

ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИЕ НАУКИ

STUDY TOURS AND GENERATION Y: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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АННОТАЦИЯ: В статье рассматривается вопрос об учебных экскурсиях в высших учебных заведениях на материале учебных экскурсий колледжа Альберта (Латвия). Задачей этой статьи является определение основных качеств поколения Y для наиболее точного определения как возможностей, так и проблем учебных экскурсий. В ходе исследования обозначены основные возможности учебных экскурсий и намечены пути преодоления проблем.

ABSTRACT. The article deals with the issue of study tours in higher educational institutions on the basis of study tours of the Alberta College (Latvia). The purpose of this article is to determine the main qualities of the generation Y for the most accurate definition of both the opportunities and problems of study tours. In the course of the study, the main opportunities for study tours and the ways to overcome problems are outlined.

Key words: study tours, generation Y, higher education

Ключевые слова: учебная экскурсия, поколение Y, высшее образование

Updating the problem of study tours in higher education

Teaching methodology, as never before, offers a variety of teaching methods and forms. A special place among study forms recently introduced in the process of higher education in Latvia belongs to study tours.

Study tours belong to study forms attractive in content and form, which are more often remembered in a situation, where students are massively leaving university studies. In the case of my school (Alberta College, a private 1st level higher education institution in Riga, Latvia), the situation is as follows: up to 20% of students leave their studies after first semester, and such situation is similar in other educational institutions. It is therefore logical that besides many activities, they are looking for forms of study that could "hold" students in studies, motivate them to continue their studies, interest them. Namely, reasons of leaving are sought not only in students' positions and lack of interest, but also in effective selection of study process organization, teaching methods and forms. A successful study tour can be realized if the educational institution has formulated a proper position, which, in turn, occupies a place in the study organization guidelines; an appropriate plan for the organization of study tour has been developed. A study form is no less important for students: it must be attractive, informative, intriguing and formal. For example, the study tour of Alberta College (Riga, Latvia) "Animals in myths" at the Riga National Zoo, visited by every student at least once in their lifetime, was presented in college's homepage exactly in such manner – with attractive, informative, intriguing and formal questions: *Do animals talk on Christmas night? What is the Jesus lizard? Does peacock's feather really brings misfortune? How the lynx constellation got its name?*

In Latvia, during last 10 years, study tours are being developed as a form of learning and promotion, whose popularity and demand from the younger generation is only growing. For the 10th consecutive year, the largest educational and career portal of Latvia, together with companies active in various sectors, are organizing the project of Companies' Open Doors Week

- organizing tours for young people to Latvian companies. The Open Doors Week allows Latvian youth – primary and secondary school students, vocational and technical school students, college and university students, to visit companies from different sectors to find the most suitable profession in the future, as well as to find practices and summer jobs. The aim of the project is to show young people the real prospects of the labor market and help them integrate into the labor market more successfully.

Generation Y: What kind of generation are we teaching?

Students of new generation, whose designations are already quite characteristic (*wired generation, millennial*), have attracted a regular attention from researchers, methodologists and trainers since year 2000. [Alsop 2007], [Oblinger, 2003], [Raines, 2003], [Slate, 2007], [Hartman, McCambridge, 2011] Many researchers point out generation's peculiarities that we must not ignore and cannot ignore.

Using the generational theory developed by the great American scientist – demographer Neil Howe and historian William Strauss in 1991 – we have to consider generational characteristics, the concept of generational conflict and also generational value systems. Overall, the generation that interests us is also known as the millennials, the individuals born between 1980 and 2000.

Main features of this generation are broadly described: they are characterized as technologically sophisticated multitaskers, who are accustomed to working in teams and who rely on their parents for guidance as they struggle to make decisions independently they crave feedback and praise, which can be perceived as high maintenance; their parents continue to insinuate themselves into their children's lives, leaving others to question the millennials' independent thinking abilities [Hartman, McCambridge, 2011: 23 p.]; they are overconfident, opinionated, and expect to be heard [Alsop, 2007]; they enjoy structure and dislike ambiguity; they prefer clear rules, well-defined policies, and responsibilities; they claim to be committed to social responsibility and desire work life balance; they

see themselves as indispensable beings with high expectations and a desire to be sought after [Alsop, 2006]; they see technology as something that is part of their lives, not something they adopt or try to integrate. It is inseparable from who they are and what they do [Beckstrom, Manuel, & Nightingale, 2008], [Hartman, McCambridge, 2011: 24 p.].

One of the most prominent and often mentioned features of this generation is modern technology that this generation was born with. And most visible benefits of this generation are related directly to informational and media abilities: „They have more technology exposure than any previous generation.” [Hartman, McCambridge, 2011: 24 p.] However, these benefits also include possible shortcomings. “Yet this very fact of constant, informal, technology-based “connectedness” may have resulted in their acknowledged shortcomings.” [Hartman, McCambridge, 2011: 24 p.] Specifically, one of the drawbacks is related to the interpersonal communication skills in real world; other drawback is related to oral and written communication, and another one affects the communication between different generations. Therefore, I fully agree with the call of my colleagues: We need to help millennials hone their interpersonal communication skills to successfully engage with people of all ages and backgrounds. One strategy for achieving that objective is by teaching students about the dual concepts of communication style-typing and style-flexing.” [Hartman, McCambridge, 2011: 27 p.]

Researchers not only recognize the specific communications of this generation, but also that the communication skills of this generation should be created by those who do not belong to this generation. After having studied millennials and having worked with them closely during the past several years, we believe there is a gap between where these students are and where they need to be in terms of effective interpersonal communication skills. Understanding the implications of those acknowledged differences can help overcome millennials’ communication deficiencies. [Hartman, McCambridge, 2011: 23 p.] This is rather a two fold gap: on one hand, the gap between student’s current communication and expected communication after studies, and on the other hand, the gap between what communication student is learning business communications in and, student’s contact with a teacher from generation X or the quiet generation.

Study tours for generation Y: Success or failure?

An overview of scientific and methodological literature suggests that such learning activity like study tour, in new generation is not spoken of very frequently and regularly: this aspect emerges, for example, in the context of outdoor activities. Although several features of this generation, on one hand, indicate very precisely the potential success of this activity in the organization of learning process, for example, such features as activity, mobility, communicability, and eco-thinking, on the other hand, they indicate the ability of such activities to work with deficiencies of generation Y in interpersonal communication, oral communication and also in communication with different generations.

The concept of the excursion originates from the Latin language (Latin *excursio* – walking, trip), and its main field of application is tourism. Characteristics of

tourist excursions became the main features of study tours: the study tours were intended with to visit and explore a place or an object, often natural objects, industrial objects, historical monuments; the purpose of entertainment inherited from the tourist excursion becomes the optional goal. Later, the cultural-logical aspect began to lose its dominant position: excursions began to specialize and follow the specifics of a particular subject. It should also be noted that the role of communicative leader in study tours is also changing: it can still be managed by the teacher, but more often by a production representative, often a public relations specialist, who is responsible for such tours, as evidenced by content analysis of websites of state institutions and organizations: they hold the information on study tours and their conditions, including contact persons, who are also most often public relations specialists.

Choosing and applying for a study tour can be in many forms, among which the following are most common ones: 1) The websites of public authorities, state and also private companies offer excursion services (see pictures 1, 2 and 3) and representatives of high school administration, study program directors or lecturers contact them and apply for study tours accordingly; 2) representatives of high school administration, directors or lecturers of study programs, in case the relevant information is not publicly available, contact the public relations specialists of the state institutions, state or private companies who can arrange study tours on request; 3) lecturers use their private contacts, for example, contact their colleagues in their existing or former jobs, etc.

If we look at the typologies of study tours, we can see that they have a wide range of options that are used for specifics of generation Y and addressing the problem of its difficulties, they create an interpersonal communication. Tours bring important principles in studies: *the principle of demonstration* - students get to know cultural, production, etc. objects; *the principle of connecting with life* – a student sees what is real, what does not come from a textbook; *technical principle* – students get acquainted with production, its principles, specifics in different spheres; *the principle of professional orientation* - a student gets a chance to choose a job, to understand where he or she would like or - sometimes it is more important – where he or she would not want to work. The range of these principles can be supplemented by *the principle of acquiring professional communication* – students hear and perceive the language of professionals, they understand and develop perceptions of specifics of professional communication, test themselves in communication with professionals they will have to communicate with in their professional life. For example, such principles are implemented at the Alberta College; tours for potential specialists in public relations, potential businessmen and marketing specialists, personnel management specialists: tours to the Cabinet of Ministers, the Register of Enterprises, the National Information Agency LETA, the Riga City Council’s Visitor Reception Center, the State Archives of Personnel Documents, to the State Labor Inspectorate and the Competition Council.

Excursions are also divided into the types of science and/or specialization areas: *industrial excursions*, e.g., economics, *natural science excursions*, e.g. geography or botany, *historical and literary excursions*, for

example, literature and linguistics, visiting writer's memorial museums, public lectures or commemorative events in these museums, we can also include *regional research, museum excursions*, etc. Another type of excursion is a *complex or cross-subject excursions*, that is, an excursion which includes the objectives of several subjects. For example, Alberta College's excursion to the *Oracle Innovation Day 2016* conference with English as a work language, what became a complex type of excursion: developing foreign language skills, understanding various occupations, observing scientific communication.

Let's mention few other types of study tours. The aim of the excursion is to become the basis of excursion typology: *the purpose of acquiring* the new subject and *the purpose of strengthening* the subject. Regarding the attendance, study tours are rarely realized in an individual form, usually they tours of on *group*, for example, a study tour for prospective lawyer assistants, or tours of several groups, for example, a study tour involving lawyer assistants and cultural management specialists. The type of moving – *on foot* or *on (urban, intercity) transport*. By the form they can be realized as a *lecture tour*, a *seminar tour*, a *tour-exam*, a *concert tour*, a *walking tour*, a *demonstration tour*, an *advertising tour*, *quest tour* and their combinations.

To sum up, we can say that the *benefits* of study tours are related to their form and content: 1) it takes place in a different environment, tends to be - also in time, it is led by a new, unseen “tutor”, a professional, representative of a “real” company or institution; 2) in terms of content, study tour contents are often related to a subject in one very specific aspect, for example, the vision of one problem, the use of a stringent method, the discussion of one example; 3) they take place under the conditions of real professional communication, without simulations, without study process filters, with a real feedback.

Study tour issues are also related to their form and content: 1) different environment can play its card against the objective, for example, by steal attention, making the learning environment non serious or too serious; Also, the role of another teacher may become a negative aspect, for example, it will not be perceived as mandatory part of the subject, will not be listened to, students could just entertain or kill the time; 2) the content of the study tour may be too specific, narrow, forcing students to think that “it is not for me”; or the topic of study tour told by industry professionals is still unknown, because the theory of this subject will be discussed much later. One of the major challenges in study tours is – in student's perception it might be a *non-lesson*, that is, a study period that can be spent without learning, a time that gives a sense of legitimate leisure and entertainment.

The problems of study tours also cause various questions of organization, evaluation and analysis, which demand their answers: Do you need homework after study tours? Or/How to control the acquisition of the material provided in a study tour? Is it necessary to count all participants and make them sign in a special protocol? Is it necessary for a study tour report from the

teacher and/or students? Is it ethical to offer a test and/or exam at the end of the tour?

Conclusion

The study tour as a study method cannot be used without a specific goal and should be in line with the subject plan; it should logically fit into the plan of a particular study program. The organization of study tours must be coordinated both with the administration and with the plans of other subjects, since often there are tours to the same place led by different teachers. Millennial student attendance is possible if the excursion is not considered as a study period outside the classroom, in which the students have a chance to take free actions, receive compact and appropriate information.

Considering specifics of millennial students, study tours can be supplemented with the following options: introductory tours at the beginning of the subject; accompanying excursions, which help to acquire the content, concluding tours, which help to gather information and control its acquisition, repeat the content by actively participating in professional communication. And most importantly, study tour is not be excepted as educational fashion event.

Study tours have the chance to become another successful form of cooperation between higher education institutions and employers, and also the study tour is a way for the company to increase its visibility by inviting people to study tours on a regular basis which can become a criteria for competitiveness of this company, as well as the concern of the company about education in the country.

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