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Teaching Methodology in Tourism Studies

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ABSTRACT

For a long period of time, tourism studies have been amalgamated with management and economics. Then, with the development of tourism as the second most important industry in the world, syllabus designers felt the need of elaborating special contents for tourism students independently from economy. As curriculum designing requires a great variety of pedagogical matters to be taken into account for the sake of facilitating the process of learning in tourism classroom, it has been thought to innovate and experiment some approaches and strategies that are likely to enhance the learning process. Identifying the potentially appropriate approach to teaching tourism would be useless if not completed with methods and techniques of teaching. In other words, the syllabus designer should think of adapting some classroom activities and strategies to reflect the philosophy of the selected approach. In this context, our presentation seeks to investigate if there is a common consent on a specific approach to teaching tourism and to identify the best classroom and field activities that may lead to better learning.

Keywords: Teaching Methodology, Tourism Studies, Multidisciplinarity, Outcome Approach

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Introduction

The beauty of our planet Earth has inspired the development of the tourism industry in almost all regions of the world. Nature, in a burst of generosity, has provided all countries with beautiful sites, and this scenic beauty has encouraged both economic and educational policies and measures to promote tourism as an unalterable source of richness.

Among the educational measures, one can mention the many reforms that have adapted to the needs of fast and effective training of professional tourism agents. This type of training has commanded us to map new training programs and also new teaching approaches capable of generating tourism managers and agents in the shortest period of time. If it is current and easy to develop a training program after the learners' needs have been determined, it is more difficult to adapt an approach to teaching tourism modules that would achieve the training objectives traced previously. However, the approach that seems to be on the way to gather common consent on its efficiency is the outcome based teaching. With this approach, the focus of teaching has shifted on enabling the learners to achieve the intended learning goals immediately after the training period.

1. Teaching Tourism Subjects

As there are approaches and methods of teaching languages, science subjects and humanities, there are others for teaching tourism topics as well. The teacher of tourism has to design theoretical and practical courses according to specific approaches that would facilitate the process of teaching. To train a group of learners in tourism studies is a complex process which starts with the identification of their needs to designing a syllabus, to reaching the objectives and finally making sure that they transfer the amount of knowledge they have learned to the professional life. To achieve the whole process successfully, the trainer has to guide, counsel, motivate, and facilitate by means of relevant and enjoyable activities he performs in classroom.

It is commonly agreed that the subjects/modules/disciplines taught in tourism studies are classified in three major arrays: economics, laws and languages. This is a source of difficulty for the teachers because even though coming from different horizons, they have to work in close connection so that their learners connect and transfer successfully from one subject to another. Moreover, these teachers must also relate what they teach to authentic situations and authentic people. Teaching meaningful contexts in tourism studies is an important requirement for gaining knowledge and understanding efficiently. Students are to be considered as actors performing numerous activities in economics, laws and languages largely dominated by tourism themes.

2. Defining an Approach

In tourism studies, the teacher is fully responsible for designing, creating, stimulating

and informing. To achieve these tasks, he has to elaborate appropriate programmes corresponding to the chosen approach. But what is an approach?

It is an overall assumption dealing with the nature of what we are supposed to teach. It is one's own philosophy and belief in how to handle the whole process of investigating, designing, teaching and assessing the project we have undertaken. The approaches to teaching have been improving fast during the latest decades, especially in the field of humanities and languages.

The method of teaching, on the other hand, is the medium or long run plan of practising the act of teaching. It covers all activities related to content design, training period, course-books and hand-outs use, fieldwork, etc.

Regarding tourism studies, the best approach, in our stance, is the one which contributes greatly to raising students' awareness toward their future mission. Tourism students are expected, more than other specialties students, to work in multidisciplinary fields with diversified cultured people. Knowing that each approach privileges one aspect of the training process, it would be convenient if the teacher could implement one that would take the best of each approach. From the communicative approach for example, the teacher can retain the interactive teaching in authentic situations. From the situational approach, one may envisage taking the simulation activities. From the audio-lingual approach, the teacher may use the communicative interactions which contribute greatly to develop the listening and speaking skills. They are of paramount importance in tourism studies.

This way of proceeding which consists in collecting different strategies of teaching taken from different approaches is called eclecticism.

3. The Outcome-based Approach

However, the approach that is taking precedence over all others in tourism studies is known as Outcome Approach. It aims essentially at organizing all features of schooling such as objectives, syllabus, instruction, and assessment, so as to produce specifically outlined results. Besides, all students are expected to demonstrate the same results. The outcome approach requires from the teacher to anticipate on the results and to consider assessment early while planning. An outcome approach teacher measures what his learners know, what skills they have, and he leads them to a particular grade with a particular new amount of knowledge.

It is the teacher's responsibility to determine what suits the students and to select the most suitable method and technique to achieve the traced goals.

The outcome-based approach as adapted to tourism studies is based on two assumptions:

- All students can succeed (not necessarily on the same day)
- Success motivates for further success.

When designing his syllabus, the teacher focuses on what students need to learn and he is given total latitude to decide about what may achieve the learning outcome to fulfil students' expectation. When possible, he can associate the learners while developing the programme. According to this approach, priority is to be given to what students can do as they progress from one level to another rather than the amount of time allocated to teaching them, or the equipment used. This approach sees learning as more interactive between teachers and learners, and as having a clearer purpose. The teacher is considered as a guide and a facilitator rather than a feeder. Outcome based approach proponents consider that all learners are potentially of high level. It does not bother much about the input; rather it focuses on the output. By the end of the training period, students should be able to demonstrate that they can manage in the working field, rather than just showing up.

4. Learning in Tourism Studies

Field work is one of the most important subjects in tourism studies. Learners need to be exposed to tourism activities to:

- develop their sense of observing tourism places.
- familiarize with tourism centres and offices.
- learn how to communicate, to promote, to convince, and to sell tourism destinations.
- share authentic experiences.
- know more about the local environment.
- develop the sense of teamwork.

5. Teaching in Tourism Studies

Tourism studies teaching is more demanding than other specialties because all theories are to be practised in the working field. As explained previously, the three main modules of economy, laws and languages co-exist to form the training syllabus in tourism schools. This multidisciplinary syllabus is one of the difficulties of teaching tourism training. When we add the other difficulty of finding the right approach to adopt for each subject, we can measure how troublesome is the teacher's role.

In brief, tourism studies teachers must:

- seek to be constantly informed about tourists' movement in local and regional area,
- develop and transmit a critical view toward sources of information,
- engage in social actions to support one's beliefs,
- use a variety of teaching techniques which enhance both individual and cooperative work,
- teach the curriculum in relation with noble beliefs like human rights, self-esteem, hospitality etc.
- the outcome remains the central concern of the teacher,

- design a programme which demonstrates the achievement of the learning outcome. The learning outcomes must be stated at the beginning of each unit,
- the programme must emphasize particularly the skills identified in the outcome statements.

6. Designing Units

Planning a lesson is one stage among others which should lead the teacher to anticipate on the results that will be obtained at the end of the teaching course. In the outcome approach, teachers are intensely advised to prepare the planning phase with other colleagues in charge of the same Teaching Unit (grouped subjects) because they are supposed to share similar objectives. When programming a lesson, the teacher should:

- determine the outcome students will reach,
- clarify the utility of teaching this unit,
- fix the indicators to observe in the learners at the end of the unit,
- relate the students' background knowledge with what they are being taught,
- identify the links that can be made with authenticity,
- make sure that the learning matches the outcome, and vice versa,

In the Outcome approach, the planning process comprises four steps:

- 1- Interpretation: analyse the syllabus and study the learning outcomes; i.e., what students will be able to do by the end of the unit.
- 2- Assessment: Plan for assessment early to make sure the content being taught matches the students' needs to achieve the learning outcome. The teacher must plan when to assess and how to mark. The teacher must also draw the battery of instructions to raise the students' awareness toward what to do exactly.
- 3- Designing units: the teacher has to develop a unit and decide about the amount of time needed to cover it. If the unit is experimental, he must provide the students with the theory which goes with the practical work (not all theories). For each content there must be some specific activities which facilitate its understanding. Major activities last for several weeks, while minor activities do not exceed one lesson.
- 4- Content and Activities: After designing the general plan, the teacher has to detail more activities for each topic in the unit. Students must be actively involved in the learning process. In no case they should be passive. (Students' centered approach). All four language skills are equally necessary for the learning project. If the activities are not enough, the teacher must be innovative and create his own.

Conclusion

The outcome approach to teaching tourism inspires several activities which conduct teachers to motivate their students making them foresee the results of the training period. The learning phase is to be useful, interesting and enjoyable. Teaching tourism

successfully means relating the classroom activities to real people through fieldwork and simulations. As explained previously, the secret of success in tourism studies is partly in collaborative work for teachers. This is so because tourism training a multidisciplinary branch which requires bridging between its different parts (economy, laws and languages).

By the end of the training period, limiting the range of assessment of the students' level to what has been identified and specified in the syllabus is a good procedure as it prevents the learners from overlearning extra topics that are not necessary for their future carrier.

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