

Academic Field Trip as a Teaching Pedagogy to Accounting Students

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Abstract

Academic field trip is organised to attain several objectives. The objectives are in general, among others, to enhance social, personal and emotional development of students as well as to add value to students academic development. However, the specific objectives, as outlined in the syllabus of strategic management courses, include ability to function as a consultant, owner of a business, make strategic decisions and to justify those decisions through oral and written communication, both as an individual and as a member of a team. To meet these objectives, general and specific, at the beginning of the semester, students are briefed about the academic field trip and expectation (knowledge and experience) from it. To ensure that the students' will benefit from the trip, they are required to make some preparations before going for the academic field trip. The preparation includes research on the company and its industry, and to get the necessary information during the trip in order to complete some tasks. To complete the tasks, students have to form groups of three and they are given some assignments. The information necessary to complete the assignment will come from their observations during the trip. Basically, the assignments relate to the concepts and theories they have learned in class. The assignments will reflect the ability of the students to link them to the industry. Thus, the objective of this paper is to discuss the preparation before, during and after field trip as a teaching pedagogy in line with output-based education system. However, the effectiveness of academic field trips as a teaching pedagogy is not measured directly, therefore, it becomes a limitation of the paper. Nevertheless, this paper may serve as a useful input in the involvement and commitment of students during fieldtrips and the content of the assignment submitted will give an insight into the level of understanding of the students on class-room learning.

Keywords: Academic field trip, assignment, industry, academic development

1.0 Introduction

Some scholars define academic field trips as trips arranged by the school and undertaken for educational purposes, in which the students go to places where the materials of

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instruction may be observed and studied directly in their functional setting: for example, a trip to a factory, a city waterworks, a library, a museum (Krepel and DuVall, 1981, p.7). Meanwhile, other scholars defined academic field trips as trips which include visits to an out-of-school setting and can be categorized into either academic, non-academic or extra-curricular (Atyeo, 1939; Kenna and Russell, 2016). Academic field trips are designed to provide students with real world experiences so that they might gain knowledge of a particular set of content or skills. On the other hand, non-academic field trips are designed to promote socialization among the students and are used as a form of reward, for example academic dinner. Extra-curricular field trips occur as a result of competitions often attributed to athletics and performing art programs, for example, band and choral competitions (Atyeo, 1939). Students have the opportunity to gain educational experience with all three types of the academic field trips. However, the focus and purpose of the three types of academic field trips are different and it is necessary to separate them from each other (Kenna et al., 2016). Academic field trips may be organised to meet general or specific objectives. However, according to Michie (1998), basically, academic field trips may be planned for five purposes, namely: to provide first hand experience, to stimulate interest and motivation of students, to add relevance to learning and interrelationships, to strengthen observation and perception skills as well as to promote personal and social development.

They are two schools of thoughts that discuss academic field trips as a teaching pedagogy. One school of thought is in favour and the other not in favour of academic field trips as a teaching pedagogy. Some scholars argue that academic field trips and experiential activities can be an effective method to develop students' interest which can become a means of authentic learning opportunities for students regardless of the content area (Behrendt and Franklin, 2014; Kenna et al., 2016). Furthermore, the findings of many prior studies on academic field trips had documented positive contribution towards students' cognitive (short-term and long-term) and non-cognitive learning experiences (Atyeo, 1939; Mason, 1980; Strum and Borgner, 2010). On the contrary, some scholars disagree that academic field trip can be an effective means of teaching. The scholars claim that the level of learning gained from academic field trips by students is low (Cox-Petersen, Marsh, Kisiel, and Melber, 2003; DeWitt and Storksdieck, 2008). Since there are differences in the findings of prior studies, this paper plans to investigate further whether academic field trip is an effective teaching pedagogy.

The objective of this paper is to discuss the preparation before, during and after the academic field trip; and experiential learning activities involving the final semester students of Bachelor of Accountancy (Hons) Universiti Teknologi MARA Sabah campus and the role of the classroom teacher before, during and after the academic field trip. This paper is organized into four sections. The first section is the brief introduction of academic field trip, including definition and objectives of the paper. It is followed by literature review in the second section and discusses the theoretical background of the previous studies on academic field trips. The third section discusses the methodology of the academic field trip. The fourth section is the conclusion and recommendation.

2.0 Literature Review

Literature review is the review of studies done by scholars in the area of interest of this paper. This section is divided into two sub-sections, namely, academic field trips as a pedagogical practice and lecturers' motivation and attitudes towards academic field trips.

2.1 *Academic Field Trips as a Pedagogical Practice*

Academic field trips have been studied as a unique pedagogical practice and were viewed as a progressive approach in education aimed at reforming how students are taught (Kenna et al., 2016; Windschitl, 2002). Some of the early studies on field trips were developed to examine the effectiveness of the trips (Atyeo, 1939). The author documented the use of field trips throughout America and sought to establish the value teachers placed on their use. Mason (1980) encouraged the use of field trips due to the favorable findings on how field trips facilitated the acquisition of student learning outcomes. Thus, the findings of numerous research has found that academic field trips is an effective educational tool for student learning outcomes including cognitive and non-cognitive learning outcomes (Atyeo, 1939; Mason, 1980; Strum and Borgner, 2010).

Students have experience from short-term cognitive, long-term cognitive and non-cognitive learning as a result of attending field trips (Kenna et al., 2016). Strum et al. (2010) studied the short-term effectiveness of a field trip to a museum by comparing the learning and motivational outcomes of sixth grade students who experienced the same educational activity but in two different learning environments, one at a field trip site and the other in a classroom. Using a pre-test, post-test and retention-test, Strum et al. (2010) sought to identify if there were any differences on students' ability to recall certain facts and concepts based on the environment. They concluded that both the museum-group and the classroom-group experienced cognitive gains from the pre-test, however, "...the museum-group outperformed the classroom-group in the post-test and in the retention-test" (Strum et al., 2010, p. 17). Thus, students who attended a field trip to a museum experienced short-term cognitive gains greater than those who did not attend the field trip.

The study of Miglietta, Belmonte and Boero (2008) investigated the long-term cognitive effects of academic field trips using a pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire. The findings revealed that primary and secondary students who visited a marine biology museum, were able to retain the information they had learned for up to three months after the visit. The long-term effects of a field trip also include non-cognitive gains. Farmer, Knapp, and Benton (2007) found that one year after a group of middle school students had experienced a field trip to the Great Smoky Mountains they were not only able to recall many plants species they had seen but also expressed a new perceived pro-environmental attitude.

A study on adults between the ages of 25 and 31 indicated that they were able to recall several positive aspects from academic field trips they were involved in while in school. Most notably, they expressed the positive influence of socializing as well as the impact that field trips had on exposing them to new careers and cultures (Pace and Tesi, 2004). In addition, Salmi (2003) conducted a survey of university students as regards to why they had chosen a science major and 20% indicated that the positive experience they recalled during field trips played an important role in their decision.

However, findings of some studies were not in favour of academic field trips. Cox-Petersen et al. (2003) discovered, after observing 30 visiting school groups at a natural history museum and interviewing a select number of students, that students learned only low levels of science as a result of their field trip. On the other hand, DeWitt et al. (2008, p.182) stated that the documented learning gains from academic field trips are often relatively small, but small effects are not surprising given the one-off nature of most school trips. Indeed, it could be argued that any gain at all is noteworthy, given the brevity of the experiences and the variety of factors that can affect the extent to which learning occurs.

2.2 Lecturers' Motivation and Attitudes Towards Field Trips

There are many reasons why academic field trips are used as a teaching pedagogy (Kenna et al., 2016). Sorrentino and Bell (1970) analyzed texts and research articles by science educators and discovered that their primary motivations for using academic field trips were numerous, namely: to provide first-hand experience to students, stimulating interest and motivation in science, giving meaning to learning and interrelationships, teaching observation and perception skills, and personal and social development of students. Fido and Gayford (1982) explained that teachers' positive attitudes towards field trips, regardless of subject and grade level taught, include hands-on and real world experiences, quality of education, positive attitudes to the subject, motivation towards the subject, improvement of the socialization between students, the development of rapport between teachers and students, and enabling teachers to utilize teaching strategies such as cooperative learning. The study of Marcus, Levine, and Grenier (2012) revealed that history teachers value museums as a means of promoting aspects of historical thinking and the findings of the study also suggested that the history teachers felt that academic field trips should be made part of the secondary curriculum. The study of Kisiel (2005) indicate that teachers believe that academic field trips are valuable for students. His findings revealed that 90% of the teachers still recognized academic field trips as a highly valuable educational experience for students.

On the contrary, some teachers do not value academic field trip as a teaching pedagogy. This can be associated with teachers' negative attitudes towards field trips as a result of difficulties with transportation and cost, disparity of teachers' skills, time constraints amidst school schedules, lack of support from school administrators, curriculum

inflexibility, poor student behavior, and inadequacy of resources or venues (Fido et al., 1982).

3.0 Methodology

The students involved in the academic field trip used by this study are graduating students of Bachelor of Accountancy (Hons) from Universiti Teknologi MARA Sabah campus who registered for Strategic Management course offered in the final semester. At the beginning of the semester, the students were informed that they would go for an academic field trip and the firm visited was discussed and decided by consensus. The objectives of the academic field trip are numerous but among others, it is aimed at enhancing the ability of the students to appreciate certain concepts and principles they learn in the class room. The lecturer explained to the students that the trip is part of the learning process and they are expected to do some assignments in the form of writing a case study or a report. Students when writing the case study or report, will link the information gained during the trip with certain concepts of strategic management.

3.1 Instruction to Students

Two weeks before going for the academic field trip, written instruction were circulated to students. The written instruction includes preparations before, during and after the academic field trip. The instruction given (appendix 1) requires students to form a group of two (2) or three (3), each group will answer one question and register the assignment number with the lecturer. To ensure that students will benefit from the academic field trip, each group is required to do some research before going for the academic field trip and prepare questions necessary in order to complete their assignment and ask during the talk or trip to the factory. The instruction also require the students to discuss the layout of their work before going for the academic field trip with the lecturer. Each team will have to submit a report and the report must be computer-typed, font size: 12, font type: Times New Roman, length of case study: 2,000 words. The report must have introduction, content and a conclusion. About 70% of the content of the report must be genuine, that is, from the students' experience and knowledge gained during the trip (secondary data such as internet will only account for 30% and references must be quoted). The assignment will contribute 10% to the students' assessments and the best group will get the opportunity to showcase their case study in class.

3.2 Assignment Questions

The lecturer prepared four (4) guided questions and each group of students were required to choose one question. Question one (1) requires the students to write a case study on the firm visited. The content of the case study must include items such as the nature of

business (core business of the firm), vision and mission statements and the importance of this from strategic management perspective, description of the firm's target customers, explain the strategies that the firm utilize to position itself in the industry, identify and list the resources, both tangible and intangible, which are available to the firm. The students are also required to answer some questions such as: What capabilities do the firm have which can be a source of above average return? What would you suggest to the firm in order to sustain its competitive advantage?

Question two (2) requires students to discuss, based on the information gathered during the academic field trip, what business level strategies (cost leadership, differentiation or even focus) the company employs. The discussion must incorporate an analysis for the basis of customer value and target market.

Question three (3) requires students to discuss the five forces model of competition and how these five forces of competition would affect profit potential of the firm visited. To facilitate the process of analysis using Porters five forces model of competition , students are given worksheet to guide their discussion (appendix 2).

Question four (4) requires students to discuss the operation of the firm based on value chain analysis. Before analysing the operation based on value chain analysis, students must first decide on the appropriate business-level strategy (cost leadership or differentiation) employed by the firm. To facilitate the process of analysis, students are given worksheet to guide their discussion (appendix 3).

Students are given two weeks after the academic field trip to submit their reports to the lecturer for assessment.

3.3 Assessment Rubrics

The reports submitted will be marked based on an assessment rubric (appendix 4). The rubric is segregated into five (5) criteria namely: content (20 marks), explanation of the business or the firm visited (15 marks), mechanic (5 marks), team work (5 marks) and language (5 marks).

The first criteria that will be assessed is the content of the report. Basically, for content, the lecturer will be looking into the explanation of the background of the firm visited, the selection and presentation of relevant information, the analysis of information collected and whether the reports manage to achieve its objectives.

The second criteria in the rubric is on the explanation of the firm visited. This criteria will be evaluating the ability of the students to show an understanding of the business of the firm visited as well as their ability to give relevant explanation as required by each question.

The third criteria is on the mechanics part of the report that is the systematic presentation of ideas and flow of the report. The fourth criteria is on team work. Since it is a group assignment five, (5) marks are allocated to team work. This criteria is evaluating students' ability to work as a team.

The last criteria in the rubric will be assessing the language in the report. Language of the report is classified into the right vocabulary used in the report, the appropriateness of the language for report writing and the originality of information presented in the report.

Marks for the above five (5) criteria are categorised into four (4) namely: excellent, good, satisfactory and poor. The aggregate marks from all the five criteria will be divided by 50 marks and multiply by 10% in order to get the final marks for each report.

4.0 Conclusion

Academic field trips offer an opportunity to motivate students to appreciate and understand classroom concepts, which increases students' knowledge foundation, promoting further learning and higher level thinking skills. With understanding comes confidence and intrinsic motivation. A successful and quality academic field trip requires teacher preparation and guidance. Bearing the importance of teachers' preparation prior to the academic field trip, written instruction were circulated to students aiming at guiding them as to what need to be done before, during and after the academic field trip. To ensure the involvement and commitment of students, they are required to submit report. The content of the report submitted will give an insight into the level of understanding of the students in class-room learning.

This teaching pedagogy may in a way assists both the lecturer and students to achieve the objectives of the course which requires the students to be able to function as a consultant, owner of a business, make strategic decisions and to justify those decisions through oral and written communication, both as an individual and as a member of a team. To measure the effectiveness of academic field trips as a teaching pedagogy, the current practice is based on the outcome of entrance survey and exit survey. This method is an indirect means of measuring the effectiveness of this method of teaching. Since the effectiveness of academic field trips as a teaching pedagogy is not measured directly in this paper, it becomes a limitation of the paper. For future study, it is recommended that this teaching pedagogy be measured by adapting a validated questionnaires. The findings can be used to assess the effectiveness of academic field trips as a teaching pedagogy.

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Appendix 1

The written instruction are as follows:

1. Students are required to form a group of two or three.
2. Each group will answer one of the four questions below (choose one question only) discuss with your group member as to which assignment you want to attempt and inform your instructor (register your assignment number with your instructor).
3. Each group is required to do some research before going for the field trip, you need to be prepared with questions necessary to complete your assignment and ask during the talk or trip to the factory.
4. Discuss the layout of your work before going for the field trip with your instructor.
5. Each team would have to submit a report. The report must be:
 - a. Computer-typed
 - b. Font size: 12
 - c. Font type: Times New Roman
 - d. Length : 2,000 words
 - e. The report must have introduction, content and a conclusion.
 - f. 70% of the content of the report must be genuine that is from you and your experience and knowledge gained during the trip (secondary data - internet will only account for 30% and quote your references).
6. This assignment will contribute 10% to your overall assessments and the best group will get the opportunity to show case their report in class.

Appendix 2

Discuss in detail the impact of Five Forces Model on the profit potential of the firm visited. Your discussion on the Five Forces Model will be guided by the following worksheet. You may add in other factors that you think necessary.

FIVE FORCES	ANALYSIS
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1. Threat of New Entrant

When others see that there are profitable markets that yield high returns it will draw firms to enter into the industry. This results in many new entrants, which will effectively decrease profitability. Unless the entry of new firms can be blocked by incumbents, the profit rate will fall towards a competitive level (perfect competition).

If barriers are high, new entrants are deterred from entering the industry. MAGIC WORD HIGH OR LOW ENTRY BARRIERS

- the existence of barriers to entry (patents, rights)
- brand equity
- capital requirements very high (high barrier)
- if there are a lot of distribution channels (high barriers)
- absolute cost advantages
- government policies

2. The Threat of Substitute

The existence of close substitute products increases the propensity of customers to switch to alternatives in response to price increases.

Magic Word: Cheaper substitute & easily available & buyers perceive substitute gives similar satisfaction as the original product .

3. The Bargaining Power of Customers

The more to choose from the higher the bargaining power of the buyer. Magic Words: Alternatives available, Choices, Switching Cost (LOW or High), Buyer Concentration of purchases, buyers information availability (easy or difficult to get information: would give rise to more choices!)

(continued)

FIVE FORCES
ANALYSIS

4. The Bargaining Power of Suppliers

(The power to choose who to supply to)

Suppliers of raw materials, components, labor, and services (such as expertise) to the firm can be a source of power over the firm. Suppliers may refuse to work with the firm, or for example charge excessively high prices for unique resources. Magic Word: Choices of those who need the supply (big or small), Contractual agreement (easy or difficult to switch to another), the uniqueness of the supplies (unique or standardized).

5. Intensity of Rivalry

For most industries, this is the major determinant of the competitiveness of the industry (that is the existence of competitors). Sometimes rivals compete aggressively and sometimes rivals compete in non-price dimensions such as innovation, marketing and WAR is created. MAGIC WORDS: the price war, product war, promotion war, even place & process war.

- More number of competitors would create more wars
 - rate of industry growth, the more matured the industry the more wars
 - diversity of competitors would create innovation war
 - if level of advertising expense is low there would be more promotion war
 - Where Economies of scale is enjoyed, this would lead to price war
 - The competitors would try to shield themselves & build HIGH STRONG forte so that new entrants find it difficult o enter!
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Appendix 3

Discuss in detail how value chain activities of the firm visited can create value for the company. Your discussion on the value creating activities will be guided by the following worksheet. You may add in other factors that you think necessary.

Supply-Chain Management	Operation	Marketing (Including Distribution Sales)	Follow-Up Service
The Procurement system shows how to go about purchasing the materials:	The operation involved in converting the coffee bean into coffee powder.	The marketing and promotion activities of the company.	The channel of distribution and how the product can reach the customers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any Customer Service being practice by the company?
State: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The types of materials • The quantity of purchase (Bulk purchase or JIT) • The Supplier (long term contract) • A common standardized supplier or selective supplier 	State: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The type of labour - skilled or semi-skilled • The number of staff handling each process • The operation involved – What are they? • The size of operation (Batch processing or small operation) • Packaging of the coffee • The daily capacity of the machine • The number of the machine • Operating Hours in a day (how many days in a week) 	State: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The brand name • The product logo • Create a distribution arm • Customers come to collect • The Advertisement (if necessary) • The payment collection method <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cash ○ Credit card ○ Credit terms 	State: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The type of distribution channels • Delivery Van - Any ? How many? • Customers come to collect ? • The Advertisement • The payment collection method <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cash ○ Credit card ○ Credit terms
<u>Cost Implication:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the cost of procurement (high, average, low) • Payment method 		<u>Cost Implication:</u> Discuss the cost associated with the above activities	<u>Cost Implication:</u> Discuss the cost associated with the above activities
	<u>Cost Implication:</u> Discuss the cost associated with the above activities		

Appendix 4

MAF 640 – STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

MEMBERS' NAME	STDN'S NUMBER			GROUP NUMBER	
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
CRITERIA	MARKS	EXCELLENT	GOOD	SATISFACTORY	POOR
Content					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and concise background • Selection of relevant information • Analysis of information collected • Substantial and well-researched data • Achievement of report objectives 	20	20-17	16-14	13-10	9-1
Explanation of The Business Chosen					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to show an understanding of the business • Able to give relevant explanation 	15	15-14	13-10	9-6	5-1
Mechanics					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic presentation of items 	5	5	4-3	2	1
Team Work					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show a degree of co-operation and unity in group 	5	5	4-3	2	1

(continued)

CRITERIA	MARKS	EXCELLENT	GOOD	SATISFACTORY	POOR
Language					
• Appropriate vocabulary					
• Appropriate language for report writing					
• Originality of information					
	5	5	4-3	2	1
TOTAL	50				

Marks : _____ /50 x 10%

Remarks : _____

Name of examiner : _____

Signature : _____