

## Thinking About the Students as the Center: Taking the Problems and Solutions in Economics Teaching as an Example

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### Abstract

Currently, there are several problems that exist in teaching micro economics in undergraduate colleges including little participation from students, weak connections between class content and reality, and consumed motivation by abstractive theories. There is just an opinion that colleges in China do not consider students as center of teaching, which results problem above. In this regard, it is necessary to change teaching and managing mode and move focus to student-centered teaching model. In addition, it should be to explore corresponding teaching method, improve students' motivation, design teaching based on students' knowledge and relate examples in life to theories as the foundation of teaching.

**Key words:** Student-centered; Teaching mode; Problem-solving

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## 1. EXISTING PROBLEMS IN TEACHING ECONOMICS

As a summary to situations involved in a period of teaching, there are several problems existed:

### 1.1 Little Participation From Students During Teaching

It is common that teaching of economics is based on teacher's lecture due to heavy contents, abstractive theories, which are difficult accepted by students and need professor's recitation. It usually means that students need to passively follow teachers' idea with low active participation. After-class assignments would hardly improve students' ability of active thinking. Abstractive theories supported by plenty of the hypothesis are not highly related to practice. Thus, in certain chapters, teachers are not able to leave inspirational assignments. Therefore, this homework is mainly calculations and short-answer questions.

### 1.2 Connection Between Course Material and Reality Is Weak

Completing the teaching task is the teachers' own work. Some of classes need to explain a large amount of theories, which make the teachers tend to teach theoretical content to the whole class, and in order to enable students to better understand the content taught, it requires a large number of exercises. This relatively weakened the emphasis on the practical significance of economic theory, and lots of assumptions make the theory seem to be lack of the carrier of reality. Students are passive acceptance of the content of the theory and they lack of realistic foundation in order to understand. This leads to disjunction between learning and reality, and students have a hard time to accept the theory. It is difficult for them to establish an economical way of thinking and even more difficult to solve the practical problems.

### 1.3 Abstract Theories and Obscure Expression

There are a lot tedious mathematical formulas, complicated graphs and curves in economics, and the language is obscure, the logic is very strong, and the course content is interlocked. It takes good thinking ability and well mathematics background to learn economic

well. Students are able to use mathematics to express the content of economics, but the economics of learning and thinking and mathematics' learning and thinking are different. So it is very easy for students who are learning microeconomics to feel at loss, or even resist it. At the same time, the content of the study of economics is strongly associated with each other. If the students do not understand the content earlier, it can influence the follow-up learning easily. And obscure language and boring theory makes it difficult for students to self-study, but also to spend the enthusiasm of students learning

## 2. THOUGHTS ON THE "STUDENT-CENTERED" THEORY

Many literatures in economics teaching attributed problems to teachers who teach in accordance with the requirements of the syllabus over emphasis on teaching content and fail to establish a "student-centered" educational philosophy. Therefore, the implementation of the "student-centered" teaching concept is not satisfactory.

### 2.1 Debate on Subjective and Objective

The education and teaching philosophy of "student-centered" is first mentioned by a famous American psychologist, Carl Rogers, who is also a humanistic psychologist. He believes the goal of education is to promote students to change, so that students learn to learn. During the process of achieving goals, students realize that they are the main subject of learning, and they need to reply on their own efforts to achieve the full potential of the development of personality. Teachers need to implement the "uninstructive guidance" teaching theory and strategy, to respect the students, to understand and trust them, to pay attention to inspire students to simulate their thinking and interests in learning.

However, in students' study, teachers need to let the students realize that studying is the realization of self-worth, and studying is their own responsibility; even if the students have established such a consciousness, can they really achieve perfect self-restraint? How should teachers judge which students can perform self-study, which students need help to set up learning is their own learning subject, is a good sense of the way to realize self-value, and then perform the classification of the management?

### 2.2 How to Adapt to Students

Supporters of the "Student-centered" educational ideas put forward the idea that all the educational resources used in education and teaching, together with all the help of educational methods and means are external factors, and can play its role only when it is accepted by the educated students. Therefore, all kinds of schools, curriculum, course materials and teaching methods must be built on the actual situation of students to meet the needs of students as a benchmark. They must help to students'

physical and mental health. Hence, teaching activities are required to demonstrate the needs of students, rather than the individual's own wish. From the current teaching situation of economic courses, the curriculum content has set the microeconomics price theory as the core material explaining producers and consumers' behavior on the production and consumption, and the supply and use of elements and market failure. Some textbooks have added to the general equilibrium, welfare economics, and game theory. Macroeconomics deals with the utilization of economic resources. It is utilized to solve problems such as economic growth, price stability, employment and balance of payments. Its main theories include national income decision theory, inflation theory, employment theory, economic growth theory, economic cycle theory, and fiscal and monetary policy. About the nature and task of "economic", "economic" is the basic course for the two professional courses: economic and management. Through the teaching of relevant concepts and basic theory, students can master the general mechanism of market economy principle, the establishment of basic economic thinking, and be able to use basic economic analysis tools and methods and socio-economic operation for a simple empirical description and analysis. From the teaching objectives of the course, it is in line with the economic management of various types of students' follow-up learning needs. Much controversies are about economic teaching is caused by the difference between economic theory and the reality, and the existence of differences is not good for the students to understand the theoretical content. A large number of theoretical models, graphics and mathematical reasoning also make it more difficult for students with weak mathematical background. Thus, many scholars and teachers suggest setting up models to simplify the empirical analysis, but it is useful to noting that although microeconomics belongs to the social sciences category, the course system is similar to natural science courses in its tight logic. Its concept, analysis methods, and principles are abstract, but graphics, theoretical models and mathematical reasoning are the basic methods to understand the principles of economics. It is also good for students to establish better economic thinking and attainment. So teachers should teach in a way that students can understand the economic knowledge and analytical methods, rather than simply simplify the learning content and mathematical explanation.

## 3. TEACHING MODE TRANSFORMATION

In order to improve the teaching effect of microeconomics and to achieve the certain curriculum goals, comprehensive adjustments need to be made to current course materials, teaching methods and means to achieve the transformation of teaching mode.

### 3.1 Guide Students to Participate During Class

Economic course teaching aims to cultivate students' economic attainment and enhance students' ability to analyze and explain various economic phenomena by using economic theories and methods. The cultivation of students' economic attainment and the development of their economic thinking and judgement need to be inspired and guided in economic teaching. Economic theories are abstract and charts and formulas are extremely complex, so it is difficult for students to understand. Therefore, teachers need to be good at using economic cases to guide them to observe initiatively and think actively, and apply economic principles to the phenomena. Students' thinking abilities can be trained through their participation during class, their will understand the concept more deeply, and their abilities of analyzing and problem solving are enhanced.

### 3.2 Notice the Connection Between Course Material and Real Life

Economic theory is the refining and summary of the actual social economic operation. During the realistic theoretical summary process, one needs to translate the concrete economic phenomena into an abstract or an accurate description of the mathematical language, and the economic theory is based on a series of assumptions on the relationship between economic variables hypothesis, and after turning economics into mathematical equations, the mathematical model of economic theory becomes the most "scientific", logical deduction of the theory. Thus, common economic theory is tight, refined, and more abstract, especially for students who just learn economics. It is often felt that the theory is too abstract, and there is no way to apply this interpretation to real life. However, the value of economics lies in solving practical problems. Hence, teachers need to pay attention to enhance students' thinking and applying economic theory to practical issues. When introducing a concept or a law, first start with the economic phenomenon, bring students into the reality of the scene, and guide them to summarize and conclude the corresponding concept and imagination. Finally, elaborate and reasoning the concept and theory clearly, so that the abstract concept and theory become alive in students' mind. Such teaching process not only enhances the students' understanding of the theory, but also helps students better apply economic theories and methods to real-life problems.

### 3.3 Optimize the Design of Links and Contents in During Classroom Teaching

The theoretical system of economics is complete and the logic is strict. Links and contents design for economic teaching is not only embodied in the classroom, but also in the section, and even the entire course. Teachers should pay attention to the students' acceptance level for theory, and arrange theoretical chapters accordingly.

For microeconomics, there is a supply-demand microeconomics theory. The explanation of each chapter should be divided into two: One focuses on the demand—the consumer, and the other focuses on the supply—the producers, to explain their elements of choices. Both the producers' and consumers' decisions are inseparable from equilibrium, and the price factor is the prerequisite for equilibrium. While factors for products, production and the market reach an equilibrium under the effects of demand and supply. The utility of the ordinal utility theory and the production theory of consumer equilibrium are quite similar to the optimal combination of factors of production logic, its indifference curve and yield curve analysis methods, and even its theoretical derivation process. The logistic relationship between production theory and cost theory is derived from the law of diminishing marginal returns. The short-term costs are all related to output. The marginal cost curve, average cost curve and the average variable cost curve are all U-shaped, that is, first decrease then increases with increasing output. The short-term average cost curve has a U-shaped because of effects of diminishing marginal returns. Under the same condition, the law of diminishing marginal returns states if the input of a variable element continuously increases, the marginal product first increases and then decreases after reaching its maximum. Therefore, there exists a corresponding relationship between short-term production function and short-term cost function, the minimum on the marginal cost curve corresponds to the maximum on the marginal output, and the maximum point on the average yield curve corresponds to the minimum point on the average variable cost curve. In the market structure analysis, the cost is the major factor of equilibrium formation. Only when the marginal cost equals to the marginal revenue, a manufacture can form a stable production state and the profit needs to be determined by the relationship between the average cost and the average return. Manufacturers' scale adjustments and access make the market to achieve a dynamic equilibrium. The factor of supply explains how to achieve the allocation of resources and the distribution of income through the price mechanism. From various parts of the content, we can see that microeconomics emphasise equilibrium, the stability of the economic system, and the price fluctuations are a relatively stable mechanism for the economic system automatic adjustment. Market failure theory is the amendment and supplement of the core theory of microeconomics, that is, the "invisible hand" principle.

In the arrangement of chapters, classes should be designed in such way that it is easier for students to accept. Teachers need to pay attention to how to bring up the topic at the beginning of the course, and guide students through the class for them to deduce, induce, and ultimately form a theoretical understanding. For example, introducing cases and exercises during explanation can enhance students' understanding. Make abstract symbolic

language, figures and formulas as students' thinking signals, and make each lesson as vivid and efficient as possible.

### 3.4 To Improve Students' Economic Attainment

The goal of economic teaching is to enhance students' economic theory attainment, so that students can learn to think like an economist, by using explanations for theoretical economic system with terms, models, icons and mathematical theory. In this way, students can master the basic analytical tools of economic thinking and the core concepts, master the use of the tools and theoretical analysis of various social and economic phenomena, and learn the ability to analyze and summarize "hot spots" in the real economy and form personal points of view. During the teaching process, teachers should pay attention to the explanation of basic knowledge and combine it with the real economy, and to use group discussions, case studies and other forms of flexible teaching to help improve students' problem solving abilities and analyzing abilities. In the meantime, we should also pay attention to improve students' ability to express themselves through class discussions and writing. And use summer social in-tern, professional colloquiums, studies on cutting-edge problems to broaden the horizons of students and improve their level of awareness of practical problems.

### SUMMARY

Teaching in colleges and universities is a systematic project. It requires coordination and cooperation between education departments in order to improve the teaching effect of economics. In particular, teachers are required to put in outstanding efforts. They need to be "student-centered", to mobilize students' enthusiasm, to design their courses according to students' cognitive rules, in order to make more students to participate during class, and help them establish economic thinking and nurture their thinking and problem solving abilities.

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