The impact of intentionally applied comprehension strategies on student learning and achievement

Dr. Youngsoo Choi
College of Hospitality and Tourism Management

&

Dr. Kathleen McGrath
College of Education

April 4, 2014

Neither of the applicants has received CCTL grants previously.
This project is not supported by any other funds.
The impact of intentionally applied comprehension strategies on student learning and achievement

Background

In this multidisciplinary project, two professors from diverse disciplines examine the impact of intentionally applied active, integrative comprehension and study/reading skills strategies on students’ learning in a College of Hospitality and Tourism Management core course (HRT253: Human Resources Management). A unique aspect of student learning outcome measure of this course is multiple choice exam questions that challenge students to effectively apply their understanding of key concepts and issues discussed in class. Consequently, many questions are in the format of long paragraphs that describe hypothetical and/or actual scenarios at the hospitality industry settings. For many years, the instructor has noticed that a significant number of students were dejected from their low exam scores possibly due to their lack of comprehension of questions in exam situations. Hence the instructor decided to take a multidisciplinary approach to address this crucial issue by teaming up with a faculty in College of Education who is an expert in literacy/reading comprehension.

Goals and objectives

The primary goal of this project is the development and implementation of active, integrative student learning strategies and instructional tactics in the HRT253 course. Specific objectives are as follows:

1. To measure HRT253 students’ level of reading comprehension and study skills.
2. To identify various causes of low performance in the exams perceived by the students.
3. To develop multidisciplinary intervention strategies [with a specific focus on active, integrative student learning] based on the findings from steps (1) and (2).
4. To empirically assess the effectiveness of the researchers’ intervention strategies

Methodology

We implement a mixed method – combining both qualitative and quantitative methods – which is believed to be the most appropriate and balanced research approach for this particular project. First, a survey (Taraban et al., 2000) was already implemented to examine HRT253 (Spring 2014) students’ comprehension and study/reading skills strategies. Next, a focus group interview (with several student
volunteers) will be conducted once an approval from IRB is acquired to explore poor exam performance more deeply. Data will be analyzed using a grounded theory method (qualitative approach). Based on the analysis results of the focus group interview, researchers’ further exploration will focus on how the instructional intervention with comprehension and study/reading skills strategies can offer more active and integrative learning experience to the students. At this preliminary stage of this multi-semester project, the following instructional and supporting tactics can be considered and incorporated into Fall 2014 HRT 253 classes.

a) Regular in-class discussions and online assignments on actual/hypothetical human resource management-related cases/scenarios at the hospitality industry settings – Students will have an active and integrative learning experience by applying the theories and concepts to the best managerial decisions, and by sharing their thoughts and opinions with group members.

b) Student’s sharing (e.g. via online blog) their personal experiences, audio/visual files (e.g. YouTube), or industry news that has direct or indirect implications to the class topics/issues

c) Sessions with NU’s supporting divisions (e.g. Academic Support) can be incorporated into the course syllabus to help students who need assistance to build more effective learning and study skills

In Fall 2014, a quantitative assessment of the instructional intervention’s effectiveness will be conducted via 1) a comparison of students’ performance in the exam between the classes of Spring 2014 (control group) and Fall 2014 (experiment group); and 2) students’ reflections on the intervention experience – A survey with a five-point, Likert-type scale will be conducted to measure students’ (Fall 2014 classes).

**Contribution and dissemination of the project**

We hope this project would help the students more actively engage in their learning experience, and eventually become a competent industry professional in near future. If accepted for a CCTL grant, we plan to disseminate the project results either at the 2015 CCTL conference or at a TLC seminar. Also, we plan to present the findings at a national academic conference (possibly at International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education conference in 2015 (date/place to be decide). We also plan to submit an academic article to a peer-reviewed hospitality/tourism education journal in 2015.
IMPACT OF INTENTIONALLY APPLIED COMPREHENSION STRATEGY ON STUDENT LEARNING

References