

MUSEUMS, MONUMENTS, AND MEMORIES

by:

Alyssa Marie E. Adran

Teacher I, Samal South Elementary School

Last January 24, our district's field trip around Manila became more than just a welcome break from classroom routines. It turned into a meaningful lesson about our past, our present, and our future. Stepping beyond the school gates reminded me why education should never be confined to four walls. According to a study published in the *Journal of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development* by Campbell, Y. M., & Gedat, R. (2021), field-based learning emphasizes that real-world exposure allows learners to construct meaning more effectively because they encounter concepts in authentic contexts. On that day, our pupils did not just learn; they experienced, discussed, reflected, and yes, they also had fun. These are the kinds of memories that will stay with them long after exams are forgotten.

Our journey began at Bahay Tsinoy in Intramuros, where students explored the long, deeply rooted connections between Filipinos and the Chinese community through trade, culture, and shared heritage. This experience highlighted how people and nations have interacted across time and how global issues cannot be understood in simple terms.

From there, we walked to Rizal Park, also known as Luneta, the site where José Rizal gave his life for the country. Standing where Rizal stood was powerful; it reminded students that freedom was earned through sacrifice. This was not simply a history lesson from a textbook but a lived encounter with national memory.

We ended our day at Star City, where learning took on a lighter form through laughter, shared meals, and thrilling rides. Beyond academic content, students built social connections, practiced communication skills, and developed independence. In a

comprehensive review of educational field trips, Bouchrika (2026) reports that experiential activities improve not only academic engagement but also social development, confidence, and collaborative skills. Such findings reinforce the idea that holistic education involves both cognitive and socio-emotional growth.

Field Trips and Educational Policy in the Philippines

For some students, field trips are a highlight of the school year. However, it is important to clarify that field trips have never been universally banned in the Philippines. According to Department of Education DepEd Order No. 56, series of 2001, the Department stated that it did not issue any circular banning field trips and that such activities may supplement classroom instruction provided they are educationally relevant and properly planned.

In 2017, following the tragic bus accident in Tanay, Rizal, the Department issued a temporary moratorium on field trips to review and strengthen safety measures. This action was formalized through DepEd Memorandum No. 47, series of 2017, emphasizing learner safety, risk assessment, and accountability. Subsequent policy issuances clarified that off-campus educational activities could resume under stricter guidelines aligned with the K-12 curriculum, ensuring that safety protocols, parental consent, and administrative approvals were in place.

DepEd policy also clearly states that participation in field trips is not mandatory. Students who are unable to attend must not be penalized academically, and schools are required to provide alternative learning activities. Furthermore, supplemental policies stress that trips should prioritize educational destinations such as museums, historical landmarks, and science centers, and that schools must avoid imposing unnecessary financial burdens on families.

Reflection on Equity and Access

Even as our students gained valuable experiences, I could not ignore that not all were able to join because of financial constraints. This reality reflects a broader issue of educational equity. While DepEd policies discourage excessive costs and emphasize inclusivity, financial barriers remain a practical challenge. Ensuring equitable access to experiential learning opportunities continues to be an important responsibility for schools and educational leaders.

The True Value of Experiential Learning

Our Manila field trip demonstrated that education is at its best when it informs, inspires, and connects. Students returned not only with new knowledge but also with meaningful experiences and reflections. Research in experiential education consistently supports this observation. Studies indicate that students who participate in well-designed field trips show increased engagement, improved retention of information, heightened cultural awareness, and stronger ability to apply academic concepts in real-life contexts.

By walking through museums, historical sites, and public spaces, students practiced curiosity, critical thinking, and empathy. These competencies are as essential as academic achievement. As educators, we are reminded that learning is not confined to textbooks. It is lived, experienced, and remembered.

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