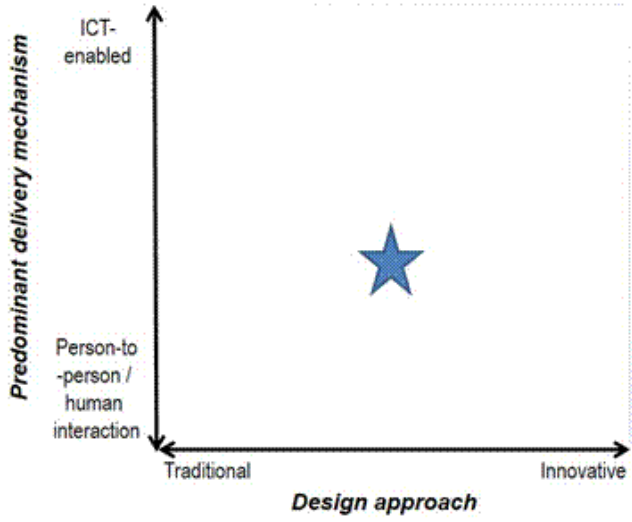
Chapter six

Case Based Learning Approaches Used in Business Schools in Western Greece: the Experiences, the Values, the Good Practices.

Ioanna Giannoukou and Chrysostomos Stylios



An Overview of the Case Based Learning Methodology

The globalisation that has characterised recent decades has been accompanied by the development in Higher Education of innovative teaching methodologies designed to improve the level and quality of

student learning. Race (2003) observes that these new teaching and learning methods and approaches have been prompted by the need of teachers to 'refresh' teaching with methods which can remedy weaknesses that have been found in traditional methods.

Traditional methods tend to be teacher-centered – an approach which does not take adequate care of student-centered aspects of teaching and learning. However, they retain many strengths and Race's (2003) advice is that they should be applied in conjunction with innovative teaching methods.

Business schools in Higher Education Teaching have a long history of using case studies. Many of these are written by individuals or teams affiliated with the top business schools (including Harvard, INSEAD, Ivey, IMD) and are available direct from case teaching schools and from case clearing organisations such as The Case Centre (www.thecasecentre.org/) or journals like that of the North American Case Research Association.

These teaching case studies endeavour to describe actual business situations and detail some aspects of organisational life – for example a change programme or the behavior of a new CEO (Naumes & Naumes, 1999:13). They describe (Race, 2003) a set of circumstances faced by an organisation in its real world context (Bussière, 2005; Mauffette-Leenders *et al.,* 1997) where a decision is required (Lyford, 2000), or they are used to help students understand multiple issues in complex situations (Dewing, 1931). Typically they include:

> *"... a chronology of significant events in the organisation's development; summaries of important cost, financial and sales data; statements and opinions of employees of the company; and information about the competitors and industry" (Edge & Coleman, 1986:2).*

Although they may be fictionalised cases often build on real situations in the life of an individual, a profit-seeking company or a non-profit organisation (Feagin *et al.,* 1991).

Lee (1983), Piotrowski (1982), Westerfield (1989), Boyd (1991), St John (1996), and Jackson (1998) all provide definitions of case based teaching and learning whose key concepts overlap. Broadly, they see

the case method as a technique based on analysis, discussion, and decision-making. In this process, students are presented with a record of a problematic business situation that an organisation has actually faced; they are then required to reflect, interact, take responsibility for, problem-solve, and determine possible courses of action and the consequences of implanting these (Esteban & Canado, 2004).

A typical teaching case will contain a combination of primary data (e.g. interviews with managers) and secondary data such as press releases, annual reports etc (David, 2003).

In management education there are different types of teaching case for application in different situations (Heath, 2002) but all are designed for use in the classroom; this approach is seen as an essential way for students to develop an appreciation of real-life management issues (Liang & Wang, 2004). This can help students to develop a range of learning outcomes and skills, such as knowledge application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Banning, 2003; Bloom, 1964; Hartman, 2006; Mauffette-Leenders *et al.,* 1997).

A case will tell a 'story' that can be used in the classroom as a basis for learning (Broder *et al.*, 2003; Patten & Swanson, 2003). Cases tend to be contextually rich in detail; students learn through the application and adaptation of theoretical concepts to specific business situations described in the case. Students develop judgement and reasoning skills by evaluating different options and focusing on complex problems which usually do not have 'one right answer' (BIM, 1960; Greiner *et al.,* 2003). In this way cases provide a classroom substitute for experience (Garvin, 2007).

Case based teaching (CBT) was adopted by business administration at Harvard Graduate School as long ago as the 1920s (Jackson, 1998; Kleinfeld, 1990) and has since gained *"a long and varied history as part of the curriculum of programs in professional education"* (Boyd, 1991). Its increasing popularity and effectiveness has led to its use in a variety of disciplines including medicine, social work, science, public administration, teacher training, demography and business (Kintner *et al.*, 1994).

Among all student-centred learning methods, the case method is

particularly good at immersing each individual student into the case situation. This helps them to prioritise resources and identify and analyse relevant information in order to make decisions that would resolve the case (Wassermann, 1994).

Types of Case Study Method

Three main types of Case Method have been distinguished by a number of authors, including Westerfield (1989). One type requires the student to suggest a solution to a situation or problem which is faced by management and which has as yet not been solved. This, in Westerfield's opinion, is the most effective in stimulating discussion. The second type requires the student to evaluate an action that has already been taken the third type asks the learner for a general appraisal of whether a situation is proceeding as it should.

Lee (1983) also points to three main case study methods, namely; the Harvard Approach, where the student must consider a series of questions about a problem described in narrative form; the Abbreviated Case Approach, which condenses the problem situation and avoids the complexities inherent in the real situation; and the Incidence Approach, where it is the student's responsibility to look up any additional facts necessary to solve the problem presented.

The latter approach has much in common with what Mascolini and Freeman (1982) term the 'open case', since here the students gather information themselves, either through group discussion and direct observation or from newspapers and other library sources. The alternative is the closed case, where all the information is supplied.

Miles (1987) observes two distinctly different types of case: vignettes (see also Patterson, 1994) and the pre-structured case method. Vignettes are understood as descriptions of situations or problems written by a professional, along with a suggested outline and comments. The pre-structured case method refers to an outline written by the researcher prior to collecting any data.

Benefits of Case Based Teaching

According to Soy (1997), case studies *"excel at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research."* Another major strength of the case study method is that its focus encompasses richly detailed contexts (Feagin *et al.*, 1991). A further important benefit that appears to accrue from using the case study method is that it promotes Deep Structure Learning (Patten & Swanson 2003; Swanson 2005; Swanson & McKibben 1999), which is aimed at the development of critical thinking skills. Students view it more positively than courses not designed using this approach and they are more willing to participate and learn (Roberts, 2002; Swanson, 2005). Part of the reason for this may be that the deep structure learning approach naturally accommodates other features associated with the case study method, namely; the use of real world problems, the emphasis on concepts rather than mechanisms and on writing and presentation skills, active cooperative learning and the *"worthwhileness"* of a course (Patten & Swanson, 2003; Swanson 2005; Swanson & McKibben, 1999).

The flexibility and adaptability of CBT to myriad educational settings and purposes is highlighted by both Boyd (1991) and Jackson (1998) as one of its most notable advantages. In addition, it allows the learners to enhance their communication skills – listening critically, inferencing, and synthesising information – in an integrated manner (Grosse, 1988; Jackson, 1998). It also allows students to refine their interpersonal and teamwork skills by collaborating with classmates and working together towards the achievement of a common goal (Jackson, 1998; Nagel, 1991; Piotrowski, 1982; Westerfield, 1989). Furthermore, it helps students better to understand and articulate their own values and beliefs, making them more active, responsible, independent, and reflective as regards their own learning and helping them to develop effective leadership and managerial skills (Jackson, 1998; Kleinfeld, 1990; Piotrowski, 1982; Westerfield, 1989). In addition, it can help them to sharpen their analytical, problem-solving and decision-making skills by aiding them to differentiate fact from

opinion, relevant data from irrelevant data, and trivial from vital information (Jackson, 1998; Piotrowski, 1982; Westerfield, 1989).

The analysis of teaching case studies offers us the opportunity to capture idiosyncrasies and complexity; it can enable the student to explore the idiosyncratic detail of the trees while generating an understanding of the background forest (Reddy, 2000). Broad fieldwork or ethnographic studies are often advocated because large samples can mask idiosyncratic details (Wassermann, 1994), but it is also argued that these methods, while providing depth, do not permit the verification of theories, and that sacrificing validity for richness could detract from the strength of the findings (Leenders & Erskine, 1989). Problems can arise because of the variability in the way data are collected and interpreted across the different teaching cases. However, such problems can be reduced by means of strict selection and coding criteria (Reddy, 2000).

Case studies also narrow the gap between theory and practice by enabling connections to be made between knowledge and practice, presenting relevant and fresh material, confronting learners with real situations, and fostering the skills and confidence which students will need in order to feel at ease in the community of Business English practitioners (Boyce, 1993; Jackson, 1998; Piotrowski, 1982). These considerations, together with the fact that case studies seem to work well with the learning style of most adults (Jackson, 1998; Piotrowski, 1982), make this method extremely motivating, interesting, intense, and engrossing (Mostert & Sudzina, 1996; Piotrowski, 1982; Westerfield, 1989).

Advantages of Traditional Pedagogical Approaches in Comparison with CBT

However, the advantages of case studies are only part of the picture; their drawbacks must also be examined. The literature on CBT agrees that its most noteworthy disadvantages include the fact that it is a difficult instructional strategy to use (Boyd, 1991; Grosse, 1988; Jackson, 1998; Kleinfeld, 1990; Westerfield, 1989).

Furthermore, the success of CBT largely depends on the teacher's role. This is a non-traditional one which may make some educators uncomfortable and some students hostile (Boyce, 1993; Jackson, 1998; Mostert & Sudzina, 1996; Piotrowski, 1982). In CBT, the instructor is no longer an expert who provides the right answers or solutions, but rather a facilitator or consultant who hands the responsibility of learning over to the student (Lee, 1983; Milheim, 1996; Paget, 1988; Smith, 1987). Welty (1989) qualifies this view when he suggests that, although this is the ultimate objective, it is not always the most suitable one for students who are not familiar with the discussion method.

According to Piotrowski (1982) even the physical learning environment needs to be modified for optimal results. Welty (1989) asserts that that the ideal physical environment should involve:

- a U-shaped arrangement (as opposed to a circle shape) because it facilitates visual contact and interaction among the participants in the discussion and provides space for the leader to exercise his/her authority and control)
- tables and swivel chairs (tables reduce the threatening nature of the exchanges while swivel chairs favour interaction and make for a freer use of classroom space)
- a small table in the front for the instructor (useful for placing outlines, notes, and handouts)
- board space on at least two walls (for a more versatile use of different parts of the room)
- enough space for the instructor to move around freely without stumbling over students or interfering in the discussion.

Such arrangements might be difficult and expensive to introduce. A further factor to be borne in mind is the unreported bias of the author of a case study and the potentially incomplete description of the situation (Jennings, 1997). Yet as a counter to this point it could be argued that there will be few grounds for suspecting deliberate bias on the part of the case writer. Publications offering teaching case studies

explain that authors are meant to report the facts of a case objectively and that teaching cases are *"not supposed to be works of fiction; the literary license invoked by creative writers and film makers is not an option open to case writers"* (Swiercz & Ross, 2003:424). A case should be *"the vehicle by which a chunk of reality is brought into the classroom"* (Lawrence, 1953:215). And because it is *"describing real business situations that capture the complexity of organisational life, the case method gives participants firsthand experience in the analysis and evaluation of business situations"* (Liang & Wang, 2004:398).

As Miller and Friesen (1977:256) explain, teaching cases that supply published data on a firm avoid *"the subjective impressions of an executive of the company. It is more difficult to hide the real situation from a case writer who studies a firm in detail."* However, in the writing of teaching case studies certain issues or phenomena may be given more prominence than others as a means of highlighting a specific point to students (Liang & Wang, 2004). Furthermore, some teaching cases may be imprecise or incomplete due to the impossibility of providing exhaustive accounts of past events (Kieser, 1994), or because of the organisation's denial of access to some pieces of information. In addition, some teaching cases tend to be over-rationalistic, CEO-centric and instrumentalist (Liang & Wang, 2004).

Nevertheless, far from adopting a negative attitude towards the application of this method, authors such as Jackson (1998) insist that these obstacles can be surmounted given careful preparation, considerable practice, and clear explanation of objectives; they argue that *"in most situations, these disadvantages can be overcome with creativity, ingenuity, hard work and perseverance"* (Jackson, 1998:159).

CBT Usage in Business Schools in Western Greece

In preparation for this chapter, we interviewed professors teaching at business schools in Western Greece. We focused on professors who teach Business Administration, International Business and aspects of management such as Operation Management, Marketing

Management and Financial Management. For clarity, we excluded classes in Economics and only looked at university courses and not Technical School studies. The result was that we interviewed a total of 33 professors at the Department of Business Administration of the University of Patras and at the Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises of the University of Western Greece.

Our inquiries concentrated on whether they practice CBT and, if they do, how they apply it in their classes. Twenty professors (60.6% of our sample) at the two Universities do not use CBT. They prefer the traditional methodology of teaching with speeches and open discussions on the theory and examples – although these do not include case studies. The remaining thirteen professors (39.4% of our sample) said they were enthusiastic CBT practitioners.

From the interviews and the literature used by the CBT practitioners we were able to identify four distinct approaches to CBT, characterised as:

1) the typical way
2) the historical narration
3) CBT to transfer specific skills
4) CBT to build decision-making skills (Patten & Swanson, 2003).

Approach 1: the Typical Way

The 'typical way' approach to CBT is applied by the majority of professors in the specific target group. What they do closely resembles the five steps documented by Mauffette-Leenders *et al.* (1999).

Step 1: Introduce the case. The professors present to the students a brief problem statement of the case. Each professor can choose a different format of case study – such as showing newspaper cuttings or role-playing – which can make the problem realistic and stimulate student interest. Then, the professor asks the students to read the

problem statement carefully to get a sense of the case and its issues.

Step 2: Form groups and initiate discussions. The professor splits the class into several groups of four to six students so as to be an effective group. The group must work together, discuss and identify the issues and solve the problems. During these discussions students may be motivated by and discuss issues that are relevant but may not be the intended focus of the study. While teachers acknowledge the importance of these issues and recognise good ideas, they also help students to identify and focus on the key issues for solving the case.

Step 3: Identify the way forward. All students know the limitations of time and resources and must now prioritise the issues. Some sensible assumptions might have to be made and some details might have to be set aside. What is important is that students identify their own way forward, assign research tasks within the group for analysing the issues and resolving the case, and then engage in a variety of tasks or learning activities.

Step 4: Guide the learning activities. Students participate in different learning activities, such as information searching, literature review, data collection. Teachers provide guidance, and closely monitor the activities with a view to providing timely feedback so as to facilitate students' learning.

Step 5: Organise presentation, mobilise discussion and provide timely feedback. The professor, at the final step of this procedure, organises a session in which groups present their findings. When each group presents its ideas, the professor asks a representative from each of the remaining groups to ask questions or provide feedback. The presenting group is prompted to answer fully all requests for clarification. At the end of the Q&A session, the professor provides immediate feedback on the group's work, confirming the good points that were made, supplying any missing information, and clarifying any misconceptions.

Approach 2: the Historical Narration

Because a case tells a story, it can be used to teach an historical narrative; in fact, storytelling is increasingly becoming a taught subject in business schools (Patten & Swanson, 2003). Through historical narrations the student is expected to learn what has actually happened during the life of the subject entity in a case. This narrative method is especially appropriate for comparing the preconceptions that people may have about a particular subject.

Swanson and Morrison (2010) give the example of a Swiss manufacturing company faced with shrinking demand for its products. The company responds by changing the product design, thereby returning to profitability. The student reading this case learns how the company discovered and described the problem. S/he then evaluates the various actions the company contemplated taking and considers how and why the company finally responded as it did.

This kind of case gives teachers the opportunity to analyse step-by-step with their students the entire sequence of events and to cover the whole experience of the specific case. Also, they can focus students' attention on the alternatives and how they were formulated in order to highlight the relative importance of alternative strategies that a company might have been able to implement. Finally, the teacher can promote good practices resulting from the specific actions that returned the company to profitability (Swanson & Morrison, 2010).

The use of narrative in business studies helps students to understand how and why businesses succeed or fail. Storytelling by sharing of actions, views and opinions shapes a business's culture and may be a power for good or it may provoke division and subversion. The need for narrative understanding has increased in importance due to the rapid changes resulting from modernisation and globalisation. More importantly, the use of narrative in education provides a connection to experience and morality that captures the complexity and contradictions of life, and empowers the learner through caring interdependent relationships (Witherall & Noddings, 1991; Gilligan, 1988).

Educational critics such as Postman (1995) connect knowing through narrative to motivation. Postman states that a narrative of interdependence needs to be chosen above narratives of reason, science, economic utility and technology in order to give students a reason for learning.

Scholars agree that storytelling creates a learning situation (Mostert & Sudzina, 1996). It allows one to think 'outside the box' that defines one's own experiences and to develop creative ways to problem-solve. It also allows us to identify with the theme and character of the story and to perceive how others think. Through this process, one's own errors in thinking tend to be become apparent (Witherall & Noddings, 1991).

Narratives help build moral development and enhance verbal communication. They also enhance interpersonal communication. Narratives allow the student to look at life from different angles. They engage the mind and promote the development of critical thinking. When students start to look at a problem differently they begin to see how things could have been better – or worse.

Narratives offer an opportunity to look at new ways of processing things so when similar situations offer themselves in the future they can be processed more efficiently and effectively. Narratives provide a down-to-earth method of teaching case studies which might be foreign to the student. They activate the student's existing background knowledge and, because of this, the student is more likely to process information better and remember it better.

Narratives may invoke emotion, which is proven to help people to learn better and retain information. Besides, historical narratives can make learning fun (Witherall & Noddings, 1991). They help students put themselves in someone else's shoes and this assists them to see solutions and alternatives where past thinking patterns offered no alternatives (Swanson & Morrison, 2010). Also, narratives are less abstract and can be very powerful for looking at problems from other viewpoints. Stories about others show how others were able to overcome barriers and eventually succeed, and they promote critical thinking (Liang & Wang, 2004).

Approach 3: Transferring Specific Skills

This third application of cases enables students to acquire specific skills (Patten & Swanson, 2003). The typical format here is that instructor constructs a question which students must answer by conducting some sort of research exercise (e.g. downloading and assembling data and performing a series of calculations). In doing so, the student acquires specific skills by analysing the question and manipulating relevant data (Swanson & Morrison, 2010).

This approach has the advantage of using a real-life situation which helps to enliven the learning experience for the student and simultaneously emphasises the learning experience that the instructor wants to achieve (Swanson & Morrison, 2010). To illustrate, assume that a faculty member wishes to teach about channels of distribution; a case could be selected that describes a company and the product it manufactures. Information about the cost of manufacturing and the desired profit margin could be provided. The student could then be asked to identify possible ways in which the manufacturer could distribute its product to the consumer. This can be as extensive an analysis as the faculty member decides is appropriate given the level and objectives of the course (Swanson & Morrison, 2010).

Given a certain problem that the case has identified, the student then learns that s/he must now discover various alternatives to solving the problem (Swanson & Morrison, 2010). Since the alternatives must all concern distribution channels the student ends up acquiring a specific skill – in this case, knowledge of how distribution works.

As an example of this approach here is a brief description of a case approach that hones specific skills used in evaluating global consumer markets using data available from the U.S. Census Bureau and the World Bank. The prospect of rising incomes destined to transform massive populations into rapidly expanding consumer markets spurred a rush of U.S.-based corporations into China, India, and other markets during the 1990s. These expanding consumer markets continue to attract corporations whose present-day business derives largely from mature markets with limited prospects for further growth. In their efforts to globalise, corporations need to anticipate

the future growth of these emerging consumer markets. Such markets pose distinctive problems amenable to applied demographic analysis. The case centers on a study to refine and expand a corporation's global view of the middle class consumer. In this case, the student is called upon to develop data on the preceding points and prepare an analysis to be presented to a client who is a builder interested in foreseeing future homebuyer preferences. This client is contemplating entry into one of several emerging markets and looking for guidance on the comparative demographic strengths and weaknesses of each market (Swanson & Morrison, 2010).

This third approach causes students to learn by engaging in problem-solving and other activities that motivate the need to learn. This gives students a chance to apply what is being learned in a way that affords real feedback (Kolodner, 1997; Kolodner *et al.*, 1996; Schank & Cleary, 1994). Students might engage in solving a series of real-world problems – such as managing erosion or planning for a tunnel or designing a software application – either for real or through realistic simulation. Each instance requires:

- identification of issues that need resolution and knowledge required to address those issues
- exploration or investigation or experimentation to learn the needed knowledge
- application of that knowledge to solve the problem
- generation and assessment of a solution (Kolodner *et al.*, 2003).

In the process students might engage in taking surveys and learning statistical concepts (sampling, averaging, probabilities) and social science concepts (question asking) (Kolodner *et al.*, 2003). Participation in design and problem-solving activity, especially when students must make something work, gives them the opportunity to work out what they need to learn, experience the application of that knowledge, and learn how it is best used (Kolodner *et al.*, 2003).

Approach 4: Fostering Decision-Making

The fourth instructional application focuses on the art of decision-making. How does one identify problems? What needs to be solved? How does one formulate possible courses of action? What criteria can be used in evaluating solutions or courses of action? Under this approach, the student must discover the problem – it is not identified as such in the case (Swanson & Morrison, 2010). This approach is very popular when teaching courses such as strategic management where it is desirable to encompass problems involving a variety of subject-matter fields.

The process of identifying the problem, enumerating possible solutions, establishing criteria to be incorporated in the solution that is selected, and selecting the solution along with the supporting rationale makes for an important experience. Case studies are particularly well suited to delivering a valuable learning experience in this type of situation (Swanson & Morrison, 2010).

A Bespoke Approach Developed in the Business Schools of Western Greece

During our research on the Business Schools of Western Greece, we elicited the following four discrete steps to promote decision making. They are:

Step 1: Identify/clarify the decision to be made. The case study will not specify the decision. It has to be identified by the students themselves. Not all students will succeed in doing so but the more discerning ones will lead the discovery process. A case containing multiple problems enables the instructor to focus on problem clarification as a key learning outcome. A brainstorming discussion in the classroom facilitates collection of all problems realised by each student. All problems revealed from the case study are displayed so that all students can have a clear view of the range of problems presented in the case.

Step 2: Identify possible decision options. This step requires the

decision makers – at this point the students – to present, as clearly as possible, just what the decision alternatives really are. Again at this point a brainstorming discussion is initiated in the classroom in order to collect all possible decision options on each specific problem realised by each student. All decisions for each problem are collected and displayed so that all students can have a clear view of all the potential decisions.

Step 3: Gather/process information. Next, the students have to collect or process information that can help guide the decision. In some cases, all information necessary for the final decision is available in the case study itself. So the students must re-read the case study in detail and extract the information that will enable the decision to be made. A case might present no relevant information, or offer insufficient information. In that case, students have to search for and collect relevant information about the company featured in the case, or about suitable managerial strategies. They must also find and read handbooks on specific theoretical aspects that might be of great use in their decision-making. In doing this the students categorise the problems and prioritise the chief problem to be solved. The more significant the decision, the more rigorous must be the information-gathering process.

Step 4: Make the decision. During this step students can work individually on the case and document their ideas and solutions; alternatively groups of (say) 4 students can collaborate.

After the information has been considered according to its relevance and significance, and then discussed in the classroom, each student presents and explains his/her decision.

Good Practices of Business Schools in Western Greece

During our research into CBT as used by professors of the business schools of Western Greece, we uncovered a practice that the professors involved, and their students, felt resulted in better feedback and value. This method could be named Case Debates because it is concerned

with comparisons between cases (Cinneide, 2006). Usually the cases used for this practice are different cases about the same company – often a multinational company or a start up.

This learning procedure has been used on the International Management course since 2008 to stimulate post-discussion learning among student cohorts. Case debates are organised in the course and administered to teams after three or four different case studies on a given topic have been discussed and analysed in the class. Emerging issues from all the cases are reviewed to develop analytical insights on the theme; these are then debated.

This process involves two phases. In phase A each group of students is separated in four subgroups each of which is required to examine a particular situation in each case study (eg: recognise the practices and critical situation; recognise the particular set of resources, practices and functional problems that seemed to account for company's performance; recognise the problem attributes or the success story and fixing flaws). In phase B the subgroups recombine as a group and they proceed to discussion: categorising critical issues; linking problems to critical issues; identifying major attributes to the problems; looking for appropriate solutions.

The students learning via this Case Debates method generally reported that it helped them to understand the anatomy of cases and gain deep managerial insights. This approach can enable the students to progress from study of a single case to comparison between different cases (Taousanidis & Antoniadou, 2008). Case debates are organised after one third and two thirds of the course contents have been covered. In the process students gain skills and become familiar with a wide range of management topics.

Clearly, the quality of a case analysis will depend on the information included in the teaching cases and available from other sources. Therefore there is no guarantee that all the critical aspects of each company will be captured. The complexity of some organisations and the unobservable nature of some resources would diminish any claims of a complete analysis of firm success (Ambrosini *et al.*, 2010).

Conclusions

Case-based teaching and learning has its roots in the well-proven apprenticeship method of learning by doing. It is a student-centered learning approach that allows students to take greater responsibility and play a more active role in the learning process than they do in traditional class learning (Christensen, 1987). CBT has been shown to be an extremely effective way of teaching business administration at Harvard Business School and other leading business schools.

In preparation for this chapter, we have interviewed a majority of professors teaching Business Studies on business schools in Western Greece. From the interviews and the literature used by the CBT practitioners we were able to identify four distinct approaches to CBT used by professors teaching business lessons in Western Greece, namely; 1) the typical way, 2) the historical narration, 3) CBT to transfer specific skills, and 4) CBT to build decision-making skills (Patten & Swanson, 2003).

The typical way approach is applied by the majority of professors in the specific target group following the four specific steps, avoiding any kind of differentiation from the typical kind of usage of CBT. Through historical narrations the student is expected to learn what has actually happened during the life of the entity. Narrative Method is especially appropriate for comparing the preconceptions that people may have about a particular subject. By the transferring specific skills approach, the instructor constructs a question which students must answer by conducting some sort of research exercise in order to acquire specific skills by analysing the question and manipulating relevant data. The fourth instructional application focuses on the art of decision-making. This approach is very popular when teaching courses such as strategic management where it is desirable to encompass problems involving a variety of subject matter fields.

During our research we uncovered the Case Debates methodology, a practice that the professors and the students involved felt resulted in better feedback and value. This learning procedure has been used to stimulate post-discussion learning among student cohorts.

Each method we have described contributes to student learning.

To a greater or lesser extent, each way of using case-based teaching and learning contributes to the appropriate organisation by students of information to be recalled later for use in reasoning. Furthermore it generates experience that students would not otherwise have, increases the visibility of students' reasoning processes, and increases students' confidence.

About the Authors

Ioanna Giannoukou is a Researcher at the Department of Business Administration, University of Patras, Greece and a business consultant. She can be contacted at this email: igian@upatras.gr

Chrysostomos Stylios is Associate Professor in the Department of Computer Engineering at the Technological Educational Institute of Epirus, Greece. He can be contacted at this email: stylios@teiep.gr