

A Bullet-Proof Framework to Develop Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving, and Decision Making Skills Through the Case Method

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This paper proposes a bullet-proof framework to effectively and efficiently develop critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making skills through the case method. An application at an MBA Program at a Canadian university is presented.

The framework is composed of six steps: Synopsis, Sequential symptoms, problem/goal definition, quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, and recommendation (or decision). In the synopsis step, learners identify the relevant issues of the case. In the sequential symptoms, learners identify a cause-effect sequence, which leads to the problem/goal definition. A quantitative analysis identifies the financial implications of the various scenarios, which lead to the best solution. A qualitative analysis identifies qualitative relevant issues, which will corroborate the favoured solution from the quantitative analysis, or suggest a better one. Finally, the recommendation step identifies the actual solution or decision from the learner.

While the framework guides the learners through the steps, it also allows for individual creativity and input. The advantage of this framework is three-fold: the learners pursue to solve the actual problem in the case (i.e., root cause of the symptoms), it also ensures that no relevant issue is left out, and identifies an unambiguous recommendation (decision).