

# **The Research of Team Training -----An Interactive and Innovative Exploration of Entrance Education for First-year Graduates in Harbin Institute of Technology**

## **Abstract**

As an indispensable part of graduate entrance education since 2005, team training has been an important component of graduate student affairs in Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT). There has been more than 25,000 first-year graduates participating in the team training, 78% of whom gave high appreciation for the team training in their course papers during the past 9 years.

Designed for the first-year graduates, the team training adopts experiential teaching method after consideration for their traits and personalities. The aims of team training include enforcement of self-awareness, training the cooperative ability when experiencing in the team, getting the necessary knowledge of interpersonal communication for a better relationship with others, inspiring the potential talent and achieving a positive mental attitude. The team training has turned out to be effective in promoting the development of graduates' abilities in new environment adaptability, group collaboration and interpersonal communication. The team training becomes popular in school, which creates a campus culture of "trust, tolerance, love and share". This paper tries to study the training work in course content designing and management, effectiveness evaluation, curriculum reform and some other aspects as well.

## **Keywords**

**team training course, first-year Graduate, entrance education**

Postgraduate entrance education for fresh graduates is an important part of school quality education for graduates, which can help them adopt to postgraduate life better and more quickly, making a positive effect in their later establishment of study aims as well as after-graduate development. Setting the team training class as an important part of graduate entrance education is an innovation. And the teaching model is based on the creation of situational practice cases through experiential learning methods, with its emphasis on graduate experience and insight during the practice process so as to realize behavioral achievement and quality enhancement

(reference), which contributes to Individual growth. In Harbin Institute of Technology, for example, the team training has made a great effect in developing graduates' abilities of campus environment adaptation, interpersonal communication and group collaboration.

## **1. Team Training Course Design and Management**

Postgraduate entrance team training courses were designed and developed by using experiential learning method and case teaching method, utilizing group training theory, graduate psychology development theory, educational psychology and experience teaching theory as the theoretical basis, combined with features of the fresh postgraduates. "enhancing self-awareness to better understand ourselves; experiencing team relationship to develop teamwork skills; gaining perception of interpersonal communication to learn to live in harmony; having a state of mind and exploring our potential" is set as the main teaching objectives. The training classes are at the first week of the first semester. All fresh postgraduates should attend the training classes. Each class contains 60 postgraduates from more than ten different majors on the basis of diversity to promote communicating and co-studying among students with different major background. The aim of the courses are to enhance the sense of teamwork interaction. Through one day curriculum to deliver perceptions such as tolerance, trust, caring and sharing ideas, so that postgraduates can get familiar with new lives quickly. During the teaching process, the teachers need to follow the principles of tolerance and encouragement to promote postgraduates' self-motivation and self-realization. After the class, each student needs to share insights and complete homework and questionnaire assessments.

### **1.1 Content Design of Team Training Course**

Preparation stage: the teacher introduces the main purpose and the basic requirements of the course. It is important to emphasize that the teacher is only a guider and each participating student should be the master of themselves and of the team to be devoted to the training course. Then, they will get what the team course brings to them.

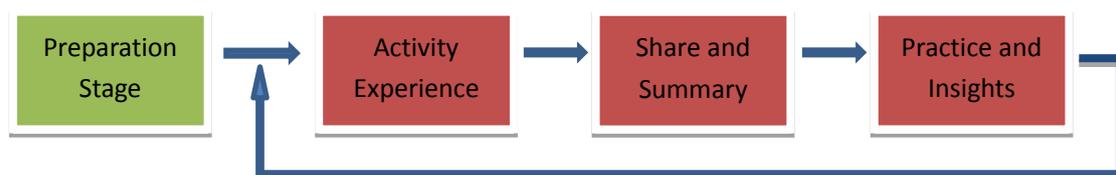
Implementation stage includes four steps, each step composed of several participatory activities; at the end of each activity, the teacher will help students to share, analyze and discuss what happened with the players to discover the true meaning behind each activity, so that the students can get self-awareness and benefit from it.

In the first step, get to know each other and build a team. Getting to know each other is the process of “ice break” and warming up. Do some simple but interesting “warm-up” activity. Let the members relax themselves, eliminating the strangeness gradually with each other. Through a special group game, the students will be separated into different teams. Then, the members of each team should work together to elect their team leader, make the team regulation and name their team (including the team name, song, slogan and logo). Finally they will show all the results to other teams.

In the second step, self-awareness. In this step, students are required to participate in activities on the basis of equality. Students discuss and share interesting things to know others and themselves through activities called “hand draw energy”, “self SWOT analysis”, “my graduate student life illusion”, etc. In this step, students will learn to dig their potentials, understand others, care for others and accept others.

In the third step, enhance trust among teammates and experience team power. In the activities called “blind walking” and “trust back jump”, students will gain their trust with each other. After that, the community sports activities will become harder and more complex gradually. This will make the students cooperate more with each other, figure out new ways and overcome difficulties together.

In the fourth step, summary and farewell. Each student will sum up what they have learnt in the farewell ceremony. They will rethink what they have learnt in this course and present their hope of the graduate life and future plan through activities called “farewell declaration”, “best wish cards”, etc.



**Fig.1. Processes of participatory activities in course implementation stage**

**Table 1. Operation process in course implementation stage**

	Getting acquaintance and making up teams	Self-awareness	Experiencing team power	Summary and farewell
Teaching Targets	Establish relationship, form up teammate agreements, and make	Strengthen relationship, enhance trust, and promote self-awareness.	Consolidate relationship to face group challenges, apply innovations to	Using group activity sources to sum up and sublimate gaining, make up future plans, and

	preparations for further cooperation.		achieve self-breakthrough.	set post-graduate aims.
Focuses	Through focusing only on oneself to on the whole team, form up good group atmosphere.	Through activities, exploration and sharing to strengthen trust and confidence.	Find the relation of individual and team, achieve self-breakthrough.	Self-examination and inter-communication in group.
Teaching Processes	Gradually establish trust, and find expectations to the course.	Learn team power from simple challenges in activities, establish belongingness, and experience some kind of conflicts.	Adjust the relation of individual and team when faced with challenges, resolve conflicts and achieve self-breakthrough.	Share experience from different point of views, exchange feelings.
Key Points	Honest, concentration, specific, acceptance	Support, questions, encouragements	Challenges, feedback, pressure	Common feelings, questions, feedback

## 1.2 Activities Design of Team Training Course

According to different teaching targets and contents in course implementation stage, the teacher should collect, write and design participatory activities fitted for teaching targets. Since project selection has a direct effect on classroom teaching, those selected projects should both correspond in content and be suited for operation. Specially speaking, curriculum activities can be designed from three kind of views:

### **In the form of activity experiences:**

Recognition-oriented activities: Team group sitting around, thinking for a given topic or hypothetical questions. These activities have low sit requirement and will be quiet.

Action experiential activities: Usually with more limb movements, larger space requirements, more challenges and enthusiasm.

Emotional experiential activities: Promote self-examination with experiential activities. Moderate space requirements, physical actions combined with mental activities.

### **In the form of activity origins:**

Independent innovation activities: Teachers combine the features of school and major and psychological characteristics of students at the present stage with teaching theories to design, practice and verify participatory teaching activities.

Reference type activities: Participatory activities proposed in the basic teaching theories and used by many colleges in career development, group counseling and some other ways.

**In the form of activity content:**

Activities related with self-skill enhancement, career planning or group quality development.

**1.3 Team Training Course Management**

Team training is a compulsory course for post-graduates, included in the graduates training programs and evaluated in credits. Anyone who fails it has to retake it. Management of the course adopts a standard and strict process, with specific persons to establish teaching files. The course bases upon characteristics of the newly-come graduates, combines common confusion and possible problems in their later graduate life with school moral education goals. It is designed mainly in modules, adjusting according to teaching tasks each year. According to school teaching management, teachers of the teaching group must carry out practices such as lesson plan designing, teaching seminars, teacher hiring, collective lesson planning, teacher evaluation, curriculum research, evaluation and summary, and so on, to constantly enrich content of the education, improving graduates' interpersonal skills as well as cooperative learning and working skills, strengthening self-awareness, cultivating innovative thinking habits. At the end of the course, it is required that each student write a passage on the topic of "plan for my graduate life and future career" with experiences and feelings gained on the day. The aim is to help students make a better preparation of their graduate life, and carry out research with purposes. Through this open and participatory course, It tries to inspire students start considering about their coming graduate life, prepares them to grow up with purposes.

**2. Evaluation of the Team Training Course**

Sound assessment mechanism can fully manifest problems of training projects, so at the end of the course questionnaires are assigned to each student for evaluation test. The test includes 16 components in 5 parts, including teaching attitude, teaching content, teaching methods, comments and suggestions, and comprehensive evaluation.

Assessment and adjustment are made upon analysis of the test results.

**Table 2. Top ten components in student assessment evaluation**

	Test content (Whether and how much I have improved in such aspects listed below)	level
1	Self-awareness	★★★★★
2	Self-acceptance, self-respect, confidence and attitudes to others	★★★★★
3	Necessary social skills to develop relationship with others; trust for myself and other people	★★★★★
4	Responsibility, care, and sensitivity to other persons' feelings and needs	★★★★★
5	Positive and optimistic attitudes to life	★★★★★
6	Acceptance for others	★★★★★
7	Teamwork	★★★★★
8	The value and pleasure of sharing experiences with others	★★★★
9	Future targets and plans	★★★★
10	abilities to expand ways of thinking, overcome difficulties and solve problems	★★★★

Experience teaching method adopted in team training course abandons the traditional way of teachers teaching and students accepting. It sets the students thinking and moving as the main course, with teachers playing the guiding role, emphasizing on students' instant feelings and gaining. Meanwhile, it is also a cooperative learning way between students and teachers. In freshmen entrance education, experience teaching method enables students to gain more knowledge in pleasant experiences, leading them to think about how to start graduate life and improve personality, helping students to strengthen self-awareness. Thus, it is beneficial for students to get familiar with environment and improve their social communication skills. As a result, the well design and novel implement of the course has received popularity among students so far, making it a positive and innovative try of college education in China.

### 3. Summary

Nowadays, team training course for graduates is characterized as clear directional (helping students to better adapt to graduates life and enlighten career planning), positive (transferring a positive, optimistic and friendly life attitude) and

close to students (connected with campus daily life). On this basis, we have refined the framework of team training teaching for graduates, adopting the participatory teaching method in the model of the present teaching process. For newly-come doctoral candidates, carry out the high-altitude quality development training to help them achieve the goal of “learning to insist, to overcome difficulties, and to go beyond myself”. For postgraduates on graduation year, carry out team training on big cities to build a platform of communication for students willing to find jobs there, and meanwhile further develop their social adaptability.

So far, the development of teaming training course for graduates has been for 9 years, though still leaving space for further refinement. For example, it is suggested to build a similar course at the end of each semester, establishing a stable and continuous curriculum system and further assessing effects of the course, in order to enable students truly benefit from the knowledge learned. As another example, the operability of the course activities designed should be considered, and the form of participatory teaching should be further developed. In summary, as the first class of postgraduates in Harbin Institute of Technology, team training provides a good foundation for future education and thus has a strong meaning for promotion.