

The Integrated Multi-level Bilingual Teaching of 'Social Research Methods'

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Abstract

'Social Research Methods', as a methodology course, combines theories and practices closely. Based on the synergy theory, this paper tries to establish an integrated multi-level bilingual teaching mode. Starting from the transformation of teaching concepts, we should integrate interactions, experiences, and researches together and focus on cultivating innovative and practical international talents.

Keywords: *Social research methods, Integrated multi-level, Bilingual teaching*

'Social Research Methods', as the core curriculum of sociology and administrative management, has drawn more attentions from college teaching and researches as the curriculum system continues to be improved and the research methods standardized. Meanwhile, as the core compulsory curriculum for master of public administration, 'Social Research Methods' is the basic curriculum of MPA and the basis and premise of other compulsory curricula. With the development of science and technology and the progress of society, social research methods have become the most important and fundamental ways for people seizing the social pulse, understanding the public minds, and relating to social realities, and also the chief instruments for social recognitions. As a basic instrument curriculum, 'Social Research Methods' is to train students with scientific methodology awareness and competence and help them to get the scientific and standard research paradigm. How to effectively change the traditional class teaching which takes 'teachers, teaching materials, and instilling teaching' as the center, and how to adopt the right teaching method for 'Social Research Methods' is an educational reform issue to be resolved.

1. The teaching requirements and the status of 'Social Research Methods'

Social research methods means to use scientific methods to systematically collect and analyze materials of social phenomena, and on this basis to make a scientific understanding of related social phenomena and the nature and laws. 'Social Research Methods' is a curriculum about methods. The teaching needs to reflect the feature of the combination of methodology theories and practices. The organization of teaching materials should follow the principle of practices and operations. It requires students to know the basic concepts of social research, learn how to understand the realities of society from perceptual knowledge, display the general conditions, processes, and features of social phenomena by objective description, explain the generation, development, and changes of social phenomena, and learn how to predict and control social phenomena. Traditionally, the teaching of 'Social Research Methods' has combined the explanation of theories in class and the analysis of cases, examining students' learning results by closed examinations of theoretical knowledge. This way of teaching emphasizes on conveying theoretical knowledge but neglecting students' voluntary participation. Although by this way students can systematically learn the basic theories of social research methods, establishing foundation for practical social research, they would never possess the operational capability of solving practical problems. The traditional teaching does not reflect the due features of a "methodology" curriculum. As a result, it fails to perfectly fulfill the requirement for cultivating the

core capability of public administration, and cannot realize the purpose of training professional and operational talents.

‘Social Research Methods’, as a basic curriculum which draws more attentions in recent years, mainly adopt the lecture-oriented teaching, focusing more on the explanation of research methods, lack of the training of interactivity, flexibility, interests, and research thoughts. Considering the characteristics of the curriculum of methodology, there are certain limitations for using traditional teaching modes, methods, and tools to train and improve students’ capability of thinking and innovating. Because this curriculum involves many specific methods, techniques, and operational procedures, and needs a lot of case explanations and practices, traditional teaching methods cannot effectively motivate students’ enthusiasm for study. The learning effects are not satisfying. In addition, some social research software, such as SPSS, AMOS, LISREL, and HLM, are all English editions. LISREL even involves English encoding process. Former teaching in Chinese disconnects theoretical explanations and software operations, which restrict the teaching effects. The curriculum cannot exert its features and advantages. The teaching gets half the result with twice the efforts.

2. The theoretical basis for bilingual teaching and the study of teaching mode

Bilingual education has the theoretical support of teaching philosophy and thoughts, including inter-language theory, think tank model, and ‘input-output-context-process’ teaching mode. The inter-language is the linguistic system emerging between mother language and foreign language during the process of the learner learning a foreign language. The inter-language theory is based on Noam Chomsky’s linguistics of transformational-generative grammar. Chomsky thought that there was a special language acquisition mechanism in human brain and this mechanism could follow a series of rules of language “transformation-generation”. By these rules, a learner transforms common grammar into the learning of grammar of target language. This process could be described as a recycle learning strategy of “trying – error – correcting – testing – trying again – error again – correcting again – testing again”, and continuing to be close to the target system. The think tank model regards the brain as a think tank. In this think tank, although the first language and the second language respectively have their own knowledge and techniques, the performances of two languages are determined by the common language skill of the brain. The quantity and quality of the input and output of the two languages stimulate the development of the think tank. Baker introduces the study of general education into the field of bilingual education and proposes the “input-output-context-process” mode of bilingual education. Here, the input variables include characteristics of teachers and students, process variables teacher-students interaction, students-students interaction, and application of reference materials, context variables social environment, nature of class, nature of curriculum, nature of school, and purpose of running school, output variables language standards, language attitudes, and social and cultural integration, etc.

The construction of curriculum system should reflect certain educational and teaching philosophy. Based on above theories of bilingual education, currently the popular bilingual education modes in foreign countries include: (1) the Canadian immersion mode; (2) the subject-oriented bilingual teaching mode; (3) the structured immersion teaching mode; (4) the transitional bilingual teaching mode; (5) the double connection bilingual teaching; (6) the tri-diversion bilingual teaching; (7) the trilingual system; (8) the multi-lingual teaching. In China, colleges and universities mostly adopt the second mode, namely the subject-oriented bilingual teaching mode, which takes the second language (not the mother language) as the medium and carries out teaching trials for several subjects. During the implementation of the trials, colleges and universities advocate to using the second language (English) to teach relevant subjects, in addition to perform the specialized teaching for the second language.

In foreign countries, lots of explorations and researches are about the teaching methods and learning modes for ‘Social Research Methods’. Recently, social survey techniques and social research methods have made significant progresses. As for the field of social survey techniques, since the 1970s, the multiple cross-sectional trace survey for social changes has become the basic survey for all countries and regions knowing the changes of social structures and the conditions of social development. This survey not only significantly promotes the researches on sociology, but also has great effects on researches on the whole social science. Besides, the survey results have become important basis for government decision. Before and after the theory of pragmatism education, many psychologists and educators have actively explored a variety of teaching methods. These methods contain the ideas of inquiry teaching and learning, mainly including the discovery method proposed by an American psychologist Bruner, the heuristic pedagogy proposed by a Bulgaria Medical Dr. George Loza-nov, and the self-learning method emerging in Japan. All these studies argue to adopt the project (or task, problem, context) teaching in order to make students be

the subjects, direct them to explore and discover knowledge, and develop capabilities. Thanks to the successful practices of the dual educational mode in Germany, as well as the CBE education mode prevailed in North America, the project teaching becomes one of main teaching methods. The dual education system in Germany is the “practice-oriented” education, which adopts the behavior-oriented teaching. One of main forms is the project-oriented guide, i.e. take enterprises’ needs as different projects, guide students to solve real problems by using learned methods, and help them to form the capability of organizing and using knowledge. CBE (competence-based education) emphasizes on the dominant position of students. As for the teaching method, it insists in the active learning of students. The teacher should play the role of guider or organizer of teaching activities. As for learning theories, the teacher can use the class teaching or take both class guidance and self learning according to students’ conditions. As for learning skills, the teacher should organize the teaching process and arrange teaching activities and students should actively learn, take exercises and practice more.

3. The integrated multi-level bilingual teaching mode for ‘Social Research Methods’

A good teaching mode must be strongly operational. Therefore, for teacher, to understand the teaching mode theoretically is only the first step to improve the teaching effects. How to apply the theory to practices is the key for teaching reform. This paper tries to establish an integrated multi-level bilingual teaching mode based on the synergy theory. As a teaching reform mode, the synergetic teaching seeks for changing traditional teacher-students relationships in specific teaching activities, transforming the authorized position of teacher into the two interactive subjects of teacher and students in dialogues. By this way, it can motivate the teacher and students to a great degree, which enables students to get the full development and the teacher to improve the teaching and professional skills. It is a dynamic, synergetic, and developing teaching mode. Based on the synergy theory, the integrated multi-level bilingual teaching should start from changing teaching philosophy, integrate interactions, experiences, and researches together, and focus on training innovative, and practical international talents.

First of all, update the concepts of education and strengthen the trial bilingual teaching. Build an open, interconnected, and shared trial multi-level bilingual teaching platform. Considering the characteristics of social research, we should explore the competence-oriented multi-level teaching modes, teaching tools, and teaching methods, make theoretical teaching and experience teaching in synergy, and train innovative and practical talents with high qualities. The interactive bilingual teaching mode integrates experiences and researches together. Multimedia English teaching combines spot English interaction together. Use case bilingual teaching to stimulate students’ initiatives and enhance the interaction between teacher and students in teaching and learning. By a variety of forms, e.g. case teaching, group discussions, and panel presentations, try to cultivate students’ capability of expression, skill of data mining and analyzing, and ability of innovation, improving their competitiveness, i.e. the skill of knowledge application. Promote the fundamental reform of talent training mode.

Secondly, use the constructivism theory as the guidance and establish a new trial system of integrated multi-level bilingual teaching, focusing on training innovative and practical international talents. The constructivism theory advocates the learner-oriented learning under the guidance of the teacher. It emphasizes on the subjective effect of learners and does not ignore the guiding effect of the teacher. The teacher is the coordinator and the promoter for sense making, instead of the conveyer and the importer of knowledge. To establish the trial teaching system based on the constructivism theory makes the importance of synergetic learning prominent. It is divided into three levels, i.e. the basic level, the analytical level, and the application design level. The basic trial emphasizes on the learning of basic skills and methods, training students with operational capabilities and positive scientific styles, and preparing students with sound basis. The analytical trial focuses on the data mining and data analysis, training students with the capabilities of solving and analyzing actual problems, preparing students with complete knowledge system. The application and design trial puts stress upon professional applications and innovative researches, training students with capabilities of induction and deduction, improving their abilities of identifying and solving problems, and helping them to understand the importance of team work. The stages of whole trial should follow the law of recognition, under the guidance of constructivism theory, achieving the objectives of trial teaching ----- training the international talents with capabilities of innovation and application.

Thirdly, the bilingual teaching mode emphasizes on interaction, experience, and research. On the basis of using the software of social research in English to independently design and solve problems, the curriculum of ‘Social Research Methods’ should perform the interactive experience teaching by combining with real social problems and train students with awareness of and enthusiasm for research by latest methodology documents in the world. By organically integrating interaction, experience, and research in teaching practice, we can improve the status of

bilingual teaching mode in training students' experimental skills, scientific thinking and methods, innovative awareness and capability, making it become one of basic teaching forms extensively promoting the quality education.

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