



Case Method in Management- Stakeholders Perspective

KEYWORDS

Dr. M. Selvalakshmi

MBA, M.Phil, Ph.D Assistant Professor, Thiagarajar School of Management, Madurai

Mrs. P.Mutharasi

MBA, M.Phil, (Ph.D) Assistant Professor, Thiagarajar School of Management, Madurai

1. Introduction:

"Let no man ever contemplate an act ill-conceived and ill-considered, ill-done without proper scrutiny. Inspect a matter with utmost care before reaching conclusions and rushing into actions; else, bitter remorse is let loose"

-Panchatantra.

The Panchatantra in India is the first known collection of fables and tales used as case studies for teaching the art and science of governance, administration, welfare, diplomacy, and public welfare. The use of case studies in management education has now become universal and ubiquitous. So much so, this pedagogy is now taken for granted by the B-Schools. The paper aims at bringing out the relevance of Case Method in Management Education from the existing science of knowledge and from the experiences of students and teachers. It also explores the perception of academicians and MBA students on the impact of Case Method in comparison with other teaching methods.

2. Education System of the day:

We pass our B.A and M.A, examinations, we cram ourselves with loads of learning, but the intellect gains neither vigour nor maturity... And the domestic feud between learning and life goes on growing, each bitterly and incessantly mocking at the other." - Shri. Rabindranath Tagore

According to Cabrera, Colbeck and Terenzini (1999) effective learning can take place only due to the interplay of various factors in a context shaped by the students own characteristics, the institutional practices they encounter in the classroom, and classroom climate created by the professor and peers.

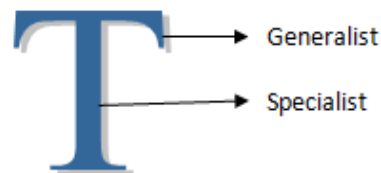
The famous quote of Calr Orff reiterates the same idea "Tell me, I forget; Show me, I remember; Involve me, I understand."

You can't teach people everything they need to know. The best you can do is position them where they can find what they need to know when they need to know it." said Seymour Papert. The inquiry-based learning method, otherwise called as Discovery learning has appeared numerous times throughout history as a part of the educational philosophy of many great philosophers particularly Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Dewey.

"There is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education" wrote Dewey. It also enjoys the support of learning theorists and psychologists Piaget, Bruner, and Papert.

What students require is a double-loop learning process that necessitates questioning and reflection at the same time. It calls for a shift from 'learning by rote' to 'learning through critical thinking'. According to Maxwell, children who have acquired proper thinking skills will grow into adults ready to face challenges of their lives (Maxwell and Bishop, 1982).

3. Relevance of Case Method for a T Shaped MBA:



Management Education is intended to make the MBA graduate a T shaped knowledge worker- a specialist in some field (vertical part of the letter T) and yet a generalist (the horizontal part) which signifies a holistic capability to integrate various disparate information and situations to create a whole. It should enable the student to critically evaluate information and 'think'.

Medicine, Law and Management are disciplines where case studies are an effective medium of instruction and training. Given the various possible solutions, ability to narrow down to a manageable list is important.

Arun Kumar Jain (2005) states "Case method simulates the real world conditions inside a controlled environment of a classroom where the variables influencing decision making are analyzed to understand the complexities in decision-making and their intended and unintended outcomes". A case is a framework for a learning experience that goes far beyond the facts. Cases are never complete in information. Nor do all the information provided prove to be relevant for the crucial decision making process. While the background note in the case provides the theoretical perspectives to practice (Theory into Practice- 'the TIP part') discussion of the case in a classroom environment could bring out new theory and concepts (Practice into Theory (PIT part). Having students from culturally and educationally diverse areas will augment this experience. Case discussion infact, simulates the emotional atmosphere in which managers must operate.

Case discussions tend to develop skills – skills which are difficult to teach through lecturing. An individual can learn to balance in a cycle only when he gets on a bicycle and his skill level improves with the time he spends in the learning process. However case study is not a pure skill oriented practice. It presents contexts such as competitive structure, government policies, technology, consumer's opinions, economic changes including the rise and fall of onion prices which are highly dynamic unlike pure skill training where the environment remains more stable.

4. Case method as the best choice

The following perspectives have been analyzed to determine the suitability and relevance of case study to management Education


- 4.1 Taxonomy of Learning
- 4.2 Scientific View

- 4.3 Industry View
- 4.4 Student's View

4.1. Taxonomy of learning

Benjamin Bloom (1956) developed the well known taxonomy to elucidate the changes produced in individuals as a result of educational experiences which comprises of six major levels of learning: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Table: 4.1.1. Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning

	Cognition level	Capabilities Developed
	Evaluation	Can judge the value of material learned for a given purpose which are based on defined criteria
	Synthesis	Can pull parts together to form a new whole – works with various elements to arrange and combine them to form a new structure
	Analysis	Can break down the material learned into smaller elements or components so that its organizational structure is understood.
	Application	Can use the material he/she learned in new situations, applying concepts, principles, methods, and theories effectively.
	Comprehension	Can comprehend the meaning of the material presented and predict consequences or effects from it.
	Knowledge	Can remember ideas, facts, and theories.

Case Method is an unstructured problem solving exercise. Case method enables the participant to reach the level 5 , i.e the synthesis level of learning. At this level, while analyzing the case , the individual is able to demonstrate an advanced capability by developing a creative, unique solution to the problem by applying what he/she has learned in a new and different way. It helps the learner to achieve the following tasks:

1. Break the whole communication down into its constituent elements.
2. Examine relationships of the elements to each other or elements to the main idea (thesis). The purpose of this step is to determine the connections and interactions between the various parts.
3. Analyze the structure and organization (e.g., asking what is the form, pattern, or structure used?) and identify the purpose of the message. Recognize the organizational principles, arrangements and structure which hold the communication together.
4. The individual can therefore synthesize parts together to form a new whole

4.2. The Scientific view

Lecture method and reading practices appeal and gets registered in the short term memory. A student who has applied his /her mind in the various learning experiences would surely be able to retain fresh concepts and ideas which would remain in the long term memory. It is the strength of the learning that decides the resilience of the memory. The individual will certainly be able to come out with conceptualizations which are likely to last long.



The Hologram

Hologram is a unique technology with wide applications. Every part of the hologram contains all the information pos-

essed by the whole. It is not possible to separate things constructed holographically into individual pieces; It can give only smaller wholes in a 3-D format It brings the virtual image close to the real object.

A case method resembles the science of a hologram to a great extent. The case method gives remarkable power to the student to understand the physical phenomenon by synthesis of information, instead of a deductive approach. When approached from different angles say Marketing, production, Finance, HR perspectives the same case study would give a holistic view and permits different perspectives to understand a context

4.3. Industry View:

In a survey among alumni about their experience in Judge Business School, Cambridge University's MBA program, they were asked to rate the usefulness of various aspects on a scale of 1 to 5. It was found that they highly valued what they had learnt outside their regular classroom sessions when compared to other core classes. It was also found that general skills of strategy and leadership were ranked above disciplines like marketing, operations and finance.

Table 4.3.1: Alumnae feedback on learning methods

Aspect	Rank
Out-of-class experiences within Business School	4.3
Out-of-class experiences within Cambridge	4.2
Strategy and Leadership classes	4.0
Other Core classes	3.5

Source: No, Management Is Not a Profession, Harvard Business Review, August 2010

Industry demands more thoughtful, more aware, more sensitive, more flexible, more adaptive managers, capable of being molded and developed into global executives. The corporate leaders also have strong positive references on case method of learning. Mr.K.Ganesan - V.P (HR), TCS and Mr. Sridhar Ganesh - Director-HR, Murugappa Group, opined that Industry expects students to adopt a holistic approach to business problems.

4. 4. Student's View:

A descriptive research was designed to determine the impact of the case method in comparison with various methods of teaching practiced in management education. The widely used methods in B-schools include Role play, Lecture, Seminar and Case study. The study was conducted among MBA students of various management institutions in Madurai with a sample size of 100. 82 responses were complete and the profile of the respondents is given below.

Table 4.4.1: Profile of Respondents

Year of studies	Frequency	Percent
I	43	52.4
II	39	47.6
Total	82	100.0

Experience	Frequency	Percent
Yes	16	19.5
No	66	80.5
Total	82	100.0
Age	Frequency	Percent
20	3	3.7
21	21	25.6
22	16	19.5
23	25	30.5
24	11	13.4

25	6	7.3
Total	82	100.0
Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	47	57.3
Female	35	42.7
Total	82	100.0

The study aimed at determining the degree of preparation, interest, application of mind, participation, Listening and Recall by the student in the class room session. The response was measured on a 5 point scale with 1-Very Low to 5-Very High for the various teaching methods used in the MBA class room.

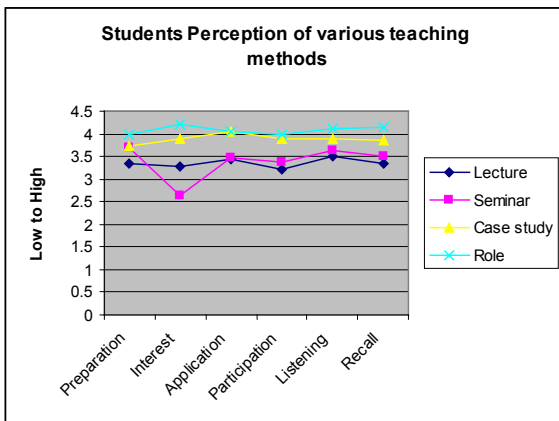
Table 4.4.2: Student’s perception towards various teaching methods

Teaching Method	Preparation	Interest	Application	Participation	Listening	Recall
Lecture	3.35	3.27	3.44	3.23	3.5	3.35
Seminar	3.7	2.63	3.48	3.38	3.62	3.49
Case Study	3.72	3.89	4.05	3.9	3.88	3.87
Role Play	3.99	4.2	4.04	4	4.11	4.16

Source: Primary Data

The major findings of the study is briefed below

- Seminar method has been inferred to invoke least level of interest in the class room
- Case study method is identified with application orientation when compared to the other parameters
- Management students tend to apply their mind more in case discussion classes than in any other teaching methods.



Chi Square test revealed that

- at 99% confidence level, there is a significant relationship between the Work experience possessed by an MBA student and the level of preparation for the case and the level of recall of the case.
- at 95% confidence level, there is a significant relationship between the gender of the MBA student and the level of preparation for the case

5. Factors determining effectiveness of Case Method:

Despite the various perspectives favoring the relevance of case method in Management education, there are several intervening variable that would determine the effectiveness of this teaching method.

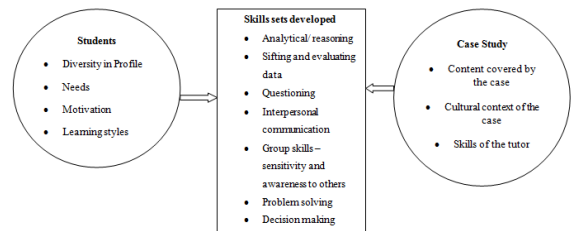
Teaching by the case method is class discussion of possibilities, probabilities and expedients. Given the complexity of a case situation and the cultural and educational diversity of the students, it is the responsibility of the instructor to inte-

grate ideas put forth by the students and explores it to the fullest extent possible. Creative use of the black/white board can help in this regard. The instructor should keep in mind Shapiro’s advice (Shapiro, 1985); “Have the students accept and maintain ownership of the discussion. The discussion must be student-driven. If the teacher takes the responsibility...the process will degenerate to the instructor’s lecturing about the case.”

Instructors should understand that cases are not meant to substitute a text; rather they are supplemental teaching vehicles that illustrate theoretical claims and disciplinary concerns, assumptions and insights. Care should be taken to select cases that fit the learning and teaching objectives.

Harvard School Professor K. Rangan has quipped “It is difficult to lead a case discussion with fewer than 10 or 12 people, as it needs the diversity of talent and experience that critical mass of students provide.” A good case does not have to be long. On an average 80 minutes is the optimal length for analyzing a case as per Harvard Business School’s findings.

The following model demonstrates the interplay of the variables involved



The Case method should be an inter-disciplinary integration, but it tends to be function-specific. The Yale school of Management has pioneered a curriculum based on the co-teaching of integrated classes. The key lies in realizing that integration is not taught but learnt. It has to take place in the minds of the MBA students. They should be able to link the various elements together. Business Education is not one-size-fits-all; it should be collaborative rather than competitive. Some of the comments of eminent academicians from Harvard Business School on the Case method of teaching are

Possibility of the combination of intricate facts, probabilities of human reactions and the expedient to bring about the responses from others that leads to a definite end.--A.S.Dewing

Just like a real manager in a real case, the Challenge for the student is to impose a meaningful framework on the unruliness of case facts -R. Hacke

A skilled teacher recognized that all significant learning can only come from creative efforts of the learner. That’s another way of saying learning is personal --N.Canter

6. Conclusion:

Although Managers can be formally trained and qualified, we rely on professional bodies/organizations to define what they should know and to certify them as fit for practice. Case method of teaching enables the students to acquire the skills of integration and application beyond mastering a set body of knowledge. The stake holders of Management Education such as Industrialists, Academicians and Students invariably feel Case method as more relevant in the discipline of Business Studies. It is therefore important that the B Schools understand themselves primarily provider of good learning environments where the core skill of integration and decision making must be developed which is only through a sound method like Case Study.

APPENDIX: 1: Questionnaire

1. Course Pursuing:
 2. Year of PG Course: I/II
 3. Institution:
 4. Work Experience: Yes/No
 5. Age in years: -----
 6. Gender: Male/ Female
- Please score questions 7-12 using the following scale ☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
- where 1 = Very Low and 5 = Very High
7. Rate the degree to which you will prepare for a class room session of

Lecture	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Seminar	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Case study	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Role play	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
 8. Rate the degree to which you will be interested in a class room session of

Lecture	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Seminar	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Case study	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Role play	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
 9. Rate the degree to which you will apply your mind (think) in a classroom session of

Lecture	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Seminar	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Case study	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Role play	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
 10. Rate the degree to which you will participate in a class-room session of

Lecture	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Seminar	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Case study	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Role play	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺

11. Rate the degree to which you will listen in a classroom session of

Lecture	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Seminar	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Case study	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Role play	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
12. Rate the degree to which you will recall the essence of a classroom session of

Lecture	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Seminar	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Case study	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺
Role play	☹ 1 2 3 4 5 ☺

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX: 2: Institutional Breakup of Respondents

Institution	Frequency	Percent
American College	4	4.9
KLN College	13	15.9
Micheal College	3	3.7
MK University	1	1.2
Raja College	14	17.1
Sourashtra College	3	3.7
SVN College	19	23.2
TSM	23	28.0
Velammal College	2	2.4
Total	82	100.0

REFERENCE

• Alberto F. Cabrera, Steven M. La Nasa, (2002), Classroom Teaching Practices: Ten Lessons Learned,pg.5 | • Arun Kumar Jain (2005), Management Education and Case Method as a Pedogogy, Vikalpa, Vol.30. No 1, Jan- Mar 2005. | • Alan Mumford(1997)How to select the Right Development Method, Honey, Maidenhead, England. 1997 | • Derek Abell (1997), What makes a Good Case- Autumn/Fall 1997 | • Howard Husock , Director, Case Program, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Using a Teaching Case- [http:// www.ksgcase.harvard.edu](http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu) | • Joel.M. Poddolny (2009), The Buck Stops (and Starts) at Business School, Harvard Business Review, June 09 | • L.B.Barnes, C.R. Christensen and A.J. Hansen (1994), Teaching and the Case Method, HBS Press, 1994. | • Lawrence R. Jauch, William F.Gluck (1998) Business Policy and Strategic Management, Mc Graw Hill, chapter 12,Pg 403- 418 | • Richard Barker(2010), No-Management Is Not a Profession, Harvard Business Review, August 2010 |