Using Case studies in Character Development

Audience: All   Group Size: N/A

Purpose

To provide a more thorough analytical teaching tool through use of situations or "case studies" (often the story of an individual or individuals) and provide application of core values and character development of personnel.

Description

Case studies present real and complex everyday situations. They often involve ethical/moral dilemmas, conflicts, or problems that people must work through.

A good facilitator uses case studies to keep discussion focused on the facts of the situation and help the participants apply proper analysis and application of an individual's character and institutional core values. Participants practice identifying the boundaries of a situation, recognizing and voicing positions, testing solutions, and arguing different points of view.

Execution

It is important to know all the issues involved in each case study used. Facilitators should prepare questions in advance and anticipate where issues may arise. Additionally, by knowing the audience, you draw on their backgrounds, experiences, and personalities to advance the discussion.

While there are many variations in how case studies can be used, these six steps provide a general framework for how to lead a case-based discussion:

- Give participants plenty of time to read or watch and think about the case.
- Introduce the case briefly and provide some guidelines for how to approach it.
  - Identify the constraints each person in the case was operating under and the opportunities they had.
  - Evaluate the decisions each person made and its implications.
  - Have participants explain what they would have done differently and why.
- Breaking a large group into smaller groups gives individuals more opportunities for participation.
  - Assign deliverables for each group (e.g., "Identify three potential courses of action and outline the pros and cons of each").
  - Designate responsibilities for each member in the group (e.g., one individual watches the time and keeps the others on task; a second individual challenges the biases, assumptions and/or interpretations of the group and digs for deeper analysis; a third individual records the group's dialogue and conclusions and presents it to the larger group)
- Each group presents their solutions or reasoning. If groups know they are responsible for producing a deliverable (a decision, rationale, analysis), they will approach the discussion with greater focus and seriousness. Write their conclusions on the board so that you can return to them in the discussion that follows.
- The facilitator should guide the discussion and probe for clarification and deeper analysis without imposing their own biases, values, and beliefs. As the discussion unfolds, ask questions that require participants to examine their own assumptions, substantiate their claims and provide examples.
- Be sure to bring the various discussions back together at the end so participants see the bigger picture.

References

The Encyclopedia of Ethical Failures (https://ogc.osd.mil/defense_ethics/resource_library/eef_2019.pdf)

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