

Exploration of the Journal Club Teaching Model in the Postgraduate Forest Fire Management Course

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Abstract

Academic salon has become an increasingly popular teaching model in education due to its innovative organizational structure and the learning philosophy it advocates for, which emphasizes student autonomy, exploration, and collaboration. This paper traces the historical development of academic salon and explains the importance of selecting appropriate topics, determining reasonable time, location, and participants, and arranging the program properly. The paper also elucidates the role of academic salon in the learning and growth of graduate students, and discusses the significance of academic salon as a component of graduate courses in the context of the expansion of graduate enrollment.

Keywords

Academic salon; Graduate education; Forest fire management course.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Salon" is the transliteration of the French word "salon," which means a reception room. It originated during the Renaissance period in Western Europe and became popular among the upper classes as a gathering place to discuss literature, art, politics, and other broad issues. In the mid-17th century, some British scientists often gathered together to discuss the difficulties they encountered in their research and voluntarily formed an "invisible college", which was the prototype of academic salons. In 1931, American scientist Gordon initiated an academic exchange conference, which in addition to academic reports, arranged a lot of time for scientists to communicate freely. The participants all benefited greatly. This communication method later became known as the Gordon conference and is a typical modern academic salon. Academic salon is a network of intellectuals, and its members have certain kinship and academic backgrounds. Initially, they often gathered together due to leisure, and later developed into a systematic and standardized activity. The theme of academic salons is clear, and the content is also relatively clear. From the origin and evolution of academic salons, it can be seen that it has the following three characteristics. First, it is not limited by the participants identity and research field; second, it has freedom of thought and speech; and third, it has strong academic and ideological qualities. By the eve of the bourgeois revolution in 18th century Europe, the development of salons had reached its peak^[1], and afterward, salon participants were not limited to the nobility. Ordinary intellectuals also had the opportunity to participate in salons, and it even became a place to promote social equality at that time^[2]. It can be seen that at its inception, salons were a meeting activity with diverse participants, and various spiritual topics were discussed.

An academic salon refers to a small gathering in the fields of natural sciences, humanities, or social sciences, in which participants typically have a certain academic background, are equal to each other, and enjoy full freedom of thought and speech. The topics have strong academic

and ideological characteristics, and the format is relaxed and lively, with no restrictions on time and place. It has the characteristics of openness, equality, diversity, and interaction. An academic salon is an excellent method for teaching activities. Firstly, it can improve students' innovative consciousness and innovative abilities, and cultivate innovative talents. Academic salon is a fertile ground for the growth of innovative talents, which can stimulate people's innovative consciousness, hone their innovative thinking, and improve their innovative abilities^[3]. The realization mechanism is to improve students' ability to collect, organize information, and think independently through the preparation work of academic salons, form a knowledge gathering effect through communication and reporting in academic salons, inspire thinking through debates and discussions, and improve the ability to analyze problems and express ideas through the guidance of the instructor, all of which belong to innovative abilities. Secondly, academic salons can promote academic communication, emotional communication, and ideological exchange between undergraduate mentors and students, forming a community of teachers and students. Mentors should create as many opportunities as possible to communicate with students, but the forms of communication are different. The communication between mentors and students should be mainly academic, and it can unconsciously influence students' personality, thinking, and emotions through academic communication. In this regard, academic salons provide a good platform. Finally, the conditions for mentors to organize academic salons are relatively sufficient. The application of academic salons must have the following conditions: first, to give time and space to teachers and students; second, to understand the formation law of new knowledge; third, to need mechanisms and atmosphere; fourth, to have a spirit of seeking common ground while reserving differences^[4]. These conditions are difficult for professional teachers and counselors (or homeroom teachers) to meet.

2. THE MEANING AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ACADEMIC SALON BASED ON THE MENTOR SYSTEM

Compared to regular salons, academic salon is more specialized and professional, with its topics mainly focused on academic issues. Its participating members are often connected by academic or familial ties. Unlike regular salons, academic salon has more concentrated topics. Academic salon is similar to the German "Seminar" that originated in the 18th century. It refers to a research group composed of senior students and outstanding students, guided by professors, who regularly gather together to explore new knowledge fields^[4]. Academic salon is an excellent occasion for free education, as the time of the salon falls under leisure time, and the topics discussed are non-practical free knowledge, which can be tailored to each student's needs and effectively promote the improvement of students' virtues. Although some academic salons in history had core figures, the members' academic status differences were not significant, and there were relationships such as apprenticeship, neighbors, and relatives among members.

2.1. Academic Salon Targeting Free Education Based on the Mentor System

Academic salon based on the mentor system refers to an academic seminar that focuses on free knowledge within a particular subject, led by undergraduate and graduate mentors, with undergraduate and graduate students as the participating subjects. It is an attempt at free education. Firstly, academic salon aims to cultivate students' rationality, reflection, and critical thinking ability in terms of their virtues. During discussions, students are guided to learn to distinguish between "necessary desires" and "unnecessary desires" to achieve the freedom of desires. Secondly, academic salon's primary purpose is to promote the development and improvement of students' intellectual and moral virtues, enabling them to acquire excellent qualities and learn moral virtues such as courage, temperance, and honesty, guiding them to obtain wisdom to achieve the freedom of virtues, and ultimately reach the highest level of

freedom - contemplative freedom. Thirdly, the implementation of academic salon based on the mentor system requires two institutional conditions: the mentor system and the institutional "leisure person" - undergraduate and graduate students. Higher education, as a social system, allows students to focus on learning a particular subject direction without having to engage in a certain profession for "necessary desires." They can engage in learning activities entirely out of their interests, which is the essence of leisure. However, as they do not yet possess the ability to grasp free knowledge within their subject, the guidance of mentors is a necessary condition, and the existence of undergraduate and graduate mentor systems is another institutional condition for their existence. Finally, the learning content of academic salon mainly focuses on free knowledge, which refers to theoretical knowledge within the subject that helps to cultivate students' virtues, such as classical books and theories within the subject.

2.2. Characteristics of Academic Salons Based on Mentorship

Academic salons based on mentorship have a core leader - the mentor. The mentor is a seeker of truth, ethics, and goodness, who guides students to love wisdom and pursue it together. The mentor does not provide truth but rather guides students to pursue wisdom. The mentor and students should be companions in the pursuit of wisdom.

In academic salons based on mentorship, the mentor is a fixed and unchanging member, while other members include students of different grades as well as relationships between students of the same grade. The mentor is the core leader, but leadership is not limited to the mentor alone. Senior students also serve as leaders for junior students. Although the mentor and senior students are leaders, it does not mean that the discussions and presentations of junior students will not have some enlightening effect on the mentor and senior students. Therefore, in summary, there are three characteristics of member relationships in academic salons based on mentorship: the mentor is in a core guiding position, students inspire and guide each other, and students may also inspire the mentor.

Academic salons based on mentorship advocate the Socratic Method. The Socratic Method, also known as the method of irony, is a way of using dialogue to draw out the rational and wisdom-loving qualities of the spirit, to use dialogue to reflect on the opinions held by the other party, point out contradictions, and let the other party recognize the fallacies of their views[5]. Both parties pursue universal principles such as truth and virtue together. In an open and honest dialogue, both parties experience sincere communication of the spirit, touching the depths of the soul, and stimulating a philosophical impulse towards seeking truth, virtue, and goodness. The Socratic Method requires that both parties in the dialogue are equal and unreservedly open their minds, producing a philosophical impulse towards seeking wisdom. It only cares about the health of the soul, and whether the soul is closed off by prejudice, opinions, or the secular world. However, in many cases, it is difficult for individuals to complete this task alone. Therefore, "to care for the health of the soul, we must rely on rational dialogue that pursues truth and the true insights it produces about the world or life, to keep the soul away from misleading influences and maintain its health. Socrates' dialogue reminds the participants to find truth within themselves and understand the conditions for truth, so that the soul can recreate itself in the process of establishing a relationship with truth, shaping the health of the soul[6].

In academic salons based on mentorship, the dialogical communication between mentors and students, and between students themselves, is the Socratic Method. There are two advantageous conditions for its implementation: first, the mentor-student and student-student relationships based on academic background are familiar relationships, which provide favorable conditions for both parties to open up their hearts and engage in a dialogue of the soul; second, the mentor has a great deal of initiative in creating a psychological environment, and can create an environment of equal dialogue, choose free knowledge rather than practical

knowledge as the theme of the dialogue, encourage students to reflect on the reliability of their own opinions, and stimulate their desire to pursue truth.

3. APPLICATION METHODS OF ACADEMIC SALON IN TEACHING

3.1. Selecting Suitable Topics

Choosing suitable topics is a prerequisite for the success of academic salons. Academic salons are common in graduate teaching and are also popular among young scholars^[9]. One reason is that they have accumulated considerable professional knowledge and have received systematic academic training, making it easier to choose topics.

3.2. Reasonable Determination of Time, Place, and Number of Participants

Reasonable timing, location, and number of participants are key to ensuring that academic salons do not become too formal and do not vary too greatly. In terms of timing, it cannot conflict with students' class time and can only be scheduled for evenings or weekends. The duration of an academic salon should be around two hours. If it is too short, it will not be conducive to the development of problems and the divergence of thinking; if it is too long, it will inevitably lead to repetition or topic dispersion. In addition, considering that academic salons require preparation and summary, the frequency should not be too high, generally no more than once a month. As for the location, the original meaning of "salon" refers to a living room or reception room, but academic salons are obviously different from classroom teaching, and even different from the seminar-style Xumingnaer^[7]. Therefore, academic salons should be held in relaxed and comfortable places as much as possible, such as tea houses, cafes, small round table-equipped offices, or the living rooms of mentors' homes, rather than in classrooms or conference rooms that are too serious and formal. As for the number of participants, it is appropriate to have five to ten people. If there are too many people, it will not be conducive to stimulating the enthusiasm of each participant, nor will it be conducive to controlling the rhythm and progress of the academic salon. If there are too few people, it is likely to create a cold atmosphere, which is not conducive to the gathering of knowledge and the collision of ideas. At the same time, this number also corresponds to the number of academic works that undergraduate mentors guide^[8].

3.3. Proper Arrangement of Procedures

Properly arranging procedures is the guarantee of the success of academic salons. Academic salons include the preparation stage before the event, the academic salon itself, and the summary and assessment stage after the event. In the preparation stage, undergraduate mentors should notify classmates of the time, location, participants, topics, and procedures of the academic salon, and require them to do necessary preparation work, such as collecting materials, independent thinking, forming opinions, and preparing speech outlines. If the preparation work is solid and meticulous, the academic salon is already half successful. The academic salon itself generally includes four steps: mentor's opening remarks, theme speech, free discussion, and mentor's comments. At this stage, the mentor's control and guidance are crucial. If any classmates deviate from the topic, the mentor should stop them in time; if there is a cold atmosphere, the mentor should speak up in time to liven up the atmosphere; if the debate is too intense, the mentor can temporarily suspend the controversial issue; if necessary, the mentor can also announce a break to have tea, chat, and eat snacks. In addition, the mentor should record the classmates' flashes of thought, do a good job of summary and comments, and the summary and comments should be mainly encouraging. In the summary and assessment stage after the academic salon, undergraduate mentors can require each participant to write a summary. If the discussion is very mature and has many bright spots, they can even require students to co-write an academic paper. The mentor should also summarize the academic salon,

find out the shortcomings and ways to improve it. In addition, based on the students' preparation, performance in the academic salon, and summary or paper after the salon, the mentor should assess and evaluate each student.

4. ADVANTAGES OF APPLYING ACADEMIC SALON IN FOREST FIRE MANAGEMENT COURSE

The academic atmosphere is jointly created by teachers and students, and the teacher-student relationship is an important cornerstone of graduate education. In the construction of a good academic style, promoting harmonious teacher-student relationships has become an important issue. Holding academic salons at a certain frequency ensures that the mentor and students have face-to-face communication time, avoiding the coldness and estrangement of being strangers. In fact, education is the education of the soul of a person, and it requires full communication between teachers and students. Academic salon can answer questions and provide guidance, allowing the mentor to teach according to students' aptitude based on understanding of the students. In a sincere and warm atmosphere, students can speak freely and express their feelings, and also rely on the mentor's comfort and guidance to control negative emotions. Therefore, some people vividly describe education as "a tree shaking another tree, a cloud pushing another cloud, and a soul colliding with another soul."

4.1. Academic Salon as a Link for Communication among Graduate Students

Graduate students tend to have less communication and interaction with each other. Some of them focus solely on their studies, while others are busy working part-time jobs or taking care of their families. Some are simply immersed in their personal lives, leaving little time for socializing. Over time, these factors can lead to distant relationships among classmates, leaving them feeling disconnected from both their mentors and peers.

Academic salon serves as a bond that connects friends. In the salon, all students of the mentor are generally required to attend, and after introducing themselves, they become familiar with each other through discussion and debate. The mentor often requires students to read the same book or related literature on a particular topic, and then everyone is invited to express their own views and opinions on the subject. Other members can provide relevant comments, and students can engage in in-depth discussions. Through debate and exploration, students not only gain knowledge, but also develop friendships.

4.2. Academic Salon Helps to Establish a Learning Community

Constructivists believe that each learner not only has a unique knowledge background, but also has different perspectives and information processing methods. Learning is not an isolated individual behavior, and appropriate learning environments are not only necessary conditions for learning, but also largely determine the direction of intellectual development. Learning community refers to a community composed of teachers and students who work together to complete learning activities. There is a dialectical relationship of mutual dependence and mutual promotion between collective behavior and individual behavior. Academic salon is such a learning community, where students can absorb different viewpoints, refine them and apply their existing experiences to construct meaningful internal psychological representations.

4.3. Academic Salon Helps to Further Consolidate the Idea of Graduate Students Pursuing Academic Studies

Universities should create a rich academic atmosphere, which is conducive to the healthy growth of students. In this atmosphere, students benefit from the education effect of being surrounded by and immersed in the academic environment. The lectures given by mentors or experts can greatly broaden the academic horizons of graduate students, expand their

knowledge, and enable them to understand the latest academic information and trends. At the same time, the expert's comments help students understand the difficulties of learning, the charm of academic research, and the importance of academic norms.

As a researcher who aspires to devote oneself to academics, it is necessary to maintain a strong interest and enthusiasm for academic pursuits, a spirit of self-improvement, courage to forge ahead, and a strong will to persevere. Through academic salon, students can enjoy the pleasure of being immersed in the academic atmosphere, while also being influenced by rigorous academic style and charismatic personalities. They can deeply appreciate that academic pursuit requires not only interest and passion, but also rigor, meticulousness, and a willingness to work hard. The formation of such qualities will have a profound impact on their future work and life.

Academic salon is an effective way to promote communication and academic cooperation between teachers and students, which can improve the frequency and quality of communication between them, enhance the academic atmosphere, promote emotional communication, and improve the teaching and learning effectiveness of the course. It can increase the frequency and quality of communication between teachers and students, and provide an opportunity for regular meetings and communication between mentors and students to promote communication and interaction between them. It can enhance the academic atmosphere by providing students with a platform to showcase their academic achievements and thoughts, inspiring them to actively participate in academic research and discussion. At the same time, academic salon can also promote academic cooperation and communication between teachers and students, enhancing the academic atmosphere of the entire course. It can promote emotional communication between teachers and students by providing an opportunity for mutual listening and communication, making the relationship between them more intimate and harmonious. In this process, students can confide their troubles and difficulties, and mentors can provide spiritual support and encouragement to promote students' comprehensive development. It can improve the teaching and learning effectiveness of the course. Through academic salon, mentors can have a deeper understanding of students' learning conditions and difficulties, and provide more personalized guidance and advice. At the same time, academic salon can also promote mutual learning and communication among students, improving the teaching and learning effectiveness of the entire course.

5. CONCLUSION

Academic salons, with their innovative teaching organization and their advocacy of autonomous, exploratory, and cooperative learning concepts, are becoming increasingly popular teaching models. Academic salons are characterized by their freedom, openness, equality, and interactivity, with flexible and diverse themes and a free and unconstrained spiritual atmosphere. They play a significant role in promoting students' innovative consciousness and abilities, strengthening emotional communication and ideological exchange between teachers and students, and improving students' learning and growth. This paper traces the historical evolution of academic salons, clarifies the need to choose appropriate themes, reasonably determines the time, place, and participants, properly arranges procedures, elaborates on the role of academic salons in the learning and growth of graduate students, and discusses the importance of academic salons as a form of graduate course composition in the context of expanding enrollment of graduate students.

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