CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7. 1. Findings:

On the basis of this research work, the researcher has made the following inferences which are considered as the findings of the study.

1. Total ideas generated by the groups under Debate condition (dysfunctional approach to Brainstorming technique, where conflict situation is created during the discussions by encouraging criticisms amongst members on the ideas generated by others) is marginally superior, irrespective of the category of the organization, than conventional Brainstorming condition (functional approach, where possibility of criticism is ruled out). However, Debate conditions stimulated the groups significantly to generate more number of ideas, including new ideas (group creativity) than did under Minimal instructions condition (controlled condition where instructions to the participants were just minimum without any mention of the words ‘criticism’, ‘conflict’ etc.). (Results are shown in Chapter - 6 : Page Nos. 161-164 and also in Annexure D)

2. Debate condition (dysfunctional conflict situation) encourages participation and reduces social loafing in groups as it demands participation by each and every member of the group in the activity. People will start searching for newer ideas (creativity in the group process starts at this point of time) for self defense when others start criticizing, based on past experiences and knowledge or awareness. (Based on the study, Refer Tables in Annexure –D).
3. Confrontation and debate by minorities in the group stimulate more thought process, and importantly, thought that is divergent and creative. As a result, this generates more ideas in the group. On the contrary, if majority agrees or disagrees on a point, other members of the group will have tendency to incline towards them, which prohibits creative idea generation (Based on the observations in the study).

Amabile’s (1996) research had demonstrated that individuals produce lower levels of creativity when they perceive their work environment as constraining or otherwise controlling. In brainstorming and minimal instruction conditions such a constraining or controlling environment was perceived by the subjects, whereas in debate condition no such perception was conceived by the participants, as a result free flow of thought process without any apprehension emerged out.

4. The permission and encouragement given by the researcher to actively engage in debate and criticize the ideas of other group members spurt a freedom to “think the unthinkable” to play with ideas, naturally lowered concern about evaluation apprehension. This was quite visible during the discussions under debate conditions, in almost all the groups, especially in service sector organizations than in manufacturing sector organisations. (Refer Chapter 6 – Hypothesis 4 - result interpretations).

5. Criticisms in the groups (dysfunctional approach in conflict) not only contributed to group creativity by generating more number of ideas in finding out solutions
to problems (performance evaluation and improvement suggestions), but also acted as a mechanism for ‘performance evaluation’ amongst group members by itself. (Ref. Chapter 6 Hypothesis 5 – result interpretation)

6. As an orthodox intervention strategy, performance appraisal is part of much broader discourses of management-labour relations, sediment to those relationships based on cultural assumptions and societal values. (Ref. Hypothesis 6- result interpretation). Respondents’ emphasis on the factors affecting performance were more or less same in all cases, as all of them were from the State of Kerala with its common heritage, cultural and societal values, irrespective of organizational cultural differences.

In labour-process theory, performance appraisal process is conceptualized as a struggle over the question as to who controls the labour process (McKinlay and Taylor 1996).

7. The objects of the appraisal concept brought into being through discourse (Grant and Hardy 2003), namely the ways in which HRM practices such as appraisal and people – as objects (Shields and Grant 2002) were constructed by texts which emerged from managerial ideas, concepts and assumptions regarding performance appraisal, were tested in the study. Thus, the focus of this finding is on identifying managerial concepts of appraisal and how these concepts informed the construction of the appraisal instrument.

Results (Hypothesis 7 – Ref result interpretation) revealed that strength of the
factors adversely affecting performance appraisal system depends on the method of appraisal adopted and varies from situation to situation, and hence construction of appraisal instrument depends mainly on managerial requirements.

8. Creativity can be encouraged within work groups through autonomy in the work, encouragement of creativity, mutual openness to ideas, constructive challenge to new ideas, and shared goals and commitments. These factors can surely promote intrinsic motivation through a constructive sense of challenge and refocus on the work itself. (Ref. Results on analysis of the questionnaire 1 – item 12- emphasis given by the respondents on the factors in the performance appraisal mechanism-Hypothesis -5)

9. Certain types of conflict—particularly disagreements of opinion on specific work issues and goals—can aid the creative process (James, 1995). In this study, Task-based conflict, which pertains to discussions and debates about the work being done; has shown a curvilinear relation with work group performance (generating more ideas for solving the problems of performance at individual, work group and organizational levels), indicating that such task-based conflicts can be beneficial. (Results of the entire study is based on this conceptual framework)

7.2. Suggestions:

The main concept of this research work is centered around ‘Group creativity in brainstorming under conflict situations’. Much research findings suggest positively as well as negatively to this theoretical idea. However, the attempt of this researcher was to
extend the positive conceptual frame of this idea into its application domain through one of the major HRM practices – performance appraisal mechanism, in organisations.

7.2.1 Ratingless Performance Appraisal:

Today, performance review meetings in organisations are regarded as conversation with a purpose. It is considered extremely important for the development and health of the organization. The purpose of the performance review meetings is to reach mutually agreed conclusions about the development of the individual and his performance and if applicable, any areas for improvement, including how such improvements are to be achieved.

The purpose of performance and development reviews is to enable the employees to engage in a dialogue and get the support of the colleagues about the individual’s performance and development. They should be more like free-flowing, open meetings in which views are exchanged so that agreed conclusions can be reached.

The three key elements of performance review meetings are:

1. **Feedback** - Providing information on how a person has been doing.

2. **Measurement** – assessing results against agreed targets and standards.

3. **Exchange of views** - Ensuring that the discussion involves a full, free and frank exchange of views about what has been achieved, what needs to be done to achieve more and what employees think about their work the way they are
managed and their aspirations. Here, debate and criticism on others points of view and opinions are welcomed and encouraged and a conflicting situation is created in the group.

Performance appraisal review is the meeting when the employee can be motivated to perform better in future or reinforce the desirable behaviour. Review discussion meetings ideally should include the following:

- Review of progress on tasks and activities in relation to the employee’s performance plan,
- The developmental initiatives taken by the employee himself and those planned by the other members in the group for the employee.
- Identification of variances in terms of delays, requisite quality and shortfall in help planned for the employee, if any
- Analyzing the causes of the delay, the problems faced and the solutions adopted.
- Preparation of action steps for solving identified problems and contingency plans for anticipated problems.

**Periodic review meetings** – This becomes meaningful only when they help pause, reflect, take stock, plan for development and strategize actions in an otherwise active relationship.

**Feedback** – The purpose of the feedback should be developmental always rather than judgmental. To maintain its utility, free, frank and timely feedback should be provided to the employees and the manner of giving feedback should be such that it should have an impact, both motivating and challenging effect on the employees’ future performance.
Evaluation technique – An appropriate evaluation technique should be selected; the appraisal system should be performance based and uniform. The criteria for evaluation should be based on observable and measurable characteristics of the behavior and performance of the employee.

Accordingly, a model of performance appraisal was formulated on the basis of the theoretical idea explained above using task conflict process and the model is named as ‘Ratingless appraisal model’, when no numerical rating or letter grading is envisaged. Instead, importance is attached to performance management rather than performance appraisal hitherto being conducted in organizations with no or less future benefit (T.V. Rao 2008).

7.2.2. Model of Group Process in Ratingless Appraisal:

Chart No.7.1
7.3 How to uncover needs for improvement

“Needs” include interests, Values, hopes, desires, wants. Process stages (stochastic movements) to encourage people to shift from their existing position to exploring their needs at another stage. Improvisation of need is possible when interaction is maximized in a group by realizing the needs of others and getting realized and sensitized on the proximities of future challenges. Both functional and dysfunctional conflicting opportunities are to be explored to reach the hands to uncovering the needs of self and others. (Identification of needs)

**Introduce Needs Approach:**
Explain that we’re looking for a solution that allows everyone to have as many of their needs met as possible, in a group to achieve both individual and organization needs. (need achievements together)

**Shift from Solutions to Needs:**
When asked what they need, many people reply with solutions that they think are needs, such as “I need him to ring me when he’s going to be late”. The need is to know whether he is safe. There are a variety of solutions which meet that type of need. Ringing when late is only one of these. So one has to explore different possibilities, with the help of others in a group situation. (creative idea generation)

**Ask “Why?”**
As people are permitted to explain why their solutions are important to them, they usually express their underlying needs. But if they are restrained from explaining, uncertain and uncomfortable feelings emerge, causing frustration and irritation. However, after
permitting to express solutions, if these solutions are criticized, they not only feel uncomfortable but also start defending their ideas, by creating novel ideas based on own past experiences, knowledge and general awareness. The importance of questioning is for creating a conflicting situation. (dysfunctional approach)

**Testing:**
Use active listening skills to check what you have heard or surmised about their needs. This helps in generating ideas for questioning as well as creating self defense, both of these would help generating more ideas individually but also amongst the group. (group creativity through individuals)

**Look for indicators:**
If a need is intangible (e.g. respect), it may be helpful to others what would indicate or point to the need being met. Ask what type of things, incidents or situation the people concerned would like to have happened. These may be then built into the solutions, to correct the individual performance through appropriate interaction amongst the group members. Individuals would come to know their performance indicators, which leads them to improve upon their performance further. (challenges through indicators)

**Break into component parts:**
An abstract or complex need (e.g. lifestyle) may be divided into simpler parts by asking what is involved, and what it means to the person. This may cause individual to understand improvement requirement. Self questioning or introspection and analysis of each component against achievement would result into truthful self appraisal. (self appraisal).
**Identify concerns and Fears:**
Enquire specifically what would happen or what would go wrong if the need wasn’t met. This again creates surprise and can again lead to generation of new ideas through introspection. (self appraisal for negative attributes)

**Move fixed positions:**
If people are stuck with their own positions, help them to shift by giving feedback, if necessary by creating dysfunctional conflict too. Ask if there are any circumstances in which their solutions would not satisfy them or why other solutions donot work for them. Paint a “what if…” scenario which could uncover their unrecognized needs to move from the current situation, to a better performance scenario. (shift the focus on development, both individual and group)

**Brainstorm the needs:**
What are the elements that would be part of a successful agreement? Explore what needs would have to be met to produce an agreement that worked for everyone (including influential people who are not immediately obvious e.g., spouse, boss), which in turn result in the outcome of bettering the performance of individuals in the group and in turn, the total performance of the group. Only through interaction synergy effect emerges, which is possible by sharing the views, deeds and knowledge each other in a group. This, in a group might lighten up differences of opinions, arguments and mutual challenges, that might reverberate into self defense by generating new and novel ideas, knowledge, and opportunities, igniting possibilities for better performance improvement of the group and its members in common. (performance improvement)
This model of appraisal of performance does not rate or grade the employee at any point of time, instead attempts to modify the performance better than the present by giving feedback using debate and criticism, and hence considered to be superior for implementation in small work groups, where people interact freely with each other. Hence this process is termed as “Ratingless appraisal system”.

7.4 Conclusion:

The research suggests that confrontation and debate stimulate more thought and, importantly, thought that is divergent and creative. From many previous research findings it is evident that such practices aid innovation in the workplace (Nemeth, 1997; De Dreu & West, 2001). By debate, the researcher has not meant conducting arguments for the sake of arguments. Nor did he mean techniques by which debate is role played, as with devil’s advocate. In fact, evidence shows that such role-playing techniques does not stimulate creative thought and solutions as does in authentic dissent. What was seen is that authentic differences stimulate thought that encourages the consideration of more information, more strategies and creative solutions. Thus, where differences exist, they should be expressed, confronted and explored.

There are implications of this line of work for the broader literature of Social Psychology and Organizational Behavior that have often emphasized harmony, avoiding conflict and strengthening cohesion in a group for better understanding and result. A survey of most textbooks in Social Psychology shows the links between liking and being liked, cohesion, persuasive tactics, attitude change, productivity and morale. Winning friends is often seen
as linked to “influencing people” (Carnegie, 1937). In Organizational Behavior, the fields of organizational culture, ‘person-organization fit’ and organizational demography often assume that homogeneity of thought enhances individual, group and organizational performance consistently. The goal is homogeneity of views and behavior, enforced through mechanisms of social control, or “fit” which results in more satisfaction, commitment and retention (Chatman, 1991; Schein, 1992; O’Reilly & Chatman, 1996). There have been dissenting voices, however, as in the case of this study.

Relative to traditional brainstorming instructions, such permission to debate will be even more conducive to idea generation. If in the current study, especially in light of the fact that two distinct cultures are showing the same pattern of findings, it will raise the question as to whether evaluation apprehension is of major importance in reducing idea generation and even if so, if instructions against criticism actually reduce it, then why is Debate—an actual encouragement of criticism—even more effective in stimulating idea generation in groups, post-discussion and in total production?

The problems associated with cohesion, harmony and strong leadership have been recognized by researchers of defective group processes such as groupthink (Janis, 1982) or of information sharing that is biased towards facts that are held in common (Stasser & Titus, 1985). Both types of work show the problems with not availing oneself of information held by a minority member or by processes that limit the debate and confrontation of differing views. More direct evidence has been provided by work on minority influence, especially that showing that minority views stimulate divergent
information search, strategies, and thought. People detect new correct solutions and think more creatively (see generally Nemeth, 1995).

The importance here is that minority views may not “persuade” others to their proposition; however, they stimulate divergent thinking and, in general, raise the level of decision making and productivity (Nemeth, 2002). From this perspective, dissent has value, even if it is wrong or considered as negative by some. Competing views serve decision making, innovation in the workplace (Nemeth, 1997) and, as argued by John Stuart Mill (1859), the detection of truths. In the context of the present study, the encouragement of such debate—and even criticism—appears to encourage the expression of more creative ideas.

The positive effect of criticism and debate once again strongly reveals that disagreement and opposing viewpoints help participants to evaluate their own performance and can take corrective action in case of deviation. Time may be required to consider this as a formal appraisal mechanism but as far as an employee is concerned, measuring his performance with the unique objective of achieving organizational goals is not sufficient and this concept needs to be changed in organizations. The employee must be made aware of his level of performance and both - organization as well as the employee- can take measures to improve the performance. This not only helps in improving the job performance, but helps in enhancing the employee commitment towards the organization.

The present experimental work is also not opposing the same, but agrees with the findings of earlier research work stipulating the importance of conflict and confrontation in a group process to generate more creative ideas to solve the problems. This study
further related this aspect and used this process for improving the performance of the employees in organizations by modeling a new method of appraisal system where the truthful feedback on job performance is given to each employee in the group by the other members along with the possible improvement methods by debating each other and if necessary by criticizing other participants ideas and deeds. This is done on work basis (task- conflict) and hence becomes timely and effective. As there are no ratings or grading done here, this method is ascribed as ‘ratingless appraisal’ with all its functions remaining same for performance improvement through individual criticism, where group members generate new ideas for better performance of self and others. The net result would be not only the employee improvement, but the enhancement of organizational effectiveness as well.

The present study reveals that there is ample scope for the new model of appraisal in organizations which will reduce the apprehension of rating by others, but improve the genuine need for personal improvement through the process of effective feedback and open discussion, which may not be very much acceptable to the group members, thus creating the need for further improvement as a challenge. Further research is required in the micro areas of the work in different organizational context.

7.5 The Future of Creativity Research:

Guilford’s (1950) early thinking on creativity led scholars down the path of investigating individual creativity as it relates to cognitive processes, personality traits, and environmental contexts. Today, researchers must look to the next horizon to understand
how creativity occurs in natural settings. Situations where individuals must work together, share ideas, and be creative in team contexts are increasingly important in the modern workplace and are worthy of more investigation by creativity researchers. In recent years, researchers have made great strides to better their understanding of how groups function. To take creativity research to the next level, researchers must now accept the challenge of dissecting team-level creativity and understanding the components of creativity as they occur with multiple individuals. The recent research on conflict in teams expands on Guilford’s original idea by suggesting that task conflict can lead to more creative outcomes.

Despite the potentially positive effects of task conflict, conflict of all types tends to involve negative affect. This can be dangerous for groups; even the beneficial type of conflict, when not effectively managed, can easily spiral into more destructive interpersonal attacks and emotional outbursts (relationship conflict).

In helping us to understand the importance of investigating creativity in individuals, Guilford opened the door to a world of personality traits and cognitive processing models. It is now up to us as creativity researchers to expand the scope of this field and explore creativity in all of its manifestations, from single individuals working together, to small teams, to large and complex groups.

*The improvement of understanding is for two end; first for our own increase of knowledge; secondly to enable us to deliver and make out that knowledge to others*

*John Locke*