

# Understanding of the team dynamics in adult education

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**Abstract.** On the hypothetical case we analyzed, a group of trainees comes to a crisis, while going through the team development phases. Intense disagreement between the members of the group emerges, and the instructor is informed about it. Through this crisis, certain roles of the members of the team emerged, that affect the dynamics of the team. In this paper we deal with these roles and with the instructor's attempt to discharge the intense situation.

**Keywords:** Adult education, team dynamics, group formation.

## Case analysis

### Incident

During an adult education training program, the instructor asked the participants to form groups of five members, to draw an adult educational program of a topic and a target group of their own choice and to present their work to the whole team (which consists of 20 members). In one of the groups, tension came up as one of the group members was not consistent with the choice of the cognitive topic of the other members. The instructor had to intervene and asked the members of the group to stop interrupting each other and to work out the topic choice taking into account all the different opinions, even if they come from only one member. The team continued their work until the break, without however corresponding completely to the task they were given, while they reached their decision for a topic after a majority election. During the break, the trainee who had the objections to the selected topic shared confidentially with the instructor his wish to change group or even leave the program because he was sensing hostility from the other group members.

**A. Group formation phase:** This specific hypothetical group is on the phase 3. All the differences of the members' thoughts and their approach to the cognitive subject of the educational program they were expected to design appeared, were expressed and were the cause of confrontation and disagreement, when they had to deal with the imposed decision for the educational topic. The members of the group started interrupting each other, making it necessary for the instructor to intervene, and the emotional state of the group was agitated and intense, facts that clearly indicate the third phase. The request that the fifth member made, about abandoning the group, shows that the group didn't make it to the next phase 4, meaning that they didn't make good use of the crisis and the instructor's intervention, so as to make clear any ambiguities they had and to rearrange the situation. Had they succeeded in doing so, feelings of satisfaction would have emerged, the members' relationships would be improved and the group would have regained interest on the program. Voting didn't help the group get over their differences, which had as a result for the group to remain on phase 3 instead of moving on the creative phase 4.

**B. Roles:** In this incident, there is no dispute between subgroups, but the intense disagreement and conflict between one member of the group and the rest of the group. The role of the controversialist is revealed, the person who questions the perspective of many, who is opposed to the rest and separates himself from the group. We think that the controversialist affects the dynamics and the elaboration of the group positively under certain circumstances. The expressed confrontation should be addressed and deployed, not skipped or worked around. It is an opportunity for the group to reevaluate their targets, their rules and their processes, thus reducing the vagueness and the insecurity feelings of the group members.

Unfortunately, in this incident, the controversialist was considered as nuisance and they tried to hush it up using the voting method or the “dictatorship of the many”. Moreover, this role appears to stick to the certain member, leading to a hostile attitude from the part of the other members. This treatment could be due to the fact that the group had to accomplish a certain work, in a determined amount of time and the role of the controversialist was not acceptable at the specific moment.

**C. Instructor’s actions:** I think that a non-reversible situation is formed, concerning the atmosphere created between the controversialist and the other members during the program session. The instructor should accept the confidential request of the trainee and let him choose a new group to join. The instructor must first ask for the permission of the new group and then let him be a part of it. Due to the incident and to avoid similar situations in the future, time should be spent in discussion about the importance and the use of conflicts, initiated by the instructor.

## CONCLUSION

To sum it up, we would like to note that the time of the conflict was crucial. It happened too soon, before the group formed its identity and the tools to work on critical situations. In this way, the crisis was not beneficial, it was covered and tension was accumulated, leading to the departure of the member from the group.

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