

# How cases can be used as exams

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## **Abstract**

Case study is an in-depth study that based on collect, organize and integrate data about a specific problem. If universities transforming their lecture model in to case studies the student will gain a lot of expertise and get to provide theoretical knowledge in real life situations. Cases exam can be designed in different ways for example is it possible to let student writes an assignment about a case that can be made by various composition or provide oral exams. The difficulties around the examination teachers have to consider when making and planning the lectures. They also need to take the responsibility to get students motivated and familiar what expecting from the. The using of cases put pressure on how to evaluate the students. It is important to trying to get good standard criteria and judgment to enhance the assessment to be fair.

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## **1.Introduction**

Case studies increase more often in education situations and the research aim to explore and illustrate a process to more advanced understanding. But the question is what a case study and why is it preferable to implement cases into learning techniques. This paper definite the case study and the different types of cases there are. According to Flyvbjerg (2003/4.) cases are the only learning technique that makes beginners becomes experts and based on this theory there are a lot to learn from using a case study. The different possibilities how to exam a case studies are ambiguous and it requires knowledge of the teacher about the different ways to exam. It will be discussed in this note about the benefits and even some disadvantaged to understand the using of case studies in school environment. It will also contain an introduction about various exam choices, some affect the different exams involve and a couple of concrete examples how to exam. The intention is too answer *How to use cases as an Exam* in greater amount of possibilities.

## **2.Methodolody**

The aim of this study was to explore how cases can be used as an exams and what options there are. The study is based on secondary sources. The information from secondary sources is when it is not experienced first-hand and someone else created the research (University of Illinois Library, 2006). The data that has been collected are different type of format but as generally when it comes to secondary resources it has been books and articles. The main part of the sources is science articles found through University of Halmstad's databases and library. Summon is a helpful tool to find full text articles in the library range and have been a good device to use. To found trustworthy articles in the Summon the peer review button were pressed. Peer review is a widely accepted method for helping validate researches (Elsevier, n.d.). Using keywords as: case study; case study method; case study in school; exam in case study; how to exam cases; teacher in case study; case study in education gave a lot of results. The results led for example to the databases Proquest, DiVA, Scopus, Science Direct etc. where the science articles are found. To complement the sciences articles in the study books about cases were found at the library. It gave some helpful information for the study. Except for the science articles and books, manuals from Universities that using the case study as a learning technique were used to get a widely perspective of the problem. Google were partly a good tool and typing in how to use case studies in education in the search square gave a lot of matches but some of them were more trustworthy and relevant than others for example Harvard Business school's manual about teaching in case studies. YouTube have published a lot of videos about case studies that were found with the keyword case study. The videos gave practical and living example of the using of case study.

## **3.Lecture Review**

### **3.1 Case study definition**

A definition of a case study is an in-depth study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across larger sets of units (Gerring, 2004.). Yin (1981) has a similar definition of case studies and defines it as new phenomena put in a real-life situation when the barrier between the

phenomena and the context does not fit together. The question in research are definable as: who, what, where, how and why while in a case study focus more on the question who can explain the nature which is how and why (Easton, 2007). Case studies usually begin on a lower level where a person on the field discover and identify a problem. The basically method of case studies is to collect, organize and integrate the data and information to in the end get a final product (Merriam, 2011). The collecting of the data or analyzing data in a case study does not have to be done in any particular way as it is in experimental researches (Yin, 2008). Case's focus and problem can look different depending on what industry or which subject who is in the spotlight. In business studies the cases can for example be a workplace, in the education cases it can be all from a single institute to a particular educational innovation or in medicine the cases most likely are a patient. Even if case studies can seem similar to action studies they are not to confuse. In the action studies the research is more about finding a way to change intervention through a number of reflective stages while the case studies are more often to observe the participants and provide a bigger picture and more advanced understanding. Case studies can be divided into different types of method for example it is possible to either a quantitative or a qualitative case study. Independent of which method is chosen the aim for both of them is to strive for a thick description (Cousin, 2005). The cases can be divided in other categories based on the content in the case and which company, country or industry. Solberg & Huber (2006.) writing in there book about a few different sections to divide cases. One of them is illustrative case study which include a strict problem and searching for a generalize conclusion. Another one exploratory case studies also looking to generalize the conclusion but the study is around a wider field of problem. Critical instance case is based on one or a few complication and searching for more concrete outcome than the illustrative and the exploratory case studies does.

### **3.2 Exams in case studies**

According to The Free Dictionary (n.d.) exam, or, examination that is the more formal word to use, is an official test that testify student's knowledge or ability in a particular subject. Based on information from Ivory research (n.d.) there are different ways to perform an exam. Expect doing the normal exams with questions and answers it can also for example be made as an essay exam, multiple-choice exams and oral exam or there are even sometimes open books exams where it is allowed for the student to bring their course material. A relevant exam form for case studies is the unmentioned one, the problem-based exams. The problem-based exams are a bit different where students get a specific problem that they are supposed to solve by using the course material. The focus here it to instead of testify what students can remember regarding to theoretical knowledge it testify their skills development. The aim of using problem-based studies is to understand how to use the theoretical knowledge in real life situations. Researches who have been made can show that cases have been an important part of the human learning. It has also shown by science that cases are the only learning technique, which make people develop from beginners to experts. Experts around the world have study cases in-depth and complete over thousand concrete cases to have the expertise they have. If schools integrate well chosen cases in to the education students will have a good opportunity to enhance their competence more than only read fact and rules in textbooks. There is a lot of knowledge to gain if universities who using the normal lecture model transforming it into

case studies instead (Flyvbjerg, 2003/4). Karns (2005) rates in his study cases behind internship and class discussion in the comparing of the effectiveness among 21 different class activities. The study also makes cases one of the most challenging activities in school. The using of cases is a positive study method for the fact the Internet has become a useful research tool these days and according to Michael Allard (2001) cases are good to use in school context because students has to practice to find trustworthy sources around specific subjects. The case studies have more positive effects. It can be a powerful instrument to bring out new thinking solutions or to rethinking traditional theories. It is a good instrument to use but it is also important to know that case studies can fail and instead of getting a result the study can end up in nothing. It is quite common scenario (Dumez, 2015). But a case study does not always provide an answer. The point of using cases as learning technique is to raise questions and allow the student to process decision-making and learn in action (Writing Case Studies: A Manual. 1999.). The one person making a research will probably not know in the beginning what the cases are until the research is virtually completed. What the case will coalesce gradually and in the final realization can sometime be the most important part of the interaction between ideas and evidence (Ragin, 1992). In USA it have become a common technique to use case studies as a way to teach central principles of public management and administrative law. It is most likely that courses in administrative law organize a standard set of cases in the education (Rosenblom, 1995). As Stein (1952) implies law comes in cases. A difficult part of using cases into learning techniques is to evaluate the students' work. There is not a single correct answer and a case can be interpreted in different ways. To find a way to evaluate cases is to work with standard or criteria judgment about the quality (Riddle, Smith & Frankforter, 2009). For an example the considered criteria in social work cases can include transferability, credibility, conformability and dependability to assess the quality (Lee, Mishna & Brennenstuhl, 2010). One way to make sure the students fulfill and understand the required educate is using Blooms et al.'s (1956) Taxonomy of the Domaine that explain six different levels ranking as knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The major concept with using the levels are showing students what they know can be arranged in a hierarchy where they have to master one level before they reach the next one (Huwitt, 2011). Each of the levels in the Taxonimy of the Doamine requires a practical skills and a wide understanding of the relevant theories and concept (White, 2007). Another issue with the case study learning is the security if using one case more then one year and how to consistency and comparability of the assessments over time (Rochford & Brochert, 2011).

### **3.3 Different example how to exam in case studies**

At college and university level it is common write cases as an assignment and the three important sections assignment should have is introduction, background and conclusion (Best Essay Service, 2012). A example case is the one about Mickes Maleri i Adalen AB (Solberg & Huber, 2006. 93-99) the introduction explains short about how the business works and present a case about how the owner realize how he still could run his business but need to hire new staff. In the background the upstart and history of the company are described. There are also a part in the case that includes the previous decisions the owner made and fact about the bankrupt. After a reconstruction of the company running a different strategy of the business in a van with five people in his crew and using their good reputation to keep the sale. The

conclusion of the case and change is that it has become more effective and saving money not having the rents. Chuc & Libby (2010.) implemented an assignment including six mini-cases in a taxation course that's lasted for 12 weeks. The students got a problem and four different solutions and after a well introduction they were supposed to choose one and make an analysis why the other one were not preferred. After a research and data collection the conclusion of using this assignment is that it enhance the learning experience and even students recon it raise there learning in to a higher degree than traditional types of assignment. Stoneham (1995) wrote some advice for case writers that included prepare the case in great details, a rich cases do not have a single answer, use questions and stretch the audience and ask other students for opinions and if publishing the case a good editing is necessary.

The most natural way to practice case studies is learn by doing but discussions and oral exams are not to exclude. While using discussions in a seminar the students will still practice their sense to make decisions and to think critical (Solberg & Huber, 2006.). Solberg & Huber (2006. 45-57.) has made a case study about Mercatus Engineering AB that is operating in the environmental techniques. The case is about the history and how the company decided to invest in their staff and made a re-organization. Solberg & Huber (2006.) mention how this sort of case is pedagogic to use as basis in a discussion because it is easy for the students to relate to the subjects. The teaching notes in the end of the case are seven questions and all of them are openly asked but still require students understanding of the case, for example *How could you describe the management at Mercatus?*. There are some complications of using a discussion about the cases. The idea of the examination is that the students get a case and will study it back home and then discuss it in class. In these kind of assignment the issue is the students themselves and their various motivations to learn. Michael Zigarelli (2012) showing in his video about two students who has two completely different ways to prepare before a seminar about the case study. One of the student reads the case carefully and trying to figure out a conclusion both on his own and together with two classmates. On his own he is taking the decision to talk the case through with two other persons with different options. They are trying to find different ways and think in different rounds that will make them achieve exactly that kind of understanding and knowledge case studies are good for. However another student in the video is not reading the whole case and almost ignore the task and instead play games on the computer. The guy has made an equation what the possibilities is for him to answer in class which is very low and he decide not to fulfill the case study. The difference shows the difficulties by have an oral exam on case studies (Zigarelli, M, 2012). According to Shapiro (2014.) it is necessary for the student to follow and commit to the 4 Ps that stands for preparation, presence, promptness and participation to have a good oral exam. The teacher has a responsibility to make sure the student understand the importance of these four elements early in the course and make relevant example in the areas.

Damnjanovic (2012.) writing about marketing management and a special way to implement case studies in the education by creating a competition where the students solve cases from the field marketing. The cases are judged by a jury with odd number of people and consist of persons from the company producing the cases, top management, teacher assistant or

professors who writes case studies. Example of problem who is familiar to use for the students are an entry strategy in foreign market, branding strategy, formulate a promotion mix and portfolio analysis. This way of studies is perfect for students applying in real business and it is a great experience to present the ideas to the organizations and see what they recon. There is one winner but Damnjanovic notice in her conclusion everyone who is getting case solving experience and learning complete the phases should feel like winners.

#### **4. Analysis**

There are a lot of benefits of implement cases in to teaching and Flyvberg (2003/4.) recons it is a lot of knowledge to gain if change the normal lecture model in to case studies instead. The theory is strengthening with Karns (2005.) research that putting cases on a third place comparing effectively of twenty-one different activities. The question why it is useful as a learning technique is because it making the students uses theoretical knowledge in real life situations (Flyvberg, 2003/4). It is very good for students getting a more practical knowledge. A disadvantages of the using is that it is not only one single solution for the case or it might not even be an answer which can seems confusing putting it in a lecture model. But according to Writing Case Studies: A Manual (1999.) the point of using cases is to raise questions and allow the students to process decision-making and learn in action. As long as the teacher has a big understanding of the case studies there should be no problem with this issue.

There is quite a lot of complication when letting students writing their own case studies. Case does not always provide an answer (Writing Case Studies: A Manual. 1999.), which can confuse the students in their studies. Best Essay Service (n.d.) provides three parts who is important of writing a exam assignment but in Solberg & Huber's (2006.) case Micket's Maleri i Adalen AB there it is not easy to only put these three parts on the written text which shows that the directions are different depending on the case. This can also complicate it for some students. To avoid complications in writing cases there should be clear instructions and maybe just provide the illustrative case study (Solberg & Huber, 2006.) that only focus on one problem. Also Chuc & Libby (2010.) idea about an exams that already including four solutions and only focus on the students analysis to pick one out might make it easier. But that might keep back the student to develop how to find trustworthy sources which Allard (2001.) recon is an important point of the case study. The way of using cases as a competition like Damnjanovic (2012.) writes about sounds like a good idea in marketing. A competition with real organizations problem are ha prime example how the cases study makes students use theoretical knowledge in real life as Flyvbjerg (2003/4) writes about. But the complication are that it might just be a way for creative subjects where there are different solutions to find. As in USA where cases are used in administrative law (Rosenblom, 1995.) it might not be as useful to create a competition because the law should only have one answer which make it hard to be a compete with other students answers.

In Zigarelli (2012) video about the two different students who prepare totally different before the case discussion the teacher of the course is not in focus at all. Based on the fact that Shapiro (2014) considers it is the teachers responsibility that students understand and actually

embrace the 4Ps. It might have to be a bigger focus how the teacher is acting when introducing the case study and that the teacher is clearer how the oral exam will be formulate. The teaching notes in Solberg & Huber's (2006.) case Mercatus Engineering AB showing the relevant of an active and ambitious teacher who putting effort to help the students to learn. The student in the video who making the case study more correct are discussing with two other one. Stoneham (1995) mentions its importance to ask for others opinion when writing case assignment. This is probably even when student do an oral exam. An idea of these facts is that the teacher should put groups together to make sure the student discuss the case together and give them teaching notes who they will present for the class. It will be followed by a discussion. This suggestion will eliminate the problem of some students think they can pass the exam without saying a word. It still not guarantees that the entire group has been active but it is easier for the teacher to note who is silent in the discussion.

## **5. Conclusion**

Case studies should continue being used in school as a learning technique. It is a lot of benefits to implement it and make the students a connection with real life situations. The disadvantage presents seems to be rejected with some easy counterarguments. How to provide to the exam can depend on the subject. In marketing using case study as a completion will be a good solution but it is not working everywhere. In other subjects in might be more suitable for writing an assignment or having oral exams. The oral exams should be done in small group and presented in front of the class.

## **6. Implication**

The widely field case study can be used in has ben a difficulties during the study. There are a lot of sources to be found and it has been hard to found the one who is relevant. Using the keyword case study to find science articles are too wide and even if combined it with other keywords it gave a lot of irrelevant sources to deselect. Searching for secondary sources is a time consuming activity but it felt like a detailed were missing to be able to do the research as effective as possible.

## **7. Future study**

This paper receives general information about case studies and ideas how in different subject compose an exam. For future study it will probably be a better idea to make an in-depth study about a specific subject or a specific way of exam. Getting narrowed in a specific part in the case study context will probably enhance the effectiveness of founding relevant sources that were mention as an implication of this paper.

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