Case Study Analysis
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Case Study Analysis is one of the most used activities to facilitate learning as it has a variety of benefits for students, including practical application of theory and applied critical thinking. There are many models for case study analysis; however, the model below is suggested for Instructors who do not have another model they prefer to use. Although the information below is presented for use as a classroom or small group activity, the same model can be used effectively in preparation for writing a paper for submission. For written submissions students should use headers: Introduction, Observations, Analysis, Solutions, and Conclusion for their paper. Keep in mind that every case study, and life in general, revolves around three axes: economic considerations, relational considerations, and political considerations (money, sex, and power).

Classroom or small group use (allow from 30 minutes to two hours for this activity, depending upon the complexity of the case study)

Students should be divided into small groups of three to five individuals. Once the class is divided, provide the group with the case study and have them complete the steps below. If desired, restrict the case study to focus on a specific topic, e.g. how marketing affected the case and recommendations for improvement.

1. Read the case study (have one individual read the case study aloud while the others follow along and make notes related to the reading)
2. Apply this basic formula to the case study

    a. <u>Observe/Identify</u>

    This step identifies the problem as presented by the symptoms of dysfunction, but doesn't ignore the possibility of "referred" symptoms. Defining the *real* problem versus the seemingly *obvious* problem is often the most difficult part of the process. That is, the presenting problem may not in actuality be the REAL problem. Making the correct identification is a primary task in finding a solution.

    Some of the questions that can be asked to determine these connections and their relevance to the situation are listed below. Students should work together to answer these questions.

    1. What is the issue? (can you articulate what you *perceive* the problem to be?)
    2. Who is in charge? (who has the responsibility for the existence of the situation and who has the responsibility for correcting the situation?)
    3. What will happen if the situation is not addressed? Or if the person in charge does not act?
    4. What is the history? (very little occurs without a history)
    5. Who are the stakeholders? (relationships are the key to life and the connections between people can have a profound effect on a situation) What are their goals, motives, and concerns?

6. What other assumptions need to be considered? (culture, politics, economics, etc.)
7. What other information would you like to have to understand the case better?
8. Who benefits most if the problem is not corrected? If it is corrected? How do they benefit?
9. Are there moral, ethical, or legal considerations?

b. Interpret/Analyze

This next step is to take the information which has been observed and interpret or analyze the information to determine "The real problem." This is the most lengthy step of the process.

Interpretation/Analysis requires the individual to discern the "real" from the "felt" and the interplay of factors that have bearing on the situation along with possible solutions. Practically, this means to understand how a problem came to be, determine options for the solution, and propose ways to have a positive result should it happen again. Part of this step includes an evaluation of the quantitative information provided in the case study. Use theory and concepts from your study to enrich your understanding and assist in interpreting/analyzing information. If the case study is being conducted with an expected written outcome, conducting research would take place in this step.

Some questions that could be asked to facilitate the analysis include:

1. Why is this an issue?
2. What makes the current situation different from before? What has changed?
3. What outside forces are involved?
4. What facts do we have? How reliable is the data?
5. What additional information/facts can be deduced from analyzing the facts/data available?
6. What are the desired results?
7. What are the "real" issues?
8. What, if any, are the primary emotional needs NOT being met by stakeholders.
9. Do you see any trends or patterns? Describe along with potential outcomes.

c. Apply/Recommend

This final step in the process takes all of the above information, identifies several possible solutions, and determines which of those has the best chance of success in relationship to the cost of the decision. No decision which costs beyond what is willing to be paid, either in actual funds or relational stress, is an option, regardless of its ability to address the problem. A good rule of thumb here is that no solution should be considered unless the one proposing it is willing to share the cost personally in equal or greater measure than the other parties involved.

Once the solution has been decided upon, the implementation of the solution should be carefully considered as timing always plays a role. Solutions which do not culminate in implementation are basically useless. Practically, the willingness of an individual to invest in bringing solution is one of the truest signs of leadership.

1. What could be the outcome results or ramifications of the problem upon the relational, institutional, economic, etc., stakeholders (i.e. what is the best and worst case scenario if the problem is not resolved for all the parties involved)?
2. Whether or not a solution can be offered which will have a positive benefit?
3. What solutions can be offered, include each solution's:
    a. Effectiveness to resolve the problem
    b. Relative "cost" (cost is more than just financial, it includes time, energy, resources and relational stress).
4. Recommend a solution with pros, cons, costs, and timeline for implementation

3. Class Presentation

The class presentation should have a time limit and reflect on the following:

- The presenting problem
- History and Stakeholders
- Research
- Analysis
- Solutions
- Recommendation with costs and timeline for implementation