

THE CASE STUDY METHOD IN TRAINING FOR PEACE

The case study method of presenting new concepts and developing skills is highly developed, in one form, within the schools of management and business. Over the past decades thousands of cases have been written up and circulated between such graduate schools, particularly within the U.S.A. via the Inter-University Case Clearing House based at Harvard Graduate School of Business.

The International Peace Academy could very usefully benefit from the concept of the case method as conceived in this context. The following points summarize the approach used for management training with the possible equivalent in the peace training environment:

1. Potential cases are selected by examining illustrative practical decision- or policy-making problems that have arisen in typical real corporations whether large or small to determine those which may best be used to help convey certain management skills. (There is a wealth of equivalent material on real-life peace and mediation problems which could be used to illustrate and develop the appropriate skills.)
2. Cases are written up by management researchers on the basis of interviews with the people actually involved in the real problem, in order to get their views of the problems at the time of the decision-making crisis. Techniques have been carefully developed to cover the manner in which such material is handled to avoid including the interviewers bias. Background material is added on the general problems and trends in the corporation's industry together with any appropriate trends on social data. (The IPA has the resource people to permit preparation of similar write ups of decision-making problems in international crises requiring mediation or peace-keeping action.)
3. Cases are often based on confidential information about the corporation in question which it is not to the advantage of the President or other interviewees to reveal. The names and facts which can be used to identify the real-life corporation are therefore disguised in the case write up. These modifications are then approved by the corporation before the case is released for general circulation. Occasionally, where permitted, the identity of the corporation may be stated or else revealed after the discussion of the case. (It would appear that this approach could provide an ideal method for making available much semi-confidential experience on the manner in which crises were perceived and handled in real-life peace-keeping situations.)
4. Cases take the form of easily circulated mimeographed documents 1-30 pages in length, but averaging about 10 pages. The cases are made available at a nominal charge to schools of business around the world. This is an ideal method of compressing information and experience into a format which travels well and can trigger the development of equivalent skills at distant points of the globe without incurring all the disadvantages associated with

the lack of resources to transport top-class resource people to each graduate school around the world. (The Peace Academy is faced with the same problem of transferring new skills to distant points with limited resources and limited available top-class resource people. Cases on peace-keeping could well be circulated to national diplomatic academies, universities, national internal military peace-keeping programs, and peace-oriented general training courses. It is a rapid short cut to achieving the desired diffusion of part of the expertise that it has at its disposal, or can call on for short periods.)

5. Cases are generally distributed to participants at a course to permit analysis on the day before they are dealt with in a large group session. In the group one student/participant is called upon to present his analysis and decisions. This is used as a basis by the discussion leader (resource person) for a general discussion in which he attempts to stimulate participants into recognizing each others limitations in approach in order to get them to elaborate the best solution in the light of the skills available to them. The discussion leader functions as a catalyst in this process rather than as a lecturer. If the case is new to him, or he is inexperienced, a case guide written up in parallel with the case supplies him with suggestions for guidance of the session. The case guide is not made available to participants. (There is no reason why this approach should not be used in peace training. It certainly places pressure on participants to come to a session with an adequate grasp of the case to avoid "losing face". It also makes the best of the available resource personnel.)
6. An alternative used on a weekly basis, requires the participants to write up their analyses of the case in a 6 page format. This obliges participants to be extremely clear and concise in thinking through and recommending a course of action. It can also be used to place pressure on participants to perform well if the cases are graded.)
7. Management problems require decisions under non-ideal conditions. As indicated above, the case method may be used to apply pressure on participants so that they experience the difficulties of decision-making under tension. (International crises also require action under non-ideal conditions. This also needs to be conveyed to participants.)
8. A given course (e.g. human relations, business policy, etc.) may consist almost entirely of cases, namely with an absolute minimum of formal lectures, but the cases are so balanced with background theoretical material similarly distributed, that theoretical skills are effectively transferred to participants. (The pilot seminars of IPAC have already made available such background material, but its usefulness is enhanced if it is mimeographed for each participant to consult when he returns to his own environment — particularly when he actually comes up against a problem requiring the skills or concepts described in the document.)
9. Cases may focus on a variety of theoretical and practical issues. (It must be noted that management, like peace-keeping, seeks a balance between the theoretical

and the practical approach)

10. When a participant has been exposed each day for a number of weeks to from 1 to 6 cases, plus background material, he develops naturally the skills required to select relevant information from a flood of information and to get to the essence of a problem rapidly. (A similar approach could be of benefit in peace training.)
11. When the funds are available a given school may use as resource person the actual individual decision-maker who was the key person in the case, or he may be asked to comment after the analysis and discussion by participants, with or without their having been informed of his identity. (This approach could also be of benefit to peace-keeping training.)
12. Management cases are currently grouped into chapters of printed books illustrating particular aspects of the management process (e.g. human relations, labor relations, government relations, business policy, etc.) or action situations. These publications are sold as textbooks for business schools. (A similar technique could be used eventually by the Academy. It ensures maximum use of the available materials as well as incidentally providing a useful source of funds.)
13. Catalogues of cases have been prepared which are organized by topic, geographical setting, importance of corporation. These are used to guide selection of the most appropriate cases for a given training program. (This approach could also be used to provide an overview of the wide range of material available on different aspects of peace-keeping.)

From the above, it should be apparent that there could be much in the case study method as applied in business management schools which could be of benefit to peace training. In addition, surprisingly enough, a certain amount of case content touches more or less directly on problems or skills which are relevant to peace-keeping training. Of particular interest is the material on human relations (which touches on social change), the problems of multinational business corporations ~~and~~ and the attitudes they require of transnational executives in given countries.

It might therefore be of value to discuss in some detail the peace training problems with people in one of the major business schools to determine the relevance of their methods and the value of some of their material. Information on the case method used in military academies or international law courses should not be considered representative of the management school approach.

It is interesting to note the possibility that some peace case material might well be used eventually as background material in some non-peace oriented courses, e.g. management schools concerned with multinational business operations.