We flipped the classroom, now we flip the case study: lessons from teaching undergraduate strategic management

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Abstract: This paper describes how to flip a case study, shares lessons from practice of flipping case studies and makes a pedagogical case for flipping. The key principles of flipped instructional strategy were adopted and applied to case studies with the view to have a flipped case study characterised by being developed in partnership with students and enterprises, engaging the student and enabling their active learning, presenting probable solutions to the enterprises featured, and usable for teaching, building on existing knowledge and potentially creating new knowledge. The interventions implemented in this case reveal that case studies have the potential for enabling more than knowledge transfer, they can be used as tool for decolonising learning. Inspired by the success of the flipped classroom instructional strategy, this paper is an account of the exploration of the potential of this methodology in the creation and teaching of case studies in strategic management.

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1   Introduction

This paper provides an account of a 'flipped case study' approach developed over the course of teaching strategic management to undergraduate learners over a three-year period. The paper provides a background to the development of the approach in the

context of strategic management pedagogy, a description of the developed approach, reflections on what was done, and lessons learned, and finally an argument is made as to why flipping the case study may be the desirable future of case teaching in the context of alignment to relevant pedagogical frameworks.

1.1   Fundamental definitions

This paper introduces the notion of the flipped case study. The concept has been derived from the adaptation of case teaching from traditional to flipped learning environments. A clarification of how these terminologies are employed in this paper is summarised here:

1   Case study/teaching case: A case study/teaching case is a resource for teaching developed through the case method. The case method entails focus on a specific organisational context with clearly identifiable actors faced with decision making responsibilities. The primary objective of the resource is to convey information that would enable users to conduct analysis and draw conclusions.

2   Flipped classroom: A flipped classroom flips the order of taught schoolwork and independent homework. The traditional teaching method first introduces students to new concepts in the classroom environment and requires them to work on related activities away from the classroom. The flipped classroom introduces learners to new concepts away from the classroom environment and requires them to work on related activities in the classroom. In the flipped environment, learners are provided with baseline resources and are required to undertake further research to learn the concepts. Application and activities are then guided in the classroom environment.

3   Flipped case study/flipped teaching case: The flipped case study/teaching case is one that is presented as a partial/ incomplete narrative for analysis. The narrative is completed by learners by the end of their course of study. The method is a blend of a live teaching case (which includes relevant guest speakers to provide input on the decision points of the case material) and an integrated case approach (where the same case context is used across various but related decision points).

1.2   Rationale for the study

The key drivers of the flipping of case studies in this research arose from a recognition of gaps in addressing learner needs based on strategic management pedagogy, learner orientation and the challenges faced by less experienced case instructors.

1.2.1   Strategic management pedagogy

Case studies dominate the approach to giving learners a real-world experience of strategy in practice. Albert and Grzeda (2015) have described most case teaching as 'linear', resulting in learners not being able to reflect critically, lacking creativity in the strategic options they generate and unable to present plans for implementation. Dean and Fornaciari (2002) further describe case teaching as following a rational decision-making model which does not expose learners to the realities of the human processes of organisations. These reports on how cases have been taught suggest that learners are not

receiving the real-world experience of strategy and may be unable to apply what they learn in the classroom in the world of work.

Strategic management pedagogic strategies broadly have the associated learning outcomes of 'analysis' and 'implementation' – the foundational perspectives of the strategic management process (Albert and Grzeda, 2015; Baumann, 2020). As far back as Porter and McKibben (1988), educators have reported students as being able to analyse strategy with some basic success but having great difficulty in being able to translate analysis into problem solving implementation (Greiner et al., 2003). Mintzberg (1994) suggests that this is because of the 'mechanical approaches to evaluation' which are a hindrance to innovation and critical thinking. Instructors need to reconsider how they use case studies to achieve the intended learning outcomes of going beyond analysis to achieving implementation.

1.2.2   Student orientation

Students exhibit preference for memorising and structured thinking rather than the complexity of critical thinking and ambiguity of reflection (Albert and Grzeda, 2015). In the author's experience, students will embrace critical thinking and reflection if they find learning interesting, if they believe they have some experience of either the subject or object of learning and when they feel confident about their mastery of the requisite knowledge. Most traditional case studies and their presentation do not satisfy this orientation.

Students at times exhibit a disconnect with the case study method of teaching and learning because they may be inadequately involved in the case study as a holistic process due to being unable to identify with the case study, inadequate prior preparation (Ashamalla and Crocitto, 2001), and apathy towards group work (Allan, 2016).

Although some scholars argue that learning styles are a myth (An and Carr, 2017; Newton, 2015), the author acknowledges that students have different learning preferences as also acknowledged by Allinson and Hayes (1996) as well as Nickerson et al. (1985). Under the right conditions, students can exercise flexibility and adapt as required (Kirton, 1994). The challenge for instructors is to create these conditions. Traditional case studies favour students that are sequential, detail-oriented learners but fail those whose preference it is to process information more holistically (Backhaus and Liff, 2007). The different learning styles are related (Backhaus and Liff, 2007), and so instructors need to provide opportunities for students to explore learning outside their comfort zones.

1.2.3   The less experienced case instructor

With the use of case studies being a ubiquitous part of strategic management education, even less experienced case study instructors are expected to facilitate case discussions. This may result in the instructor exerting excessive control over the discussion (Argyris, 1980) and achieving less success in facilitating student discussion (Sykes, 1990). There is a danger that case study learning can become repetitive (Dean and Fornaciari, 2002) if not deliberately modified to overcome this pitfall.

2   Brief review of the literature

In this section, a brief overview of the literature on flipping classrooms is presented. This is done with the view to recognise elements of transferability to case teaching. This overview is presented alongside a brief overview of literature on case teaching in strategic management courses. By doing so, the gaps in extant approaches to case teaching in the field are exposed and the opportunities to fill those gaps through flipped methodologies are highlighted.

Flipped classrooms have also been referred to as inverted classrooms in the literature. The approach was prominently pioneered by Bergmann and Sams (2007). Summarily, the aim of flipping the classroom is to enhance student learning by promoting self-study and facilitating high quality class-based activities (Lundin et al., 2018). According to Strayer (2012), technology is a key facilitator of this approach both in supporting self-study and in enhancing class activities.

The aim of case teaching is to enhance student learning through discussion. The traditional case teaching method presents students with a written narrative and discussion questions. Students typically pre-read the case prior to the class session. In the class session, the instructor manages the development of the discussion and capitalises on 'teachable moments' as they emerge (Harvard Business School, 2003). In this context, areas of self-study are defined by the narrative text presented and the discussion is focussed on the guidance questions. What is immediately noticeable as a gap is the potentially narrowed focus which although ideal for meeting very specific learning objectives, limits the potential for broader learning beyond the narrow scope.

Furthermore, the discussion questions tend to reflect fixed points in time. This means that real time changes to the circumstances of the case may not be effectively captured and that the lessons learned are static and historical rather than dynamic and current. Case instructors have partly addressed these limitations with the use of multimedia cases to reduce the rigidity of scripted narratives (Sheppard and Vibert, 2016) and live cases to introduce real time questions (Cameron et al., 2012).

However, even with these enhancements to case teaching, the action of learning remains predominantly instructor driven rather than student-lead. A 'flip', as proposed in this paper, requires greater learner involvement beyond viewing the media and reading the case narrative. A 'flip' requires learners to find their own resources to conduct research on the case (the instructor may provide some guidance on where such resources may be found but not be prescriptive in this regard). Furthermore, a 'flip' requires that learners develop their own independent inquiry based on stimulated interests as opposed to predefined areas for discussion.

Flipped classroom approaches are theoretically underpinned by active learning pedagogy that places learners and problems at the centre of learning (McLaughlin et al., 2014; Mason et al., 2013). They are further underpinned by attempts to embed learning (Prober and Khan, 2013; Wilson, 2013). Problem-solving is prioritised in flipped learning (Arnold-Garza, 2014).

In strategic management case teaching, problem-solving is also a priority, as implied by the strong emphasis on the decision focussed nature of ideal cases (Case Centre, 2021). Embeddedness of learning remains however unsatisfactory and learner engagement lower than desired. If flipping the classroom reportedly allows for improvement in both these aspects of the learning experience, then this paper seeks to explore how the flipping methodology can yield these outcomes in the case classroom.

Flipping classrooms has proved effective in disciplines where learners are required to understand the underlying theoretical principles of a concept prior to their application of the concept (Gannod et al., 2008). Although learners may do pre-readings before coming to class and optionally participate in discussion, this is not the same as a flipped approach in which each learner is alerted specifically on what class activity is expected of them (Arnold-Garza, 2014).

Strategic management is an ideal discipline for the flipped experience as the tools for practical decision making used in the field are established on theories that learners first need to master. What is required to enrich the learner experience is class activity beyond case discussion that consolidates the learning of the theories and moves learners towards practice. This is what the flipped methodology promises.

3 Methods

This section captures the activities that were undertaken to flip case teaching in an undergraduate strategic management class. It provides a brief historical background on how cases were taught prior to the 'flip'. It then presents the theoretical underpinning for the approaches taken in implementing the 'flip' changes. A summary of the 'flip' activities (how we flipped case teaching) are presented in a table to showcase the changes made. The outcomes are reported in the results section.

3.1 Research question

The approach to undertaking the interventions was based on the general research question stated as follows: how can we effectively use teaching cases to enhance learner's understanding of how strategy is crafted in practice?

3.2 Background to the module and the research question

The strategic management module is delivered at undergraduate level in the final year of study at a university in the UK. It is a core module for learners in the business management course. It is year-long, delivered over two semesters and is worth double the standard credits attainable. Prior to this flipped case intervention, the module was taught based on an adopted textbook that has an extensive collection of case studies linked to each chapter's topic. In the author's experience of teaching strategic management in this way, learners have frequently asked how strategy is crafted in practice, despite all the exposure to this made available through the case studies.

As an initial intervention to address this, the author introduced the strategy map in the curriculum to give learners hands-on exposure to the practice of crafting strategy. Learners however struggled and experienced a disconnect in the taught content and the strategy map exercise.

Learners on the module provided formal and informal feedback on the content, how it was taught and the additional resources. The large number of students in the module allowed the author to arrive at indicative conclusions from the feedback that the difficulty was with synthesis, which in the author's experience, required creativity and out of the

box thinking. This is what lead to exploration in what is labelled in this paper as 'flipping the case study' based on the principles of flipped classroom teaching further discussed.

3.3   Participant profile

Participants in this intervention over the three years of moving pre-flip to post-flip were undergraduate level, final year learners, undertaking a core strategic management module at a university in the UK. The number of participants over the three years varied as follows:

- 2018–2019: 1,037 learners
- 2019–2020: 673[1] learners
- 2020–2021: 540[2] learners.

3.4   Data collection

Data on the intervention was collected by observation of learner's participation in case discussion and completion of assigned activities. The author kept a log of highlights of learner contributions during classes. Learner activities were largely based on the technology platforms of the university's virtual learning environment. This enabled records of completed activities to be digitally stored and analysed through statistics tracking. Platforms for activity included online discussion forums, online quizzes, online collaborative wikis, online polls and online reflective diaries. Multimedia material (videos and podcasts) were hosted in the virtual learning environment alongside any text-based narrative resources.

3.5   Adopted principles of flipping

3.5.1   Case study before theory

Case study material is typically presented at the end of theoretical teaching. In flipping the case study, case studies are presented before any theory is taught and without the case questions. This is done purposefully to address the criticism raised by Albert and Grzeda (2015) of the effect of most common ways of teaching strategic management that "overemphasize the acquisition of theory and the use of standard analytical tools thereby creating an analytical template without adequate integration of the reflection needed for proper analysis and implementation recommendations." Introducing the case study in this order creates an environment that reduces reliance on the templates of strategy frameworks. Learners will be able to engage in holistic unprompted reflection. Learners will explore what the potential complexities, management issues and strategic opportunities are before they are informed of the theories that may influence their thinking. Although the case study precedes theory, what is advocated as an end goal is a 'unity between theory and practice' and 'subjectivity and objectivity' (Freire, 2005). Strategy is after all both science and art (Maranville, 2011).

3.5.2 Continuous integration and systems thinking

Most strategic management undergraduate case studies focus on a specific area of strategic concern. Flipping the case study is about continuously integrating prior learning in a scaffolded way. The case studies selected become integrated with all topics featured in the module and learners layer their learning in several iterations of connections between and across topics and their associated representation in the case studies. Scholars note that this level of integration is often lacking (Durand et al., 2017; Seaton and Boyd, 2008). Learners are encouraged to review cases in the broader context beyond that which they are presented in.

3.5.3 Creating the critical thinking environment

In most case teaching approaches, questions are provided in advance of the session for learners to consider and then discuss during the session. This approach is supported but it is believed that it can be enhanced. In flipping the case study, continuous probing of these questions prior to and after the sessions through platforms such as discussion forums integrated in learning management systems is encouraged. This creates an environment where the learner can consider perspectives other than their own and develop curiosity about other perspectives. Learners can perceive social and personal realities, their inherent contradictions, and the subsequent development of critical thinking ability (Freire, 2005). Strategic thinking has received far less attention as compared to the other domains of the strategy process (Liedtka and Rosenblum, 1998; Srivastava and D'Souza, 2019). Flipping case studies enables focus on this crucial element of the process.

3.5.4 Forming experiences

The tools and models of strategic management do not form experiences and so educators need to find complementary alternatives (Mintzberg et al., 1998). Flipping the case study requires bringing the case study to life through any avenues possible including film, simulation, role-playing, industry practitioner led lectures as well as case study site field trips. Missing out on this may result in students merely grasping theories but not establishing their relevance to work life (Ashamalla and Crocitto, 2001).

3.5.5 Visualising learning

This advocacy for flipping case studies includes support for visualising the learning outcomes of case study discussions. This position is supported by proponents of mind maps (Buzan, 1991) and concept maps (McLaren et al., 2007). Visualising learning allows learners to draw together seemingly disjointed facts and see their overall connection (Buzan, 1991).

3.5.6 Collaborative social learning

Collaborative approaches to case teaching best reflect how strategy is designed and implemented in practice. Problem solving in strategic management is therefore best demonstrated in this way (Gilbert, 2013). In the undergraduate teaching of strategic management, technical mastery has been gained at the expense of social development (Porter and McKibben, 1988). There is no reason why learners should not be encouraged

to work with their peers, instructors and the broader community in crafting and learning about case studies used for learning if they are to move beyond debate and towards inquiry. By inquiring more, we listen more carefully to understand and recognise the value in alternative views (Senge, 2006).

3.5.7   Collaborative case writing

It is worthwhile partnering with learners in developing case studies. Flipping case studies encourages involving learners as writers, either in part or wholly. This makes the learning material both relevant and interesting (Ashamalla and Crocitto, 2001). Flipping case studies means that students can become more than what Bailey et al. (2005) described as passive observers in an analyst role.

3.5.8   Representing diversity

Twenty years ago, Ashamalla and Crocitto (2001) bemoaned the cultural bias of cases as largely American. Although progress has been made in generating cases from other global regions the issue of representative diversity still needs addressing. Flipping cases calls for ensuring that the contexts and protagonists of case studies used are relatable to learners and reinforce their identities. Failure to do this fails learners in not giving them a sense of global organisations and the culturally diverse nature of the present-day workforce (Ashamalla and Crocitto, 2001).

3.5.9   Fluid assignments

Fluid assignments are those that "allow learners to develop and employ their own strategies that tap into less conformist and more holistic thinking" [Backhaus and Liff, (2007), p.458]. What is fluid about assignments in flipped cases is that they typically have a plethora of solutions. There may be some structure provided to make the assignments comparable and to ensure that key learning objectives are assessed whilst reserving the proportion of assessment to the intuitive process demonstrated.

3.6   How we flipped case teaching

Table 1 demonstrates the changes that were implemented to flip the approach to case teaching. This was a grounded approach based on the author's experience of teaching the module over the years 2018 to 2021.

   The assessments were modified as shown in Table 2.

   The modifications reflected the ongoing need to monitor changes in learner interaction in the flipped case environment. This was achieved through non-credit bearing continuous formative assessment.

   The credit-bearing formative assessment was modified to build on the skills students had acquired in building a strategy map.

   The credit-bearing summative assessment was modified to provide options for examination around the integrated cases that learners had been working with throughout the year.

Table 1 Before and after the flip

Week and topic	Before the flip	After the flip
1 Module introduction	No case teaching – focus on theoretical concepts	The two integrated case studies students would be working with throughout the year (Amazon and Apple) were introduced and the rationale for selecting these cases (benchmark organisations as among the first to reach trillion-dollar valuation; student familiarity with both organisations; contemporary nature of the organisations) was conveyed. Strategy maps as a way of visualising strategy across the organisation were briefly introduced. Students would be assessed on a visual representation of a strategy in one of their assessments. Students were required to conduct independent research on both the cases and the strategy map concept.
2 The strategic management process	No case teaching – focus on theoretical concepts	Students were presented with videos featuring the case studies. This was the first opportunity students had to link their learning to the case studies. Students also had to link this learning to the strategy maps introduced in week 1.
3 The strategic external environment	Case study from core text: the informal economy: what it is and why it is important?'	Prior to the class session, students were asked to conduct independent research on the general, industry, competitor and global factors that may affect the organisations in the case studies. In the class session, student answers were then mapped to the theoretical frameworks of political-economic-socio-cultural-technological (PEST) analysis (Aguilar, 1967) and Porter's (2008) five forces. This elicited a recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of the frameworks and prompted students to think about what other forms of analysis are relevant for the strategic manager.
4 The strategic internal environment	Case study from core text: 'Zara: the capabilities behind the Spanish 'fast fashion' retail giant'	In addition to the integrated case studies, students looked at a mini-case study on the internal organisation of ZARA (the apparel retailer). The mini-case text was supported by a short video clip. Students were asked to consider what was transferable in their learning of ZARA to the integrated case studies.
5 Industry speaker (change from pre 'flip' topic on decision making)	No case teaching – focus on theoretical concepts	An industry practitioner hosted a lecture series based on their experience of implementing theory and practice, the impact of crises on global strategy and the future of global strategy. The practitioner was selectively chosen for their work experience at the organisations in the integrated case studies, their youth (a millennial like many of the students) and their minority ethnic background (Black Caribbean). The practitioner has an admirable history as a global strategist, advocate for social inclusivity and has been recognised by *Forbes* (30 under 30 most influential people in Europe, 2020). The practitioner defies the typical image of most leaders of global strategic influence that the students are typically exposed to. Students were invited to ask the practitioner questions and comment on their lecture series. There were numerous provocative questions and praiseworthy comments.
6 Resource-based view and positioning	Xbox and PlayStation – news article	The resource-based view (Barney, 1991) and positioning (Porter, 1980) were discussed as perspectives of strategy. Students debated the perspectives and were drawn to the potential complementarity of the perspectives in practice when they applied the perspectives to the integrated case studies. In the session, students worked in groups to conduct valuable-rare-inimitable-organised (VRIO) to capture value analysis (Barney, 1991) on the integrated cases with reference to the perspectives of strategy.
7 Organisational structure and controls (change from pre 'flip' topic on organisational culture)	No case teaching – focus on theoretical concepts	A mini-case of Unilever (the consumer goods company) and a relevant video were given to students to consider what was transferable in their learning of Unilever to the integrated case studies.
8 Knowledge management and innovation	Knowledge management success and failure 2 case studies sourced from https://www.computer.org/csdl/proceedings-article/hicss/2015/0707029812OmNz3bdEF	Rather than presenting the theoretical knowledge upfront, students were tasked with researching the products, services and operations of the integrated case organisations and rank them based on their impression of how innovative they were. Students then had to evaluate their lists and work backwards to recognise what innovative organisations had in common and how knowledge could be managed for innovation. The session was student led from start to finish with two end products of a list of features of innovative firms and a list of how knowledge is managed in innovative firms.

Table 1   Before and after the flip (continued)

Week and topic	Before the flip	After the flip
9	Ethics and global strategy (change from pre 'flip' topic on strategic entrepreneurship and innovation)	No case teaching – focus on theoretical concepts	Students were tasked with compiling evidence of questionable practices in the strategy execution of the integrated case studies.
10	Organic strategic growth methods	No case teaching – focus on theoretical concepts	Rather than presenting the theoretical knowledge upfront, students were tasked with researching evidence of organic growth in the integrated case organisations based on the documented reflections of organic growth from John Lewis (a department store company). Students then had to compare the reflections to their evidence to recognise the enablers and features of organic growth.
11	Mergers and acquisitions	No case teaching – focus on theoretical concepts	Students were tasked with being creative in thinking of potential merger and acquisition targets for the case study organisations using the principles of successful merger and acquisition strategy presented to them. Students attended a panel discussion of financial analysts as they reviewed the most successful and disastrous mergers of the last decade to gain a further appreciation of what were required in theory and practice. The options the students generated were polled and this gave all students insight into how others were thinking as they explained their propositions.
12	Alliances and networks	No case teaching – focus on theoretical concepts	Students had to reflect on how much of the success of the integrated case organisations was attributable to their independent efforts or to alliances and networks they were a part of. These reflections would be returned to in week 19.
13	Internationalisation strategy	Mamas and Papas pushes into Africa (news article)	Students had to summarise their understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of all the internationalisation modes and share in the session their organisation examples of success and failure with the modes. This sharing exercise then led to identification of the conditions under which different modes may be desirable.
14–16	Levels of strategy, i.e., corporate level strategy, business level strategy and functional level strategy	Case study from core text: Sany Heavy Industry Co. Ltd.	Because this is not an area of strategy that organisations stipulate in the public domain with great clarity, students were tasked with surmising what they assessed to be the corporate, business, and functional level strategies of the integrated case organisations based on the case evidence developed over the course of the module and their further research. In groups, they were tasked to illustrate the strategic fit of the strategic elements at these levels.
17	Value chain analysis	No case teaching – focus on theoretical concepts	Students had to conduct independent research on the primary and supporting activities of the integrated case organisations. Students were then further tasked to illustrate the value chains of the organisations for presentation in class.
18	Strategic leadership	No case teaching – focus on theoretical concepts	Students were asked to do research on the key leaders of the integrated case organisations and summarise their perceptions of the leadership styles, consider what impact these styles may have had on the strategic directions taken by the organisations and express their personal preferences for leadership style.
19	Collaborative advantage (new additional topic post 'flip')	N/A	Students drew on the reflections they produced in week 12 to assess the viability of collaborative advantage over the traditional pursuit of competitive advantage.
20	4IR and AI (new additional topic post 'flip')	N/A	Students engaged in sharing their personal thoughts on their concerns or/and excitement about the technological revolution and the strategic management activities they believed would be impacted on.

Table 2 Assessments before and after the flip

	Formative non-credit bearing assessment	*Formative credit bearing assessment*	*Summative credit bearing assessment*
Before flip	-	Podcast and report on global strategy challenges	Final exam on general themes of global strategy
After flip	Discussion forums, collaborative wikis, online quizzes, reflective journals	Video presentation on strategy map addressing global strategy challenges	Final exam consisting of optional questions on general themes of global strategy and optional questions on the integrated case studies

4 Results and discussion

In this section, the weekly and holistic outcomes of the various flip interventions are analysed. We also consider the module level feedback on the impact of the interventions.

4.1 Observations from teaching

There are three key points to note about the pre-flip approach as follows.

The first point to note is that prior to the intervention, case teaching was not an integral part of the approach to teaching strategic management. Lectures usually included business examples, but class sessions only occasionally had focussed case discussions. Table 1 shows that case teaching was only conducted in 6 of the 18 topics. The first key intervention was therefore wholly integrating case teaching into the teaching approach in alignment with principle 2 of flipped methodology (continuous integration and systems thinking).

The second point to note is the disjointed nature of cases prior to the intervention. There was no apparent thread connecting these cases and the content taught together. There was no further building on case lessons after they were first taught. The second key intervention was therefore to use the same principal cases throughout the course of teaching in alignment with principle 2 of flipped methodology (continuous integration and systems thinking). The cases selected were comparable and enabled the linking together of learning across topics. The principal case discussions were supported by mini cases which broke the monotony of only looking at two organisations and allowed for greater case diversity.

The third point to note about the approach to cases prior to the intervention is the absence of associated activity beyond reading and discussing the case in class. Students were told what to read and what to discuss but were not given activities to do. The third key intervention was therefore to introduce relevant practical activities to support the case teaching in alignment with principles 4 and 5 of flipped methodology (forming experiences and visualising learning).

After the flip, there were notable developments in the learners' depth of engagement with questions around the events that played out with the cases. In the early weeks of the approach, learners could identify events in a cause-effect fashion. As they progressed, they reflected deeply on alternative effects of any given action. By the end of the course,

many learners could provide propositions on how their desired effects could be brought about. This is a level of strategic thinking that Albert and Grzeda (2015) noted was desirable in teaching strategic management. This achievement was evidence that principle 3 of flipped methodology (creating the critical thinking environment) had been achieved.

Learners demonstrated increasing ability to link new lessons to prior learning. For instance, in week 3, students were able to create links across the PEST and five force frameworks and trace them back to strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) analysis (credited to Albert Humphrey as an outcome his research over 1960–1969) which they had learned about in earlier years of study prior to undertaking this course.

Learners further demonstrated ability to apply learning to new contexts. For example, when presented with supporting mini cases outside the principal case studies (as was done in week 4 and week 7), learners where able to draw contrasts and comparisons across the cases.

Principle 5 of the flipping methodology (representing diversity) was achieved in week 5 with the insertion of the industry guest. A student commented on the impact of this guest on their perception of learning and practicing strategy as follows:

> "Young, black and proud – I didn't think I could use those words in the same sentence as: successful global strategist. The practitioner has inspired me – I didn't think strategy and high-level organisation roles were for people like me. You have my attention in this module now." – Student X

Group work was encouraged throughout the module. This was particularly fruitful in week 6 which focused on VRIO analysis. In prior attempts to teach this analysis, students were given tasks to complete individually with mixed levels of success. Group work however encouraged debates and made students think about resources and capabilities thoughtfully resulting in meaningful application of the VRIO framework. This is in alignment with principle 6 of flipped methodology (collaborative social learning).

There were deliberate efforts to present case activities prior to presenting strategic management theory in alignment with principle 1 of flipped methodology (case before theory) so that learners could essentially work out the theory from practice by themselves. What was rewarding about this approach was that learners were able to informally generate outputs that closely mirrored prepared lecture notes on the topics of discussion. This was particularly evident in week 8 and week 10.

By week 11, learners were exhibiting maturity from debaters focussed on defending their initial standpoints to keen listeners who could see value in the perspectives of others.

By week 17, it was not only the quality of debate that had evolved but the ability to express ideas visually by illustration. This was in alignment with principle 5 of flipped methodology (visualising learning). Students were able to present adequate illustrations of value chains and linked their illustrations to the earlier learned levels of strategy, most notably, without being prompted to.

When ethics and leadership were discussed in weeks 9 and 18 respectively, learners showed great introspection. What was an important takeaway for learners was the appreciation that every strategic move has ethical implications and that ethical consideration must be an integral part of evaluating strategy options. The most notable outcome was the human face that students could place on global strategy. Learners were thinking of strategy as more than tactics – as a tool for human contribution and

organisational responsibility. In reflecting on strategic leadership, what came across strongly was the expression of learners of their desire to lead in a fashion that they would want to be led. This empathetic approach to strategy contrasts the 'art of war' narrative that dominates strategic thought.

4.2   Module level feedback

Students had an opportunity to share on their holistic appraisal of their learning in the module. The feedback was humbling and inspired the documentation of practice in the module. Below are sampled responses from students that represented the essence of the feedback that students provided:

> "This module is the most challenging module I have had in my 3 years, but the challenge was well worth it. I have never been taught like this before. I was charged with the responsibility of writing up my own case study, something I had never done before." – Student A responding to the question: how challenging was the module?

> "I had to learn how to think, very weird that I never thought about how to think." – Student B responding to the question: what surprising thing did you learn in the module?

> "I felt supported all the way, not a hand-holding or spoon feeding but more like having your dad behind your back as you learn how to ride your bike – ready to catch you but letting you try and fall a little. I felt my opinions were valued in class and I also learned to see other views." – Student C responding to the question: how did the teaching approach in the module make you feel?

> "Working with the same organisations throughout the year helped me see the complexity of strategy in a simpler way. I have worked with case studies in other modules, but it is always a different case for each topic – difficult to see how things are related." – Student D responding to the question: what difference, if any, does using integrated case studies have over traditional case teaching?

5   Implications

To successfully flip case teaching, instructors must bear in mind some key considerations.

5.1   Case selection

The selection of cases is crucial as these needs to be integrated throughout the course. The instructor must therefore consider whether there is sufficient case context to address all the teaching themes and if not, where supplementary mini cases can be drawn on to support the principal teaching case. Furthermore, cases need to have sufficient contemporary attention so that the instructor can draw on timely multimedia resources to support case discussions as the case progresses. Additionally, relevant industry speakers should be identified, and their engagement negotiated before firmly selecting the principal cases to adopt. Case selection must be considerate of the cohort of learners that

will work with the cases. Diversity and representation must be factored into the selection process.

5.2   *Preparing for synchronous and asynchronous activities*

The instructor needs to pre-plan the entire course activities from start to end. This is very time consuming but necessary to achieve balance in what learners must do and to ensure that learning outcomes are met. Nonetheless, there is still need for the instructor to allow for flexibility to respond to real-time events affecting the case. Summarily there should be sufficient pre-planning to provide adequate structure to both facilitators and learners. There should also be ample fluidity to allow for flexible adjustments where required.

5.3   *Quick turnaround on formative task assessment and feedback*

The flipped teaching case environment is built on a scaffolding of learning. This requires the instructor to closely monitor learner progress with learning concepts. This ensures that learners are provided timely support in areas that they struggle with and that adjustments to the teaching approach can be made. This aspect of flipping case teaching may require working with a module team to improve the number of learners per instructor ratio so that learners receive the required level of attention for their success.

5.4   *Digital literacy*

It is vital that learners have the right support to develop digital literacy. This is required for their self-directed study and engagement with the technology-based support activities. Instructors must be sensitive to issues of digital poverty which may hinder learner engagement. It may be worthwhile considering alternative activities that are not technology dependant where this issue is prevalent.

5.5   *Learner motivation*

Learners need to be made aware from the onset about the nature of this approach as it is more likely than not that it will be viewed as requiring more input from learners than other modules in their course. The rationale for what is being undertaken must be clearly communicated. With some flexibility factored into the planning, learners could be invited to suggest what activities they would like included in the modules and provide their perspective on what activities they are not keen on. This level of dialogue brings them on board as partners in the approach and gives them a greater sense of control in embarking on this unfamiliar way of working with cases.

6   Limitations of the study

The intervention was not pre-planned at the onset. It emerged organically in response to arising learner needs while teaching. As a result, a pre-post-test could not be conducted to validate the effectiveness. Many of the inferences of success of the approach are based on the anecdotal evidence collated while the intervention was already underway. Although the pre-post-test was not conducted in this study, other studies (Scott et al., 2016;

Scheines et al., 2005) of flipped interventions with control groups for comparison confirm the effectiveness of the principles of flipping which this intervention adopts.

The impact of this limitation has been minimised by mapping the outcomes to widely accepted pedagogical frameworks such as Bloom's taxonomy, active learning and grounded learning.

7 The pedagogical case for flipping

7.1 Alignment of flipped case study approaches to Bloom's taxonomy

Bloom's taxonomy is a relevant pedagogical reference point for flipping case studies in strategic management as it is focussed on skills achievement over content (Krathwohl, 2002). The argument presented for flipping case studies in the teaching of strategic management emphasises the need to facilitate the development of strategic thinking skills, application, and creation, which the traditional case format does not sufficiently enable.

Figure 1 demonstrates the achievement of objectives related to Bloom's taxonomy at all levels. Traditional case studies typically allow for all except application and creation.

Figure 1 Alignment of flipped case study in strategic management with Bloom's taxonomy (see online version for colours)

7.2 Alignment of flipped case study to active learning pedagogy

With flipped cases, students are actively involved in their learning. The benefits of active learning have been reported as being a memory aide (Green, 1994), a student-centric approach (Ashamalla and Crocitto, 2001) and a promoter of continuous learning (Cinneide, 1997).

7.3   Alignment of flipped case study to grounded learning pedagogy

Mosca and Howard (1997) describe grounded learning as a process of being able to inductively learn from an interactive environment. The flipped case study method grounds learning by placing students in a dynamic context that presents opportunities for learning.

8   Conclusions

The main argument for flipping faces lies in the humble question, 'what should be the purpose of teaching a strategic management case?'. The author believes it should be to introduce the context of the organisation within appropriate boundaries, enable learners identify the interrelationships, activate multidimensional thinking, embolden personal responsibility for solutions generated and inspire an action orientation. Organisations are messy! They have multiple complexities and ongoing dynamism. The way cases are taught now does not allow for our utopian perspective of what teaching a strategic management case can achieve but flipping these case studies may bring us closer to this dream.

Flipping cases may be a frightening thought at first for learners as it puts them in the position of overseeing their learning. In the words of Freire (2005, p.63):

> "Almost never do they realize that they, too, 'know things' they have learned in their relations with the world and with other women and men. Given the circumstances which have produced their duality, it is only natural that they distrust themselves."

It is necessary therefore to introduce the flipped case method with kindness, patience, and encouragement; so that learners can believe in their ability to learn with cases as much as we do.

The partnership of this method, among the learners, instructors and industry practitioners allows us to be cocreators of new learning and reduces dependence on old learning which may at times only have time-bound relevance. It allows us to stimulate the much hungered for 'new paradigms of thought' (Dunne and Martin, 2006).

Flipping case studies is about viewing cases as both artistic and scientific, appreciating that these perspectives are complementary and are by themselves valid (Maranville, 2011).

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Notes

1   The module was split in the 2019–2020 offering to enhance student learning experience and manage the teaching load.

2   The impact of the corona virus pandemic resulted in lower student numbers in 2020–2021.