



Case Study

What is Case Study?

Case study is a learning practice that shifts the emphasis from lecture-based activities towards more student-based activities. In general, teaching materials for case study can come from various sources. Teaching materials can be a short journal or news article; they can be a scenario of problem solving and decision making; they can be an open-ended question, a picture or even a diagram. The aim of case study is to help students demonstrate the theoretical concepts in real-life issues. Students can also develop various generic skills, such as decision making and practical skills through the case study. Case study can be practiced either individually or as a group. Students are actively involved in the learning process because they are required to produce solution and arguments for their study. Case study can reinforce the traditional teaching and learning methods because it acts as a bridge between theory and practice.

Structure of Case Study

A case study may consist of the following sections:

- **Objective:** The expected learning outcomes of the case that teachers want their students to develop (e.g. the application to the theory into a scenario).
- **Description of the case:** The way a teacher presents the case. It can be in the forms of diagram, newspaper journals and scenario presented within a short paragraph. Of course, the case may not always be an exact mimic of real-life scenario. It is also possible that the case study is presented with some questions and instructions. Thus, the students can understand what is happening in the case and what they are trying to achieve.
- **Preparation and Analysis:** Some teachers may prefer providing the case study and some related questions to students prior class. Students have to prepare research materials and analyze the piece given in their own time, this will help reduce preparatory work during class time and also provide opportunities for the teacher to give valuable feedback.
- **Discussion:** If case study is practiced as a group activity, students can discuss their analysis and opinions with other group members. Students can be divided into different groups. For example, if the case is about the legislation of statutory minimum wage, then group A can look at the issue from the Government's perspective, group B can look at the issue from employers' perspective, and Group C can look at the issue from the employees' perspective.
- **Presentation:** It refers to the ways students present their opinions and findings. Students may be asked to report their analysis, findings and discussion through short presentation, poster, essay, debate and worksheet.
- **Conclusion:** Students conclude their findings and their views of the case.
- **Feedback:** Once everything is done, teachers can give some feedback on students' performance



Y	Declarative	CHARACTERISTICS
Y	Functioning	
	Take Time to Set	
	Take Time to Answer	
	Take Time to Correct	
	Take Time to provide Feedback	
Y	Suitable for Large Class	
	Can substitute with Computers	
	Passive	
Y	Active	
Y	Process Oriented Method	
Y	Product Oriented Method	

P = Possibly Y =Yes

Advantages of Case Study

- An opportunity to apply the theoretical concepts to a real-life scenario
- Encourage active and group learning
- Develop generic skills such as decision making, problem solving and collaboration skills
- The mimic of real-life scenario may enhance students' engagement to the subject
- Stimulate students to carry out independent research outside of the classroom
- Practice time management because students need to discuss and decide how to best carry out the work in class

Disadvantages of Case Study

- Some teachers may be reluctant to change to this new teaching module (prefer talk and chalk approach)
- Time consuming to look for or create a case
- Students may be unfamiliar with this teaching and learning approach, teachers may need to take some time to explain the instructions
- Quieter students may find this approach challenging because they may have to work with other students

How to design a good Case Study Assessment?

1. Decide the topics, objectives, skills and learning outcomes that students will accomplish
2. Create a case that students can apply the theoretical concept, ensure it is actually feasible
3. Make sure the case fit into the context of the subject
4. Decide the case study to be practiced as individual activity or group activity



5. Assign the case to students before class, so that they have to do their research outside the class, or give the case to students in class, so that they can brainstorm ideas in class, or even ask students to look for a case based on their interests
6. Teachers only supervise the in-class activity but do not give too much support or help
7. Provide a few questions for students to do their analysis. This assists and guides students to develop “the best strategy” for problem solving in the case
8. Be aware of the time allocation (such as the time for preparation and discussion)
9. Provide feedback and comments on students’ performance after the activity has been finished
10. Prepare for unexpected outcomes to emerge. As real-life cases are complex and open to different disciplines and opinions, there may be no right or authoritative answer in some scenarios, students may give answers that are innovative and out of the course context.
11. Invite people from related industries to supervise the activity. For example, if the case is about safety crisis of a nuclear plant, teachers can invite some people from nuclear engineering to supervise the activity and share their first-hand experiences in relation to the case.
12. Make sure to provide guidelines and explanations to students as some of them may be unfamiliar with this teaching and learning approach
13. Clear grading criteria
14. Decide the way students would present their analysis. After students have finished their analysis, they have to share their findings and opinions with other teacher and students. They can present their work in the forms of oral presentation, short summary, poster and even debate with other groups. Teachers have to decide the form of presentation because they assess their students based on those presentation and poster.

Marking Rubrics

As there are many different approaches to practice Case Study, there are different assessment criteria. Teachers have to make sure the learning outcomes are aligned with the case for analysis (e.g. a scenario analysis or diagram analysis). In addition, teachers have to ensure that the grading criteria fit the format chosen for the case. Here is a sample marking rubrics for case study.

MARKING RUBRICS	Excellent	Proficient	Average	Poor
Understand and apply the theory:	Showed a thorough understanding of the theory; able to concisely assess the case to apply the theoretical concept at a deep level	Showed a working understanding of the theory; able to satisfactorily assess the case but applied the theoretical concept at a surface level	Showed basic understanding of the theory; attempted to assess the case and apply the theoretical concept in a very limited level	Showed little understanding of the theory; poorly assessed the case and applied the theoretical concept
Problem solving skills:	Able to suggest and bring out appropriate solutions to the case; many solutions were	Able to bring out some solutions; logical flow was still observed but there was a lack of	Still able to bring out a few solutions on time; logical flow was hardly observed	Failed to bring out any solution to the case; logical flow was not observed



	provided; logical approach to seek for solutions was observed	relevance of the flow		
Creative opinions and solutions:	Able to come up with some innovative opinions; solutions were not those mentioned on textbook and lesson	Attempted to look for a few innovative opinions, some solutions were those not mentioned on textbook and lesson	Attempted to look for any innovative opinions; solutions were those mentioned on textbook and lesson	Failed to show or didn't attempt to give any innovative opinions; ideas were those on textbook
Case analysis:	A deep and critical analysis was made based on a wild range of inter-disciplinary perspectives	A satisfactory analysis was made; showed the attempt to analyze the case from a wild perspective but not deep and critical enough	Analysis was made based on the subject discipline at a surface level	Failed to make an analysis of the case with the context of the subject

Web References and Resources

- Fry, H., Ketteridge, S. and Marshall, S. (1999). *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, Kogan Page, Glasgow, 408.
- Grant, R. (1997). A Claim for the case method in the teaching of geography. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 21, (2), 171-185.
- Mustoe, L. R. & Croft, A. C. (1999). Motivating Engineering Students by Using Modern Case Studies, *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 15, (6), 469-476.
- Raju, P. K. & Sankar C. (1999). Teaching Real-World Issues through Case Studies. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 88, (4), 501-508.
- Teaching Materials Using Case Studies, UK Centre for Materials Education, The Higher Education Academy <http://www.materials.ac.uk/guides/casestudies.asp>

A Case Study Example

Length: 1 hour (one tutorial)

Course: Economics course

Aim: To demonstrate some Economic concepts in the legislation of statutory minimum wage

Assessment: Group work, presentation skills, application of Economic theories

Case description:

An editorial from MingPao (10-11-2009)

Title: Minimum wage should be low

A minimum wage bill is now before the Legislative Council (Legco). The Liberal Party, which represents the business sector, has suggested that the minimum wage should be set at \$24 an hour (about \$5,000 a month), while most trade unions have demanded that it be at least \$33 an hour (about \$7,000 a month). This newspaper reported last Wednesday the government intends it to be near the former initially.



The government's idea is in keeping with the reality in Hong Kong. The higher the minimum wage is, the likelier it will be for the employment market to be distorted and for wage earners to lose their jobs. Therefore, the minimum wage should be low initially. It is necessary to observe how seriously the legislation will impact on the employment market before gradually adjusting it in the light of the actual situation.

As that is a mainstream view and a minimum wage bill has been presented to Legco, it is not realistic for business people (employers) to object to legislating for a minimum wage in principle or refuse to discuss how much the minimum wage should be or how the legislation should be enforced in practice. Employers and unionists should try to make a good job of the legislation and make sure that it will protect poorly-paid workers without considerably increasing unemployment.

If the minimum wage is too high, employers may make little profit, and many employees may become jobless. Even unionists cannot deny society may face such a danger. However, if the minimum wage is excessively low, society will only be exposed to the risk of having an ineffective policy. Poverty may still be a problem, but it would not worsen. And the government could then revise the policy to make it more forceful. Having weighed the pros and cons, we believe the minimum wage should be low initially. That would expose society to lower risk.

Minimum wage legislation is new to Hong Kong. It is unclear how it may impact on the employment market. It is therefore realistic to move forward very cautiously and set the minimum wage low initially lest the market should be seriously distorted.

Instruction:

Students will be divided into three different groups (representing the Government, employers and employees). Each group will be given ten minutes to present their ideas. Then, students will have 30 minutes to discuss the issue of the statutory minimum wage.

To Reference these pages

Copy and paste the text below:

Chan C.(2009) Assessment: Case study, Assessment Resources@HKU, University of Hong Kong
[http://ar.cetl.hku.hk]: Available: Accessed: DATE