

Student Perceptions of Study Tour Learning: A Case Study

Kimberley Howard* and Makarand Gulawani**

ABSTRACT

Undergraduate business students who participated in a study tour to India were surveyed to determine their perceptions of attainment of study tour learning outcomes. The majority of students surveyed indicated that they were better able to achieve the stated learning outcomes as a result of participating in the study tour. Their perceptions of achieving the study tour learning outcomes were corroborated by the faculty members' assessments of their assignments. The literature review reveals that business study tours tend to emphasize functional skills and practical knowledge over holistic personal development. Contrasts between the learning outcomes of our undergraduate business study tour and other short term study abroad programs are highlighted. It was evident that student learning on study abroad programs goes beyond the stated learning outcomes. More longitudinal data and comparative research is required on how undergraduate business study abroad learning outcomes differ from study abroad learning outcomes in other disciplines.

KEY WORDS: Study Tours, Study Abroad, Learning Outcomes, Internationalization.

This paper explores a business school's effectiveness in the achievement of study tour learning outcomes, compares the types of learning and learning outcomes in a range of study abroad programs (both business and non-business) and recommends areas for future research. The authors hypothesize that business students on short-term study abroad programs achieve stated course learning outcomes. In addition the authors hypothesize that short-term study abroad programs are instrumental in changing business students' attitudes and behaviour regardless of whether these outcomes are articulated or

measured. Schools of Business in the early stages of internationalization may find this paper helpful for developing learning outcomes and curricula for short term study abroad programs.

Grant MacEwan University located in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada focuses on undergraduate education. The university's School of Business has approximately 4,000 students and offers a Bachelor of Commerce degree as well as certificates, diplomas and an applied degree. International learning opportunities are an advantage to business graduates operating in today's globalized context and study abroad

***Kimberley Howard**, Senior Manager, International Projects, Grant MacEwan University in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
Email: howardk2@macewan.ca

****Makarand Gulawani**, Assistant Professor, Grant MacEwan University School of Business in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
Email: GulawaniM@macewan.ca

experiences reinforce connections that are difficult to simulate in the classroom. The School's internationalization efforts include study tours, student exchanges, field schools, joint research institutes, hosting international visiting scholars, and an international open journal.

For-credit, undergraduate study tours in Brazil, China and India are offered as electives to business students. These countries were specifically targeted as emerging economies (i.e., BRIC countries) that will have significant impact on global business for decades to come. Additionally, we have faculty members originally from these countries teaching at our School of Business. Howard, Gulawani and Henry (2012) describe MacEwan University's School of Business study tour model for all three countries as comprising program (curriculum and structure), purpose (goals and outcomes), participants (faculty and students), place (destination), and process (structure, resources and logistics). Students who have participated in MacEwan University's School of Business internationalization opportunities are overwhelmingly positive in describing the impact on their learning, with statements such as: "I did more, saw more, and learned more in a shorter period of time than I ever thought possible," and "I honestly learned more in this study tour than I could ever hope for from another course".

In addition to the reasons mentioned above, India was chosen as a study tour destination due to its impact on the Albertan and Canadian economies. Albertan exports to India (e.g., wheat, machinery, crude oil products) average \$98.5 million CDN per year and imports to Alberta from India (e.g.,

iron, steel) average \$93.1 million CDN per year. The provincial government believes there is potential to increase exports to India. Edmonton has a large immigrant population from India which can increase and facilitate business relationships between the two countries. As an emerging market that is soon to be the world's most populous country and a growing middle class, India will continue to have a significant impact on the global economy. The diversity of cultures, religions and languages as well as the presence of widespread corruption makes it an incredibly complex market; understanding these market challenges increases the potential for success.

OVERVIEW "DOING BUSINESS INTERNATIONALLY: STUDY TOUR TO INDIA"

Students participated in the study tour to India in either May 2010 or May 2011. The course included a week of pre-departure orientation classes and two weeks abroad, structured with academic, business and cultural components. The study tour had seven learning outcomes which were communicated to the students in the course outline, distributed several weeks prior to departure. The expected learning outcomes were as follows:

1. Identify key trends in globalization impacting business in India
2. Identify business strategies for Canadian companies doing business in India
3. Discuss how social and cultural factors in India affect the way business is conducted
4. Prepare a briefing on doing business in India based on a specific scenario

5. Compare and contrast business practices in Canada and India
6. Identify intercultural competencies necessary for a career in international business
7. Assess personal suitability for a career in international business

After returning to Canada, students were asked to complete a survey assessing their self-perceived attainment of the above learning outcomes, their satisfaction with the academic, business and cultural components abroad, as well as three additional questions on whether their attitudes about doing business in India had changed, whether the study tour helped integrate concepts learned in the classroom, and if they had learned things about India that surprised them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A comprehensive review of the literature of study abroad learning outcomes reveals a tendency toward holistic (implicit) rather than functional (explicit) learning outcomes, a tendency not always reflected in business study tours. One explanation for this difference in emphasis is that historically study abroad was the realm of liberal arts programs that traditionally focus on whole-person development rather than attainment of a specific set of knowledge, skills and abilities which tends to be emphasized in professional programs such as business. Part of the challenge when discussing the types of learning that occurs in study abroad is the lack of a common lexicon. Table 1 summarizes the different learning categories that are included in this literature review.

Table 1: Overview of Study-Abroad Learning Classifications

Cognitive	Knowledge transfer (e.g., world geography)
Affective	Attitudinal change (e.g., acceptance of other cultures)
Behavioural	Acquisition of new skills (e.g., intercultural adaption)

Larson, Lars L. & Schermerhorn, John R. Jr. (1989) Alternative instructor roles in cross-cultural business and management training. *Journal of Teaching in International Business*, 1(1), 7-21.

Intentional	Formal learning
Incidental	Informal learning
Conscious	Intentional learning
Unconscious	Unintentional learning

Younes, Maha N., & Asay, Sylvia M. (2003). The world as a classroom: the impact of international study experiences on college students. *College Teaching*, 51(4), 141-147. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27559156>

Integrative	Combining learning from numerous sources (e.g., combining ideas, employing diverse perspectives, using different sources)
Reflective	Thoughtful/considered learning (e.g., self-examination of views, attempts to understand other perspectives, developing new angles to assess issues)

Gonyea, Robert M. (2008). The impact of study abroad on senior year engagement. In: Research and practice: embracing connections. Las Vegas: Association for the Study of Higher Education.

Experiential	Seeking to understand experiences, make generalizations about these experiences and actively applying and experimenting with new understanding.
Situated	Largely unintentional learning that occurs as a result of activity within a specific context and culture.

Miao, Shin Yu, Harris, Roger, & Sumner, Robert. (2005/2006). Exploring learning during study tours. *International Journal of Learning*, 12(11), 55-62.

Study tours have been commended for bridging the gap between theory and practice through experiential learning, or learning by doing. Di Iorio et al. (2009) point out that student learning on study tours is both multi-faceted and occurs at multiple levels (e.g., professional, personal, etc.). McKeachie (1980) cited in Paul and Mukhopadhyay (2003) states that students who engage in active learning retain information for longer periods of time and can better apply information to new situations than those who learn passively. Business students who participate in MacEwan University's undergraduate study tours overwhelmingly affirm that they experience significant learning both personally and professionally.

Kulich and Leirman cited in Miao et al. (2005/2006) distinguish between learning (a natural process that occurs throughout life) and education (a formal process). Miao et al. (2005/2006) state

that learning on study tours is more natural, unconscious and less controlled than learning in structured educational environments. Miao et al. (2005/2006) distinguish between two types of learning on study tours: experiential and situated. They describe experiential learning as a process where students seek to understand their experiences, make generalizations based on these experiences, and actively apply and experiment with their new understanding. Situated learning occurs as a result of activity within a specific context and culture and is largely unintentional learning as opposed to deliberate learning. Miao et al. (2005/2006) found that affective aspects of learning (i.e., those relating to changes in attitude) were harder to achieve than cognitive aspects of learning (i.e., knowledge acquisition) on study tours. We agree with Miao et al.'s observation and would add that affective aspects of learning are not only harder to achieve but also harder to measure than cognitive aspects of learning.

Younes and Asay (2003) state that international learning experiences culminate in many types of learning: intentional (formal) and incidental (informal), conscious and unconscious and encompass introverted and extraverted learners. They identify three themes of learning in a study of three international study tours: educational learning, group learning (i.e., coping with group dynamics and conflicts), and personal learning (typically in the areas of personal growth and self-discovery). Students participating in these study tours indicated they would retain what they learned from a study tour experience longer than learning in a traditional classroom setting. In addition to accomplishing the learning outcomes, students experienced a great deal of incidental learning. This study emphasized the need for more time for study abroad participants to reflect given the fast pace of the study tour and the overwhelming amount of information and experiences. We agree with Younes and Asay on students' need for reflection; however, our experience in previous study tours is this is a difficult element to achieve and measure. For example, a previous MacEwan University undergraduate business study tour included personal journal writing as an assessment method. Despite a detailed grading rubric and a session on personal journal writing during the pre-departure orientation, the journals were almost exclusively a diary of events rather than an analysis and reflection on the students' experiences. Another challenge was trying to find time to keep a daily personal journal given the full schedule abroad.

Paige et al. (2009) surveyed more than 6,000 American study abroad participants whose study abroad experiences occurred between 1960 and

2005. They found that study abroad affects five dimensions of global engagement: civic engagement (either domestically or internationally), knowledge production (39 percent of the surveyed study abroad participants had formally published in various media after their study abroad experience), philanthropy (through volunteerism or monetary donations), social entrepreneurship (involvement with organizations who support the community), and voluntary simplicity (as a lifestyle choice). Study abroad had two additional outcomes: career choice and future education choices. The study divided impact into near-term (1 to 5 years post study abroad) and long-term (6 or more years post study abroad). The study showed that of all the respondents' undergraduate activities, study abroad had the greatest effect on their lives. Paige et al.'s research shows the need for additional research on the long-term impacts of study abroad. There is an opportunity to track students who have participated in study abroad for several years after the experience.

Shaftel et al. (2007) report that undergraduates in professional programs show significant changes in several intercultural competencies as a result of an international learning experience. Their study of 660 students from professional degrees indicates that students improve in areas of open-mindedness, flexibility, cross-cultural adaptability, and appreciation of diversity as a result of international study experiences. Their study highlights that the first few weeks of international study have the most significant impact on perceptions and values, particularly in those students who have had little international experience. Our experience corroborates this

finding. Those students without any previous international exposure experienced substantially greater impact moving within the competency-consciousness matrix from "unconscious incompetence" (not knowing what you don't know) to "conscious incompetence" (knowing what you don't know).

Cheiffo and Griffiths (2004) surveyed over 2,300 students over a two year period divided into a group of short-term study abroad students and a group who did not participate in a short term study abroad program, but took similar (domestic) courses to those offered abroad on four aspects of global awareness: intercultural awareness, personal growth and development, awareness of global interdependence, and functional knowledge of world geography and language. The study attempted to measure perceived and recalled student activities and attitudes rather than actual learning outcomes or changes in behaviour. The abroad-group was "more confident in their levels of intercultural awareness and functional knowledge than their peers who remained on campus" and "engaged in more internationally-minded activities and described their learning in much broader and non-academic categories than their counterparts." Intuitively, we would agree with Cheiffo and Griffiths' findings, however, we have yet to duplicate their comparative research between study abroad and non-study abroad groups.

Sutton and Rubin (2004) stress that learning outcomes assessment in study abroad involves determining whether participants' content knowledge and cognitive understanding have improved. Their paper describes the GLOSSARI

(Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative) project, which measured seven learning outcomes in five content domains for study abroad and non-study abroad students. The five content domains were "knowledge of strategies and skills for functioning in other cultures, knowledge of intercultural interaction techniques, global interdependence, knowledge of comparative civics, and knowledge of world geography". The seven learning outcomes within these five content domains were:

1. functional knowledge (i.e., strategies and skills for operating in other cultures)
2. knowledge of global interdependence (i.e., political awareness and global interconnectedness)
3. knowledge of cultural relativism (i.e., acceptance and validation of other cultures)
4. verbal acumen (i.e., language improvement and acquisition)
5. knowledge of world geography
6. interpersonal accommodation (i.e., adaptation in intercultural interactions)
7. cultural sensitivity

Students surveyed in Sutton and Rubin's GLOSSARI research represented a variety of disciplines, including business. Their research found that students who studied abroad scored higher in functional knowledge, knowledge of world geography, knowledge of cultural relativism and knowledge of global interdependence. There was no significant difference in verbal acumen, interpersonal accommodation, or cultural

sensitivity. In comparing differences among specific majors, business majors scored lower on knowledge of cultural relativism than students majoring in education, journalism and social sciences. We observed our students improving in all seven of Sutton and Rubin's learning outcomes, however, it is mainly learning outcomes in the cognitive knowledge area that are measured on MacEwan University undergraduate business study tours.

Gonyea's (2008) analysis of study abroad on senior year engagement showed that students who participate in study abroad report significantly higher levels of engagement in integrative learning (e.g., combining ideas from various sources, employing diverse perspectives, using ideas from different courses, etc.) and reflective learning (e.g., self-examination of views, attempts to understand the perspectives of others and developing new angles for assessing issues) and are stronger in the areas of personal and social development, specifically in engaging in diversity experiences. In Gonyea's study, business majors were less likely than arts, humanities, and social science majors to engage in integrative and reflective learning approaches or diversity experiences.

Harrison (2006) surveyed 102 business students who participated in a four week international business study tour (offered over a period of ten years). The survey found that study tour participants reported greater understanding of cultural differences, found company visits valuable for providing insight about global business, indicated that study tours were an effective method for learning about business and for enhancing personal development. The results also

showed that the study tour had only a moderate impact on the students' interest in pursuing a career in international business.

Larson and Schermerhorn (1989) cited in Paul and Mukhopadhyay (2003) define three types of learning: cognitive (knowledge transfer), affective (attitudinal change) and behavioural (acquisition of new skills). In a study of cognitive, affective and behavioural learning of Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) students before and after participation in study abroad, Paul and Mukhopadhyay (2003) found that learning takes place in all three areas; however, more significant learning takes place in the cognitive and affective areas. The researchers concluded that learning occurred regardless of destination country.

Business literature increasingly emphasizes the need for graduates who are culturally competent and flexible. Murray (1999) cited in Orahood et al. (2004) identified three primary selection criteria for employees of global companies: intellectual ability, motivation and interpersonal skills. Murray predicts the five criteria most important to employers of the future are: a global mindset, diversity, innovation, engagement, and information technology skills. Contrary to Harrison's (2006) findings, Orahood et al. (2004) found that business students who have studied abroad are more interested in internationalizing their careers. They emphasize that study abroad experiences should be described using meaningful learning outcomes; the emphasis must be on knowledge, skills and abilities that are valuable to students and employers. Toncar et al. (2005) note that business students are concerned with the impact study abroad has on their future career

prospects which may account for business study tour learning outcomes' tendency toward preparation for specific international business activities and careers over general development. We also found that it is significantly easier to measure attainment of specific knowledge and skills than attainment of intercultural competencies during the study tour.

Kehl and Morris (2008) state that "careful evaluation of specific learning outcomes may direct educational leaders in planning more appropriate program outcomes according to differing program lengths." Spencer, cited in Donnelly-Smith (2009) emphasizes that "A good short-term program is strongly connected to coursework and an integral part of a larger learning experience". MacEwan University's undergraduate business study tours meet the first component of Spencer's criteria; study tour courses include a week's coursework before departure. Although all Bachelor of Commerce students are required to have a minimum of two courses with international content before graduating, there is currently no requirement for students to participate in study abroad as part of their degree.

Gillespie (2002) states that formal assessment of study abroad programs is lacking when compared to other kinds of post-secondary programs. The author presents possible explanations such as the absence of nationally agreed-upon standards, the quick growth of study abroad programs, and less value attached to off-campus versus on-campus learning. She raises important issues of the differences between academic experiences at home versus abroad, the reliability of assessment methods for study abroad experiences, and

whether North American standards of measurement can be imposed on study abroad experiences.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluating methodology includes feedback from students and faculty assessment of student learning. A total of 34 students participated in the India study tours; 20 in 2010 and 14 in 2011. The 2010 course comprised 13 women and ten men, with ages ranging from 20 to 47 years, and an average age of 24. The 2011 course comprised ten women and four men, with ages ranging from 22 to 32 years, and an average age of 24. Response rates to the survey were 60 percent (2010 students) and 64 percent (2011 students), although not every student answered every question. Although the survey response rates are satisfactory, all students' views are not represented.

Students were sent a link to a survey via e-mail during the fall term after the study tour was completed. The survey included questions on the seven learning outcomes of the course, questions on whether students' attitudes about doing business in India had changed, whether the study tour helped integrate concepts learned in the classroom, if students had learned things about India that surprised them, and satisfaction with the academic, business and cultural visits and activities abroad. Students had the opportunity to write comments for each of the questions.

FINDINGS

The results indicate that most students felt they were better able to accomplish all the learning

outcomes for the course as a result of having participated in the study tour. The 2010 group of students' responses ranged from 88.9 percent to 100 percent in terms of attainment of learning outcomes. The 2011 group indicated a 100

percent positive response for attainment of learning outcomes. Table 2 shows the survey questions, learning type associated with each question, response rates and results for the 2010 and 2011 classes.

Table 2: Perception of Attainment of Course Learning Outcomes and General Knowledge

Question (Type of Learning)	2010			2011		
	Yes	No	Response Rate	Yes	No	Response Rate
*Do you feel you are better able to identify the key trends impacting business in India? (Cognitive)	100%	0%	83%	100%	0%	67%
*Do you feel you are better able to identify business strategies for Canadian companies doing business in India? (Cognitive)	88.9%	11.1%	75%	100%	0%	67%
*Do you feel you are better able to discuss how social and cultural factors affect the way business is conducted in India? (Cognitive)	100%	0%	75%	100%	0%	67%
*Do you feel you are better able to prepare a brief for a Canadian company interested in doing business in India? (Cognitive)	88.9%	11.1%	75%	100%	0%	67%
*Do you feel you are better able to compare and contrast business practices between Canada and India?(Cognitive)	100%	0%	75%	100%	0%	67%
*Do you feel you are better able to identify intercultural competencies necessary for a career in international business? (Reflective)	100%	0%	75%	100%	0%	56%
*Do you feel you are better able to assess your personal suitability for a career in international business? (Reflective)	88.9%	11.1%	75%	100%	0%	67%
Have your attitudes about doing business in India changed? (Reflective)	77.8%	22.2%	75%	100%	0%	67%
Did the study tour help you integrate concepts learned in the classroom? (Integrative)	87.5%	12.5%	67%	100%	0%	67%

*Question linked to a specific course learning outcome articulated in course outline.

Students in the 2010 course were assessed in three ways: preparation of a strategy for a Canadian company planning on entering the Indian market assigned and submitted before departure for India (20 percent); a project comparing perceptions of doing business in India before and after time abroad (30 percent); and a contribution/professionalism grade assigned abroad (20 percent). In the 2010 study tour, the students also completed assignments that were assessed by faculty members both before and after the study tour was completed. Students in the 2011 course were assessed in three ways: a country report assigned and submitted before departure for India (35 percent); a business plan for a Canadian company doing business in India assigned and submitted before departure for India and a presentation abroad (35 percent); and a contribution/professionalism grade assigned abroad (30 percent). Faculty member assessment was based on both formal and informal assessment of students. Direct assessment of learning was reflected in the grades students received. Grades for the 2010 group ranged from B+ to A; grades for the 2011 group were in the A range.

Assignments were the principal means of assessing attainment of learning outcomes one to five (identify key trends in globalization impacting business in India, identify business strategies for Canadian companies doing business in India, discuss how social and cultural factors in India affect the way business is conducted, prepare a briefing on doing business in India based on a specific scenario, compare and contrast business practices in Canada and India). Several sessions at the pre-departure orientation and activities

abroad also dealt with these outcomes. During the pre-departure orientation, students completed either Hammer and Bennett's Intercultural Development Inventory or the Kelley and Meyers' Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory followed by a facilitated session to address learning outcomes six and seven (identify intercultural competencies necessary for a career in international business and assess personal suitability for a career in international business).

The 2010 study tour was the School of Business's inaugural study tour to India. Based on the 2010 experience, modifications were made to the 2011 study tour. Ideally, we would keep the assignment where students have the opportunity to compare pre- and post-knowledge of India, however, approximately half of our students stay after a study tour is finished to travel in-country, and there were many difficulties in completing and submitting assignments while still abroad. The 2010 study tour gave us better evidence (in the form of assignments) of the students' learning before and after the study tour. Although evidence of pre- and post-study tour learning was also present in the 2011 group, it was anecdotal.

Limitations of this research include the small sample size with only two years of data collection, which can be easily remedied in the future by surveying all MacEwan University's Bachelor of Commerce study tour students. The survey did not give a range of possibilities (i.e., the students had a choice of "yes" or "no"), and future surveys could be strengthened by using a Likert Scale to indicate the degree of change students experienced.

Indirect measures such as surveys and self-assessments are often considered as an inadequate

method of assessing performance. Although we agree that surveys and self-assessments have limitations, the assignments and activities the students completed during the study tour are direct evidence of student learning and corroborated the indirect evidence of their self-perceptions that they had attained the learning outcomes. Another possible limitation is the duration of the experience. Students did not have time to move beyond the initial, positive stage of engaging in a new culture and many of the challenges of living in a different culture would only become evident during a longer period abroad. The findings are also limited to these two groups of students.

The study tours took place in spring term (May) and the surveys were sent during fall term (September to December). The delay in the administration of the survey gave students time to process their experiences; had we sent the survey immediately upon return or even later, responses may have been different. Rexeisen et al. (2008) cited in Rexeisen and Al-Khatib (2009) report that students continue to experience developmental changes four months after a study abroad experience. Although the students we surveyed indicated that they felt they had a better attainment of the learning outcomes, many were not able to articulate how that was the case, other than in broad, general statements.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The majority of students indicated they were better able to achieve the course learning outcomes as a result of participating in Doing Business Internationally: Study Tour to India.

Faculty members' assessment of students' assignments corroborated the students' self-assessments of achievement of learning outcomes. Well-designed learning outcomes connected to program design and assessment increase student learning and satisfaction with study abroad. Schools of Business with similar missions and resources at the initial stages of internationalization may benefit from our experience when designing short term study abroad curricula.

The literature review shows a general tendency to emphasize holistic goals over functional goals in study abroad. This tendency was not reflected in our course learning outcomes and tends not to be reflected in other business study tour learning outcomes, however, it is indisputable that invaluable learning is taking place in myriad ways and at many levels. Given the strong emphasis on cognitive learning outcomes in business programs, non-cognitive learning outcomes are often neither articulated nor measured, possibly due to the professional rather than academic focus of business programs and the challenges with measuring affective and behavioural learning outcomes.

Research that compares attainment of the same learning outcomes for a "Doing Business Internationally" course for two groups of students: one that travels abroad and one that does not can help quantify the value of study abroad. Given that cognitive learning outcomes can be realized relatively quickly in comparison to affective and behavioural learning, research opportunities exist to track the impact of a student's study abroad experience not only for months but years later

which may capture changes in attitudes and behaviours that occur slowly. Additionally, further research with longitudinal data is required to determine the implications of emphasizing the acquisition of knowledge over changes in behaviour and attitudes and may influence whether business study abroad programs should consider expanding learning outcomes to include affective and behavioural outcomes when developing curricula.

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