

Case Method Teaching

- What is the case method?
- Why use it?
- What is a case?

What Is the Case Method?

Origins of case method

- 19th Century innovation by dean of Harvard Law School.
- Students demanded that the dean be fired!
- Harvard Business School adopted method in 1920s.
- Method has spread widely across universities globally and disciplines, including medicine.

Characteristics of the Method

Case instructors...

- Facilitate student thinking rather than tell them what to think.
- Ask guiding questions to help students explore a case and develop their thinking about it.
- Ask many types of questions such as open ended, clarifying, challenging, supporting, comparing.
- Talk less, students talk more.

Case students...

- Must prepare material before class and be motivated to discuss it in class.
- Collaborate with each other and the instructor to give meaning to the case.
- Learn primarily from each other.

Cases...

- Usually do not have objectively correct answers.
- But certain conclusions are far better than others: they are supported by case evidence.

Why Use the Case Method?

Problem with higher education

- Provide students with only half the education they need.
- Lectures and textbooks teach concepts, theory, and frameworks efficiently.
- But students do not learn how to **use** that knowledge as they will in the real world.

Is the critical knowledge in your field most valuable as theory or as a way to make a difference in the real world?

**If it's the latter,
application of knowledge
needs to be practiced.**

**Preferably in way that
no one is hurt.**

**Are situations in which
you apply knowledge
highly structured or not?**

**Less structured =
more practice required**

**Why is airline travel less
error prone than
medicine?**

**Knowledge is not
enough.**



I got my degree from Universidad de Fútbol.

Universidad de Fútbol

- I listened to many great lectures on how to play fútbol.
- I watched videos and saw demonstrations by expert players.
- I took the tests and received perfect scores on all of them.

**However, I never
practiced.**

**Do I know how to
play fútbol?**

**Cases are a practice
field for students.**

Consider...

- We don't allow a doctor to treat patients on her own until she has practiced applying her knowledge for years.
- Yet, in many fields, students are not asked to apply their knowledge in any situation that closely resembles the real world.

Research-Based Reasons for Using Cases

- What students do in class is much more important than what teachers do.
- **Cases require students to do something in the classroom: make meaning from a case.**

- Varying the conditions of learning makes learning harder for students but results in better learning long term.
- **Cases vary the conditions of learning because every case is different, even when the domain of knowledge (e.g., finance) is the same.**

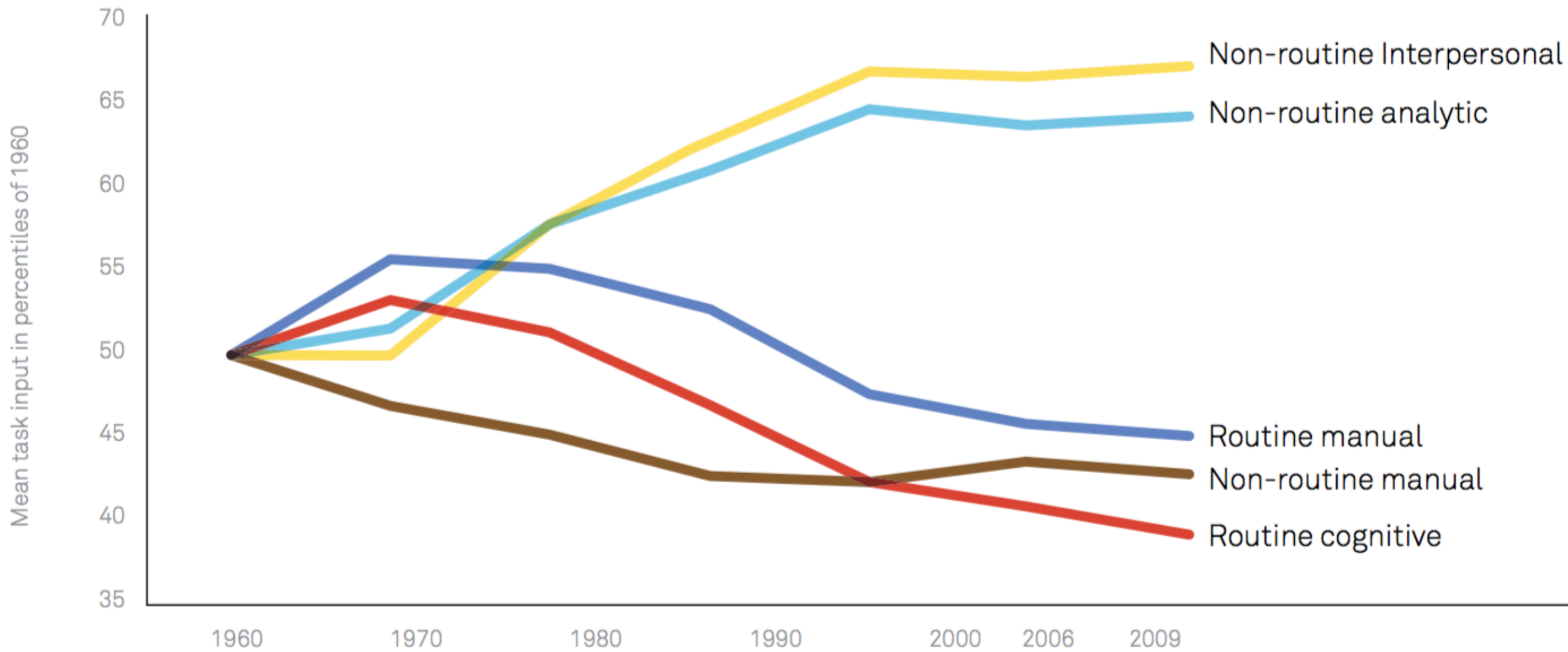
Changing Nature of Work

Rise of thoughtful work

- In advanced economies, the content of work is increasingly about analytical and creative thinking and social skills.
- It is increasingly less about procedure and repetition.

Figure 1

Non-routine Tasks on the Rise in the U.S. Labor Market



Source: David H. Autor and Brendan M. Price. "The Changing Task Composition of the US Labor Market: an Update of Autor, Levy and Murnane (2003)". MIT Mimeograph, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2013.

**Case method cultivates
skills for an developing
and developed economies.**

What Is a Case?

Textbook

Conclusions

Linear organization

Explains meanings

Case

Information only, no conclusions

Organized disorganization

Reader constructs meaning

A case is...

- A simulation of the real world.
- Meaningless beyond the information it states about a situation.
- Given meaning by the reader and people who discuss it.

A key concept of active learning is having students construct meaning.

**Cases are one learning
platform for doing that.**

**Finally, dilemma for
professors:**

**At the end of a discussion,
do you tell the students your
opinion about the case?**

**Your opinion =
the right answer**

**Students have to learn
how to think for
themselves.**

Thank you!