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Use of Seminars for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Recommendations for Business and Management Teaching

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Abstract: This research is aimed to perform a comprehensive literature review of articles on the use of seminars for teaching and learning in the higher education. The review was performed using 68 relevant studies on seminars in the teaching and learning across various disciplines. The review first considered articles on the higher education, business and management and other very close disciplines including social science and engineering. We then performed the synthesis and discussions of the facts emerging from these studies to answer some of the relevant questions including why seminars are used, how they are conducted, how they are beneficial to participants and academic institutions, and challenges associated to conducting them. Based on the endorsements from the extant literature from business and management and other contemporary disciplines, we also provide recommendations for using it in the business and management discipline.

Keywords: Seminar, Small Group Teaching, Higher Education, Business, Management

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1 Introduction

Creation of a new knowledge is mainly achieved by students themselves, and the key task of teachers in the higher education is thus to help this learning process (Hofsten et al., 2010). Increasing amount of relevant education at universities indicates crowded courses and impossibility of organising seminars where students can discuss each other's work. This seems to lead to lower motivation and inferior learning (Makkonen, 2005). The traditional classroom puts learner in a situation where an instructor initiates, a learner responds, and the instructor then closes the sequence by either accepting or rejecting the learner's turn (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). This does not leave much space to the learner to interactively involve in the learning process.

Seminar is a learning session in which a group of 25 students facilitated by a content expert discusses questions and concerns emerging from assigned readings on a topic of practical relevance (Jaarsma et al., 2008). It is also defined as a small group meeting in which students and a tutor discuss information on a chosen topic (LTDU, 2007). Such small group learning provides students opportunities to discuss and refine their understanding of complex issues, learn how to solve problems and reflect on their attitudes and feelings (Steinert, 1996). Actively getting engaged in questioning, discussions, and interactions with subject matter in small groups promotes 'deep learning', whereby students elaborate and restructure facts, principles, and concepts to build strong cognitive frameworks (Dennick and Spencer, 2011).

Learning through seminars is also useful due to intense competition among teaching institutions to provide high quality education. In an educational setting, they play a significant role in simulating the thought process. They encourage people to exchange new information that would not have been possibly available otherwise. Moreover, the cutting-edge technology used to present knowledge from experts helps gain better understanding of topics (Stewart, 2014). Moreover, they provide opportunities to explore topics in more depth, share ideas in a way that develop individual's thinking, provide an environment that helps learning from each other's experiences and background knowledge, and identify and resolve any misunderstandings (Rana and Dwivedi, 2016; Rana et al., 2016ab; LTDU, 2007).

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The universities in the developed countries like the USA and the UK also emphasise the need for seminar to fulfil the relevant numbers of hours to each module. Teaching only the theoretical part of the modules through the traditional form of lectures cannot fulfil that criterion. Therefore, universities are using a method of conducting seminars to increase the number of contact hours for each module, which is one of the ways to move up the league table of ranking. Moreover, the concept of seminars has been largely used in the more mature discipline such as medicine (e.g. Coodin and Chisholm, 2001; Deutsch, 2002; El-Mallakh, 2001), pharmacy (e.g. LeBlanc et al., 2007), nursing (e.g. Beaton, 2007; Hofsten et al., 2010), and clinical courses (e.g. Beullens et al., 2006; Green et al., 2008) to name a few. However, only a handful (e.g. Arbaugh and Benbunan-Fich, 2006; Doman, 2011; Lamb et al., 1997) of research studies are available to understand the advantages, challenges, opportunities, and use of seminars in the higher education.

The above discussion indicates that there is a lack of research to understand the usefulness, advantages, challenges, and opportunities of seminars in the higher education in general and business and management studies in particular. To the best of our knowledge, none of the studies have ever conducted any literature review of the articles on the relevance and usefulness of seminars in this area. Such review of literature on seminars will allow the researchers to understand its relevance in the context of the higher education in general and the business and management education in particular. Moreover, as there is no literature review available in this area of research to date, this study is a step forward toward filling the existing research gap.

2 Research Method

We employed a systematic review approach to identify, collect, and analyse relevant literature on seminar from ‘small group teaching’, ‘small group discussion’, and ‘group discussion’. We explored the selected educational journals to find appropriate articles related to seminars in the teaching and learning. For that, we investigated 28 major journals on education including Academy of Management, Learning and Education, Management Learning, Studies in Higher Education, British Educational Research Journal, Journal of Accounting Education, Journal of Higher Education, Journal of Education Policy, British Journal of Guidance and

Counselling, Innovations in Education and Teaching International, Accounting Education, Advances in Developing Human Resources, Higher Education Quarterly, Journal of Management Education, Journal of Education and Work, Journal of Marketing Education, Issues in Accounting Education, Journal of European Industrial Training, Education and Training, Industry and Higher Education, Educational Management Administration and Leadership, Journal of Vocational Education and Training, Journal of Management Development, Active Learning in Higher Education, International Journal of Management Education, Journal of Further and Higher Education, Quality Assurance in Education, International Journal of Training and Development, and Journal of Workplace Learning.

Putting them together in the databases such as Scopus and ISI Web of Knowledge with the selected keywords (such as ‘seminars’, ‘small group teaching’, ‘small group discussion’, and ‘group discussion’) in the title of the articles retrieved a total of 110 distinct articles. Moreover, we also performed searching independent of any academic sources through Google Scholar on the keywords such as ‘seminar’, ‘higher education’, ‘teaching’, and ‘lecture’. This searching provided us with 674 possible articles from various other journals and conferences. After a careful scrutiny of the all studies, we were left with 113 relevant articles. Out of these selected articles, only 22 were found related either to the business and management studies or the higher education. The other 46 articles were found to be from the other contemporary and more mature disciplines such as psychology, nursing, medicine, pharmacy, pathology, chemistry, economics etc. to name a few and hence they were categorised separately. The remaining 45 articles were although based on seminars; they were not related to the context of the teaching or learning purposes. Therefore, we discarded these articles from our further review. As a result, only 68 articles related to seminars on teaching and learning in the higher education made the basis for this literature review.

3 Literature Review

Hensley and Oakley (1998) revealed that although challenges of teaching a large lecture class are considerable, they are surmountable. The solution is to develop innovative methods of instructing the class that can reduce if not eliminate many of the issues inherent in the mass class. The authors discussed some of the challenges of conducting large class such as class

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size, time commitment required by the faculty instructor etc. Brooks et al. (1999) explored students' perceptions about seminar in their examination preparation strategy. The research concludes that tutors should proactively manage seminar by carefully designed strategies relevant to the needs of students and to contribute efficiently to their development. Jelfs and Colbourn (2002) focused on the current demands of teaching staff in the UK higher education and the influence these demands have when teaching through electronic resources. The study explored how communication and information technology can help students and lecturers in making the most of small group-based learning and to promote and support efficient change in educational practice. It was realised that there is a need for increased financial support for additional staff development and training in the use of communication and information technology. It was also established that there is a need for tutors to maintain a full support to students in a move toward enhanced use of technology in their learning.

Brower (2003) discussed the problems and promise of offering an executive MBA course through asynchronous and web-based course delivery medium. The author also presented an example of how a quality classroom discussion was imitated using electronic bulletin board technology. This article contributes to the literature on effective distance learning by showing not only how the classroom discussion can be captured in the on-line venue, but also how a learning community can be created. The research concludes that creating a learning community is one learning objective that can be achieved through the electronic discussion board. Both students and faculty benefit from its use for this purpose. Moreover, electronic discussion forums received positive results when designers used a particular learning purpose for the discussion and adapted their tutoring to efficiently use the technology. Montgomery et al. (2003) evaluated the ways different seminar types (i.e. instructor-led vs. student-led and small group vs. large group) might influence such outcomes as student satisfaction, confidence in major selection, academic performance, and retention in engineering. Kollias and Kikis (2004) examined the level of students' satisfaction with five different dimensions of the seminar, namely the organisation and clarity, the pedagogic approach, the interaction within learning groups, the delivery platform, and their learning experiences. The findings suggested that the interaction among learners in the seminar was the most satisfactory dimension.

Makkonen (2005) compared a web-based coursework to a traditional coursework focusing on the impact of the topics to learn. The study revealed that the web-based coursework suits better for the students of information technology (IT) faculty in the learning of building information systems. The paper demonstrated that a seminar for a crowded course is possible using the web environment. Axelsson et al. (2006) aimed to design assessment events that result in deep learning and high student activity, but still provide the teacher with a reliable basis for justice in examinations. The key lesson learned from this research is that teachers must arrange the student interactions in a conscious fashion. The authors found that without a distinctive relationship to the written exercise, the student might find it meaningless to perform at the seminar. On the other hand, if the seminar does not go beyond the written exercise, it will be repetition and not a true learning event. Arbaugh and Benbunan-Fich (2006) examined the relationship between teaching approaches and online learning outcomes using a sample of 40 MBA-level courses. The outcomes of the research indicated that students reported significantly high scores for perceived learning and delivery medium satisfaction in the courses where objectivist-teaching approaches were supported by the use of collaborative techniques. These findings empirically recommend that the collaborative learning model should be a foundation upon which online courses are designed and delivered. Porter and Swing (2006) argued that only a limited research has attempted to isolate the influence of various aspects of the first year seminars on persistence. The authors suggested that if institutions want their first-year seminars to be effectual in impacting perseverance, they must understand both the long- and short-term effects of the choices faculty members make as they create their course syllabi.

Hauke (2007) aimed to encourage both teachers and students of the Library and Information Science (LIS) to experiment with more interactive methods of teaching and learning. The findings indicated that the LIS students are highly enthusiastic about these so-called project seminars as they provide invaluable practical experience that complements skills attained in the other more theoretical courses. These practical seminars prepare students for an academic career including the skills required for editing or publishing scientific books. Kinsler et al. (2007) discussed the evolution of a Freshman Seminar course from commencement to its current configuration. The survey provided the

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evidence that the student valued the topics. The use of student mentors is another possibility for effectual management of the seminar. The experience of the student mentor would provide valuable leadership experience for other students taking part in the seminar. Koehler et al. (2007) reported the results of a semester-long analysis of the development of technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK) during a faculty development design seminar where the faculty members worked together with postgraduate students to develop online courses. The findings suggested that developing TPCK is a multigenerational process involving the deeper understanding of relationships between each component of TPCK.

Jaarsma et al. (2008) explored the perceptions of student groups as to how teacher performance, group interaction, and the quality of assignments are linked to one another and shown to influence small-group learning in hybrid and problem-based curricula. The results indicated that teacher performance and group interaction significantly influenced the perceived learning effect. The strong relationship between teacher performance and learning effect indicates that students rely strongly on their teachers. Exploring the potential of blended learning to promote retention and achievement in higher education professional study programs, Basque and Pudelko (2010) presented a blended learning model designed for a university professional study program attended by the full-time professionals. The research found that pedagogical and professional factors are insufficiently considered in theoretical models of student retention. However, such factors are of primary concern for students who work full-time as professionals. Benaya (2010) conducted a study to better understand the reasons for relatively large number of students failing to complete the seminar requirements. The findings suggested that factors such as work and family situation could be the possible cause for students for not attending seminars. The author emphasised the need of more structured supervision and personal contact in order to increase the attendance of students in seminars.

Doman (2011) demonstrated that the lean principles and practices used in the industry can be successfully employed to enrich the higher education administrative processes through an innovative and engaging leaning experience involving undergraduate students. This case study found that a small group of undergraduate students can quickly learn basic

principles, tool and practices, and apply them in a real-world setting to dramatically enhance university processes. Christensen and Corry (2012) presented a case study in active learning in which they replaced traditional lecturing with active seminars. Active seminars were symbolised by student learning through activities such as exercises and discussions rather than teachers going over slides. As a conclusion of this research, the authors decide to continue with active seminars in this course in the years to come with the hope that other teachers in the community will experiment with some or all ideas emerging from their research.

Harry et al. (2012) presented a tablet-based system to collaboratively track discussion topics and ideas in a seminar style discussion classroom. Each student used his or her own tablet to share ideas using text in a synchronised and virtual environment. Based on their findings, the authors concluded that the spoken participation alone imposes obstacles for some participants and using a non-oral, text-based stage can facilitate reasonable and engaging discussions in the class. Domizi (2013) examined the use of microblogs to augment content learning and to foster community between participants in a weekly multidisciplinary graduate seminar on teaching and pedagogy. The analysis of the data collected from students and teachers indicated that students did use Twitter to connect to the content and to each other.

Kurczek and Johnson (2014) discussed the development, pedagogical approach, and experience of a senior level seminar course in which the students and instructor collaboratively explored an emerging field where none of them were an expert of the concerned area. Students provided feedback and evaluations at three time points over the course of semester. Students' responses revealed both high level of satisfaction and degrees of perceived learning within the course at the midterm and final evaluation. Pelton (2014) examined the impact of a newly established teaching seminar using the teaching anxiety and confidence scale. The findings from pre- and post-test data showed that seminar reduced graduate students' feelings of anxiety about teaching for the first time and increased their levels of confidence regarding mastery of common pedagogical skills. Qualitative feedback from evaluations further showed the positive impacts of the seminar on students themselves as teachers and their knowledge of effective teaching practices.

4 Literature from Other Contemporary Disciplines

Table 1 presents the major disciplines and related example source(s) for each of them. The review indicates that medicine is the most matured discipline as far as undertaking research on it is concerned. This is followed by some other disciplines including clinical seminar, nursing, psychology, dentistry, psychiatry, and chemistry where the relevance and usefulness of seminar have been discussed. Moreover, the relevance of seminar related to disciplines such as sociology, economics, neuroscience, orthodontics, occupational therapy, anthropology, geomorphology, veterinary, English language, and pharmacy has also been explored.

Table 1. Literature on seminar from some contemporary disciplines

Discipline	Example Source(s)
Medicine	Boots and Treloar (2000), Beullens et al. (2006), Brassington (2006), Coodin and Chisholm (2001), El-Mallakh (2001), Elliott and Misselbrook (2002), Goldman (1987), Green et al. (2008), Hadley and Mars (2011), Hermes-Lima et al. (2002), Salerno et al. (2003), Spruijt et al. (2012), Weurlander et al. (2009)
Nursing	Alderson et al. (2002), Davies (2014), Granero-Molina et al. (2012), Hofsten et al. (2010), Zsohar and Smith (2010)
Psychology	Atchley et al. (2012), Azara (2003), Negovan and Osiceanu (2012)
Dentistry	Behar-Horenstein et al. (2008), Brunton et al. (2000)
Psychiatry	Agarwal and Rohrbaugh (2011), Allen et al. (2000)
Chemistry	Hamstra et al. (2011)
Sociology	Trautner (2014)
Economics	Elliott (2004)
Neuroscience	Bucci and Falls (2007)
Orthodontics	Miller et al. (2011)
Occupational Therapy	Banks et al. (2000)
Anthropology	Agarwal and Rohrbaugh (2011)
Geomorphology	Harwood (1987)
Veterinary	Jaarsma et al. (2009)
English Language	Entzinger et al. (2011)
Pharmacy	LeBlanc et al. (2007)

A fair number of studies (e.g. Boots and Treloar, 2000; Coodin and Chisholm, 2001; Elliott and Misselbrook, 2002; Goldman, 1987; Hadley and Mars, 2011; Spruijt et al., 2012; Weurlander et al., 2009) have analysed seminars in the context of different branches of medicine. For example, Boots and Treloar (2000) aimed to use a behavioral model to predict intern attendance at a metropolitan teaching hospital in Australia. The results indicated that the resident education programmes within teaching hospitals require attention to and change of facilitating conditions that might allow improvements in attendance and quality of the

programme. Coodin and Chisholm (2001) found that experience of facilitating a seminar was an impacting factor for its successful organisation. Such a forum enabled the presenters to focus on a new role, sharing presenter's life experience in a non-clinical setting, and acting as educators.

Describing the planning and running a seminar on medicine and literature, Elliott and Misselbrook (2002) demonstrated that the seminar could be set up and run as an educative framework. Analysing an elective seminar to teach the first-year students the medical and social aspects of AIDS, Goldman (1987) found that students have reported the seminar to be valuable in helping them overcome their fear of disease, develop compassion for patients with tragic diseases, and understand an extensive approach to a complicated disease. Green et al. (2008) described clinical seminar to integrate basic science and clinical topics for chiropractic students. The seminar experience resulted in the improvement and confidence in the knowledge and satisfaction with program among students.

Hadley and Mars (2011) reported that the use of IT to strengthen teaching in paediatric surgery in Africa is appealing and often unsuccessful due to the costs involved and a lack of proper bandwidth. A simple solution is required to allow sharing of teaching sessions that are normally conducted using the videoconferencing in areas in which bandwidth is sufficient. However, where a lack of bandwidth precludes videoconferencing, the low-tech low-cost solution has ascertained effectual in resource-poor settings. Spruijt et al. (2012) aimed to explore students' views related to the aspects that influence seminar learning. The findings indicated that course schedule and alignment seem to have a stronger impact on seminar learning. Conditions and processes around seminars also appear to contribute to the quality of seminar learning and therefore well worth further investigation. Weurlander et al. (2009) reported on students' perceptions of a new form of case seminar as a way to learn pathology. The findings revealed that the new case seminar could be an effective teaching and learning activity. It can be applied in the traditional courses as a complement to lectures and does not need any major change in the course design. It is also supposed to be well suited for integrated curricula.

A handful of studies (e.g. Alderson et al., 2002; Davies, 2014; Granero-Molina et al., 2012; Hofsten et al., 2010; Zsohar and Smith,

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2010) have also explored seminars in the specific context of nursing. For example, Davies (2014) examined the efficacy of using mobile technology (such as Apple iPad) more formally in facilitating enhanced levels of interaction and group cohesion within a series of tutorial sessions involving undergraduate nursing students. The outcomes indicated that mobile computing platform of this type might help students to engage more fully with learning activities and materials and enhance student confidence using peer presentation and feedback. Analysing clinical seminar as a complementary learning method, Granero-Molina et al. (2012) found that such seminars can contribute toward reducing levels of stress during clinical practice. They also facilitate students to obtain significant learning from their fellow students and lessen the theory-practice gap. Hofsten et al. (2010) described the case seminars and associated learning process from the students in a Swedish nursing program. The results identified how the Case Method opens doors to deeper understanding and critical thinking of the subject matter. Structured seminar discussions and use of white board were appreciated and students considered it to give them the opportunity to understand the problems in a wider context. Cases from real life also encouraged students to ask questions and look for new knowledge. The Case Method seems to involve students in a way that intensifies their understanding.

Three studies (e.g. Atchley et al., 2012; Azara, 2003; Negovan and Osiceanu, 2012) analysed seminars in context of psychology. For example, Atchley et al. (2012) examined an online psychology orientation course that requires relatively few instructional resources to accomplish success. The analysis shows enormous improvements in students' performance for major knowledge and planning for the future and moderate gains in the other areas. This work suggests that the online model is one potentially powerful tool for preparing undergraduate psychology majors to succeed. Teaching the candidate in case seminar, Azara (2003) found that the case seminar format should be standardised, candidates should demonstrate the similar levels of experience, professors should examine the suitability of the case in advance, and candidates need to be prepared for the group process. Negovan and Osiceanu (2012) explored whether the type of seminar activities differentiate undergraduate psychology students' learning outcomes. The outcomes suggested that if

the progress in learning is examined by the knowledge development, the students must to be engaged more in activities focused on knowledge.

Moreover, some other studies on diverse disciplines including dentistry, psychiatry, chemistry, sociology, neuroscience, economics, orthodontics, occupational therapy, anthropology, geomorphology, veterinary, English, language, and pharmacy also emphasised on the significance of seminars in the teaching and learning perspective. For example, analysing the students' perceptions of seminar and lecture-based teaching in restorative dentistry, Brunton et al. (2000) concluded that students were found to prefer seminar-based learning opportunities as opposed to more traditional styles of learning, particularly, instructive lectures. Hamstra et al. (2011) integrated webinar and blogging technologies into chemistry seminar. Although both these technologies are fairly commonplace for social and business interactions, the authors believed that coupling them together in the undergraduate seminar course is innovative, pedagogically treasured, and pertinent to an extensive amount of chemistry seminar formats. Trautner (2014) argued that including pedagogical issues into substantive graduate seminars can facilitate students better prepare for the classroom and also provide them additional way to ponder over and learn the material and elementary areas.

Miller et al. (2011) explored the recorded interactive seminars and follow-up discussions as an effective method for distance learning. The findings indicated that recorded interactive seminars with follow-up discussions are also an effective and acceptable method of distance learning. Entzinger et al. (2011) found that mix of students from different years is very effective to develop discussions that widen everyone's views, and that this can help faculty to find out what knowledge students feel they miss and how they like to be taught. This will result in more accurate and useful design and development of coursework. LeBlanc et al. (2007) examined pharmacy instructors to help online discussions. After attending a training seminar, participant's comfort level in their ability to teach online increased.

5 Discussion

The literature review presented above examined a number of studies on business and higher studies and some distinct research on contemporary and more mature disciplines. Considering the review of two different areas

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of literature, it is deemed appropriate to synthesise and collectively discuss their findings.

The review of literature on business and management studies and the higher education indicate why seminars are relevant and useful. Firstly, they go beyond the written exercise (Axelsson et al., 2006) and provides learners the overall information on the given subject area. Secondly, they have been argued to be more interactive methods of teaching and learning (Hauke, 2007) and provide learners opportunities toward two-way communication where both students and teachers offer their views on a topic and discuss its pros and cons in a more detailed and collaborating fashion. Thirdly, it also provides students a valuable real-world experience that compliments skills obtained in the corresponding theoretical courses (Hauke, 2007). Fourthly, students' learning through activities such as exercises and discussions rather than teachers going over slides (Christensen and Corry, 2012) boosts up their confidence and widens their knowledge base on the specified topic. Fifthly, the use of technologies such as tablet-based system (Harry et al., 2012) and use of microblogs through Twitter (Domizi, 2013) can help students toward reasonable and engaging silent discussions in the class (Harry et al., 2012). Such discussions are sometimes preferred over the spoken discussions where all members in the class are usually not able to put forward their views and which result in incomplete discussion on the given topic. Finally, seminars are also preferred and considered useful as they reduce students' feelings of anxiety about teaching (Pelton, 2014) and enhances their levels of thinking, confidence, and capability of logically arguing and concluding any given topic.

Some studies (e.g. Granero-Molina et al., 2012; Hofsten et al., 2010) from contemporary and more mature disciplines have also supported the reasons of why such seminars are or should be conducted. For example, exploring the experience of clinical practices, Granero-Molina et al. (2012) revealed that seminars help student gain significant learning from their fellow students and minimise the theory-practice gap. Moreover, analysing the nursing students' experience of learning, Hofsten et al. (2010) found that Case Method based seminars allow the participants to have a deeper understanding and critical thinking of the subject matter.

Also, studies (e.g. Brooks et al., 1999; Brower, 2003; Domizi, 2013; Jelfs and Colbourn, 2002; Makkonen, 2005; Montgomery et al., 2003)

have put forward their different views on how seminars are conducted. Firstly, seminars are conducted by carefully designed strategies pertinent to the needs of students and to contribute efficiently to their development (Brooks et al., 1999). Secondly, it is suggested that seminars should be conducted through the relevant electronic resources. Using such technologies help students and lecturers in making the most of small-group learning (Jelfs and Colbourn, 2002).

The other similar way to conduct such seminars and quality classroom discussion is by using the asynchronous and web-based course delivery medium (Brower, 2003; Makkonen, 2005), electronic bulletin board technology (Brower, 2003), tablet-based system (Harry et al., 2012), and Twitter (Domizi, 2013). Thirdly, Montgomery et al. (2003) evaluated the different ways in which seminar types can be conducted such as instructor led vs. student led seminars and small vs. large group seminars. Finally, it is also suggested that objectivist-teaching approach supported by the collaborative techniques could be an effective way to enrich student's learning and satisfaction.

Literature (e.g. Hamstra et al., 2011; Entzinger et al., 2011) from contemporary and more mature disciplines have also suggested and supported their views on the ways seminars are conducted. For example, Hamstra et al. (2011) suggested integrating technologies such as webinar and blogging together in a chemistry seminar. Although these systems are common in social and business interactions, the authors felt that integrating them together would be more relevant and innovative for effective arrangement of seminars.

Studies on business and management and the higher education have also discussed how seminars benefit the teaching and learning environment at large. Firstly, the use of seminars in the curriculum provides users with the pragmatic exposure and experience (Hauke, 2007), which is not possible with the slide-based theoretical teaching. Secondly, they provide equal opportunities of participation to the students particularly when integrated and collaborative technologies such as tablet-based systems (for text-based discussion) and Twitter (for microblogs) is used to invite everyone's views on a specific topic. Thirdly, seminars facilitate students by reducing feelings of anxiety about teaching and enhance their levels of confidence (Pelton, 2014). This is possibly due to the fact that seminars broaden the degree of discussions and possibly the understanding of the specified topic of a given subject area.

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The studies (e.g. Granero-Molina et al., 2012; Hensley and Oakley, 1998; Zsohar and Smith, 2010) on contemporary disciplines have also discussed some of the benefits in arranging seminars in these subject areas. For example, exploring the nursing students' views on clinical seminars, Granero-Molina et al. (2012) found that seminars obtained benefits such as the development of participants' competencies and the capacity to apply the theories and understanding each other's interpersonal relationships in life and work. Hensley and Oakley (1998) found that small group seminars were significant in terms of developing students' writing, speaking, and analytical abilities. Considering graduate student seminars as a faculty development activity, Zsohar and Smith (2010) revealed that faculties benefit from the written evaluative comments of all participants. As a result, those faculties who are not seminar leaders also benefit from the feedback from their peers.

Similarly, only a few studies have analysed the challenges in conducting seminars. For example, Harry et al. (2012) found that spoken participation alone imposes some kind of hurdles to the participants of seminar. This is possibly because all participants do not get opportunities to speak on the given topic due to the constraints of time. Hensley and Oakley (1998) revealed that large class size and the time commitment required by the faculty instructor are some of the major challenges of a large class teaching.

The studies from nursing disciplines (e.g. Beaton, 2007; Entzinger et al., 2011; Hofsten et al., 2010) have also explored challenges in those areas in their own ways. For example, discussing the seminar involving nursing students on clinical problems, Beaton (2007) found that working with patients from other cultures was a big challenge for nurses serving them. Analysing the seminar style e-learning courses on English and Internationalisation, Entzinger et al. (2011) found that managing time efficiently is one of the biggest challenges for such courses. Endorsing the importance of case seminars in nursing students' experiences of learning, Hofsten et al. (2010) revealed that large size of the group made it hard to hear the discussions. This was considered as a challenge for some of the students.

6 Recommendations

A handful of studies from both business and management and related fields on higher education (e.g. Azara, 2003; Benaya et al., 2010; Domizi, 2013; Negovan and Osiceanu, 2012) and other contemporary disciplines (e.g. Allen et al., 2000; Beaton, 2007; Hrastinski and Jaldemark, 2012; Jaarsma et al., 2009; LeBlanc et al., 2007; Spruijt et al., 2013) have prescribed recommendations for using seminars in their corresponding settings.

For example, based on the participants' and faculty members' response, Azara (2003) recommended that there should be more focused case presentations with each candidate presenting at least three to five times would be more effective way to go about it. Discussions on the beginning of the seminar about people's feelings about presenting provide openness among participants. It was also prescribed that not every case is suitable for a specific course of study. It was recommended that perhaps the case proposed for presentation could be reviewed with faculty member in advance for determining its suitability for discussion. Benaya et al. (2010) recommended that supervisors of the individual seminar should define milestone such as topic selection, list of references, outline etc. It was also recommended to have an automated tool, which help identify and send reminders to students who are lagging behind.

Using the significance of microblogging to foster the communication in a graduate seminar course, Domizi (2013) recommended that instructors who plan to use Twitter for class communication should be prepared to help students get oriented while the students get accustomed. This is particularly useful at the beginning of the semester when students have either no experience or a very little experience with Twitter. Negovan and Osiceanu (2012) recommended that critical thinking or assessment should be used carefully when seminar activities are intended to provide students with good training for securing good results in the written exam.

The study from the contemporary discipline of psychiatry by Allen et al. (2000) recommended that integrative seminars should use heterogeneous learning groups that represent multiple forms of therapy at various levels of expertise. Considering the seminar for nursing students involving discussion on clinical problems, Beaton (2007) recommended that instructor must clearly define his or her expectations for the seminar to students. Discussing the significance of online seminars, Hrastinski and

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Jaldemark (2012) recommended that asynchronous discussion (i.e. the discussion which is scheduled over a week) should be conducted in larger groups as it develops a better opportunity for communication (Mazur, 2004), while chat discussions are recommended to be conducted in smaller groups because online students would otherwise find it difficult to maintain a logical sequence of speakers' contributions (Haythornthwaite, 2006).

Exploring the students' and teachers' perceptions of the occurrence and desirability of verbal interactions in seminar groups, Jaarsma et al. (2009) recommended that the amount of teachers' guidance should be reduced during group discussion. They also suggested that teachers need extra training in helping group toward effective learning. Assessing training seminar to prepare pharmacy instructors to help online discussions, LeBlanc et al. (2007) recommended that increasing the time assigned for the overall seminar and spending more time on the application portion are some of the steps required for improving its standard. Spruijt et al. (2013) recommended reducing the group size to decrease obscurity and facilitate students and teacher build a positive relationship.

Considering recommendations from the studies of business and non-business disciplines, this research would also like to provide some recommendations for using seminars in the business and management studies. Firstly, seminars should be organised by considering students across the different levels of an undergraduate or postgraduate course to have a wide-ranging views and understanding of the topics. Such arrangement allows students more opportunities to apprehend the subject matter and stretching their imagination beyond a specific degree. Secondly, it should be attempted to organise in a small group to provide opportunities to each and every student to put forward their views and related discussions. It also helps instructor to provide constructive discussion and feedback on the given topic. Thirdly, it is also recommended to have seminars in the silent form of discussion using integrated and collaborative technologies such as tablet-based systems (for text-based discussion) and Twitter (for microblogs). Such seminars encourage participants toward a constructive and engaging discussion and let them feel confident about the topic they learn. However, such seminars are useful only in situations where all students in the class are not able to put forward their views and hence are preferred over spoken form of

discussion. Fifthly, we recommend that the instructor should provide the topic of seminar well in advance and give enough time to students to prepare for it to have a constructive and healthy discussion during the seminar. The instructor should also provide the electronic or physical copies of appropriate material of the topic on which the seminar has to take place. This allows students to have a basic and required knowledge on the topic to be discussed and stop them digressing away from the topic. Finally, the faculty should also be given some appropriate training on how to effectively conduct the seminar to maximise students' participation, reduce fear and anxiety toward putting forward their views, and widen their understandings toward the topic.

7 Conclusions

This research provides a literature review of the articles on the use of seminars across the business and non-business disciplines. Based on the review of literature, we analyse and found out different responses for why seminars are used, how they are conducted, how they benefit, and the challenges linked with it. The literature review of various studies across different disciplines allowed us to synthesise ideas and provide recommendations for conducting them in business and management settings. Our review indicated that the seminars are an integral part of the higher education regardless of any disciplines. It is a useful and handy tool for better and clear understanding of the subject, which possibly cannot be undertaken only through the theoretical teaching process. This research synthesises the ideas gathered from different studies on the use of seminars and discussed them to understand their relevance in the higher education in general and business and management discipline in particular. Hence, our comprehensive review of literature on seminar may serve as an alternative to understand its relevance and usefulness in any professional higher education.

7.1 Research Limitations

Although we have taken appropriate precautions in conducting this research, it is still interpreted in the light of some limitations. First, there were a few journal articles and a number of articles from conferences, which could not be accessed and would have added up a more toward the comprehensive review of the available literature. Second, this research did not perform keyword analysis of the relevant literature selected for

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performing review in this research. Exploration of keywords would have found some more relevant and useful keys through which the search for articles would have further refined. Third, this research has not compiled the list of limitations and future research. Such analysis would have found some research gaps, which have not been filled in with the existing research work. Finally, this research has not evaluated the performance of some of the key variables (e.g. anxiety, confidence, satisfaction, comfort level etc.) picked up from the corresponding empirical research.

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