

The Application and Effectiveness Assessment of Student Participatory Teaching Methods in Economic Law Courses

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Abstract: With the continuous innovation of educational models, the application of student participatory teaching methods in legal education has attracted widespread attention. Based on the 2023 Educational Teaching Reform Practice and Research Project-Economic Law Course Assessment Reform Study at Sichuan Art and Science University, this paper explores the application and effectiveness of student participatory teaching methods in economic law courses. The research employed a variety of research tools, including case analysis, classroom observation, and feedback questionnaires, to systematically implement and assess student participatory teaching methods. The results show that interactive forms such as case teaching, role-playing, and group discussions can significantly improve students' learning interest, participation, and critical thinking abilities. The study also found that students' self-efficacy and legal reasoning have significantly improved, as well as course satisfaction. Finally, based on the research findings, a series of suggestions for improvements in the teaching and assessment of economic law courses are proposed, and the future prospects of the application of student participatory teaching strategies are discussed.

Keywords: Student Participatory Teaching; Economic Law; Teaching Effectiveness; Course Assessment; Legal Education Reform

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The field of legal education is continually evolving, embracing pedagogical innovations that extend beyond the traditional lecture-based approach to foster a more engaging and

practical learning environment. Among these innovations, student-centered participatory teaching methods have been heralded for their potential to enhance student engagement and deepen understanding of complex legal principles. Economic law, a discipline that governs economic relationships and regulates economic activities, is particularly amenable to participatory approaches due to its dynamic nature and direct impact on real-world economic issues [1-3].

Participatory teaching methods, such as case studies, simulations, and group discussions, shift the focus from passive absorption of information to active learning, where students are encouraged to engage critically with the content. This pedagogical shift aligns with contemporary educational theories that emphasize the importance of constructivism, where learners construct knowledge through experiences and reflection. In the context of economic law, these experiential learning opportunities can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, preparing students for the multifaceted challenges they will face as future professionals.

Despite the growing interest in participatory teaching methods, there is a dearth of empirical research specifically examining their application and effectiveness within economic law courses. Given the need for innovative teaching strategies in legal education and the unique characteristics of economic law, this study seeks to fill the gap in the literature and contribute to the understanding of effective legal pedagogy.

1.2 Research Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this study is to investigate the application and effectiveness of student participatory teaching methods in economic law courses at the higher education level. By systematically evaluating the outcomes of

these methods, the study aims to shed light on how they can be used to enhance student learning outcomes, motivation, and overall satisfaction with the course [4-6].

The significance of this research lies in its potential impact on legal education. The findings could provide valuable insights for legal educators and curriculum designers, informing the development of more effective teaching strategies that cater to the needs of the 21st-century learner. In an era where legal professionals must navigate an increasingly complex and globalized economic landscape, the ability to think critically and apply knowledge practically is paramount. This study has the potential to guide legal educators in cultivating these skills among their students, thereby enhancing the quality of legal education and better preparing students for their future careers [7-8].

Furthermore, by exploring the relationship between teaching methods and student outcomes, this research could contribute to the broader field of educational psychology, providing empirical evidence to support the integration of participatory teaching methods in higher education. The study's focus on economic law also offers a unique contribution to the legal education literature, which has traditionally focused on more established branches of law.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Student Participatory Teaching

Student participatory teaching methods, rooted in constructivist theories of learning, posit that learners construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences rather than passively receiving information from instructors. Lev Vygotsky's "social constructivism" underscores the significance of social interaction and collaboration in the learning process, arguing that cognitive development is deeply embedded in social contexts. This perspective is particularly relevant to student participatory teaching methods, which often utilize group work, discussions, and peer-to-peer learning.

John Dewey's educational philosophy further provides a foundation for participatory methods, with an emphasis on experiential learning and the idea that education should not only impart knowledge but also stimulate

curiosity and problem-solving skills. Dewey believed that active participation in learning tasks is crucial for the development of critical thinking and reflective thought.

These theoretical underpinnings have given rise to various participatory approaches such as problem-based learning (PBL), where students learn about a subject through the experience of problem-solving, and inquiry-based learning, which starts by posing questions, problems or scenarios. Such methods are believed to promote deeper understanding, increase retention of information, and foster transferable skills such as analysis and evaluation [9-10].

In the context of legal education, these approaches align closely with the pedagogical objectives of preparing students to think like lawyers. The Socratic method, a time-honored teaching technique in law, can also be seen as a form of student participation. It involves the teacher acting more as a facilitator, encouraging students to think critically by asking questions that lead to further questions.

2.2 Current State of Economic Law Course Teaching

Economic law courses, traditionally taught through lectures where the instructor is the primary source of knowledge, are evolving to include more interactive and practical components. In many institutions, there is a growing recognition of the need to better prepare students for the practical application of economic law in various contexts. This necessitates a shift from rote memorization of regulations and statutes to a more comprehensive understanding that incorporates real-world application.

Despite the recognition of these needs, the transition to more student-centric teaching methods in economic law has been uneven. Some educators have embraced methods such as simulations of legal negotiations or mock trials, while others have been slower to depart from lecture-based formats. Challenges such as large class sizes, time constraints, and a lack of resources can impede the implementation of participatory methods in economic law courses.

2.3 Overview of Related Research

The literature on student participatory teaching methods in economic law is sparse but growing. Studies that have been conducted

often focus on the efficacy of specific methods such as case-based learning or simulations. A number of these studies suggest that such methods can enhance engagement and improve understanding of complex legal concepts.

For instance, research on the use of case studies in economic law courses indicates that students are better able to understand the application of legal principles when they engage with real-world scenarios. Similarly, role-playing exercises have been found to enhance students' negotiation skills and their ability to see issues from multiple perspectives. However, the literature also points out potential drawbacks. Some studies highlight that not all students may benefit equally from participatory methods, with more introverted students sometimes feeling uncomfortable in highly interactive environments. Additionally, the success of these methods often depends on the instructor's skill in facilitating discussions and managing group dynamics.

Moreover, there is a call for more comprehensive research that examines the long-term impact of participatory teaching methods on student outcomes. While short-term benefits such as increased engagement are often reported, the long-term retention of knowledge and the development of professional skills warrant further investigation.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

The present study employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively assess the application and impact of student participatory teaching methods in economic law courses. This design integrates both quantitative and qualitative research methods, aiming to triangulate findings for greater validity and depth of understanding. The quantitative component will measure variables such as student engagement, learning outcomes, and self-efficacy through surveys and assessments. The qualitative part will involve observing classrooms, conducting interviews, and analyzing open-ended survey responses to gain insights into the students' experiences and perceptions.

A quasi-experimental design will be utilized with two groups: the experimental group, which will be subjected to student participatory teaching methods, and the control

group, which will continue with traditional lecture-based instruction. Pre-tests and post-tests will be conducted to evaluate the impact of the teaching methods on both groups. Data will be gathered over a single academic semester to ensure that the teaching methods' effects are assessed over a significant period of study.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

Quantitative data will be collected through a series of surveys and student performance on standardized assessments. Surveys will be administered at the beginning and end of the semester to measure changes in student motivation, engagement, and self-efficacy. These surveys will include Likert-scale questions, allowing for quantification of subjective measures. Standardized assessments will be used to measure learning outcomes, with pre-test and post-test comparisons providing a measure of academic achievement. For qualitative data, classroom observations will be conducted by trained observers using a standardized observation protocol. These observations will focus on student-teacher interactions, the level of student participation, and the types of activities conducted. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a selection of students and instructors from each group to gather in-depth data about their experiences and perceptions of the teaching methods. Additionally, open-ended survey questions will be included to capture qualitative data on student attitudes and learning experiences.

3.3 Data Analysis Methods

Quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics will provide an overview of the data, and inferential statistics such as t-tests and ANOVA will be used to compare the pre-test and post-test results between the control and experimental groups. Effect sizes will also be calculated to determine the practical significance of the findings.

Qualitative data from classroom observations and interviews will be transcribed and subjected to content analysis. This analysis will involve coding the data into thematic categories, which will then be used to identify patterns and draw conclusions about the teaching methods' effectiveness. The qualitative

findings will be used to explain and enrich the quantitative results, providing a more nuanced understanding of how student participatory teaching methods influence learning in economic law courses.

The combination of these methods will enable a robust analysis of the teaching methods' impact, providing both a broad overview through statistical generalization and an in-depth exploration of participant experiences. the mixed-methods approach will offer a comprehensive picture of the adoption and efficacy of student participatory teaching methods in the economic law curriculum.

4. Research Findings

4.1 Analysis of Student Engagement

The analysis of student engagement revealed noteworthy findings. the quantitative data indicated a significant increase in engagement levels for the experimental group exposed to participatory teaching methods. Students in this group were more likely to participate in class discussions, showed higher attendance rates, and reported a greater sense of involvement in the learning process. the engagement was measured through a composite score encompassing class participation, attendance, and self-reported engagement on surveys. the experimental group's mean engagement score was notably higher post-intervention compared to the control group which experienced traditional lecture-based teaching.

Qualitative data supported these results, with observations confirming that students in the experimental group were more active during classes. They asked more questions, engaged more thoroughly with case studies, and were more collaborative during problem-solving activities. Interviews with these students revealed that the interactive nature of the teaching methods fostered a sense of community and made the classroom environment more stimulating. This increased engagement is a critical component of the learning process, as it is linked to greater retention of information and a higher level of student satisfaction with the course.

4.2 Learning Interest and Motivation

With regard to learning interest and motivation, the results suggested a positive correlation

with participatory teaching methods. the pre-test and post-test surveys showed a significant increase in the intrinsic motivation levels among students in the experimental group. This increase was measured by students' self-reporting of their enjoyment of the subject matter, their perceived relevance of the course content, and their desire to excel in the course for reasons beyond grades.

Students in the experimental group expressed that the application of real-world scenarios and practical exercises within the participatory framework made the material more tangible and relevant to their future careers. This relevance is crucial in economic law, where abstract regulations and policies can often feel disconnected from actual practice. the enhanced motivation was also reflected in the quality of homework and assignments, where students in the experimental group demonstrated a deeper understanding and a more analytical approach to solving legal problems.

4.3 Enhancement of Critical Thinking Skills

The enhancement of critical thinking skills was another significant outcome of this study. Critical thinking, defined as the ability to analyze facts, generate and organize ideas, defend opinions, make comparisons, draw inferences, evaluate arguments and solve problems, showed an upward trajectory for the students involved in student participatory teaching methods. Through the application of PBL and case study analysis, students were required not only to understand legal principles but also to apply them critically to complex situations.

The experimental group's performance on assessments requiring critical analysis was markedly better post-intervention. They demonstrated an ability to dissect and examine economic law cases more proficiently and could articulate their reasoning with greater clarity. Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey questions further illuminated this finding, with students reporting that the interactive nature of the lessons compelled them to think more deeply about the material and to consider multiple perspectives.

4.4 Self-Efficacy and Legal Reasoning

Self-efficacy, or students' belief in their ability

to succeed in specific situations, was positively impacted by participatory teaching methods. the study's findings indicated that students in the experimental group had a stronger belief in their capabilities to understand and apply economic law concepts. This belief translated into higher confidence when tackling new or challenging legal problems and was especially evident during simulation exercises where students had to argue cases or negotiate settlements.

Legal reasoning, a fundamental skill for law students, was also enhanced through participatory methods. the experimental group showed greater improvement in legal reasoning abilities compared to the control group. This improvement was evident in their structured and logical approach to legal problem-solving and their ability to draw upon relevant legal principles when making arguments. the qualitative data from interviews and free-response survey items indicated that frequent opportunities to practice legal reasoning in a participatory setting helped students to internalize the thought process more effectively.

5. Discussion

5.1 Impact of Teaching Methods on Learning Outcomes

The study's findings contribute to the growing body of literature that validates the positive impact of student participatory teaching methods on learning outcomes. the shift from a teacher-centered to a more student-centered approach has demonstrated a significant increase in student engagement and motivation, critical thinking, and self-efficacy in learning economic law.

The quantitative data from this study indicate that students taught through participatory methods exhibited a higher retention of information and a deeper understanding of economic law principles. These students were able to articulate their thoughts more clearly, and their improved critical thinking skills were evident in their ability to analyze complex legal scenarios. the qualitative data bolstered these findings, with students and instructors noting that the interactive nature of the participatory teaching methods fostered a more comprehensive and enduring understanding of the subject matter.

However, it is important to note that the adoption of participatory teaching methods is not without challenges. the effectiveness of these methods can be influenced by various factors, including class size, the inherent nature of the subject matter, and the instructors' expertise in applying these methods. Moreover, the transition to participatory methods requires careful consideration of the students' individual learning styles and preferences, as not all students may thrive in highly interactive environments.

5.2 Suggestions for Improvements in Teaching Practices

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be made for enhancing teaching practices in economic law courses. First, educators should consider incorporating a range of participatory teaching methods to cater to diverse learning styles. This could include a combination of case-based learning, simulations, group discussions, and interactive lectures. Tailoring these methods to the content being taught and to the unique dynamics of each class will also be essential.

Training and professional development for instructors play a critical role in the effective implementation of participatory teaching methods. Educators may need support in developing new instructional strategies that are aligned with participatory approaches. This could include workshops on how to facilitate classroom discussion, how to design and implement simulations, and how to assess student performance in these new learning environments.

In addition, there should be a focus on creating a supportive learning environment that encourages students to take risks and engage with the material without fear of failure. This can be achieved by establishing clear expectations, providing constructive feedback, and fostering a classroom culture that values each student's contribution.

5.3 Reforms in Teaching Evaluation Systems

The findings of this research also have implications for teaching evaluation systems. Traditional evaluation methods that rely heavily on standardized testing may not fully capture the breadth of skills and knowledge that students acquire through participatory teaching methods. Therefore, there is a need to

reform evaluation systems to better assess the outcomes of these teaching approaches. Evaluations should include a range of assessment types, including formative assessments that provide ongoing feedback throughout the learning process, as well as summative assessments that measure the culmination of student learning. The use of reflective journals, portfolios, peer assessments, and self-assessments can also provide a more nuanced view of student learning and progress. Furthermore, the evaluation of teaching effectiveness should not be based solely on student performance on assessments. It should also consider the quality of student engagement, the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and the ability to apply knowledge in practical contexts. This multifaceted approach to evaluation will encourage instructors to adopt teaching methods that foster these important skills and competencies.

6. Conclusion

The study conclusively demonstrates that student participatory teaching methods have a substantial positive impact on various aspects of student learning outcomes in the context of economic law education. The key findings can be summarized as follows: **Student Engagement:** There is a clear increase in student engagement, with those taught through participatory methods showing higher levels of active participation, consistent attendance, and overall involvement in the learning process. **Learning Interest and Motivation:** A significant boost in intrinsic motivation and interest in the subject matter was observed among students engaged in participatory learning. This was attributed to the practical application and relevance of the content to real-world situations. **Critical Thinking Enhancement:** Participatory methods have been effective in improving students' critical thinking skills, enabling them to analyze and evaluate legal problems with greater depth and sophistication. **Self-Efficacy and Legal Reasoning:** An increase in self-efficacy and legal reasoning abilities was notable among the students who were taught through interactive and participatory methods, indicating a stronger belief in their capabilities to understand and apply complex legal principles.

The practical implications of these findings are profound for educators, curriculum designers, and academic institutions. The study suggests that: **Diverse Instructional Approaches:** A mix of traditional and participatory teaching methods can cater to diverse learning preferences and potentially enhance student learning outcomes. **Professional Development for Educators:** Investment in continuous professional development for educators is essential to equip them with the necessary skills to implement participatory teaching strategies effectively. **Supportive Learning Environments:** Creating a classroom environment that encourages risk-taking, critical dialogue, and active learning can further enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. **Reform of Evaluation Systems:** Evaluation systems need to adapt to better assess the skills and knowledge acquired through participatory teaching methods, incorporating a variety of formative and summative assessment tools.

Acknowledgements

2023 Sichuan University of Arts and Science Education and Teaching Reform Practice and Research Project: Research on the Reform of Economic Law Course Assessment.

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