

Students' Self-Study Activities: Case Study at Thu Dau Mot University

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Abstract. Self-study has “a very important role in the cognitive process of individuals, contributing to improving the quality of school education”. If students know how to organize self-study activities well, they will “improve their own learning outcomes”. The aim of this study is to explore Thu Dau Mot University students’ perception of self-study activities, reveal the current status of students' self-study skills, and analyze and find out the student's self-study activity plan and the content of the student's self-study activities. In terms of purposes of the study, to answer the research question and based on the background of previous studies, this study involved 490 students in different majors – freshmen to seniors. The result of this study shows that students understand the importance of self-study, some students do not arrange their time properly, do not know how to balance between studying and working, etc., so their self-study time does not meet the requirements of the training program. Students need to practice discipline in all matters, first of all discipline in studying, when studying, they need to concentrate highly, not to be affected by external factors that make self-study ineffective.

Keywords: university, student, self-study, skills

Introduction

Self-study is an urgent issue for education and training in every country, self-study plays a big role in determining the quality of the teaching and learning process in schools. Self-study activities help learners increase their knowledge, skills, level of autonomy and responsibility, transforming the educational process into a self-education process through their own efforts. Learners make an effort to discover knowledge through their own thinking methods, self-test, evaluate to understand themselves, thereby forming knowledge, skills, and developing their personality.

In 2021, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training updated the "Regulations on University Training" (Circular No. 08/2021/TT-BGDDT), emphasizing the role of teaching and learning in higher education. Students must "self-study and research, class time will be reduced, so students' self-study plays an important role".

Thu Dau Mot University (TDMU) is a public higher education institution under the People's Committee of Binh Duong province. The school was established under Decision No. 900/QĐ-TTg dated June 24, 2009 of the Prime Minister. Thu Dau Mot University develops in an applied direction, training in many disciplines and fields from undergraduate to postgraduate levels. With the academic credit system, by changing the management method, it has brought positive results such as many students have changed in terms of good academic performance, have known how to do scientific research and have many scientific research projects applied in real life. Besides, due to many different reasons, there are still some difficulties and limitations in the process of self-study.

Hopefully, the findings of this study will contribute to the management of self-study activities in TDMU. On that note, the research objectives of this study have been crafted as follow:

1. Survey TDMU Students’ perception of self-study activities;
2. Find out the current status of students' self-study skills;
3. Analyzing and finding out the student's self-study activity plan and the content of the student's self-study activities.

Literature Review

Van Thi Nhu Y (2010) has researched on "Measures to manage self-study activities of students at the People's Security University", emphasizing the management work of the Principal on self-study activities of students who were residing at the school, assessing the current status of management work and proposing management measures to better manage the school.

A study on the relationship between students' small group activities, time spent on self-study, and achievement Open access (Kamp et al., 2012) investigate the relationship between the contributions students make to the problem-based tutorial group process as observed by their peers, self-study time and achievement. Time spent on self-study was measured with a self-estimation method and achievement was measured with a unit test and a group assignment. A causal model of these variables was developed, in which the three types of activities were assumed to affect time spent on self-study, which would in turn affect unit test scores and group assignment scores.

Do Khac Thanh (2013) has a study on "Improving measures to manage self-study activities of students at Hung Vuong University, Phu Tho, Vietnam", mainly studying "students' self-study activities in the following aspects: Self-study awareness, self-study skills, lecturers' initiatives, self-study locations, management work, thereby finding out factors affecting self-study activities; Determining the relationship between self-study activities and factors affecting self-study activities; Recognizing the current status of different self-study management measures with the following contents: Planning, organizing orientation, organizing skills training; managing the use of equipment for self-study; From there, developing measures to manage self-study activities of students at Hung Vuong University, Phu Tho".

Phi Dinh Khuong (2019) had a study on Improving measures to manage self-study activities of students at the University of Science - Thai Nguyen University. This study identified the performance of the self-study activities of students in terms of: students' awareness on self-study, study skills, services for self-study, teaching method and administration. This study finds out the factors both externally and internally that may affect the activities of students' self-study, providing leaders with a clear idea on how effective and successful they should have in the work as management of self-study in university.

Nguyen Duc Giang (2021) researched on "Developing self-study capacity for university students of education according to the active teaching approach", the topic focuses on studying measures to develop self-study capacity according to the active teaching approach in teaching methods and forms of organization, the author studied "theoretical basis, current status of developing self-study capacity for students of university students of education according to the teaching approach; current status of developing self-study capacity for university students of education; proposing measures to develop self-study capacity for university students of education according to the active teaching approach".

Author group Ngo Thi Dung (2022) in the study on "Self-study activities of nursing students at Can Tho University of Medicine and Pharmacy, school year 2020 - 2021" reported that the best-practiced skill was "Completing homework completely" (95.6%), the most frequently applied self-study method was "Learning according to the lecture focus" (76%), the most frequently applied form of self-study was "Studying independently", 54.75% of students regularly studied 2-4 hours/day. There was a correlation between the most recent semester's learning outcomes and the skills of planning study ($p < 0.001$), referring to and researching documents ($p < 0.001$); summarizing and rewriting lessons ($p = 0.007$), and learning according to the lecture focus ($p = 0.013$). The self-study skill "Completing all homework" is the best performed by students, the self-study method most frequently applied by students is studying according to the focus of the lecture, the form of independent study alone is most applied by

students. Planning study, consulting and researching documents, summarizing and rewriting lessons and studying according to the focus of the lecture are factors related to students' learning outcomes.

Methodology

Research Methods

Among many other research methods, Ben Davis (2021) reported that Education research often relies on a quantitative methodology. Quantitative research in education provides numerical data that can prove or disprove a theory, and administrators can easily share the number-based results with other schools and districts.

In addition, the study of Oberiri Destiny Apuke (2017) established that “quantitative research deals with quantifying and analyzing variables in order to get results. It involves the utilization and analysis of numerical data using specific statistical techniques to answer questions like who, how much, what, where, when, how many, and how. It also describes the methods of explaining an issue or phenomenon through gathering data in numerical form.”

In this study, the writers used the quantitative methods. After the literature review on self-study activities was conducted, we designed a questionnaire to investigate Thu Dau Mot University Students' self-study activities. Then, the data were collected through google form surveys, from sending out email and link surveys randomly to formal students in different majors - Freshmen to senior students at Thu Dau Mot University.

Participants

In this study, 490 TDMU students in different majors - Freshman students to senior students are taken as samples. An email was sent to 490 students, inviting them to complete the online survey and providing them with an internet link to it. They were randomly selected and all of them took a course on Scientific Research Methods at least once, few has not taken a course on Scientific Research Methods.

Instruments

The study used an online survey as a tool for collecting data. The online questionnaire was carefully created on google drive. This tool plays a key role to survey of Thu Dau Mot University students' self-study activities.

The online questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section was entitled “General Information”. It consisted of the question about the student's major, the student's gender. The second section is entitled “self-study activities”. This section will focus on three questions from the survey. This section aims to get information about Thu Dau Mot University Students' perception of self-study activities; Find out the current status of students' self-study skills; Analyzing and finding out the student's self-study activity plan and the content of the student's self-study activities.

Results and Discussion

Thu Dau Mot University Students' Perception of Self-Study Activities

This section discusses students' perception of self-study activities, the following table show the results:

Table 1. Students' perception of self-study activities

Content	Students	
	Quantity	Percentage %
Not important at all	9	1.8%
Not important	15	3.1%
Neutral	47	9.6%
Important	208	42.4%
Absolutely important	211	43.1%

The majority of students (85.5%) surveyed said that self-study is "Important" and "Absolutely important" for students during their studies at school. This reflects the fact that students have realized the necessity, importance, and necessity of self-study. Only a very small number (14.5%) of students have not fully appreciated the importance of self-study or misunderstood the nature of self-study during their studies at school. These students think that self-study is the work of students themselves to learn and explore knowledge, when there is guidance from teachers, it is no longer a self-study process but a teaching process. From there, they think that self-study is unnecessary or neutral, leading to lack of self-awareness and passive, so that learning results are not good.

Through the survey on students' perception of self-study activities, it shows that most students have a correct awareness of self-study issues.

The Current Status of Students' Self-Study Activity Plan

According to Nguyen Dinh Binh's research (2019), students' self-study activities often come from: "Thinking in their heads", "In writing", "Thinking in their heads and in writing" or "No plan". The current status of self-study activities of Thu Dau Mot University students is presented in the following data table:

Table 2. Planning method

No	Content	N	Percentage (%)
1	Thinking in their heads	339	69,2
2	In writing	21	4,3
3	Thinking in their heads and in writing	119	24,3
4	No plan	11	2,2

The results table shows that: Students who build self-study plans by thinking in their heads without writing them down account for a very large proportion (69.2%), only a very small number (4.3%) of students build plans in writing and (24.3%) of students use both forms of planning above. Regarding the time to build self-study plans, surveyed students often build self-study plans by week, month, semester or school year, the specific results are as follows:

Table 3. Time to build students' self-study plan

No	Content	N	Percentage (%)
1	By week	259	54,1
2	By month	125	26,1
3	By semester	51	10,6
4	By academic year	38	7,9
5	Building self-study strategies (as soon as enter university, make a self-study plan for the entire university period)	6	1,3

The results of the table above show that students only build short-term self-study plans such as weekly plans (54.1%) or monthly plans (26.1%), while long-term, strategic plans such as semester plans (10.6%) and academic year plans (7.9%) have not been paid much attention to; in which, only 1.3% of students "building self-study strategies" as soon as enter university, make a self-study plan for the entire university period.

Regarding the level of implementation of self-study plans, the survey results are as follows:

Table 4. the level of implementation of self-study plans

No	Content	N	Percentage (%)
1	Unaccomplished	82	17.12
2	Rarely accomplished	210	43.84
3	Accomplished	187	39.04

Building a self-study plan is a skill and a very important stage that greatly affects the self-study results of students. Without a self-study plan, has made less productive, wasting time. However, the actual results show that most students (43.84%) rarely accomplished a self-study plan, a group of students (39.04%) accomplished self-study plan and a number of students (17.12%) unaccomplished a self-study plan. This shows that students' self-study is mostly spontaneous, lacking preparation and initiative.

Content of Student Self-Study Activities

According to Clause 1, Article 7 of Circular No. 17/2021/TT-BGDDT effective from June 22, 2021 about "*Regulations on training program standards; development, appraisal and promulgation of training programs for all levels of university education*", the regulations on the content and self-study hours for students, mean: "For theoretical or practical, experimental subjects, to acquire one credit, students must spend at least 30 hours of personal preparation. Teachers evaluate students' self-study hours through the results of implementing teachers' requirements for students for self-study hours. Thus, self-study activities in credit-based training play an important role, being a mandatory part of students' learning activities. To effectively learn 1 hour of theory or 2 hours of practice in class, students will spend 1 hour or 2 hours preparing before the lesson". The content of self-study activities of Thu Dau Mot University students are as follows:

Table 5. Content of student self-study activities

No	Content	N	Percentage (%)
1	Self-study according to the content required by the teacher	190	38.8%
2	Self-study new lesson content in advance	90	18.4%
3	Self-study reference materials introduced by the teacher	87	17.8%
4	Self-study to train physical fitness	25	5.1%
5	Self-study to train will and spirit	58	11.8%
6	Self-study to expand professional knowledge	40	8.2%

The focus of self-study is determining the content of self-study. Determining the correct content of self-study helps students visualize and generalize their own study plan, thereby having appropriate and scientific methods and ways of implementation, being proactive about time and dividing the content reasonably during the self-study process. The results of the table above show that: "Self-study according to the content required by the teacher" is chosen by the

majority of students for self-study (38.8%) and is ranked highest among self-study contents. The content "Self-study in advance of new lesson content" and "Self-study of reference materials introduced by the teacher" are chosen by students with the second highest rank (18.4% and 17.8%). With two self-study contents of immediate nature to consolidate lessons in class that students are interested in, the content of longer-term, more extensive nature has a lower percentage of students interested in choosing with 11.8% of students choosing the content of "Self-study to train will and spirit"; 8.2% of students choose the content of "Self-study to expand professional knowledge" and 5.1% of students choose "Self-study to train physical fitness".

The above results show that the investment in self-study content of students is not uniform, still prioritizing the near, immediate content, still coping, not willing to invest in more in-depth content, supplementing and fostering professional skills, leading to many difficulties in practical work after graduation.

Student Self-Study Skills

The results of the survey on students' self-study skills are shown as follows:

Table 6. Student self-study skills

No	Content	N	Percentage (%)
1	Building goals and self-study strategies	129	26,3%
2	Controlling study time	15	3,1%
3	Skills in searching and selecting information for self-study	98	20,0%
4	Skills in taking notes and systematizing exercises	31	6,3%
5	Self-study of reference materials and textbooks	91	18,6%
6	Interacting with teachers during self-study	89	18,2%
7	Participating in group work	37	7,6%

The above results show that: the skill of "Building goals and self-study strategies" is rated by 26.3% by students, showing that students are very interested in performing self-study tasks assigned by teachers. Most of the problems that teachers assign students to self-study are easy to understand, easy to access or are new issues in theory. Through the study of "Skills of searching and selecting information for self-study" (20.0%) helps students discover problems for scientific research, writing topics for excellent students in the subject, and writing graduation theses. Practical observations show that "Self-study of reference materials and textbooks" (18.6%) and "Interacting with teachers during self-study" (18.2%) show that students are very interested in researching and presenting new issues assigned by teachers in discussions and seminars, thereby improving their cognitive ability and learning outcomes.

However, in reality, students using the skills of researching additional reference materials to improve lectures are focused on a number of students who have the ability and correctly identify their motivations and learning goals, especially career, social and scientific motivations and goals. Meanwhile, the remaining students often use the skill of re-reading lectures after listening to lectures, mainly to solve immediate problems in their studies. Therefore, their learning results are only average or quite average.

"Skills of taking notes and systematizing exercises" (6.3%) and "Participating in group work" (7.6%) are the skills that help students remember lessons in a positive, proactive, long-term and comprehensive way, demonstrating a high-level thinking process, which is a good method in the process of self-study at university level. However, the results showed that students rarely choose this method for self-study, only choose easier methods, do not bother to systematize, generalize or outline the lessons they have learned, and are still passive in self-

study. This has led to certain limitations in students' learning outcomes as well as scientific research.

There are no effective measures to monitor and promote students' self-study activities, only through the results of the assigned exercises, there are no measures to support and monitor the self-study process of students. There are no measures to measure the output standards related to self-study skills, innovation, and the desire to enrich themselves, their families, and society. Some detailed course outlines do not clearly describe the use of appropriate learning methods/methods to promote the practice of essential skills and soft skills. There is no goal of forming the ability to analyze and synthesize, the ability to identify problems, critical thinking, creative thinking and time management, planning skills, teamwork and self-study ability, helping students understand different learning strategies so that they can choose the most suitable strategy for each specific learning task. Some detailed course outlines do not have a description of the use of appropriate teaching methods to promote the training of essential skills, soft skills, self-study ability and self-study/lifelong learning ability for students. Activities to encourage students to conduct scientific research to improve their self-study, self-study and life-long learning ability have not been effectively implemented, and very few students respond and participate in scientific research. 100% of students do not register to do their graduation thesis. There are no specific instructions and sanctions for teachers to monitor students' self-study activities.

Although students understand the importance of self-study, some students do not arrange their time properly, do not know how to balance between studying and working, some students are distracted by many things such as playing games, watching movies, social networks, etc., so their self-study time does not meet the requirements of the training program. Students need to practice discipline in all matters, first of all discipline in studying, when studying, they need to concentrate highly, not to be affected by external environmental factors that make self-study ineffective.

Conclusion

The conclusions that we have reached so far are that students who are “interested in self-study during the learning process, determine the right motivation for learning, carry out self-study activities such as determining self-study content, building a self-study plan, knowing how to choose and use appropriate methods, forms and means of self-study, knowing how to self-evaluate and check their own self-study results are considered to have self-study skills”. However, the above activities have not been “fully and comprehensively perceived and evaluated by students, have not received proper attention and investment, so self-study has not achieved high results, and still faces many difficulties and shortcomings”.

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