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Business Consulting Projects: An Experiential Learning Opportunity for Students

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ABSTRACT

In response to the criticisms addressed to business schools, teaching formulas that foster experiential learning are increasingly being put forward. The Missions Commerciales de l'Université Laval (MCUL- Université Laval Trade Missions) is a training program designed to foster experiential learning. This program extends over an entire academic year in which students are required to find and fulfill an international development mandate on behalf of a business. The objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which participation in such a business consulting project enables students to acquire new skills and modify certain attitudes. Our results show that student participation in an international trade mission has a considerable impact on the acquisition of professional skills and competencies, as well as the development of personality traits and attitudes. Through this experience, students build confidence, develop a sense of initiative, learn how to promote their competencies and sharpen their presentation (sales pitch) skills. Having completed a trade mission also appears to improve student employability.

Keywords: Experiential learning, business consulting project, trade mission, project-based learning.

INTRODUCTION

Many voices have been raised to question the value of the education provided in business schools (Bach, 2012; Datar, Garvin & Cullen, 2010; Holtom & Porter, 2013), and it has become evident that a change in direction is needed. An often-heard criticism is that the teaching is too theoretical and does not adequately prepare students for the labour market. More specifically, there appears to be a significant disconnect between MBA programs' curricula and the skills that potential employers look for in graduates (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Rubin & Dierdoff, 2009; Rubin & Dierdoff, 2011). One of the avenues that should perhaps be considered to remedy this shortcoming is to prioritize a pedagogical approach based on experiential learning (Brown, Ben Arbaugh, Hrivnak, & Kenworthy, 2013), such as can be provided through business consulting projects. The objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which participation in a business consulting project enables students to acquire new skills and modify certain attitudes. The pedagogical context of this study is centred around the Missions Commerciales de l'Université Laval (MCUL- Université Laval Trade Missions), a training program that extends over an entire academic year in which students are required to find and fulfill an international development mandate on behalf of a business. On a related subject, more general outcomes of this type of training will be explored, in particular as they relate to student employability.

A review of the literature will first provide context to the concept of experiential learning, as well as the notion of project-based learning. Student experience as part of the Trade Missions will then be described in depth to provide a proper understanding of the learning context. The methodology used to identify the Trade Missions' impacts and to measure the learning outcomes will be explained. A presentation of the results and data analysis will provide an opportunity for an insightful discussion of the pedagogical model upon which the Trade Missions program is based as well as the broader impacts of this initiative. As this study is of an exploratory nature, its limitations will be underscored, and promising avenues for future research emanating from this study will be put forward.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) has inspired management education and research for nearly half a century. This theory put forward by D.A. Kolb (1984) is rooted in the work of leading researchers such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin and Jean Piaget. ELT is a dynamic view of learning based on a learning cycle in which the learner travels through four steps: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation (Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Learning is therefore achieved by taking action, on the condition, however, that learners have the opportunity to take a step back and think about what they have just experienced, draw a lesson from this experience or gain a new understanding of the phenomenon and experience it once again.

In an academic context, it is important that the experience be as close as possible to a real situation in which students will eventually find themselves. Case studies, simulations and role playing activities are in fact approximations of reality. Corporate internships, consultancy or intervention projects provide the ideal terrain for experiential learning, to the extent, obviously, that they are designed to enable students to travel through the four steps of the learning cycle.

One of the most critical steps is that of reflection, which involves calling into question one's assumptions. This generally occurs on an individual basis, but it can also be done as a group or within a team which, in the opinion of some researchers, makes the exercise even more productive as greater competence is developed via the social interaction and dialogue that occur when students discuss among themselves and share their points of view (Knapp, 2010; Ohlsson, 2013). The results of Miller and Maellaro (2016) underscore the fact that by compelling students to aggregate their individual reflections into a consensus reflection for the team, the students have the opportunity to reflect once again from the new angle their experience has provided.

The concept of project-based learning refers to the learning outcomes of students engaged in a project of limited duration, that includes goal-directed activities that are negotiated with a client or sponsor that generate both externally validated performance outcomes and individual and collective learning (DeFilippi, 2001). This concept is influenced by the work of authors researching action learning, the basic assumption in action learning being that managers learn best by taking action and reflecting on the action (Revans, 1998). When applied to an academic context, project-based learning has specific implications for instructional design (DeFilippi & Milter, 2009). Students work on a semi-structured or open-ended assignment that requires some engagement outside the classroom setting with real-time primary information sources, project client, or sponsor. The teacher acts as a facilitator, providing access to project opportunities, resources, advice to students. The students design and implement the activities required to deliver what has been negotiated with the client-sponsor. Student project involvement provides the experiential basis for knowledge creation (learning) through student reflection and dialogue on the inter-relationships between theoretical knowledge and its action implications when knowledge is put into practice. Project-based learning is therefore somewhat of a specific application of the more general ELT principles.

In light of the above, it is reasonable to assume that academic projects that place students in "real life" simulation situations by confronting them to real problems provide a unique learning opportunity. The following section describes the Trade Missions pathway, which provides students with precisely such an opportunity by having them play the role of a professional actually on the job.

UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL TRADE MISSIONS

General description

For several years now, Université Laval has offered its students the opportunity to participate in trade missions as international development officers. This training program is carried out under the aegis of the Missions Commerciales de l'Université Laval (MCUL - Université Laval Trade Missions), a non-profit organization managed in collaboration with students. Students are responsible for selling the Trade Missions' services to Québec-based businesses, and then preparing and fulfilling the mandates they are awarded in the targeted country. The nature of these mandates is generally to help the businesses penetrate new international markets (market studies, export assistance) or to internationalize their value chain (import assistance, sub-contracting).

To benefit from these services, the mandating business must make a lump-sum payment of CAD\$ 7,500, which essentially covers the student's travel expenses and the Trade Missions' operating expenses. Although students are not remunerated for this work, they receive academic credits if they fulfill all of the Trade Missions' academic requirements.

Destinations

The first edition of the Trade Missions was held in 1997 with 15 business administration students representing Québec businesses in Argentina. Since then, a total of 18 destinations have been visited, several of which on multiple occasions. The destinations change from year to year, although at least one Asian country and one South American country are always represented. One other particularity worthy of mention: from the very beginning, it was decided to exclude the US market as a potential Trade Mission destination. Since the United States is by far Canada's leading trade partner, it was deemed too easy for students to find mandates there and that the sales experience would be diminished as a result. Furthermore, the cultural and language barriers between Canada and the US are rather low, which would have limited the students' opportunity to develop cultural adaptation skills.

Trade Missions management and operations

The Trade Missions is a non-profit organization headed by a board of directors that includes representatives of Université Laval, business people and Trade Missions alumni. The organization's management includes an academic director and an executive director who work in collaboration with students.

The academic director is a professor with Université Laval's Faculty of Business Administration who ensures that the project's pedagogical component is properly carried out. This is the person who plans the various training sessions throughout the year and who evaluates the assignments written by the coordinators and development officers. The executive director is responsible for the organization's operations. He ensures that objectives are achieved and that the program stays on budget. He orchestrates the recruitment of the coordinators and leads the team to ensure that each member performs the assigned duties. The coordinators and development officers are students who receive academic credits for their involvement.

Coordinators

The coordinators are former development officers who are selected to act as trade mission leaders. They are the immediate superiors of the development officers. Their first duty is to recruit development officers by generating a pool of candidates via a campus-wide advertising campaign. They supervise and support the officers, in particular by helping them achieve their sales targets. They are also responsible for all of the mission's logistics: budgeting, booking flight and hotel reservations, organizing events at the destination, etc. Lastly, they coordinate the mission's activities once they are on site.

Development officers

Development officers are students recruited mainly from business administration, science and engineering, law, communications and international studies programs. On average, nearly 180 students submit an application every year for only 40 available positions, which is an indication of the Trade Missions' popularity and notoriety on campus. After two interviews, development officers are selected on the basis of their leadership, motivation, dynamism and eagerness to work abroad.

The first duty of development officers is to contact businesses, Québec-based SMEs in most cases, to try to secure a mandate. To achieve this, every week for nearly five months, they cold-call business leaders to get an appointment to present their services. Searches in various databases are carried out in order to identify major market trends and business opportunities for the targeted businesses. It should be noted that all development officers are responsible for obtaining mandates for the entire group. This means that every officer must continue to search for and visit businesses as long as all of the mandates have not been secured. This is truly a team effort in which strong connections among the students are created. The mandate-seeking period ends in late March, after which the students focus on preparing their mission.

The nature of a mandate is jointly defined by the development officer and the mandating business, and subsequently validated by the coordinator to ensure it is feasible. Once they have been assigned a mandate, development officers begin to familiarize themselves with the business and its products and to further explore opportunities to be seized abroad. Before they embark on their mission, they produce a report that includes an analysis of the targeted market, an interview questionnaire for the scheduled appointments at their destination, as well as an action plan.

In May, the delegations, each of which includes a dozen development officers and two coordinators, leave for a three-week mission in the targeted countries. In the first days at their destination, the delegation attends a meeting at the Canadian Embassy or Bureau du Québec, depending on the destination. These diplomatic meetings allow the students to validate the work they have done up to that point and, if applicable, schedule additional appointments with foreign companies. On occasion, meetings with local associations or chambers of commerce are also organized for the purpose of expanding their contacts. Over the three-week period, development officers are responsible for meeting with businesses and organizations in order to achieve the objectives set by the clients they represent. Every evening, a team meeting is held in which each person shares a summary of their day, their success stories and obstacles they have encountered. Since the teams are multidisciplinary in nature, these team meetings enable each person to share their specific knowledge and to quickly find solutions to continue fulfilling their mandate. In addition to being in constant contact with their client, every Thursday of the mission, the development officers must provide them with a summary of the appointments scheduled over the previous week.

Upon their return from their mission, the development officers draft a report in which they describe what they did during their mission and the results they achieved. They also formulate recommendations regarding future potential internationalization efforts by the company. After the report is evaluated by the academic director, it is presented and submitted to the business, thereby completing the work of the development officer.

Course associated with the Trade Missions

To participate in the annual Trade Missions, students must first successfully complete the selection process and then register for the six-credit course related to the Trade Missions experience. This is an elective course that any Université Laval student can take, regardless of program or academic level. The general objectives of the course are to promote understanding of the business world, both in Canada and in the destination country, by securing a mandate to represent a Canadian business, preparing the financial, logistic, commercial, cultural and technical aspects of a business trip and conducting real negotiations with potential clients or partners on behalf of the mandating business.

The course includes a more traditional teaching component in the form of thematic workshops led by various experts in international trade, intercultural management, market development, negotiation, leadership and languages. These weekly workshops begin in October and continue until late April. Concurrently, students undergo practical training in the form of coaching from the coordinators as they carry out start-up activities (cold-calling, scheduling appointments, developing sales pitches, etc.). An office is specifically assigned to them in which they can carry out these activities, with access to telephone lines for calls and computers for database searches. Students are expected to dedicate half a day per week to these activities.

Students are mainly evaluated on the basis of their participation in the activities and their mission reports (pre-departure report and final report given to the business). At the end of the process, they must also complete a summary of their experience in which they explain their progression, what they learned from their experience, how they experienced the mission and its preparation, and what left the biggest impression on them, both in terms of the mission and the country they visited. They are also asked to report on their experience with regard to the team dynamics, the difficulties they encountered and how they overcame them. In short, they must put into writing the reflections and actions that resulted from the experiential learning loops they experienced throughout the Trade Missions process.

In light of the above, the nature of the Trade Missions experience appears to foster experiential learning. It can also lead to project-based learning, according to the definition provided by DeFilippi et Milter (2009), the difference being that the facilitator's role is fulfilled by the students-coordinators rather than the professor in charge of the course.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

The student experience summaries and informal conversations with students who have completed a mission suggest that student learning outcomes reach far beyond the objectives set in the course outline. More specifically, it appears that the Trade Missions experience has a profound and positive effect on the students' attitudes, personality traits and skills, which leads us to formulate the following question:

What are the principal impacts of the Trade Missions experience on student attitudes, traits and skills?

This exploratory study therefore focuses on the acquisition of soft skills and changes in attitudes by the students, rather than the acquisition of knowledge about international trade. Given that international trade knowledge acquisition goals are already measured using a broad range of graded activities, another pathway was prioritized, which appeared to us to be more promising.

Sample and context

The cohort observed in this study was the group of 40 students who participated in the Trade Missions from fall 2014 to summer 2015. More than two thirds of the respondents were enrolled in a business program (12 BBA and 15 MBA students), where the remaining respondents were from international studies (6) or other programs (law, communications, languages). The cohort was almost evenly distributed among undergraduate and master's students as well as gender.

Missions for 2014-2015 were held in the following countries: Germany (12 mandates), Indonesia (11 mandates), and Mexico (17 mandates). The mandating businesses were for the most part SMEs: 44% had sales of less than \$10 million and 55% had less than \$25 million. Nearly half of the businesses were located within a radius of 100 miles of the city of Québec, 18% were in the Montréal area and the rest were distributed across the other regions of the Province of Québec.

Data collection method

Before developing a questionnaire, a qualitative analysis of the experience summaries submitted by the students from previous cohorts was conducted to identify the main impacts of the Trade Missions experience on the students. On the basis of this analysis, a questionnaire was subsequently developed. A first set of questions targeted changes observed in attitudes and personality traits, a second set targeted improved communications and sales skills and techniques, and the last set dealt with the acquisition of professional skills. For each question, students were asked to indicate whether they felt that the Trade Missions experience had helped them improve their attitudes, traits, competencies or skills. Possible answers ranged from (1) No, totally disagree to (5) Yes, totally agree.

The questionnaire was administered online to all Trade Missions 2014-2015 participants in late summer 2015. The response rate was 100%, which, although an outstanding result, is not really surprising given the strong student commitment to the Trade Missions.

RESULTS

Table 1, 2 and 3 below list the questionnaire results, based on percentage and frequency (in brackets) of the answers for each possible answer.

Table 1 Improvement of attitudes and personality traits

Dimension Measured	Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree	n	Mean
Self-confidence				25% (10)	75% (30)	40	4.75
Self-knowledge			5% (2)	35% (14)	60% (24)	40	4.55
Independence			2.5% (1)	30% (12)	67.5% (27)	40	4.65
Initiative			2.56% (1)	25.64% (10)	71.79% (28)	39	4.69
Open-mindedness			12.5% (5)	37.5% (15)	50% (20)	40	4.38
Perseverance			5% (2)	25% (10)	70% (28)	40	4.65
Self-confidence in communications with more experienced individuals		2.5% (1)		7.5% (3)	90% (36)	40	4.85

Table 2 Development of communications and sales skills and techniques

Dimension Measured	Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree	n	Mean
Persuading others				42.5% (17)	57.5% (23)	40	4.58
Promoting one's competencies				25% (10)	75% (30)	40	4.75
Knowing how to sell a product			2.5% (1)	50% (20)	47.5% (19)	40	4.45
Knowing how to represent a business				25.64% (10)	74.36% (29)	39	4.74
Identifying the needs of others			5% (2)	40% (16)	55% (22)	40	4.50
Cold calling techniques			7.5% (3)	25% (10)	67.5% (27)	40	4.60
Sales pitch techniques		0	7.5% (3)	45% (18)	47.5% (19)	40	4.40
Appointment preparation techniques	2.5% (1)	0	7.5% (3)	45% (18)	45% (18)	40	4.30
Appointment follow-up techniques		2.5% (1)	7.5% (3)	45% (18)	45% (18)	40	4.33

Table 3 Development of professional skills

Dimension Measured	Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree	n	Mean
Knowing how to conduct oneself in meetings with business people		2.5% (1)	7.5% (3)	27.5% (11)	62.5% (25)	40	4.58
Adapting quickly to unforeseen situations		2.5% (1)	5% (2)	27.5% (11)	65% (26)	40	4.55
Adapting to a foreign culture		2.5% (1)	5% (2)	30% (12)	62.5% (25)	40	4.53
Managing one's stress		2.5% (1)	7.5% (3)	35% (14)	55% (22)	40	4.42
Identifying business opportunities		2.5% (1)	7.5% (3)	32.5% (13)	57.5% (23)	40	4.45
Working efficiently as a team		2.5% (1)	12.5% (5)	27.5% (11)	57.5% (23)	40	4.40
Developing foreign language skills		5% (2)	12.5% (5)	27.5% (11)	55% (22)	40	4.33

In light of the above, it can safely be stated that participating in a project such as the Trade Missions helps students improve a number of attitudes and competencies. On average, the impact is greatest on attitudes and traits (general average of 4.65/5), followed by communications and sales skills and techniques (general average of 4.51/5) and professional skills (general average of 4.47/5).

The dimension for which the results are the most striking is self-confidence. It is true that surmounting the many challenges involved in preparing and carrying out a trade mission can feed one's ego. This appreciation for self-confidence is even more tangible in contacts with older and more experienced individuals (average of 4.85/5). First, students have to interact with business leaders and experienced managers as they seek mandates. Second, they must work in close collaboration with the members of the mandating business, not to mention the many contacts they have to establish abroad with potential suppliers, buyers or distributors. These are outstanding business networking opportunities that seldom if ever occur as part of a regular university curriculum. This also explains why the most improved professional skill was knowing how to conduct oneself in meetings with business people.

We also noted significant student appreciation of their sense of initiative and independence, which are qualities that are essential to a successful mission abroad. With regard to perseverance, students were required to display this quality throughout the mandate-seeking period, as they had to place many cold calls before getting an appointment, and not all appointments result in a mandate.

It bears repeating that the mandate-seeking exercise is a team effort, which one would assume would considerably improve the students' ability to work effectively as a team. However, this dimension scored among the lowest (4.4/5). This can probably be explained by the fact that students learn to work as a team from the moment they begin their university studies, and it is therefore difficult to improve a skill that is already fairly well developed. Similar results were obtained for the open-mindedness dimension, which received a score of 4.38/5, most likely as a result of a sampling bias. Indeed, most students who are interested in participating in the Trade Missions already have extensive travel experience, which suggests that students already had an open mind even before starting their mission. More than likely for the same reason, gains in terms of students' ability to adapt to a foreign culture did not rank among the highest. This may also be due to the fact that the students only spend three weeks abroad, which is very little time to adapt to a new culture.

With regard to sales skills, the most significant improvements were the ability to promote one's competencies, knowing how to represent a business and, to a lesser degree, the ability to identify needs, to persuade and to sell a product. This can probably be explained by the fact that several students hold part-time jobs during their studies or summer jobs working in retail or food and beverage establishments. They have therefore already had a hand in selling products and services. Promoting their own skills, however, is a new experience, as is knowing how to represent a client, as opportunities to practice these skills are rather scarce in a university environment.

As for sales techniques, the most significant gains were in the area of cold calling and, to a lesser degree, giving a sales pitch. This can probably be explained by the fact that business students have many opportunities in their studies to practice these techniques, such as when they participate in interuniversity games or certain entrepreneurship or communications courses.

The dimension with the lowest degree of improvement was language skills. It should be pointed out that the working language for the missions in India and Germany was English. Thus, practically all of the students that were recruited for these missions were already fluent in English. Students who had chosen Mexico as their mission destination were required to have at least intermediate-level Spanish skills. These students were essentially more likely to improve their foreign language (Spanish) skills by participating in these missions.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that the missions enabled the students to develop certain personality traits that are often associated with entrepreneurs, namely, the ability to identify business opportunities and the capacity to adapt quickly to unforeseen situations. Many former officers are in fact now in business.

DISCUSSION

As was explained in the preceding section, participating in the Trade Missions has an undeniable and considerable impact on the students by helping them acquire professional skills and competencies and develop traits and attitudes. How can such success be explained?

The literature reviewed makes reference to the multiplier effect of collective reflection when a student's experience is discussed within a group or team at the reflective observation stage. This is in fact precisely what happens with the Trade Missions. Right from the mandate-seeking period, students get together in the office they are assigned and discuss their successes and challenges among themselves, thus providing mutual encouragement. As was mentioned above, the responsibility to find mandates is shared by all. Students can also count on the support of a coordinator who is available at all times to coach them, listen to them, advise them and share their tricks with them. During the appointments with businesses, the officers are always accompanied, which provides yet another opportunity for experience sharing. Lastly, during the mission, a debriefing session is held every evening in which the day's events are discussed as a group and potential solutions are put forward. The students therefore often find themselves in a context of collective rather than individual reflection as they reflect on and critically examine and evaluate their experiences.

Another factor that is likely to contribute to student learning outcomes is the fact that the project extends over a period of nearly 10 months. On one hand, the students have time to develop trust with their peers, which facilitates the sharing of experience. On the other hand, the program provides students with opportunities for many different but complementary experiences, each with its own learning loop.

Beyond skills acquisition, the Trade Missions also have an impact on student employability. As of May 2017, all of the students from the cohort who had completed their studies were employed. From the 40 students in the cohort, eight were still studying. From the 32 other participants, four students were hired by the business that had mandated their trade mission and were still working on international market development. It is also interesting to note that half (16) of the students who are employed work in the field of international trade (including those who are working for the mandating business). Lastly, five students started their own businesses in the year that followed the end of the Trade Missions program. These data show that the students quickly find employment in connection with the expertise they developed as a result of their participation in the Trade Missions program. Furthermore, the data also confirm that an increasing number of businesses are using consulting projects as an integral part of their hiring process.

That being said, we cannot jump to the conclusion that projects such as the Trade Missions program should be generalized to the entire student body. In our opinion, certain winning conditions should be met for such initiatives to lead to significant learning outcomes. First, it should be pointed out that the students are hand-picked; they do not necessarily constitute a representative sample of Université Laval's student population. From the start, these students were open to this type of experience, which is rather destabilizing and extremely demanding. They had both the time and the desire to launch themselves into such an adventure and the program fit in well with their curriculum. In addition, it goes without saying that this type of academic project cannot be imposed on students; this can only remain an option for them.

From a more practical standpoint, our experience in recent years suggests that no more than around 40 students should be selected for the project as a whole to be manageable and for that many mandates to be found.

Implementing academic projects of this type is no easy task. Expectations toward professors have greatly evolved in the last 20 years, as a result of which many professors focus primarily on their research activities rather than developing innovative teaching formulas, which can unfortunately be very time-consuming. In order for initiatives such as the Trade Missions to see the light of day, their value must be recognized by university authorities and those who champion these projects and shoulder their weight must be supported and rewarded.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The main limitations of this study are of a methodological nature. From the start, we should point to the small sample size, which involved a single cohort of only 40 students. It is therefore difficult to generalize the results in this context. In addition, the data used to measure learning outcomes were only collected at a single point in time— at the end of the Trade Missions. We were therefore unable to assess the impact of the Trade Missions by comparing measures taken before the start of the Missions with those taken at the end. Moreover, the learning outcome measures were of a perceptual nature, as they were based on student impressions. These limitations also constitute avenues for future research, however, since data collection could be carried out before and after future Trade Missions. More objective learning outcome measurement tools could be developed, or proven psychometric tests could be used.

On another note, it would be interesting to take a look at the spinoffs the Trade Missions generate for the businesses that mandate the students. For some, this is their first experience with international trade. It would be interesting to investigate the degree to which this first experience encourages them to develop international markets over the longer term. Given that a certain number of businesses hire the students that represented them as an officer, does this have a training effect on their international activities? It would also be relevant to investigate whether the effects vary according to the country in which the missions are held. Interestingly, almost every year, at least one of the three targeted markets is in a country with which Canada still has very little trade, which makes them more difficult to penetrate (e.g. Indonesia and Turkey). Does a successful mission in an unknown country with significant cultural differences help build confidence among businesses and encourage them to seek out more international opportunities or, on the contrary, are they discouraged by the difficulties they encounter? In short, there are boundless avenues for future research.

CONCLUSION

In response to the criticisms addressed to business schools, teaching formulas that foster experiential learning are increasingly being put forward. It so happens that the Trade Missions formula corresponds precisely to this type of teaching style. Our results show that student participation in an international trade mission has a considerable impact on the acquisition of professional skills and competencies, as well as the development of personality traits and attitudes. Through this experience, students build confidence, develop a sense of initiative, learn how to promote their competencies and sharpen their presentation (sales pitch) skills. Having completed a trade mission also appears to improve student employability, as a significant number of alumni have managed to find employment in the field of international trade. It would certainly be desirable for such learning opportunities to be made available to a greater number of students, but the considerable effort required to implement innovative projects that foster experiential learning cannot be underestimated.

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