

# Exploration of the Application of Situational Teaching Method in Ethics and the Rule of Law in Junior High School

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**Abstract:** The junior high school stage is a critical period for the formation of adolescents' values and moral cognition. The Ethics and the Rule of Law course bears the important mission of cultivating students' social responsibility and core competencies. This paper takes junior high school Ethics and the Rule of Law courses as a starting point to explore practical pathways for the situational teaching method. The core of this method lies in organically integrating teaching content with specific situations, thereby stimulating students' emotional resonance, mobilizing their intrinsic motivation, deepening theoretical understanding through interactive and collaborative engagement, and facilitating the internalization of knowledge into conscious action. Ultimately, it achieves the teaching goal of integrating knowledge with practice and effectively fulfills the educational function of the Ethics and the Rule of Law course during this pivotal stage of adolescent development.

**Keywords:** Situational Teaching Method; Junior High School; Ethics and the Rule of Law.

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## 1. Introduction

As a key course for achieving the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education, the teaching methodology of Ethics and the Rule of Law in Junior High School is particularly crucial. The situational teaching method injects new vitality into it. The Compulsory Education Ethics and the Rule of Law Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) explicitly requires that "teaching in Ethics and the Rule of Law courses should follow the formation laws of moral cultivation and legal literacy, fully consider students' life experiences, create diverse learning situations, and guide students to engage in autonomous, cooperative practical exploration and experiential activities". Its essence is to ground teaching in students' life experiences, problem-solving experiences, and participatory experiences, awaken their intrinsic motivation, promote active cognitive construction, develop essential character traits, enhance key competencies, and improve teaching efficacy.

## 2. Overview of Situational Teaching Method

The situational teaching method refers to teachers creating situations centered on teaching objectives, textbook content, and student characteristics, enabling students to better understand the content and develop abilities and qualities within specific contexts. Based on constructivist learning theory and utilizing modern teaching tools, this method emphasizes linking teaching content with real or simulated situations to stimulate learning interest, deepen emotional experiences, and guide students to actively construct knowledge and develop emotionally through practice and reflection. Its core lies in breaking away from the abstractness of traditional knowledge transmission. By creating teaching situations that incorporate life scenarios, problem conflicts, role-playing, and other elements, it bridges abstract theories with students' experiences. Through contextual experiences, students understand abstract knowledge, ignite interest, and

resonate emotionally. In solving situational problems, students cultivate logical thinking, value judgment, and analytical and problem-solving skills.

In junior high school Ethics and the Rule of Law classrooms, teachers should design diverse situations aligned with adolescents' cognitive levels and life experiences, based on curriculum standards and the developmental characteristics of students. For example, selecting timely legal news, campus activities, or trending topics as situational carriers can guide students to independently organize knowledge frameworks, analyze moral emotions, and explore behavioral strategies through observing, exploring, and discussing situational conflicts. Such immersive learning experiences activate students' cognitive potential, deepen understanding of knowledge through problem-solving, strengthen moral identity and legal awareness, and internalize external moral norms into conscious actions. This effectively shifts students from passive reception to active construction, organically unifying knowledge, emotion, and moral behavior education, thereby enhancing teaching effectiveness and educational outcomes.

## 3. Role of Situational Teaching Method in Ethics and the Rule of Law in Junior High School

As a comprehensive subject, Ethics and the Rule of Law courses often involve abstract concepts and theories that may seem distant from junior high students' cognitive characteristics, leading to superficial understanding. The situational teaching method injects vitality into these courses, breaking away from traditional "spoon-feeding" teaching modes. It enhances teaching enjoyment and interaction; drives situational inquiry and deepens knowledge construction; evokes emotional resonance and strengthens moral identity; and integrates theory with practice to improve comprehensive abilities.

### **3.1. Enhancing Teaching Enjoyment and Emphasizing Interaction**

Teachers ground scenarios in students' life experiences, infusing moral principles and legal concepts into engaging and participatory situations. Abstract knowledge becomes tangible and actionable. Students transform from passive recipients to active explorers, experiencing, reflecting, and collaborating with teachers and peers to solve problems and uncover the real-world significance of moral and legal concepts. This interactive and enjoyable process turns classrooms into platforms for intellectual exchange and emotional connection, sparking interest in the subject while nurturing communication skills and teamwork. Students develop correct values and legal perspectives through practice, enhance social responsibility, and grow into citizens with strong legal literacy and moral character—all within a relaxed and supportive atmosphere.

### **3.2. Driving Inquiry and Deepening Knowledge Construction**

According to Piaget's cognitive development theory, junior high students are transitioning from concrete to abstract logical thinking. Complex theoretical knowledge, such as the dialectical relationship between rights and obligations or the structure of legal systems, requires concrete support for genuine comprehension. The situational teaching method uses vivid contexts to transform abstract knowledge into relatable problems and tasks, prompting active inquiry. For example, teachers can create real-life situations like community conflict mediation or school rule-making, guiding students to observe, analyze, and reason through these scenarios. Students actively construct systematic understanding of moral norms and legal concepts through independent thinking and collaborative discussion, moving beyond fragmented knowledge to practical application. This problem-oriented approach aligns with cognitive development, deepens understanding and retention, and cultivates independent thinking and knowledge transfer skills.

### **3.3. Evoking Emotional Resonance and Deepening Moral Identity**

The core of Ethics and the Rule of Law education lies not only in knowledge transmission but also in emotional cultivation and the shaping of moral and legal consciousness. Adolescents in junior high school exhibit heightened independent thinking, emotional volatility, and strong plasticity—traits that present opportunities for education. Traditional methods often fail to truly resonate. The situational teaching method refines and presents social life scenarios, broadening perspectives and enriching experiences. For instance, creating vivid situations like family conflict resolution or bullying response allows students to immerse themselves in roles, empathizing with moral dilemmas and emotional struggles. This emotional resonance breaks down barriers between students and knowledge, turning moral norms into heartfelt experiences. After emotional engagement and value reflection, students' understanding of morality and law deepens from rational to affective levels, achieving a shift from "cognitive acceptance" to "emotional identification," and internalizing moral and legal principles as personal values and behavioral guidelines.

### **3.4. Integrating Theory with Practice to Enhance Comprehensive Abilities**

The Ethics and the Rule of Law course combines theory and practice, requiring students not only to master knowledge but also to apply it flexibly. Traditional teaching often separates the two, leading to a disconnect between knowledge and action. The situational teaching method bridges this gap by creating authentic contexts close to students' lives, transforming abstract concepts into actionable problems. Students actively explore, understand, apply, and analyze knowledge in these situations, achieving deep integration of theory and practice. For example, teachers introduce real scenarios like community governance or consumer rights protection, guiding students to analyze problems, propose solutions, and implement them. This process demands not only theoretical knowledge but also comprehensive skills like information gathering, logical reasoning, communication, teamwork, and innovation. This "learning by doing" approach deepens theoretical understanding while honing practical competencies, enabling a qualitative leap from knowledge accumulation to ability development.

## **4. Application Strategies of Situational Teaching Method**

Centered on constructing vivid scenarios, the situational teaching method effectively breaks down barriers between theory and practice and aligns with adolescents' curiosity, active thinking, and growing independence. Under the core competency-oriented education framework, its scientific application requires systematic planning. Strategies are explored below from four aspects: creating dynamic situations, designing activities, enhancing interaction, and implementing evaluation.

### **4.1. Creating Dynamic Situations**

#### **4.1.1. Introducing Real-Life Contexts to Cultivate Practical Cognition**

The theoretical knowledge in the Ethics and the Rule of Law in Junior High School course is closely connected to real life. By introducing authentic life cases, students can be immersed in the moral and legal issues they face in reality. This bridges the gap between students and the classroom/textbook, sparks their interest, and cultivates their practical cognition abilities. In teaching practice, teachers should optimize situation creation from two dimensions: At first, adopt a student-centered approach: Grounded in the teaching content, extract core themes and integrate them with students' daily experiences and knowledge reserves. Create situations that are both engaging and lifelike, building a bridge between theoretical knowledge and the real world to help students achieve rapid knowledge transfer. At second, uphold the goal-oriented principle: Enhance classroom appeal by introducing typical cases. This teaching strategy allows students to intuitively perceive the practical value of knowledge while guiding them to apply theories of ethics and the rule of law to solve real-world problems. It achieves the goal of applying learning to practice and enhances the effectiveness and relevance of course instruction.

#### **4.1.2. Constructing Problem-Based Scenarios to Foster Critical Thinking**

The construction of problem-based scenarios aims to stimulate students' deep thinking. By designing situations

characterized by conflict and openness, students are guided to apply knowledge of ethics and the rule of law in dialectical analysis. Teachers can design progressive chains of questions centered around social hot topics or legally controversial cases.

For example, when introducing the hot topic case of "cyber violence": First pose the controversial question: "Should anonymous commenters be held accountable?" Then guide students to analyze the legal basis using the Law on the Protection of Minors and the Cybersecurity Law. Finally discuss how to prevent similar behavior from a moral perspective. Throughout this process, the teaching focus lies in guiding and inspiring. Students are encouraged to: Break through one-dimensional thinking. Weigh the relationship between legal principles and human considerations, as well as rights and obligations. Cultivate critical thinking and legal reasoning skills through questioning, argumentation, and reflection. This approach enables students to achieve a profound understanding and flexible application of the course's core content.

## **4.2. Designing Teaching Activities**

### **4.2.1. Organizing Collaborative Inquiry to Emphasize Student Agency**

Junior high school students are at a critical stage for developing thinking and collaboration skills. Creating collaborative scenarios that inspire students to deeply engage with learning content—enabling them to solve problems and complete tasks cooperatively with peers in concrete situations—effectively cultivates their cognitive abilities and collaborative competence, fully leveraging students' proactive engagement to transform them into genuine actors and practitioners. Teachers should prioritize student agency by designing group discussions and cooperative tasks centered on social issues or campus events, allowing students to independently identify and analyze problems through division of labor and collaboration. This deepens their understanding of knowledge via intellectual exchange while honing communication skills and teamwork awareness, ensuring students truly become the protagonists of the classroom; alternatively, teachers may employ role-playing techniques to design diverse simulated scenarios, guiding students to develop emotional resonance through immersive experiences, understand the logical perspectives of different stakeholders, gradually form legal thinking patterns, and cultivate socially responsible awareness aligned with normative standards, ultimately achieving the dual objectives of knowledge acquisition and competency cultivation.

### **4.2.2. Promoting Situational Practice to Facilitate Knowledge Internalization**

Situational practice serves as a critical pathway for transforming abstract knowledge into practical competence. Teachers can design practical activities such as mock trials and social surveys aligned with teaching content, enabling students to apply knowledge in authentic or simulated contexts. For instance, within the "Law and Life" unit, organizing a simulated court trial on a minor protection case—with role assignments spanning prosecutor, lawyer, and judge—compels students to delve into legal provisions and analyze case logic; alternatively, through practical tasks like formulating a "Campus Civility Convention," guiding students to conduct field research, gather opinions, and develop feasible solutions using knowledge of ethics and the rule of law. These practice-oriented activities embody

"learning by doing," integrating legal norms and ethical standards into concrete actions. Through problem-solving processes, students achieve deep knowledge internalization, cultivate moral judgment capabilities, and develop the autonomous awareness and ability to apply ethics and rule of law knowledge in real-world contexts—ultimately realizing the transformation from "theoretical cognition" to "practical application."

## **4.3. Enhancing Classroom Interaction**

### **4.3.1. Designing Gamified Scenarios to Boost Engagement**

The junior high school phase constitutes a critical period for character development. As students' behavioral patterns and cognitive awareness progressively mature, gamified performance scenarios prove highly compatible with their developmental stage. Teachers can design game-based scenarios featuring clear rules, intrinsic enjoyment, and cognitive depth—aligned with students' current cognitive characteristics and teaching content. For instance, in "Basic Legal Knowledge" instruction, implement a "Legal Knowledge Challenge" game with stages such as "Case Judgment" and "Legal Provision Completion," where students participate in team competitions. This approach reinforces legal concepts within a stimulating competitive atmosphere while facilitating knowledge acquisition through enjoyment. Such gamified practice not only enhances students' classroom participation enthusiasm and learning initiative—fostering a positive classroom environment—but also strengthens their comprehension and application of ethics and rule of law knowledge through experiential gameplay.

### **4.3.2. Leveraging Technology to Enrich Role Experiences**

Harnessing the advantages of modern information technology enables the creation of immersive learning environments for students. Teachers can utilize diverse multimedia resources—such as images and videos—to construct vivid audiovisual scenarios, for instance, using animated shorts to recreate the entire process of a bullying incident and guiding students to analyze the situation from multiple perspectives including victim, bystander, and mediator; employ multimedia technology to display lifelike settings where students contemplate and discuss ethics and rule of law issues within authentic contexts; implement VR technology to simulate courtroom proceedings, allowing students to experience firsthand the solemnity and rigor of legal trials. Furthermore, leveraging interactive teaching software facilitates role-playing tasks—such as online simulated community governance meetings where students participate as "resident representatives" in public affairs decision-making—through which this interactive learning approach enables deeper comprehension of course content, enhances cognitive understanding of legal responsibilities and ethical norms within digital environments, and effectively elevates both the depth and breadth of classroom engagement.

## **4.4. Implementing Evaluation and Feedback**

### **4.4.1. Prioritizing Process Evaluation to Promote Learning**

Process evaluation necessitates conducting qualitative analysis of students' learning progress by focusing on the practical and experiential characteristics of Ethics and the Rule of Law courses, thereby capturing learning dynamics. Teachers can employ tools such as growth portfolios and

classroom observation scales to document students' participation, creativity, cognitive performance, and collaborative skills during activities like situational simulations and group inquiries. For instance, in thematic scenario debates on "Cyber Law," assessment should extend beyond evaluating students' articulation of legal perspectives to include their logical reasoning, verbal expression, and teamwork processes. Concurrently, introducing self-assessment and peer-assessment mechanisms—organizing group discussions to share learning gains and shortcomings—guides students in reflective improvement. This process-oriented, multidimensional approach transcends traditional outcome-based limitations by integrating evaluation into the learning journey, stimulating intrinsic motivation for autonomous development. It empowers students to promptly identify issues and adjust learning strategies, ultimately realizing the principles of "assessment for learning" and "evaluation for holistic development."

#### 4.4.2. Strengthening Feedback to Improve Teaching

The feedback mechanism serves as a critical nexus connecting teaching and learning; by leveraging process evaluations and outcome-based feedback from students, it prompts teachers to reflect on and refine instructional approaches, ensuring teaching better serves learning while striving to achieve "teaching-learning-assessment consistency". Teachers must systematically synthesize feedback generated during situational teaching to precisely identify instructional weaknesses—for example, if students reveal vague understanding of civic responsibility in a "community governance" simulation exercise, teachers can introduce supplementary thematic case studies on "rights and obligations relationships"; for cognitive biases in moral judgment, design more conflict-laden scenarios to deepen comprehension. Concurrently, bidirectional feedback should be collected through teaching reflection sessions and student evaluations, enabling continuous improvement in the suitability of situational designs and the rationality of activity structures; this dynamic, data-informed feedback model ensures teaching strategies consistently align with students' actual needs, effectively realizing "assessment for teaching enhancement" and fostering a virtuous cycle of mutual pedagogical growth.

## 5. Conclusion

As a pivotal pathway for innovating Ethics and the Rule of Law in Junior High School classroom instruction, the situational teaching method effectively bridges theoretical knowledge and real-world application through multidimensional scenario creation, diversified activity design, innovative interaction models, and precise evaluation feedback—synergistically cultivating core competencies including political identity, moral character, and legal consciousness. Its value extends beyond stimulating student interest to guiding active knowledge construction through practical experience while nurturing legal thinking and moral judgment capabilities. However, effective implementation necessitates continuous enhancement of teachers' professional expertise, emphasizing student agency, value relevance, contextual alignment, and logical coherence: educators must not only focus on innovating and diversifying scenarios—prioritizing the alignment and elevation of situational content—but also attend to students' growth and development by positioning them at the center of the learning

process and activating their cognitive agency. As educational philosophies deepen and technological tools evolve, exploring how to further unlock the pedagogical potential of situational teaching and advance its integration with discipline-specific core competency cultivation will constitute a critical frontier for future practice in Ethics and the Rule of Law in Junior High School instruction.

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