



Teaching Mode Reform of “Principles of Management” Course Based on “SPIRT”

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Abstract. The “Principles of Management” course has a profound impact on students’ learning of management. However, due to the nature of the course, teaching practice often encounters issues such as low student enthusiasm for learning and difficulties in developing practical management abilities. To address these challenges, an online and offline teaching mode called “SPIRT” is proposed. This teaching mode clarifies multiple teaching processes, including scenario creating, problem proposing, interactive teaching, reflecting and summarizing, and transferring application. A two-year application indicates improvement in both learning motivation and teaching effectiveness.

Keywords: Principles of Management, management course, “SPIRT” teaching mode, teaching mode reform

1 Introduction

The “Principles of Management” course systematically studies the general laws, basic principles, and general methods of management activities. It serves as a core professional foundation course for students majoring in management and economic, and has a significant impact on subsequent professional curriculum^[1]. The course aims to help students understand the fundamental principles of management, acquire proficiency in basic management methods, cultivate basic thinking in management, and thus develop the ability to solve practical management problems.

Generally, the “Principles of Management” course does not require any introductory courses. The course content is simple and easy to understand, and requirements for students' basic knowledge are few^[2]. However, many problems occur in teaching practice. Students lack the motivation to learn management principles. Meanwhile, all the knowledge they learn in the classroom is difficult to transform into their own management abilities. As observed through long-term teaching practice, students usually have a good grasp of questions like “what is the problem?” and “why did it happen?” when conducting case analysis. However, they often struggle to answer questions like “how to solve the problem?”. A large number of students have reported that management is “easy to learn, hard to do”. Many theories they learn from books often only remain in

their memory. Basic management abilities, such as planning, decision-making and communication, haven't been effectively developed. A systematic design for the teaching mode of the course is needed to enhance students' learning motivation and improve the quality and efficiency of teaching and learning.

2 Problems in teaching

2.1 Insufficient leaning motivation

On one hand, the numerous classic theories taught in the course were developed during the second half of the last century. Course content such as Taylor's scientific management can even be traced back to the 19th century [3]. On the other hand, classic management theories do not involve overly complex concepts, and basic management principles can be easily understood by everyone. Management ideas such as humanistic management are well known to students even before taking this course. This can easily lead students to the illusion that the management classroom merely provides hindsight preaching, resulting in insufficient motivation to learn management [4].

2.2 Monotonous teaching mode

The teaching content of “Principles of Management” in general universities covers basic management knowledge and five major functions of management (planning, organizing, leading, controlling, and innovating) [5]. Due to the large amount of teaching content and limited class hours, classroom teaching emphasizes rote memorization of course content, leading to passive knowledge acquisition. There is a lack of communication between teachers and students, which hinders the development of students' management abilities. The exploration of online teaching effectively utilizes online resources, providing students with more flexible learning time and freer learning methods. However, it still follows the traditional “lecture-listening-practice” mode, where students can only passively receive course content. Therefore, it is necessary to further optimize and improve the current monotonous teaching mode by leveraging information technology [6].

2.3 Deficient practical exercise

Management theory is summarized and refined from a large number of long-term management practices, making it a discipline that places great emphasis on practice. College students generally do not have abundant life experience and lack practical experience in management. They have limited perceptual understanding of real management work, which can easily lead to a superficial comprehension of relevant management theories. The transition from management knowledge to management ability must go through the three stages: thinking, practice, and summary. However, students have few practical

opportunities to apply theory and methods to solve real management problems. Therefore, it is necessary to prioritize the improvement of experience and the cultivation of abilities in management course teaching.

2.4 Poor study habits

The vast majority of students have read management books before and possess certain abilities in information collection, processing, communication and cooperation. However, they lack dialectical, strategic, and innovative thinking when observing and analyzing management phenomena. The “post-00s” students are willing to utilize information technology to facilitate learning and demonstrate strong e-learning abilities. However, they often lack long-term planning and self-control regarding their own skill developing, making it difficult for them to adapt to high-intensity independent learning mode. Additionally, students generally show a reluctance to delve into management-related issues encountered during the learning process and fail to summarize what they have learned.

3 “SPIRT” teaching mode

To address the existing problems in the teaching of the “Principles of Management” course, an innovative teaching mode called “SPIRT” is proposed as shown in Fig. 1.

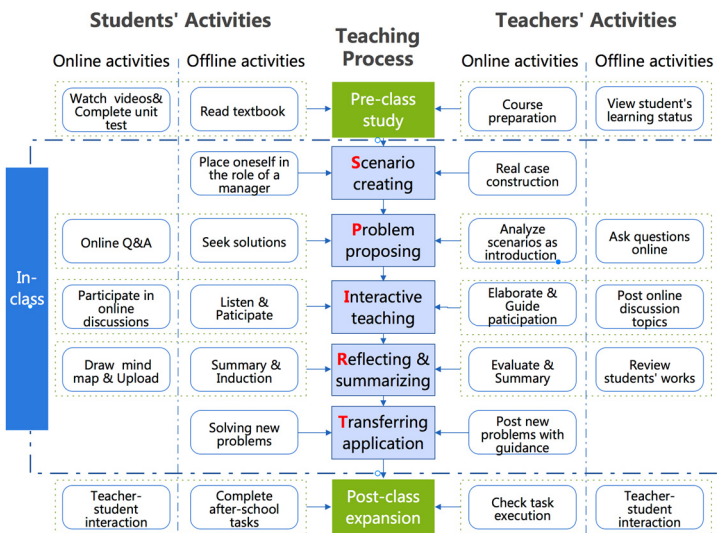


Fig. 1. “SPIRT” teaching mode

During the teaching process, teachers and students collaborate to accomplish pre-class guidance, in-class implementation, and post-class expansion teaching tasks. In-class implementation involves scenario creating(S), problem proposing(P), interactive

teaching(I), reflecting and summarizing(R), and transferring application(T) to construct a comprehensive logical chain of “problem-theory-thinking-application-summary”.

3.1 Scenario creating

Scenario can stimulate students’ mental associations and thinking, thereby generating specific emotional experience and visual thinking^[7]. At the beginning of a lesson, management cases and current trending management topics are introduced. Management scenarios are created based on real cases, immersing students in the role of managers within these scenarios.

3.2 Problem proposing

Teachers analyze the created situation and highlight the contradictions and conflicts exist within. Students are then guided to analyze relevant knowledge and explore management issues within the scenario. This process naturally induces new management knowledge points and learning tasks.

3.3 Interactive teaching

Based on the presented problem, teachers guide students to participate in the learning process. After clarifying key knowledge points such as concepts, key aspects, and challenges, students actively participate in learning activities through personal reports, group discussions, case studies, and role-playing. This section focuses on the enhancement of students' learning interest and the cultivation of their abilities in expression, communication, and cooperation.

3.4 Reflecting and summarizing

By summarizing the knowledge points and clarifying the lesson’s context, students’ impression is deepened, and teaching effectiveness is further improved^[8]. During the summary process, students take the center stage, while teachers play a supportive and guiding role. Students organize and summarize the problems, methods and processes, and create visual aids such as mind maps or flow charts. This enables them to acquire new knowledge.

3.5 Transferring application

Management is about “doing” rather than “knowing”. The ability to flexibly apply methods and principles derived from the initial scenarios to new management practices is the indicator of effective learning for students. After familiarizing relevant knowledge points, students are encouraged to apply the theories and methods they have learned to new management practices. Through the integration of knowledge and action, students can experience the synergy between “science” and “art” in management.

4 Application example

The “SPIRT” mode is utilized to facilitate the teaching of Mayo’s human relations theory. Before class, students watch videos about the Hawthorne experiment led by Mayo on the online platform, read relevant materials, and complete the pre-class test. Teachers evaluate acceptance level of students and identify teaching difficulties of the lesson based on online test data.

In the Scenario creating stage, teachers introduce the widely accepted concept of people-oriented management and provide a case study illustrating this approach.

In the Problem proposing stage, based on the above scenario, teachers raise the question: “is there a contradiction between people-oriented management and pursuing efficiency”. Students are encouraged to explore this question throughout the lesson.

In the Interactive teaching stage, teachers explain the key knowledge points regarding the process of Hawthorne experiment and human relations theory. Students are fully guided to participate through group discussions, viewpoint expression, and real-time questionnaires.

In the Reflecting and summarizing stage, Students are guided to revisit the initial question proposed at the beginning of the class, clarifying that there is no contradiction between putting people first and pursuing efficiency in management. Teachers and students collaborate to summarize the course content. Students are encouraged to use mind maps to consolidate the main viewpoints and other elements of Mayo’s human relations theory.

In the Transferring application stage, students are presented with a new management case and asked to analyze it using the main viewpoints of human relations theory.

5 The effect of “SPIRT” teaching mode

The “SPIRT” teaching mode has been implemented by teachers of “Principles of Management” course at Army Logistics Academy (ALA) for two school years. A total of 525 students have participated in this mode. At the end of the course, students are assessed using a standardized survey to evaluate their management abilities. The test results are presented in Table 1. A control group consisting of 513 samples was established, comprising students who were taught by the same teachers prior to the implementation of the “SPIRT” mode.

Table 1. Test results before and after the implementation of “SPIRT”

Group	Number Of students	Theoretical knowledge mastery	Planning ability	Decision-Making ability	Communication ability	Team building ability	Total score
Before	525	95.8	92.6	91.1	88.3	89.8	91.5
After	513	91.1	87.4	85.3	81.2	80.4	85.1

The results in Table 1 reveal that students’ mastery of theoretical knowledge and basic management abilities are effectively improved after the teaching mode reform.

Additionally, an anonymous questionnaire was designed to assess students’ interest in management work. Prior to the implementation of the “SPIRT” mode, 78.5% of students expressed interest in management work. After the implementation of the “SPIRT” mode, this number increased to 91.3%. The enthusiasm of students for learning management has been effectively enhanced.

6 Conclusion

The “SPIRT” teaching model is proposed in response to the nature of the “Principles of Management” course and the existing teaching problems within it. The arrangement of teaching activities emphasizes promoting the integration of theoretical knowledge and practical application. The entire teaching mode fully utilizes information technology to expand beyond the traditional classroom setting. Interactions between teachers and students can be further enhanced using smart teaching devices such as in-time interaction apps. An illustrative example is provided to demonstrate the entire process of the “SPIRT” teaching mode. The application of this mode in ALA demonstrates its alignment with students' cognitive patterns, its emphasis on developing and improving management skills, and its effective facilitation of the transition from management knowledge to management abilities ^[9].

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