

Research on the Abilities of Community Education Study Tour Instructors

Honghui Fei*

Jiangsu Open University, Nanjing 210036, China

*Corresponding author: Honghui Fei, 76861217@qq.com

Abstract: Community education study tour instructors are important action elements of community education tours. It is necessary to sort out the abilities of community education study tour instructors as well as construct a scientific and reasonable professional ability index system for community education study tour instructors, so as to promote the high-quality development of community education as well as the modernization of lifelong education governance system and governance ability. Based on the practice of community education in Jiangsu and the basic theory of pedagogy, this paper puts forward five core vocational abilities of community education, including travel education and teaching ability, curriculum development ability, management and research ability, training and guidance ability, as well as study tour guarantee ability. This paper attempts to sort out the ability of community education study tour instructors through research and analysis. A three-dimensional and multi-dimensional framework of community education instructors' ability has been constructed to provide a path for the professional development of community education study tour instructors.

Keywords: Study tour instructor; Community education; Team construction; Vocational ability

Publication date: December 2021; **Online publication:** December 27, 2021

1. Introduction

As an important carrier of community education, study tours create a community education and learning culture for residents in the process of observation, discovery, thinking, debate, experience, and understanding. It promotes the learning situation of common learning and breaks the binary opposition between teaching and learning in community education. It is a useful supplement to the mainstream development model of community education, which is a popular form of community education among residents. As a form of teaching organization in community education, community education study tour is still a new thing and is in the process of exploration and practice. There has always been a problem of weak participation among residents in the development of community education. In order to solve these problems, as a preferred form of teaching organization among residents, community education study tour has become an important way to promote the high-quality development of community education, which is inseparable from the improvement of the quality of the tutor team and the teaching level. After all, education depends on every teacher to work on it^[1]. The situational teaching theory that community education study tour relies on emphasizes the interaction between learners and learning situations, as well as between learners and learners. Therefore, study tour instructors are not only the implementors of community education study tour, but also undertake the design, interpretation, and reconstruction of the course, focusing on the response of different students to the course and implementing appropriate teaching. As a result, study tour instructors are important actors who would affect the quality of community education study tour and important factors that would affect the high-quality development of community education study tour.

2. Concepts

2.1. Community education study tour

The word “study tour” first came from the biographies of Emperor Chunshen in historical records. “Study tour can broaden one’s horizon.” This means that in the perception of people, scholars with extensive knowledge must be people with rich experience in travel ^[2]. In ancient times, “study tour” was not only an important method for Chinese scholars to acquire the knowledge of self-cultivation, family regulation, and state governance, but also the best way to surpass the spirit. In modern times, the Qing government used the term to refer to the act of sending students to foreign countries to study in order to cultivate talents. There was a time when the term “study tour” was confused with “study abroad.” The concept of “study tour” has a long history in China. From the perspective of lifelong learning for everyone in the new era, community education study tour is widely welcomed by community residents and local governments because of its dual functions as cultural leisure and social education carrier. Modern study tour has become a universal teaching model from the perspective of social education and an important way to build a lifelong learning education system for the people ^[3]. Study tour, as a traditional education form with a long history, has achieved remarkable results in innovating learning methods among citizens, promoting multiple subjects to participate in community education, optimizing the presentation of learning resources, and exploring the introduction of market-oriented mechanism into community education. It has become a new learning carrier of community education under the background of national lifelong learning ^[4]. It can be seen that from the perspective of audience range, community education study tour is not subordinate to a specific group, but oriented to everyone, with universality and sociality; from the perspective of functionalism, the purpose of study tour is for learning through “tour,” which does not only emphasize on the acquisition of residents’ knowledge, but also on the input of culture, which is educational and enriching; from the perspective of organizational form, study tour is not a copy or reprint of classroom education, but a beneficial supplement to school education. It is an important form of the unity of knowledge and practice, which is open and practical.

2.2. Research and learning travel

The term “research and learning travel” derives from “study tourism,” “research and study tourism,” “educational tourism,” etc. These concepts have no essential difference but have evolved with the changes of the times. At the same time, it is also mixed with the concept of “study tour.” In China, “research and learning travel” began from the document expression at the national level and is oriented to primary and secondary school students. In 2016, the Ministry of Education and 11 other departments issued the *Opinions on Promoting Research Trips for Primary and Secondary School Students* (Teaching Foundation I (2016) No. 8), which clearly defined research and learning travel of primary and secondary schools as an out of school educational activity combining research-based learning and travel experience organized and arranged by the education department and the school in a planned way through collective travel and centralized accommodation; it is an innovative form of connection between school education and out of school education, an important content of education and teaching, and an effective way of comprehensive practical education. It can be seen from the national documents that the audiences of “research and learning travel” comprise of primary and secondary school students, and it is positioned as “out of school education activities” with the purpose of “comprehensive practice and education.” It can be appreciated from the concept that research and learning travel is different from community education study tour, whereby it is more planned and organized. Although the connotations of “study tour” and “research and learning travel” are not very different, and both of them emphasize on learning while travelling, there are still several differences and connections between “community education study tour” and “research and learning travel”

in actual practice.

2.3. Community education study tour instructors

Community education study tour instructors play the role of curriculum design, implementation, and activity guidance in the process of community education study tour. Therefore, these instructors can be deemed as professional and technical personnel who plan, develop, or implement the curriculum scheme of community education study tour, as well as organize and guide students in the process of community education tour to obtain personalized growth needs through sightseeing, interaction, self-service, and practical experience. As community education study tour has been in the development of community education practice for less than ten years, it is still in the exploration and development stage. Therefore, in the practice of community education study tour, there are problems in the design, implementation, and management of community education study tour, and the phenomenon of “generalization” and “disorder” tend to occur. In order to standardize the development of community education study tour, the teaching methods and curriculum implementation, which cannot be separated from community education tour instructors, should be improved. Community education tour instructors are the subjective and dynamic force that directly builds a bridge between the curriculum and the students; they create special interactive activities with students in the whole process of learning at the micro level. At the same time, in the process of community education study tour, the teaching method is different from traditional classroom teaching due to the transformation of teaching scenes and the renewal of teaching ideas. Therefore, the degree of specialization of community education tour instructors determines the quality of community education tour activities to a large extent.

3. SWOT analysis on the development status of community education study tour instructors

SWOT analysis, also known as situation analysis, was first put forward by Professor Heinz Merrick from San Francisco University in the early 1980s to determine the internal strengths, weaknesses, external opportunities, and challenges. The concept is based on relying on internal strengths, taking advantage of external opportunities, reducing or overcoming internal weaknesses, and resolving external challenges, so as to organically combine internal resources and the external environment ^[5]. This analysis fully considers the internal and external competitive environment as well as various factors closely related to the research subject. A comprehensive, systematic, and accurate analysis of a situation can be made through SWOT analysis, thus forming a conclusion with decision-making nature. Using this method, this paper discusses how study tour instructors can comprehensively improve their professional quality and ability; it also analyzes the advantages and disadvantages as well as the situation they face in serving the people’s lifelong learning and the construction of a learning society.

3.1. Strengths

3.1.1. Practical needs of the standardized development of community education study tour

As a new mode of national lifelong learning and education activities, there are several problems in the practice, such as unreasonable structure, weak professional knowledge, and unreasonable ability structure among community education study tour instructors; in addition, the policies and systems related to the cultivation and evaluation of community education tour instructors are also flawed. From the perspective of the professional development of community education study tour instructors, this paper analyzes the practical problems existing among them in the current practice of community education study tour and puts forward professional ability training and evaluation standards for the professional development of community education tour instructors, the improvement of their professional quality and ability level, as

well as the promotion of the high-quality development of community education.

3.1.2. Conducive to the professional development of community education study tour instructors

At present, the construction of community education study tour instructors has been facing some difficulties, such as insufficient supply of instructors, uneven service ability among instructors, insufficient institutional support, and so on ^[6]. Community education study tour is an important carrier of community education. Study tour refers to the cultivation of tutors and the construction of evaluation index system, which provides an implementation path for the professional development of community education instructors. Professional study tour instructors do not only provide a guarantee for the high-quality implementation of each community education study tour, but also a professional and comprehensive perspective for the curriculum development of community education along with personalized and scientific community education study tour experience for different learning communities.

3.2. Weaknesses

3.2.1. Issues in the operation of community education study tour bases

Community education study tour bases are space carriers of study tours. In recent years, community education study tour bases have begun to take shape. By the end of 2017, Chengdu has established more than 30 study tours in 14 districts and counties of the city, receiving an average of nearly 70,000 citizens and learners every year ^[4]. The construction of Jiangsu provincial community education study tour bases started in 2018, and by 2020, 24 provincial study tour bases have been established in 10 districts and cities. However, in the process of development, there are issues in the management and operation of community education study tour bases. As carriers for cultivating study tour instructors, the insufficient construction as well as existing management and operation issues of community education study tour bases are not conducive to the cultivation of study tour instructors.

3.2.2. Insufficient number of community education instructors and poor professional abilities

In the *Opinions on Promoting Community Education*, issued by the Ministry of Education in 2004, it has been proposed that local education administrative departments should strengthen the construction of community education teams and establish a management team with teaching staffs to meet the needs of community education with full-time personnel as the backbone and part-time personnel and volunteers as the main body ^[7]. Taking Jiangsu Province as an example, according to statistics, by the end of 2020, there were 19,640 full-time community education staffs, accounting for 0.02% of the permanent population of Jiangsu Province in 2020, 59,420 part-time staffs, and 4,744,200 volunteers, accounting for 5.79% of the permanent population of Jiangsu Province in 2020. Community education in Jiangsu has basically formed a personnel team during the 13th Five-Year Plan period, but it is far from satisfying the construction of lifelong learning and the learning-oriented society in Jiangsu. In addition, community education instructors are basically civil servants from establishment teams and school teachers within the system, with certain educational background or educational experiences. However, as a new type of education, the organizational form, curriculum design, teaching objectives, and other aspects of community education are very different from school education, and there is a lack of theoretical teaching materials and approaches for community education instructors to systematically learn.

3.3. Opportunities

3.3.1. Complying with the requirements of the times for the construction of a learning society

In the report of the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, it has been pointed out that building a “national learning and lifelong learning” society as well as building an education system serving national learning are important strategic objectives of education reform in the new era, the cornerstones of a learning society of national lifelong learning, and the inevitable requirements of educational modernization. The rise of community education study tour conforms to the requirements of the era in the construction of a learning society. It combines the elements of tourism and education, promotes individual development through individual travel, enhances the development of travel organization through organizational learning, promotes national development through national learning, as well as pursues lifelong development through lifelong learning, diversified development through flexible learning, and internal development through autonomous learning. To a certain extent, it has enriched the content of nationwide learning and lifelong learning, and innovated the organizational form of nationwide learning, which is of great significance to the construction of learning-oriented individuals, organizations, society, and the country. In the national lifelong learning system, community education study tour is not only the expansion and extension of school education, but also an effective supplement to community education and social education outside school education.

3.3.2. Meeting people’s needs for a better life

With the development of economy and the improvement of national living standards, the “tourism” fever of Chinese citizens remains at peak. Some new tourism products, such as “rural tourism” and “industrial tourism,” enrich the connotation of “tourism”; in addition, the element of “learning” has been contained more and more. Theme study tours such as community study tours, rural study tours, industrial study tours, and human resources study tours have sprung up, and a number of supporting digital learning resources have been developed. Primary and secondary school students’ research and learning, parent-child travel, elderly tourism, enterprise and institution workers’ party groups, trade union activities, and so on are rising. “Study tour” is becoming more and more popular with the public, and its educational effect is becoming more apparent. Modern community education study tour is a universal teaching model from the perspective of national lifelong learning. It plays an important role in building an education system that serves national lifelong learning. While promoting people’s learning, community education study tours are also leading a new way of learning, making learning a way of life, and gradually forming a learning organization, a learning city, and a learning society.

3.4. Threats

Starting from the traditional Chinese concept of “study tour,” it is necessary to take root in the Chinese local culture, strengthen the localization development of community education study tour, as well as promote a standardized and orderly development of community education study tour from the perspective of national lifelong learning. In the face of the construction of a high-quality education system and the continuous promotion of the modernization of education governance system as well as governance ability, it is imperative to conduct full research, build a scientific and reasonable professional ability system for community education study tour instructors, and constantly improve it.

4. The abilities of community education study tour instructors

Different from traditional school education teachers, community education study tour instructors pay more attention to their practical operation abilities as well as their curriculum innovation and development

abilities, which reflect the difference and particularity of their abilities. The educational form of community education study tour has developed from the original two-dimensional relationship between teachers and students to a three-dimensional relationship – “teacher-student-joint learning and growth” – that pays more attention to learning and growth through mutual communication. It is of great practical significance to explore the construction of a professional ability system for the professional development of these instructors as well as the reform of community education. Jiangsu community education tour has rich practical experience. Through investigation, it has been found that community education study tour instructors should not only have basic professional ethics and basic knowledge of community education and teaching, but also abilities in study tour education and teaching, course research and develop, management research, training and guidance, as well as study tour guarantee. At present, the academic community has not formed a standard unified system for study tour instructors in community education. This paper attempts to sort out the abilities of community education study tour instructors through research and analysis as well as construct a three-dimensional and multi-dimensional framework of their abilities (Figure 1).

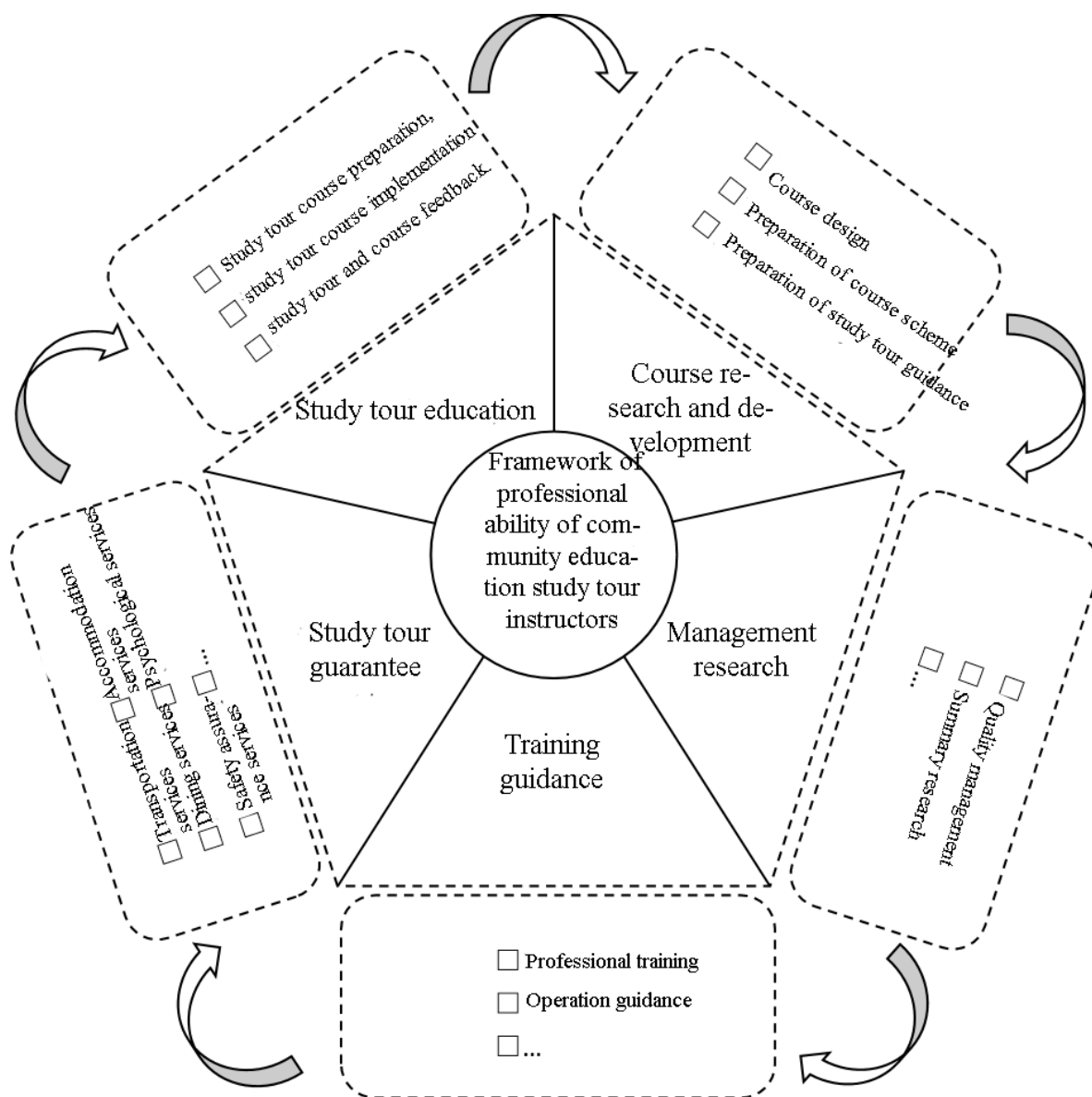


Figure 1. A framework of the abilities of community education study tour instructors

4.1. Study tour education and teaching

Study tour education and teaching ability is a basic ability that community education study tour instructors should have. It includes three links: study tour course preparation, course implementation, and course feedback. The complexity of the learning community participating in community education study tour reflects that community education study tour instructors should not only play the role of knowledge disseminators, but also have the ability to manage and recombine learning resources in the face of different learning communities in addition to the ability of teaching design in the process of curriculum implementation and feedback evaluation after the end of the curriculum.

4.2. Course research and development

Course research and development is the core competence of instructors in community education. The difference between community education study tour instructors and ordinary teachers is that these instructors should not only have solid education and teaching ability, but also have the ability in curriculum design and development. Most community education study tours have a strong regional color. Therefore, in community education study tours, community education study tours instructors should be competent in designing and developing community education study tours according to regional characteristics as well as in planning regional community education study tours.

4.3. Management research

Community education study tour instructors should pay attention to the quality management and summary research of community education study tours. They should not only timely adjust and improve teaching strategies in community education study tours, but also carry out teaching evaluation and reflection on the curriculum implementation as well as summarize and study the curriculum design for the purpose of improvement. A good community education study tour course must be a continuously improved course based on practice, rather than a fixed textbook. Community education study tour instructors should learn to apply action research, carry out academic research in practice, develop their own academic research ability, and promote a standardized and scientific development of community education study tour courses.

4.4. Training and guidance

Community education study tour emphasizes on the instructor's education, teaching, and curriculum development. It is a process of continuous accumulation and improvement that requires community education study tour instructors to have professional sustainable development ability. The current professional training system for community education study tour instructors has not been fully established. Therefore, in addition to their lifelong learning ability, community education study tour instructors should also have the ability of professional training and operation guidance, provide professional guidance to new community education study tour instructors to help them to grow, as well as develop a team of community education study tour instructors.

4.5. Study tour guarantee

Community education study tour is an organic combination of "tour" and "learning," with learning as the purpose and tour as the carrier. Therefore, community education study tour instructors have dual identities as a teacher and a tour guide. In community education study tours, community education study tour instructors should not only have the ability of teachers to ensure the quality of implementing the curriculum, but also to ensure the completion of the whole study tour in a smooth manner. Therefore, community

education study tour instructors should also be able to provide certain transportation services, accommodation services, dining services, psychological services, and safety assurance services, mainly referring to the ability to organize and guide students in such a way to abide by public order and be able to deal with emergencies in terms of transportation, accommodation, and the whole process according to the emergency plan.

5. Conclusion

Community education is a highly complex wisdom practice with inexhaustible breadth and depth, which is difficult for anyone to avoid difficulties and failures. Although there are still problems in lifelong education and community education in China, such as flawed system construction and system standards, insufficient motivation and strength of school participation in community education, uneven quality in community education, as well as poor construction of community education practice base and supporting policies for the cultivation of teachers, with the advancement of the modernization of national governance system and governance capacity in addition to the implementation of the concept of high-quality development, community education tour instructors should seize the opportunity to fully tap the potential contained in community education tours as well as improve professional knowledge literacy and comprehensive ability, in order to contribute to the modernization of educational governance system and governance capacity.

Funding

This research was supported by the Research on “Jiangsu Province Social Education Planning Project” 2020 Key Project “Study Tour (Research) Guidance Professional Ability Evaluation” (Project Number: JSS-B-2020011).

Disclosure statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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