

etc.

Technical Report

30

CASE DEVELOPMENT:
PROCESS & PROBLEMS

by

B.G. Shah

WP 1973/20

WP20
■■■■■■■■
WP
1973
(20)



**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT
AHMEDABAD**

CASE DEVELOPMENT:
PROCESS & PROBLEMS

by
B.G. Shah

December 1973

Indian Institute of Management
Ahmedabad

Paper presented at the meeting for Asian Business Schools at Jakarta
(Indonesia) on November 29, 30 and December 1, 1973.

S U M M A R Y

The paper first discusses the process of drawing specifications of case materials required for achieving teaching objectives of a case course. The paper then goes on to discuss the process involved in establishing case leads and case writing. (In the discussion of case writing it deals with the questions relating to the statement of case problem, disguise of the identity of the organisation, confidential nature of information and 'Quid-pro-quo' for case writing facility. It also discusses what details should be included in the case study to achieve its teaching objectives. The paper also discusses the institutional environment demanded for effective application of case method. It highlights the institutional tasks of building bridges between the management and academic world, creating an environment of experimentation and exploration with regard to the concept of management as a field of learning and pedagogy for training in decision making.) The difficult task of reconciling the faculty's personal objectives of creativeness with the institutional demands for ongoing problem-related case and project research is also discussed. The paper also pinpoints some of the problems of case development in developing societies and new fields of management of agriculture and government systems.

CASE DEVELOPMENT - PROCESS & PROBLEMS

B.G. SHAH

1. INTRODUCTION

Management has developed into a profession. Its practitioners need training no less than those of medicine or law or any other such profession. Traditionally, a management school aims at training professional managers for business.¹ Thus, its two major tasks are: (1) to define the academic content of management as a field of learning, and (2) to develop a pedagogy that effectively trains practitioners of management. Much work has been done since to develop management into a distinct field of research and teaching. It is also widely accepted that the goal of management education is not that of producing 'learned' or 'erudite' scholars of the subject. Its educational goal is to help the trainees to acquire facility to act in the face of uncertainty and risks. "It asks not how a man may be trained to know, but how a man may be trained to act."² The question asked is: can practice of management be taught? But the question is of secondary importance to the question: how can it be taught?³

¹ Many schools of management have recently re-examined (or are in the process of re-examination) of the adequacy of this traditional aim of theirs and are re-defining their area of activities to include management of government systems, agriculture, education, planning, public programmes (health, family planning) or distribution system.

² Malcolm P. McNair and Anita C. Hersum (eds.), The Case Method at the Harvard Business School (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), p.3.

³ David R. Willings, How to Use the Case Study in Training for Decision Making (London: Business Publications Limited, 1968).

1.1 Case studies have a great potential in achieving that educational objective. They make it possible for the trainees to increase their 'vocabulary of experience' and draw on that learning from others' experiences in dealing with concrete problem situations which they may face in the course of their career. This paper does not seek to examine the validity of the education theory underlying the goal of management education nor the claim that the case method can effectively train persons in the practice of management. The paper discusses the process of case development and the institutional environment necessary for it. It also pinpoints some problem areas of case development in developing societies and some new areas of management (management of agriculture and government systems).

1.2 ORGANISATION OF THE PAPER

Section 1 is an introduction to the paper. Section 2 discusses the process of case development. Section 3 deals with the institutional environment necessary for case development work. Sections 4 and 5 state the problems of case research in developing societies and some new areas of management (agriculture and government systems) respectively.

PROCESS OF CASE DEVELOPMENT

2. A case course is much more than a mere collection of cases. Case studies must be relevant to the course objectives. A good case course

should meet two tests: (i) it should increase the trainee's "vocabulary of experience" which he can draw upon in dealing with the decisional situations that he is likely to face on the position, and (ii) he should gain an understanding of the relevant concepts and techniques and their application in the resolution of problems. The first essential step in case development is therefore to answer the three questions: (i) who is the target trainee of the course? (ii) what is the position he is trained for? and (iii) what are the kinds of decisional situations he is likely to face in that position? Besides the relation of the course to other courses must also be kept in mind in determining the scheme for case development work for the course. Answers to these questions will determine the course content and its teaching objectives, sequencing of the course and course sessions, and weightages to be assigned to different topics of the course. I would like to illustrate the above process by reference to case development work for a case course in Credit Management that I developed for a large nationalised commercial bank. The target trainees were branch managers and officers in the advances department of the head office of the bank. I found that the mix of advances and job responsibilities varied widely between branches, depending upon their size and location. So I first identified a group of trainees who had a broadly similar advances mix and responsibilities. This was an essential step in developing a course design that was related to the job of the trainee group. The next step was to analyse the kind of decisional areas that the trainee group would face on the job. This analysis was necessary to draw the specifications for case

studies that would meet the course objectives. I also found that a majority of the trainees had no background in management and financial accounting. Accordingly, cases written with the objective of giving trainees an understanding of basic accounting concepts and methods and cost concepts and their applications in making credit decisions were included in the course materials. This process of Developing a course framework lent a direction to the work of case collection and preparation of technical notes to achieve the course objectives. Appendix A gives the outline of the course in Credit Management.

2.1 CASE LEADS

After the case situations that will meet the course objectives are defined, the next step is to find leads for case collection. Leads for collection of case materials can be developed in several ways. Case leads can be developed by a careful perusal of company reports, reports of study groups, commissions and committees appointed by the government or associations of trade and industry, histories of business houses, research reports recording the findings of problem oriented researches, business journals, and such other published materials. Often the case writer has some idea of the kind of problem situation he is looking for. In such a case a lead can be developed by identifying companies that are known to have experienced such a problem. For example, I was looking for a case study on the problems of amalgamation of banks. I knew of a bank that came into being as a result of amalgamation of four

middle sized banks. I developed a lead with that bank for my proposed case study through a friend of mine who knew the top executive of that bank. Alumnae of the school are a rich source of case leads. Most management schools organise management development programmes for practising executives. Alumni of such executive development programmes are a particularly fruitful source of case leads on the kinds of problems they are facing in real life. These leads are developed in the course of interaction between the practising executives and the faculty teaching in the executive development programmes. Our experience is that the potential of this source for case development work is not fully exploited. Much depends on how far the administrators of the management schools have communicated their needs for case collection to their alumnae and the willingness of the alumnae to commit their time and effort to support and supplement the case collection activity of the school. A word of caution is necessary though. The alumnae, who support or supplement the case collection activity of the school, must do so with the knowledge and consent of their top executives so that their case collection activity gets legitimised and contribute to good relations between the school and its alumnae.

- 2.1.1 Yet another source of case lead is the project research work undertaken by trainees/students as part of the course work. Such problem centered project reports provide good basis for development of diagnostic and diagnostic-cum-prescriptive depth case studies of real life management problems. Similarly some excellent case leads can be

developed from the research studies made by faculty as a part of process of collecting research data to construct and/or test hypothesis or to fulfil a thesis. Also some of the best case leads are developed out of the consulting activity of the faculty of the management school. Consulting assignment generally involves a deep search for the real problem and prescription of a course of action to resolve that problem. The clients also fully co-operate in the investigation of the problem and provide all the data relevant to the analysis of the problem.

- 2.2 Before following upon a case lead by an actual visit to the company for field work, it is a good practice to know all you can about the company, its products-market data, the industry in which it is working and its problems. A good deal of such information is available in the published sources such as the annual financial statements of the company, industry studies, government policy statements, etc. Invariably, company executives are more willing to cooperate when they find that the case writer has taken pains to know as much as he can about the company and its problems. It is also desirable that a case writer prepares a written specification of the case study. Such a specification would include a statement of the teaching objective(s) of the case, a description of the decisional situation which is the subject matter of study, the data that might be necessary for a meaningful analysis of the problem situation, and the possible sources of such data. Such a specification should provide a broad direction to his field work. - But it must not be allowed to structure his field work to an extent that he sacrifices reality to the specification.

2.2.1 It is important to ensure that a company does not feel pestered by several people simultaneously doing case collection work with it. Before an approach is made to a company following a case lead, it must be verified whether anyone else is already working on another case study in the company and what has been the experiences of the previous case writers with the case collection work in that company. Such a coordination of case collection work by the school authorities is extremely important.

2.2.2 For a case lead to be productive, it is advisable that the case collection work starts with an appointment with a responsible top executive of the company. It is not unusual that a company executive does not fully comprehend what he is getting into in agreeing to a preparation of a case study on the company problem. It is a good practice therefore to explain to him what a case study is (unless he is an alumnus who is exposed to case method) and the kind of problem and data you are looking for. It is also our experience that people at lower levels of organisation cooperate more fully in the case collection work if it is cleared with the top executives. "The further you go from the top, the greater is the possibility of failure and also greater is the possibility of setting off internal frictions within the company which may eventually harm the school."⁴

⁴McNair and Hersum, op. cit., p.258

2.3 CASE WRITING

Problem: It is usual to begin a case with a description of the situation or an event or an incident which is the theme of the case study. A case may also begin with the statement of a problem as perceived by the chief character in the case or by giving lead or clues to the identification of the real problem. Depending upon the case objective, a case writer has to decide on how far to obscure the real problem.

"The line between constructively obscuring the real problem and leading the participants up the garden path is indeed a narrow one. Since real life management problems are often obscured by outward appearances, the case study will be artificial if the real problem is too evident. What is more, the diagnostic element of the case study session will be lost. If, however, the real problem is so thoroughly concealed that the participants would not reasonably be expected to find it, the objects of the case study are not likely to be achieved and the participants will be unconstructively frustrated. A golden rule in writing details around the real problem is to aim for the least degree of concealment necessary to achieve the objects of the case study. -----

Many managers tend to focus their attention on some detail and miss the real problem altogether. The judicious introduction of red herrings into the case study can effectively highlight the dangers of this tendency. The operative word is judicious. Management problems can be loaded with red herrings. A measurement of manager's perceptivity can be the skill with which he spots the red herrings and the real issues."⁵

⁵Willings, op.cit., pp.106 & 112.

2.3.1 The point can be illustrated with reference to some concrete problem situations which I came across in my case collection and consulting work. A large textile mill asked us to look into its losing operation. The top management of the company was of the view that its real problem was inability of its distribution channel to market products that were high contributors and inadequate flow of market information. Our study revealed that its real problem was that of active search for an optimal product mix that satisfied the marketing and manufacturing constraints and yielded an amount of contribution high enough to absorb its comparatively high fixed costs. Another case deals with a dissatisfied management trainee in a bank. The case describes in detail the growing disillusionment of the trainee with the management and vice versa. Our study showed that the problem was neither with the training programme or the reliability of selection test. The real problem lay in the inability of the trainee to relate his training to his perception of his job which influenced his communication and behaviour with management.

2.4 DETAILS

A case writer has to decide on what details to give in the case. The questions that need consideration are: what details are relevant and who is to decide their relevance? What weightage should be attached to the different details? The case writer's judgement on what details are relevant to the case analysis depends to a large

extent on how much effort he has put in to understand the basics of the industry and the problem he is working on. But the best judge of what are relevant details in the case situation are the characters involved in the case study more than the case writer. The question still arises when in real life the decision was arrived at without use of all information that seem relevant to the case writer? Take for example, a case study on planning and policy where the decision maker had not made worthwhile use of the relevant environmental data. Should the case writer include such environmental data which were not used in actual decision making process in order to achieve the teaching-learning objective of the case? Loading a case with too many details distracts from its value. The case must have just enough details to achieve its teaching purpose. For example, in a case study on the performance appraisal of a bank, addition of an appendix describing various types of deposits, advances and remittances instruments and branch administration proved useful to the analysis of the case especially by a predominantly non-banker participant group. It is also important that the details must be accurate, factual, and consistent. Incorrect information on yarn realisation from a pound of cotton in a case study on the appraisal of a loan for the purchase of a spinning wheel led the class to turning down the proposal when in fact it was sanctioned. Checking on details is particularly important when these are included in order to disguise the identity of the organisation. Care must be taken in that case to see that the case writer does not in the process introduce discrepancies

that might destroy the credibility and believeability of the case. How does one ensure adequacy and consistency of the details? One way is for the case writer to get the details checked by persons who are knowledgeable about the industry and the problem situation. Another way is to prepare a detailed teaching note on the case study setting out its teaching objective and making a detailed analysis of the case situation. Such an exercise often brings out any glaring discrepancies in the details or their redundancy or inadequacy for achieving the case objectives.

Yet another problem the case writer encounters in the process of case development is to decide on whether and how to disguise the case. A case may be disguised at the specific request of the organisation. Sometimes the case writer may decide to disguise the case though no request for it has been made by the organisation. This might be desirable to enhance the teaching-learning value of the case which will be lost if the participants identify the company and considered the action it took in the case situation as right.⁶ There are several ways to disguise the identity of the organisation. This could be achieved by disguising the names of companies, persons, products, places and figures. In choosing a disguised name, care should be taken

⁶ James W. Gulliton, Handbook on Case Writing (Makati, Philippines: Asian Institute of Management, 1973), p.42.

to see that a company with a similar name does not exist. It is my experience that it can happen despite all the care that you might take. As far as possible, disguise of an industry should be avoided. Each industry has its own technology, and set of commercial and economic problems and the entire case discussion would take place in an unreal context when the industry is disguised. Sometimes the company desires that the product may be disguised. In that case, it must be seen that the product-market characteristics must be described in sufficient details to preserve the real-life flavour. It is usual to disguise the balance sheet and profit and loss figures by applying a constant multiplier or a deflator. It is difficult in such a case to preserve the basic behavioural relationship between different types of costs. Disguise of balance sheet and profit and loss account figures usually requires appropriate revision of other related figures on investment, scale of output, sales, working capital, etc. Even the disguise of a place can create a problem. I was writing a case on the take over of a bank. In putting a value on that bank, it was necessary for the management to assess the business potential of the places where that bank had branches. Disguise of the places made this difficult. To overcome this difficulty, the relevant data on business potential at those places were included in the case. Sometimes the participants groups brings to bear on the case analysis the typical environmental situation prevailing in the disguised place. This considerably detracts from the teaching-learning value of the case.

2.5 OPINIONS AND FACTS

"Case writers are reporters, not judges or opinion makers. They should, therefore, stay out of the situation both in reality and in their writing."⁷ A common error in case writing is to mix up opinions for facts. There is also a danger of the description of the people and problem in the case by case writer's perception of the people and situation. The best safe-guard against this danger is to check the draft of the case with the respondents and the co-writer of the case, if any.

2.6 CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE DATA

Every care must be taken to preserve the confidential nature of information gathered during case collection work. The case writer must disguise the case in the manner agreed upon so that the identity of the company is kept confidential. The case writer should not share the information gathered from one executive or organisation with another executive or organisation. Even a single case of violation of confidence can damage the reputation of the school and the trust that it may enjoy with the world of management. A case writer is required to obtain from a responsible company executive a written release of the case. "There are two reasons why signed releases are insisted upon. The first is to protect the company itself from the misinterpretation of facts or from the uncontrolled use of material given in confidence;

the release card assures the company that the case will be used only in the form in which it was released. The second purpose is to protect the school by providing written evidence that the permission has been granted to use the material in question.⁸ The form of release letter used by the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad is given in Exhibit I.

2.7 CASE WRITING - PROBLEM OF "QUID-PRO-QUO"

The executives who throw open their companies for case writing must do so in order that others may profit from their own experiences. They should understand that neither the case writer nor the school they represent makes any promise of 'Quid-pro-quo' for the time and effort they commit in assisting case collection work. Expectations that case collection work would lead to free consulting help or appraisal of the decisions taken should be discouraged. Many small businessmen do have such expectations. A technician entrepreneur, who had cooperated in developing a case study on his firm, asked me if I could prepare a cash flow forecast and help him negotiate a loan limit with his banker. Another small entrepreneur, manufacturing electronics equipments, wanted the case writer to represent his problems which were the subject of the case study to the financing institution and the government. There are however four ways in which executives may benefit from case collection work. First, a perspective executive derives a great deal of benefit

⁸ McNair and Hersum, op.cit., pp. 262-263

from the way the case writer structures his approach to the problem under study. Company executives also get opportunities for self-evaluation and introspection in the course of his association with the data collection work for the case study. Depending upon how knowledgeable the case writer is, case collection work may also generate new approaches and alternatives for the resolution of the problem and these may be later evaluated and pursued by the executives. Further the business gains from the supply of young managers who have been trained to make decisions on real life managerial problems.

2.8 CASE STUDY - HOW TO BRING REALISM IN ITS DISCUSSION

The claim that case method brings realism to the discussion in a classroom is contested. It is argued that case discussion in a classroom does not involve the pressures or impose the penalties of decision-making in real life. To bring realism to bear on the case discussion in the classroom therefore, two things can be done: (i) the students must be pushed into taking a decision on the case situation. After they have taken the decision, they may be informed of the actual decision taken in the real life. This will make possible for the students to measure the results of their actions. (ii) The other thing that can be done is to write a series of cases such that each subsequent case in the series deals with the consequences of the decision taken in the previous case in the series.

2.9 CASE STUDY - THE MATURING PROCESS

Rarely does a case turn out to be perfect the first time it is written. It has to go through a certain maturing process. The first stage in the maturing process begins with the preparation of a teaching note of the case study. This often brings out the strengths and weaknesses of the case study, and points to the lines along which it needs revision to achieve its teaching objectives. Free and frank discussion of cases in a faculty seminar could also generate useful feedback on the improvement of case studies. However for case seminars to be fruitful sources of feedback for revision, there must be willingness on the part of faculty to offer and take criticism. Some useful directions for revision of the case study also emerge from its discussion in class-room situations. The case writer should make detailed notes of the class-room experiences in using the case so that he may be able to evaluate how far does the case achieve the teaching-learning objective(s) with which it was written.

3. CASE DEVELOPMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The case method demands a certain kind of institutional environment for its effective application. These demands are explained by the fluid nature of management as a field of study and the educational goal of a school of management. Even now the academicians have some reservations in accepting that management is a field worthy of research and teaching and that the practice of management can be taught. The

concept of management and pedagogy of training decision makers therefore need constant exploration and experimentation. The authorities must accordingly create an environment that is conducive to such experimentation in research and teaching in management. Besides the educational goal of a management school is not that of producing 'erudite' or 'learned' men, but practitioners of management who are experientially and conceptually equipped to act in the face of uncertainty and change. The goal of a management school is to develop and impart knowledge and skills required for the resolution of real life managerial problems. To achieve that goal, it is necessary that the school must build bridges between the academic and management worlds. Building such bridges is however not an easy institutional task. The academicians believe that management is at best an art, and requires sound commonsense and skills to manipulate men and affairs, more than rigorous conceptualisation. The belief is to some extent encouraged by the fact that quite a few businessmen have not received much formal education or training. Besides the academicians are reluctant to descent from the realm of logical concepts and thoughts to the study of decision making processes in the day to day uncertain and changing world of management. To some extent, this reluctance to tackle concrete business situations arises because not many academicians believe that applications of their concepts and tools in the resolution of concrete managerial problems can be intellectually demanding and satisfying. The practising managers on the other hand is unable to comprehend what academicians can do to help them manage their affairs. Their perception of academicians is

that of persons who live in ivory tower, revel in building logical and neat models and are oblivious of the different constraints and uncertainties that obtain in the real life world of management. Case development work cannot make much headway unless the authorities of the school accept that the goal of the educational process in a school should be that of producing practitioners of management and take effective steps to build bridges between the academic and the business worlds which have but little communication between them. It was for this reason that our Institute organised programmes for practising executives before starting a two-year full time residential post-graduate course in business administration. Similarly, in my efforts at building a management programme in a university department, I organised a conference of the opinion setters in the local business with the faculty members of commerce and other relevant disciplines. This contributed to building up a mutually supportive relationship between the local business world and the department. The businessmen gradually opened up their firms for case and project research, granted donations to support the various activities of the school, and subscribed to the management development programmes organised by the department.

- 3.1 The case method places unusual stresses and strains on the faculty of the management school. Its faculty runs into a crisis of identity. The business world rejects them as "impractical", "theoretical", and "model builders". Their peers in the academic world reject them because case research and applied research work involving applications

of existing knowledge in resolution of business problems do not contribute to the extension of frontiers of conceptual knowledge. The faculty in a management school is thus torn between these conflicting pulls. He desires, on the one hand, to gain recognition from his academic peers by engaging in basic research that might push the frontiers of knowledge but may have no immediate application in the managerial world and on the other hand he has to meet the institutional demands of developing good case courses and engaging in applied work aimed at understanding and resolution of concrete managerial problems.⁹ The faculty therefore prefers to do project research or basic research where a published book or a paper may provide visible evidence of the writer's ability and knowledge to his academic peers. This may result in not enough attention being paid to developing a good case course and case collection for day-to-day teaching. It is often forgotten that developing a good case course may involve years of hard work, study and concentrated attention. For example, it took me full two years of hard work and study to develop a two-tier management development programme for senior bank personnel. This tendency to neglect case collection work is further strengthened if the faculty perceives that the evaluation process in the school puts a premium on project research or publication of research article more than on case collection work or development of good case course. I know of one management school where this has in fact happened.

⁹ McNair and Hensum, op. cit., pp. 212-222 (See also Appendix B)

3.2 What should be the role of academic administration in reconciling the faculty's personal objective of creativeness with the institutional requirements? This can be achieved by asking the faculty to indicate his interest in teaching assignment, choice of field of research and areas for consulting work and allow him to pursue a mix of this activity which satisfies his needs for creativity without sacrificing the institutional objective of constantly learning from experience in the field. The school authorities should also stimulate and control the institutional consulting activities and use them as instruments of faculty development. Often there are forces at work which tend to concentrate consulting activity in a select group of faculty members. It is however important that the authorities pursue the policy of associating the younger and junior faculty members with the consulting activities so that they get adequate opportunities to obtain this useful kind of experience. Such assignment not only satisfy their ego and status needs in the social world of the school but also give them insights into the managerial decision making process and contacts with executives which constitute a great asset in his research and teaching activities.

3.3 Finally, the administrative support is necessary in mobilising finance for supporting a vigorous case and project research work. The case method is an expensive method of teaching. The cost of a case will vary with the type of the case. But it is difficult to compute

the exact unit cost per case study. The recorded costs are always less than the properly allocable costs. This arises from the fact that costs of collection of some cases are charged to consulting or project research activities.

4. CASE DEVELOPMENT WORK IN A DEVELOPING SOCIETY - SPECIAL PROBLEMS:

Case research work in a developing society presents a special set of problems. A good number of business firms are family owned and controlled. In such firms, decision making processes are neither explicit nor documented. This affects the case development work in two ways. First, it makes difficult to ascertain and retrieve the data actually used or considered in the decisional situation. Second, since decisional process is not documented, it neither gets reported nor does it appear in the internal records of the organisation. For both these reasons, some valuable case leads are lost to the case researchers. Further in the absence of professional management in most family owned firms, vital decisions are made on an ad hoc basis with little formal planning or explicit strategy and policy formulation. This limits the scope for writing comprehensive business policy type of cases. Most attempts to write such cases result in the case writer adding a lot of micro level and environmental data which in fact was not considered by the decision maker in the particular situation. This tends to make such cases akin to arm-chair cases.

4.1 There are also some real problems of data collection in a developing economy. The difficulties at the firm level arises from

the personalised style of management and absence of explicit decision making process. At the macro level, data collection suffers on various counts. There is a large time lag in the publication of data. It is also difficult to find industry-wise data in sufficient detail on a consistent basis over any reasonable length of time.

4.2 Yet another problem in a developing economy is the difficulty that a case writer faces in successfully disguising the case. The industry base is narrow with only a few firms operating in many industries. Further the competition in most industries, particularly non-consumer industries, is either limited or absent with the result that it is much easier for those in business to identify the firm. Any attempt to keep identity of the firm confidential by disguise of the industry or productline or the scale of operations may virtually destroy the teaching-learning value of the case situation.

4.3 There is also some amount of unwillingness on the part of even the enlightened businessmen to open up for case collection work and lay bare their problems for the scrutiny of the case writer. This unwillingness is explained by unique environmental factors in developing societies. First of such an environmental factor is the detailed governmental regulation and control of business. There is therefore the apprehension that some of these case studies might unintentionally invite government attention on them or might lead to some unforeseen trouble or irritations from some quarters. The second environmental factor that explains the unwillingness to open up for case collection work is the close ties

between the social and business life. This explains why some business firms are unwilling to subject the actions of those whom they hold in high regards being dissected by the case writer on the grounds of sentiment. Further quite a few businessmen in developing societies have had no formal management education or training. They therefore developed a sort of defensiveness against the scrutiny of their actions by the case writers from professional schools and sometimes rationalise their responses to the questions of the case writers so as to make their decisional process appear professional. To the extent, the case study will not reflect the reality of the business situation.

5. CASE COLLECTION WORK IN THE FIELDS OF AGRICULTURE AND GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS - SOME SPECIAL PROBLEMS:

Recently, management schools are re-appraising their goals in an effort to relate their activities to the changing environmental demands and are extending their research and teaching activities to the fields of management of agriculture, government systems and public sector enterprises.¹⁰ This is particularly true of a management school in a developing society. Large investments are made in developing countries in the public sector enterprises and agriculture and efficient management of these sectors is becoming crucial to the success of the experiment of planned economic development. The question to ask is,

¹⁰ Our Institute has set up a Centre for Management in Agriculture and have initiated studies in the management of banking systems, government systems, education, and management of public programmes, etc.

whether the management process in the governmental administration or agriculture or public sector undertakings is a mere variant of the managerial process in a profit seeking business enterprise or is it a qualitatively different process? A great deal more exploration and study is necessary before a satisfactory answer could be found to this question. However, our experience of working in agricultural and government sectors has brought to light certain unique problems of case collection in these sectors.

5.1 AGRICULTURE

First, we discuss the special problems of case collection in agricultural sector. Case collection work in agricultural input or processing industries do not present any special set of problems. The problem will begin when case collection work reaches the farm level. A typical Indian farmer has a small holding and is illiterate and suspicious of an outsider's objectives in collecting data on his operations. This makes difficult communication of case collection objectives and how is it relevant to his life. This certainly influences his willingness to cooperate in the case collection work. Some difficulties in case collection arises because of high degree of uncertainty about the output (yield) and income from investments he might make in inputs. Further, farming being a way of life and unorganised, little systematic and reliable data could be available on the critical variables affecting farm level decisions.

5.2 GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

Equally difficult, if not more, is the task of a case writer in his study of the governmental system. The bureaucratic system is so total, integrated, and hierarchical that it is extremely difficult in the first place to identify an autonomous decision making unit like say a business corporation. In a case study, the decision maker is either known or identifiable. In a governmental **bureaucratic system**, unless it is studied in its totality, it is not possible to name or identify the decision maker in relation to the problem situation.

5.2.1 Development of appraisal or policy types of cases at the level of a sub-system of a governmental system, say a district, is difficult in view of the labyrinth of rules, procedures and precedents that operate as binding constraints on the decision making. It is difficult to decide on what all the relevant constraints are and to incorporate these in the case study. A business firm can develop a clear-cut criterion or a decision rule to guide its choice of an optimal course of action. In a governmental system, criterion or decision rule for a choice of action is rarely explicitly stated or is so qualitative (political) that it is not easy to evaluate the results of an action. Lastly, there is the excessive secretiveness about the data bearing on different case situations. This makes collection of relevant data almost impossible, or you get data too outdated to be relevant to the present-day situation. In the few cases where data could be collected,

the process could be time consuming and frustrating. Finally, it is not easy to decide who is the person who can release the case for use. Often several characters and departments are involved. This poses a problem in identifying a person who can authorise the use of case. At the same time failure to obtain proper release may prove very costly in terms of the school's relations with the governmental administrative apparatus.¹¹

¹¹In writing this part of the paper I have greatly benefitted from my discussions with my colleagues, Dr.V.R. Gaikwad and Professor and Dr.P.S. George, Chairman, Centre for Management in Agriculture. Both of them have done work in the fields of agriculture and government systems. The responsibility for the views however is entirely mine.

APPENDIX A

CREDIT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME OUTLINE

- Programme title : Credit Management Programme
- Programme duration : Two weeks
- Participants group : Branch Managers of metropolitan branches, large urban branches, Officers in the rank of Controllers in the head office.
- Programme objective : The primary objective of the programme was to impart experiential and conceptual training to the participants so that they could make competent credit decisions.

Note: Since the bank is organising special workshops in agricultural financing, we have excluded agricultural loans from the purview of this course. In selection and preparation of teaching materials, due emphasis will be given to loans to priority sectors, particularly small business (retailers), self-employed, and also small manufacturers. This programme is supplemented by two specialised programmes in financing of agriculture, and small scale manufacturers.

Course content	Case materials	Weightage
Basic accounting concepts and conventions	1. Technical Note: a) Basic Accounting Concepts and Conventions (teaching information technical note)	1
	2. Balancesheet of a selected company.	
Understanding the form and structure of balance-sheet and classification of assets and liabilities	1. Technical Note: a) Balance sheet b) Profit and Loss Account	2
	2. Balance sheet of a selected company	

Course content	Case materials	Weightage
Financial statement analysis - ratio analysis as a tool for determining liquidity, solvency, and profitability of a company	1. Technical notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Some common ratios b) Uses and limitations of financial statements 2. Case studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Case of an Unidentified industry b) Dunlop India Ltd. (B) (teaching exercise type case) 	3
Financial statement analysis - inter-firm comparison	1. Case study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Rajdhani Textile Mills 	1
Explaining concepts of cash flow, funds flow and method of preparing it and its uses	1. Case studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Dunlop India Ltd. (A) or b) Amalgamated Indus. Ltd. or c) Maharaja Mills Ltd. 2. Assigned readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) "Cash Flow Analysis from Managerial Control" National Association of Accountants 	2
Forecasting of funds needs - Cash budget method	1. Technical Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Note on financial forecasting 2. Case Studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Rajasthan spinning & weaving Mills Co. Ltd. (B) or b) Suraj Pharmaceuticals Ltd. 	1
Working Capital - definition of working capital, assessment of working capital requirements, credit authorisation scheme of the Reserve Bank of India	1. Technical Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Working Capital b) Credit authorisation scheme of the Reserve Bank of India - some problem areas in its implementation. 2. Case studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Sunder Mills Ltd. b) Swatantra Bank Ltd. c) Navbharat Bank Ltd. 	6

Course content	Case material	Weightage
Sources of credit information	Teaching information note on the subject	1
Preparation of credit proposals - filling up the bank's standard credit proposal forms	Specimen of some filled in credit proposals for different types of borrowers. The sets of the specimens are so selected that they contain some well prepared, some incompletely prepared and some others that are poorly prepared.	3
Appraisal of credit proposal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hand-outs on the subject giving extracts from the manual of instructions of the bank. 2. Case studies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Bharat Glass Works (A), (B), (C) (Term Loan) b) B.C. Chatterjee (Discounting of Bill) c) Traders Bank -do- d) Bharat Chemicals Pvt.Ltd (small scale sector) e) Sharma Engineers & Foundaries (small scale sector) 	5
Follow-up and supervision of advances	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hand-outs based on the manual of instructions on the subject 2. Case studies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Bharat Chemicals Pvt. Ltd. 	4
Risks and pit-falls in hypothecation advances	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technical note: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Some Aspects of Hypothecation Advances. 2. Case study: Lakewood Bank <p>Reading assignments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Advances Against Goods, by Shastri. 	
Documentation	The sets of documents should be so prepared that some are correct and complete, some incomplete and some other incorrect-specimens of the forms for registration of charges and satisfaction of charges in cases of limited companies.	2
Reserve Bank of India Bill market scheme and selective credit control	Hand-outs written in simple language, based on circulars on bill market scheme and other re-finance scheme.	2

PROGRESS OF CASE COLLECTION AT THE
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT, AHMEDABAD

	Cases collected during the year	Cumulative cases collected*
1963-64	100	100
1964-65	200	300
1965-66	100	400
1966-67	100	500
1967-68	150	650
1968-69	100	750
1969-70	100	850
1970-71	25	875
1971-72	31	906
1972-73	69	975

*Source: Annual Report 1972-73 of Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

NOTE: The break-up of the cases into technical notes, other informational materials, teaching exercise type of cases and technique oriented cases are not available. Nor is the break-up of cases by subject areas readily available.

EXHIBIT 1

CASE RELEASE CARD

Indian Institute of Management
Vastrapur
Ahmedabad-15

Gentlemen:

We have read the case entitled _____

submitted by _____.

We hereby authorize the use of this material at the Indian Institute of Management, other schools, companies, organizations and in printed case books. It is understood that this material will be used for educational purposes only.

Signature of Executive _____

Position _____

Firm _____

Date _____

Organization's stamp

Countersigned by Author

Date _____