

Teaching Philosophy, Belief and Style

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August 27, 2009

I love to teach. I have tremendous pleasure seeing my students to become self-motivated in learning Economics and in applying the theory they learn to analyze real-world issues.

Teachers have a role in students' learning process only if there is a forum for them to interact, may it be physical or virtual. Students are interested in engaging in such forum only if the benefits of attending such forum outweigh its costs. Thus, a course has to be designed such that the difference between the benefits and costs to students is maximized, by lifting the benefits and lowering the costs, under the constraints of students' characteristics and the course content to be covered.

To lift the benefits of learning, I have adopted a variety of interesting teaching activities to suit the needs of different groups of students and different course content. For example, in an international finance course, I organized field trips to the forex dealing rooms, developed a simulation game, required students to follow and explain the trend of a currency as well as a forecast of future movement, showed video on relevant topics, and invited outside speaker (e.g., local prominent economists) to share their experiences and views. In a microeconomics course and a data analysis course, I demonstrated the theory with experiments. In a course on competition, regulation and business strategy, I adopted case teaching to illustrate how real-world issues may be analyzed. In an economic forecasting course, I engaged students in a forecast competition.

To reduce the costs of learning, I have provided syllabus, PowerPoint notes, lecture notes, teaching cases and other teaching materials in our class web site, and integrated the information technology in teaching. The use of information technology allows non-synchronization of teaching and learning. Students can download my notes at any time, send me questions or comments at any time, submit an order to buy or sell a currency in our simulation game at any time, and upload their homework assignments through a class website. And I can respond at any time. Whenever students are asked to write a term paper, I give enough individual guidance and demonstration about where to find the relevant information (on-line or in the library). By simplifying the process

of collecting information, I hope my students can focus on the analysis.

Students will be able to analyze the real-world issues by themselves only if they have enough practice of the trade under guidance. I believe that one of the roles of an Economics teacher is to train students to conduct and present their own research — observing, collecting data, screening for useful information, analyzing the issues and presenting the analysis. In Economics, learning the research skills instead of memorizing a solution is important because unlike science, every economic phenomenon has some uniqueness. Therefore, in addition to my discussion of examples in class, I let students practice the skills by requiring them to discuss economic issues in tutorials, present their observations in class and to write short papers. Through discussions, presentations and writing short papers, their skills get sharpened and their understanding deepened.

I believe that teaching and learning are a two-way communication (a dialogue). With a good dialogue, students will know what the teachers expect; teachers will know what the students want and their progress in learning. However, large class size, especially in first year courses, makes good dialogues difficult, if not impossible. Recent development in information technology has allowed me to engage in dialogues with students at a reasonable cost. For instance, after each mid-term exam/quiz, I often send each student an email message telling them their personal grades and a few personal words of encouragement, using the email merge function of MS Word and Excel. I often invite the poorly performed students to visit me for a chat. Using a course management system (Moodle), I am able to collect feedback from students even in large classes.

I believe that a teacher has to take care of students of different backgrounds and different talents. Sharp and motivated students may be given more challenges. Low achievers may require additional attention. In lectures, it is hard to cater this diversity. Outside classrooms, individual needs may be catered more effectively. To this end, I always keep my door open, and promptly answer any questions through email or in person.