimony to the connection that develops between participants.

SOME PROCESS-ORIENTED TERMINOLOGY: EDGES, METASKILLS, RESISTANCE, AND ROLES

Awareness of personal *edges* is a significant aspect of the program. Edge is defined by Arnold Mindell (1988) as, “[t]he experience of not being able to do something, being limited or hindered from accomplishing, thinking, or communicating” (p.175). A person's known identity does not encompass the experience that exists beyond a personal edge.

Metaskills are the ongoing, continuously unfolding, and emerging in-the-moment feelings and attitudes that are reflective of the most deeply held beliefs of the counsellor. If accessed in a naturalistic way, the enactment of these metaskills will bring the process to life in ways the use of techniques that are applied in a mechanical way cannot (Cohen, 2002; Amy Mindell, 1995).

Resistance is seen as significant information trying to emerge that is important for individuals and the group. This differs from the predominant opinion in the counselling field that views resistance as an impediment to be removed. Resistance can be broken down into two parts. One part is trying to do, be, or see something,

and the other oppositional part is against this. Both have value. The relationship between them is conflictual, and the work involves uncovering the intent of each and opening up a communicative dialogue between them with the idea that the seeds of growth reside within the troubling experience. Resistance is the inner other and can no more be eradicated than the other in an interpersonal conflict.

Roles are viewed as temporary, complex experiences that say something about a person in-the-moment and do not define a person's identity. Roles in groups may be represented or not. Ghost roles, any non-present other, can exist in the group's atmosphere and have a powerful influence. Identification of and work with roles is basic to the group's process and learning.

LEADER/FACILITATOR/TRAINER SKILLS

It is important for the leader to have and demonstrate four skills that are basic for the group and individual therapist (Cohen, 1996a): (a) the capacity to attend to another's experience, (b) the ability to accept another person's experience and to convey to them that acceptance, (c) the ability to demonstrate a range of metaskills, and (d) the ability to facilitate the creation of a group container and group connections.

As well, the group leader makes use of four categories of multi-level awareness:

1. Split awareness: paying attention to what is going on in the foreground while maintaining an awareness of background processes. An example would be performing a demonstration while checking on the group.
2. Dual awareness: tracking the external process while keeping in tune with internal processes, both in reaction to what is occurring and as a potential input for the group. An example is noticing that as one participant speaks animatedly I begin to experience a warm feeling.
3. Role awareness: maintaining awareness of roles as they emerge, the effect of the roles, and role shifts as they occur and how. For example, if I become very absorbed in an interaction, I could say, "I am now stepping out of the role of facilitator as I would like to participate in this interaction. Could someone agree to take the role of facilitator?"
4. Self-reflective awareness: the capacity to notice, reflect, perform inner work, evaluate, and articulate experience. I could say to a quiet participant, "I am aware that when you get quiet, I feel a sense of anticipation. When I was a child and my brother got quiet, his quietness was usually followed by a funny comment."

A group leader facilitates a group through the stages of group development, including an ability to work with the *chaos* of beginning, the intimacy and working through process of the middle stage, and the work involved with the ending of the group, using these experiences as learning opportunities about these stages. The leader needs to have an ability to track the process of both the group and individuals and to tie this in with large group themes and processes as these develop and emerge. Conversely, the leader can help the group see the interactive relationship

between group processes and the processes of individuals. The leader is alert for a new meta-position; the position that facilitates the group taking increasing responsibility for itself. As the group participants take over more of the maintenance of the group, the leader at times shifts to the role of group consultant.

It is crucial that the leader has a great interest in being in groups, leading groups, relationship and intimacy, the whole process of counselling, and working on himself or herself. This makes a significant contribution to the atmosphere of the group and also models metaskills that are significant in a group setting and work with individual clients. After leading one program I received feedback that participants were surprised that I hadn't spoken more. I think that this is rare feedback for an educator and speaks to the resources within the group and the value of the leader as facilitator.

DEEP DEMOCRACY AND ISSUES OF DIVERSITY/INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

The practices of "deep democracy" as described by Mindell (1992, 2002) are employed in the training program. Mindell (1992) wrote:

Deep democracy touches upon all levels of our lives. In personal life, it means openness to all of our inner voices, feelings, and movements, not just the ones we know and support, but also the ones we fear and do not know well ... In group life it means the willingness to listen to and experiment with whatever part comes up. In global work, deep democracy values politics, ethnicity, and the spirit of nature. (pp. 154–155)

The practices of deep democracy address issues of diversity, which means acknowledging intellectually and experientially the details of individual and group experience. The idea that each person has something to offer and an obligation to do so is endemic to the developing culture. A similar view is taken about the parts of the self that are disavowed or hidden from view. Nuance of experience are seen as aspects of the whole, and the practice of deep democracy suggests the commitment to and practice of accessing those parts and including them in the process.

An example involves a man who was deathly afraid of speaking in the training group. For many weeks he said as little as possible and concealed his fear. He eventually shared with me that he had this fear. We discussed the possibilities for addressing this. I suggested that he could say something about it, he could tell someone else and have that person share his fear, I could say something, or he could continue as he had been doing with an emphasis on self-reflection to learn more about the process. He decided that he would share this fear himself in the next group during the opening group process. The group was very interested and supportive. Others with similar fears shared their experience. Most importantly, there was a shift. His dilemma became the group's dilemma. His silence was seen as a loss for the group. Whatever he might have to share was not available. Questions arose. What was it about our group that fed the fear? What could we do about it? How could we track the process? This man became a representative of the silent and fearful part of everyone. His response was quite

emotional. This process unfolded over a couple of months, became part of the group's oral history, and culminated with him coming to the group one evening dressed up in a costume and performing a piece of theatre for the group that involved the group as audience and participants. Essentially the identified problem—fear of speaking out—became a seed experience for individual growth, community development, and an example of a deeply democratic process.

PARTICIPANTS AND THE SELECTION PROCESS

The participants in this program come from diverse backgrounds, and generally each student has been through a life crisis that has led to a personally meaningful process of personal reflection. They know the territory from the inside. Participants meet certain criteria, including the ability to be relational in a group, a capacity to meta-communicate (talk about) their experience, a capacity to attend to another person, a substantial interest in the process of self and others, a desire to work with people, a willingness and ability to be in the presence of strong emotions, sufficient capacity for and interest in intimate relationship over time, and a potential for being with people in creative, unique, and unusual ways. As well, the participants need to have adequate ability and an interest in participating in a group that interweaves a training function and a personal growth dimension. Participants come with a variety of agendas. They want to learn the skills for use in organizational, professional, and personal environments.

An interactive interview is set up as a process of mutual discovery. Information about the program, its underlying philosophy, and my role as leader/facilitator, and a description of the experiential nature of the program are shared. Opportunity is provided for the applicants to talk about their personal and professional background, and their reasons for pursuing this type of training. At some points during the interview I will focus on the present, be self-disclosing, and articulate my passion for the work. The interview experience is reflective of the training process. Feedback is given to applicants and the applicant is left with information to consider about the implications of joining the group.

GROUP STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

To liberate a free-flowing creative process, structure is used as a scaffold and not a blueprint for the group's activities. An example of the use of structure is that timing, sequence, and content of various elements is consistent for each meeting. The purpose of the structural component is to support the learning process. This is unlike some educational approaches where it is used to control or oppress expression. Content of particular program elements within allotted, predictable, and consistent time frames is supported. On rare occasions when circumstances suggest a change to timing, this becomes part of the group's process and supports ownership of changes. The clarity and consistency of the structure along with process-oriented facilitation support the maintenance of balance

between process and content issues, which is often a concern in groups and frees the group to attend to the content of learning.

The group meets over a nine-month period, one evening per week for four hours along with four weekends spaced evenly through the program. During the first term of the program, all practice is in the form of in-class experiential exercises. In the second term this continues, and additionally students are paired with each other for practice outside of class time.

Along with the group sessions, each student has three individual supervision opportunities with the facilitator to discuss their work. The content for these sessions is mutually defined.

The first hour of each meeting is devoted to group process, for which guidelines (Cohen, 1996b) are provided. Participants can check in with their in-the-moment experience, share experiences, give and receive feedback, learn experientially about conflict in groups, perform individual and/or relationship work in the group, experience the development of this group as community, learn experientially about group intimacy, and learn about their effect on the group and the converse. Twenty minutes are then devoted to understanding and conceptualizing the process. Included in the possibilities for discussion are the facilitation, roles, group dynamics, the developmental stage of the group, the meaning of experiences, and transitions.

Next there is a presentation about the learning focus for the session and relevant related material from the manual (Cohen, 1996a) is discussed. An experiential exercise is introduced, including a 15-minute demonstration with a volunteer from the group. This is followed by an opportunity for feedback, discussion, and questions. Partners are then chosen to try the method. One hour is allotted for this, and participants try the roles of counsellor, client, and in some exercises, observer. The time is divided equally, with a five-minute debrief at each transition point. Then the group comes back together for discussion and feedback. Finally, 15 minutes are devoted to putting closure on the entire session on a personal and didactic level.

The initial sessions are used to outline and establish the structure and culture of the group, work with beginning issues, and start learning the material. The structure as described above is established at the outset, is maintained throughout the program, and looks after basic issues related to time, safety, and predictability, while maximizing creative possibilities.

In the middle stage the group's understanding and skill development deepens, intimacy grows, risk-taking increases, and identification and development of the group's culture is central. Group members focus on their own issues, the current learning tasks, working in a co-creative mode, the potential of conflict as an opening to increased intimacy, developing a sense of safety and history, identifying and being in an ongoing process of identifying group patterns, having what is for most a different experience of intimacy, discovering the group's unique character and culture, and learning about their individual and collective ways of being in group.

In the final stage the focus is on issues related to ending. Group members can deal with issues related to this ending, other endings in their lives, reviewing and evaluating this experience, cultural background related to endings, giving and receiving feedback, unfinished business, and looking to the future. Kubler-Ross's (1969) model related to death and dying, including denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, and acceptance, is used as a frame for the ending. For many in the group, it is an opportunity to process an ending in a way that is new.

The participants generally have a parallel experience between their personal growth and their work to learn counselling skills. Initially they will struggle with comprehending the basics. In the middle stage they have moved toward an attitude of experimentation and curiosity and are less concerned with getting things "right." In the ending stage they are experiencing the fruits of their labours and working with fine tuning, acknowledging and/or taking care of unfinished business of both a personal and skills nature.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PERSONAL/EMOTIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The personal/emotional environment is highly valued and nurtured, and this is conveyed by sensitive attention to the details of associated issues. Extensive attention to possible events that could affect the environment are attended to. Doors are closed and/or locked, phone ringers are off, and *do not disturb* signs are in place. Outsiders are only brought in by invitation and with permission from the group, absences and returns are acknowledged, and participants are asked to communicate about absences. This ongoing attention to detail supports a feeling of safety and predictability in the group. This environmental sensitivity consecrates the space as sacred. Participants feel that they are connected to each other, that their learning is valued, and that the events of their lives and their feelings matter.

THE LEADER'S ATTENTION TO RELATIONSHIP DETAILS AND SELF-CARE

A leader is a role model. As leader, by my way of being, I want to convey a message about my care and concern for the community and the individual learners. I want to develop a realistic bond with each student that provides insight into what kinds of connections will nurture that individual's growth and learning. Where appropriate, contact is made outside the group with a participant to facilitate learning, provide personal support, and support the group's process. There is a constant interplay between the needs of the individual learners and the group as a whole. The fact of this contact is transparent even though the content may be confidential.

As leader I endeavour to model the values that the program seeks to represent. I attend to what I call the "three basics": adequate rest, good nutrition, and optimal physical activity, along with my own emotional well-being. I also attempt to demonstrate appropriate limits in terms of my time and energies. Classes begin

and end on time. Breaks occur on schedule. The benefit to participants of this self-care is to have a leader who is in a fit state for offering the material that students have come to learn and whose way of being models self-care.

LEARNING METHODS AND RELATED IDEAS

Every aspect of the training group's structure, process, and content is designed to provide integrated learning opportunities. Diverse learning styles are addressed by the use of a contiguous variety of learning approaches, including written material, discussion, demonstrations, didactic presentations, feedback, and experiential exercises. Learning opportunities are available in group, one to one, and on their own. Students are encouraged to identify their dominant and non-dominant learning styles, and contexts that are easier and more difficult for them, and to work with development and integration of these.

I have discovered intuitively that integration involves a here and now focus on experience followed by a self-reflective opportunity to facilitate change and learning. This is consistent with Yalom's (1995) work, even though his focus is on therapeutic learning. These two dimensions of learning become part of the group's culture and values.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Pierce and Baldwin (1990) wrote,

[G]roup leadership training in a counsellor education program must be fair, do no harm, respect the individual's right as a free agent and yet at the same time, do them some good in being able to participate constructively and to use and control self-disclosure effectively. (p. 149)

I believe the principles outlined are also applicable to learning individual therapy in groups. The emphasis is on the protection of students. There are no balancing comments about the benefits of risk-taking. I suggest student interests are best served where there is ample and appropriate support for risk-taking. This is a component of these process-oriented groups.

Ethical/legal considerations for this program include the contractual agreement, multi-level relationships, combining learning with personal growth, confidentiality, and the use of personal material of participants as part of the learning process. There is a fine line to be walked in using individual participants' personal material as grist for the learning process. Within the program the group has the opportunity to experience the complexity of working in this way, to learn about the sensitivity required, and to learn about all the potentials and implications of this way of working.

PERSONAL GROWTH AND PERSONAL THERAPY

Yalom (1995) points out the distinction between a therapy group and a group that is therapeutic. Participants are told that the leader cannot attend to them in

the way that would be done in a therapy group. The use of methods associated with counselling is distinguished from counselling as a specific undertaking. In my experience this is a common confusion. Using relational language, giving feedback, expressing feelings, and speculating about inner processes and interactional dynamics are methods used in counselling, but their use does not create a counselling process. In this training context, the approaches are used to facilitate the creation of a good educational environment and to demonstrate their use. The possibility of therapeutic benefits and personal growth is evident and common, but it is not the identified purpose of the group. The group's purpose is education, and the learning of these methods includes demonstration of their use. Participants are encouraged to seek personal therapy outside the group to facilitate personal growth, to heal personal-emotional wounds, to learn about the therapy process by experience, and to support optimal use of the training group experience.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The distinctions between this and other approaches are embedded in the attitude toward learners, which includes direct and consistent finely tuned attention to their humanity, an emphasis on development of the educational community as an event in itself and as part of the learning process, and the integration of curriculum and personal dimensions. I have described how the leader's role is to facilitate learning, encourage the potential of learners, and model the values, including responsiveness to learners and their communication, and how the educational leader's role is one that can be described as continually changing and being redistributed as different leadership aspects are picked up by group members.

In the development of process-oriented learning communities, participants increasingly feel part of something substantial, part of something that they want to be a member of, and something within which they feel agency and ownership.

The groups are designed to create a feeling of emotional safety, enhance personal growth possibilities and skill learning opportunities, and be comprehensive and holistic. There is a focus on the personal and the curricular, the individual and the group, and issues of diversity. The success of these groups derives from the process-oriented framework and the ability of the leader to implement the principles and methods of this approach. Finally, the distinguishing feature in these training groups is the lived curriculum that is the interactive responsiveness of the learners, including the educational leader, to the material and most importantly to each other.

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