Assessing Active Class Participation in a Sino-British Context

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In order to stimulate students’ active participation in class, my HEA grant enabled me to split a large marketing lecture in China into smaller groups and introduce assessed (marked) case discussions. Student-led qualitative and quantitative research investigated students’ perceptions of these changes and the impact on their learning. The most operational finding with impact on my own teaching is that Chinese students should be allowed to discuss their views in a small group of four to six students before a discussion with the entire class. This allows them to test their ideas, to increase quality of their statements and to save face because they feel they speak for the group rather than themselves. Our results also suggest that Chinese students do not believe that they learn from their peers because they do not accept their peers as “more knowledgeable others”. This finding could have a theoretical impact on our understanding of Vygotsky’s social development theory in a Chinese context. Within my institution, the project contributes to a wider initiative on assessed class participation, and one concrete impact is that class participation may now be assessed on a group level. The project had particular impact the Chinese students involved in the research on assessed class participation. One of my undergraduate business students presented the research at the Management Learning Conference at Lancaster University and decided to shift subject and is now doing her masters in education in Canada. Presenting the research results on four continents has also increased my visibility and contributed to my recent appointment (beginning in 2015) as an Associate Editor of the Academy of Management Learning & Education.