

# *Application of the Case Teaching Method in University Classrooms*

Zhihua Feng\*

*School of Physics, Dalian Jiaotong University, Dalian, Liaoning, China*

*fzh@djtu.edu.cn*

*\*Corresponding author*

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**Abstract:** The case teaching method uses real or simulated practical situations as a carrier to integrate abstract theories and fundamental methods of academic courses into concrete problem-solving processes, guiding students toward deep understanding and flexible application of knowledge through analysis and discussion. With the transformation of higher education from a focus on knowledge transmission to an emphasis on ability cultivation and quality improvement, the limitations of single lecture-based teaching models have become increasingly apparent. Owing to its emphasis on contextualization, participation, and practicality, the case teaching method has gradually become an important approach in the reform of university classroom teaching. Based on actual teaching practices in higher education, this paper systematically examines the basic connotations of the case teaching method, analyzes its main characteristics and implementation procedures in university classrooms, and focuses on key issues that require attention during its application, including teacher guidance, classroom interaction, student knowledge construction, and problem-oriented instructional objectives. The study argues that the scientific design of cases and the rational organization of teaching activities are essential guarantees for fully realizing the educational value of the case teaching method and improving classroom teaching quality.

## 1. Introduction

Higher education institutions bear the important responsibility of cultivating high-quality professional talents and innovative talents for society. With continuous economic and social development and industrial upgrading, employers no longer evaluate graduates solely on their mastery of professional knowledge, but increasingly emphasize their abilities to analyze problems, solve practical problems, and comprehensively apply knowledge. Against this background, how to enhance students' practical competence and innovative awareness through classroom teaching reform has become a major concern for university educators <sup>[1]</sup>.

For a long time, lecture-based instruction has occupied a dominant position in university classrooms. This teaching approach has irreplaceable advantages in systematically explaining theoretical knowledge and constructing disciplinary knowledge frameworks, especially in courses

with strong theoretical foundations <sup>[2]</sup>. However, in actual teaching practice, one-way knowledge transmission often places students in a passive learning position, resulting in low classroom participation and insufficient learning initiative, which in turn affects teaching effectiveness. In particular, in courses with strong practical or application-oriented characteristics, students often find it difficult to establish effective connections between theoretical knowledge and real-world problems.

In response to these challenges, the case teaching method has gradually attracted increasing attention from university teachers. By introducing real or simulated practical scenarios, the case teaching method situates course content within concrete problem contexts and guides students to analyze and discuss problems actively <sup>[3,4]</sup>. Through learning by doing and learning by thinking, this method helps bridge the gap between classroom instruction and practical application, enhances students' depth of understanding, and improves their ability to apply knowledge. Therefore, a systematic exploration of the characteristics and implementation of the case teaching method in university classrooms is of significant practical value for promoting teaching reform and improving instructional quality.

## 2. Basic Characteristics of the Case Teaching Method

A defining feature of the case teaching method that distinguishes it from other instructional approaches lies in its use of cases as both the starting point and the core of teaching activities. Cases are not merely supplementary examples but constitute an integral component of instructional content and serve as the primary vehicle for organizing classroom learning. Through the analysis and discussion of cases, students are able to understand and master course knowledge within specific contexts <sup>[5]</sup>.

First, the case teaching method emphasizes a high degree of alignment between cases and course content. Selected cases should closely correspond to instructional objectives and core knowledge points, enabling students to naturally apply relevant theories and methods during case analysis. If the relevance between cases and course content is weak, teaching focus may become blurred and instructional effectiveness compromised. Therefore, teachers must conduct in-depth analyses of course content and clarify the functional role of cases within the teaching process.

Second, the case teaching method stresses the authenticity of contexts and the complexity of problems. Cases with real-world backgrounds or realistic scenarios are more likely to arouse students' interest and engagement. Such cases often involve multiple influencing factors and constraints, which helps cultivate students' abilities to analyze problems systematically. Moreover, problems embedded in real contexts rarely have unique standard answers, thereby encouraging multi-perspective thinking and discussion.

Third, the case teaching method highlights active student participation. Unlike passive listening in traditional lectures, students are required to engage deeply in learning activities through reading case materials, analyzing problems, participating in discussions, and proposing solutions. In this process, students shift from passive recipients of knowledge to active problem explorers, resulting in significantly enhanced learning motivation and classroom participation.

From an instructional organization perspective, the case teaching method typically includes stages such as case presentation, problem analysis, classroom discussion, and summary and refinement. These stages are interrelated and together form a complete teaching process, enabling students to deepen their understanding of course content progressively.

## 3. Key Points for Implementing the Case Teaching Method in University Classrooms

The effective implementation of the case teaching method in university classrooms depends not

only on the quality of the cases themselves, but also on instructional organization, teacher guidance strategies, and the degree of student participation. Compared with traditional lecture-based instruction, case teaching differs markedly in classroom dynamics and teaching rhythm. Without systematic design and scientific implementation, it may easily become superficial and fail to achieve expected outcomes. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze key implementation points from perspectives such as teacher guidance, classroom interaction, student knowledge construction, and problem-oriented instructional objectives.

### **3.1. Emphasizing the Guiding and Facilitating Role of Teachers**

Although the case teaching method emphasizes students' central role in learning, it does not imply a weakening of the teacher's role. On the contrary, in case-based instruction, teachers transform from knowledge transmitters into learning facilitators and process organizers, making their guiding role even more critical. Whether teachers can accurately grasp instructional objectives and provide effective guidance at appropriate moments directly influences the depth and quality of case teaching.

At the case introduction stage, teachers need to clearly present the background, problem context, and basic conditions of the case to help students quickly understand the real situation in which the problem is embedded. This prevents misunderstandings caused by insufficient contextual information. At the same time, teachers should guide students to identify key issues through carefully designed questions, enabling them to develop an initial awareness of the analytical focus before entering discussion.

During case analysis, teachers should avoid providing direct conclusions or standard answers. Instead, they should progressively stimulate students' thinking by highlighting key conditions, decomposing complex problems, and guiding comparisons among different solution approaches. When students' analyses deviate from reasonable directions, teachers should refrain from outright negation and instead use probing questions or supplementary information to help students discover problems on their own. Such gradual guidance helps students develop systematic problem-analysis frameworks and enhances independent thinking abilities.

In addition, teachers should pay attention to individual differences among students. While some students actively participate in discussions, others may remain relatively silent. Through strategies such as targeted questioning and group reporting, teachers can encourage broader participation and ensure that case teaching truly addresses the entire class.

### **3.2. Strengthening Teacher-Student and Student-Student Interaction**

Interactivity is one of the most important features distinguishing the case teaching method from traditional instruction. Through sufficient teacher–student interaction and peer communication, classroom teaching shifts from one-way knowledge transmission to multidirectional information exchange, fostering an active and open learning atmosphere.

In classroom discussions, cases should possess sufficient openness to allow students to propose diverse viewpoints and solution strategies. Teachers may adopt a combination of small-group discussion and whole-class sharing, enabling students to exchange ideas within groups before presenting their conclusions collectively. This approach enhances both participation breadth and discussion depth.

When students express their ideas, teachers should strive to create a supportive and inclusive classroom climate that encourages open expression. For divergent opinions, teachers can guide students to compare perspectives in terms of theoretical foundations, practical conditions, and feasibility, thereby promoting deeper understanding through intellectual exchange.

At the same time, teachers need to appropriately regulate the discussion process to prevent deviation from instructional objectives or superficial debate. Through periodic summarization and commentary, teachers can help students organize discussion outcomes and extract key conclusions, ensuring that interaction effectively serves instructional goals.

### **3.3. Promoting Students' Autonomous Construction of Knowledge Systems**

An essential value of the case teaching method lies in its promotion of students' autonomous construction of knowledge systems within authentic problem contexts. In analyzing and solving case problems, students must continuously activate prior knowledge and integrate new information into existing cognitive structures, thereby achieving knowledge internalization and transfer.

Compared with lecture-centered instruction, case teaching places greater emphasis on the application process of knowledge. When confronted with concrete cases, students must consider which concepts and methods are relevant and how different types of knowledge can be integrated to address the problem. This process helps students understand internal relationships among knowledge points and avoid fragmented learning.

After case discussions, teachers should guide students to reflect on the analytical process, summarize core concepts, fundamental methods, and problem-solving strategies involved, and elevate these experiences to a theoretical level. In this way, students can transform case-specific experiences into transferable knowledge structures that support subsequent learning and practical application.

Furthermore, case teaching can foster students' metacognitive abilities. Through repeated analysis and reflection, students gradually become aware of deficiencies in their knowledge structures, clarify future learning directions, and enhance autonomous learning capacity.

### **3.4. Maintaining a Problem-Oriented Instructional Focus**

The case teaching method should consistently maintain a clear problem-solving orientation. The design and presentation of problems within cases directly determine the focus of instructional activities and the direction of student thinking. Consequently, careful selection and structuring of problems are of critical importance.

Generally, each case should center on one or two core problems that are representative and thought-provoking, guiding students to comprehensively apply learned knowledge. An excessive number of problems may disperse attention and weaken instructional effectiveness.

During the problem-solving process, teachers should guide students through a complete analytical sequence, including clarifying objectives, analyzing constraints, proposing solutions, and comparing the advantages and limitations of different approaches. Through this process, students not only master specific problem-solving techniques but also develop standardized modes of analytical thinking.

In the final stage of case teaching, teachers should organize reflection on both the problem-solving process and outcomes, encouraging students to consider the applicability and limitations of proposed solutions in different contexts. Through continuous reflection and summarization, students deepen their understanding of course content and enhance their ability to analyze complex problems and address real-world challenges.

## **4. Conclusions**

Overall, as an instructional approach emphasizing contextualization and participation, the case teaching method holds significant application value in university classroom teaching. By

embedding course knowledge within concrete case scenarios and guiding students to learn through problem analysis and resolution, this method effectively enhances students' depth of understanding and ability to apply knowledge.

Teaching practice indicates that the effectiveness of the case teaching method is closely related to case design quality and instructional organization. Only by clarifying instructional objectives, scientifically designing case content, rationally organizing classroom discussions, and fully leveraging teachers' guiding roles can the advantages of case teaching be truly realized. In future university teaching practice, it is necessary to flexibly apply and continuously refine the case teaching method in accordance with course characteristics and student needs, thereby continuously improving classroom teaching quality and better serving the talent cultivation goals of higher education.

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