

Date: 11/14/96
To: Ronald Heifetz
From: Vladimir Petit Medina (mc-mpa)
Subject: Group Study Questionnaire (Form II)
Group F Week : 8th

1) Are there common or are there competing conceptions of purpose in the group? What effect does this have on the group's ability to proceed with the task?

There are still many competing conceptions of the purpose and many hidden perspectives but this week we finally could work in the appropriate way. The intensity of the conceptions went down a little bit and so it emerged a real possibility to work as we are expected to: using the new analytic framework to help the case presenter and learn from his failure.

Perhaps the intense feeling that many people had, in the sense that the previous meeting was not satisfactory, led the whole system to a positive and profound work. In some way, the catharsis became productive and, therefore, a higher ability to proceed with the task was noticed.

Existing factions decided to step back for a while and let the dynamic flow. And it really worked. Even Kent, maybe the most radical member of the group, seemed to me that he was interested in learning and helping. In fact, I am really satisfied with the meeting and I think the rest of the group got that feeling too.

Having said this I just want to state in a clear way the following: we were able to consult to the case presenter and in doing it, we did not hesitate to use our best tools. At the same time, I think that the whole system learned a lot about leadership and authority. We could proceed with the task successfully and productively.

2)What was the initial event of the group meeting?

At ten o'clock, Sarah asked Jorge to proceed with the case, in order to avoid wasting time and she declared that she would not allow any work avoidance. With this decision, Sarah exercised the formal authority she had as Chairperson but, simultaneously, she gained informal authority. Why? Just because many of us thought that the previous week she did not act as she was expected to and now, she was changing the direction of the process as a signal of a positive reflection. She played a great role bringing direction to the group and protection to the case presenter.

Jorge began presenting the case. People remained silent for a while. Jorge's case engaged the group in such an easy way that complemented the initial holding environment that Sarah created by saying just the appropriate words.

There was no fear. For the first time, we were exploring the unfamiliar with no consciousness of it. Direct attention and incredible concentration led to silence, order and commitment. The system was moving forward.

3)Was there any difference between what the CP identified as the leadership dilemma in the case and your own interpretation of the problem in the case? If so, what?

There was a difference. In fact, Jorge's view of the case was not complete and I think mine was much broader. Then the disparity was based on the extension rather than the content.

I used some new ideas I have just read about Mao's perspectives of leadership. Then I identified his case as dualism and its interaction with an external conflict. By the way, the conflict was an antagonistic one.

The conflict: the external environment that affected the trustworthiness of the PRI in the country, and in the particular state in which the university was located. This conflict was to be managed by leaders and it was not in Jorge's hands. Unfortunately, the external conflict interacted with the minor system and influenced it.

The dualism: Jorge was a PRI representative to the University and I think that people completely identified him with his party. But at the same time, he was running for student representative and students did not identify his ambitions with their aspirations. Instead of accepting the message of a student running for the co-government of the university, students perceived that it was not Jorge but the PRI that was acting trying to preserve some power. Dualism affected his path to authority and destroyed his possibilities from the very beginning of his fight. A tragedy: his biggest strength became his worst weakness.

Then, this was not a case of leadership but authority and there was a primary conclusion: I think he never had the real chance to win the election just because he did not know how to gain authority and the only way to do it, according to his view, implied that he had to reinforce his image of PRI representative. A real catch 22.

Also:

- He became the lightning rod and the guy to beat.
- He feared of experiencing the unexpected and that was the only way to change the predictable results of the election, which it was also an act to reinforce authority (maybe he should have stepped back for a while, trying to follow his aspirations rather than his ambitions, or he should have reached an agreement with the divisive faction or maybe he should have supported another people's candidacy)
- He did not create a holding environment
- He refused to have allies rather than supporters
- In trying to bring the PRI votes together he avoided the real adaptive challenge.

4) What was the primary hidden issue of the consultation group meeting and what was the underlying problem in the case? Was there any parallel? Did the initial event provide a clue?

The primary hidden issue was the perplexity of some people who were attracted to the case but at the same time the complexity made it difficult to analyze. That is the reason why Mark and Andrea remained silent for a long time, perhaps trying to reflect on it more clearly. Some of the questions they made revealed a profound curiosity and an increasing surprise.... Guns in the university?? Asked Kent. I replied: Well you have the same problem but at the high school !. Jorge reinforced this response by affirming: It is very common but the rationale is quite different from yours here in America: that guns are to protect activists and not to attack people as delinquent. This is a clue of a very sensitive hidden issue: routine vs. exception , a costume vs. an incidentally act. And besides those factors we could find two different feelings and personalities.

Also I noticed something important: Some people were surprised because this big case was presented by Jorge, who was one of the representatives of the factions. I think that some of our groupmates have previously underestimated his values and experience and suddenly they found

themselves shocked by a clear and interesting presentation from which emerged an impressive informal authority.

5.- Identify the most productive intervention of the meeting. What made it so ?

With all due respect I think my intervention set the real biases of the problem and allowed the system to get to clarify the context. I intervened about four times: to find out the percentages and the turnout of voters, to clarify the relationship between Jorge and some divisive group of the PRI, to know about the initiatives he made to reach an agreement and to find out his real ambitions and aspirations. I think that was very productive.

6.-Did the group use any work avoidance mechanism to maintain equilibrium? Did the people in the case use any work avoidance mechanisms to maintain equilibrium? If so, what were they? was there any similarity?

A Scapegoating-attempt appeared again but just for few minutes: Jorge tried to scapegoat with the PRI issue as the only reason to explain his failure , and he was wrong. As I proved it, later on, Jorge made a wrong assessment of the situation because the level of his ambitions became higher than the level of his commitment with the student's sector and the people perceived it . Then, PRI support was not responsible for all what happened. However, he rapidly understood that he did not explore the whole variety of alternatives and decided to use a broader scope.

I want to clearly state that Jorge did not assume a defensive position. And that is the reason why he appeared so open to new criticism. And I think the whole group succeed in identifying and rejecting, simultaneously any attempt to work avoidance .

7.-How were you used by the group? Were you used well or poorly?.-

I was properly used. However at the very end of the meeting I decided to talk to Jorge privately but there were still some members of the group around. I explained him what I exactly thought that happened in his case by using the new analytic framework and some of my groupmates urged me to make that kind of analysis during the consultation meeting. I asked them that I did not do it in such extension but I did say the same basic ideas during the meeting. Then there is a dilemma I have to manage: I will continue intervening but I will not hesitate to make my whole analysis regardless of the time constraint.

Finally Jorge told me that he found new elements and a different perspectives of analysis thanks to our interventions during the consultation meeting. He thought that we helped him. Therefore, at last, we could accomplish the purpose and the task at the same time. We successfully helped him. At least, a little bit.

8.-How was the chairperson used by the group?

She did a great job. A real manager of the direction and a great groupmate. We used her in the proper way and she became absolutely useful in finding the appropriate way to get to the real point.

9.- To whom did the group give informal authority and Why?

We gave it to the case presenter and to the chairperson. The chairperson turned her formal authority into an informal one by directing the meeting successfully and by avoiding any kind of work avoidance. She guided us to a good outcome in a smooth way.

The case presenter revealed himself as a person full of experience in the real world and he did a great job by giving us all the data we required. Also, the way he answered some suspicious questions showed himself as a person with firm character and clear positions. He used some of the Hiefetz's concepts to ease the comprehension of the case which made us feel more comfortable.

10.-Identify one moment when you thought you had something worthwhile to say and you held yourself back? None.

11.- What interplay between your own personal tuning and the dynamics of the small group account for your capacity to intervene? In what ways have the large class dynamics influenced your behavior?

In this session I felt likely to intervene because the dimensions of the case were very attractive and related to my field" politics. Also, the fact that we succeed in maintaining work avoidance-attempts under control make it more attractive and eased the dynamic itself. We were not trying to get insights from the rest of the groupmates but trying to get analysis and skills from the case. I am really happy because we are moving forward and I think it is an irreversible process. Also, the fact that we got productive outcomes almost immediately and everybody could appreciate them was a great incentive.

I am writing this just few hours after the last case debriefing session and I think that the large class system is working better. I think that the strange case presented today introduced a new perspective and a set of new elements for the analysis: our new skills and the framework itself is useful even with complex and plural systems. Then, there are no barriers but constraints to overcome.

12.-Identify two key words from the group and discuss the relevance of their etymologies to the hidden issue?

1. **Direction:** from Latin *directus* and *dirigere*, to direct, the act or function of directing...guidance of an action or an operation. It was clear that the appropriate direction and guidance of the meeting made the adaptive work possible and let the dynamic flow as required and desired. Also, the ability to direct and to conduct did not leave any room to work avoidance but to minimum attempts. Finally, we must remember that one of the important elements of the authority in times of distress is direction. We were lucky.
2. **Attract:** from Latin *attrahere*, *attract*: *ad* + *trahere*, pull. To arouse or compel the attention of...The new system moving forward , sometimes at 100% capacity, attracted us to the new experience and the new direction of the work. As long as the work became more natural and pleasant, more attraction it had. Then, the experiment itself pulled our attention and we felt attracted to doing what we were to do from the very beginning: a consultation group rather than therapy group.



