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STUDENTS' VIEW ON THE USE OF BUSINESS GAMING IN HONG KONG

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ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with Hong Kong students' view on the usage of the case method in teaching the subject strategic management. It is hypothesized that Hong Kong students perceive that the case method can help them in understanding the subject. The results strongly support the alternative H_a - the majority of students who agreed that the case method can help them in learning the subject is greater than those that disagreed. The value of the test statistic (z) is 14.42. It is significant at 0.0005 level, single-tail test.

INTRODUCTION

To what extent, would students whose first language is not English consider the case method (cases in English, discussion in English) as an effective approach to learning strategic management and achieving what the case method is designed to achieve? The authors examined how students in Hong Kong evaluate the objectives of the case study approach and the use of cases in their course. The authors had sought to find out if the students in Hong Kong agree that the case method can help them in understanding strategic management as a process. Hence, the following hypothesis was established:

Working hypothesis, $H_0: P=P_0=0.5$; and

Alternative Hypothesis, $H_a: P>0.5$;

Where P = the proportion of Hong Kong students who agree that the case method help them understand the subject of strategic management.

$P_0 = 0.5$ when there is no difference between the proportion of Hong Kong students who agree and those who disagree.

METHODOLOGY

A survey questionnaire was conducted with two groups of Chinese students in 1998: a) final year full-time degree students who enrolled in the subject of Strategic Management and b) final year part-time diploma students who enrolled in the subject Business

Strategy. Participants in this survey have gone through the case study method in the course of their learning. A total of 398 questionnaires were administered. 353 usable questionnaires were received.

Students' Perception of Case Method in Helping Them Understand Strategic Management

Students were asked if they think that the case method has helped them understand strategic management. Table 1 exhibits the results. 266 respondents (75.78%) agreed with the statement that the case method has helped them while 8 (0.027%) disagreed. 77 neutral responses were recorded and constitute 21.93%. The z value, 14.42 is significant at 0.0005 level. The result supports the alternative hypothesis (H_a) - the percentage of students who agreed that the case method could help them in learning the subject is greater than those that disagreed.

Detail Learning Objectives Associated with the Case Method for Strategic Management

A list of learning objectives associated with the case method Romm and Mahler (1991), Osigweh (1989), Christensen (1987), and Dooley and Skinner (1977) as illustrated by Jennings (1996) was used to examine whether or not students agree with them. Over 70 percent of the students involved in the study agreed that learning objectives are to acquire knowledge, to develop analysis and synthesis, to relate theory to practice and assist with the long-term retention of the knowledge and skills gained.

Lecturers need to be aware of the reasons why they employ the case method for their classes. In other words, they have to define their teaching objectives before the selection of the case (Jennings, 1996). The current study documents how students in Hong Kong evaluate the learning objectives of the case method and the effectiveness of this approach.

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A More Holistic Understanding of Objectives in Using the Case Study Method for Strategic Management

Students were asked if they agreed with the objectives as identified by Jennings (1996). The case method appears to be a highly suitable tool for the development of strategic analysis/strategic thinking, communication and interpersonal skills. The development of analytical skills, teamwork, and report writing comes from having to deal with the complexity of the case and the subsequent demand on students to justify the recommendations they make.

CONCLUSION

The study confirms that the case method is effective in helping students to learn the subject of strategic management. It helps lecturers to understand the students' view on the use of the case approach and the objectives normally associated with cases. Suitable cases serve to help students acquire knowledge, to

develop analysis and synthesis, to relate theory to practice and assist the long term retention of knowledge and skills. More emphasis and efforts need to be invested by lecturers in enhancing the achievement of the other objectives, which may be less obvious to students. This means careful selection of cases and making learning objectives more explicit to students.

The case method is a suitable tool for the development of strategic analysis and communication and interpersonal skills. Well organized discussions, which tend to develop analytical skills, teamwork, and subsequent report writing do make significant demands on the students' time and their capacity to manage complex descriptive material. This must be understood in the light of the fact that English is not their first language. Overall, the use of case method is supported by students in Hong Kong to effect learning and understanding of the strategic management.

TABLE 1

STUDENTS' VIEW ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CASE METHOD

	Full-time Degree Students	Test Statistic z	Part-time Diploma Students	Test Statistic z	Combined Full-time & Part-time Students	Test Statistic z
	Yes No Neutral		Yes No Neutral		Yes No Neutral	
Case method helps students understand the subject of strategic management.	55 7 32	6.096****	211 1 45	15.58****	266 8 77	14.42****

Note: 1. $z = (x - np_0) / [np_0(1 - p_0)]^{0.5}$,

Where x = number of students agreed the case method help them understand the subject of strategic management
n = sample size = 62 (for full-time students);
n = sample size = 212 (for part-time students);
n = sample size = 274 (for the combined full-time and part-time students)
p₀ = 0.5.

2. **** significant at 0.0005 level. (All at single-tail test)