

Business Education and Case Study Pedagogy: A Skill-Building Approach

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Abstract

Case study pedagogy is a very effective and efficient way to teach students due to its dramatic impact on the course's quality and students' learning. Despite the vitality and significance of case study methodology in the modern world, universities in Pakistan are following this trend, but very less in number. The literature lacks sufficient studies regarding the usage of case study methods in business education and only a few studies have attempted to document the role of case study methods in business education. This study has attempted to tap this missing link in the literature by collecting data from students of business education programs who were enrolled in four provinces of Pakistan and analyzed their perceptions regarding the usage of case study methods. A sample of 480 students by selecting 30 from each university (15 undergraduate and 15 postgraduate students) was approached for data collection across Pakistan. Statistical package for social sciences was used to analyze data through descriptive statistics and results indicate that according to the perception of students, problem-solving skill is the most important skill which they learn from the case study pedagogy while interpersonal skill is the least important skill which they learn from this methodology. Moreover, students indicated that case studies being offered in business schools are relevant and helpful to understand and apply theoretical concepts.

Keywords: Case Study Methods, Business Pedagogy, Students perception, Business Educations, Skills

Introduction

Education is a process of teaching and coaching activities that communicate knowledge, training, and skills. Education supports recognizing the right and wrong concepts, which can be professional, personal, or organizational. For this process of teaching, the case study method is under practice since Harvard business school adapted the case

study methodology as a medium of pedagogy about one hundred years ago. It is still in practice in many schools of business, law, and policy.

Case study teaching is rarely used, but it is a very effective and efficient way to teach students. Its effectiveness is based on the type of case and it has a dramatic impact on the course's quality. Moreover, case studies have the potency to affect the learning scenario of the class and how students will work together to solve specific problems. Cases vary from situation to situation and are complex sometimes.

Case study-based pedagogy is vital within the Pakistani education context too as it can develop rigorous thinking and interpersonal communication skills (Abrar, Baig, et al. 2021). Business graduates require skills and education is a valuable tool to equip students with such capabilities (Sidiropoulos 2014). Case study methods applied in business education as pedagogical tools polish the fundamental and necessary skills required for business graduates (Abrar, Abbasi, and Saqib 2021)

The validity of case studies can be enhanced by using various methods such as analyzing the data at different spaces, times, and contexts and using different data sources for the same study such as conducting interviews and by using archived records, these all serve as triangulation and enhance the confidence of researchers.

The professional teacher mostly uses the professional approach to train the students. This approach is helpful for the students to understand the concept thoroughly. Professional teachers have special exposure practically to specialization which covers all pertinent literature, themes, and updates on the changing scenario in business education.

The business environment continues to change at a rapid pace and business faculty should have to cater to the dynamic needs of industry and students keeping in view the latest trends and challenges constantly (Martin, Heppard, and Green 2011). Thus, identifying the needs and selecting the right pedagogical courses is a challenging task because case study highlights real-life context and have control over events and phenomenon (Yin 1984).

The case study method can help to develop sufficient knowledge in the students and then they can be evaluated (Lasrado and Kaul 2021). Similarly, a case study can help to develop a set of “rules” which can be utilized for new processes of learning (Lasrado and Kaul 2021). Case studies thus provide a useful method to analyze the larger range of

elements and students can learn skills about organizations, and institutions (Çakar and Aykol 2021).

The modern world needs to train the business graduates with a deeper understanding of the business environment related to an international scenario with an interdisciplinary focus based on an international level (Martin et al. 2011) and this can be done through education. Thus, education is the process of learning where knowledge and skills are transferred from one generation to another in society through teaching, training, and research culture. Universities are performing an important role in modern societies through educating large shares of people and creating knowledge (Perkmann et al. 2013). This knowledge sharing and knowledge creation can bridge the human and technological facets of innovation management (Prajogo and Ahmed 2006). While, several researchers still argue that based on case studies, only hypotheses can be generated but cannot be tested and generalized at large because researchers tend to support analytical generalization instead of statistical generalization (Yin 1984). However, generalization from a single or a set of case studies can be made in good manners if someone has a grip on descriptive or analytic language, which helps to integrate various components of the system.

Two types of case studies are usually used to increase the learning of students. This classification is based on learning mechanisms, first one is Intrinsic case studies in which case studies are considered based on the particular case of interest while another type of case is study is instrumental case studies which are used to develop a greater understanding (Tann and Scott 2021).

Case studies can offer a mechanism to learn international business education. Through the applicability of case studies universities can foster values, knowledge, and skills among business graduates because theorists about the field of cognitive, and social learning argue that learning of international business education involves both the cognitive and emotional processes which have the potential to affect attitudes and knowledge. Researchers have portrayed that learning through experiences has gained much more attention as compared to the other methods in practices (e.g., Brennan 2014; Regehr 2013; Schworm et al. 2017). Moreover, according to the premise of experiential learning theory (Kolb 1984) learning at the international level and intercultural level can bring benefits that can be achieved through the usability of case studies in business education. Thus,

following the case study methods in business education pedagogy can bring fruitful benefits for the developing nations such as Pakistan, because business graduates would be in a better position to learn the intentional culture, values, and cross-culture knowledge through it.

Despite the significance and practice of case studies in the modern world, some universities in Pakistan are following this trend, but very less in number. The literature lacks sufficient studies regarding the usage of case study methods in business education and few studies have attempted to document the role of case study methods in business education, for instance, Abrar, Abbasi, and Saqib, (2021) explored the perception of teachers regarding usage of case study methods as a teaching instrument in business education. While Abrar et al. (2021) investigated the required skills which are demanded by the business community and business graduates should possess them.

Past literature indicates that there is a need to bridge the gap between business education programs and the needs of organizations (Milhauser and Rahschulte 2010). To cater to this need, there should be a shift in the design and execution of business education programs by restructuring the business pedagogy (Martin et al. 2011) from a content focus to a process focus (Milhauser and Rahschulte 2010). It is a crystal clear fact that business education is becoming important due to its role in fostering business activities in the economy by providing trained manpower but available literature is silent about the important pillar this building block and perception of students regarding the applicability of case study methods have not been explored yet (Abrar, Baig, et al. 2021). Past studies indicate that there is a need to develop a sustainable approach by the business schools because there is still a need to meet the requirement of sustainable development and developing economies are in more need to adopt this (Mousa 2021). With the emerging trend of deregulations, the role of the private sector is increasing day by day. The private sector/industry intends to enhance efficiency by using its resources more efficiently. The major resources requirements for the industry include physical, financial, and human resources, and minimum efforts are being utilized. This study has attempted to tap this missing link in the literature by collecting data from students of selected business schools from the four provinces of Pakistan and analyzing their perceptions about the current business education system and usage of case study methods.

Data for this study were collected from the four provinces of Pakistan, except Gilgit Baltistan, for which eight public and eight private sector universities were approached that were offering business education programs. Fifty percent of institutes were from the Punjab province while the remaining were from Sindh, KPK, and Baluchistan. A sample of 480 students by selecting 30 from each university (15 undergraduate and 15 postgraduate students) was approached for data collection. In this regard, a nonprobability sampling technique was employed and students have contacted through convenience sampling technique because this technique was most feasible owing to the reason of cost and time associated with the data collection process.

The outcome of business education results in the shape of business graduates who are supposed to meet the requirements of the industry. Thus, perception of students was explored regarding the case study methods and its outcome in the shape of improvement in the various skills identified such as “Problem-Solving Skills, Thinking about Alternatives, Organization Skills, Interpersonal Skills, Ability to think, Ability to analyze and Strategic Planning Skills” (Abrar, Baig, et al. 2021). Hence students were approached for data collection regarding attributes of the case study. Data were collected in four dimensions, information about the academic background was inquired from the students and they were asked to state their degree program in which they are enrolled, next their choice of admission was asked and they were requested to report either they have to get enrolled according to their own choice or by the will of their parents. Their future intention was also inquired whether they want to pursue their carrier after completion of a degree in Govt: job, private job, own business or they want to pursue their family business; the age of the students was also inquired. Their gender, location of residence, and living status at the institute were also inquired. Next to this, they were asked to report regarding the relevancy of case studies which are offered by teachers, the contribution of case studies for more than one business-related course, and appropriateness of case study according to the intellectual level of business degree program students. Before administrating questionnaires to the students an approval was obtained from the department. Moreover, it was ensured to the students that collected data will be used only for academic purpose and their participation in the survey is voluntary.

Results and Discussion

Initially, 480 questionnaires were distributed among the study respondents (students), keeping in view the methodological orientation of this study. After discarding the partially filled/incomplete/missing responses, a usable sample of 446 respondents was in hand. Out of these 446 respondents, 232 students were enrolled in the Bachelor's program (BBA) while 214 students were enrolled in the Master's level program (MBA). From a percentage point of view, 52 % of respondents were from the bachelor program while 48% of students were from the master program.

Out of a total of 446 respondents, 220 students were from the private sector universities and 109 were enrolled in the Bachelor's program (BBA) while 111 students were enrolled in the Master's level program (MBA). From a percentage point of view, 49.5 % of respondents were from the bachelor program while 50.5% of students were from the master program. Out of the total 446 respondents, 226 students were from the public sector universities, and out of which 123 were enrolled in Bachelor program (BBA) while 103 students were enrolled in Master level program (MBA) of business education. From a percentage point of view, 54.4 % of respondents were from the bachelor program while 45.6 % of students were from the master program.

Table-1: Categorization of respondents according to their degree program

Degree/Program			
Description	Overall	Private	Public
BBA	232 (52 %)	109 (49.5 %)	123 (54.4 %)
MBA	214 (48%)	111 (50.5%)	103 (45.6 %)
Total	446	220	226
Selection of subjects			
By Choice	266	123	143
By Chance	137	73	64
By the pressure of parents	43	24	19
Total	446	220	226
Future Intention			
Govt: Job	95	52	43
Private Job	123	55	68
Own Business	228	113	115

Total	446	220	226
Age			
Less than 20	108	50	58
20-25	338	170	168
Total	446	220	226
Gender			
Male	265	121	144
Female	181	99	82
Total	446	220	226
Location of Residence			
Urban	314	157	157
Rural	119	56	63
Peri-Urban	13	7	6
Total	446	220	226
Status			
Day Scholar	211	116	95
Hostel	235	104	131
Total	446	220	226

Students were asked to report their choice of enrollment in a business education program, either they have selected a business education program as per their own choice or were forced by their parents to get enrolled in business education programs. From the total 446 respondents, the majority of the respondents (59.6%) reported that they get enrolled in a business education program according to their own choice and their decision was purely based on their own will. Similarly, only 9.6% of students reported that their parents pressurized them to get enrolled in the business education program. An interesting fact of this study indicates that significant students (30.7%) reported that they get admission in business education programs by chance either due to their fellows/friends.

Survey respondents (Students) were asked to rate their choice after completion of degree/education. More than half of students (51.1%) reported that they tend to start their own business after completion of their business education. While 27.6% of students reported that they tend to

join the private sector as their future career after completion of their business education. While 21.3 % (n=21.3 %) students reported that they tend to pursue their career in Govt: Jobs after completion of their degree. Respondents were asked to report their age group. As the target population of this study was business graduates, so it was assumed that their age group will be less than 25 years. So two categories were framed out to ask from the students i.e. one was having an age group less than 20 while the other age group falls between the age group of 20-25. As per the response received from the survey respondents, most of the students were under the age category of 20-25 (75.8 %, n=338) while 108 respondents (24.2 %) were having an age less than 20. From a gender point of view, most of the students in this survey fall under the category of males (n=265, 59.4 %) while female respondents constitute 40.6 % of the study sample. It can be concluded that in business education most of the students are male. However, the female composition is also significant in business education. Survey respondents were asked to report their location of residence, purpose of this question was to ensure the trend of enrollment in business education. Study results revealed that most of the respondents/students enrolled in business education from the urban area (70.4 %) while 26.4 % of respondents were from the rural area. Similarly, only a few respondents were from the Peri-Urban Area (n=13, 2.9 %). So it can be concluded that in business education mostly students get enrolled who have a background from the urban area. Students were asked to report their living status during the study program. An almost equal portion of the students in business education was residing in a hostel and as a day scholar. There was a slight difference among their portion. 52.7 % of students were residing in a hostel while 47.3 % of students were day scholars.

Perception of Students towards Teachers case study approach

Before asking the students regarding the most important skills which they learn from case study methods, they were asked to report their perception regarding the approach used by their teachers while teaching them business-related courses. These questions were regarding the relevancy of case studies with course, the contribution of case study in other courses, enhancing business-related theoretical concepts, increasing intellectual capacity, any ambiguities in learning due to case studies, and finally application of case study as a realistic and interesting method.

Table-2

Perception of Students towards Teacher's approach					
Indicator	Response				
	SA	A	N	D	SD
Relevancy to the course	304 (68.2 %)	85 (19.1%)	0	27 (6.1 %)	30 (6.7 %)
Contribution to course objectives	179 (40.1 %)	228 (51.1%)	0	32 (7.2 %)	7 (1.6 %)
Application of theory	358 (80.3 %)	43 (9.6 %)	24 (5.4 %)	14 (3.1 %)	7 (1.6 %)
Relevance of case study material	364 (81.6 %)	49 (11 %)	0	27 (6.1 %)	6 (1.3 %)
Offered Case studies are interesting	351 (78.7 %)	62 (13.9%)	0	20 (4.5 %)	13 (2.6 %)

Almost 80 % of the students reported that they agreed that the case study offered by their teachers is relevant to their course work. This indicates that teachers of business education tend to use case studies that are relevant to the course which they taught to the business graduates. The second proposition of the above set of questions was regarding the contribution of the case study towards one or more of the course objectives. Most of the survey respondents (90%) reported that case studies offered by their teacher more often contribute to more than one subject and hence it can be assumed that their learning capability is also enhanced when case study suits to more than one business course. Similarly, 91 % of students of this survey also reported that they think that case study assists them in developing principles of business. Thus it can be assumed that case studies are a very important way to develop the conceptual skills of students regarding the application of theoretical knowledge. In continuation to this, 92 % of survey respondents reported that they think that case study material provided by their teachers is appropriate to their knowledge, experience, maturity, and intellectual capacity. Hence it can be assumed that teachers in business schools often use such material which suits the intellectual capability of the students. Survey respondents were also asked to report that either they find the case studies material realistic, relevant, and interesting, and almost 92 % (78.7 % + 13.9 %) of students reported that they find case studies material realistic, relevant, and interesting.

Moreover, if the students find a case study relevant and interesting it can develop their intellectual abilities which will further strengthen their research skills (Lucas 1988).

Table-3 Ranking of Factors of case studies According to the perception of Students (Overall) based on Mean Attribute Scores (MAS)

Ranking of Factors of case studies outcomes

Factor	Overall		
	MAS	Std. Deviation	Rank
	Statistic		
Problem Solving Skills	4.636	0.46854	1
Ability to Analyze	4.5	0.42697	2
Strategic Planning Skills	4.4723	0.55473	3
Ability to think	4.3752	0.60892	4
Thinking about alternatives	4.3643	0.47886	5
Organization Skills	4.3371	0.60273	6
Interpersonal Skills	4.2915	0.56731	7
Private university students			
Factor	MAS	Std. Deviation	Rank
	Statistic		
Problem Solving Skills	4.6424	0.45096	1
Strategic Planning Skills	4.497	0.55035	2
Ability to Analyze	4.4955	0.43463	3
Ability to think	4.4167	0.58618	4
Organization Skills	4.3394	0.59506	5
Thinking about alternatives	4.3364	0.47354	6
Interpersonal Skills	4.2848	0.56776	7
Public Sector University Students			
Factor	MAS	Std. Deviation	Rank
	Statistic		
Problem Solving Skills	4.6298	0.48597	1
Ability to Analyze	4.5044	0.42029	2
Strategic Planning Skills	4.4484	0.55913	3
Thinking about alternatives	4.3916	0.48348	4
Ability to think	4.3348	0.62893	5
Organization Skills	4.3348	0.61141	6
Interpersonal Skills	4.2979	0.56806	7

An interesting point noted from the empirical results of this study, it has been found that students from both public and private institutes reported that problem-solving skills are the most valuable skills which they learn from case studies. A similar pattern is observed in the case of the least important skill which they learn from case study pedagogy (interpersonal skills). However, slight variations in ranking of other skills have been reported by private and public sector students (e.g. strategic planning skills and ability to analyze). These findings are in connection with the previous studies that case study creates a way for the learners to find out more and appropriate solutions to the problems through artificial life situations (Khimataliev, Bakhriddinov, and Jumanazarova 2021)

Conclusion

Based on empirical findings of this study it can be safely concluded that students perceive case study pedagogy as a valuable source that tends to increase their exposure to compare their theoretical knowledge to a practical problem. Moreover, students have reported that they find offered case studies relevant and interesting, and helpful in understanding business concepts. It is the consensus among the students across the country that problem-solving skills are the most valuable skills which they learn from case studies while interpersonal skills are the least important skill which they learn from case study pedagogy. These skills will help out students to become a vital pillar for economic development and growth, as well as an option of poverty alleviation and employment generation (Unachukwu 2009). However, before intruding on case study methods in pedagogy legitimacy of case studies should be ensured by keeping in view the construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability (Çakar and Aykol 2021). Just like other studies, this study has also some limitations, firstly this is a descriptive study and there is no cause and effect relationship has been discovered, secondly, we have just documented the perception of students and other stakeholders in this regard have not been considered in this study, therefore in future researchers industry and teaching staff should be approached to get deeper insights.

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