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World Education Congress 2012 Award, Best Professor in International Business

Biographical Note

John Thanopoulos studied in Greece, France and England before receiving his Ph.D. in Marketing from the University of Arkansas, in the U.S.A.

As a business practitioner he achieved by the age of 26 more than \$25,000,000 in sales. However, eventually, he joined the University of Akron in Ohio (1983) as a Professor and Director of the International Business Programs. He served in various other positions, including Co-chair of the Executive Committee of the Greater Akron Export Association, President of the JTA, Inc., Associate Dean for the American College of Greece, Professor at the University of Piraeus from 2000-2015 and Professor and Business Dean of the IST College from 2015 to present.

He received various awards and recognitions, such as World Education Congress, Best Professor in International Business (2012), University of Akron, Teaching Innovation Award (1997), Publication Award (1997), Teaching Excellence Award (1988), Distinguished Sales and Marketing Executives Award, 1994, etc.

He has contributed in hundreds of international events papers, speeches, reviews and related services which appeared in a variety of media and has published 19 books primarily in international business and business ethics. He enjoys contributing to the societal betterment, travelling, reading and year-around long-distance swimming.

Dr. John Thanopoulos' Keynote Digital Poster Paper "Abstract" on
Education and Tourism:
Systemically Extending Case Studies from Past Experiences
14th HSSS National and International Conference on Systemics & Tourism
September 14-15, 2018, Kalamata, Greece

"Changing lives through education and travel¹" is one today's many university-level mottoes promoting education and tourism-related programs. It is believed that in our era it is a well-established assumption that education and tourism serve parallel domains aiming to systemically enhance socially-oriented concepts, like better understanding of the reasoning of being, togetherness, practical business aspects, exposure to different global realities, experience expansion, self-actualization potential, life contradictions, process limitations, identification of daily routines, meeting visionary objectives, and so on.

¹ Marymount University, International Study Programs, promotion of their program in Prague, 8/2018.

Obviously the analysis of factors involved in the combination of education and tourism is based on the existing organizational experiences, in-depth study of syllabi propositions, the “blending” of such programs with the offered subject matter at the destination country, as well as the quality of the individuals that lead these efforts is critical of the success of such efforts.

This paper capitalizes on the different methodologies used in a variety of cases in the business administration field² that this individual faced during the last thirty five years of academic work^{3,4}. Moreover, it elaborates on undergraduate, graduate and professional business courses that are offered as student experiences of the following types:

- Three-day, professional or of targeted knowledge.
- Seven-day, undergraduate, graduate or professional.
- Month-long, undergraduate or graduate.
- Semester or year-long undergraduate and graduate student exchanges.
- Academic Tourism, i.e. Conferences.
- Faculty and staff training and retraining opportunities.
- Specific propositions that can be serviced by the existing facility and staff.

Elaborate infrastructure is needed for such activities that deal with special travel permits, hotel arrangements, tourist sights visitation, corporate meetings, executive speeches, identification of foreign individuals who are able-ready-willing to support these initiatives and so on. The individual overseeing these activities must be very experienced in global travelling and capable to support major program-related crises, from student sickness to any major unexpected event.

Dr. John Thanopoulos’ Keynote Digital Poster Paper **“Speaker’s Notes”**
(it excludes slide show and speaker’s comments available only at formal address) on

Education and Tourism: Systemically Extending Case Studies from Past Experiences

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Global travelling was not an easy proposition even before the Second World War realities, less than 100 years ago! Going for serious business from Albania to Brazil or from China to Denmark required in-depth preparation not only of the commercial activities but also tremendous attention to routine matters ranging from linguistic adaptation to travel patterns and from residential arrangements to monetary exchanges.

² This paper is targeted in the business-oriented education/tourism experiences. Major adjustments of the practical issues will be required in other academic fields, for example, in nursing or engineering.

³ The cases of this study were mainly offered from the University of Akron and from the University of Arkansas and primarily blended USA business educational offerings with experiences in China, England, Greece and Holland.

⁴ It is worthwhile to observe that even the top university accreditation agencies propose reimagining business education. See for example, Carlile, Paul R., et al, *Reimagining Business Education: Insights and Actions from the Business Education Jam*, Emerald Group Publishing Limited , Bingley UK, 2016.

Tall “fences” between nations resulted in country specificities creating within their barriers unique cultures, defense armies, difficult to approach bureaucracies, religious limitations, ultra-nationalistic sentiments, empathy for foreign predisposition, targeted education, artistic traditions, behavioral uniqueness, and so on. Travellers and visitors had to be very respectful of local protocols.

... Versus today’s realities ... You may travel from Greece to France and from Italy to Japan and in all airports they will talk to you in English. Your credit card will permit charging most currencies. Your e-phone will allow you to communicate and exchange pictures with everyone. You will be able to partake from American business sites to African dances and from European museums to Ecumenical exchanges.

Welcome to our new era where our motto is now “changing lives through in-depth education and travel.”

This sort analysis has four parts: (a) Discuss the combination of education and tourism-related programs at the high school and at the university-level study. (b) Present two examples of past undertakings; how we made more effective the learning process in “foreign” environments. (c) Outline main types of study-travel experiences. (d) Offer suggestions for future ventures.

Outline of the combination business education and tourism-related programs

As addressed in the abstract of this paper, it is believed that in our era it is a well-established assumption that education and tourism serve parallel domains aiming to systemically enhance socially-oriented concepts, like better understanding of the reasoning of being, togetherness, practical business aspects, exposure to different global realities, experience expansion, self-actualization potential, life contradictions, process limitations, identification of daily routines, meeting visionary objectives, and so on.

Therefore, attention must be paid in the existing systemic differences around the world. Expect different insights and study needs from a Swiss student and of one from Singapore, or from one from Morocco or one from Mexico. Add differences from the city, the environment, the family wealth, and the religious predispositions they are influenced from. Multiply the above by factors affecting the supervising authority of this educational effort⁵.

Obviously the analysis of factors involved in the combination of business education and tourism is based on the existing organizational experiences, in-depth study of syllabi propositions, the “blending” of such programs with the offered subject matter at the destination country, as well as the quality of the individuals that lead these efforts is critical of their success.

The bottom line is that learning from different sources expands the individual capacity to systemically observe and adapt. In the process attention should be paid on the different methodologies used in a variety of cases and locations in the business administration field⁶.

⁵ AACSB, for example, offers top-level educational insights but only a very small percent of the global institutions can afford to be its members.

⁶ As stated at the abstract this paper is targeted to the business-oriented education/tourism experiences. Different approaches are in other fields of education, for example in medicine or in art.

Examples of past undertakings as related to business education and tourism

Reimagining business education is central to the effort of blending business education and related experiences. It gives the student the opportunity of seeing, for example, accounting practices in a totally different environment while enjoying local vistas and food. Key to this venture is the quality of the administrator in charge of such programs and the depth of experiences he has both as an academic and as a global citizen. Be hesitant to support the proposition of an assistant professor who believes that she has the network to offer a comprehensive summer experience to her students that combines a course offering and a tourist sightseeing. What is listed at the paper may be a very risky sequence when an unexpected accident occurs—to a student, or to her!

Before we proceed six sets of advices are in order:

- (a) An experienced administrator of such programs, and his assistants, must stay behind in order to support the university's overseas groups in emergencies.
- (b) Each travelling group must have at least two individuals supporting it throughout this experience.
- (c) Elaborate study support, from a detailed business plan to extra funding and from well-developed syllabi to textbooks, is a must.
- (d) A well-tested network of contacts must be included from the start.
- (e) Advance screening of applicants for these programs might reduce potential problems.
- (f) A thorough ex-post analysis of pluses and minuses from this experience is a great platform to improve follow-up similar sessions and to recruit future professors and participants.

The above were based on feedback received from business education and tourism experiences that the writer had during the thirty five years of academic work where such activities were undertaken by several US institutions in four countries. A few unexpected cases are described below in an effort to illustrate, through examples, arising complexities or beautifying moments.

- Parental death of one the students requiring immediate attention and escort support.
- Serious sickness of one of the instructors sent to teach and support our program requiring his eventual return.
- Local businessman offered to all our participants an elaborate dinner.
- Well-known firm proposed internships for our students and gave to all small gifts.
- Companies offered sponsoring of future programs.

Types of study-travel experiences

A well-based study-travel program must expand beyond the traditional offerings. Here are a few such opportunities that can be furthered in future occasions and include undergraduate, graduate and professional business courses. Examples:

- Three-day, professional targeted knowledge.
- Seven-day, undergraduate, graduate or professional.
- Month-long, undergraduate or graduate coursework.
- Semester or year-long undergraduate and graduate student exchanges.
- “Academic Tourism”, i.e. conferences in a particular place of attraction.
- Faculty and staff training and retraining opportunities.
- Specific propositions that can be serviced by the existing facility and staff.

Suggestions for new and existing business education and tourism-related programs

As implied before, elaborate infrastructure is needed for business education and tourism-related programs since such activities deal with special travel permits, hotel arrangements, tourist sights visitation, corporate meetings, executive speeches, identification of foreign individuals who are able-ready-willing to support these initiatives and so on. The systemic understanding of all factors involved is essential for the successful venture of blending business education and tourism. The individual overseeing these activities must be very experienced in global travelling and capable to support major program-related crises, from student sickness to any major unexpected event.

Moreover, the opportunities of such programs go significantly beyond normal expectations of most university administrators. Well-managed such programs may result in exceptional corporate relations, student and faculty internships, sponsoring of activities, teaching enhancement by observing foreign practices, student betterment during our efforts to internationalize their education, and improvement of the totality of university activities and the local potentialities.

And as I say in my self-actualization lectures

Sky is the limit! Smile-Create-Care (and then) Dream-Dare! Any Questions?