

Application of Constructivism Teaching Mode in Travel Service Management Teaching

Huiyuan Mao

School of Business Administration, Shenyang University
54 Lian-he Road, Da-dong District, Shenyang City
Liao-ning Province, 110041, China
E-mail: maohuiyuan2004@126.com

(Received: 11-7-13 / Accepted: 27-7-13)

Abstract

Travel Service Management is a compulsory course of tourism management with strong practicality. The reform for the teaching mode of it is imperative under the circumstances. As one of the new mainstream theories of the international educational reform, constructivism has become a hot topic in educational circle. It has a positive function for implementing the quality-oriented education. Based on the theory of constructivism, this research paper analyzes the teaching status quo of Travel Service Management, and innovates the traditional teaching mode. It aims to improve the teaching quality, stimulate students' initiative in learning, and develop their innovative thinking and creative abilities.

Keywords: Constructivism Teaching Mode, Travel Service Management, Teaching mode.

1. Introduction

Curriculum of tourism management is concerned with some other subjects. Nowadays, knowledge-oriented teaching mode, inculcating systemic theoretical information into the mind of students and ignoring initiative and creation in study, still plays important role in curriculum teaching. 21st Century is the second golden time for tourism industry. Tourism industry is becoming the largest industry in the world, which promotes the development of tourism education and causes higher standards for employees in tourism. To comply the tendency of development and new demands for talents in tourism, the author innovates the traditional teaching mode based on constructivism. In teaching process of constructivism class, teachers are hoped to play guiding function, stimulate students' initiative and interest in learning, and encourage students' creative thinking ability.

2. Necessities of Applying Constructivism Teaching Mode in Travel Service Management Teaching

Constructivism teaching mode is established according to the theory of Constructivism. In the whole teaching process, students are the core of the class and teachers are organizers, directors, helpers and promoters. Situations, cooperative tasks and dialogues are utilized in teaching to arouse students' go-aheadism, enthusiasm and creative spirits, aiming to effectively construct the knowledge learning in class. In this teaching mode, students are positive constructors and teachers are helpers ^[1]. Textbooks are not the whole contents of

teaching, but they are the objects in constructing students' knowledge system. Teaching techniques are not traditional teaching means and methods in teaching, but the tools of creating situations, cooperative learning and communication ^[2].

Travel Service Management is a practical course. Students should have strong abilities of transferring knowledge and solving problems, so that they can cope with miscellaneous work in travel services. Practical teaching has been paid more importance by schools of tourism administration now. Because of restriction of traditional talents training mode, practical teaching has been considered as hypotaxis component. Practical courses and contents are subsidiaries of theoretical parts. In March 2012, Ministry of Education constituted a document of *About Several Opinions on Improving Quality of Higher Education in All-round Way*, pointing out the biggest purpose of higher education is to train talents, and the basic work for training talents is to reform teaching contents, teaching methods, and teaching modes ^{[3]-[4]}. Teaching reform for the specialty of tourism administration must be deepened to improve students overall quality. Constructivism teaching mode is a possible way of training comprehensive talents. It has been applied in the field of teaching and obtained a good teaching effect already. It will also get the ideal teaching purpose, if the theory can be utilized in the teaching of tourism administration specialty.

3. Problems Existing in Traditional Teaching of Travel Service Management

Nowadays, teaching of *Travel Service Management* in most colleges still follows the traditional knowledge-oriented teaching mode. That is to say, in the class, teachers give lectures to students, while students listen to teachers. In accordance with features of tourism management specialty, there are following disadvantages in traditional teaching of tourism management specialty:

3.1 Hard to Arouse Students' Interest in Study In traditional Teaching

Hard to arouse students' interest in study in traditional teaching, teachers talk about professional knowledge on platforms in a ponderous way, meanwhile what students can do is to listen to the lectures passively. This type of teaching mode makes the class atmosphere inactive. Most of students are not interested in study in such a circumstance. What the students learn in class is only about different definitions and theories. Studying by rote is an effective way of getting a higher score in final examinations. Teaching is a process of dividing professional knowledge into various definitions, characteristics, and significant that is not meaningful in students' eyes. This mechanical means of study is useless to foster students' interest in searching knowledge. On the contrary, it is an effective way to sap students' curiosity, making study a burden for students.

3.2 Harm for Students to Grasp Professional Knowledge and Skills

Classrooms and textbooks are the teaching focuses of tourism management specialty. Teachers emphasize on teaching theories, instead of establishing practical environments for students. Students are armchair strategists after learning in class. They have no opportunities to put the theoretical knowledge into practice. It is harm for students to grasp the professional knowledge and skills. Meanwhile, it makes against developing their individual competence of working in tourism in future.

3.3 Invariable Forms of Examination

Written examination is the frequently used means of examination for tourism management specialty. It can objectively reflect the study status on curriculum contents, but it is not an effective way to get to know whether students control the skills of applying the professional knowledge in practical work.

3.4 Difficult to Foster Students' Innovative Thought and Practical Competence

In traditional teaching mode, students are not the main body of the class. Teachers make conclusions for students directly, helping them understand, memorize, and consolidate professional knowledge. Initiative is restricted by teachers' teaching. Students' learning activities are solely concerned with comprehending and memorizing professional knowledge in tourism. Students are not interested in asking questions, analyzing essential problems, and solving issues, causing their weak ideation. Even in the practical courses and activities, students are arranged in enterprises on probation. They seldom have opportunities of doing practical work in tour enterprises in person. Report on Practice is the only achievement for their practical learning. It is ineffective for fostering students' innovative thought and practical competence.

4. Application of Constructivism in Travel Service Management

More and more teachers in tourism education have realized the disadvantages of teaching in traditional tourism management class. Constructivism proposes many new concepts, which are helpful to deal with these disadvantages of traditional teaching concepts and practical courses of tourism management. The theory provides a new experiment for teachers to innovate the traditional teaching mode of tourism management specialty.

Based on constructivism, some main ripe teaching modes are proposed, such as Scaffolding Instruction, Anchored Instruction, Random Access Instruction, etc.

4.1 Scaffolding Instruction Teaching Mode

Scaffolding Instruction teaching mode provides learners with a kind of concept structure for helping them understand the professional knowledge^[5]. The concept structure is utilized to develop learners' comprehension on the professional knowledge. Thus, complicated learning tasks must be resolved first in order to guiding learners' thoughts into deeper levels. Questions are gradually raised to students by constructing scaffold. Students obtain knowledge within scaffold structure, which will be removed at appropriate time later. Constructivism borrows the word in architecture "scaffold" as the concept structure. In fact, the concept structure is the scaffold in learning process. Author takes establishment of travel services for example. Building scaffolds, entering situations, exploring independently, collaborating with other learners, and evaluating activities are five teaches in Scaffolding Instruction teaching. In the class, teachers introduce some basic concepts structure related with establishment of travel services^[6]. For instance, if a person wants to go out for traveling, he must purchase various services during his tour. He has to settle issues such as transportation, sightseeing, meals, accommodation, entertainment, shopping and so on. He will suffer from troubles, if he arranges everything in person. He cannot even afford long-distance call. Who can collect all services from suppliers, and sell them to tourists at one price? It is an appropriate question for students in such a circumstance. Meanwhile, teachers lead students into some situations—"What should you do, if you are going to some unfamiliar places for traveling?" "Seeking help in tertium quid—travel services?" is the answer of most

of students. This is a process of building scaffolds. Then some activities related with travel services should be told to students, making them conceive of related working situations. Exploring independently is the next step. At the beginning of exploration, teachers should develop students' mind in solving problems at destination places. Then students are required to analyze solutions themselves in meals, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, entertainment and shopping. In the process of this step, proper hints are given to students for helping them improving cognition along concept structure. Direction and help should gradually be reduced in teaching process for improve students' ability to deal with issues in work themselves. Collaborating with other learners is the following teaching step. Five or six students are arranged in one group for discussion and debate in order to grasp organization structure and division of labor in travel services, as well as condition and flow of establishing travel services. Teacher's detailed instruction and effective evaluation are the final steps for finishing the construction of professional knowledge

4.2 Anchored Instruction Teaching Mode

Anchored Instruction is established on the impressive real events or issues. Selecting real events or issues is compared to anchoring. The theory of constructivism proposes that learners must experience the whole process from recognizing learning targets, putting forward learning targets, to obtaining the learning targets in person positively, so that they could deeply understand the property and objective law of an object, even the relationship with the other object ^[7]. Anchored Instruction teaching is also called "example teaching", because many real events and issues are utilized in teaching ^[8].

Tourist Itinerary Design is one of the chief components in tourism management. In recent years, the tourist itineraries are various in tourism market. Designing attractive and beneficial itineraries is an important topic in teaching. Teachers should direct students to design itineraries for their familiar tourist destinations according to the existing professional knowledge. Students are divided into several groups. The group leaders are responsible for dividing the work, based on characteristics of target tourists. The things they have to do include arranging transportation, accommodation, restraints and their specialties and the sightseeing places. Before finishing designing integrated itineraries, students have to discuss, research, continuously adjust with the help of teachers.

4.3 Random Access Instruction Teaching Mode

Random Access Instruction is derived from Flexibility Cognitive Theory, a new branch of constructivism, aiming to improve comprehensive competence and knowledge migration ability (the ability to use professional knowledge flexibly) of learners ^[9]. Students are permitted to begin the same study contents with different approaches and various means, so that they can obtain different recognition and comprehension towards the same event or issue. The beginning of Random Access teaching is not limited to one type. Teachers select topics at random as the leading part of teaching. For example, "what are the frequently accidents in tourists' tours?" is a good question for the leading section. Students take part in the classroom activity of expressing their opinions and experiences actively in such a circumstance. Meanwhile, teachers could announce the topic of the class at appropriate time according to the expressions from students. "Yes. What we are talking about is just concerned with how to deal with properties losing in tours?" Teachers present the basic scene for students, concerning with tour accidents and properties losing. Then students are required to do role-play activities and group discussions on how to deal with the accident of property losing in order to develop their thoughts in solving problems in future work. The final step in Random Access teaching is evaluating students' performance in activities and selecting the best from the whole class.

5. Summary

Constructivism theory is a profound educational revolution, consisting of various forms with universality and individuality. The learning situation in constructivism includes four elements: context, collaboration, conversation and meaning construction. Teachers arouse students' learning interest and initiative in class, guiding them to discover issues positively, researching and analyzing the related professional information. Constructing a better cognitive structure is the final target of teaching. In such a positive and opening study situation, learning tasks can be easily achieved by students.

References

- [1] Q. Bin, Teaching reform on optional courses in colleges based on constructivism: Taking tourism aesthetics for example [J], *Modern Education Management*, 11(2012), 172-173.
- [2] J.Y. Weeding, Comments on constructivism [J], *Journal of Socialist Theory Guide*, 5(2011), 7-80.
- [3] H. Kekang, Learning and thought on American National Educational Plan in 2010 [J], *e-Education Research*, 4(2011), 8-23.
- [4] W. Zhuli, New constructivism: Learning theory in network time [J], *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies*, 2(2011), 11-18.
- [5] E.G. Hein, Constructivist learning theory [C], *CECA Conference*, (1991).
- [6] R.E. Slavin, *Education Psychology: Theory and Practice* [M], (1994), Needham Height, Massachusetts.
- [7] P.A. Skehan, *Cognitive Approach to Language Teaching* [M], (1998), Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [8] J. David et al., Constructivism and computer: Mediated communication in distance education [J], *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 9(2) (1995), 7-26.