


Chapter 8

Developing a Case Writing Club to Create Local Cases in a Private University in Puebla, Mexico: Examples From Academia

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ABSTRACT

In a business school in Puebla, Mexico, numerous methodologies were introduced to create a more active learning environment as part of the new educational model. One of such methodologies was the use of case studies. Initially, cases were bought from different case centers, and/or adapted from books, which was costly and did not necessarily help students from rural communities and small villages understand the reality that businesses in the region were facing. An initiative was established to develop a writing group integrated by faculty members. Integration was fast and smooth, and the initiative turned into a writing club that produced case studies based on local businesses and businessmen, and specialized in rural and marginalized communities that have developed different entrepreneurial projects. The process in which the group was organized and the methods used to promote collaborative writing are described including the tricks of the trade of the group, which in only two years has created a repository of over 50 cases. The cases will be published as a book in 2019.

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INTRODUCTION

A new educational model was developed in a private university in Puebla. This model defined different methodologies to be used, among them, the case study. Additionally, in the university's mission and vision, the importance of considering the local identity and the connection of the university to local businesses has been captured.

Case studies have been used both in graduate and postgraduate programs for several years, but almost none of the cases used reflected the reality of local businesses. Furthermore, since the university has over 17,000 students in different levels, in traditional, open and online education, acquiring cases from case centers has become increasingly expensive.

Most faculty who have been using cases in their courses have decided to use short cases included in textbooks. The problem is that they do not always relate to the courses' learning outcomes, do not include teaching notes to further help professors stay within the objectives of the case, and class discussion of these cases has sometimes been limited.

An initiative to develop cases considering a local perspective was set forward by the dean of the business school, as it is in the programs of this school where cases are frequently used. An open invitation was sent out to all faculty, especially those who were already part of the research group, with very positive response. The group received formal training in case writing and in collaborative writing tools.

Different activities were scheduled, and small groups were created to develop the cases. In this initial effort cases were kept short, with a maximum of five pages, and included an additional teaching note. This initiative reported important results, as 50 short cases were developed in different areas, including marketing, hospitality and tourism, international trade, logistics, management, business intelligence, accounting and finance.

The group called itself the Case Writing Club, in which members were fully committed to case writing. The response from the students has been overwhelming, and some entrepreneurship students have become case writers themselves, with the help of faculty.

The sources of ideas for case writing have become almost limitless. Initially, they came from faculty's personal experiences, personal relations and businesses, but soon they expanded to other institutional connections with local businesses, entrepreneurial, social services, and social innovation projects.

As the result of this initiative, a short handbook that includes easy to follow templates has been developed.

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