

Enhancing Self-Study Skills in Teacher Education: Challenges and Solutions

Bui Thi Nhu Phuong (MA)

Faculty of Education: KhanhHoa University

Add: 01, Nguyễn Chanhstreet, Nha Trang city, Khanh Hoa province, Viet Nam

Abstract: Credit-based training is a prevalent educational method today. It reflects the general trend of our era. The essence of this training method lies in harnessing students' proactive and positive attitude, with self-study being a decisive factor in their academic outcomes during their entire learning journey. Therefore, the question of how to enhance students' self-study and research abilities has been a recurring theme across most universities, including KhanhHoa University (UKH), especially during the transition from academic year-based regime to credit-based education. As a teacher with many years of direct teaching experience at the university, I have also consistently pondered this issue. In this article, I aim to provide practical insights into the current state of student self-study and propose some solutions for enhancing self-study skills, particularly in the Faculty of Pedagogy at UKH, through designing detailed course outline.

Keywords: Self-study, students, pedagogy, course outline.

Introduction:

Over time, various perspectives have emerged regarding self-study. According to Levitov, self-study is an active process involving positive psychological components related to comprehension, thinking, and memory. These mental processes are closely interconnected, contributing to effective self-study outcomes. Rubakin defined self-study as the process of acquiring knowledge and historical social experience through personal activities. It involves improving initial experiences by comparing them with real-world models, ultimately transforming human knowledge into an individual's intellectual knowledge, skills, and expertise,... However, most approaches consider self-study aiming to foster positive attitudes, autonomy, creativity, and practical application of knowledge, thereby impacting emotions and instilling a sense of joy and enthusiasm for learning. Consequently, it can be seen that self – study is one of the most significant parts and is highly required to learners, especially students.

Shared Responsibility for Enhancing Self-Study:

Improving self-study and research capabilities is not solely the responsibility of students; it extends to all educators, administrators, and institutional leaders. Self-study is not limited to university years; it continues throughout life. Teachers serve as advisors, setting requirements and providing guidance, while students actively engage in self-study and research to acquire knowledge and develop comprehensive skills.

Self-study is a vital competency in today's world. That is the reason why educational institutions should prioritize teaching effective self-study methods rather than merely imparting knowledge. However, current self-study practices among students often fall short of credit-based training requirements.

1. Current State of Self-Study in Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of KhanhHoa:

There are several factors contributing to suboptimal self-study outcomes of students in general and ones in KhanhHoa University attending pedagogical field specifically. In order to be brief, these are some factors:

- The recent shift to credit-based education poses challenges, especially given the limited infrastructure readiness. Faculty members need time to adapt their teaching methods and overcome deeply ingrained traditional practices due to inadequate infrastructure. The transition requires significant changes in perception, methodology, and teaching habits. It is not a small challenge for the educational career of the university.
- For students, they have long been accustomed to the traditional passive learning approach, where knowledge is received one-sidedly from teachers. They often consider the teacher's knowledge as the sole standard, and self-study is not a core issue. However, when transitioning to the credit-based system, especially for first-year students, the learning process becomes genuinely challenging. This new approach emphasizes teaching learning methods, study experiences, and active learning strategies, encouraging students to take ownership and enhance their abilities. Consequently, many students struggle to choose suitable and effective learning methods in this relatively unfamiliar academic environment.

- Additionally, most students do not fully grasp the role and importance of self-study for their academic performance in each subject. Their self-study goals often revolve around coping with exams and earning grades, rather than truly mastering the knowledge and improving their skills. As a result, they often fail to allocate sufficient time for self-study according to the prescribed curriculum (30 hours/credit, equivalent to 1 hour of theory/2 hours of personal preparation). This lack of commitment to self-study affects their overall learning outcomes and places additional pressure on teachers during direct instruction.
- Another realistic aspect is the financial problems pose challenges for many students, especially those in remote areas of Khanh Hoa province. Balancing work and studies becomes a necessity for these students, impacting the time available for self-study.
- Furthermore, the university's relatively low admission standards limit students' self-study capabilities. Students heavily rely on textbooks and materials, particularly online resources. While electronic search tools provide convenience, they also have drawbacks. Some students become complacent, relying on external sources rather than fully utilizing their creative and independent thinking abilities.
- The assessment methods do not always reflect the true nature of self-study. Teachers often struggle to evaluate students, especially in group activities. The habit of dependency persists, partly due to teachers' assessment methods lacking precision and fairness. This poses a significant challenge for teachers in managing time and assessing students' self-study abilities across different subjects.
- Some students in certain majors neglect genuine passion for their chosen field of study. Their uncertainty and deficiency of confidence in the future lead to indifference towards learning. Many students approach self-study as a coping mechanism rather than a proactive endeavor. This reality warrants attention during the university's training process.
- Additionally, some teachers do not actually concern about students' self-study. Specifically, when designing course outline, teachers often overlook the importance of self-study and independent research. The general requirements for self-study remain vague and insufficiently detailed. The restrained availability of study material exacerbates the situation, leaving students struggling to find relevant resources and effective self-study methods.

These existing challenges significantly impact students' learning outcomes and the overall quality of education at the university. Addressing these issues is not only crucial for students but also a substantial challenge for the institution as it strives to integrate into global trends. However, within the scope of this article, we focus on enhancing students' self-study capabilities through detailed course outline design and implementation.

2. Developing Students' Self-Study Skills through Detailed Course Outline Design and Implementation

Enhancing students' self-study ability is a crucial task for both learners and educators. It involves various aspects throughout the training process, with detailed course outline design being one of the essential responsibilities for teachers. This design significantly impacts students' self-study capabilities and the overall quality of education at the institution.

A detailed course outline serves as a commitment and a basis for implementing and realizing the subject between teachers and students. Therefore, it should be outlined like a roadmap for students' knowledge acquisition journey. Its role is significant in guiding all student activities during the learning process.

To address the aforementioned challenges and improve students' self-study abilities, this article proposes several directions for designing detailed course outlines that empower students to study and conduct research more effectively.

In the credit-based education system, classroom teaching time per credit is limited, while the knowledge content to be acquired is extensive. Consequently, students must engage in self-study and prepare before attending classes. To facilitate effective self-study, both teachers and students need to meet specific requirements:

The structure of a detailed course outline typically includes the following sections:

1. General information about the course,
2. Course objectives,
3. Summary of course content,
4. Detailed course content,
5. Learning materials,
6. Teaching and learning organization (class schedule),
7. Policies related to the course and other requirements from the instructor,

8. Assessment methods and evaluation criteria,
9. Information about the instructor. In particular, teachers should clarify specific objectives (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) and the allocated hours for theory, practical work, and discussions. Additionally, they should emphasize self-study and research activities in the class schedule, especially for credit-based teaching.

When designing the teaching schedule, instructors should focus on allocating time for students' self-study and research. Providing detailed guidance for these activities is crucial. While often overlooked, this aspect significantly affects students' self-study process. Therefore, instructors should invest more effort and provide specific directions for each knowledge unit within the course.

Beyond course design, effective implementation is equally important. To utilize the designed course outline effectively, instructors should:

- Disseminate the course details to students early, allowing them to borrow textbooks and study materials in advance. Provide instructions for self-study and research based on the "Preparation" section in the outline.
- After distributing the course outline, encourage students to review it and provide feedback. Address any doubts or disagreements promptly, adjusting as needed. Once students fully agree with the outlined requirements, consider it a contract between the teacher and students, obligating students to approach their studies seriously and take responsibility for adhering to the outlined expectations.

By emphasizing detailed course outline design and effective implementation, educators can enhance students' self-study capabilities and contribute to a more successful learning experience. The understanding and alignment of students with the course outlines provided by instructors are crucial initial steps. These outlines help students orient themselves toward the objectives related to knowledge, skills, and attitudes. By actively approaching the subject matter, students can efficiently achieve these goals. This approach fosters objectivity, democracy, and respect for learners.

Additionally, it allows instructors to review and adjust the course design to better suit the student population, thereby maximizing students' self-study capabilities and ensuring timely adaptations for optimal learning outcomes.

Here are some key considerations:

- **Staying Aligned with the Course Outline:** Students should closely follow the course outline and carry it with them throughout their learning journey. This practice facilitates tracking content, progress, and requirements specified in the outline. With this information, students can plan and allocate time for proactive self-study, leading to better results.
- **Emphasizing Self-Study:** From the outset, instructors should emphasize the importance of self-study for academic success, especially within the credit-based system. Students need to recognize the significance of self-directed learning during their university experience and apply it effectively in their future endeavors.
- **Guiding Study Skills:** Based on the course outline, instructors can guide students in reading techniques, researching materials, note-taking, summarizing, highlighting relevant content, and structuring effective study plans. Encouraging habits like documenting what they've learned helps save time and facilitates information retrieval.
- **Regular Self-Assessment:** Instructors can assess students' self-study progress through quizzes or quick-response questions related to the outlined requirements (these assessments can contribute positively to students' overall grades).

To enhance students' self-study capabilities, beyond the course outline, students need intrinsic motivation, effort, a serious attitude toward learning, a growth mindset, and the ability to apply critical and logical thinking to problem-solving. Cultivating a habit of self-study anytime, anywhere is essential for intellectual development and personal growth.

Conclusion:

Within educational institutions, the essence of learning lies in self-study, and the core of teaching involves instructing students how to learn. Students' outcome correlated directly with their self-study ability. Self-study not only improves academic results but also fosters independent and creative abilities, laying the foundation for lifelong learning. In this context, the course outline serves as an essential tool—a compass guiding students toward their academic goals and personal development within the university and beyond.

References

- [1]. Nguyen HuuChau and some authors, (2007), *Help book for teachers of College of Pedagogy (commonly used for all subjects)*, University of Education Publisher.
- [2]. Levitov N.D. (1970). *Psychology: (for teachers and masters of vocational-technical schools)*. Hanoi: Education Publisher.
- [3]. Ministry of Education and Training, (2016), *Developing a training program for general education teachers in Literature (Training documents for officials and lecturers of general teacher training establishments on developing training programs)*, Hanoi.
- [4]. Rubakin, M.A, (1973). *How to self-study*. Hanoi: Young Adult Publisher.
- [5]. Hoang Van Van, (1992), *Credit-based training method, nature and implications for teaching and learning for training methods at the university level*, Vietnam National University, HanoiPublisher.
- [6]. Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, *Training on designing training programs and course outlines to meet output standards*.
(<http://hcmussh.edu.vn/?ArticleId=8232708f-38d7-4e10-a010-b7caf23b4b89>).