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Disrupting Traditional Pedagogy: Integrating Curriculum in Tourism Studies

Karla Boluk
University of Waterloo

Corey Johnson
University of Waterloo

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Disrupting Traditional Pedagogy: Integrating Curriculum in Tourism Studies
Karla Boluk and Corey Johnson, University of Waterloo, Canada

The authors challenge the dominant discourse of higher education that suggests that professors are the purveyors of all knowledge. Rather, we would like to (re)consider ourselves to be co-facilitators and co- designers of knowledge as we work closely with our students and mutually challenge each other. Working alongside our students created the inspiration for further integrated student collaboration opportunities and directed us to consider integrating aspects of our curriculum.

Integrating curriculum, according to Shoemaker (1989), is
> education that is organized in such a way that it cuts across subject-matter lines, bringing together various aspects of the curriculum into meaningful association to focus upon broad areas of study. It views learning and teaching in a holistic way and reflects the real world, which is interactive. (p. 5)

Integrating curriculum offers a way to enhance intellectual curiosity, improve attitudes towards school and enhance problem solving skills among students (Anderson, 2012). Furthermore, such an approach confronts traditional ways of teaching in U.S. and Canadian contexts while highlighting a more effective style conducive with 21st century learners.
As Powell (2014) suggests when considering integrating curriculum, we chose to start small by interconnecting assignments across two courses. A direct way to illustrate that content from one course applies to another course is linking assignments. One assignment can live primarily in one course, but have certain points (as in part of the grade) applied to another course. Powell described how her Human Resource Management students created the performance review documents for the feedback and supervision of students in her programming course. The documents were reviewed and improved at the beginning of the semester, and then HR students provide two hours of "community connection" time to come on-site and provide feedback to the students implementing the community program. In another example, she demonstrated how her programming students generated evaluation data that the students in her Research Methods course subsequently analyzed. This technique makes real the connections and created natural opportunities for students to connect across cohorts and courses.

Using this premise, the aim of this paper is to explore the opportunities and challenges associated with integrated curriculum design as we experimented with connecting two tourism courses in Winter 2016. Specifically, the paper will explore the implementation of an integrated framework developed by the authors in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies to join up two courses in the Tourism program for the mutual benefit of their students. We gave a lot of thought to the pedagogy that would frame the integration developmentally for each set of students and have them challenge and support each other from diverse frameworks. Consequently, we chose a first year Introduction to Tourism course and a final year Advanced Seminar course for integration. It was also convenient that the first author was responsible for instruction of both courses. The integrated curriculum resulted in several opportunities for the two courses to intersect and for reciprocity across student cohorts in terms of role- modeling and mentoring.

Our primary form of integration was an experiential exercise resulting in a request from our regional tourism organization to improve the user experience. This required our first year students to collect user experience data at a local tourism attraction. The students identified challenges [and posted them similar to a (detailed) Trip Advisor post] on a blog created by the instructor. The data posted on the blogs were then interpreted by the fourth year students who were then tasked with designing a critical intervention in response to the challenges identified by the first year students. Both groups of students were given several opportunities to check in and engage in a dialogue regarding the development of understandings and ideas for the critical interventions. The dialogues culminated in a final presentation by the fourth year students to the first year students and a panel from the regional tourism organizations. Both groups of students were asked to reflect on their experiences throughout the term and they were responsible for on-going peer assessments. Although we were pleased overall with the outcome, we did face challenges regarding team teaching, student buy-in, class size, and industry skepticism. Given some of the challenges faced in this first attempt, the authors consider ways to adjust their framework to suit the needs of their students, identify additional courses which could enhance the collaborative opportunities for students both within and outside of their department and postulate opportunities for students to collaborate across institutions.