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Emerging Trends of Case-Based Pedagogy in Undergraduate Management Institutes

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Abstract: Today's education is seeing a paradigm shift. A huge revolution is taking place in the management education in India. The corporate houses demand the management professionals that are fully equipped with decision making skills and possess the required knacks to perform specific jobs. However, with the advent of freely available online resources, managing a classroom has thus become a difficult task for teachers. To shape the students into the industry ready employees, it is imperative that the students' involvement in classroom study increases. To enhance the students learning the top management institutes of India like IIMs have made pioneering efforts to adopt case based pedagogy. On the other hand learning via case study in an under-graduate management institutes is still in a nascent stage. The paper explores the issues and challenges faced by the instructors in adopting a case study pedagogy in undergraduate management institutes. The study has been done by carrying out through literature review, faculties' survey through questionnaire and by taking in-depth interviews of faculties from different colleges. The primary data was collected in Ahmedabad and the data has been analysed using statistical tools like graphs, charts and calculated averages. The authors have also suggested the aspects that the management institutes may incorporate to escalate their overall competence.

Keywords: Business Education, Pedagogy, Case Based Pedagogy, Case Study Learning, Undergraduate Management Institutes.

I. INTRODUCTION

India is witnessing a revolutionary change in the management education. The educational institutions are facing a growing pressure for changing the ways the education has been imparted traditionally. The B-schools need to integrate the academic activities with other relevant skill based activities in order to make the students ready to tackle the issues related to business. Today, the management students are no more seen as a fresher in a job, rather they are seen as a ready employable product who are assumed to possess the necessary decision-making skills required for a job. To shape the students into the industry ready employees, it is imperative that the students' involvement in classroom study increases. Today, not only the B-schools but also the undergraduate management institutions are facing similar immense competition.

To enhance the students learning the top management institutes of India like IIMs have made pioneering efforts to adopt case based pedagogy. (Singh and Sinha, 2006) A study states that in the Indian context, IIM Ahmedabad (established in 1963 with the contributing efforts of (HBS) Harvard Business School) has been one of the pioneers of the case based pedagogy amongst business schools for its flagship PGP (MBA) program.

On the other hand learning via case study in an under-graduate management institutes is still in a nascent stage. Reflecting to this changing ways of imparting management education, the under-graduate management institutions need to give a green signal in adopting different pedagogies mostly influenced from west.

The study would try to recognise the challenges faced by the undergraduate management institutions and would try to make an attempt to recommend the undergraduate management institutions in adopting the new pedagogical styles.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

With the advent of freely available online resources the biggest challenge for an instructor is classroom management. Unless, a teacher does not have something value addition in a classroom, the students' involvement will be at stake. One such study by Merrett and Wheldall (1993) found that a vast majority of teachers felt that classroom management is very important.

Addressing the issue of effective classroom management, Eisenman, Edwards & Cushman (2015) states that the problem persists because of the lack of the reality-based pedagogy.

The under-graduate students lack working experience. Hence, it is difficult to bring reality to the classrooms. However, the demands of corporates cannot be neglected.

Study by Khan (2014) says that in response to various stakeholders' complaints that business schools do not provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the current dynamic organizational system and culture, business schools need to work on transformative learning while integrating discipline-specific knowledge into fully understanding the emerging business organisation.

To involve the students in the learning process it is imperative that the student is actively involved in a learning process. Case based learning is a wave in bringing the reality of business and economy in the classroom. Case based learning helps the students in enhancing their decision making skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills, analytical skills and gives a holistic approach to any situation.

The study by Williams (2005) adds that Case-based learning (CBL), which is one of such teaching and learning methods, is an interactive, student-centered exploration strategy that draws on real-life situations to initiate and promote authentic learning.

Case-based learning is a constructive learning paradigm, in which learners select and transform information, construct ideas, and make decisions based on their current or past knowledge (Brandon & All, 2010).

However, we found that many instructors hesitate using case based learning. The reasons could be ranging from students involvement to the lack of efforts by the instructors in adopting this pedagogy.

According to Srinivasan et al (2005), the case study approach hones skills in handling uncertainty, change and builds tolerance for ambiguity among students. He further compares the case study and lecture pedagogies, and states that the former is more demanding since it goes beyond the spatial dimension to also bring in the temporal element. (Srinivasan, 2005).

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to provide a critical analysis of the pedagogical challenges faced by the undergraduate management institutions.

The broad objective of the paper is to recognise if CBL can be imparted in undergraduate management institution

The sub-objectives of the study are:

1. To study the influence of the college affiliation over the pedagogy used by the instructor.
2. To identify the issues and the benefits of using case based teaching in the undergraduate management class.
3. To identify the most common pedagogy conveyed in an undergraduate management institution.
4. To understand the influence of the subject on the pedagogy.

The findings of this study would be useful to any other undergraduate management institution aiming to produce effective managers for tomorrow.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There is a lack of studies related to the issues, challenges and benefits of using CBL in an undergraduate management college. The insights of this exploratory study have been developed through a literature review and the in-depth interviews conducted with the professors of different management institutes in Ahmedabad. For confirmatory research, the data was collected through survey using questionnaire.

V. SAMPLING

The sample size for this study is 40 and instrument used is questionnaire. The sample area is Ahmedabad. The statistical tools used are simple average method, graphs and charts.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH FACULTIES

In-depth interviews were conducted in order to gauge the attitude of the faculty towards the case based pedagogy. Respondents were the faculties of undergraduate management institutes from Ahmedabad. Six faculties were interviewed and the respondents for in-depth interviews were chosen based on the convenience.

INSIGHTS FROM THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The basic purpose of in-depth interview was to understand the motives behind the pedagogical style w.r.t. case study analysis.

The arguments for using Case study pedagogy at undergraduate management level are:

1. Case studies encourage active learning in the students attitude as cases are tools to facilitate participatory student learning
2. It helps students to think critically and analyse the given information
3. It boosts the problem solving skills, decision making skills as well as helps in team-building, group discussions and develops communication skills
4. Generally, cases impart real life into the subject matter, hence we say that it brings corporate reality to the classroom. It develops awareness of different industrial knowledge.
5. Proactive learning is encouraged in CBL as pre-readings are pre-requisites
6. Many students prefer to drop few years after under-graduation to gain work experience so as to secure admission to the top b-schools for post-graduation. Hence, in such a case, a practical application education like CBL at under-graduate level becomes useful

The arguments against using Case study pedagogy at undergraduate management level are:

1. Compared to the traditional methods like classroom lectures, case based pedagogy demands much more of emotional labour from the faculties
2. Lack of students sincerity in pre-reading of cases and the pre-requisites poses a challenge in a healthy case discussion in class
3. The under-graduate management students lack appetite for handling change and ambiguity of cases

4. At undergraduate levels, sometimes the breadth of touching all theoretical concepts becomes more important rather than covering the depth of few important concepts. However, a discussion may not cover all aspects in one go. It is difficult to sacrifice breadth in favour of depth
5. Sometimes there is a dearth of certain basic conceptual knowledge essential to read the case as compared to postgraduate students. Hence, at times case discussion becomes general debate as students jump to conclusion or solutions rather than admiring the journey of a healthy case discussion
6. Some basic concerns from most of the faculties were:
 - Short Time duration to cover a lengthy syllabus
 - Language barriers poses a challenge, as some students also come from Gujarati medium as well as Hindi medium schools
 - Lack of availability of free and simple cases which covers the topics of the syllabus
 - Lack of Funds to purchase cases
 - Enthusiastic case discussion is possible if students are exposed to Indian perspective cases. But lack of Indian domain cases pose a problem for healthy discussion.
 - CBL at undergraduate level can be more fruitful if it was in a residential course as then time would not be a constraint
 - For quantitative subjects like statistics, accountancy, mathematics the concept clarity should be given more importance than practical application of case discussion

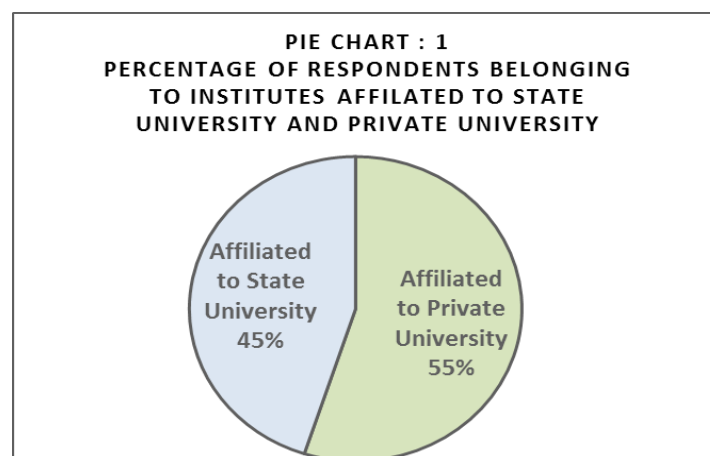
The in-depth interviews and the literature review helped to identify few pedagogical styles that are mostly preferred in management institutions. Some types of pedagogies used for the survey are direct instruction or writing for learning, interactive lecture or leading discussions, case-study method, problem-based learning, project-based learning and game-based learning.

QUESTIONNAIRE AND SURVEY DESIGN

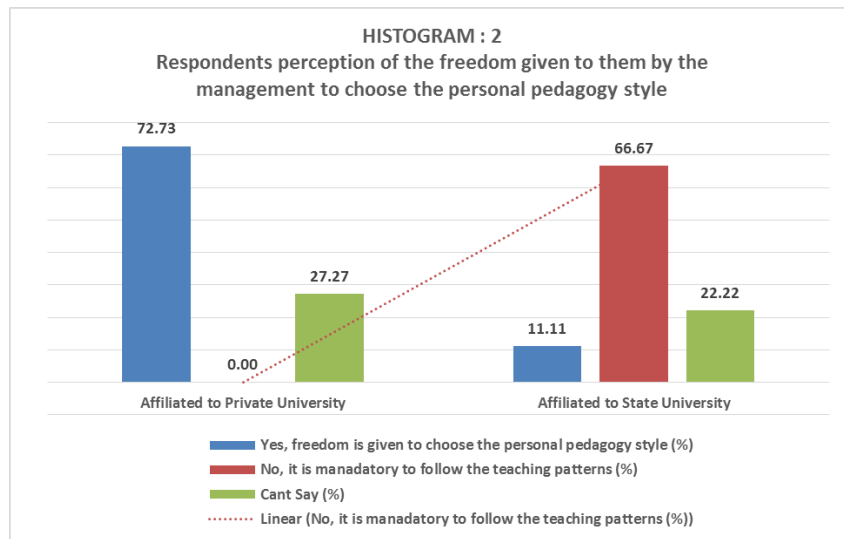
The questionnaire used in the survey is included in Exhibit 2 in detail. The nominal scale and rating scale is mostly used. To capture different perspectives of the professors open ended subjective questions were also used. Both online and offline survey was done. The respondents were selected from different undergraduate management colleges in Ahmedabad.

VI. DATA INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS

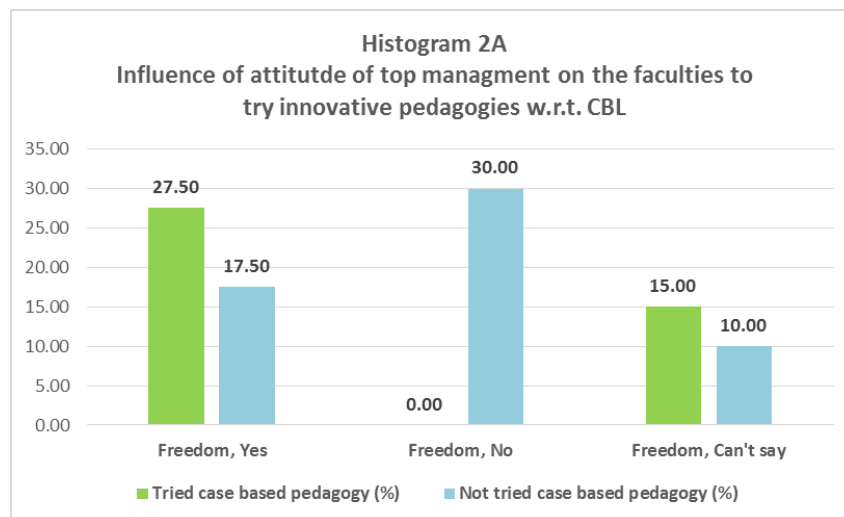
The profile of the respondents: The faculties of nearly seven different undergraduate management colleges in Ahmedabad were included. These colleges provided the courses like BBA, IMBA and MAM. BBA is a three years Business administration course. Whereas, IMBA and MAM are five-years integrated course of applied management.



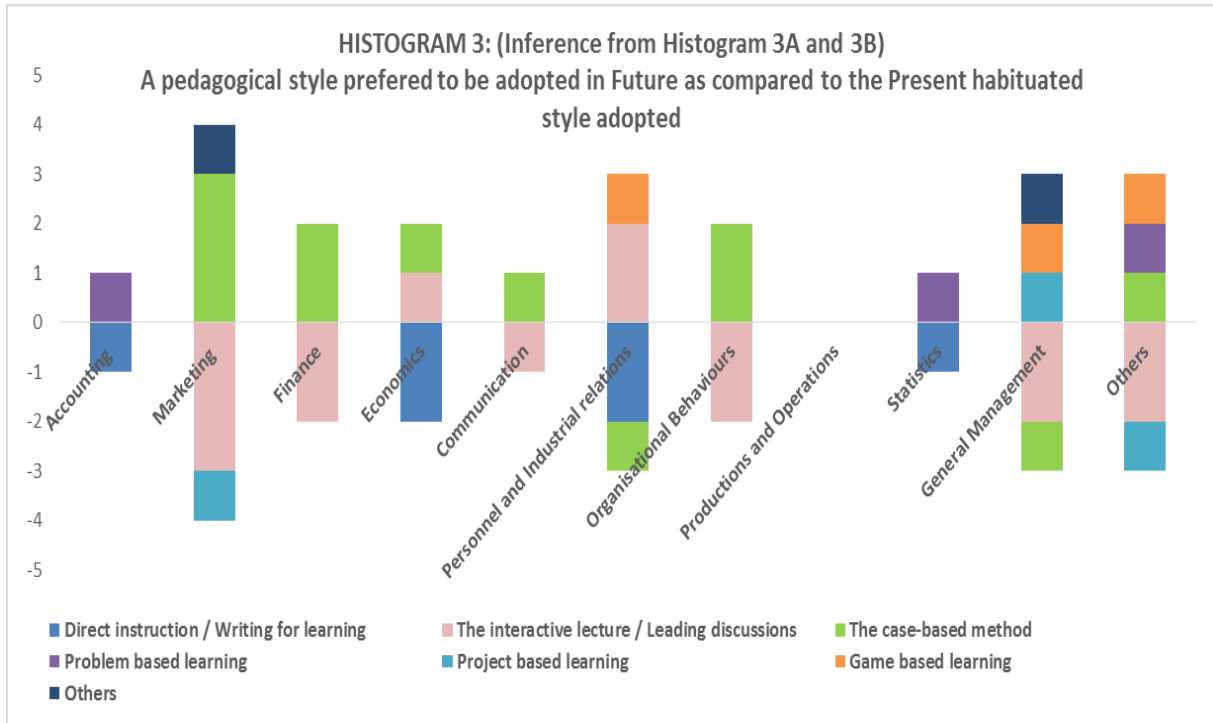
Out of total 40 respondents, 55% of the respondents were working with the institutes that were affiliated to private university whereas 45% of the respondents were working with colleges affiliated to state university (As shown in Pie Chart: 1). The college affiliation has an impact on the pedagogy decision making, hence the profile of respondents was chosen accordingly. However, the faculties from autonomous institutes, deemed and central university could not be reached for conducting the survey.



The choice of adopting a personal pedagogy is at times influenced by the freedom given to choose the teaching style by the top management of the college. From the histogram2 we can say that from the total respondents working with colleges affiliated to private university 72.73% respondents said that their college them enough freedom to carry on classroom activities. Whereas, 66.67% of the respondents working with colleges affiliated to state university said that there was less freedom to choose personal pedagogy style and they had to follow certain standards for conducting a class.



The histogram 2A indicates that if more freedom to conduct classroom actives is given to the instructors, then instructors would make extra efforts to try new and innovative pedagogies in classroom teaching. 27.50% of the total 40 respondents said that they have tried case based pedagogy because they were given freedom to choose personal pedagogical style. Whereas, 30% of the total 40 respondents said that they never tried case based teaching in their present working institute as there were certain pedagogical standards one has to follow.



Histogram 3 (Inference from Histogram 3A and 3B as shown in the exhibit 1) shows the influence of subject areas on the pedagogical styles. The respondents were asked to answer the most used pedagogical style by them in their subject and then answer the pedagogical style they wish to adopt in their subject in future. Respondents showed optimistic response for using case based pedagogy in teaching subjects like marketing, finance, economics, communication, organisational behaviour and others at undergraduate management level. However, in subjects like accounting and statistics, the respondents showed negative response for using case based pedagogy. The reason given was mainly that quantitative oriented subjects needed more of conceptual clarity than case discussions at undergraduate levels.

The other subjects included the subjects like taxation, law and entrepreneurship. And the others category of pedagogical styles included workshops, collaborative assignments, one-week internships, tours, moot courts in the subject law, live demos in communication, movie making, role play, etc.

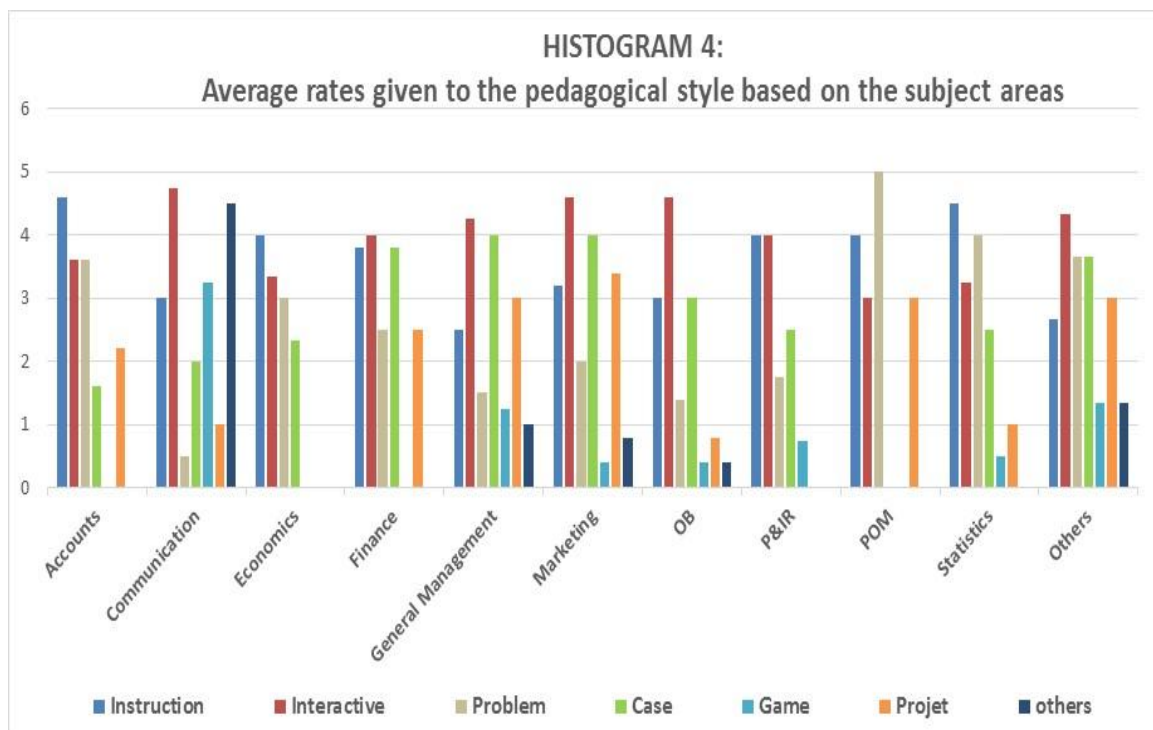
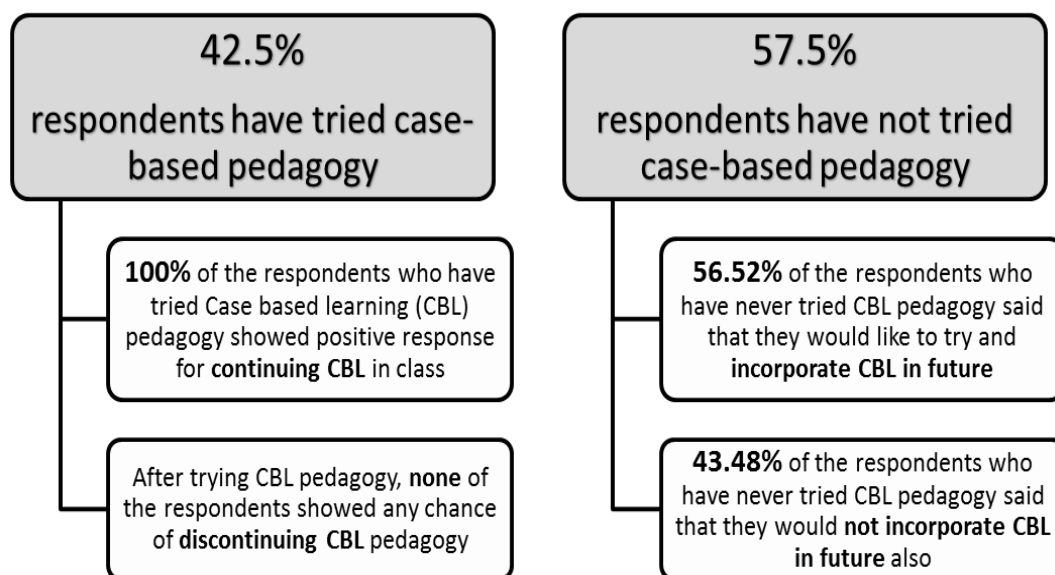


Table: Histogram 4	Instruction	Interactive	Problem	Case	Game	Projet	others
Accounts	4.6	3.6	3.6	1.6	0	2.2	0
Communication	3	4.75	0.5	2	3.25	1	4.5
Economics	4	3.33	3	2.33	0	0	0
Finance	3.8	4	2.5	3.8	0	2.5	0
General Management	2.5	4.25	1.5	4	1.25	3	1
Marketing	3.2	4.6	2	4	0.4	3.4	0.8
OB	3	4.6	1.4	3	0.4	0.8	0.4
P&IR	4	4	1.75	2.5	0.75	0	0
POM	4	3	5	0	0	3	0
Statistics	4.5	3.25	4	2.5	0.5	1	0
Others	2.67	4.33	3.67	3.67	1.33	3.00	1.33
Total	39.27	43.72	28.92	29.40	7.88	19.90	8.03

Based on our literature review we can say that case based pedagogy should be adopted in management institutes. However, when asked the respondents to rate the pedagogy used by them that can be adopted for the subject areas at undergraduate management level, we can clearly see that the case-based pedagogy has taken a backstage. Even today the undergraduate management institutes of Ahmedabad are relying more on traditional methods of teaching like direct instructions, writing for learning, interactive lectures and leading discussions. The game based pedagogy is least preferred by the respondents.

Chart 5



Though, case based pedagogy is still not widely used in undergraduate management institutes, the chart 5 shows that out of the 42.5% of the faculties who have tried using case based teaching, of them 100% will continue to use it. None of the faculties would prefer to discontinue CBL. This positive response for using Case based teaching is mainly because CBL gives them an edge over their subject. On the contrary, approximately 23% of the total respondents have shown extremely negative preference towards Case Study teaching. This may be because of the quantitative oriented subjects like accountancy and statistics. The time constraints, freedom given by top management, length of the syllabus, students' pro-activeness in learning with Cases, language barriers etc. are some issues which came up during in-depth interviews could be the reasons for showing negative preference in incorporating case based pedagogy in future.

VII. OBSERVATIONS FROM THE STUDY

- The faculties from the colleges which are affiliated to state universities seems to get less liberty to choose their personal pedagogy as compared to the colleges affiliated to private universities.
- If faculties are not obliged with pedagogical norms and standards then faculties would welcome innovative pedagogies in their class.
- Faculties have shown interest in shifting from traditional direct instructions to other new and innovative pedagogies.
- It is inferred from the survey that for areas like marketing, organisational behaviour and general management CBL is quite preferred, whereas in areas such as finance, communication, economics, the faculties would attempt to integrate CBL with their traditional pedagogies.
- Whereas in quantitative oriented subjects like accounts, statistics, productions and operations management traditional lecture based and problem based methods are more favoured.
- Many faculties fear that if they incorporate a student-centered pedagogy like CBL then they would lose an edge over their subject and might lose the control over a class discipline.
- The insights from in-depth interviews have presented with the arguments for and against the use of CBL at undergraduate management level.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Though there are arguments for and against for using Case-based pedagogy at undergraduate management level, but the latest trends shows that CBL is an emerging pedagogy at undergraduate management institutions. Undergraduate management schools need to transform themselves. It is time that the pedagogy at undergraduate management level integrates managerial implications.

- The pioneers of the university working at the top management should be little more liberal rather than having a conservative attitude. Faculties should be given some autonomy to decide on their personal style of pedagogy instead of demanding from them to sternly follow certain customs.
- The Case based pedagogy should be integrated with traditional lectures and other innovative pedagogies. The theoretical concepts taught in lecture need not be replaced, but the managerial implications of theoretical concepts should be taught additionally with CBL and other innovative pedagogies in order to bring an understanding of reality in class.
- The students should be involved into the rigorous training of practical application based studies right from the first year of undergraduate level. The problem lies in CBL being introduced at the last year of undergraduate level and hence students lack appetite to digest new methods of learning.
- The fear of losing the class control among instructors will decrease if they are trained to conduct CBL sessions.
- Faculties should be encouraged to participate in FDP's and they should learn to conduct a case study analysis in class.
- To solve the problem of dearth of Indian perspective cases, institutes must encourage research activities in academicians. A good research will build upon and contribute the education industry with Indian perspective cases.

IX. LIMITATIONS

The sampling technique used is convenience which inevitably limits the generalizability of the study. Some faculties taught subjects in two or more areas. Hence, it was difficult to infer their views about pedagogy for one particular area. Many students learn more passively than interactively, hence the effectiveness of CBL cannot be measured for passive learning students.

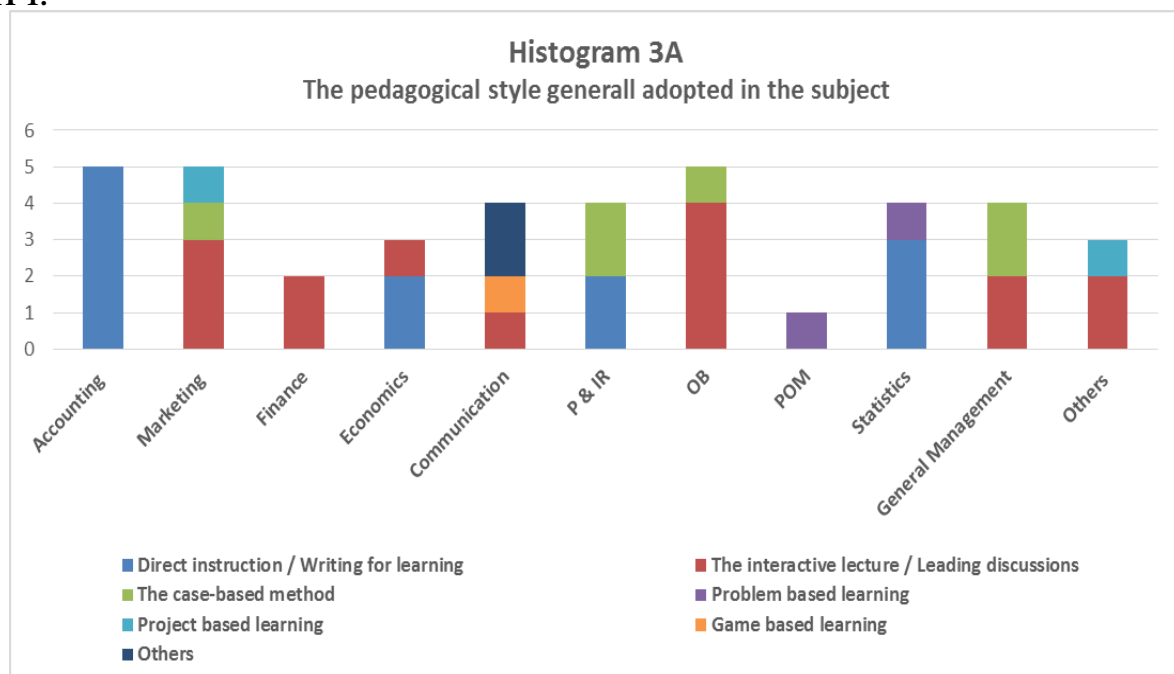
X. CONCLUSION

The major transition of India's management education can be seen since last decade. The importance of cross cultural global education through students' exchange programmes, the alliances between the institutes and the corporates and the partnership among the institutes are some of the shift elements. Hence, the study of this paper enables educational institutions to play an active role in skill acquisition process. The findings of this study has shown concerns over the traditional pedagogies to meet the recent demands of corporates. Thus the paper has made an attempt to suggest the ways to improve quality in education by integrating CBL and other innovative pedagogies with traditional pedagogies.

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EXHIBIT 1:



- Yes: Enough freedom is given _____
- No: It is mandatory to follow norms _____
- Can't say _____

10. Please tick one method of teaching you generally adopt in your subject.

- i. Direct instruction / Writing for learning
- ii. The interactive lecture / Leading discussions
- iii. The case-based method
- iv. Problem based learning
- v. Project based learning
- vi. Game based learning
- vii. Any other, please specify _____

11. Please tick one method of teaching you wish to implement in future in your subject. (you might have used it once or twice in the past)

- i. Direct instruction / Writing for learning
- ii. The interactive lecture / Leading discussions
- iii. The case-based method
- iv. Problem based learning
- v. Project based learning
- vi. Game based learning
- vii. Any other, please specify _____

12. Have you ever tried using a case-based approach in teaching?

Yes / No

(If answer to Q-12 is "Yes" then please skip Q.16. If No, then please answer Q-16 Onwards.)

13. What are the benefits of case-based teaching to the class?

14. What problems did you face in trying a case-based session?

15. Would you continue to use the case based approach?

Yes / No

16. Would you like to incorporate case-based approach in your pedagogy?

Yes / No

17. According to you, which method should be used to cover the syllabus of your subject at under-graduate level? Please rate from 0 to 5. (0 means least likely to be used and 5 means most likely to be used)

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Direct instruction / Writing for learning						
The interactive lecture / Leading discussions						
The case-based method						
Problem based learning						
Project based learning						
Game based learning						
Any other, please specify						

18. Anything you would like to add?

Thank you!

AUTHOR(S) PROFILE



Sonal Gogri, working as an Assistant Professor she has done her Master's in Business Administration in Marketing Management. She has over 3.5 years of experience in Academics.

She has worked with Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad as an Academic Associate. At IIMA she has assisted courses like Marketing Research and Information Systems, Strategies in Digital Marketing, Business Research Methods and Marketing Management in the world of Hi-tech innovation. She has also worked as a Lecturer in various Institutes like Samyaktva Education Ltd., Swastik Institute for Professional Studies and L. J. Institutes among others. She has taught subjects like Advertising Management, Public Relations Management, and Strategic Management.

Besides academics she has also worked with Business Standard Limited and Radio Mirchi for a short-term project-intern basis. At college level she teaches subjects like Marketing Management, Management Concepts and Practices, Organisational Behaviour.