

Teaching methods for group work and group discussion for Tourism Students

Context: I have taught tourism geography in the Tourism Department of National Management Degree College since 2014. This is a course for second year undergraduate students. Class size is usually just over 50, with more than twice as many women as men. All the students are day students, taught face-to-face, and not distance learners. Most are 18 years and not in employment. Acquiring field survey and interview techniques is important for tourism students' research skills .

I also teach a *Geography of Myanmar* module on a postgraduate Diploma in Tourism Studies and Management. All the students are in employment. Therefore, this course teaching time is weekday every morning 7 a.m to 9 a.m. A typical class size would be just above 40 students with about twice as many women as men and an average age of 30+.

Activity aims:

- to learn how to work in groups
- to develop the sense of community within the class
- to work together to collect data, have group discussions; and
- to share information within each group.

Why the activity was developed: The activity was developed because it increased collaboration and effective teamwork and group work together. Group work can be an effective method to motivate students, encourage active learning, and develop key critical-thinking, communication, and decision-making. It teaches the effectiveness of cooperative learning, group work, teamwork, and best practices. It includes sharing ideas and knowledge for group work by the students.

The activities: For the undergraduate class, first, they listened to the lecturer's presentation about the topic and then they took some notes from the textbook. Then, to get experience, students and teacher chose a place and title for a field survey. The student group leaders organized the group and planned the field trip, choosing Taunggyi, Shan State in Myanmar. The title is tourism development. Then, the

class is divided into eight groups of seven students. Students prepared the questions for interviews group by group. The student group leaders organized the group and planned for teaching, transportation and food. The students investigated physical features, culture, tourism and tourist arrival in this field area. The students researched new knowledge about the destination from field surveys and interviews. Interviews were possible with villagers, local people, authorized person and tourists.

When they came back from the field trip the students held did group discussions and group work. . They shared their new knowledge group by group. Finally, they presented the groups' findings in order to contribute to a whole class discussion. This compared and contrasted the different findings from each group.

For the diploma class, I led group discussions and group work within the classroom. Firstly, the students listen to my lecturer note and then they had taken some note from the textbooks, focusing on particular aspects of the geography of Myanmar, for example physical features, climate, economy etc. If the students need more information, they followed up with research in text books. Next, the class divided into 7 groups. Myanmar has seven States (Kachin, Kayar, Kayin, Chin ,Mon, Rakhine and Shan), therefore, there was one group per State. The project title was: *Study of tourism development in one state*. In general, the projects fall into three main categories: geographical features, attractive tourism site, or assessment of tourism development. The students used internet, text books and other information sources. I gave 45 minutes to search information as a group. Then, there is a group discussion (group by group) within the class room. Next, each group does a presentation to share their new knowledge across the whole class. Good Internet access is needed for this exercise.

The teacher chooses the project title and the group allocation. I explained how to collect the data and indicate reference books and articles. They were provided with a rubric setting out the expected structure and content of the report. Students were encouraged to become familiar with the kinds of reference materials available to them and to know how to make use of them. Teacher can give instruction to student. The student must decide what data is needed, how it is going to be gathered and how it is going to recorded before venturing into the study area. Because of the time consuming nature of field work great thought must be given to planning every detail of the field excursion. I advised the students to write a diary to accurately summarize all significant activities each day.

Feedback on the activity: I gained undergraduate student's feedback from feedback forms. After finishing the report paper, they were confident about knowledge sharing. They had learned new knowledge, new methods and techniques and new thinking. Most of the students were satisfied and interested in the field work.

I got diploma students' feedback from informal conversations. They said they found group discussion and group work to be very good teaching methods and that they had learned a lot from the other groups.

Strengths and weaknesses: Students can develop their learning by listening to other groups, using suggestions and information. They shared knowledge and idea and therefore presented a good report paper. I conclude that group work and group discussion, results in good and more successful learning.

Weaknesses – Some students are passive learners, making it difficult for them to participate in discussions. Therefore I declared “if you got 1 mark, you must participate in discussion or ask a question.” Sometimes, there was misunderstanding within groups, because they do not know some facts or have a weak understanding of some points.

Key words: group work; group discussion; data collection; knowledge sharing