

Original Paper

Exploration of the Case Study Teaching Method in Human Resource Management Courses

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Abstract

Human resource management is a course that links theory with practice, which requires students to master a series of knowledge, including recruitment, performance appraisal, salary management, employee relations and so on, and to understand the connotation of these concepts. However, if students only grasp the meaning of these concepts, they can not necessarily apply them in the real work environment. For example, if a student can explain the connotation of recruitment, he may not be able to judge whether the interview process is reasonable. If a student can only remember the definition of performance appraisal, he may not be able to analyze the reasons for employees' dissatisfaction with the appraisal results. In the traditional classroom teaching, the teacher first explains the content of the knowledge, and the students listen to the lecture, take notes and review the content after class. Although this method can help students master the basic knowledge, it can not provide enough opportunities for students to solve practical problems. Case teaching can make up for this deficiency and bring specific situations into the classroom. Students read and analyze the case, put forward their own opinions, and put forward reasonable solutions. In order to make a deeper understanding of the case teaching method, this paper focuses on the analysis of human resource management courses, points out the problems existing in teaching practice, and puts forward suggestions for the improvement of case selection, teaching support and so on.

Keywords

case teaching method, human resource management, teaching effectiveness

1. Introduction

The training of human resource management students is now facing new demands. It is no longer enough for students to remember concepts and basic theories. They also need to handle practical problems, understand workplace situations, and think with some flexibility. Because of this, the old classroom model, in which the teacher mainly lectures and students mainly receive information, shows clear limits. In this course, real business cases and actual management problems can make the classroom more concrete. They can also make students think more seriously about how theory is used. Case teaching has already been used in many places, and its value has been widely recognized. Even so, actual classroom use still shows many weak points. This paper discusses those weak points and then considers how the method may be improved in the teaching of Human Resource Management.

2. Problems in Applying the Case Teaching Method in the Human Resource Management Course

Case teaching is often used because it can bring classroom learning closer to actual work situations. It does not treat theory and practice as two separate parts. Instead, it tries to place them in the same teaching process. But in real teaching, the method is not always used well. Several problems can still be seen.

(1) Some cases are not close enough to real practice, and some are already outdated

One important task of the Human Resource Management course is to help students build professional ability, communication awareness, and a basic sense of cooperation. For that reason, the case used in class should match the course itself and should also reflect practical management situations. In many classrooms, however, teachers still use cases taken directly from textbooks or older materials. Some of these cases no longer fit current realities. Some do not fit the specific teaching topic very well either. In addition, a case may fail to match students' present learning level. When this happens, discussion becomes less effective. There are cases that include too many details and make it hard for students to find the real issue. There are also cases that are too simple, so students have little to analyze.

(2) Classroom discussion is still often controlled by the teacher, and student participation is not strong enough

The main value of case teaching lies in the students' own discussion and judgment. Students are supposed to read the case, think about it, and exchange views with one another. The teacher should not occupy the whole process. But this is not always what happens. In some classes, the teacher still leads nearly everything. The result is that the class looks different in form, yet the inner pattern remains close to the old teaching style. Students answer questions raised by the teacher, and the teacher then explains the "right" direction. Under this pattern, it is difficult for students to become active participants. Their dependence on the teacher remains strong, and discussion rarely goes very far.

This problem is also related to students' own habits. Some students are still used to passive learning. They wait for explanation instead of entering the problem on their own. Some do not prepare before class and therefore have little to say during discussion. Some rely too much on other group members.

There are also students who talk only about the visible facts of a case and do not connect the discussion with theoretical knowledge. Once this happens, case discussion stays at a superficial level and cannot really improve students' ability to analyze and solve problems.

(3) Teachers often lack enough support and motivation in case teaching

Case teaching places higher demands on teachers. It needs time, preparation, and repeated adjustment. A teacher has to choose cases carefully, organize discussion, and think in advance about how the class may unfold. Yet in many schools, the support system for this kind of teaching is still weak. There is often no special unit to help with case collection, teacher training, or classroom design. Much of the work is left to individual teachers. This increases their burden.

Another issue lies in evaluation. In many universities, teaching innovation of this kind does not receive enough weight in performance review or title assessment. Case teaching often takes more effort than ordinary lecturing, but the extra investment may not be reflected in formal recognition. In that situation, teachers may naturally reduce their input.

There is also a practical imbalance between case development and case use. Some teachers have taken part in writing or collecting cases, yet fewer of them use self-developed cases in actual teaching in a stable way. In some cases, the problem is not willingness but lack of familiarity with how case teaching should be organized in class. Teachers also differ in their understanding of the method. Some regard case teaching simply as adding an example after explaining theory, while others understand it as a full teaching process with its own structure and purpose (Xie, 2017). As Felix Oberholzer-Gee has noted, teachers need to know how to use cases before they can develop cases with real practical value (Li et al., 2018). Compared with case writing alone, actual classroom use helps teachers understand the method more directly and also helps them see what kind of case is truly teachable (Fafashahi & Tajeddin, 2018). For that reason, the relationship between case use and case development needs to be handled more clearly in teaching practice (Lyu, 2025). In addition, a lack of special funding also affects the building of local case resources and the training of teachers.

3. Further Adjustments to Case-Based Teaching in the Human Resource Management Course

The above problems make it clear that the role of cases in teaching activities should be analyzed and evaluated objectively, not only to introduce cases after the teacher's explanation, but also to avoid students passive acceptance of knowledge, and to make the classroom appear to change. In the teaching of human resources management, teachers should guide students to use cases as learning materials, analyze the situation, identify problems, compare different views, and use theoretical knowledge to solve problems.

(1) Cases should come closer to actual human resource work

Case selection should follow the teaching content rather than simple interest. An interesting case is not necessarily a useful teaching case. What matters is whether it helps students understand a specific issue in human resource management. Take recruitment as an example. A case should not merely state that a

company has failed to hire suitable employees. It should show where the recruitment problem lies. The job description may be unclear, the interview questions may not match the position, the company may not be attractive enough to applicants, or the final hiring decision may lack reasonable standards. With these details, students can connect the case more directly with the knowledge of recruitment and selection.

The same principle can be applied to other parts of the course. When teaching performance management, cases may focus on unclear appraisal indicators, unfair scoring, weak feedback, or employees distrust of the appraisal results.

When analyzing the case, it is necessary to analyze the problems encountered by the enterprise, such as the lack of clear responsibilities, the repetition of work content, and the conflicts between departments. When analyzing the training module, it is necessary to analyze the reasons for the failure of the training program, and to understand the reasons for the lack of performance improvement. The analysis of such cases is conducive to the understanding of classroom knowledge, which is different from the general management story.

Teachers may also use more recent and local materials. Some textbook cases are still valuable, but some of them are far from students present experience. A case from a local company, an internship, campus recruitment, or a common workplace problem may be easier for students to understand. The case does not have to be large. A small but real problem may lead to a more focused discussion than a long case about a famous company.

A good case should leave room for judgment. If all conclusions are given in the material, students only repeat the answer. If the material is too vague, students do not know where to begin. A better case should provide the background, the people involved, the conflict, and several possible choices. The final judgment should be left to the students. After one round of teaching, teachers can revise the case according to students responses.

School-enterprise cooperation can also provide better materials. Human resource departments often face problems such as new employee turnover, unclear promotion standards, poor training results, and disagreement over performance appraisal. These problems cannot always be used directly because they may involve business information or personal privacy. But after anonymization and rewriting, they can become useful teaching cases. Compared with imagined examples, these cases are closer to actual work.

(2) Classroom tasks should be arranged before discussion begins

In the case discussion, we should find the right starting point. If students only read the case and wait for teachers to ask questions, the classroom will become passive and students will respond passively. We should set specific tasks for students, which can be simple and not difficult, but students should know what they need to do in the process of reading and discussing the case.

Each group should be responsible for different tasks. One group should be responsible for grasping the key problems in the case, and another group should analyze the causes of the problem and clarify the

responsibilities of the relevant personnel. Another group should be responsible for solving the problem, and the remaining group should analyze the feasibility of the solution and the risks that may be encountered. In this way, students will not give the same answer in the discussion, but will analyze the same case from different aspects, and the discussion will be more targeted.

Pre-class preparation is also required. Teachers should organize case teaching activities before teaching, distribute cases to students, and guide students to mark the content they do not understand, put forward questions, and explain them. Although the requirements for students are not high, they can prepare for classroom learning. In this way, when students read the case in class, they will spend a lot of time understanding the basic content, and the discussion in the next stage will not go deep.

Group work also needs simple rules. If there is no arrangement, only a few active students may speak. Each group can have a recorder, a speaker, and a student who raises questions or objections. This can reduce “free riding” and give quieter students a clearer role. The teacher can also change these roles in different classes, so that more students have the chance to speak or summarize.

Role-play may be used when the topic is suitable. In a recruitment case, students can act as interviewer, applicant, and observer. The observer can record whether the questions are clear and whether the interviewer’s judgment is reasonable. In a performance appraisal case, students can act as department manager, employee, and HR officer. The purpose is not to make the class look active. It is to let students feel the difficulty of making a management decision when different interests are involved.

(3) Teachers should guide the process without replacing students’ thinking

The teacher’s guidance should appear at the right time. If the teacher explains too much at the beginning, students may stop thinking by themselves. If the teacher gives almost no guidance, the discussion may lose direction. The teacher therefore needs to observe the class carefully and decide when to speak.

In the discussion, the teacher should not rush to give his opinion, but to observe how the students understand the case and give his opinion. Listen to the students’ opinions carefully and guide them to analyze the case according to the knowledge learned in the classroom. If students only rely on their feelings, teachers should guide them to use the concepts learned in class. If the answers of several groups are similar, teachers should guide students to analyze the reasons for their answers. If students have different opinions, teachers should not make judgments immediately, but encourage students to explain their reasons.

After the discussion, we should summarize it, but we should not give a fixed answer to the students, but to help them find what they have not noticed in the discussion, and to analyze the relationship between the case and the theory in the course. For example, when analyzing a recruitment case, we need to analyze the recruitment channels, the standard of selection, and the analysis of the position. In this way, students can realize that the case is not only used for discussion, but also for understanding the key knowledge.

In the process of classroom teaching, the classroom atmosphere will have a direct impact on the quality

of classroom discussion. Some students are afraid of answering questions incorrectly and dare not speak in class.

Students may first give a rough judgment and then revise it after listening to others. If the class accepts only perfect answers, many students will remain silent. Teachers therefore need to allow trial answers, while helping students correct problems through further questions and final summary.

(4) Teachers need support outside the classroom

Case teaching is difficult to maintain if it depends only on personal enthusiasm. Teachers need to collect materials, rewrite cases, prepare questions, organize discussion, and review the result after class. These tasks all take time. If there is no support from the school, many teachers will find it hard to continue.

Schools can set up a small case teaching group or workshop. It can collect materials, organize trial teaching, and allow teachers to share classroom experience. Teachers can discuss which cases work well, which questions students find difficult, and which classroom arrangements need adjustment. This is more practical than asking every teacher to start from the beginning alone.

In the evaluation system, we should also pay attention to the importance of case teaching. At present, some teachers can spend a lot of time in the classroom activities and case design, but they do not have a strong purpose in this respect, and do not reflect it in teaching evaluation. In this case, if teachers are not required to carry out classroom reform, case teaching and reflection, they will not be willing to invest in this work. Therefore, we should regard case teaching as an important content of teaching, and regard it as an important part of teaching achievement. If the efforts of teachers in classroom teaching and case development can be recognized, the case teaching method can be continuously improved.

Financial support is also an important condition that can not be ignored. In the process of purchasing cases, organizing training, building case databases and so on, we need to invest more money. Although the amount of financial support is not large, it can play an important role. With this support, teachers can collect first-hand materials, revise the case text, organize interviews, and actively participate in case teaching training. With a large number of cases and a rich case resource pool, teachers can share the cases they have developed and use them in their own teaching, which can save a lot of time and gradually improve the quality of case teaching.

In the process of teaching, teachers should repeatedly use the cases and constantly improve them. Some cases look perfect in design, but can not play a role in the classroom, students can not understand the background, can not deal with difficult problems, and can not give a reasonable answer. These problems can not be found before teaching, but can only be found in the process of classroom teaching. After class, teachers should adjust the content of the case, set questions for students, and record the problems encountered by students. After multiple revisions, the case will be more suitable for teaching and student learning.

4. The Value of Case-Based Teaching in the Human Resource Management Course

In the process of teaching human resource management, case teaching is a relatively effective method. This course is not only a series of concepts, but also related to the development of real enterprises. In the process of employee training, recruitment, performance evaluation and so on, it is necessary to make decisions according to specific situations. If students only learn this knowledge from textbooks, they can only understand some concepts, and they can not solve practical problems. The introduction of case teaching can bring these concepts into real situations.

In the process of job analysis, teachers should guide students to understand the definition of this term and make them aware of its value in the process of practical operation. If students can analyze the case, they can understand the concept more deeply. They can feel that if the responsibilities of the two departments are not clear, they will inevitably lead to conflicts, repeated work and poor cooperation, and the case can provide a good practical background for the concept.

In the process of performance management and recruitment, students need to pay attention to the rationality of the description in the job description, whether the interview questions are targeted, and whether the hiring decision is reasonable. In the process of performance management, students need to analyze whether the indicators set are reasonable, whether the scoring process is transparent, and whether the feedback is reasonable. In the process of solving problems, students will not only repeat the content of the textbook, but also analyze the problems encountered in practice with the help of theoretical knowledge.

In the process of case analysis, students can form their own judgment, which is conducive to the cultivation of students practical ability. Usually, human resource management problems can not be answered in one go. Whether it is to formulate a training plan, to give performance scores, to adjust salaries, to transfer employees, and so on, it will produce different consequences and bring different benefits to the enterprise. Students need to make choices from many aspects, analyze the reasons why a certain plan is more reasonable than another, and compare the two plans. It is different from the simple memorization of concepts. Students should be encouraged to analyze the impact of different decisions.

In the process of case analysis, students' communication ability can be continuously enhanced. In group learning, students can express their ideas to others, listen to others' opinions, and defend their ideas. Sometimes, they will change their original ideas because they hear a more reasonable explanation from their classmates. Although these changes are small, they have a positive impact on students. In the process of future development, human resource managers need to have good communication ability, be good at persuasion, be good at explanation, and be good at coordination. Classroom discussion can help students accumulate practical experience in communication.

In the case teaching mode, the way of organizing teaching activities and the way of preparing courses have changed, and teachers can not only prepare slides and organize explanations, but also guide students to analyze the case, analyze the background, and guide students to answer questions in the process of discussion. Although this mode of preparation requires more time, it is conducive to the

realization of teaching objectives. After repeated teaching, teachers can understand the content that students can master quickly and the content that needs to be explained repeatedly.

Overall, case teaching can make the Human Resource Management course more practical and more connected with students future work. It helps students understand theory, apply knowledge, and think about management problems in a more concrete way. Its role is especially clear in chapters that require analysis and decision-making, such as recruitment and selection, performance management, job design, training, and employee relations. At the same time, case teaching should not remain unchanged. Cases need to be updated when workplace situations change, and classroom arrangements should also be adjusted according to students actual responses. Only when cases, students, and teaching goals are connected can this method play a stable role in the course.

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