

Thane Thompson, Teaching Philosophy, 27 FEB 2022.

Purpose: Help hiring managers see me as a teacher. Explains my values and beliefs.

My goal is to teach a great course. One that is good for students, good for me, and is a synergistic experience for students, myself, and the host institution. In the end, the course is memorable and provide future value. This is a complicated and lofty goal; nevertheless, My teaching philosophy is described in a 'engagement". Based on active learning theory, I apply the principles of leadership, coach learning, case studies and provide students with tools, and feedback. [\[1\]](#)

**Teacher as Leader.** A good class needs a good teacher. A good teacher leads through the jungle of unfamiliar concepts. Legitimacy is paramount and all the nuances of human confidence come into play. Teachers are scrutinized by students and deficiencies degrade teacher legitimacy and reflect poorly on the institution. This is superficial, yes, but it is very human. I believe a teacher's image and comportment contribute to the student's receptivity to new information. This is the very human aspect of teaching. Teacher experience and confidence are essential to students' confidence in the material. So, I take my looks, actions, and pronunciation very seriously...its show time. All the finely tuned aspects of human communication are used to convene knowledge. I am a cool, calm, and competent instructor who serves the great objective of student success. I believe a great class starts with the teacher as a knowledge leader and follows context and student engagement in problem-solving.

**Teacher as Coach.** A good class needs good students. A good student pushes the discussion through questions and sets the example for other students to follow. Encouraging discussion is important. For my part, I keep updating curriculum based on student expectations and adjust the curriculum with new content under the assumption that current information is more relevant. I do this by planning space in the schedule for current injects, engaging students early on during the syllabus about their expectations, and then meeting expectations by injecting guest speakers or current events to demonstrate the relevance of crucial curriculum points. I will synchronize with student goals and adapt the methods of learning periodically.

**Case Studies.** Case studies are an excellent teaching tool that can be used in the demonstration, explanation, and application phases of a class. For instance, a case introduction is a form of demonstration is used to illustrate a topic. A well-written case study can put the student into the story allowing the student to appreciate a problem from a protagonist's point of view or compare stakeholder agendas. Continued use of the same case study during explanation gives depth to associated theories and often provides a good setup for the application. Lectures often include historical examples as mini-demonstrations followed by explanative lectures. Case studies provide an excellent teaching tool for emphasizing the application of a management tool and the what's and whys of the problem context. They allow a forensic discussion of how others have successfully or unsuccessful solved a problem. I will engage students in case studies that put them in the role of employee, manager, customer, or business owner to provide the feel of actual life tasks. The practice value is especially important in teaching management. As a 40 plus year management practitioner; I understand the value of case studies. This makes case studies and history so valuable.

Assignment problems which put the student in situations similar to cases studied are excellent learning methods. Students need to understand the context of their tasks. This aids to understanding of second and third order effects. This is essential for systemic thinking. Context also helps to explain different stakeholder agenda and

objectives. In total, understanding context aids in understanding the problem. This understanding of the situation surrounding a student's work or task is a critical habit to develop in students. Cross-cultural communication is an essential skill and shapes the character of many, if not all, business problems. I implement this principle by using culturally competent teaching methodologies inclusive of both domestic and international student populations. Conceptual graphics is my primary key tool for communicating across cultures and disciplines. Students will gain an appreciation of different ways and means of learning the content. They will gain an appreciation for different management styles and organizational cultures. Management is a social endeavor where human behavior is the crux issue.

Students need to understand their task and purpose. Purpose answers a student's "so what"? Situational context is explained by showing varying points of view among stakeholders. Understanding context and purpose increases the ways students understand a problem. The student must understand the relevance of the current task to the students' interests and concerns. This understanding of the situation surrounding a student's work or task is a critical habit to develop in students.

Students need tools. Application is student problem-solving capability and represents the highest value in my teaching philosophy. Application of theory and methods equip students to solve problems, survive, and thrive, which I think is the point of education. Students will understand different ways of solving management problems given the complexities of real life. They will be able to make a reflective analysis of their solutions. Mental tools have enduring student value. A valuable cognitive tool is something the student can reuse to good effect, and I always strive to pass along good tools. As a "protip" or cheatsheet for problem-solving, and an excellent mental tool is useful. A tip or technique to use when they encounter a similar problem. So, tools are restricted to methods or analytic tools; but include psychological tools. Good tools and techniques are candidates for inclusion in the aforementioned iteration principle. See the tool used in the demonstration. Then have the details of the tool explained. Then apply the tool as a user in an appropriate practicum.

**Drills & Tools.** In management, tools are subject to change, some like fads, others discredited through new evidence, and yet others prevail as trusted tools, like the classic comparison and contrast used through the millennium to understand differences. I keep a library of analytic tools at the ready and use them again and again. I like to highlight these tools and refer to their use in different cases to provide a context of similar patterns and evidence of the tools' utility. Essential management tools are financial statements, but there are other necessary customers, employee, and stakeholder satisfaction measures. The balanced scorecard approach seeks to frame objectives and measure results. However, new management innovations such as the social benefit corporation expand the concept of objectives and stakeholders. I know it is essential for the teacher to keep up with current events and hot topics to meet student expectations of relevant and timely education.

**Feedback.** Active learning is predicated on feedback and interaction. Reflection closes the classic feedback loop. Guided reflection after an assignment allows me to guide the conversation and facilitate student understanding and encourages the skill of new information integration and development of goal-seeking habits. I like to iterate on important topics by shifting the student's point of view or orientation on a problem by

considering the different stakeholder agendas of a given historical case. There are three proven ways to iterate by student perspective: demonstration, explanation, and application. I like to demonstrate a phenomenon and illustrate it with the case or other 'scene setter.' In demonstrations, the student often has a third-person point of view on the topic. I then like to explain the topic using theories that help the student frame their observations. Lastly, I like to use assignments that have students interact with the topic from the position of a stakeholder and use some management tool or application to work a solution from a first-person perspective. These three perspectives help hammer home a topic and keep students engaged by shifting their perspectives on the problem. I use this approach for the most important skills in the curriculum. A key aspect of feedback loops is evaluation. Effective feedback is complicated because good evaluation is highly individualized and often involves customized interaction. To mitigate this complication and ensure good feedback, I set aside the classroom to discuss major tests and assignments, ample schedule office hours, and promote good use of tutors and assistants when available. These are my ways of addressing common student behavior where the students receive back their graded paper, look at the grade, thumb through the paper; but do not interact with the missed problems thru discussion, rework, or follow-up. Associated with the feedback loops is early and clear communication of grading standards. I do this is a rubric for each major assignment to fix the frames of reference for grading. Not only does it help communicate standards to students, but it also aids assistants in grading assignments. The students must reflect on the meaning of what is learned, update their understanding, and refresh on critical frames of reference.

**Adaptive Delivery.** Teaching continues to evolve due to COVID-19, technology, social movements, and government policy pressure. The biggest tactical change is the acceleration of distance learning tool classroom communication and group work. This is of mixed value with pros and cons, but there is no going back. Management education requires heavy interpersonal discussion, reading, writing, talking, and briefings or presentations. Use of Office 365 or G-Suite or Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Canvas change the work of teachers making class preparation, teamwork, chat discussions, and Q&A interactions very different than pre-COVID times. The way to reduce frustration increase student involvement is to approach this challenge with preparation, technical competence, and optimism to achieve the desired learning outcomes. The attention to detail on things like written instructions and timely response to student questions makes all the difference. For my part, I generally embrace technology and seek to pass on a sense of optimism with advances in learning technology.

**Summary.** I aim to deliver context and tools or big picture and practical applications. Ultimately, I want to enable students to survive and thrive. I fully understand the need to constantly adjust to change, modes of learning, and promote diversity.

[1] Barnes, Douglas (1989). Active Learning. Leeds University TVEI Support Project, 1989. p. 19. ISBN 978-1-872364-00-1.