

Exploratory Practice of Participatory Teaching in the Course “Social Survey Research Methods”: Taking the Class-based Teaching of Rural Regional Development Major as an Example

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Abstract: “Social Survey Research Methods” is a foundational course for humanities and social science majors such as sociology, public administration, social work, and law. It is characterized by a high degree of integration between theory and practice, with prominent instrumental attributes. Based on the undergraduate teaching practice of the Rural Regional Development major, this study adopts the concept of participatory teaching as guidance, combined with course teaching objectives and student characteristics, to analyze the process, effects, and existing problems of implementing participatory teaching from the perspectives of teaching concept reconstruction, practice pathway design, innovation of student participation forms, and teaching reform effects, providing reference experience for teaching of social science-related majors in universities.

Keywords: Social survey research methods; Participatory teaching; Teaching reform

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1. Introduction

“Social Survey Research Methods” serves as an applied practical course that links multiple professional courses in the undergraduate major of Rural Regional Development. It requires students to master a series of theoretical and practical knowledge applications, including research method theory, research design, data collection methods, analysis methods, and report writing, which are ultimately applied to students’ graduation thesis writing. Therefore, this course plays a crucial role in the academic completion of students in this major. The learning of applied practical courses focuses on the mastery of skills and the close integration of theory and practice. Pure classroom teaching methods cannot meet the needs of the course objectives. Therefore, this course explores participatory teaching paths through teaching reform projects. The main practical content includes two aspects: one is to fully understand the current situation of students and design teaching content, methods, and progress based on student characteristics; the other is to adopt diversified participatory

teaching methods, pay attention to students' subjectivity in the classroom, promote students' genuine participation in teaching, and enhance students' sense of ownership and achievement in learning. Through the above practices, analyze teaching effectiveness and student feedback, summarize experience, and this study attempts to explore feasible models of participatory teaching in undergraduate courses in universities, opening up feasible paths for promoting students' enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity in learning.

2. Literature review

Domestically and internationally, research on participatory teaching in universities has been widespread, and related teaching practices have been extensively implemented. Existing studies have generally emphasized the necessity and importance of participatory teaching and put forward corresponding reform suggestions.

The research conducted by Ran Yuanmao and Li Siwen (2023) analyzed participatory teaching based on the "three teachings" concept of "teaching thinking, teaching experience, and teaching expression" ^[1]. They believed that teaching is essentially a dialogue between the teacher and the student as subjects, and the realization of dialogue ultimately depends on the degree of students' "dialogue participation". Therefore, the core of participatory teaching lies in promoting students' active integration and participation. Zheng Yanlin, Wang Chenyin, and Luo Yuchen (2026) believed that participatory teaching can significantly enhance students' critical thinking level and contribute to the development of students' critical thinking ^[2]. Wu Xuejun and Wang Xiaoxiao (2023) explored participatory teaching in ideological and political theory courses in higher vocational colleges ^[3]. Based on the existing problems in the curriculum, they proposed suggestions to improve the effectiveness of classroom teaching by perfecting pre-class preparation, improving classroom teaching strategies, teaching organization strategies, and teaching evaluation strategies to enhance the effectiveness of participatory teaching.

Existing research has extensively explored the theoretical connotation and practical paradigm of participatory teaching, yet it has not uncovered research specifically focusing on participatory teaching in courses related to "Social Survey Research Methods". Therefore, this study will concentrate on "Social Survey Research Methods," a crucial course in social science-related majors, to analyze and explore the practical models and effects of participatory teaching from a micro perspective, providing referential practical experience for participatory teaching in related courses.

3. Teaching reform process and content

In the teaching reform of this course, the teaching team has conducted analysis and exploration on the teaching methods, teaching content, and ideological and political education. The reform of the course teaching is mainly carried out in three aspects, including: learning situation analysis, application of participatory teaching concepts and methods, and implementation of integrated ideological and political education.

3.1. Analysis of student learning conditions

Through surveys of students to obtain data, we discovered students' needs for the course and adjusted course arrangements based on student needs to improve students' classroom subject awareness and learning initiative. On one hand, we analyzed students' knowledge needs, understanding what knowledge students

want to learn through the course and their purposes, and designed course content based on student needs. On the other hand, we analyzed students' needs for teaching methods and adjusted teaching approaches based on student needs.

Through classroom observation and survey analysis, we identified students' shortcomings in the learning process, as well as their weaknesses in learning methods or learning abilities, and based on this, we conducted targeted knowledge transmission and capacity building to help students overcome their weaknesses and improve learning efficiency.

3.2. Application of participatory teaching concepts and methods

3.2.1. Immersive case teaching

Integrates course knowledge points into carefully selected cases, organizing students to simulate or practice based on these cases, deepening their understanding of knowledge and enhancing their ability to apply what they have learned.

For example, in the "Field Research" section, classic field research cases such as "Left-behind Population Survey" and "Participatory Rural Appraisal" are selected for explanation to promote students' understanding of the characteristics and methods of field research. Afterward, students are organized into groups to carry out field observation and interview simulation training. Students in different groups act as observers and observed individuals, researchers and interviewees, exercising research skills while also experiencing the joy of research.

3.2.2. Introduce the concept of service-oriented learning

Use resources on campus and in the surrounding area in the curriculum design and practical sessions, arrange students to engage in practical training, select topics in groups during classroom discussions, conduct research plan design and questionnaire design, and carry out practical research based on this. Conduct investigation and analysis on real-world issues, apply the learned methods to analyze and solve practical problems, and achieve the organic unity of value shaping, knowledge imparting, and ability cultivation. In the spirit of serving the countryside and society, integrate the service-oriented concept into the teaching process, cultivate students' sense of responsibility to learn knowledge, contribute to society, and promote development. In the practical process, let students truly realize their role in promoting social development and the impact they have as research subjects on the survey area, thereby stimulating students' initiative and enthusiasm for self-actualization.

3.3. Integrated ideological and political education

Integrate ideological and political education elements into the knowledge, case studies, and practical processes of classroom teaching. Enhance students' ideological and political qualities and their ability to practice correct values, and foster a sense of responsibility for maintaining social fairness, justice, harmony, and sustainable development.

For example, by providing cases with ideological and political guidance in conjunction with course content, students are shown the correct ideological and political direction and how good ideological and political qualities promote social development. The "typical investigation" section uses the case study of Zhou Enlai's investigation in the Boyan Commune in Hebei in 1961, combined with film clips from "Four Days and Nights of Zhou Enlai," to demonstrate to students the valuable spirit of the older generation of

revolutionaries of the Communist Party of China in adhering to the mass line and reaching out to the masses.

4. Summary of teaching practice experience

The participatory teaching reform practice of “Social Survey Research Methods” has generally achieved good results. Students’ learning effectiveness and learning initiative have both significantly improved, and the course’s student evaluation and satisfaction are also relatively high. Based on the analysis of questionnaire surveys, classroom observations, and student interviews, the following main conclusions are drawn:

4.1. Diversified classroom participation methods can significantly improve students’ learning initiative

Classroom participation mainly includes classroom Q&A, student classroom case discussions and analysis, team discussions and collaboration on group topic selection, questionnaire design, and research plan design, as well as completion and classroom presentations of student research processes and research outcomes. Through diversified classroom participation methods, teachers give students full freedom of expression in the classroom during the teaching process, while also enhancing students’ confidence in classroom participation through the teaching of theoretical and practical knowledge, and creating ample participation opportunities. Through multiple classroom participation experiences, students progress from initial passive participation and reluctance to participate, to natural participation, then to gaining confidence and a sense of achievement from the participation process, and finally to active participation. This progressive participation process is also a process of continuously improving learning initiative.

Case study: A male student W in the class was reported by multiple course instructors as having poor learning initiative and poor classroom performance. In this course, at the beginning of the semester, student W either skipped class or attended but did not listen for the first four weeks. During class, he sat in the back row, placed his computer on the desk to watch dramas, and covered the computer with a jacket to block the teacher’s view. When the teacher noticed and reminded him, the effect was minimal. To stimulate student W’s enthusiasm for learning, the teacher asked him questions multiple times and discovered that he had certain ideas and his own logic. Based on this, the teacher continuously guided, affirmed, and encouraged him. Student W gradually developed an interest in the course. In subsequent literature review presentations and survey report presentations, student W very actively volunteered to present on stage and performed excellently, achieving a comprehensive score of 70 at the end of the semester, which represented significant progress compared to his previous learning performance.

In addition, through after-class conversations with multiple students, it was found that most students welcomed the participatory classroom. Students believed that classroom participation gave them a different positioning of their role in the classroom, feeling that the classroom was their own. The sense of ownership and achievement made them more active and confident in learning.

4.2. Participatory teaching receives high student evaluation

Overall, the student evaluation of this participatory teaching reform was relatively good. Before the course concluded, the teacher conducted a survey of students in the form of a questionnaire, with 60 students completing the questionnaire to evaluate the classroom teaching methods and teaching content. From the data in **Table 1**, the vast majority of students were satisfied with the teaching content and methods.

Table 1. Student evaluation of participatory teaching

Content	Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Evaluation of Teaching Content	Satisfied	54	90%
	Average	6	10%
	Dissatisfied	0	0
Evaluation of Teaching Methods	Satisfied	55	91.7%
	Average	5	8.3%
	Dissatisfied	0	0

Data source: Questionnaire survey

In terms of evaluation of their own course learning effectiveness, most students indicated that through course learning, on one hand, they improved their professional competence, manifested in the enhancement of professional knowledge and skills, including improvement in professional English proficiency; on the other hand, they improved their learning enthusiasm and sense of responsibility, mainly manifested in increased interest in learning and enhanced enthusiasm. Most students indicated that the practical participation in the entire survey process enabled them to truly master research skills, independently complete topic selection, research design, data collection, and report writing, laying a good foundation for future thesis writing and other related work. The survey data are as follows:

Table 2. Student evaluation of their own course learning effectiveness

Content	Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Professional Knowledge Learning Effect	Very Good	31	51.7%
	Good	22	36.7%
	Average	7	11.7%
	Poor	0	0
Professional Skill Mastery (Including Professional English Proficiency)	Very Good	26	43.3%
	Good	20	33.3%
	Average	4	6.7%
	Poor	0	0
Change in Learning Interest	Significantly Improved	18	30%
	Somewhat Improved	27	45%
	No Change	15	25%
	Decreased	0	0
Evaluation of Learning Confidence	Significantly Enhanced	20	33.3%
	Somewhat Enhanced	32	53.3%
	No Change	8	13.3%
	Decreased	0	0

Data source: Questionnaire survey

4.3. Deficiencies and difficulties in course reform

The study summarized and analyzed the deficiencies and difficulties existing in the participatory teaching of the bilingual course “Social Survey Research Methods” through questionnaire survey data analysis and classroom observation.

4.3.1. Traditional study habits limit students' courage and confidence in participation

Influenced by over a decade of traditional teaching models, students have become accustomed to listening to lectures. For answering questions in class or participating in group discussions, they initially only adopted a task-completion mindset. Students are not accustomed to expressing themselves and also lack courage and confidence, fearing making mistakes, fearing criticism, or not knowing what they want to express. Particularly for bilingual courses, students' limited English proficiency further undermines their confidence in participation. The guidance and encouragement in the course have played a good role in improving students' participation ability and confidence, but some students still find it difficult to adapt and transform fully. In summary, a single course's practice is difficult to have a fundamental impact on all students, and the effects of joint, long-term efforts across related courses are more worth anticipating.

4.3.2. Insufficient practice space and time

Although this course has made efforts to increase practice opportunities, limited by space and class hours, the forms and time of students' actual participation in practice still need improvement. Current practice is mainly conducted within the campus or surrounding areas, or online. Students lack opportunities to enter society and rural areas for research truly and to solve practical problems. In future course design, it is expected that more in-depth practical training can be achieved.

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