CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

While case methods have usually been developed in the context of group learning, a mode that is emphasised in this chapter, it is not always possible to organise training in that mode. Any one of three situations could exist:

1. Individual learning. Administrators in remote locations might profitably work through the cases in this book in an attempt to improve their administrative performance. Unless however they are able to check their solutions against either a body of theoretical knowledge gained from reading or the opinions of their peers they stand in considerable danger of merely strengthening existing prejudices.

2. Distance learning. Developments over recent years have clearly established the viability of forms of distance learning. However this might be organised the essential features are likely to be:

   (a) The supplementing of the actual case material by written, aural or visual means.

   (b) The existence of a mentor.

   (c) Regular exchange and feedback between the mentor and the student.

3. Group learning where trainer and trainees are in actual physical contact.

The advantage of the group situation lies in the fact that lines of enquiry emerge mainly out of immediate discussion and vigorous intellectual exchange. Where, as in individual study or distance learning, this is not possible it can be replaced by a carefully devised series of questions and activities and supplemented by arrangements for both self assessment and external evaluation. The sections in this chapter covering diagnostic and analytic procedures will be relevant whatever the learning situation.

While for reasons of expediency the detailed methods outlined here refer to the group situation, sensible adaptations will no doubt occur to those who need to work in an alternative way.

Case Writing

One of the more powerful devices for helping both trainees and trainers to understand the use of case studies is to involve them in both the writing and editing of such material. Suggested ways of doing this are as follows:

1. Discussion of case criteria. Initially these can either be the subject of exposition or an inductive/deductive method can be used. For example, by presenting the case of Luke Martel as originally written and as edited by the consultant, trainees can be helped to work out what the criteria might be.

2. Participants might be encouraged to bring along a report of some personal experience and this can be edited within the criteria as group exercise.

3. A group can be set to writing case studies.

   (a) It is not unlikely that, if people are simply asked to do this in the group situation, nothing much will happen. The problem is usually one of 'getting started'. It will be found useful to first define a general problem area, for example, the 'head teacher and the community' or 'a dilemma facing an inspector in relation to a head teacher'. A general free-for-all or 'brainstorming' session can help to release ideas and to break through the reticence of the participants.

   (b) Groups then attempt to define a specific situation by asking themselves such questions as: What could be happening? Who might be involved? What might be the setting?

   (c) A case is worked out by each individual.

   (d) The cases are discussed and a group version is developed.

   (e) The case is used by another group.

   (f) The solution reached by the second group is submitted to the first for discussion.

   (g) The consultant then conducts a brief evaluation of the experience. Ample time should be allowed for the whole activity.

Case Structure

A case study may be considered as consisting of three elements:

1. The case report which has been described as "... a confrontation of people in training with concrete human situations."[23]

2. The case diagnosis. What is the situation? Who are involved?

3. The case analysis. Why have the events happened in just this way? Why have the people in the situation acted as they have done?

Bringing these three elements into the closest possible relationship so that solutions emerge or principles are illustrated becomes the aim of case methodology.

1. The Case Report

The most common and certainly the most convenient method of presenting a case is the written case report. In such a form the case can be made readily available in multiple copies to assist both individual and group diagnosis and analysis.

Case reports may range from highly complex and detailed examples that might take a number of sessions through to the mini-case consisting of a page of print or less.

The written word can be supplemented or even wholly replaced by alternative forms of presentation. The cassette tape, alone or in conjunction with photographic slides or photographs, and the movie film or videotape can lend a further dimension of understanding. Care should be taken however that the inherent entertainment value of such approaches does not distract from the real purpose of the exercise.

Case reports tend to be shaped in accordance with the purpose they are to serve. The lawyer or the doctor looks to cases for the identification of specific cause and effect but for the educational administrator the purpose is more diffuse. They are seldom concerned with the elusive 'best' answer since their decisions must always have some political content. Hence the best cases in educational administration will be those that provide the opportunity for the exercise of informed judgement in order to generate a range of possible solutions rather than to discover an ideal answer.

2. Case Diagnosis

Whatever its length or detail the case will have been reported within the limits of the author's perceptions but, at the point of diagnosis, it will inevitably be seen within different frames of reference as each group member brings his or her own perceptions to bear. Diagnosis will therefore be a process of filling out the details of the case. For a mini-case this process needs to be especially creative. When the participants ask, "What is the situation?" they need not be arbitrarily confined by the case as written but should be allowed to range within the limits of reasonable probability.

3. Case Analysis

Diagnosis - asking what? - shades into analysis - asking why? - and in this section the two are treated as complementary. Diagnosis and analysis can be conducted on at least three levels: Informal and Personal, Organisational, Conceptual.

(a) Informal and Personal

At this level of diagnosis and analysis the group will be concerned mainly with establishing the obvious facts about the situation and the apparent relationships among the people involved. Judgements will tend to be of the common-sense or 'gut reaction' type and there is a danger that the solutions advanced will owe more to moral stances or personal prejudices than to a careful consideration of alternatives. For example, in the case of Luke Martel, members of the group opposed to alcohol 'on principle' could make harsher judgements than others who themselves enjoy a drink. Useful questions to be asked would include:

- What is Luke's side of the story?
- Since the problem is apparently one of long standing, why haven't the parents previously objected?
- What do Marie Bissett's serious talks with Luke tell you about the headteacher?

(b) Organisational

The problem of Luke Martel is not just one that concerns the village. The school is part of a wider organisation and both Luke and Marie are members of a teaching service. Hence the discussion could profitably move to such questions as:

- Who decides what is acceptable behaviour in a teacher? The parents? The headteacher? The system?
- What would be the attitude of the Teachers' Union should Luke be reported and disciplined?
- What remedies are available to meet this situation and how likely is it that they would be applied?

(c) Conceptual

Finally a number of theoretical and philosophical questions could be asked, for example:

- In what ways does the case of Luke Martel illustrate the boundaries of headteachers' authority?
- What rights do parents have in relation to the education of their children?
- What are Luke's rights in this situation?

The Mini-Case

In real life situations the administrator operates against a background that they probably know so well that they take it for granted. When called upon to report a case they may tend to assume that the background details are similarly obvious to the audience. The result is a brief, slimmed-down version

that can be regarded as a 'mini-case'.

The brevity of the mini-case does not necessarily imply that it contains very little for discussion. Indeed a one page case report may be richer in implications and in substance for discussion than some more extensively reported cases. But in order to achieve that result it may first be necessary to reconstruct the background details by drawing on the experience of the group to clothe the bare bones before embarking on the quest for a solution.

Consider the following mini-case contributed to an actual seminar 'some where in the Pacific' by a primary school headteacher.

The Maneaba

William Toere is the headteacher of a village school on a small Pacific island. One of his new teachers, Ana Haia, is having difficulty in the community.

Ana's father has built his house very close to the 'maneaba'. The villagers are very angry as it is the custom of the island that, since the maneaba is a public place, nobody is allowed to build a house there, especially on the side facing the lagoon. They have asked Ana's father to move his house but he has refused.

Now some of the villagers are threatening that they will refuse to have Ana teach their children. What should William Toere do?

A group presented with a case such as this must simultaneously reconstruct as they diagnose and analyse. The three levels of analysis, personal, organisational and conceptual, serve as a guide.

(a) Personal
- Why has Ana's father acted in this way?
- How would Ana feel about the situation?
- Is William Teore a man of this village or has he been appointed from a community with different customs?

Out of the answers to these and similar questions would come a clearer appreciation of the social context and the personal conflicts inherent in the situation.

(b) Organisational
- Is Ana an efficient teacher?
- Should William attempt to solve the problem himself or is it one he should refer to the Ministry?
- Is there some formal village council with whose members William should confer?

(c) Conceptual
- Should William allow his loyalty to a staff member to override a concern for a local custom?
- Should a parent be able to 'interfere' in the management of the school by threatening to withdraw a child unless a teacher is transferred?
- When traditional customs clash with

imported educational and social ideas
which should prevail?

While great care needs to be exercised when filling out a mini-case in this way in order to avoid a loss of integrity it is suggested that what initially appears to be a simple, straightforward case is often revealed when analysed to be full of hidden complexities.

A variation of this approach to the diagnosis and analysis of a 'critical incident' has been developed by Pigors and Pigors[24]. Their 'Incident Process Method' is described below.

Some Detailed Procedures

Teaching and learning are highly personal experiences. While good teaching is often orderly it is not necessarily so and, indeed, many would regard it as a creative process that refuses to be bound by conventional 'lesson steps' or traditional 'learning activities'. Nevertheless clear procedures represent useful starting points for beginners and handy points of reference for the more accomplished. Those that follow are presented without apology. While they should be regarded as suggestions only they do represent sequences that have been found useful in the field.

1. Extended Cases

Method 1:

(a) The case study is presented in a suitable form. This may be in writing, on cassette, on film or some combination of these.

(b) The case is diagnosed (What is happening?) and analysed (Why?) using the three levels of enquiry, informal and personal, organisational, and conceptual, as set out in the previous section.

(c) Individuals advance and defend various solutions and the sub-group moves towards consensus.

(d) A spokesman for the sub-group reports on the discussions and findings.

(e) The group moves towards a consensus solution.

The above procedure is designed for an issue case. Should the case be descriptive the procedures would be similar except that in step (b) the discussion would centre not on a proposed solution but on the way the administrator has handled the problem.

A similar general procedure can be used for a substantive case. However the greatest emphasis would then be on diagnosis and analysis at the conceptual level. Hypotheses could be set up and examined and the whole case tested within some theoretical framework.

Method 2:

(a) A model illustrating some theoretical issue is presented.

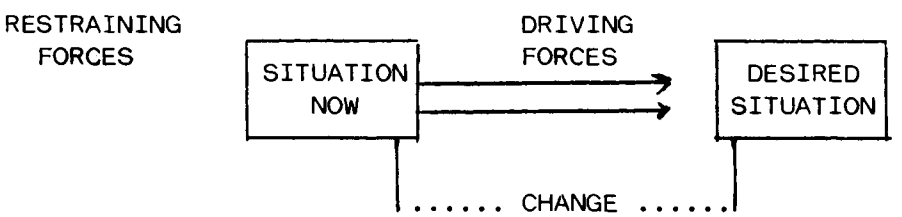
(b) A structured worksheet is devised and presented.

(c) Individuals or groups complete the worksheet.

(d) The process is evaluated.

The following example based on the topic of managing change illustrates the procedure.

Preamble: Most change situations can be understood in terms of forces which push towards change (Driving Forces) and forces which resist change and keep the situation the same (Restraining Forces).



Exercise: Any change usually tends to bring with it a certain amount of confusion. But this is not always necessary; change does not have to be haphazard. This exercise will help you to subject any given situation including change to analysis.

1. State the situation so that it describes:

   (a) The situation as it is now.

   (b) The situation as you would like it to be.

2. What are the Driving and Restraining forces affecting the situation? Think about these as broadly as you can. The three levels of diagnosis/analysis should be kept in mind. Include personality factors, physical resources and restraints, feelings, social pressures. List anything that comes to mind, without being critical or selective. You can weed out the irrelevant items later.

   List the forces.

   (a) Restraining Forces.

   (b) Driving Forces.

3. Now review the two lists and underline those forces which seem to be important right now, and which you think might be able to affect the situation constructively. There may be one specific force that stands out or there may be two or three driving forces and two or three restraining forces which are particularly important.

4. Now for each restraining force that you have underlined, list some possible courses of action which you might be able to plan and carry out to reduce the effect of the force or to eliminate it completely. Brainstorm - list as many courses of action as possible without worrying about how effective or practical they would be. You will later have a chance to decide which are the most appropriate.

Restraining Force A: _____
Possible courses of action to reduce this force:

Restraining Force B: _____
Possible courses of action to reduce this force:

Restraining Force C: _____
Possible courses of action to reduce this force:

etc.

5. Now do the same with each driving force you outlined. List all of the courses of action which come to mind which would increase the effect of each driving force.

Driving Force A: _____
Possible courses of action to increase this force:

Driving Force B: _____
Possible courses of action to increase this force:

etc.

6. The place to begin change is at those points where some stress and strain exist. Sometimes an attempt to increase a driving force results only in a parallel increase in the opposing force. Consider whether the change would be managed more easily by reducing a resisting force.

Review the action steps you have listed on the last two pages and underline those which seem promising.

7. List the courses of action you have underlined. Then for each course of action list the materials, people, and other resources which are available to you for carrying out the action.

8. Now review the list of courses of action and resources in step 7 and think about how they might each fit into a comprehensive action plan. Eliminate those items which do not seem to fit into the overall plan, add any new steps and resources which will enhance the plan, and think about a possible sequence of action. Write the possible sequence below.

9. The final step in this problem-solving process is for you to plan a way of evaluating the effectiveness of your action programme as it is implemented. Think about this now, and list the evaluation procedures you will use.

2. Mini-Cases

The Mini-Case, First procedure:

(a) The mini-case is distributed and discussed in order to fill out the missing details and so to arrive at a consensus as to what the situation probably is.

(b) Sub-groups are set to work to conduct a three-level analysis and to achieve consensus on a solution.

(c) Sub-group spokesmen advarce and defend various solutions.

(d) The group moves towards a consensus solution.

The Mini-Case, Alternative procedure:

(a) The mini-case is distributed to the whole group which has had previous experience or instruction in the method of three-level diagnosis and analysis. A general discussion is held to clarify points and to stimulate further analysis. No firm conclusions are allowed at this stage.

(b) The group breaks into small sub-groups each of which then produces a full version of the case together with a consensus solution.

(c) Sub-groups report back to the group where versions and solutions are exchanged.

(d) The consultant comments on important issues including theoretical issues.

3. The Incident Process Method

While the traditional method of attacking both extended cases and mini-cases is useful in developing attributes and analytical skills it can at best deal only with an incident frozen in time and hence not readily able to "reproduce the unfolding quality of actual events."[25] One attempt to overcome this limitation lies in the Incident Process Method as developed by Paul and Faith Pigors.

This method is based on the presentation of a 'Critical Incident'. A critical incident resembles a mini-case in most respects but there is a significant difference in that while the mini-case stands on its own the critical incident is actually the climax of a fully developed case, the details of which are initially known only to the group trainer.

This may be illustrated by reference to the case of Luke Martel. It could be assumed that the consultant wishing to use the Pigors Incident Process Method would initially disclose paragraphs 4 and 5 of the case as received but with modifications to introduce the two major characters.

The critical incident extracted from the case could then read as follows:

> When under the influence of alcohol, Luke Martel, a teacher in a village school in Mauritius, would be a real nuisance, disturbing the morning assembly, walking hesistatingly here and there, reclining, if not sleeping in class, being over-critical or picking quarrels with his colleagues - doing exactly the right thing to make the headteacher lose her head if not her temper. Besides Marie had to sustain the remonstrations of parents pestering her for the transfer of their wards to another class, the recriminations of the other teachers, the complaints of the domestic staff.
>
> Marie felt that it was not gratifying to spend a lot of her precious time in discussion either with a drunken teacher or with raging parents. Adverse reports had been of no great effect but Marie felt that she had to cope with her problem teacher and to save the good name of the school. Finally the parents presented her with an ultimatum.

Pigors and Pigors believe that:

> "... when a person studies remote cases (or analyses his own experience) a full measure of learning becomes possible only when he (i) puts a good deal of himself into the work of analysis; (ii) uses some method to 'travel around' (getting different angles of view); (iii) uses or develops some system of analysis that is 'realistic' (that yields results in the form of workable decisions); (iv) keeps searching for general ideas and operative principles in the 'ever-tangled skein of human affairs'; and (v) keeps going back and forth between remote cases and his current experience, trying to apply some part of what he has learned."[26]

Their recommended procedure is as follows:

(a) The incident which represents the climax of the case is given to the group. Group members are encouraged to identify with a particular person in the situation.

(b) Questions are directed towards eliciting the facts of the case from the trainer in order to decide what needs to be done and decided immediately.

(c) Short term decisions are made and tested as follows:

  (i) Each member of the group considers the case, writes down his decision and hands it to the leader.

(ii) The leader sorts the individual decisions and forms sub-groups supporting each of the several short term decisions. These sub-groups confer and prepare a supporting statement.

(iii) Spokesmen for the sub-groups then debate the case for these decisions (or there can be a role play).

(iv) The group leader discloses the rest of the case and so reveals what actually happened and what the consequences were.

(d) The group then are led to reflect on the case, to isolate long term issues and to uncover the deeper implications.

4. Role Play

Benne[27] notes that in the Pigors and Pigors method the trainee is still analysing the behaviour of someone else and hence that diagnosis and judgement are still separated. He feels that Moreno's Sociodrama or Role Play Method comes closer to achieving a bond between these aspects.

Moreno believed that "... taking the role of another is a mark of a socialised human being ... role behaviour gives people opportunities to accept and be accepted by others."[28] He was responsible for sociodrama, a method aimed at a more intimate involvement in a situation under study. Sociodrama is also know as Reality Practice, Role Play and as the Participative Case Method.

Role Play, Method 1:

(a) A problem situation is presented.

(b) Trainees assume the roles of people in the situation.

(c) Those acting out the situation work 'in the round' with the rest of the group placed around the room as observers. This is sometimes known as a 'fish bowl' arrangement.

(d) (i) The observers are led to comment on the performance.

(ii) The actors are encouraged to describe their inner feelings as they performed their roles.

(e) Further analysis and discussion identify and reconcile disagreements or faults in diagnosis and action.

(f) The situation is re-enacted.

Role Play, Method 2:

(a) A problem situation is presented.

(b) Trainees discuss the people in the situation in order to achieve insights as to personality and to form preliminary ideas as to the reasons for their actions.

(c) Roles are assumed and acted out in a 'fish bowl' setting.

(d) The performance is discussed as in (d) above.

(e) Further analysis and discussion probe more deeply into the situation, and small segments might be re-enacted in order to make further points.

(f) (Optional) The situation is re-enacted.

Role Play, Method 3:

(a) A problem situation is presented.

(b) Sub-groups each prepare and present a role play of the situation.

(c) General discussion concerning strengths and weaknesses of each presentation.

(d) Re-enactment by one group.

(e) Further analysis and discussion to ensure that issues are highlighted.

5. Actuality Method

(a) Each participant is requested to write up an actual incident in which he has been involved and to bring it to the seminar.

(b) A volunteer agrees to have his behaviour in the case discussed by the group.

(c) Discussion proceeds at an informal level and actions are analysed and commented upon.

(d) The consultant sums up.

This method should be used with great care. It contains elements of sensitivity training that can cause distress to the volunteer.

6. Information Modelling

In an interesting variation of the case method the participants are presented with a set of data relating to a particular problem. They then use this information to model an administrative situation and to arrive at a solution. This then becomes a 'descriptive' case that can be studied in accordance with techniques already outlined. Examples of these cases may be found in Part II.