LEARNING FROM THE CASE METHOD

A REPORT TO THE EUROPEAN CASE CLEARING HOUSE

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Background

The Case Teaching Method in management education and development is the most used approach outside the traditional lecture/instruction format. For many management teachers and developers it is much more than just another methodological option in a range of approaches, it is central to defining their educational and development practice. Case study teaching is central to a global 'community of practice' in management education and development. It is supported by extensive structures and institutions. It defines the teaching/learning approaches of whole courses, programmes and institutions.

The great majority of the extensive discussion, in the case community, of how the Case Method works is pragmatic and a-theoretical. Central to the Case Method is a scepticism about basing management and organisational practice on any straightforward application of theoretical generalisations – this proposition is central to the foundation of the Case Method and its orientation to learning (the issue of whether theory has no role in relation to management practice, or a more complex one of offering different interpretative frameworks, is more contested). It is clear that case teachers and developers bring this attitude to the role of theory in relation to the practice of management back to their attitude to their own practice as facilitators of learning. While this is understandable there is no logical reason why this should justify an a-theoretical approach to understanding the process of the case study. This report and study promotes the argument for an approach to understanding and improving the use of the Case Teaching Method based on a use of relevant theories, models and goo practice.

Historically teaching methods, perhaps like practices in other field of endeavour, have progressed from the pragmatic to the more theoretically, empirically, scientifically informed (think, for example, of medicine with pragmatically discovered herbal remedies being followed by scientifically 'designed' treatments, with the former still occupying a strong place in the range of contemporary practices).

Lecturing / instruction presumably has its historical origins in the ecclesiastical practices of sermons and readings, and indeed can be seen as the secular version of these as educational institutions have evolved out of monastic ones. More recent teaching methods: role-playing, simulations, business gaming, various experiential methodologies have been designed, at least partially on theoretical, empirical, scientific grounds. On this spectrum the Case Method occupies the middle ground. It was the first method to offer a serious alternative to the traditional lecture/instruction session, but it predated the more theoretically based approaches to which it opened the door.

This study concludes that there is considerable potential for developing the application and output of this robust, popular and enduring teaching approach.

This report shows some of the ways in which a more theoretical approach to thinking about the learning process in the Case Method allows a more integrated understanding of the issues behind the mass of ideas about good practice, and strengths and weaknesses of the Case Method. Particular issues are the contested extent to which the Case Method brings reality and the ability to practice action to the learner. The theoretical analysis also highlights the very limited extent to which the practice and rationale of the Case Teaching Method acknowledges, understands and responds to the differences between learners in term of their learning processes and styles, the personal strategies in which these area embedded, and the varying personal contexts in which these exist. There is a great tendency for the Case Method to homogenise the learner.

What Does the Literature Tell Us?

Our literature review reveals that:

> The Case Method seems not to be attached to any existing learning theory.

> Ninety years of practice have not led to the development of a new learning theory or sub theory explaining why the Case Method works.

> The assumption is that 90 years of experience proves that the Case Method does work.

> While theory is absent, nor is there any model describing how and why the process works in learning terms.

> Different responses to the Case Method which might relate to national culture, gender or organisation culture are not indicated as significant themes in the literature.

> Those attempts which have been made to describe the learning process involved in the Case Method have remained at a level of relative superficiality. 'Active learning', 'Participative process.' More is known about what is actually involved within these generalisations than case tutors have themselves written about.

> Learners are apparently viewed as a generalised mass with occasional aberrations of conduct. There are practically no references to the significance or extent of preferences by individuals of how they learn.

Perhaps because of the absence of a sustained theoretical discourse amongst Case Method practitioners and advocates there is considerable, and partly obscured, differences, in beliefs and practices associated with the Method. This extends to diametrically opposed views on some practices, and on what count as strengths or weaknesses of the method. There also remains considerable latent disagreement, both in general terms and in specific application situation, as to what the learning/educational goals are for the Case Method.

Our small scale study of three case teaching events including examining the experience with the participants suggest that while most participants appreciate the method and get something out of it this is highly variable in its nature and process. Student orientations

cover a spectrum from active to passive. Active students use a variety of learning strategies and styles, often formed in response to tutors explanation of the method. For the 'active' students getting into a collaborative or competitive relation with other students is an issue. Passive students just evaluate it as an experience – like a TV programme or play, finding it interesting/not-interesting etc.. Where formal assessment for a qualification is involved personal strategies for dealing with this is a very significant part of learners' personal agendas, and appears to take precedence over any sense of preparing for the practice of management.

<u>How Learning Might be Improved</u>

In encouraging case teachers to think more theoretically, both individually and collectively, about their practice, we suggest that the six most important issues that need addressing to improve practice are:

- Understanding and using the full range of opportunities within the learning cycle.

- Relating to the variety of learning styles and underlying strategies, as they affect how learners use the learning cycle, and how this is facilitated and inhibited by what goes on in class.

- Considering how case teaching strategy can be relate to learners' espoused theories – what they understand and can say, to their theory-in-use - what underlies what they can do in a work situation, and the linkage between single (improving means) loop learning and double (challenging and revising ends) loop learning.

- Developing a strategy for dealing with the development and improvement of tacit knowledge – and dealing with the issue of whether it should be made explicit or 'improved' in its tacit state.

- Using the experience with a case to improve learning to learn.

- In dealing with these issues case teachers should consider the objectives of their teaching, learning approaches, methods, models ideas and situational awareness along side developing the ability to learn itself and adapt to future situations. Our study suggests that Case Teachers can take a 'both / and' approach to this choice, and hence get 'double value' from their sessions.

The report offers a number of detailed ideas for how case teachers, both individually and collectively, and through using their case teaching as a kind of practical theory led action research on learning, might do this. These cover diagnostic steps that can be taken prior to design and planning, the design of programmes using the Case Method, particular case sessions, procedural issues for conducting case sessions, dealing with the dynamics of human interaction in the class, and learning related practices that students/learners might be encouraged to adopt.

This study has gone into some depth on both the literature and the practitioner views of the purpose and process of the Case Method, and the criticisms of it. It has cross-related these to a modestly scaled study of three case teaching episodes in undergraduate, postgraduate and post experience contexts, including a review of the experience with the participants. This has provided reinforcing evidence for a number of our conclusions, particularly those about variety in learning style and strategy from the learners' points of view.

Further Research

Against this background it is suggested that further research should reverse the emphasis – focus primarily on the students/learners against a background of propositions and hypothesis derived from out increased understanding of the theory and practice of the Case Method, and the educational beliefs and practices of those who use it.

1. Introduction

The research was carried out within the framework of the revised proposal, formulated in October 1998, which was accepted as the basis of funding by the ECCH and FME. The essential elements of the proposal are set out below followed by a note on the variations to the plan which were reported to and agreed with the steering committee as the work progressed.

a.) <u>Research Proposal And Methodology:</u>

Focus for project: The project will compare and contrast the learning process and outcomes in the use of the Case Method as proposed in the literature, as designed and experienced by case teachers, and as experienced by learners.

The aim of the project will be to infer which theoretical perspectives make most sense of the application of the Case Method, and to suggest how applications might be improved.

Definition: The working definition of the Case Method for the project will be: 'A depiction (in words or video) of a situation, specifically written for development purposes, which exists or existed within an organisation. Learners read (or watch on video/film) and analyse what has happened. Subsequently they present, debate, defend, discuss and critique the analysis, with tutors and fellow learners, in a variety of ways, such as interaction in pairs, groups or full plenary sessions.' (modified from Mumford A. (1997) How to choose the right development method, Peter Honey Publications).

Key topics: The outcomes intended by case teachers, and experienced by learners will be considered in terms of knowledge, skill and insight development, learning to learn, levels of learning (single/double loop, incremental/transformational), and transferability of learning (specific to specific, or specific to general).

The influence of moderating processes will be considered, e.g.: development needs/purposes, psychological disposition to learning in general and the Case Method specifically, individual learning style, the learning group context, the teacher/tutors style, design and approach, gender and national culture.

Proposed Methods:

A.   Literature Review
        The literature will be reviewed with a particular emphasis on:
        The reasons why the Case Method is advocated.
        The particular purposes identified by proponents.
        The impact of the Case Method as experienced by tutors and observers.
        The impact of the Case Method as experience by learners.

B.   Interviews with tutors - general
        Tutors in the sites (see below) participating in the research will be interviewed for their reaction to a set of discussion topics, created to meet the intentions of the research.

C.   Interviews with tutors - specific
Some tutors would be interviewed further to establish their goals and expectations in relation to a particular case for a specific session. They would then be interviewed after the event, against their perception of what had actually occurred.

D.   Interviews with learners - general
Learners would be interviewed while participating on a course to establish their views on their experiences with the Case Method.

E.   Interviews with learners - specific
A sample of learners participating in the specific case experience discussed with a tutor will be interviewed to establish their reaction to the particular experience.

F.   Interviews with learners at work
Follow through with learners approximately two months after their experiences to establish links between what they have learned through the Case Method and their actual application at work.

G.   Other interviews
Discussions would be held with some individuals outside the research sites. It would be important here to ask for the participation of individuals who have a critical perspective on the Case Method, for example, Chris Argyris, Henry Mintzberg, Charles Margerison, David Kolb and Richard Boyatzis.

H.   Observation
Some case sessions would be observed, following the 'Interview specific (C)' identified earlier. Observation would be based on a structured protocol. (See for example analysis done by Chris Argyris).

I.   Learner preferences
It is thought likely that some of the research sites will already be using either the Kolb Learning Styles Inventory or the Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Questionnaire. If already available this data will be collected and used. Otherwise, tutors and learners will be invited to complete the Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Questionnaire.

J.   Research Sites
Research will be centred on three sites, two business schools and one management centre. Discussions have already been initiated with London Business School. To ensure coverage of variety of contexts in the use of the Case Method, the sites will be chosen to represent undergraduate, post graduate and post experience applications. The full study including participant experience and follow up will be conducted in connection with these three sites. To add the international dimension, interviews with case practitioners will be carried out in the USA and at one non-UK European site – probably Lyon or INSEAD. If local cooperation can be obtained for follow up this will be included.

For the purpose of this project we define Research Site as one in which a full range of involvement is provided, ie: general and specific discussions with tutors, and discussions with learners.

K.   Additional visits
Discussions will also be held in other institutions without the full range of involvement. Some specific individuals have already been identified above. In addition, at least two major business schools in the United States would be visited - Harvard and Columbia Business School.

Additional visits in the United States might embrace for example Stanford University, or management educational research bodies.

One site will be visited in Continental Europe, as discussed, and international differences in practice will also be examined as far as possible through the literature review.

L.   Summary of Methods
The nature of general discussions with tutors and learners will be fairly obvious. The more sophisticated analysis we are proposing in addition is described in the following model:

M.   Episode Analysis
Discussion with tutor before specific session.
Observation of session.
Discussion with tutor after session.
Discussion with participant after session.
Longer term discussion with participants.

N.   Conceptual/Theoretical Framework
The data from this study will be interpreted initially against a number of relevant theories. It is expected that particular attention will be paid to rehearsal - practice theory, tacit learning theory, learning cycles and learning styles. It is expected that the latter will have formed part of theory and practice for those involved in the research discussions. It is also seen as particularly relevant in terms of application by trainers and educators, since learning cycle and learning styles are widely used. A critical review would therefore have particular significance.

Overall the aim of the project would be to infer which theoretical perspectives make most sense of the application of the Case Method, and to suggest how applications might be improved.

The theories currently envisaged for closest examination are:

Rehearsal - practice theory (which suggests that recent deliberate practice is the form of learning that has most influence on action, see Ericsson K.A., Krampe R.T., & Tesch-Romer C. (1993). The role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance. Psychological Review 100 363-406.

Tacit Learning Theory - to consider the extent to which the Case Method cultivates explicit knowledge, cultivates tacit knowledge, or through analysis & reflection, makes previously tacit knowledge more explicit and refined (see Polanyi M. (1967). The Tacit Dimension. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul & Nonaka I. & Takeuchi H. (1995). Knowledge Creating Company: how Japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation. Oxford. Oxford University Press.)

Learning cycle and learning style - to see if these make sense of the learning process and differences in process and outcome (see Honey P. & Mumford A. (1992). The Manual of Learning Styles. Maidenhead. Peter Honey Publications, Kolb D.A. (1983). Experiential Learning. Englewood Cliffs New Jersey. Prentice-Hall.)

The empirical part of this research focuses on the Case Method as it is currently used. We anticipate bringing fresh theoretical perspectives to the understanding of it, tied into an evidence based analysis of the current state of the art. We anticipate that our conclusions will be suggestive of useful avenues of innovation and development in the Case Method. As part of our conclusions we would suggest what these should be. This part of our work would lay the foundation for a second phase of research, to be carried out by us or others, which would have an action research orientation involving the development and testing out of new Case Method approaches.

b.) Modifications to the research design

The research largely followed the plan set out above. There are three variations worthy of note, one of emphasis and two more specific.

The research was intended to, and has, juxtaposed the general theory of the Case Method, tutors general and specific approaches on the one hand with learner/student experience and outcome on the other. The study has investigated three case teaching episodes in post experience, post graduate and undergraduate sites as planned, through to interviews and focus groups with students/learners. However the general theory and tutor approaches have proved so interesting and diverse that considerable effort has gone into codifying this. The emphasis has therefore been on the input side, with a useful contrast to the output side.

The specific plan to visit a continental European case teaching site was dropped, with approval, in favour of being more thorough with other aspects of the study, and dealing with the cultural diversity of case application on the basis of literature.

The intention to do longer term follow up of case teaching participants was dropped after preliminary and pilot work, that showed that it was not going to be possible to meaningfully separate out the specific impact and effect of specific case learning episodes after several months or years. This has suggested that meaningful research could be usefully done on long term follow up, but that it would need a different approach. This will be taken up under the discussion of ideas for further research.

c.) <u>Dates of research.</u>

The research was originally scheduled to be conducted between January and September 1999. As has been discussed with the steering committee the early stages were somewhat delayed and interrupted, and the arrangements for studying specific case application sites took the work into early 2000, and analysis and write up has extended to the end of that year and into January 2001. The work has however been able to keep in step with the other projects in the ECCH / FME case research initiative.

2.   Literature on the Case Method

<u>Introductory Note</u>

This literature review covers only those pieces of work relevant to this research project. It is therefore focussed on what has been written about <u>why</u> the Case Method is used, not on how the Case Method is used. This distinction is not always easy to implement. In one particular respect, that of 'Learning to Learn', questions of whether and if so how the Case Method is used involves both 'how' and 'why'.

<u>The Case Community</u>

A great deal of the literature is substantially, and often only, concerned with how the Case Method is to be delivered successfully. Many of the writers referred to below are in that category. A few writers adopt less the role of advocate for the Method implied by describing how to use it, and present in a more neutral role appraising strengths and weaknesses. However their comments usually explicitly or implicitly are sufficiently supportive of the Method for us to include them as part of the 'Case Community'.

<u>Definitions</u>

In our project proposal we offered as a working definition for this project:

> 'A depiction (in words or video) of a situation specifically written for development purposes, which exists or existed within an organisation. Learners read (or watch on video/film) and analyse what has happened. Subsequently they present, debate, defend, discuss and critique the analysis, with tutors and fellow learners, in a variety of ways, such as interaction in pairs, groups or fully plenary sessions'. (Modified from Mumford A. 1997, How to choose the right development method, Peter Honey Publications.)

This definition was produced after reviewing definitions by other authors. These include:

> 'The term case teaching in this context refers to a description of a situation which exists or existed within an organisation'. (Smith G. 1987).

> 'Cases are teaching documents that have been designed with two goals in mind: a substantive lesson and effective pedagogy'. (Garvin D. 1991).

> 'A teaching case is a description of episodes of practice, a selection of reality, a slice of life, a story designed and presented as study material, an exercise, a puzzle, or a problem.' (Barnes L.B., Christensen C.R., Hansen A.J. (1994)).

> 'A group is taught by Case Method when participants have studied a case situation prior to discussing what should be done and how it should be done. The trainer in a Case Method class is seen more as a facilitator and encourager of discussion and participation than as a repository of the correct answer'. (Reynolds J.I. (1998)).

About the Case Method

While the Case Method existed in Medical and Law Schools, its first use in management studies is said to be 1912 at the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration. In 1924 it became the prime method there (Ewing 1990). Harvard was not only the innovator, but has remained preeminent in the development of case material. It had generated over 5,000 cases by 1998, and is still producing 600 cases a year. (Crainer S. and Dearlove D. 1998). The volume of cases, and of books and articles describing how to use them, had not by 1987 been accompanied by any research into the Method. As it stands such an intuitive approach to cases is unconvincing and indeed is contradictory to the logical, analytical training supposedly incorporated within the method (Smith G. 1987). Smith's criticism has not been followed by research to fill the gap he identified.

It could of course be claimed that since the Case Method has been experienced as helpful and successful, though the reports are at an anecdotal level, by both tutors and learners, the research would only confirm what is already known. An alternative view is that research would be too dangerous, since it might contradict in at least some ways the apparent experience of 75 years of use of the Method. (Of course the Case Method does not stand in lonely isolation in this sense, since there is little research on other Methods of development).

The following comment is made in a major text from the most prestigious users of the method:

> 'Amy Lowell was correct; we do not have a good way of understanding or evaluating how people learn'. (Barnes L.B., Christensen C.R., Hansen A.J., 1994).

This is both surprising and disturbing. Surprising, because as already indicated perhaps 75 years of experience in a high quality academic institution ought to have led to an organised understanding of how their clients learn. Disturbing, because as we shall see under the section on learning theorists, actually there are substantial contributions to an understanding of how managers and professionals learn, much of it of direct relevance to the Case Method, though rarely directly related to it.

A rather different view is taken by another Harvard book (Christensen C.R., Garvin D.A., Sweet A. 1991). Here 'a teacher requires not only knowledge of subject matter, but knowledge of how students learn and how to transform them into active learners. Good teaching, then, requires a commitment to systematic understanding of learning'. They review current research on learning:

> 'It is contextual, ie it comes from extending and revising prior knowledge. Knowledge becomes usable when it is acquired in situations that entail applications to concrete problem solving. Discussion teaching it is claimed 'is essentially a systematic way of constructing a context for learning from the knowledge and experience of students, rather than exclusively from the canons of disciplinary knowledge.
>
> The acquisition and application of knowledge are fundamentally social acts.

It is important to see ones' own knowledge and expertise as a teacher as instrumental to others' learning rather than as something to be displayed.

Cases conducted through the discussion method provide for 'active learning'. 'Students must be actively involved in the learning process'. (As compared with what they describe as the traditional model of learning, in which knowledge lies at the core of learning and is best transferred from experts to novices via lectures.)

The Case Method promotes social learning, involving a partnership between students and instructors, and the creation of a learning community.'

These authors express in elegant form the frequently encountered view that managers do not like lectures, and prefer to be 'involved' in some sense in a more participative process. Harvard Business School itself has been seen as a leading proponent of the view that the Case Method is so antithetical to the lecture, that there should be no formal inputs in or around the case session. The more recent literature does not present this view. (Indeed several of our interviewees at Harvard Business School referred to a change in which inputs from the tutor are regarded as not only acceptable but explicitly desirable).

In an interview Professor By Barnes says 'The classroom should be for insightful learning, not basic knowledge gathering. Another sacred cow that I am beginning to violate more and more is the instruction to discuss the case, not the students' experiences. In our owner-president program I find it important to get the participants to bring in their experiences, and learn from each others, experiences as well as from the case. (1997).

A very significant additional point he makes is; 'One limitation that I am interested in is the extent to which the cases we write tend to lend themselves to analysis rather than to doing'. 'For the future, I want to see the Case Method moving more into the realm of doing, and developing people with these action taking skills'. As we will see when we review comments made by critics, this is seen as one of the relative weaknesses of the case. (Barnes 1997).

Maufette-Leenders and her colleagues (1997) say that the case is 'an excellent tool to test the understanding of theory, to connect theory with application and to develop theoretical insights'.

Professor Derek Abell also comments on this aspect of the learning process in the case. 'Make sure the case provides currently useful generalizations'. (Abell 1997). 'Cases should be sought out and written in such a way that there are some generalizable concepts'. He argues for 'currently useful generalizations' and not just 'generalizations'. 'We want the participants to have a skeptical view of a generalization; to use it but not overuse it'.

As we will see later under the heading of 'what do students learn', and in the section on 'criticisms', there are strong views on what students learn and do not learn. Ewing (1990) advances from the general propositions of 'Active Learning', by describing the Method as involving a dialogue which is owned by the student and not by the instructor. This proposition is however somewhat tarnished by the fact that on many previous pages he

has described how the process is actually managed by the instructor. It is also useful here to refer to the comments of Argyris (1980) – see below.

Osigweh, Ng (1989) reviews 'ten major sets of appeals' in adopting the case approach. These can be compared with eight sets of actual or potential weaknesses similarly reviewed. In addition he writes 'There is still a general paucity of well designed empirical studies on whether or not the approach suffers the weaknesses or achieves the objectives reflected by the benefits attributed to it. The arguments for and against the approach, as exemplified by much of the literature cited in this article, still rests largely on theoretical or conceptual grounds. There is, thus, a need for future empirical studies in this area'.

Different types of Case

Heath (1998) describes six different types of case teaching:

> The incident case - a short single event.
> A background case - a framework within which specifics are explored rather than using a handout.
> The exercise case - where students apply a specific technique, eg quantitative analysis.
> A situation case, often with an accompanying question 'why did things go wrong'.
> The complex case - significant issues may be concealed in a mass of data.
> The decision case - where a student states what he or she would do and formulates an action plan.

Romm and Mahler (1991) offer another differentiation; 'Interpersonal case studies focus on issues of leadership, conflict, power, politics etc, while non-interpersonal cases focus on issues of policy, strategy, finance, marketing, organization and development etc'.

Cases may also be distinguished by whether they focus primarily on analysis, on decision making, or implementation. The first two of these are really the classic 'Harvard type', as described for example in Barnes, Christensen, Hansen, (1994), Christensen, Garvin and Sweet (1991). Barnes' concern about the absence of 'doing' has already been mentioned.

Argyris (1982) uses some of the characteristics of the classic case, but then takes it into the implementation phase, requiring participants to present and discuss with colleagues in direct role playing situations how their proposed solution would be implemented. While prepared to use his methodology to build on the experience offered for example by a classic Harvard case, Argyris would prefer in most circumstances a version of a case built round a real incident or incidents in the working life of a participant in a group. A significant factor here of course is that Argyris' use of one or other of his versions of the Case Method is directly drawn from his own theories of learning. (These are described in the later section on learning theorists).

A number of tutors have developed a type of case which resembles those of Argyris in the sense of being drawn from immediate situations, without drawing on his learning theories as a means of creating and causing discussion from the case. Tutors sometimes describe a difference as being that between 'live' and 'dead' cases (although these terms

are not found in the literature). The emphasis here is on students bringing in for discussion, either orally or through written work, an actual situation they are currently experiencing, rather than working on case material presented to them by a tutor.

Another difference described in the literature is that of whether individuals work on cases which are significantly close to their own reality, either specifically written for their own organisation or for a similar one, or whether they work on cases from a totally different kind of area such as industry or vocation specialism. The Harvard literature described earlier tends to focus on general cases of wide application.

Physical Layout

Erskine (1998) urges that 'there must be a high degree of direct eye to eye lines of sight amongst all the participants, and people must be able to hear and understand one another at normal speaking volumes. Unfortunately architects are not tuned into these fundamental needs of rooms designed for discussion based learning'. The traditional business school amphitheatre seems less than well designed to meet his requirements. Marsick (1998) describes alternative physical arrangements 'so learners can talk directly to one another'. While there is a lot of emphasis in the literature on the role and skills of the tutor, subjects which we have deliberately eschewed in our research, much less has been written about the physical layout issues, which have received this brief comment here because the potential for effective learning interaction between learners is important for our focus in this research.

Numbers

Ewing (1990) describes the characteristic Harvard MBA program as providing for case discussion in plenary session amongst 90 people, preceded and sometimes followed by study groups containing six people. Professor Bill Bruns says 'in a large case class, say 80 or 90 students, each student would participate every second or third class. Consequently it is easy to hide. In a smaller class it is obvious when a student doesn't speak'. But he also argues that in a small class 'participants tend not to challenge each others' views'. He says further about the difficulty of leading case discussions with fewer than 10 or 12 people: 'In a group that small there is very little diversity of views'. (Hill, L., Bruns, B. and Rangan, K. 1996).

National Culture

References to the desirability of making the content relevant to the culture of the learner are exemplified in Farmoohand (1999). The process issue is more debatable.

Erskine (1998) 'does not see variations in culture, language, subject specialisations or the demographics of the teachers in his classes as significant influences on the basic process of learning how to manage a discussion based case class.' One may take it by extension therefore that despite the title of his article, Professor Erskine does not see National culture as being of great significance in learning from a case. A different view is offered by Marcie and Pendergast (1994). They discuss the problems arising in both local Faculty and students in understanding and accepting the case approach. Germain (1995) similarly describes difficulties in transferring a case from one country to another.

Hofstede (1986) while not referring to case studies specifically, illustrates some of the difficulties likely to emerge.

Newman (1997) reviews problems with the use of case material in China. His first major point is concerned with a crucial aspect of the discussion process. 'Classroom behaviour is so deeply ingrained that even with mature Masters students and a young Chinese professor, a two way dialogue is extremely difficult to initiate and maintain'. As an associated point he says that 'the behaviour so deeply ingrained at school and reinforced by society at large make it virtually impossible for the Case Method to work with Chinese professors and Chinese students in the same group'. (He advocates the use of fellow students as discussion leaders.) Chinese students are markedly better than equivalent Western students at identifying and analysing problems, but are loathe to offer any solution publicly.

In Newman's view there are particular problems if the case teaching material has been imported. It relates to a totally different environment and Western Business practices and functions differ. Secondly the material either has to be taught in English or it has to be translated. The latter may lead to changes in meaning in for example the words Manager and Marketing.

The Prime Method

Ewing (1990) says that participants on the Harvard two year MBA program undertake 900 cases. There is no doubt of this institution's belief in the primacy of the Case Method. Thirty years ago no other method of delivery was provided (though even then Readings were given to accompany case material); now additional methods including simulation, CD Rom and various IT based methods are used either within the Case Method or as an adjunct to it. (Crainer 1998). Harvard does not see the Case Method as one amongst many methods, as do other business schools. The literature reviewed here, and comments made during discussions with individual participants from Harvard, show that the Case Method is seen not as first amongst equals but as the prime or core learning process around which any other might revolve as a subsidiary. It may be that the absence of research and subsequent discussion in the literature of some of the issues presented in our research relates directly to the strongly held values and beliefs of past and present Harvard Faculty.

Case Teaching Styles

Erskine J.A., Leenders M.R., Maufette-Leenders L.A., (1997) provide a useful review of different teaching styles, on a continuum from 'student responsible for learning' to 'tutor responsible for tutor learning'. The discussion of tutor choice on this continuum is not matched by discussions about learners [see section on Learning to Learn.]

Criticism Of The Case Method

The Learning Process

We describe in a later section 'Learning Theories' the potential application of some major theories. Heath (1998) while not referring to any of those theories is unique in providing an organised chapter on what is learned, how it is learned. While his beliefs

about how people learn might not be universally agreed, at least he has provided a statement which might cause others to reflect usefully on their own beliefs.

Ewing (1990) in his review of the use of the Method at Harvard Business School identifies reasons why cases may not always be best:

> There are some issues eg 'how to make a decision tree' which need a formal input.

> Effectiveness of the Method depends on the chemistry of the class.

> Cases are second hand, not what students have found out for themselves.

> They focus on problem identification and decision making, whereas managers spend the greater part of their time not on making decisions but implementing decisions.

> Whereas in real life fortunes and careers are made by the participants, students working on a case face no such reality.

Reynolds (1998) usefully summarises the original article by Osigweh Ng (1989):

> The Method may be viewed as static. The approach cannot reproduce the 'messy' reality that is characteristic of problem solving realities in organizations. Moreover the cases focus on something that has happened and that requires analysis or a hypothetical decision at most.

> It does not allow double-loop learning to take place. The term double-loop learning 'denotes learning through correction of underlying assumptions of an organisation'.

> The learners' ability to make effective generalizations may be reduced. There is a danger that a superficial interpretation of a case may lead to poor decisions by the participants in the job after the training has taken place.

> Individual accountability for learning may be diminished. Because it is based on group work, it is likely that some group members will be more active and thus be able to learn more effectively from the case than others.

> A norm of non-criticism may come to pervade the group's interaction which again may prevent the group from breaking new ground in their analysis of the case.
> There is a risk of 'Group think'. In this situation individuals who have totally different ideas about the issues of the case do not bring out their ideas for fear of being labelled as 'deviant'.

> The case approach may foster quantity and not quality interaction. There is a risk that some trainers may reward to a larger extent extrovert participants rather than reflective participants who keep a low profile with their qualitatively speaking more thoughtful answers.

Smith (1987) comments that 'empirical research into the Case Method is at best inconclusive and often internally and/or externally inconsistent with other research'. He says:

> 'The Case Method may be seen as a poor means of acquiring knowledge but relatively effective for retention and the ability to apply principles.'

He seems on the whole to come down in favour of the effectiveness of the Case Method for problem solving via an improved analytical approach.

Research at the time of his article did not support the normally claimed improvement in group skills, eg sensitivity and awareness of others.

> 'Cases are not effective at causing students to identify analyse and possibly reformulate their own and others' attitudes.'

Smith's critical views of the existing research are based in part of the fact that case teaching instructors have been used to research the Case Methods and inevitably are subjective.

Romm and Mahler (1991) identify major problems associated with using case studies in management education:

> The lack of clearly defined objectives for teaching with case studies.

> The lack of a clearly defined repertoire of methodologies to be employed when teaching with case studies.

> The lack of a theoretical framework which can relate case teaching objectives with methodologies to yield the most effective outcomes.

They develop these comments:

> Should the exchange of views and open confrontation be the primary objective of teaching with cases (as advocated by Chris Argyris)?

> Or should in depth understanding and insight into managerial processes and dilemmas be the goal?

> Should objectives be modified to fit different student populations?

> Should teaching goals vary at different phases in the management education process?

> Should teaching with case studies be tailored to the needs of individual students and if so how?

So far in this section we have reviewed comments which though critical, are either presented in a context broadly sympathetic to the Case Method or are an apparently

genuine attempt to present a balanced view of the advantages and disadvantages of the Method. We now turn to some of the more overt criticisms.

We have seen one of the criticism of the Method is that it encourages inappropriate generalisations.

Derek Bok, when president of Harvard University (of which the Business School is part) said that the Case Method does not develop better generalizations, theories or models. Perhaps the use of the word 'better' helps to explain the two contradictory views about generalisation.

Gates and Cooksey (1998) identify three problems about the Case Method:

> 'Simply feeding the already strong and natural tendency for managers to over generalise from one circumstance to another using a linear set of rules.'

> 'If we see a problem like the one in this case, approach it in this way to solve it' is the educational outcome we seek to avoid.

> We need to balance the emphasis management education places on rational thinking processes with a appropriate emphasis on the experiential and more emotive components of the thinking process.

Mailick and Stumpf (1998) summarise criticism as:

> Limiting analysis.

> Over-simplifying relationships with people.

> Reinforcing a belief that diagnosis is the remedy.

> Over-emphasising the role of managers as problem solvers.

Argyris (1980) reviewed the Case Method in operation on a three week executive program, collecting his data by personal observation and tape recordings. His observations at that time correlated with his own theories. In his view the Case Method might unintentionally reinforce individual and organisational forces against double-loop learning. Secondly, whereas the espoused theory of tutors related to more effective participation by students, their actual behaviour in the sessions did not in practice facilitate this - their 'theory in use' was different from their 'espoused theory'. Finally he commented that since there was no discussion with participants about what was going on, they were not able to use the experience of discussing the case to relate the congruence or lack of congruence to their 'real life' processes for dealing with conformity and the hiding of errors. (Argyris' research and conclusions were themselves criticised by Berger (1983), who did not however respond to the core of Argyris' findings about the kind of learning or not learning involved.)

The comments of Romm and Mahler quoted earlier are relevant to these criticisms by Argyris. Failure to use the case discussion as a vehicle itself for analysing, reviewing and potentially improving on exhibited behaviours is clearly a matter of choice, and one to

which we will give considerable attention in our remarks later in this Report. The difference between 'espoused theory' and 'theory in use', if exhibited widely by case teachers, represents an incongruity in teaching style rather than a necessary consequential feature of the Case Method.

The adoption of an 'espoused theory' [though he does not use this term] purely in order to get good marks in an examination is described in Griffith (1999), as are attempts to generate a different process to avoid problems in the traditional case tutor's approach.

It is not clear whether other authors whose comments have been quoted above about the barriers placed by the Case Method to double-loop learning are using their own experience, or merely confirming that they agree with the findings of Argyris. (Again this is an issue on which we will comment later from our discussions with case teachers.)

As we have already indicated, while Argyris can certainly be seen as a critic of the 'traditional' Harvard type case, he is a substantial user of his own version of the Case Method.

In contrast, some other critics have developed their criticism towards a belief in a significantly different approach. 'Laying events down in a neat narrative can lead students to overlook the complex, confused and messy reality. The traditional case teaching is classroom oriented and marred by twenty twenty hindsight.' These are the comments of Hodgson (1998), who is joint director of Ashridge Management Colleges, Action Learning for Chief Executives Program. Revans, the originator of Action Learning, might not wish to be seen as being placed in a continuum of views about effective management development, in which Action Learning is a natural consequence of the attempt to introduce reality initially through 'historic' case studies. He is characteristically scornful about case studies which 'often masquerade under a spurious realism', 'with everybody thinking up the clever things he would have done had he been there at the manager's desk'. His more profound criticism is that, as with some other learning processes, the case teaching is not useful 'unless that idea can be applied and tested in reality. Such application and test must be made in the field'. Revans (1982).

Mintzberg criticised the Case Method in his book (1989), and then even more challengingly in the Harvard Business Review (1992). In the former he says 'I wish to add a word of caution on the case teaching method of teaching - not so much on the use of cases as on how cases are used. Cases are a powerful device to bring varieties of reality into the classroom for descriptive purposes. But used in a prescriptive way, I believe they are part of the problem, not the solution.' He proposes instead that 'when the students are seasoned practitioners, the trainer in fact has an opportunity to use something far better than the case teaching - the students' own experiences.' His Harvard Business Review contribution is even more pointed. Harvard 'takes people who know nothing about a particular company and then insists, based on twenty pages of verbalised and numerical abstractions, that they pronounce on it in the classroom. The students have never met any of the company's customers, never seen the factories, never touched the products.'

'But because good managers are decisive, good Harvard Business School students must take a stand. Imagine a student putting up his or hand and saying "I refuse to comment. This is a superficial exercise. I know nothing real about this company." After you have

done this several hundred times, what kind of a manager do you become? Glib and quick witted to be sure, just the kind to race up the fast track, but to what effect?' He goes on to argue that the management schools do have something to offer. 'Lets convey this understanding to real managers in real contexts, to people who can assess the values of the theories by applying them to living problems.' (It is not clear whether these specific comments about Harvard Business School are drawn from direct personal experience there).

Vaill (1996) in the course of criticising various forms of 'institutional' learning, says 'The Case Method risks the loss of both self directed learning and creative learning because it discourages the learner from thinking of the case data as his or her own, produced and structured by his or her own efforts.' He also comments that 'The physical arrangement of classrooms still reflects primarily institutional assumptions, ie seats facing front, no facility for learners to break up into groups'.

Learning Theories Relevant To The Case Method

In contrast to the Harvard authors quoted in the first section, we think quite a lot is now known about how managers and professionals learn. In this section we review only those learning theories or models which are of observable relevance to the Case Method. Thus we do not look for example at the theories of behaviour modification exemplified by B.F. Skinner, nor at Action Learning as developed by R.W. Revans. Nor have we brought in the theories on levels of learning of Entwhistle, or Saljo and Martin.

Dewey

While it would be possible to go back to Socrates, sometimes quoted as an early proponent of the virtues of dialogue and discussion, it seems more appropriate in this report to start with John Dewey. The association of the Case Method and Dewey's theories of education is made explicit in Barnes, Christensen, Hansen (1994), which includes a Reading by Dewey, written in 1915. In it Dewey says that the parcelling out of instruction amongst ends such as the acquisition of skill, acquiring information and training of thinking 'is a measure of the ineffective way in which we accomplish all three. Thinking which is not connected with increase of efficiency in action, and with learning more about ourselves and the world in which we live, has something the matter with it just as thought.' But he goes on to say 'skill obtained apart from thinking is not connected with any sense of the purposes for which it is to be used.' While 'information severed from thoughtful action is dead, a mind-crushing blow.'

Dewey emphasises the crucial importance of recognising and using past experience amongst students. But students need additional data if they are asked to tackle new problems. While 'only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at first hand, seeking and finding his own way out, does he think.' 'While the need of application of ideas gained in study is acknowledged,' 'practice in applying what has been gained in study ought primarily to have an intellectual quality.'
Dewey summarises his chapter:

> The pupil must have a genuine situation of experience - that there be a continuous activity in which he is interested for his own sake.

The genuine problem develops within this situation as a stimulus to thought.

That he possesses the information and makes the observations needed to deal with it.

That suggested solutions occur to him which he shall be responsible for developing in an orderly way.

That he have opportunity and occasion to test his ideas by application to make their meaning clear and to discover for himself their validity.

Given the reverence accorded to the ideas of Professor John Dewey, it is not surprising that his essay should lead the readings provided in the Barnes, Christensen, Hansen book. While the association of his ideas with at least some of the proposed features of the case Method is interesting to at least educational theorists, an even more interesting question cannot be answered through the two major Harvard books. (Education for Judgment, Teaching and the Case Method). No explicit connection is offered between Dewey's statements, recorded with obvious approval, and the practices as they first developed at Harvard. It may be that such a connection was actually present - but if so it is not identified in these books.

Harvard

As we have already commented, there is no Harvard theory or model neatly presented to the world. We have already suggested some possible explanations of this. Another is perhaps to be found in the following paragraph by Barnes, Christensen, Hansen (1994):

> 'Much of what the Harvard Business School represents have never been interpreted in words: our practice, values and traditions remain oral. Focussing on one individual's observations may involve a possibility of substantial misinterpretation. The risk is especially great when one attempts to interpret the School's intellectual core - the Case Method of instruction - the still point in our rapidly changing academic world. We acknowledge that danger'.

It is however arguable that while there is no simply presented model, nor alternatively a more complex written statement of concepts, in fact Harvard does have an overarching statement of 'how and why things should be run through the Case Method' that might be argued actually to be a statement of theory. For us to force the term theory on a major institution which seems so disinclined to want it may seem perverse, yet their statements in Barnes, Christensen, Hansen seem to have many of the essential properties of a theory:

Generalisations.

Establish the basis for a course of action.

Are measurable.

Their statements include:

'We believe that when educational objectives focus on qualities of mind (curiosity, judgment, wisdom), qualities of person (character, sensitivity, integrity, responsibility) and the ability to apply general concepts of knowledge to specific situations, discussion pedagogy may be very effective.' (They go on to contrast with readings and lectures).

'In discussion teaching, partnership - a collegial sharing of power, accountability, and tasks - supplants hierarchy and asymmetry in the teacher-student relationship. The discussion process itself requires students to become profoundly and actively involved in their own learning. To discover for themselves rather than accept verbal or written pronouncements'.

'The Case Method enables students to discover and develop their own unique framework for approaching, understanding, and dealing with business problems.'

'Case Method teaching is intellectually stimulating for the Faculty.'

'As John Dewey observed "if teaching becomes neither terribly interesting nor exciting to teachers, how can one expect teachers to make learning terrible exciting to students."'

'The Case Method encourages an adaptive culture. (In the Business School itself).'

'The Case Method as practised at the Harvard Business School is economically efficient. (ie can be conducted with what other people would see as large classes of 80-100 people).'

'Education Theorists would describe the Method as an effort to blend cognitive and affective learning modes.'

'A review of the fundamental principles underlying Case Method teaching may help explain its extraordinary power to involve the student in a highly personal learning experience. Keeping Occam's Razor in mind, let us note the five we believe to be most important:

The primacy of situational analysis.

The imperative of relating analysis and action.

The necessity of student involvement.

A non-traditional instructor role.

A balance of substantive and process teaching objectives: the development of an administrative point of view.'

Thomas Clough a seminar participant is quoted in Barnes, Christensen, Hansen (1994):

'Where truth is relative, where reality is probabilistic and where structural relationships are contingent, teaching and learning are most effectively accomplished through discussion. With intrinsically complex phenomena and the limited usefulness of simple theoretical relationships, little of value can be communicated directly from teacher to student. The learning process must emphasise the development of understanding, judgment and even intuition.'

McNair (1971) says that the learning principles covered by the Case Method are:

Motivation.

Active Involvement.

Individual Approach.

Feedback.

Transfer (though he places some question marks on this).

Knowles

Whereas Dewey in his work constantly refers to 'schools', 'instructors' and seems generally to focus on the learning of young people, Malcolm Knowles was the first person to identify a theory of learning applicable to adults, which was picked up by some trainers and educators in developing their work with managers and professionals. Knowles in fact popularised, if that is in fact the right word, the idea of the difference between the learning of young people and adults as being appropriately described as in the first case pedagogy and in the second case andragogy. (1985). Knowles was essentially focussed on the difference between the fact that adults learn, whereas he thought that young people are taught through pedagogy. This clearly relates strongly to the views expressed about the Case Method, which originated in a considerable sense through dissatisfaction with 'teaching' methods centred on reading books and receiving lectures. Though Knowles originally placed andragogy and pedagogy in opposition to each other, in later years he accepted that there was a place for both kinds of structure. His andragogical model is that:

The learner is self-directed but has a conditioned expectation to be dependent and to be taught.

The learner comes with experience which means that with many kinds of learning, adults are themselves the richest resources for one another and that there is a wide range of experience in most groups of learners.

Adults are ready to learn when they have need to perform more effectively in some aspect of their lives.

For the most part adults do not learn for the sake of learning; they learn in order to be able to be able to perform a task, solve a problem, or live in a more satisfying way.

Although adults will respond to some external motivators (eg, better job, salary increase) the more potent motivators are internal - self esteem, recognition, greater self confidence, self actualisation.

The potential connections of the Case Method to Knowles' model are:

Self-Direction:

In the sense that a great deal of what learners learn from case studies is the result of their own interests and motivations, and what they choose to draw out of the case, there is an element which meets Knowles' theory. However this has to be moderated by acceptance that since the case is designed by a researcher or the tutor, is discussed under the guidance of a tutor, and often responds to the syllabus requirements of what this particular case needs to cover, there might be some challenge to the proposition that the Case Method is genuinely enabling of self directed learning. Perhaps it is best seen as a matter of emphasis, comparing the Case Method with some other methods, eg lectures or reading which provide less for self direction.

The Use Of The Learner's Experience:

In principle, the case requires people to draw on and use such experience as they have although this might be an implicit expectation rather than necessarily always an up front challenge.

Readiness To Learn:

Case studies are frequently seen and written about in the context of formal education programmes such as MBAs. In this context the 'readiness to learn' will relate less to the practicalities of being a manager and more to the requirement to pass an examination. In the wider context for example of management training in which case studies are used, Knowles statement would provide an explanation of why some people do not find some cases particularly useful. If they are not related to an individual's more immediate requirements for effective performance, for example by being drawn from a different country, a different industry or a different occupation, then Knowles model provides one of the explanations of why learning does not occur.

Kolb and the Learning Cycle

David Kolb has had an even more profound impact on theories of learning for managers and professional people than Knowles. His theories, and their origins, are described in his book (1984).

One of his most important contributions was to provide a definition of learning:

'Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.'

This definition is illustrated and supported by his version of the Learning Cycle (though he acknowledges his debt to Kurt Lewin - and indeed to John Dewey). In the Kolb

learning cycle model people learn through constantly cycling through the four stages of *active experimentation, concrete experience, reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation.* As a cycle none of these steps is a starting or ending point, though in his model they do occur in this order.

Figure 1: Learning Cycle
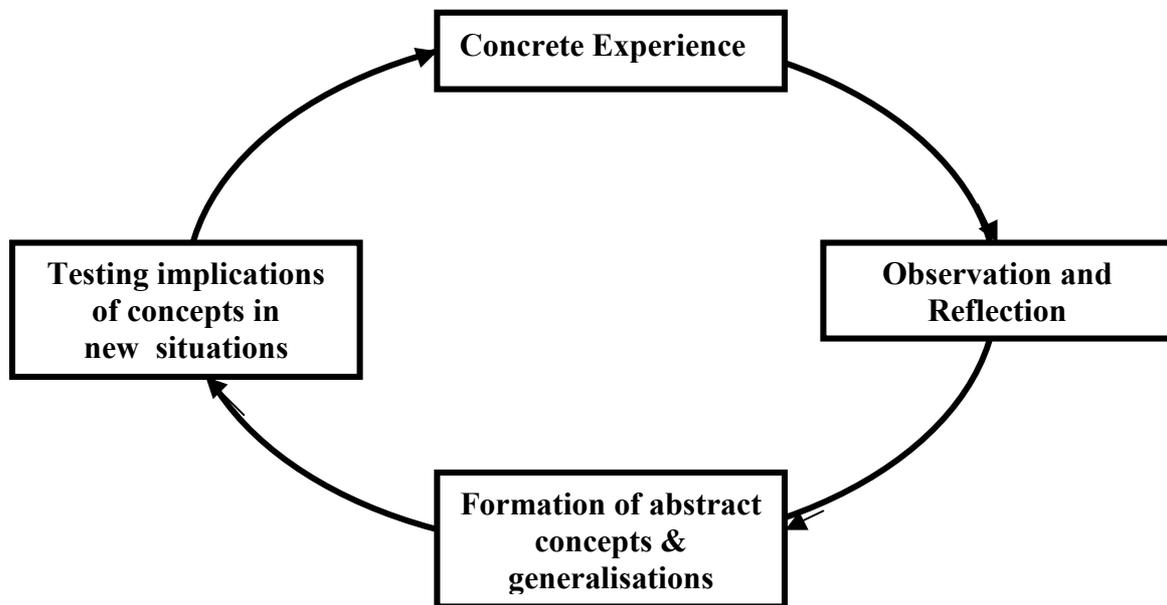
The impact of Kolb's Learning Cycle on the design and implementation of any learning experience, and for our purposes here specifically the Case Method, is a crucial issue. Despite the general deference paid to his Learning Cycle in management education and training literature, only two references to Kolb have been found in case teaching literature Saint Germain (1995) describes the writing of cases as Kolb's cycle in operation. Reynolds (1998) says that the Case Method provides more for Reflective Observation and Abstract Conceptualisation than other methods.

In our view Case Method discussion can be seen to operate through two different though often co-terminus Learning Cycles.

In the first Cycle learners receive the case teaching, and review, reflect and analyse the data presented in it – Kolb's Reflective Observation stage. Learners then are usually asked to reach conclusions about the case. What happened here, why did it happen, what are the possible solutions to any problems identified, what would you do? This is the stage at which learners may recognise or be helped to recognise what the case 'means'. They may be caused to generalise, ie reach conclusions about the relationship between this particular case and other situations or experiences with which they may be faced. These aspects are covered by what Kolb describes as Abstract Conceptualisation. (There can of course be considerable disagreement over the extent to which case teaching discussions in practice actually facilitate this kind of learning).

Kolb's third stage, which he calls Active Experimentation, is the stage at which observations, reflections and subsequent conclusions are tested and serve as guides in creating new experiences. It might be argued that the Case Method provides a possibility

for this. It might do so both in the sense that through a series of case studies, learning from one case teaching, in terms either of process or content is transferred to analysis and discussion of a subsequent case. In the longer term, a case teaching might be transferable to the work situation. But that is not achieved within the case discussion itself in the traditional version of the case.

Nor is there a provision of the stage called 'Concrete Experience' within the content and functional purpose of the case discussion. Learners' prior experiences will be drawn of course into the Reflective Observation and Abstract Conceptualisation stages but that is as it were second hand Concrete Experience (though tremendously important). The case itself, again in the traditional Harvard type, is not based on an individual's own Concrete experience. Though of course variants of the traditional Method, which for example either require individuals to write up and bring their own cases, may be based directly on an individual's own concrete experience.

Honey and Mumford

Honey and Mumford introduced variations on the Learning Cycle which have specific virtues in understanding what is occurring in the Case Method. Their version of the Learning Cycle is shown in figure 2.

Figure 2: The Honey and Mumford Learning Cycle
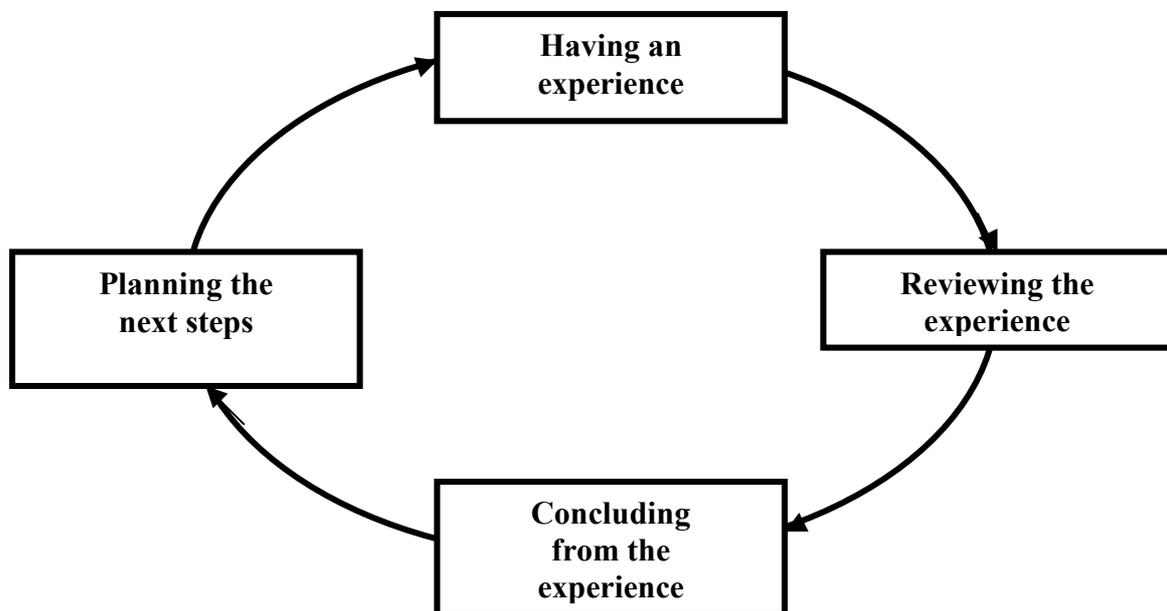
There are two significant differences from Kolb. The first is terming one stage 'Concluding' rather than 'Abstract Conceptualisation'. Honey and Mumford felt that this better expressed what was actually happening at this learning stage, partly because it related more clearly to the stage managers would be going through in thinking about their normal work, ie the stage at which they reach a decision on what to do. Secondly they felt there was some ambivalence about Kolb's concept of Active Experimentation as a

distinct stage. In many ways this seems just a different kind of activity represented otherwise by Concrete Experience. Honey and Mumford therefore identified as their fourth stage in the Learning Cycle a clearer and therefore more separate stage called 'Planning the Next Steps'. (Kolb had incorporated some elements of this in his own description of Active Experimentation).

If we test the Case Method against the Honey and Mumford Learning Cycle, it is clear that in principle it provides for Reviewing, Concluding and Planning the Next Steps - but as with Kolb's Learning Cycle the Case Method does not provide for what they call 'Having an experience'.

So far we have been talking about the application of a Learning Cycle to the content of the case. But there could be a second accompanying cycle which is concerned with what is happening within the case analysis and subsequent discussion. This Learning Cycle has the potential to be a complete cycle - since there is an experience, on which individuals and groups can conduct analysis and reviews, through which they can draw conclusions about what has actually occurred in the process of discussion the case, from which they can decide what they might do in a subsequent discussion - they can plan to do it - and then they can actually put their planning into effect in a new 'having an experience' the next case.

Either of these Learning Cycle models could be used in the design of case teaching sessions, and in analysis of what occurs within them. As we have indicated, there is very little reference in the literature to this being done. In a later section we review the practice as exemplified by the people we interviewed.

Kolb and Learning Styles

Kolb's most original contribution was to examine the idea that individuals differ significantly in the ways in which they prefer to learn. His detailed research led to the Learning Styles Inventory, through which individuals can assess their own preferences. That knowledge can then be used by individuals to plan better the way in which they approach learning experiences and by tutors in designing learning experiences better to fit individual needs. The case literature does not refer to Kolb's LSI (or indeed to the idea that some individuals might learn better from case studies than do others). Mumford (1997) reviewed the likely responses to the Case Method of people with different learning style preferences .

Bloom's Taxonomy

The ideas of self directed learning, learner centred education or training, and a reduction in the directive role of tutors has led to less attention being paid nowadays to Bloom's taxonomy of instructional objectives (1956), than was the case perhaps 20 years ago. One specific analysis of his six objectives claims the case can meet them all [Erskine J.A., Leenders M.R. and Maufette Leenders M.A. 1998]. Romm and Mahler (1991) provide a very useful review of the relationship between the Case Method and the detailed objectives set out by Bloom and his colleagues.

Argyris

Reference to the criticisms made by Chris Argyris of the implementation of the Case Method has been made in the previous section. His article (1980) illustrates the relationship between his observations of what happened in some case teaching sessions to his general theories. Those theories (researched and supported by thousands of hours of recorded observations of managers and professionals) can be summarised as:

Espoused Theory versus Theory in Use:

In layman's terms the former represent what we say we believe, what we say we mean to do, and what we say we actually do. In contrast theories in use describe the beliefs, values and theories which have in fact determined what we do.

Single Loop and Double Loop Learning:

Single loop learning he defines as learning that corrects errors by changing routine behaviour. It is incremental and adaptive; it enables people to develop knowledge and skills appropriate to and defined by present circumstances. Double loop learning in contrast corrects errors by examining the underlying values and policies of an organisation or unit or individual. It involves redefining the nature of problems faced by an individual or organisation and learning how to cope with the new transformed understanding - by adopting new transformative behaviours.

Defensive Routines:

Since double loop learning involves challenging the present situation, and understanding the difference between our espoused theory and our actual theory in use, we need also to understand the reasons why double loop learning does not more frequently occur, and why differences between espoused and actual theory remain. Argyris says that both individuals and organisations develop defensive routines which are the conscious but sometimes unconscious, stated but often unstated ways in which examination of underlying themes, issues, problems and beliefs are prevented. He further argues that the existence of defensive routines is often illustrated by the fact that people and organisations are unwilling to test whether they are actually employing them!

Argyris has written many books on these themes. They can be conveniently accessed in his 'Reasoning, Learning and Action (1982)'. There are no references in the literature to the use of Argyris' theories in traditional case teaching design or implementation (although of course he does describe his own Case Method approach). Dixon (1991) also provides a useful specific illustration.

Potential Applications Of Argyris' Theories

Within the traditional method, it seems likely that case studies could provide for at least the initial stages of double loop learning, ie a willingness to challenge existing ideas, practices, values and beliefs in learners' own organisations. The traditional case approach however would not provide for the application of those challenges within the real organisational setting.

Espoused Theory

Traditional case studies would seem more likely to encourage the development of explicit espoused theory, than to challenge the reality of those espoused theories ie the actuality of theories in use. Again, learners are not exposed within the case teaching experience to testing those theories in their real situations at work. A case teaching session normally requires people to say what they would do, and may in some circumstances test to some extent their technical ability in delivering their answer. However the emphasis remains - they are stating what they would do in a situation which does not actually currently exist for them.

Defensive Routines

The case teaching itself may of course illustrate the existence of defensive routines within the situation described by the case. Cases could provide convincing evidence for learners that defensive routines exist. It is also possible that (as with our discussion of the second phase Learning Cycle earlier), the actual experience of individuals and groups in discussing the case could be used to develop further understanding of those routines, and to improve capacity to deal with them. This could be done without adopting the full Argyris approach or objectives, or even necessarily his phrase. The fact that common tutorial experience reflects the fact that for some individuals and for some groups some issues are 'undiscussible', does not however seem to have been described and analysed in the literature.

Nonaka and Takeuchi

Although some people would describe their work as producing a model rather than a theory, the work of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) is interesting in reviewing the potential of the Case Method. While the model is about knowledge rather than total description of learning, it is highly significant for that aspect of learning.

They define knowledge as 'a dynamic human process of justifying personal belief toward the truth'. While some may find this definition elusive, it is perhaps less important than their distinction (following Polanyi) between tacit 'personal knowledge embedded in personal belief, perspective, and the value system', and explicit which 'can be articulated in formal language including grammatical statements, mathematical expressions, specifications, manuals and so forth, and can be transmitted across individuals formally and easily'. In their model knowledge is created by converting;

tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge.

explicit knowledge into tacit.

tacit into further tacit knowledge.

explicit into further explicit.

If this model is applied to the Case Method, it can be seen that the process of preparing for a case discussion and then participation in the discussion could involve all four stages of their model. Recognition of this opportunity, and effective meeting of that opportunity could contribute both to an enhancement of what is actually learnt during the case

process, and an improvement in understanding by participants of what is actually happening - learning about learning.

We have found no references in the case literature to this model. (See Investigation of Practice for contributions by tutors on the issue of tacit and explicit learning).

Summary on Learning Theories and the Case Method:

Case teaching users have not so far produced a learning theory or model for the Case Method - they have produced empirical justifications for it related to values they hold about learning.
General theories of learning have not been used to explain or justify in the literature the reason for using the Case Method in general, or case studies for specific sessions and purposes.
There are no references in the literature to use of learning theory, models or instruments to improve, sustain and subsequently analyse the impact of the Case Method in general, or specific case teaching sessions, on learners in general or individually.
Nor are there any indications in the literature of tutors using an awareness of their own learning style preferences in designing and implementing their case teaching sessions.

Learners And Learning

Learners

The Case Method developed at Harvard in major part from a belief that it provided a more effective method of helping people to learn than did traditional lectures or books. Harvard itself does not claim that the Case Method is always suitable for all different types of learning. Even at Harvard case material is supplemented by Readings. But Harvard believes in the Case Method as being the especially appropriate method for what it chooses to teach. Other business schools and training centres are more selective; Cases are just one method amongst several used. The criteria for choice between methods is not however, something which has been developed with the same apparent rigour as those developed for the subjects actually addressed on these courses (Mumford 1997).

Given the apparent lack of rigour in choosing the Case Method, it is not surprising that even less material is available, as we have shown in the section on learning theories, to explain and better implement ideas about the learning process and the participation of individuals. Herta Hertenstein (1994) is an exception. She provides 8 profiles of different kinds of participant. (Though this seems to be based only on her own experience, not research.) Nor is there any great analysis of what actually happens in smaller groups or in the plenary sessions themselves. We have already quoted the major Harvard text (Barnes, Christensen, Hansen 1994) 'We do not have a good way of understanding or evaluating how people learn'. In earlier sections of this literature review we have sought to show that this perhaps modest statement about Harvard is not justified in a wider context. Quite a lot is actually known about how people learn; what is missing is the application of that knowledge to and within the Case Method.

Admirable though the 'How to' books and articles are in many ways, they have therefore at least one major omission. The excellent help they give to tutors on how to conduct themselves in case sessions is not accompanied by comments and advice about the

participants, except for some occasional and very generalised observations that some participants will behave differently from others. What, for example, do high and low levels of participation mean in terms of learning? Students may be marked on participation - but this is not an indication of what they have learned, even if tutors attempt sophisticated arguments of the quality of participation. Nor, as commented earlier, are there any references to individual differences in preferred ways of learning. Even the only book specifically and usefully directed at learners [Maufette Leenders L.A., Erskine J.A. and Leenders M.A. 1997] is silent on this.

Easton (1982), despite the title of his book 'Learning from Case Studies' does not talk about learners' differences but does say that differences in teacher style make it difficult to say which learners will learn from the Case Method - thus putting the whole onus on the teacher rather than on recognising differences in the learners!

Of course the most powerful statements about learners could be written by learners themselves. Two books by Cohen and Robinson have the great advantage of placing their experience with case studies in the context of a full picture of their MBA programmes, rather than just looking at case experiences alone.

Cohen (1973) kept an extraordinarily detailed diary of his two years studying for an MBA at Harvard. His description is particularly powerful because it is so personal. For that reason of course it may not even in the 1970s have been the view of all his contemporaries.

'The Case Method is to the Harvard Business School (HBS) what the crooked tower is to Pisa. The Harvard Business School invented the Method; The Harvard Business School succeeded with it; The Harvard Business School swears by it, and we have to put up with it, every grinding minute of every grinding day. There are no lectures, no labs, few textbooks even. Only Cases, Cases, and more Cases.'

'Three Cases a day; sixty, maybe a hundred, maybe more than a hundred pages a night. You almost read yourself to death, just to find out what the problem is. And then, of course, you need a solution.'

'The name of the game is to make a point. Both, the kind that prove something and the kind that can be added up to give a grade.' 'The trouble is that with 94 players and the time per game limited to 90 minutes, it is difficult to score. It often isn't so much a matter of knowing the stuff but knowing how to let the professor know that you know it.'

We know of no more recent book by a HBS learner that deals with the experience in such detail.

Robinson (1995) describes a different kind of experience in the sense that he is writing about the first year of the MBA program at Stanford, where a variety of teaching methods are used. A particularly interesting comment in his book derives from the experience of his class being asked to work on a case, subsequent to being given the Nadler-Lawler model of worker motivation.

> 'The discussion was the most interesting in any of my classes so far. People talked here. Ford? A steel mill? The heaviest industry I'd seen in Washington was

lobbying, but now I was able to listen to classmates who had built objects out of steel. Bob (the tutor) however looked pained. "This is an OK discussion," he said "but you should all try real hard to think of these things in terms of the model. That's what we're doing in this course, building models. Anyone? Can anyone apply Nadler and Lawler to the case?"'.

A later case discussion provided the following:

'Thus began the most excruciating hour of my life at Stanford. I tried to explain the simple conclusions that our group had drawn (on an airlines Case) but Dawson (the tutor) and King (founder of the airline) kept interrupting, drawing me out, demanding analysis, presenting entirely new questions of their own.'

Of course these are just two authors providing what is literally anecdotal evidence - usually deeply scorned in traditional scientific research. We quote them partly because they seem of significant interest. Even more because they illustrate an absence - there are many fewer anecdotes let alone extended books about the experience of learners within the Case Method than there are books and articles by teachers of the Case Method.

Which provides a link to our final comment in this section.

Tutors As Learners

Charles Cragg (1994) says 'Not all the teaching should be done by the teacher. Not all the learning should be done by the students.' Of course the Harvard texts referred to throughout this review are descriptions of what the various authors have learned, from their experiences in the classroom, and from discussions with other tutors. Sometimes the learning is expressed as big generalisations, such as that the apparently crucial skill of asking questions in running a case teaching needs to be accompanied by an equivalent skill in listening. Sometimes it may approximate to at least the first stage of double loop learning - as Professor By Barnes 'I'm beginning to violate more and more the instruction to discuss the Case, not the students' experiences.' 'The more I teach the less I use the chalkboard (Barnes 1997).'

Erskine J.A., Leenders M.R. and Maufette Leenders L.A. (1997) in their book Learning with Cases focus entirely on the student - there are no references to tutors learning nor are there in Maufette Leenders' companion volume (1998). A fundamental question for our research is how tutors have learned what they learned, and what they understand about the processes by which they and others learn. We review this issue in the subsection 'Learning how to Learn'.

What Do Learners Learn?

Mumford in his review of the Case Method (1997) gives the following list of skills claimed in the literature:

Analytical - reasoning, sifting and evaluating data.

Questioning.

Diagnosing.

Problem solving.

Skills in communicating to others.

Skills in influencing others.

Improved capacity to be objective by absorbing other people's viewpoints.

Group skills - sensitivity and awareness of others.

Generalising from specific.

Capacity to integrate theory into own practice.

Decision making.

Skills in winning arguments.

While these would be generally seen as desirable skills for managers and professionals, he suggests that if the Case Method helps individuals develop competitive behaviour, the skills involved are not universally approved as desirable.

Mumford also argues that a very specific case may be an effective way of delivering knowledge, or may provide a way of demonstrating how to apply knowledge to a particular situation. Indeed the issue of the application through case analysis and discussion of models, frameworks, theories learned either through an extended range of case studies or through other methods, could also be significant.

Finally he uses the term 'insight' as a description of what colloquially is often referred to as the Ahas of learning. In his view the literature has probably underemphasised the extent to which learners acquire this kind of learning - for example the capacity of a case to jolt a learner into recognition of connections between problems.

Barnes (1997) says 'of course basic knowledge and information have to be transferred, but this can often be done through books, notes and videos. The classroom should be for insightful learning, not basic knowledge gathering.' In the context of this article, he is using "classroom" to describe the location of the case teaching discussion.

He also directs his attention to one of the theoretical and practical criticisms of the Case Method. (See for example Mintzberg 1989, 1992). 'One limitation I am interested in is the extent to which the cases we write tend to lend themselves to analysis rather than to doing. For the future I want to see the Case Method moving more into the realm of doing, and developing people with these action taking skills.'

Barnes, Christensen and Hansen (1994) do not offer anything as obvious as a list of skills developed through the Case Method. However they do offer some relevant views about how people learn.

Each class is an experience in learning how to express ones' self and perhaps to persuade others to ones' point of view.

A class enables students to develop their own unique framework for approaching, understanding and dealing with problems.

The Method is designed not to teach truths but to teach men (sic) in the presence of new situations.

Students learn in cognitive and affective learning modes. (Presumably their argument is that therefore students learn things under those headings.)

Romm and Mahler (1991) give considerable detail on cognitive and affective objectives which may be achieved through the Case Method. However Smith (1987) reviews research which questions whether these are actually achieved.

Ewing (1990) says the Method:

Facilitates understanding of and development of personal beliefs not just know-how.

Provides opportunities for 'playing with and against each other'. This enables people to see the results of these activities. It also enables them to 'see yourself'.

It provides experience in working through other people and therefore of participative management.

It provides a focus on decision making. However he qualifies this – 'but managers spend their time implementing.'

Students learn from what is in the case (the content) as well as the process.

Readers have to make decisions based on the best information available.

They learn there is no easy answer - complexity is ever present.

'Listen - you might hear something.'

Osigweh Ng (1989) makes an important point. The Method helps people to unlearn skilled incompetence. (See the relevance of this to the views of Argyris).

An actual experience which to some extent contrasts with the view of Ewing about 'working through other people' is given by Bolton (1999). The study of an unsuccessful student team on an MBA program revealed failings which though not necessarily solely attributable to the Case Method, do carry significant implications about what students actually learn:

> The team took no time to discuss how it would work together or to specify roles and expectations for the individual team members.
>
> Once the team experienced conflict a pattern of avoidance began, which ultimately terminated with complete polarisation of team members.
>
> The team did not reflect on its own failures at the conclusion of the semester, learned little from the experience except an aversion to team work, and completely failed to recognise that the team's malfunction occurred despite the individual capabilities, high grade point averages and initially high motivation to succeed of each group member.

Bolton argues; 'We cannot sit on the sidelines as instructors because we want students to learn on their own.' 'The implicit assumption is that students will bootstrap themselves up the learning curve through trial and error experiences with their fellow students.'

Jennings (1996) has compared through his research the effectiveness of case teaching teaching in relation to the supposed primary objective in his particular field of Strategy. His research shows that the supposed objective of developing ability in strategic analysis and strategic thinking is the least effective use of the Case Method. 'In general, cases are most effective as a means for developing communication and interpersonal skills and integration.' It is significant that none of the skills lists include the skill of learning.

Learning How To Learn

We included learning how to learn as one of our key topics in our research proposal, because we see this skill as being one required to meet effectively concepts such as 'lifelong learning' and 'continuous learning', which have become familiar, though not necessarily well practised concepts over the last two decades. Does the Case Method have the potential to facilitate learning how to learn, and if so how well is that potential realised?

Professor Frank Folts is quoted as saying; 'As long as they can learn from their future experiences, we've accomplished what we've wanted [Maufette Leenders L.A., Erskine J.A., Leenders M.R. 1997]. Professor James Erskine wrote (1998); 'Our job is to help the participants to learn how to learn, and to encourage their participation in this learning.' More specifically, 'Cases actually engage you in a process of learning how to learn. While every case is different it is the process of learning how to learn that is generalizable'. This is what Argyris would call 'espoused theory.' Is there evidence that the theory is followed in practice? [The skill of learning is not included in their list of 8 skills developed by cases.]

A crucial starting point is to look at the extent to which case teaching tutors themselves demonstrate their own interest in and capacity to learn how to learn. Charles Gragg (1994) recognised the need. 'Not all the teaching should be done by the teacher. Not all the learning should be done by the students.' 'Teaching is not only the art of thinking and speaking. It is also the art of listening and understanding.' Apart from the presumption that 'listening and understanding' will lead to learning, no further guidance of relevance to learning how to learn is offered in his paper - though at the time it was originally

written it was no doubt a very extraordinary proposition that teachers of case studies should also be learners.

More specific guidance is available in Christensen, Garvin and Sweet's volume (1991) Elmore says in the foreword 'The authors of these essays gently suggest that the improvement of teaching requires a significant relaxation of the norms of privacy and social isolation that surround teaching.' Specific aspects of this can be seen in this volume in the chapter by Burke for example. She reviews her experience in moving from being an entrepreneur to a teacher (with no formal training), in the course of which she kept a journal. 'Writing in my journal clarified some of my feelings but did not offer a lot of advice.' She found she could not even share with her teaching team – 'they only exchange success stories.' Mead in her chapter does actually feel able to ask for help. She used an observer to record for example all the questions she asked in a case session. Austin describes the different types of observation which can be provided in order to give feedback which can help good teachers become better.

Ewing (1990) describes a less detailed attempt than does Burke of capturing learning. 'As soon as possible after class instructors generally shut their office doors and scribble down a summary of the session just completed'. It is reasonable to hope that this will contain at least some observations related to what the tutor has learned from the experience, rather than just notes enabling subsequent assessment of performances by class participants.

Maufette Leenders et al (1997) addressing learners says it is extremely useful to have a short period of reflection right after class to evaluate your individual and small group preparation and larger group participation against your understanding at the end of the class. Ask yourself "what did I/we miss and why?" Their further comment is that students too often charge out of class without this quick reflection and lose the data necessary for continuous improvement. The emphasis here desirable in itself is on the content of learning. Heath (1998) claims that 'Reflecting upon these ongoing experiences leads to continual adjustment in the learner's understanding of the words. The discussion of a case teaching provides many opportunities for such reflection and it is part of the case teacher's job to encourage actively this mode of learning'. This suggests the possibility of learning more than the content of a session. However, neither Maufette Leenders nor Heath make learning about how you learn explicit, nor are there any references to the general processes and tools to help reflection.

The books by Cohen and Robinson referred to in our section on learners provide one kind of illustration of Learning to Learn, since they are clearly drawn from very detailed journal keeping. Though in their way admirable as dramatic representations of what these students 'went through', they are almost entirely descriptive rather than analytical. Description is stage one of a sequence of learning about your own learning processes - it needs to be followed by the other stages in the Learning Cycle.

Since there are no references to even relatively simple processes of engaging learners in understanding better what and how they are learning, it is not surprising that there are no references at all to different levels of learning. It would seem the literature, since it does not describe even what could be called incremental learning to learn, is certainly not yet of any help in describing transformational or double loop learning how to learn.

Trends And Changes In The Method

Crainer and Dearlove (1998) claim that 'The Case teaching method is alive and well, though the typical Harvard Case teaching now bears little resemblance to its predecessors - in terms of delivery at least.' When Kim Clark took over as Dean of the School in 1995 he 'shocked academics with his brazen use of new technology.' 'Harvard puts its first electronic Case to use in 1996 and now boasts that its MBA curriculum is "virtually paperless" with an expanding number of electronic cases incorporating on site video sequences and links to real time information on the internet.'

Gallagher and Stevenson (1998) say that 'Interactive, multi-media case studies are attempts to open new and more powerful vistas of understanding for the case user. They try to enhance the vision of the user by presenting information which helps to illuminate and augment both the general and specific components in a case teaching.' 'At worst, they provide interactive databases which allow the user to access information more rapidly. Consequently interactive cases tend either to be a resource of "rich information" or an "integrated learning package". The former tends to provide navigation processes, while the latter tends to aim at developing user interrogation and understanding.' They go on to describe the detailed content of the case material they have used. They convey the excitement of designers and providers of the new technology, but as with similarly excited people using new technology, they are stronger in conveying their belief and excitement about the new technology than they are in describing how different kinds of learner might respond to the new technology.

Non-Barking Dogs

We have indicated in previous sections some major issues which are either not covered at all, or are covered poorly in the literature. These major issues include:

The Case Method seems not to be attached to any existing learning theory.

Ninety years of practice have not led to the development of a new learning theory or sub theory explaining why the Case Method works.

The assumption is that 90 years of experience proves that the Case Method does work.

Theory is absent, nor is there any model describing how and why the process works in learning terms.

Different responses to the Case Method which might relate to national culture, gender or organisation culture are not indicated as significant themes in the literature.

Those attempts which have been made to describe the learning process involved in the Case Method have remained at a level of relative superficiality. 'Active learning', 'Participative process.' More is known about what is actually involved within these generalisations than case tutors have themselves written about.

Learners are apparently viewed as a generalised mass with occasional aberrations of conduct. There are practically no references to the significance or extent of preferences by individuals of how they learn.

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3. Investigation of Practice

Introduction

Interviewees (see Appendix A) were sent a list of 'topics for discussion' in advance of the interview (Appendix B). Some individuals showed evidence of detailed preparations as a result of seeing these topics in advance; others spoke in a less prepared way. In these latter cases, the 'topics' were clearly even less of a strait jacket on the content of the discussion - it was even more the case that individuals talked about issues which were strongly in their mind at the time of the discussion.

The interviewees can be looked at in the following ways:
26 male, 6 female
21 from the United States, 1 from Canada, 10 from the United Kingdom.
21 who were clearly enthusiasts, 4 occasional users, 7 who were either explicitly critical of the Case Method, or preferred to use other methods.

This break down refers to 'tutor' interviews - the number of learners with whom discussions were held was too small to be usefully analysed.

The following presentation of the results of our discussions follows the 'topics' which were used in the discussions; the heading given for each topic is a summarised version of given each topic here is a summarised version of the fuller 'topic' shown in Appendix B.

Definition Of The Case Study Method

As part of the introductory material describing the research project, interviewees were given the definition of the method offered in our project proposal (see Introduction). We found in our discussion that individuals often referred to what they called the 'classic Harvard case', and meant by this something close to our definition. Some however included in their definition variants such as -

- cases written by students
- hypothetical cases
- live cases
- web site based material including text pictures, video interviews

A significant issue here is the extent to which tutors in fact use the word "case" to describe circumstances in which learners bring in for discussion real problems - 'live cases', and/or use a 'Harvard type' case as a means of propelling discussion beyond advice or recommendation into demonstrating action on the case. There seemed to be some lack of clarity about both the nature of these variants and even the fact that they were variants. A further issue related to clarity of definition is that of the extent to which the case study method is regarded as embracing only the case itself, as seems to have been the theoretical position of some of the earlier Harvard writers. In practice, at least some of those interviewed draw only loose boundaries around the Case Method, in the sense that theoretical inputs of lectures or readings are made, perhaps before the case. In addition there can be role playing during the carrying out of the case discussion.

The Learning Advantages And Disadvantages

Our question about the learning objectives of the Case Method was rather overwhelmed in our discussions by the willingness of individuals to talk about advantages and disadvantages. It would have been interesting to pursue the meaning of differences behind statements such as "to teach people a disciplined approach to a marketing problem", as compared with "to provide a good vehicle for learning about marketing". However the difference between teaching and learning was one that would have been more appropriate to a discussion group than to a single time limited interview.

The list of proposed advantages and disadvantages is so extensive that we have included it in the final pages of this section, rather than here, so that we can highlight some of the crucial issues emerging from the total list.

One of the features of the detailed list of responses is that there were very few which were emphasised by all individuals who were advocates of the Case Method - such individuals tended to select different aspects. In contrast the disadvantages of the Case Method were widely agreed amongst the critics, and even often shared by advocates of the method.

Some of the advantages and disadvantages also relate to the issue raised above 'Definition', i.e. the extent to which the case is seen as a stand alone process, or whether it is seen as preceded by or accompanied by other methods of learning. So for example the response of someone who saw the Case Method as replacing lectures, proposed different advantages from someone who saw the Case Method as "demonstrating the application of theory". The complete list of advantages and disadvantages presented at the end of this section has been provided so that readers can make their own assessment of the significance of each. We highlight below some which strike us as being particularly important in the context of the purpose of this research.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Real	Unreal
Sharpens analytical skills	Only deals with analytical skills
Options Identified	Options not tested by Implementation
No right answer	No right answer
Non emotional	Non emotional

A Learning Theory To Support The Case Method?

It was generally agreed that there was no explicit statement available of "a theory of learning in the Case Method". Beyond this, the responses ranged over a variety of issues:

- Some individuals were puzzled about the concept of a theory. In what sense could there be a theory about the case specific to the Case Method, or explanatory of it?

- Others felt that since their view was that the case study approach was implicitly non-theoretical i.e. theories were not proposed through it, the idea of having a theory about the Case Method itself was too paradoxical even to be thought about.

- Some individuals felt that the question was of no practical significance. In their view drawn from their experience the Case Method worked well and/or better than alternative methods, so you did not need as a practitioner to have a theory which explained to you why it worked.

- Some individuals offered the view, without necessarily describing this as a theory, that the idea behind the Case Method was that participative methods are better than passive ones.

One aspect of the reactions to the question about a theory - does it matter since it works - has already been indicated. In contrast, some individuals saw that the absence of a theory was important. 'We do not have a theory, nor do we work much on effective practice - so what do we actually know about learning?'

Only one of our interviewees mentioned the influence of theory on his practice - quoting Kolb, Argyris, and Nonaka. As will be seen in the next sub-section, rather more people said that they knew of the learning cycle, although they had not earlier identified this as a theory relevant to the Case Method.

General comments made about learning theories relevant to the Case Method included:

- The Case Method moves from particular to general and is therefore Inductive.

- Discovery is the best learning process.

- 'It goes back to Socrates and Dewey - beliefs about social learning and the significance of groups'.

- There is a tacit learning theory - but since you asked we ought to have something against which to review our experience.

- There is no real theory except that Pedagogy is pragmatic i.e. drawn from Dewey.

- In principle it ought to be important that we have a theory - but given my experience it does not matter that I don't know of or use a theory.

- You don't need a theory - you do it because Harvard does it.

- It does not itself produce 'actionable theory', and therefore the implicit theory about it is flawed.

- It produces answers in the abstract, and represents a limited view of what learning is about.

- The Case Method is lacking an important element of learning theory in that it does not include real action.

- The Case Method would be improved if it responded to a full explicit theory which embraces action and its consequences.

The Learning Cycle Theory

We indicated the learning cycle theory to our interviewees as a topic for discussion for two reasons. It is often quoted in management education and training literature with reference to the effectiveness or otherwise of a learning process, and as a model it provides a means of assessing what is actually happening in learning terms within the case study method (see section 2 of the Literature Review for a summary of this theory).

About one third of our interviewees had some knowledge of the learning cycle, usually the Kolb version. Most did not claim consciously to use it - though from observation one did in practice.

One individual commented that the Case Method was the learning cycle in operation 'except for Concrete Experience'. Six individuals commented that the lack of what they called implementation meant that the Case Method was not a good representation of the learning cycle. One individual said that the Case Method is "not good at Active Experimentation except for the skills of doing the case". Another individual commented there was limited time for Reflection.

Other responses to the more general question of how the case works as a learning process included:

- We are teachers not facilitators we don't know how it works; surely we could do better if we did.

- Have I got it right the four stages of the learning cycle are (he quoted the Kolb cycle accurately) - but I don't use them consciously.

- It works as a learning process because it is fun and challenging and versatile in use.

The Development of Skills, Knowledge, Insights

Some of the issues about what the Case Method develops have been identified in the detailed comments about the advantages and disadvantages.

The positive claims were that the method developed:

Skills

- Team Work Skills

- Analytical Skills

- Skills in Applying Management Tools

- Case Related Skills i.e. analysing, articulating, listening, convincing people

- Skills Related to working in a group

- Active Listening

- Skills of Critiquing

- Critical Thinking

- Mutual Learning

Insights

You learn how often the cause of the problem is people (a comment from someone other than an organisation behaviour person).

Knowledge: Informants disagreed about whether and how knowledge was improved. Comments included:

- Knowledge about the world of business, and of specific industries and services.

- It delivers less knowledge than through a lecture "where you know what you have delivered - though not what they have learned".

- It is good for insights because the tutor cannot define for everyone in advance what the insights will be.

- What you mean by insights I have seen as 'connections'. It is people recognising how things fit together.

- It is good for insights - the light bulb goes on.

- It does generate insights in people - though often not at a very high level of content.

Learning Preferences And The Case Method

There was a wide-spread recognition that individuals are different in their approach to learning, and that the differences are important. Interviewees accepted this as a fact, but either offered no comment on, or were puzzled by the possibility of, dealing positively with this rather than simply accepting those differences. Just as there were few people who explicitly recognised and used a version of the learning cycle, so there were few who knew about and even fewer who used either the Kolb or the Honey & Mumford learning styles diagnostic tools. Comments included:

- The differences are not a big issue "all of our students are pragmatists" (in context, this interviewee meant that in his view all his students were interested in "what works").

- The method suits convergent problem solvers.

- It is not so good for those who want structure.

- It is not good for people who do not like ambiguity.

- I don't like labelling people through a Learning Styles tool.

One tutor observed that the tutor's own learning style is significant in terms of how the tutor runs the case session.

Transferability

Comments here included:

- There is better transfer with executive programmes than with the two year MBA - it is more immediate.

- You need several cases covering the same territory for useful transferability

- What is transferred is a discipline of thinking.

- Transferability is diminished by the lack of provision for planning what to do and then doing it in real terms.

- The case analysis process is transferred.

- What is transferred by MBA's can be facile. Transferability is "obviously good" on company tailored programmes but is doubtful on open programmes.

- Learners transfer new ways of looking at problems.

- There is some transfer from one session e.g. from one on finance to another on finance - but how much comes from e.g. organisation behaviour to finance?

Levels of Learning

The terms incremental learning and transformational learning, and single loop and double loop learning were not familiar to most of the interviewees. The following comments were made, sometimes after an explanation of what levels of learning might mean.

Incremental and Transformational Learning

- There is an emphasis on incremental learning, simply because one case builds on another, and also the experience over the programme is incremental.

- There were some changes in thinking style and behaviour which I see as transformational.

- The strong arguments which occur within the Case Method does transform some people's understanding.

Single And Double Loop Learning

- It is single loop learning because students are not tested on "espoused theory".

- It is single loop because you are looking at what other people should have done, not at what you yourself should have done.

- It is double loop learning because there is quite a lot of challenge.

- There is personal reflection especially in organisational behaviour which leads to double loop learning.

- People do shift their perspectives so that is double loop isn't it?

- Because you are thinking about thinking it is double loop.

- You recognise stereo-types - which means you challenge your previous thinking so that is double loop.

- Double loop learning is unlikely in the Case Method - but you could develop it more.

- You could build double loop learning into the Case Method but most tutors would not want to.

- Double loop learning will only happen if tutors structured for it.

- You only get part of double loop anyway - espoused theory - you don't get theory in use i.e. actual modified behaviour in relation to a particular personal issue or problem.

It should be emphasised here that not all of the comments made about double loop learning match the full definition given by Chris Argyris (see Literature Review).

<u>Learning to Learn</u>

The clearest statements about the potential and actuality of learning to learn related to the internal processes of the Case Method itself. As already indicated in some of the earlier sections, some tutors referred to students learning to learn how to participate in case studies, and learning the skills involved in achieving this.

Beliefs on and evidence about learning to learn in the larger sense of individuals understanding and practising more effective learning skills (see our definition in Conclusions, section 4) were less clear.

It was not always clear, from the comments made by those who said the Case Method was useful for learning to learn whether they were talking about potential or actuality. In this context remarks included:

- The starting point is at least to ask people what they have learned - and you have to provide explicit time for this.

- We do ask what people have learned usually at the end of a session. But we don't ask them how they have learned it so it is only a part answer to your question.

- You certainly should encourage learning to learn - but you need to provide a structure and time to achieve this.

- We encourage all tutors to ask questions related to this, not just organisational behaviour faculty.

- There is a potential to discuss learning to learn - but I do not actually do it.

Those with a less positive view even about potential provided comments such as:

- I am against providing formal time for reflection on this issue - it is all tacit learning really.

- It might be desirable in some sense but it is very difficult to find the time for reflection on what has been learned and how it has been learned.

- A crucial issue here is student expectation. They do not come to my sessions expecting to be faced with questions about this.

- I have never seen a case session which included learning to learn.

- I do not favour enforced self reflection - leave it to a more tacit less overt process.

- Leave it to organisational behaviour.

- "You don't ask patients how they got better - they are relieved if they are".

Practice and Work Performance

Comments under this heading included:

- The relationship is clearer and more achievable on shorter programmes such as Executive Programmes.

- As with any method, any gap between the time at which someone learns something and an opportunity to put it into practice reduces the effectiveness or at least the sustaining of learning.

- Analytical skills are transferred from the Case Method to work performance.

- Constant repetition in the Case Method improves performance on the cases.

- On the MBA programme you can see people's performance in analysing and then delivering their comments on the case showing an improvement.

- The case study ought to be a way of testing generalisations, so in that sense putting into practice what has been learned and showing performance in that way shows this direct relationship.

- There might be very recent practice in relation to a system, a concept or a tool taught earlier in the programme.

Impact On The Development Of Tacit Knowledge

Though many contributors thought that the Case Method both employed and assisted in the development of tacit knowledge, they were less clear about how and whether this knowledge was used. Since the idea of tacit or implicit knowledge is by management education standards relatively new, it is not surprising that a number of individuals had not really thought about the issues involved. There were more expressions of view about the fact of tacit knowledge being used in some way than there were statements about the desirability of recognising and using tacit knowledge in a more disciplined i.e. explicit sense:

- Tacit knowledge exists but it is usually superficial "you surface your content knowledge".

- Tacit knowledge is present always in the discussion of a case - but it is not stated perhaps explicitly.

- There is a need to structure understanding of tacit knowledge, to have a discipline to achieve it in the classroom.

- If tacit knowledge is not brought to the surface and discussed there are likely to be misunderstandings.

- There is an intermediate position in which tacit knowledge actually becomes explicit often through the sharing process in a group - but the fact that it is now explicit is not discussed - explicitly.

- It is crucial but difficult to convert tacit knowledge into explicit. Much more needs to be done on this. It is very important for learning to learn.

- Of course tacit knowledge is present but I do not specifically ask about it.

- Tacit knowledge as an issue ought to be covered both for the programme, and for later use.

- Tutors themselves often operate on tacit knowledge - but for example they should make their own learning theory explicit to students.

- We are not good as a Faculty about our own tacit knowledge.

National Culture

A few tutors offered the view that you had to be "careful" in using the Case Method outside the Anglo-Saxon culture:

- Asian people are more reticent.

- French managers are more interested in theory.

- Germans want answers.

Gender

Similarly there were few observations about the possible impact of gender. One tutor offered the view that "women take longer to get involved but once they are, there is no difference". There were no comments (we did not ask) about possible issues arising from women tutors dealing with predominantly male learners.

Differing Contexts

Comments were made about the perceived differences of response between shorter executive education programmes and MBA. Comments included:

- Experienced managers on shorter programmes want shorter cases.

- With MBA people you have a long period of time over which to build up both the essence of content knowledge required, and an appropriate disciplined approach to the Case Method.

- MBA people know that they are going to be assessed for a degree - executives do not expect to be assessed.

- Executives don't want to spend four hours on a case study which gives them just a nugget of information.

Technology

While no-one advanced the view of a likelihood of total replacement of printed cases, there were comments about the impact of newer technology as at least an addition to the traditional Case Method e.g. through the use of Virtual Reality (see literature review for comment on Harvard Business School on this issue).

Physical Aspects of Learning

Several of the "critics", but not the proponents of the Case Method, said that the physical arrangements were not good for learning. The traditional tiered classroom caused, and indeed was deliberately generated to provide focus on the tutor. It does not provide for effective interaction between learners, who it was said too often were talking to the back of someone else's head.

Multi-Functional Cases

Several tutors commented that one problem was that inevitably people knew what problem they were supposed to be looking at, for example that the case was about different ways of assessing the value of income over a period of time. The suitability of the case for teaching exactly that was challenged by the fact that often in business life the problem is not neatly packaged in that sort of way. There were one or two references to the desirability of multi-functional cases (even before an all-encompassing business case at the end of a programme), or for the use of cases to discuss issues other than the central core issue - for example comments on organisational structure arising in a finance case.

Content and Process

As indicated in the discussion earlier about learning to learn, some tutors saw themselves as being entirely concerned with the content of the case, rather than with the issue of the process through which the case is discussed and learning is achieved. Some of these explicitly passed on responsibility "that is for organisation behaviour faculty to work on".

Associated with this was a comment from one tutor about the impact of student assessment. He not only made the point that students arrived for a case study session on a particular subject and not only expected that the discussion would centre on that, but that they would possibly actually reject discussion outside that subject. This comment was taken further by the tutor suggesting that since tutors were now assessed by students, any tutor who behaved in a way which was anti-thetical to student expectations would get "low marks".

Business Schools As Centres Of Learning

In the course of our discussions we sometimes asked why no research had been done on the issues raised through our project. There were three kinds of answer:

- Harvard has been doing it successfully for 75 years and we have followed - who needs research?

- Who wants research to show that what they are doing could be improved - or even be proven wrong?

- That is a good question. Next question.

- A specific response was: 'The whole set of questions you have asked me raises issues which I, and the Business School, ought to have thought about and we have not. Your report ought to stimulate us to do so.'

Another issue at a more individual level was that of the extent to which Faculty are themselves learners:

- I have been doing the same case for 15 years and yet I still get new insights occasionally with different classes.

- I do sit down and think about how the case has gone and ways of improving the discussion next time. But if I'm honest, I'm thinking about how I can do something better rather than thinking about what the students have learned - and that is a bit different.

- I have had good experiences with a "teaching group", where we discuss case material before and after a session in which several of us are using the case.

Implementation, Action and Learning

The fact that cases emphasise analysis and hypothetical action was accepted by many proponents as a weakness, and by some critics as a disabling characteristic of the Case Method. There were various references to ways in which either within the case or outside it a more personal form of action could be undertaken. Thus for example tutors might break into role plays, in which the presenter of a particular course of action would be asked to engage in carrying through the presentation with another member of the course acting as a recipient of the recommendation.

A much more extended version of implementation within a case is that carried through by Chris Argyris, and followed by some others. This involves the use of the case to understand the issues of "exposed theory" and "theory in use", and Single Loop and Double Loop learning. This creates circumstance in which the actual behaviour of the participants to each other becomes the focus for the discussion, rather than staying at the level of the hypothetically created interaction of people playing roles.

Comments from both people advocating this style of work through cases, and from people who had participated in such experiences but were not proponents of it, indicated that whatever the potential additional benefits to be gained, there were major issues of the complexity of problems being faced, and the difficulty of handling the real personal interactions involved which would create additional major problems for tutors. As one of those commenting said, without apparent irony, "even OB people would find it difficult".

An interesting aspect of this was raised by one tutor, not in fact discussing an Argyris type approach to the case. He talked about experiences as both tutor and learner which he described as "confrontational". Some tutors, and some learners, are very confrontational in the way in which they carry out discussion. His own rule was to start without confrontation as a tutor, and to test and to decide whether to use it later. He said the discussions through this research project had caused him to reflect further on this issue. He made the decision, and he did not discuss openly with the learners the consequences. He wondered whether in fact he should do so. He wondered further whether those of his colleagues who used either wholly confrontational or wholly non-confrontational approaches were prepared to discuss these approaches with learners.

Information from Learners

Classes were observed, and follow up discussions held by interview and focus groups in three settings aS planned, Lancaster University Management School for undergraduate teaching, London Business School for postgraduate (MBA) teaching and Cranfield Business School for Post Experience.

As we have already indicated, the number of learners with whom we had discussion was small. There were also differences in the structure of the two MBA programmes involved, so that some of the comments apply in one institution but possibly not in the other. The comments made included:

- Cases are better than just getting theory through reading or lectures - but it is important to have balance e.g. to do role plays as well as associated reading.

- Cases feel like real life.

- The time spent in "learning teams" of six or seven people was very useful.

- The main learning was sometimes achieved in the learning group as compared with the main plenary session.

- Some students had their own working processes for learning from cases, and could talk about and show evidence of using these. On the basis of the small numbers involved, it seemed that these more active students internalised the intended learning process as presented to them by their specific tutors – or developed their own as a variation on this.

- Other students took a more passive stance to their case learning experience – just judging it as an event in terms of being interesting, informative etc. but with no particular awareness of the process involved.

- Other learners had no self-defined learning process, but responded to the case in terms of the details within it, of discussion about it and comments by the tutor.

- Those learners who were participating in qualification bearing programmes were very much concerned with how to achieve the grades necessary to get the qualification. "What do I need to do to pass?" was a much more dominant concern than "what is this giving me towards being an effective manager later on?" At least some of the students were highly, and mainly, attentive to cues from the tutor on what they needed to do to 'get their grade', and showed signs of being mainly preoccupied by satisficing, and occasionally excelling, in these terms.

Information from Observation of Case Discussion

We were grateful to those tutors who allowed us to sit in and observe case study discussion. The following comments represent again a very small number of observations, but maybe useful in highlighting some issues:

- Some participants showed very competitive behaviour in the sense of winning arguments and being judged by the tutor and their peers as better at presenting and winning their arguments in class.

- The plenary discussion was often dominated by those who showed a wish to contribute, with others sitting back and operating in the "I listen and learn" mode.

- The physical design of the classroom, in amphitheatre style, highlighted the focus on the tutor, and the difficulty some individuals had in communicating effectively with people below them in the classroom's physical structure.

The Full List of Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages

It is better than lectures.
Cases feel real.
Development of analytical skills.
Engages participants in discussion.
You get what is relevant to you.
Discussion is more important than the
reading associated.
It is a way of applying for example a tool
you have learned earlier.
Learners identify with the participants
in the case.
Particular skills are developed e.g. articulating,
listening, convincing other people.
You find that any situation is improvable.
It is largely an unemotional process.
Participation by learners is crucial.
People like learning from examples
The case is especially helpful with
less experienced managers because
they need the colour given in the case.
The complexity of cases is a good
thing.
You can demonstrate the application
of theory.

There are multiple options.
Cases ought to be good at
developing reflection.
Participants enjoy them.
There is a common basis for dis-
cussion.
There is a good match with some
learning styles.
Gives anchor points for dis-
cussion.
Challenges mind sets.
Develops self awareness.
Develops working constructively
with others.
As a tutor I talk less
The tutor learns
People learn from each other
Cases can stimulate experienced
managers.
There is intellectual excitement.
The fact of no obvious solution
is an advantage.
Everybody works from the same
information.

Disadvantages

No direct implementation.
Starts with the tutors view of what
should be learned not the learners'
actual problems.
Skill of analysis may be specific to
skill of case analysis.
You are at the mercy of the tutor.
Few tutors get into real time behaviour
with students.
There is great difficulty in writing and
then leading multi-disciplinary cases.
It is not a full experience.
It is more realistic for organisational
behaviour than for marketing or finance.
They are not helpful for inexperienced
participants.
There is a lack of real involvement -
You can see things too clearly through
a written case.
It is too often a process for exchanging
ignorance.
Does not match some learning styles.
May produce successful players at the
game of discussing cases.
My needs as a tutor do not necessarily
match their needs as learners.
They can be too enthralling.
Cost in terms of development and then
discussing the case in relation to achieved
learning.
There is a cognitive bias.
Analysis is over-emphasised and there
is no real action.
The physical lay-out is authoritarian and
creates difficulty of exchange of views.

Over emphasis on analysis.
Ineffective in delivering
knowledge.
Specifies the problem/ issue /
function to be discussed.
Attitude and emotion are
described in the case but not
experienced.
Not everyone learns well from
this kind of narrative.
It is an illusion of reality.
There is no explicit move from
current Espoused Theory and
Theory in Use to a new Exposured
Theory and Theory in Use.
There is an illusion of learning.
There can be inappropriate gener-
alisation.
Despite what the tutor says there
is too often perceived to be a
a right answer.
Not really interactive, though
participative.
There is a lack of immediacy
and reality.
Can be out of date.
Difficulty of creating useful
generalisations.
They do not fully represent
the messy, emotional nature of
management.
The emphasis is on decision, not
on implementation.

4.   Conclusions from Literature and Practice

Introduction

One of our interviewees said "I found this a very testing set of questions - really on issues I've not thought about, but ought to have done". This, from a very experienced user and advocate of, case studies was particularly interesting. If experienced users have not thought about questions such as those we posed, then it seems probably that they are not reaching even the first stage required for considering whether improvements in practice are desirable, let alone how improvements might be achieved. This section concentrates on the first of these - whether improvement is necessary. The next section makes suggestions on how improvements might be made.

The following remarks largely follow the themes we originally identified in our research proposal, expressed subsequently in topics raised in discussion. We have already offered some conclusions within the Literature Review itself, for the convenience of those who would like to treat the Literature Review separately. In this section however we embrace both comments derived from the Literature Review and from our interviews and observations.

In offering our conclusions, we continue to treat the case study and the discussion of it by learners as a discrete process, separate from other learning processes around it, we treat the Case Method in its purest form. We recognise of course that, even at Harvard Business School, the case is not a completely isolated method. In many institutions it is one of a number of methods of learning employed; other methods may be provided explicitly in order to remedy some of the disadvantages of the Case Method spelled out in an earlier section of this report. The conclusions offered below are specific to the Case Method because that has been the subject of our study. We do not imply that other methods of management development already meet and overcome some of the problems we identify.

In addition some tutors will provide different kinds of experience within a session which is labelled as a "case session", such as the inclusion of mini lectures, role plays. Our reason for sticking firmly within the dimensions of a "purest" version of the case study method is that it is only by looking at it without any supporting interventions or processes that the full constraints of the method can be recognised - and more positively additional opportunities for learning can be recognised and implemented.

Learning Objectives

The learning objectives intended to be met through the Case Method have not been stringently defined either in the literature, or in the practice of those tutors we interviewed. Objectives seem instead to be implicitly defined by statements about the advantages of the Case Method, or claims for the kind of skills, knowledge or insight developed through this method.

The issue that needs to be confronted here can be expressed in two ways. The first is that it is convenient, especially for tutors with long experience of case studies to assume that

it is unnecessary to spend time thinking through and writing down what the specific objectives of the Case Method in general or a case session or case study in particular are. A second version of this issue is that the breadth of claims on what cases achieve in terms of skills, knowledge or insight cover every possible development need for individuals, so that similarly there is no need to be more specific in terms of objectives.

The view which we propose is that the discipline of defining more clearly what case studies in general, or in specific situations, are intended to achieve would be salutary. The result would be beneficial for both tutor and learner. So for example specification of the kind of skill or knowledge or insight or what combination of these is sought through a particular case or session will clarify the mind of the tutor in design, and could lead to significant improvement in understanding and achievement by learners.

Advantages And Disadvantages Of The Case Method

We commented earlier that sometimes what is seen as an advantage by some people can be seen as a disadvantage by others. It is not to our purpose here to give weight to any of the statements made by our interviewees about advantages and disadvantages; we have offered some comments in the Literature Review about the accuracy or imbalance of these.

The crucial point here is to recognise that there is potential both for emphasising and gaining greater reward from some of the advantages, just as there are ways within the method itself of at least lessening if not removing entirely some of the disadvantages.

However part of the issue here as already indicated revolves around what particular tutors see as being the objectives of the Case Method in general and their own sessions in particular. As an illustration, an advantage claimed by some is the lack of emotional involvement in the case - learners have none of the immediate identification with the people performing in the case, as they would have if the case was actually their own real problem. Eliminating this kind of emotional involvement is thought to be productive in terms of focusing on issues of for example functional concern, such as the best way of creating a production inventory.

As will be seen frequently in the conclusions offered below, a central issue here is the extent to which any tutor wishes to give total emphasis to functional content, without reference to other issues which do not contribute in a major way to the discussion of the functional content. To pursue the example of the absence of emotional content as a further illustration, some tutors might feel they neither want to, nor are they equipped to, handle discussion of emotional issues which may be contained or represented which may be represented by participants in the case. "How far do you think John's reaction was due to his organisational position, or to his emotional involvement in the problem, or to a combination of the two". If in addition we go on to suggest the desirability of making use of the case study session itself as an illustration of "emotion in action", it will be seen that even more tutors might find themselves unwilling to engage in such discussion.

Another example can be taken from the alternative comment that the Case Method is very good at developing analytical skills, but maybe only good at developing analytical skills. This latter view, expressed as a disadvantage, could be overcome within the Case Method itself by:

- Clarifying through clear determination of objectives what any particular case or case study session could contribute to generating a wider, larger number of skills.

- Ensuring that attention is given to what may be seen as subsidiary skills developed through the case, insufficiently recognised and commented on by both tutors and learners.

<u>Learning Theory</u>

Kurt Lewin's statement seems to us particularly appropriate here:

"There is nothing so practical as a good theory".

Our view about the issue of the relevance of learning theory to the Case Method is that it has at least three aspects:

- Whether any theory, though both good and practical, has any substantial claim on the attention of most tutors.

- Whether there is a theory, or a number of theories which meet the definition of being good and practical.

- Why, if good and practical theories already exist, they are not apparently widely recognised and used.

We have posed the first question in terms of "most tutors", because of course tutors in terms of either or both their tutorial style and their learning style might not actually want or recognise a need for the support of a theory in their work. However as was suggested in some of our interviews, the place of an appropriate learning theory in using the Case Method is that it would provide a better means of assessing effectiveness and efficiency within the method than would simply an accumulation of views of success or failure in practice.

Our review of the literature and our interviews mutually confirm that 75 years of practice have not led to the development of a new learning theory or to a theory specific to the case explaining why the Case Method works.

Of course the explanation for this may be seen as in the statement "75 years experience". In the colloquial expression, if a thing isn't broken, don't try and fix it. As we showed in the Literature Review, statements in the most substantial book on the case study from Harvard by Barnes Christensen and Hansen seemed to have many of the essential properties of a theory. They contain generalisations, the bases for a course of action and are measurable. It can however be argued that the absence of a Case Method theory is logically justified since the Case Method itself is claimed to rest on the virtues of reiterating practice as a vehicle for learning, rather than on a model or theory.

A good and practical theory of the Case Method would derive from research into what makes the Case Method effective. The issue of whether any existing theory or theories could meet the definition of good and practical, though currently not explicitly or solely

about the Case Method has been partially addressed in our Literature Review. Though there was little reference to the understanding of and application of any of the learning theories mentioned there by our practitioners, our interpretation of the learning theories mentioned in the literature provides a vehicle which could be adopted by practitioners. The most relevant theories we take to be:

- Kolb's learning cycle theory or the Honey and Mumford variant on it.

- Chris Argyris' theories of single and double loop learning, and espoused theory and theory in use.

- Nonaka's theory (or model) of tacit learning.

The third of the issues we raised was why, if good and practical learning theories exist, they are not recognised and used. Our answer to this is that there has been no attention given to the issue of appropriate learning theories either by those institutions which favour the use of case studies, or by significant numbers of people within those institutions. In this particular respect we repeat the comment made earlier that criticisms about weaknesses in the understanding and implementation of case studies could well apply to other methods employed for example in Business Schools or Management Training Centres. Given the centrality of the effectiveness or lack of it of learning processes within such institutions, the absence of major research compared with research conducted on the functions which it is proposed to teach through such institutions continues to be extraordinary.

We have focused so far on theories which are already known within the admittedly small group of tutors who are interested in learning. During our research, other theories were identified. One is especially significant because of the position so far taken in this review of learning theories. The theory of "critical realism" argues that it makes most sense to think of the world as real as being an open system containing elements that have emergent properties when they are combined. This theory supposes that the Case Method, for example, presumes that what management deals with is not a set of phenomena that can be dealt with deductively from specific theory (the predictable closed system) yet no situation is so particular and idiosyncratic that it has no implications for any other - hence the value in studying cases.

Another theory which we expected to be of value in looking at the Case Method is that of "practice/rehearsal". This theory has relevance to the issues particularly of transferability, and could be seen as expressing itself through the statements made to us by tutors who referred to the consistent use of case studies generating case studies skills, but not necessarily skills relevant to later management.

As we have stated earlier, we have selected for more intensive discussion in the literature, and have identified here for conclusive action, theories which are better known and perhaps of more immediate understanding. The "critical realist" and the "practice rehearsal" theories would certainly form a significant part of any further study on the implications and applications of theories.

Individual Learning Preferences

The literature about case studies makes almost no reference to the likelihood of individuals reacting to and learning better or worse from case studies differently, one individual compared with another. Learners are seen as a generalised mass, within which some aberrations occur, with individuals who are unable or unwilling to learn from the way proposed through the Case Method. In our interviews, case study proponents seemed to recognise, perhaps under the influence of our specific question, that there were individuals who learned much less well from case studies. However they seem to regard this as essentially an untreatable condition.

As indicated in the Literature Review, some much more explicit predictions can be made about which individuals are more or less likely, in terms of their preferred learning style preferences to learn well or less well from case studies. The propositions made in Mumford's resource (1997) certainly needs to be tested properly by research. Our conclusion is that even without such research, tutors could progress much further. A rather low key acceptance of the fact of individual differences could be replaced by a more consistent and rigorous search for ways of making at least some elements of the case study method more appropriate to more individuals. To continue to treat learners as an undifferentiated mass is wrong. It is much easier for the tutor to behave in that way, but it is to accept a lower standard of performance in relation to learners than is either desirable or necessary.

Of course one of the issues here is the extent to which tutors recognise in their teaching style their own preferred approaches to learning, and the extent to which they are prepared to modify or add to their preferred styles in order to meet more of the needs of more of the learners with whom they should be engaged.

Skills, Knowledge And Insights

The Literature Review offers considerable coverage on this subject (though not so much on insights).

We have already made some suggestions in relation to objectives and related issues of which skills are helped through case studies.

In this sub-section we propose that while critics of the Case Method have claimed that it over-emphasises analytical skills, and under-emphasises those skills which are required for implementation because implementation is not part of the case study, there are additional skills which could and should be highlighted even within the context of a "classical" case study. Without necessarily going down the route advocated by Chris Argyris it would be possible to highlight and create the conditions for the further development of those skills which are part of classical case study discussion. Our impression from the literature and from discussions with tutors is that opportunities for discussing and creating the conditions for further work on skills such as presentation, influencing others, effective work in a learning group are not treated as significant opportunities within the normal or classical case session. This seems to us a major missed opportunity, one which it would be relatively easy to remedy without tutors adopting a total change of style or stance within the case discussion. It is again an issue partly related to the prime attention given by most tutors to the functional issues within

their case, rather than to the issues of what the case could be additionally designed to achieve.

While we argue that such issues could be discussed even within the classic method of the case and its discussion, there are significant issues about skills which people currently do not learn sufficiently from the case itself. This could be achieved by the kind of development of the Case Method advocated by Argyris, and supported by a few other practitioners. This involves making much greater use of the reality and actuality of the case discussion as an essential part of the learning process. Instead of relying solely on the content of the case as the prime vehicle for learning, the process through which the case is discussed could and should form a major objective. The reality of the situation in which learners have engaged in discussions with each other about the case could form a major vehicle for learning, and more over one which would add to transferability of learning. Instead for example of focusing purely on a discussion about the relationship between a marketing director and a production director in a case, the actual experience of John presenting an argument with which Margaret does not agree in the case discussion, and what occurs between them, could be used much more intensively and successfully than seems to be the situation at the present with many tutors.

We recognise that at present quite a lot of tutors would reject this latter proposition. They would do so in part because they would see their priorities and the expectations of their students as being concerned with the functional content of the case. They may also have a decent and acceptable humility about their capacity to deal with the issues which might well be raised under this kind of approach. Thus the expressions of view that this kind of issue should be dealt with by "the organisation behaviour people". However a common expression about what it is implied in this sort of statement is "passing the buck". We believe that more tutors should take advantage of at least some opportunities for these issues - without necessarily causing them to be raised in every session.

Movement into this kind of area would also tackle head on the issues of the lack of objectives about, and developed skills in, implementation. In terms of any of the three major learning theories we have advocated for use, and indeed for the earlier theories of Malcolm Knowles and John Dewey the lack of opportunity for implementation is a major weakness in the case study approach. While as we have commented earlier it is quite possible to fill this gap by introducing in a programme other methods - projects or the full version of action learning or role playing - we believe there are opportunities within the Case Method itself to provide a more rounded experience of learning by causing people to engage in more "implementing" behaviours as part of the case study session itself.

Transferability

We had ambitions when we proposed this project which involved following up learners to see to what extent they seemed to be applying at work lessons they had learned through case studies through educational or training experiences. We had however under-estimated the problems involved in carrying out the necessary longitudinal studies - though we recommend this as a potential more extensive research project for the future.

The extent to which there is transferability from case studies to later working practice is as far as we can tell from the literature a matter of anecdotally based belief rather than

research based evidence. Even in that field, there are some doubts as to whether what is transferred is a method of thinking (the analytical skills argument), or a useful collection of generalisations, or a portfolio of employable techniques.

Some tutors believed that transferability occurred within the programme itself, i.e. that learners learned how to do case studies better as a programme preceded. This opinion however is based on the tutors own judgement of what was happening in their sessions, rather than on any research evidence presented to us. While it seems an entirely plausible argument we felt slightly uneasy about the lack of harder evidence than that presented by tutors who have a belief in the virtues of the case study method, and without wishing to be cynical, a reason for implying that their own tutorial input is effective.

However it is also interesting to note that some critics of the Case Method accept that people learn skills from their early experiences with it which they develop and use later in subsequent case studies. Their criticism is that these skills become too well honed, and too isolated.

Levels Of Learning

Neither our Literature Review nor our interviews with tutors give much depth of evidence on the issues surrounding our questions on single loop or double loop learning, or incremental or transformational learning, in the sense of there being substantiated claims for these being achieved.

If we look at the list of skills produced through the Case Method put in evidence in the literature and by tutors, we see that there are very few which could clearly be attached to higher levels of learning, whether described as transformational or double loop learning. There are certainly problems of definition and understanding about transformational learning in any event. As far as double loop learning is concerned, which requires a planned sequence of events moving from better understanding and knowledge through an identified theory of behaviour to actually changed behaviour, the classic case process does not really allow for this. The classic Case Method provides for different stages of learning but not for learning through direct implementation.

This is one of a series of connected issues about the Case Method where we believe there to be potential for significantly enhanced learning, to be achieved through:

- Explicit change in the statement of objectives for the Case Method in general, and case sessions in particular.

- Explicit change in the conduct of the case session.

- Attention by learners to the opportunities and possibilities involved.

Since we believe those opportunities should be seized in real time, we do not believe that this is an issue or a process which should be delegated to Organisational Behaviour Faculty.

Learning To Learn

Learning to learn is becoming a cliché of government publications, task forces and business school brochures. We have not encountered a generally agreed definition, but offer our own:

> "Learning to learn is a process through which individuals
> (or groups) understand the principles of effective learning,
> and acquire and continuously improve the disciplines and
> skills necessary to achieve learning".

This is not a definition we had developed at the time we were carrying out our interviews, and indeed one of the reasons for producing the definition was that we were asked by some tutors to explain what we meant by the term.

It is clear from the literature and from our discussion with tutors that there is a significantly missed opportunity in converting a phrase into an action. There is currently a somewhat vague assumption, occasionally made more concrete by an assertion, that learning to learn inevitably "happens as a result of a succession of case study sessions". There is no evidence that learning to learn is inevitable or efficiently produced by most case study sessions.

Our definition offers the clue as to what we advocate here. We believe learning to learn ought to be an explicit issue with associated disciplines, and with the experiences through which people go in a case study used to identify issues about how people are learning. Learning to learn is a fundamental requirement for us all, which certainly does not stop with school or under-graduate education. While individuals need to improve their skills of learning in a macro sense, the Case Method provides both opportunity and need in a more micro sense. If learners do not fully comprehend how they are expected to learn within the Case Method, and what their actual learning experiences within it are, it seems unlikely that they have a basis from which to improve their capacity to learn. An individual's overall capacity to learn is surely an over-arching requirement. So explicit structured attention needs to be paid to it in the same way that a course will provide explicit attention to the skills involved in marketing, in motivating staff, in using financial information. The idea that people's understanding of and skills in learning how to learn can be picked up in an informal way, by some process of osmosis represents a lost opportunity for management education and training in general, and certainly for the case study method in particular.

Of course the way in which learning to learn as an issue and a collection of disciplines should be approached needs careful design and implementation. It needs the time and commitment of both tutor and learner. It needs the development of both interest and competence amongst tutors. It means discussion with learners about their expectations - to overcome the problem referred to earlier in this report of learner expectations which focus on functional issues "I came here to learn about operations management not learning to learn".

We are not suggesting that learning to learn needs necessarily to be added to every session of every day on every programme. We believe that this should however be built into the design of every programme, with a clear commitment amongst the tutors on how

responsibility for engaging in learning to learn process will be shared amongst them. As with many of the other issues raised in this report, we would not regard it as satisfactory that the issue should be handed over to Organisational Behaviour tutors to deal with. All tutors could however be asked to commit to the idea of regular learning reviews, perhaps accompanied by some form of learning log as a regular means of encouraging learners to focus on both what they are learning and how they are learning it. The issue of how, and how frequently, the results of such reviews should be discussed and shared is one which could be dealt with in the overall design of the programme.

A crucial responsibility here rests with tutors not only for designing and implementing learning to learn disciplines for learners, but to exemplify through their own behaviour and perhaps occasional revelations that they are themselves carrying through the same disciplines in relation to their own learning. At the practical level, this would be a requirement to sustain the credibility of any learning to learn process offered to learners. At a higher level of challenge, the adoption of such processes by tutors for themselves could be seen as offering potential for improvement in their own learning and the implementation of that learning in their work not just with other learners but in other aspects of their responsibilities.

Turning Tacit Into Explicit Knowledge And Skills

A lot of our discussion with tutors revolved around converting their implicit or tacit beliefs about the Case Method into explicit statements to us. Some of them expressed interest in and approval of this case research project and the topics we proposed to them precisely because it caused them to look at their implicit beliefs about the Case Method and their experiences with it. In a sense their response illustrates something which is more available within the Case Method than is practiced.

The opportunity is available for tutors to assist learners in bringing out more clearly the fact that they are using implicit and tacit knowledge and understanding in responding to the case. This represents their working reality outside the course as well. The case study experience provides the opportunity for, and is sometimes used for, the explicit analysis of the use of implicit beliefs in responding to the case. It can be particularly valuable for individuals to recognise how often their proposed and actual courses of action are dominated by beliefs which are sometimes of long standing but which are not necessarily sustained by substantial evidence. Implicit learning may be revealed in statements such as "everyone knows", or "marketing people always".

While one of the virtues of the Case Method is that it provides opportunities for people to use their past experience in analysing and proposing responses to the case, the method ought also to provide clear means of enabling people to remove inappropriate learning, often buried deep as implicit or tacit learning.

Learning Communities

The case study experience involves:

- Reading by individuals.

- Informal discussion by one individual with another, or several others.

- Formally created discussion in learning groups.

- Plenary discussion.

In all except the first of these, learners are involved with others in creating, understanding, articulating, and sometimes implementing learning. They are involved in learning communities of different size, intention and opportunity. Our research does not show that the opportunities involved in creating effective communities are recognised or implemented. Learning groups certainly provide the opportunity for exchanges on what has been learned and how it is being learned, in a more effective way than might be available in a large plenary discussion of the same kind of issues. Emphasis on this opportunity, together with some guidance on how to make effective use of it, would also bring into play the possibility of more structured and longer discussions on implementation of what has been learned - the issue which is lacking in the classical Case Method, and which at least some tutors are reluctant to bring into play in the plenary case session.

As in an earlier section, the credibility of this process would be enhanced if tutors both participated in relevant ways in discussing learning issues within a community involving learners, but also if they created learning groups for themselves with fellow tutors.

Learning Reviews

A substantial contribution to a more effective way of learning to learn can be made by structured learning reviews. At their simplest level, learning reviews require that tutors should provide opportunities for learners to review:

- What has been learned.

- How it has been learned.

- What learners have learned from both what and how.

- What learners will do as a result of the learning review.

The adoption of a relatively simple structure of this kind would present a manageable 'learning to learn' starting point for most programmes. Additional more sophisticated questions can be added, such as why something has been learned, what the input of a tutor or of other learners has been, how the experience relates to other experiences.

National Culture

There is clearly more experience available than has been written up about the impact of learners from different national cultures on the experience of learning from case studies. We have reviewed some of the comments made by tutors. There is little of substance in the literature. This seems a pre-eminently practical point on which more guidance should be made available.

Gender

As with cultural differences, too little has been recorded on a presence or absence of the impact of gender differences in the Case Method of learning. While it is again true that it is not unique to the Case Method that we are insufficiently knowledgeable about whether women react differently to a particular method of learning as compared with the way men react, we are concerned here with the absence of information in relation to the Case Method. Mumford (1997) reviews what little evidence there is.

An area even less studied is that of whether the gender of the tutor makes a significant difference to the learning of people of the opposite gender. Are for example female tutors operating essentially in the same way with the case study as do male tutors - and is their tutorial process received in the same way by men and women?

Our conclusion is that as with national culture, this is an area of significant interest for future research.

5. How Learning from the Case Method Can be Improved

 Introduction

 The presentation of our ideas on how applications of the Case Method might be improved should be seen in the context of the terms of reference for this research project. We were concerned to look at the learning process, and the extent to which different learning theories might be exemplified in, or implicitly or explicitly articulated through, the Case Method. The suggestions which follow are not another general guide on how to be an effective tutor in the Case Method. They are concerned with one aspect of being an effective tutor - the one which our literature review and interviews confirmed was largely unstudied, and little practised.

 Is Improvement Necessary?

The Case Method, approved by both tutors and learners now for more than 75 years in management studies, clearly has high face validity. The stimulus we had in proposing this research project was partly the suspicion that the attractiveness of the Method, sustained over such a long period of time, may have led to a general lack of interest in asking some questions about it.

 It may also be the case with individuals that their own experience of success and effectiveness in using the Case Method, perhaps for 20 or 30 years, reduces the inclination to spend time reviewing personally an apparently successful process.

It seems to us that questions about the Case Method, and possible improvements within it are exactly those questions which institutions devoted to learning, and individuals employed to assist the learning of others, should encourage.

The justification for the view that improvements in application can and should be made is supported by comments made, and comments not made by our interviewees. It is not simply a case of the two of us writing as experts on learning. The following three comments in different ways illustrate the view of at least some case study practitioners that improvements are possible.

> "One limitation that I am interested in is the extent to which the Cases we write tend to lend themselves to analysis rather than doing."

> " For the future, I want to see the Case Method moving more into the realm of doing, in developing people with these action taking skills." (Professor Louis B. Barnes - 1997).

> "I found this a very testing set of questions - really on issues I have not thought about, but ought to have done." (A participant on the research project).

The first two comments are an implicit recognition of the fact that the learning process has too often been incomplete - the more interesting because it is offered by one of the worlds most experienced case teaching tutors, still capable of identifying improvements.

The third comment, if acted on by case tutors, might produce the kind of results exemplified in the first comment.

Different Strategic Approaches To Improvement

A major aspect of our report has been to identify implicit or explicit theories about the Case Method, and to examine the Case Method in terms of more general learning theories. One approach to improvement is therefore to take learning theories, and suggest how application of the Case Method might be challenged and/or improved through the application of one or more theories.

Another strategic approach is to take a number of practical suggestions on how the learning process in the Case Method might be improved with perhaps subsidiary reference to any relevant learning theory.

In the following sections we start from the first approach - looking at theory. This is logical in the light of the terms of reference for our project. It is not however a requirement for individuals whose initial inclination is to look for practical ideas and suggestions rather than to look at theory. Since after all one of the things we have looked at in the research is the idea of differently preferred approaches to learning (eg Learning Styles), it is appropriate to suggest that if individuals feel themselves more likely to be turned on by practical suggestions, they turn immediately to that later section instead of necessarily going through a theoretical section which will be less attractive.

Can You Improve By Looking At A Theory?

Apart from the issue of whether individuals are more or less disposed to being interested in theory, there is the associated issue of the connection between an interest in theory and the evolution and implementation of good practice. Some of our participants said that the absence of a learning theory either in general in relation to the Case Method or in terms of their own operation of it, was not a matter of concern. These are the individuals who may turn first to the section dealing with more effective practices. We hope that they may perhaps then take up the challenge of looking at theories.

It could be argued that people who claim not to have a theory are really only saying that they do not have an articulated theory. For example, most must surely believe that the Case Method is more than a collection of anecdotes about particular experiences. They must presumably add up to something of more general application. The implicit theory is that a collection of cases on a programme does produce synergy - the totality being greater than the parts. Of course the word is a cause of irritation to some, who nonetheless propose models and structures of interactions and behaviours which they would avoid describing as theories.

Kurt Lewin's statement given earlier has been used as our standard both in earlier sections of this report and in the comments which follow:

"There is nothing so practical as a good theory."

As an introduction to the following section which looks at the potential applications of learning theories and models, readers might like to respond to the following questions.

The Case Method And My Theory Of Learning

- What are my views/beliefs/theories about how adults learn?

- Do I adhere in my tutorial design and practice to a theory or model of learning?
    -in general?
    -in relation to the Case Method?

- When did I last review:
    - my beliefs about learning in relation to the Case Method in general?
    - my beliefs about learning in relation to use of the Case Method in a
      specific session?

Using Learning Theories And Models

Since the Case Method revolves especially around the use of questioning and analytical techniques by tutors and learners, the suggestions made in this subsection are provided through questions. Two points can be made about the way in which these questions can be used:

- The questions are phrased to be answered by individuals - but there can be collective responses by a complete department or a training or education centre.

- The questions can apply to an individual session, a day, a week or a complete programme.

Some of the questions relate specifically to some of the theories identified in this report. Others are of a less specific nature, while still being related to important concepts about learning.

In considering responses to the following questions, individuals will use, perhaps in some combination, their knowledge of the theories:

- Drawn from previous awareness about the theories.

- Drawn from the summaries of relevant aspects of the theories in this report.

- Drawn from reading or rereading the relevant articles and books (see Literature Review).

Readers may know of and perhaps be attached to other learning theories and could develop similar questions in relation to those theories.

Questions Related To Specific Learning Theories And Models

- What use can be made of past experience (Knowles) or challenging past experience (Argyris).

- In what ways can the Kolb or Honey and Mumford Learning Cycle model be used in the design of the session/programme?

- How far is the session/programme primarily about single loop or double loop learning? (Argyris).

- How far does the session/programme provide for experience in Espoused Theory and contrast it with Theory in Use? (Argyris).

- In what ways does the session/programme recognise and make use of the theory of Defensive Routines? (Argyris), in relation to:
    - the case under review,
    - participation by learners in the case.

- How far does the session/programme design cope with individual preferences about how to learn (Kolb, Honey and Mumford).

- In what ways does the programme enable learners to convert from tacit to explicit knowledge? (Nonaka).

Some readers will experience this list of questions as being formidable, whether looking at a session, or even more the complete programme. The list is intended to convey at least some major possibilities, from which individuals might for example choose aspects of particular relevance to an individual session, or to the particular case, or to the function or content of the session/ programme.

There are additional questions which could be asked, not so directly related to particular theories.

General Questions On Learning Design And Learning To Learn

- What are my preferences about how to learn, as a tutor, as a learner?

- How might these have affected my approach to the design of learning experiences in general, or to a particular learning experience?

- What is my view on the desirability of explicit learning to learn interventions in my sessions?

- What specific provision of time to discuss what has been learned and how it has been learned is to be made:
    - for the programme as a whole,
    - for a particular session.

- What arrangements exist for me to discuss with colleagues:
    - general issues about the learning design,
    - specific learning to learn techniques/interventions.

- What is my view on the desirability of structured sessions to explain learning to learn?

- What is my view of the relative suitability of the Case Method for the development of knowledge, of skills, of insight?

- What is the contribution to knowledge, skills, insight of a particular session on a particular case?

- What proportion is devoted, to which stage of the Learning Cycle:
  - for this day/week/programme,
  - for a particular session.

- What possibilities are there for increasing understanding of, and practice in, the conversion of tacit learning to explicit learning?

- What opportunities can be created for double loop learning?

- What opportunities exist for facilitating transfer of learning:
  - to later sessions in the same content or functional area,
  - to later sessions in other areas of the programme,
  - to work situations.

- What resources are available to me on design and learning to learn issues:
  - to assist me as a tutor,
  - to facilitate learners.

Double Value And Learning To Learn

The focus of many case teaching tutors, on the evidence available to us, is primarily on the content of the case. A second factor is approval by self, as well as perhaps peers and students, of personal effectiveness as a tutor. This is sometimes accompanied and perhaps supported by achievement of desired educational outcomes, ie: learners pass examinations or other validation processes.

Much less attention is directed at the learning process. Especially in educational institutions, this may be in part because outcomes are not definable in the sense identified above. It is possible to assess whether an individual has produced a good contribution to a discussion on a case, or a good essay. In contrast how do you assess whether an individual has understood and perhaps improved ability to learn?

Our "double benefit" argument is that it is both desirable and possible to pursue learning outcomes which both meet the content demands and opportunities exhibited through the Case Method, but also takes advantage in a way which relatively few seem to do at the moment of the opportunity to develop explicitly the learning skills of participants. We emphasise "explicitly" because of the assumption, sometimes part of a defensive argument, that "Of course participants learn how to learn through case studies" .

The view that the learning process should be explicit in design and implementation by tutors, and in experience by learners, is one which not all tutors will find comfortable or necessary. Some may use the it "happens anyway" kind of argument referred to above. Others will argue again implicitly or explicitly that "my job is to teach Marketing, not to teach people how to learn." so one of the substantial questions raised by this report as a whole, and this section in particular, is one familiar in fact to tutors in business strategy or marketing. "What business are we in?" . The suggestions made below are intended to encourage tutors and indeed institutions to ask themselves this question in relation to whether they wish to encourage through tutorial effort, individuals to obtain both functional content and "learning how to learn" experience and skills from sessions on the programmes they run. In our view, there are opportunities for both to be pursued effectively within a session or sequence of sessions, thus creating the "double value" .

In order to achieve this, tutors need to:

- design sessions and programmes according to whatever principles of learning design they adhere to.

- provide opportunities for learners to understand, and use for their own learning, those principles.

Designers and learners both need to understand explicitly and work to the idea of "learning to learn" . We offer the following definition:

> "Learning to learn is a process through which individuals (or groups) understand the principles of effective learning and the disciplines and skills necessary to achieve learning."

Some Useful Practices On Learning Process And Learning To Learn

One way of identifying useful practices, which would of course be especially appropriate in a discussion of the Case Method, would be to present a series of case studies, each illustrating one or more aspects of useful practices which could be incorporated in order to bring about more effective learning design, and implement useful learning to learn practices. To do so would be to extend this report beyond its manageable length.

However, use could be made of the principle behind this idea by individuals reading this report. They could turn to their own case material, or to published collections of cases, and test the application of the suggested practices within those cases. Designers and runners of courses on the Case Method could use the same approach.

Some Ideas For Action

We have largely operated so far by posing a series of questions to tutors and institutions, on the grounds that this style will be particularly suitable for readers who will primarily already be experienced case tutors - and for whom a questioning technique is a crucial element in effective Case Method work. There are however a number of ideas, techniques and disciplines which can be suggested directly. Some are drawn from the experience of some participants in the research, some drawn from literature on other methods of development, some generated by the authors of this report. We have avoided

repeating comments about the design of case sessions available in existing literature, but have concentrated on points arising from our research.

Design Of A Case Session

One of the Learning Cycle models (Kolb or Honey and Mumford) can provide a strong discipline for tutors in design and implementation, and for learners in maximising learning. Tutors can design the session by allocating time explicitly to each stage of the Cycle. The Honey and Mumford version is used below.

- How much time for collecting information from participants

- How much time for reaching conclusions?

- How much time for discussing planned actions in the case (still the concluding state within the Case)?

- How much time for planning next steps within the case?

- How much time for 'acting out' those plans?

Of course there is an additional Learning Cycle available to the learner.

- How much time for the learners to look at the actions they have engaged in during the case discussion, and to:
    - Review
    - Conclude
    - Plan next steps

    In relation to what the learner has learned from the case experience.

Integration In Learning

The idea that "learning to learn" should be an accompanying theme to discussion of the content of a case has been a major theme of this report. We identified earlier that some tutors, if they thought the subject worthy of attention at all, thought that it should be left to the Organizational Behaviour tutors. Some functional specialists who saw this as a crucial issue do provide time. (See Learning Reviews below). Even more benefit could be obtained if more tutors took greater responsibility for providing opportunities to discuss and where appropriate prepare action plans on the integration of learning from a particular case with other case experiences, and with other learning experiences. It would be particularly important to generate discussion about how and why people are learning from a case, or a succession of cases so that this self awareness can be transferred to other learning experiences on the programme, and subsequently to learning effectively at work.

Whereas we suggest later that Learning Reviews should be conducted frequently, discussions under this

Integration need not be so frequent. Such a discussion might for example be sensibly placed at the end of succession of cases on a particular subject, or at a break point in the programme.

Useful questions for learners would be:

"How does what you have learned, and how you have learned it, compare with how you have learned from other experiences on this programme, or experience at work?"

"What action might you take as a result of this review of how you have learned from the case study experience?"

A Systems View Of The Case Method

Both in the design of the case session, and in discussions about the case, it might be helpful for both tutors and learners to be encouraged to take a systems view of what is happening:

- The case itself is one element in an organizational or management system. The participants in the case, and the elements in the case, interact with elements of a larger system not necessarily explicitly discussed in the case itself.

- Interactions before, during and after the case teaching session demonstrate a different kind of systems situation . Those interactions occur between individual learners, perhaps informally, within specially created groups to discuss the case, in a full plenary. Interactions between learners are then stimulated and/or managed by a tutor.

This idea of taking a systems view of case discussions is directly relevant to the argument advanced in this report to take more advantage of the "double value" opportunities for embracing learning to learn in a variety of sessions.

While tutors might benefit from carrying this idea into their design of learning experiences, learners could be helped to understand it. This might be achieved by for example including learning as a systems issue in a session explicitly devoted to "systems thinking" , or "organizational structures" , or "business strategy" . Or it might be achieved within a separate structured learning to learn session. Or it might be included preferably by prior design into any case, of whatever functional content, where recognition of the interaction between different elements in a system was a significant part of potential discussion.

Making Multiple Use Of A Case

The "double value" argument used earlier was directed first at taking advantage of the opportunity of any case discussion to embrace discussion of the learning process. In addition, to the comments made subsequently of gaining extra value through "integration" and "systems thinking" there is the more familiar issue of whether cases are

sometimes seen in too isolated a way as eg a "marketing case", or a "case about discounted cash flow" .

Understandably tutors usually are focused on the particular contribution of a case to their own direct content requirements. While we are not suggesting that all cases should involve discussion of all possible aspects revealed in the case, from a learningpoint of view it would be advantageous if more cases involved some discussion of associated issues. There is risk otherwise that people learn very deeply but on a narrow front about a particular issue. As an example, discussion about a finance case which involves the best location for a warehouse, which does not also at least refer to the human issues involved of moving from one place to another, is missing an opportunity.

It should be emphasised here that we are not suggesting equal balance on all potential issues within a case. We are arguing that at least a significant reference should be made to at least some contiguous issues. Despite the pressures on time felt by many of the tutors in our research, we suggest that the following question would be appropriate in some, not all, case sessions.

> "What other issues/questions/problems would need to be considered in addition to those we have directly addressed so far?"

Using The Reality Of The Case Discussion

Some versions of case discussion embrace the idea of moving from analysis and diagnosis with proposed actions, to acting out the proposed action in the case discussion. The tutorial technique of asking individuals to role play a particular solution is well known. "John, so you are the marketing director and you make the proposal you have just set out for me. Jane, you be the chief executive receiving the proposal."

There are some additional steps that could be taken to increase learning from the direct actions of participants in the case discussion. These include asking participants to review explicitly what they have learned about themselves and about others from this experience (see Learning Reviews below).

A development beyond the "Let's have a role play here", scenario is to bring about a more substantial discussion on the reality and transferability of the experience participants have had in the whole system of the case. Participants could be asked about their experiences in:

- solo preparation for the case

- discussion in pairs or groups.

- discussion in the main plenary session.

Under these headings, participants could be asked:

- "How could this experience be used in the rest of the programme, by yourself and others?"

- "How could this experience be transferred into a work situation?"

A further opportunity exists to extend this last suggestion from reflection about experience, and conclusions drawn from those reflections through the plans of what to do as a result - three stages of the Learning Cycle - into actually carrying out the results of those conclusions and plans into action. (A version of Chris Argyris Double Loop Learning). The Learning Cycle then continues with individuals carrying out the actions which they decided in subsequent case teaching discussions - followed by further review. Participants would then have been involved not just in a useful but isolated single learning experience and a single Learning Cycle, but in a continuous learning process - a Learning Spiral.

Reflection In Action

Some tutors commented to us that although they saw the point of trying to make learning an integrated explicit part of a case teaching session, they suspected a number er of learners might be less than thrilled, or indeed positively object. "I came to this session to learn more about Productivity in Manufacturing; we should do learning in Organizational Behaviour". Since also the kind of processes we have described necessarily involve reflection, they are likely to be at least initially less attractive to people who do not favour that particular kind of learning.

One argument that might usefully be deployed is to create discussion about participants' learning experiences. Most of those learning experiences, even at undergraduate level, will have involved learning from experiences other than those in a school, training centre or university. At managerial level, people learn while managing. It is a dual activity. The learning part of it is of course often unconscious, unstructured, not fully worked out and understood. So the analogy for the case teaching session is that they are being asked to do what they do unconsciously and not so well in working life, consciously and better through the case teaching session. Then of course the discussion points about "Integration", "Using reality of case discussion" come into play as well.

Learning Reviews

Any description of an effective learning process, though the Learning Cycle explicitly emphasises this, involves the conscious and thoughtful acquisition of information, and conclusions as to what that information means. We believe that in addition to any specific sessions which may be included in a programme on learning to learn, which might embrace learning reviews as a topic and a discipline, individual case teaching sessions should similarly be buttressed by learning reviews. In this context, the criteria for an effective learning review include:

- It should be a regular feature for each case teaching session (There might be separate sessions not conducted through a case in which participants gather together learning reviews from a number of sessions).

- The review should be part of the session - not an optional addition to be carried out by participants in their own time.

- For the solo part of the review, a minimum of ten minutes needs to be allowed.

- Learning reviews are more effective if shared, eg with a single colleague - more time would need to be allowed for this.

- The tutor needs to reward the fact of learning reviews having taken place by asking for contributions from individuals about what they have learned and how they have learned it.

- The review needs to be structured, but particularly over longer programmes should be varied in terms of the questions actually posed. As a starting point, in early sessions, questions might include:

  - What was the most important thing you have learned from the case discussion in terms of the content of a case?
  - What did you learn from interactions between your colleagues on the programme?
  - What did you learn from your interactions with the tutor?
  - What conclusions do you draw from what you have learned?
  - What actions will you take as a result of these conclusions?

One variant on timing is to pose the learning review perhaps at the end of a session, to ask participants to think them over - and perhaps discuss in pairs after the session. The crucial point is not to leave it at that, but to give the 10/15 minute discussion time at the beginning of the next session - otherwise some of the participants will opt out.

The learning review is not the same as a summary of the case, delivered by either tutor or participants, where the emphasis is on what the case was about.

Tutors should carry out their own learning reviews on the session. They will need to be careful in deciding how much they decide to share of their learning reviews with participants, and how frequently.

Solo, Group And Plenary Learning

Under earlier headings we have made suggestions which both implicitly and explicitly illustrate the fact that learning in cases occurs within individuals, and between individuals. We have suggested that these learning exchanges are identified, made explicit, used and subsequently acted on by learners.

An important contribution to this process is to take advantage of opportunities within the case process, to discuss the different kinds of learning which may be achieved individually and by sharing - and how this relates to what happens at work.

While all these interactions depend initially on an individual thinking about learning, individuals left on their own to record, understand and plan about their learning will do less, and be less effective than if they are asked to engage in some sharing process. It is a helpful discipline especially for those who are inclined to take an understanding of

learning less seriously, to cause them to participate with others. Individuals asked to do a solo review of their learning may take a chance on not doing it, and hope that they can get away with it in a plenary discussion. A requirement for at least a preliminary discussion, a pair or a group, helps to reduce this risk.

Learning Logs

Many managers keep a record - perhaps a foolscap book, or through a PC - of actions they have undertaken or plan to carry out. For some, this is extended into a conscious review of what has happened, why and what might be done in future. The suggestion that individuals should keep learning logs in relation to what they have learned from a formal programme is now made on many management training and education courses.

There is general advice available on how to keep learning logs available in the management development literature which we will not repeat here. The crucial point is to state firmly that learning logs are a crucial element in learning reviews. Even individuals who dislike both the idea and the practice of formally recording what they have learned in this way, find that recording actually enhances their learning. This is not to say that tutors will not have problems with individual learners - strong Activists in Honey and Mumford Learning Style terms.

In the same way that what are in effect learning logs might not be kept as a separate document, but included in other management records at work, there can be useful debate about how a learning log is to be kept in relation to case teaching sessions. Is the learning log kept as a separate document - perhaps covering the totality of a programme and not just case teaching sessions? Or is it kept in direct association with notes made about the case session? The practical answer is probably that individuals need to make some notes directly related to the case session, which may then be transferred in some form to a more broadly based learning log within the total context of a programme. Again the issue of integrating different kinds of learning from different kinds of experience is one that needs to be recognised, and can be facilitated through learning logs.

Of course, tutors ought to keep their own learning logs.

Coping With Different Learning Styles

Comments have been made earlier in the report about the significance of different preferences about learning held by individuals, and the potential use of either Kolb's Learning Styles Inventory, or the Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Questionnaire, to help tutors and individuals recognise and take action on those differences. Particular actions which could be taken on this include:

- Obtaining completed learning styles results from all participants.

- Using differences in learning styles to spread differences across the creation of subgroups, or pairs. (Pairing a strong Activist and a strong Reflector, for example, can be very enlightening for both).

- Adjusting some elements of either content or delivery to suit a group which has a predominant learning styles preference.

- Relating the tutors own learning style preference to the way in which the session or programme is conducted - and to compare it with those of any group working on a case teaching.

- Identifying possible consistent responses by participants, eg Activists are rather better at making statements in the guise of a question, Reflectors are better at genuinely fact seeking questions.

Converting Tacit Learning Into Explicit Learning

One of the virtues of the Case Method is that it can provide the opportunity to cause people to examine as well as use their past experiences. In one sense case teaching discussion strongly involves people converting their tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge for use in the discussion. This process may have been discussed in a "Learning to Learn" group, outside the particular case session. The case session might be used to provide illumination and depth through an understanding of "what has happened here". It can provide opportunities to test what are in effect superficial translations of tacit knowledge into explicit and challengeable knowledge. Thus tutors can make use of opportunities to test statements such as "everyone knows…." , "in that situation what always happens is ..".

 In addition there may be within the case itself illustrations of solutions created or problems caused by the deployment of tacit knowledge.

Building Learning To Learn Into A Session

The following five headings may be useful in providing a checklist for introducing learning to learn into a case teaching session:

- Make it explicit

- Give it a time slot

- Use the experience itself

- Use some disciplines

- Explicit but integrated

Reviewing Potential Applications

We revert to the question technique to enable readers to assess what they may have gained from reading this section:

- What have I learned about the relevance and/or potential application of any of the theories or models?

- What have I learned from my responses to the specific questions contained in this section?

- What are my main conclusions about how I might prove the overall learning design of a programme, or of a particular case teaching session?

- What have I concluded about the desirability and practicability of making learning to learn a feature of at least some case teaching sessions?

- What have I learned about myself as a tutor and designer?

- What have I learned about myself as a learner?

Action Plan

Tutors, and the institutions of which they are a part, should decide what they are going to do:

- About the report as a whole; is it something to be read and filed, something to be discussed between colleagues?

- Should particular actions be proposed as a result of the discussion?

- What actions are individual tutors going to take on particular suggestions?

As with any managerial action plan, the following elements need to be present:

- The priority items for action

- The sequence for action

- The people involved

- The resources involved

- Measures of achievement

6.   Suggestions for Further Research

The main approach of the research reported here has been to understand the diversity of views and practices underlying case teaching teaching practice, consider how these views and practices can be understood more holistically in terms of more theoretical ideas about learning, and check some of these against some observations of case teaching practice and learner experience.

Our suggestion for further research, against this background, is to concentrate more on the learning experience, process and outcomes for students / learners / participants in the Case Method.

Our original aspiration in this study was, on at least a small scale basis, to investigate learner experience / process / outcome on both a short (at the time of the teaching episode) term and long (months or years later, when the people taught have spend some time in the field of practice for which the case teaching is presumed to be preparing them).

We were relatively successful in drawing some meaningful conclusions from the short term follow up of learners, but found that it was not realistic to expect to be able to trace the influence of specific teaching / learning episodes months or years later. There are however issues that can best be illuminated by longer term follow up, and finding workable approaches to this should be a priority for further research. It would be useful, for example, to explore the relevance of 'practice – rehearsal theory' to the practice of management and the role of the case teaching in preparing for it.   The question is whether management is like performing 'professions' – e.g. music and sport, where the quality and effectiveness of performance at a point in time appears to be strongly influenced by a combination of recent practice/rehearsal and further back (in time) foundational learning/training.

In our preliminary exploration of longer term follow up of Case Method learners it did seem possible to understand their broad-brush attributions of benefit to having being taught by the Case Method. For example it seems likely that former Case Method students could make judgements, after a period of months or years, on the relative benefits in terms of *learning the traditions, institutions and practices of particular industries, learning particular theories, models, approaches,* and *having been through particular character/approach forming episodes, usually highly emotionally charged, at moments of high involvement in case Session debates.*

Within this broad approach we have a number of suggestions for approaches and topics to a further phase of more student / learner centred research:

General

Develop the theory, and, on the basis of this, a precise set of situation – process – outcome hypotheses of a testable nature.

Investigate whether the emerging impact of IT based approaches to presenting and delivering case teaching are enhancing the practical delivery of existing methods or crating the possibility of fundamentally different new approaches.

Short Term Learner Experience / Process / Outcome

Go in complementary depth into the variety of learner experiences in differing contexts and with an approach involving understanding of learner strategies.

The effect of regimes of assessment for qualification awarding purposes on learner strategies and experiences.

Investigate the possibility of comparing the two 'rival' strategies of developing tacit knowledge while keeping it tacit vs. developing it through making it explicit – the difference between the Polanyi and Nonaka perspectives.

Study case learners in terms of learning cycle and learning style, both in terms of the learner backgrounds, strategies and circumstances that shape how they learn, and the consequences of this for process and outcome in case teaching situations.

Long Term Learner Experience / Process / Outcome

Follow up of groups taught *intensively* by the Case Method with a focus on their qualitative approach to work, and in contrast to groups educated by other processes.

Qualitative longitudinal study of part time/post experience students in the work place to investigate any changes in interpretation, analysis, decision making and action taking approach.

Survey broad categories of learning outcome as experienced retrospectively by learners.

Hybrid Short and Long Term Learner Experience / Process / Outcome

Develop and apply operational criteria to test the notion that people 'learn to learn' through the Case Method.

7. Appendices

a) <u>People Interviewed</u>

1. Beta Mannix – Columbia Business School
2. Willie Pietersen – Columbia Business School
3. Schon Beechler – Columbia Business School
4. Mike Felon – Columbia Business School
5. Terry Orr – Teachers' College, Columbia University
6. Bob Bontempo – Columbia Business School
7. David Schmitt – Fairfield University
8. David Kolb – Case Western University
9. Richard Boyatzis – Case Western University
10. Dianna Bilmoria – Case Western University
11. Victoria Marsick - Teachers' College, Columbia University
12. Ray Horton – Columbia Business School
13. Louis By Barnes – Harvard Business School
14. Linda Hill – Harvard Business School
15. Michael Roberts – Harvard Business School
16. Chris Argyris – Harvard Business School
17. Lee Warren – Harvard University
18. Nancy Dixon – George Washington University
19. Elias Carrayannis – George Washington University
20. Burke Jackson - Brigham Young University / Unilever
21. Gordon Wills – International Management Centre
22. Henry Mintzberg – McGill University
23. John Constable – freelance strategy teacher
24. John Stopford – Strategy Group, London Business School
25. Ken Simmonds – London Business School
26. Julian Birkinshaw – London Business School
27. Mitchell Koza – Cranfield School of Management
28. Cliff Bowman - Cranfield School of Management
29. Malcolm McDonald - Cranfield School of Management
30. David Myddelton - Cranfield School of Management
31. Geoff Easton – Lancaster University Management School
32. Luish Arujo - Lancaster University Management School

b) <u>Topics For Discussion In Research Interviews</u>

A.   Interviews with case users and expert informants
Tutors in the sites participating in the research will be interviewed for their reaction to a set of discussion topics, created to meet the intentions of the research.

1. What is your background as a case teacher (how got into it, learnt it etc)?

2. What do you see as the (possibly distinctive) educational objectives/advantages of the Case Method?

3. What is your view on how they work as an educational process?

4. In your view is there an underlying educational/learning theory/philosophy, if so what?

5. What is important in the implementation of the Case Method?

6. Have there been any significant changes in either your use of the Case Method, or its general use, in the recent or more distant past? If so, what, when?

7. Is the learning cycle idea known to you? – Does it make sense? – Is it useful? If so how does it apply to the Case Method?

8. Does the idea that work performance is primarily shaped by long term practice, and particularly more recent practice make sense to you? If so does this make sense of the Case Method?

9. Do you believe that the Case Method has any relation to the development, working with, tacit knowledge – i.e. knowledge that underlies performance but cannot be easily articulated by the person doing it?

10. Anything else interesting/important about the Case Method?

B.   Interviews with tutors - specific
Some tutors would be interviewed further to establish their goals and expectations in relation to a particular case for a specific session. They would then be interviewed after the event, against their perception of what had actually occurred.

Before

1. What specifically are you hoping to achieve in this case study session?

2. What is the situation/context – participants, course context, place in overall programme design?

3. What are the important elements of how you are going to 'play' it?

4. Are there any particular contingencies you anticipate, and plans for dealing with them?

5. Anything else important/interesting about this application?

After

1. How did the session go, compared with your expectations, in terms of what happened and the process of the session?

2. What is your sense of the outcomes in relation to what you intended and expected?

3. Where there any incidents or episodes that you thought were interesting or significant? If so what, why?

4. Anything else?

C.   Discussions with case teaching session participants
       Discussions with participants after case sessions where shaped by what had been observed in the sessions, but in general covered:

   - What the participants felt they had learnt
   - How this had happened for them
   - Their experience of the Case Method in comparison with other methods
   - How they felt it fitted with their approaches to learning
   - The interpresonal dynamics of the case session amongst participants and tutor
   - The assessment process, if any.