Reality in the Classroom: Teaching Critical Thinking with Scenarios

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Reality in the Classroom: Teaching Critical Thinking with Scenarios

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The Need

- One of the challenges for hospitality educators is to develop critical thinking skills in the future leaders of the industry. It is often thought that students will develop this skill as a byproduct of course work, but research indicates that it must be explicitly taught.

Teaching Critical Thinking

- This model is based upon Kolb’s learning cycle (Kolb, 1984).
- This model is composed of a ten step process where students first examine a problem, arrive at a practical solution in a timely manner, consider any repercussions that could result after a decision is made, and then take steps to implement the decision.

Factors present in effective scenarios:

1. Actually occurred in hotel, restaurant or other hospitality environment
2. Level of management identified
3. Requires management action
4. Has multiple possibilities for management—does not have one clear solution
5. Has known actual solution with retrospective pros and cons of solution

- Students exposed to authentic or situational problems and dialogue strategies had improved critical thinking skills (Abrami et al., 2015).
- Role playing allows students to immerse themselves in a problem by assuming the role of a character in a real situation (Ruhanen, 2005).
- Research has shown that when students assume different roles, over multiple role playing scenarios, students gained confidence in working in various situations (Ertmer et al., 2010).

Delivering Scenario Based Learning

Resources

- There are a number of articles that explore scenario based learning.


Integration Of Scenarios Into The Classroom

- The instructor provides the background and the context of the situation to fully draw out the students to explore different approaches and the subsequent outcomes of each approach.
- Students are interested in learning about and being challenged by “real world” situations, which scenarios excel in accomplishing by encouraging and motivating students

Tips to be successful with scenarios:

1. Engage current industry leaders regarding management dilemmas they have recently faced. This helps to stay current.
2. Develop in class exercises to allow students, in groups or independently, explore ways to address the problem.
3. Encourage students to think a few steps ahead given their decision.
4. Allow time in class for students to explain and defend their chosen plan of action. This creates a space for classroom discussion.