

USING A CONFUCIUS TEACHING PHILOSOPHY IN MARKETING CLASSES: AN ACTIVE CLASSROOM LEARNING EXAMPLE

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ABSTRACT

The importance of a teaching philosophy has been discussed in previous books and articles (Brookfield, 1990; Chonko, 2007). Using the guidelines advanced by Brookfield (1990) in *The Skillful Teacher*, we implemented a classroom learning philosophy that is based on a teaching philosophy thousands of years old; a philosophy that follows Confucius' lessons. Among the most important tenants of a Confucian philosophy of education is teaching and studying (Shim, 2007). Confucius' teaching stresses the importance of cooperative learning and advancing knowledge through peer and reciprocal learning. In his teaching, Confucius motivated students to compare ideas and to share various experiences with each other including the teacher. According to Confucius (*OESNews*, 2006), "The processes of teaching and learning stimulate one another." Individual ideas were accounted for through a sharing and comparing process, and thus, contemplation and proactive learning were enhanced.

Confucius' philosophy suggests that by creating an active and supporting learning environment, students are free to learn while helping enhance the learning of their student peers. According to Warren (1997, p. 19), active learning is, "making students the center of their learning." Through this active engagement, students not only think about and learn course material in greater depth, but they also learn how to apply knowledge to solve problems in a "real world" environment so they are better prepared for the future (Peterson, 2001). In fact, a recent study

by Karns (2006) found active learning pedagogies are more effective in teaching marketing. Students increase their intrinsic interest in expanding knowledge and take pride in facilitating peer learning. Although, the idea of a classroom innovation thousands of years old may seem like a contradiction, the application of this philosophy in today's classrooms is a revived pedagogical tool. This is especially true in Western cultures where competition rather than cooperation provides the motivation to learn in many classrooms (Sautter, 2007).

In our classes (both undergraduate¹ and graduate levels² principles of marketing), active learning by students is fostered through a learning environment involving several layers. Typically, the class is divided into four "layers" that are designed to build on one another and to develop students' understanding of the material. These four layers include, (1) lectures/discussions heavily emphasizing active learning and quality participations, (2) student-led case discussions, (3) presenting timely and comprehensive feedback – shadow-group feedback, self evaluations, peer evaluations, and instructor feedback, and (4) experiential projects. Each of these layers expands upon class concepts to enhance experiential learning, learning by doing (Educational Resource Information Center, 2003; Smith & Van Doren, 2004), and each is discussed in detail.

References Available on Request

¹ The average class size for undergraduate levels is 35 to 37.

² The average class size for graduate levels is 25 to 30.