




Chapter 3

A Reflection on my Journey as a First-Year Bachelor of Accounting Student at UJ

Naphtali Moshe Aphane 

*College of Business and Economics (CBE)
University of Johannesburg 
Johannesburg South Africa*

My name is Naphtali Moshe Aphane, a first-year student studying for a Bachelor of Accounting at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). As a Commerce 100 student, I have done a lot of academic writing that requires extensive research. I have learned a lot of skills from doing research. I have learned how to perform well under pressure. I have learned to think critically about certain problems and solve them without falling short of ethics. Commerce 100 equips us, students, with the necessary knowledge on how to gather, integrate, and spread widely the information that can provide us with a global overview of the business environment in a multicultural context (Hughes, 2024). This module provides students with insight into managing certain crises in the business from a manager's perspective. This is done by reading case studies and solving a problem from a manager's perspective. This work will elaborate more on how those points were achieved.

The task we are given is to assess our knowledge to test if we remember what we have been lectured on. Our lecture tests our knowledge to check if we understand the content. We are then required to apply everything that we learned throughout, through the means of finding any business case study to link it to the theory that we have studied. We then must synthesise all the knowledge we have acquired across the different modules to evaluate a solution for a specific case study by integrating

our knowledge. At the end of the research on the specific topic, we are required to criticise that topic. We are open to giving our point of view on the facts presented. In this way, we are ensured of having been engaged with the content. In the assessments of the forum, we were required to research companies of our choice.

There is a forum that struck my interest. In that forum, we were required to find any example where a business practices any tool and technique that enables control in an organisation. In this research, I was required to research any company of my choice to determine what technique of organisational control that the company uses. I chose Swimming Pool Cover Inc., located in California in the United States, as a company of interest. That company used open-book management to control its staff. They share financial information with their employees to show them how the company is performing. In the forum, I had to explain what open-book management is. To do that, I did in-depth research on open-book management to obtain an idea for my starting point. I started by doing in-depth research on open-book management to ignite ideas. I had to link the theories from our textbook with Swimming Pool Cover, Inc. This research made it easy for me. I also discussed the pros and cons of open-book management.

I approached the forum, sat down with drafted questions, and brainstormed. I wrote everything that I thought would apply to my answer. After answering the question with my knowledge, I then went to the Google Scholars search engine and searched "Open-book management". I used Google Scholar because it provides academic sources. I downloaded three sources that were most relevant to my topic. I read all those documents. They provided me with better insight into what open-book management is all about. However, I was only able to use one document as my reference. I was able to pick what was most relevant to what I was writing about. I referenced all my sources to show my lecture where I obtained the facts I presented in my work. Processing the information that I read and filtering out what I did not need was the most interesting part for me. I realised that other information can be good at

providing me with good knowledge. That information does not contribute to my writing, but it is good for me to broaden my perspectives.

Through this perspective, I can now navigate through the trials and tribulations of the business. I have learned how to use my technical skills from a theoretical perspective to integrate them into research that will solve a problem in a business. For example, there was another forum where we were required to do research where someone was violating a business ethics dilemma. In my research, I found that several companies broke an unwritten rule. One of the companies that acted in an unethical manner was SAP, a German multinational software company. Its subsidiary in South Africa soon accepted kickbacks from Eskom and Transnet to guarantee them a contract.

In my research, it was clear that it is not illegal to receive kickbacks; however, it is not fair to do so in comparison with other companies. Therefore, it is not good to do so. It is a great way of learning ethics through case studies. Dr. Rouse CA (SA) (2024) said sometimes it is weird to say that you are going to teach your students ethics, but it is possible by way of case studies. When we are given case studies where people are engaged in unethical activities, we distinguish wrong from right (Rouse, 2024). We develop a systematic way of behaving ethically. I used to believe that ethics were only taught at home when you are young, but this module changed my whole perspective. Ethics can be taught even when individuals are older.

The other thing that I have learned with this course is to continuously learn. The information is continuously updated. We need to consciously update and refresh our knowledge. I started to have a deep understanding of how to filter important information from massive information. I gradually improved on that by reading many articles and writing essays and reflections. Commerce exposed us to how to research companies in theory and practice. The university also allows tutors to take us step by step and provide us with one-on-one sessions, which enhances our understanding.

This module taught us how to use integrated methods. Earlier this year, our lecturer launched the JSE challenge. The JSE challenge is a gamified challenge in which we are required to invest in listed companies in Johannesburg. It is a teamwork activity; we were allocated to groups of four individuals each. To register with JSE, we were required to pay a fee of R100. We were instructed to fundraise a minimum of R100 through any kind of entrepreneur. We were also instructed in all the phases of development, such as introducing ourselves, brainstorming, managing conflicts, and presenting our financial information in a video clip. This was a nice opportunity to use AI to upskill myself through learning software to create videos to speed up the process of being creative.

We used Word and Microsoft Excel as AI tools to prepare financial statements. I used online courses to learn most of the Microsoft Word and Excel features. Those Microsoft skills were the catalysts for finishing our project on time. I also took an online course in SkillsShare, an online website and an AI tool. The course was on videography. That course also helped me with taking videos for our project, editing and inputting most of the features. I was not perfect on my first try, but it has provided me with a great foundation on how to create effective videos. In addition, I have taken an online course on how to speak in front of the camera. This extra work that I have taken to prepare for this project might seem unnecessary, but it has saved me much time. The time when I engaged with my teammates, it was a lot easier to complete the project since I knew what to do. As I have said, I was not perfect, but I was able to move faster and focus on the core content of the project.

I did a research essay in one of my modules where we were required to research whether it is ethical to use AI in academics. The answer was not whether it was ethical or not; it was whether you used it ethically or not. However, it is not recommended. As a business-minded student, I was keen on learning AI and bringing it into solving problems that we are facing in South Africa, which are poverty, inequality, and unemployment. In most instances, I used AI tools to enhance my learning. I also took an online course at the University of

Johannesburg, named the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which provides insight into AI. The course provides a case study on how China used robots for most services, such as checking stocks that are not in good state and reporting to the manager, where someone must replace that stock.

To date, I have developed the fundamentals of managerial skills. I have developed a sense of what business is all about. I have insight into the corporate world. The study of commerce has exposed me to most corporate trials and tribulations. This module has not only equipped me with technical skills but also with soft skills, both of which are essential for the corporate world. It has taught me how to integrate my studies with the incorporation of AI since we are in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It has not only provided me with the theoretical part of the business but also with the practical side of corporate through a mixture of case studies and projects where I do it solo and engage with my colleagues. Through that, I have learned how to deal with different types of people.

I have learned how to integrate different types of knowledge and information to solve problems. I also learned how to incorporate AI into solving problems. I have experience in how AI can catalyse my effectiveness and efficiency. I have performed better in tackling my academics in terms of fairness, transparency, and integrity. My takeaway from this module is to keep enriching my knowledge and to keep up with the updates on the market to make informed decisions. Also, I learned to know how to communicate with my colleagues (it can either be my employees or employers and customers to improve my services) to obtain as much information as possible.

References

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- Rouse, M. (2024). Ethics. Plagiarism. University of Johannesburg. Unpublished.