



Shift from Lecture Mode of Teaching to 100% Case Centered Learning - an Experiment and Experience in a Premiere B- School in India – A Narrative

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ABSTRACT

Over the past 20 years, educators have increasingly turned to case-based instruction. However, advocates of case-based teaching rarely point out the many challenges that might detract from effective case-based instruction. There are obvious challenges facing case instructors too.

KEY WORDS: case based teaching, case based learning, Student Evaluation, Competencies for a case teacher, Student centered learning

PURPOSE

The B-School in the case, The Great Indian School for Business Studies and Research (TGISBSR) has introduced 100% case based learning for all subjects in Semester 1 & 2 (Marketing Management, Human Resource Management, Organizational Behavior, Accounting for Managers, Business Research Methods, etc), to begin with, in June, 2009 shifting from a 100% lecture based teaching using Audio-Visual aids. Teaching via the case method appears to be an ideal way of communicating the detailed, interrelated, and often densely interrelations necessary to explore the multidimensional nature of what students and teachers do in classrooms. This B-School has shifted from 100% lecture mode of teaching with continuous evaluation in the form of tests, quizzes, projects, assignments and book reviews to 100% case centered learning with same evaluations but an additional component viz., Class Participation. The Professors, from being information power houses are reduced to facilitators in the new method.

DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH: The present case addresses the following in a narrative way:

1. Reasons for shifting to 100% case based learning and challenges faced by professors in terms of delivery and evaluation
2. Issues in cultural differences from a one-way teaching to a student-centered learning
3. Competencies required being a case-based teacher.

ORIGINALITY/VALUE: This case study is an original work based on first-hand experience of the author when she was employed in that Institute.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS: This experience can be followed by any Institute aspiring to introduce 100% case based teaching.

The Great Indian School for Business Studies and Research (TGISBSR) ¹ is one of the reputed B schools, located in a sprawling campus, in Hyderabad city, capital of Andhra Pradesh in India. The campus edifice is surrounded with abundant mango, jack-fruit, and guava trees denoting a perfect combination of nature and education going hand-in-hand. The campus is filled with 140 plus full time professors from various streams of Business Management assisted by doctoral research students; with 1000 plus students representing pan India and 100 plus support staff. The building is constructed with state-of-art educational infrastructure requirement thus providing a perfect ambience for learning, writing, teaching, discussing, debating, researching, and a range of academically stimulating activities. Also, the institute is

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self-reliant with a management research center and a case development center, besides a host of journals and magazines under its name.

Till January 2009, the pedagogy at TGISBSR was predominantly a lecture method using Audio-visual aids. Case discussions were used to drive home important concepts. Evaluation consisted of both internal and external evaluation. Internal evaluation components ranged from quizzes, tests, projects, assignments, experiential exercises, case analysis to research paper reviews, field studies, etc.

In February, 2009, all the faculty members received a notice from the Director of the Institute to watch a three hour video about case teaching at Harvard whenever they are free. The video was put on the common server. Nobody could decipher the purpose of it and some guessed vaguely. But, all of them managed to watch the video and there were discussions among faculty members regarding their reactions and opinions on the video. Then, followed another notice from the Director stating that, he would like to meet the faculty members department wise (Marketing, HR, Finance, Operations, IT, and Economics) on given dates to examine the reactions/opinions regarding the video because the Institute is exploring ways and means to implement 100% case based learning. Also, the notice said that all should be present on the said dates.

On 23 February, the HR and Marketing departments attended the meeting at 11:00 am. The Director walked in at 11:00 and first called out the roll call. He found that one faculty member was on leave due to a family contingency. Then, he adjusted his voice and spoke, "Dear friends, the purpose for today's meeting is to explore ways and means to implement 100% case based learning. The management strongly feels that imparting knowledge through lecture method followed by an evaluative component is hackneyed and we got to explore novel methods of learning which is beneficial to the students who are brand ambassadors to the Institute. Also, the faculty members have to come out of the role of being information power houses and play a different role in the class room. The management perceives that students become more independent in case based learning with respect to thought and action than conventional methods... and the faculty members would be able to gain newer insights and alternative viewpoints from the students while running the case which is not feasible in a conventional lecture method. I presume all of you present here have seen the video. Do you have anything to say?"

There was silence for a while and then began a series of interpersonal murmurs between members of the audience. The director waited patiently, silently and was just looking at his palms and looking at all of us and then adjusted his voice again, "Friends! Any problems you foresee with the above statements? I am here to answer your queries and address your concerns. Please feel free to voice your judgment". There were murmurs again, and this time the director gave a friendly laugh and said, "May I join you please"? Then, a faculty member from the Marketing department said, "Sir, why this shift? Aren't we fine with the conventional methods? We are one of the top schools in the country and we have good faculty capital here and suddenly what is the need for all this? Don't you think culturally, this shift would be infeasible? In India, one way teaching is popular since the *gurukul*¹ times. But, with the advancement of technology, and work place demands, innovative pedagogy and continuous internal evaluations have made their way making the classroom teaching into a two-way process. As part of our regular pedagogy, we have case analysis and case presentations besides lectures. Then,....why? Somehow.... 100% case based learning sounds skeptical to me". He sat down and many conceded with his statement and nodded in assent. Then, another professor, from the same department stood up and said, "What percentage of time can we spend in lecturing while discussing case"? Even to this statement, all nodded affirmatively.

1. A gurukul (in Sanskrit, Guru means teacher and kul means domain), is a type of school in ancient India which is residential in nature, with *disciples* living in proximity to the guru often within the same house.

The director immediately strongly asserted, "No lecturing is allowed". Pandemonium broke out this time in the meeting hall; collectively all said, "What?? No lectures? Then, how will the student learn concepts? No.....this shift is not acceptable to us". On the instruction of the director, there was order in the room again. Another marketing faculty stood up and said, "Sir, please tell me how can we run a case without a theoretical and/or concept based input. All these years, we taught theory first and then we run the case to enable students to relate theory to practice". To this the director said, "So, the student has to search only

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for the concept you taught in the case and you give only that case which has the concept you teach. Do real life situations/problems come in neatly labeled packages?" This set the direction for thinking in the hall but still none could accept what the director said. Another marketing faculty member said, "Sir, is it a dictate to follow this method, in that case, we don't have to waste time here. Somehow.... we shall manage".

This slightly irritated the director but he managed to keep his cool and said, "You can please air your concerns till you feel convinced that this method can be effective. Also, please convince me as to why this method is not feasible. Why can't we think differently? Please alter your thought processes, all of you!!! Then, again another concern emerged from the marketing department itself, "Then, how shall we teach concepts, how shall we evaluate them, how do we ensure that all have read the case. First of all, tell us, how do we teach concepts?" The director said, "the student will read the case and the related chapter (case will be given to students one week before the class) and you need to ask questions to drive home what you planned for the session. You can seek a myriad of opinions from the students and guide the discussion and evolve the outcomes planned for the session". The marketing professors were agitated this time and said, "What!! If they themselves read the case, they themselves read the text, then why to pay so much and come to college; they can as well pursue a distance mode MBA!! Howzzatt!! We are reduced to discussion guiding agents and nothing else? Ohhhhhhh.....this is simply infeasible". He looked at all his colleagues impatiently and unpleasantly, and said, "I hope you all are with me....." and all unanimously voted for him. Another faculty member added, "The video is good, but a small percentage of our students possess work experience and rest of them are freshers. How can they solve a case without work experience? From where will the knowledge emerge, it is obviously the teacher who has to set the direction through lectures introducing theories, concepts, and models!!" There was lot of hullabaloo on this specially regarding evaluation, class coordination and control, student inexperience, student readiness to participate, faculty bias during evaluation etc. The marketing faculty members were out and out against the method. Director patiently answered most of the queries, but the faculty members were not convinced.

All the while, the HR faculty members who also teach Organizational Behavior (OB) were silently listening to the proceedings and were having occasional interpersonal whispers. The director looked at the HR group and said, "how come the HR group is silent? Don't you have any concerns to air?" Unanimously the group said, "We vote in favor of 100% case based learning for Organizational Behavior...." A Marketing faculty interrupted, "Oh!! What is there to teach in OB? This OB and HR are just farcical." The director seriously retorted and the faculty member became silent but with a peevish smile on her face. The director turned to the HR/OB group and said, "Please go ahead". One of the OB faculty members stood up and asserted, "It is possible to deal OB through cases and the concepts can also be handled through the case itself. I refer to Kolb's learning cycle where reflective observation is one of the ingredients. Also, one study in the 1980s suggested that the cultivation of the capacity to reflect in action (while doing something) and on action (after you have done it) has become an important feature of professional training programmes in many disciplines, and its encouragement is seen as a particularly important aspect of the role of the mentor (in this case, the faculty member) of the budding professional (the student). Certainly, it can be argued that a real reflective practice needs another person as mentor or professional supervisor, who can ask appropriate questions to ensure that the reflection goes somewhere, and does not get bogged down in self-justification, self-indulgence or self-pity! Thus, we the HR group unanimously vote for the introduction of 100% case based learning for OB and we are all excited to try this method but we are skeptical about teaching Human Resource Management using the same methodology. Because HRM is not model based like OB. Also, where do we procure so many cases from? Will the Institute buy cases from Harvard, Ivey, etc? Also, we want to know how to evaluate the students using cases". The director heaved a sigh of relief while the Marketing faculty continued to fume and fret at OB group and throw temper tantrums at them.

After the HR/OB groups' stance, there appeared a considerable re-direction in the thinking among the marketing faculty members. The director smiled in appreciation and looked and gave a triumphant look at the marketing faculty members. Silence followed and now, the resentment was declining and now some

genuine concerns regarding evaluation and training to teach cases, started emerging. Some continued to take a stubborn stand but their stance began diluting while members of the same group started thinking favorably. But, somewhere in a remote corner, there were apprehensions regarding the success of this pedagogical tool even to the HR/OB group. But, they decided to remain silent.

Regarding the issue on ensuring student control, the director referred to the video wherein the name board of the student was pasted on the table and the student is expected to sit there for every class so that the teacher can recognize the student and place him in his mind while evaluating. For evaluation, the director said that classroom chart would be given to all faculty members with student photographs as per their seating order and the faculty can use it as a guide to recall while evaluating. There were issues about what grade to give to those who are just silent and who never speak. In fact, the director wanted to emulate the Harvard Model (in the video) in principle to which some faculty members objected saying that there is a probability of this method getting misfired due to cultural clashes. The video addressed most queries raised by the faculty members but acceptance rate has remained unchanged. The meeting ended at 4:30 pm with a one hour lunch break. The queries regarding procurement of cases, training for teaching and evaluating case discussions, remained unaddressed. After the meeting ended, there were informal discussions again, and some hated the OB/HR group for voting favorably.

The following day, the Finance group and the Economics group were called for the meeting and also, the one member who missed the marketing-HR meeting was asked to sit in this meeting so that he doesn't miss any case pedagogy related discussion/debate. Again, the director began with roll-call but none were absent. This meeting commenced at 11:00 am as usual but ended at 6:30 pm but, with no favorableness from either of the groups. The finance group contains professors of accounting, banking, and finance. They protested vehemently that more than 50% of the students are from non-accounting background and asserted it is impossible to even attempt a case without knowing fundamentals like journal, ledger, debit, credit, profit and loss, assets, liabilities, etc. The same was the argument from the Economics team, that students hardly study economics after class X unless they opt for it at Junior college or under graduate level. They asserted that students hardly know any theory about demand and supply and its repercussion. Both the teams voted unfavorably for 100% case based learning and also asserted that the case development center of the college hardly has any cases for Economics exclusively and this view was supported by the finance group also. Other concerns like evaluation, student control did not emerge here as the teams were bitterly against the pedagogy itself. The director failed to convince. Some members were silent (reticent) but their body language exuded unfavorableness.

The following day the Operations and IT also showed a similar reaction. Though there were a myriad of favorable and unfavorable discussions, the bottom-line remained non-acceptance.

For the next three days, all was silent. The fourth day, the Director sent a notice to all the faculty members of all departments to attend another meeting with respect to introduction of case pedagogy. All those who were against this method were thoroughly charged to attack the director. The reticent members remained reticent while silently supporting the non-acceptance movement and while those who accepted, eagerly attended to learn some new insights.

The meeting commenced at 2:00 pm in the afternoon in the lecture theater. He addressed, "Dear friends! After spending marathon sessions regarding introduction of case pedagogy, I find that most of you are apprehensive and obdurate regarding the pedagogy. Today's meeting would address your concerns at large. He categorized the concerns aired by all faculty members in the last three meetings into six broad areas, which are as follows:

Query 1: What is the philosophy behind the shifting the pedagogy and how to introduce it across all the departments with minimum resistance?

Query 2: Where to procure the cases from?

Query 3: How to evaluate the class?

Query 4: How to ensure classroom coordination and discipline? How to handle reticent and silent students?

Query 5: How to deliver tangible learning outcomes through case based learning?

Query 6: What competencies are required for faculty members to run a class through case? How to handle faculty bias?

With respect to query 2, he called the in-house case development center (CDC) Head to the meeting too. The CDC Head provided a list of cases (subject wise) they had at the moment. The Director categorically stated that an effective case teacher writes his/her own cases and thus urged the faculty members to write cases. This raised din again but the CDC Head intervened and offered to train all of us in case writing. Director affirmed that the Institute wants to develop home-grown cases from Faculty members. All these years, the CDC had its own team of case writers but henceforth, the faculty members would write and would direct research scholars in case writing.

With respect to other queries, he promised that all the faculty members would be given intensive training by experts in the area. But before that, he gave an exercise for faculty members. He suggested that 6-7 teams of two faculty members each should visit all the prominent B-Schools in the country and meets one or two professors (personal contact) and meet the rest through this contact and enquire the status of case pedagogy in their respective institutes. He asked the teams to examine the role of the faculty member, vis-à-vis address all the above queries and make presentations.

All the members were okay with the idea and wanted to learn from the experience of others. The remaining faculty members were asked to visit CDC to find out how many chapter relevant/concept relevant cases were available. The Area Coordinators (Heads of departments) were to coordinate these visits from each department. The meeting ended. The following week, all the teams got ready for visits.

The next fortnight was spent in identifying cases chapter -wise, topic-wise, concept-wise at CDC and finally a gap analysis was made in every subject. Every department could develop a chart of what is available versus what is required. Case availability for courses like accounting, economics, IT, financial management was dismally low while cases for Marketing course was encouraging. With respect to OB, cases were not available especially for topics like personality, perception (including attribution theory), learning (reinforcement theories), communication, power & politics, Emotional Intelligence, OB models and Approaches.

Another meeting was called for to learn the gap analysis followed by an action plan. Accounting, Economics, Operations and IT teachers raised a furor vehemently opposing the introduction of the case pedagogy. They helplessly declared that they cannot run the class on a case mode not only because of infeasibility but because of non-availability of cases. These groups continued to nurture a feeling at the back of their minds that this pedagogy would be dropped if the director is put under pressure. Also, they claimed that they would be insignificantly standing in the class while the students are rambling.

The following week the touring teams returned and there was another round of meeting to learn their experiences at other B-Schools in the country. The experiences shared by the faculty colleagues gave everyone some interesting insights about having case based learning as a pedagogy. Some B-Schools in the country followed case pedagogy but not in 100%. It is purely the teachers' prerogative to decide the percentage of delivery through cases. In all the presentations, the faculty members understood and admitted that case pedagogy is not just a tool but a system or a strategy for systemic enhancement and also the faculty member's role is undergoing a sea-change. Also, the faculty members have seen that the case content is not marketing specific, or HR specific or finance specific, in fact, the case facts were multidisciplinary in nature. For this, all faculty members need to have multi disciplinary understanding to run the case.

The director then addressed the audience, "Dear friends! Case-based approach engages students in discussion of specific situations, typically real-world examples. This method is learner-centered, and involves intense interaction between the participants. Case-based learning focuses on the building of knowledge and the group works together to examine the case. The instructor's role is that of a facilitator and the students collaboratively address problems from a perspective that requires analysis. Much of case-based learning involves learners striving to resolve questions that have no single right answer. The case-based learning model is an answer to the challenge of a multidisciplinary study programme. Different viewpoints on the same phenomena through different disciplines result in different problems. In the conventional learning model, the students deal with professional problems through the project work. This

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approach originates from a learning philosophy stating that a project will never be better than the problem investigated. The problem is the central point of the project work, and everything in the project has to reflect the problem by contributing to a qualified answer to the problem. The work is anchored in a stable problem. However, in multidisciplinary project works, the problem is no more stable. When a subject is investigated from different disciplinary perspectives, different problems arise. And consequently interdisciplinary work cannot be anchored in a single stable program. Faculty members here facilitate the discussion and mentor the students and create an environment to learn mutually and/or reciprocally. Thus, the goal is interdisciplinary synergy". He also referred to the study cited by the HR faculty in the first meeting supporting his stance.

All the members clapped but finance teachers half-heartedly clapped. Operations and IT teachers were worried about writing cases.

The following week, the CDC Head with his team trained all the faculty members in writing field cases, cases based on secondary data, fictitious cases, problem cases, etc. The semester would begin in June, 2009 and thus all the departments had to accelerate the pace of case writing, and case sorting.

In first week of April, a workshop on case based learning was organized by the institute for all faculty members for one week. The classroom was simulated for case teaching purpose. All the faculty members were allotted seats with their name plates on it and we were instructed to sit in the same place throughout the programme. The resource persons came from reputed B-Schools in the country as well as from Corporate firms. All the resource persons were asked to see the video prior to running the class.

In the training, the faculty members were exposed to multidisciplinary cases, and were taught how to bring out concepts through the case itself. While the resource person was explaining, some faculty members raised some questions where the resource person gave a small five to ten minute lecture to explain the query and these were called *lecturettes* and thus faculty members were allowed to present *lecturettes* during the case session in the real classroom to clarify vital queries coming from students. Also, it is noticed that the resource person was avidly listening to every trainee's answer and relating it to the other trainee's statements. If the discussion went haywire, the resource person immediately brought it back to line. Also, he raised questions within the chapter/topic he planned for the day and every deviation was avoided skillfully. If the deviation was essential, it was allowed. Also, the opening question for the case is important and that question needs to be decided and the entire session runs from that question itself. Inputs were also given regarding preparation of session plan keeping the case pedagogy in view. The following format was suggested.

Session No.	Chapter/Topic to be read/prepared by the student	Case title	Concepts/theories/models to be covered
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The resource persons said that case writing is an essential competency every case teacher should have. Regarding evaluation, they said that the faculty member can either point out at particular student group for the day and pose questions or randomly ask questions to any student who raised his/her hand or follow any other pattern to pose questions. For those students who remain silent, the faculty member should make sure to target them too.

After the training program, the director specifically addressed all the faculty members and demanded that there should be uniformity in delivery and evaluation. All sections² should be given similar inputs. For this, the faculty team should decide a date to have a meeting before the session, and read the case to discuss the vital points, and also decide what is to be covered in terms of content, questions to be asked, etc so that uniform inputs can be imparted. It was instructed to all to identify the best textbook in each course and these texts were procured and a copy was given to each student as well as the faculty member teaching that course. The faculty member can suggest additional readings too.

With respect to evaluation, the Institute was following Grading method and Forced distribution method before the introduction of case pedagogy. In this method, the students are continuously evaluated using tests, projects, quizzes, etc on 5 different grades, A,B, C, D, and E. Also, to get a normal distribution, across

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sections, only 15% of the students should get A, 25% should get B, (A and B should not exceed 40%), 45% get C, 10% get D and 5% of them get E.

1. This Institute had huge batch strength. Each course had many section/divisions. For example, there were 12 sections for Organizational Behavior course. Six faculty members were deputed to teach twelve sections.

For case pedagogy, evaluation was divided into two components, class participation and non-class participation. Class participation was given a weightage of 40% to 60% while the rest for non-class participation. For non-class participation, components like quizzes, tests, projects, etc, grades awarded were up to E but for class participation, grades were reduced to A, B, and C only where 20% of them get A, 30% get B and the rest get C across sections.

All the faculty members got a chance to run a case in the respective course they teach in the workshop and most of the queries were cleared. But, finance and economics teams continued to crib and the Institute procured Harvard and Ivey school cases for them.

Also, the institute usually allots 4 weeks of preparatory sessions for MBA students before commencing the program in order to familiarize students from different academic backgrounds with accounts, IT, and various other curricular and extracurricular activities.

To accommodate the apprehensions of Accounting and IT teachers, that students would have no clue in these subjects, Director allowed them to take 10 sessions (lecture based) for concept introduction only. Once the semester commenced, everyone had to run cases only. During preparatory, Marketing, OB, and other courses had one practice session with case and the learning was immense. Once the semester began, faculty members automatically donned themselves into the role of a facilitator, and mentor and developed competencies of listening, connecting responses logically, reflective observation, etc. During the semester, three meetings were conducted by the director to take stock of the progress, and discrepancies if any. OB, Marketing, Soft skills, Economics, had no complaints, but IT, and Operations expressed mild discomfort as they perceived that students weren't able to pick up the complexity. Accounts and finance expressed comfort only in the last meeting as it has taken time for them to accept and acclimatize to the change. The director arranged another training program only for accounts and finance faculty members during the semester to ease their inconvenience.

The students initially found it taxing to read every day but gradually they fell in line with the requirements and expectations of the faculty member. Students who were silent in semester one began getting active in semester two and the journey of 100% case based learning began and is successfully continuing at TGISBSR.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) What can be the reasons for shifting to 100% case based learning in B-Schools in a competitive environment?
- 2) What are the challenges faced by professors in terms of delivery and evaluation?
- 3) What are the Competencies required being a case-based teacher?
- 4) What can be the issues in cultural differences from a one-way teaching to a student-centered learning?