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## Education for Management: Pros & Cons of Using Case Method in the XXI Century

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# **Education for Management Pros & Cons of Using Case Method in the XXI Century**

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## **Introduction**

This is a paper on the Case Method, or what is now frequently called “Participant Centered Learning” method. The main purpose of it is to make some reflections on the pros & cons of using this methodology Case Method in the XXI Century.

The Case Method, which has been defined as a: “*Teaching approach that consists in presenting the students with a Case, putting them in the role of a decision maker facing a problem,*” (Raymond, 1998 and Hammond, 1976) is a methodology of learning that is specially suited to improve or ameliorate the competences required for management.

Those competences are:

- Analysis
- Synthesis
- Identification of problems
- Solution Proposals
- Decision Making
- Team Working *in the preparation discussion of cases*
- Capacity of listening to others.

The Case Method was first used as a learning method for management in the beginning of the XX Century, and since then has been widely use, and has been quite successful as a learning methodology for management (Mintzberg, 2004). The elements needed for the utilization of this method are quite simple: The case, the students, a good professor, a classroom, a blackboard and a chalk, but now, in the beginning of the XXI century there are new methods, new possibilities for learning.

One hundred years after the Case Method was first used, there are new realities: Technological breakthroughs, innovation, social networks, very easy information access and higher capacity to process and access all kinds of data at more affordable pricing. *Does this mean a change in the traditional teaching for Management?*

To try to understand the pros & cons of using this methodology in the XXI Century, we will present some ideas about some topics on management, and about these new “realities.” Then we will explain three different types of intelligence, showing in a chart what their main characteristics are. We will then present an explanation on the 3 steps of Prudential Knowledge, which is the knowledge mainly used for management. Finally, we will present some conclusions.

## Methodology

The methodology used was:

- 1) Carry out some reflections on the changes, and the new realities present in the context of the beginning of the XXI Century.
- 2) Understand the main 3 different types of intelligence
- 3) Organize the different types of intelligence in a table stating: their definition, their imperative dimension, who possesses it, giving examples of who possesses it, stating the best type of learning /teaching for each, giving an idea of the cost relative, and finally trying to determinate the influence of new technologies: TI, software, hardware, telecommunications, internet, etc.
- 4) Show the main 3 steps of prudential knowledge,
- 5) Having understood the 3 types of prudential learning, and taking into account the statements and conclusions of the table, we will be able to draw the conclusions.

Some reflections on:

- 1) **How to know it?** There are 3 ways to know(Aquinas,1964):
  - a) The person who knows “theory”, i.e., the one who possesses knowledge, which is usually found in books, or currently on the internet.

- b) The person who knows “techniques”, i.e., the person who knows how to do things and knows how to develop such techniques.
  - c) The “skilled person”, who has the prudential knowledge which makes himself “capable.” Prudential knowledge has three well-defined stages: diagnosis, decision and execution. *To be disclosed in the second part of this paper.*
- 2) **Management is more an art than a science.** It requires skills and demands special capacity. It is not about improving, but getting ready to perform, to resolve, to carry out tasks. Once upon a time, a concert performer had just finished a piano composition, one of the attendees, who had been very satisfied by it, approached him and told him: “*Maestro*, you performed it so well, I would give my life for the chance to play piano like you do.” The virtuoso player answered: “Beg your pardon, but I have given my life for such skill, I have been playing for 6 hours a day, for 30 years.” Art requires reinforcing/strengthening skills. There is a great similitude between Art and Prudence.
- 3) **A good manager:** Are you born a good manager or do you become one? It just the same with the artists – Dr. Carlos Llano used to say – “The genius is a seed, but it needs lots of water of course the water doesn’t work without the seed.” We have to acknowledge that there are a few ‘*very, very few*’ who are artists at a very young age and they are truly exceptional (Mozart, Beethoven, Michael Angelo).
- 4) **What is, then, the best way to teach how to manage?** It depends on what you want to learn. If it is about transmitting knowledge of traditional education, in which teacher knows and student does not, this works best undoubtedly. If it comes to transmitting skills or learning techniques, practice, workshops then “doing things” are best. But, when it comes to prudential knowledge and managerial skills, the participant has to be “tuned” to analyze, synthesize and decide *trying to determinate which is the appropriate thing to do, in each and every case.*

5) **Teaching Management.** It is about developing capacity, rather than transmitting knowledge. It is about perfecting skills through practice, discussion and argumentation, through well-structured judgment.

6) **A useful metaphor: Exercising.** Let's take an easy example. Exercising can be done in many ways, the most economic one is to browse a routine on the internet or maybe to buy a book about it. Or, you might buy a video which shows routines and follow them; subscribe to a sports club or a gym and attend sessions. Finally, the most expensive option would be to hire a personal trainer who gives you personalized routines and corrects you. It is clearly shown that the more money you spend, the better the quality you will receive, the more integral satisfaction you will receive too. Something similar happens in management education, since a good teacher in small groups will be more expensive than a self-learning book, but there is no doubt the result "the learning" will be better. Another topic is skill, interest and student motivation, since the higher the interest and student motivation, the more the student will learn, and this is true, even in a more "economical system" compared to an "expensive system." An unmotivated & uninterested or low skilled student, even learning from a good instructor, will learn less than a motivated & interested one in a "less expensive" way.

7) **Taking advantage of new realities: The digital world:** *Computers, software, telecommunications, internet, social networks.* It is about realities, which have achieved spectacular and amazing changes in our way of doing things. Education should not be the exception to that, there will be more information and more information availability at a lower price; besides, software developing is creating interactive programs which contribute, not only to acquire knowledge, but to improve your skills and this is being done "interactively", modulating learning speed as the student "learns." This undoubtedly represent an advantage, not only due to their low cost compared to a good teacher, but also due to the fact that they are able to adapt to the student, and thus avoiding that common situation where there is a group with "slow" and "fast" learning students. *Which students should the teacher address? In these new methods, the student learning speed sets the pace.*

- 8) **Case Method**(Hammond,1976)...**Does it make sense? Will it become obsolete?** *Will it follow the same path typewriters, telegraph and horse carriages once took?* We believe it will not, it won't become obsolete; the learning relationship: student – teacher, especially if the student/participant, wants to achieve more, become more skilled, it will always be benefited by a good coach who will achieve the improvement of the student' skills.

The topic is open and new developments are to come and thus, realities which will allow learning improvement, taking into account human nature, the wish to learn, to improve how we do things, to become wiser, more skilled, more capable.

### Three Types of Intelligence

If it comes to reflecting how to learn (to teach) to direct (lead, conduct, guide, steer), we can also make a brief comment about intellectual habits mentioned above.

As mentioned earlier, there are 3 types of intelligence (3 ways to know):

- 1) **Scientific Intelligence:** Knowing theory; be “instructed” or better said “lettered” wiser. He, who possesses it, understands the order of things in nature (Math, Physics, Chemistry); he who has knowledge knows laws. This intelligence traditional education deals with, teacher knows best, student does not; the teacher explains and transmits knowledge to student. Source of such knowledge is science.
- 2) **Technical Intelligence:** Knowing how to do things; being “able” skillful or competent. He who has it knows how to do things, that is to say, he is able to order as in “accommodating” or setting the order to something. He who knows how to “do” things, of course, has rules and uses “gadgets” –instruments or equipment.
- 3) **Directive (Managerial) Intelligence:** Knowing, in a real situation, how to diagnose, to decide and to act, in the sense of being “able” to “resolve”; he who possesses it, is able to set an order to his own actions and in the actions of the group under his supervision. Then he orders using both meanings of the term: he sets in order, and gives commands. He who knows how to rule combines

knowledge, formation and experience to diagnose, decide and execute, and the result of his intelligence is shown in his actions.

The following chart shows the main characteristics of each type of intelligence.

**Table 1: Main Characteristics of each Type of Intelligence**

Type of Intelligence	Definition	Imperative dimension	Who possesses it	Examples of who possesses it	Type of learning Teaching	Cost (relative)	Influence of new technologies (TI, Software, Hardware, Telecommunications, Internet, etc.)
<b>Scientific</b>	Understanding the order of things	Rationality	Wise	Mathematician Chemist, Physicist.	Traditional (Transmission of knowledge)	\$ - \$\$	High; it can be taught efficiently by using them
<b>Technical</b>	Know how to do, be competent	Practicality (Being practical)	Skilled	Carpenter Construction worker, Professional sportsman	Teaching how to do	\$\$ - \$\$\$	Relative; these are techniques to be learnt by doing, but to understand “how to do it” new technologies can help
<b>Directive</b>	Set an order, lead	Will	Able	Company Manager, Entrepreneur, Ship Captain.	Teaching to think & act. (to Diagnose, to decide, to act)	\$\$\$ - \$\$\$\$	Low; here, “mayeetical” dialogue through a teacher is the best way to acquire it and to develop it

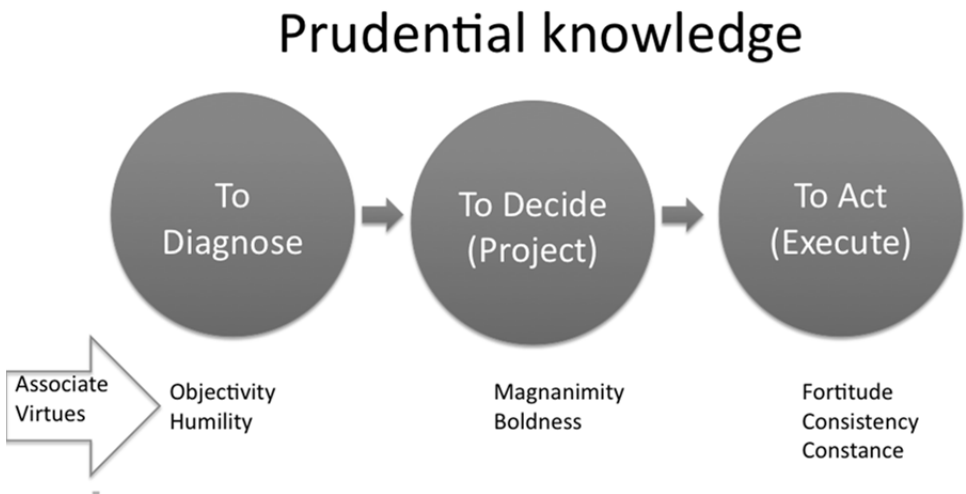
Pinpointing the imperative dimension has been made to understand better. Even though other dimensions participate as well; a Scientist uses intelligence a lot to understand, but he also uses will to “want” to understand. Similarly, a Manager uses will a lot, especially when executing, since he advances against the current, fighting to modify reality, but he already uses intelligence to make a good diagnosis “objective and humble” and to take a decision, by elaborating an action plan through intelligence.

The “Traditional” path of a manager usually goes through the 3 types of intelligence *as he goes up as we can say*. His first job has to do with knowledge acquired in college: an accountant registers liabilities, a doctor fills up medical history records, a lawyer reviews agreements. Later

on, experience and capacity to do things helps him move on; that and we have to say it, his teamwork skills, motivating people and making them work. Finally, the next step is related to a directive task, command of a unit, department, division or function, where he will have to use Directive Intelligence when faced with a variety of situations/problems that will come by as pointed out above and in other cases, making diagnosis, deciding and executing).

Directive Intelligence also “gets better with experience.” The more we make diagnosis, decide and execute, the better we’ll get doing that, and that’s why the Case Method, (*putting people in the context of learning from real experiences, make them take decisions facing a problem*) is a very good way make people learn and acquire Directive Intelligence.

**Figure 1: Prudential Knowledge(Cifuentes,1979/2007) 3 steps:**



## Conclusions

As is stated in the paper, now, at the beginning of the XXI Century, will it be useful to keep using an expensive “Method” such as the “Case Method” to teach to manage, acknowledging the existence of new less expensive methods and options? As we showed, there are new realities that can improve the learning experience and, as Table 1 shows, the benefits of these “new technologies” vary according to the type of Intelligence you want to “teach.” As for the Directive Intelligence, the one



most widely used in management, without doubt the Case Method (the “Mayeutical” dialogue) is still the best way to improve or ameliorate the competences required for management which we stated in the introduction: Analysis, Synthesis, Identification of problems, Solution Proposals, Decision Making, Team Working *in the preparation discussion of cases* and last, but not least the capacity of Listening to others).

Undoubtedly the new realities offer us new “methods” that can be very helpful in learning those other types of Intelligence “Scientific and Technical” that are also important to management, but since it’s about learning how to be abler, and not about getting knowledge, we are convinced; the Case Method is still the best way.

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