**MOBTS 2021 SUBMISSION: TRADITION MEETS TECHNOLOGY**

**60 MINUTE ACTIVITY/EXERCISE**

**TITLE: “FAMILY AND FRIENDS WELCOME – UTILIZING THE VIRTUAL STUDENTS PEERS AND SOCIAL CIRCLE FOR ENRICHMENT OF ONLINE LEARNING”**

**ABSTRACT: this activity session is based around introducing participants to the idea of using a virtual and/or physical students’ family and friends in certain experiential learning assessments to improve the experience. Management curriculum can be improved for the student who is left without a physical class to experience due to the pandemic in this type of exercise. An overview of the assignment type, its nature, and how to adapt it to other courses subjects will be reviewed. Participants will be given the opportunity to learn and discuss alternate ways of constructing such exercises and reviewing with their peers.**

**KEYWORDS: Peers, Family, Friends, Cross-cultural literacy, Experiential.**

Introduction;

This session will outline a primary major assignment, and then secondary, minor-type assignments that were utilized in an undergraduate international management class, taught in traditional and online format simultaneously during the pandemic lockdown. In the specific context of the course its relevance was high, as a major learning objective of the course was “enhancing cross-cultural literacy and the understanding of different cultures”. The exercise is outlined as follows from the course;

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Instructions for Individual Assessment #2:

-You must do ONE of the following to experience another culture/global example;

1) Find an ethnic restaurant in your area. Go there and experience another culture through their cuisine. Order and enjoy something you have NEVER had before. You MUST pick something you have never experienced/eaten before. You can go alone or with friends, family, etc., it’s totally up to you, food is a social as well as cultural experience in its consumption. You MUST take a picture of your meal and your experience and include in your submission, which will include the following details -

\*Research ahead of time the type of food, dish, eating etiquette, etc. DO NOT go into a totally new experience blind and expect to guess something, only to tell me it was "gross". NOT ACCEPTABLE. As in business opportunities, you will research beforehand what you want to get involved from this country/culture and provide me with that evidence on the etymology/background/history/cultural significance of the dish/meal. Provide also a written summary of the country where this originates from, what the ingredients mean to them as exporting/importing in global contexts, and how the type/format of the restaurant you are in establishes them as an example of cross-cultural literacy using the chapter material. Cite all sources used in APA. Word count is max 1500 and should include reflections on how you attempted to experience a new culture through food.

2) Research/Watch a FOREIGN FILM. Non-English speaking required. Write up the same type of summary and reflection for this type of product, as outlined in #1, but provide the requisite background for this type of product (media/entertainment) with the appropriate sources. All other details remain the same.

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The assignment was designed to allow both student groups, a face to face group and an online only group, to engage in an assignment with the same depth and immersion. This is extremely difficult to do in such a situation as the online students typically do not get to engage in as rich of a classroom experience or discussion due to technology issues and connectivity at times. Giving the students the ability to use their peer and family wherever they happened to be physically, enhanced their connection and immersion with the task, and made it more relevant for them. They were no longer just educating themselves to a new culture but bringing their loved ones along for the ride. The ability of assignments like this to improve student engagement are high, and the reviews and comments from the discussion about completing it were very positive. In a world where students may be increasingly cutoff from their physical university environment and only engage in it virtually, this creates a need for the faculty member to create assignments that utilize the environment they do have around them and replace their classmates with their peer and family groups in creative ways. This session is designed to outline how this activity worked, and then get feedback from participants about how their own similar efforts have worked and how to continue to build such curriculum pieces.

Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications;

The background literature that helps establish how this type of exercise contributes to a more engaging form of learning is based around the significant amount of research that illustrates the value of peer learning and peer support. Multiple studies across sociology and psychology outline the value of peers and informal socialization activities in allowing these groups to learn skills/ideas better than rigidly structured classrooms in traditional formats. Also important for the foundation would be the supporting works from studies that illustrate the emotional support perceived in exploring new skills, activities, experiences, etc., that come with doing it with a family/friend group versus doing it alone. Finally, the various works that illustrate the importance of learning about cross-cultural matters in expanding a student’s mindset for busines practices are important factors for this type of exercise.

Learning Objectives;

The learning objectives for the course related to this assignment were to enhance the understanding of cross-cultural literacy, the differences between cultures, and how they do business in various ways amongst students. The overarching objective was to increase their awareness of different global products, and how cultural practice and beliefs, tastes, and values shape different economies. The exercise was meant to give hands on, experiential opportunities for the students to engage with a different global product in either a food example, or entertainment example, to literally consume and provide feedback on.

Exercise Overview;

There are no classroom materials required for this type of exercise, which makes it ideal for virtual classes. The student’s personal connections and resources make it ideal. The exercise can be outlined to be completed in a week, or several, based on class size or how much research you insist on them doing beforehand and write up afterwards. The variation to the first option of eating ethnic food, is the foreign film option. This is to accommodate students who may have food allergies, religious issues with diet, or simply not living somewhere that legitimate options exist for consumption.

Students typically ask questions about how “authentic” their experience has to be, for ex., I did not count Taco Bell as authentic Mexican cuisine, however I did not ban Mexican cuisine as an option despite the ease with which students can access it, or have already tried it. A taco truck with an authentic list of ingredients, meal options, and ambiance was considered fine. The key was to encourage the students to try something they had NEVER had before. I stressed this a lot, and it was surprisingly easy for them to get on board with it, because they were able to bring along their “support group”. The pre-research must be done as well; the student CANNOT walk into a restaurant sight unseen. They must research the country of origin, the ingredients, the dish, the dining etiquette, and how to even speak to servers or serve themselves or others as food is a cultural product. The student should know exactly what they want to get and what others should get before going to this place.

The write up and presentation afterwards needs to be a reflection by the student about how they learned about a culture and nation through its food and cuisine, this includes etiquette. The write up should also include a brief overview of how those food products make up a globally exported product for that nation (ex. Rice from an Asian country, and how it works in the dish and the economy to grow it, or coffee from a South American country, etc.). The importance of that dish socially and culturally to the nation it comes from should be researched by the student as well, for example is it a traditional holiday meal? A formal event meal? A working-class snack of the people? These are important economic factors when it comes to understanding how a people work and feed themselves.

The foreign film option must also push the students to explore a culture. This means no American Hollywood films of any kind. Ideally the film should be in a foreign language as well, with subtitles, although a dubbed version in English is an acceptable alternative if it’s the only option available to the student. For example, some anime films are only available in dubbed English for a student to access. This does not diminish the importance of the genre of art that anime holds in Japanese culture, and the student should be able to research that and present after watching the film. Films that were excluded and deemed unacceptable on other grounds were pornographic ones, amateur films with no distribution or cultural component, and instructors can include other mature rated rankings if they wish to limit the amount of violence or sexual material their students may try to work into a project because they think its funny. I told students to check out the foreign film entries to the Oscars as worthy cultural products to consider, and this worked well.

Session Description;

In this session there will be the following outline –

1. An overview of the exercise and how it went in my class, then discussion of its elements and how it flowed, and then Q&A period for participants to delve into its format and success/issues further. 15-20mins.
2. A further outline and breakdown of smaller, similar exercises that branched from this major one that also utilized the personal groups of the students, with the same explanation to participants. 5-10mins.
3. A breakout group/room time for splitting the participants up into work groups to discuss how they have also tried similar exercises, or to create new ones for certain management course subjects using this concept, especially for online. This will include outlining how to present the students work in a multi-formatted class type. 10-15mins.
4. Finally, the group will be brought back together to discuss findings, thoughts, ideas, and further recommendations for how to utilize this concept in the ongoing pandemic and altered state of classroom environments as we move forward. 10-15mins.