Teaching Observation for Karthik Srinivasan

08/10/2018

Dear Karthik,

Thank you for giving a guest lecture in my course MIS 373: Basic Operations Management and inviting me to observe your teaching session on July 31. My course MIS 373 is an undergraduate course with 16 students. Your teaching session lasted about 70 minutes from 5-6:10 in McClelland Hall, Rm 133. The topic you lectured is decision theory, which is one of the most fundamental theories in operations management, as well as decision tree a decision-making tool derived from the decision theory. The teaching session is learner-centered and evidence-based in general, and I have learned a lot from observing it.

You started the teaching session from self-introduction. Then you briefly introduced the learning objectives. The objectives are clear and measurable, but they could be more accurate if you could have borrowed verbs from the Bloom's Taxonomy.

To give the students some knowledge background, you first used a gift-giving example to explain decision making and show that decision making is ubiquitous. Then you asked the students to think about an important decision they made recently and share on Padlet. This led the students to the context of decision making. After 5 minutes, you asked the students to think about the steps of decision making. Then a few students shared their ideas and you wrote them down on the whiteboard. At the same time, you also talked with the students on how to order these steps. In this way, you led the students to find the full decision-making process. I see your excellent communication with students in this activity, but your writing on the whiteboard is too small to be seen by students sitting in the back. I know the small whiteboard is a classroom design weak point, but one way to solve this is to type that out.

After summarizing the decision-making process, you proceed to the elements of decision process. You listed the elements on the slides and talked about the meaning of each element with the students. One student asked the difference between decision criteria and conditions. That was a good question, and you gave an excellent answer by pointing out that conditions are not controlled by decision makers but criteria are decision makers' choice.

Next, you led a group activity in which the students chose a decision-making example to explain the elements. Then you asked the students to share their examples orally and summarized them. One thing I noticed is that one student didn't join any group. I saw you asked the student to discuss with the others, but I don't know how he responded and how we should deal with such an issue. During the group discussion, you walked around the groups and talked with the students to find and solve their questions early. All the students willingly participated in this collaborative learning activity and this effectively enhanced the students' understanding of the elements in decision process.

At last, you presented decision tress with an example and asked the students to create decision trees for the previous examples in groups. After ten minutes, you used a student to share his answer and drew his decision tree on the whiteboard as well as revising it. I think this interactive way is a good method for

instant instructor-student communication and quick feedback. In this way, we can easily figure out the weak/wrong understandings and correct them instantly. For example, in your class we observed that a few students had difficulties understanding the decision conditions.

Overall, you applied many evidence-based teaching methods and achieved an interactive class. You articulated the learning goals and used them to guide your teaching plan. Your class agenda was clearly presented by slides, so the students knew the logical flow of your class and what they should do in each step. You encouraged active thinking by having the students to think and discuss your questions. You also led group discussions to implement collaborative learning. The students actively participated in the in-class activities and quickly responded to your questions. In this way, your teaching content was well delivered and the students gained long-term memory of class content. Besides, you interacted with the students in a friendly and inviting manner. This communication skill facilitated students' participation in discussions and made the students more engaged in the group activities.

After your lecture session, a few students told me they liked your interactive teaching style and learned a lot from your class. I agreed with them and learned a lot from your guest lecture as well. I hope this observation letter may help you in your future lectures.

Regards,

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