

An Analysis of the Improvement of Teaching Microeconomics

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Abstract: There are three problems about Microeconomics teaching. Firstly, teachers can't grasp the focus easily. Secondly, the students fear complicated mathematical analysis of Microeconomics. Thirdly, examination methods are not scientific. Therefore, teachers need to adopt a variety of teaching methods and increase the explanation of inspiring content. Moreover, teachers need to use comprehensive assessment measures to enhance the teaching effect, too.

Keywords: Microeconomics, teaching focus, teaching methods

I. INTRODUCTION

Microeconomics is economic theory which studies the economic behavior of individual economic units in society [1-3]. It is economic theory about how to determine the corresponding individual values of the economic variables. Microeconomics is also the core professional core courses of domestic economic undergraduate students. Microeconomics mainly includes consumer choice, vendor supply and income distribution [4-6]. Its content is numerous. Its figures are numerous. Its models are changeable. The student is easy to have the mood about fearing difficulty and hating study.

II. PROBLEMS

Main problems in teaching as follows:

A. *The teaching content is complex. It is difficult for teachers to highlight the curriculum focus*

At present, the domestic common textbooks are written by Gao Hongye (Western economics micro part, China Renmin University press), Varian's (Microeconomics: a modern perspective, Shanghai people press) and so on. Teaching content includes supply and demand equilibrium price theory, demand theory, production and cost theory, firm behavior and market structure theory, factor market theory, general equilibrium theory and welfare economics. It relates to Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Hicks, Malthus, Marshall, Cairns and other economist. Although the overall teaching content has a logical sequence, these schools and representative theories belong to different countries and different historical stages. It also associates with higher mathematics knowledge. It is difficult for teachers to grasp the key. It is easy for teachers to roll out in general teaching.

B. *There are many graphics and formulas. Students are prone to fear*

First, microeconomics has many graphics. There is supply curve and demand curve in the equilibrium price theory. There is indifference curve in the demand theory. There is isoquant curve and isocost curve in the production and cost theory. There is marginal cost curve, marginal revenue curve, short-term average cost curve and long-term average cost curve in the vendor behavior and market structure theory. There is factor supply curve and factor demand curve in the factor market theory. There is production contract curve and exchange contract curve in the general equilibrium theory and welfare economics. The students not only need to remember these curves but also need to analyze them. It is difficult for liberal arts students to adapt quickly.

Second, microeconomics has many formulas. There is supply function and demand function in the equilibrium price theory. There is utility function in the demand theory. There is production function and cost function in the production and cost theory. There is marginal cost function, marginal revenue function, short-term average cost function and long-term average cost function in the vendor behavior and market structure theory. There is factor supply function and factor demand function in the factor market theory. There is social welfare function in the general equilibrium theory and welfare economics. A variety of mathematical functions and complex calculations are also a major challenge for liberal arts students. The liberal arts students focus on more memory and summary of knowledge and less mathematical analysis during their secondary school learning. They will encounter a large number of mathematical models after they enter into the

university. They need time to develop mathematical analysis ability.

C. Course examination methods are not scientific

At present, microeconomics assessment is composed of usual performance and final exam in most school. Usual performance occupies a low proportion of total score. Final exam determines the total score. For example, usual performance occupies 20% of total score. Final exam occupies 80% of total score. Some students think that it is ok for them to pass the final exam because usual performance occupies a low proportion of total score. They think that they will pass the final exam if they attend class and remember relevant knowledge. In addition, microeconomics teaching task is arduous. Class time is not enough if teacher arrange topic discussion in class. However, course teaching will fall into the old circle of economic theory and homework if teacher do not arrange topic discussion. Students will think microeconomics is a purely theoretical curriculum. These can not improve students' interest in learning. Every student that majors in economics should learn microeconomics because microeconomics is a basic course. The students have limited time to speak during topic discussion because of the large number of students. The students can't get a good workout.

III. PROPOSALS

Some proposal of the teaching improvement:

A. Teachers should comprehensively use a variety of teaching methods to enhance teaching effectiveness

At present, the common teaching methods include PBL, CBL, and LBL teaching method and so on. PBL (Problem-Based Learning) teaching method emphasizes the problem-based, student-centered, teacher-oriented and student self-learning teaching. CBL (Case-Based learning) teaching method emphasizes the case-based teaching.

Teachers appropriately guide students to find and solve the question after the teachers explain the case. LBL (Lecture-Based Learning) teaching method bases on the teaching of the teacher. Students learn basic knowledge at first. Then they will think about the problem. These methods are different. Teachers can use them flexibly. For example, teachers can use PBL to teach how to maximize utility under existing budget constraints when teachers explain consumer equilibrium. First, teacher can give a question (how do students arrange spending if they graduate and the monthly income is limited). Students can think, discuss and speak then. Students must have a good income distribution in the basic necessities because of budget constraints. They can not only focus on a particular aspect or they will not achieve maximum

utility. Then, teachers can use LBL to conduct consumer equilibrium analysis. Teachers can both use indifference curves for graphical analysis and use the Lagrange function for extreme values. Students can also expand think the question after teacher complete the theoretical analysis. Teachers can use CBL teaching method to talk about relevant question in modern society after that. "Moonlight clan" discussion can make the students realize the importance of rational consumption. Students can also reflect on their own impulse consumption and distress situation after impulsive consumption. Students can not only understand the theoretical content of consumer choice but also link to the current social reality after teachers adopt a variety of teaching methods. Students' ability to identify problems, analyze problems and solve problem can be improved better.

B. Teachers should lay stress on teaching focus reasonably and increase the explanation of the practical content about present society appropriately

Each chapter of microeconomics has a variety of theoretical knowledge. The students will feel puzzled about them if teachers do not highlight the key teaching difficulties. Teachers must sort out the curriculum focus at first. Then Teachers should highlight key points and special difficulties when they teach each chapter.

Microeconomics is the theory about market functioning mechanism and price decisions. Microeconomics is also the theory how the scarce resources are allocated between different uses to better meet the different needs. Microeconomics is the theory about the people's behavioral patterns, too. Microeconomics argues that various actors such as consumers, producers, investors, workers, capital and landowners follow the rational behavioral model when they make decision in social and economic activities. They strive to achieve the most favorable results under established constraint. Households (consumers and factor owners) seek to achieve maximum utility. Producers seek to achieve maximum profit. Therefore, the supply and demand analysis, consumers' decisions and manufacturer's decisions are course focus.

A basic principle is that manufacturers will maximize their profit when teachers explain how manufacturers make decisions. The principle is the focus of the chapter. Profit is equal to the total revenue minus the total cost. The total revenue is equal to the price multiplied by product sales. The total cost includes labor costs and capital costs. The marginal revenue equals to the marginal cost when profit is maximization. That is, profits can not increase after manufacturers increase production. Profits will decline. This is a difficulty of the chapter. Teachers can guide students to think and take the real world as example.

For example, we will open a restaurant near the school and provide catering services. What problem do we need to consider? First of all, we are to pursue profit maximization. Then we must consider the price, sales and costs. The price can not be too high because we must consider the price of other nearby restaurants. Customers are not familiar with our restaurants at the beginning. The quantity of the food can not be too large, or they may not be sold out. Fix cost includes rent and basic facilities of restaurants. Variable cost is mainly workers wages, raw material, water, electricity and natural gas. We need to think how many workers we should hire. The workers can not be too more and too less. Wage is too high if we hire too more workers. Manpower is not enough if we hire too less workers. Finally, students can also consider special circumstances, such as when a loss occurs when we stop the business, when we go out of the business, and so on. Students can think many questions in the real world.

Teachers can increase the explanation of the instructive content in order to let the students relate theory with practice and enhance their ability of comprehensive analysis.

C. Teachers should use comprehensive assessment methods and increase the proportion of regular grade

For a long time, regular grade of microeconomics accounts for 20% to 40% of the total grade in most schools whether microeconomics is exam course or examination course. Final examination accounts for large proportion of the total grade. The final examination method is close book and close note. Examination questions include selection, filling in the

blank, the terms, judgments, short answer and analysis, etc. Examination mainly tests the memory of students. Students will obtain good grade as long as they review the review outline and lectures rote that teachers give. These will lead a problem easily. Students may only listen to teacher and not think actively in class. Students like to copy the teachers' note after class and remember some examination problems before the final exam. School must establish an assessment system that can help students to correct attitude towards learning. The assessment system can enhance the comprehensive ability of students.

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