

Case-Based Teaching Driven by Financial Scenarios: Exploring the Case Method in the Course of Financial Enterprise Management

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Abstract

Students in the course of Financial Enterprise Management generally lack exposure to real financial institutions, which tends to produce a gap between textbook theory and actual management practice. To address this problem, the course team developed a set of teaching cases grounded in authentic scenarios drawn from banking, fund management and securities firms, and organized them into a five-stage implementation sequence, namely theory anchor, case scenario, role immersion, decision output and debrief feedback. Three design principles are distilled from this practice: industry authenticity, theory mapping, and closed-loop output with debrief. Course supervision ratings reached 90 and 98 points in two separate observations, the mean student course evaluation score was 98, and participation in every case-based activity exceeded 80%. Classroom observation further indicates that students moved from rote recall to situational transfer in the decision simulation tasks. Drawing on representative cases including the quantitative fund crisis at Star Fund, the night-shift inspection case and the cross-departmental communication case at Zhitouying, this paper summarizes the design principles and implementation experience of case-based teaching, and discusses limitations such as an underdeveloped case updating mechanism, weak alignment between assessment and case-based output, and uneven student engagement, together with corresponding directions for improvement.

Keywords

Financial Enterprise Management; Case Method; Financial Scenario; Instructional Design; Experiential Teaching.

1. Introduction

The course of Financial Enterprise Management uses the fundamental principles of management as its skeleton and the real operating practice of financial institutions as its substance. Its content spans the core managerial functions of decision-making, organisational design, leadership, human resource management and communication. Two distinctive features characterise this course. The first is a high density of theory: concepts and models range from Simon's principle of satisficing and Fiedler's contingency model to the Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode instrument, and many of them are highly abstract. The second is a strong orientation toward practice: students are preparing for authentic managerial tasks such as credit approval, product issuance, risk disposal and cross-departmental coordination, rather than for textbook answers with a single correct response.

Undergraduate students, however, seldom have internship or work experience in the financial industry, and therefore lack an intuitive grasp of questions such as what a redemption crisis in a quantitative product actually looks like, or why risk control and sales departments are structurally in conflict. In a lecture-centred classroom, students can often recite the seven steps of the rational decision process or the typology of leadership power in an examination, yet they

struggle to apply these frameworks to a management situation that has no standard answer. This produces a knowing-doing gap: the theory is comprehensible but not usable. The case method, which situates learners in authentic or simulated contexts and has them apply theory while making decisions and acting as stakeholders, is a commonly used remedy for this gap. The case method tradition at Harvard Business School, which developed discussion-led classroom teaching, laid the methodological foundation for this approach [1, 2]. Kolb's experiential learning theory supplied the learning-theoretic justification for knowledge acquisition through concrete experience [3], and recent empirical comparisons indicate that the learning gains of case-based teaching are no worse, and in some respects superior, to those of pure lecture instruction [4, 5]. Existing practice has nevertheless exposed persistent problems: generic management cases are disconnected from the financial industry, cases are loosely matched to knowledge points, and student participation remains shallow. Drawing on the author's experience in developing and running cases for the course of Financial Enterprise Management, this paper examines the design principles, implementation path and limitations of case-based teaching oriented towards financial scenarios.

The term case-based teaching is used here in a deliberately broad sense. It includes classroom discussion built around written cases, role-play and decision simulation based on cases, as well as structured analytical tasks built on publicly disclosed materials of real companies. The evidential basis of this discussion consists of the case designs that have already been implemented in the author's classroom together with classroom observation, teaching supervision evaluations, student course evaluations and participation statistics. Because no control class was established, the judgements regarding teaching effectiveness should be read as preliminary conclusions rather than strict proof; this point is addressed honestly in Sections 4 and 5.

2. General Approach to Case Design

The case development of the course team follows three principles.

2.1. Industry Authenticity: Every Case Scenario Must Be Grounded in a Real Financial Setting

Cases in general management textbooks are drawn predominantly from manufacturing and retail industries, so students lack any sense of identification with the organisational structure, regulatory constraints and risk culture of financial institutions. The course team therefore anchors every case in the concrete details of financial business. The quantitative fund crisis case in the decision-making module is built around the failure of quantitative factors that triggered concentrated institutional redemptions, and involves subscription and redemption mechanisms, liquidity risk and reputational risk. The Zhitouying case in the communication module comes from a typical scenario in which a commercial bank's intelligent investment advisory project stalled because of poor cross-departmental coordination. The conflict negotiation case is designed around a common contradiction in practice: the risk control department of a securities firm requires the suspension of a wealth management product with mismatched risk, while the wealth management department objects strongly. The more specific the financial detail, the deeper the student's identification with the role and the clearer the industry constraints that condition the theoretical analysis.

2.2. Theory Mapping: Each Case Serves One Clearly Defined Knowledge Anchor

A case is not a story inserted for decoration; it is a vehicle for applying knowledge. For each case the course team first identifies the theoretical anchor to which it corresponds, and only then designs the plot in reverse, so that the conflict embedded in the case is precisely one that the theoretical framework can address. In the night-shift inspection case, for example, the

manager responds to a subordinate group with prohibition and punishment, exercising only positional authority; this corresponds directly to the distinction between management and leadership and to the knowledge point covering legitimate, reward, coercive and personal influence. The Hongding Financial three directors case presents three parallel dialogues exhibiting autocratic and democratic styles respectively, allowing students to make stylistic judgements before the Lewin findings and the continuum of leadership behaviour are introduced. This one-to-one mapping between case and anchor avoids the common imbalance in which a lively discussion yields no theoretical return.

2.3. Closed-loop Output and Debrief: Every Case Discussion Must Produce Structured Output

One-way case discussion easily degenerates into everyone talking past everyone else. This shares an underlying logic with approaches in conflict management that drive behavioural reflection through measurement instruments, such as the Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode instrument [6]. Every case in the course team therefore carries an explicit output requirement. Decision simulation cases require each group to produce a complete decision plan in the name of a decision committee, presenting problem diagnosis, goal hierarchy, alternative options and an implementation timeline step by step following the rational decision process. Communication cases require students to draft approximately 150 words of spoken language on the spot and to explain which communication barriers the script is designed to overcome. Organizational design cases require students to mark in red, on the Industrial Bank case material, which arrangements reflect designing positions according to the job and which may involve designing positions according to the person. Debriefing must follow the output: student plans are compared against the theoretical framework and the session closes by returning to the knowledge point of the lecture, completing a loop of scenario, decision and theory.

3. Implementation Path and Representative Case Studies

Under these principles the course gradually formed a five-stage implementation path of theory anchor, case scenario, role immersion, decision output and debrief feedback. The following five case studies illustrate how this path operates across different knowledge modules.

3.1. Full-process Decision Simulation: The Quantitative Fund Crisis at Star Fund

Decision-making is the starting point of the managerial function and the first major module of the course. To render the abstract rational decision process operable, the course places a decision simulation, titled Crisis at a Time of Quantitative Crisis, at the climax of the first half of the decision-making unit. A quantitative fund encounters an abrupt shift in market style, suffers widespread factor failure, and faces surging redemption pressure from institutional clients. Groups of students act as a strategic decision committee comprising a chief executive officer, an investment director, a risk officer, a client relations director and a chief technology officer, and are required to analyse the crisis and produce a final decision plan.

The implementation of this case corresponds strictly to the seven steps of the rational decision process, with an explicit output at every step. In the problem diagnosis step, students must distinguish the surface problem, namely factor failure, from deeper problems such as loss of client trust, reputational crisis and latent liquidity risk, training the ability to identify what the real problem is. In the goal clarification step, the case provides a three-tier structure of core, key and safeguard goals, guiding students towards an understanding of securing the bottom line first and pursuing ideals second. In the alternative generation and evaluation step, the case offers three options, A, thorough restructuring, B, holding to commitments, and C, limited communication combined with position reduction, and groups must establish evaluation

criteria before making comparisons. Finally, implementation and supervision require converting the chosen plan into a seven-day implementation timeline and a set of key performance indicators. The defining feature of this case is that case discussion is turned into a full-process rehearsal: students do not observe a case but walk through an entire decision procedure within it. Classroom observation indicates that after the complete simulation, students no longer rely on rote memorization for the seven steps, and in subsequent tests most groups are able to reproduce the key outputs of each step independently.

3.2. Dilemma Cases: Night-shift Inspection and the Three Directors

The knowledge points of the leadership module, namely the distinction between management and leadership, leadership style theory and contingency theory, are easily confused when delivered by lecture alone. The course therefore adopts a dilemma-first, theory-later sequence. The night-shift inspection case describes a department director who discovers that night-shift employees are watching football matches in a private group chat despite repeated prohibition, and who is thus caught between punishment and tolerance. Four progressively deeper questions are then posed: What request will Director Zhang make? Is this effective managerial behaviour? Is the behaviour of the night shift team reasonable? Does Director Zhang act primarily as a manager or as a leader? The subtlety of the case lies in the fact that, during the early part of the discussion, students spontaneously produce plain judgements such as strengthen punishment and top-down imitation, and these judgements are precisely the kind that require the frameworks of power bases and the essential difference between management and leadership in order to be answered systematically. Theory enters at the moment students need it, which works considerably better than presenting theory first and then supplying an illustration.

The Hongding Financial three directors case presents three parallel dialogues exhibiting the behavioural characteristics of autocratic, democratic and other leadership styles, allowing students to make stylistic judgements first and then introducing the Lewin experimental findings and the continuum of leadership behaviour to explain their answers. This phenomenon-first, theory-later ordering is a shared experience across case implementation in this module.

3.3. Real-company Comparative Case: Analysing the Organisational Structure of Industrial Bank

The difficulty of the organisational design module lies in the inability of students to imagine how structure shapes behaviour. The course opens with a situational problem, namely what to do when a bank promotes green finance but its departments each act in isolation, followed by a viewing of publicly available Industrial Bank case video material. Students then take the role of an organisational architect and mark in red which arrangements in the material reflect designing positions according to the job and which may reflect designing positions according to the person, and analyse how the structure safeguards unity of authority and responsibility and unity of command. The defining feature of this case is the combination of a real company and a structured task: the real company material supplies credibility, while the red-pen marking task converts a general invitation to comment into a specific and assessable output. When combined with an instant classroom polling tool, such as Ketangpai or Rain Classroom, both of which are widely used classroom response systems in Chinese universities, whole-class votes on questions of structural fit and strategy-structure correspondence can expose gaps in student understanding for correction on the spot.

3.4. Script Design Cases: Cross-departmental Communication at Zhitouying

The ultimate objective of the communication module is behavioural change rather than mere recall of knowledge. After teaching types of communication barriers and strategies for

overcoming them, the course arranges two rounds of progressively demanding case tasks. The first round is based on the Zhitouying intelligent investment advisory coordination meeting, which ended in an acrimonious departure, and requires students to identify barriers in the dialogue material such as lack of respect and attention, emotional accusation and outright opposition; this round is diagnostic training. The second round shifts perspective and requires students, acting as project leader, to draft approximately 150 words of spoken language on the spot in a situation where the meeting has reached stalemate and the technical manager has left the room, and to explain which barriers the script aims to overcome; this round is intervention training. The securities firm case escalates the conflict-handling segment by requiring students to design a negotiation strategy within forty-eight hours on the basis of an analysis of the sources of conflict, namely communicative, structural and individual differences. This progression from diagnosis to intervention moves communication teaching from knowing what barriers exist towards responding aptly under pressure, and points directly to professional competence.

3.5. Decision Method Training: Embedding Quantitative Tools in Financial Scenarios

The quantitative methods of the lower decision-making unit, including decision trees, expected value analysis and the Boston Consulting Group matrix, are the methods that students find easiest to compute with but hardest to use. The course embeds each class of method in a financial scenario that requires judgement, although a few comprehensive cases retain a diversified enterprise background to accommodate matrix-based tools. For the business portfolio analysis method, the background is the business portfolio difficulties of the diversified enterprise Xuri Group; students must first place its four business divisions into the star, cash cow, question mark and dog quadrants with reasons, then propose resource allocation recommendations for each, and the discussion extends to BCG analysis of financial product portfolios. For risk-based decision methods, the case of the three new wealth management product options at Star Financial Services provides known probabilities of the product being popular or unpopular, and students must construct decision trees to compute and compare expected returns. For decision under uncertainty, a single payoff matrix is used to compare the pessimistic criterion, the optimistic criterion, the Hurwicz coefficient criterion, the equiprobable criterion and the regret-value criterion, so that students see that the choice of criterion reflects the decision maker's risk disposition. In addition, instant polling activities such as which stock to sell convert abstract concepts such as influencing factors and decision styles into students' own real choices. Experience indicates that the key to these quantitative cases is that the scenario must precede the data: only after students first disagree about what to do is the computational tool introduced, at which point the method becomes an instrument of argument rather than an exercise.

4. Implementation Effects and Basic Experience

The evidence for implementation effects comes from three levels: classroom supervision evaluation, student course evaluation and participation statistics. Regarding classroom supervision, the course received ratings of 90 and 98 points in two supervision observations, reflecting the recognition of classroom organisation, case selection and interactive teaching arrangements by the reviewing experts. Regarding student evaluation, the mean course evaluation score was 98, and in the open-ended feedback students expressed concentrated and positive judgements about the innovativeness of the case-based format, most of them describing the difference from conventional lectures directly as fresh or as no longer being merely lecture-listening. Regarding participation, participation in every case-based activity exceeded 80%, and in the two task types requiring students to speak in role, actual attendance

and speaking proportions approached the upper limit. It should be noted that these three types of data reflect the overall teaching effect of the course. They provide indirect support for the implementation of case-based teaching, but because no control class was established, the effect cannot be attributed directly to case-based teaching as a single factor.

Classroom observation and the quality of student assignments indicate three perceptible changes. First, the form of classroom participation has changed. In decision simulation and script design tasks, students speak in role rather than as examinees, the proportion of active speakers visibly widens, and students who rarely speak are willing to express themselves under the protection of a role. Second, the performance of theory transfer has improved. In quizzes and discussions of subsequent units, most students are able to invoke frameworks such as the principle of satisficing, unity of authority and responsibility, and functional conflict to analyse new situations rather than reciting definitions. Third, the financial character of the cases produces a by-product in the form of professional orientation. Students perceive the risk culture, compliance constraints and cross-departmental conflicts of financial institutions directly in the simulation, and this sense of the industry cannot be provided by generic management cases.

Three points of basic experience can be distilled from this practice. First, the financial detail of a case scenario determines the depth of identification, and when developing cases it is preferable to sacrifice the dramatic quality of the plot in order to guarantee the professional accuracy of business detail. Second, the timing of theory entry should be late rather than early: students should first encounter confusion in the scenario, and only then should theoretical tools be provided, which strengthens motivation to learn. Third, structured output with immediate feedback is what distinguishes case-based teaching from storytelling; without output requirements and debrief, case discussion deteriorates rapidly. This requirement is consistent with Drucker's proposition that managers should be judged by the results they produce rather than by the extent of their busyness [7].

It must also be stated honestly that the evidence of effectiveness in this paper carries three limitations. First, supervision ratings and student evaluations measure the overall teaching performance of the course, which includes the combined effect of lecture arrangements, assessment design and other factors, and therefore cannot isolate the net effect of case-based teaching. Second, both supervision ratings and student evaluations are subjective judgements subject to observer expectation effects and may overestimate teaching effectiveness. Third, participation rates reflect attendance and speaking, which is not equivalent to depth of learning; no controlled comparison of achievement between a case-based class and a non-case-based class, nor a pre-test and post-test questionnaire, has been carried out. The statements regarding teaching effectiveness should therefore be understood as preliminary conclusions based on multiple sources of evidence rather than strict proof, which also points to the direction of future research.

5. Problems and Directions for Improvement

Four problems remain to be solved in the practice of case-based teaching. First, the case updating mechanism is inadequate. Regulatory policy and business forms in the financial industry change rapidly; the background of some cases, such as the environment for the promotion of intelligent investment advisory projects, has shifted markedly within a few years, while teachers rely mainly on personal accumulation to update cases without institutionalized revision arrangements. Second, assessment is disconnected from case-based teaching. Existing assessment still relies primarily on final knowledge-based examinations, while process-oriented outputs such as case discussion, script design and decision plans account for a low proportion of the overall grade, causing some students to treat the case segment as an optional

activity and producing wide variation in engagement. Third, free-riding occurs in group simulation. Although role division is clearly specified, individual contribution within a group is difficult to observe precisely. Fourth, case coverage is uneven. Cases for the decision, leadership and communication modules are well developed, whereas situated cases for the human resource management module lag behind and require completion.

Corresponding directions for improvement include the following: establishing a case review and updating mechanism on an academic-year cycle, incorporating regulatory developments and industry events into the case repository; restructuring the course assessment system to incorporate case outputs into formative evaluation with clearly specified weightings; introducing individual contribution records and mutual peer evaluation within groups; and prioritizing the development of financial scenario cases for the human resource management module, such as compensation design and performance appraisal disputes in financial enterprises, so that the case system covers all core modules of the course. When conditions permit, an empirical evaluation of teaching effectiveness incorporating pre and post questionnaires and achievement comparison should be conducted, so that the qualitative experience reported here can be subjected to stricter testing.

6. Conclusion

The case method is not new; its value lies in the degree of its fit with the characteristics of a particular course. For a course with a strong orientation toward practice such as Financial Enterprise Management, self-developed cases grounded in the real business scenarios of financial activities, combined with a closed-loop implementation path of theory anchor, case scenario, role immersion, decision output and debrief feedback, can train students' capacity for theory transfer and professional competence in management situations that have no standard answer. Case-based teaching is not a substitute for lecture, but is nested with it: theory supplies tools for case analysis, and cases give theory a field of application. How to keep cases updated, how to make assessment genuinely align with process-oriented output, and how to make effectiveness evaluation more rigorous are the questions to be addressed in the next stage.

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