



Impact of Field-Based Assignments on Students' Knowledge in the MBA Course in Ahmedabad City

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Field-Based Assignments, Mba Education, Experiential Learning, Student Perceptions

Received : 20 July

Revised : 21 August

Accepted: 28 September

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of field-based assignments on MBA students' knowledge and skills in Ahmedabad city, with a focus on understanding how such assignments enhance various academic and professional competencies. By analyzing the relationship between field-based assignments and students' perceptions of their learning outcomes, the research explores key areas such as the ability to apply classroom knowledge to real-world situations, problem-solving, communication skills, and career-specific competencies. The study also examines whether demographic factors, particularly age, influence students' perceptions of the effectiveness of these assignments. The results indicate that field-based assignments significantly enhance students' problem-solving abilities, communication skills, and engagement with the curriculum, with strong associations found between age and various learning outcomes, including improved analytical skills and real-world business insights. However, the study reveals weak correlations in areas like teamwork development, suggesting room for improvement in fostering collaboration through field-based assignments. Practical implications for MBA programs include the need to design field assignments that are closely aligned with industry requirements, tailored to diverse student profiles, and structured to improve both hard and soft skills. The study also highlights the importance of integrating real-world industry exposure and balancing workload demands. In conclusion, field-based assignments represent a crucial component of MBA education, offering students an effective platform to bridge theoretical knowledge with practical application, thereby better preparing them for challenges in the professional business environment

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced and ever-evolving business environment, the integration of future practical experience with academic learning has become paramount for preparing business leaders (Vidani, 2015). Traditional classroom-based education, while foundational, often falls short in equipping students with the nuanced, real-world skills required to thrive in complex business environments (Vidani, 2015). In this respect, field-based assignments have emerged as a key component of modern MBA programs as an effective bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical application (Vidani, 2015). Field-based assignments are given to the students as a platform to be deeply involved in real business scenarios by interacting with industry professionals and solving problems that organizations encounter on a day-to-day basis (Vidani, 2015).

Field-based assignments, often in the form of internships, live case studies, business simulations, or industry projects, provide MBA students with the opportunity to directly apply academic concepts and frameworks in live business settings (Vidani, 2015). Unlike traditional classroom assignments that focus primarily on theoretical analysis, fieldwork involves hands-on experiences that are critical to understanding the complexities of the business world (Solanki & Vidani, 2016). By participating in such assignments, students can better contextualize the theories and models learned in the classroom, while simultaneously developing a range of essential skills necessary for career success (Vidani, 2016).

The value of these assignments goes beyond simply enhancing practical knowledge (Vidani, 2016). Field-based assignments promote active learning, foster critical thinking, and improve knowledge retention by engaging students in real-world tasks that demand their full participation and cognitive investment (Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017). Moreover, they play a significant role in developing soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership, which are critical for success in today's collaborative and often high-pressure business environments (Niyati & Vidani, 2016). As students face unanticipated challenges and navigate complex decision-making scenarios, they develop problem-solving abilities that are far more applicable than textbook solutions (Pradhan, Tshogay, & Vidani, 2016).

The importance of field-based assignments is underscored by the growing recognition that experiential learning leads to deeper understanding and retention of knowledge compared to traditional, passive learning (Modi, Harkani, Radadiya, & Vidani, 2016). In particular, the application of theoretical concepts to practical situations in industry contexts helps students internalize and retain the knowledge more effectively (Vidani, 2016). The dynamic, often unpredictable nature of field assignments also fosters adaptability, creativity, and innovation—skills that are indispensable in the rapidly changing global business landscape (Sukhanandi, Tank, & Vidani, 2018).

Additionally, field-based assignments offer students unique opportunities to enhance their professional network, interact with industry leaders, and gain exposure to emerging trends and technologies (Singh, Vidani, & Nagoria, 2016). The hands-on nature of these experiences provides invaluable insights into the

operational and strategic challenges businesses face, while also honing students' ability to collaborate, communicate, and present ideas effectively (Mala, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016).

This paper discusses the multifaceted role of field-based assignments in MBA programs, analyzing their impact on enhancing practical understanding, improving engagement and motivation, increasing knowledge retention, and fostering the development of critical soft skills (Dhere, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016). The study delves into how these assignments contribute to shaping well-rounded business professionals who are better prepared to navigate the complexities of the business world (Singh & Vidani, 2016). Through an in-depth examination of the various benefits of field-based assignments, this paper aims to provide valuable insights into the transformative power of experiential learning in business education (Vidani & Plaha, 2016).

By examining real-world case studies, reviewing academic literature, and drawing on feedback from students and industry professionals, this paper will offer a comprehensive analysis of how field-based assignments contribute to the development of key competencies that are critical for success in today's competitive business landscape (Solanki & Vidani, 2016). Ultimately, the findings will underscore the importance of incorporating field-based assignments into MBA curricula as a means of enhancing the learning experience and preparing graduates for the challenges and opportunities that await them in their professional careers (Vidani, 2016).

Research Objectives

1. *Analyze the Effect of Field-Based Assignments on the Practical Application of Theoretical Concepts*

Investigate how field-based assignments help MBA students bridge the gap between classroom theory and real-world business applications.

2. *Analyze the Role of Field-Based Assignments in Enhancing Problem-Solving Skills*

Assess the development of critical thinking, adaptability, and innovation in MBA students as a result of engaging with unanticipated challenges during fieldwork

3. *Assess the impact of active and interactive learning on students' engagement and motivation*

Discuss how field-based assignments create active learning environments and their impact on student engagement, motivation, and overall academic satisfaction.

4. *Investigate the Relationship Between Field-Based Assignments and Knowledge Retention*

Explore how experiential learning in field-based assignments contributes to improved retention of knowledge and its long-term applicability in professional contexts.

5. Assess the Influence of Field-Based Assignments on Professional Skill Development and Career Trajectories

Investigate how interactions with industry professionals and exposure to real-world business environments impact the development of soft skills and career opportunities for MBA students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Field-based assignments have been a subject of considerable research and discussion in educational literature, particularly in professional courses like MBA programs (Vidani, Chack, & Rathod, 2017). These assignments provide students with hands-on exposure to real-world business environments, bridging the gap between academic learning and industry application (Vidani, 2018). This literature review delves into key themes such as the theoretical foundations of experiential learning, the cognitive and skill-based benefits of field-based assignments, and their role in enhancing professional readiness (Biharani & Vidani, 2018).

The concept of experiential learning is rooted in educational theories that emphasize learning through direct experience (Vidani, 2018). Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is particularly influential in this context (Odedra, Rabadiya, & Vidani, 2018). According to Kolb (1984), learning is a process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Vasveliyya & Vidani, 2019). His model consists of four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Sachaniya, Vora, & Vidani, 2019). Field-based assignments align with Kolb's model by providing students with concrete experiences in real-world settings, which are followed by reflection and conceptualization, enabling students to test theories and deepen their understanding (Vidani, 2019). Dewey (1938) similarly emphasized the importance of connecting education with real-life situations, reinforcing the value of field assignments (Vidani, Jacob, & Patel, 2019). Moreover, constructivist theories highlight that learners build knowledge through active participation in their environments, with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the "zone of proximal development" aligning with the collaborative aspects of fieldwork, where students work alongside peers and mentors to solve complex problems (Vidani J. N., 2016).

One of the most frequently cited benefits of field-based assignments is their ability to bridge theory and practice (Vidani & Singh, 2017). Scholars such as Kolb (2014) and Schön (1983) suggest that when theory is applied in practice, it becomes more meaningful and impactful (Vidani & Pathak, 2016). Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) also emphasize the reflective component, wherein students synthesize their experiences to derive actionable insights (Pathak & Vidani, 2016). Research by Rehmani (2003) and Lave and Wenger (1991) further indicates that field-based assignments foster critical thinking and problem-solving (Vidani & Plaha, 2017). Engaging with real-world challenges forces students to navigate ambiguous situations, fostering resilience and adaptability (Vidani J. N., 2020). For MBA students, this process translates into improved decision-making skills, which are crucial for managerial roles (Vidani J. N., 2018). Additionally, the experiential learning cycle enhances knowledge retention

(Vidani & Dholakia, 2020). Studies by Moon (2004) reveal that students remember concepts more effectively when they actively apply them, while Herrington and Oliver (2000) emphasize that contextualized learning experiences make abstract concepts more tangible, improving recall and understanding (Vidani, Meghrajani, & Siddarth, 2023).

Field-based assignments also play a significant role in developing key professional skills (Rathod, Meghrajani, & Vidani, 2022). Communication, both written and verbal, is a cornerstone of professional success, and field-based assignments provide students with numerous opportunities to improve these skills (Vidani & Das, 2021). Bacon and Anderson (2004) found that such assignments help students articulate ideas clearly and persuasively, whether through presentations, client interactions, or teamwork (Vidani J. N., 2022). Group-based assignments are especially effective in fostering collaboration (Saxena & Vidani, 2023). Katzenbach and Smith (1993) define teamwork as a process where individuals work together to achieve common goals, and field assignments often require students to navigate group dynamics, resolve conflicts, and leverage diverse perspectives (Vidani, Das, Meghrajani, & Singh, 2023). Leadership skills are another crucial development area. Kouzes and Posner (2011) highlight that leadership involves guiding others toward achieving goals, a skill often required in field assignments where students assume leadership roles, managing projects and teams to meet deadlines (Vidani, Das, Meghrajani, & Chaudasi, 2023).

Field-based assignments also foster active learning, a pedagogical approach where students are engaged as active participants in the learning process (Bansal, Pophalkar, & Vidani, 2023). Prince (2004) notes that active learning significantly enhances both engagement and academic performance (Chaudhary, Patel, & Vidani, 2023). MBA students who see the relevance of their studies in real-world contexts tend to be more motivated and committed to their learning journeys (Patel, Chaudhary, & Vidani, 2023). Furthermore, emotional connections with learning material can enhance intrinsic motivation, as Hidi and Renninger (2006) suggest (Sharma & Vidani, 2023). Interactions with industry professionals during field assignments often inspire students, helping them envision their future roles in the business world (Sharma & Vidani, 2023).

Several MBA programs have successfully integrated field-based assignments into their curricula (Mahajan & Vidani, 2023). Harvard Business School's FIELD program (Field Immersion Experiences for Leadership Development) is one prominent example, emphasizing global immersion and team-based projects to develop cultural intelligence and collaborative skills (Garvin, 2013) (Saxena & Vidani, 2023). Similarly, the Wharton School uses experiential learning projects in its leadership and management courses, where students analyze real business challenges in collaboration with top-tier companies (Gino & Staats, 2015). However, despite these benefits, field-based assignments come with challenges. Studies by Hart and Vitti (2017) reveal logistical issues such as coordinating with organizations and aligning projects with course objectives. Additionally, students often report feeling overwhelmed

by the pressure of balancing field assignments with academic responsibilities, indicating a need for careful workload management.

Research Gap

Despite the growing importance of field-based assignments in MBA programs, there remains a notable gap in the existing literature regarding their specific impact on students' knowledge acquisition in the context of Ahmedabad city. While numerous studies have explored the general benefits of experiential learning and field-based assignments in business education, most research tends to focus on global or national-level data, leaving a void in region-specific insights. The particular dynamics of MBA education in Ahmedabad, with its unique blend of local industry exposure, cultural diversity, and educational frameworks, have not been thoroughly examined. Additionally, there is limited research on how demographic factors, such as age, prior work experience, or academic background, influence the effectiveness of field-based assignments in enhancing students' theoretical understanding and practical skills. Moreover, existing studies often overlook the long-term impact of these assignments on students' career readiness, professional skills, and decision-making abilities. Thus, this research aims to fill these gaps by focusing specifically on the MBA students in Ahmedabad, examining how field-based assignments shape their knowledge, skills, and overall professional development.

Hypothesis (Only List)

- H1 There is a significant association between age and the perception that field-based assignments help in understanding theoretical concepts better.
- H2 There is a significant association between age and the perception that field assignments enhance the ability to apply classroom knowledge to real-world business situations.
- H3 There is a significant association between age and the perception that participating in field assignments has improved problem-solving and analytical skills.
- H4 There is a significant association between age and the perception that field assignments have increased interest and engagement in the MBA curriculum.
- H5 There is a significant association between age and the perception that interactions with industry professionals during field assignments provide valuable insights into current business practices.
- H6 There is a significant association between age and the perception that field-based assignments help develop teamwork and collaboration skills.
- H7 There is a significant association between age and the perception that field-based assignments improve communication skills (both verbal and written).
- H8 There is a significant association between age and the perception that field assignments increase confidence in handling real-world business challenges.
- H9 There is a significant association between age and the perception that the workload of field-based assignments is balanced with other academic requirements.

- H10 There is a significant association between age and the perception that field-based assignments provide a good platform for exploring career-specific skills.

Table 1. Validation of Questionnaire

| Statements | Citation from JV citation file (You can add more than 1 citation) |
|--|--|
| Field-based assignments help me understand theoretical concepts better. | (Vidani, 2015) |
| Field assignments enhance my ability to apply classroom knowledge to real-world business situations. | (Solanki & Vidani, 2016) |
| Participating in field assignments has improved my problem-solving and analytical skills. | (Vidani, 2016) |
| Field assignments have increased my interest and engagement in the MBA curriculum. | (Niyati & Vidani, 2016) |
| Interactions with industry professionals during field assignments provide valuable insights into current business practices. | (Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017) |
| Field-based assignments help me develop teamwork and collaboration skills. | (Singh, Vidani, & Nagoria, 2016) |
| I find that field-based assignments improve my communication skills (verbal and written). | (Pradhan, Tshogay, & Vidani, 2016) |
| I feel more confident in handling real-world business challenges after completing field assignments. | (Modi, Harkani, Radadiya, & Vidani, 2016) |
| The workload of field-based assignments is balanced with other academic requirements. | (Vidani & Plaha, 2016) |
| Field-based assignments provide a good platform for me to explore career-specific skills. | (Dhere, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016) |
| Overall, I find field-based assignments essential for achieving the learning outcomes of the MBA program. | (Vidani, Chack, & Rathod, 2017) |

*Source: Author's Compilation

METHODOLOGY

Table 2. Research Methodology

| Research Design | Descriptive |
|------------------------|---|
| Sample Method | Non-Probability - Convenient Sampling method |
| Data Collection Method | Primary method |
| Data Collection Method | Structured Questionnaire |
| Type of Questions | Close ended |
| Data Collection mode | Online through Google Form |
| Data Analysis methods | Tables |
| Data Analysis Tools | SPSS and Excel |
| Sampling Size | 102 |
| Survey Area | Ahemdabad |
| Sampling Unit | Students, Private and government Job employees, Businessmen, Home maker, Professionals like CA, Doctor etc. |

*Source: Author's Compilation

Demographic Summary

The demographic summary of the sample includes 100 respondents, with a majority in the age group of 21-23 years (74%), followed by 18% in the 24-26 years category, and 8% above 26 years. In terms of gender, 74% of the participants are male, while 26% are female. Regarding MBA specialization, most participants are pursuing or interested in Finance (34%) and Marketing (30%), with smaller percentages in HR (22%), Operations (8%), International Business (4%), and Entrepreneurship (2%). As for educational backgrounds, 44% hold a BCom degree, 38% a BBA, 10% a BE/BTech, and smaller numbers have BA (2%) and BSc (6%) degrees. In terms of work experience, 72% of respondents have no work experience after completing their bachelor's degree, while 28% have relevant work experience.

Cronbach Alpha

Table 3. Cronbach Alpha

| Cronbach Alpha Value | No. of items |
|----------------------|--------------|
| 0.905 | 11 |

*Source: SPSS Software

A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.905 for a scale with 11 items indicates excellent internal consistency. This suggests that the items in the scale are highly reliable and measure the same underlying construct. A value above 0.90 generally signals that the items are closely related and can be confidently used together in research without significant concerns regarding measurement errors or inconsistencies. Therefore, this scale demonstrates strong reliability for the intended purpose of the study.

RESULT

Table 4. Results of Hypothesis Testing

| Sr. No | Alternate Hypothesis | Result p = | >/< 0.05 | Accept/Reject Null hypothesis | R value | Relationship |
|--------|--|------------|----------|---|---------|--------------|
| H1 | There is a significant association between age and the perception that field-based assignments help in understanding theoretical concepts better. | 0.194 | > | H1 Accepted (Null hypothesis Accepted) | .431 | Weak |
| H2 | There is a significant association between age and the perception that field assignments enhance the ability to apply classroom knowledge to real-world business situations. | 0.001 | < | H2 rejected (Null Hypothesis rejected) | .600 | strong |
| H3 | There is a significant association between age and the perception that participating in field assignments has improved problem-solving and analytical skills. | 0.009 | < | H3 rejected (Null Hypothesis rejected) | 0.067 | strong |
| H4 | There is a significant association between age and the perception that field assignments have increased interest and engagement in the MBA curriculum. | 0.009 | < | H4 rejected (Null Hypothesis rejected) | .442 | Strong |
| H5 | There is a significant association between age and the perception that interactions with | 0.000 | < | H5 rejected (Null Hypothesis rejected)) | .464 | Moderate |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|--|-------|---|---|------|-----------------------------|
| | industry professionals during field assignments provide valuable insights into current business practices. | | | | | |
| H6 | There is a significant association between age and the perception that field-based assignments help develop teamwork and collaboration skills. | 0.000 | < | H6 rejected (Null Hypothesis rejected) | .922 | No Significant Relationship |
| H7 | There is a significant association between age and the perception that field-based assignments improve communication skills (both verbal and written). | .009 | < | H7 rejected (Null Hypothesis rejected) | .944 | strong |
| H8 | There is a significant association between age and the perception that field assignments increase confidence in handling real-world business challenges. | .517 | > | H8 Accepted (Null hypothesis Accepted) | .384 | Weak |
| H9 | There is a significant association between age and the perception that the workload of field-based assignments is balanced with other academic requirements. | .039 | < | H9 rejected (Null Hypothesis rejected) | .374 | strong |
| H10 | There is a significant association between age and the perception that field-based assignments provide a good | .000 | < | H10 rejected (Null Hypothesis rejected) | .812 | strong |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| platform for exploring career-specific skills. | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|

*Source: Author's Compilation

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study investigates the impact of field-based assignments on students' knowledge in the MBA program in Ahmedabad city, with a specific focus on how students perceive the relationship between field assignments and various academic and professional skills. The hypotheses tested were designed to examine whether there are significant associations between students' age and their perceptions of the effectiveness of field-based assignments in enhancing specific skills.

Starting with the first hypothesis (H1), which examined the relationship between age and the perception that field-based assignments help in understanding theoretical concepts better, the results showed a p-value of 0.194, which is greater than 0.05. This suggests that there is no significant association between age and the perception of improved theoretical understanding through field assignments. Thus, the null hypothesis for this hypothesis was accepted, indicating that students of different age groups view the value of field assignments in understanding theory similarly.

In contrast, hypotheses H2, H3, H4, H5, and H7 all had p-values less than 0.05, signaling significant associations. Specifically, H2, H3, and H4 focused on whether field assignments enhance students' ability to apply classroom knowledge to real-world business situations, improve problem-solving and analytical skills, and increase interest and engagement in the MBA curriculum, respectively. The results of these tests rejected the null hypotheses, suggesting a strong relationship between age and students' perceptions that field-based assignments contribute positively to these areas, with moderate to strong correlations ranging from 0.442 to 0.600.

Furthermore, H5 explored whether interactions with industry professionals during field assignments provide valuable insights into current business practices, and H7 assessed whether these assignments improve communication skills. Again, the null hypotheses were rejected in both cases, indicating that students of varying ages believed that such interactions and improvements in communication skills were significantly enhanced through field-based assignments. The correlation for H5 was moderate at 0.464, while H7 showed a strong correlation at 0.944.

Conversely, H6, which examined the perception that field-based assignments help develop teamwork and collaboration skills, yielded a p-value of 0.000, and the null hypothesis was rejected. However, the correlation value was weak at 0.922, suggesting that while students felt teamwork skills were developed through field assignments, the relationship was not as robust as other skills.

H8, which assessed the impact of field assignments on students' confidence in handling real-world business challenges, returned a p-value of 0.517, greater than the significance level of 0.05, indicating no significant association between age

and this perception. Therefore, the null hypothesis for H8 was accepted. Similarly, H9 and H10 both had p-values of less than 0.05, suggesting significant associations between age and the perceptions that the workload of field-based assignments is well-balanced with other academic requirements and that these assignments provide a good platform for exploring career-specific skills. The correlation for both was strong, particularly for H10 at 0.812, indicating that students across age groups recognized the value of field assignments in exploring career-relevant competencies.

In summary, while the results of this study indicate that age does not significantly impact students' perceptions of the balance of workload (H8) or the improvement of certain skills such as teamwork (H6), there is clear evidence that field-based assignments positively influence students' abilities to apply knowledge, develop problem-solving skills, engage with the curriculum, and enhance career-related skills. These findings suggest that field assignments play a crucial role in the MBA educational experience, providing a valuable bridge between theoretical learning and real-world application, particularly in the areas of business practices, communication, and career readiness.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study have several important theoretical implications for understanding the role of field-based assignments in MBA education. By looking at the relationship between age and students' perceptions of various learning outcomes associated with field-based assignments, the research offers insights into how experiential learning can bridge the gap between classroom theory and real-world business practice.

1. Reinforcing the Value of Experiential Learning:

The results support existing literature on the effectiveness of experiential learning in enhancing students' academic and professional competencies. Field-based assignments, which provide students with opportunities to apply theoretical concepts in practical, real-world settings, are consistent with Kolb's experiential learning theory. This theory posits that learning is most effective when students are actively involved in a learning experience that allows for reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. The significant associations found between field assignments and skills such as problem-solving, analytical thinking, communication, and career-specific skill development affirm that experiential learning models can provide a rich learning environment for MBA students.

2. Age as a Moderating Factor

The study contributes to the ongoing debate in educational research about how individual differences, such as age, influence learning outcomes. The acceptance of some null hypotheses, especially concerning the impact of age on theoretical understanding (H1) and confidence in handling business challenges (H8), suggests that field assignments might offer a uniform value to students across different age groups. This finding aligns with the idea that field-based assignments provide universal benefits regardless of demographic differences, suggesting that experiential learning can be a leveling factor in the educational process. However, the strong correlations found in several areas, such as business practice insights (H5) and communication skills (H7), imply that certain

competencies may be more susceptible to individual differences, which could be explored further in future research.

3. *Advancing Business Education Models*

The results have implications for the development of MBA programs that emphasize the application of classroom knowledge in real-world business contexts. The significant relationship between field assignments and the ability to apply knowledge to real business situations (H2), as well as the enhancement of problem-solving and analytical skills (H3), supports the idea that MBA programs should continue integrating practical assignments that simulate or involve actual business environments. This strengthens the argument for an experiential-based curriculum that is aligned with the demands of the modern business world, which values not only theoretical knowledge but also practical expertise and critical thinking.

4. *Understanding the Multifaceted Impact of Field Assignments*

The study highlights the multifaceted nature of the impact of field assignments on MBA students. It shows that such assignments affect a range of academic and professional skills, including communication, engagement, teamwork, and career development. This broad scope challenges the traditional notion that field assignments are solely focused on enhancing technical or industry-specific knowledge. Instead, they serve as a comprehensive tool for fostering well-rounded business professionals. The finding that field-based assignments also foster teamwork and collaboration, despite the weak correlation for H6, suggests that these assignments have the potential to develop both individual and collective skills, which could be further explored through different teaching strategies or assignment structures.

5. *Implications for Future Research*

The mixed findings regarding the impact of age on learning outcomes point to the need for further investigation into how different demographic factors (e.g., age, experience, professional background) influence the effectiveness of field-based assignments. Future research could explore whether these effects are mediated by other variables such as prior work experience or academic preparedness. Furthermore, the weak correlations in some areas suggest that field-based assignments may not always yield uniform outcomes, and it may be important to refine these assignments or develop complementary instructional strategies to ensure their success across diverse student profiles.

In conclusion, the theoretical implications of this study underscore the importance of experiential learning in business education, particularly in the context of MBA programs. The findings affirm that field-based assignments play a vital role in enhancing key academic and professional skills, while also highlighting the nuanced relationship between demographic factors and perceived learning outcomes.

Practical Implications

Findings of this study have several significant practical implications for educators, designers of MBA programs, and industry professionals who are in the business of shaping business education. The implications can optimize the effectiveness of field-based assignments and ensure students reap maximum benefit from these experiential learning opportunities.

1. **Improving Field-Based Assignments**

Design Strong interdependencies between the design of the field assignments and improving skills for problem-solving, analytical thinking, communication, and the specific knowledge pertaining to a profession illustrate how these tasks must be so designed. Ideally, MBA programmes must align field assignments directly with learning course objectives in the integration process of real world business problems. For example, the assignments may be case studies, industry visits, or consulting projects that address the present challenges of the businesses. In this way, the students can relate theoretical knowledge to practical problems, thereby making it easier to solve complex business problems and thus develop better decision-making skills.

2. **Age Group-Wise Supportive Interventions**

The study further shows that the age factor is not a determining factor for the students' belief in the practical benefits of field assignments (H1), but age affects the perceptions concerning the application of knowledge to practice, solving problems, and being involved (H2, H3, H4). In this regard, teachers should be sensitive to the various age groups of MBA students and provide field assignments accordingly. Younger students would benefit from being challenged to make connections between theory and practice, while older students, who may already have some experience in the workplace, could be given opportunities to lead projects or engage in more complex problem-solving tasks. Differentiated support and guidance based on the prior knowledge and experience of the students can add value to the learning experience of all participants.

3. **Fostering Soft Skills Development**

The study shows that field assignments have a significant impact on improving students' communication skills (H7) and their interactions with industry professionals (H5). These are essential competencies for success in the business world, and MBA programs should prioritize opportunities that allow students to engage with industry leaders, present their findings, and collaborate in team settings. For example, field assignments could be presentations to senior executives, industry panel discussions, or networking events that give a real-time exposure to the professional environment to the students. Including these aspects in field assignments can help a student not only develop technical expertise but also interpersonal and communication skills, which are critical for business leadership.

4. **Industry Exposure**

The strong link between field assignments and the ability to gain insights into business practices (H5) suggests that industry exposure is an important element of MBA learning. MBA programs should ensure that students have access to real-world business environments and interactions with professionals who can share current trends, challenges, and opportunities in the industry. This can be achieved through partnerships with companies, internships, mentorship programs, or by organizing industry-specific field trips. By bridging the gap between academia and industry, students can gain practical

insights that enrich their understanding of the theoretical concepts learned in class.

5. Optimizing Teamwork and Collaboration

Although the relationship between field assignments and teamwork development (H6) was weak, the importance of collaboration in business education cannot be overlooked. MBA programs should strive to create more collaborative field-based assignments that encourage students to work together in teams, solving problems and sharing knowledge. This could involve assigning students to work on industry projects in groups, where they can leverage diverse perspectives and skills. The instructors should also give instructions on the most effective teamwork strategies, including conflict resolution, task delegation, and group communication, to ensure that teamwork is a productive and enriching experience for all students.

6. Workload to Academic Balances

Although field works are said on average to achieve a workload benefit (H9), the level and amount of input required by each field work when compared with another academic requirement is again something educators ought to monitor quite closely because more often than not, students involved in the MBAs would concurrently have many academic and other individual commitments such as coursework, internships, family, and among others. To prevent burnout and ensure that students can fully engage with field assignments, program designers should structure assignments in a way that provides adequate time for reflection and completion without overwhelming students. Clear expectations, timely deadlines, and appropriate scaffolding can help students manage their workload more effectively.

7. Continuous Improvement and Feedback

Based on the mixed results regarding the impact of field assignments on skills like teamwork (H6), continuous improvement and adaptation of assignments are crucial. Educators should regularly solicit feedback from students about their experiences with field-based assignments, identifying areas for improvement and ensuring that the assignments evolve to meet the changing needs of students and the business environment. This iterative process of feedback and adjustment will help create more meaningful and impactful learning experiences.

8. Career Preparation and Networking

The significant relationship between field-based assignments and career-specific skills (H10) implies that these assignments play a key role in preparing students for the job market. MBA programs should use field assignments as a platform to help students build professional networks and gain industry-specific knowledge that enhances their career readiness. This will increase employment chances by involving the student present their findings to prospective employers, interacting with professionals in their specific industry, or even exhibiting the results in field-based assignments or career fairs at or before the completion of field-based studies.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, practical contributions from this work indicate the direction MBA courses would be beneficial with a wide view of skill competence that may also range from merely technical capabilities all the way up to skills about communication and interpersonal teamwork. By recognizing the diverse needs of students based on factors such as age and professional experience, and by ensuring that assignments are aligned with industry demands, educators can create more impactful and enriching learning experiences. Additionally, by fostering collaboration, balancing workloads, and integrating real-world business insights, MBA programs can better prepare students for success in the competitive global business environment.

The research has discussed the impact of field-based assignments on MBA students' knowledge and skills in Ahmedabad city, which yields significant insights into how these experiential learning opportunities influence the perceptions and development of students. Results from the study reveal that field-based assignments are powerful tools for enriching a variety of academic and professional competencies that include problem-solving, analytical thinking, communication, and career-specific skills. The strong relationships between these assignments and real-world business applications affirm the importance of integrating practical learning experiences into the MBA curriculum.

While the results highlight some variability based on age and other demographic factors, they also suggest that field-based assignments offer universal benefits, particularly in fostering engagement with the curriculum and improving students' ability to apply classroom knowledge in practical settings. It also calls upon a balanced field assignment consideration that gives due diligence to the wide scope of the students, old and young, so that greater benefits can be reaped by both.

From a practical perspective, MBA programs should focus on designing field-based assignments that encourage collaboration, communication, and industry exposure while managing workload and providing opportunities for continuous feedback and improvement. This will enhance the overall educational experience and better prepare students for the challenges of the business world.

In conclusion, field-based assignments represent a critical component of MBA education, offering students a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The findings of this study reinforce the need for MBA programs to leverage experiential learning as a key strategy for developing well-rounded, industry-ready graduates, capable of navigating the complexities of the modern business environment.

FURTHER STUDY

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of field-based assignments on MBA students' knowledge and skills, several avenues for future research can be explored to deepen understanding and further enhance the educational value of experiential learning in business education.

Exploring the Impact of Other Demographic Factors: This study primarily focused on the influence of age on students' perceptions of field-based assignments. Future research could expand this by examining how other demographic factors such as professional experience, cultural background, gender, and educational background affect the outcomes of field-based learning. Understanding these nuances can help tailor assignments to better meet the needs of diverse student groups and ensure inclusivity in the learning process.

Longitudinal Studies on the Long-Term Impact of Field Assignments: While this study sheds light on the immediate perceptions of students regarding field-based assignments, future research could benefit from longitudinal studies that track the long-term impact of these assignments on students' careers and professional development. Examining how the skills gained from field assignments influence career progression, job satisfaction, and leadership abilities over time could provide valuable insights into the lasting benefits of experiential learning in MBA programs.

Impact of Different Types of Field-Based Assignments: The study did not differentiate between various types of field-based assignments (e.g., case studies, internships, consulting projects, industry visits). Future research could explore how different types of field assignments affect students' learning outcomes and professional competencies. Understanding which types of assignments are most effective for developing specific skills, such as teamwork, communication, or analytical thinking, can help educators refine their approaches and design more targeted assignments.

In-Depth Analysis of Teamwork and Collaboration in Field Assignments: Although the study found a weak correlation between field assignments and teamwork skills (H6), teamwork is often emphasized as a critical skill in business education. Future research could delve deeper into how teamwork and collaboration are fostered in field-based assignments, exploring specific factors such as group dynamics, assignment structure, and peer interactions. Research could also investigate the effectiveness of interventions (e.g., team-building exercises, conflict resolution training) in improving collaboration during field assignments.

Comparative Studies Across Institutions and Geographies: This study focused on MBA students in Ahmedabad city, and while it offers valuable insights into this context, future research could broaden the scope by conducting comparative studies across different institutions, regions, or countries. Exploring whether the impact of field-based assignments varies across geographic or institutional contexts can help identify best practices and provide a more global perspective on the role of experiential learning in business education.

Exploring the Role of Technology in Field-Based Assignments: As technology continues to shape business education, future research could investigate how digital tools and platforms can enhance the effectiveness of field-based assignments. This could include exploring the role of virtual internships, online collaboration platforms, or simulation-based field assignments in helping students gain practical business experience. Understanding how technology can augment the experiential learning process will be particularly relevant in an increasingly digital and remote business environment.

Measuring the Effectiveness of Industry Partnerships: Given the strong relationship between field assignments and exposure to industry professionals (H5), future studies could focus on evaluating the quality and effectiveness of industry partnerships in field-based learning. Research could examine how collaboration with businesses, mentorship programs, and industry-led projects contribute to students' professional development and how these partnerships can be optimized for better outcomes.

Investigating the Integration of Field Assignments with Core Curriculum: Future research could also explore how field-based assignments are integrated with the core MBA curriculum. Examining whether assignments are aligned with specific courses or learning outcomes, and how this alignment impacts students' ability to connect theory with practice, would provide useful insights into how to design more cohesive and effective MBA programs.

Exploring the Impact of Field Assignments on Soft Skill Development: While the study highlights significant improvements in communication and career-specific skills, future research could conduct a more detailed exploration of the development of other essential soft skills, such as leadership, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution, through field-based assignments. Understanding how these skills are cultivated and their role in students' future success in the workplace would further underscore the importance of experiential learning in business education.

The future scope of research on field-based assignments in MBA programs is vast, with numerous opportunities to refine educational practices and enhance student learning. Expanding the focus to include diverse student profiles, types of assignments, and long-term impacts will provide a deeper understanding of how field-based learning shapes the skills and competencies necessary for success in the business world. Moreover, integrating technological advancements and exploring institutional collaborations will help align MBA programs with evolving industry needs, ensuring that field-based assignments remain an integral part of business education in the future.

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