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**Live Case Study Writing as a teaching method for experiential learning –  
Are master students able to master it?**

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**Purpose of the study:**

Teaching through case studies is widely used by marketing and strategy instructors as it is a form of action learning that develops students' hard and soft skills. However, case study writing has been far less used as a teaching method. This paper analyzes this teaching approach applied to a marketing course in a master program specialized in entrepreneurship. In this research, students were asked to write a case study based on a real life company facing a real life issue. They were also asked to prepare a teaching note to highlight the learning objective, suggest interesting questions to be asked during the case discussion, describe the issue and the lessons that can be learned from the case study. Data has been collected from the summative and formal evaluation communicated to the students at the end of the class. These evaluations are made of quantitative assessments, based on a 1 to 5 scale and of qualitative comments meant to be argumentative.

This paper will start by reviewing the literature about the case study method and case study writing. Then, it will introduce our approach using case study writing as a teaching method in our entrepreneurship program. Finally, it will summarize the results of our quantitative and qualitative analysis, in order to discuss the difficulties faced by the students and the challenges that still need to be overcome.

**Method / Design and Sample:**

The class "Case study writing" takes place at the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester (4-semester program) of an MSc in Entrepreneurship. It starts with a 3-hour session lecture and exercises about case study writing. Students have to work in groups of 3 and to choose a company which is an SME or a start-up operating in Switzerland and facing an internationalization issue. Two months into the course, the students have to make an intermediary presentation of the company, the issue and the focal point they chose to work on. A jury of 3 professors asks questions and gives tips about future directions of the work. Two months later, each group presents the final work and hands-in a written case study, a teaching note and optionally, additional material (e.g. brochures, videos, samples,...).

The case study and the teaching note are assessed based on multiple criteria (see exhibit 1). The evaluation is based on a 1 to 5 scale. Comments are added when appropriate.

A total of 41 case studies was analyzed. They cover a whole range of industries (e.g. F&B, IT, consulting, e-commerce, measurement instruments, logistics,...). They were written between 2014 and 2018.

All the grades were computed in order to calculate averages and standard deviations, as well as median and quartiles.

The coding of the comments was conducted using Nvivo. Based on a set of labels that were extracted from the literature review as well as from the structure of the evaluation form

**Results**

The research results suggest that although students struggled with some aspects of this exercise, they mostly handed out better case studies than teaching notes. They also found this exercise quite interesting, especially the connection between practice and theory that it provided.

The coaching job seems to be effective - with a good prior work of choice of business and issue by the students. This provides, in the end, case studies that can be seen as globally good. However, students struggled on the finalization, in particular regarding the lessons to be drawn from the use of their case study, the choice of a good theoretical framework and the preparation of a good teaching note.

When coding, it was not always easy for the researchers to link the codes that were essentially chosen based on the literature, with the comments of the evaluators. Based on the results obtained and analyzed, as well as on an experience of several years, it appears that it might be appropriate, at this stage, to adapt the evaluation grid accordingly.

In the revision of the grid we recommend distinguishing between satisfiers and dissatisfiers, to emphasize the criteria that, if not achieved, strongly undermine the value of the case study, as well as the criteria that merely bring a plus, a "nice to have".

### **Value to Marketing Education:**

This research shows that case study writing is an interesting approach for teaching marketing: The written report helps enhance logical structuring, written presentation as well as writing in a concise and factual way. The content in itself teaches interviewing skills as well as the ability to link interviewee statements to other sources. Case study writing also forces students to identify relevant issues facing the target company. Lastly, when students write the teaching note, they learn how to suggest theoretical frameworks to solve the issue at hand and to identify the lessons to be learned from the case.

A subsequent discussion with the students involved in these case study writings, showed that they found this exercise quite different from what they are used to do in other classes. They found the connection between theory and practice particularly interesting and recommended emphasizing this aspect during the lecture. They also said that this was a good preparation for their Master Thesis.

**(References available upon request)**

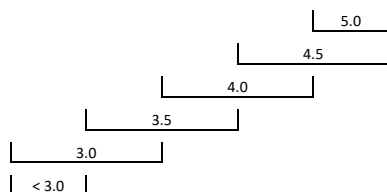
## Exhibit 1 Evaluation Grid

### Evaluation – Case study writing

Names:

Title:

	Criteria	<<	<	O.K.	>	>>	Argumentation
Quality of the documents	Clarity of the overall structure						
	Formal requirements						
	Main contents of the case study						
	Main contents of the teaching notes						
	Availability of additional information						
	Clean and nice presentation						
Relevance and argumentation	Complexity of the case study						
	Originality of the case study						
	Positioning of the type of case study						
	Consistency with pedagogical goals / teaching notes						
	Consistency of the argumentation / telling story						
	Ability to apply in practice / relevance of result						
	Quality of the sources cited / relevance						
Tools used	Positioning of the internationalization dimension						
	Key elements of internationalization						
Overall assessment	Perception overall quality						
	Perception of relevance and argumentation						
	Perception of tools used						



Comments :

Grade : / 5