



Enriching and Deepening Strategic Management through Case Methodology: A Conceptual Approach

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ARTICLE INFO

Published Online:
01 August 2018

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of case methodology in enhancing and enriching the pedagogy of business policy/strategic management. It advocates the need to intensify the use of case methodology in the teaching and learning of strategic management in tertiary institutions and business schools where the course is tenable. The study adopts a post-positivist approach and employs descriptive and exploratory research design which relies heavily on secondary data and historical orientation. The study stresses that the use of case method based on proxies such as heuristics, simulation and case writing could have positive relationship with deepening and enriching the pedagogy of strategic management in-situ in the classroom context subject, of course, to empirical operationalisation. Specifically using general systems theory, complexity theory and chaos theory to anchor the study highlights the relevance of case methodology to all aspects of strategic management viz: strategic intent, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, strategy evaluation and control as it could assist students as future strategists to develop their competencies to fit answers to practical strategic problems in the future. Therefore, the study likening cases in strategic management to cadaver used for training in medical sciences, strongly recommends that sufficient time be allocated to lecture periods for strategic management to afford learners opportunity to find solutions to real-life strategic problems reported in specific cases. The recommendation lends credence to the hands-on experience students stand to gain with continued practice over time especially by institutions in the developing economies.

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KEYWORDS: General systems theory, complexity theory, chaos theory, heuristics, simulation, case methodology and strategic management.

Introduction

The popular notion that there is no "one best way" in management does not only apply to structuring, leading and managing people in organisations, but also positioning a theoretical and/or conceptual argument which in the process warrants emphasis on some aspects and de-emphasis on others (Barney, 2001). This lends credence to and provides inspiration for the post positivist approach followed in this research paper. Strategic management as a course is a critical stage and turning-point in the life of an average business education student at both undergraduate and graduate levels worldwide. It occupies this pride of place because it is considered a capstone course in the curriculum of business education since its inception in 1911 at Harvard Business School as business policy and had since then evolved, over time to be accorded the present status as strategic management (Kazmi, 2002; Grant, 2008). Over the

years, business policy and strategic management course is taught to final year undergraduate students in tertiary institutions and business schools across the globe. The decision to teach this course during the terminal year of undergraduate programme deliberately underscores the importance attached to strategic management as it encapsulates and integrates the body of knowledge gained from all the major disciplines in the business education programme offered in tertiary institutions and business schools viz: accounting, finance and banking, management, marketing and hospitality management and tourism (Pearce & Robinson, 1991, 2003; Kazmi, 2002; David, 2013). It could safely be described as the centre of gravity and cornerstone programme as far as business education is concerned globally. Critical however to the successful and impactful teaching and learning of strategic management are

the pedagogical tools and lecture periods allocated to it which vary from one institution to another.

Ideally, the methods often adopted in the teaching of the course in other climes especially at Harvard where it originated, were basically both theoretical and quasi-practical using case studies (Kazmi, 2002; Wheelen & Hunger, 2010). The *raison de'être* behind the use of case studies to orchestrate the teaching and learning of strategic management is to help to simulate more or less real-life business problems in the classroom with a view to sharpening the understanding of the learners to learn and discover facts of real-life business problems personally which can best be described as heuristic i.e., learning by doing (Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007; Wheelen & Hunger, 2010; David, 2013). However, available empirical evidence has shown that the ratio of usage to non-usage of case study in the classroom in India stood at 50:50, (Kazmi, 2002). This ratio may not obtain or apply in Nigerian tertiary education context where orientation towards the teaching of the course is fundamentally theoretical in most cases. Urieto (1997) buttresses “the criticism of our educational system often voiced by the private and public sectors is that university graduates entering various areas of business are not adepts at problem-solving.” The lack of application of case methodology to the teaching cum learning of strategic management does somewhat pose great challenge to students. It inhibits the mastery of the practical nitty-gritty of the course for eventual application to solve real-life business problems upon graduation. Here lies the burden and lacuna of this study as vividly captured by Thompson & Strickland (2003, 2007) thus: “a student of business with tact, absorbed many answers he lacked. But on acquiring a job, he said with a sob, ‘how does one fit answer to the fact’.”

Context/Grounding

Strategic management seeks to equip learners and graduates of tertiary institutions and business schools with all-round knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSAs) as well as the right analytical frame of mind preparatory to future and/or current applications to solve myriads of strategic problems and challenges of global dynamics and diversity confronting business organisations on the daily basis (Kazmi, 2002; Grant, 2007). The use of case studies in the course of teaching was supposed to enhance the achievement of this lofty aim as the specific learning outcome (Urieto, 1997; Nkuda, 2018). Incidentally, this is often not the case resulting in wrong solutions being proffered to real-life strategic business problems. The application of case study to the teaching and learning of strategic management could be likened to what obtains in the physical sciences where medics and engineering students are exposed to frequent and rigorous practical sessions which span the course of their programmes. During this formation period, specimens such as cadaver and metals are used to experiment coupled with

practical gains of internship and Students’ Industrial Work Experience Schemes (SIWES) which students are compulsorily made to undertake as the case may be. Extrapolating that analogy to the field of social science and management sciences in particular, it is a well known fact that in the eye of the law, business organisations are contemplated as legal and artificial persons that can sue and/or be sued (Adesanya & Oloyede, 1978; Gower, Cronin, Easson & Charlton, 1979; Nwinee, 2011). Therefore, just as wrong medical diagnosis could lead to wrong prescription and possible death of patients as Nosa Basuaye – A Hematologist and Foremost Stem Cell Transplantologist in Nigeria - speaking on Good Morning Nigeria hosted by (Osador & Umeayo, 2018) linked increase in sickle cell anemia partly to the increase in false laboratory result of patient’s genotype.

Similarly, strategic problems of business organisations to which strategists provide wrong and unviable strategic solutions can as well undermine the survival and growth of the business organisations concerned. This negative scenario and narrative may continue eternally if the students of strategic management as future strategists are not given the right training and preparation to be able to cope with the challenges that lie ahead. Thompson & Strickland (2003, 2007) vividly capture the experience of a fresh and inexperienced graduate of strategic management thus: “A student of business with tact, absorbed many answers he lacked. But on acquiring a job, he said with a sob ‘how does one fit answer to the fact?’ ” Failure to realise this subtle and yet important fact amidst the complexity of business environment might have accounted, in part, for either the outright mortality of some industrial outfits in the past or current decline in industrial production capacity of other business organizations in automobile, textile, aviation, agriculture and manufacturing sectors of Nigerian economy (Reeves, Levin & Ueda, 2016; Ewuzie, 2017; Obi, 2018; Hassan, 2018). As a result, the dismal performance of industrial sector due partially to lack of seasoned human resource in critical areas such as strategic management has contributed to the trail-blazing and unprecedented unemployment rates in the country put at 9.9 % in 2015 (Onuchuku, 2016), 13.9 % in 2016 (Nwinee, 2017) and 18.8% as at the third quarter of 2017 (Anonymous, 2017; Obi, 2018).

It further highlights and explains why the lack of exposure of business students (future strategists) in-situ to real-life business problems which beset business organisations on ongoing bases has caused them to be tagged half-baked and misfit on graduation being unsuitable for and un-fit to discharge their future endeavours. The observed non-usage of case methodology in the teaching and learning of strategic management creates a problem as it fails to stimulate and sharpen the intellectual acuity and mental agility of the students to develop the mindset of thinking-out-of-the box to provide creative and innovative solutions

to organisations’ problems. Urieto (1997) corroborates that they lack analytical ability and are incapable of thinking creatively. This is more so when cognisance is taken of the fact that business entities as systems likened to biological organisms are subject to and constrained or buffeted by the forces of entropy constantly in operation (Grant, 2008). The real challenge, undeniably, remains yet in the ability of strategic managers and prospective strategists (students) to appropriately diagnose business problems as do medical doctors and then proffer viable solutions to safeguard business organizations against entropy and possible collapse under the weight of such problems.

Theoretical Framework

Although as indicated earlier on there was no general theory of strategic management at the outset, the research in the strategic management area had since and over the years, progressed and advanced resulting in some theories such as: profit-making and competition-based theory, the resource-based theory, the survival-based theory, the human resource-based theory, the agency theory, the contingency theory, industry organisation theory, organizational learning theory, dynamic capability theory, strategic choice perspective theory, institution theory etcetera (Raduan, Jegak, Haslinda & Alimin, 2009; Nkuda, 2017). However, the baseline theories used to ground this study include: the general systems theory, complexity and chaos theories as elucidated below:

General Systems Theory:

The general systems theory is intimately and creditably ascribed to Ludwig Von Bertalanffy based on his article published in 1951 on the subject. Together with Miller and Rice, he approximates a business organisation to a biological organism with parts (sub-systems) which work independently and at times, inter-dependently to achieve the overall goal and functioning of the system as a whole (Raduan *et al.*, 2009; Sapru, 2013; Probert, 2014; Nkuda, 2017). This goes to corroborate why Barnard (1938) views business organisations as cooperative social systems. The notion of applying systems theory to business organisations accentuates the fact that a given problem in any part of the system automatically triggers ripple effects on the entire system. This point becomes truer and more palpable when ill-equipped and trained strategists with no prior exposure to real-life business problems via case studies in strategic management make wrong decisions or proffer wrong solutions to strategic problems of business organizations (Thompson & Strickland, 2003). The whole essence of using the case methodology as stated earlier on, is to put learners in the driver’s seat in trying to solve real-life business problems based on the understanding of the systems perspective of business expressible in terms of their sub-systems and chain of mutual interactions among themselves and the operating business environment (Pearce

& Robinson, 1991, 2003; Kazmi, 2002; Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007; Sapru, 2013; David, 2013).

Complexity Theory:

Notably and characteristically, business organizations depending on their respective sizes, ages of development and strategic typology as either prospectors, defenders, analysers, reactors or any combination of these, are complex in nature, Miles & Snow (1978) cited in (Armstrong, 2009; Ivancic, Mencer, Jelenc & Dulcic, 2017). The complex nature of most business organisations causes the decision-making mechanism to become somewhat slow and hampered. Thus, the complexity theory comes to the rescue. Complexity theory was propounded by the founder of Sante Fe Institute, George A. Cowan in New Mexico in the 1980s precisely 1984 (Gare, 2000). It relies and thrives on open systems and stipulates that a few broad principles and directives be developed to guide decentralized decision-making in order to enthrone and promote strategic adaptation in relation to the dynamic and ever-evolving business environment which is always in the state of flux (Aluko, Odugbesan, Gbadamosi & Osuagwu, 2004; Kazmi, 2002; Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007; Grant, 2008; Wheelen & Thomas, 2010; David, 2013). In his review of Niklas Luhman’s book, Probert (2014) describes this process as loose coupling.

Admittedly, the application of simple principles and directives such as: be number 1 or 2 in your industry, achieve six-sigma quality, simplicity of procedures, self-confidence to ensure effective implementation, empowerment of middle and first level managers and provision of performance incentive packages were ingeniously combined and adopted by Jack Welch as the Chief Executive Officer of General Electric at a time. This approach enabled the world’s biggest and most complex business entity to record excellent and superior financial performance (Grant, 2008). This underscores a classic example of the application of complexity theory to complex adaptive systems which exhibit common feature such as: unpredictability and self-organisation, (Kazmi, 2002; Alan Turing (n.d) cited in Oestreicher, 2007; Grant, 2008).

The feature of unpredictability of complex adaptive systems states that although they are bereft of stable equilibria, they however, are driven by exogenous forces which are subject to the operation of power-law distribution of which small changes are capable of triggering both small effects at one time and major consequences at another. While the characteristic of self-organisation likens business organisations to biological organisms such as: bee colonies, shoals of fish, ecosystem, trading in stocks on the stock exchange that are capable of adapting to change in orderly manner without any guide, creating structures and systems depicting identity in intent and sense-making (Madsbjerg & Rasmussen, 2014), relationships, inertia and chaos (Kazmi, 2002; Alan Turing cited in Oestreicher, 2007). The sense of emergent global order introduced and evident in the crowd

behaviour of these biological and economic phenomena underlines the operation of complex adaptive systems (Gare, 2000; Grant, 2008). In order to safeguard business organisations against premature death, the need for strategists to adapt their organizations to the ever-increasing complexity of the environment cannot be over-emphasised (Reeves, Levin & Ueda, 2016).

Chaos Theory:

This theory was advanced by Edward Lorenz of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Mitchell Jay Fiegenbam in 1961 (Kazmi, 2002; Oestreicher, 2007). The theory holds and advances that at the base of any adaptive complex system like business organisations, environment or biological systems lies a set of rules that provide dynamic order to the superficial complexity of the system. The theory takes into account the fact that a business organisation is not a linear system whose mode of operation engenders a simple cause and effect relationship. Rather, it is a complex adaptive system which is dynamic in nature and as such, operates in a non-linear pattern or manner (Kazmi, 2002; Oestreicher, 2007). Hence, chaotic models based on mathematical equations are developed to help explain and interpret the behaviours of non-linear and dynamic systems which as social systems should be maintained at the edge of chaos that is between too much and too little authoritarian control (Oestreicher, 2007). Chaos as a phenomenon cuts across economic, biological, sociological, ecological and

meteorological spectra (Kazmi, 2002). The bottom-line of the chaos theory to strategic management is that given the dynamic nature of environment in which most business organizations operate, it would amount to suicide for any business organisation to remain static. Rather, it is strategically expedient and advisable for business organizations that intend to survive and grow over time, to be less internally focused, but should be much more externally focused to be able to innovate, reinvent on the long-term and adapt to the ever-changing environment (Drucker, 1999; Kazmi, 2002; Bertolini, Duncan & Waldeck, 2015). Over all, cases which convey real-life strategic problems to which these theories may apply should be demonstrated and orchestrated in the classroom setting for the budding students-strategists to come to terms with through learning by doing and thus, garner some modicum of hands-on experience.

Conceptual Framework

The discourse under this sub-head focuses strictly on the concepts that make up the schema depicted below which include: case methodology, case writing, heuristics, simulation, strategic management process, strategic intent, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, strategy evaluation and control as well as the nexus between case methodology and strategic management.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

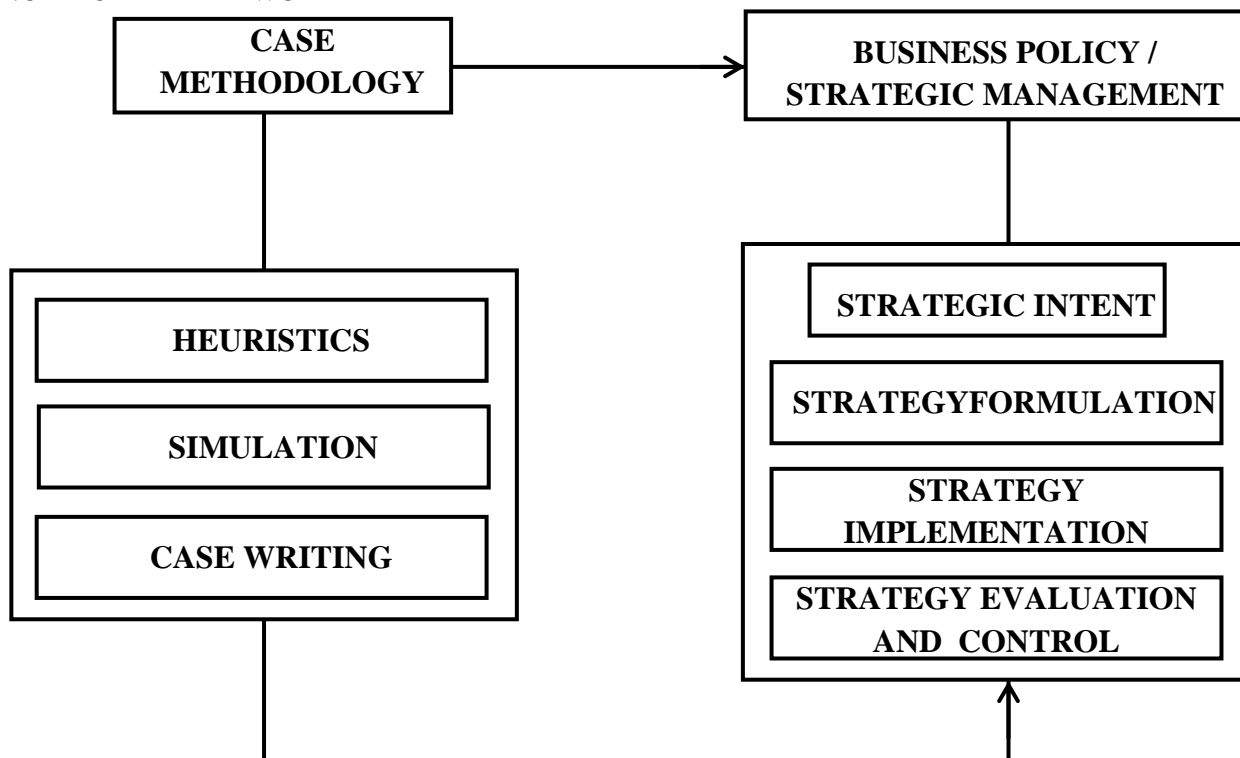


Fig. 1.1- Enriching and deepening strategic management through case methodology

Source: Researcher’s Desk (2018) with insights from Kazmi (2002). Business Policy and Strategic Management, p. 40.

Case Methodology

The notion of case methodology simply connotes the application of case studies or methods in the course of teaching and learning business policy and strategic management. In technical and functional parlance, a case refers to the historical narrative of conditions, events, happenings and experiences of a business organisation at a particular time expressed in terms of facts and figures (Pearce & Robinson, 1991, 2003; Kazmi, 2002; Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007; Wheelen & Thomas, 2010; David, 2013). Historically, the use of case method as a pedagogical tool to teach and learn strategic management dated back to 1871 when it was first used at Harvard Law School and was later in 1911 adopted by Harvard Business School from where it had since become very popular and spread across the world including India Institute of Management in 1962 (Kazmi, 2002). Annually, Harvard Business School publishes approximately 350 cases of which majority focuses on North American companies and only a few of such cases are focused on Europe, Asia and Africa (Azubike, 2018). Recently, a case entitled “Infrastructure in Nigeria: Unlocking Pension Fund Investments” jointly co-authored by John D. Macomber and Pippa Tubman Armerding both of Harvard Business School is the first of such cases from Nigeria and perhaps in Africa (Azubike, 2018). The case borders on Infrastructure Credit Guarantee Company (InfraCredit) set up in 2017 as a scion of a collaboration between Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) and GuarantCo which is a member of Private Infrastructure Development Group (Azubike, 2018). The cardinal aims of strategic management are to prepare and equip students and practitioners alike, among other things, with knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to empower and make them suitable to brace up to strategic problems of industry’s hyper-competition coupled with analysis of diversity and other challenges of business organizations in the future (Pearce & Robinson, 1991, 2003; D’Aveni, 1994; Levinthal & Myatt, 1994; Kazmi, 2002; Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007; David, 2013). The essence of the case methodology therefore is to ensure that these aims are translated into reality in a more practical terms and ways as possible (Pearce Robinson, 1991, 2003; Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007). Saliiently, the case method affords the students the opportunity to be exposed to the conditions that prevailed in the company spotlighted in the case and to recognise the managerial taboos and limitations in directing organisations’ affairs (Kazmi, 2002; Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007).

It helps to practically hone the skills of the students to be able to size up an organisation, analyse its situation and proceed to proffer possible and workable solutions to identified problems of the concerned business organisation. Overall, the application of case study places students on the vantage position to appreciate the complexities of organizational problems, kindle their critical and analytical

skills and interest which altogether, makes the learners to become versatile in tackling organisational problems towards which strategic decisions are usually made (Kazmi, 2002; Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007; Pearce & Robinson, 1991, 2003; Grant, 2008; Wheelen & Hunger, 2010; David, 2013). Urieto (1997) also states that the most important benefit of a case method is the ability to think and to draw inferences based on logical reasoning. Azubike (2018) notes likewise that a case method is “often characterised as the defining pedagogical experience of an HBS education, the case method has been described as ‘a profound educational innovation that presents the greatest challenges confronting leading companies, non-profits and government organisations and places the students in the role of the decision-maker’.” Urieto (1997) confirms that the exposure of students to case method temporarily confers on them the status of business managers. It enables the students to appreciate early the fact that attendant ripple effects or implications associated with strategic decisions could, sometimes, accelerate a phenomenon described as “the race to the bottom” as reflected in the Ivy Business School Case Study tagged “the children’s place Inc., - challenges in Post-Rana Plaza World” (Kazmi, 2002; Subramanian, 2016). The scope of a case could be panoramic touching off on the entire industry profiles, focus on a particular business organisation or a part of a given business concern dealing with a specific problem or several problems spanning a period of time. The information conveyed in a case is both products of historical and environmental analyses bordering on real or hypothetical business entity. The case captures strategic problem(s) which enables the students to sharpen their skills as they attempt to find solutions to the problem(s) show-cased and thereby gain hands-on experience.

Heuristics

The use of case method mostly involves group discussion in the classroom context. This approach offers participating students the opportunity to learn “by doing” and to engage in critical brain-storming sessions based on their respective understanding of the strategic issues and problems outlined or conveyed in the case (Anderson, Sweeney & Williams, 2000; Thompson & Strickland, 2003). In course of the brain-storming process, the learners air their views freely and draw from their reservoir or store of knowledge of business to bear on the identified issues without fear of possible criticisms and above all, are confident to proffer their solution(s) to the problems as frankly as possible and also put up stout defence of their recommendations as the need arises (Stevenson, 1999; Pearce & Robinson, 2003; Anderson, Sweeney & Williams, 2000; Kazmi, 2002). For instance, a case that deals with a company having challenge to minimise cost of transporting finished products from many sources to customers at different locations. A learner would intuitively state the initial optimal solution from

his/her knowledge of business by relating the problem to transportation model and be guided to apply the insights of manipulating transportation model to resolve the problem in question during classroom discussion of the case (Stevenson, 1999). The bottom line is that application of heuristics to case analysis helps in deciding the initial strategic options subject to gradual fine-tuning or tinkering to suit environmental demands and organisation's strategic intent (Grant, 2008). Urieto (1997), David (2013), Schermerhorn (2010) and Thompson & Strickland (2003, 2007) submit that both analysis and intuition (heuristics or good judgement) do enhance and constitute the basis of strategy formulation.

Simulation

The rationale behind the case methodology is principally to bring a real-life business problem to the teaching and learning context especially as it relates to decision making to resolve strategic problems. The simulation technique comes handy to facilitate this process and thus, makes learning interesting and smart as much as possible. According to Anderson, Sweeney & Williams (2000), simulation is a computer-based or driven technique used to model operation of a system using both controllable inputs to generate controllable outputs. Stevenson (1999) views simulation as a descriptive technique which involves the development of a model and conducting experiments on the model to evaluate its behaviour under various conditions. It enables the decision makers to test their solutions on a model that reasonably duplicates a real process especially decision alternatives using what-if approach to ascertain the viability or otherwise of each alternative. A case deals with real-life problems or hypothetical problems that approximate or mimic real-life problems such as: new product development, airline overbooking, inventory management, risks management, waiting lines or queues to mention but a few (Anderson, Sweeney & Williams, 2000). Cases of this nature can be modeled and simulated in the learning context to drive home their practical imports to enable learners to garner hands-on experience

Case Writing

There cannot be a case without case writing in the first place. The presentation of a case could assume either of two forms namely: oral or written. Regardless of whatever form a case may take, paramount importance and premium attention should be placed on the quality of case materials used. This precaution needs to be exercised to avoid a re-enactment of the initial experience in India where very poor quality materials covering limited areas and a few industries were used in preparing cases (Kazmi, 2002). Unlike lectures, adequate preparations are required in analysing case studies.

Business Policy/Strategic Management

The title of this course suggests that it has undergone some degree of transition over time. At inception in 1911 at Harvard Business School, USA, it was known simply as business policy and considered as a compulsory course in the management education curriculum of tertiary and business training institutions across the world (Levinthal & Myatt, 1994; Kazmi, 2002; Wheelen & Hunger, 2010). Based on the reports of both Gordon and Howell in 1959 and Pierson in the same year, the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) in 1969, exercised its statutory and regulatory mandate and made business policy a compulsory course to be enshrined in the management education curriculum in America from where it had since spread to other parts of the world. It became more or less an apex course offered in the terminal year of undergraduate and/or postgraduate programme which affords students opportunity to pull together what they have learnt in the business education generally in order to be able to apply the same to solve complex business problems in the future. Strategic management helps business organisations to create strategies (corporate, business and functional) to pursue and maintain competitive advantage (Grant, 2008; David, 2013; Avila & Preiss, (2015).

The transition of business policy spanned adhoc policy making in the 1930s which featured budgeting and control systems reflected in capital budgeting and management by objectives (MBO). This was followed by long-range planning or strategic planning occasioned by increasing expansion and complexity of business environment. However, the latest development brought in its wake the need to align business organisations with their operating environments to establish strategic fit via strategic choice originated by Alfred Chadler in the 1960s (Kazmi, 2002; McShane & Glinow, 2003). It also ushered in a new era or paradigm shift leading to the birth of strategy as a concept in the 1960s and accordingly, strategic management became the dominant narrative of the traditional business policy in the corporate world since 1980s till date (Kazmi, 2002; Pearce & Robinson, 2003; Grant, 2008; Wheelen & Hunger, 2010; David, 2013; Thomas, n. d.). General Electric which pioneered strategic planning led the transition to strategic management (Wheelen & Hunger, 2010). During this evolutionary sojourn of business policy, there was a noticeable lack of a theory to ground its practice as even the emergence of Von Neumann and Morgestein's theory of games only offered a glimmer of hope (Grant, 2008). The status quo goaded or rather prompted Thompson & Strickland (2003) to state that “approaches and methods of strategic management have not yet coalesced into a theory of how to manage an enterprise but ‘they very definitely do represent a powerful way of thinking to resolve strategic issues’.” Anshen & Guth (1973) eloquently concurred this viewpoint that the “lack of theory and formal analytic techniques requires that at least four basic alternative

research strategies be adopted to improve the research capital of the field.”

Strategic management as a modern and popular coinage for business policy has many definitions and models built by scholars to capture its essential and fundamental tenets. In terms of definitions, Harrison and St. John (1978) cited in (Kazmi, 2002) define strategic management as “the process through which organisations analyse and learn from their internal and external environments, establish strategic direction, create strategies that are intended to help achieve established goals and execute these strategies, all in effort to satisfy key organisational stakeholders.” Strategic management is viewed as a set of managerial decisions and actions that determines the long-run performance of corporation (Wheelen & Hunger, 2010). David (2013) considers strategic management to be the art and science of formulating, implementing and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organisation to achieve its objectives. In the same vein, Pearce & Robinson (1991, 2003) define strategic management as the set of decisions and actions that result in the formulation and implementation of plans designed to achieve a company’s objectives. Hitt, Ireland & Hsskisson (2013) consider strategic management as the actions required for a firm to achieve strategic competitiveness and earn above average return. Yet, Schermerhorn (2010) considers strategic management as a process through which strategies are formulated and implemented.

Based on the strengths and insights garnered from the foregoing definitions, we opt to define strategic management in this study as the process of building a culture of strategic and analytical thinking on ways to resolve organisational problems in order to enhance organisational success in the long-run. With respect however to strategic management model, we are inclined in the face of plethora of strategic management models or frameworks (Grant, 2007) to adopt the strategic model by Kazmi (2002) and Thompson & Strickland (2003). Their model outlined in a simple and straightforward manner, the fundamental concerns or tasks of strategic management as encapsulating: strategic intent, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, strategy evaluation and control around which further discussion in this study would revolve. This model underscores the fact that the major fruit of strategic management is to produce a strategy that can be used to achieve competitive advantage for business organisations (Porter, 1985, 1998; Reed & Defillippi, 1990; Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 2002; Grant, 2008; David, 2013). Given the importance of strategic management to business organisations, it is imperative to give students as future strategists thorough grounding on the nitty-gritty and intricacies of strategic management through exposure to case studies in-situ in the classroom to make them round pegs in round holes upon graduation. A typical and topical example is what Prasanta K. Mishra – M.D/CEO of Delta

Steel and Mines Limited, Warri, Nigeria which acquired the defunct Delta Steel Company in Warri, Delta State, Nigeria in 2015, is currently doing. The firm adopted a combination of backward integration and turn-around strategies to revamp the company (former Delta Steel Limited) into a functional venture in 2018 producing a special grade of steel called BS triple 49 grades with a resolve to stamp the company on the map of profit-making business in the Nigerian steel industry in the nearest future (Hassan, 2018).

Strategic Intent

Strategic intent is one of the major building blocks of strategic management process. Gary Hamel and C. K. Prahalad in their article published in 1989 coined the term strategic intent which signifies an over-arching and compelling leadership position reflected in the aspiration or ambition which a business organisation, regardless of the size of its resources, seek to achieve over time (Gomez-Mejia, 2002; Kazmi, 2002; Thompson & Strickland, 2003; Grant, 2008; Gupta, Gollakota & Srinivasan, 2009; Schermerhorn, 2010). Strategic intent encapsulates vision, mission, business definition, goals and objectives (Kazmi, 2002). This perhaps, explains why some scholars describe strategic intent as the “Big, Hairy, Audacious or Ambitious Goals -BHAG)” (Thompson & Strickland, 2003; Grant, 2008). It constitutes the fulcrum around which all organisational activities revolve and towards the attainment of which both organisational members are aligned and corporate efforts are geared. Besides, strategic intent engenders stretch and leverage on the available resources and thus, creates fresh opportunities for new competitive advantages. Rather than being purely obsessed with endless quest for strategic fit based on prudent resource allocation (Kazmi, 2002; Thompson & Strickland, 2003; Grant, 2008). It brings about and enthrones the gut-spirit founded on “success-against-all-odds” among the ranks and files in the organisation (Grant, 2008).

A few concrete examples of organisations and institutions which exhibit strategic intent exist in America, Europe, Asia and even in Africa. Typically at institutional level, the 35th President of America, John F. Kennedy proclaimed just three months into office that he believed that American nation was capable of committing itself to achieving the goal of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth before a decade ran out (Thompson & Strickland, 2003; Grant, 2008). Precisely six years after his assassination on July, 1969, this gargantuan feat was achieved as Neil Armstrong landed in the moon and with a deep sense of humility mingled with glee, he proclaimed the sublime and immortal words “one small step for a man, a giant leap for mankind” (Grant, 2008). Likewise, the Nigerian government some years ago came up with what is called “Nigeria Vision 2020” strategy by means of which she aspires to become one of the top 20 developed economies in the world by the year 2020 (Radwan &

Pellegrini, 2010). However, the attainment Nigeria’s vision 2020 hangs in the balance as the target year for its realisation is just two years away from now. At corporate level, British Airways desired to be the “world’s favourite airline” and Coca-Cola aspired to “have a coco-cola within the arm’s reach of everyone in the world”, Komatsu –a Japanese road construction equipment manufacturer and a challenger to Caterpillar, had an enviable strategic intent thus: “encircle Caterpillar”, Wal-Mart, a retailing outfit had a strategic intent etched as “overtake Sears” which was the largest retailer and rival to Wal-Mart (Thompson & Strickland, 2003; Grant, 2008). In Nigeria, Dangote Group of Companies and Zenith Bank Plc both indigenous firms which, like a tiny seed that produces sequoia tree – the largest living thing by volume on planet earth (McAfee, 1990), have grown to become global brands driven strictly by their respective strategic intents reflected in their vision and mission statements.

Strategic intent, as stated earlier on, has many seeds viz: vision, mission, business definition, goals and objectives. The vision describes the future which an organisation seeks to create for itself in the long-run. Usually, the vision of an organisation is vividly captured in the organisation’s vision statement. A Japanese proverb (n. d) confirms that “vision without action is a day dream and action without vision is a nightmare.” The mission has to do with the purpose and essence for an organisation’s existence, its products and/or services (product mix), location, identity and target market(s) is also represented in a mission statement. Strictly speaking, the mission constitutes the critical stepping stones with which the vision of an organisation can be realised with the passage of time (Gupta, Gallakota & Srinivasan, 2009). Business definition as the term implies, points partly to the business model of an organisation and specifically, the customer’s groups, customer’s function and alternative technologies (Kazmi, 2002; Thompson & Strickland, 2003).

Goals as opposed to objectives are the long-term aspirations of the organizations usually expressed in qualitative terms. While objectives represent the sum total of attainable ends expressed in terms of targets, results and/or outcomes to be accomplished within a specified time period (Kazmi, 2002; Wheelen & Hunger, 2010). There exists, however, some intricate relationships among vision, mission, goals and objectives. In specific terms, vision is goal-oriented while mission is objective-oriented. Nonetheless, all these components of strategic intent need to be carefully crafted to reflect their respective strategic imports relative to the organisations’ needs and typologies thus: prospectors, analysers, defenders and reactors, Miles & Snow (1978) cited in (Grant, 2008; Armstrong, 2009). This justifies all the more the need to expose students as budding strategists to the practical approaches via case methods to handle this kind of challenges aware that nobody can give what he/she

does not have (*nemo dat quod non habet*) (Adesanya & Oloyede, 1978; Nkuda, 2018)

Strategy Formulation

This is the next major building block in the strategic management continuum. To Hill & Jones (2013) strategy formulation is the process of selecting strategies based on analysis of an organisation’s external and internal environments. Wheelen & Hunger (2010) refer strategy formulation to be the development of long-range plans for the effective management of environmental opportunities and threats in light of corporate strengths and weaknesses (SWOT). Strategy formulation is also considered to be the process through which strategies are created (Schermerhorn, 2010). In this study however, strategy formulation is viewed as the process of articulating and making sense out of the key strategic insights and information obtained from environmental analysis to create a functional strategy. As indicated in almost all of the above definitions, strategy formulation begins with environmental analysis using environmental scanning techniques such as: internal environment evaluation (IEF), external environment evaluation (EEF), competitive profile matrix (CPM), strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), Strategic Position and Action Evaluation (SPACE), Boston Consulting Group (BCG) matrix, the Internal-External (IE) matrix, and the Grand Strategy Matrix and ends with strategic choice based on what is called Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM), (Kazmi, 2002; David, 2013).

The conduct of strategy formulation ideally proceeds in three stages namely: input, matching and decision stages. Depending however, on the kind of environmental scanning approach desired which could be adhoc, systematic or process-form approach, the input stage provides information on the strategic factors relative to the internal and external environments of the firm as well as the competition profile preparatory to be used in crafting strategies (Kazmi, 2002; David, 2013). The information resulting from the input stage is subjected to different environmental scanning techniques namely SWOT, SPACE, BCG, IE and grand strategy matrix to generate strategic alternatives from which appropriate strategic choice could be made after weighting and evaluating each strategic option bearing in mind the cost-benefit implications of each alternative. The strategic alternatives that SWOT analysis provides include: strengths and opportunities match (SO), Weakness and opportunities match (WO), strengths and threats match (ST) and weakness and threats match (WT) from which strategic managers can make informed decision (Avila & Preiss, 2015). This is what (David, 2013) refers to as the matching stage. However, for want of space only the schema of SWOT is illustrated below for clarity and practical application purposes.

SWOT ANALYSIS MODEL

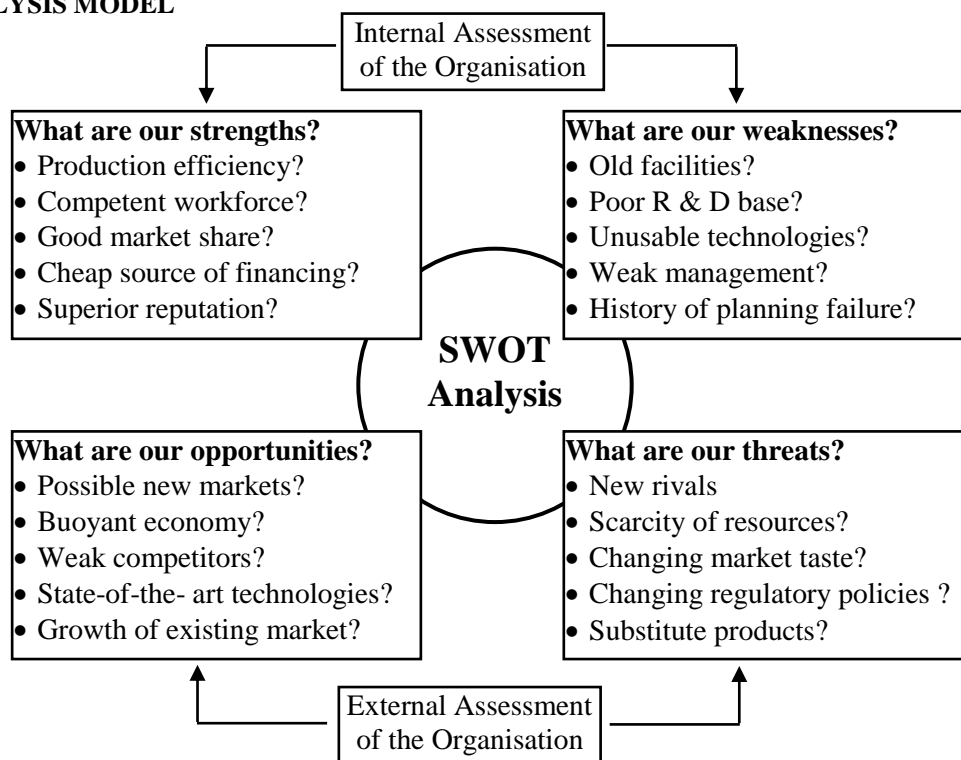


Fig.: 2.1- SWOT Analysis Model

Source: Adapted with modifications from Schermerhorn, J. (2010). *Exploring Management: Explore, inspire*, P.145.

The strategic alternatives range from corporate strategy through business strategy to functional strategy (Porter, 1985, 1998; Johnson & Scholes, 1999; Kazmi, 2002, Pearce & Robinson, 1991, 2003; Fubara, 2004; Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007; Grant, 2008; Wheelen & Hunger, 2010; Schermerhorn, 2010; David, 2013). The corporate strategy which answers the question as to where a firm chooses to compete as usually reflected in strategic plans determines the overall and preferred direction along which available organisational resources should be deployed to achieve the desired objectives (Porter, 1985, 1998; Kazmi, 2002; Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 2002; Grant, 2008). It is referred to as “the task of domain selection” Jay Bourgeois (cited in Grant, 2008). Corporate strategy as sole responsibility of top management (Thompson, 2001; Phipps & Burbach, 2010; David, Paul, Ongeti, Nicholas & Evans, 2012) is of different types and is classified into four broad categories viz: integration strategies made up of forward, backward and horizontal integrations; intensive strategies comprising market penetration, market development and product development; diversification strategies consisting of concentric, conglomerate and horizontal diversifications and other strategies concerned with joint venture, retrenchment, divestiture, liquidation and combination as well as turn-around strategies (Aluko *et al*, 2004; Kazmi, 2002; Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007; Schermerhorn, 2010; David, 2013).

These basic, general or grand strategies provide a variety of strategic alternatives from which strategists can make their choice(s) vis-à-vis the generic strategies which include:

threats of new entrants, bargaining powers of buyers and suppliers, threats of substitute products and threats of competitive rivalry which mark the decision stage according to (Porter ,1985; 1998; Kazmi, 2002; David, 2013). The strategic choice also affects business strategy premised on tactical plans which determines how a firm should compete in its choice industry in order to achieve competitive advantage (Pearce & Robinson, 1991, 2003; Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 2002; Grant, 2008). The generic competitive business strategies normally developed by the middle-level managers involve cost-leadership, product differentiation and focus (Porter, 1985, 1998; Kazmi, 2002; Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007; Grant, 2008; Schermerhorn, 2010, Wheelen & Hunger, 2010). The functional strategy undertaken by functional managers entails the actual execution of both the corporate and business strategies based on the development of relevant operational plans (Pearce & Robinson, 1991, 2003; Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007). To make the strategic choice as a direct outcome of strategy formulation calls for considerable hindsight, heuristic and intuitive judgement as relevant qualitative tools of strategic analysis (Urieto, 1997; Grant, 2008; David, 2013). Exposure of students early to the rigorous process of strategy formulation is imperative to prepare and equip them to become successful strategists in the future.

Strategy Implementation

The notion of strategy implementation presupposes that there is already a strategy formulated and put in place meant

to be implemented. Therefore, strategy implementation as the third phase of the strategic management process involves the actual translation of the strategy formulated into concrete action with a view to actualising organisational set objectives in the short run and goals in the long run (Fubara, 2004; Schermerhorn, 2010). While the strategy formulation is more of a rigorous mental activity, strategy implementation involves both mental and physical exertions and a lot more time-consuming, demanding and energy-sapping (Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007; Rajasekar, 2014; Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008). It is at the point of strategy implementation that a strategy formulated either succeeds or a complete mess is made of a nice and well-crafted strategy (Schermerhorn, 2010). Strategy implementation entails a whole lot issues (soft and hard) ranging from the actors or implementers themselves (executors), activating the strategic actions, strategy formulation, top management, middle management, lower-level management, non-managerial level, communication, implementation tactics, consensus, commitment, structural, behavioural and functional issues (Kazmi, 2002; Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008; Schermerhorn, 2010; Noble, 1999a, Nutt, 1998 cited in Amjad, 2013). These individual factors can also be grouped and considered as a holistic picture in the strategy implementation process (Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008). Besides, certain conditions warrant the failure of strategic planning namely: launching new ventures, fostering innovation and change, management of mergers and acquisition (horizontal integration) and response to environmental dynamics Finkelstein (2003) cited in (Messah & Mucai, n.d). The skills and ability needed to streamline, harmonise and drive these processes to achieve the desired results make strategy implementation to be a very complex activity and process (Kazmi, 2002; Hambrick & Mason, 1984 cited in David *et al*, 2012; Amjad, 2013).

Pursuant to the difficulty and complexity associated with strategy implementation, nearly 90% of new grand strategies could not be communicated and implemented with success to achieve the desired outcomes leaving a paltry implementation success rate of 10%, (Miller, 2002, Ahmadi, Salamzadeh, Daraei & Akbari, 2012; Amjad, 2013; Rajasekar, 2014; Kaplan & Norton (2004) cited in Avila & Preiss, 2015). Part of the causes of implementation failure could be attributed to the disconnect that often exists between strategy formulation and implementation which necessitates forward and backward linkages in implementation process coupled with what this author called ulterior motives of some strategy implementers (Lynch, 1997; Kazmi, 2002; Amjad, 2013). Other related issues include project implementation, procedures and resource allocation to meet the demands of strategy implementation. Equally important and critical to strategy implementation is the issue of structure which, defined as how job tasks are formally divided, grouped and coordinated, immediately or remotely follows strategy for which it is designed to drive

(Lynch, 1997; Alfred Chadler (1962) cited in Kazmi, 2002; Mcshane & Glinow, 2003; Rajasekar, 2014; Robbins, 2005). Rajasekar (2014) in an empirical study on factors affecting strategy implementation rated the idea of structure follows strategy 60% as against structure first, followed by strategy rated 15%. The nature of the operating business environment coupled with the spate of change should influence the type of structure either mechanistic or organic put in place to implement the strategy, Burns & Stalker (1961) cited in (Caves, 1980). The corporate governance structure and organisational systems need to be factored in to ensure effective strategy implementation from the perspective of structure (Kazmi, 2002; Schermerhorn, 2010).

The behavioural dimension of strategy implementation encapsulates the imperatives of strategic leadership, development of strategists in terms of their styles relative to the choice strategy, the corporate culture which, most of the times, is regarded as sacred, corporate politics and the influence of power, strategic values and ethical issues as well as impact of corporate social responsibility on successful strategy implementation (Thompson, 2001; Kazmi, 2002, Flamomholtz & Aksehirlu, 2000; Thompson & Strickland, 2003; Gupta, Gollakota & Srinivasan, 2009; Schermerhorn, 2010; Wheelen and Hunger, 2010, Phipps & Burbach, 2010; David *et al*, 2012; David, 2013; Rajasekar, 2014). Strategic leadership which tests among other things the absorptive capacity, the change capacity and the capacity for managerial wisdom, of corporate leaders plays significant and decisive role in strategy implementation process (Kazmi, 2002; Gupta, Gollakota & Srinivasan, 2009; Phipps & Burbach, 2010). Of a truth, the burden of implementing corporate and business strategies lies and rests on the functional managers who are at the helms of affairs at the functional levels.

The functional areas comprising, as it were, production, finance, marketing, research and development, human resource etcetera depending on the choice organisational structure of individual firms develop their respective operational plans to aid the implementation of their plans vis-à-vis the overall strategy (Kazmi, 2002, Pearce & Robinson, 2003; Wheelen & Hunger, 2010). Success in strategy is never a solo game of the chief executive officer but rather, the responsibility of the whole retinue of personnel across the ranks and files whose hands must be on desk during strategy implementation process (Thompson, 2001). Effective strategic communication is of critical importance in this regard (Li, Guohui & Eppler, 2008; Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Rajasekar, 2014). Students of strategic management stand a better chance to benefit when exposed in the course of their training to cases of firms which fail as a result of poor strategy implementation in addition to being sufficiently aware of the complexity of strategy implementation and the dire need to be well-kitted

and prepared mentally and otherwise for their strategic roles in the future (Thompson, 2001).

Strategy Evaluation and Control

The strategic management process operates in phases. The terminal phase describes the strategy evaluation and control. According to Kazmi (2002) strategy evaluation and control is the process of determining the effectiveness of a given strategy in achieving the organisational objectives and taking corrective action wherever required. Julian & Scifres (2002) view strategic control as involving the monitoring and evaluation of plans, activities and results with a view towards future action, providing a warning signal through diagnosis of data, and triggering appropriate interventions, be they either tactical adjustments or strategic reorientations (cited in Gupta, Gollakota & Srinivasan, 2009). The evaluation and control process ensures that firm achieves what it set out to achieve (Wheelen & Hunger, 2010). We view strategy evaluation and control in this study as the process of applying appropriate qualitative and quantitative metrics or measures to ascertain the extent to which actual corporate performance vis-à-vis set standards has led to the achievement of stated objective(s) in the strategic plan and the need to correct significant deviations from the plan wherever they occur.

It affords the strategists the opportunity to look back to assess how well or otherwise the implementation of a choice strategy has fared in terms of meeting the set corporate objective(s). Hence, Henry Mintzberg (1987) cited in David (2013) declares “while strategy is a word that is usually associated with the future, its link to the past is no less central. Life is lived forward but understood backward. Managers may live strategy in the future, but they

understand it through the past.” Overall, strategy evaluation and control seek to establish the effectiveness of the implemented strategy. Notably strategy evaluation and control operate at two levels in the organisation: strategic and operational levels. Strategic control like a continuous assessment exercise helps to cross-check whether or not the assumptions on the basis of which strategy was formulated are still valid, needed to be rejigged or changed outrightly (Kazmi, 2002; Gupta, Gollakota & Srinivasan, 2010). It incorporates premise control, implementation control, strategic surveillance and strategic alert control. Succinctly, premise control deals with assumptions that guided strategy formulation, implementation control concerns itself with tracking possible challenges associated with implementation of any new strategic initiative, surveillance control monitors a broad range of activities and events within and without the organisation and special alert control provides warning signals that help to create timely response to event that could derail smooth implementation of the formulated strategy (Kazmi, 2002; Gupta, Gollakota & Srinivasan, 2010).

The operational control deals strictly with both qualitative and quantitative metrics to be used in evaluating the performance of strategy in relation to the set objectives. The process involved stating the objectives and performance standards, measuring actual performance using the right metrics, comparing the actual performance to set standards, analysing possible variances and effecting corrective actions as the case may be (Kazmi, 2002; Gupta, Gollakota & Srinivasan, 2010; Wheelen & Hunger, 2010). The schema below provides graphic and vivid information on how the control process takes place:

FEEDBACK CONTROL MECHANISM

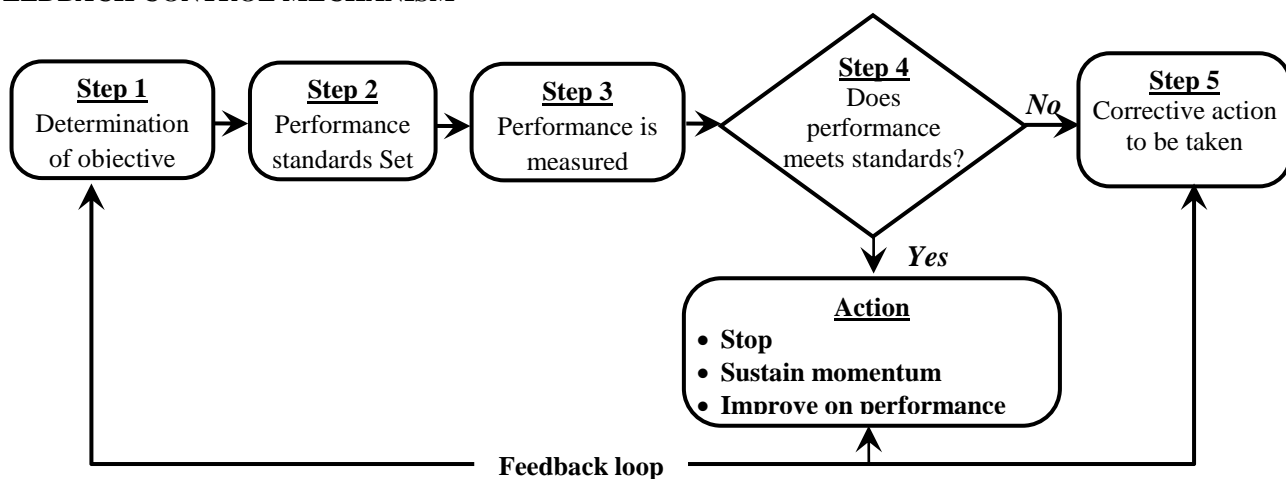


Fig.: 2.2 – Feedback Control Model

Source: Adapted with modifications from Wheelen & Hunger (2010). *Strategic management and business policy*, P. 378.

The operational control as indicated in the above schematics ideally should cover the entire organisation reflecting the specific management areas such as production, marketing,

human resource, finance, information and communication technology (ICT) etcetera in relation to the strategies being implemented. It is a traditional approach as opposed to

contemporary approach which involves analysis of the internal and external environment on a continuous basis to help managers determine whether or not to modify the strategy (Dess, Lumpkin & Taylor, 2004). The qualitative metrics that can be used to evaluate performance of a strategy include consistency, appropriateness and workability (Kazmi, 2002; Dess, Lumpkin & Taylor, 2004). While quantitative measures have to do with financial ratios, stock price, dividend rates, industry average, market share, earnings per share, days lost on account of industrial action, production costs and efficiency, labour turnover etcetera (Kazmi, 2002; Gupta, Gollakota & Srinivasan, 2010).

Better still, the balanced scorecard introduced by David Norton and Robert Kaplan in 1993 which incorporates both qualitative and quantitative measures such as: customers, managers/employees, community service/social responsibility, operations cum processes, business ethics/natural environment and financial ratios can be used (Kaplan & Norton, 2001; David, 2013). The balanced scorecard cures or overcomes the drawback of short-termism associated with the sole pursuit of profitability at the expense of long-term strategic goals of the enterprise. It helps to harmonise and integrates both the financial and strategic goals of the business organisation and Mobil Corporation’s North American Marketing and Refining business (NAM & R) pioneered the use of balanced scorecard after its introduction (Grant, 2008). Finally, the organisational systems put in place play major roles in the evaluation and control process of strategic management. The students need, as it were, to be exposed to critical area of assessing the efficiency and effectiveness with which a given strategy has been implemented.

Nexus between Case Methodology and Business Policy/Strategic Management

In the pedagogy of business policy as it was known at inception in 1911 and later strategic management, the case method played important role. The rationale behind the application of case methodology was to ensure that the learners benefit maximally in-situ in the classroom context from the course in terms of acquiring the requisite skills to analyse, differentiate, speculate and interpret strategic problems (Kazmi, 2002; Dess, Lumpkin & Taylor, 2004; Thompson & Strickland, 2003, 2007). The case methodology incorporates proxies such as heuristics, simulation and case writing. The case writing captures the historical trends, events and conditions of either existing business or an hypothetical business entity for the purpose of exposing the students to come to terms with the strategic problems facing companies all over the world. These strategic problems are mostly captured and treated in the capstone course referred to as strategic management.

The main purpose of strategic management is to ensure that the graduates of the course are well-equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes that can arm and

empower them to fit answers to facts or problems that may crop up in the organisations they may have occasion to work for in the future. To realise this lofty goal, it becomes imperative to incorporate case methodology in the pedagogy of strategic management. It is almost axiomatic that practice makes perfect and nobody can give what he/she does not have. To this end therefore, there is a strong nexus between case methodology with strategic management now and in the future. Hence, a renewed and greater attention needs to be paid to the use of cases in the teaching and learning of strategic management in the classrooms of institutions where the course is offered particularly in the developing economies. All aspects of strategic management ranging from strategic intent, strategy formulation through strategy implementation to strategy evaluation and control require the exposure of students of strategic management as budding strategists to all these aspects via the case methodology. Ambrosini & Bowman (2009) cited in Breznik & Lahovnik (2016) buttress that the use of case studies could better the understanding of how firms can maintain, for example, competitive advantage.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study had to do with exclusive focus, as it were, on secondary data to harp on the need to adopt case method as a major pedagogical tool to the teaching and learning of strategic management especially in the developing countries such as Nigeria. Although a conceptual framework in support of the application of the case methodology to strategic management has been built in this study, it is yet subject to being operationalised.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has demonstrated that strategic management is an important course which serves as the reservoir of skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to be imparted to budding students of strategic management in business education programme at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The *raison d’être* is to arm the students with a cutting-edge skill to craft strategy that can be used to assist their future employers’ organisations to gain competitive advantage. This throws up the dire need to intensify the application of case studies which capture the real-life problems in-situ in the classroom context thereby enabling students to attempt finding practical solutions to such strategic problems. The use of case studies to understand the working of corporate organisations viewed in the eye of the law as artificial persons that can sue and be sued, certainly approximates the cadaver used in medical sciences to train would-be medical doctors and metals used in the training of engineering students. The whole essence of this practice is hinged on the fact that just as wrong diagnosis produces wrong prescription which could lead to the death of innocent patient, similarly wrong solution to strategic problems premised either lack of or poor understanding of the

problem could also trigger the demise of otherwise budding business organizations. Given the complex nature of most organisations, the baseline theories in which this study is grounded include: general systems theory, complexity theory and chaos theory. A conceptual framework which provides heuristics (intuition) and simulation as possible proxies of case methodology was conceptualised subject to future operationalisation. A four-phase model of business policy/strategic management was tersely and incisively discussed. Over all, it was concluded that case methodology is applicable throughout all the phases of strategic management continuum viz: strategic intent, strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation and control. On the strength and plank of this conclusion, it has been recommended that more than ever before, case methodology should be encouraged and sustained in pedagogy of strategic management education so that strategic management graduates at all levels can be able to more efficiently and effectively fit answers to the facts whenever they are confronted with strategic management problems which shape and define the operations of most business organisations in the contemporary corporate world.

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