

The Influence of Learning Styles to Learning Effect of Overseas Field Trip-the Case of Resort Management Course

Dr. Jean Ling Lee

Assistant Professor, Kainan University
Taiwan

Abstract

Overseas field trips offer students a unique educational opportunity to investigate and understand how global organizations set up and implement strategies in one of the most dynamic markets in the world. The students can engage in developing a critical understanding of how different contexts impact on business opportunities and leadership in practice. The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of learning styles to learning effect of overseas field trip. In accordance with the visions and objectives of resort management course, the overseas field trip has taken place in Macau. The main objects of this research were college students from KNU University Taiwan; they have completed the two-day overseas field trip lessons in Macau. According to the students learning effect analysis, participant students have received the good learning effect in this overseas field trip. In addition, it is positive that the learning styles of individual students will influence their learning effect, especially in the aspects of Outside Environment Interaction and Knowledge Learning Growth.

Key Words: Learning style, Learning effect, Overseas field trip

1. Introduction

Overseas field trips are an integral and deeply rewarding part of the overseas study experience. It offers students a unique educational opportunity to investigate and understand how global organizations set up and implement strategies in one of the most dynamic markets in the world. The innovative overseas field trip course can combine lectures, workshops, company visits, cultural activities, and networking events; it aims to immerse students in the opportunities and challenges facing organizations operating in the global economy through a live case study experience. Hence, the students can engage in developing a critical understanding of how different contexts impact on business opportunities and leadership in practice. In addition, it can reinforce and develop specific and general skills, to provide the possibility for experiential learning and the challenge of different environments, to permit textbook derived knowledge to be sorted and clarified, and to encourage the development of tacit or intuitive knowledge.

A condition for the integration of theory and practice in higher education is that a mutual learning takes place between students, teachers, and surrounding society (Arnesson & Albinsson, 2012). Learning styles

have been the focus of many studies over the past decades to improve courses design and to give us better understanding of how students learn (McCarthy, 2010). The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of learning styles to learning effect of overseas field trip. In accordance with the visions and objectives of resort management course, the overseas field trip has taken place in Macau. With the top ten largest casino resorts in the world, five out of ten are located in Macau (Said, 2013; BIN, 2013). In addition, the 40-story, \$2.4 billion Venetian Macau is the largest casino resort in the world and the largest single structure hotel building in Asia (Walker, 2010). All of the participant students have to turn in the contributions to the field trip report and perform oral presentation after returning from the trip.

The study has come out some important implications for higher education. First, experiential learning and interactive learning has resulted in positive outcomes for students. Second, to understand the learning styles of students, it can improve the teaching activity and the student's learning is optimized. Third, it is positive that the learning styles of individual students will influence their learning effect.

2. Literature Review

Learning styles refer to an individual's natural pattern of acquiring and processing information in learning situation. The learning style theories propose that all people can be classified according to their style of learning. The core idea is that individuals differ in how they learn (Coffield et al., 2004; Yang, 2005).

The concept of individualized learning styles originated in the 1970s, and has greatly influenced education despite the criticism that the idea has received from some researchers (Pashler et al., 2008). Proponents of the use of learning styles in education recommend that teachers assess the learning styles of their students and adapt teaching methods to best fit each student's learning style (Yang, 2005; McCarthy, 2010). There is plenty of evidence for differences in individuals thinking and ways of receiving and processing various types of information (Pashler et al., 2008).

David A. Kolb's model of experiential learning can be found in many discussions of the theory and practice of adult education, informal education and lifelong learning (Smith, 2010). It is one of the most influential models of learning styles (Coffield et al., 2004). According to Kolb's model, learning is the process where the knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Coffield et al., 2004). In addition, the ideal learning process engages all four of these modes in response to situational demands; they form a learning cycle from experience to observation to conceptualization to experimentation and back to experience. The four stage learning model represents two polar opposite dimensions of grasping experience (concrete experience and abstract conceptualization), and two polar opposite dimensions of transforming experience (reflective observation and active experimentation). In order for learning to be effective, all four of these approaches must be incorporated and the learner must go through the entire cycle (Kolb, 2007). Kolb's model gave rise to the Learning Style Inventory (LSI), an instrument used to assess the individual's learning style (Table 1). It is a very popular scheme, particularly in the United States (Pashler et al., 2008).

Table 1. Kolb’s Learning Style

Learning Style	Learning characteristic	Description
Accommodator	Concrete Experience + Active Experiment	strong in "hands-on" practical doing; at ease with people but sometimes impatient and pushy (e.g., <u>physical therapists</u>)
Diverger	Concrete Experience + Reflective Observation	strong in imaginative and aware of meanings and values; interested in people and tends to be feeling-oriented (e.g., <u>social workers</u>)
Assimilator	Abstract Conceptualization + Reflective Observation	strong in inductive reasoning and creation of theories; thinks it more important that ideas be logically sound than practical (e.g., <u>philosophers</u>)
Converger	Abstract Conceptualization + Active Experiment	strong in problem solving, decision making, and the practical application of ideas; prefers dealing with technical problems rather than interpersonal issues (e.g., <u>engineers</u>)

Source: The Kolb Learning Style Inventory-LSI Workbook Version 3.1. (2007)

As mentioned, individuals may exhibit a preference for one of the four styles — Accommodating, Converging, Diverging and Assimilating (Figure 1).

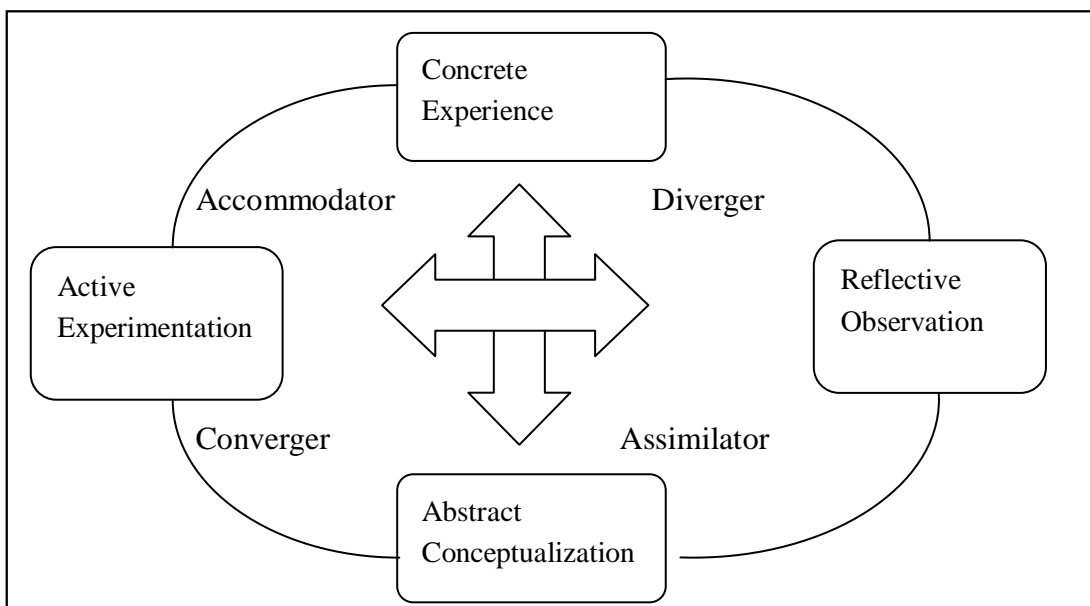


Figure 1. The Experiential Learning Cycle and Basic Learning Styles

Source : The Kolb Learning Style Inventory-LSI Workbook Version 3.1. (2007)

To measure the learning effects of student field trip, Chang and Chan (2013) tried to develop a new learning effect instrument. The measure was examined in three separate analyses. The learning effect scale consists of three dimensions labeled “Skill Learning Application”, “Outside Environment Interaction”, and “Knowledge Learning Growth” that encompass ten statements. A 5-point Likert scale was adopted for each item, ranging from 1—very disagree, 3—neutral, and 5—very agree. Sample items from each dimension include “The field trip makes me learn how to get along with people.”, “The field trip makes me love to learn new things.”, “The field trip makes me learn more of knowledge that textbooks did not teach.”, “The field trip teaches me to love the environment.”, and “The field trip makes me touch more of the mother nature.” (Chang and Chan , 2013).

3. Research Method

The main focus of this paper is to the exam the influence of learning styles to learning effect of overseas field trip. The participants for this research are college students from KNU University Taiwan; they have completed the two-day overseas field trip lessons offered and taught by the researcher in April 12-13, 2017 in Macau. There were total 20 students filling out the questionnaire.

In order to access the learning style, this study uses Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (LSI); which was developed by David Kolb in 1971 to assess individual learning styles (Kolb, 2007). In the questionnaire, there are 12 sentences that describe learning with a choice of four endings. Rank the endings for each sentence according to how well you think each one fits with how you would go about learning something. Write 4 next to the sentence ending the describes how your learned best, and so on down to 1 for the sentence ending that seems least like the way you would learn (Kolb, 2007).

The quantitative data on each subjects' learning effect was obtained through the usage of a Field Trip Learning Effect Scale developed by Chang and Chan (2013). It consists of three dimensions labeled “Skill Learning Application”, “Outside Environment Interaction”, and “Knowledge Learning Growth” that include ten questions representative of significant field trip learning effect. However, the items are not fit into all of specific subject. Hence, after a close examination of the items, certain modifications were made in order to tap into the context of the current research. The ten items were reworded slightly and scale down to nine questions so that all of the questions can reflect the overseas field trip context.

A 5-point Likert scale was adopted for each item, ranging from 1—very disagree, 3—neutral, and 5—very agree. Sample questions from each dimension include:

- The field trip makes me learn how to get along with people.
- The field trip makes me love to learn new things.
- The field trip makes me learn more of knowledge that textbooks did not teach.

- The field trip teaches me to love the environment.
- The field trip makes me touch more of the mother nature.

4. Findings

The learning style of participant students are listing as followed (Table 2); there are six accommodators, four divergers, three assimilators, and seven convergers.

Table 2. Students Learning Style Analysis

Learning Style	Number of Students	Percentage
Accommodator	6	30%
Diverger	4	20%
Assimilator	3	15%
Converger	7	35%
Total	20	100%

The learning effect of participant students are listing as followed (Table 3); participant students have highest average in Outside Environment Interaction, and follow by Knowledge Learning Growth and Skill Learning Application.

Table 3. Students Learning Effect Analysis

Item	Skill Learning Application	Outside Environment Interaction	Knowledge Learning Growth
Average	4.4	4.767	4.517
Standard Deviation	1.28841	1.004988	1.359228

To exam the influence of learning styles to learning effect of participant students, the one-way ANOVA is used to test them (Chang & Lin, 2005; Wang, 2007). We set learning styles as the factor and the three dimensions of field trip learning effect as the dependent variable lists. The results are as followed (Table 4):

Table 4. Learning Styles to Learning Effect One-way ANOVA Analysis

Item	F-test value	P value
Skill Learning Application	0.999	0.419
Outside Environment Interaction	3.327	0.046*
Knowledge Learning Growth	3.787	0.032*

*p<.05

If the value is significant at the specified value of alpha, a star is placed to the right of the F Ratio; here

the p value would have to be less than 0.05 to make the F-ratio significant. According to the results, The p value of Outside Environment Interaction and Knowledge Learning Growth are less than 0.05; that is, both of the two dimensions have reached to the significant level. Therefore, there are significant correlation between the learning styles and the learning effect of participant students in Outside Environment Interaction and Knowledge Learning Growth. However, the p value of Skill Learning Application is bigger than 0.05; it has not reached to the significant level.

5. Conclusion

Derived from the above findings, we have arrived the following conclusions:

1. While field trips are a valuable way of providing experiences not available in the classroom, some students avail themselves of all such opportunities. The overseas field trip provides the students an experiential learning opportunity to understand the world of by field observation and survey of the natural environment, social and economic development, transportation and marketing planning in a designated part of a foreign country. In addition, it can reinforce and develop specific and general skills, to provide the possibility for experiential learning and the challenge of different environments, to permit textbook derived knowledge to be sorted and clarified, and to encourage the development of tacit or intuitive knowledge.
2. The experiential learning and interactive learning have resulted in positive outcomes for students. According to the students learning effect analysis, participant students have received the good learning effect in this overseas field trip; it is emerged from the high average score in Outside Environment Interaction, and follow by Knowledge Learning Growth and Skill Learning Application.
3. It is positive that the learning styles of individual students will influence their learning effect, especially in the aspects of Outside Environment Interaction and Knowledge Learning Growth. However, in the aspects of Skill Learning Application, the learning styles of individual students is not significantly influence their learning effect. In short, to understand the learning styles of students, it can improve the teaching activity and the student's learning is optimized.

6. Reference

- Arnesson, K., and Albinsson, G.,(2012), Integration of Theory and Practice in Higher Education. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 53,370-380.
- Before It's News (BIN). (2013, March). The World's Top 10 Largest Casinos. Retrieved March 1, 2017 from <http://beforeitsnews.com/alternative/2013/03/the-worlds-top-10-largest-casinos-2589598.html>
- Chang, C.C., and Chan C. H., (2013), A Study of the Relation between Perception, Satisfaction and Learning Achievement of Elementary School Students-A Case of Mutou Wood Tourism Factory. *Journal of Rural Tourism Research*, 7(2), 59-86.
- Chang, S.S., and Lin S.C., *SPSS Multivariate Data Analysis*, 2005, 1st Ed., Taichung, Tsang Hai

Publishing, pp.45-54.

Coffield, F., Moseley, D., Hall, E., and Ecclestone, K., (2004), Learning styles and pedagogy in post-16 learning: a systematic and critical review. *London: Learning and Skills Research Centre.*

Retrieved March 1, 2017 from

<http://skills.nl/lerenlerennu/bronnen/Learning%20styles%20by%20Coffield%20e.a..pdf>

Kolb.D.A., (2007), The Kolb Learning Style Inventory-LSI Workbook Version 3.1.

Technical Specifications. Retrieved March 1, 2017 from <http://www.learningfromexperience.com>

McCarthy, M.,(2010), Experiential Learning Theory: From Theory to Practice.

Journal of Business & Economics Research,8(5), 131-139.

Pashler, H., McDaniel, M., Rohrer, D., and Bjork, R. A., (December 2008).

Learning styles: concepts and evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, **9** (3): 105–119. Retrieved March 1, 2017 from

http://steinhardtapps.es.its.nyu.edu/create/courses/2174/reading/Pashler_et_al_PSPI_9_3.pdf

Said, S. (2013, January). The Top 10 Casinos in the World. Retrieved March 1,

2017 from <http://www.therichest.com/business/the-top-10-casinos-in-the-world/>

Smith, M. K., (2010). David A. Kolb on Experiential Learning, the Encyclopedia of Informal Education. Retrieved March 1, 2017 from

<http://infed.or/mobi/david-a-kolb-on-experiential-learning>

Walker, C., (2010, May). Ten Largest Resorts in the World. Retrieved March 1,

2017 from <http://www.mademan.com/mm/10-largest-resorts-world.html>

Wang, Y.D., *Social Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches and Applications*, 2007, 1st Ed., Taipei, Wiseman Publishing.

Yang, S.M., (2005), The Influence of Learning Styles to Learning Achievement of On-line Courses. *E-Soc Journal*,44. Retrieved March 1, 2017 from

<http://mail.nhu.edu.tw/~society/e-j/44/44-06.htm>