Dynamics of Team Teaching and Research in a Management School: Learning and Imperatives

Sunil Kumar Maheshwari
Mukund R. Dixit
Abhinandan K. Jain
Ramesh Bhat

W.P. No.2007-01-03
January 2007

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT
AHMEDABAD-380 015
INDIA

Dynamics of Team Teaching and Research in a Management School: Learning and Imperatives

Abstract

This paper discusses the experience of team teaching to address the issues of integration of academic inputs by bringing multi-disciplinary perspective together and thereby enhance learning experience of participants. The paper delves on the process, events and outcome of team teaching by four faculty members at IIM Ahmedabad who collaborated in teaching, writing cases, and doing research for a period of more than three years. The experience has been summarized using the following dimensions: need for team-teaching, existing mechanisms and barriers, opportunities and potential, imperatives, fall-outs and challenges experienced in the process. The cohesion, trust and mutual respect are key imperatives. The other factors contributing to the success of team-teaching are strong felt need by the members for integration in programmes, complementary skills and experiences of team members, frequent programmes with integrated components that provided continuous opportunities for learning, co-location of the instructors, and off-site programmes that provided opportunities for close get-togethers. The autonomy granted by the institution to instructors and co-coordinators to design and execute learning opportunities was also instrumental in the success. In an environment where the rule of the game is individualism, forming teams creates fears of loss of importance and recognition. The experience shows that the competency of the members and the overall effectiveness of the tasks are strengthened if the team believes in "reciprocating interdependence". This can be possible only if members allow themselves opportunities to experiment, improvise and review.

Dynamics of Team Teaching and Research in a Management School: Learning and Imperatives

I. Introduction

It is well known that scientists and specialists in various disciplines expect complete freedom to exercise independent judgment and tend to function in individualistic patterns (Hagstrom, 1964). They are also usually reluctant interact with their colleagues and to provide feedback to their colleagues, and take criticism as they deem fit. Providing guidance and telling each other what to do, may be seen an intrusion in their domains resulting into serious inter-personal problems. Hence, it is difficult to modify their behavior to any externally imposed goal or process. Would such a group of people then be able to work together as a team? Their combined knowledge, surely, would be of immense value to the participants they address. Studies show that team teaching could result in better learning.

Bunderson (2003) suggests that groups perform better when members identify and utilize each other's expertise. Though diversity among members enables groups to integrate multiple perspectives, managing becomes a challenging task owing to different professional assumptions, experiences and training of the members. Little, however, is known about the process that enables such groups to perform synergistically.

Ericksen and Dyer (2004) suggest that groups that follow described or prescribed progressions perform well. Events that shape the formative period of the team influence the outcome in the subsequent days. Very little literature is available that documents events from the formation to the functioning of groups over a period of time.

Like experts in other fields, professors in management schools too tend to work individually. But they do, however, participate in interdependent academic situations such as multi-disciplinary research and handling case discussions in a class. This paper discusses the need for team teaching to improve the learning of participants and explores the reasons for the absence of team teaching in business schools. It also provides insights on the process, events and outcome of team teaching by four faculty members in a business school who collaborated in teaching, writing cases, and doing research for a period of more than three years.

II. Team Teaching in the Case Method

Faculty teams play crucial roles in academic and administrative processes in an educational programme. Colleagues work together on the admission process (test construction, evaluation, interviews and final selection), curriculum design, and graduation. However, most of the time, the delivery of academic inputs and the case discussion in class are done individually. The preparation for the class is also done alone. It is generally not mandated to work together in teams. However, most academic programmes have integration of academic inputs as one of the objectives, which may require considerable multi-disciplinary interaction. While many instructors recognize that students would stand to benefit from team teaching, few efforts have been made and fewer still have been successful. "Leave me alone with my course and my class. I am sure that the participants are intelligent enough to see the linkages and integrate," appears to be the attitude. There are a few academic institutes where instructors attend each other's classes as a regular practice. Wherever this happens, it is done more to understand the learning of participants or to provide feedback to the instructor. Even in programmes that necessitate multiple sections and multiple instructors, the role of teams is confined to broad-based class strategy; the details are usually left to individual faculty members.

The case method of learning has been widely accepted as the most potent pedagogical tool in business education. The relevance of team teaching in handling cases in class hinges on the nature of the cases and the process of learning.

Nature of the Cases: Real-life case studies (the most useful of the various types of cases for learning) present managerial problems of multiple stakeholders from multiple perspectives. The problems posed in a case cut across the various disciplines of management and frequently require the use of various tools with multiple perspectives and frameworks for arriving at a set of decisions and planning their implementation. This is also seen critical from integration viewpoint. For example, understanding and developing skills to understand shareholder perspective requires strong application of financial and strategy framework in addition to behavioural science tools. This understanding would also be incomplete in the absence of understanding of customer perspective and the way development and growth in organization contributes to the shareholder value. Similarly, employee perspective necessitates a strong application of developmental framework, while competitor perspective demands strategy framework. Multiple perspectives are essential for preparations by instructors and participants, as are multiple approaches for discussion. It is clear, therefore, that a multi-disciplinary perspective is imperative for improved learning from case method.

Processes*:* In the case method of learning, instructors expect participants to prepare the cases in teams so that multiple perspectives on the situation faced by the decision maker can be highlighted. Participants, especially in executive education programmes, have a sound knowledge of the various streams. They respond to cases based on their own experience, and visualize their own context while studying the issues. It should be noted that instructors themselves tend to prepare as individuals and guide the discussions in the class based on their experiences and areas of specialization.

Limitations of a Single Instructor*:* Single instructors have limitations of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits. Their expertise is primarily related to their area of specialization. Naturally, discussions get somewhat biased and many issues remain inadequately explored. Single instructors find it difficult to arrive at both a relevant set of decisions in complex situations and a robust implementation plan in any situation. The full learning potential of a case is therefore not realised. Besides, single instructors are generally unable to integrate multiplicity in a class, and hence both instructors and participants leave the class disillusioned.

Non-Optimal Learning Outcomes*:* Participants expect - and understandably so - all the dimensions to be discussed irrespective of the background of the instructors and feel unhappy if relevant issues are not covered in class discussions and while taking decisions or preparing implementation plans. Their expectations raise the following fundamental questions:

- Is case-discussion handling by a single instructor adequate for a case discussion?
- Would it be more beneficial to have more than one instructor to facilitate the discussion?
- How would several instructors with relevant skills come together and conduct the discussions?

Answers to these questions can only strengthen the case method of learning. Situations such as these provide opportunities to understand the functioning of a team of highly qualified people.

Potential of Team Teaching: A team of instructors from various backgrounds would be beneficial in many ways. First, the preparation by instructors has the potential to explore all the relevant issues. Second, there is likely to be better guidance by the instructors in pre-class discussion and subsequently in the class discussions, which can only result in better responses. Third, an integrated approach to learning from different perspectives is entirely possible. Fourth, the team approach provides ample opportunities for even instructors to learn from other experts and in turn they become better academics. Fifth, discipline-based instructors can link their discipline with general management functionaries in organizations. Sixth, instructors acquire the ability to manage a class of diverse participants. Seventh, a team effort of individuals possessing specialized knowledge cutting across several disciplines is likely to generate new ideas. Finally, it has the potential to improve the overall learning of both instructors and participants significantly.

III. Risks and Fears

Team teaching is not without risks and fears. Institutions have to provide extra teaching time. One-upmanship, ego clashes, and power politics between instructors are likely to occur, resulting in high coordination costs to institutions. Finally, the team might just break up, making a mockery of the case method of learning.

Experience thus far: Despite dismal results, the advantages prompt business schools to encourage team teaching of cases. Business Schools the world over have experimented with team teaching in different forms in three kinds of courses. In the most common form, the faculty members come together to design a programme and sequence their sessions to achieve specific objectives and deliverables. For example, there are instances when two or more faculty members offer joint courses and programmes. They conduct their sessions or modules in rotation. The specific sessions are largely handled by individual instructors. In the second form, faculty members are usually present in all the sessions. However, each of the sessions is conducted by a single expert, while the others observe the proceedings.

This paper presents the third form of group teaching. Different faculty members take lead roles at different times during the same long session. However, the other members can intervene and add value to the discussions at any time during the session. Since it is physically impossible for a big team to keep standing during the entire session, the lead instructor occupies the place in the front while the others occupy strategic seats visible from all directions in the class. Lead roles are however often interchanged and every instructor has the right to steer the discussions.

IV. Methodology

One objective of this paper is to evolve a theory about the process of development of a team of specialists. Another is to study the issues and the effectiveness of team teaching. These objectives require a methodology to capture the process dynamics. The process description provides details regarding events, the understanding of individuals and their roles in the dynamics over time.

The data for this research was collected through participant observation, based on the observations, experiences and insights of a team of professors at a management institute in India from the fields of Finance and Accounting, Human Resource Management, and Marketing and Strategic Management. A Management Information System professor was also part of the team, but since he was not involved from beginning to end, the paper is based on the observation of only the other four.

The members had taught together for more than three years and had evolved as a team, working towards a more interactive and integrative style of teaching. The early joint case teaching soon led to taking joint management development programmes for executives. The members bounced ideas against each other, sharing experiences, individual research and teaching methods. The team graduated from a Team of Case Teachers to a Team of Case Writers to a Team of Researchers. There has been no study of such a large team of faculty members who have persisted with team teaching for such a long period of time.

One of the members of the team first prepared a detailed note of his observations after the first major team teaching. The other members added their observations. The process was repeated after every session of team teaching. Finally, two more notes were prepared, one each for team writing and joint programme development. The updated notes provided data for this research.

After nearly three years of team activities, the team decided to develop a research paper on the experiences of the team building process. In a programme on Training the Trainers, one of the team members made a formal presentation of the process of team formation and its activities in the presence of the other team members, who liberally added their own experiences. Eight such iterations were undertaken to reflect the experiences in a process note, which was discussed in detail jointly. The process of learning and the issues were also identified in five such joint sessions. The team members sent comments to each other on email. This process of building conclusions is consistent with Eisenhardt (1989), who argues that building theory from case study research is iterative and that such theories provide a unique opportunity to generate novelty to literature.

V. The Context

The faculty team works at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA). IIMA, as a policy, encourages faculty members to experiment and take initiatives. The institute focuses on general management training and therefore encourages interdisciplinary interaction. Though three member and two member teams have worked together to design and deliver management courses, joint teaching is not institutionalized.

Culturally, the relationships between faculty members are not hierarchical and decision-making occurs at a committee level and is largely open. Functionally, the institute, like most other business schools, is divided into areas such as finance and accounting, operations management, human resource management, and strategic management. There are industry specific research centres and faculty members from various disciplines contribute.

The faculty members in this study have their offices coincidentally located in the same wing. They have experimented with team teaching in various formats at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA). The experiences have been unique on many counts. First, the team consisted of four (sometimes five) faculty members, unlike the two or three member teams in most of the other formats. Second, the team consisted of mature professionals between the ages of 35 years to 60 years. Third, the background of the members varied significantly; they belonged to different functional streams of management and came from different social backgrounds. Fourth, though the team members had never worked before together collectively, they had worked together in different dyads. Fifth, the scope of team functioning spanned from teaching to consulting and research. There has been no study that provides such a variation. The team, as mentioned, evolved over a period of time and the team dynamics and relationships between the members changed during this period. This study examines the nature of the relationships and the dynamics. The team has continued in different forms in different teaching programmes, research and consulting in the last four years.

While co-location alone does not nurture team development, the opportunities provided by the Institute to interact in committees, Management Development Programmes (MDPs), Orientation Programmes, and specially designed programmes for companies (known as in-company programmes internally in the institute) have fostered a culture of working together. The members were also experienced in leading teams as coordinators of short and medium duration MDPs (varying from a few days to few months). The team members, by virtue of living in the campus, had ample opportunities for informal interaction, and the long rambling walks which they often took together prepared an excellent ground for team teaching.

***The Process*:** A few comments from the team members that reflect on the team's evolution:

"I know what you are going to write on the board and how you are going organize your board, well before you have passed the first two points."

"I do not know when I would be required to interject or build on, but when the instructor in the well asks me to build further, I will presume that he has broken off at the most appropriate juncture."

"Now we do not need elaborate discussions and game plans. We just have to decide to be together and get involved."

"I used the excel sheet developed by you in my class in a totally different way. Here is my version of the sheet. Let us build on it in our next team involvement."

"You almost killed my role when you started talking about the people issues while discussing the value of the customers. However, I knew that you were trying to build it in the overall context of team teaching."

Building the Team - the Trigger**:** In the year 2002, IIMA assigned the coordination of its three week-long Management Development programme, Tier II, for Senior Managers, to one of the members of the team - Prof. Sunil Maheshwari (SM) from the Personnel and Industrial Relations Area. SM had earlier coordinated the other four week-long programme, Tier I, for middle managers in the Institute and Industry.[1]

Over a period of time Tier II lost much of its character. Though it was more expensive, it was similar to Tier I, and included just a few reductions in some of the functional modules, clearly designed to suit the shorter duration of the programme. Tier II was under integrated. The presentation of a case depicting the learning of general management perspective on the last day of the programme left much to be desired.[2] There was a feeling that the faculty did not exploit the full potential of the case method and the experiences of the participants. The participants expressed the need for intermediate presentations to learn the general management perspective so that it could be well reflected in the final presentation. Having recently coordinated Tier I, SM felt that there ought to be a different edge to the programme.

The Initial Steps: SM impressed upon Ramesh Bhat (RB) of the Finance and Accounts Area the need for innovation in the delivery process. RB, the then Chairperson of the Management Development Programmes at the Institute, was responsible for the design and development of all general management programmes. RB and SM had worked as a research team in a long-term research project a couple of years earlier.

RB and SM decided to discuss the issue with Prof. Mukund R Dixit (MRD) from Business Policy Area. Apart from being in charge of the design and delivery of the module on general management, MRD had valuable experience in steering the review committee for the MBA programme. This committee, of which RB was also a member, had suggested an innovative design and delivery of the programme contents. RB had also earlier jointly coordinated an in-company programme with MRD[3]. MRD had strongly advocated a modular approach to the design and delivery of the programme content in the committee meetings. This approach was supported by most members, including Abhinandan Jain (AKJ) of the Marketing Area. The committee had strongly recommended, among other things, the use of a modular approach with team teaching of overlapping academic topics like demand forecasting. Instructors could be chosen from

[1] Both Tier I and Tier II are part of a programme called the Three Tier Programme of the Institute. This is a long standing and prestigious set of Executive Education Programmes which aims to build general management competencies among executives. The Tier 1 for middle managers is designed with a greater focus on functional learning and culminates in the development of general management perspective. The Second Tier for senior managers focuses more on general management perspective.

[2] Towards the end of the programmes participants make a large scale presentation which is expected to reflect the general management perspective of the participants.

[3] The in-company programmes of the Institute are Executive Education Programmes customized for meeting the specific needs of a single company.

the areas of economics, marketing, and quantitative methods. The committee further recommended that team teaching be employed for developing general management perspective in different phases of the MBA programme in the compulsory/ required first curriculum.

Gathering Momentum: RB, MRD, and SM maintained that an integrated approach to the design and delivery of Tier II of the Three Tier Programme, as against the functional approach in Tier I, could be a strong differentiator. The team of three believed that the programme could be well differentiated by adopting integration along two dimensions:

- To do things in a theme mode
- To do things in a team mode

MRD was excited at the possibility of experimenting with his ideas, though in a different programme. The three approached AKJ, also a member of the above-referred review committee. MRD and AKJ had worked together as a teaching team in two in-company programmes. They had earlier jointly written articles and cases, designed and delivered in-company programmes, and conducted sessions on "Orientation to the Case method". AKJ had practiced team teaching with others in the industry and within the Institute. He had earlier worked with two other colleagues in the Computer and Information Systems Group to develop and offer a new elective course in the MBA programme. He had also teamed up with a practising executive to develop and offer a course on Consumer Based Business Strategy. The team of four varied in their age - AKJ, MRD, RB and SM were their late 50s, early 50s, early 40s and late 30s respectively.

The Challenge: The faculty members unanimously believed that the challenge at this stage lay in not having worked together earlier. They had worked in two member groups (RB and SM; MRD and AKJ, and MRD and RB), but this was the first time they were planning to work together in a class. The question was: how?

The following sentences express their inhibitions:
"I am concerned about my professional domain. I'm not comfortable about my colleagues sitting in class. I might have anxieties owing to this."

"I am new in the Institute. All the other three members have been my teachers during my student days. There is high formality in the relationships. How will the process unfold – I'm anxious."

These words summed up the overall feeling: "It is nice to talk about live integration in class. But can we suppress our domain orientation and rise to the occasion? Will we be ridiculed by participants and colleagues if we fail in our attempts?"

The Plunge: SM summed it up: "It was a difficult time for me. As the coordinator, the success of Tier II programme was critical to me. When the team started working together, I faced high resistance from the other members of the programme (a total of nine). Some of them were skeptical, while others were concerned about the non-inclusion of a member from the Operations Management area. I also ran the risk of straining my relations with others, as they were not involved in the team teaching process. However, my experience showed that any team bigger than this would have been impossible to work together on academic matters. I finally decided to continue with the team of four and take my chances."

VI. Team in Action

Since they had firmly committed to team teaching, all the members willingly participated in the preparatory activities and in developing the strategies to organize the class discussion in class. Despite having various commitments, each member gave first priority to these meetings. The chance location of the offices in the same wing of the Institute proved to be fortuitous – meetings could be organized at short notice, allowing for flexibility and sorting out various coordination issues in time. The key preparatory activities included identification of a case and preparing the strategy for the session.

Identifying the Case: Having agreed to the theme/team approach, the team realized that the identification and the positioning of a set of cases in the programme were crucial. MRD stated, "We didn't have much time, so we started meeting in RB's office[4] formally and informally to chalk out the complete process. We wanted to think through before any administrative work (like distribution of the case to the faculty team) began." AKJ and MRD had a propensity for homework and thinking through, which soon began to rub off on SM and RB.

The identification of cases assumed considerable importance. The main criteria for selection of cases were scope and opportunity to discuss multiple-perspectives in the class. A search was on for a case that would have enough scope for an integrated discussion involving all the four faculty members. RB suggested a case that he had used from a finance perspective in one of the programmes for the executives of a large automobile company. The case was used primarily to cover the finance concepts and help the participants to develop finance perspective in strategic decision-making situation. He had actually found the discussion inadequate since many customer, people, and strategic dimensions could not be discussed at length and integration got left out. SM had coordinated the programme. Though SM was familiar with the case, he was not sure of the potential since it appeared to be a number oriented finance case. After much discussion, it was decided that the team members would look at the case. It was distributed and everyone agreed to meet on a Sunday in RB's office with an analysis on hand.

Preparing Strategy for the Session: In a meeting that lasted for more than three hours, RB identified all the issues in the case. The fact that the case involved a lot of numbers could be used to assess whether the proposed change in the distribution strategy of the company would be financially beneficial and did it make strategic sense. Thus, financial evaluation of the proposed move was the obvious issue. In addition, would the move benefit the customers? Strategic issues were a little hidden. People issues, however, were not at all obvious.

SM recalled this meeting:

> "It was boring as the team discussed all the functional dimensions in the case. Marketing and finance were discussed at length. Some aspects of environment and strategy were brought in. I did not see people issues

[4] RB's office is located in the corner of Wing 1. The furniture arrangement makes the office more spacious.

> coming through at all. I thought that we would end up in a silo. I could not foresee my role. However, since I was committed more to the success of Tier II programme than to team teaching per se I persisted with the meeting."

At the end of the meeting, the team decided to open the session with the participants discussing the following questions:

- What was the company trying to do?
- Why was it trying to do that?
- What should the company do now?

The sequencing of issues in the class discussion was also decided in the meeting. MRD would anchor the discussion in the beginning and integrate the discussion at the end of a daylong session on the case. The team counted on MRD's experience in handling strategy cases and managing the blackboard. RB, AKJ and SM (in that order) would take lead roles during the session. The themes for discussion in the case were identified as Environment & Strategy, Finance, Performance and Evaluation, Customer, Employees, and issues in Strategy Implementation. While a flow of discussion was identified, the members were urged to chip in as and when appropriate.

VII. The First Effort

Implementation of Class Strategy: The team tried to implement the strategy developed. However, the issues and discussion on finance and the number work took an unusually long time. The team members did not know whether to intervene or not. While numbers were being discussed by the lead instructor, one of the team members worked out an alternative approach to help reduce the time taken to discuss finance issues. His intervention, however, did not help and in fact extended the time taken by the financial issue.

During the tea break that followed, the team members quickly reworked the strategy. Customer perspective was followed by employee perspective and strategy perspective. At the end of the session several new ideas developed as a result of exposure to different perspectives.

The Outcome: As the faculty members took lead roles in the class in rotation, one of the participants commented, "Oh, I am overwhelmed that there are four faculty members to teach us today." At the end of the session, the participants responded almost unanimously: "We had one of the richest discussions ever on a situation. While each faculty member was excellent, it was the combined effort of the team that made the difference." They gave a standing ovation to the faculty team.

Reflection and Review: One of the team members commented on the experience: "I had a feeling of competition. I wanted to be better than my colleagues. The sense of evaluation created anxiety in my mind. However, I could see that the participants appreciated the team effort more than the effort of any individual. This changed my approach and attitude in class and in subsequent contributions." The overall experience was thus summed up: "We did it. There is so much that can be done."

The team met to review the experience. It was decided that in the next session less time would be spent on number work and more time on qualitative managerial issues. The members also explored various options of the sequence of issues that could be discussed and considered the possibility of bringing finance towards the later stage of the class. "Let the 'environment and strategy' discussion be followed by 'what does it mean to the customers?'" was the suggestion. On the employee perspective, SM reflected, "It was as if I played my role and returned. There is scope for interacting with participants differently and wearing the employee hat." MRD reflected, "Let us understand numbers together. Numbers are too important to be left to one person." RB, the Finance faculty, explained, "I was on my toes. The participants were working with another set of assumptions in the previous Tier II programme. Renewing my own numbers in the context created stress. I did not know how to get out and hand over the class to the next member." AKJ added, "Sensing that I had worked out a different set of numbers with a different approach in the class, I intervened. However, it was not easy to change the course of discussion to the new approach and I ended up taking more time." RB and AKJ deliberated over the new numbers and their interpretations.

VIII. The Next Opportunity

A New Setting: The next opportunity for team teaching came up in January 2003 when the coordinator of the Tier I, Prof. Sanjay Verma (SV), approached SM and asked for a few innovations. The four-week programme had provision for only one integrated case at the end of the programme as a capstone exercise. SM advised SV to have one more integrated case midway. It was readily accepted and SM reviewed the request with the team. MRD, who was not part of the Tier I faculty team, was invited by SV to be a member of the programme faculty. A few significant IT issues were also evident in the case. Hence, SV too was included in the team, increasing the number to five. As it happened, SV too was located in the same wing[5].

Trying out the new Sequence: By now the team had become familiar with the case and the issues involved in it. The new sequence, as decided in the review, was tried out. The discussion on strategy and customers ends was followed by financial issues and calculations. The employee and IT dimensions were well integrated.

The Confidence: The integrated discussion mode became a distinctive feature of the General Management Programmes. The pattern of involvement changed. Though the faculty members occupied centre stage in rotation, they were willing to contribute at any stage during the session. There was less hesitancy and cooperation slowly replaced competition. One of the team members stated, "I am now much more comfortable in the team." The members argued in class and built on each others' contributions.

In the next offering of Tier II in 2004, there were no anxieties regarding the roles in class. Team members were willing to discuss the extremely technical issues of the different disciplines. MRD developed a slide show that captured the progress made and raised new questions regarding class strategy.

The current opening put the participants in the evaluation framework. Why not start with a decision orientation? The team discussed the pros and cons of the new opening and

[5] There are sixteen wings in the Institute. All but two wings have 10 offices for the faculty members. One of the wings is dedicated to the administrators. The other wing has only two offices for the faculty members.

decided to give it a try. In the next decision, seeking opening control was entirely with the participants. The team members wove in and out of the discussions. The finance member touched the people angle and the people expert held forth on the customer angle.

IX. Sustaining Team Teaching

***Tier II*:** Following the norms of the Institute, the coordinator for Tier II changed in 2005, as did the coordinator of Tier I. The faculty teams for the two Tiers also changed. Would the new coordinators continue with the experiment? The team members had not taken any action to sustain the effort since the design and implementation of the programmes was the responsibility of the faculty team of the respective tiers under the supervision of the MDP Chairperson, who too had changed. The new Tier II faculty did not include RB and SV.

Just two weeks before the start of the Tier II programme, while working on the timetable, the programme secretary discussed the previous offerings with the new coordinator. The new coordinator approached SM and requested team teaching on some integrated cases.

The Team: SM was reluctant to change the team for the integrated case discussion as it involved considerable time investment of faculty in preparation. Given the time available, the team was not sure whether a new member would be able to assimilate the knowledge, skills, and attitude needed for conducting the session. SM along with others stated the difficulty of working with a new team at such short notice and requested the coordinator to retain the earlier team for team teaching of the integrated cases. The team came together again.

The Strategy: This time the decision making format was used for the case discussion: What should the company do now and why? The challenges thought through by the participants steered the course of the discussion. The faculty team - more precisely the faculty at the front end of the class at the time of opening - could at best try to channel the discussion to specific issues. The rotational pattern of faculty involvement was not likely to be effective in this approach.

Implementation: The opening was steered by MRD. Other faculty members took lead positions more than once when concerned issues came up. However, not more than one faculty member was present in the well at a time owing to space constraints. During the session, formal handover of charge was decided by the instructor. The course of the discussion soon got to a level where the faculty had to respond or take the discussion to issues that bordered on the expertise of others. Such overlap of discussion became the norm particularly in the second half of the session. Invariably, AKJ (Marketing) discussed issues beyond marketing and got into strategy and HR. Similarly, RB (Finance) talked about HR and the marketing issues of the case. Having been part of discussions of the case few times earlier, all the members were familiar with the various functional dimensions/ issues of the case.

Reflection: MRD (Business Policy) remembered an exchange with one of the participants who stated, “I understood finance well today.” In another instance a participant asked RB (Finance), “Are you a faculty of HR?” The team members took such comments in their stride. There was no feeling of domain overlap or domain threat. They often joked with each other, “We are all losing our own identities and gaining new ones.” The verdict was unanimous: the process had so far been extremely insightful for the faculty members, particularly in understanding other functional areas and relating their own area to general management.

Expanding the Application - Sub Team Approach: There were other opportunities to discuss the same case in other programmes. However, owing to many constraints, it was not possible to have all the five members together. The case was discussed by a team of two or three, according to the availability of the members. It was found that even in smaller teams the members were able to sustain the class discussion with great facility. The feedback from the participants was similar at all times.

X. On to another Case and another Context

Events took a sharp turn when the team members sat through each other's regular sessions in one of the in-company programmes. This programme was done outside the Institute, which gave considerable opportunity to faculty members to interact. SM used a successful case to discuss only HR related issues. Numbers - money related or otherwise - were left out and there was very little information about marketing. However, as the class discussion progressed, AKJ, RB and MRD made their contributions. The class that was scheduled for two sessions, 70 minutes each, continued for almost four hours. It was a discovery for both the faculty and the participants.

In this programme, the team approach was adopted to discuss another case in the Petroleum Sector. The case discussed earlier by RB and SM in organizing sessions was Trekking Organizational Performance. AKJ and RB began working on Customer Value and Value of the Customer. Similarly, SM and MRD began working on Strategy Implementation issues. The Petroleum company case was finally discussed by different sub teams of MRD and RB, AKJ and RB and SM and MRD.

The in-company programme was the last phase of a three-phase programme designed to build marketing competencies in middle-level marketing and support function executives of a large petroleum corporation. This phase of 3 to 4 days each offered seven times over a period of more than a year was meant to discuss projects undertaken by participants (in groups) to cap their overall learning. One case was used to cap their people learning, while another, their marketing competency and yet another, their strategic marketing skills. The cases provided excellent opportunities to gain experience in team teaching.

The team spent all their evenings in this programme discussing the experiences of the sessions. Such a programme out of town was a great contributor to the team building exercise as it provided opportunities to take discussions beyond the classroom in an informal atmosphere.

XI. Forming a Habit

Slowly it became routine for the team members to attend each other's sessions if they were part of the faculty of the same programme. Team teaching became a natural process. In one of the 5-day long in-company programme in the year 2006, RB, MRD, AKJ and SM were the members of the faculty team. They had individual sessions as well as a few joint sessions. Only a few joint sessions were planned owing to the extremely tight schedules of the team members. Further, only one of the cases that had earlier been tried in integrated sessions was part of the programme design. Surprisingly enough, all the team members made it a point to be present in almost all the sessions and contributed to the discussions in class. Without inhibition or prior strategy, they effortlessly exchanged roles.

The programme was highly appreciated by the participants. One of the faculty members stated, "I had to attend all the sessions despite other pressing commitments as I knew it would be a great learning experience."

***Extending the Scope*:** The team extended its scope of activities as it developed confidence through formal and informal processes. Joint effort resulted in teaching in long duration programmes, case writing, and consulting assignments. The team wrote a series of eight cases together.

RB had this to say about the success of the team: "We had trust and respect for each other. The feedback from the participants was very encouraging every time we taught together and it always pointed to the team and not to the individual. Thanks to this approach, I, a Professor of finance, feel comfortable enough to understand the issues of marketing and HR. I now take a holistic approach."

***Multiplier Effects*:** Independently, the team members began disseminating the learning and significance of team teaching. In a workshop on team teaching, coordinated by MRD and AKJ, team teaching was discussed and demonstrated to other colleagues in the Institute. MRD teamed up with two other colleagues to discuss a new case in a programme. The new team went through similar processes to facilitate discussions in class. MRD teamed up with another three colleagues to discuss cases in another programme. RB and SM teamed up with a guest faculty to discuss a case in a programme on health policy management. AKJ teamed up with a colleague from Computers and Information Systems Area to teach a case over two sessions in a programme.

***The Challenges*:** SM believes that resource constraints like time available to the faculty is a challenge to team teaching. The programmes have to be planned to ensure the availability of all the members. There were also cultural constraints where people were made to believe that team teaching could actually work. Teaching is still primarily seen as a single instructor activity.

AKJ believes that team teaching would facilitate better learning by participants. While individualized teaching is good for developing specialized knowledge, it needs to be integrated if participants are to benefit. It is well known that the use of cross functional teams to resolve challenging issues and draw up implementation plans has become quite common. However, academics still continue to operate individually and do not actively support integration of learning.

RB outlined the major challenges in creating and strengthening teams of highly skilled faculty members:

- Overcoming self-imposed barriers of thinking – for example, who will receive the highest credit, for instance?
- Overcoming the fear of possible clash of ideas – for example, will the professors have different views on the same issue in class?

- Overcoming the fear of being upstaged – for example, what if one professor covers major issues and not much is left for the others to discuss.
- Objection from the administration - fro example, would it view team-teaching as a waste of resources.

XII. Conclusion

The team went from strength to strength over three years. As mentioned, formal classroom sessions and informal evening meetings out of town helped develop cohesion, trust, and mutual respect in the team. There were a number of reasons for the success of team formation: the strong felt need by the members for integration in programmes, complementary skills and experiences of team members, frequent programmes with integrated components that provided continuous opportunities for learning, co-location of the instructors, and off-site programmes that provided opportunities for close get-togethers. It must be noted that the full autonomy granted by the institution to instructors and co-coordinators to design and execute learning opportunities was also instrumental in the success.

The experience of working in teams of diverse but highly skilled professionals over an extended period of three years provides insights into team formation and the functioning of highly qualified professionals. More often than not, the rule of the game is individualism. When such people come together to perform a common task, the preferred mode is "sequential interdependence" and "clarify my role and state my sequence of entry" is often the demand. As noted, there are fears of loss of importance and recognition. There are also anxieties about trespassing and inadequate knowledge. The experience clearly shows that the competency of the members and the overall effectiveness of the tasks are strengthened if the team believes in "reciprocating interdependence". This can be only possible if members allow themselves opportunities to experiment, improvise and review. Various dimensions of this experience are summarized in Figure 1.

Contributing factors to the team's success:

***Self image of members*:** Members had the confidence to independently to steer the class if the experiment failed. Though such a contingency was never part of the plans, members were always prepared to manage any kind of situation.

***Prior experiences*:** Tier II provided a platform for collating experiences and leveraging them. Members were able to work as a team only because they spent considerable time together. What the outcome would be if strangers worked together is not known.

***Informal process*:** Informal interaction opportunities obviated the need for formal documentation. However, intermediate documentation and formal presentations to the team helped improvisation and provided critical views of each other's efforts. Reviews also allowed the team to undertake a completely different turn in class in the next offering.

***Mutual learning*:** Members learnt from each other and this only strengthened their understanding each other's functions. The 'Eureka effect' - where experts themselves learnt more about their own areas of specialization – was clearly evident. For example, the use of skilled number work to demonstrate the 'Economics of strategy' was new to MRD. When RB developed an analysis of the exhibit, MRD discovered the power of simple assumptions in pushing the analysis further. He used this insight to analyse other cases and strengthened his class strategy.

***Positive reinforcement*:** The positive reactions from participants to team teaching during tea breaks were a source of encouragement. The team was at work even during the breaks, and this chemistry had a positive effect on the participants.

***Coordination*:** Such a large scale effort could have ended up as a circus. But the members took care not to step on each other's toes and often handed over the session or invited interventions at appropriate junctures. Large classes of over 90 people could easily descend into chaos, especially when participants entered into long-winded digressions with the instructor, but the members were always on the alert and intervened, even if not scheduled.

***Leveraging on potential*:** The experience shows that institutes do have the potential to experiment. This is not harnessed for want of mechanisms to bring them together. Magic can certainly happen if institutes provide opportunities.

References

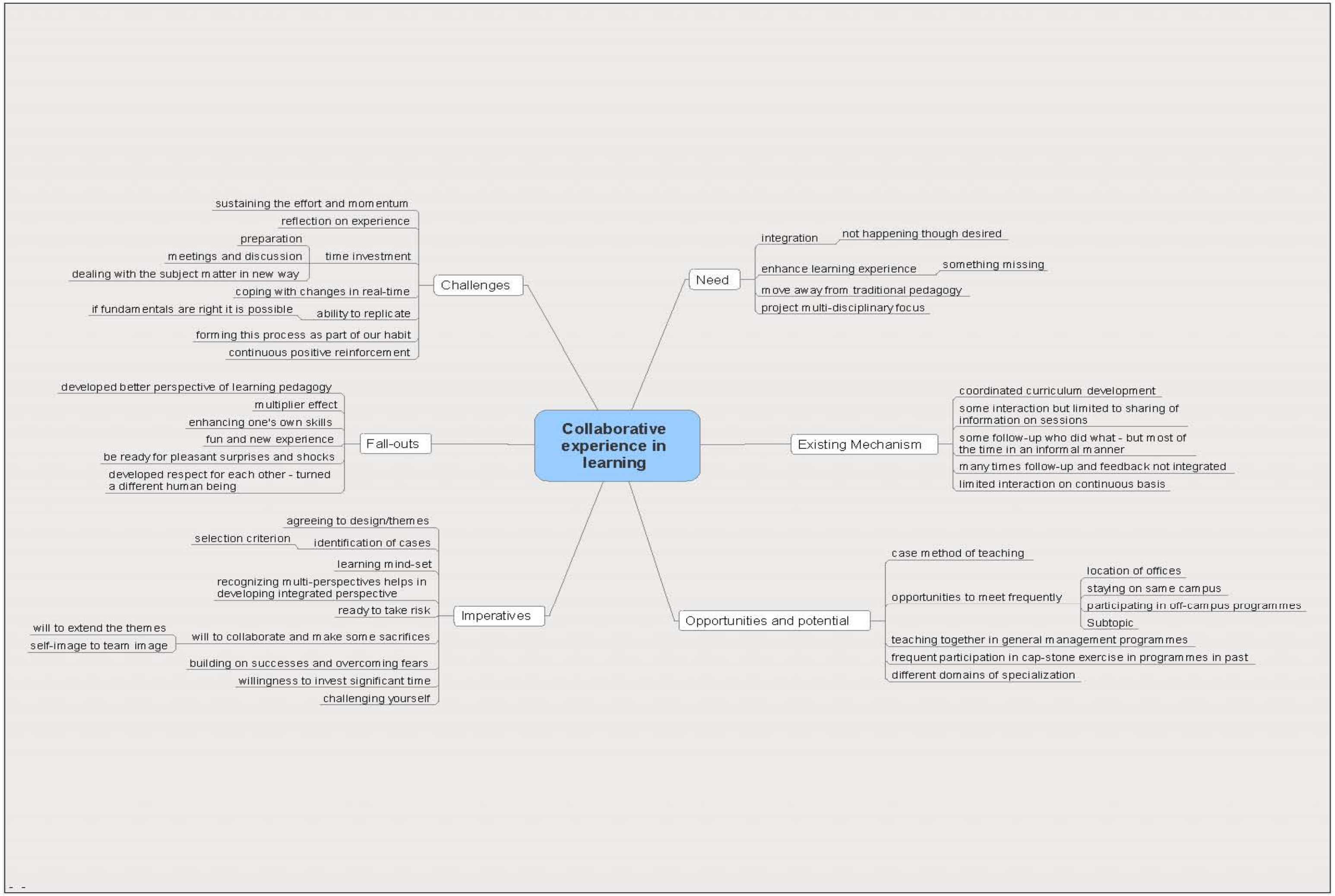
Bunderson, J. Stuart (2003). Recognizing and Utilizing Expertise in Work Groups: A Status Characteristics Perspective, **Administrative Science Quarterly**, 48(4): 557-591.

Eisenhardt, Kathleen M. (1989). **Academy of Management Review**, 14(4): 532-550.

Ericksen, J and Dyer, L. (2004). Right from the Start: Exploring the Effects of early Team Events on Subsequent Project Team Development and Performance, **Administrative Science Quarterly**, 49(3): 438-471.

Hagstrom, Warren O. (1964). Traditional and Modern Forms of Scientific Teamwork, Administrative **Science Quarterly**, 9(3): 241-263.

Figure 1


Collaborative experience in learning
Challenges
sustaining the effort and momentum
reflection on experience
time investment
preparation
meetings and discussion
dealing with the subject matter in new way
coping with changes in real-time
ability to replicate
if fundamentals are right it is possible
forming this process as part of our habit
continuous positive reinforcement
Fall-outs
developed better perspective of learning pedagogy
multiplier effect
enhancing one's own skills
fun and new experience
be ready for pleasant surprises and shocks
developed respect for each other - turned a different human being
Imperatives
agreeing to design/themes
identification of cases
selection criterion
learning mind-set
recognizing multi-perspectives helps in developing integrated perspective
ready to take risk
will to collaborate and make some sacrifices
will to extend the themes
self-image to team image
building on successes and overcoming fears
willingness to invest significant time
challenging yourself
Need
integration
not happening though desired
enhance learning experience
something missing
move away from traditional pedagogy
project multi-disciplinary focus
Existing Mechanism
coordinated curriculum development
some interaction but limited to sharing of information on sessions
some follow-up who did what - but most of the time in an informal manner
many times follow-up and feedback not integrated
limited interaction on continuous basis
Opportunities and potential
case method of teaching
opportunities to meet frequently
location of offices
staying on same campus
participating in off-campus programmes
Subtopic
teaching together in general management programmes
frequent participation in cap-stone exercise in programmes in past
different domains of specialization