Research on the Application of Case Debate Teaching Method in Economics and Management Subjects

Ya-Mei GUAN* and Yong-Chang LU
Nanjing University of Finance and Economics, Nanjing City, P.R. China, 210023
guanyamei@sina.com
*Corresponding author

Keywords: Economics and Management Subjects, Case-based Teaching Method, Debating Teaching

Abstract: Economics and management subjects are practical and highly applied subjects, emphasizing students' thinking ability and overall quality through its teaching process. The case debate teaching plays an important role in the teaching of economics and management subjects, whilst contributing to stimulating students' enthusiasm to participate in interactions and improving students' debate, problem analyzing and solving abilities. This paper discusses the advantages of case debate teaching method and its concrete application process through following stages: teaching preparation, case teaching implementation and summary feedback. Furtherly, this paper summarizes three problems that should be paid attention to in the practical application of case debate teaching method and puts forward the optimization strategy of case debate teaching accordingly.

Introduction
Case analysis is an important teaching method in economics and management subjects and it becomes increasingly important. However, there are some problems such as improper case selection, overuse of case teaching, overlook of case teaching methods and the unsatisfied effect of case teaching. Based on the author's argument-based case teaching experience, this paper aims to study the application of case debate teaching in economics and management subjects in order to diversify our case teaching methods as well as obtain positive effects through these methods.

The Definition of Case Debate Teaching Method
The debate case teaching method has a long history, its origin form can be traced back to the ancient Greek Philosopher Socrates’ "spiritual midwifery method". Start from the real case, Socrates debates with students through a series of dialogical inquiry and imparts the truth contained in the debate by winning the debate. In this way, Socrates not only improves the students' critical thinking and debate ability, but also makes himself a famous orator. The case debate teaching method in this article has developed Socrates' method, which is more systematic and teaching-targeted. The author argues that the argumentative case teaching is based on the general case teaching, which arouses students' enthusiasm to participate in the classroom, and uses the professional knowledge to analyze the problems in the case. Through the interaction between the teachers, the affirmative side and the negative side students, contributing to the improvement of students' thinking ability. In the process of case debate teaching, both teachers and students are participants. The teacher represents the host and students should be divided into the affirmative side and the negative side before starting to debate the case. Thus there exist a case-based interactive relationship between these three roles.

The Application Process of Case Debate Teaching in Economics and Management Subjects

The Preparation Phase
Firstly, it's necessary to make full preparation for teaching. In the debate of case teaching, the teacher should choose a case properly and then determine a course-related topic for students. The
teacher should also carry out a demand survey among students before selecting the case. An investigate about students' interest and proficiency in the knowledge is necessary before determining the frequency and focus of case debate teaching. The case debate teaching method should be applied to these situations that students are interested in or obtaining poor understanding of some areas with the purpose to enhance their learning skills. Secondly, it’s useful to take some assistant measures. It’s wrong to consider it as a small teaching activity, the case debate teaching should be regarded as a teaching method. What’s more, there should be some supporting measures which can facilitate and provide conditions as well as the environment, including school policy, teachers' evaluation of students and teaching environment. For example, the evaluation about students' educational performance made by the Office of Academic Affairs should be combined with their daily performance. In this way, students’ initiative of joining in the case debate teaching can be released.

The Implementation Phase

Debating case teaching, as a novel case teaching method, changed the role teachers and students played in traditional teaching. Teachers are both the participant and the chairman of the debate. Students can not only listen to teachers' theory but also debate with others on behalf of the affirmative side or the negative side. Therefore, the role participants played should be identified in the implementation of the debate.

The Role of Participants

In the debate of case teaching, the teacher is no longer the leader of the classroom, but the designer, the organizer, the guide and the arbiter of the case discussion. Therefore, the teacher became as the activity’s designer, the host and the arbitrator. Accordingly, students are the main participants, the affirmative and negative debater and the responder of the activity. Undergoing this activity, only when the roles of the participants are clearly defined, can the teaching activities be carried out according to the participants.

Class Debate

Before the debate, it is necessary to select four debaters as the affirmative side and negative side by individual application, there will be a positive response due to the encouragement of students’ participation. Then the host (teacher) gives a brief introduction about the relevant background information, the game flow and rules of the debate. The claim and the counterclaim representatives should state their opinions in turn within 3 minutes and then give a closing statement. Meanwhile, the group can discuss the countermeasure of the remaining part and the teacher can help both the claim and counterclaim with their problems in the previous stage. Furthermore, the teacher can give some advice about both sides’ strategies and encourage them to persuade the other side by professional theoretical knowledge. In the following free debate stage, two sides take turns to stand up and speak independently. Both sides can state their views and point out the mistake in the other side’s statement, even ask opposite side’s speaker some questions. Free debate can test students' reaction ability and improve their ability of debate. Moreover, teachers can ask students more specific questions in this stage. The teacher's participation is beneficial to guide the two sides following right direction, because students could easily stray from the topic in this part. So teachers should listen carefully to the summary of both sides and guide students to improve their summarizing ability and generalization ability reflected in the free debate stage. Furthermore, every time a debate in the case teaching should have a certain achievement, teachers should record the whole process of debate and students' summarizing statements and make a case teaching report which also includes the students' reflection. Finally, the whole teaching activity in this lecture can be used as an example for the subsequent case teaching.

Summary of Case Teaching

The debate case teaching cannot do without the joint effort of teachers and students. Teachers need to investigate the needs, choose cases, determine the topic, host the debate, summarize and make
evaluation. At the same time, students need to be familiar with the case, select the point of the topic, form a team, debate and give feedback. The ultimate goal through the guidance of teachers and cooperation with the students is that all the participants would gain benefits from this process. In summary, the case debate teaching method is concentrated on the characteristics of social economic and management problems and combine the case from the realistic society with the classroom teaching by the introduction of debate. As a result, it can effectively improve the teaching quality of economics and management subjects.

**The Optimization of Case Debate Teaching in Economics and Management Subjects**

Only by optimizing through three stages of case choosing, debating and minimize problems can we achieve good results.

**Case Selecting: Uphold the Principles of Argument, Pertinence and Comprehensiveness**

The teacher must understand what a good case is for the economics and management subjects when choosing the case. The case should have the following characteristics: First, the questions in the case should be debatable. Debate for both sides are fair, so that it is easy to lead students to argue and discuss as if they were enemy soldiers in a battle. Second, the case should be targeted. The selection of cases should be based on the professional knowledge of the major. Third, the case should be comprehensive. In this way, students can use clues provided by the case to start the debate. With the training trough case, the purpose is to enable students to solve economic and management issues in reality.

**Case Debating: Uphold the principles of professionalization, theorization and openness**

In the classroom debate process, students often stray from the theme, debate by unprofessional language, repetitive debate and even lead to the controversy. Therefore, teachers should make the principles clear, which including the distinctions of professionalization, theorization and openness in the case debate. Students should be encouraged to use economics and management expertise to understand the case and participate in the debate, so as to improve their professional knowledge and ability in economic and management subjects. In the classroom debate not only to ensure professionalization, but also to stress the importance of ensuring the theoretical practice.

**Minimize problems: Uphold the principles of efficiency, coordination and materiality**

In implementation process of case debate teaching, it is possible that problems such as low efficiency, long time consuming, chaos and too open classroom debate may occur. Sometimes the debate is caught in a deadlocked situation and there is no appropriate conclusion available related to the case. Therefore, adhering to the principle of maximizing efficiency under the command of teachers, students should simplify the language as much as possible. Teachers need control the debate order according to the rules of debate with the help for both affirmative side and the negative side. It is also necessary to stop chaos in time and guarantee the debate order. When the debate is deadlocked, the teacher, as the arbiter, should help coordinate both sides. Because of too many students and different criteria of evaluation, it is difficult to give an accurate evaluation. Therefore, teachers should adhere to the principle of ‘Key point evaluated first’ to grade students combined with the key item in evaluation process. So students’ advantages and strengths can be underscored.

**Conclusion**

Economics and management subjects are practical and highly applied subjects in China. So in the course of economic and management teaching, we should pay attention to the advanced and practical case from China's economic and management, government reform and social issues, these cases should be introduced into the teaching of economic and management subjects. Most of Chinese economic and management theory is the introduction of foreign economic and management theory. Therefore, it is important to combine theories with Chinese actual cases to achieve
localization. Also students should do some critical thinking, which is the process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information to reach an answer or conclusion. Case debate teaching should combine debate method with case teaching and carry out debate based on the case. It would stimulate students' critical thinking and disciplined thinking in the debate. Evidence from practices shows that case-based debate teaching is an effective way for economics and management teaching. It combines cases, debates and the economics and management subjects together to meet the requirements of economics and management teaching and improve teaching effect. In a sense, it not only can enhance students and teachers’ abilities, but also has a positive effect for the localization of economics and management. Furthermore, it can improve teaching methods and culture and has a great promotion for other subjects.

Acknowledgment

[1] This research was financially supported by the Higher Education Research Project of Nanjing University of Finance and Economics <Research on the credit system training model and examination way reformation of Business Colleges and Universities>
[2] This research was financially supported by Education Reformation Project of Nanjing University of Finance and Economics (JGX1769)
[3] This research was financially supported by academic degree and master education of Nanjing University of Finance and Economics (Y16006)
[4] This research was financially supported by Blue Project of Jiangsu Province

References