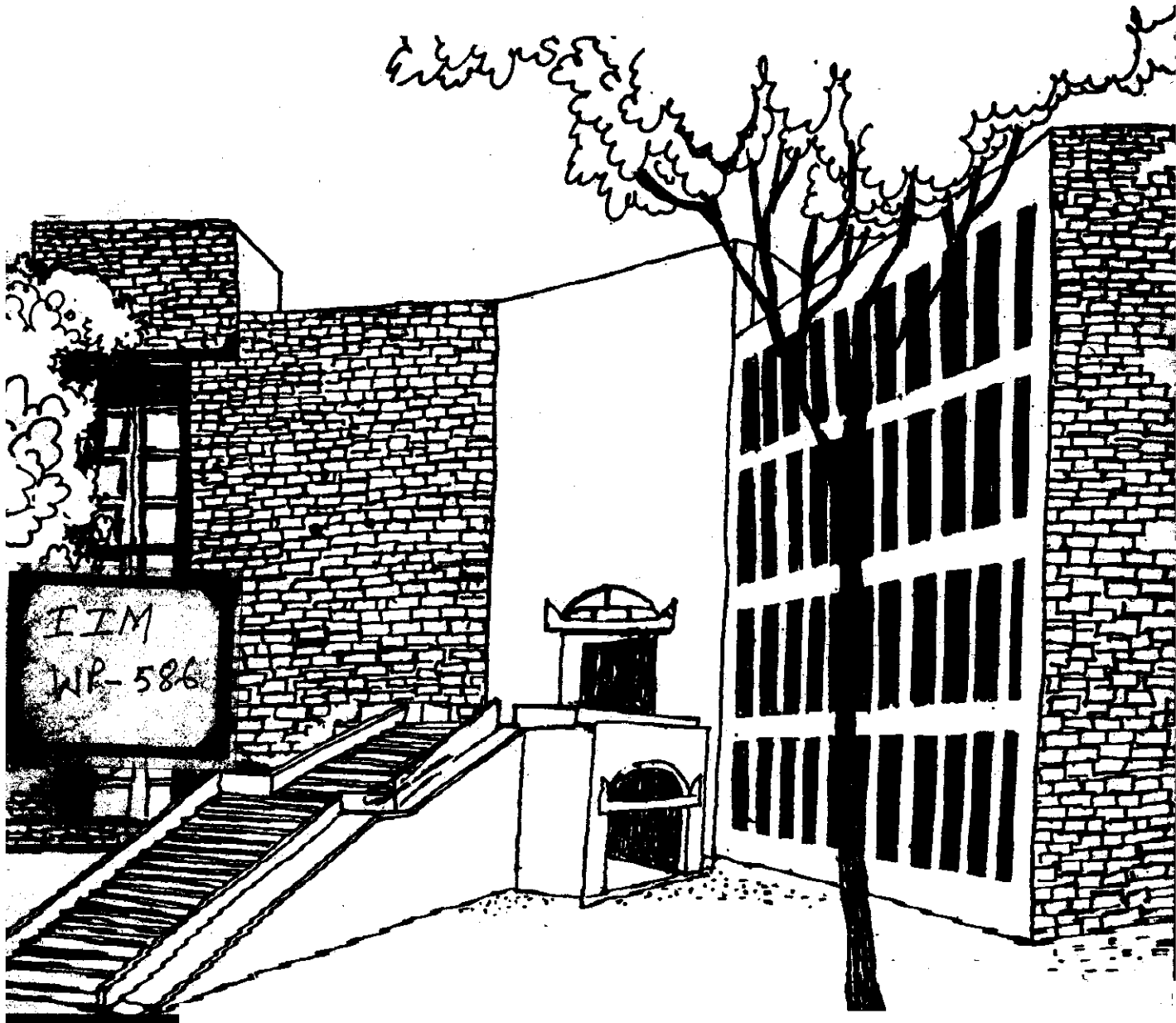


Working Paper



EXPERIENCES OF DESIGNING
A CASE BASED COMPULSORY MARKETING COURSE FOR
A MASTERS LEVEL PROGRAMME IN MANAGEMENT

BY

Mukund R. Dixit and Abhinandan K. Jain

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ABSTRACT

Title : EXPERIENCES OF DESIGNING A CASE BASED COMPULSORY MARKETING COURSE FOR A MASTERS LEVEL PROGRAMME IN MANAGEMENT.

Authors: Mukund R. Dixit and Abhinandan K. Jain

This paper describes authors' experiences of designing a case based compulsory marketing course for Post Graduate Programme (PGP) in Management (equivalent to MBA) at Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA). Given the course objectives, set in context of the programme objectives, the participants profile, and the overall learning culture at IIMA; the paper discusses the experiences of design of (i) overall course structure, (ii) different types of modules in the course, and (iii) learning climate in the course. Approaches used for improving the design of each of these over the last 20 years along with assessments of the approaches as well as the currently unresolved issues are presented. The paper concludes with some remarks useful for improving the design of the course and its modules as well as learning climate. Implications for improved design of case based functional area courses as well as other compulsory courses offered in PG Programmes are also presented in the end.

EXPERIENCES OF DESIGNING A CASE BASED COMPULSORY MARKETING COURSE
FOR A MASTERS LEVEL PROGRAMME IN MANAGEMENT*

Mukund R. Dixit and Abhinandan K Jain

The primary motivation to write this paper is the belief that comments and criticism can be of substantial help in a major redesigning exercise of the compulsory marketing course to be undertaken during this academic year as a part of review and redesign of the I year of the Post Graduate Programme (PGP)¹. We also believe that our experience could be of interest to marketing faculty as well as faculty of other areas (departments) concerned with designing compulsory courses for programmes like Master of Management/Business Administration.

The paper is divided into seven sections. The first section discusses the setting of the marketing course (goals of PGP, objectives of first year of PGP, IIMA's milieu in which the programme operates, and participants profile), objectives of the course, and their implications for designing the course. The second describes the philosophy and the overall design of the course. The experiences of designing three types of modules in the course are described and discussed in the three subsequent sections (III, IV and V) alongwith the unresolved issues. Experiences in designing the learning climate in the course are described in section VI. The last section (VII) provides some concluding remarks on designing the course and implications for designing other compulsory courses.

¹ PGP is a Two-Year Master's level programme in Management, (MM).

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SECTION - I : THE SETTING

Through the two year PGP in Management, IIMA primarily aims at developing future professional managers for industrial, commercial and agricultural and rural development organisations in India. The Institute hopes that the graduates of PGP would occupy higher management positions in such organisations. For achieving these purposes, the Institute decided on the use of case method as a major instrument of learning in the PGP (as also in the short duration executive development programmes for training practising executives). Right from its inception in 1962 the design of the programme, the academic infrastructure, and the residential facilities have been governed by the overall programme objectives and the choice of dominant learning method. The compulsory marketing course in the I year of the programme has been designed in such a context.

Participants Profile :

Each year, about 180 men and women, selected from among more than 8,000 applicants, register for the PG Programme. The 180 participants represent a mix of varied back grounds. In any batch, academic backgroundwise, about 40 to 55% hold engineering degrees. Those holding bachelors' degree in each of the Science, Humanities, Commerce, and Agriculture related disciplines are about 10 to 20%. About 20 to 40% have work experience of 6 months or more. Average age of the participants is about 21 years. Besides, they also come from a wide mix of the varied kinds of educational institutions and socio-economic strata that exist in India.

For selecting the candidates, Institute places significant emphasis on excellence in prior academic career, higher scores on a GMAT type test, and application-orientation of the applicant as assessed through personal interviews and group discussion. At the same time, applicants (and/or those who join) have been known to view the programme at the Institute as better than any where else in the country but extremely demanding in terms of hard work to be put in for successful completion. Thus, those who finally join not only have excellent background but also are committed to do their best in the programme.

Certain characteristics of the participants have significant implications for designing (particularly) case based courses. On the positive side, the mix of participants, their excellent record in earlier academic career, and a higher level of commitment to the programme augur well for adequate preparation, wide variety of ideas to learn from, and possibly classroom discussion. However, a lower average age of batches (21 years) and methods of learning prior to joining IIMA pose certain problems for effectively using the case method of learning. A lower average age does not ensure the level of maturity required for effective use of case method of learning. Prior to joining IIMA, the participants have been, by and large, exposed to an autocratic and passive learning environment in the educational institutions and families. Even the participants who have had work experience have been exposed to autocratic decision making, which continues to be the mode of decision making in most business organisations. As a result, use of case method of learning from the very first day in the programme has to be planned with extra care. Special efforts have to be made to induct them to case

method which requires learning through active participation, learning from each other's experiences treating all the participants as co-learners (including the instructor), and exercise of mature judgement for developing independent thinking, decision making skills, and attitudes.

Post Graduate Programme :

The Post Graduate Programme is of two year duration. The first year curriculum consists of 20 compulsory courses, whereas 15 courses are offered by participants in second year, only two of which are compulsory. During the summer between the two years, the participants undergo a 8-10 weeks training in an organisation. The thirteen elective courses in second year are chosen by the participants from over 40 course offerings, including field projects. These courses provide the participants an opportunity to gain further insight into broad range of subjects covered in 1 year and to pursue one or more areas to a far greater extent. The summer training, which precedes the second year, provides a first hand experience of working environment in a real life organisation to fresh participants of PGP and the relevance and applicability of knowledge gained in first year to all participants. It also helps participants in making a judicious choice of the elective courses in second year.

The first year courses (20) and the two compulsory courses of second year aim at providing the basic knowledge and developing skills, values, and attitudes required of a professional manager. The basic minimum level of concepts, techniques, etc. in first year courses is

primarily determined by minimum requirements of a professional manager in any functional area whereas the minimum requirements from the point of view of elective course package play only a secondary role.

The responsibility for finally deciding the objectives, the topics and the sessions to be assigned, to topics within the course as well as to the course as a whole of each compulsory course, rests with the PGP Faculty. However, individual areas/departments as academic groups assess the requirements of content in their area for a professional manager and in turn specify the coverage expected from courses to be offered by other areas. Such inputs from all areas are then discussed by the PGP Faculty to finally arrive at the minimum coverage in compulsory courses.

It would be obvious that such exercise is conducted only at intervals of long period. After starting the PGP, when the exercise was undertaken prior to starting the PGP in 1964, the first review of courses was undertaken in 1975-76. The Institute is in the process of reviewing its PGP course package for the second time during the current academic year (1985-86).

The compulsory course package, as reviewed and revised in 1975-76, has 22.5 units of course work, where each unit consists of 30 class sessions of 70 minutes duration. The broad coverage of the package is as follows : (see Appendix - 1 for titles of courses and sequencing).

Courses on broader business environment constitute three units out of a total of 22.5 units of the compulsory package. These courses primarily aim at creating an awareness and understanding of the particular segment of the environment and their implications for organisations.

Courses in basic disciplines like Economics, Mathematics and Statistics, and Computer and Data Processing, are assigned a total of four and one half units. Their primary objective is to expose the participants to basic concepts and techniques. They are also to build skills and attitudes required for their effective use in decision making.

Courses in each functional area, including marketing, and in organisational behaviour (a total of 11 course units) are intended primarily to develop effective skills and attitudes of decision making in functional areas. They are also intended to familiarise the participants with current business practices and relevant concepts and techniques.

The two unit course on Written Analysis of Cases (WAC) focuses on building analytical skills for decision making and developing written communication skills. The objectives of the two courses in Business Policy are to integrate the learning of functional areas, environment, and basic disciplines for formulation and implementation of business strategies.

The first year courses are offered in three terms of 11 to 12 weeks duration (The sequence of these courses is as shown in the Appendix-1). The scheduling of courses in the three terms has been guided by two important considerations. Firstly, complexity of situations and work load of participants increases as they progress from the first to third term. Secondly, the proportion of courses using primarily the case method of learning is deliberately kept smaller in the first term. Thus, the scheduling provides for a less than total break from previous methods

of learning, and thus, hopefully, create a better climate for change-over to the new learning methodology.

Participant's Learning Environment :

Each batch of PGP, in the first year, is divided into three sections of roughly 60 each and the participants in each of the sections represent the mix of the batch as a whole fairly well. Each participant resides in a single occupancy room. There are ten rooms to a floor of a dormitory. Each dormitory has 2 to 4 such floors. Each floor has enough space and a black board to conduct small group meetings. For providing inter-section exposure, first year residents of each floor/dorm are drawn from all the three sections.

On each day, three sessions of 70 minutes are scheduled in the morning (8.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.) with 10 to 20 minutes' break in between two sessions. The participants are provided with cases/readings in advance and are supposed to work 6 to 8 hours preparing individually as well as in small groups for next day's sessions. After the day's classes, they could also meet faculty for discussing their ideas at the end of the session or in the afternoon.

The Institute has developed more than 1,300 cases and contextual notes, over the years, on Indian organisations and situations. The participants have an access to a well equipped library of more than 1,00,000 books and leading journals, of both Indian and foreign origin, on management and related subjects. They also can use a time-shared multi-terminal computer system at the Institute for aiding their learning. In near future, they would have access to PCs as well.

Objectives of Compulsory Marketing Course :

The objectives of the compulsory marketing course as decided by the PGP Faculty are "..... develop the participant's basic analytical skills and conceptual abilities and substantive knowledge in the field of marketing". These objectives, as stated in the most recent outline of the course, are sought to be achieved "..... by helping the participants to undergo meaningful exercises in decision making in a variety of real life marketing situations". The course attempts "to familiarise the participants with various marketing concepts as well as several decision areas related to marketing function".

The course objectives, thus, emphasize building skills and attitudes required for marketing decision making in real life Indian situations. The course relies very heavily on case method of learning. The marketing course is a two unit course scheduled during second and third terms of first year. This positioning of the course helps not only in achieving a smoother transition to case method of learning but also helps the course to utilise, in the early part, the concepts and techniques learnt in the courses on Economic Analysis of a firm (Micro Economics) and Managerial Accounting and Control - I, both taught in the first term of the first year.

Marketing course is allotted a total of 60 sessions or about 11% of the total sessions in first year. However, both participants and first year faculty have felt that the course takes far higher proportion of the participants' total time. The phenomenon probably reflects the demands made by the learning method used in the course and the intrinsic

higher appeal of the course (particularly from the point of view of actual and perceived placement opportunities at IIMA).

SECTION - II : OVERALL DESIGN OF THE COURSE

Underlying Philosophy :

The marketing faculty at IIM Ahmedabad intrinsically believes that concepts, theories, etc. in an applied area like marketing need to be evolved by observing and conceptualising the marketing phenomenon. The belief has two important implications for learning marketing management.

1. The concepts, theories etc. developed elsewhere need to be tested for their relevance in the Indian marketing context.
2. An indepth understanding of marketing context and practice not only can help in testing the current marketing concepts etc., but more importantly, lead to generation of new concepts/ideas.

In designing the course, therefore, adequate emphasis is laid on an indepth understanding of the marketing phenomenon in the Indian context. This is primarily achieved by constant updating of case material and discussion of marketing issues and decision making in a wide cross section of marketing situations faced by different organisations in India. Notes on Indian marketing environment (marketing system, distribution system, advertising, legal aspects of marketing etc.) have been prepared which provide the broader context of marketing in India. These notes (portions thereof) are assigned along with cases scheduled for discussion to integrate the environmental aspects and the practice of marketing. Besides, wherever possible the cases themselves contain a

short overview of the relevant industry related marketing aspects. In addition, if necessary, relevant background readings of concepts from a text book/journals are assigned.

Besides learning of decision making skills and attitudes through the class discussion, participants are encouraged to draw generalisations regarding environmental influences, behaviour of significant actors in the types of situations, the degree of sharpness of specific marketing mix elements, and implementation and control of marketing operations. At the end of each module such exercise is conducted in the class room itself.

In essence, the onus of drawing generalisations is on the participants as a group. The faculty primarily scans the marketing phenomenon in the environment and writes up cases/notes reflecting, to the extent possible, the reality of marketing decisions and context. In almost all situations the faculty tries to avoid their own view of marketing concepts etc. in unduly influencing either the design or content or handling of the sessions.

We have found that this philosophy pays rich dividends in terms of participant learning. Couple of illustrations, which occur repeatedly would clarify our belief in such a philosophy. We, in pre-eighties, found that while discussing a case on a high value-advanced technology product (specifically numerically controlled machine tools), the education system within the country was spotted as a relevant element of marketing environment. Participants even went to the extent of thinking about drawing up an action plan to influence the educational institutions

so as to generate adequate supply of trained manpower at the customer's end. To the best of our knowledge (which could be inadequate) explicit identification of educational institutions as a component of marketing system was a new finding in our class rooms in the pre-eighties. The second illustration is on appropriate use of product positioning concept. In competitive markets, where it probably originated, the concept is widely used for positioning brands in relevant segments. Discussions of real life situations in India revealed that the concept could be used much more effectively for positioning products rather than brands in the market.

To sum up, the philosophy guiding the course content design is to bring to the class room as realistic a depiction of marketing phenomenon as possible and let the bright young people develop and/or test existing marketing concepts. We realise that, to an extent, the success of the philosophy rests on good handling of sessions by the participants (in which probably the instructor plays the role of first among equals) and the level of intelligence, the application orientation, and the motivation to learn on ones own. Both, the participants and the instructors, we are almost sure, we could not get a better group within the country. The prominence of the Institute assures us on this count. However, we do need to take adequate care of the induction process of both participants and faculty.

Modular Design of the Course :

The marketing course has been organised into several modules based primarily on sub-functional areas of decision making. The chosen basis of module design seems to be superior compared to two other options

suggested by the course objectives and philosophy. The three options are :

1. Nature of product-markets;
2. Elements of decision making process; and
3. Subject specific (the chosen option).

The first approach would have meant designing of separate modules along product market situations faced by organisations operating in different types of product-market combinations. This basis would have required availability of wide range of product market situations as cases, probably few sessions to be devoted to each product market situation, and a minimal understanding of marketing function on the part of participants. While it would have been possible to find a number of product-market combinations relevant for such a modular structure, this design would not have enabled, in the time allotted to the course (60 sessions), a fuller treatment of a reasonably large number and, thus, a variety of industries/organisations/product market situations. Far more important would have been the problem of less than minimum understanding of marketing (function) on the part of participants. The second approach of designing the modular structure fitted well with the major course objective of learning decision making skills and attitudes. However, another compulsory course (WAC) makes explicitly use of such a structure. Exact duplication of the structure would have lead to problems of identity for both courses, apart from inability to focus on the subject matter of marketing.

The third approach, i.e. subject matter based, reflected the second objective of the course i.e. familiarise participants with marketing

concepts and techniques, and the marketing context. The chosen approach has been so adapted as to reflect the primary concerns addressed by the other two approaches. The structure of second approach has been used to schedule the modules as well as schedule the cases in specific modules. For example, the modules on Indian marketing environment and buyer behaviour, are primarily used for developing capabilities of problem identification, alternative generation, and criteria/objective setting in the beginning of the course. Also the same philosophy has been used to choose and sequence the cases in each module dealing with specific marketing decisions. The structure suggested by the first approach has been used to select cases for each module as well as for the course as a whole. As far as possible, each module has a mix of cases dealing with consumer non-durable, consumer durable, and industrial products. The course as a whole also includes some marketing situations dealing with service, non-profit, and developmental organisations to provide the needed perspective of marketing function in Indian organisations.

Implementing the Chosen Modular Design :

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The specific modules and the sessions allotted to each module in the course are as given in Appendix - 2. As for all compulsory courses, the modules and/or allocation of sessions to each one of them has been decided by the PGP Faculty as a whole. Neither the marketing area (department) nor the faculty teaching the course are allowed to make any significant changes in these aspects. However, they are free/encouraged to choose/develop teaching material, develop their own style of handling the course, and design grading and evaluation scheme, which would enhance the learning value of the course.

The different modules in the course have posed variety of issues in effectively designing their content and handling. From the point of view of improving the effectiveness of modules and of the course as a whole, the modules are categorised into three groups posing distinct design issues :

1. Module on Marketing Environment
2. Modules which draw substantively concepts/knowledge/techniques from basic discipline course(s)
3. Modules dealing with substantive marketing decisions.

Our experiences in designing such modules with an assessment of suitability of such designs form the subject matter of the next three sections. A subsequent section would deal with experiences in designing the learning climate for the course as a whole.

SECTION - III : DESIGNING MARKETING ENVIRONMENT MODULE

This module has posed some very distinct problems in achieving a proper design for it. We are not yet sure whether we are any where near resolving the same satisfactorily. However, several kinds of designs have been implemented, mostly with different outcomes. The nature of problems faced in designing the module and the kinds of approaches actually used, along with the assessment of their effectiveness are described in this section.

Whether to Have a Separate Module :

In the beginning, till end of sixties, this module did not exist in the course. An understanding of the Indian Marketing Environment was sought to be achieved by discussion of Indian cases having reasonable

description of the relevant marketing environment. Marketing faculty, in early seventies, realised that an explicit treatment of the environment in India was very necessary as the environment, particularly the regulatory, political, and technological environment, had significant influence on choices/actions of marketers. Besides, a number of questions from significant quarters in the society, including the participants of the PG Programme, were beginning to be raised regarding the relevance of marketing in a scarcity ridden developing economy like that of India. In early seventies, therefore, this module was introduced in the course with the title: Marketing System and Role of Marketing in India.

The objectives of this module, at the time of curriculum review of the first year PGP (1975-76), were decided as follows :²

- Familiarisation and understanding of current and likely changes, in the marketing environment, including the regulatory environment;
- Understand the implications of the environment and changes therein as impinging on individual organisations and industries; and
- Understand the role of marketing in India.

What should be the Contents and Pedagogy of the Module?:

The issue of content was not really serious. Once the objectives were set, it was possible to write-up relevant notes and cases. However,

² At the same time, the PGP Faculty decided to introduce four new compulsory courses : Computer and Data Processing, Social and Political Environment, Legal Aspects of Business, and Technological Environment. The last course for variety of reasons has not yet materialised.

the material to be covered turned out to be enormous and the sessions assigned to the environment module (4) wholly inadequate. We could not assign more sessions to the module for two reasons : firstly, we would have had to sacrifice some sessions of other modules of the course and secondly we would have had to seek not merely the approval of the area faculty, but the entire PGP Faculty. As we were not prepared to sacrifice some sessions of other modules, there was no question of seeking approval from the PGP Faculty. Following approaches have been tried to achieve the module objectives :

1. Devote one session to understand the contours of marketing environment by discussing marketing context of one industry, and follow it up by other case based sessions on different industries. Use contextual notes on Indian marketing system as background reading.
2. Devote first session as spelt out in 1 and for remaining sessions, assign specific product-market situations to groups of 5 to 6 participants for obtaining information from library as well as field (limited to Ahmedabad town) and knowledgeable persons in the industry. Individual groups to present their findings and discuss the same in class over two sessions.
3. First session as outlined above and for remaining sessions assign each element of marketing environment for (i) assessing current status and likely changes in the same and (ii) assess its implications for marketing in the context of a specific product/market/organisation. Like the approach 2, individual groups to present their findings in class over two sessions.

Assessment of approach 1 by both, the participants and the instructors on two of the objectives of the module was poor. The primary reasons for the assessment were (i) inability to use more than 4 situations as well as (ii) lack of availability of comprehensive recent situations to draw meaningful conclusions particularly for the marketing environment as a whole. However, to an extent the implications of available environmental information on organisations/industries dealt in the class were brought out reasonably well.

The second approach turned out to be a big success so far as the use of available contextual information in assessing marketing system of a company/industry was concerned. This was evident from not only oral and written feedback on the module by participants but also as judged by both participants and instructors in the use in subsequent case discussions. The approach also familiarised the participants with sources of environmental information. However, in the opinion of instructors, the approach significantly failed in familiarising the participants with current status and likely changes in Indian marketing environment and role of marketing in India.

The third approach implemented only in the last academic session (1984-85) was reasonably successful in understanding the current and likely changes in broad environment. However, the implications of such changes for organisations/industries did not come through well as the groups were looking at implications of each element of the environment, rather than the total environment, on each organisation/industry etc.

It seems to us that the vastness of the information content of the module and the instructors' desire to achieve participants' learning about such vast content through an experiential mode in limited number of sessions are responsible for less than adequate achievement of the objectives.

What should be the position of the module in the Course?:

For a number of years we dealt this module immediately after the introductory module while we were using approach 1 for the design. In later years, particularly when approaches 2 and 3 above were implemented, the first session of the module had been scheduled after the buyer behaviour and segmentation module. The presentations have been scheduled after couple of week ends required for working on the group assignment by the participants.

The approach of scheduling the module immediately after the introductory sessions has lead to use of 'systems' approach by participants in subsequent modules. However, the overall understanding of the Indian marketing system and environment, in absence of some exposure to marketing phenomenon at the organisation level, suffered considerably. Scheduling of the module after some 5 to 6 weeks of work in the course has decidedly been better. The faculty has consistently felt that possibly its handling somewhere midway in the course, if not in the end, would be far more beneficial. This feeling is based on a belief that the participants would learn much more through these sessions if they have been exposed to a somewhat larger number of marketing situations.

Unresolved Issues :

As the review of I year courses is due this year, we have following issues to be resolved :

- whether to ask for increase in number of sessions? If yes, how many? How to design and position the same?
- In case increase in sessions does not materialise or is not desirable, what should be the objectives of the module? and how to design and position the same?

For resolving the issues, we propose two approaches :

- A) Given the experiences of using the three broad design approaches, discussed above, it seems quite reasonable to use approach 2 for achieving the objective of understanding of marketing environment as it impinges on an organisation/industry. One session on a case and two for presentations of group work with additional time of two sessions equivalent for group work is quite appropriate. However, if the objectives of broad understanding of environmental changes more deeply and the role of marketing in India are to be achieved, the module needs to be extended by another 3 or 4 sessions for using approach 3 as well.
- B) Alternatively, one of the two sets of objectives possible to be achieved by approaches 2 and 3 could be attempted to be achieved through case discussions in the remaining modules of the course while the other could be achieved by the specific module through approach 2/3. However, the latter option implies writing significant number of new cases and a much faster updating of the material. Both these are quite time consuming and difficult exercises.

The positioning of the module also needs to be thought through. Possibly the group exercises should not be attempted either too early in the course or too late in the course. However, if the second approach is followed, the session(s) on understanding the role of marketing could be scheduled towards the end of the course.

SECTION - IV : DESIGNING DEMAND ASSESSMENT AND FORECASTING MODULE:

This module is representative of those which draw a substantive conceptual/knowledge/technique component from a basic discipline like economics, statistics, behavioural sciences, etc. Such modules in the marketing course are demand assessment and forecasting, buyer behavior, pricing, marketing organisation, and marketing research. The module on demand assessment and forecasting is allotted five sessions and is scheduled after the module on buyer behaviour and segmentation but before any modules on sub-functional areas of decision making. The cases in this module have represented a mix of marketing situations in, terms of nature of product (consumer non-durable, consumer durable, and industrial products) as well as new v/s old products. The issues in designing the module primarily concern the relative emphasis on its three objectives. The objectives of the module are to (i) understand the basic requirements of using the techniques/concepts, (ii) develop skills of selecting appropriate concepts/techniques for the problem situation at hand, and (iii) judiciously use the results obtained by applying them for resolving the decision problems faced by managers. However, the basic discipline based course (Economic Analysis of the firm) usually handles the subject matter more from theoretical point of view and less from application point of view in any specific functional area.

Unless the module in the marketing course (as well as the discipline based course) is designed with some care, there are more than reasonable chances that the learning from the two courses would not be integrated. If such outcome were to take place, the application orientation of the participants, even if acquired, would not be based on sound footing.

Approaches used and Their Assessment :

In the demand assessment and forecasting module, two broad approaches of design have been used. We would briefly describe each approach and assess their suitability for achieving the objectives of the module.

The first approach was that of using case situations which provide opportunity for application of more than one demand assessment and forecasting method but need not necessarily provide enough description of decision makers' considerations and/or the details of buying unit behaviour. At the end of the module (part of) a session is devoted to understand applicability of the methods in different situations. This approach has been found to achieve the objectives of developing a technician's skill in use of techniques. It does not necessarily lead to development of judgement for effective use of techniques for decision making. Participants have been found to evaluate this approach better. However, subsequent sessions in the course, where demand assessment was an important aspect, have usually failed to provide assurance of better judgement in use of such techniques to instructors as well as participants.

The second approach also consists of case sessions but each case depicts realistic buying unit behaviour as well as a decision situation. The cases should preferably have information which provides opportunity to apply more than one demand assessment technique. Again, like the first approach, (part of) a session is devoted to recapitulate/review the learning of appropriateness of different forecasting techniques in different decision situations. This approach has been found to develop adequate skills of judgement for using/choosing appropriate forecasting approach as well as a technique, if one exists. However, the participants have not evaluated this approach better than the first approach. The likely reasons for such assessment could be lack of 'concrete' learning (of techniques etc.) and lack of appreciation of learning about 'not so concrete' aspects like skills and attitudes. Given that this module is taught in the first one-third part of the course in the second term, the primary causes for these could be influence of prior learning methods on the batch as a whole and the attitude of 'concrete' learning acquired in engineering and natural sciences from where a bulk of the participants come.

Unresolved Issues :

Our experience has convinced us that the second approach is better for achieving the major objective of decision making skills. However, the approach has not achieved the objective of understanding/knowledge of various forecasting techniques. Our experience also strongly suggests that the fault probably lies in lack of integration in the two courses where forecasting/demand assessment are learnt by participants. We, therefore, propose that for improved learning in this module, an

attempt should be made to integrate some part of the module along with the demand assessment module in the course on Economic Analysis of a firm (Micro Economics). The factors which are likely to affect the integration could be the differences in the objectives of the modules in the two, approaches of individual instructors, and ability of the instructors to work together. Needless to say, they all need to be taken care of well.

SECTION - V : DESIGNING THE PRODUCT POLICY MODULE

Design of all the decision oriented modules poses somewhat similar problems. Such modules in the course are segmentation, product-policy (including new product introduction), pricing, etc. Experiences of designing the product policy module would be described in this section.

The Module :

The product policy and decision module, over the years, has been positioned after the modules on introduction, buyer behaviour, segmentation (market selection), and demand assessment but before any other decision oriented modules. It has been allotted roughly 6 to 7 sessions. Its objectives are to (i) develop decision making skills regarding various decisions within the product area; and (ii) familiarise with relevant concepts in the product policy area. The module design has used following broad approaches :

1. Handle all sessions through cases with limited time for generalisations allotted in one or more sessions
2. Use first session as a broad discussion session followed by all case sessions with limited time for generalisations mostly in the last session.

3. Use all but last session for case discussion and the last session for summing up and drawing generalisations.
4. Similar to approach 3 but a comprehensive written assignment and presentation by groups of participants on a case in the last session, with some time for drawing generalisation.

The cases in the module consist of a mix of important decision situations prevailing/likely to prevail in the Indian organisations. Generally a new product introduction case, a case on managing a single product, one or two cases on managing a product line have been used. The mix of cases also reflects varying levels of competition, different types of product-market situations, and different lengths of time for which the products have been in the market. The background reading material has consisted of chapters on product policy and new product introduction from standard text books and a set of articles for supplementary reading.

Assessment of the Module Design :

We have found that 6/7 sessions are quite adequate for the kinds of objectives of the module. Its position has been well received by the participants as well as the faculty. One of the important reasons, possibly, for such acceptability of the position is the deliberate non-use of products which could be highly unfamiliar to the participants. This has been facilitated by a good mix of engineers and others among the participant group and also by the fact that a course on production management has already been taken by the participants in the preceding term.

Among the four design approaches, the first one was given up by early seventies because of lack of time available for understanding and internalizing concepts of product policy. The design pendulum shifted to the second approach in which the participants discussed the concepts in the first session of the module by applying them to pre-specified varying types of product situations. However, it was found quite difficult to cover more than one product situation in the session. Thus the purpose of really understanding the existing concepts by trying to operationalise them in different product situations could not be achieved. The instructors tried this approach for three/four years but the results just did not come through. Devoting one session to one product situation was no different than using a full blown case. In fact, a case could provide a far better context.

The third approach succeeded reasonably well. Having discussed several cases in detail, this approach provided reasonable time for reflection by both the participants and the instructors on not only decisions and situations covered in the cases but also for discussion of important concepts not covered through the cases.

The fourth approach was really an extension of the third. Its chief advantage over the third is in the fact that at least one case is thoroughly analysed by each group, decisions arrived at, and defended both in writing and orally inclass through presentations and discussions. Sometimes we have allowed participants to chose the case for assignment and presentation. This further improved the achievement of module objectives. While this approach in product policy module (as also in other decision oriented modules) has improved learning in the

marketing course, learning in other courses has suffered significantly on the day assignment and presentations are scheduled. We have tried to circumvent this problem by sharing the information, with other instructors, about the days assignment submissions/presentations are due, so that lighter work load could be assigned in other courses on those days. However, even when other instructors co-operate, all are fully conscious of the fact that marketing course is acting like a prima dona. Some degree of planning of submissions (like on a holiday) has helped somewhat but then some of the participants have complained, though not vigorously, of cutting into their non-academic time which in any case is quite limited.

Unresolved Issues :

Thus, we find that through trial and error we have been able to achieve a design which takes care of learning objectives of the module quite well. However, its impact on other courses is yet to be taken care of. All the first year courses being compulsory in nature, implying that each participant must learn the minimum required from the courses, we would have to devise some mechanism to take care of this aspect.

SECTION - VI : DESIGNING THE LEARNING CLIMATE :

The learning climate in the course needs to be designed considering the perception of the participants about marketing as a subject and the characteristics of the participants likely to influence learning through the case method. As discussed in the sub-section on participant profile (Sec. I) of this paper, the learning climate in the course

should capitalise on characteristics of the participants which have positive impact for learning through case method i.e. reinforces the strong motivation and commitment and utilise the diverse background for increased participation. At the same time, the negative contributions of characteristics of the participants should be overcome as early as possible i.e. lack of inclination to learn co-operatively and lack of inclination to treat participants (including the instructors) as co-learners. In addition, we have found, almost every one perceives oneself as an authority on a subject like marketing (or psychology for that matter) on the basis of ones daily experiences. This could lead to too much 'blah-blah' in the discussion in the beginning of the course. It may also be important to keep in mind that the design chosen to take care of these aspects itself may give rise to additional problems. Following steps have been found to be useful in achieving a better design of the learning climate. The description of the steps also includes their assessment in terms of positive and negative implications.

Introducing the Course :

The marketing course at IIMA has always been introduced to the participants through an Introductory Module of two or three sessions. The purposes of the module are two fold: delineate the subject matter to be covered and demonstrate the case method of learning to be used in the course. Till mid-seventies, when the course was scheduled to start in the first term, three sessions were used for course introduction as the module was also to serve as an introduction to the case method of learning for PG Programme as a whole. However, since the

mid-seventies, the course, starting in the second term, has used two sessions for introductory module. A short case (6 to 7 pages of single space quarto size) is scheduled for discussion on both the days.

Individual participants are required to present a complete analysis of some aspects of the case considered worthy of a detailed analysis by participant. The instructor encourages an evaluation and modification of such proposals by participants. However, ^{as a result of} lack of internalisation of the case method of learning by this time in the programme, the evaluation and modification process is found to be incomplete. The instructor, therefore, proceeds to help the presenter(s) in evaluating the proposed analysis by appropriate questioning. Yet, the first day leaves the process somewhat incomplete for lack of time, in comparison to the number of presentors - and the ideas expressed. The exercise is pursued on the second day for about half the session, by which time most issues in the case are brought out by participants through the discussion. The instructor then proceeds to delineate the scope of the course and emphasize the learning method as he is likely to follow in the course. He emphasizes the merits of selecting an important aspect of the case for discussion, making a detailed analysis of the same, and testing the ideas in a small group before coming to the class. He then emphasizes the manner of contributing to discussion in the class and learning from the class discussion even if the discussion in the class is on aspects that an individual participant may not have considered before coming to the class.

Our experience suggests that this exercise provides a reasonable headstart to case method of learning besides delineating the subject

matter and objectives of the course. However, it must be added that unless the subsequent sessions reinforce the philosophy of learning, the effect wears out quite fast. We have observed this particularly because the sessions following the introductory module are on marketing environment and/or buyer behaviour where the decision focus is not all that strong. Unless the instructor is careful in treating these modules (or at least the next few sessions of the subsequent modules) with decision making focus, he finds the effect of the exercise wearing out real fast.

Conducting Remaining Sessions in the Course :

Two approaches have been followed in the remaining case based sessions. The first consists of non-directed group discussion in all other sessions whereas the second consists of conducting the beginning sessions as some kind of a 'court-martial' type of interaction between individual participant and the instructor and then, at appropriate time, switch to non-directed discussion among participation.

Given the less than adequate maturity level of the group, the lack of inclination for co-operative learning through discussions, and strong possibility of higher level of 'blah-blah' because of perceived familiarity with the subject matter, the court martial approach in the beginning sessions has been found to achieve a variety of important objectives. These are : Making a significant dent in the individual participant's perception of himself as brightest among the group thereby prepare ground for participative learning, shatter the participant's attitude of 'know-all' about the subject matter, instil a sense of responsible behaviour in the class room, and generate a sense of better preparation individually as well as in small groups before coming to

the class. Once these changes are achieved, subsequent sessions could be well handled through non-directed discussion method. Achieving such changes among the participants has been found to be almost impossible for more than half the duration of the course by the use of first approach.

The court martial part of the second approach, however, has significant negative consequences too. Firstly, the approach can generate a fear psychosis not only about class participation but also about the instructor among weaker participants. Secondly, only a handful of participants are able to share their ideas in each session in the classroom, leaving others quite uninvolved. And thirdly, it may adversely affect prior preparation as most participants would find the discussion in the class at variance with what they had prepared. The second and the third aspects could be taken care of by the instructor through his summary at the end of each session/every 2 or 3 sessions by pointing out aspects not covered as well as reinforcing the manner of learning (testing ones own analysis by similar kind of questioning) suggested in the introductory module followed by discussion with interested participants after the class. However, if the approach ends up creating the fear among a significant proportion of the class, the instructor would have lost out the war in trying to win the initial battle.

On the whole, therefore, the court martial approach needs to be executed in a fashion that the participants realise their own inadequacies but are not brow beaten or made a laughing stock. In addition, the timing of switch to non-directed discussion is to be decided so that the court martial approach has had the desired effect by then.

Both these are more easily stated than actually achieved. It seems to us that higher the subject matter abilities and the skills of relating with the participants, lower would be the time required to achieve the skill of successfully operating the second approach.

Taking Care of Mid Course Blues :

In spite of the appropriate measures taken to familiarise the participants with case method by repeated application, it has been found that around the time when quarter or one third of the course is over, participants feel considerable frustration both about the method and the perceived lack of learning. This is not a phenomenon peculiar to IIMA or specific to one course. Such a phenomenon has been experienced at other institutions as well as in other courses.

The phenomenon starts taking shape when the questioning about first taking a specific decision and then justifying it starts putting mental pressure on participants. A point comes when the participant just fails to justify the stand taken either by him or others to his own satisfaction because one can't have perfect information in any case about consequences of ones actions. Probably the phenomenon at IIMA has greater intensity than elsewhere. Part of the reason could be the participant mix i.e. a higher proportion of participants with engineering and science background who always look for exatitudo in whatever they are doing. The participants increasingly ask for instructor's solution of the case situation and/or how did the managers in the organisation handle it. The instructors do not dishout any such thing as, by this time, the participants have neither an attitude of accepting the fact that more than one solution could be equally effective nor

the confidence in their own logic/thinking. Yet, an improvement in perceived learning is a strong motivating force and lack of it could lead to real disaster. We have found the following answer which partially takes care of this phenomenon.

On a given day the instructor really puts himself/herself in the shoes of an average participant and acts out the agonies of grappling with facts, opinions, rumours available in the case to evolve decision problems, alternative courses of action, and decision criteria in a given case. He then proceeds to not only evaluate the alternatives but also assess the chances of success of each with the help of given material in the case. He clearly demonstrates the crucial assumptions made and their reasonableness in his opinion, though he could as well be wrong. In a sense, he shows himself to be a human being whose decision could more or less be questioned by other human beings and yet, given the situation, he cannot shirk his responsibility to act decisively and be prepared for the consequences.

It is difficult to depict this exercise in words for us. We would however, like to assure our readers that the exercise invariably has had significant positive outcomes. Running the course after this session is a tremendous smooth sailing.

Monitoring and Evaluation :

The design of learning climate in the course requires that participants should be preparing both individually and in small groups as well as contributing to discussions in the class. Thus some systems of monitoring, control, and evaluation which take care of individual

learning, group work, and contributions to class discussion are required. At IIMA, we assign about 20% weightage for class participation, about 20 to 30% weightage for group assignments, and the remaining for mid-term and term end exams in each of the two terms of the marketing course. Timely feed back on assignments and exams in terms of grade obtained and detailed comments helps a great deal. Comments on strengths and weaknesses of the analysis as well as suggestions for improvement constitute important motivators for the participants. The mechanism used for monitoring and evaluating class participation consists of a register in which each participant, along with his relevant background information, is represented as a row and each session of the course is represented as a column. The entries in each cell depict presence/absence of a participant in the class session and also the quality and quantity of his class participation. This register is helpful in keeping a tab on participant's level of participation and devising appropriate measures to improve participation by non-contributors to the discussion and restrict, if need be, the contribution by those who have participated enough. The details of participants' background help in spotting those who could help in enhancing the discussion in case an impasse develops in any class during handling of particular kind of marketing situation.

We also conduct a review of the course and obtain feed back from participants on objectives, contents, methodology, instructors, evaluation scheme, and participants' perception of their contributions at the end of the course. Such feedback has been of immense value in bringing about desired changes in the course. In addition, reviews

at the end of each module are used for assessing and consolidating the course learning.

SECTION - VII : CONCLUDING REMARKS

The case method based functional area courses in Masters' level programmes in management generally have the objectives of developing decision making skills in the particular context (environment) and learning of relevant concepts, techniques, etc. The first issue in course design, therefore, concerns the kinds of modules to be included in such course. The next set of issues relates to content and pedagogy design for each type of module. A third set of issues includes design of learning climate and teaching material preparation. Our attempts at resolving these issues, some of which still remain unresolved, have also lead us to draw some tentative implications for designing environmental and discipline based compulsory courses in Masters' level programmes in management.

Quite obviously, several modules each dealing with a group of interrelated sub-functional decision areas would be included in the course. Also, certain sub-functional decision area modules and/or some other subject specific modules (like the buyer behaviour and the demand and sales forecasting modules) which draw significantly on certain disciplines, have also to be included for providing a sound conceptual base for improved decision making skills. However, the treatment of broader environment in the course as separate module(s) could be somewhat debatable. Exclusion of separate module(s) on environment implies that participants have to learn such aspects either

through their own assimilation from different cases and their discussions or such issues are dealt in time allotted for summary/review in the course. Our submission is that broader environment in more and more societies is gaining greater importance for variety of reasons. Writing enough cases/notes encompassing such aspects at the pace at which environmental changes are taking place would be quite difficult, particularly for schools having upto medium size faculty. Hence, learning of environment, trends therein, and their implications for decision making would be less than satisfactory if such module is not specifically handled in the course. The latter submission is made keeping in mind a better than average effectiveness of case method of learning which may or may not be so in specific schools. Therefore, we further submit that such module(s) be made distinct components of a case based functional area course, particularly in schools where faculty size is small to medium.

Effective design for each type of module differs in terms of content and pedagogy. Our experiences suggest the following approaches for the three specific types of modules generally included in the case based functional area compulsory courses :

- Module on environment would achieve the objectives better if participants do an indepth exercise of collecting and analysing relevant data and share the results of such exercise in the class room through presentation and discussions. They, however, need to be exposed to a broad understanding of the manner of viewing the environment in a discussion session. This approach would primarily utilise environmental information available in most libraries.

The modules significantly drawing on concepts, techniques etc. taught in other discipline based courses need to be designed and handled after mutual consultation among instructors of functional area and discipline based courses. It is likely to achieve a better degree of integration in learning by design.

Sub-functional decision making modules would be far more effective if participants actually submit a written analysis of a case at the end of each module which is then followed by proper summarising and review of learning in the module.

The above generalisations should be viewed in the light of significant unresolved issues discussed in the paper i.e. issue of increasing the number of sessions or changing the objectives of environmental module, difficulties likely to be faced in working together by instructors of varied background and styles for achieving integration of learning from the functional area course module and related module in a discipline based course, and the problems of devoting more time to integrated case assignment at the end of modules at the cost of learning in other compulsory courses.

The learning climate, including the evaluation and control of participant's learning, needs to be designed with far greater care. The first step in this direction would be an assessment of the implications of course objectives, participants' profile, learning climate in other courses, and climate outside the class on requirements of effective learning through case method. The instructor's own level of development as a case teacher is likely to influence not only the design of

climate but also its effective execution. A realistic assessment of the same by the instructor himself constitutes the third step in the process. Finally, the assessment of implications of the instruments to be used for learning climate needs to be made.

We have found that increased confidence in case method of learning could be developed among participants if simpler decision situations are scheduled in the beginning and those having increasing level of complexity are handled subsequently (i) within each module as well as (ii) over the course as a whole. The latter aspect (ii) also has implications for scheduling the modules. Accordingly, the teaching material (cases and contextual notes) at hand should be sorted out according to varying levels of complexity of situations. In case there are gaps in the teaching material, development of appropriate new material should be planned. A greater involvement of participants could also be generated if the teaching material is based on recent situations and reflects the changing context of decision making in the functional area. Consistency in the focus of discussion in the course acts as another element of motivating the participants, whereas a fluctuating focus would hamper their preparation and discussion style. Needless to mention that the discussion focus should ensure a degree of rigour in analysis and thus build improved decision making skills among the participants.

Besides the above mentioned generalisations for case based compulsory marketing course, which to a reasonable degree may be applicable to other functional area courses, we may draw some tentative implications for environmental and basic discipline based compulsory courses.

- These courses could enhance their contribution to learning of future managers if the focus of a significant portion of the course is on drawing implications for decision making.
- Integration in design and implementation of some part of the modules of these courses with similar module(s) in functional area courses could be of significant help.
- Development of teaching material required for the integration purposes could be achieved and need to be achieved by joint efforts of faculty handling the functional courses on one hand, and environment and/or discipline based courses on the other hand.
- The faculty handling environmental and discipline based courses may be able to achieve the learning objectives of their courses through a methodology different than case method. Our experience of handling case based functional area courses strongly suggests that use of case method (experiential learning) to at least a minimum degree could substantially enhance the use of learning from such courses in applied situations.

APPENDIX - 1

FIRST YEAR COURSES

	<u>Credit Units</u>
<u>FIRST TERM</u>	
1. Mathematics & Statistics for Management-I	1.00
2. Production & Operations Management-I	1.00
3. Managerial Accounting & Control-I	1.00
4. Economic Analysis	0.75
5. Organizational Structure & Dynamics	1.00
6. Written Analysis & Communication-I	0.50
7. Legal Aspects of Business	1.00
Total :::	<u>6.25</u>
<u>SECOND TERM</u>	
1. Mathematics & Statistics for Management-II	1.00
2. Personal & Interpersonal Dynamics	1.00
3. Finance-I	1.00
4. Marketing-I	1.00
5. Managerial Accounting & Control-II	1.00
6. Written Analysis & Communication-II	0.70
7. Economic Environment & Policy-I	1.00
Total :::	<u>6.70</u>
<u>THIRD TERM</u>	
1. Human Resource Management	1.00
2. Computers & Data Processing Systems	0.75
3. Production & Operations Management-II	1.00
4. Finance-II	1.00
5. Marketing-II	1.00
6. Economic Environment & Policy-II	1.00
7. Written Analysis & Communication-III	0.80
8. Indian Social & Political Environment	1.00
Total :::	<u>7.55</u>
Grand Total :::	<u>20.50</u>

APPENDIX - 2

MARKETING MANAGEMENT

<u>Sr.No.</u>	<u>Module</u>	<u>No. of Sessions</u>
1.	Introduction	2
2.	Marketing Systems and Role of Marketing in India	4
3.	Buyer Behaviour and Segmentation	8
4.	Demand and Sales Forecasting	5
5.	Product Policy (including New Product Decisions)	6
6.	Pricing	4
7.	Distribution Channel Management	5
8.	Sales Management (including Personal selling, Advertising, and Sales Promotion)	5
9.	Marketing Research	5
10.	Marketing Organisation	2
11.	Marketing Programmes Planning	4
12.	Developmental Marketing, Consumerism, and Legal Aspects	3
13.	Course Review	2
	Total :::	60

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