

EFFECTIVENESS OF CASE STUDY METHODS IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

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Abstract:

The globalization process is significantly affecting the economic and commercial life of nations. Changing economic conditions and intensification of global competition have given management education an increasingly central role in the success of individuals and corporations. Management education has spread in the last fifteen-twenty years in India. Management education, at this juncture, needs a critical examination as only developing talent can take India forward. Global competition is changing the relationship between management education and business. The efforts for building leadership pipelines in organizations have intensified in the last five to six years. Continuous changes in both technology and economic systems, along with the speed of change, require executives to be engaged in a constant learning process. Management education has become a major profession that attracts considerable attention across the world. The purpose of this paper is to engage all concerned in a serious discussion with a view to revamping management education in India as a prelude to better participation and viability in the global economy. This will need a quantum jump in managerial capability in all the economic spheres. It is the joint responsibility of Government, public sector and private firms and educators, to put management education on a new growth trajectory. This paper examines the issues that need to be addressed and a possible direction so that management education can be rejuvenated. Today, an MBA has gained importance due to the emergence of professionalism in corporate sectors. The competitive business environment has paved the way for increased demand for management graduates in the employment market. This has led to a significant expansion of management education across the country. Today, business schools have the challenging task of developing the competency level of students to meet corporate expectations. Given the developments in today's business environment, preparing our students for their future will require significant change in the curriculum and pedagogy.

In management education, quality has become a necessity & circumstances require total quality management. To make India an intellectual capital of the world we have to rethink about the management education & efforts should be made to create a dynamic environment. In this background, this paper attempts to explore a mechanism to stimulate development of new curricular elements and methods in management education. It also describes the emerging strategy to make teaching methodology in management education more vibrant and in sync with the changes in the business and economic environment.

Keywords

Management education, business school, teaching method, effective learning, curriculum, corporate, action oriented leadership, research scholars, global competition

Introduction

What have we learnt about the case method? What have we learnt through the case method? Should we attempt to train another generation of instructors in the method? Or, will we discover that the case method has served its time and that we must move on to

new methods without making a fetish of the past? What is the future of the case method in management education? What, more specifically, will be its role as a pedagogical tool in management schools in India in the years to come? These are the questions that serve as the coordinates to the colloquium on

the case method. This colloquium, in other words, is an attempt to take stock and gives management educators in India a platform to share their experiences and learnings on any aspect of the case method that is relevant to its past, present, and, especially, its future. The two primary issues such as the future of the case method and its role as a pedagogical tool, however, are implicated in several other issues which emerge from the technological challenges and the cultural specificities that the method must grapple with in order to ensure its viability in the years to come. The relevant 'socio-economic indicators' here include the decline of reading as a cultural practice, the growing prestige of technological forms of rationality, the demand for multimedia and/ or gaming forms of interactivity, the rise of globalization and the exacerbation of cultural differences in our political and educational lives, the emphasis on communication in both general management and communications-based professions and services, the worldwide proliferation of management education, and the endemic uncertainties in the global economy.

The contemporary challenges to the method represented in these emerging contexts, however, are mediated by 'legacy systems' in institutions. So, unless we are sensitive to how these legacy systems have shaped the deployment of the method, we will find it difficult to give a direction to the future that we can envisage for the method. Hence, the contributions to the colloquium are divided into three sections: Contexts, Institutions, and Futures. Several members of faculty with experience of the case method in management programmes were invited to participate in this colloquium. All the participants were drawn from the IIMs and most are faculty at IIM, Ahmedabad (IIMA) where the method continues to thrive. That a number of professors were willing to respond to this invitation at short notice despite competing commitments is a witness to the fact that despite the intangible, enigmatic, and elusive

qualities of the case method, it continues to generate a transferenceal hold on the very idea of management education. It is not surprising then that the case method has become a powerful tool of differentiation for management programmes worldwide. While it is true that most Indian management schools are not yet in a position to deploy the case method widely due to a shortage of trained instructors, its persistence in the IIMs, especially at IIMA, which pioneered this method as early as the 1960s as part of its collaboration with Harvard Business School, is itself worthy of a case study in management education. It is this foundational moment, in itself a *mélange* of myth and method, that endows IIMA with the pedagogical responsibility to disseminate the case method. What then is the case method? How is it different from the lecture method? Unlike the lecture method (which is preoccupied with an economic form of knowledge transfer and hence comprehensible within a spatial frame), the case method, almost by definition, demands more since it is also implicated in the problem of temporality.

It demands that the participant locate himself or herself at a particular locus in space and at a particular point in time to think through a problem involving decision-making in an organization in the context of a business situation. The situation itself could be of varying levels of complexity and has to be extracted from the case; the contours of the situation are by no means obvious without some analysis. It is not clear, in other words, to the participants at the beginning of a case discussion as to what exactly is at stake in a given situation. The case discussion often reveals that the situation is something other than what they might have imagined it to be during individual or group preparation before class. Furthermore, the temporal unfolding of the case through the interpersonal dynamics of the classroom is also an unpredictable process. But, despite the unpredictability of the process, it continues to play a dominant role in management education since it not

only imparts knowledge but also helps to facilitate the development of other relevant attitudes, competencies, and skills as well.

The method at its best demands not merely intellectual robustness and the willingness to do some homework on the part of the instructor and the participants but also the affective capacity to contain and work-through the discussion generated. Even experienced instructors who have taught a particular case on several occasions will find that it is not easy to choreograph a class discussion especially when a contingent encounter with the reality of any concept opens up possibilities that did not emerge in previous case discussions in the class. In other words, the method is not without its demands. The demands are many in number, but, minimally, we must recognize that the emotional labor is much more in the case method for all the parties concerned (other things being equal) than in the lecture method. The participants must also have an appetite for handling change, uncertainty, and a considerable 'tolerance for ambiguity.' The method is both analytical and discursive and hence unsettling for those who demand easy answers at the end of a session. It is, to put it simply, doubly demanding, and as the contributors will demonstrate, doubly rewarding. Hence, both academic institutions and nonprofit organizations must provide incentives, wherever possible, to encourage the writing of cases and work out the modalities for training employees or participants through the use of the case method.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Indian educational system has been subjected to fast, radical, and ever revolutionary change over recent years. Knowledge and knowledge-creation will be far more central to the management education of the future rather than technology. Humans will live not by bread and car alone but far more by knowledge, wisdom and ideas. This fundamental transformation of management

education is both inevitable and necessary because the present consumption patterns of mankind can only take him thus far in its evolution and no further. We are therefore going to experience in the next decade altogether different focus of organizations and management systems. It will, therefore, be necessary to anticipate and study some of their contours so that we design appropriate system of management education as early as possible.

The values are of utmost importance and are inseparable irrespective to any form of education. Management education should produce persons with such value orientation, who, through example of dedicated hard work in a spirit of service, can change the attitude of the people they manage towards work, and towards each other to ensure quality of life and of work life. Management institutes are often criticized for focusing more on theory and on quantitative analysis while neglecting interpersonal relationship and quantitative finding. It is often stated that management education should be experience-based, active, problem oriented and modified by feedback and action learning serves the purpose.

Due to globalization and advancement in information technology the role played by management education in enhancing country knowledge base has been placed under a sharper focus thus it has become imperative to look at management education from the market oriented perspective and take a strategic view to better align business education with the requirement of the global market. Internationalization of management has been promoted along several dimensions such as curricula challenge, research activities with both contents and outlet being relevant and executive development programs. It seems that educational institutions and supplementary providers of management education have no choice but to rise to the challenge of global competition. Many management gurus were of the opinion that management education in India is at cross roads with the dawn of new millennium there

has been exceptional growth in management institutes, to upgrade their competencies the financial autonomy will be the key and academic autonomy the major drivers.

After independence, a combination of events, people and government policies came together in a unique way to professionalize management education in India. As a result of this unique interaction several institutions of management came into being in the 1950s and 1960s. Since the very first institute for imparting management education was set up almost five decades has passed, during this period management education has been subject to radical and revolutionary changes. Management education can be more meaningfully viewed as a process, rather than a programme with twin objectives first, change in role behavior and second, effective influence of individual practicing managers upon their organization. Management education in India today has acquired the characteristics of a commodity, to be bought and sold in markets like other commodities.

CASE STUDY METHOD - MERE ADOPTION BY WESTERN WORLD

In the 5th-century BC, the philosopher Lao-Tse (also Lao-tzu) wrote "If you tell me, I will listen. If you show me, I will see. But if you let me experience, I will learn." And so began one of the first active learning philosophies. Other Chinese philosophers, such as Kung Fute (Latinized as Confucius) and Han FeiTzu, followed Lao-Tse by using a method that closely resembles what we now call the case method or case study. A member of the study group would present a paradox, which would be in the form of a parable. They would then discuss it and explore possible resolutions.

In the 1880s, Christopher Langdell, the dean of the Harvard Law School, revived the case method that the early Chinese Philosophers used. It slowly won acceptance in the schools of business, law, and medicine. Langdell felt students could learn more about the law by studying actual court opinions than by reading legal texts. By the early 20th century, virtually every American law school had

adopted Langdell's method. In the 1960s, most schools began to introduce some form of clinical education to supplement the classroom study of cases. Although the classic Harvard case is quite comprehensive in nature, cases used at present are not long and detailed to excite and encourage the creative efforts of the learners.

A STRONG CASE FOR INDIAN WISDOM

The Great King (Chandra Gupta) Bhatti Vikramaditya cracked several cases put forth by the vethala. The vethala described several social, political and managerial issues and paradoxes which were intelligently solved by Vikramaditya. They were all cases where wise decisions were made in the context of that peculiar situation.

Pancha Thanthra stories followed an unique way of enabling learning by children. They teach morals to be imbibed in the minds of children. Abimanyu learnt cracking of Padma viyugam from womb, as was described by Lord Krishna. Paramartha Guru and His Five Sishyas teach our children how ignorant they should not be. These are all nothing but case studies under different names, enabling the reader or listener to position himself in that situation and think and act swiftly.

A PIONEER OF THE CASE METHOD

Many are grateful to Late Prof. MN Vora of IIM-A for helping to shape them into successful businessmen or academic scholars. He is credited as the pioneer of the case study approach in management education. His contemporary cases had been compiled and published by IIM-A. He had co-authored with many scholars including the marketing guru Philip Kotler. Being one of the first Indians to get MBA from Wharton in 1961, he joined IIM-A in 1963 where he worked for 30 plus years. His biggest contribution was really to organize common sense which never gone out of fashion. He invented the "endless why" techniques much before Toyota and ITC.

NATURE OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES

Science holds a lot of theories and conditional behavior. They are applicable universally forever and remain constant under standard conditions. The student has to simply learn and adopt them as such e.g. properties of matter are the same under similar conditions. On the other hand, art is learnt by mere practice. It is always dynamic and requires different skill sets at different times. Every time that part of the art becomes unique and the skill to handle it gets improved over practice.

Management studies is a science to be learnt as well as an art to be practiced. There are some fixed theories, standard norms and prescribed regulations, making it to appear as a science. Sometimes, the situations change dynamically, requiring a unique solution. At least one parameter would have changed at least a little thereby necessitating different actions and reactions.

CASE STUDY AS A LAB EXPERIMENT

Science subjects require laboratories for the students to experiment and learn. Arts subjects require models as the basis for students to practice. Management Studies being both science and arts, can be learnt better by analyzing different situations and understanding why and how important decisions were taken. Case study method is more relevant to Management Studies in the context of functioning as a platform for visualizing different situations and learning by practicing solving various problems.

FROM KNOWLEDGE TO WISDOM

Knowledge is awareness on various aspects of a particular object while wisdom is all about application of that knowledge. Knowledge can be acquired by extensive learning while wisdom can be developed by extensive practicing. Knowledge is “what to do” and “how to do” while wisdom is on the contrary. Managers should have more of wisdom than knowledge. Knowledge level being almost

equal among the managers, it is their wisdom which makes them distinguished and enables them to excel and raise above all others.

In Management Studies, while text books help acquiring more knowledge, Case Studies help in developing wisdom. Case Studies give lot of scope for application of knowledge and mind which is the crux of wisdom.

EFFICIENCY VERSUS EFFECTIVENESS

Efficiency is all about doing things right whereas effectiveness is more about doing the right things. No doubt, managers should know how to do things in the right manner, more important for them is to know which things to do in which order. In Management Studies, text book knowledge equips the budding managers how to do a thing efficiently with the available resources. Case Studies enable the management students to evaluate comparatively various options and decide upon how the resources can be deployed effectively to solve the immediate problem / tide over the situation.

STATIC & DYNAMIC CASE ANALYSES

Cases can be analyzed in two ways (1) Static and (2) Dynamic. In static analysis, the situation should be fully understood along with the environment which prevailed during the occurrence of the case; the resources that were available at that point of time should be fully assessed. Then the solution should be suggested based on that particular situation subject to resource constraints.

In the dynamic method of case analysis, one has to visualize the situation at the current point of time together with the resources available at present. Obviously, the solution may differ between static and dynamic analyses mainly because the resources availability is normally subject to change.

ADVANTAGES OF CASE STUDIES

- Case studies improve creativity and innovations in decision making.
- Case studies fix the minds of the students in a specific situation and facilitate them to

develop the art of making smart decisions by practicing.

- Case studies enable the students to visualize real life situations in the organization and facilitate the students in making trial and error attempts to solve the issues.
- Case studies simulate organizational situations, requiring strategic as well as tactical decisions.
- Case studies require the students to position themselves amidst the given situation and demand their wisdom to come out.

PIT FALLS IN USAGE OF CASE STUDIES

- Case study method requires serious involvement both from the teacher as well as the students; unless everyone takes it seriously, the outcome cannot be productive. At times, it may turn counter-productive.
- Every case is unique and more so the solutions. It is dangerous to generalize and apply them universally.
- Optimal solutions are always dependant on resources available at that point of time. Decisions may need to be modified at a later date because there is bound to be some change in the resources which are dynamic.
- It is always easier said than done. It is very easy to stand off and suggest on matters which do not affect us immediately; but it is very difficult to make even simple decisions when we are under tense situations, pressuring our minds which may not work at times of real crisis.
- Cases should not be over used since the students might have already known the best answers. Giving them new cases will be possible only if we have a storage of good cases which are updated.
- Serious problems in real life situations need serious attention and enormous thinking; solutions may not be that much simple, which can be arrived at by theoretical analysis.

CONCLUSION

On the whole, the case method of learning adds significant value to the learners and their (potential) organizations. The value lies in

learning to assess the situations faced by managers and in learning the use of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to use the problem solving approach to achieve organizational objectives as well as the objectives of managers. Supplementing the traditional case method with field projects will help in developing the requisite habits of appropriate decision-making. The field projects also have the potential of making the learning contemporary compared to an existing case pertaining to a past situation.

Through this method, the future learning objectives of the organizations are likely to be met very well. The availability of cases is likely to improve in the future. However, the availability of cases based on real life situations needs to be encouraged through collaborative writing by academics and managers. The use of the case method purely as a way of learning may add value to the instructor by way of appreciation by participants. Publishing of more journals devoted to case and case research would add more value to the academics engaged in the writing of cases through the enhancement of their publication record. Further, the academic institutions need to develop appropriate reward mechanisms for motivating case discussion leaders and case writers for achieving the potential of the method for organizations and managers in the future.

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