

A Study of ‘Demand Differentiation and Customization’ Interactive Case Teaching Based on the Marketing

Hua Zhang^{a,*}, Qishou Zou

Dept. Marketing of School of Business Administration, Guangdong University of Finance and Economics, Guangzhou 510000, China;

^ahuahua555782@163.com

*corresponding author

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Abstract: The ‘demand differentiation and customization’ interactive teaching is a teaching method that combines both traditional heuristic teaching and modern collaborative teaching. Its meaning is to achieve one-on-one interaction between students and the teacher in case teaching. Thus, specific answers are provided to different students’ questions when they are in the problem-solving process. This teaching method can prevent students from ‘eating from the same pot’, i.e. receiving the same reward regardless of the work done, and maximize the teaching efficiency and results in one-on-one teaching in class, and motivate the students to think actively. Meanwhile, this teaching method maximizes the teacher's control over the teaching and learning process in the interactions, which keeps students from free-riding in projects, arriving late and leaving early, and conducting other lazy behaviors following the crowd.

1. Introduction

Interactive teaching is a teaching method that combines both traditional heuristic teaching and modern collaborative teaching [1]. Interactive case teaching emphasizes and highlights the interaction between students and teachers in the process of teaching and learning in case analysis. It motivates students to be interested in learning and enjoy learning and guides them to change from passive learning to active learning. Meanwhile, this approach enhances the supervision of teachers, so that teachers can find out students’ learning condition instantly through interaction, and adjust time. This can fundamentally change the current situation in colleges and universities, which is that many students free ride in projects, participate passively in class and do not ask questions actively. Thus, a teaching and learning atmosphere of democracy, freedom, equality, harmony, and pleasure is created. As a result, students’ independent learning and thinking ability and problem-solving ability are developed, and the quality of teaching and learning is improved [1]. Marketing courses have four characteristics, including flexibility, practicality, innovativeness, and applicability. Not only knowledge should be taught systematically in class, but also students should be trained to gain the ability of finding, analyzing, and solving problems in terms of teaching and learning methods in marketing courses to cope with the application demand in the market[2]. Interactive case teaching is the teaching model that can achieve this teaching effect and objective.

The needs of the development of the ‘demand differentiation and customization’ interactive teaching come from the contradiction between the difference in knowledge level, angles of logical analysis, interests in and focuses on cases, and the demands for teaching of students, and the personality traits of conservation and moderation in Chinese culture. On one hand, different characteristics and requirements of students lead to their dissatisfaction with the single standard case analysis from the teacher. On the other hand, students’ personality traits with Chinese characteristics cause them to seldom actively propose requests or ask questions to the teacher. As a result, either that questions are asked after class, which has passed the best timing for discussion, or the flash of thought is just ignored. The ‘demand differentiation and customization’ interactive case teaching can prevent students from ‘eating from the same pot’, i.e. receiving the same reward regardless of the work done,

and maximize the teaching efficiency and results in one-on-one teaching in class, and motivate the students to think actively. Meanwhile, this teaching method maximizes the teacher's control over the teaching and learning process in the interactions, which keeps students from free-riding in projects, arriving late and leaving early, and conducting other lazy behaviors following the crowd.

2. Nature of ‘demand differentiation and customization’ interactive case teaching

Essentially, the ‘demand differentiation and customization’ interactive case teaching is to achieve one-on-one interaction between students and the teacher in case teaching. Thus, specific answers are provided to different students’ questions when they are in the problem-solving process. Meanwhile, ‘demand differentiation and customization’ interactive case teaching is not a mechanical repetition of “the teacher asks and the student answers”. It is that teachers and students work together to build an excellent learning atmosphere, in which teachers create scenarios, and students actively consider and solve problems. Meanwhile, teachers fully participate in students’ discussion process and offer instant guidance to the discussion and answers to questions. Thus, students can actively join in the teaching and learning activities. Two important features of ‘demand differentiation and customization’ interactive case teaching are “interactivity” and “customizability”, which allow students to voluntarily participate in the teaching and learning process, and motivate students to actively study by using specific one-on-one tutoring. Thus, students can truly play the role as the main body.

3. Expression of ‘demand differentiation and customization’ interactive case teaching in marketing courses

3.1 Case selection

In the course of Marketing, appropriate case selection is the key step in interactive case teaching. The basic principle of case selection is the teaching content. Students’ interest is the key factor that determines the effectiveness of teacher-student interaction, and also the driving force of their active learning. First, teachers need to consider the correlation between course knowledge and cases. Cases need to be filtered based on the teaching objective and content so that they are linked to the teaching objective and content closely. The content of cases that is abstract and hard to understand should be avoided. Second, teachers need to collect information about students’ interest in class and after class to find out different demands and characteristics based on students’ knowledge, and understand students’ different interest preference on cases. In this way, the structure of cases in the course can be adjusted. For example, girl students may not know as much about high-tech products like cars, and boy students may not be interested in female products like cosmetics. At last, teachers need to be aware of the factor of timeliness when selecting cases and update related information in time. In the modern information age, the business environment is very changeable, and related laws and regulations, industry standards, the preference of consumers, and the competition situation can all change. When analyzing classic cases in history, students should be reminded of the market status of those cases. The subsequent development of companies in the cases can be organized as extended reading materials for the students to link theory with practice and conduct divergent thinking. At the same time, the latest cases that are closely related to students’ life should be collected, which is conducive for students to connect and understand. Therefore, selected cases can both contain the knowledge that students need to learn and consolidate, and trigger students’ learning interest and the desire to challenge.

3.2 Preparation before class

Students' preparation before case analysis is usually influenced by their energy level. When students have lots of homework, activities, exams, and contests, they tend to treat the case analysis part perfunctorily, which does not have a conclusive influence on their grades. For example, they free

ride in projects, repeatedly use materials in previous lessons, do not engage or speak in class, etc. [3]Therefore, the approach adopted by the author of this paper is to let students collect and read materials related to cases before class to form the basis for class discussion. No prior discussion, analysis, reports, and speeches are required. First, students can fully use the e-library of the university and get to know about the periodical literature and the use of Internet resources through collecting materials. This can prepare students for their graduation thesis and the use of Internet resources in future work. Second, students' workload is reduced, so they can take full advantage of in-class time and make better time arrangement. At last, repeated mechanical work is avoided, as the materials that students discuss outside class are not worth repeating in class except for examination. It would be better for students to discuss directly in class, which is also convenient for teachers' supervision.

3.3 Class discussion

Class discussion is a teaching and learning method in which students carry out discussions based on learned knowledge using in-class time under teachers' organization to achieve the objective of understanding knowledge deeper and improving abilities. Specifically, there are three methods as follows: The first is discussions inserted in the teaching and learning process. The teacher raises small and realistic questions that are closely linked to the teaching content and students are interested in based on the important and difficult parts in teaching content in the process of teaching theoretical knowledge. Students carry out short discussions for less than ten minutes using freshly learned knowledge. The second is group discussion. The teacher proposes related hot topics and assigns one topic to each group of students. Students find out their solutions to the topics using after-class time and share and discuss with the whole class in the following lesson. The third method is debating. The teacher raises a neutral question, and students are divided into the pro side and con side. Students spend time outside class looking up materials and finding arguments, then hot debates are conducted in class. The one-on-one interactions between the teacher and students are reflected in class discussion, including one-on-one interactions between the teacher and the key opinion leader in students, between groups, and between the two sides of the debate. The teacher should pay attention to the control of time arrangement, like briefing time, thinking time, discussion time and conclusion time when the case analysis begins. The teacher should come off the stage and listen to students' discussions in the progress of case analysis. The teacher can raise inspiring and vague questions to guide students to think from deep and diverse angles, which enables students to create, analyze and evaluate cases based on different possibilities, and make appropriate decisions. Proper guidance on the thinking direction can be offered to keep the case discussion focused on the topic and run smoothly, and answers can be given instantly in response to students' questions to speed up the discussion progress when students meet problems in thinking. One thing to notice is that some students often read cases with enthusiasm, but decipher them perfunctorily. In this situation, the teacher needs to encourage students' autonomy and activeness, so that they can participate in the case discussion voluntarily, and think and cooperate to work on the problems in cases. Meanwhile, overall learning effects need to be attended to with the aim of all-student involvement instead of certain students.

In this process, the teacher can know about students' preparation, thinking direction, master of knowledge, and the real results of discussions. More importantly, the gaps in the teacher's preparation which are concerned by the students are clarified and can be filled directly using the Internet in multimedia classes. Finally, the teacher can summarize students' gains, questions, and mistakes in discussions, and create specific summaries based on different classes in the final teacher analysis.

4. Conclusions

The following points should also be noted when implementing 'demand differentiation and customization' interactive case teaching:

Time control. Teachers should pay attention to the equal distribution of participating time in each discussion group. Students' follow up questions need to be answered directly, and the topics should not be overextended to avoid straying from the theme.

Utilization of multimedia tools. Teachers and students can make use of the Internet through computers and smartphones to conduct searches for questions, cases, advertisements, news, etc. Thus, answers and proofs can be found on site [4].

Case update. The focus should be put on the latest development condition of research objects, and be updated timely to prevent the problems of contradiction and outdated information.

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