

Date: 10/08/96  
To: Ronald Heifetz  
CC: Brendan O'Day  
From: Vladimir Petit Medina (mc-mpa)  
Subject: Group Study Questionnaire (Form I)

Group \_\_F\_\_ Week: 3d.

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### **1) What was the purpose and what was the task of the consultation group session?**

Basically, *the purpose of the consultation group was to have the presentation of a case representing a failure and the task was to analyze the said case brought out by the presenter and in studying his personal experience, we were supposed to learn about leadership, the analysis of the whole system itself and the ways that failure could be possible avoided.* This week **Bruce Andersen** had the opportunity to present a case and we, as a group, had to analyze it and to recommend solutions.

### **2) What was the initial event of the group session?**

Mark Torres,<sup>1</sup> the Jesuit, was the chairperson for this week and he did a great job, establishing his informal authority very rapidly. In fact, the operational rules were set with such a **smooth style** that everybody agreed on them immediately (clear direction). Then, we got started with the case presentation.

Bruce Andersen made a great effort in order to get us become familiar with the very complex organization of the Scouts in the United States. He worked for the Scouts and he thinks that he had some responsibility for the collapse of the volunteers' area within the organization. Then, the initial event itself became his significative story and his important primary confession: "...I tried to avoid what happened and even today, almost two years later.... There is something about it that permanently disturb my mind....I know that sometimes I become away from reality because of some idealistic expectations..". Then, along the rest of the presentation, we carefully heard a person tortured by some kind of feeling, blaming himself with the intensity that only a real *belief* may cause. *His reflection led the small group system to an initial search with no destiny, as normal in real life. At the beginning some of us, assumed the specific role of interrogators while the rest were deeply reflecting back on our unconsciousness tied to similar and previous examples of our own life. Therefore, the system began by playing*

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<sup>1</sup> It is easy to notice that Brendan's comment about the last questionnaire was absolutely right.

*the roles to embody issues and reality itself at the time of acting according each individual's interest. The, we reached some equilibrium point by confronting the issues and, as a consequence, by regulating the level of distress during the small group session.*

**3) Was there any difference between what the case presenter identified as the problem in the case and your own interpretation of the problem in the case?. If so, what?**

Yes, because the presenter *identified the problem as his own leadership failure and most of us rapidly concluded that the fact itself had been out of his real control, therefore, it was not related to it but to another important dilemma : the eternal difference between what it is and what it Should be.* So, he strongly focused on the individual aspect (specially his insight ) and we tried to get to the relevant point: *an inappropriate assessment of the context and , maybe, a tacit overestimation of both his responsibilities and his possibilities as a member of a large organization..* Therefore, a wrong appreciation of the real adaptive challenge was the real case. So, this case was implicitly related to another important fact: the measure of the alternatives by the real appreciation of the chances and strengths and possibilities, in order to have a real idea of what adaptive work and challenges are.

**But we were wrong. We were just playing the roles of the story initially. How? By embodying the same interest of the case. Then, as in the case, we chose the easy and incorrect explanation because of our own interests. Later, we reached to a some dead point by confronting the reality itself : “ I feel we do not want to get to the point”, I said. The, Mark pointed out: “ We all are seeing through our own internal realities and not through the less subjective view of an analyst”. That touched us. We reacted. Then people were still viewed from a different perspective, but the system began working in another way: trying to find real responses instead of hiding our heads and minds. Suddenly, we get to a point in which we asked ourselves : If Bruce behavior and acts have been different in the case, it would have made any difference?. The answer was yes but not unanimous. Some people decided to return to the easy explanations. The rest of us, started thinking about a real failure and the real and profound analysis of the case began.**

The system is a complex and interconnected reality with many manifestations. But every system has its own rules and its roles. The system that the case brought up, was one in which our case presenter had just informal authority gained through his effort and his involvement. That is the reason why some people thought there was not any failure that was his responsibility. They did not differentiate formal authority from leadership ( they were a whole ) so, they could not see that they case itself was just a collection of our own and daily failures.

**4) What was the primary hidden issue of your consultation group session?**

The presenter made *a great effort to be sincere and he did not have any defensive reaction*. Also, he was willing to provide the required information. The problem was the initial system reaction and its direction: **“This was not a problem of failure but your own problem of remorse. It was absolutely out of your control”**. I thought that way at the very beginning, but then I asked myself: If people’s behavior, acts and values have been different in the case, it would have made any difference?. The answer was yes. I talked to the group and groupmates started reflecting on it again.

*The initial reaction put us in another path: some of us were looking for the right answer and the rest remained stuck in the easy answers. As we were progressing and reaching some equilibrium<sup>2</sup>, fewer people remained in the easy faction but at the end, anyway, there still were at least three people thinking in the same way.*

**5) Did the initial event provide a clue for identifying the primary hidden issue of the group session? If so, what was the connection?**

Yes. The *initial event as a complex integrated by both the presentation of the case itself and the immediate initial reaction ( which brought up the hidden issue simultaneously )* was the key element to identify the real hidden issue of the consultation group. The connection was that the position held by many of the characters of the case was the same position held by some of the groupmates. Then, roles embodied were the definitive leads.

**6) Did the hidden issue of the meeting have an impact on the group dynamics as the group worked on the task? If so, what was the impact?**

Yes. The analysis became disturbed by the search for the easy and inappropriate answer, then the group session was affected by some kind of hide confrontation that suddenly showed up, when we decide to face the hidden issue itself.

**7) Was there any way that the hidden issue of your group session resembled the underlying problem or dynamic in the case?**

Yes. Actually, the problem of *the case itself was resembled through our reactions. As in the case, some people decided to take the easiest way : not to face the reality as an adaptive challenge, and , then run away. Some group mates were running away from the real problem although they were present during the consultation session. As Bruce intended to do in the case, other groupmates were trying to get to the point and to recommend solutions.*

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<sup>2</sup> The equilibrium was reached by confronting sincerely this hidden issue: Hey, Do you think Bruce is crazy? He brought out his case meeting the requirements? Do you think he failed bringing us this case ? Perhaps is not an easy answer but anyway, is Bruce’s failure..” . This discussion took place before Bruce. Maybe it disturbed him but it was necessary.

*We saw that people avoiding the real analysis and that caused some level of disturbance. As long as we faced the problem, fewer of the groupmates were thinking in the same way, but the disturbance was still there ( affecting our own adaptive work ).*

**8) Identify two key words from the group session and discuss the relevance of their etymologies to the hidden issue?**

- **Belief**, derivative from *leubh* (to care, to love) and from the Old English *geleafa* (belief, faith). What we love or what someone takes care about, or what leads some Person saw a person who has a profound belief and, perhaps, this situation was not properly understood by the groupmates. I think that this misunderstanding was what misled some groupmates to the wrong position: this was not a failure, this guy wanted to do something that was out of his control, maybe because of his ideals. And it was his failure and, at the same time, it was his ideal.
- **Distort**, derivative from *terk* ( to twist ) and the Latin *torquere* (to twist ). The case analysis was initially deformed and distorted by the immediate reaction and the misleading thought which it brought up. Then our own adaptive work was affected.

**9) Has there been any difference between your capacity to contribute in the consultation group and the large class? What issues are embodied in the group that might account for this difference.**

Yes, in the consultation group we are able to reach an equilibrium point rapidly. In the large class people do not understand that professor Heifetz is trying to lead us to a point in which we ,by ourselves, must reach an equilibrium situation as a system that has a certain evolution to make. Then, a permanent disorder is just the initial state of the class. That situation does not enable us, foreigners with the natural barriers of the language, to compete at the same speed they usually do. In the large class, multiple issues are embodied: those who want leadership by showing up are present, those who want to decide on behalf of our own feelings are common, and those who want to be taken into account by Professor Heifetz, make normal appearances. Many people think that leadership is the art of the appearance instead of concluding that leadership is the art of getting people doing what we think is necessary to do from the perspective of a positive system of values. Then, no one has successfully exercised leadership yet. Perhaps because nobody understands that the first step to make is to gain informal authority, as in this consultation session Mark Torres did. Let's see if our own adaptive work becomes possible in this environment.

Chairperson? No.

Case Presenter? No.

vpm