

Chapter 6

Development of Knowledge and Skills with Case Method

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the application of two different variations of the case study method at different levels of education programs in reference to the development of knowledge and skills. Based on theoretical foundations the authors share good practices of their own experience as educators at HSO Business School in Switzerland and Koźmiński University in Poland. Both institutions face different challenges created by different institutional settings. These reach from pre-experienced undergraduate and graduate student group in a traditional University setting in Poland to part-time students with several years of work experience in higher vocational education in Switzerland.

INTRODUCTION

The main goal of managerial education is to prepare students to act responsibly in unpredictable business environments. Students should not only be equipped with knowledge, but also with skills and social competences (Koźmiński, 2011; Postuła, 2013). As the former is relatively easy to acquire through traditional methods of teaching, such as lectures, the latter may be developed to a limited extent as it requires time-consuming training. Schools of management worldwide have attempted to reform teaching methods in order to meet the demands coming from the business world. The case study method is perceived as a means of fulfillment of those requests (Barnes, Christensen, & Hansen, 1994b) by development of both analytical and decision-making skills (Ellet, 2007; Gibbert, Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008; Grey, 2001; Koźmiński, 2011). “It asks not how a man can be trained to know but how a man may be trained to act” (Dewing, 1931). Through the case study method, students independently learn through analyzing and debating, which in turn allows them to develop skills desired by educational programs (Chakrabarti & Makham, 2007). Challenged by both instructors and colleagues, they need to defend their arguments and

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develop increasing ability to think and reason rigorously (Corey, 1996). The case study method introduces a different educational culture in which the student shares ownership of his/her own educational process by taking responsibility of the quality of the discussion (Barnes, Christensen, & Hansen, 1994a).

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the application of the case study method at different levels of education programs in reference to the development of knowledge and skills. Based on theoretical foundations, the authors are going to share good practices that they have carved out over the years. The settings in which these practices were applied reach from pre-experienced undergraduate and graduate student groups in a traditional university setting in Poland, to part-time students with several years of work experience in higher vocational education in Switzerland. In the chapter, the authors would like to discuss the problematic issue of students' evaluation. With case methods, grading becomes more complex and time consuming in comparison to traditional teaching approaches. Moreover, it is complicated to evaluate the level of development of particular skills with one final assignment. The authors will attempt to share best practices of students' work evaluation.

BACKGROUND

Nature of the Case Study Method

A case typically is a record of a business issue which actually has been faced by business executives, together with surrounding facts, opinions and prejudices upon which executive decisions have to depend (Gragg, 1953, p. 6 as referenced in Barnes et al., 1994b). The focus of the tutor is not on searching for the right answer, but rather on the manner in which the solution is arrived at, deliberations involved and its practicality (Shivakumar, 2012). Thus, the case study method allows development of both knowledge and skills necessary to act in a business environment (Barnes et al., 1994b). Using Polanyi's (2009) typology, case studies develop both tacit and explicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge (later referred as knowledge) is formal, systemized, easy to transmit to others and its possessor is aware of the state of its disposition. It is easily stored in books and other written materials (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Tacit knowledge (later referred as skills) remains beyond the consciousness of its possessor and he or she has problems with its articulation (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2002; De Long & Fahey, 2000; Nonaka, Toyama, & Konno, 2000). It manifests itself in actions, procedures, routines, ideas, values and emotions, and is accumulated with experience and intuition (Lubit, 2001). Researchers indicate that tacit and explicit knowledge complement each other and cannot exist independently of each other. Only when those two types of knowledge cooperate, can the value can be generated (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Choi & Lee, 2003; De Long & Fahey, 2000; Spender, 1996). The reason for the effectiveness of the case study method as a teaching tool lies in its ability to link those two types of knowledge, which is close to the natural ways of the human learning processes. In the next section, the authors will discuss in detail the character of skills and knowledge that can be acquired through case study methods.

Skills Developed with the Case Study Method

Skill can be defined as complex capacity acquired by experience in responding appropriately to particular concrete and whole situations (Barnes et al., 1994b). The case study method allows for training various skills, and its extent of development varies in respect to techniques applied by the educator, case com-

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