

An examination of business case studies as an active learning method in a principles of management course: an online to face-to-face comparison

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Introduction

The purpose of this proposed study is to examine the effective use of business case studies to teach principles of management and if student perception of learning differs in face-to-face vs. online case experiences. Specifically,

- how and in what format do management instructors in introductory level courses use business case studies to encourage active learning?
- Can differences in student’s perceptions of effectiveness of using business case studies occur online in comparison to face-to-face environments?

What is a Business Case?

From the perspective of teaching management, a business case study is broadly defined as a business dilemma or problem description that is designed for analysis. Cases can either be real, written about an actual circumstance, or fictional in nature. The primary goal of using cases is for students to gain experience in crafting and executing management strategy (Thompson, et al. 2014). In addition, cases can be useful as a foundation for theory-building courses (e.g. Principles of Management) on the grounds that they can be structured to display the phenomena in all of its complexity (Christensen & Carlile, 2009). The student’s role in a business case is to diagnose and ascertain the situation described and recommend specific action steps (Thompson, et al., 2014).

Key Words

SoTL, active learning, case studies, principles of management, online, face-to-face, student perception of learning

Methodology

Data was collected from students enrolled in two separate sections of a Principles of Management course at a Midwestern University using an in-class written survey. The survey compared student’s perceptions of completing a short business case face-to-face to online. A total of 31 surveys were collected (19 from Sec 001, 23 from Sec 002). Quantitative data was analyzed using a paired T-Test to determine if mean differences were statistically significant.

Results

Null hypothesis: There is no difference in students’ perception of their experience solving a business case face-to-face compared to online

Alternative hypothesis: There is a difference in students’ perception of their experience solving a business case face-to-face compared to online

The null hypothesis is correct. There was no significant difference in students’ perception of solving a business case face-to-face compared to online in the three questions outlined in Table 1 using a standard significance level of 0.05.

| | F2F Mean | Online Mean | d | sd | t | p-value | Significant? (>0.05) |
|--|----------|-------------|-----|------|------|---------|----------------------|
| How many ideas did your group generate to answer the questions of the (F2F vs. Online) case? | 3.93 | 3.3 | .60 | 1.06 | 3.16 | .149 | No |
| Wow much do you believe you learned in working through the (F2F vs. Online) case? | 3.93 | 3.95 | .02 | .978 | 1.11 | .138 | No |
| How did you enjoy working through the (F2F vs. Online) case? | 3.81 | 3.79 | .02 | .892 | 1.25 | .135 | No |

N=31, d=difference between means, sd = standard deviation, t=test statistic