

Therapeutic Factors in a Group Experiential Learning Program in Teacher Education

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the experiential group learning experiences of student teachers (STs) who participated in a two-day experientially based group learning program, as part of their curriculum at a teacher training institute in Singapore. This program is designed as a personal growth group with an emphasis on value and character development. Thirteen groups were selected, with 12 members from each group randomly recruited to participate in the focus group interviews. A total of thirteen focus group interviews were conducted, with 109 STs participating in the sessions. The interview data was transcribed, coded and presented in themes using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The main themes were largely compatible with the therapeutic factors identified by psychiatrist Irvin Yalom that were found to improve interaction and facilitated outcome in group processes in his research. The overall results show that the dominant therapeutic factors experienced by the participants included instillation of hope, universality, imitative behavior and cohesiveness. These findings provide us with valuable information that may help facilitate a positive and beneficial group learning experience in teacher education.

Keywords: Teacher education, Therapeutic factors, experiential learning