

# Determinants of the Case Method: An Empirical Study in Undergraduate Business Education

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## ABSTRACT

*By its very nature, the case method accommodates different interpretations and different ways of framing problems for a complex real business situation. While this characteristic of the case method offers a valuable learning experience, it also creates complexity and diversity, which are potentially costly and difficult to manage. Thus, if cases are to be used in undergraduate business education, we think that at least a careful refinement of the tool is needed for this pedagogy to be effective. Some ingredients from the case method as used in graduate school could be restrictive for the undergraduate learning process. The aim of this research project is to better understand the use of the case method in an undergraduate setting. In trying to understand this, we survey instructors who use the case method to teach undergraduates in the school of business and economics at a private university. The sample included both faculty teaching qualitative (e.g., management, marketing, human resources, etc.) and quantitative (e.g., accounting, finance, and economics) courses. The survey results, along with the literature review, allow us to develop a conceptual framework on the case method. In particular, we propose some theoretical constructs for the assessment of teaching with cases, including the selection of cases, intensity of use by faculty, types and level of courses, level of expertise of instructors, and faculty members' prior beliefs about the usefulness of the case method. This exploratory study aims to validate these constructs.*

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