

**rethinking
salesian
education**

150 Years

After Don Bosco's Preventive System



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO FOCUS GROUPS

Facilitation by YM Delegates

Research project promoted by



**Università
Pontificia
Salesiana**



**PONTIFICIA FACOLTÀ DI
SCIENZE DELL'EDUCAZIONE
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1 MEANING AND PURPOSE OF FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are a tool for listening and shared reflection, part of the research project Rethinking Salesian Education. This project aims to gather the perspectives of Salesian educators (consecrated and lay) at the provincial level regarding key dimensions of the Salesian educational experience today.

Focus groups are neither training sessions nor debates, but structured opportunities for narration and re-reading of experience, allowing to:

- Gather lived experiences, interpretations, and educational practices;
- Foster personal and community awareness;
- Contribute, through the collected data, to a process of rethinking Salesian education in different contexts.

Youth Ministry (YM) Delegates, as facilitators, play a key role in ensuring methodological quality, a climate of trust, and fidelity to the purpose of the research.

2 FOCUS GROUP AS A TOOL

The focus group is a guided group interview with the following characteristics:

- **Participants:** 8–12 educators with knowledge of the provincial educational and pastoral context from various fields (school, oratory, vocational training, social works, etc.).
- **Number of meetings:** 2 meetings that can be organized in half a day.
- **Duration:** approximately 90 minutes per meeting.
- **Roles involved:**
 - Moderator/Facilitator (YM Delegate): Guides the meeting, proposes questions, manages time, and encourages participation from all.
 - Observer/Secretary: Supports the moderator, records and transcribes the meeting, and notes dynamics, atmosphere, and the order of interventions in a separate file.



3 FACILITATION STYLE REQUIRED OF THE YM DELEGATE

The YM Delegate is called to adopt a sober, welcoming, and neutral facilitation style, characterized by:

- Attentive listening and respect for every intervention;
- Neutrality regarding content (do not express personal judgments);
- Attention to timing and the distribution of speaking turns;
- Ability to create a climate of trust and freedom of expression.

It is important to remember that:

- Each participant should speak only once per question;
- There is no debate between participants;
- Interventions must be brief, focused, and related to concrete experience.



4 STARTING THE MEETING AND PROJECT PRESENTATION

At the beginning of each meeting, the moderator:

- Introduces themselves and the observer;
- Briefly explains what a focus group is and how the meeting will proceed;
- Clarifies the purpose of the research and the importance of each person's contribution.

Reminds participants that:

- The meeting will be recorded and transcribed;
- Participants have already provided informed consent;
- Anonymity will be guaranteed during the data analysis phase.

It is essential to reiterate that answers must refer exclusively to the educational experience lived in Salesian contexts with adolescents and young people.



5 STRUCTURE OF THE TWO MEETINGS

First Meeting

Brief presentation of participants (if necessary).

Questions oriented toward exploring:

- **The way Salesian education is understood today;**
- **Fundamental educational convictions;**
- **Their reflection in daily practice.**

Second Meeting

Questions oriented toward exploring:

- **Personal and community involvement in the education of young people;**
- **The relationship between Salesian education and the current social context;**
- **A personal synthesis of Salesian educational effectiveness.**

The YM Delegate follows the provided outline, adjusting only the pace and time management, without modifying the meaning of the questions.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

First Meeting

“In every young person, there is a point accessible to the good” (Don Bosco)

This expression recalls a conviction and refers to the educator's first duty: to seek this point, this "sensitive chord of the heart to draw profit from it."

- **What does this mean to you?**

Explain what it signifies and what you think about it.

- **What do you do when a young person "resists" (rebels, opposes, refuses, shows indifference) to your educational intervention?**

Tell a story where this statement took shape in your educational practice and explain how it involves you (challenges you, provokes you, moves you...).

“It is not enough that the young be loved; they must know that they are loved” (Don Bosco)

This expression invites us to ask ourselves what we do to make young people feel loved in the things they like, so they learn to see love in the things they naturally dislike.

- **What does this mean to you?**
- **What do you do personally and as a community so that young people realize they are loved?**

Tell a story where this statement took shape in your educational practice.

Second Meeting

“For you I study, for you I work, for you I live. For you I am even ready to give my life” (Don Bosco)

- **How can this statement be translated into today's world?**
- **How does it involve you? (challenges you, provokes you, moves you...)**

Tell a story where this statement took shape in your educational practice.

Educating “good Christians and honest citizens”

In today's social context (growing complexity, fragility of citizenship, crisis of democracy, social inequality, injustice, migration, religious intolerance...) we ask how we can concretely live out this Salesian commitment, especially with the poorest young people.

- **What does this mean for you today?**
- **What do you do personally and as a community to realize this goal of the Preventive System?**

Give an example and explain (how it challenges, provokes, moves you...).

A Salesian educator is effective when...

Each person completes the sentence.

7 DOCUMENTATION AND FEEDBACK

At the end of each focus group, the facilitator and observer prepare:

- a full transcript of the meeting and any translation into one of the main languages (IT, EN, ES, FR, PT);
- an observation sheet on group dynamics.

The material must then be sent by email to **infopg@sdb.org** by **24/05/2026**. Responsibility for this phase lies particularly with the coordination of the PG Delegate.



8 FINAL ATTENTION

The quality of focus groups largely depends on the facilitator's ability to safeguard the method, encourage authentic speech and maintain the link between research, pastoral work and educational mission.

The focus group is both a research tool and a space of charismatic listening: for this reason, it requires competence, sobriety and educational passion.

For further guidance on conducting Focus Groups, consult this [guide](#) or others available in your language.



CONTACTS AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

For technical support, questions and information write to:

salesianedu@unisal.it

For other resources:

www.salesian.online/rse