

The Application of Case Discussion Method in the Teaching of Public Administration

Xiaochuan Wang^{1,*}, Wenzheng Zhang²

¹College of Management, Gansu Agricultural University, No. 1 Yingmen Village, Anning District, Lanzhou, 730070, Gansu Province, P. R. China

²Teaching Quality Monitoring Office, Gansu Agricultural University, No. 1 Yingmen village, Anning District, Lanzhou 730070, Gansu Province, P. R. China

*Corresponding author

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Abstract: The drawbacks of the inculcation-type teaching and the informatization construction urge the reform to come up with a new teaching method, in which the teaching subject no longer takes the teacher as the leading role, but takes the teacher and the student as the center and focuses on serving the student. At the same time, the teaching concept and the teaching method should be reformed based on the informatization means to improve the teaching quality and efficiency. In this paper, the necessity of the application of case discussion teaching method in public administration teaching was discussed through the application of case teaching method on the premise of public administration study. At the same time, after the design of its application in public pipeline teaching, the countermeasures were put forward based on the analysis of the difficulties in the five links of knowledge points and case selection, case discussion preparation, classroom case discussion implementation, student learning effect evaluation, case discussion design reflection in the process of classroom implementation.

1. The Necessity of Applying Case Discussion Method to the Teaching of Public Administration

1.1. Application of Practical Cases in the Public Administration Determined by Practice Orientation

Public administration is mainly based on the inherent basis and the conditions of the times, the former of which is the essential difference between the public and private sectors, while the latter are mainly the economic, social and political crises that occurred globally from the 1960s to the 1980s. Based on this, western countries made a series of government reforms to get rid of the predicament. The government crisis caused by the failure of Adam Smith's liberalism prompted western countries to try to reform their governments. The scientific and technological revolution and the globalization tide have also become another impetus to separate public administration from politics, administration and management. [1] Another major reason for the separation of public administration is that it pays more attention to the influence of external environment on public administration departments. Therefore, public administration should adhere to the practice orientation, show its discipline

advantages by effectively responding to the challenges brought by external environment, and continuously gain the momentum for discipline development. Therefore, the application of real cases in public administration has more practical significance, highlighting the practical orientation of public administration.

1.2. Theoretical Inclusiveness Seeking the Real Cases to Support Public Administration

Through exploration, it is found that the theoretical sources of public administration are rich, and public administration is characterized by theoretical inclusiveness. Public administration originally originated from the political discipline, with government failure theory and bureaucracy theory as the theoretical basis of political science, classical school theory, behavior school theory, decision school theory, system school theory and new management theory as the theoretical basis of management, [2] and public choice theory and principal-agent theory as the theoretical basis of economics. The theoretical explanation in specific practical cases of public administration can be based on both political theory and economic theory, and the general tools of management can be applied to solve specific problems, which can be used as the theoretical support of public administration. Obviously, the multi-theoretical foundation of public administration provides a strong theoretical support for the development of public administration, and constantly consolidates the theoretical foundation of public administration.

1.3. Exploring the Shaping of Public Administration by Many Cases Due to the Discipline Immaturity

As public administration has only been in existence for less than 50 years, there is no mature theory and methodology, clear discipline boundary and systematic discipline system. It also needs many practical explorations and more practical case studies to shape the discipline system of public administration, including the theoretical system and the methodological system. Therefore, the development of public administration needs more practical cases as a supplement that is committed to solving various major problems raised in practice. In a word, the characteristics of public administration, such as practice orientation, theoretical inclusiveness and discipline immaturity, determine that its teaching should be conducted through case discussion, which can not only reflect its discipline characteristics and nature, but also increase the interest of classroom, improve students' learning initiative and strengthen students' sensitivity to discipline. [3]

2. Design of Case Discussion Method in the Teaching of Public Administration

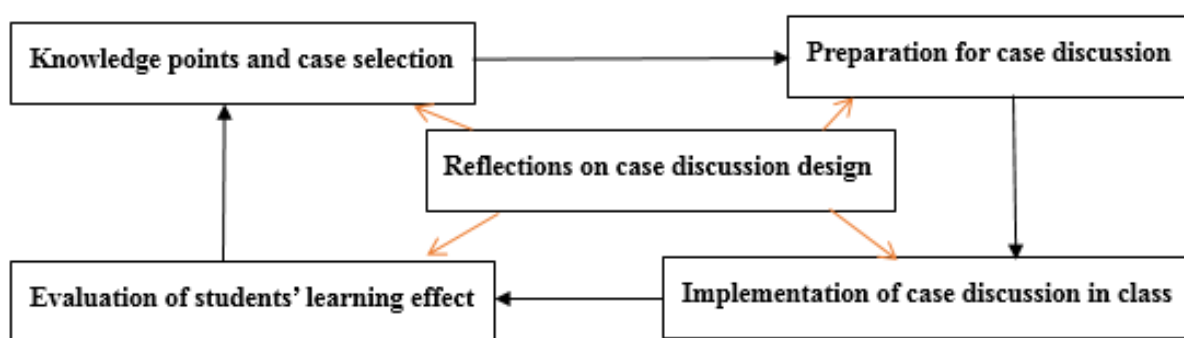


Figure 1: Design of case discussion

Teaching design is the most important and primary link in the teaching process. Only with careful

teaching design can we have an accurate grasp of the curriculum and classroom. The teaching design of case teaching of public administration in this paper is shown in Fig. 1.

2.1. Knowledge Points and Case Selection

Table 1: Case design corresponding to the knowledge points of Public administration

	Knowledge points	Case titles	Questions before class	Discussion questions in class
1	The relationship between public administration and Chinese social development	Deployment of decoupling work between Shanghai Chamber of Commerce and administrative organs.	1. What are the main means used by the current government in the management of the social economy? 2. How to promote the benign development of industry associations and chambers of commerce?	Please talk about the role of trade associations and chambers of commerce from the perspective of governance?
2	The principal-agent theory	The “moral dilemma” of the principal-agent problem	There are many practical acts of principal-agent in daily life. What is the content of principal-agent theory?	How to treat the principal-agent problem caused by the nonmorality (essentially immorality) of the market in the public domain?
3	Characteristics of public organizations	The problem of begging children in Minxian County, Gansu Province	What role do public organizations play in the process of social development?	What do you think are the reasonable countermeasures to solve the problem of professional begging from the perspective of public administration?
4	The government as one of the subjects of public administration	Fuxian Lake case: The pain of tourism real estate development	What are the management subjects in the public domain?	What measures should the government take in the process of environmental governance?
5	Lindahl equilibrium	Harding and the Tragedy of the Commons	1. What is the problem of "hitchhiking"? What is the root cause? 2. Why is there a tragedy in the commons?	How to achieve Lindahl equilibrium in case as much as possible?
6	Functions of public administration	Tianhe District of Guangzhou plans to “subcontract” 39 government functions	What is “a big government and a small society”? What is a “small government and a big society”?	How to build a new governance model of “a small government, a big society”?
7	Public administration control	Audit Office: 57,500 government-subsidized housing units in five provinces are idle	What are the contents of the public administration control process? How to control the process of public administration?	What are the reasons for the ineffective implementation of public administration policies?
8	Market failure and its correction	The State Council issued a document standardizing telecom charges and forbidding improper pricing	What measures does the State Council take to regulate the market? What are the attributes of state-owned enterprises?	How to form a market-determined price mechanism as soon as possible?
9	Public sector performance management	“Standardized Operation Demonstration” initiated by Shanxi Local Taxation Bureau	What are the main difficulties facing performance management in the public sector?	What is performance management? What are the main activities of performance management?
10	Supervision of public power	Hot events on the Internet often involve public power supervision. Anti-corruption and people’s livelihood have received much attention	What is public supervision? How to know the position and function of network public opinion in the supervision of public power?	How can the news media give full play to the supervision role of public opinion?
11	E-government	Analysis of Haidian Park Digital Park Government in Zhongguancun Development Zone	What is e-government? What do you know about e-government?	How to establish the e-government in the era of big data? What kind of difficulties and challenges do you face? How to solve it?

The important and difficult contents in the teaching of public administration are related to the

subject attributes and teachers' knowledge reserves. In the process of preparing lessons, teachers need to design the key and difficult knowledge points of teaching, as well as the knowledge points presented in the form of cases according to the collection and preparation of materials, which requires teachers to carefully design to reach a meeting point, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows the knowledge points and case designs used by the author for classroom discussion in the teaching of Public Administration. In the preparation of teaching, it is also necessary to design specific teaching cases, including teaching courseware, teaching videos, texts of teaching cases, reference answers, teaching tools, diagnosis summary, teaching feedback, teaching review, etc. It is a relatively large and systematic work, in which each design link is very important. Besides, it is also necessary to update the case according to the time dimension.

2.2. Preparation for Case Discussion

Preparation for case discussion includes grouping students, issuing early cases, checking students' reading cases, designing discussion links, designing grading standards, etc., especially the grading design, which includes teacher grading, student-teacher grading, student self-evaluation, and student mutual evaluation. For the sake of fairness and justice, the standard of scoring is uniform. For example, in the case of public sector performance management, students not only discuss the case design, but also engage in the familiar classroom activities of designing performance indicators in the public sector. At the same time, the method of "teacher's evaluation plus student's mutual evaluation" has been recognized by students, and has improved the enthusiasm and initiative of students to participate in the case discussion. Finally, students are encouraged by prizes. In this process, a unified scoring standard is also used to reflect fairness and impartiality. The scoring table is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Evaluation of classroom presentation of Public Administration

Date:

No. of group	Rationality of indicator design (totally 20 points)	Comprehensiveness of indicator design (totally 20 points)	Feasibility of indicator design (totally 20 points)	The degree of excellence of the courseware (totally 20 points)	Body posture, language expression, content familiarity (totally 20 points)	Total
Group I						
Group II						
Group III						
Group IV						
Group V						
Group VI						

Notes:

- (1) This table is based on hundred-mark system.
- (2) It shall be filled in by each group anonymously (one page for each group)
- (3) The final score of each group is the average of the total scores of each group.
- (4) Each group shall complete the table and submit it to the previous group for final score calculation. The team leader of each group shall be responsible for reporting the score to the monitor for summary.

2.3. Implementation of Case Discussion in Class

The implementation of case discussion in class should be carried out after the preparatory work of case discussion is completed, which is also a key link in case discussion teaching. [4] The adequacy of case design in the early stage is not absolutely positively correlated with the implementation effect

of case discussion, because the implementation effect of the same case in different classes is quite different due to the different characteristics of students. In this process, it is necessary to understand the characteristics of the students. As the students in some classes are generally active in answering questions, there should be a limit on the number of times they can answer questions. For example, one person can answer questions up to three times, otherwise the class case discussion will be seriously overtime, which will lead to the difficulty in ensuring the completion of teaching tasks. However, when students in some classes are conservative and do not answer questions actively, it is necessary to stipulate that they should undertake at least one task of case discussion at the same time of presentation so as to ensure the adequacy of case discussion. The rules of discussion should be designed according to the characteristics of students. At the same time, teachers' control ability, guidance ability, communication ability, observation ability and analysis ability are all factors that need to be considered in the implementation of case discussion.

2.4. Evaluation of Students' Learning Effect

Case discussion design is not the purpose of course teaching, but students' ability to master and apply knowledge is the ultimate goal of specialized course knowledge learning in teaching. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the students' learning effect after the case discussion, with the help of questionnaires and interviews [5]. The evaluation of students' learning effect in Public Administration course is mainly carried out from two aspects. On the one hand, the basic content of each knowledge point is evaluated in the form of exercises in and after class, and then the questions with the highest wrong answer rate are explained in order to consolidate the learning of basic knowledge. On the other hand, the evaluation of all case discussions is carried out in the form of questionnaires, so as to understand students' evaluation of case discussions and their knowledge mastery. Through questionnaire statistics and analysis, the design and adjustment of case discussion teaching can be made on the basis of data, so as to better serve the course teaching and student service.

2.5. Reflection on Case Discussion Design

It is inevitable to apply case discussion teaching in public administration. After the case discussion, the case and the students' situation should be reconsidered and repeated throughout each link of the case discussion. The case design should be constantly adjusted according to the results. Moreover, according to the students' performance and feedback in class, reflections should be constantly made on the ways that can arouse students' learning enthusiasm to the greatest extent in the design process. [5] First of all, in the process of selecting knowledge points and cases, how well the cases match the knowledge points, can the cases reflect and examine the knowledge points? Does the case discussion design enable students to master knowledge points? Can the case discussion stimulate students' thinking and cause controversy? All of the above are problems that need to be repeatedly tested and reflected in this link. Clearly, it is necessary to continuously select cases and adjust knowledge points on the basis of practice.

3. Difficulties Faced by the Application of Case Discussion in the Teaching of Public Administration

3.1. Low Matching Degree between Knowledge Points and Cases

As shown in Table 1, although there are some knowledge points corresponding to cases in the early design, as well as the design of thinking problems before class and discussing problems in class, how do the knowledge points and cases match each other? Since it is not possible to measure with

objective tools, the analysis can be performed in a one-to-one correspondence. For example, Knowledge Point 1 is the relationship between public administration and social development in China, and the corresponding case is the decoupling of the Chamber of Commerce of Shanghai Deployment Industry Association from the administrative organs. Judging from the title of the case, it is more suitable for the relationship between government and non-government patriarch or the relationship between government and society, so the investigation of knowledge points should be adjusted. On the other hand, it is directly related to the teaching objectives of the course, and the case reflects the objective facts. As a case can be analyzed from different angles, it is possible to try to analyze the teaching case from the investigation of different knowledge points, so as to strengthen students' ability to analyze problems and their academic acumen. Furthermore, thinking is the shallow understanding of the case before the case discussion, which is designed mainly to examine whether students have read the case in advance and their basic grasp of the case. The question should not be too in-depth about "WHY" and "HOW", but should be more inclined to "WHAT".

3.2. Lack of Teaching Objectives and Student Training Objectives

In a narrow sense, teaching objectives are understood as the objectives to be achieved by disciplines, course chapters and knowledge points. Most courses mainly set the meaning of teaching objectives in a narrow sense. In a broad sense, teaching also includes the teaching objectives to be achieved by majors. However, few teachers think about the relationship between disciplines and professional teaching objectives in the teaching process. In other words, professional development needs and future employment needs need to run through the curriculum. [6] In terms of hierarchy, the order of teaching objectives should be professional development objectives, subject teaching objectives, chapter objectives, knowledge point objectives, and case discussion objectives. The teaching objectives are in the same strain from macro to micro, and they are mutually supportive and complementary. As shown in the link of knowledge points and case selection, there is no design of teaching objectives, which makes it impossible to determine the boundary of case discussion.

3.3. Inconsistent Evaluation Criteria for Students' Learning Effect

Feedback of students' learning effect is the key of case discussion, so how to evaluate students' learning effect becomes an important link of case discussion. There are various methods to evaluate the learning effect, [7] such as classroom questions, exercises, quizzes, etc. to test students' mastery of knowledge points, and questionnaires to investigate students' learning situation. However, the evaluation criteria are not reflected in the evaluation process of students' learning effect. The unified evaluation criteria are the basis of questionnaire interview design, and at the same time, they can also reflect the fairness and justice of evaluation and the comparability of evaluation. If the evaluation criteria are not uniform, the promotion of the corresponding improvement strategies will be affected, and the fairness and impartiality of the evaluation will not be reflected.

3.4. Insufficient Teaching Feedback

Teaching feedback is not the last step in the teaching process, but runs through the whole teaching process. Teaching reflection is involved in the case discussion of Public Administration, [8] but the specific steps of teaching feedback, the problems in the teaching process, the causes of the problems and the strategies to solve them are not reflected. In other words, teaching feedback only appears as a conceptual word in the case discussion, but not really realized. What is the meaning of teaching feedback? Why should teaching feedback be conducted? How to give teaching feedback? These problems are not involved in the case discussion, let alone the importance of teaching feedback, and

they are important problems in the case discussion of Public Administration.

4. Countermeasures to Solve the Application of Case Discussion in the Teaching of Public Administration

4.1. Improving the Matching Degree between Knowledge Points and Cases

The matching degree of knowledge points, case selection, pre-class thinking and class discussion should be evaluated through the teaching objectives, and revised after evaluation, so as to increase the matching degree between knowledge points and cases and achieve the teaching objectives and teaching effects. We should also try to analyze a case from different knowledge points, so as to improve the utilization rate of the case and the ability of case analysis. Classic cases should be designed with detailed case teaching, which not only applies cases to classroom teaching, [9] but also improves the ability of case study, and promotes teaching and scientific research to learn from each other. As far as students are concerned, it is necessary to improve their learning initiative and cultivate their disciplinary acumen, provide them with different solutions to the same problem, broaden their thinking and gradually establish their own disciplinary thinking framework.

4.2. Strengthening the Connection between Teaching Objectives and Student Training Objectives

Schools have the corresponding design of professional students' training objectives, and teachers of various disciplines have the design of team teaching objectives, which are connected with rather than separated from each other. The design of objectives should be gradually refined from professional development objectives, subject teaching objectives, chapter objectives, knowledge points objectives and case discussion objectives. As a public basic course of public administration, which belongs to the major of public utilities management, labor and social security, the specific design of the training objectives should be discussed with only cases.

4.3. Establishing a Unified Standard for Evaluating Students' Learning Effect

The evaluation standard of students' learning effect is mainly designed from the objective and subjective aspects. On the objective level, it is measured through classroom questioning, in-class tests, exercises after class and review before class. On the subjective level, it is mainly to motivate students' initiative in learning through various ways, find out the sticking points and then put forward targeted solutions. Fundamentally, the most important thing for college students is to build up their self-confidence. Therefore, it is very important to be good at applying incentive measures to encourage students in teaching and gradually build up their self-confidence, including their professional self-confidence and discipline self-confidence.

4.4. Setting up the Teaching Feedback of Each Link

Teaching feedback needs to be set in every link of teaching, and attention should also be paid to the establishment of correct thinking. It is common to have various problems in the teaching process. [10] The feedback link is a process of problems emerging → problem analysis → solution strategy → practice → re-analysis → solution strategy → practice. It is a repeated process, because teaching also changes with the changes of external environment (school environment, educational environment). Besides, the practice orientation of the discipline of public administration also determines that the development of the teaching of public administration is constantly adjusted and

cases are updated, so it is necessary to make constant feedback.

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