

# A case of choice

Analysing the advantages and need-gaps in using the case method as a pedagogical tool for management education in India

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The case method of teaching is a discussion-oriented pedagogy that is popular across a wide range of disciplines such as Management, Law, Medicine, and others. Management schools across the world have embraced it as the pedagogy of choice.

The case, typically a 10-20 page-document, is a rich narrative that brings forth a real-world scenario

and gives the students an opportunity to put themselves in the shoes of the decision-maker. The method involves students reading and reflecting on a case ahead of the class and in the classroom. They critically analyse the case, present their viewpoint, discuss the pros and cons of the various options, and propose solutions. The instructor plays the role of a facilitator. Incisive questions, carefully orchestrated by the faculty, transi-

tion the discussion from one pasture (context) to the next, substantiated by polls and breakout rooms that generate a high degree of energy, enthusiasm, tension, and peer engagement in the class.

## Key issues

While there are many positives to the case method, there are two key issues that need deliberation in the Indian context. The first is that most of the cases available are centred on



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organisations and protagonists in the U.S. and Europe. Are the learnings from these cases applicable to Indian organisations and a management style that is still evolving to global metrics and standards?

The second issue relates to the typical learner profile in India. The case method works well when MBA students come with a

few years of corporate work experience and can appreciate and relate to the context and content in the case. How effective is it for learners with minimal corporate experience?

A majority of teaching cases are field-based, i.e., the faculty member writing the case would need to visit a company, conduct interviews, obtain data

and necessary permissions, and then work with a protagonist at the firm while writing up the manuscript. While this process ensures a deep understanding of the various aspects of the firm and ensures fidelity of the data, the context tends to be localised and the lessons learnt can only be applied within a certain cultural context.

To propagate the case method of teaching in India, it is imperative for faculty to get involved and develop cases that are predominantly India-centric.

Another dimension that needs to be considered when deciding on an appropriate pedagogy is the mode of course delivery (online vs. in-class; asynchronous vs. synchronous).

Finally, depending on

the dexterity of the instructor and the participation levels in the classroom, case study learning tends to be unevenly spaced. This stands in contrast to a lecture-based routine where the instructor mainly controls the tempo and pace of coverage of course content.

Hence, when making a choice of adopting case-based teaching, a key question emerges: Is it better to teach 100% of the material to the students; or is it better for them to learn only 60%-70%, but through a process of active dialogue? The answer, perhaps, lies in a case yet to be written!

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