Case Method
for
Digital
Natives

Teaching and Research

Editor
Ajoy Kumar Dey

CASE METHOD FOR DIGITAL NATIVES
TEACHING AND RESEARCH

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AJOY KUMAR DEY

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CASE WRITING

Contemporary Business Management Teaching Case Development: A Perspective

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Abstract: In recent times, pedagogy in higher education endeavours to use a variety of methods in educating and developing students as per the needs of society. However, the recent changes and developments in society have created a requirement to re-visit the pedagogical methods further. The case teaching method is being considered as one of the active learning methods in contemporary business management programs. This article focuses on exploring a new direction in the development of teaching cases in higher education. The new approach in case teaching, particularly in business management, should focus on enabling students to engage intellectually and emotionally with the super complexity of the contemporary business environment. The business cases developed in contemporary pedagogy should be towards analysing, discussing and determining actions to be taken in a real-world situation. Accordingly, this article emphasis on addressing the key skills to be comprehended in contemporary teaching case development in both teacher-centred and student-centred teaching/ learning perspectives, that is, Problem-solving Skills, Self-management Skills, Information Technology Use Skills, and Social Engagement Skills. This framework would facilitate the teaching case writers in developing teaching cases.

Keywords: Business, Case Development, Higher Education, Teaching

Introduction

This article focuses on exploring a new direction to the case teaching method in higher education. Of course, the pedagogy in higher education uses a variety of methods in educating and developing the students as per the needs of society. However, the recent changes and developments in society have created a requirement to re-visit the pedagogical methods which are being practiced.

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Different forms of subject delivery might more readily suit the expectations and learning styles of an increasingly diverse student population (Roberts, 2011). Recent changes and demands in higher education have highlighted the need for re-thinking of pedagogical methods adopted in higher education. The developments of new business models and frameworks etc. in the 21st century need to address an array of new types of understandings that university graduates should possess. The development of types of understanding should allow learners to involve intellectually and emotionally with super complexity (McCune & Entwistle, 2011). As such, the 21st-century business management pedagogical methods require integrating such skills to meet the need of business organisations. Super complexity is that situation where one is faced with alternative frameworks of interpretation through which to make sense of one's world and to act purposively in it (Barnett & Hallam, 1999, p. 138).

Business management undergraduates need to explore management philosophy deeply to understand its applications. As such, the case teaching method is being considered as one of the active learning methods in contemporary business management programme. The case teaching method creates a platform for wisdom development and space for knowledge application. The case study method in teaching in higher education had been initiated by the Harvard Business School (Herreid, 2011). The case study teaching method is an in-depth exploration method of realities (cases) and presenting investigative analyses (Minniti et al., 2017, p. 373). Cases are stories with a message and can be used to educate learners (Herreid, 1997). As such, in case teaching, students are given stories allowing them to play the role of decision-makers (Nkhoma et al., 2017). Case study teaching engages the learner and creates an opportunity for students to: apply theory to practice, practice decision-making skills, use different points of view, be involved in data analysis, and synthesise course content (Popil, 2011).

The 21st-Century Case Teaching Method

Business cases employed in contemporary pedagogy should be towards analysing, discussing and determining actions to be taken in the real-world situation. The case teaching method creates a very effective teaching–learning platform, where premeditated content is discussed in a flexible mode with interaction with students. McCune (2009) reveals that there might be substantial potential in exploring further how higher education learning experiences can best be planned to offer learners authentic engagement with the practices of their subject areas. McCune (2009) also provides vital characteristics of authentic engagement learning that can be simply addressed by case teaching methods (Table 1).

Table 1: Relationship between Authentic Engagement Learning and
Case Teaching Method

Characteristics of Authentic Engagement Learning	Case Teaching Method
Personal relevance for students, with respect to their developing identities	Teaching case is designed in business management
Be situated within social contexts which mirror as far as possible how the practices of the subject area are employed in 'real-life' settings;	'Real life' cases with real facts and figures in the relevant context
Provide students with sufficient independence and responsibility to support them to become more autonomous learners	Let the students to study independently with the learning had in the classroom with relevant theoretical backgrounds; provide the students with clear instructions on the way to analyse the case
Scaffold students' developing understanding of the ways of thinking and practicing their subject area such that students become more able to critically engage with the subject area	
Make use of complex, ill-structured, and open-ended problems	Provide students with open-ended questions to address different aspects of issues raised through the teaching case; things from different perspectives in a meaningful way
Treat students as valid participants in the construction of knowledge	

Source: Adapted from McCune (2009, pp. 359–360)

Case teaching facilitates the accumulation of knowledge and lets learners develop from conceptualisation to application (Kunselman & Johnson, 2004). Further, it encourages networked thinking by learners (Pilz & Zenner, 2018).

Integrating active learning methods to facilitate student learning is not new (Kunselman & Johnson, 2004). The case teaching method as one of the active learning methods can be used from the authentic engagement of learning. It provides advantages (Farashahi & Tajeddin, 2018) thar are vital in the contemporary business management context (see Table 2).

Table 2: Advantages of Case Teaching Method

Helps students to learn through the application of knowledge and concepts
Provides opportunities to learn through knowledge integration
Provides a structured environment for teamwork
Provides a safe environment to take risk
Provides opportunities to see management problems and their solutions
Provides directions towards analyses in a broad range of controlled settings
Directs students to identify and solve problems in controlled settings

Provides opportunities to learn sequential analysis of the controlled situation to make appropriate decisions
Expose students to a diversity of decision contexts for defined problems
Helps students to deal with learning through active critical thinking, analysis, and debates
Provides opportunities to learn interpersonal relations, teamwork, and communication in controlled settings
Helps skill development in controlled and low-risk settings

Source: Adapted from: Farashahi & Tajeddin (2018, p. 140)

Teacher-Centred Approach vs. Student-Centred Approach in Case Teaching Method

Teaching methods can be divided into two parts as teacher-centred and student-centred (De la Sablonnière et al., 2009). The teacher-centred approach is comparatively efficient as it promotes logical arrangement of education content, allowing to focus on the subject; this approach encourages gaining knowledge instead of deep exploration of the areas. In addition, students are more dependent on the teachers in the teacher-centred approach. In contrast, the student-centred approach promotes efficient decision-making since students are more open and use their own knowledge (De la Sablonnière et al., 2009), and it encourages independence by breaking the psychological barrier of looking at teachers as experts (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

Teacher-centred learning ignores the active character of students, while student-centred learning ignores the learning role of the teacher. Further, teacher-centred learning oversees the individual differences among the students while student-centred learning oversees individual differences among teachers (Afsouran, et al., 2018).

The case teaching method can be adapted in both teacher-centred and student-centred approaches. Figure 1 shows the core concerns of each teaching method, with the teaching philosophy behind each approach.
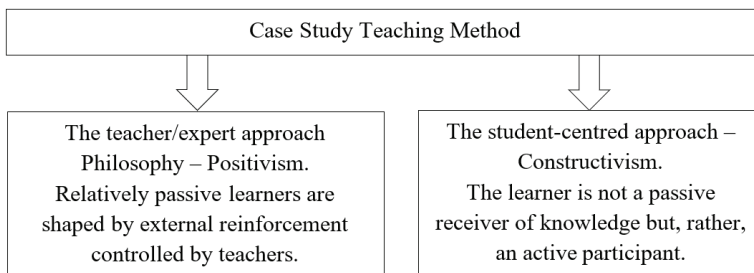
Figure 1: Core Elements of Teacher-Centred and Student-Centred Case Study Teaching

Source: Author Conceptualization, 2021.

Key Dimensions in Contemporary Teaching Case Development

It is obvious that the teaching case has to be incorporated in the contemporary pedagogy, as it provides the way to develop the competencies expected by contemporary business organisations. As such, contemporary case teaching needs to focus on the following key dimensions as these skill areas will be the key requirements of future management graduates. Figure 2 conceptualises contemporary teaching case development.

Moreover, the three dimensions considered in Figure 2, are not entirely new—self-management, problem-solving and social engagement. However, what the emphasis of this conceptualisation is that the way of applying these dimensions in case teaching has to be with the contemporary requirements.
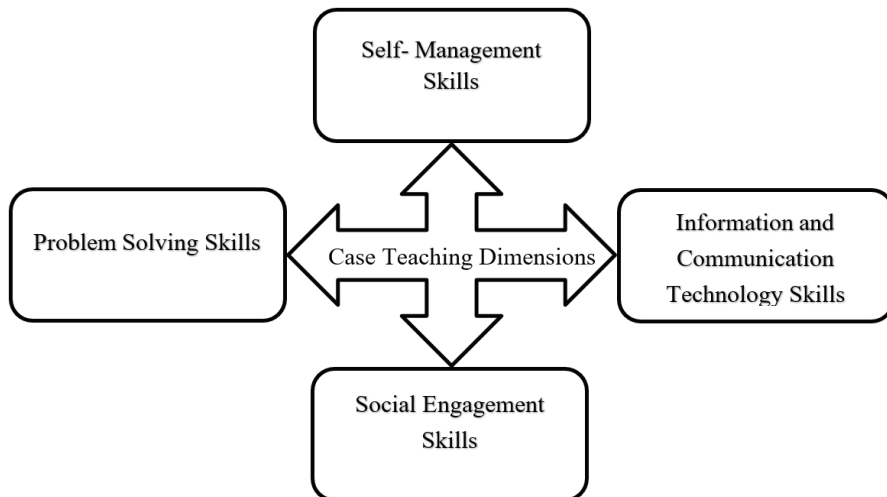
Figure 2: Contemporary Teaching Case Development Dimensions

Source: Author Conceptualization, 2021.

- **Problem Solving Skills:** The teaching case has to develop the skills of problem-solving. This problem-solving aspect needs to address analytical thinking, complex problem solving, critical thinking, creative reasoning and ideation.
- **Self-management Skills:** Self-management skills will help students to reduce problematic behaviours and reinforce appropriate behaviour (Gureasko-Moore et al., 2006; e.g., punctuality, preparation, being focused, and reflection, etc.). Self-management skills can also be addressed through case teaching as it will address adaptability, flexibility and active learning involvements.
- **Information and Communication Technology Skills:** Information and communication technology has transformed the manner in which

Table 3: Dimensions of Case Teaching Development

Dimension	Definition	Key Skills Intended to Develop	Case Teaching Activity Example	
			Teacher/Expert-centred Approach	*Student-centred Approach*
Problem Solving Skills	Skills required to obtain the best answer to an unknown, or a decision subject to some constraints. (Mourtos et al., 2004, p. 1). This skill is the foundation of processing of information to identify the problem/s and developing possible appropriate solutions.	Skills to start the case with confidence about problem-solving through creativity and theoretical knowledge in the given scope. Skills to find alternative courses of action. Skills to solve problems with higher order thinking or critical thinking. Further, to think of the problem from a holistic perspective or without thinking of it as an isolated issue.	Boost student's confidence by highlighting that they are capable enough to solve the problem in the case with their creativity and existing theoretical knowledge. Since business management mostly does not provide a unique answer, encourage students to find alternative solutions to the given problem based on the guidance given by the teacher. Encourage students to think from a holistic perspective instead of focusing on the isolated issue. Help students to see possible complex interactions between nodes and connections in a given problem space.	Students try to boost their confidence in their capabilities by blending their creativity and existing theoretical knowledge. Students try to come up with an alternative course of action by blending their experiences. This will provide unique solutions for the problem or solutions with students' creative thinking. Instead of considering isolated issues, students may consider the problem from a holistic perspective of the complex issue.
Social Engagement Skills	Skills relate to one's participation in the activities of a social group (Prohaska et al., 2012).	Skills to work collaboratively with other team members, and to develop and maintain relationships with others in the team.	Assign a team of students to discuss the questions raised at the end of the teaching case. Encourage students' participation and contribution by maintaining a peaceful classroom environment.	Let students think about their role as a member of a group and provide their contribution to the group effort.

		Skills required to participate in case analysis and maintain the relationships with group members by contributing to finding solution/s to the questions of the case.	
Information and Communication Technology Skills	The capacity to solve problems of information, communication and knowledge in digital environments (Claro et al., 2012, p. 1042).	Skills in searching, selecting, evaluating and organising information in a digital environment. Skills in effective communication (capacity to communicate information by ensuring proper meaning). Skills in collaboration and virtual interactions (capacity to work in online platforms and to use ICT in work life).	Encourage students to use computers and the Internet in submitting reports to address the teaching case; thus, develop teaching cases to show the gravity of using communication technology in business operations etc. Develop teaching cases to improve information fluency and effective communication skills to and encourage students to use digital resources in teaching case analysis by providing them proper guidance.	Allow students to use their digital resources and create an environment to improve information fluency and effective communication skills by themselves.
Self-Management Skills	A process whereby a person faces immediate response alternatives involving different consequences and the person chooses an apparent low-probability response (Manz & Sims, 1980, p/ 362).	Skills to manage their work/ contribute actively to the teamwork, and skills to monitor whether they use their people relationship skills.	Develop teaching cases at different levels of study—difficult and moderate levels—as to understand the need of for self-management; limit the number of students in teaching case discussion groups; teaching cases to address individually. Encourage and guide students to manage their own behaviour by setting personal standards they need to maintain in the process of case discussions.	Let the students develop their standards and manage their own behaviour to cope with the established standards in case study discussions.

Source: Author Synthesis, 2021.

we administrate every business. Higher education pedagogy must now consider inculcating the information and communication technology skills in the students when preparing them for the contemporary business world where ICT plays a significant role. ICT helps businesses to be more efficient and effective, and to respond quickly to stakeholder needs. Further, students need to appreciate the use of ICT in contemporary business as almost all the functions are ICT driven. As such, students are required to be equipped with relevant technology skills to become successful employees in the future (Lefever-Davis & Pearman 2005) Moreover, they should be provided with opportunities to work collaboratively (Fatimah & Santiana, 2017) with communication technologies such as texting, social media (Thompson, 2017) and mobile learning (Buabeng-Andoh, 2018). In addition, students are required to cope with new developments such as digital textbooks, virtual keyboards and cloud environments.

- **Social Engagement Skills:** The social engagement domain includes sociability, social connection and teamwork, which determine the interpersonal factors that influence students' successful integration or adaptation into their environment (Le et al., 2005). In addition, case teaching will have to develop the skills of the student to work with people. The case discussions in a classroom with students in student groups will enhance this 'working with people' skills, where leadership skills would be improved and social influence aspects would also be identified.

Accordingly, Table 3 expands the key dimensions with examples for each dimension so as to direct the business management teaching case development.

Concluding Remarks

Present-day organisations require qualified graduates from higher education institutes to effectively address the business management intricacies that are developing with dynamic changes in the business environment. As such, the didactic teaching method is no longer valid with the modern learning-oriented teaching environment. An interactive problem-solving-oriented case teaching method is an alternative for traditional didactic teaching, as it enhances learners' skills from multiple perspectives. The purpose of the case teaching method is to produce graduates who are competent in management philosophies and their application. This article concludes that four dimensions (i.e. problem-solving skills, social engagement skills, information and communication skills, and self-management skills) are to be incorporated in business management teaching case development so that the students will

be able to improve the competencies expected by the contemporary business organisations. This will create a win-win situation for both the business and education sectors. In addition, this article elaborated that the case teaching method can also be implemented through two teaching applications (i.e. teacher-centred, and student-centred). Finally, this article highlights the key skills intended to develop and case teaching activity examples relevant to each dimension mentioned above.

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100 Years of Case Method

Case Method for Digital Natives

Teaching and Research

As the year 2021 marks hundred years of Case Method, this book is dedicated to its various dimensions in teaching and research. The Case Method has been used extensively around the world to inculcate, analytical skills, decision making and critical thinking among management students. Similarly, research using this methodology has provided the academia with various theories and models that have been widely used in research and practice. Given its immense contribution in academia and research, 36 case experts and enthusiasts from 11 countries, have contributed to this book through 24 articles distributed in seven sections. These articles highlight how the said method has evolved and how it will be critical in developing the 21st Century Skills in teaching and research.