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Enhancing students' global competence through international business study missions

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Enhancing Students' Global Competence through International Business Study Missions

Abstract

Purpose – This article shares how an Asian University enhanced students' global competence through international business study missions (BSMs). More specifically, it focuses on (i) how the design of these BSMs enabled “deep” learning beyond industry tourism and (ii) how 21st century competencies such as ‘global competence’ can be acquired through participation in short-term, faculty-led study missions.

Design/methodology/approach – Using the case study approach, it critically analyses the learning goals and objectives, design decisions, implementation details and learning outcomes underlying three business study missions led by three instructors from the same university to the USA (New York), Germany (Berlin and Stuttgart), and South Korea (Seoul).

Findings – The study shows that students gained global competencies related to specific fields of study such as the creative industries, urban sustainability, and entrepreneurship. It shows how design choices such as destination, range of organizations, length of individual visits, range of pedagogical techniques, intensity of preparation, and quality of management contribute to students' acquisition of global competencies.

Research limitations/implications – Our research presents a subset of case studies that may limit the generalization of the findings; the bias that results from an unrepresentative, opportunistic sample (selection bias); and lack of quantitative causality in a qualitative evaluation.

Practical implications – The course design described here provides practical information for designing study abroad “deep” learning goals, objectives and outcomes focusing on global competence.

Originality/value – The detailed case studies of three instructors from different disciplines to achieve the country's education vision of globally competent students.

Keywords Global competencies, Study missions, Curriculum design, Asian University, Study abroad, Short term, Faculty led, Learning outcome

Paper type Case study

Introduction

The geographical setting is the Republic of Singapore, a city state in Southeast Asia with about 5.9 million people. Singapore stands out as an interesting case study in successfully developing its human capital base. The island republic is well known for the systemic effort of the country's leadership to turn development aspirations into reality (Asia Society OECD, 2018). Singapore's Ministry of Education aspires for its students to be “prepared to face challenges and seize the opportunities brought about by globalization, changing demographics and technological advancements” (MOE Singapore, 2020). Students schooled in the Singapore education system are expected to have 21st century competencies and student outcomes include the need for civic literacy, global awareness and cross-cultural skills.

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3 At the Anonymous University (AU), all students must complete a global exposure experience
4 prior to graduation, as part of the university's efforts to achieve Singapore MOE's vision. AU
5 students may fulfil the global exposure requirement by participating in any of the following:
6 summer programmes, overseas exchange, study missions, overseas projects, overseas community
7 involvement, overseas internships, global innovation immersion or overseas co-curricular
8 activities such as competitions, conferences or performances. While each of these opportunities
9 presents different experiences, the key question is how effective short-term, faculty-led study
10 missions should be designed to enhance students' global competence and what this term actually
11 means (Weninger, 2017).
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14 Short-term, faculty-led study missions provide students with insights into industries related to
15 their field of study through meetings and visits to companies abroad. Besides the opportunity to
16 study a specific country's developing relationship with Singapore, students get to analyse and
17 interact with successful start-ups and larger firms in the specific country during the course and the
18 actual trip. Through coursework, research and site visits, students are enabled to understand topics
19 relevant to globalization, such as business models, competition and market trends,
20 internationalization strategy, and so forth.
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22 The key research goals of this paper are
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24 RG1 to discuss *how the design choices of our short-term study missions allow for “deep”*
25 *learning beyond industry tourism*, and
26

27 RG2 to explain *how 21st century competencies such as ‘global competence’ can be acquired*
28 *through short-term, faculty-led study missions*
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30 by analysing the design decisions underlying three study mission cases presented in this paper.
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32 One novel aspect of this article is that it *externalizes* the experiences of three instructors from
33 two schools at AU across disciplinary boundaries: communication management, organizational
34 behaviour and information systems – a collaboration challenge highlighted by Nolan and
35 Kurthakoti (2019) for larger institutions.
36

37 Literature Review

38 *The Concept of Study Missions (Abroad)*

39 Study mission or study abroad is an immersive and experiential learning program (Brandauer
40 and Hovmand, 2013; Conran, 2019; Nolan and Kurthakoti, 2019; Panina, 2019). Experiential
41 learning – or learning through an experience – has been a crucial part of college and university
42 education for a long time (Schmidt, 2004). Fundamentally, it involves a “direct encounter with
43 the phenomena being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter, or only
44 considering the possibility of doing something about it. Experiential learning can be defined in
45 terms of an instructional model, which begins with the learner engaging in direct ‘experience’
46 followed by reflection, discussion, analysis and evaluation of the experience” (Borzak, 1981;
47 Brookfield, 1983).
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49 The most famous experiential learning theory was developed by David A. Kolb (Kolb and
50 Fry, 1975). His model comprises four elements: concrete experience, observation and reflection,
51 the formation of abstract concepts, and testing in new situations. Kolb's research shows that
52 experiential learning occurs when students engage in these four activities, ideally as iterative
53 steps in a learning cycle or spiral where the learner ‘touches all the four bases’ (Chavan, 2011).
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Experiential learning confers a number of benefits to students. These include giving learners valuable opportunities to apply theory to practice (Gremler et al., 2000); providing students with the necessary competencies to pursue professional careers upon graduation (Baxter and Marcia, 2001); and letting students develop the skills and accumulate the requisite job experience to gain a competitive edge when looking for employment after graduation (Chavan, 2011). Other studies show that experiential learning improves grades (Reitmeier, 2000) and attitudes towards challenging material (Pugsley and Clayton, 2003). It can also increase students' motivation by showing them the applicability of knowledge acquired in school to their lives (Briers, 2005).

Increasingly, short-term, faculty-led study missions are appealing to students as they offer greater flexibility and lesser financial or academic demands compared to full-time overseas exchange programs (Interis et al. 2018; Janda, 2016; Mapp, 2013). Moreover, short-term trips help students to gain the confidence and desire to participate in longer term trips. Study abroad participation for eight weeks or less during the academic year in the United States grew the most in terms of percentage, from 9.5% in 2005/2006 to 19% in 2017/2018 (Institute of International Education, 2019). This is the highest market share growth compared to other countries' study abroad programs.

Short-term programmes reduce the concerns administrators have about the academic quality of, or credit transfer from, foreign partner universities and are less costly to operate than university-owned study centres abroad (Heisel and Kissler, 2010). From a student's perspective, many of the obstacles to studying abroad are lower. For instance, leaving friends and family for long periods, studying in an unfamiliar language, and coping at an overseas university or a foreign country are less likely to be a concern in these types of programmes, most of which last only one to eight weeks.

Nonetheless, shorter, faculty-led programs still afford students many of the benefits of longer study abroad programs. According to Zamastil-Vondrova (2005), students develop greater sensitivity to, and patience with other cultures and languages; learn to cope with new and unusual surroundings; discard false preconceptions about the places they visit; and grow in overall confidence. Similar studies by Hallows et al. (2011) and Opengart (2018) report that students learn to be more independent, confident, and are more willing to adapt. However, due to the short duration, many of these trips focus on only general levels of analysis. In our study abroad, we focus on a specific field of study with intense pre-trip activities that allow for a "deeper" learning opportunity, similar to Vance et al. (2011) who focus on the travel and tourism industry.

The Concept of Global Competence

Various educators, scholars, governmental entities and advocacy groups have attempted to define 'global competence' with reference to concepts such as global perspective, local responsiveness, cross-cultural sensitivity, etc (Hallows et al. 2011; Sullivan and Tu, 1995). However, there are few descriptions of what 'global competency' entails, with most research papers merely stressing the importance of educating a 'global ready' workforce to address the importance of globalization (Li, 2020; Kjellgren and Keller, 2018; Topi et al. 2017; Dirkes, 2015). According to Asia Society OECD (2018), there are four overlapping dimensions that students need to interact successfully with people face-to-face as well as virtually around the world. Table I describes these four aspects that holistically make up a singular concept: **global competence**.

Table I

Globally competent students understand that the world is a system in which their actions, as well as the actions of nations, have consequences across the globe. They see the interconnectedness of humans with the landscape and environment; they understand why people settle and live where they do; they understand how their local economy is affected by global economic forces; they see history as an ongoing story with many threads, rather than a series of unconnected events; they are aware of the big questions doctors, scientists, and policymakers are trying to answer and recognize the forces that impede or accelerate progress; and they are attuned to the differences as well as the similarities of cultures. These characteristics of a global competent student are aligned with Singapore MOE's 21st century competencies: civic literacy, global awareness and cross-cultural skills.

Methods

To shed light on our research goals, we used a multiple case-study approach featuring three study missions in the tradition of Eisenhardt (1989), Yin, (1994) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). The aim is to arrive at an analytical generalization that extends global competence concepts and related practical pedagogical applications. The case study method is especially relevant in research where the scholar is seeking new insights. In selecting cases, (Eisenhardt, 1989) posits that qualitative samples should be *purposive* rather than random if the goal is to extend a concept. Following this principle of selection, we formulated the following selection criteria: (i) provision of deep learning opportunities related to global competence via effective design; and (ii) the robust reputations of corporate hosts whose firms are fuelled by competitive and sustainable business models. The case study approach has been widely used for study abroad research (Alexejun and D'Angelo, 2013; Brandauer and Hovmand, 2013; Conran, 2019).

Table II explains why we visit these cities and countries, and table III provides the demographic data of the student populations in our three study mission case studies, which meets the selection criteria described above.

Table II

Table III

Case Studies

We feature three case studies: Business Study Mission (BSM) New York, BSM Germany (Berlin & Stuttgart) and Technopreneurship Study Mission (TSM) Seoul. Through these case studies, we examine the teaching and learning approach related to the acquisition of global competence at the *learning outcomes* level.

Case study 1: BSM New York (USA)

The creative industries are important agents of economic growth and socio-cultural change. Using an interdisciplinary approach, the BSM New York aimed to introduce students to the business models and strategies of firms in these industries. Between 2005 and 2019, the BSM made it possible for students to visit leading organizations such as Spotify, New York Times, Conde Nast, Google, Coach, R/GA, Sony Music, Sony Pictures, and Carnegie Hall.

Several factors make the course a challenging but rewarding learning experience: First, unlike conventional products and services, "Creative industries produce 'symbolic goods' where value is primarily dependent upon the play of symbolic meanings" (Bilton and Leary, 2002). Second, the advent of digital technologies has had a dramatic impact on how creative products are discovered and consumed (Smith and Telang, 2016). This impact needs to be taken into account when

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3 formulating strategies for creative industry firms. Last, but not least, the students needed to be
4 cognizant of the influence of culture on the mindsets of creative professionals. The BSM New
5 York in 2019 comprised undergraduate students who were selected on the basis of their GPAs,
6 fields of study, co-curricular activities, and performance during interviews conducted by the
7 instructor.
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9 *Example of a Project by GroundUp Music.* Founded in 2012, GroundUp Music is a New York-
10 based record label known for recordings in a variety of genres including jazz, world music, folk,
11 rock, and gospel. GroundUp Music's most famous band is Snarky Puppy, which had performed
12 twice in Singapore – in 2014 and 2016. The band's critically acclaimed performances and growing
13 cult following in Singapore had perked GroundUp's interest in exploring the Singapore market for
14 the other artists on its roster. As Singapore is an excellent 'launch pad' for other Southeast Asian
15 capital cities such as Bangkok, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, it holds a strategic significance for any
16 media company that wants to build a name for itself in the region. Thus, the class project provided
17 GroundUp with an excellent opportunity to gain timely and valuable insights into the Singapore
18 audience and market.
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21 The brief required the students to develop 'buzz' in Singapore for four GroundUp artists. It
22 meant creating a positioning that accurately reflected each artist's differentiating proposition to a
23 clearly defined audience in Singapore. First, this required the students to understand the artist's
24 background, genre, and fan base in the US through secondary research and online chats with
25 GroundUp music executives. Second, the students had to develop insight into the demographics
26 and psychographics of the potential Singapore audience using qualitative interviews with experts
27 in the local music industry and existing music fans. Last, they had to create a communication plan
28 for Singapore that included publicity, partnerships, and platforms.
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31 To prepare the students for their project and presentation in New York, the class sessions in
32 Singapore equipped them with knowledge about strategy, the science behind hit cultural products,
33 and how culture influences creative production. In addition, they had two video conferences with
34 GroundUp Music's label director and the Chief Strategy Officer of New York creative agency
35 Fred & Farid. These interactions gave them the opportunity to clarify issues, ask questions, and
36 test initial ideas. The students also met and received presentations from the founder of Singapore's
37 leading film production company (mm2); Jasmine Sokko (one of Singapore's most popular singer-
38 songwriters); an executive from Singapore's top music tech company, (Musiiio), and a director at
39 the government's placemaking agency (Urban Redevelopment Authority). This exposure to the
40 strategies and perspectives of companies in both Singapore and the US fostered their capacity to
41 examine global business issues from 'Asian' and 'Western' perspectives.
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44 The course culminated in presentations to GroundUp COO Eric Lense and label director
45 Caroline Fontanieu on the last day of their New York trip. The presentations helped both parties
46 to gain new perspectives: On the one hand, the students learnt about the financial constraints of
47 running an independent music company and their implications for the firm's global marketing and
48 communication. On the other hand, GroundUp learnt about the idiosyncrasies of the Singapore
49 market for each of their bands. It was a win-win scenario.
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52 In addition to the project, the students visited nine highly respected companies in the New York
53 creative industries including Disney Theatricals Group, The Broadway League, Downtown Music
54 Publishing, Kate Spade, and Gimlet Media.
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56 *Case Study 2: BSM Berlin & Stuttgart (Germany)*
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3 In the following, we examine a 2019 short-term faculty led business study mission trip to Berlin
4 and Stuttgart with special thematic reference to sustainable (smart city) management and digital
5 transformation. Propelled by the transition to a low carbon, environmentally sound, reliable, and
6 affordable energy supply and a vibrant technology ecosystem, Germany's capital has become a
7 hub for ground-up initiatives in the areas of urban mobility, renewable energy and digital economy
8 to develop intelligent solutions for the city of tomorrow. One driver is the Berlin Agency for
9 Electromobility eMO, the central point of contact for smart mobility in the German capital region.
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12 The Berlin visit exposed students to the futuristic EUREF (European Energy Forum) campus,
13 a business, research and education hub built on a former industrial site. It serves as a test bed and
14 demonstration platform for regulators, transport operators, airports, corporations, business parks,
15 and universities who wish to experience new autonomous mobility solutions. eMO's self-driving
16 shuttle EZ 10 is ideal for last-mile transportation (experts from global testing, certification,
17 inspection and training provider TÜV SÜD have assessed the EZ10 for open road usage). The
18 EUREF campus hosts clean-energy-related companies and organisations such as the Green
19 Garage, a cleantech accelerator that helps start-ups turn the climate challenge into a business
20 opportunity.
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23 To appreciate the role of IoT (Internet of Things) as an enabler of sustainable ('smart') homes,
24 mobility and cities, the group visited the new Bosch IoT Campus in Berlin Tempelhof where more
25 than 300 employees advise external customers and partners on the development and
26 implementation of projects for 'networked solutions'.
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28 The increasing importance of low-emission and market-driven, sustainable mobility of the
29 future (via electric mobility and fuel-cell technology) became obvious during our visit of the
30 Mercedes Benz plant in Sindelfingen (near Stuttgart, the capital of the state of Baden-
31 Wuerttemberg). The success of the German automotive cluster depends on the country's high-
32 quality technical and vocational training system. Trainees are well paid and acquire core skills in
33 an environment conducive to learning through highly skilled master craftsmen and on the basis of
34 systematic training plans.
35

36 *Example of Global Competencies Acquired by a Visit of Mann & Hummel.* In Stuttgart, the students
37 had the opportunity to take a closer look at the strategic business and innovation management
38 systems of the Mann+Hummel Group. The company produces various filter elements for the local
39 and international automotive and mechanical engineering industries. Due to the entry of new types
40 of electronics into the engine compartments in cars and respective space requirements, there is a
41 need to adapt air filter systems to this new trend. The firm employs hundreds of research-and-
42 development experts to ensure that it can respond to changing installation conditions and future
43 electromobility trends with novel product solutions.
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46 One current concern is the need to develop cleaner solutions for both people and machines to
47 combat the high levels of air pollution in cities, in particular pollution caused by particulates.
48 According to the World Health Organisation, particulates are responsible for the deaths of around
49 47,000 people every year in Germany. Particulate vehicle emissions come not only from the
50 exhaust but also from braking and tyre and road abrasion. Electric vehicles are not entirely
51 pollution-free, although they are often labelled as zero emission vehicles. Mann+Hummel's so-
52 called "Fine Dust (Feinstaub) Eater" project, with test vehicles operating in the air polluted city of
53 Stuttgart is a response to this threat. Key takeaways of the M+H visit included the insight that (i)
54 fine dust from car brake pads is a major source of air pollution which needs more stringent
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3 regulation (and novel filter solutions); (ii) that smart, sensor-linked interior cabin air filters can
4 prevent ultra-fine particles from entering the vehicle which in turn greatly improves a driver's
5 well-being, and (iii) that AI-fuelled, advanced data analytics services (e.g. to generate insights on
6 the impact of operation and cleaning schedules of membranes) are novel business approaches that
7 differentiate 'green' industry leaders from followers. These insights emerged due to various, very
8 well curated learning stations M+H had prepared as part of the visit, including professional
9 presentations and debriefs by M+H's senior management team and Q&A sessions.

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12 BSM Germany effectively addressed three of the four dimensions of global competency by
13 building students' capacity to (i) critically examine issues related to environmental sustainability,
14 (ii) to appreciate different perspectives and worldviews, e.g. of founders and senior business
15 managers with regard to green(er) business models, and (iii) to interact positively with other people
16 such as young female engineering students in Stuttgart who are pursuing a dual study programme
17 at German car-makers.

18 19 *Case Study 3: TSM Seoul (South Korea)*

20 Since 2012, TSM has introduced over 200 students to the entrepreneurship scene in Seoul, as well
21 as other cities such as Silicon Valley and New York. According to Peter Drucker's book (Drucker,
22 1999), entrepreneurship refers to the practices of consistently converting good ideas into profitable
23 commercial ventures and innovation as the systematic act of turning "something" (product, idea,
24 information, technology, etc.) into a resource that is of high value to its target market. We want
25 our students to understand the factors and ecosystem that leads to entrepreneurship and innovation
26 for start-ups and large firms in cities abroad. This allows students to look beyond Singapore.

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29 The course project usually involves bringing the companies' profitable commercial venture or
30 value of their product to Singapore. For example, the project could involve coming up with a
31 Singapore marketing campaign, surveying Singaporean as potential customers to build a brand, or
32 testing a prototype customized for Singaporean taste. Through such projects, students engage with
33 representatives from the company in formal and sometimes informal methods. They provide
34 opportunities to understand subtle cultural perspectives, such as the motivation and passion of co-
35 founders of start-ups or company associates. We have worked with New York companies such as
36 Revolut (a fintech start-up providing digital banking and travel card services); and Stack Overflow
37 (runs a popular online community for software developers).

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40 *Example of a Project by Stack Overflow.* Stack Overflow, whose CEO Prashanth Chandrasekar is
41 a Harvard Business School graduate, is known worldwide as a community for developers and
42 technologists to get answers to their problems. The project problem statement was "What could
43 Stack Overflow do to encourage more students to become active community members?" In order
44 to validate this problem, the team surveyed our students to find out how active they are and the
45 reasons for their participation. The surveys provided insights into AU's developer community in
46 Singapore that are useful to Stack Overflow. In addition to the survey, the team did a SWOT
47 analysis and learnt about current strategies such as gamification to reward collaborative
48 documentation, especially in the much lacking space of providing sample code to use software
49 API. The analyses and research gave them inspiration for their recommendations that were
50 presented to Stack Overflow's director of Public Q&A, Sara Chipps. Students learnt about existing
51 business problems faced by Stack Overflow, how to conduct and analyse data from surveys to get
52 insights, the current strategies deployed and how to pitch their recommendations. Students had the
53 chance to clarify issues and ask questions while the Stack Overflow team provided some guidance.
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Besides the course project, students are required to research on an organization to visit so that they are able to recognize, understand and appreciate the perspective of the organization in the city they operate. According to Peng et al. (2015), this pre-briefing enhances participant's interest and confidence in intercultural interactions (motivational CQ). We visited large firms such as InterPark, KBS, Kakao and Seoul Topis as well as start-ups such as VCNC, GreedEat, Trazy, Weenu, Memebox, Korbit, and Moglue; and incubators or coworking spaces such as Google Campus, Startup Alliance and Go Venture. Visits to universities such as SNU and KAIST helped students get a sense of the motivation behind the talents that fuel entrepreneurship. With some organizations we networked over lunch, dinner or an informal setting such as a gaming session.

The founder sharing sessions provide candid discussions on what to look out for when starting a company. Students are able to engage openly, appreciate different perspectives and hopefully reflect and apply what they learn on their own start-up. A desired side effect for the course is to aspire new entrepreneurs and start-up ventures. Thus, it is important that our students understand the tough journey of a founder and know the high rate of start-up failures. "*You have this brilliant idea. You have formed a wonderful all-rounded star team. That's great news! Now I will explain what you have to do to ensure you get your FIRST funding!*" At the end of the visits, students are required to reflect on the ideas/products, founders/teams, business models, and finance in different stages of the company journey.

The reflections show deeper insights into the start-up reality which requires hard work and passion for the long journey ahead, beyond just coming up with an idea. The visits help students to empathize with culture differences, such as the vibes/mindset, and culture similarities, such as the challenge of giving up a stable income to pursue his passion. They learn lessons to persevere when the going gets tough and draw inspiration from success such as Kakao, a company that started with a text messaging app KakaoTalk when we first visited, to a suite of apps including their latest success in KakaoBank. Similar to prior case studies, students can attain global competencies on entrepreneurship, cultural perspectives and the opportunities to interact. We are confident that these lessons helped them set their minds on what actions to take when they venture on their own start-up ideas.

Discussion

In this section, we will discuss how our students acquired global competencies (RG2) through effective design choices (RG1). The case studies systematise how we turned global competency-related *learning goals* and *objectives* (see Tables IV to VI) into concrete learning *outcomes* (see Table VIII). In terms of designing effective courses, all three components – learning goals, objectives and outcomes – are critical for successful course design. *Learning goals* refer to the higher-order ambitions educators have for their students; *learning objectives* refer to the more specific, measurable competencies; and *learning outcomes* describe the learning that course participants have achieved (The Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, 2020; The Peak Performance Center, 2020).

Design Choices (RG1)

In contrast to industry tourism, "deep" study tours must have a proper format (Bergsteiner and Avery, 2008; Madden et al. 2019; Panina, 2019). Our learning goals and objectives guided the decisions we made to achieve the proper format for our courses. This format included: an interesting and relevant *country destination* (social, cultural, and business-approach divergence from Singapore); a comprehensive *range of organizations* to be visited (e.g. manufacturing, services, government, research); an adequate *length of tour* (i.e. two weeks) and *individual visits*

(i.e. two to three visits per day); a *range of pedagogical techniques* (e.g. self-learning, graded assessments); *intense preparation* (e.g. in-depth briefing report); *quality management at all stages* (e.g. selection of students, selection of hosts, qualification of instructors); and insightful (*de*)*briefings*. All these provide for an extraordinarily rich and deep learning experience (Diamond, 2008). The following comment from a student in the BSM Germany makes direct reference to design choices:

“The course was well planned, and covered innovation, sustainability and AI, all of which are very important matters which will determine the course of human history. It has given me tools to plan my own future and clarified my own ideas about how the world should continue on its path of sustainable development.” - anonymous course feedback.

Destination. The selection of the ‘right’ destination and hosts was based on the country’s/city’s/company’s reputation in the domain of focus: New York is regarded as one of the world’s great ‘creative’ cities; Berlin (Germany’s capital) has become a globally leading hub for clean energy and climate change mitigation start-ups; Seoul (South Korea) has one of the highest Internet penetration rates in the world – an important criterion for technopreneurship. The importance of destination is highlighted in the following comments from students in BSM New York and TSM South Korea, respectively:

“The opportunity to travel to New York and visit the leading companies in this city is truly an unforgettable experience. The culture and the way of thinking in New York companies is very different from the situation in Singapore. I have picked up practical advice from various leaders we met that I can definitely apply to what I do in the near future.”

“I think it gives students the experience to travel to another country to see the world. From there, we can learn better and understand their culture. In this case, traveling to Korea will let us see how successful start-up companies there are and learn from them.”

Range of organizations. The cases feature a wide range of hosts (e.g. manufacturing, services, government, research). The selection of hosts in New York’s creative industries was based on a combination of the companies’ reputations, *Fast Company* magazine’s “Most Innovative Companies” list, and recommendations by senior industry contacts in New York and Singapore. In the case of BSM Germany, hosts were selected on the basis of operational (engineering) excellence and innovativeness (e.g. Daimler Benz, Bosch, Mann & Hummel) in aligning the firms’ business models with sustainability concerns. Entrepreneurial leadership and innovativeness were criteria for choosing relevant hosts for the TSMs.

Choosing the right host is critical to the success of the course. The host’s reputation within the industry, their existing relationships with faculty, and students’ interests do matter. Country-specific industry awards and rankings can help instructors to select good hosts so that students get inspiration and learn from the best, whether they are interested in theatre, music, fashion, digital media, green start-ups, clean or renewable energy, automotive innovation, electric mobility, entrepreneurship, fintech, incubation centres, or the gaming industry. Start-up visits, such as to SirPlus (Berlin) or VCNC (Seoul), provide an opportunity to share the founder’s passion and ideas in a deep and freewheeling manner. Visits to other supporting organizations such as garages, campuses, incubators, funding agencies, coworking spaces, accelerators and innovation centres extend the students’ understanding of how each organization contributes to the ecosystem.

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3 Pre-existing relationships between the host and the faculty member can help to achieve better
4 project outcomes, as any project collaboration requires mutual trust and access to information that
5 may not be in the public domain. For example, the faculty member who led BSM New York had
6 close ties with GroundUp Music and worked out a win-win situation where students achieved
7 meaningful global competence learning outcomes, and GroundUp learned about the characteristics
8 of the Singapore market as a launch-off point for the larger Southeast Asia market. Similarly, TSM
9 projects were conducted in collaboration with start-ups interested to enter the SEA market, in
10 exchange for Singapore perspectives on start-up ideas and innovation. The range of organizations
11 visited is alluded to in the following comment from a BSM New York student:
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14 *“I learnt about the inner workings of the creative industries, which would not have been*
15 *possible without the discussions I had with our company hosts and client in New York. In*
16 *addition, I learnt the importance of connecting multiple disciplines to answer the client’s brief.”*
17

18 *Length of tour and individual visits.* With so many potential hosts to visit, our study tours typically
19 entail two to three company visits per day. We agree with Bergsteiner and Avery (2008) that deep
20 learning requires time for reflection. How do we maintain the opportunity to reflect for “deep”
21 learning? Some of our visits to coworking spaces, universities, accelerators and incubators
22 comprise one-site locations with multiple start-ups that allow for sharing sessions by various
23 company founders. These visits help students to get a deeper understanding of the importance of
24 a supportive ecosystem. Even visits comprising multiple host sites in a day can provide good
25 opportunities for “deep” learning if the course mandates intense preparation and pre- and post-trip
26 briefings.
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29 *Range of pedagogical techniques.* AU Study Mission courses are offered as full-term courses in
30 Singapore with one-to-two-week overseas visits. Instructors give lectures and conduct case
31 discussions on topics related to the field of study; invite guests to share their expert perspectives;
32 and get students to work within self-directed groups on applied projects (Panina, 2019; Zhoc et al,
33 2018). Student presentations, reports and reflections are graded assessments. Taken together, these
34 methods give students a kaleidoscopic picture of the creative industries, urban sustainability and
35 entrepreneurship. The following student comment captures the range of pedagogical techniques
36 used:
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39 *“I liked that guest speakers and senior managers came to class before we embarked on our*
40 *trip. That helped to prepare us for things to come and enabled us to ask questions as well. The*
41 *pre-trip group presentations and reports were useful because they helped us to focus our*
42 *research and to learn more about the places and companies to be visited in Germany.”*
43

44 *Intensity of preparations.* This course structure allows for intense preparation, briefings and time
45 for reflection. Students are introduced to the host company and project through briefings. After the
46 briefings, they prepare a project plan and do research on the company before the trip abroad. This
47 preparation includes communication with the host via video conferencing, email, online
48 interviews, messaging, etc. These pre-trip interactions allow them time to reflect on and understand
49 the problem statement from different perspectives. The project, accredited course and grading
50 criteria require students to put in effort to pass the course. During the trip, they present their
51 recommendations and obtain feedback from the host. A student from TSM South Korea wrote this
52 about the intensity of preparations:
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“This course is nothing like the classroom courses I have taken. I like the preparation process leading up to the actual departure of the trip. Researching on start-up companies in South Korea opened up my eyes.”

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Quality Management / Student Selection. AU’s study missions are open to all undergraduate students. However, the popularity of these study missions affords us the luxury of selecting students based on their interest in the country’s culture and their experience in the creative industries, entrepreneurship or urban sustainability. A study by Rexeisen et al. (2008) suggests that what students bring with them to their study abroad experience (e.g. pre-existing demographic characteristics and life experience) influences the likelihood that they will develop a more intercultural mindset during the experience. In fact, it may increase their motivational CQ (Peng et al. 2015). Hence, our selection of students based on their pre-existing interests and experiences can help to achieve this objective. For the TSM, students can choose to approach the companies (e.g. Twitch) they are interested in visiting. These student-led visits enhance student interest and spread the workload required in organizing such study missions.

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While quality management is important, trial visits are not feasible due to cost. On our first visit, we may not be able to foresee or mitigate all risks. However, through repeat visits, we have been able to deepen our ties to hosts, improve the logistics and accommodations and refine our selection mechanisms. A potential opportunity is better coordination across faculty-led study missions to share the burden of logistics (e.g. finding good accommodations) on the basis of a community of shared interest (COI).

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(De-)briefings. We conduct pre-trip briefings and post-trip reflections on the destination city, host organizations and project. These post-trip pieces are graded, which gives students an extrinsic incentive to do well. A student from BSM Germany remarked:

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“I liked that the group project forced us to do research about the various places to be visited in Germany. That provided us some important insights before taking off. The individual post trip reflection was also an effective way for us to consolidate our learning and thoughts about the entire BSM.”

37 38 *Global Competency (RG2)*

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Our second research goal aims to explain how ‘global competence’ (see Table I) can be acquired through Study Missions. We answer this question by explaining our design choices that were based on learning goals and objectives to achieve the learning outcome. Table VIII summarizes the respective learning outcomes of all three study trips, making explicit how the three tours contribute to achieving global competency.

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The first dimension of global competency is the capacity to critically examine issues such as trade, poverty, migration, inequality, environmental justice, conflict, cultural differences, and stereotypes. Each of our study missions addresses issues related to trade (e.g. creative products, green business models and innovative services), migration (e.g. in terms of acquiring talent and funding), conflict (e.g. competition between companies and within ecosystems), cultural differences and stereotypes (e.g. by correcting prejudices towards certain ethnic groups like ‘the Germans’ through interactions with host representatives). This dimension is reflected in the following student comments from BSM Germany and BSM New York:

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“I have learnt a lot about Germany (and Singapore!) both before and during the trip. I enjoyed interacting with both Germans and my classmates during the trip, and I made a number

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3 of friends. It has also opened my eyes to many aspects of sustainability and AI which I have
4 heretofore been unaware of.”

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6 “Learning how to strike the balance between maintaining business sustainability and creating
7 culturally rich work, and how such thinking can be brought back to Singapore.”

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9 The second dimension is the capacity to understand and appreciate different perspectives and
10 worldviews. In BSM New York, learning outcomes include appreciating how creativity and
11 commerce converge in the city. Through the company visits and project work, students are enabled
12 to appreciate how the culture of a place like New York City influences the mindsets of creative
13 professionals working there. In TSM Seoul, participants learn to appreciate the different
14 perspectives of companies in Seoul at different stages (from start-up to innovation in large firms)
15 and how the ecosystem works for them. This worldview helps them to understand their own
16 venture in the global marketplace.

17
18 The ability to interact positively with people of different national, social, ethnic and religious
19 backgrounds, as well as those of different genders is critical in terms of mastering the third
20 dimension of global competency. While we do not specifically design the host representatives to
21 be from different social, ethnic and religious backgrounds as well as different genders, they often
22 are, as their nationalities are likely to be of the country the students are visiting. In fact, some
23 students continue to interact with host contacts via social media, after the course. This second
24 dimension of global competency is captured in the following student feedback from the TSM and
25 BSM New York:

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28 “I get to be exposed to a whole new culture and so far, I have gained plenty of knowledge about
29 entrepreneurship in Korea. Extremely interesting.”

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31 “For anyone who wishes to better understand the mindset, the culture, and the skillsets required
32 to work in the creative industries, there is no better course. The immersion in New York was one
33 of a kind and an experience of a lifetime.”

34 35 **Conclusion**

36 In this article, we explained how our short-term, faculty-led international study missions to New
37 York (USA), Berlin & Stuttgart (Germany) and Seoul (South Korea) supported AU students in
38 acquiring global competencies by highlighting design choices based on learning goals and
39 objectives. Tables IV to VI summarize the respective learning goals and objectives. Important
40 design choices are summarized in Table VII. Table VIII specifies the global competency-related
41 learning outcome. Table IX describes the implications for research, practice and/or society.

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43 For BSM New York, the overall design of the project and the client’s commitment to the project
44 were key to the success of the course. The project engaged and challenged the students and
45 culminated in deliverables that were valuable to the client, while fulfilling the learning objectives
46 of the course. In addition, having company hosts that represented the best in their respective fields
47 ensured that students learnt from the very best. Finally, the students learnt that the creative
48 industries are only as dynamic as the cultural ecosystem in which the companies draw their talent,
49 inspiration and support from.

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52 BSM Germany was instrumental in helping students to appreciate the reasons behind Germany’s
53 *Energiewende* policy and the importance of policies and corporate leadership in promoting
54 sustainable growth in the face of the climate crisis. Students gained valuable insights into the
55 importance of engineering excellence as a source of national wealth creation, global challenges
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3 such as growing protectionism and a slowdown of the Chinese economy as well as the huge
4 investment costs associated with the shift towards electric vehicles, self-driving cars and the rapid
5 rise of connected IoT devices. The Stuttgart visit reminded all participants that there can be no
6 smart city without environmental sustainability.
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8 An important takeaway from TSM Seoul was the insight that entrepreneurs in Singapore can
9 learn from the different perspectives of entrepreneurs in Seoul. In a small city state like Singapore,
10 there are few examples of innovative leaders to get inspiration from. By getting students to work
11 on the course project and understand the culture of the Seoul start-up ecosystem, the hope is that
12 they would critically examine the issues faced by start-ups, appreciate the different perspectives
13 from Singapore and Seoul, interact with contacts from the start-ups, and act on what is required
14 for their own venture with a global market perspective.
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17 By taking part in AU's study missions designed for "deep" learning, students can gain global
18 competence. This learning outcome helps AUs to implement the vision of Singapore MOE's "outer
19 ring" for 21st century competencies. Short-term faculty-led study abroad trips are popular because
20 they represent an immersive form of teaching and learning for students. Learners are able to study
21 in-depth the issues faced by the host company and contribute to making recommendations for
22 change and improvements. The last dimension of global competency – that builds on the first three
23 – puts emphasis on being willing to *act* constructively to address issues of sustainability and well-
24 being. There is arguably room for improvement in this dimension. To close this gap, it might be
25 worthwhile to retool the BSM curriculum so that students can also participate in carrying out their
26 project-related recommendations.
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29 While the current Covid-19 crisis situation has put a temporary stop to international student
30 travel, universities are well advised to continue to nurture 'global citizens for tomorrow' through
31 transformative education on the basis of short-term faculty-led tours abroad. Global challenges
32 such as the war for (creative) talent, the sustainability crisis or building global-ready
33 entrepreneurial firms require a global mindset and global competencies to appreciate and hopefully
34 to resolve them – this is where international business study missions play a significant role.
35

36 In terms of future research, it might be worthwhile to conduct matched-subjects quasi-
37 experiments by comparing desired global competencies between students enrolled in short-term,
38 faculty-led international study missions and learners who are not enrolled in such a course to
39 examine the curriculum's impact. This would allow the researcher to measure potential
40 competency changes between members of the international BSM treatment group and control-
41 group students who are not enrolled in an international course initiative, using a pre-test and post-
42 test design.
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45 Some limitations of our research are that we are presenting a subset of case studies that may
46 limit the generalization of the findings; the bias that results from an unrepresentative sample (i.e.
47 selection bias); and the lack of quantitative causality due to the emphasis on a qualitative
48 evaluation.
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50 **Table IV**

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Table VIII**Table IX****References**

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Table I: Key Dimensions of Global Competency (Asia Society OECD, 2018)

1. The capacity to critically examine issues such as trade, poverty, migration, inequality, environmental justice, conflict, cultural differences, and stereotypes.
2. The capacity to understand and appreciate different perspectives and worldviews.
3. The ability to interact positively with people of different national, social, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, as well as those of different genders.
4. Builds on the first three and stresses being willing to act constructively to address issues of sustainability and well-being.

Table II: Why we visit these cities and countries?

	City, Country	Reasons
1	New York City, USA	New York City is regarded as one of the world's great 'creative' cities and home to some of the world's best-known entertainment, media, and fashion design companies, it provides an ideal setting in which to study the unique characteristics of this vibrant and important sector.
2	Berlin, Stuttgart, Germany	A key objective was to expose students to Germany's operational (engineering) excellence which has enabled export-oriented multinationals such as Daimler Benz to achieve a global market leadership role in the automotive sector vis-à-vis the push towards green innovation and the strategic adoption of sustainable solutions aimed at creating social, environmental and economic value in an era of climate change.
3	S. Korea	It is not by accident that Korea has the highest Internet penetration in Asia. Similar to Singapore, Seoul's government partnered with organizations to set up numerous incubation buildings that support clusters of start-ups in areas such as fintech, gaming and multimedia. These visits are important to understand the start-up ecosystem.

Table III: Demography of the student population

	N	Gender: Male/Female	Affiliated Schools	Year in School
1	23	5 males 18 females	17 business 6 social sciences	5 year 5 6 year 4 12 year 3
2	27	14 females 13 males	1 accountancy 9 business 3 double degree (tech / mgt.)	1 year 5 3 year 4 13 year 3 10 year 2

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			1 economics 11 information systems 2 social sciences	
3	33	25 males 8 females	3 business 29 information systems 1 social sciences	5 year 4 22 year 3 4 year 2 2 year 1

Table IV: Global Competency Acquisition through BSM (USA)

	Learning Goals	Learning Objectives
1	To introduce the business models and strategies in the creative industries.	Students can analyse and explain the strategies that creative firms and groups adopt to compete and win over time.
2	To introduce the science behind hit creative products and entities.	Students can apply theoretical principles and frameworks to a real-life client project.
3	To develop sensitivity to how the culture of a place influences the mindsets of creative professionals working there.	Students can apply their understanding of how art and creativity happen in New York City.

Table V: Global Competency Acquisition through BSM (Germany)

	Learning Goals	Learning Objectives
1	To introduce sustainable business management and digital transformation approaches.	Students can analyse and explain why and how start-ups and large firms make sustainable business management and digitalization work.
2	To sensitize students for the (necessary) transition to a low-carbon, environmentally sound, reliable and affordable energy supply as well as the importance of supportive policies and corporate leadership to promote sustainable growth.	Students can apply conceptual frameworks related to a low-carbon, environmentally-sound economy and digitalization to real-life client projects.
3	To develop competencies related to the creation of sustainable business models and digital transformation.	Students can create a canvas of a sustainable business model fuelled by digital technology that creates social, environmental and economic value in an era of global market expansion and climate change.

Table VI: Global Competency Acquisition through TSM (South Korea)

	Learning Goals	Learning Objectives
1	To introduce the entrepreneurship scene in Seoul.	Students can analyse and explain the differences between start-ups in Seoul and in Singapore.
2	To sensitize students to the characteristics of a start-up and the ecosystem that supports the start-up.	Students can apply analysis and explain how start-ups in Seoul function and fit in the ecosystem at different stages of progress.
3	To develop competencies for students' entrepreneurs to start their own venture.	Students can understand what is required to start a venture with their own start-up idea by comparing with the start-ups we visited.

Table VII: Design Choices of "Deep" Study Tours

	BSM USA	BSM Germany	TSM South Korea
Country/City	New York City	Berlin & Stuttgart	Seoul
Range of organizations	Advertising, film, recorded music, fashion design, video gaming, publishing and theatre sectors.	Climate mitigation space and automotive sector.	Ecosystem focus on technology and innovation.
Length of tour and individual visits	7 days with two visits per day; 1-2 days of cultural visits.	10 days with two visits per day.	5 days with 2-3 visits per day; 1-2 days of cultural visits.
Range of pedagogic techniques	Lectures, case studies, guest talks, applied projects.	Lectures, guest presentations, applied project works.	Lectures, guest presentations, applied project works.
Intensity of preparation	Pre-mission presentations.	Pre-mission presentations and reports.	Pre-mission presentations and reports.
Quality management/ Selection of Students	Selection based on applications and face-to-face interviews	Selection based on applications; long-standing contacts to corporate hosts in Berlin and Stuttgart.	Selection based on interest and experience; corporate hosts based on award and student interest.
(De-)briefings	Short post-mission reflection.	Post-mission reports and Wrap-up session	Reflection and wrap up session

Table VIII: Learning Outcomes of BSM New York, BSM Germany and TSM South Korea

BSM New York	BSM Germany	TSM South Korea
Students demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate why particular creative companies succeed in generating significant revenues and audience.	Students demonstrate the ability to solve real-life client projects with the help of relevant conceptual frameworks related to a low-carbon, environmentally-sound economy and digitalization.	Students demonstrate the ability to solve real-life client problems by surveying, prototyping and testing company product and services with Singapore customers.
Students demonstrate the ability to develop theory-driven and research-based plans to create buzz for a creative product or entity.	Students demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate why start-ups and large firms that have adopted sustainable business management and digital transformation approaches are successful in commercializing their (green) business models.	Students demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate how start-ups are successful in acquiring talent and funding at different stages of their progress.
Students appreciate the different perspectives of the clients and company hosts they come into contact with.	Students appreciate some of the secrets of Germany's economic dynamism and engineering excellence which has enabled export-oriented MNCs to achieve a global market leadership role in the automotive sector vis-a-vis the push towards green innovation and the strategic adoption of sustainable solutions.	Students appreciate the different perspectives and issues faced by the companies visited in Seoul, able to adapt to the Singapore market, users and ecosystem and apply to their own start-up idea.

Table IX: Implications for Research, Practice and/or Society

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of structured internships and on-the-job training programs to make students global-ready. • Impact of communities of practice (COPs) developed in collaboration with global firms on students' learning outcomes (Wenger, 1998) • Integration of Kolb's experiential learning model into a concrete global business unit of a participating training company to supplement more traditional teaching and learning methods (Sims, 1983) • Government support for training providers who impart global skills into students
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