

Relating theories with daily examples via the production of videos

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Introduction of the video project

To equip students with the ability to apply what they learnt in practice is often considered to be one of the most important aspects in tertiary education. However, it is difficult in teaching to educate students with such skills especially in subjects, which emphasizes highly on abstract and theoretical knowledge. Examples of real incidences in these subjects are often interconnected with numerous theories that make explanation of these examples in class difficult to be understood by students. Therefore, the most direct way to facilitate understanding is to make students work on instead of lecturing each of these examples.

Teachers from DSME1040 Economics for Business Studies II initiated such approach by introducing a video project as partial assessment to the course in academic year 2010-2011. The video project required students to produce a short film, which incorporated with macroeconomic theories in class. It was believed such strategy to be effective in helping students to better consolidate what they learnt and to better apply them in reality.

The video project began by asking students to divide themselves into groups of six to seven. Each group had to choose one out of the following topics, which all fell under the category of macroeconomics: unemployment, economic growth and monetary policy. Then, students were required to incorporate the theories of their chosen topic into a short video, which lasted six to eight minutes. At the end of the course, videos produced by each group were presented so as to allow students to learn about topics that they did not work on.

However, it can sometimes be difficult to work on these theories completely by students themselves. Therefore, throughout the process of video production, each group of students had to arrange a number of consultations with their teachers and to discuss with them about their approaches in incorporating economic theories. Teachers had advised accordingly so as to ensure accurate application and profound understanding of theories among students. In addition, students were required to upload their videos for others to comment before the actual presentation. Thereby, students were able to make further amendments and to learn better by referring to others' comment. It is apparent that video production is also effective in facilitating communication between teachers and students, and in promoting peer-learning.

Besides, the video project encouraged students to approach problems creatively. For example, one of the groups explained concepts in relation to unemployment by turning the short film into a TV news programme, which described fictitious death of an unemployed master student at CUHK. Another group of students conceived a love story to explain the relationship between opportunity costs and scarcity, which fell under aggregate demand and aggregate supply. Apart from feigned stories, some students adopted a real life example to explain the phenomenon of

monopoly by highlighting the popularity of attending tutorial classes among secondary school students. Cases from above confirmed the project to be effective in relating theories with daily incidences.

Advantages of the video project

As an example of interactive strategies for learning, the project resulted in numerous benefits of the following,

- Consolidated students' knowledge through relating theories with daily life examples.
- Made abstract theories interesting and simple to be understood.
- Equipped students with the skill to operate various multimedia equipment
- Enhancement in team work and communication skills
- Improvement in organization skills by coordinating different units of the video

Feedback from students

A combination of focus group and questionnaire were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the video project in the second semester of academic year 2011. Results suggested that students agreed the project had helped them to better consolidate their understanding and to expand their cogitation in economics. Moreover, most of them regarded the project to be interesting, which assisted them in relating abstract theories with examples in reality. However, majority of them had problems with editing these videos as they had limited exposure to the use of related software. Therefore, it is recommended that technical support should be in place if similar projects were to be implemented in future.