

Research on the Application of Case Teaching Method in Middle School's Ideological and Political Courses

Changjian Li

School of Marxism, Jilin
International Studies University,
Changchun, Jilin, China

gracev@nwfsc.edu

Abstract:

With the introduction of a new round of curriculum reform and the “double reduction” policy, the evaluation of ideological and political courses throughout China is increasingly moving away from the traditional mode of memorization, instead of focusing on students’ judgment ability, logical thinking ability, and problem-solving ability. Therefore, reforming traditional classroom teaching methods and improving students’ various abilities in a short time has become a top priority thing in today’s education. The case teaching method plays a key role in cultivating students’ various abilities and improving teaching effectiveness by organizing them to analyze cases. Therefore, it has received increasing attention from frontline teachers in middle schools. Based on analyzing the connotation, characteristics, and significance of the case-based teaching method, this article focuses on pointing out the shortcomings of using the case-based teaching method in today’s classroom teaching, such as insufficient analysis of cases by teachers, relatively single presentation of cases by teachers, and relatively single evaluation of students’ understanding of cases by teachers. It also proposes three targeted measures such as actively establishing a case resource library, learning various teaching methods to enrich case presentation methods, paying attention to students’ sense of achievement, and evaluating them promptly.

Keywords: Case study teaching method; middle school; ideological and political courses

1. Introduction

Teenagers are the future of a country and nation. To cultivate them into talents that are needed in various

industries, it needs to provide them with a comprehensive education in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor skills. As a key course in cultivating students’ morality, ideological and po-

litical courses play an immeasurable role in their healthy growth. In 2023, the new curriculum reform proposed three basic concepts: paying attention to student development, emphasizing teacher growth, and valuing learning-based teaching [1]. For middle school teachers, they need to further abandon the traditional teaching method of “cramming” and enhance students’ sense of participation and achievement in classroom teaching. As a teaching method based on typical cases and guiding students to analyze them, case-based teaching not only deepens students’ understanding of the knowledge in a lesson, but also cultivates their communication skills, critical thinking, and the ability to state and defend their viewpoints. Currently, there are still some urgent issues that need to be addressed in the implementation of the case-based teaching method. Based on briefly summarizing the relevant overview of the case-based teaching method, this article proposes some corresponding strategies to address some typical problems of the case-based teaching method in classroom teaching, to better serve the teaching objectives of ideological and political courses in middle schools and promote the comprehensive development of middle school students.

2. Overview of Case Teaching Method

2.1 The Connotation of Case-Based Teaching Method

Currently, it is widely believed that Harvard University is a pioneer in researching this method. In 1870, Randall, the dean of his law school, was the first to use typical legal precedents as classroom teaching materials. After implementing this method, he found that students learned much more from analyzing typical cases than from textbooks [2]. Subsequently, this method gained increasing recognition from scholars, and Harvard University even established a dedicated institution to research and develop cases that can be applied in classroom teaching. With the progress of the “reform and opening up” policy, the case teaching method has gradually taken root and sprouted in China. This article summarizes the connotation of the case-based teaching method as the following: based on the teaching objectives and content of this lesson, teachers select some typical cases that are suitable for student’s physical and mental development characteristics, easy for students to understand and express, guide students to analyze and discuss these cases, cultivate students’ problem-solving ability, and ultimately promote students’ comprehensive development in all aspects.

2.2 The Characteristics of Using Case Teaching Method in Middle School’s Ideological and Political Courses

2.2.1 Openness

Unlike subjects like mathematics and physics, which often have only one correct answer, many questions in ideological and political courses often do not have a unique correct answer, which makes the learning of this course more focused on students’ understanding and expression, and has an openness. For the case-based teaching method, students analyze, think, express, and argue from multiple perspectives based on the cases given by the teacher, combined with their own experiences and previous knowledge. Their conclusions are often diverse, and some may even involve things related to other subjects. Teachers will also actively interact with students, explaining and correcting their answers. In this process, students’ critical thinking and innovative consciousness are cultivated, and their ability to comprehensively apply knowledge from various subjects is also improved.

2.2.2 Practicality

Many of the cases selected by the case teaching method are real events that have happened in students’ daily lives. The presentation of these cases by teachers, as well as students’ thinking and solving of these cases, are of great benefit to cultivating students’ practical abilities. When students encounter similar situations in their daily lives, they can fully apply the knowledge learned in the classroom to practice. Max once said, ‘Philosophers only explain things in different ways. The world and the problem lie in changing the world. Ideological and political education is not a course of empty talk, but a course dedicated to changing the world. The application of the case-based teaching method not only deepens students’ understanding of knowledge but also promotes the development of student’s abilities, which can be described as killing two birds with one stone.

2.2.3 Subjectivity

In the classroom where the case-based teaching method is used to teach students, teachers often place students in a subject position and see themselves as motivators and inspirators. They often guide students to analyze and think about the case through grouping and other methods. In this process, students’ ability to analyze and solve problems has been improved, their learning potential will be developed, and they may ultimately reach a stage where they can independently solve every problem [3]. For a student who is not very proactive in learning, this teaching method is likely to make them fall in love with learning.

The teaching effect of this method is much better than teachers simply teaching knowledge, and students mechanically memorize and recite after class.

3. The Significance of Using Case Teaching Method in Middle School's Ideological and Political Courses

3.1 Beneficial for Making the Abstract Content of Middle School's Ideological and Political Courses More Relatable to Daily Life

Middle school's ideological and political courses involve a series of abstract and difficult knowledge to understand such as national conditions, law, philosophy, etc. If teachers only use traditional teaching methods to teach, they will undoubtedly turn each knowledge point into a "sky garden" or a pile of textbook texts, which is not conducive to students' understanding, learning, and application of abstract knowledge [4]. The case-based teaching method requires teachers to design their teaching through individual cases, which changes teachers' traditional roles of knowledge providers and indoctrinators into motivators of students' learning interests. Students begin to play the role of "decision-makers" in learning, which not only helps to bring profound content to life but also conforms to the goal of making ideological and political courses more practical in the new curriculum reform [5]. Students' emotional recognition of ideological and political courses can also be continuously deepened, and their learning enthusiasm can be improved to a certain extent.

3.2 Beneficial for the Development of Core Competencies among Middle School Students

Middle school ideological and political teachers should not only pay attention to whether students have mastered each knowledge point and achieved high scores in exams but also attach great importance to the cultivation of students' core competencies. The latest version of the 2022 middle school's ideological and political education curriculum standards stipulates that middle school's ideological and political education should cultivate students' five core competencies: political identity, moral cultivation, legal awareness, sound personality, and sense of responsibility. The traditional teacher-centered teaching method only focuses on the level of knowledge mastery of every student and cannot promote students' comprehensive development. The case teaching method requires teachers to make sufficient preparations before class, by collecting and displaying cases that are closely related to students' daily

lives and promoting the integration of students' learning and thinking. While making abstract knowledge points into concrete, it also cultivates students' five core competencies. As a crucial stage in life that connects the past and the future, cultivating these five core competencies is crucial for students' growth and development in middle school.

3.3 Beneficial for Improving the Learning Enthusiasm of Middle School Students

In the past teaching activities of ideological and political courses, teachers usually used one test question after another as the basis and taught relevant content to students by drawing corresponding content. Students learning remained in a "drowsy" learning mode of "copying notes, memorizing notes, and taking notes". The case-based teaching method subverts this traditional teaching mode by allowing students to learn from each case given by the teacher through group discussions, and to grasp knowledge through the collision of viewpoints rather than generalization [6]. This way of allowing students to explore on their own is in line with the characteristics of high school students' strong thirst for knowledge and curiosity, greatly improving their learning enthusiasm and developing their problem-solving ability, enabling them to independently solve some problems and effectively apply the knowledge they have learned to daily life [7].

3.4 Beneficial for Improving Teachers' Comprehensive Abilities

In today's information age, students can easily learn about various major events happening throughout the country and even the world via the Internet. They may already have some understanding or even be very familiar with the cases presented by teachers in the class. Therefore, for teachers who use case-based teaching methods for teaching, if they cannot analyze cases from a new height and new perspective, it often leads to a weakening of students' learning enthusiasm or even a psychological aversion to learning [8]. This undoubtedly puts forward higher requirements for teachers' comprehensive abilities. Teachers need to collect various materials extensively, and based on their understanding of the student's actual situation, choose cases that are suitable for students' reality to interest them. Similarly, in the process of implementing case teaching, teachers should actively answer questions raised by students during discussions and speeches, and there should be no situation where students' questions cannot be answered. In short, teachers should continuously improve their overall quality in the process of applying the case-based teaching method. This is not only beneficial for

improving teaching effectiveness, but also for teachers to gradually grow into good teachers who satisfy both students and the general public.

4. Problems in the Application of Case Teaching Method in Middle School's Ideological and Political Courses

4.1 Insufficient Analysis of Cases by Teachers

Front-line ideological and political education teachers in middle schools have to undertake a lot of work every day. In addition to normal teaching work, they may also face organizing student activities, participating in community services, and other tasks, which greatly compresses the time for teachers to prepare lessons. At the same time, some teachers also waste a lot of time searching and screening cases, which makes it difficult for teachers to conduct in-depth exploration and analysis of the cases they want to teach. The explanation of cases in the classroom often falls on the surface, leading to the failure of the case-based teaching method to achieve its intended effect and limited development of student's abilities

4.2 Relatively Single Presentation of Cases by Teachers

Currently, with the development of online platforms such as Subject Network and Education Resource Network, teachers have many channels to watch videos of other teachers and enrich their teaching methods and presentation forms of case studies. However, in actual teaching, teachers often rely on traditional text, images, and even oral narration to present cases. After all, static text not only makes it easier for teachers to implement but also saves time in classroom teaching, allowing the teaching tasks arranged by teachers to proceed smoothly. However, this can lead to low classroom participation among students and even fatigue from reading too much text. Over time, not only will it fail to improve the effectiveness of ideological and political education, but it may also have the opposite effect, causing students to develop an aversion towards ideological and political courses.

4.3 Relatively Single Evaluation of Students' Understanding of Cases by Teachers

The problem of neglecting the evaluation of students is a common issue in the teaching process of ideological and political courses in middle schools. Middle school's ideological and political education is a course that educates students' thoughts and ideologies. Therefore, the evalua-

tion of students should always adhere to a combination of process evaluation and summative evaluation. However, due to the influence of exam-oriented education, teachers are not very concerned about students' evaluation and feedback. This is manifested in the fact that during a teacher's teaching progress, if students raise opinions that do not match the teacher's established thinking, the teacher often leads them to their predetermined thinking without analyzing whether the student's thinking has a certain degree of rationality. After class, teachers often use paper and pencil tests to assess students' mastery of knowledge points through scores, without evaluating their process. As for students' opinions on the cases they are teaching, they ignore them. Over time, this is very detrimental to the cultivation of students' moral character, emotional attitude, and values.

5. Three Targeted Measures of the Problems

5.1 Actively Establish a Case Resource Library

In response to the problem of many teachers wasting a lot of time searching for case resources, or even having no time to search for cases, which results in insufficient analysis of cases, it can solve this problem by establishing a case resource library. Firstly, teachers from a grade or school can organize the good cases collected during lesson preparation or those closely related to students in daily life in the order of the textbook, introduce them in the school's case resource library for other teachers to use in class. Other teachers can also continuously modify and improve the case based on their years of teaching experience and actual teaching effectiveness, to ensure that both the content and form are close to the physical and mental development laws and age characteristics of students. Secondly, it is necessary to actively communicate with teachers from other schools in this city and province, listen to their opinions, and actively listen to the updated and more cutting-edge suggestions put forward by other teachers. At the same time, the ideological and political course teachers at the school should pay close attention to the latest major events and strive to include them in the case resource library. This can not only make the cases in the case resource library contemporary and cutting-edge but also continuously improve the school's case resource library.

5.2 Learn Various Teaching Methods to Enrich Case Presentation Methods

The case teaching method is a student-centered approach

that uses various cases to help students master relevant knowledge and improve their ability to analyze and solve problems. Therefore, when introducing cases to students, in addition to traditional methods such as text, pictures, and oral narration, teachers should also actively learn new ways to enrich the presentation of cases and increase the fun of teaching. For example, teachers can organize students to perform scenario plays in some cases. By organizing students to perform and analyze situational dramas, they not only mastered the knowledge points to be learned in this lesson but also accumulated corresponding experience. Once similar incidents occur in daily life, they can better cope and avoid being flustered. However, teachers should pay attention to controlling the time for students to perform and maintaining the discipline of classroom teaching when using situational dramas to present cases, so as not to delay normal teaching and lead to counterproductive effects.

5.3 Pay Attention to Students' Sense of Achievement and Evaluate Them Promptly

Middle school's ideological and political education is a course that educates and cultivates students' ideology and morality. Therefore, teachers should not only focus on whether students' knowledge and ability goals have been achieved, but also on whether emotional, attitude, and value goals have been achieved. Currently, due to the influence of exam-oriented education, it is difficult for teachers to place the assessment of students' emotional attitudes and values in a more important position than knowledge assessment. However, teachers cannot ignore the development of students in this area, at least teachers should place it in a position that is equally important as knowledge assessment. Specifically, teachers can create a "growth record manual" for each student and divide the entire class into several small groups. The group leader will record the student's performance and various ideas in case discussions, the teacher should review it every two weeks. For students' novel ideas, teachers cannot simply deny them. Teachers should carefully analyze them write comments on the manual and make their evaluations. Teachers can also have conversations with students to further understand their ideas. This not only ensures that daily teaching work cannot be affected but also provides timely feedback on students' learning problems. Over time, this will greatly benefit the enhancement of students' sense of gain in ideological and political courses, as well as the cultivation of their ideology and morality.

6. Conclusion

Although the case-based teaching method was introduced to China in the 1980s and 1990s, it has already gained strong appeal. It focuses teachers' teaching on students and the classroom, attaches importance to students' problems and demands, changes the traditional talent cultivation model, and gradually returns the teaching model to students themselves. The implementation of current policies such as the new curriculum reform and "double reduction", will surely radiate stronger vitality and energy. Based on some basic explanations of the case-based teaching method, this article proposes the significance of the application of the case-based teaching method in current classroom teaching in middle schools, as well as some existing problems, and puts forward some targeted solutions to these problems. This article has certain reference significance for the in-depth study of the case teaching method and the development of students.

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