Cases in the Classroom: Part B

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In Vol. 33 (1), we focused the discussion on cases in the classroom, and we asserted that cases offer value for student learning (Peters, Cellucci, and Ford, 2015). For this issue, we focus on how professors use cases in the classroom. Specifically, our goal is to develop a snapshot of how professors from various fields (e.g., accounting, management, marketing, healthcare, etc.) are using cases as experimental learning tools.

Thus, for this issue, our “From the Editors” article focuses on the development of a survey to be distributed during the spring of 2016 to assess the use of cases in the classroom. Our survey questions are based upon the research elaborated in Vol 33 (1) and summarized in the article for each survey section (Peters, Cellucci, and Ford, 2015).

The Survey Development

Study Explanation to Participants
Faculty members will be invited to participate in Spring 2016 in a research study titled “The Use of Cases in the Classroom” being conducted by Leigh W. Cellucci, PhD, MBA, Professor at East Carolina University, Cara Peters, PhD, Professor at Winthrop University, and Eric Woodruff, Student at East Carolina University.

The goal is to survey faculty members affiliated with the Society of Case Research and/or Journal of Case Studies. It is hoped that survey responses will assist us to better understand the state of case research use in undergraduate and graduate courses. Participation in the research is voluntary. The survey will take approximately ten minutes to complete. The survey will be anonymous.

This research will be overseen by the East Carolina University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Some of the IRB members or the IRB staff may need to review the research data. However, the information provided by responders will not be linked to them. Therefore, any responses will not and cannot be traced back to the respondent by anyone, including Cellucci, Peters, and Woodruff.

If a respondent finds she has questions about her rights when taking part in this research, she will be directed to call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) with the phone number provided. Or, if she finds she wants to report a complaint or concern about this research study, she will be directed to call Director of ORIC, with the phone number to be provided.
The Survey
A person asked to answer the questionnaire to be distributed in the spring 2016 does not have to take part in this research, and he can stop at any time. If he decides he is willing to take part in this study, he will be asked to please indicate this agreement and continue with the survey.

We will thank the respondent for taking the time to participate in this upcoming research.

Each respondent will be asked:

1. Do you consent to participate?
   _____Yes   _____No

   This question addresses consent. If the respondent answers, “No,” she will exit out of the survey. If the respondent answers, “Yes,” she will continue with the survey.

2. Do you use cases in your class?
   _____Yes   _____No

If no, please go to question 24.

Other questions to gather information about where the professor uses cases in the classroom are as follows:

3. In what classes do you use cases?
   _____Undergraduate classes
   _____Graduate classes
   _____Both undergraduate and graduate classes.

4. In what subject area(s) do you use cases? Please check all that apply.

   _____Accounting   _____Computer/Management Information Systems
   _____Economics    _____Entrepreneurship
   _____Ethics       _____Finance
   _____General Management   _____Operations Management/Logistics
   _____Strategic Management   _____General Marketing
The Stanford Center for Teaching and Learning (1994) recommends that professors decide goals regarding why they want to use cases in the classroom. Moreover, the use of a case study usually involves more than a traditional lecture (Vega, 2013). Instead of a lecture, students are expected to prepare for and interact with the instructor and other classmates. (Bergmann and Sams, 2012). Students will have assignments prior to coming class (readings, watching supplementary materials) and spend class time actively participating in discussion and working on in-class directed assignments. To address class preparation, we include the following questions:

5. When you use cases in the classrooms, what are your goals for the students regarding learning outcomes? Please check all that apply.

- Help students apply theory to complex, real world situations
- Give students appropriate teamwork experiences
- Help students draw connections across disciplines (from one major area to another, for example, from accounting to health administration)
- Give students practice with analyzing data
- Provide students with a situation in which they draw conclusions in a particular business context.
- Encourage students to become more responsible regarding their own learning
- Makes class time more enjoyable for students because they are more actively involved (as opposed to listening to a traditional lecture)
- Gives students opportunities to develop critical thinking skills
- Other. Please explain.
In addition to instructors’ defining the goals of their using cases in the classroom, Vega (2013) put forth that cases provide for blended affective and cognitive learning styles. For instance, students may lead class discussion on the case analysis or they may write an executive summary about the case to be graded. Questions to address learning styles include the following:

6. **How do you use cases during class time? Please check all that apply.**

   ____ Students individually present the case to the class  
   (formal oral presentation)

   ____ Students are on teams, and team members present the  
   case to the class (formal oral presentation)

   ____ Students individually read and answer questions during class about the case  
   (informal oral presentation)

   ____ Students are on teams, and team members read and answer question during class  
   about the case (informal oral presentation)

   ____ Students individually take a practice test about the case to offer experience when  
   they will answer test questions about another case (practice test)

   ____ Students individually take a test about the case (formal test)

   ____ Students are on teams, and team members take a test about the case (formal test)

   ____ Other. Please explain.

Instructor roles may vary when they use cases in the classroom. Some may lecture and then ask students about case facts, stakeholders involved, and student recommendation for action. To assist instructors, formal teaching notes are provided that include student outcomes, sample questions and answers, and other pedagogical materials.

7. **If a teaching note is available for the case, how frequently do you use it?**

   ____ Never  ____ Rarely  ____ Sometimes  ____ Often  ____ Always

8. **If you refer to the teaching note, to which part(s) do you typically refer to?**
   Please select all that apply.

   ____ Case Overview  ____ Research methods

   ____ Learning Outcomes  ____ Discussion Questions

   ____ Answers to Discussion Questions  ____ General Discussion
Andersen and Schiano (2014) propose that professors consider a teaching plan. To assess professors’ preparation and teaching methods, the following questions are asked:

9. You consider your **primary** teaching role is ______________ when you use cases in the classroom.
   - to facilitate class discussion about the case
   - to present a traditional lecture about the case
   - to really sit back and let the students teach each other about the case
   - Other (please explain)

10. You consider your teaching role(s) are ______________ when you use cases in the classroom. Please check all that apply.
    - to facilitate class discussion about the case
    - to present a traditional lecture about the case
    - to really sit back and let the students teach each other about the case
    - Other (please explain)

11. What questions do you ask your students about the case? Please select all that apply.
   - What is the problem or issue noted in the case?
   - What do you think caused the problem or issue in the case?
   - Who are the stakeholders involved in the case?
   - What are possible action steps to be taken to address the problem or issue in the case?
   - What would you recommend happen to address the problem/issue?
What evidence may be found in the case to support your recommendation?

Other questions? Please explain.

12. What information do you provide to the students before they begin their case analysis? Please check all that apply.

- Discuss theories that may be applicable to the case
- Discuss formulas needed for effective analyses that may be applicable to the case
- Discuss models that may be applicable to the case
- Discuss what they have learned in this course that might be applicable to the case
- Discuss current real life events that pertain to the case
- Other information? Please explain.

13. What information do you provide in class after the students have completed their case analysis? Please check all that apply.

- I note the main points I wanted them to take away from their casework
- I discuss how the case topics relate to course topics
- I give the epilogue of what actually happened (if I know what did indeed occur)
- Other information? Please explain.

Evaluations may add value to assessment of student efforts. Instructors may assess both the quality and quantity of individual based on the degree of insight provided in discussion (Erskine, Leenders, Mauffette-Leenders, 2003). Peers also may assess individual team members’ participation and contribution as instructors ask them to assess each other’s performance based on factors of participation and contribution.

To address assessment, the following questions are included:

14. Do you use cases for testing?

- Yes
- No

If no, go to question 17.
15. Have you at least once employed a grading rubric for student assessment?

____ Yes  _____ No

16. What is your opinion of using grading rubrics for student assessment?

_____ I do not like rubrics for grading

_____ I have no opinion about rubrics

_____ I like rubrics for grading

17. Do you ask students to conduct peer assessment of their team members?

_____ Yes  _____ No

Past research indicates that students may be wary of risk in the classroom. Case studies may force students to address ambiguity as the professor is not just acting as a sage on the stage (Stanford Center for Teaching and Learning, 1994). Student participation is needed for an effective case in-class discussion. At times, students may offer a solution to a problem that simply is not helpful. Students (as well as employed professionals) do not want to appear less intelligent in from of their peers (Weaver & Qi, 2005). Thus, students may not participate as often in the interaction as would warrant case discussion success.

Professors may also be mindful that some student demographic groups may need a safe classroom to encourage greater student participation. Research indicates that women and minorities may self-silence (Romero-Canyas, Reddy, Rodriguez, and Downey, 2013 and London, Rattan, Downey, Romero-Canyas, and Tyson, 2012). The development of a “safe classroom” in which the instructor is mindful of interaction, participation, and peer response. The end result is a safe classroom in which students may exchange ideas and offer recommendations without the concern of ‘real-life’ consequences (Cellucci, Kerrigan, & Peters, 2012).

Professors further may consider that student preparation prior to class discussion of the case may increase students’ confidence in their knowledge as well as increase participation (Weaver & Qi, 2005). Moreover, team work or small groups in the classroom may encourage students to work together to understand the material. Small groups enable students to use active learning and engage in substantive conversation that helps with achievement (Cohen, 1994).

Lastly, professors may appreciate that case study may help student develop their professionalism skills. We define professionalism per the definition provided by the Healthcare Leadership Alliance (HLA), professionalism in healthcare is (Garman, Evans, Krause, and Anfossi, 2006, p. 219):
The ability to align personal and organizational conduct with ethical and professional standards that include a responsibility to the patient and the community, a service orientation, and a commitment to lifelong learning and improvement.

At a recent undergraduate two-day workshop for healthcare administration programs (AUPHA, 2015), six of the twenty-two education sessions focused on student professional development. Teaching techniques, internship experiences, and assigned readings are all ways to encourage students to develop their professionalism skills. Cases may be a way to encourage students via, for example, formal oral presentations, effective team work outcomes, increased knowledge of the subject matter, and practice about how to identify a problem and think critically about how to address it competently.

To assess whether or not professors that are using cases in the classroom are mindful of issues such as noted above, we asked the following questions:

18. Do you have students work on teams for cases discussed in the classroom?

_____Never  _____Sometimes  _____Often  _____Always

If you answered “Never,” please go to question 20.

19. Do you think their working on teams helps students develop ___________. Please check all that apply.

_____their knowledge about the subject matter

_____ ease with their being willing to participate in class

_____their public speaking skills

_____ collaboration skills with their colleagues

_____ professionalism

_____Other. Please explain.

20. Do you establish guidelines for in-class discussion and explain these guidelines in class to the students prior to using cases in the classroom?

_____Never  _____Sometimes  _____Often  _____Always
21. Do you think the establishment of guidelines for in-class discussion is important to do in-class prior to using cases in the classroom?

_____Not important
_____Somewhat important
_____No opinion
_____Important
_____Very important

22. How do you encourage student participation in in-class discussion?

_____Providing incentives, such as extra credit
_____Providing incentives, such as a grade for participation in class discussion
_____Penalizing students for not participating in class discussion (take away grade points)
_____Calling on students randomly
_____Other, please explain

23. Please complete the following sentence. I use cases in the classroom because

__________________________________________________________________________

24. Is there anything else you want to add about the use of cases in the classroom?
Please do so here.

__________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your participation in the survey.

Cases in the Classroom: Part C

We created this questionnaire based primarily from past research conducted on the use of cases. The next steps are to submit the study with the survey for IRB approval, and if approved, pilot the survey, and then survey a larger population of professors that employ cases in their classrooms. Thus, in the spring 2016 upcoming Volume 34 (1), we will
have employed the survey that addresses teaching and the case method. Until then, look for cases that suit your goals in this issue. We have 14 for you to peruse; we think at least one may be just what you are looking as you use cases in the classroom.

References


AUPHA Undergraduate Workshop, November 6-8, 2015. Denver, CO.

Bergmann, J. and Sams, A. (2012). Flip your classroom: Reach every student in every class every day. International Society for Technology in Education. Alexandria, VA.


