

1 Analyses of the Cases

The purpose of these notes is to provide teachers and readers of the case studies with some analysis, comments and insights into the cases. They are particularly designed for readers who are new to the case study method to help them launch themselves into this approach. They have been compiled after extensive teaching of the material to various audiences of management students. Many of the points were directly obtained as suggestions from the students in the course of case discussion. However the notes are only proposals to help with understanding: the student of management will find new individual ways of using the material and further interests and complications in the cases which are not mentioned here. Being so much concerned with observational insights and understanding, the proper use of the case method is much more a work of art than a scientific method.

Each case study is analysed in the same format, geared to two sessions of study. The objectives of the case are defined and a preliminary question for focusing the reader is proposed. It is recommended that both the objectives and the preliminary question be clear to the student before initial case reading starts.

This is followed by the question on the case and a detailed account of:

- how the question can be viewed in general
- alternative approaches to the problem
- a suggested approach to deal with the main issue.

The whole slant of the analysis is prepared as a proposal on the main question. It is appropriate to treat it in this way and to test its acceptability to management.

The main points made are summarised at the end of each chapter.

POINTS ON THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CASE STUDIES

The first chapter is primarily concerned with the objectives of the material. It is important for the student to read it to establish clear expectations of the case studies. It describes the form and content of the cases, what the main function of each case is and how the cases relate to each other.

The student needs to notice the following points:

- 1 The case studies are all constructed in the same format:

- company contexts, products, markets,
- product and process specification
- orders processing
- operational performance.

- 2 Each case has a leading question which needs a precise answer but which calls upon consideration of all the factors in the text. Many points of view are possible.

- 3 A useful focus for the studies is to aim to conclude with a clear definition of the operational responsibilities which people in the company must carry out supported by appropriate information. These conclusions require that a point of view has been established on the sales and production policy of the company and that the form of the plans and procedures to carry them out has been fully defined.