

Exploring New Teaching Techniques with Case Studies

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When it comes to embrace the complexity of the music business a Berklee teacher can use different pedagogical methods: class discussion, research articles, or videos...One of my favorite is case study. In this article - derived from a BTOT presentation available [here](#) - I explain the key dimensions of a case study, the main advantages of using them for instructors and students, and how to use some of them in classroom.

What is a case study?

Simply put, a case study is a detailed story of a subject of study. The "case" being studied may be an individual, organization, event, or action, existing in a specific time and place. Examples of subjects for cases that can be written at Berklee are: musicians/bands, firms/companies in the music industry, emergent technologies/tools in audio/video production, clinical tests in music therapy...

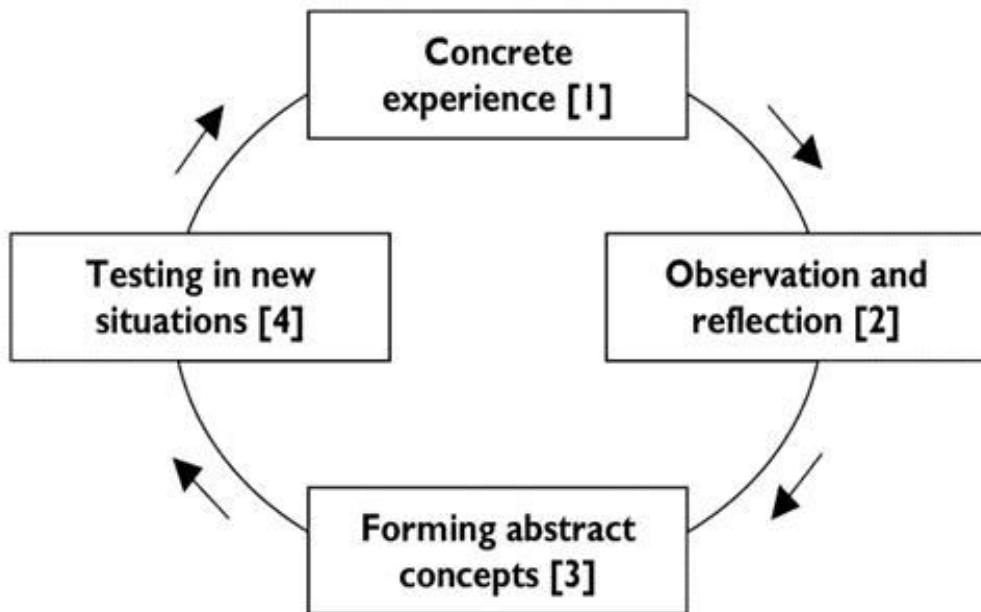
A case usually presents a problem or a dilemma faced by individuals or by organizations that invites readers of the case to imagine solutions to put into practice. The case is facilitated by an instructor who knows about the solutions that were really implemented ("this is what happened in real life"). A case study is a pedagogy that an instructor can use to express the complexity of a given situation. A process of discussion and analysis, guided by the instructor, leads class participants to deeper insights into issues and their resolution. On one side, students need to read the details about the situation and discuss that situation with an instructor. On the other side instructors need to have a teaching note that describe the possible outcomes of the case.

A case is...	A case is not...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A result of a research conducted about a subject that leads to interesting outcomes• A written document using videos, audio files or pictures• A written teaching note that explains how instructors use the case	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A collection of journal/magazine articles• A video recorded interview of somebody talking about a subject

What is a case based pedagogy?

An instructor using a case based pedagogy is putting the students into the shoes of a researcher by writing a story the reveals some key learnings for the students. Case based teaching relies on deduction and induction made by students. David Kolb¹ developed the model of experiential learning depicted below:

¹ Kolb, David. (1976). *The Learning Style Inventory: Technical Manual*. McBer & Co, Boston, MA.



Effective learning is seen when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages: of (1) having a concrete experience followed by (2) observation of and reflection on that experience which leads to (3) the formation of abstract concepts (analysis) and generalizations (conclusions) which are then (4) used to test hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences. This model can explain how students interact with instructors in a classroom (see the Table below).

Experiential Learning	Concrete Experience	Observation and Reflection	Forming abstract concepts	Testing new situations
Benefits for the students	Students read a detailed story to become the subject (artist, firm...)	Students answer questions about issues raised by the instructor	Students relate the case to theories / tools / concepts	Students can reuse the lessons learnt from the case
Benefits for the instructor	Instructors share the story about the subject (artist, firm...) in a written format	Instructors frame some issues about the subject of the case	Instructors lead the students to induce / deduce a theory / tool / concept related to the case	Instructors conclude the experience by summarizing the lessons learnt

Examples of cases I like to teach in classroom

- **Miles Davis: Kind of Blue** (by Robert D. Austin and Carl Stormer): This case examines how successful companies can "jump to the next innovation curve" through an analogy to the life's work of Miles Davis, especially his paradigm-shattering Kind of Blue album in

1959. Students consider how and why Davis, who had already proven he was tops in his field, created a new disruptive innovation in the field of jazz, in the process creating the most commercially successful jazz album of all time.

- **Radiohead: Music at your Own Price** (by Anita Elberse and Jason Bergsman): the British band Radiohead caused a stir in 2007 when it announced it would allow customers to decide how much to pay for its new album, released exclusively as a digital download and available only from the band's own website. The pricing plan represented a significant break from the industry standard of fixed prices for music, typically 99 cents for individual songs and upward of \$9.99 for complete albums. How viable is such a "name-your-own-pricing" plan? And what does Radiohead's move say about the evolution of the music industry?
- **Beyonce** (by Anita Elberse and Stacie Smith): in December 2013, music superstar Beyoncé is about to surprise her fans with the release of her self-titled album. How would fans and music industry insiders react to the daring launch, unveiled via Beyoncé's Facebook and Instagram accounts? Would the album be able to find a large enough audience even without traditional promotional activities? And would there be any adverse reactions, for instance from traditional music retailers refusing to carry the physical album later?

All these cases can be accessed through the Berklee Library website in the Case Centre database.

Useful resources about Case Study Method

1. *The Berklee Case Centre*: a group of Berklee faculty whose job is to help you using and writing case (send a mail at caselcentre@berklee.edu)
2. *Teaching with Cases* by Espen Andersen and Bill Schiano (Harvard Business Publishing, 2014) focuses on practical advice for instructors that can be easily implemented. It covers how to plan a course, how to teach it, and how to evaluate it (link [here](#)).
3. *The Case Study Handbook: How to read, discuss and write persuasively about cases* by William Ellet (Harvard Business Publishing, 2007) helps the case writer to structure a case and use effective and identify ineffective writing techniques (link [here](#)).
4. *The Case Analysis Coach* is an online tutorial developed for students to enhance their learning with case (link [here](#)).
5. *The Teaching Post* (<http://teachingpost.hbsp.harvard.edu/>) is a blog monitored by Harvard Business School professors about case method teachnig in action.