On Case Teaching for Incommunicative Students

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Abstract. In case teaching, students are the important part of teaching activities. If the students tend to be reluctant to talk, how can the teaching activities be carried out? We had encountered the above difficulty, and we had found a road to overcome it. We summarize our experience in five years, and propose some feasible method to implement case teaching for incommunicative students.

Introduction

In traditional teaching, the students play the role as the listens. However, there are some shortcomings in this method. As a passive audience, students do not tend to think on their own initiative. Moreover, the teaching content is relatively fixed because the teaching activities are centered on teachers. Such teaching effectiveness is obviously not good, and the student also cannot obtain the enhancement. To overcome it, some novel teaching methods had been presented, and case teaching is the one of them.

In case teaching, the students are no longer the passive audience, and they are also an important part of teaching activities. According to the teaching purpose and the teaching content, the teacher gives several cases. Then the students are well prepared and actively discuss the cases under the guidance of the teacher. At last, the student can acquire the knowledge in the case teaching. In the teaching, the student gain more knowledge by consulting materials and discussing each other. More importantly, students are active learners.

Their learning efficiency is higher, and their learning effectiveness is more obvious. Since the student are so important in case teaching, if the student tend to be reluctant to talk, how can the teaching activities be carried out? Because of the influence of Chinese traditional culture, Chinese students often do not like to speak in front of people. There is an old saying that wind destroys the flourishing trees in the forest. So Chinese students like to study hard rather than talk in front of people. But if the students do not actively participate in the discussion and do not publish their views, how is the case teaching implemented?

We had encounter the above difficult, and we had found a road to overcome it. When we started the case teaching, most of the students were not prepared before the discussion and did not speak during the discussion, which led to the fact that the discussion could not be carried out. In order to improve the effect of case teaching, we have tried many methods. After five years of exploration, we find that the effect of case teaching has been greatly improved. On the questionnaire survey on the students, we find that most students consider that our course is very interesting and helpful to them.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the learning situation analysis, and our methods of case teaching are discussed in the section 3. Our evaluation and analysis are presented in section 4. At last, we conclude this paper.

Learning Situation Analysis

There are some differences between the traditional teaching and the case teaching which is shown in fig.1. In the tradition teaching, the teachers are the taker, while the students are the audience. Sometimes the teacher asks the students questions, and the students need to answer questions. The
interaction between them is very simple. However, in case teaching, the cases are the important component and the medium for teachers to impart knowledge to students. Teachers guide students to prepare and discuss cases, and students acquire new knowledge during preparation and discussion. In the case teaching, students are no longer passive listeners, but organizers and implementers of teaching activities.

![Diagram of traditional teaching and case teaching](image)

**Figure 1. Difference between traditional teaching and case teaching.**

In view of the importance of students in case studies, we investigate and analyze the students’ situation. In fact, we find that most of students are incommunicative in our class. The first cause is Chinese culture. Chinese children are taught by their parents to speak little and do more when they are young. Although they begin to change after they entered college, they are still not active in class. When we first implemented case teaching at 2013, students were often silent and unwilling to respond to the questions and discussions, and it is very embarrassing. Our first attempt was a failure.

We investigate the reasons why students were reluctant to participate in case teaching. First, many students consider that teachers should teach in the class and the student should be the audience. So they seldom answer the question and participate in the discussion. Second, some students think that it takes too much time to obtain the knowledge by discussing the case. They want the teacher to tell them the answer directly, not to find out for themselves. Some students consider that the teachers organize case teaching because the teacher is lazy, so they are also slack off in case teaching. Fourth, since most students cope with the case discussion, other students think the discussion is worthless and more reluctant to participate in the discussion. At last, students tend to expect definite answers rather than specious conclusions. However, many cases have not the best answer, and students think the cases have no conclusion and it is useless. On the above causes, the students do not want to put the effort to case teaching.

Teachers are also responsible for the above difficulty. First, the teacher’s ability is insufficient for the case teaching. As students participate in teaching activities, teachers need stronger classroom control ability[1]. However, when we first try case teaching, we do not have enough experience to cope with the situation. Second, a suitable case is a guarantee of success in case teaching. An inappropriate case will cause students to fail to understand the purpose of teaching. It is difficult to find appropriate cases in a short time. It takes more time to collect and sort out the cases. Third, adequate preparation is essential. In traditional teaching, the course is implemented according to the script. However there are too many uncertain factors in the course of case teaching. For example, students may pose unexpected questions for the teacher. In order to handle the situation, the teacher has to spend more time preparing lessons.

**Our Methods**

In order to improve the teaching effect, we had adopted many methods in the past five years. We summary it in following subsections.

**Building Case Library**

We spend a lot of time to build a case library. We had prepared a lot of cases when we planned to implement case teaching at 2013. After a round of teaching, we found that some cases are not appropriate. We also asked students about each case through a questionnaire survey that students
select appropriate cases and inappropriate cases. Based on these findings and teaching effectiveness, we eliminate a number of inappropriate cases. At the same time, we add some new cases each year. After five years, we have constructed a relatively well case library.

In our opinion, a case, whether true or hypothetical, should be a story to explain a problem that it is the teaching content. The case should be suitable for the teaching content, and it is inapposite to fabricate the cases because of case teaching. In fact, the cases should be collected purposeful on the content of the teaching, and sorted carefully for case teaching. There are more relevant cases with some teaching content, and less relevant cases with some teaching content. At this time we need more patience to find suitable cases.

The case should be able to stimulate students’ interests [2]. As an example, we have a class to discuss how to carry out the investigation. It was the American election at that time. Before the American election results came out, polls showed that Hilary had great hopes of being elected president, but the election results were reversed. We took it as one case, and encourage students to find out the reasons. Because the U.S. presidential election coincided with our teaching, there is a lot of source on the Internet for students. Students are also very interested to prepare the discussion, is also very active and enthusiastic in the discussion. The teaching effect is very good.

Moreover the case should be a well thought out story of the right size[2]. The case should not be boring numbers, rules, but a living little story. The case comes from life, but it is necessary to be revised to fit into the case of teaching. Usually a case should be adjusted according to the teaching arrangement. If a case is too long, it may affect the overall arrangement of the teaching. For example, we are introducing how to ride with leaders and colleagues. We can discuss the problem with a few pictures. The images are vivid, so we do not need too much discussion. The size of the case is also flexibility. According to the classroom response, if the students discuss enthusiastically, the discussion may be extended.

Suitable Atmosphere

Case teaching should have a suitable atmosphere. In a depressed environment, students may not speak on their own initiative. This situation is especially serious if the students themselves are not talkative. We should create a comfortable environment in our teaching. In this way, students will not be too nervous to participate in the discussion. Moreover, in a relaxed environment, students are more active in thinking and interacting with each other. In this way, case teaching can achieve good results.

How to create a comfortable environment? There is one example. During the course of organizing case teaching, the school leaders and the steering group attended the lecture. Because of the leadership, students were very nervous and afraid to speak some wrong thing. It made that case teaching can not be implemented. At this time, the teacher should ease the atmosphere. As the organizer of the case teaching, I said: “these teachers attending the class directed at me, not for you. So I should be nervous, but you”. The students laughed at what the teacher said, and the atmosphere of the class became relaxed.

There are some ways to make the class atmosphere easier. For example, we usually do not always stand on the platform in class. In our opinion, standing on the platform creates an invisible pressure for the speaker. Many times, we go into the students to participate in the discussion, not spectators. In this way, we can more clearly understand the true intention of the students’ talk. Noted that do not interrupt the students. When a student is interrupted, he may doubt what he says. The students speak freely and evaluate each other, and the teacher gives advice to guide the students at last. This case discussion is more intense and the effect is better.

Good Comprehensive Ability

To improve the implementation of case teaching, it is essential for teachers to have good comprehensive ability. Compared with the traditional teaching, case teaching requires teachers to have higher ability. In case studies, students may ask questions that the teacher do not expect. In order to carry out case teaching better, the teacher must have extensive knowledge. Similarly, teachers
should have better classroom control skills to cope with all kinds of salient situations. Finally, teachers should have good teaching ability to attract students.

A teacher must devote more time to improving his knowledge. Poor knowledge of teachers is one of the reasons for the failure of our first case teaching. This is our first time to take this course at that time, and we do not have enough knowledge to answer case teaching. The teacher did not have the confidence to have good lessons. After five years of accumulation, we not only master the knowledge of textbooks, but also have a thorough understanding of relevant knowledge.

In our opinion, teachers should have some humor. In order to enliven the atmosphere, humor can achieve very good effectiveness. In one discussion, no student is willing to be the first to speak. How to break the ice? At that time, we ask the most handsome student to answer the first question. The students elected, soon a classmate stood up report. Students are overjoyed on our joke, and a student is selected soon. Similarly, we ask the most intelligent students to answer the question, and so on. The art of humorous lectures breaks the situation of no one answered, and arouses the enthusiasm of students.

Other Methods

Some methods can be adopted to improve the effect of case teaching. First is to adjust the class size. To ensure the effectiveness of teaching, the number of students in the class can not be too much. If there are too many students in the class, the teacher is not able to accommodate more students. This can cause a considerable number of students to be ignored, and the students who are incommunicative will be more silent. Of course, the small size of classes is also affecting the teaching effect. If the number of people involved in the discussion is too small, the enthusiasm of students decline. In our opinion, it is suitable for about twenty students in a class.

Students should be appropriately motivated in case teaching. The evaluation of students’ achievements in traditional education is usually on Teachers. However, in case teaching, because of the subjective factors, it is not easy to be objective evaluated. To this end, we propose a solution that is the combination of student self-assessment, peer evaluation and teacher evaluation. Moreover the scoring standards and the results of the scoring are public, and all students participate in the evaluation. Because of the competitive relationship, the students begin to speak actively.

In case teaching, the teacher must also be a good organizer. For example, in the discussion, some students like to speak, but there is nothing valuable in the speech. So the teacher should prevent him from making long speech so as not to waste too much time. On the contrary, some students are not good at speaking, so the teacher should guide them to speak. Moreover, the discussion should be adjusted in time so as not to deviate from the subject in the discussion. At the end of the discussion, the teacher needs to summarize it and find out the problem for deeper thinking.

Our Achievement

In the past five years, we have carried out case teaching for 40 classes. The effectiveness of case teaching is obvious. Because a large number of students take part in the postgraduate entrance exams, some students do not come to class or sleep in class. This situation does not exist now. We have conducted a sample survey of 20 students at each year for investigating teaching effectiveness with the anonymous questionnaires. In the questionnaires, we grade the teaching effectiveness with centesimal system. At first year, we only get a score 71. However, we continue to improve our teaching methods, and the score increases to 93.

Summary

In this paper, we give some of the advice learned from the implementation of case teaching over the past five years. The results of practice also show that the above methods are effective. In the anonymous questionnaires, one student wrote the sentence as following. I plan to sleep in the classroom, but you did not let me sleep at all because the lessons you teach are so interesting.
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