

Case Study Based Methodology of Teaching & Research in Imparting Learning in Social Sciences

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Abstract: One of the most crucial aspects of learning is, learning is complex, in case if the content fails to get delivered or difficult to be delivered. When it becomes complex to get delivered the content, a need arises on the part of the instructor, to see that, how the content can be more meaningful and deliverable to the learners, who are interested to get some kind of learning. As long as, the content has not delivered, the question of learning does not arise. Huge amount of steps were taken since time immemorial to keep the learners learned about vary many aspects in different forms. The research in education has crossing its boundaries to adopt new and innovative pedagogical tools. One such tools is “Case Study Methodology”. The present research paper has taken lot of inputs from the literature and aimed to discuss its state in today’s scenario in imparting learning in social sciences disciplines. Further, the current research paper has critically reviewed from various angles the pedagogical tool of case study methodology. Adoption of case study based education is gaining momentum in the field of management education and the trend in Management Education and other fields also analyzed in this research paper. The methodology of imparting learning is changing its boundaries. Aligning the interests groups to the subject is becoming stupendous task on the part of the instructors and accordingly instructors throughout the globe are adopting different innovative ways to keep the interest of learners to the theme. A large number of pedagogical tools adopted to impart learning since ancient times to till today. The present research paper focused on one such pedagogical tool “Case Study Methodology”.

Keywords: Learning, Pedagogy, Methodology, Management Education, Social Sciences.

INTRODUCTION

The field of research in all disciplines is a need of the day. Certain disciplines rely on the fundamental premise of “finding the truth” by way conducting a research. Though fact-finding is one of the major aspects of research, case studies to some extent are exceptions to that premise. The field of social sciences is built on large number of generalizations without proper experimentation unlike in pure sciences. Though social sciences have this limitation, research in social sciences is also advancing by keeping the results as far as possible scientific by validating the results. At this juncture, the research in social sciences came across a new method of research called “Case Study Method of Research” popularly known as CSR (Case Study Research). As Case Study Method of Research is relatively, a new method in social sciences it is worthwhile first to look at its objectives and importance primarily in imparting learning in social sciences

education like in Sociology, political science, business, law, education and health.

What is a Case Study?

A good case is the vehicle by which a chunk of reality is brought into the classroom to be worked over by the class and the instructor. A good case keeps the class discussion grounded upon some of the stubborn facts that must be faced in real life situations.....” (Paul R. Lawrence). Case studies are tailor-made for exploring new processes or behaviors or ones that are little understood [1]. The contextual nature of the case study is illustrated in Yin’s [2] definition of a case study as an empirical inquiry that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and addresses a situation in which the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.”

The major reason for adoption of case study based methodology in social sciences especially in

management is due to its practicability for enhancement of students basic skill sets like argumentation and analytical abilities rather than testing their retention capabilities. Further, today Z generation students may not be interested towards traditional method of lecturing, due to the availability of lot of distractions in the form technology. Case Study based teaching is one way an alternative to generate and elicit interest in the student community especially in higher education. However, there are lot of critical aspects, which have to be addressed with respect to the adoption of case based methodology of teaching in higher education especially in social sciences disciplines. The present research paper is addressing, rather evaluating case study based methodology from point of view of research and teaching.

Is Case Study a Story?

A case study is literally a story. Stories have profound influence on the listeners and readers and a good case study will exhibit a story about an organization, culture, person, a social group or a dilemma in a situation etc.,. Much of the social sciences subjects like history, political science, public administration, economics, law, anthropology, psychology or sociology contains the same phenomenon and if written in case study oriented manner, it will definitely catch hold of the interests of Z generation students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It was observed by Professor Christopher Columbus Langdell of Harvard University in 1870 that the students of law learn better from evaluating cases rather than from reading text books [3, 4].

The gross roots of case study research is traced back and owed its origins to anthropology, history, sociology and psychology [5-7]. Case Study design were undertaken in the form of ethnography as early as in 20th century in anthropology on human life and culture [8, 9, 6, 7].

The field of social sciences embarked with experimentation, surveys and result verification etc., with the advent of quantitative methods in social sciences in 1950s, and quantitative methods and designs adopted as far as possible in the qualitative works [8].

The foundations of starting a lengthy based case studies swept their way by conducting field studies and observation of people and groups emerged in the social sciences in between 1920 -1950s [7]. Same is the case with other subjects like education, medicine, sociology and political science and case studies are adopted as a form of inquiry [6, 10-14, 2].

The scope and adoptability of case study research has increased tremendously from the stage of inquiry to analysis of broad range issues covering multi-facets of areas like human behavior, organizational complexities, management problems, and societal issues etc., [6, 1, 12, 16, 9, 17, 2].

Case studies are criticized may be that researchers disagree about the definition and the purpose of carrying out case studies. Case studies have been regarded as a design [18], as a qualitative methodology [19], as a particular data collection procedure [20], and as a research strategy [2].

The purpose for carrying out case studies is unclear. Some regard case studies as supplements to more rigorous qualitative studies to be carried out in the early stage of the research process; others claim that it can be used for multiple purposes and as a research strategy in its own right [21, 2].

Objective of the current research paper

Case Study methodology is already adopted in various universities and institutions prominent among them is Harvard Law and Business School. Much of the curriculum is taught through case based methodology. However, the same has not gained momentum in majority of social science subjects. Accordingly, the current research paper has undertaken with an objective of providing the readers, academicians, researchers, educational experts, advisors in higher education an insight about the methodology of case study based research and teaching imparting learning in higher education. The study will through a light to make necessary adjustment by adopting case study methodology suiting to the requirements of the curriculum of various institutes, colleges, universities across the globe in social science subjects.

Case Studies in Social Sciences

A large number of real life themes available in the subjects of history, political science, sociology, anthropology, economics and law. For example the recent issues of settlement of boarder dispute between India and China on Doklam area can be well presented in the form of a case study with full details and exhibits. Similarly, the war type of environment between USA and North Korea can also be represented in an interesting episode. The content has to be well connected to the underline theory involved and potential and relevant concepts can be well explored without diluting the fundamentals, the same leads to understanding of the subject in a crisp and concrete fashion. In case if the social science disciplines are not aligned towards these trends, the interest, curiosity and flavor to learn from the students can be lessened in the long-run. The signs are pretty clear with respect to reduction of admissions and enrollments in social

science courses. Though, there are multiple reasons for reduction of enrollments, it is time for introspection. The introspection can give leverage for the development of new subjects in the social science disciplines. The subject of management developed in the similar fashion, though there was no subject in that form until 19th century.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present study is made on the basis of secondary sources of data both in the form of published and unpublished sources like books, journal articles, research papers, magazines and internet resources.

Whether Case Study based methodology of teaching has any limitations?

Chris Argyris of Harvard University narrated some of the limitations of case study based methodology of teaching. They are as follows:

- The question of coverage of theory is doubtful through case study method
- Organizations are suffering from plethora of problem a case study may not cover all
- Lesser amount of time for faculty to interfere with the students, who are asked to state their views and exposed to confrontation with others and the same may lead to missing the link of vital learnings
- Case studies generally may not provide a solution and further it cannot be concluded that all solutions are wrong
- It is in fact creating a drama in the class by protecting the interests of both faculty and students by each other

Further, at times case studies may not cover certain concepts; the same may lead to providing of lesser skill sets to the student community.

Apart from the above limitations, case studies have the following pitfalls. Some of them are as follows:

- Case studies have no academic rigor
- Case study without research is not useful
- Sometimes the instructors own perspectives may be pushed
- It may raise to loose best students
- Surrendering teaching to those with little knowledge of the vast subject cuts the quality of management education
- Case Method rarely exposes students to the latest tools for making better decisions
- Teaching a case study is time consuming
- Availability of low number of Realistic case studies in various disciplines

- Requires creativity of on the part of the instructor
- Preparedness of the students
- Evaluation of Students Performance on the basis of case study discussion in the class

Though the above-mentioned limitations are quite common in dealing with case study based methodology of teaching, yet usage of case studies is gaining not only in certain specified subjects, but also across other disciplines as well.

Case Studies usually provide the following advantages:

- Grown because of the Industry Demands students to be “Job Ready”
- Managers Requires “Decision making ability” as per the situation
- Case Studies gives the opportunity to take up decisions as per the situations
- It is tool to apply the text based knowledge to solve practical problems
- Provides more wisdom and knowledge
- Some prominent business schools like “Harvard” completely follow on case based teaching and research

The success of case study based method teaching depends on certain general assumptions like that the students knew the basics of the subject, how the case study is presented and analyzed and the creativity and curiosity of the instructor. The instructor role in case study administration and analysis is very vital, instructors have to prepare a structured teaching plan, which should contain various chalk and talk aspects, blackboard usage cannot be forgotten. Further, the analysis should travel like a sailing ship by putting the students with answer seeking questions like information seeking, analytical questions, challenges of the theme, and hypothetical, predictive and general questions. The students will be grilled through this process to make the understanding of the subject or underlining theory in a crisp and lucid manner. Yet times, the instructor can go with techniques like role plays as well to make the class room ambiance more meaningful and interesting. The crux of case study success generally depends on the selection of the case. Some of the prominent resources, which instructors can resort to are Magazine or newspaper cover stories, research articles, audio, video-visual aids, live issues by observation from the environment makes the subject more lively and the amount of learning on the part of the students can be increased. Certain prominent studies have narrated a list of questions, which have to be addressed before undertaking case study methodology in class rooms like are the traditional method of lecturing is not meaningful for delivery of the content? Whether the other pedagogical tools are not lively? In those situations, the

instructors can choose Case Study based methodology of teaching as an alternative.

Significance of Teaching notes in Case Study Teaching

The success or failure of case study teaching is largely dependent on the instructor's dedication towards preparation of teaching notes. It is a guide to the instructor to see that the discussion may not venture into a different land. A good teaching note should generally contain about the key issues associated with the case, objectives of the case, thereafter it should go with substantial analysis or in-depth analysis of the case study. Now days, majority of case study publishers making it compulsory to submit teaching note along with the case study. Therefore, teaching note or teaching plan also one of the activity, which also come under the arena of case study research with respect to teaching.

Case Study Research (CSR)

Case Study Methodology of teaching is dependent on production and publication of case studies in the form of writing of case studies. With respect to writing of case studies is concerned, the field of management education occupies predominant role. However, with respect to other social sciences disciplines, the writing of case studies has not much gained much progress due to a variety of reasons. The present research paper visualized the research into case study from two angles. They are:

- Research intended for teaching a case, this comes under pure academic research and will be used in a class room delivery
- Writing a Research Case, which is intended for researchers opinions, judgement about a phenomenon in a structured form so as to persuade the readers to accept the researcher's conclusion

Like criticisms on case study based teaching, there is disagreement over case study research as well. Some of the researchers contend that case study research is not at all a research, for them case study research lacks of academic rigor and there are no specific guidelines for collecting and analysis of data. However, certain researchers like Yin [2] viewed that Case Study Research is an inquiry that focuses on describing, understanding, predicting, and/or controlling the individual (i.e., process, animal, person, household, organization, group, industry, culture, or nationality). Further, case study research is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident. Accordingly, the researchers need to be very clear about their

interpretation of the case study and the purpose of carrying out the study.

Whatever view that may there on case study research, but one thing is clear that a good case study research if carried with the following guidelines will definitely serve the purpose of academic rigor and learning. The guidelines are as follows:

- Writing case study needs strategic thinking
- Constant review must be undertaken to check, whether the content is true or false?
- Further, major issue with case studies are that, they may not be read by the intended audience, due to a wide variety of factors
- The researcher has to pose a question, why this is going written and what purpose will it serve
- After completion for whom it can used has to be thought of much in advance

The research in case studies happens through majorly on the basis of identification of an issue and the same results into generally four types of case studies namely organization based field studies, individual field studies and case studies on the basis of published information.

Scope for future research

The scope for future research in case study teaching and writing is not looking fine, due to a wide variety of factors. To start with

- availability of dedicated and renowned publishers
- less incentive for conducting and publishing case study research for authors in various journals
- a major potential risk of rejection of case study by the organizations or individuals, in case if some negativism is narrated in the case about them and without their permission, the case studies may not become a reality.
- Over and above the academic institutions and academic monitoring body's needs to press to incorporate at least some portion in curriculum of their respective courses pedagogical tool of case study methodology to see that the content is delivered by adopting a different tool.

CONCLUSION

Case Study Teaching and Research are two different aspects. It is unimaginable without research "teaching of case". It is difficult to talk about writing cases without talking about teaching, and difficult to talk about teaching without talking about learning. A good case study should provide and serve three learning objectives. They are:

- Knowledge1.
- Skill

- Attitudinal objectives (stepping into shoes of the protagonist)

A case discussion if serves these three objectives better than lecture method, can certainly consider being a better methodology for imparting learning in any discipline.

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