The TEACH Method: An Interactive Approach For Teaching The Needs-Based Theories Of Motivation

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an interactive approach for explaining and teaching the Needs-Based Theories of Motivation. The acronym TEACH stands for Theory, Example, Application, Collaboration, and Having Discussion. This method can help business students to better understand and distinguish the implications of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Alderfer's ERG Theory, Herzberg's 2 Factor Theory, and McClelland's Acquired Needs Theory through in-class activities and application. The TEACH Method is an interactive approach for teaching the Needs-Based Theories of Motivation. Business faculty who teach Human Resource Management, Leadership, Management, and Organizational Behavior must introduce and teach the topic of motivation. Many students find difficulty in grasping the concepts and implications of the multiple theories of motivation. The TEACH Method introduces a model for helping students learn, apply, and analyze the merits of each of the Needs-Based Theories of Motivation. Business faculty can also benefit from using this approach to assure learning outcomes, to stimulate critical thinking, and to encourage higher levels of student engagement and participation in classroom discussion. This model can be facilitated in two 50 minute increments.

Keywords: Business Education; Pedagogy; Theories of Motivation; Film in the Classroom

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is threefold: 1) to introduce a method that strikes a balance between teaching theory and teaching application, 2) to emphasize the efficacy of using movies and film in business education curriculum, and 3) to provide business educators with an interactive and innovative pedagogical model to use in class to increase student understanding, engagement, and participation.

THEORY

Every academic discipline provides faculty members with a vast array of theories to use to explain phenomenon, relationships, occurrences, and events. According to Wren, Halbesleben, and Buckley (2007), there has been a multi-decade long debate amongst scholars pertaining to the required balance between teaching theory and teaching application in management education. The management education emphasis in the 1970s leaned more toward theory. In light of Total Quality Management (TQM) being a major construct of the 1980s, more emphasis on application emerged as the leading pedagogical theme. "Now we appear to be back to the trends of the 1970s, with an emphasis on theory over practical application" (Wren et al., 2007, p. 484). There is no "one-size fits all" approach to teaching various disciplines, subjects, and topics within business education. The quantitative subjects (i.e., Statistics, Economics, and Management Science) may, at times, require a faculty member to place greater emphasis on theory. On the contrary, Marketing, Organizational Communication and International Business courses may tend to require more use of practical examples and applications to clarify and to explain theories. For example, the needs-based theories of motivation can often be explained more effectively by using examples and applications. Diener, E. & Lucas, R. E. (2000) explore the challenges of using needs-based theories to explain such outcomes as happiness, fulfillment, and subjective well-being. The psychological and social constructs of motivation have often

been used to explain individual work habits, performance, and productivity. Business management educators spend a great deal of time introducing and explaining the Needs-Based Theories of Motivation in lecture and discussion. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Alderfer's ERG Theory, Herzberg's 2 Factor Theory, and McClelland's Acquired Needs Theory are similar in many respects. The TEACH Method implies that an instructor should spend at least 20 minutes introducing and explaining these theories.

EXAMPLE

Many business educators have relied on examples to reiterate lecture points and themes in classroom discussion. Dent (2001) describes his use of the television-sitcom, *Seinfeld*, as a means to depict organizational systems theory and psychological contract theory. Moreover, the use of films in the classroom has become more popular than the use of television-sitcoms. "Many developmental educators have shown movies in reading or writing classes to at least stimulate conversation and encourage close observation and, at the most, to enhance knowledge of organizational patterns" (Sweeney, 2006, p. 28). Some films possess the ability to simplify and characterize real-world scenarios into easy-to-understand and relatable chunks for students. "One way of making students feel the need to learn is to show them the relevance of the lecture material to everyday life" (Ventura & Onsmann, 2009, p. 662). Historically, several films and movies have been identified as effective teaching and learning aides. According to BizED (2004), *The Corporation* has become a staple in many B-school classrooms to drive home the tenets of Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethics. There is also a host of films that can be used to illustrate an individual's motivation and drive to excel and to satisfy his or her needs. The TEACH Method uses selected scenes from the "*Men of Honor* (2001) Special Edition DVD" as an example of an individual's personal and professional motivation to achieve. The "*Men of Honor*" film depicts the journey of Carl Brashear, the first African-American US Navy Master Diver who struggles to overcome racism and an overwhelming physical tragedy to be restored to full active duty as an amputee. Carl Brashear's perseverance, determination, commitment to excellence, and skill mastery exemplifies the core traits that many faculty members want to develop, foster, and enhance in their business students. The TEACH Method suggests that an instructor should take 30 minutes to show scenes 14-17 of the "*Men of Honor* (2001) Special Edition DVD."

APPLICATION

Kuzma and Haney (2001) helpfully articulate five classroom advantages derived from using film and video. In their cogent treatment, film and video stimulates the senses, concretize abstractions, trigger affective learning, generate historical connections, and advance "the learning paradigm" (p. 35). *Men of Honor* (2001), at first-glance, may appear to be abstract because it is obviously not a business film. But, actor Cuba Gooding, Jr., who portrays Master Diver Carl Brashear, embodies the significance of personal will, drive, determination, and motivation. "The openness of the movies' form affords students great freedom in interpretation, evaluation, and reaction; it also gives viewers room to assign a variety of meanings to any given film" (Kuzma & Haney, 2001, p. 36). After watching scenes from the film, students are likely to have different opinions, observations, and impressions as related to motivation. In order to connect students back to the needs-based theories lecture and discussion, an immediate reflection activity should be assigned. "Business students, as a whole, tend to exhibit personality qualities that lean toward being practical, expedient, and means-end oriented" (McInnis-Bowers, Chew, & Bowers, 2010, p. 19). Many students may want to immediately describe how they can or can't relate to Master Diver Carl Brashear. The application step of the TEACH Method encourages students to critically think about the scenes from the film as related to the Needs-Based Theories of Motivation. "Explicit focus on critical thinking demands modeling of skills by the instructor and active learning activities for student practice of critical thinking" (Braun, 2004, pp. 234-235). The TEACH Method offers students an "individual reflection" worksheet to fill out and complete. The worksheet allows students to apply at least two examples, or instances, from the film where they've recognized a concept from any of the Needs-Based Theories of Motivation. The TEACH Method suggests that students should take ten minutes to complete the "individual reflection" worksheet.

COLLABORATION

The instructor should now form four teams of equal size. Up to this point, the students have been working independently and many will be eager to engage in dialogue with each other. "Group work is also considered by

many instructors as a methodologically sound way of utilizing class time and as a robust technique for students to interact and learn from each other” (Gottschall & García-Bayonas, 2008, p. 4). The TEACH Method suggests that the teams are named Team Maslow, Team Alderfer, Team Herzberg, and Team McClelland, respectively. Each team will receive a “team reflection” worksheet to complete. “Reflective thinking processes can also be used in creative ways to intensify students’ engagement with the material” (McInnis-Bowers et al., 2010, p. 20). The “team reflection” worksheet requires the team to collectively apply their insights from the film’s scenes and their “individual reflection” worksheets to concepts and implications of their assigned Needs-Based Theory of Motivation. The instructor must reinforce the importance of teamwork and insist that students work collaboratively to share and exchange ideas. In addition, opposing ideas and functional conflict should be encouraged.

“Students often experience negative collaborative situations because they are not adequately prepared to serve as effective team members. They do not understand the dynamics of the team experience and often try to apply individual work processes to collaborative experiences” (Snyder, 2010, p. 1).

The TEACH Method suggests that groups should be allotted 20 minutes to complete the “team reflection” worksheet.

HAVE DISCUSSION

A classroom-wide discussion is pertinent to ensure learning. A study conducted by Kennedy, Senses, and Ayan (2011) reiterates the significance of having classroom discussion following a film to highlight and reiterate main points, themes, and concepts. In addition, further in-class collective discussion is an effective tool for engagement. Webber (2004, p. 259) describes engagement as “a social cognitive model of learning which emphasizes the dynamic nature of the engagement between learners and their environment.” The instructor must allow teams the opportunity to present the outcomes of their groups’ discussions. Each team should appoint a presenter to explain to the class their team’s findings and inferences, as described on their “team reflection” worksheet, within a 2-3 minute timeframe. Instructors should also solicit additional input and ideas from each member of each team. “Moreover, extant research provides evidence that higher levels of involvement lead to motivation to engage in higher levels of cognitive activity; i.e., knowledge acquisition” (Levin & Martin, 2010, p. 174).

Lastly, time should be allotted for Q&A and further discussion between the instructor and student teams or individuals. The TEACH Method suggests that 20 minutes should be allotted to facilitate team presentations and Q&A.

CONCLUSION

The TEACH Method does offer a balance between teaching theory and teaching application. The use of movies and films in the classroom does face some criticism. Kuzma & Haney (2001) site the following concerns:

1. Historical films often lack accurate detail.
2. A few countries dominate the movie industry, thus creating a “Western-bias.”
3. Emotional extremes can also reduce students’ attention and inhibit the learning process.

Instructors should consider facilitating a guiding discussion with students prior to showing a film in class. Non-traditional aged students are likely to possess more real world experience and are often better prepared to grasp various concepts in the learning environment. “Students without authentic organizational experience are ill equipped to make sense of how the presented theories and concepts can be related to real situations” (Harmer, 2009, p. 43). Films are in no way a substitute for actual experience in workplace situations, but they can be used to help fill the experience gap between the classroom and the real world. “Films can transform concepts into quasi-lived experiences that students may therefore retain long after class is over” (Kuzma & Haney, 2001, p. 35). The TEACH Method is an effective and efficient way to ensure learning outcomes, to stimulate critical thinking, and to encourage higher levels of student engagement and participation in classroom discussion. Students will be able to obtain an increased understanding and mastery of each of the Needs-Based Theories of Motivation. The TEACH Method can

be applied to many other theory-based lessons/topics in business and management courses. Time allotted for each activity can also vary.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

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