



## Teaching with Cases: A Practical Guide

Andersen, Espen; and Schiano, Bill  
Harvard Business Publishing, 2014

Book Review

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Some academic disciplines such as law and medicine have a long history of using case teaching as a pedagogical approach while other disciplines seldom employ case teaching. Espen Andersen, associate professor in the department of strategy and logistics at the Norwegian Business School, and Bill Schiano, professor of computer information systems at Bentley University, drawing from their experience of using case teaching in business schools, demonstrate the positive impacts case teaching can bring and provide a practical guide for instructors who would like to adopt this pedagogical approach. As readers move through the content, they will discover that the book covers topics broader than case teaching and offers rich insight into how classroom discussions can be effective toward student participatory learning development.

As indicated in the title, *Teaching with Cases* is a practical guide. It is not only a practical guide for teaching with cases, but also covers basic teaching skills and techniques. These include: how to develop content; writing a syllabus; planning a class session; using guest speakers; employing role play; designing group discussions, assignments, and grading rubrics; debriefing a course and using feedback; handling small details such as seating arrangement; using technology; managing breaks and classroom behaviours; and using the white/blackboard effectively. The book is a comprehensive manual for teachers, new or experienced.

While the comprehensiveness of the book is to be commended, more in-depth insights about case teaching are lacking as the book wanders around discussion-based teaching techniques rather than focusing on how to use cases effectively. The most helpful piece on actual case teaching is chapter 6, "Quantitative and Technical Material," where the important value of

case teaching is spelled out: “to foster an intuitive understanding of a situation and to learn to think and make decisions like a manager” (174). The best illustration on a teaching case (Dell computer’s build-to-order) is also found in this chapter. More guidance on how to craft out an effective teaching case to be used in both classroom and online discussions would be helpful.

While I appreciate the authors’ sensitivity to language and culture as an issue in case teaching and an entire chapter devoted to addressing content and classroom dynamics such as gesture, custom, vocabularies, and so forth, the authors seem to generalize language and culture by national identities or geographical boundaries and fail to recognize the particularities and diversity with a culture. For example, Chinese students from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China have different cultural values and educational systems. Hence, their understanding of what connotes sound educational practices will vary as well. Even within those three localities, diverse expressions of customs and norms can be observed. To assume all Asian students think and behave the same way is problematic.

The lack of a strong conclusion that ties it all together is a disappointment, especially since the book covers such a broad range of teaching skills and techniques. Overall, *Teaching with Cases* is a helpful guide for instructors, particularly those who are interested in engaging students in participatory learning. Readers may also find additional supplementary materials for this book online at <http://academic.hbsp.harvard.edu/teachingwithcases>.

[https://wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/book\\_reviews/teaching-with-cases-a-practical-guide/](https://wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/book_reviews/teaching-with-cases-a-practical-guide/)