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Optimizing the study tour evaluation system: The new driving force for learners' overall development

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Abstract
At a time of ever-deepening globalization and ever increasing communication home and abroad, study tour, as a unique form of education, is receiving more and more attention from the education circles in various countries for providing learners with the opportunity to step out of the classroom and get in touch with the outside world. More importantly, it promotes the overall development of learners' personal comprehensive quality. To assess the contribution of study tours to learners' development more effectively and accurately, a multidimensional evaluation system has been constructed on the basis of the concept of human-land cooperation, synthetic thinking, geographical practice, regional awareness, social responsibility, cultural inheritance and understanding.

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1. Introduction

Study tours for for primary and secondary level learners are planned and organized by educational administrators at different levels and schools in China and other countries. Then through ways of group travel and arranged accommodation, the extracurricular educational activities combining project-based learning and travel experiences are carried out. As an innovative form of integrating school and extracurricular education, study tours become an important part of education and teaching, as well as an effective approach of comprehensive practical education. For instance, sending their children on study tours during the summer vacation as an alternative to traditional camp education has become a popular option for Chinese parents, since study tours are packed with educational benefits and fun, enabling students to acquire knowledge in various ways. In recent years, more Chinese parents have arranged for their children to go on study tours to cultural museums, science and technology museums, natural scenic spots, or farms to broaden their horizon and experience during the summer vacation. The development of study tour courses is the only way to improve the scientific city, standardization and effectiveness of this new way of education [1]. According to Yin and Tang (2019) [1], the study tour courses for primary and secondary scholars refer to a series of activities aiming at improving learners' survival ability, social participation ability and creative ability via purposeful, planned and organized educational travel [1].

Study tour courses are comprehensive and practical since they possess the characteristics of comprehensiveness, interdisciplinary news, autonomy, practicality, openness, integration and continuity without losing the educative, scientific, informative nature. Furthermore, they add entertainment, exploration, social welfare to traditional school education while maintaining learners' safety. Zhong &Tan (2018) [2] strengthened the necessity of quality control in the construction of study tour courses after discussing the existing difficulties in the implementation of study tour courses for primary and secondary schools and the present solutions [2].

Studied relevant documents on study tours and the existing evaluation systems from various countries, and then screened an evaluation system that can significantly reflect the features of study tour through the Delphi Method [3]. Zhong & He (2021) [4] explored the path of study tour course development for primary and secondary school learners from the perspective of system theory [4]. Guo &Shi (2022) [22] proposed that constructing evaluation indicators for the implementation of study tour courses is a breakthrough in solving the problems of "traveling without learning" or "learning with no traveling" [5]. With the entropy weight TOPSIS method, Wan &Wang *et al*. (2022) [6] constructed high quality development evaluation system for study tours from the four dimensions of economy, security factors, market entities and human resources, which combined dynamic and static analysis paradigms [6]. Used the fuzzy Delphi method to construct a study tour course development quality evaluation system with three dimensions: knowledge base of curriculum designers, course content and course development process [7].

2. Development of evaluation

Evaluation is a complex process of obtaining and interpreting evidence. Taylor, known as the "Father of Modern Curriculum", pointed out in his book *Fundamentals of Curriculum and Instruction* that since evaluation involves obtaining evidence of changes in students' behavior, obtaining any valid evidence of the behaviors desired by the educational objectives can be regarded as an appropriate method of evaluation. [8]

Given the multidimensional goals of teaching and learning, it is clear that a single paper-and-pencil test cannot meet the needs of the 21st century for a comprehensive assessment of talent. While paper-and-pencil tests remain valid for specific objectives, they are inadequate for assessing higher-order thinking skills and synthesizing qualities, especially when faced with complex, dynamic tasks. G. Wiggins and J. McTighe (2005) [9] further refined the types of assessment by proposing three basic options: tests and exams, academic discussions (describing a topic or situation that is used to guide students to respond in a certain way), and expressive tasks and scenario planning [9]. The latter, in particular, empowers students with sufficient freedom in choosing how to accomplish their final outcomes and performances, thus comprehensively assessing their creativity, practical skills, and problem-solving abilities.

Real situation problems are often complex, dynamic, and dilemma poorly constructed problems, and a famous American psychologist, believes that the biggest difference between the various types of problems is mainly in the coherence of the structure, i.e., the good and poorly constructed problems [10]. Most of the problems encountered in formal education are well-constructed, such as practice or exam questions in textbooks, which are complete in terms of information, convergent in their answers, follow established principles and rules, and tend to be simpler and more static. For example, in the teaching of geography, "the determination of the latitude and longitude of a location" is a skill and a kind of knowledge that should be learned and practiced repeatedly in junior high school, and students are basically able to read the approximate latitude and longitude of a location on a map with a latitude/longitude network, which is a relatively regular, simple and good structural problem. In contrast, most of the problems encountered in daily life are poorly-constructed problems that behave in an emergent and fragmented manner, and the solutions are usually not convergent and predictable in advance. For example, what are some real-life situations where latitude and longitude are needed? How to report one's location to a rescuer when one is lost in the wild? Thus, poorly constructed problems tend to be complex and dynamic, i.e., clustering of problems.

To address the above assessment challenges, rubric (量规) becomes an important term that has been used frequently in **China's 8th Education Reform**. It is a set of criteria for evaluating students' academic performance including behaviors, cognition, attitudes and various learning outcomes (e.g., oral presentations, research reports, works, essays, etc.) in the learning process. The scale combines the strengths of qualitative and quantitative assessment and provides clear and precise details of the assessment. Their development needs to be closely based on academic quality standards, while taking into account the individual differences of students to ensure that a more precise evaluation space is found between the curriculum standards and the actual level of students [11].

At present, the academic research on the quality evaluation of study tour courses mainly focuses on the following aspects: (1) those based on qualitative description and qualitative evaluation. Some scholars qualitatively described the evaluation path of study tour courses from a macro perspective [12], while others developed qualitative evaluation of study tour courses by investigating the perceptions of the participating learners [13]. (2) Those based on personalized standards for case studies. Many scholars have developed personalized evaluation standards for study tour courses based on case studies [14]. (3) The diversified evaluation content of study tour courses. Some scholars evaluated study tour participators, some scholars focused on the evaluation of the implementation of study tour courses [15], and some others conducted comprehensive evaluations on learners, courses and implementers [16]. While a great number of scholars evaluated the course system in all aspects and throughout the process [17, 18, 19].

It is known to all educators that study tours are not just simple traveling activities, but also a learning process of in-depth practice for learners to broaden their horizons and explore the unknown. For example, overseas study tours should offer students the opportunity to travel, meet with people their own age in other countries and gather knowledge, they should never be reduced to fun and games. In terms of training objective, study tours focus on cultivating students' comprehensive qualities, especially in the three aspects of social responsibility, innovative spirit and practical ability [20] In this process, the learners need to combine actual educational scenarios (connected with the study tour) with their prior accumulation of knowledge to solve problems encountered in the educational practice process with independent and critical thinking in well-organized team work. Compared with school-instructed subject courses, study tour courses belong to a new type of activity course focusing on practice. From the perspective of course characteristics, they combine autonomy, openness and collectivism into one set of courses. In terms of course value orientation, study tour courses are not limited to idealized knowledge in textbooks. Instead, the learners actively explore, think and experience various realistic problems in

the process of study. Consequently, they will gain authentic experiences, learn to attach importance to the harmonious coexistence of man and nature, better understand and respect different cultures and values, and thus gradually cultivate a global vision and cross-cultural communication ability. The construction of this evaluation system aims to comprehensively and systematically evaluate the effectiveness of study tour in promoting student development.

3. Construction of the evaluation system

The present evaluation system that we are constructing goes beyond simply considering the accumulation of knowledge and skills during learners' study tour, and instead it focuses on the deepening of their perceptual cognition, the shaping of their values, and the overall cultivation of their comprehensive qualities. The true meaning of education is imparting knowledge and skills, while awakening the minds of learners, guiding them to form independent personalities, free thoughts, and the ability to maintain humanistic care and social responsibility in a complex and changing world. It aims to promote students to become future outstanding talents with profound academic background, noble sentiments and broad social adaptability. And other scholars put forward three suggestions for study tour: first, carrying out professional teacher training and training teachers to learn teaching strategies in informal learning environments; second, strengthening exchanges and cooperation between tour study sites and schools to obtain the necessary educational materials; third, focusing on organically integrating the learning experiences during the study tour into the school curriculum to enhance the impact of study tour on education [21]. Therefore, when constructing an evaluation system for promoting learner development in primary and secondary school study tour, it is necessary for us to comprehensively consider the human-land coordination concept, comprehensive thinking, geographical practice, regional cognition, social responsibility, and cultural inheritance and understanding. In order to have a more comprehensive understanding of their growth and progress in study tours, a solid foundation should be laid for their future academic activities and life.

3. Multi-dimensional evaluation system framework

1. Human-land coordination concept

- Whether the study tour guides learners to pay attention to the interaction between human activities and the geographical environment;
- Whether learners can understand and respect the laws of nature in practice and achieve harmonious coexistence between man and nature;
- Whether the study tour can deepen learners' understanding and practice of the concept of sustainable development.

2. Comprehensive thinking

- Whether the study tour cultivates learners' observation ability so that they can collect and learn to process geographical information comprehensively and systematically;
- Whether the learners can use the collected geographical information to solve geographical problems through analysis, synthesis, reasoning, speculation and other thinking methods;
- Whether the study tour stimulates learners' innovative thinking and encourages them to put forward new ideas and solutions.

3. Geographical practical ability

- Does the study tour provide learners with sufficient practical opportunities so that they can use geographical knowledge and skills to solve practical problems?
- Can learners master the basic methods of geographical investigation and research in practice, such as data collection, observation and measurement?
- Does the study tour improve learners' hands-on ability and scientific quality, so that they can effectively respond to real and complex geographical problems?

4. Regional cognition

- Can the study tour help learns to establish the awareness and habit of understanding the geographical environment from a regional perspective;
- Can learners understand the natural environment and cultural characteristics of different regions in practice and form a comprehensive understanding of the geographical environment;
- Does the study tour promote learners' sense of identity and belonging to the country, nation and culture?

5. Social responsibility

- Does the study tour guide learners to pay attention to current social and environmental issues and cultivate their sense of social responsibility.
- Can learners practice environmental protection concepts in practice and actively participate in environmental protection activities;
- Does the study tour help learners to understand and respect different cultures and values and promote cultural exchanges and integration?

6. Cultural inheritance and understanding

- Whether the study tour effectively promotes learners' in-depth understanding of their own and other countries' cultures, including cultural symbols, historical traditions, values and other multi-dimensional understandings;
- Whether learners can transcend cultural boundaries, understand the uniqueness and diversity of different cultures, and gain insights into the intricate connections and mutual influences between cultures;
- Whether the study tour promotes learners 'cross-cultural communication skills and enhances cultural diversity and inclusiveness.

When building this evaluation system, close attention should be paid to the following aspects

1. Specificity and operability of evaluation indicators: Evaluation indicators should be specific and clear to facilitate observation and evaluation. At the same time, evaluation indicators should be operational so that educators can apply them in actual teaching.

2. Diversity and comprehensiveness of evaluation methods [22]: Evaluation methods should be diverse, including observation, interview, pre-test, post-test and other methods. At the same time, evaluation methods should be comprehensive and able to fully reflect learners' performance and development in study tours.

3. Feedback and guiding role of evaluation results [23]: Evaluation results should be promptly fed back to learners and instructors to help them understand their strengths and weaknesses in the study tour and put forward corresponding suggestions for improvement. At the same time, evaluation results should be guiding and able to guide educators to continuously optimize the design and implementation of study tours and the corresponding courses.

Of course, we have also realized that different countries and regions may have their own specific education systems and study tour practices. Believes that the key factors affecting study tours are the imbalance between experience and practice in educational travel, cross-cultural differences between different places, and the tourism "return" atmosphere in the study tour team [20]. Believes that the emotional problems caused by environmental changes and the discomfort caused by the inability to adapt to the environment will also greatly affect the implementation effect of educational travel [24]. Therefore, when applying this evaluation system, educators and instructors are encouraged to make appropriate adjustments and supplements based on local actual conditions to ensure that the evaluation system can better meet local educational needs and study tour practices. In short, it is hoped that through the construction and application of this evaluation system, we can better promote the development of educational travel in primary and secondary education stages and provide strong support and guarantee for the all-round development of our learners.

4. The role of the study tour evaluation system in promoting student development

1. Improving comprehensive quality of the learners

Through the study tour evaluation system, the educators not only focus on learners' subject knowledge, but also focus on cultivating their comprehensive abilities, such as teamwork ability, leadership, communication ability, innovative spirit and self-management ability. The evaluation system comprehensively evaluates their performance in the study process through multi-dimensional and diversified evaluation indicators, and promotes the learners' all-round development.

2. Cultivating learners' cross-cultural communication ability

Study tours usually involve cultural exchanges between different countries and regions, which provides learners with rare opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges. Through the study tour evaluation system, we can pay more attention to the participants' performance in cross-cultural exchanges, cultivate their cross-cultural communication abilities, and lay a solid foundation for them to take part in future international exchanges.

3. Shaping of emotions, attitudes and values

Study tours guide students to form correct emotions, attitudes and values through visiting historical sites, experiencing cross-regional cultures, participating in social services and other activities, which help to cultivate learners' sense of social responsibility, respect and tolerance of diverse cultures, and environmental awareness.

5. Conclusion

The evaluation system of study tours for primary and secondary schools is of great significance in enhancing the influence of the tours on learners' education. They have injected new vitality into their learning career through the deep integration of practice and experiences. For study tours to play a more effective role in improving learners' comprehensive quality and development potential, a comprehensive, objective, diverse and international evaluation system framework should be built from an international perspective. This system aims to accurately measure the effectiveness of study tours and ensure that they can truly exert their educational influence.

Meanwhile, attention of the educators should also be paid to the feedback mechanism and application practice of the evaluation results to ensure that each evaluation and feedback can help the participators to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and become a valuable asset for self-cognition and future growth. Through timely and helpful feedback, we can quickly adjust the teaching progress and activity arrangements by judging the learners' actual learning results and expected results on the one hand, so as to improve the teaching methods and enhance the teaching effect. On the other hand, to carry out targeted self-improvement and development, learners can adjust their own learning status, identify their weaknesses in learning, and improve their ability to learn in a targeted manner. The application of such an evaluation system is a deep excavation of the value of study tours, as well as a careful planning and guidance of the learners' future growth paths.

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