DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS - VIDEO LIVE!

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ABSTRACT

Students describe, review and discuss individual group member behaviors observed in a video tape using the classic shared leadership behavioral guidelines, (Benne and Sheats, 1948). The exercise requires students to videotape themselves while planning and building a model home. Upon completion of the construction, students watch the videotape, then reflect and diagnose both individual and group leadership behaviors to develop a team report.

INTRODUCTION

Getting students personally involved in their own learning is one principle of adult learning (Knowles, 1990; Hatfield, 1995, Kolb, 1984). The current exercise does just that; using technology, students create a personal learning environment and give guided peer feedback about shared leadership skills. Students are urged to be involved in the group process; group communications and group development are fostered by giving students a common vocabulary. Students become more aware of the roles they and others play in groups after participating in this exercise. They discover a balance of roles is needed to achieve group goals. Students' leader behaviors are evolved by planning and building a model home; these behaviors are captured on videotape. Then, the group observes the videotape, analyzes individual group member behaviors, and gives specific, relevant, feedback to individual group members. A group report describing specific behaviors, the balance of task and maintenance behaviors and the implications of those behaviors is the final reflect-and-learn activity for the exercise.

BUILDING SHARED LEADERSHIP AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

In the exercise students must face themselves. Students see themselves on videotape, thus their behaviors are prominently displayed. To write the paper students must observe their actions on the videotape, record, analyze and discuss their specific leadership behaviors. Students may claim that this was only a game and they act very differently in their work environment. Nevertheless, discussing whether certain behaviors are demonstrated is the first step towards recognizing how they are acting here and now. From that point students decide whether they wish to change their behaviors as the need arises. The result is analysis and learning from all behaviors.

An important element in developing effective team members is providing potential team members with the appropriate tools. Students can cope with group exercises which offer no group dynamics activities to support the activities when they acquire a solid understanding of shared leadership and interpersonal skills. This exercise contributes to acquisition of those tools; it eliminates some of the ambiguity associated with how group members must operate to achieve desired goals. Students direct behaviors are the basis of learning, thus these tools are developed in a meaningful way and are relevant to all participants.

Initially, students, do not recognize giving or getting appropriate feedback is a critical interpersonal skill, and a key to developing leadership skills among group members. This exercise provides students with behavioral guidelines that enable them to safely give and receive relevant feedback. In addition it helps students to change their expectations from passive reliance on instructor evaluation to proactive individual evaluation. This provides the

groundwork for individually-centered learning, not instructor-based learning.

This exercise prepares students to give more objective feedback and to recognize leader behaviors in themselves and others. As students recognize the roles they play, they often compare the way they acted in this exercise with the way they act in different situations. These comparative comments then lead to conversations about situational leadership theories. Helping students to understand the importance of changing their behaviors to suit the situation encourages students to try different behaviors in all their groups.

EXERCISE
DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS–
VIDEO LIVE!

PURPOSE
- To recognize roles you typically play in groups.
- To read significant articles about leadership roles and teams and apply specific concepts to the functioning of your group.
- To describe specific leadership behaviors which contribute to effective, or ineffective, group functioning.
- To diagnose group dynamics within your group.
- To develop some general principles about group dynamics to help you when working in groups in other classes and on your jobs.

The activity contains several parts. PLEASE REVIEW THE ENTIRE PROCESS BEFORE BEGINNING THE GROUP PROJECT. IN ADDITION, ASK ANY QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE PROJECT. Your group meetings will be held at a location of your choice, without the instructor, so think about the project beforehand.

OVERVIEW

Your group will conduct two meetings, one to plan, and the other to build. Both of these meetings will be videotaped. Your group will build a model home, then diagnose specific behaviors, read several articles about group behavior, write a formal group paper and make an informal presentation to the class. The day of the presentation bring the model, the paper and the videotape to class. You will analyze the videotape to learn everything you can about the process your group uses to complete the exercise so the actual building is less important than THE WAY YOU GO ABOUT PLANNING AND BUILDING THE STRUCTURE.

THE TASK

As a group you will meet twice, once to plan, and once to build a model home. VIDEOTAPE BOTH OF THESE SESSIONS. Each meeting will be limited to one half hour.

Meeting #1: Planning Session .
Meet as a group to plan how and what you will do to complete the building. You may request that Instructional Media perform the videotaping or you may use your own camera. In either case you will need to purchase a blank videotape which will be given to your instructor as part of your project. If you choose Instructional Media, make an appointment with them as soon as possible.

Planning in this case means you are encouraged to think about the building process individually. **DO NOT DISCUSS ANY PORTION OF THE PLANNING UNTIL YOU ARE ALL TOGETHER.** Please come to the meeting prepared to "brainstorm" ideas and feel free to bring sample materials that might be appropriate for construction of the building. During the planning process your group will make, or defer

making decisions which will have an impact on the building itself. You have 30 minutes to complete the planning process.

Meeting #2: Building Session.
As a group, meet and construct the model home you planned. You must complete this portion of the project in 30 minutes.
1. For the structure of the home, use materials that are FREE or that have already been used. You may borrow(or beg for) the materials.
2. You may make, borrow or purchase the materials that connect the various parts of the structure(e.g., glue, nails, string, staples). If you choose to purchase these linking materials do not pay more than $2.00 per person in your group. Thus if you have 6 people you may pay up to $12.00 for linking materials (e.g. glue, string, nails, etc.)
3. The structure should fit into an 8 cubic foot box; possible dimensions are 2' x 2' x 2', or 1' x 4' x 2'.
4. The model home must be realistic, and aesthetically pleasing, both inside and out. It must be able to withstand a move (from the building site to the class).
5. The model does not need a roof but does need sidewalls; the judge should be able to look inside and recognize the rooms.
6. Furniture is not necessary, but you may draw it in, or simply write "kitchen," " great room," etc.
7. You must also purchase a tape which the instructor will keep. The instructor has an adapter, thus you may use either a VHS (T-120) tape (used with old analog recorders) or a cassette (used with digital video camcorders).
8. On (specific date) bring the model to class for the judging.
9. The final model is yours when the project is complete.

EVALUATING THE MODEL HOME

The model home is due on the same date as the written report. On that day the models are evaluated and the winning group gets five extra points(where the total project is valued at 100 points). Options for evaluating the models are: 1) each group selects one member to join the judges group; or 2) the instructor may act as the sole judge. Generally a couple of students will remind their group members they shouldn't have spent so much time building the model.

THE RESEARCH

Read the chapters in your textbook which discuss leadership and group functioning. When you have completed building the model home, please read the Benne and Sheats (1948) article attached. Additional readings may be found in the library, on reserve. You may wish to find additional journal articles on your own. You may also want to consult the PsychLit data source. A librarian can help you to utilize this very powerful database, if you choose to do so.

WRITING THE PAPER

There are three parts to this paper, describing the content, describing the process, and finally a discussion of the implications of your findings. Individual and group behaviors may be described by content and process. Content is what is being discussed. Process is how the group is functioning here and now. This means, who talks? What are they saying? How often do certain people talk? And, who talks to whom? Implications describes hypotheses, or general rules derived from your observations of your group.

GRADING (100 POINTS)

Content (20 points)

Review the videotape and discuss your observations in behavioral terms. This is the descriptive portion of the paper. Before you diagnose behaviors you must observe and accurately describe those behaviors. Describe the demographic makeup of your group and describe specific comments.

This portion of the paper requires only factual data. This is called level one data and can include information such as group demographics and specific group member comments. The data you provide in this section takes no research beyond reading the Benne and Sheats (1948) article, a couple of chapters in your textbook, and talking with your group members. You should be able to develop this section in about two pages. The comments you highlight will be used to formulate a pattern, or direction the group is taking. This pattern will be discussed in the process portion of the paper.

Process (40 points)

Describe <u>how</u> the group is functioning. That is, considering the comments you have written in the content section, describe how the group handles its leadership function, or any other functions you believe are important. <u>Who</u> is/are the leader(s), or whether there are designated leaders within your group is less important than <u>how</u> the leader(s) perform, or help members attain their goals.

Using the Benne & Sheats (1948) handout, categorize the comments you wrote in the content section of the paper. Discuss the patterns you observe. Describe whether the comments, on the whole were task oriented, maintenance oriented or dysfunctional in nature. Describe the balance, or imbalance of these behaviors in your group. Describe a few positive areas, and any potential problem areas. For example, what do you see going on because of age differences, lack of diversity, formality, or informality of behaviors? See examples of content and process comments in Appendix A.

Implications (40 points)

In this section demonstrate what you have learned, by making some generalizations about group and leader behaviors relative to your previous discussion. Look beyond your group for your responses in this section. Develop your own theories as they relate to the work world and life. What can you conclude? Some questions to think about are the following: Of what value is this experience? What are the implications for working with groups? What are some general rules of thumb or action resolutions you have discovered? How will you use this information to facilitate group development — in general? What could you do to become a more effective team?

REFERENCES

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Knowles, M. (1990). <u>The adult learner, a neglected species.</u> Fourth Edition. Houston: Gulf Publishing Company.

Kolb, D. A., (1984). <u>Experiential learning, experience as the source of learning and development.</u> Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

APPENDIX A

Content	Process	Implications
Individuals in our group bring a variety of experience to the group. The ages of our group members are 23, 25, 28, 29, and two are 30. Work experiences include, 5 years at Gayfers, 2 years with the U.S. Government, 3 years with Allied Insurance, 2 years with MacDonalds, and 1 year with GTE. We are a group of white males.	Our group developed a hierarchy of leadership early on. Tannen, D. (19xx) claims that even as youngsters, males tend to develop relationships in hierarchal order.	A group of white males will have tendency within a given group to form hierarchical reporting relationships. Leader-ship is likely to be more quickly and clearly defined than in other groups. Because this may allow a group or team to move on to the task more quickly, this may be seen as an advantage. One disadvantage is a tendency to develop group think.
Each group member came to the planning meeting prepared with sample materials to use for the construction of the building, and diagrams showing how the model home should look. One group member spoke more often and convinced the group to use her plan.	All members bringing the materials and diagrams to class demonstrated a strong task orientation in our group. The most dominant group member won our votes. Group members with strong task orientations are often quite competitive. (Burns and Hayworth, 19xx). We wonder how the process would be changed if we made the decision in another way.	Groups need a balance of task and maintenance behaviors. (Benne and Sheats, 1948). Our group might have benefitted if someone in the group encouraged other group members to speak.
Several group members talked about participating in groups in other classes and on their jobs. Typical comments were, "I didn't think it was fair for my grade to be dependent upon whether or not the group works well together, after all, what can I do? I'm not the one who gives the grade!"	Is this information ignored? What would you guess is going on? Are group members anxious? How and why are they reacting the way they are? Do they appear anxious about working in groups? This group? Why? Why not?	Working in groups, members may be anxious because they think they will be unable to achieve their desired goals. Developing group goals and standards during early group meetings may help to develop appropriate relations and alleviate many group member anxieties.