

Student Participation in the College Classroom: Based on the Perspective of Organizational Socialization

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Abstract. As the customer of higher education service, students are not passive recipients but the “co-producer” of education service. Through their active participation in the education process, students can get a satisfactory result, that is, the satisfaction of teaching, their academic achievements, and loyalty to the school. And organizational socialization of college students is an effective means to encourage college students to participate in classroom teaching. Based on the literature of customer participation and organizational socialization, this paper studies how to motivate college students to participate in teaching activities through organizational socialization strategies.

Introduction

With the development of modern education, the traditional closed and one-way classroom teaching method has lagged behind the development of the times and society. What we need is a various and interactive teaching methods, emphasizing students should play a role of active participants well in the teaching process. The higher education belongs to the service industry, and the college student is the customer who receives the education service. Therefore, the theory of customer participation can be applied to student participation. College students are not passive recipients, but the “co-producers” of education service. So college students should participate in the whole education service process actively to ensure satisfactory results, which include improving the teaching and the vitality of the whole class (Cohen, 1991; O’Neal, 1996), making students learn better (Daggett, 1997; Garard, Hunt, Lippert, & Paynton, 1998; Weaver & Qi, 2005), improving students’ communication ability (Berdine, 1986; Dancer & Kamvounias, 2005), improving the interaction between students and team members (Armstrong & Boud, 1983), enhancing students’ loyalty to the school (Henning-Thurau, Langer & Hansen, 2001).

Customer Participation and Student Participation

Customer Participation

Unlike tangible products, the process of production and consumption of services is simultaneous, which means that customers must participate in the service process. Customer participation refers to the activities and resources provided by the customer in the service production and delivery process, including information and mental inputs, tangible assets and physical inputs, and emotional inputs (Rodie and Kleine, 2000).

Customer participation has a positive impact on the three parties involved in the service encounter (enterprise, service employee and customer). Customer participation can improve enterprise productivity and service performance, and also employee’s job involvement and satisfaction. Similarly, customer participation has a positive impact on customer perception, service quality, and customer satisfaction.

Student Participation

According to the concept of customer participation, student participation refers to the activities and resources provided by the customer in the process of receiving higher education services, including:

Mental inputs - for example, students exert mental effort when preparing a class presentation or examination.

Physical inputs - for example, students perform physical labour when conducting a chemistry experiment.

Emotional inputs - for example, students should respect their teachers and be polite to their teachers and other teaching staff.

Although how student participate in the teaching process positively is a very realistic question which is worth studying, the issue of student participation has not received much attention from the academic community. Through literature review, the existing researches are mainly focused on the following aspects:

Forms of Student Participation

Kotzé and Plessis (2003) consider student participation includes in-class participation and out of class participation. In-class participation mainly refers to note-taking, participation in class activities, discipline, behaviour to other students and honesty during tests. Out of class participation is divided into individual activities and group-based activities. Individual activities include preparing for lectures, reviewing class notes, asking questions, working on individual assignments, and general behaviour towards lecturers and academic support staff. Dancer and Kamvounias (2005) consider student participation is an active engagement process which can be sorted into five categories: preparation, contribution to discussion, group skills, communication skills, and attendance. Bartley, Dimenäs and Hallnäs (2010) believe that the key words for student participation are negotiation, dialogue, cooperation and personal responsibility.

Factors Affecting Student Participation

(1) Class traits - which include class size, students are less likely to “hide”, less anxious and more willing to participate in smaller classes (Hyde & Ruth, 2002; Weaver & Qi, 2005; Myers et al., 2009). Seating arrangement is considered to be a factor, and a U-shaped/circular/semicircular arrangement are more conducive to student participation in which students can see each other and communicate with each other. Counting participation as part of a student’s grade, earning extra credit and allowing students to be a part of the participation grading process are helpful in increasing student participation (Fassinger, 2000; Boniecki & Moore, 2003; Zaremba & Dunn, 2004).

(2) Student traits - which include student gender and student age (Fritschner, 2000), students’ confidence, self-esteem, communication ability, responsiveness and classroom apprehension (Rosenfeld & Jarrard, 1985; Fassinger, 1995; Myers & Rocca, 2001; Rocca, 2010).

(3) Lecturer traits - which include instructor gender, teaching techniques used, the instructor’s oral assessment and body languages and the ways in which the professors communicate with students (Nunn, 1996; Fritschner, 2000).

How to Make Students Better Participate in the Teaching Process?

Rocca (2010) believes that there are many ways to motivate students to participate actively, such as controlling the class size, dividing the students into groups, placing the student seats in U-shaped or circular, and counting participation as part of a student’s grade. In addition, instructors play a key role in motivating students to participate. Instructors should respect students, pay attention to students’ views and praise students when appropriate. At the same time, instructors can create supportive climates by knowing students’ names (Nunn, 1996; Fritschner, 2000), showing interest and support for students’ participation through eye contact and smiles, giving students verbal and nonverbal feedback (Nadler, 1990). Many authors also argue that students need to be socialized (Kelley et al., 1990; Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996; Govender, 1998)

Organizational Socialization

The concept of organizational socialization was proposed in the field of organizational research first, which refers to an individual adapts to and comes to appreciate the values, norms and required behaviour patterns of an organization (Schein, 1968). Subsequently, the concept of organizational socialization is introduced into the field of human resource management and service marketing. Organizational socialization is considered a common method used to influence employee performance (Dubinsky et al., 1986). Since customers participate in the service production process and are regarded as the “partial employees” of an enterprise, then the customers can be socialized. Customer organization socialization enables customers to have a clear understanding of their roles and have the ability and motivation to participate in services so as to stimulate customers’ effective participation in services (Schneider & Bowen, 1995; Rodie & Kleine, 2000; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2000). In the same way, college students also can be socialized.

Freshman students are faced with a series of challenges in the process of changing from high school to college life, such as changes in the living environment, learning styles, requirement about self-management ability and so on. Many students have not adjusted their roles well enough to adapt themselves to meet these challenges. Moreover, many college students lack accurate expectations about the learning life they are going to face, and they do not know how to change from a passive, compulsory learning state into an active and independent learning state. So both school and the teachers should provide support for the organization socialization of the students at different levels.

Through organizational socialization, students will get the four necessary prerequisites for effective participation in the whole teaching activity:

1. *Role clarity*. The process of student organizational socialization provides students some learning and observation opportunities to gain some experience, clear the school and teacher’s expectations of their behaviors, and know what they should do, what level they should do.

2. *Ability*. Schools can use a combination of mode selection, active communication and training programme to ensure that students have the necessary knowledge and skills to participate effectively.

3. *Motivation*. Rodie and Kleine (2000) mention three types of benefits that motivate customer participation, namely, efficiency in the service process, efficacy of the service outcome, and psychological benefits. Obviously, many college students especially freshmen are not aware of the benefits of participation, so school should take some way to communicate these benefits to students, let them see the positive impact of effective participation on their colleague life, in order that students will have a willingness to participate in.

4. *Affective commitment*. Affective commitment refers to the psychological attachment of an individual to an organization. It is the desire reflecting the extent to which an individual wants to be involved in and participate in an organization. Through organizational socialization, students will have stronger identification with school and major’s development goals and values, will be proud to be a member of this school, and will be happy to learn here.

Measures on Motivating Student Participation Based on Organizational Socialization

Organizational socialization of college students is an effective means to encourage college students to participate in classroom teaching, but it is also a complex and continuous process (Kotzé & Plessis, 2003) and need deep understanding of students’ expectations, needs and experiences, specific teaching methods and specific classroom climate.

Managing Student Expectations

Before entering the college, each student has his own expectations for the college life, but the reality often has the disparity with the ideal. Many students cannot adapt to the campus environment, college learning methods, and the way students get along with each other and so on, so they feel disheartened, negative, and hard to devote themselves to studies in class. Some students choose major at random, and they do not know the developments and prospects of this profession. When to the college, they

find that the profession is unpopular in school, then they will lose the enthusiasm of learning. Without the supervision of high school teacher and assigned homework, some students feel that college life is boring. Some students also expect the university dormitory life is good, but the fact is that they always caught in the conflict between people. All above require schools to adopt strategies to make students have the right expectations for college.

To make actively entrance education of new students, let the students understand the school rules, especially the regulations of teaching management, let students know how to get the credits and obtain the diploma and degree, evaluation standards of scholarship, and the selection of excellent students.

To make major identity education, through which students can clear characteristics of professional learning, the engaged position after graduating from college, and get the knowledge, ability, and quality need in the future job.

To make civilized behavior and etiquette education, improve the quality of students, cultivate good behavior habits and promote form good interpersonal relationship, which are urgent need to adapt to the campus living environment.

To make emotional management education through which can help students build positive emotions, improve individual adaptability, and promote the healthy development of students' mind and body.

Establish Contact with Professional Teachers

The characteristics of college teachers is not always in office, so, in addition to the classroom, there is not much interaction with students in private. The professional teacher is an important factor affecting the student participation in the classroom, and establishing a closer and harmonious relationship between teachers and students is conducive to student participation. Therefore, teachers should actively integrate into the life circle of students out of the class, communicate with students in a relatively relaxed environment, so that students are more likely to have trust and intimacy with the teachers, which also can be brought into the classroom learning.

Some universities establish tutorial system, which is a very good way to strengthen communication between teachers and students, and promote the teaching benefits teachers as well as students. Tutorial system allows teachers to master the students' learning trends, give guidance timely, and enhance students' interest in learning. Students can participate in the tutor's research project, which can improve students' professional ability. In addition, teachers also need to use WeChat, QQ and other social media to establish contact with the students, in order to understand the ideas of the students, and give the student positive guide.

Promote Communication among Students

Communication between students can pass on each other's knowledge and experience, promote each other's feelings, and get help from each other. Therefore, schools and teachers should provide different channels to encourage students to communicate with each other.

To organize regular exchanges meeting, share learning and life perception;

To divide the students into small group in professional learning to accomplish cooperative tasks, enhance students' team spirit;

To carry out rich and colorful activities to bring the students together;

To make model education, encourage students to discover other people's strengths in their studies and activities, to choose role models, to learn from examples, and to improve their quality.

In addition to promoting the communication among classmates, it can also promote communication between the last and next students. Excellent seniors full of youthful and positive energy can influence and guide freshmen. Graduate students can be invited to come back to the classroom to share their study and work experience, to guide students to establish professional confidence and make out a learning plan. Besides, it is also important to exert the effect of students' group. There are many kinds of students' groups in the college which is a stage to show students'

personality and cultivate student ability. It can improve students' communicative ability and practical ability, improve their self-confidence, and also infect their classmates around them. Therefore, schools and teachers should encourage students to join the interested community and provide various support for community activities. In particular, some associations will invite experts to hold lectures, develop academic research, such activities should be supported by schools with funds and venues.

Improving Classroom Climate and Teaching Methods

A comfortable classroom climate with higher participation classes is more supportive, cooperative, and student-centered. Therefore, teachers should create such a classroom climate. For instance, remember the students' names, let the students feel that they are perceived as teachers by individuals rather than one person in the crowd. Give a positive response to students' participation through verbal or nonverbal cues, and encourage someone who does not like to participate by using a smile, eye contact, and approaching him. Give students time to think before they answer questions, listen to the students' responses patiently and completely, affirm the students' thinking, and encourage them to share their thoughts.

Teachers should teach in a more interactive way, not teachers-centered pattern in the past. Instructors can stimulate students' interest in learning through some ways such as group discussion, role playing, group debate, classroom display, and use the Internet, app and other means to enable students to become masters of learning, rather than passive recipients.

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