

2021-10-12

Towards an Integrated Case Method in Management Education - Developing an Ecosystem-Based Research and Learning Journey for Flipped Classrooms

jan-philipp buechler prof dr

University of Applied Science and Arts Dortmund, jan-philipp.buechler@fh-dortmund.de

Gregor Brüggelambert prof dr

University of Applied Science and Arts Dortmund, gregor.brueggelambert@fh-dortmund.de

jan-phillip Büchler prfo dr

Technological University Dublin, roger.sherlock@tudublin.ie

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ahfrcart>



Part of the [Business Administration, Management, and Operations Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Büchler, Jan-Philipp, Gregor Brüggelambert, Haijing Helen de Haan-Cao, Roger Sherlock, and Asta Savanevičienė. 2021. Towards an Integrated Case Method in Management Education—Developing an Ecosystem-Based Research and Learning Journey for Flipped Classrooms. *Administrative Sciences* 11: 113. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11040113>


This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Antenna & High Frequency Research Centre at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact arrow.admin@tudublin.ie, aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie, vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie.

Authors

jan-philipp buechler prof dr, Gregor Brüggelambert prof dr, jan-philipp Böhler prof dr, Helen De.Haan-Cao Dr, and Asta Savaneviciene Prof

Review

Towards an Integrated Case Method in Management Education—Developing an Ecosystem-Based Research and Learning Journey for Flipped Classrooms

Jan-Philipp Büchler ^{1,*}, Gregor Brüggelambert ¹, Haijing Helen de Haan-Cao ², Roger Sherlock ³ and Asta Savanevičienė ⁴ 

¹ Faculty of Business Studies, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Dortmund, 44139 Dortmund, Germany; gregor.brueggelambert@fh-dortmund.de

² Rotterdam Business School, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, 3063 ND Rotterdam, The Netherlands; h.de.haan-cao@hr.nl

³ School of Marketing, College of Business, TU Dublin, D24 FKT9 Dublin, Ireland; roger.sherlock@tudublin.ie

⁴ School of Economics and Business, Kaunas University of Technology, LT-44239 Kaunas, Lithuania; asta.savaneviciene@ktu.lt

* Correspondence: jan-philipp.buechler@fh-dortmund.de

Abstract: In the field of management science and business administration, the case method is gaining ground in research and in teaching. Case studies support on the one hand exploratory research and on the other hand problem-based teaching. However, we find that case research and case teaching remain unchained in management study programs and propose to close this gap. We identify an untapped potential of boosting the case method by integrating case-based research and teaching into a discovery and learning journey of applied science. We suggest embedding the “integrated case method” (ICM) in the ecosystem of universities, with the aim of enhancing and intensifying the knowledge transfer between business and the higher educational sector, thereby achieving better learning objectives in higher education. As a result, this approach enables the development of a high level of contextual intelligence and thus helps to avoid the fallacies of teaching based on uniform theoretical content.

Keywords: case method; learning journey; management education; knowledge transfer; contextual intelligence



Citation: Büchler, Jan-Philipp, Gregor Brüggelambert, Haijing Helen de Haan-Cao, Roger Sherlock, and Asta Savanevičienė. 2021. Towards an Integrated Case Method in Management Education—Developing an Ecosystem-Based Research and Learning Journey for Flipped Classrooms. *Administrative Sciences* 11: 113. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11040113>

Received: 31 July 2021

Accepted: 2 October 2021

Published: 12 October 2021

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction to the Case Method in Management Education

The case method comprises a broad set of applications in the field of management research and teaching, and involves different types of case studies.

In the field of management research, a case study is an “empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin 2018, p. 15). The objective of the case method is to identify the patterns and understand the causes of the identified issues. The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation, in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points; relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion; and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. Thus, the case method is a predominantly qualitative research approach containing quantitative instruments such as cross-classified tables and analyses, as well as sampling protocols when the unit of analysis is, e.g., a complex organization (cf. Gill 2011).

In field management education and teaching, the essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study is that it tries to illuminate a decision or a set of decisions, namely: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what

result (Schramm 1971; Yin 2018). “A ‘teaching’ case study is a description of a situation, or an account of a sequence of events, commonly involving a decision, an opportunity, a challenge or a problem faced by a person, or the management of an organization, raises issues for discussion and analysis in the search for a solution” (Heath 2006, p. 11). The case method is a participatory, discussion-based way of learning where students gain skills in critical thinking, communication, and group dynamics, and develop competences in problem-solving, decision-making, willingness to develop and change, and acting ethically, as well as, depending on the case assignment, team and project management skills (Bruner 2002; Christensen et al. 1991). Therefore, the case method contributes to the competence framework for higher education in line with the European Qualifications Framework (cf. EQF 2008). Hence, the focus of the case method in higher education is predominantly on case-based teaching. However, we understand learning in a holistic way, comprising research and teaching, both of which are equally important in competence and skill development. Thus, this paper explores both sides of the method and attempts to integrate them for improving the competence and skill development of students.

Compared to other forms of research, the case method is a predominantly qualitative and exploratory research approach. In the field of teaching, the case method consequently presents a problem-based approach that involves multiple levels of complexity and conflict, and requires students to apply management theories or concepts, as well as to learn about its limitations and necessary adaptations to a specific problem, often in ambiguous contexts.

Having classified the case method as predominantly qualitative in research and teaching, we position the case method with respect to other methods in a center position within the portfolio of qualitative and quantitative research and teaching methods (cf. Figure 1).

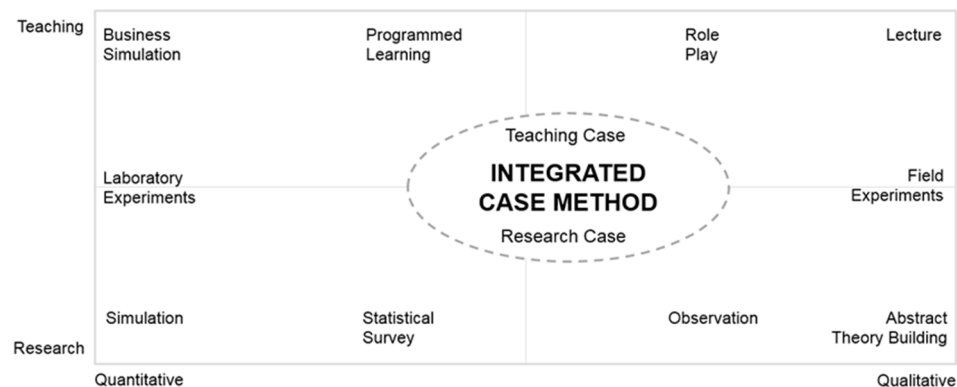


Figure 1. Case method in research and teaching. Source: own illustration.

Qualitative research comprises manifold forms, e.g., abstract theory building, field experiments, or observations, which fall outside the case method paradigm. Quantitative research predominantly comprises analyses concerned with the mathematical derivation, description, and analysis of methods of obtaining numerical solutions such as statistical surveys and simulations of laboratory experiments. Teaching methods range from quantitative business simulations and program learning up to qualitative role-playing, e.g., for negotiation training and lectures for conveying management theories and concepts.

In comparison with other research and teaching methods, case studies are more flexible and responsive to the respective environment in which they are embedded. This is associated with the exploratory philosophy of the case method in contrast with rigid-theory testing that is frequently advocated in research method classes and textbooks. Hence, an appropriate research philosophy based on the case method must take into account the complexity of the underlying object in its environment. As will be further elaborated, we see the particular value of the method outlined in this paper in extending the case study method to an integrated environmental perception, analysis, processing, and reflection approach involving all relevant actors in a specific regional ecosystem of transfer between

higher education institutions, business organizations, and multiple other regional actors, e.g., business development agencies.

This is our understanding of creating and developing contextual intelligence based on grounded learning, as introduced in the next sections (Mosca and Howard 1997; Schwarz 1985; Kutz 2008; Khanna 2014; de Haan-Cao 2020). We call this approach the “integrated case method”. In our view, teachers from multiple business and management disciplines will be trained to complete the whole cycle of conducting case research in real-life business and will transfer research insights into case teaching. This includes close contact with business and is embedded in the regional business ecosystem to develop practice-oriented teaching knowledge to relevant stakeholders of higher education institutions.

In the next sections, we try to develop the ingredients necessary to become part of a fully-fledged “integrated case method”. To this end, in the first step, we take a narrower view of the process of developing, writing, and teaching cases itself, i.e., the procedure developing cases without taking a broader view on the specific context this procedure is applied to. We call this the “process model” of the “integrated case method”. In this context, we first advocate a process of inductive learning based on self-created case studies with the active involvement of students in all process phases, i.e., case research, case writing, and case teaching. In this respect, reference is given to the grounded learning approach, where the learning activity is based on personal involvement. We argue that the active involvement of students, especially in the case writing phase, offers the opportunity to systematically integrate the specific needs and perspectives of students into real business cases studies. The second integral ingredient of the process model is the so-called “case-based learning journey”. The learning journey concept is an approach to design a teaching framework with multiple touchpoints and interactive events across different phases of a case-based curriculum. This includes in-class and out-of-class elements of procedural learning. The most important element is that in a case-based curriculum, a series of case studies should complement each other and support intensive discussions on conflicting management theories and business practices. The third proposed major ingredient of the process model is the “flipped classroom” vision of case-based learning. We propose designing a teaching approach where students are introduced to the learning material before class. Lecture time will then be used to deepen the understanding of theory through discussions with peers and problem-solving activities, facilitated by teachers.

After the discussion of integral parts of the “process model” of the “integrated case method”, we will broaden our view to the contextual environment of a higher education institution. This especially refers to the aims and value contributions of the European CASE Study Alliance (ECASA) project. The business ecosystem matters for developing the contextual intelligence necessary to cope with challenges of real-life business. Trying to apply management practices uniformly seems to be one of the major pitfalls in modern business societies. Societal conditions and institutions differ immensely from place to place. This does not only include conditions of economic development, but of institutional character, physical geography, educational norms, language, and culture (cf. Khanna 2014; Voigt 2019). For this reason, in Section 3, we develop a wheel of circular knowledge transfer as a further integral part of the “integrated case method” to ensure that the business ecosystem is recognized in a case-based curriculum of higher education institutions.

2. Results of Integrating Case Research and Case Teaching as a Grounded Learning Approach

The conventional use of pre-written case studies in case-based education is a widely practiced approach in management education. Several studies have analyzed the benefits and shortcomings of case studies as a pedagogical technique (cf. Christensen and Hansen 1987). The benefits are the immersion of students into a complex, messy, and context-specific situation (cf. Shulman 1992), stimulating personal reflection, emphasizing introspection, and the development of professional knowledge through the activation of analytical thinking (Kleinfeld 1992) on the one hand, and decision-making abilities through walking in the shoes of management in the case study on the other hand. The shortcomings

are an oversimplifying “best practice” thinking, showing a deficiency in theoretical background or research competence (cf. [McKeachie 1994](#); [Mayo and Nohria 2005](#); [Khanna 2014](#)) and a too narrow perspective on a few existing thought patterns and models of a number of big companies (cf. [Argyris 1977, 2002](#)).

After balancing the pros and cons of case method in teaching, the vast majority of scholars and students take a clear stance in favor of case teaching. However, faculty members concerned with the development of study programs cannot overlook the detriments of the case method. To this end, new pedagogical techniques are being developed. [Kirby et al. \(2010\)](#) identified that case writing performed by students serves as an effective pedagogical technique. For this reason, writing one’s own context-based case studies by integrating students in the case writing process forms a central anchor of the “integrated case method”. This might range from support of students in case research and writing, up to the writing of cases by students. The case writing assignments for students are integrated into a strategic management course: “In a nutshell, students work throughout the semester writing their own case study. Depending on the size and level of the class, this can be done independently or in small groups. Students select a business situation that interests them, find out as much as they can about the situation, the specific company, its industry and its external environment, and conduct a thorough analysis of the issues” ([Kirby et al. 2010](#), p. 200).

Integrating case writing into teaching is based on the theory of grounded learning (cf. [Mosca and Howard 1997](#); [Schwarz 1985](#)). Grounded learning is essentially a process of learning inductively from interactive involvement with the phenomenon being studied ([Smith and Williams 2019](#)). The learning activity is grounded due to the personal involvement of students providing them with a sense of “connectedness and continuity” in a complex real-life business situation (cf. [Senge 1990](#)). In this way, grounded learning is conceptually similar to the process of developing grounded theory in exploratory qualitative research. A theory is considered as “grounded” when it fits with reality, makes sense to everyone involved, provides intuitive generalization across similar circumstances, and allows some form of control over the phenomenon (cf. [Glaser and Strauss 1999](#)).

A grounded learning approach comprises the following learning elements: (1) it is based in a real business context; (2) stimulates lateral thinking and transfer across different contexts; (3) integrates research methods, management theory, and business practice with an application focus; and (4) is clearly learner-centric (cf. [Mosca and Howard 1997](#); [Kirby et al. 2010](#)).

According to [Kirby et al. \(2010\)](#), case writing represents an effective technique for conducting grounded learning in management education. It has been applied in management education successfully by the aforementioned authors thanks to giving students clear guideline for (1) selecting a business situation, (2) gathering information, (3) organizing information, (4) writing the case study, (5) writing teaching note and preparing teaching material, and (6) running the case with their fellow students.

The Center for Applied Studies and Education in Management (CASEM) tested and refined case writing as a grounded learning approach. Over a period of three years, we introduced Master’s students and advanced Bachelor’s students to case writing in several study programs and courses (International Management, Strategic Management, Global Brand Management, and Supply Chain Management) at three international European universities (University of Applied Sciences Dortmund, University of Cologne and HEC Paris). In total, 540 students in 15 management courses generated 150 case studies, teaching notes, and supplementary teaching material. In a competitive format, the best cases have been published in a teaching casebook (cf. [Büchler and Decker 2017](#)).

In further development of this approach, CASEM motivated students to write all cases based on their own primary research and not on secondary data from desk research sources anymore. This approach required (1) sophisticated research capabilities of the students and (2) sufficient companies from the universities ecosystem willing to cooperate in case research. Consequently, CASEM bolstered students with the required qualitative

research techniques and skills for data collection from various sources, such as expert interviews and data triangulation, which represent the methodological essence of case research. Thus, a methodological tutorial on case research has been integrated in all course modules to the end of improving the applied research capabilities of students and deepening the learning experience. From this perspective, we consider case writing as the missing link for integrating case research and case teaching. We consider it as crucial for competence development as it requires students to create and transfer insights from exploratory research into the conventional set of knowledge, theories, and models in teaching. Thereby, students develop a critical perspective, gain autonomy in thinking and judging, and finally reflect on the limitations and benefits of conventional theories and models (cf. Figure 2).

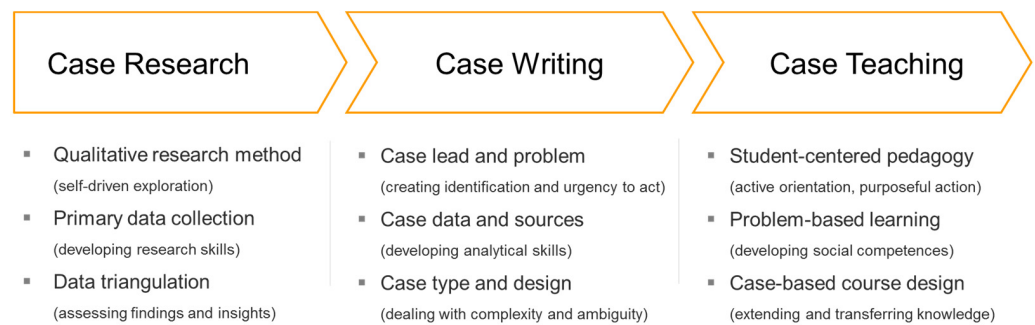


Figure 2. Integrated case method as a process model. Source: [Büchler \(2016\)](#).

Course evaluations show the highest appreciation by students resulting in the development of a deeper understanding and competences as a result of students' stronger interest in their autonomously chosen case, as well as more intense identification with the case problem in contrast with pre-written cases. In addition, students are activated and stimulated to work-out alternative solutions to a case problem in teams when preparing the teaching note, thereby changing perspectives and discussing trade-offs with others at a higher level. Finally, they develop a sophisticated sense of ownership for achieving learning objectives and realizing relevant outcomes in class by inverting the roles of teacher and student.

3. Discussion of the Design for Case-Based Learning Concepts

3.1. Design of a Case-Based Learning Journey

The learning journey concept is a learner-centered approach to design a teaching framework with multiple touchpoints and interactive events across different phases of experience analogous to the customer journey concept from marketing (cf. [Lemon and Verhoef 2016](#)). A learning journey is a curated collection of learning content, both formal and informal, that can be used to acquire a pre-defined set of skills or can be achieve a specified learning outcome. Thus, a structured learning experience provides the learner with a framework and schedule covering different touchpoints across several learning channels and sources, both on- and off-line. Traditional learning journeys are pathways on established grounds, i.e., approved connections or bridges to allow learners to easily navigate through the course content of the so-called "known-knowns".

A case-based learning journey builds the learners' experience on a planned sequence of case studies and associated teaching material such as academic articles and book chapters, and can encompass current social media channels from Twitter or ResearchGate. The case studies and teaching material are orchestrated for a maximum of stimulation of learners across different channels, e.g., on- and off-line, and locations, e.g., in- and out-of-class (cf. Figure 3).

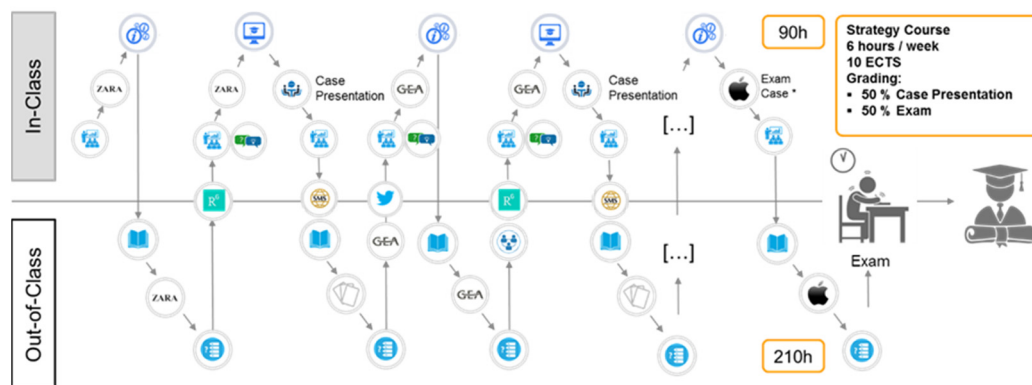


Figure 3. Case-based learning journey.

The case-based learning journey, as illustrated above and realized by business schools nowadays, aims at maximizing students' involvement and preparedness in-class by stimulating their curiosity and willingness to learn. To this end, multiple channels with digital touchpoints such as Twitter, YouTube, and ResearchGate are integrated, as well as elements of gamification, such as quizzes. On Twitter, students are, for example, required to follow corporate accounts associated with case study assignments. On YouTube, students are, for example, asked to watch and summarize interviews with researchers on the channel of the strategic management society. On ResearchGate, students need to research for the latest publications, for example, for working papers on a specific topic.

However, the most important element of the case-based learning journey is the series of case studies complementing each other and supporting intensive discussions on conflicting management theories and business practices. Yet, most business schools use pre-written case studies and case teaching exclusively for case-based learning programs.

Integrating case research and case writing into the design of case-based learning journeys requires two major adjustments in pedagogy and course structure, which add key aspects to the list of skills and competencies typically taught via case studies provided at the beginning of this article, namely:

1. Case research competence, i.e., the basic application expertise of qualitative research instruments by the learners needs to be built. Thus, a research method training should prepare students with these essentials and this should take place at the beginning of the course. Additionally, the course design should provide enough time in class for discovery-driven research, and discussions about results and alternative solutions for a specific case problem.
2. Case company involvement throughout the course requires sufficient time for students to visit company representatives, conduct expert interviews, and analyze the various data points as a basis for the case writing assignment. At the end of the course, the developed case should be tested in class and presented to the case company.

As a result, an integrated case-based learning journey inverts the tasks of students in- and out-of-class fundamentally by bringing open research topics and problems to the class, and by exploring jointly these problems and staging discussions about alternative solutions. This leads to the further requirement of a flipped classroom.

3.2. Design of a Flipped Classroom for Case-Based Learning

Flipped learning is a pedagogical approach in which the conventional concept of classroom-based learning is inverted. Students are introduced to the learning material before class and are obliged to read and understand theoretical concepts themselves out of class. Classroom time is used to deepen the understanding of the theory through discussion with peers and problem-solving activities facilitated by teachers (cf. TED 2011). The flipped classroom intentionally shifts the learning journey from an instruction-centered one towards a learner-centered pedagogy, in which time in the classroom is used to create

meaningful and unique learning opportunities (cf. Figure 4). Students explore contents, test their skills, and collaborate. Instructors provide counsel and orientation through one-on-one support when needed. The flipped setting establishes a dynamic context in which students are enabled to do their own research to obtain results. This approach attempts to bring the highest value of the knowledge and experience of professors to the discussion of content in class. Thus, the flipped classroom adds value to the face-to-face interaction between students and educators.

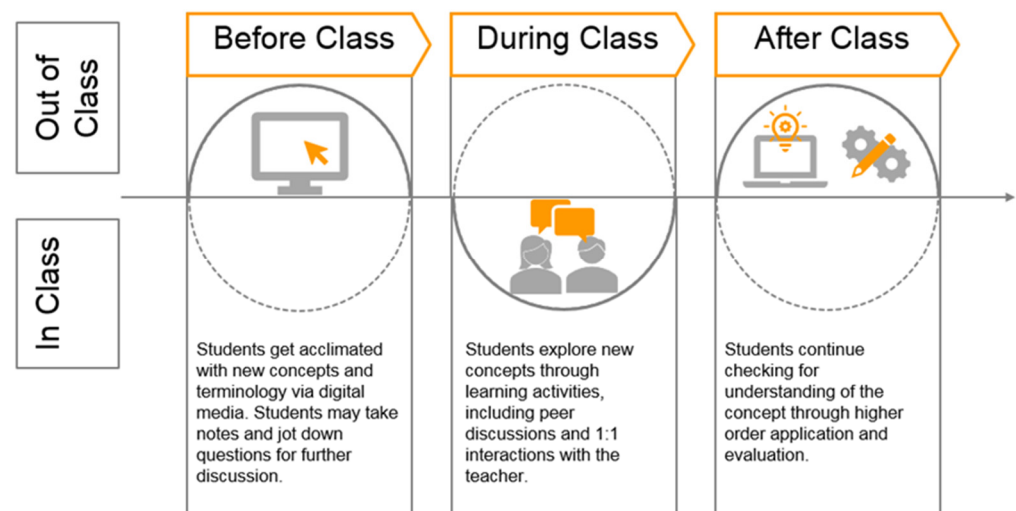


Figure 4. Learning journey in a flipped classroom.

There are several types of flipped classroom, such as debate-oriented, demonstration-based, group-based, virtual, and double flipped classrooms. The double flipped classroom puts the learner in the role of the instructor. In this model, students do not only demonstrate their own knowledge and results, but also teach their peers with an appropriate learning method. The act of showing or teaching how something is done reinforces learning. While the flipped classroom focuses on mastery, traditional education aims to cover subjects to test memorization. While the case-based learning journey within the framework of the “integrated case method” leads to both a deepening and an expansion of the skills and competencies typically taught via the classic case study method, the integration of the flipped classroom concept primarily leads to their further intensification.

We conclude that the “integrated case method”—combining case research and case teaching—is a learner-centric, research-based, and use-driven learning journey that connects students to real-life business. The necessity to embed such an integrated case research and teaching approach with business in the universities’ ecosystem creates a second level of integration and enhances the universities’ third mission.

4. The Way Forward: Thee Case Method in Ecosystems of Higher Education Institutions

The fundamental contribution to society by higher education institutions (HEIs), especially universities, lies in the creation and transfer of knowledge and engaging with society in its application and on-going refinement. “The university’s new centrality is inextricably intertwined with its role of orchestrating multi-actor innovation networks” (Reichert 2019, p. 22). Thus, old key functions of the university concerning fundamental research and education have been given a new emphasis regarding networked processes of knowledge creation in the ecosystem of universities.

An ecosystem in general is analogous to a biological ecosystem, and represents a dynamic structure consisting of an interconnected and interdependent population of organisms or organizations (cf. Moore 1993). In the specific context of universities, this population of organizations comprise small- and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs), hidden

champions (cf. [Simon 2009](#)), large corporations, universities, research centers, public sector organizations, and other parties with influence in the system (cf. [Figure 5](#)).

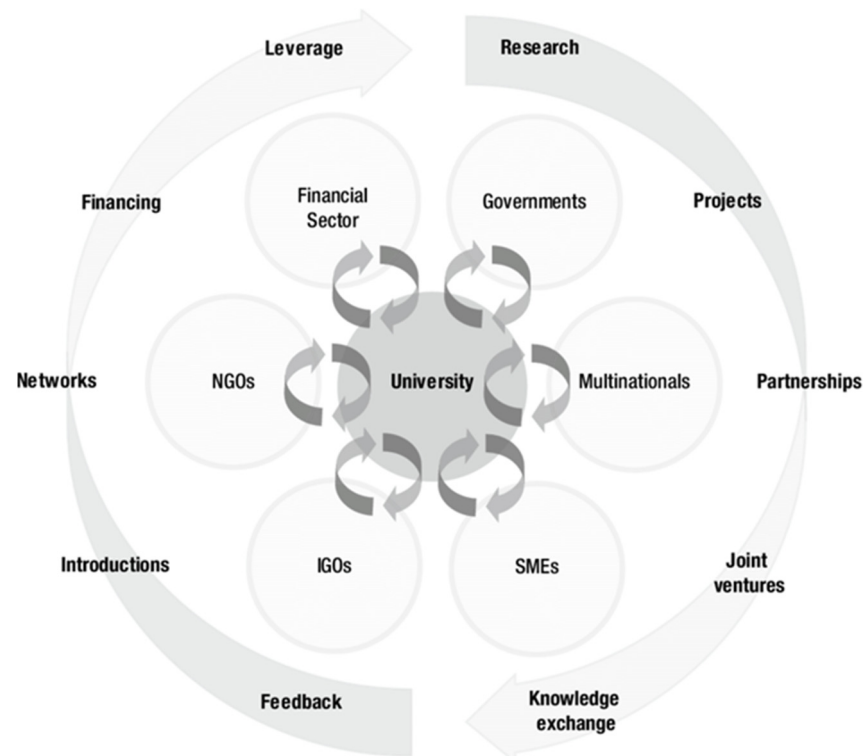


Figure 5. University ecosystem. Source: cf. ([Stagars 2015](#)).

Following the ecosystem metaphor, companies and universities serve as organisms and industries or study programs represent the species in that ecosystem setting. Like organisms and species that make-up the ecosystem, the firms, universities, industries, and study program have co-evolved to form a vast living ecosystem (cf. [Rothschild 1990](#), p. 337). The organisms and species come together in a partially intentional, highly self-organizing and even somewhat accidental manner. Thus, the characteristics for development in ecosystems are self-organization, emergence, and co-evolution, all of which help to acquire adaptability. Competition and cooperation are simultaneously present, leading to an understanding of co-opetition (cf. [Child and Faulkner 1998](#)).

The role of the universities in their regional ecosystems is that of a facilitator of joint knowledge creation and a catalyst of knowledge transfer and dissemination. To this end, engaging with external stakeholders constitutes a third vital role of universities in their ecosystems. “While this role has always been an integral part of university management and leadership and has attracted targeted institutional support in the last two decades, it has now become a central strategic concern, often of the highest priority for institutional leaders” ([Reichert 2019](#), p. 37). One of the reasons for universities giving engagement and collaboration with external partners a higher priority is the general opening of the research and development processes of companies through new models of open innovation and the substantial increase in applied collaborative research (cf. [Chesbrough 2003](#)).

In addition to the research side of knowledge creation, universities are offering continuing education and professional development courses. Universities are conducting knowledge exchange through diverse offers of continuing education and continuing professional development following a life-long learning philosophy and continuous knowledge transfer. Project-based learning is perceived as a key ingredient of teaching methodologies and curricula. In particular, it has been stressed how important it is to link theoretical learning with the solution of real-life problems presented by companies in the region.

This requires universities to establish interfaces between research development with high potential and innovation priorities for their regional or national innovation systems.

The “integrated case method” as developed in this article, seems to provide a suitable approach to fuel knowledge creation and transfer between universities and their ecosystems in a sustainable and systematic way. Therefore, we consider a further refinement of the “integrated case method” embedded in the universities’ ecosystem by integrating case transfer as a fourth stage, thereby creating a wheel of circular knowledge transfer (cf. Figure 6).

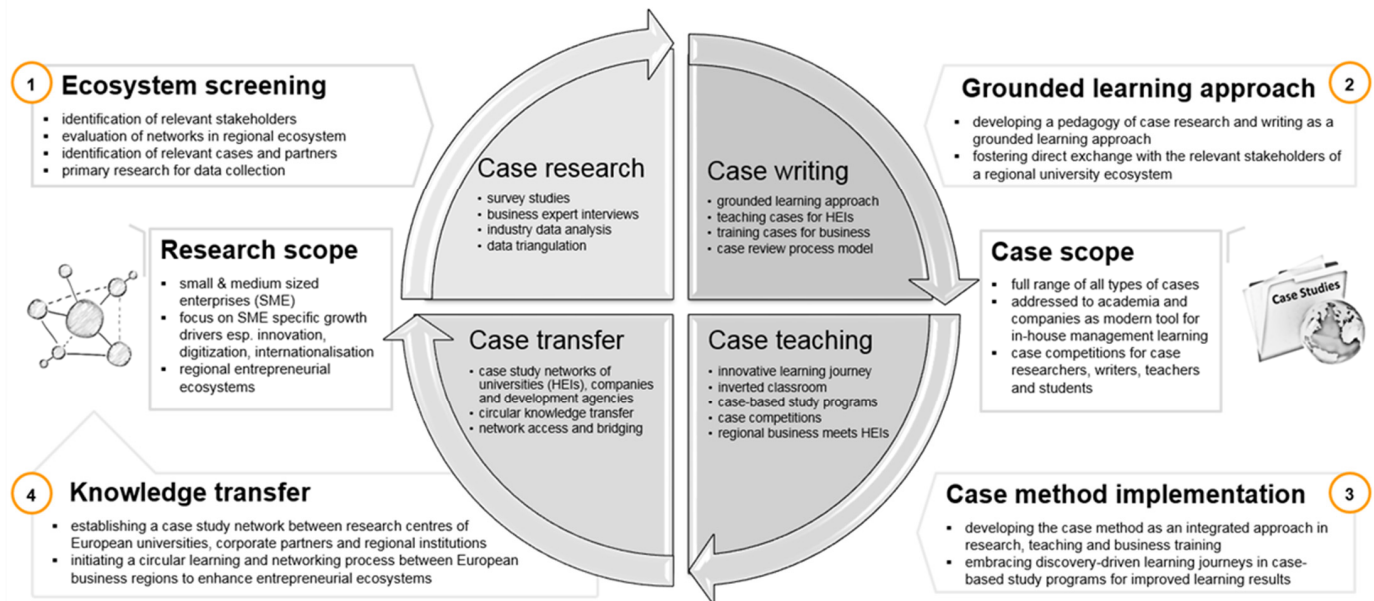


Figure 6. Integrated case method embedded in a regional university ecosystem.

The (1) regional ecosystem is the starting point of the “integrated case method”. A thorough screening helps to identify relevant stakeholders and evaluates their network relations within the ecosystem as a basis for case research. The identification of relevant partners for primary case research is driven by the research scope. The case research covers the different primary research activities and the triangulation of the various qualitative and, to some extent, quantitative data points. The development of a (2) grounded learning approach builds on a pedagogy of case research and writing as a unique learning experience for students, which fosters direct exchange between students and experts of the ecosystem. The results are all kinds of teaching cases suited for higher education institutions, as well as training cases for companies, e.g., in their in-house training programs. The case writing is integrated in a 360° case review process model incorporating peers, students, and practitioners. The (3) implementation of the case method aims at developing the case method as an integrated approach in research, teaching, and business training, offering discovery-driven learning journeys in case-based study programs for improved learning results. The concept lets students flip roles with the teachers by explaining their prior researched and written cases to their fellow students, and thus mastering the learning experience of the course. Regional case companies are involved in this teaching demonstration and meet students in the respective courses at the university, or host the courses at their headquarters. Additionally, case competitions could establish a tournament for researching, writing, or teaching the best cases for pairs of student researchers and case companies. The (4) knowledge transfer builds on the tight relations of universities, companies, and other institutions within a regional ecosystem. It makes knowledge accessible and bridges networks of knowledge first on a regional level, and additionally might extend the reach on (inter-)national levels. This requires an established case study network between research centers of European universities, corporate partners, and regional institutions, which is the aim of the European Case Study Alliance (ECASA). In this regard, “integrated” means to

develop case teaching from universal and oversimplifying case studies designed for a flat world, towards a contextual case study approach tailored to European higher education requirements. This contextual approach embeds case companies and learners in different settings and develops their sensitivity concerning differences in regions, cultures, and local market conditions, as well as social and economic differences. As a result, a circular learning and networking process between European business regions emerges that tends to enhance each regional ecosystem.

The aforementioned case research and review process starts with a screening phase for the relevant and suitable case problems in the regional ecosystem of the university, performed by the academic staff in cooperation with the partners in the ecosystem. The outcome of this stage is a defined objective and scope of the intended case, as well as a partnering company willing to undertake joint case research. The second stage of case research starts with field research by student case researchers based on qualitative and/or quantitative interviews and data collection and analyses. The third stage is focusing on the writing process of the case study and teaching note. Afterwards the first review of the case study and teaching note takes place based on a 360° review process (cf. Figure 7). The fifth stage is about testing the case in the classroom or company training situations, followed by a final review of the case study and teaching notes, and final approval for publication by the case company, which is the basis for case transfer.



Figure 7. Case research and review process.

Practitioners from the case companies in the regional ecosystem especially hidden champions (cf. Simon 2009), international student groups of study programs, and faculty members from ECASA partners (cf. Figure 8) realize the 360° review.

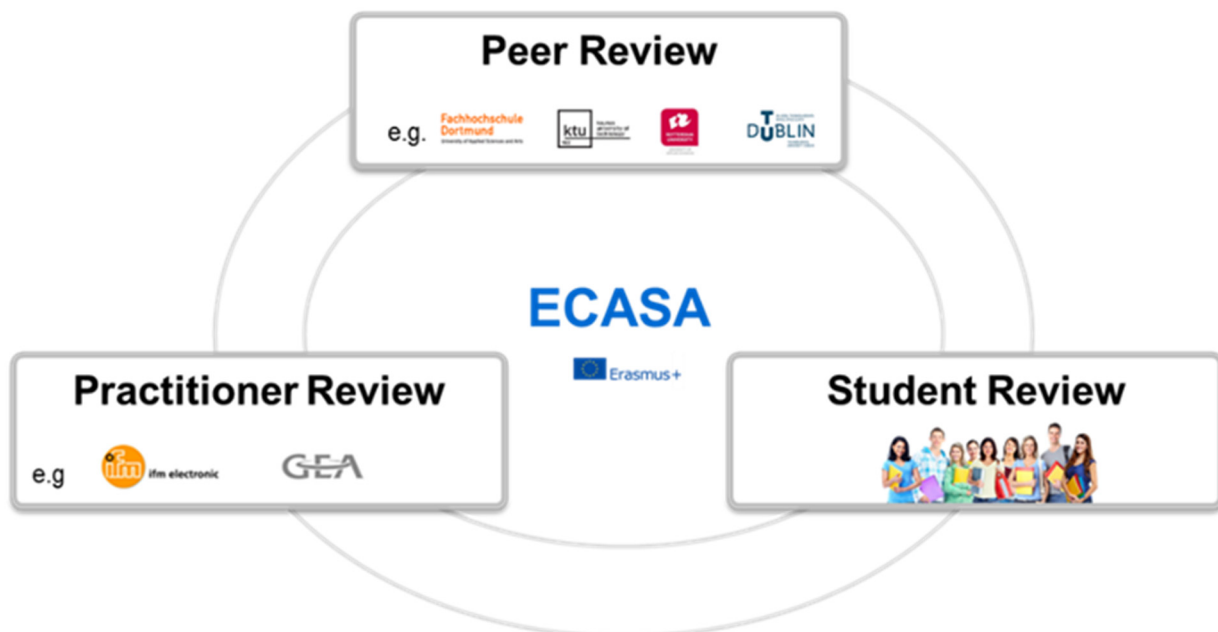


Figure 8. The 360° case review.

The outcome of this thorough case review process is high quality cases due to a referee system, comprehensive teaching notes, alternative analysis, and solution outlines.

5. Conclusion: Shifting the Research and Teaching Paradigm

The “integrated case method” presents an innovative learning journey for the flipped classrooms and is new to management education. The “integrated case method” changes the roles of teachers and students in a fundamental way. Teachers change their role from knowledge providers or brokers towards facilitators of knowledge creation in a joint discovery-driven research project. Therefore, teachers move away from the role of examining distributed knowledge towards being challengers of different perspectives.

At the same time, learners change their role from being recipients of knowledge towards being creators and users of knowledge. Learners begin to regard themselves as problem-solvers and decision-makers and not as an examinee or student anymore.

The paper rethinks on the inclusion of the “integrated case method” (ICM) in the ecosystem of universities to the end of enhancing and intensifying the knowledge transfer between business and the higher education sector better, thereby achieving better learning objectives in higher education. However, the limitation of the paper is related to the need for empirical disclosure of this phenomenon. With regard to future research opportunities, different countries with different education systems could be included, while revealing the challenges faced by embedding the ICM to the management study process.

From the authors’ point of view, however, these are not so much general methodological constraints, but rather their implementation presupposes a number of necessary changes and adaptations in the study modules and thus a comprehensive refinement of the conventional study programs. Teachers and students need to have more profound case teaching experience throughout the study program in order to deal with the task of case writing and case research. Thus, a case-based curriculum is an important precondition. In addition, it can be assumed that the group size of the modules should be limited to a maximum of 50 students in order to cope with the students’ case-related research activities and to enable in-depth case discussions. In order to establish the method as a pervasive concept, there must be openness among the teaching staff in this regard and a willingness to receive appropriate training if necessary. Addressed to the faculty or university management, this is above all a question of resource allocation (training budgets, time investment, personnel planning, training strategy, etc.).

Thus, the “integrated case method” is not a fast track to expand a university’s study and research area in a context-specific way and to support students’ competence development accordingly. Rather, we see it as a long-term investment in a sustainable university ecosystem of continuous knowledge transfer, innovation, and change that will enable universities and their students to become more active and integrated players, uniting research and application to create a real social and economic value. On the other hand, this does not mean that initial steps cannot already be taken in the form of individual initiatives by committed members of a department. These, too, can already develop value, but without the existence of a correspondingly adapted curriculum, this remains limited and threatens to perish in isolation.

The European CAse Study Alliance (ECASA) therefore focuses on a long-term integration and further development of the case study method, with the aim to improve learning outcomes, especially in the area of key competences and soft skills, in line with the EQF 2008 and to contribute to the third mission of universities as important knowledge networkers in their ecosystem.

Funding: EU Project Leader: European CAse Study Alliance (ECASA), 2019-1-DE01-KA203-0050372019-2022.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: The paper is based on the ongoing work in the European Case Study Alliance (ECASA). The authors thank Anna Weiland, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Dortmund (Germany) for ECASA project management and coordination. The authors are grateful to the alliances' case companies for the discussion of results and impact of the integrated case method.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

References

- Argyris, Chris. 1977. Double-Loop Learning in Organizations. *Harvard Business Review* 55: 115–25.
- Argyris, Chris. 2002. Double-Loop Learning, Teaching, and Research. *The Academy of Management Learning and Education* 1: 206–18. [CrossRef]
- Bruner, Robert. 2002. *Socrates' Muse: Reflections on Effective Case Discussion Leadership*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Büchler, Jan-Philipp, and Jennifer Decker. 2017. Teaching Case Studies—Marketing and Branding. In *Applied Research on Strategic International Management*. Edited by Jan-Philipp Büchler, Gregor Brüggelambert and Axel Faix. Berlin: Logos, vol. 2.
- Büchler, Jan-Philipp. 2016. Forschungsbericht: Integrierte Fallstudienmethode in Forschung und Lehre. Available online: https://www.sport.tu-dortmund.de/sport/index.php?page=show_dozent&id=115 (accessed on 2 September 2021).
- Chesbrough, Henry William. 2003. *Open Innovation: The New Imperative for Creating and Profiting from Technology*. Boston: Harvard Business Press. [CrossRef]
- Child, John, and David Faulkner. 1998. *Strategies of Cooperation: Managing Alliances, Networks, and Joint Ventures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Christensen, Carl Roland, and Abby J. Hansen. 1987. *Teaching and the Case Method*. Boston: Harvard Business School.
- Christensen, Carl Roland, David Garvin, and Ann Sweet, eds. 1991. *Education for Judgment: The Artistry of Discussion Leadership*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- de Haan-Cao, Haijing. 2020. *The Added Value of the Case Method Still Needs to be Discovered in Higher Professional Education*. Rotterdam: Rotterdam Business School.
- EQF. 2008. Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (2008/C 111/01). Available online: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32008H0506\(01\)andfrom=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32008H0506(01)andfrom=EN) (accessed on 27 August 2021).
- Gill, Roger. 2011. *Theory and Practice of Leadership*, 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Glaser, Barney G., and Anselm L. Strauss. 1999. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Heath, John L. 2006. *Teaching and Writing Case Studies—A Practical Guide*, 3rd ed. Cranfield: Cranfield University.
- Khanna, Tarun. 2014. Contextual Intelligence. *Harvard Business Review* 92: 58–68.
- Kirby, Eric G., John K. Ross III, Bill J. Middlebrook, and Michael J. Keeffe. 2010. The Pedagogy of Writing Case Studies: A Grounded Learning Approach. *Journal of Strategic Management Education* 6: 199–212.
- Kleinfeld, Judith. 1992. Learning to Think Like a Teacher: The Study of Cases. In *Case Methods in Teacher Education*. Edited by Judith H. Shulman. New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 39–49.
- Kutz, Matt R. 2008. Contextual Intelligence: An Emerging Competency for Global Leaders. *Regent Global Business Review* 2: 5–8. Available online: https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/rgbr/vol2iss2/RGBR_Vol_2_Issue_2_PDF.pdf (accessed on 20 February 2020).
- Lemon, Katherine N., and Peter C. Verhoef. 2016. Understanding Customer Experience Throughout the Customer Journey. *Journal of Marketing* 80: 69–96. [CrossRef]
- Mayo, Anthony J., and Nitin Nohria. 2005. Zeitgeist Leadership. *Harvard Business Review* 83: 45–60. Available online: <https://hbr.org/2005/10/zeitgeist-leadership> (accessed on 20 February 2020). [PubMed]
- McKeachie, Wilbert J. 1994. *Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research and Theory for College and University Teachers*, 9th ed. Lexington: D.C. Heath.
- Moore, James F. 1993. Predators and Prey: A New Ecology of Competition. *Harvard Business Review* 71: 75–83. [PubMed]
- Mosca, Joseph B., and Larry W. Howard. 1997. Grounded Learning: Breathing Life into Business Education. *Journal of Education for Business* 73: 90–93. [CrossRef]
- Reichert, Sybille. 2019. EUA Study: The Role of Universities in Regional Innovation Ecosystems. Available online: https://www.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/eua-innovation-ecosystem-report-2019v1.1_final_digital.pdf (accessed on 20 February 2020).
- Rothschild, Michael L. 1990. *Bionomics: Economy as Ecosystem*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Schramm, Wilbur. 1971. Notes on Case Studies of Instructional Media Projects. Working Paper for the Academy for Educational Development. Available online: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED092145.pdf> (accessed on 20 February 2020).
- Schwarz, Roger M. 1985. Grounded Learning Experiences: Treating the Classroom as an Organization. *Organizational Behaviour Teaching Review* 11: 16–29.
- Senge, F. M. 1990. *Case Methods in Teacher Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Shulman, Judith H. 1992. *Case Methods in Teacher Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 39–49.

-
- Simon, Hermann. 2009. *Hidden Champions of the Twenty-First Century: The Success Strategies of Unknown World Market Leaders*. New York: Springer.
- Smith, D. Gordon, and Cynthia A. Williams. 2019. *Business Organizations. Cases, Problems, and Case Studies*, 4th ed. Aspen Case Book Series; New York: Wolters Kluwer.
- Stagars, Manuel. 2015. *The Status Quo: How Do Startups Fit into Universities?* New York: Springer.
- TED. 2011. Salman Khan: Let's Use Video to Reinvent Education. Available online: https://www.ted.com/talks/salman_khan_let_s_use_video_to_reinvent_education (accessed on 5 December 2020).
- Voigt, Stefan. 2019. *Institutional Economics. An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [CrossRef]
- Yin, Robert K. 2018. *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. Thousands Oaks: Sage Publications.