

**Implementation of Visual and Video-Based Reflection During a Simulated Experience**

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## **Implementation of Visual and Video-Based Reflection During a Simulated Experience**

### **Introduction/Need for Innovation**

Leadership development within Departments of Agricultural Education, Communication and Leadership have long been rooted in the Experiential Learning, a key of which is reflective observation. According to Kolb (2015, p. 57), experiential learning theorists deem reflection as the “primary source of transformation that leads to learning and development.” In order for an experience to be transformed into further thinking, growth, and action, student reflection must be purposefully designed and facilitated. Students may be engaged in dichotomous reflection types: in-action and on-action reflection (Baker, M. A., Brown, N. R., Blackburn, J. J., & Robinson, J. S., 2014; Dibendetto, C.A., Blythe, J. M., & Myers, B.E., 2016). In-action reflection occurs throughout the teaching process and provides the student with time to process content during the learning experience (McAlpine & Weston, 2000; Schon, D.A., 1983). On-action reflection occurs after the learning activities are complete, allowing students to look back on the experience and process (McAlpine & Weston, 2000; Schon, D.A., 1983). Often, educators utilize on-action or inaction reflection in the classroom, missing the opportunity to benefit from both and to encourage the development of higher order thinking skills through varied reflection styles (Arnold, S., Warner, J., & Osborne, E. W., 2006).

The McKnight Scholar Leadership Program is structured upon the Experiential Learning Theory, providing varied experiences in and out of the classroom to develop and equip high-achieving college students with leadership skills. As part of the McKnight Scholar Program, scholars participate in a three-day simulation at the Heifer International Ranch in Perryville, Arkansas. Learning objectives during the simulation include an understanding of components of culture and development of empathy for members of the global community. In previous years, after the simulation was complete, students returned to college without an increased depth of understanding of these learning objectives. A need for meaningful and rigorous reflection throughout and after the simulation experience was apparent.

### **How it Works**

Students participated in a simulated international experience at the Heifer International Heifer Ranch in Perryville, Arkansas October 13-15, 2016. Prior to the experience, students attended a class session to prepare for the experience. In this class, students learned about the characteristics of culture and identified the five components of culture. At the Heifer International simulation, 47 students were sorted into four groups or “villages”, each with a distinct cultural identity. The village each student was sorted into determined the student’s experience including the food eaten, shelter used, chores done, and simulated family choices made to sustain the group. In the simulation, some villages might have members with injuries inhibiting their work while others might have far less food resources allocated to them creating an individual experience for each member.

Occasions for meaningful reflection were two-fold. Reflection in-action was facilitated through a group assignment utilizing GoPro Hero 4 cameras to create a mini-documentary. Students used the GoPro cameras to capture footage of the Heifer International experience that display the five components of culture previously studied. Assignment groups matched the groups students were sorted into at the Heifer Ranch. The assignment purposefully required students to communicate with group members to prioritize activities to capture GoPro video of and to reflect continuously throughout the learning process. After the three-day simulation, groups synthesized raw footage

into a five-minute mini-documentary displaying the required cultural components. Reflection on-action was facilitated through an individual assignment after each major learning experience during the simulation like meal preparation, group chores, and housing selection. Students reflected immediately after each of the seven major learning experiences and captured their thoughts on a blank postcard. On the postcard, students wrote a message home about what key thoughts and feelings they would share with their home community about the learning experience and drew a picture representing the learning experience on the opposite side.

### **Results to Date**

As a result of using this reflection technique during the annual McKnight Scholars trip to Heifer International, scholars created four reflective videos, each five minutes in length, using the GoPro cameras. Creating these videos required the students to reflect in the experience and document moments they thought best represented each element of culture. Scholars filmed an average of an hour of footage during their three-day experience and synthesized and edited their footage into a concise mini-documentary. Students also reflected on the Heifer International Experience through the use of written postcards. Scholars completed seven postcards each resulting in 322 total postcard reflections.

### **Future Plans**

The success of this two-pronged, purposeful reflection strategy lends itself to application in other facets of the McKnight Scholar Leadership Program. One such facet is the 2017 McKnight International Experience, where second-year scholars will travel to Czech Republic for a week of cultural immersion. The development of a GoPro mini-documentary as a form of reflection inaction will be a key assignment for trip participants. The same task will be completed as in the Heifer International assignment, but will be pressed to a higher level of synthesis as seven days of cultural immersion will serve as the learning experience. This extended time frame and amount of raw footage will push students to work within their groups to continuously identify cultural components to display in video form during a new and exciting experience abroad. Postcards, like those used in the Heifer International assignment, will be used as a form of reflection on-action at the end of each day in addition to discussion-based reflection and debriefing. Use of such a small space to process and reflect on a full day of culturally immersive activities forces students to prioritize experiences. Utilizing these varied approaches to reflection while on an international trip should improve depth of understanding of experiences and increase retention of cultural content upon return.

### **Costs/Resources**

Some initial cost is associated with this reflection technique. For the reflection-in technique, five GoPro Hero 4 Sessions bundles were purchased at a cost of \$250 per kit, \$1,250 total. We consider this a program investment and plan to use these GoPros for additional activities as well as for other reflection assignments. The only resources needed for the reflection-on technique were postcards. We used a free online template and printed copies for each of the students participating.

### References

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