



# Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning

## Mixed methods for enhancing experimental learning

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### **Rationale:**

Experiential learning is a theory that considers the nature of learning as a cycle responsive to the demands of the environment. According to Kolb and Kolb (2005), experiential learning is a process that involves feedback, redirection, and presentation of students' previous ideas, discussion of solutions to resolve conflicts, analysis, adaptation to the environment, and creation of knowledge (e.g., developed products or services, adopted technologies, and solutions). Experiential learning is achieved when learners are provided with environments that balance challenge vs. guidance. Experiential learning is applied by building an environment of trust and presenting intellectual challenges that promote the development of entrepreneurship, design, innovation, and/or management skills. To help the students be immersed in experiential learning, it is vital to help them link their background and knowledge to real-life experiences and become active problem-solvers through different activities. To this end, mixed methods are developed and applied to HMG 6449 Smart Travel and Tourism, a web-based course at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management.

### **Description:**

I developed mixed methods to support experiential learning in this course, including career planning memo, case studies, online discussions, business plan mini-proposals, elevator talk video presentations, and project reports.

For the career planning memo:

1. students post a short autobiography on the webcourse so that every student can learn about each other's background. Then the student will describe their professional interests and list the specific aspects of the travel and tourism (T&T) sector that interest them.
2. After that, they summarize the trends in job postings, job responsibilities, and salaries within the specific industry that they are targeting. They must support their analysis by conducting online searches on job websites such as Indeed, Glassdoor, and LinkedIn.
3. The next step is to go to <http://ucf.myplan.com>, and create a free account (using the code provided by the instructor) to complete the personality test and describe the results.
4. After that, the students are instructed to go to <http://ucf.myplan.com> to complete the Career Skills Profiler, explain their results, and discuss the extent to which their skills are compatible with their professional interests. Then short-term and long-term career goals are to be developed by the students.
5. Finally, students create their own action plan (with detailed instructions provided by the instructor). Actions may include professional development (online learning, workshops), internships, volunteering, researching, searching for jobs, pursue graduate studies, networking, etc. The students share with their peers to learn from each other.

The other major component of this course is a business proposal project on inventing/applying one or several promising technologies in the travel and tourism industry. In this project, students are asked to clearly describe the targeted problem, potential clients, market size, key technologies,

opportunities, risks, cost estimate, and expected revenue. The project includes several key milestones, such as user interviews, business proposal writing, a "shark-tank" style pitch presentation, and a final project presentation.

This proposal development process consists of multiple stages:

1. **Team formation:** students are given the opportunity to identify teammates in class. Each team should have students from different majors. Instructors intervene if any students cannot find a team. In two weeks, each team needs to submit a one-page abstract of their initial business idea.
2. **Team activity 1: conducting the first round of user interviews.** Each team starts by conducting a round of interviews with potential users. The interviews are intended to explore the user's current journeys in a service, identify unknown needs and insights to inform the design of a technological product or service. I encourage the students to use contextual observation (e.g., observing a participant in the environment), take notes, record audio/video or take photos of participants (if they permit). Then, a 2-page summary for each interview, including meta-data (length of the interview, time, place, etc.), critical insight, key questions and answers, and key observations, were submitted by each team leader.
3. **A mid-term project pitch talk is arranged for each group.** This talk takes the form of a Shark Tank TV Show. Each team is given 5 minutes to conduct a mock business proposal presentation. Each team produced and recorded an 8-slide presentation enriched with visuals to support their explanations, along with hard copies of a mini-proposal (3-4 pages) that provided to the judges.
4. **Team activity 2: Each team conducts a second round of interviews with potential customers for their proposed products/services.** The same guidelines for the first round of interviews are applied. These interviews provide further feedback for the students to refine their business proposals and revise their ideas.
5. **At the end of the semester, each team turns in a final proposal and a one-page poster to summarize their work.**

### **Appraisal:**

Mixed methods have enabled the instructor to obtain exceptional artifacts that reflect students' creativity, teamwork, analysis skills, and hands-on experience. I have learned that the students inspired each other in delivering high-quality proposals. The students' positive comments on these activities indicate that an appropriate mix of such activities increased students' motivation and engagement, promoted critical thinking, helped them gain more profound understanding of the tourism market, and encouraged creativity and teamwork. Integrating such experiential-learning activities that require students' comprehensive skills into classes would benefit the students in their future careers. These tools and activities would be applicable to courses with a practical emphasis or application-driven content.

### **References:**

Kolb, A., & Kolb, D. (2005). Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 4(2), 193-212. Retrieved February 25, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/40214287](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40214287)

**Link or explanation:** Student sample work link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zNyGBqLLQzc1-J8I5qQ7HtGv3K1jBr5D/view?usp=sharing>