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**AN EXPLORATION OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHODS
IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM: A CASE STUDY**

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INTRODUCTION

The benefits of experiential education methodologies have been clearly documented in literature (2, 23, 25). Likewise, the theories and practices associated with the travel and tourism profession open the door for the application of experiential education models and methodologies. Where many other disciplines can be developed and taught using a lecture-based classroom approach, travel and tourism is an experiential-based science. The study of travel and tourism requires a field component that allows for a specific location and a sense of place (8, 16, 26). The only way to gain full understanding of travel and tourism theory in relation to practice is to combine new knowledge that can be directly applied and evaluated in tourist environments. Environment is defined in this specific discipline as a contextual understanding and perspective of the travel experience. It is a holistic approach (2, 13, 18,

19, 20, 21, 27). The micro, as well as the macro system must be synthesized to create a comprehensive understanding of travel as a unique discipline. The application of travel experiences in the curriculum evokes a sense of place and provides opportunities for critical thinking on both a micro and macro level.

Interdisciplinary Approach and Travel and Tourism

Another important dimension of the travel science is that it must be interdisciplinary. The only way to achieve a contextual understanding is to have a multidisciplinary approach to include cultural aspects, the socio-economic factors, and geographic differences (19, 21, 30). For many disciplines, this presents a problem because territoriality develops and prevents integration. In the travel and tourism sciences, there is no room for territoriality because it is an integrated and

cooperative discipline. Getting curriculum designers, faculty, and students to think about travel and tourism from an integrated perspective is the primary educational objective. It is the ability to merge multidisciplinary perspectives into a holistic approach for the design and planning of an educational system to teach students travel and tourism concepts (9, 13, 19, 27, 28, 32).

Travel and tourism must be seen as a process and the science of travel and tourism must be taught as an interdisciplinary science that is based on process (8, 11, 18, 22). Many educational approaches are content specific and focus very much upon skill development from a micro level perspective (4, 36). And it is the responsibility of travel and tourism specialists to transfer knowledge from one situation to another in order to design successful travel and tourism experiences. In contrast, where the content approach focuses more along the micro perspective, the process approach focuses on a macro perspective (9, 10). It is important to have both approaches balanced in order to have an effective educational travel and tourism program. The content approach basically focuses more upon the theoretical aspect of the program, and the process approach focuses more on the experiential aspects of travel and tourism. It is the blending of these two approaches that makes an effective travel and tourism program. The purpose of this study was to examine the content/process blended approach to teaching travel and tourism and to determine the outcomes that can be achieved through this approach.

METHODS

Instructional Methodology

In recent years, researchers have developed a classroom/theoretical approach that is combined with field-based experiences to create a more effective educational model for teaching travel and tourism (9, 14, 16, 31). The combination of classroom instruction and field-based experiences provides opportunities for content synthesis, which ultimately creates an effective framework for travel and tourism education (33).

As the basic educational approach, travel and tourism courses are taught in professional blocks (3, 7, 10, 12, 17, 24, 29, 34, 38). These professional blocks have three primary components. The first component is classroom instruction regarding theories and principles travel and tourism. In this first approach, students learn the interdisciplinary nature of travel and tourism using a lecture/discussion approach. An important part of this classroom instruction provides a framework and methodology for analyzing and critiquing destination-based travel and tourism efforts. Learning a framework for evaluating tourist destinations prepares students for practical application during the field experiences.

The second phase of the instructional model involves the identification of practical tourist-based problems in local settings, located near or within a half-hour from campus. In this phase, students are asked to critically evaluate problems and generate feasible solutions. Since problems are identified and analyzed locally, students can reinforce evaluative skills with minimal travel time. Additionally, solving problems in local settings solidifies a framework for evaluating problems in larger tourist destinations.

The third phase of the instructional methodology involves traveling to a regional tourist destination, a 5 to 10 hours drive away from campus, and staying 4-6 days. This experiential-based extended trip is non-local, and typically involves larger cities with an opportunity to evaluate several tourist attractions. The researchers have found that greater distances from the home campus promote high levels of student to student and student to instructor comradery and sense of unity. Likewise, because students have had several foundational experiences at local settings, they have the theory-based knowledge and developing practical skills necessary to solve tourism problems as a team and the instructors merely facilitate and guide the development of solutions. In this third phase, instruction is integrated through discussion and development of a plan to solve travel and tourism issues raised during the trip. Finally, students and instructors assess and analyze the plan's ability to solve the identified travel and tourism problems in the area. This last step involves model testing and identifying the most effective plans for that destination. As with any curriculum design, it is important to identify strengths and weaknesses and student perceptions are a valuable tool in this process.

Purpose of the Study

The analysis of this instructional methodology was a case study designed that collected information using both qualitative and quantitative measures of effectiveness. The purpose of this mixed methods approach was to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of blending traditional teaching strategies with experiential learning methods into one instructional design. And ultimately, the underlying question that directed this research was, how did student perceptions of experiential, field-based methodologies compare with their perceptions of traditional educa-

tional methodologies? Moreover, after the students completed the three professional blocks of the aforementioned methodology, how did students compare the effectiveness of this instructional model with previous teaching methods.

Participants

This study examined a convenience sample of 13 graduate-level college students who were enrolled in a university sponsored travel and tourism course at a mid-western state university. Participants included 8 females and 5 males, and the average age was 26. Additionally, 85% of the participants were from the home state of the university.

Measurement

In order to determine the effectiveness of this instructional approach, two types of information were collected (5, 6, 15, 35). The first type of information collected was a ranking of student perceptions of the effectiveness of the various instructional methodologies, i.e., lectures, labs, case studies, experiential education, and field trips, in relation to outcomes achieved, (see table number 1). The second type of information sought, using a "Likert Scale," asked the kinds of outcomes that can be achieved using the new field-based instructional methodology. As illustrated in table number 2, the information sought about outcomes was associated with how successful this methodology was in achieving objective. The focus was not only on how the objectives were achieved, but the uniqueness of the objectives achieved.

Information on the comparative analysis of the instructional methodology was obtained using a close-ended questionnaire about the nature of instructional methodology. The instrument was designed using a Skipper

Charles framework (5, 6, 15, 35, 37). Data were collected on the preference and nature of effectiveness of instructional methodologies in five focus areas. As illustrated in table number 1, students were asked to rank their level of experience with and foundational knowledge of each methodology and how they perceive each method motivated them to learn. Additionally, students ranked the perceived efficiency and effectiveness of each methodology. Table number 2 demonstrates specific data that were sought regarding the nature of the field experience and how it impacts the students. Information about outcomes was sought using an open-ended framework in which the students were asked to identify the impacts of the educational experience and to relate how and why this experience was different and how this impact was achieved.

The data in this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Data were reported in terms of raw numbers because of the small sample size (see tables number 1 and 2). Open-ended data were analyzed using a Thurstonian method of judgment to form categories. After the categories were formed, discussion was obtained from the students to determine if these categories are, in fact, a good category classification system. Data, at this phase of the study, was also reported in terms of frequencies to give some indication about the importance of the outcomes achieved from such an instructional methodology (see table number 2).

RESULTS

The data were analyzed, in this study by establishing means and analyzing individual score patterns to describe relationships in the data. The data are reported in two parts: Part I, general questions about instructional methodologies, and Part II, the outcomes

associated with experiential learning methods applied in the course.

Part One

All of the participants had experience with the instructional methodologies listed in part one, which were: lectures, labs, case studies, experiential education, and field trips. For the general experience with lectures, the average score was 4.1 and the distribution of scores indicated that the participants had had successful experiences with lectures during their high school and college careers. The findings indicated that, for labs, the average score was 4.0 and the individual scores indicated that all but one of the individuals had a successful experience with labs. In regard to case studies, the average score was 3.9 and the individual patterns among the scores indicated that all but three had had successful experience with case studies. In regard to experiential education, the average score was 4.9 and all of the participants, but two, had had successful experiences with experiential education. When individual scores were examined, a comparison of general patterns indicated that there were three individuals who were an aberration from the general trend. These individuals had more success with lectures and field trips. Labs, case studies, and experiential education were not as effective methods of instruction.

The analysis of the second series of questions related to the motivation of each of the instructional methods based upon experience in college and high school. The mean for lectures was 3.0 and the individual patterns showed diversity that ranged from (very) low to (very) high scores. In regard to the lab and its ability to motivate, the mean was 3.8 and the range of scores was very high, with the exception of three individuals. The mean case study score was 3.6 and six individuals had medium to low scores. In regard

to experiential education, the mean score was 4.6. And when the individual scores were analyzed, all of the scores were high, with the exception of two individuals. The mean score for field trips was 4.9. All of the individual scores were high. When general patterns in individual scores, when analyzed across the questions, scores were either high on all the instructional forms or had a mixed pattern of high and low, based on the instructional methodology. If they had a low lecture score, or they didn't preference lectures, they tended to have low case studies scores.

The next question for analysis was on the efficiency of the instructional methodology. The mean score of lecture was 3.5 and there were five scores that indicated the lecture was not an effective method of instruction. In regard to labs, the mean score was 4.0 and there were two low scores in regard to lab effectiveness. The mean score of the case study was 3.7 and there were five scores that indicated low effectiveness in case studies. The average score in experiential education was 4.6 with two scores being low. The mean score for the field trips was 4.6 and all the scores were high. Patterns of individual scores indicated high efficiency among three of the individuals on all of the instructional techniques. There were nine individuals who had mixed patterns of the scores of some high and low, based upon a particular instructional technique. Of those who had mixed scores, those who scored low lecture scored high or very high on experiential education and field trips.

The participants were then asked to rank order the instructional techniques in regard to their effectiveness. Their mean ranking score of lectures was 3.9 with only two individuals ranking lectures high. The mean ranking for the labs was 3.2 with four of the scores being of high ranking. In the case

studies, the mean ranking score was 3.8 with one of the scores being of high ranking. The mean score for the experiential education was 1.9 with two of the scores being low. The mean score for the field trips was 2.2 with one of the scores being low. Individual analysis, with these questions, was not completed because the data were in terms of rankings.

The foundational knowledge was isolated as an important prerequisite for the use of instructional techniques in travel and tourism. It was found, in the analysis of the question related to foundation of knowledge, that the individual who was more comfortable with the structured methodologies had a low foundational knowledge in regard to travel and tourism.

Part Two

The next section of analysis is part two, and this analysis relates to the specific course where experiential education was used as the primary methodology. The first analysis was regarding the first use of the experiential education method and knowing what to do. The mean score was 2.9 for three individuals not feeling comfortable the first time they used the experiential education methods. The mean score for the motivation of the experiential instructional technique was 4.3 and there were no low scores. In regard to the importance of not learning the basics in the classroom, the mean score was 1.6 and all of the scores were low. Concerning the ability to use this methodology without some type of introduction, the mean score was 1.9 with all scores being low. The next question regarding feeling comfortable after using the method in a case study format, all the scores were high and the mean score was 4.2. After using the instructional methodology, all the scores indicated were high and the mean score was 4.2. In terms of formu-

lating a strategic plan, the mean score was 4.4 with all scores being high. In regard to the input of the student and involvement with the course, all of the scores were high with the exception of one individual who had a low score and the mean score was 4.5. When the improvement of problem solving skills was analyzed, the mean score was 4.2 and all of the scores were high. When teamwork skills were analyzed, all of the scores were high and the mean score was 4.3. In regard to the freedom of the student to work, the mean score was 4.8 and all the scores were high. When the overall satisfaction with the outcome of the course was evaluated, all of the scores were high and the mean score was 4.8. When the aberrations from the patterns were analyzed, it was found that the aberrations from the general mean pattern had low foundational knowledge in regard to travel and tourism. The pattern of these individuals' learning type scores indicated that the freedom and the higher cognitive functioning skills were a problem.

There was also a chance for the student to comment on the course. The comments supported the results. Some of the comments were: Advantages: "Learning to work with a team." "Learning patience and compromise." "Learn more than with a lecture because have experienced it." "Was motivated and enthusiastic about learning." "Helped to focus on learning." "Was able to focus on details that normally would not be considered in the class." "Team building skills." "Small group helped to get individual attention and facilitated discussion among students." "A feeling of success and accomplishment." The primary disadvantages expressed were that the higher cognitive types of skills were not detailed and explained enough in the classroom part of the course.

CONCLUSIONS

In terms of methodology, the results show that knowledge acquisition first and practical application second is an effective approach to teaching. Additionally, lectures are an effective and efficient way to transmit and disseminate travel and tourism concepts and theories. With the transmission of knowledge, it is also important for students to develop a solid framework for evaluating travel and tourism characteristics during field-based experiences. Students need to have an understanding and working knowledge of concepts and theories related to travel and tourism before they can effectively evaluate and critique tourist destinations.

The research indicates that if an experiential type of instructional methodology is used first, without a basic understanding travel and tourism concepts, students lack the knowledge of how to critique tourist destinations and that can create a level of discomfort and lack of student motivation for learning. The results also suggest that this methodology of knowledge acquisition and then application helps students to develop and expand their perspective of travel and tourism.

The findings indicate that this methodology fits well into "Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives" which purports that learning occurs in a progression of lower order skills to high order skills. These skills range from simply remembering knowledge to creating or re-producing and applying that new knowledge in a practical setting (1). The application of this methodology guides students through a progression of tourism experiences and knowledge application that, in turn, advances them to higher order thinking and the skill application level on Bloom's Taxonomy.

The other focus of the study on Part II indicates that there are positive outcomes associated with this instructional methodology. One set of outcomes focuses on attitude and the other focuses upon the ability to be able to develop a perspective on content. This perspective on content allows the student to move away from a knowledge-base learning approach to a problem-base learning approach that allowed them to solve real tourist destination problems, using practical evaluative knowledge.

Future Research

One question remains; at the end of this methodology can students perform better than other students who have had or participated in other instructional methodologies? Some of the results suggest that it depends on the individual. The one spurious relationship that we do not want to fall into is the fact that sometimes the very best students may be attracted to this methodology and

may, in fact, be more effective in the application of knowledge prior to use of this instructional methodology. This method needs to be cross tested with a number of groups and ability levels, and then the effectiveness must be compared with other groups with similar skill levels to determine if their skills are indeed more effective. This was an initial study to determine the types of outcomes that can be associated with the instructional methodology outlined.

Finally, it is important to address whether the types of outcomes and the methods used in this study are more effective in transmitting a higher level of knowledge? In the researchers' opinion, there is little doubt that student attitudes are far more positive with this type of instructional methodology as opposed to others. Motivation seems to be the primary outcome from this instructional methodology, but additional studies are needed to validate its ability to improve performance.

Table # 1

Instructional Methodology General Questionnaire Results															
General Questionnaire		S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	Mean
General Experience	lectures	5	4	4	5	4	4	3	3	4	5	5	4	4	4.15
	labs	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	5		4	4	4	4.08
	case studies	4	5	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	3	2	3	3.85
	experiential education	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3		4.67
	field trips	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.85
Motivation for Learning	lectures	3	4	4	3	2	2	2	1	3	5	4	4	3	3.08
	labs	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	5		4	4	3	3.83
	case studies	4	5	4	3	2	3	3	4	4	5	3	4	3	3.62
	experiential education	5	5	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	3		4.58
	field trips	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.85
Efficiency of Instructional Method	lectures	3	4	4	5	2	4	1	2	3	4	5	4	4	3.46
	labs	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	3	5		4	4	4	4.00
	case studies	4	5	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	5	3	2	3	3.69
	experiential education	5	5	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	-5	5	3		4.58
	field trips	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.62
Effectiveness of Instructional Method	lectures	5	4	5	1	5	4	5	5	5	4	1	3	3	3.85
	labs	4	5	4	2	3	2	2	4	3		3	2	4	3.17
	case studies	3	2	3	4	4	5	4	3	4	3	5	4	5	3.77
	experiential education	1	1	1	5	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	5	1	1.85
	field trips	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	1	1	4	1	2	2.23
Foundational knowledge		4	4	4	1	4	3	2	4	3	3	5	4	3	3.38

Table # 2

Instructional Methodology New Methodology Questionnaire Results														
Field-based Methodology	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	Mean
1 comfortable with first use	4	3	3	2	3	2	2	4	3	3	2	4	3	2.92
2 motivation for learning	5	5	5	3	5	5	3	4	5	5	4	3	4	4.31
3 without classroom foundation	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1.62
4 without introduction	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	4	2	3	2	2	1.92
5 comfortable after practice	4	4	5	3	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4.23
6 formulating strategic plans	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4.38
7 student involvement	5	5	5	2	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4.54
8 problem solving skills	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	3	4	4	4.23
9 teamwork skills	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	3	4	4	4.31
10 freedom for student	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4.77
11 outcome satisfaction	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4.77

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