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ARIES

**Assistance to Resource Institutions
for Enterprise Support**

**The Case Method of Management Education
within the ARIES Project
and
Proposed Case Study Plan**

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main objective of the ARIES project is to assist resource institutions enhance their capacity to serve more effectively small and microenterprises. To this end the project provides technical assistance, training and applied research. An important vehicle for capacity development under the project is the creation of management teaching cases tailored expressly to the situations of these resource institutions. This document discusses the case method and why it is particularly appropriate to the project's purposes. Drawing upon the literature of the field of small enterprise development and upon field visits, the project's Strategic Overview Paper (a separate document) sets forth a framework which is used to select institutions and situations for case development. The focus is on "recurring problems" facing the resource institutions as they create and modify their enterprise development programs. Other frameworks facilitate the comparative analysis of the cases themselves. In particular, how are the differing approaches to enterprise development affected by the characteristics of the institution, its clients, the policy environment and the socioeconomic context? The document concludes with abstracts of the cases proposed for development under the ARIES project.

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Introduction

A major objective of the ARIES project is to assist resource institutions working in enterprise development to enhance their capacity to achieve their own objectives. Services available through ARIES are technical assistance, training and applied case method research. While case research will produce insights into the enterprise development process, its main product will be teaching materials for executive development programs for resource institution managers. This paper presents information on the case method of research and teaching; suggests why it is particularly appropriate to the aims of the ARIES project; presents the rationale for seeking particular sorts of situations for case development.

What is the Case Method Approach and Why Use it?

Senior managers of any organization require a variety of skills to guide the organization effectively toward the accomplishment of its goals; indeed to assure that the goals themselves are appropriate. One requirement surely is substantive knowledge about a variety of subjects relevant to the organization's activities. Of great importance, however, are other skills: effective approaches to problem solving, ability to see problems and goals in context (to think strategically), interpersonal and communication skills.

The case method has proven effective in helping people to develop this combination of skills. While there are many variants of the method, most share the following characteristics. The centerpiece is "The case" - sometimes called the case report - a carefully researched description of a particular problem or situation which faced the management of an organization. A "case analysis" of this situation then is prepared by participants. In The Harvard Business School's use of the method, individual reading and reflection on the case is followed by small group discussion where much of the case analysis takes place. This is followed by the case discussion, where an experienced case leader orchestrates an exploration of the issues raised by the case. At the conclusion of the discussion, there may be a brief statement of what actually was done and the subsequent outcome. Ideally this is provided by one of the principals of the actual case (who may have observed the discussion). This may involve comments upon the analysis and conclusions of the group and response to questions.

Writing about the case method, HBS Professor Benson Shapiro stresses that the two concepts of metaphor and simulation are central to the case method approach. Each case describes a real situation and serves as a metaphor for a particular set of problems. On simulation, Professor Shapiro states that "the case method of management instruction is based upon the belief that management is a skill rather than a collection of techniques or concepts. The best way to learn a skill is to practice in a simulation-type process." (Shapiro, 1984)

More than conveying specific subject matter knowledge, the case method fosters a systematic approach to problems; develops the ability to pull from a welter of information the significant elements needed for decision; skill at being able to place these elements in an appropriate analytical framework which can serve as a guide to action; the ability to recognize limitations to action posed by the societal, economic, institutional and personnel context of the problem. An important skill is developing these frameworks - often a set of questions - to define the problem accurately. "Problem definition," writes Professor E. Raymond Corey, "also involves delineating a framework within which to deal with what may be posed as an immediate question. For example, the manager in the case may be asking, 'Why isn't our advertising effective?' That could be the tip of the iceberg; the fundamental problem might be 'What should be our target

market segment, and how do we develop an overall strategy for reaching it?' It becomes possible, then, to deal with the specific query regarding advertising effectiveness within the framework of the broader question." (Corey, 1976).

The fact that the analysis and understanding of the case takes place through interpersonal give and take moderated by the case leader delivers at least two important messages. First, in management situations, much information must be drawn out through discussions to which different individuals bring different perspectives. Like the case leader (who in some sense serves as a role model) the manager must be able to use discussion leadership skills to tap the wisdom and perspectives of his or her people. To an important extent in the case method, "the medium is the message" to use McLuhan's language. This is apparent in Professor Charles Gragg's classic article "Because Wisdom can't be Told" when he describes three phases which students pass through in making the adjustment from lecture style teaching to the case method. The first phase, he says, "is that of discovering the inability of the individual to think of everything that his fellow students can think of.... The second phase is that of accepting easily and without fear the need for cooperative help." The final phase is "recognition that the instructors do not always or necessarily know the 'best' answers." (Gragg, 1940)

Secondly, the case method reflects the manager's reality that, in Thomas Bonoma's words, "cleverness and even brilliance unrepresented, or presented poorly will not necessarily dominate mediocrity presented with persuasive genius." He continues, "Because administrative cases are dissected in a community of learners, not only "goodness" of analysis but also persuasiveness of presentation enter the discussion arena as factors with which to be reckoned." (Bonoma, 1981)

An additional benefit of the case method for senior managers is its action orientation. There is an insistent pressure to develop actionable plans suited to the situation presented. In advising new case teachers, for example, Professor Shapiro urges, "The instructor should understand that in the discussion process action drives analysis." (Emphasis his.) He advises, "It is useful to state in the course introduction, that 'the only person who doesn't need to make a decision about the case is me, the instructor'". (Shapiro, 1984). Having experienced this sort of pressure themselves, executives tend to be impatient with other approaches they consider "academic".

Several fundamental principles of effective learning underlie the case approach. First, people absorb new knowledge most effectively by integrating it with their existing knowledge. The case approach emphasizes that participants draw upon their own experiences for insights, sharing these perceptions with the group. This encourages participants constantly to integrate new case material with their existing store of knowledge. Indeed, a major premise of the case method is that much of what is learned comes not from the "teacher" but from the group; from its analysis, the perspectives which come out in the discussion; the experience of seeing peers functioning as resource people. Speaking to a group of senior managers entering Harvard's Advanced Management Program, Malcolm McNair forewarned them that they would not depart the program with "answers". "On the contrary," he said, "the principal value to you of this training at the Business School will lie in the power that you will develop to analyze a situation, to formulate a program of action, and to carry that program into effect through the people in your organization or in your community." (McNair, 1954)

Secondly, active learning is more effective than passive learning. Participants constantly are seeking to relate each new contribution to their own analysis; to modify it, to extend it, to enrich it. The value of this style of active learning is Charles Gragg's main theme as he assails "the decidedly questionable . . . assumption that it is possible by a simple process of telling to pass on knowledge in a useful form. This is a stumbling block of the ages. If the learning process is to be effective something dynamic must take place in the learner." (Gragg, 1940)

The Role of the Case Method in the ARIES Project

Within the ARIES project, the case method will serve as a major vehicle for helping senior executives of resource institutions improve their capacity to deal effectively with issues specific to small enterprise development. Managers of these institutions face many common challenges and issues. A variety of differences - in circumstances, pressures, beliefs, cultures, histories, personalities - produce wide variation in institutional responses to these relatively comparable challenges. Some responses have been more successful than others. The case method provides a framework within which they can learn from each other's experiences as they analyze and discuss cases with which they can identify. The cases themselves will be selected to highlight important decisions which have faced real managers, decisions which importantly shaped the evolution of the institution and/or its relationship to its environment. With cases drawn from enterprise development experience in the developing countries, a skilled case leader can catalyze fruitful discussion; help to structure the input of the participants in a way that helps to highlight issues and clarify underlying concepts.

Assumptions About How Case Training Will Be Implemented

In order to develop a Case Study Plan there must be some assumptions made about the context in which the cases will be used. The assumption underlying the case development is that there will be interest by senior management of resource institutions in short training programs tailored to their needs, managed and implemented by management training institutions. As businesses do, at least some of these institutions will see benefit in collaborating in case development. The perspective and questions of experienced casewriters can help managers clarify their vision of the organization and its problems and opportunities. A sense of shared purpose with a community of professional colleagues and the desire to create a body of training materials relevant to that community should help encourage participation in case studies. For managers of an institution studied, listening to the case discussion often proves to be a source of totally new ideas. (Bonoma, 1981)

ARIES staff have begun to discuss with various institutions some preliminary ideas for cases and with the faculty of management training institutes possible collaboration in developing the case material. This process should help to identify and generate interest in developing executive training programs with a principal focus on strategic issues of small scale enterprise development.

As a starting point, the ARIES research staff first has sought to identify key problems and issues facing these managers. This has been done by a combination of literature review and personal interview. The results are summarized in the ARIES Strategic Overview Paper. In some form, all resource institutions working with small enterprises encounter these recurrent problems and issues. Each deals with them in some fashion, some with great success, others with less. In these experiences lie many useful lessons.

One objective of the proposed training programs is to help managers build up a framework within which to examine the problems they face. To some extent this is done explicitly by such means as the categorization spelled out in the Strategic Overview Paper. Another approach is to engage them in the analysis of some of the main ways these problems have been dealt with; the major models developed for coping with them. This helps build up a sense of patterns in the problems and in various solutions worked out to them. ACCION, for example, talks about its "methodology". They have worked out a particular approach to small enterprise development which they find mitigates some common problems. The Carvajal Foundation has evolved quite a different model of enterprise development. Both have influenced the design of many projects beyond their own. Much can be learned by examination and discussion not only of "the model" but how it came into being. Both organizations began with quite different approach from their

present ones. It is far more instructive to study why and how they changed their program design than it is simply to have the result described as in many of the existing "case studies".

As the centerpiece of an executive training program, HIID ARIES is collaborating with a number of institutions to develop a set of core cases which examine key turning points in the evolution of the major approaches to dealing with various of the recurrent problems and issues. Used in the context of case method management education, these can help participants to build up a repertoire of patterns - metaphors in Shapiro's word - which can help them to analyze more insightfully the problems of the institutions they manage. Rather than being told about or reading about "the ACCION Model," the "Grameen Bank Model," etc. they will examine through cases the set of circumstances which led ACCION to shift from its original approach to its present "methodology;" the findings which led eventually to the creation of the Grameen Bank from a very different sort of predecessor project. How were the circumstances similar; how different? What options were considered and discarded in arriving at the current approaches? The cases will focus less on describing current models and more on illuminating the dynamic turning points in the evolution of important current approaches to small enterprise development. This will emphasize the model as response to a particular problem or opportunity rather than the model as just the way a particular organization does business.

As noted, this conception of the cases differs sharply from most of the "case study" literature. Much of the latter is purely descriptive; "stories" about particular projects. Relatively few materials are designed to analyze the circumstances to which the model represents a response. Companion "Teaching Notes" will elaborate on central themes and pedagogical objectives and technique. The objective will be to create with the case and a well-prepared case leader an environment within which to examine major recurring problems of resource institutions, responses to these problems and the degree of success achieved. Having some common frameworks within which to compare and analyse the cases enriches the learning to be derived from the case discussions.

Frameworks for Comparative Analysis of Resource Institutions and their Programs

One framework for comparative case study is the recurring problem schema set forth in the Strategic Overview Paper. These problem areas are grouped under four sorts of capacity: strategic, administrative, technical and communications. Table V-I from the Overview Paper is sets forth in detail the recurring problem categories. These categories were used in the selection of cases to be developed within the ARIES project.

Another dimension in the comparative analysis of cases is the choice of program components used by Resource Institutions to promote small enterprise development. Most programs represent some mix of the following general categories: Financial Assistance; Technical Assistance; Training; Social Promotion; Other Assistance. The programs of most of the Resource Institutions can be captured by six models representing differing combinations of these components:

- Individual financial assistance.
- Integrated financial assistance and technical assistance/social promotion.
- Integrated and sequenced financial assistance, technical assistance and training for individuals.
- Integrated and sequenced training, technical assistance, and financial assistance for individuals.
- Group-oriented social promotion, financial assistance, and technical assistance.
- Training

These six models can be examined according to a number of characteristics as follows: Cost; Beneficiary level (size); Staff skills needed; Labor intensity; New or established business; beneficiary commitment. Table IV-2 from the Overview Paper suggests the results of such a comparison.

The nature of the institution itself and the task environment both will condition the types of programs which are selected to promote enterprise development. In addition to a typology of institutions, the Strategic Overview Paper examines three aspects of the task environment. The first is the nature of the clientele to be served. Who are they? Where are they? What do they need/want? How do they relate to one another, to the community; to the society at large? Secondly, what is the policy environment in which the enterprise development effort takes place? The Overview Paper suggests a number of specific policy questions which can help assess how supportive is the policy environment. Lastly is the broader socioeconomic context which conditions what sorts of interventions are feasible, useful, culturally appropriate.

Case Selection and Abstracts of Cases Proposed for Priority Development

Field visits by ARIES staff to resource institutions, discussions and reading of the literature has led to the identification of institutions and situations which appear well-suited for development as teaching cases. These are described below, along with the recurrent problem they highlight.

The Grameen Bank

This is one of the most well-known of the resource institutions assisting small and microenterprise. Its approach will become even more pervasive as it will soon open an international training center. The original conception foresaw nothing like the present Bank. That was shaped in response to challenges met and successfully overcome in the decade since its founding. Numerous insights can be gained from recreating key turning point events which shaped this important institution.

Three sequential cases are contemplated.

Assessing the Need

Case A will recreate the situation of Professor Mohammed Yunus when he took time off from his teaching to live in the villages to seek insight into the nature of poverty and how to help people out of it. It will dramatize his experience, present his main observations. It will end by trying to put the participants in his shoes. "What do you, Mohammed Yunus, conclude from these observations about the nature of poverty and how might a pilot project be designed to test your hypotheses?" The discussion could conclude with a videotape of Prof. Yunus himself relating his experience and views at this stage in the Bank's evolution.

Generalizing the Model

Case B picks up where the pilot project is going well and you, Yunus, are trying to convince bankers that the poor are good credit risks. Repayment rates are excellent. Now the bankers say, yes, but these results are particular to the Chittagong area and cannot be generalized. What do you do next? Again, a five minute video piece could allow Prof. Yunus to recount his thoughts and actions to conclude the discussion.

Building a National Institution

Case C takes up where the banks, having been forced by the Central Bank to lend to the poor, finally have managed to get this provision changed and no longer are obliged to do so. The national success that seemed so assured has evaporated with the stroke of a pen. The grand experiment appears to have collapsed. In this as in the other cases, the viewpoints of various key individuals will be dramatized. What is to be done now? A concluding videotape also might be possible to present various aspects of the Grameen Bank, including perhaps an interview with officials of the South Shore Bank which is receiving technical assistance in its poverty lending from Prof. Yunus. This demonstration that developing country institutions can create expertise valued in the U.S. has great appeal to developing country nationals.

Other cases could be developed from the Grameen experience. One or more might be developed to catalyze a discussion of how transferable is the Grameen model, perhaps examining a situation where such a transfer was attempted. (There seems to be great interest in a South Shore Bank case to look at how the experience is used in the U.S.) Various groups have looked at the Grameen model and tried to estimate how it would fit or not fit their national contexts.

Another dimension would be personnel training methods used to build staff for a nation-wide program. A particularly interesting technique is requiring each trainee to write up a case describing the situation of a poor male and a poor female. This is to be written in the everyday language of the case subject and is intended to put the trainee "in the shoes" of the Bank's intended clientele.

ACCION

Becoming Cost-Effective

Case A. A seminal program for many enterprise development programs is UNO of Brazil, an ACCION affiliate. This case will recreate the situation at UNO when analysis brought to light the fact that every \$1 of credit extended was costing about \$1 in selection, training, and administrative expenses. Materials in the appendix will allow participants to make their own judgements of the situation and study various alternatives proposed to reduce costs. Participants will be asked to come up with specific proposals for a more cost-effective model of providing assistance.

Expanding a Pilot Program

Case B. One of the outcomes of the situation presented in Case A was the development of the "solidarity model" of group lending at the Dominican Development Foundation. This was carried on in parallel with a more traditional enterprise program. The initial successes of the new model led to projections of serving millions of clients through such an approach. The magic key seemed at hand. Into this heady atmosphere, however, began to come reports of mounting loan defaults. The approach that seemed a stunning success suddenly was in crisis. One of the ideas under discussion was creating a new agency to focus exclusively on and improve the solidarity approach. (This would become ADEMI.)

Refining the Model

Case C. This case would deal with the contemporary problems facing ADEMI's management. The precise focus is under consideration.

International Institute for Rural Reconstruction: Philippines

Reorientation of an organization towards enterprise development

The IIRR in its early days had a strong agricultural orientation emphasizing an extension approach of a relatively known technology to produce a product with an assured market. As they shifted more toward community development, they shifted to helping communities articulate their "felt-needs", then to create programs helping them meet those needs. They helped people to do what they wanted to do. Carrying this approach into enterprise development led to serious problems. It became apparent that some of the things people wanted to do were not economically viable. This transition and discovery process could be dramatized in the case as the results of early enterprise development efforts come in from their experimental village "laboratories".

The challenge is to start with the "felt-needs", then to subject them by some process to "reality testing" for feasibility. How can the "do what they want" approach be reconciled with the "what does the market want" standard which is acid test for enterprise development. You are IIRR's Director of Research and have succeeded in assuring that all projects include a "research

question". This means that income generating projects have a potential to generate new insights into the process of enterprise development. You see the need for a framework to help the organization think through the needed reorientation; also to help you formulate the appropriate "research questions". What can the research department contribute to raise the quality of the discussions about the need for reorientation? The Director has invited your views.

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee

"From Enthusiasm to Management"

BRAC exemplifies a community development approach with enterprise development as a relatively small part of broad action program. Rapid expansion has led the founder and director to speak of the need to move "From enthusiasm to management". Professor Catherine Lovell of the University of California, Riverside, has worked with BRAC on the challenge of making this transition. Prof. Lovell is working with ARIES and BRAC to identify a series of potential teaching case topics to highlight various aspects of the BRAC experience. One of the key questions is how to build more management depth without losing the enthusiasm that is so essential to an effective NGO. One case in a BRAC series could serve as the vehicle for bringing in material on staff development in general. Another case will be developed on giving operational definition to the concept of "sustainability".

CARE: Philippines (Tentative)

The Selection of a Local Partner in Enterprise Development Programs

One of the most important management decisions in developing a strong enterprise development program is the selection of an effective local partner with whom to work. With Care, ARIES staff is exploring the possibility of developing a case focusing on how this issue was addressed by CARE Philippines.

The audit as a management tool

As CARE Philippines has acquired experience with income generating projects, they have added to their local staff experienced CPAs to help in project evaluation and assessment. Recently one of these CPAs was assigned to a collaborating bank- like institution which was lending to poor clients for enterprise development. From a financial point of view, how is the program going, they asked the institution's manager. Pretty well, he thought. The CPA helped the staff develop a simple audit procedure to assess more systematically how it was going. Upon investigation, as then constituted, it was a real money loser. This finding helped to get top management's attention and stimulated corrective measures. The point of this case would be to present the basics of this audit procedure and an appendix with numbers drawn from this actual case. The participants would come to their own conclusion about how the project was going by applying the audit method to these numbers. CDC might be able to help develop some non-case teaching materials to present and exercise the methodology itself.

The Carvajal Foundation: Cali, Colombia

The Carvajal Foundation of Colombia was established in 1961 by members of the Carvajal family. From the beginning it had close links with the Archdiocese of Cali for five "parochial centers" set up by the Archdiocese. These centers appear to have been successful in achieving certain social goals and in providing a series of health, social service, and educational benefits. Nevertheless, the centers were a serious drain on the foundation's resources. In 1976-77 the

Foundation worked hard to transfer responsibility for these centers to community development entities. At the same time, it initiated its microenterprise project, after, visiting the UNO program in Recife, Brazil and receiving technical assistance from Accion/AITEC. Over the years, the Carvajal Foundation has become firmly wedded to a model of microenterprise development that emphasizes administrative training and technical assistance first and credit after these first two objectives have been pursued. Most of the microenterprises assisted by the foundation are on the large side of micro and selection criteria for credit tend to guarantee a high level of success.

Setting Priorities; Assessing the need and reorienting an organization

Case A. This case will place trainees in the position of the institution's leadership as it decides to reorient the foundation away from social welfare and community development toward a program of income generation assistance. The case will expose the participant to the dialogue among leaders as they search for a new type of program, to the way in which the needs of low-income inhabitants of Cali are assessed, and to the experience of learning about already existing models of small and micro enterprise assistance. What options are available to the leaders? How do they define their priorities and goals? What do they learn from other programs and from their own initial experience with a new approach?

Developing Independence: The Resource Institution

Case B. This case will introduce participants to the dilemmas faced by the foundation's leadership after it has selected a relatively expensive model for small and micro enterprise assistance. Leadership becomes aware of the need to generate relatively secure sources to finance their training activities. What are the costs of the program? Are there ways of making their model more cost-effective? What external resources are available? How can these resources be tapped effectively for the program? What creative responses to the need to secure financing can be devised?

Developing Independence: The Clients

Case C. This case will require participants to address the issue of how a resource institution develops the capacity to channel its beneficiaries toward formal sector lending institutions. A simulation exercise will help participants develop an appreciation of a project-related problem and consider possible solutions to it. How does access to formal credit institutions become an issue within the foundation? How is the "search" for options to be organized? What actions need to be taken to make potential options into real ones? (Note: As field work has progressed, it seems increasingly desirable to combine these two cases into one. The considerations in B and C above are in reality two sides of the same coin.)

FUCODES

Project Design: Group Lending or Individual Lending

FUCODES experienced serious difficulties with its group lending program. A new Executive Director reoriented the program more toward individual loans and in the process restored the financial health of the organization. Now the Chairman of the Board has asked him if the organization should not again give priority to group based lending. The Executive Director must make his recommendations to the Chairman and the Board.

The Senegal Community and Enterprise Development Project:

Creating Independence: The Issue of Viability

As originally conceived, the USAID funded CEDP was envisioned as providing a broad range of services to rural enterprises directly involved with agriculture. After analysis of the situation, a new team proposes to implement a credit-led "minimalist" strategy, with a primary focus on viability. There are a variety of views on how to define the appropriate objective, client group and range of services. Once these issues are settled, the "B" case deals with implementing the decisions made in the real-life outcome to the "A" case.

Tototo Home Industries: Kenya

Changing the Direction and Focus of an Institution (Tentative)

Originally having had a primary focus on non-formal education for women, this organization increasingly has shifted toward an enterprise development focus for women. ARIES staff is exploring whether Tototo's experience in reorienting the institution to this new direction could serve as a useful management training case.

Inventory of Existing Teaching Case Materials

In addition to the proposed new case materials described above, another ARIES task is to identify existing case materials which may be useful in management training for resource institutions, be that under ARIES auspices or elsewhere. The cases are being cataloged as The ARIES Case Collection using the same IBM PC compatible Notebook II software as the ARIES Analytical Bibliographic Database. Using this system, anyone with an IBM compatible PC, Notebook II and the ARIES data diskettes can search the collection of cases and case abstracts assembled by ARIES.

Conclusion

The ARIES management education cases have been selected in collaboration with resource institution managers to highlight important issues they face in their programs of support to small and micro-enterprises. The results of continuing research, discussion and field visits will tend to confirm these choices and/or to suggest others. Issues not represented here may prove important enough to justify substituting other cases for these. Using this list as a guide and framework for discussion, ARIES staff will continue to gather information, working with staff of both resource institutions and management training organizations. The ARIES/SEEP Case Workshop held in Cambridge in June, 1987 represents an important forum for further refining and elaborating case development ideas. As the PVO/NGO community develops its own case research and case teaching capability, there seems to be a tremendous potential both for the generation of new knowledge about enterprise development and for the training of managers working to improve those programs. This paper is intended to help advance that process by stimulating interest and understanding of the case method of research and teaching and of the planned ARIES cases.

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