An Empirical Study on Introducing Lingnan Culture Study Tours in Elderly Education: A Case Study at the Seniors University of Guangdong

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Abstract. In recent years, study tours have quietly emerged as a trend in the silver market, becoming an innovative educational model to actively address aging. However, a survey of the elderly study tour courses offered by Guangdong Elderly University reveals that current study tours face issues such as low participation rates, vague course content and design, an inadequate evaluation mechanism, and a lack of professionalization in the teaching staff. To achieve high-quality development of elderly study tour courses, it is necessary to start with the deepening of course themes and content, diversification of the evaluation system, diversification of publicity strategies, and the construction of the teaching staff. This will enable true curriculum reconstruction, thereby improving the quality of elderly study tour courses and student satisfaction.

Keywords: Elderly study tour courses; Lingnan culture; curriculum reconstruction.

1   Introduction

According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China, China's population is projected to reach severe aging by 2033 and extreme aging by 2045, with 296.97 million people aged 60 and above by 2023 [1]. To address this, elderly study tours have become an innovative educational model, integrating learning with travel. Study tours to China, dating back to the Spring and Autumn Period, and the importance of "learning through travel" is still generally acknowledged and valued today. In the West, originating from classical Greece's Sophists and European elites by the 17th century, these tour study have regained attention in the 21st century.

Research on elderly education study tours is limited, primarily experiential [2].However, interest in study travels for the elderly began in the 1980s. Studies on Elderhostel and senior tour companies have explored their benefits, including active ageing and

wellbeing. Patterson and Balderas（2020） do the literature review and further clarifies the benefits [3].

Early research defined elderly study tours, but experts in China have incorporated real-world experiences. Feng et al. (2021) explored connections between tours and historic villages [4], while Liu (2022) suggests improvements in target orientation [5], content, implementation, and evaluation. Scholars have limited research on study tours for professionals and the elderly, with experiential accounts being more prevalent than theoretical analyses and in-depth studies lacking[6]. This study analyzes the implementation status of elderly study tour courses at the Seniors University of Guangdong, focusing on the theory of lifelong learning. It aims to identify existing problems and explore the development of a system rich in Lingnan cultural elements to improve course quality and effectiveness.

2   The Connotation of Lingnan Cultural Elderly Study Tour Courses

2.1   Elderly Study Tour Course

Elderly study tour courses are purposeful, planned activities offered by elderly universities, integrating resources in a thematic form. They break traditional disciplinary frameworks, emphasizing personal experiences in practice, observation, operation, and expression[2]. The "tour" is the method, and the "study" is the essential purpose.

2.2   Lingnan Culture

Lingnan culture, a significant cultural system in southern China, mainly distributed in Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan, comprises spiritual and material aspects [7], including historical background, diverse ethnic cultures, rich languages, culinary traditions, architecture, folk arts, and festival customs, originating from long-term social practice.

3   Problems of Elderly Study Tour Courses

China is integrating study tour courses into elderly education, with universities in Shandong, Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Heilongjiang encouraging participants [8]. Seniors University of Guangdong, Foshan Branch, uses Lingnan culture to enhance elderly education quality, but it still lacks a systematic curriculum and routes. A case study on the Lingnan culture study tours at the Foshan Branch involved surveying course administrators, teachers, travel agency staff, and elderly participants through questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire included: (1) basic information of elderly participants (gender, age, educational background, pre-retirement occupation, income, and health); (2) needs and influencing factors for study tours; (3) participation and evaluation of courses; (4) expectations and preferences. A total of 685 questionnaires were

collected with a 100% recovery rate. Results indicate several problems with the Lingnan culture elderly study tours.

3.1   Low Course Participation Rate

As the Table 1 shows, 66.28% of respondents never joined an elderly study tour, and 60.44% relied on family and friends' recommendations for information. This reliance on word-of-mouth suggests limited outreach. Only 39.85% learned through online media like WeChat, with fewer using platforms like TikTok, indicating underutilized new media and inadequate promotion. Interviews cited unclear themes, vague content, and low tour frequency as reasons for non-participation. Nationwide, there's a lack of diverse course options meeting varied needs [2].

3.2   Unclear Course Design and Content

Initially, The Seniors University of Guangdong, Foshan Branch, lacked clear themes and systematic planning for elderly study tours, with instructors arranging content subjectively, lacking scientific approaches. This led to insufficient educational depth. It reveals 70.07% of elderly participants valued course content and route planning in the Table 1. Feedback showed 56.2% found the content unappealing. Beyond costs, 33.72% felt the content lacked depth, 32.7% desired more distinctive features, and 29.05% questioned instructor qualifications.

Elderly education lacks national curriculum standards, leading to subjective and inconsistent programs across regions and institutions. There's a significant shortage of professional teams for community education study tour design and implementation [9], impacting tour quality. Inadequate professional instructors for theoretical courses and reliance on travel agencies for route design lead to superficial formalism, hindering effective learning outcomes.

3.3   Lack of Effective Course Evaluation Mechanisms

It indicates 58.44% satisfaction among elderly participants in study tour courses in the Table 1. However, 25.84% cited inadequate course evaluation and feedback. Interviews noted traditional evaluation methods without modern technology for dynamic assessment. Evaluations were limited to course duration, lacking post-course feedback for improvement. Elderly study tours lacked a comprehensive evaluation system, neglecting multidimensional assessments like course design and teaching effectiveness.

3.4   Insufficient Professional Faculty

Study tour instructors' professionalism directly affects course quality. In a survey on elderly study tour factors, as shown in the Table 1, 41.61% highlighted teacher quality as crucial. And it also shows 29.05% dissatisfaction with current instructors. Effective study tours need an interdisciplinary team in education and tourism, but such talents

are rare. Instructors are typically tourism teachers from elderly universities, lacking education and psychology expertise to meet diverse learning needs. The industry lacks a comprehensive training system and unable to meet participant needs.

Table 1. Survey on Elderly Study Tour Courses

No.	Questions	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Have you participated in a senior tour study?	Yes	231	33.72
		No	454	66.28
2	What is your primary means of accessing study tour programs?	Referrals from family and friends	414	60.44
		WeChat public	273	39.85
		Travel agency stores	227	33.14
		Other platforms, like TikTok.	164	23.94
		Traditional media, like TV	105	15.33
3	What are the main factors that influence you to take a study tour program?	Safety and Security	536	78.25
		Course content and Route	430	70.07
		Catering and Accommodation	430	62.77
		Course Features	300	43.8
		Teacher competence	285	41.61
		Price	257	37.52
		Other	22	3.21
4	What problems do you see in senior study tour course?	Unattractive course content	385	56.2
		High cost of courses and trips	294	42.92
		A quick look around	231	33.72
		Insufficient course features	224	32.7
		Poor dining accommodations	200	29.2
		Low teacher competence	199	29.05
		Insufficient course evaluations	177	25.84
		Inadequate organization	150	21.9
		Other	17	2.48
5	How would you rate the study tours you have taken in the past?	Generally satisfactory	135	58.44
		Extremely satisfied	48	20.78
		Good	47	20.35
		Unsatisfactory	1	0.43

4   Reconstruction of Elderly Education Study Tour Courses

4.1   Reconstruction of Course Design and Content

To increase elderly participation in study tours, Chen (2020) recommends enhancing creative planning and continually innovating course offerings based on her research in Suzhou's community education tours [9]. Firstly, using surveys and interviews to understand elderly learners' awareness, interests, needs, and expectations. Analyze current courses, focusing on participant feedback and engagement. Use these insights to

strategically position and define goals for Lingnan cultural study tours, shaping themes, content, and plans accordingly.

Courses should cover various aspects of Lingnan culture. According to current requirements for elderly university public courses, each semester includes 12 classes. Figure 1 outlines a study tour system with 12 themes: Lingnan History Overview, Geography and Ecology, Ceramics and Embroidery, Cantonese Opera, Culinary Culture, Architecture and Gardens, Folk Art-Paper Cutting, Festivals and Customs, Cultural Figures, Literature, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and Calligraphy and Painting. Using these themes, enriched study tour routes can integrate diverse Lingnan cultural elements. Thematic study tour courses include tailored content, activities, and educational resources like handouts and multimedia. Designs cover objectives, content details, activities, and evaluations.
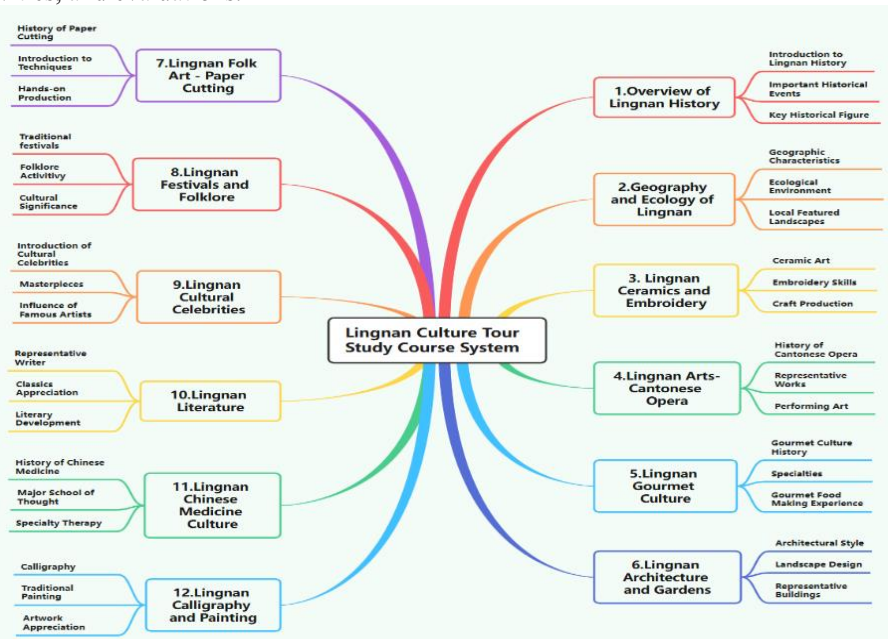
Fig. 1. Lingnan Culture Senior Tour Course System

4.2 Reconstruction of Course Evaluation Mechanism

The Senior University can improve its course assessment by focusing on evaluation subjects, techniques, indicators, and technologies to accurately reflect student learning outcomes and satisfaction. Using diverse assessment methods like formative and summative exams monitors student progress effectively. Systems for gathering student feedback through surveys and seminars ensure comprehensive viewpoints. Multidimensional assessment indicators cover learning outcomes, teaching effectiveness, course content, and student experiences for thorough evaluations. Peer and self-assessment tools promote student reflection and communication. Modern technology enhances evaluation's scientific rigor through data-driven analysis and intelligent systems.

Establishing a feedback mechanism based on evaluation findings and improvement suggestions ensures continual course quality enhancement.

4.3   Reconstruction of Course Faculty Team

To enhance senior study excursions, addressing faculty supply challenges is crucial [8]. This includes broadening sources to university professors, industry professionals, and cultural asset inheritors for academic depth and Lingnan cultural authenticity. Improving teaching skills through training, research projects, and resource sharing enhances faculty competence. Strengthening professional capacity includes communication, psychology, and education training. A comprehensive assessment and incentive system ensures ongoing feedback and incentives. Promoting collaboration, student engagement, mentorship, and team building among staff fosters a supportive environment. Flexible work arrangements and regular updates maintain a competent part-time faculty team meeting lifelong learning needs effectively.

4.4   Reconstruction of Course Promotion Strategies

Successful study trip initiatives depend on senior student participation, requiring effective information and engagement strategies [10]. Strategic promotion enhances course awareness and enrollment. Use multi-channel techniques like newspapers, TV, WeChat, and partnerships with senior organizations for broad outreach. Host regular events, employ big data for targeted marketing, and create compelling content such as expert interviews and promotional videos. Collaborate with travel agencies, schools, and media to expand coverage, ensuring comprehensive promotion that attracts seniors and boosts satisfaction and engagement.

5   Conclusions

Senior study tours meet the lifelong learning aspirations of older adults and their desire for a high-quality life. The optimization and implementation of senior study tour courses are significant for achieving active aging, promoting social participation among older adults, and fostering lifelong learning. Restructuring senior education study tour courses represents both innovation in the context of lifelong education for seniors and a rediscovery and reevaluation of the educational value of study tours in antiquity.

Funding

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