STRUCTURED FIELDWORK INTELLIGENCE FRAMEWORK (SFIF): ENHANCING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN INTEGRATED CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study introduces the Structured Fieldwork Intelligence Framework (SFIF) as an innovative teaching approach to enhance the effectiveness of fieldwork-based learning in Integrated Case Study courses (a fieldwork project where students do a site visit to interview a real business). Traditionally, students undertaking fieldwork assessments face challenges such as lack of direction in approaching businesses, inconsistent interview practices, and variability in analytical depth across groups. These issues often result in superficial findings and limited academic value. The SFIF addresses these limitations by embedding a structured, three-phase framework (Pre-Fieldwork, Fieldwork Execution, and Post-Fieldwork Analysis) supported by standardized tools, guided interview protocols, and analytical frameworks. Students are required to prepare a fieldwork proposal, conduct semi-structured interviews using a lecturer-approved template, and apply strategic and accounting-based analyses such as SWOT and financial evaluation. In addition, the framework incorporates reflective learning, documentation through fieldwork logbooks, and industry engagement mechanisms to ensure authenticity and consistency. The outcome transforms the traditional field visit into a structured "mini consultancy project," where students generate actionable recommendations for real businesses. The innovation lies in its integration of experiential learning with structured analytical thinking, improving both academic rigor and practical relevance. Implementation of SFIF is expected to enhance student confidence, standardize learning outcomes, and strengthen university-industry collaboration. This approach is scalable across disciplines and aligns with outcome-based education and graduate employability goals.

KEYWORDS: Experiential learning, Fieldwork, Integrated case study, Student consultancy, Structured framework.

PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

Fieldwork is widely used as a pedagogical tool in business education to expose students to real-world practices. Despite its widespread adoption, several persistent challenges undermine its effectiveness. Firstly, the lack of a structured framework leads to inconsistent approaches among student groups,

resulting in varied quality of outputs. Students often approach businesses without clear objectives or preparation, which reduces the quality of interaction and data collected.

Secondly, students frequently lack interview and communication skills, which affects their abilities to extract meaningful insights from industry practitioners. As highlighted in prior studies, unstructured experiential learning may fail to achieve its intended learning outcomes if not guided effectively (Morris, 2020).

Thirdly, student reports tend to be descriptive rather than analytical. There is limited application of theoretical framework such as SWOT or financial analysis, which are essential in accounting and business education. This disconnects between theory and practice weakens the academic value of the assignment.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to develop a structured framework that enhances the quality, consistency, and impact of fieldwork-based learning. Specifically, the SFIF aims to standardize the fieldwork process, improve student competencies, integrate analytical thinking and strengthen engagement with industry partners.

DESIGN DESCRIPTION

The Structured Fieldwork Intelligence Framework (SFIF) is developed as a comprehensive pedagogical model consisting of three interrelated phases.

Phase 1: Pre-Fieldwork involves preparation and planning. Students are required to submit a fieldwork proposal outlining their objectives, conduct background research on the selected organization and prepare interview questions. This stage ensures clarity of purpose and readiness before engaging with the business.

Phase 2: Fieldwork Execution focuses on systematic data collection. Students conduct semi-structured interviews guided by a standardized protocol and observe operational processes within the organization. A fieldwork logbook is used to document interactions, ensuring accountability and consistency.

Phase 3: Post-Fieldwork emphasizes analysis and reporting. Students apply analytical tools such as SWOT analysis, financial evaluation and value chain analysis to interpret their findings. They then prepare a structured report and propose practical recommendations.

The framework also incorporates reflective learning, where students evaluate their experiences and identify areas for improvement. This holistic approach aligns with experiential learning theory, where knowledge is constructed through experience and reflection.

VISUALS

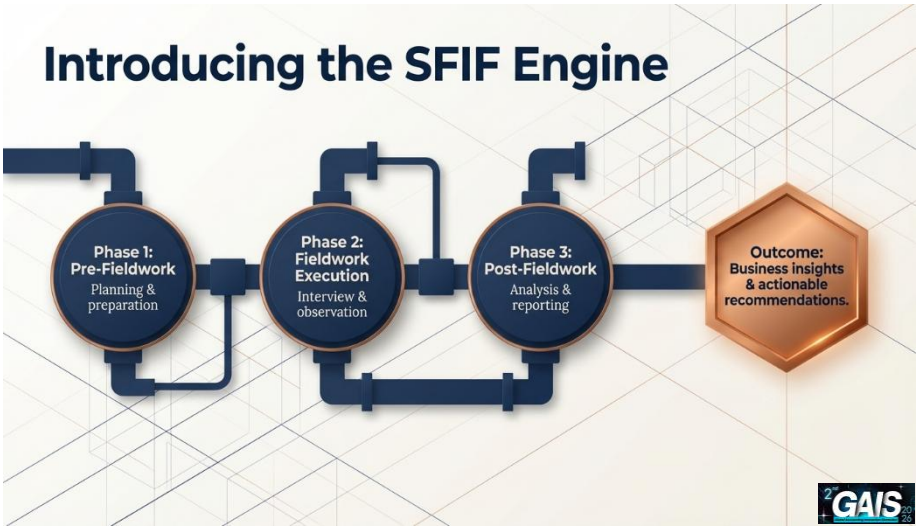


Figure 1: SFIF Framework

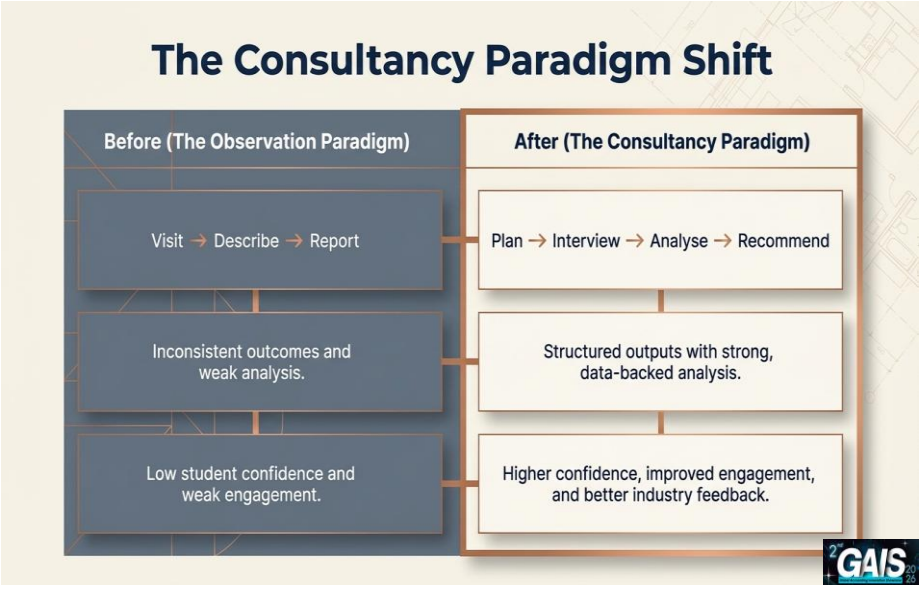


Figure 2: The transformation from a traditional descriptive approach to SFIF

NOVELTY AND UNIQUENESS

The SFIF represents a significant innovation in experiential learning by integrating structured methodology with real-world application. Unlike traditional fieldwork approaches, SFIF provides clear guidance while maintaining flexibility for critical thinking. Its consultancy-based model positions students as active contributors rather than passive learners.

Furthermore, the integration of accounting and strategic analysis frameworks enhances the academic rigor of the learning process. The emphasis on standardization ensures consistency across students' groups, while reflective learning components promote continuous improvement.

This approach aligns with contemporary educational trends emphasizing authentic learning environments and industry relevance (Herrington et al., 2014).

BENEFITS TO MANKIND

The SFIF enhances educational quality by promoting meaningful and structured learning experiences. It equips students with essential skills such as communication, analytical thinking and problem-solving, which are critical for employability. Additionally, it strengthens collaboration between academia and industry, contributing to the development of a competent workforce.

COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL

The SFIF framework has strong potential for commercialization as a teaching and training module. It can be adapted across various disciplines and institutions, making it highly scalable. Universities can adopt the framework as part of their curriculum while training providers may use it to enhance professional development programs. The consultancy-based approach also opens opportunities for industry partnerships and collaborative projects.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Structured Fieldwork Intelligence Framework (SFIF) addresses key limitations in traditional fieldwork-based learning by introducing a structured, analytical and student-centred approach. The framework enhances consistency, improves learning outcomes and strengthens industry engagement. Its scalability and adaptability make it valuable innovation in higher education. Future research may focus on empirical validation and measuring its long-term impact on student employability and academic performance.

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