



The Case Method:

**Using Teaching Cases to Increase
Students' Critical Thinking Skills**

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Overview

- What is a case? Why use cases? (3 min.)
- Teaching with cases
 - Sample case: “Jenna’s Kitchens” (5 min.)
 - Framework for case discussion (15 min.)
 - Facilitation of case discussion—you as the facilitator (5 min.)
 - Q&A (2 min.)

What Is and Is Not a Case?

- What it is not:
 - Not raw data
 - Not fiction
- What it is:
 - Descriptive, based on fieldwork
 - Richly enough described so the student can identify with the characters and the responsible party
 - A typical teaching case is a record of some situation actually faced by one or more persons (often a manager) with the facts, opinions, and prejudices upon which decisions have to depend.

Why Use a Case?

- How does it differ from other pedagogy?
- Knowledge does not lead to effective behavior
- Skills and self-concept – “thinking like a manager”

What is Critical Thinking?

- Exploring questions about and solutions for issues which are not clearly defined and for which there are no clear-cut answers.
<http://aaahq.org/aecc/intent/glossary.htm>
- Skilled, active, interpretation and evaluation of observations, communications, information, and argumentation.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_thinking
- Reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do. www.seattlecentral.org/faculty/jshoop/glossary.html

Critical Thinking

- Critical thinking is needed whenever one judges, decides, or solves a problem; in general, whenever one must decide what to believe or what to do, and do so in a reasonable and reflective way.
- A critical thinker:
 - Raises vital questions & problems, formulating them clearly & precisely;
 - Gathers & assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively;
 - Comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards;
 - Thinks open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and
 - Communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems, without being unduly influenced by others thinking on the topic.

Jenna's Kitchens case

- Read the case
- Underline symptoms (indicators that something is wrong or not right)
- Identify major “characters:” individual, group, organizational, community level
- Identify or reasonably infer goals of each character
- What ideas (concepts, models, theories, etc.) come to mind while reading the facts of the case?



Framework for case discussion

- Gaining familiarity
- Symptom recognition
- Identifying goals
- Analysis
- Diagnosis
- Action planning

Gaining familiarity

- Who does what, how do things happen, where and when do events take place?
- Separate out:
 - **Facts** (verifiable information)
 - **Inferences** (judgment based on facts)
 - **Speculation** (judgment based on cues but not verifiable)
 - **Assumptions** (judgment independent of any situational facts that arise entirely from a person's prior unrelated experience)



Symptom recognition

- List all major, recent indicators that something is not as expected or desired by case characters and yourself (including any statements of “problems” by case characters).
- Note who in the case situations seems to be bothered by these symptoms.



Identifying goals

- List all the reasonably important goals of the major entities in the case, for example, central case characters, groupings, work units, organizations, etc.
- Be sure to list all goals described in the case as well as all that can be reasonably attributed to major entities.



Analysis

- a) Select those ideas, models and/or theories that seem useful for understanding the case.
- b) Carefully and systematically apply these conceptual tools to the case situations and circumstances to increase understanding.
- c) As new case information is revealed, cycle back through (a) and (b).

Diagnosis

- Goal gaps: when a person or social entity does not have a clear goal or a goal at all
- Predicaments: an inconsistency among goals
- Problems: any discrepancy between a goal and what is actually being achieved (under or over).
- Prioritize identified gaps, predicaments, and problems



Action planning

- Criteria for choosing
- Create feasible action alternatives
- Positive and negative consequences
- Choose preferred course of action
- Implementation plan
- Assessment/evaluation plan



Case Discussion: Jenna's Kitchens

- Facts check (separate out facts from inferences, speculation, and assumptions)
- What did you find puzzling, unexpected? (symptom identification)
- Why didn't Singleton's action work? (reveals her goals; can identify other entities' goals and then predicaments and problems)
- What do you predict Singleton would do now?
- What can she do?



Preparing for case discussion

- Your role: not the authority; surface students' ideas
- You must know the case
- Need a discussion plan
 - Opening question
 - Board layout
 - Calling plan
- Summary statement at the end (key points, bridging comments, etc.)



Leading case discussions

- Room layout
- Case on the first or second day
- Alternative ways to begin a case discussion
- When students prefer to talk early about action recommendations
- Follow your discussion plans but not slavishly
- Do things differently
- Epilog, a description of what actually happened at the end of a case. Do we share these or not?
- Should you sum up the case discussion or not?



Modeling desirable behaviors

- Listen carefully
- Restate to ensure understanding
- Ideas and models that help you see the case
- Develop your students' independence—
don't tell them what you think



Summary & Questions

- What are the take-aways?
- Questions?