

Investigation on Improvements of Students' Comprehensive Capability by Team Research Study

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Abstract

Team research study subvert the traditional lecture-style teaching model as it can help students to develop the ability of analyzing and solving problems, communication skills, sense of teamwork and creativity. So the students' comprehensive capability has been greatly improved. This paper divided the team research study into three periods: preparation, research and results demonstration. It also elaborated the role of teachers in the three periods. On this basis, the paper analyzed two issues in depth when doing team research study, and point out that the quality of teachers should be improved as well as the problem of class-hour occupation should be well solved in order to ensure to carry out the team research study effectively.

Key words: Team work study; Comprehensive capability and teaching organization

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INTRODUCTION

Team research study is a teaching method basically by the form of team which systematically uses interactions between dynamic factors in teaching, cooperative exploration and analysis between team players and finally achieves the goal of problem-solving. The researchers in team research study hold the opinion that the traditional lecture-style teaching is mainly by teachers' lecture, adopts the organized form of whole-class teaching and prizes

and evaluations are always given according to the exam scores so that the competitive mode of class teaching is formed and students are prone to ability attribution. As the possibility of success falls into minority of the students, the majority lose their confidence of learning and become lack of motivation and interests in study and even evade study. Team research study transforms the structure from competition-oriented of traditional lecture-style teaching into cooperation-oriented, so it forms the pattern of cooperation in a team and competition between teams. Team players are more emphasized on mutual support in a team in order to complete the task of leaning together, prizes are given by the total performance of the whole team as well. As a result, the fear of failure in competition is largely diminished, also the interests and motivations in learning is aroused. In the rapid development of modern science and technology, students not only need to learn the knowledge, but also need to learn to observe, explore and solve problems. And through this process students are required to improve their overall quality. In the process of team research study the instructor gives the chance of expressing oneself to each student, activates the students' thinking, guides the students to positively find and solve the problem and also express their own ideas, improves the students' ability of literature research, problem analysis and solving, language skills and teamwork to greatly enhance the comprehensive capability by specific activities. Team research study can be divided into three periods: the first period is preparation, the second one is research and the third one is results demonstration.

1. PREPARATION PERIOD OF TEAM RESEARCH STUDY

The main work of preparation period is to instruct students to build their research teams and introduce ways of team research study. This period should be finished within 2 months since the first class.

1.1 Instruct the Students to Build the Research Team

At the start of class, illustrate the purpose and basic requirements of team research study. The learners can form teams by their own interested subjects which are organizational units on specific subjects and basic groups of case discussion as well. The number of team members is better limited to 10 or so. Under the leadership of Professor Belbin, the Industrial training research department of university of Cambridge experienced 9 years' professional research and finally concluded that a successful team needs 8 different roles: Shaper, Monitor Evaluator, Scheduler, Resource Investigator, Team Worker, Finisher, Company Worker. If the instructor properly adjusts the team to keep the balance of the eight roles according to character differences and talents of team players after formation of volunteering team, the study effects will be ultimately enhanced. After the team members are fixed, the most important and key factor is being of the leader, who is the sole of a team and need to be selected by the total team members. Additionally, let the learners to choose a sound and meaningful title for their team and then announce the title of each team formally hence a research team is established.

1.2 Introduction to the Ways of Team Activities

After the establishment of research team, explain to the students on how to do team-based research activities according to the specific circumstances of the students and understanding of ways of research study. It specifically includes organization and management of the daily activities of the team, work process, methods of communication, coordination, team decision making, brain-storming and so on.

1.3 Announcement of Evaluation Criteria and Methods of Team Research Study

In order to motivate students to conduct in-depth case studies, students need to be clearly stated in advance about the evaluation criteria, evaluation methods and the status in the curriculum evaluation of team research study, so that they clearly know the significance and specific requirements of team research study. Apply certain pressure as well as motivation upon the students in order to make sure every student is involved in the process of project research. The evaluation criteria and methods of team research study should be feasible, including both research results and the process.

2. RESEARCH PERIOD OF TEAM RESEARCH STUDY

A research topic lasts for about 6 to 8 weeks, ends before the last 1 to 2 weeks of the course. The work of this period is to guide research team to select research topics, make research schedule and carry out specific research activities

accordingly. Team players push forward the research continuously by teamwork.

2.1 Select Research Topics

It is very important to select a topic, as the topic can directly influence students' interests and effects of the research. When assigning a topic, the instructor should guide and inspire the students to think the topic according to the main content and key questions in the teaching process, and also make the topic related to the practical problems the college students might encounter in their daily life in order to strike a chord with the students. The instructor can prepare several candidates to let the students to choose in team research study when necessary. At last, the instructor announces the chosen topic by the students in class, and proposes a clear and definite research goal to each research topic.

2.2 Make team Research Schedule

A suitable research schedule is the basis to achieve the goal in team research study. Before the team draws up a specific research schedule, the instructor should specifically tell the starting date and deadline. In order to meet the teaching schedule, normally the period of team research study lasts for about 6 to 8 weeks, ends 1 to 2 weeks before classes end. Take the case of employment intention of college students for example, the team research schedule is shown as follows: the first week, divide up the work according to the specialties, interests and characters of the team members; from second to fourth week, the team players find information separately according to the divided work assigned to each member; the fifth week, make the survey of employment intention of college students; from sixth to seventh week, give out, collect and statistic analyze the survey; the eighth week, draft the report on the basis of the survey and make powerpoint for the final report.

2.3 Introduce the Situation of Research and Provide Some References

Before the teams start to do the research, the instructor should introduce the overseas and domestic research status to the teams, and provide fundamental references. In the meantime, in order to ensure the effects of the research the instructor should introduce the students steps and ways to obtain new information to avoid detours in the research process. Being clear about the current research situation and results, the students are able to enter into the study condition quickly in the light of the team research schedule.

2.4 Execute the Team Research Study and Instruct Students to Carry Out Research Topics

In the implementation process of the team research study, the instructor needs to instruct each team on the research methods as soon as possible to make sure the students follow the right path to carry out research. At the same time, the instructor should help students to effectively

foresee the problems and difficulties that students might encounter and to develop appropriate measures. The process of team research study is not a strictly linear process, the divided work can be adjusted at any time in the implementation process. In team research study, the most important part is the discussion period of every week. The internal information flow and sharing can promote mutual exchanges and cooperation, as well as reduce conflicts, this is also the important process to improve the abilities of oral expression and critical thinking of the team players. The instructor should take part in the discussion as much as possible, through the process of communication with students and discussion to control the progress of the project, and help the students to solve difficulties met in the research process.

3. PERIOD OF RESULT DEMONSTRATION

When every team completes the research study, the instructor should organize a class seminar, to show the research result of each team. Each team should submit a research report, give a presentation respectively in the seminar, summarize and exchange of research results to initiate more in-depth thinking.

3.1 Class Presentation of the Team

The research team should select 1 to 2 members to speech on stage according to the work divided in advance. The speaker need to report different aspects of research results including process, methods, main content, the study found, innovation, the issues to be discussed later and so on. This approach provides the students the opportunity to speak on stage and show themselves, so it is a great encouragement and challenge to the students. The in class lecture of a team has two issues needed to pay special attention to. One issue is the time control problem, due to the limits of class hours, the lecture section is not allowed to take much time, generally it is considered to take 20 minutes or so. The other issue is the teacher's role in participating in the lecture. During the period of the lecture given by a student, the instructor should keep good order in class, and trigger the student's enthusiasm with a trust and expected look in his/her eyes. When the student meets problems in the speech, the instructor needs to use enlightening and suggestive words to help him/her illustrate his/her point of view. Do not interrupt the student while speaking.

3.2 Questions Raised By Students in Class

When the speech is over, the instructor can ask the other teams to raise one question answered by the showing team. By this way to evaluate the members of the showing team that how deep they understand the research topic. Subsequently, let the showing team to raise a question to any other team randomly. So on one hand the other teams' understanding of the topic is examined on the other hand

it can attract their attention, provoke more thinking, and improve the level of participation of all students. Finally, according to the questions the instructor grasps the key of the topic and then asks questions to the showing team and answers several questions asked by students at last.

3.3 Research Results Evaluation

The other research teams are required to evaluate the research result of the showing team in accordance with the criteria announced or score table designed in advance (The content of score table should at least include depth of the research topic, effectiveness of the research content and method, creativity of the research results, effectiveness of the speech and response to the questions). Integrate the other teams' score and instructor's rating as the total evaluation of the research topic of the showing team.

3.4 Research Results Conclusion

After all teams show their results, the instructor should give summary evaluation of the research result by each team at the end of the seminar, release the overall score of each team, recognize the team of high-level and characteristic research and indicate the common problems in the study. Note that the instructor should try to use positive and praiseful words to assess the students' achievements, and use understanding and conductive words to euphemistically point out the limitations of the students and promote their improvement.

4. ISSUES OF TEAM RESEARCH

As a new class teaching method, team research study change the teaching form of one instructor lecturing for the whole class, make the students participate into the teaching activities and get control over the teaching content in the process. Through practice, we feel that there are two issues should be paid serious attention in order to make team research study get better effects in the teaching activities.

Firstly, we need to pay attention to improving the quality of instructors. In the team research study, the topics chosen by students are flexible and uncertain, so the instructor is required to have higher professional quality. The instructor should firstly have in-depth knowledge about the topics studied by the students. Only in this way, the instructor is able to provide the students effective guide and let the students have better understanding on the topic in order to get sound effects in teaching. Though it is challenging, the entire process still can be fully managed by the instructor as long as the instructor makes some effort because of the perspective of the students and the constraint of the information sources. In addition, the instructor should pay attention to the improvement of teaching skills such as the art of raise a question and heuristic techniques, as these skills also affect the effects of implementation.

Secondly, the contradiction of occupied class hours should be properly handled. Currently in the case of class hours is generally compressed, it is inevitable to take some class hours by introducing team research study. It would be quite stressful of class hours if teaching chapters were completed by the original allocation. So there must be an adjustment of teaching content accordingly, such as assigning the easy-understanding part to the students as a self-study to integrate with the questions after class. Give up a few parts which are abstract to understand, only need to memorize and are meaningless to practice. The problem of contradiction between research and occupied class hours is solved as a result of such adjustment.

All in all, by the practice team research study greatly increases the students' enthusiasm of participating in it, cultivates the students' innovation spirit, exercises the students' practical ability, trains their lifelong learning skills, teamwork skills and develops the ability of expressing themselves. Hence the team research study can improve the overall quality of the students, to better meet the social development needs for high-level talent. Although there are still some deficiencies, such as only a part of the students have the opportunities to deliver

presentations due to the limitation of class hours, the team research study still deserves our further exploration as an innovative way.

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