

Quality Enhancement in Case Study Reading and Analysis for Teaching Marketing and Entrepreneurship, in Graduate Program

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“The art of teaching is the art of discovery”- Mark Van Doren, an American poet writer and a critic.

1. Introduction

A World Bank report released in the month of Oct 2017 expressed serious concerns in the learning levels in student's education globally. It has called the situation a “global learning crisis” resulting in not equipping students with the education and skills they must acquire in order to lead “healthy, productive and meaningful lives”.

The report recommended three policy actions to address the crisis. “Assess learning, to make it a serious goal. Act on evidence, to make education systems work for learners. Align actors, to make the system work for learning,” it said. (Sunday Nov 5th 2017, Deccan Herald Sunday Spotlight)

From the report one can understand that World bank has sounded a wake up call on the state of education world wide. Countries are involved in educating but not learning. Shortfalls in learning is seen because of various factors including lack of motivation and required pedagogical skills applied, by teachers to be creatively managed.

This report has been inspirational in connecting with an empirical research taken up in a college in the Sultanate of Oman since 2011-2014, to study how case study method if managed creatively can help in increased learning and motivation for further development for students of Management education and also termed as quality enhancement of a learning tool to be utilized in all levels of education.

1.1 Significance of the Case Study Teaching Method in Modern Management education - An overview

The case study teaching method involves readers in active learning by placing them squarely in the shoes of real people facing real dilemmas. As students read a case, prepare assignments, and actively participate in class discussions and exercises, they learn how best to approach the problems described in the case. Cases are used to clearly illustrate a particular set of learning objectives, and (as in real life) rarely are there correct answers to the situation at hand. The case study will provide readers with an overview of the issue, background on the setting (typically the individual, company/institution, industry, and larger environment), the people involved, and the events that led to the problem or decision at hand. Cases can be written entirely from the point of view of a single actor or protagonist and based on interviews with the people involved, while others can be

developed from public sources. Still other case studies can be disguised versions of actual events or composites based on the faculty authors' experience and knowledge of the subject.

The case study teaching method is appropriate for undergraduate, graduate, executive education, and professional development courses, workshops, and seminars. Instructors may assign questions prior to class to focus students on the particular issues they plan to address in the class session. A class session can include student-led presentations, exercises, role plays, debates, and summarizing lectures. One of the hallmarks of a case discussion is the dynamic interaction between students, who engage in presentations, lively debate and ad hoc role plays. Instructors identify students who hold opposing views and ask questions designed to stimulate debate or they can assign them to various stakeholder groups with different points of view of the problem or situation at hand. Instructors encourage input from others on both sides of the issue until the students uncover most or all of the learning points identified in advance by the instructor. Instructors will lead students to experience an “aha” moment during which conventional wisdom is trumped by deeper, more seasoned insights.

Case studies are accompanied by teaching manuals or notes, which outline the basic premise of the case study, how it can be used within a course, learning objectives, assignment questions, a typical class discussion flow, and key takeaways. Teaching notes will often provide board plans, informational slides, exercises, and updates or epilogues to the case study. Faculty authors may also provide supplemental materials, such as “what happened next” cases, role play instructions and exercises, videos, or suggested readings.

1.2 Case teaching prerequisites.

General steps involved in case study teaching method can be broadly classified as follows

- 1) Pre-class preparation
- 2) Discuss a case
- 3) Managing class room process
- 4) Post case, class reflection

1.3 Some of the key Issues and challenges for implementing the case study teaching method in Management Education

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- How to adopt “case method” of teaching in all subjects.
- How to prepare students to understand various issues, challenges & techniques to use case method to impart maximum benefit to the learners.
- How to find relevant, thought provoking case studies with multidimensional, multidisciplinary cases of Omani origin and of global companies.
- How to effectively mix case methods with lecture and other pedagogical tools.
- How to collaborate with industries for case writing, and research.
- How to engage “Gen Y” students in learning of complex business problems and develop/enhance various skills

2. The Study

This paper examines the Case study teaching method used in a graduation program with reference to the **Marketing and Entrepreneurship Module**.

Specially to understand how the case study method helps the student in appreciating the journey and important facets of an Entrepreneur's Life. The student is no longer limiting their learning to the nationalistic or regional oriented topics, The teaching in a normal Business management class feature stories originating from all around the world. Most often the nuances of an entrepreneur's life and the decisions made by him in situations and circumstances cannot be expected to be appreciated or understood better by students residing in another part of the world. It is important to understand the role of factors like culture, social references, political legal and technological forces and their influences in the journey of the life of an Entrepreneur. For a student, to make the reading of cases more interesting and memorable a teacher can try out many ways and methods to achieve the favorable result of internalizing the learning.

One such way was tried in the Marketing and Entrepreneurship class, The students were **expected to read a 10 page case study which traced the journey of a hardworking and determined** entrepreneur who rose from very humble beginnings to become a famous global electronic Brand.

The country of origin of this entrepreneur was Japan and the case was studied in the middle east. Though the class had a mix of students, and majority of the students belonged to Asian subcontinent. Yet the prospect of reading a long case study which was to be discussed in the class seemed daunting. There was every likelihood of some of the class students losing interest totally while the case was read, was also seen evidently by their behavior and response.

In order to create a little bit of drama, some anticipation and curiosity about the protagonist, An approach to first get the students to understand the very country of the entrepreneur was taken up. The class was divided into teams and they were asked to come prepared by reading up understanding and even identifying the key art forms, culture, artifacts anything that was relevant to understand the land and its people and to understand the mind of the protagonist.

The students were given large poster white sheets and was asked to draw and create symbols, artifacts anything they heard learnt about the country and to make a collage of sorts to recreate the magic of the country, and once the poster either drawing or making small miniature pieces of the art form was completed, the students were then asked to describe them and explain the meaning behind the art form.

This was helpful in understanding the broad forces of social cultural, technological, political, physical, and competitive influences prevalent in Japan. And this helped the students to understand the protagonist better, the case study was viewed in a different mind frame, familiarity was built as the reading continued and lead into a very active and positive interaction during case and after the case discussion.

2.1 The experiment: case study method applied in Entrepreneurship class for graduate program students.

Year 1: Batch 1 (Placebo batch)(2011) read the case and did the analysis without undergoing the exercise of learning up all about the entrepreneur's country of origin.

Year 2 and 3: The second and third batch of students were divided as teams and were given the task to first learn up about the entrepreneur's country and then working together as team, they were asked to present it as drawings, paintings, artifacts representing the key elements of culture shown graphically and expressed to the entire class.

The batches were given questionnaires after the case study to understand how they felt reading the case study.

The Year 1 Batch 1 (Placebo batch) responded to questions as to how did they feel about the case study, with only minimal interest. They politely concluded it was good reading and interesting but not inspiring enough.

This was validated with the fact out of 23 students for the class only 13 attended the case reading only 5 students had read it previous day as was given to them one week in advance. 3 students claimed they glanced it. And the remaining did not come to class reading it at all. They were asked to read it along the discussion which made it difficult as they could be effective in participation because of this. Overall the case study did not do much for the group other than just another activity in the class. When asked how could we have done the case differently, the students were not forthcoming with any ideas except that it can be a good idea to do it as a team.

The Year 2 Batch 2 and 3: These batches were the ones which were given the task understanding the country of origin of the entrepreneur were asked questions differently from the batch 1 (Placebo batch). They were surveyed, by giving them questionnaires to fill up. The questionnaire had both open ended and close ended questions.

2.2 Key areas related to gathering information and insights regarding the following issues

- a) Views on this method of learning for a case study reading and analysis.

- b) Sensitivity to the case and character of case after understanding about the country of origin
- c) Prior Activity to a case study reading and
- d) Most important feature
- e) Suggestions on how one could make case study learning more interesting

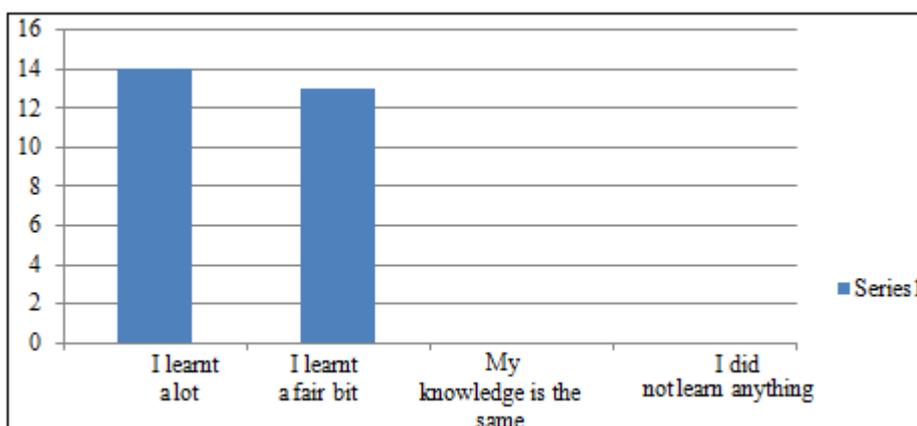
2.3 The Views gathered reflected on :

- 1) Sensitivity and understanding developed
- 2) Response to the activity at the beginning of the case study reading

2.4 Analysis

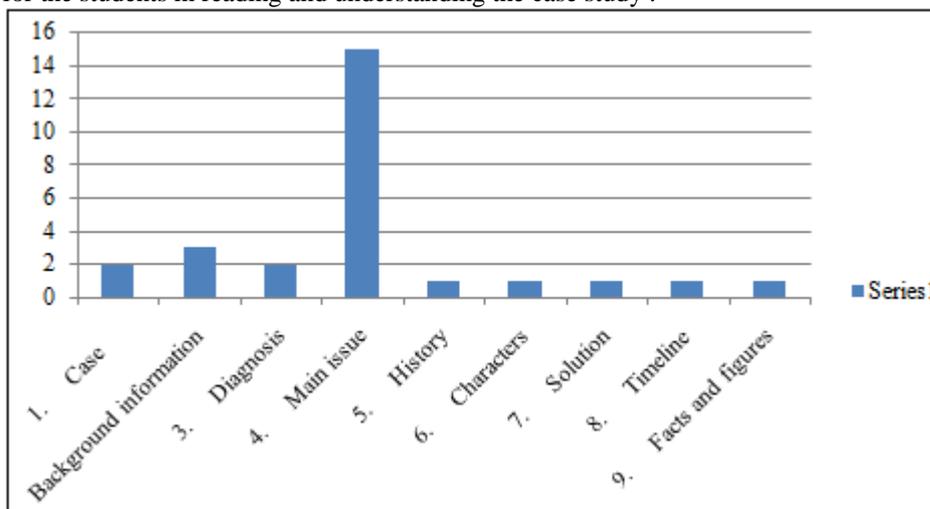
Out of the 62 students (compiled from 2011-2014 amounting to 3 year data)who were surveyed , majority of the students who were exposed to this activity before the case reading stated that they learnt a lot about the country, the culture and ethos of the individual they were studying in the case.

The students experienced a curiosity to learn more about the case and showed the eagerness to learn more about the protagonist.



Analysis:

Features important for the students in reading and understanding the case study :



The main issue related to the case study has the highest percentage in the priority ranking by the students, Back ground information is the second the case and diagnosis ranks third. The other factors are all in the same range.

This being the case, it is important to look at the qualitative analysis to understand the significance of conducting a pre case activity in helping to understand better, the case study method discussed in a class.

2.5 Qualitative analysis

This section contains the observations suggestions made by students: The statements recorded (presented verbatim) is compiled taking into account the views of 55 students and

presented after classifying based on similar attributes. They are as follows

- Practical method
- I understood the case better and analyzed the challenges faced by Matshusita
- Made me fit into the shoes of the entrepreneur
- Appreciate and understand culture of another country
- Can learn better if we role played the characters in the case, central to Japan.
- I became knowledgeable after this activity
- I learnt about Japanese culture their lifestyle, am better prepared when I make a trip to Japan
- The case study is really a long one, but the activity kept me interested

- Understood Matshusita journey in setting up an business empire in Japan also the challenges he faced in the journey.
- Activity made the case learning interesting
- Group activity before the case reading made it interesting and helped in case analysis
- Video to back the life of the character would be interesting
- Group discussion of the case helps
- It was good method
- Very effective in learning
- I became more involved in the case study
- This method motivated students
- We got “Stars” for learning about the country and presenting it before learning from case, this was very rewarding.
- We collected lots of information about Japan before analyzing the case.
- Helpful and informative

includes both Industry (7 yrs) and Teaching Academics experience (16yrs). *A firm believer in creativity and innovation as a means to provide quality life and products for Mankind, is constantly encouraging students to use imagination and creativity to maximum potential possible.*

3. Conclusion

From batches 2 and 3 it may be concluded Almost all the students were unified with their opinion about the activity conducted before case study would be a very effective method and evoked good interest in case study learning.

This study not only gave insights as to how students can become more involved in learning but also helped the students to express their views and suggestions to make learning even more broader and effective.

On Comparing for the understanding and effectiveness in learning got from case study method between batch 1 and 2& 3 batch students, it has clearly yielded a positive confirmation that this method can be applied regularly for making learning of case study more interesting for the students. This method has shown that there was greater comprehension and internalization of the knowledge and leading to transferrable skills. The Students self esteem was also increased like this. Finally, it would definitely be worth the while to be explore such a way of educating students to make learning more interesting.

References

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Author Profile

Dr. Swaroop Simha, Teacher Trainer, Consultant, and Researcher, Has her own Studio In Mysore, Karnataka, from where she works, free lancing for the University of Mysore and Bhartiya Vidyabhavan, Mysore. She was till March 2017, a faculty in the Department of Professional Studies. Specializing in teaching students Marketing Management for programs affiliated to Pearson Edexcel and Bradford Universities, UK, at the College of Banking and Financial Studies in the, Sultanate of Oman. Her Doctoral theses was in the area of “Brand and Line Extension Studies, for Consumer Durables using Qualitative Research”. A Gold medalist and a Rank holder from University of Mysore, her career graph