Chapter 9
Audio–Visual Case Methodology for Teaching Business in Virtual Campus:
The Henry Brubaker Case

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ABSTRACT

Henry Brubaker is a visual case used in different subjects in the area of business organization to delve into the subject of design and implementation of organizational structures. The projection to the students has been conducted by using different methodologies. The authors have already proven that the audiovisual case methodology is substantially related to the increases of student motivation not only to attend the lesson, but also to study the subject. It is not significant, moreover, that there is also a strong evidence for a positive correlation between the audiovisual case methodology used and improvements in the learning process. Likewise, the observations that the authors have collected so far suggest that this way of teaching fosters a better understanding of the theoretical concepts explained in the classroom.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The Henry Brubaker case is based on the 1969 book *Accomplices to the Crime: The Arkansas Prison Scandal*, by Tom Murton and Joe Hyam. The film that reproduces the case scenes is titled *Brubaker*, directed by Stuart Rosenberg and produced in 1980.

In 1967, Winthorp Rockefeller composed a report about the penitentiary system in Arkansas where he detailed the horrific conditions in which the inmates lived. In addition to several humiliating cases, the quality and quantity of food given to them was very poor in a prison where several types of vegetables were grown and dairy goods were produced which yielded an average 1.4 million dollars profit in the 1960's.

Given this situation, Rockefeller decided to reform the system with Murton's help, who was already experienced in similar cases in the Arkansas region. In February 1968, Murton, as the new warden, ordered the land in Cummins penitentiary to be dug and the corpses of various inmates who had been buried in strange circumstances were found. Later on, it was discovered that they had lived a decadent slave-like situation in the prison. These facts demanded a radical change in the organization of the penitentiary and the system. This is the basis of the case we are presenting: the organizational change and the structural forms that allow it.

In reference to this, and to the visual case here presented, the aim of this study is the type of organization that exists in Wakefield penitentiary, based on the organization of an actual fact. At the same time, Tom Murton, Brubaker in the film, proves, from an inmate's perspective first, and as the prison warden later, that the prisoners suffer all kinds of abuses, in addition to the corruption of all the high-ranking officials.

The case makes it possible to address different aspects of an organization: the organization of functions, the formal and informal organizational systems, team work development, delegation,

confidence in the organization, power use, the role of authority in the leader and unjust use of power among others, as well as the ethical aspects of the organization. Naturally, the teacher must select which aspects he or she wants to deal with in the course by means of this case and focus attention and questions on them.

SETTING THE STAGE

Our students' learning is a matter of constant concern for many teachers. It has been observed that, in various areas of knowledge, this learning is sometimes seriously hindered by the difficulty in associating the theoretical notions explained in the classroom to the real life of an organization. Students usually associate the conceptual definitions given in class with an abstract reality distant from their own. The lack of work experience –especially in the morning groups– aggravates the problem.

In view of this situation, the possibility of using more than the traditional pedagogic methods was valued. There exists the need to create a teaching methodology that not only helps in the learning process by bringing the theoretical classroom world closer to the practical world of real life, but that also increases student motivation and performance.

The era of global technology in which we are living is also defining university life. During the last years, the majority of the universities have adopted an open-source method called Moodle. It is a **virtual campus**[1] where students and teachers can share a virtual space to work and which offers many possibilities to learn in useful and diverse ways.

The case methodology starts at the beginning of the last century, as a teaching tool for executive formation programs carried out in the Harvard Business School. Each case introduces situations and problems (cases), habitually obtained from real organizations. Each group of people have to

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