



# Opportunities and challenges in school based assessment: Tourism learners' views

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## Abstract

Assessment has become an integral part of teaching and learning in the school curriculum. Curriculum changes in South Africa since 2006 have embraced the new School-Based Assessment system (SBA). Given the importance of SBA, the value of learners' voices in contributing to assessment practices is crucial if we are to promote quality teaching and learning. This study focuses on the views of learners about SBA in the context of Tourism in an under-resourced secondary school. The study captures learners' voices through an interpretive qualitative case study. Data were generated from eight Tourism learners through focus group discussions and reflective journaling. The findings suggest a wide range of opportunities and challenges in SBA. In general, learners revealed that they did benefit from SBA. They highlighted that SBA in Tourism provides opportunities for them. These opportunities were seen in the light of viewing SBA from a largely summative function where the marks obtained for SBA tasks and the Practical Assessment Task (PAT) in Tourism were used for promotion. However, learners also viewed SBA tasks as challenging. The main challenges were the difficulty level, the time-consuming nature of these tasks, and a lack of resources to complete the tasks effectively. This study suggests the need to plan SBA in such a manner that maximise the learning opportunities for learners.

**Keywords:** School based assessment, tourism education, tourism, learners, South Africa.

## Introduction

Assessment is regarded as the most important aspect of teaching and learning which determines if learning has taken place (Barber & Hill 2014; Black & William 2009). This implies that assessment is the cornerstone of learning because it determines depth of learning and understanding. Hence assessment is important in gearing learners towards learning (Barber & Hill, 2014). There has been a major shift in many countries from assessment which was dominated by high stakes once-off examination to School Based Assessment (SBA) (Hamp-Lyons, 2007; Ryan and Weinstein, 2009; Yates & Johnston, 2018). This general trend towards SBA has been echoed by the South African education system through the introduction of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in 2006 (Kanjee & Sayed, 2013; Reyneke, Meyer & Nel, 2010). This has shifted assessment practices, augmenting the summative assessment component in all school subjects in Grades 10-12 by introducing School Based Assessment (SBA), which includes a component of formative assessment.

The fundamental principle of SBA is assessment for learning which, to some extent, challenges deeply rooted concepts of promotion and certification held by teachers and



learners about assessment (William, 2018). Hence the focus of this study was on learners' views and experiences of SBA in the context of Tourism in a South African school.

### **Conceptualising School Based Assessment**

Assessment is understood as having two major aspects: summative assessment (also referred to as assessment *of* learning), and formative assessment (also referred to as assessment *for* learning) (Black & William, 2009). Summative assessment provides a concluding picture of a learner's achievement and is usually administered at the end of a set point to assess what has been learned and how well it was taught (Black & Harris, 2014). In other words it is concerned with the result and the final product of a learner's learning usually includes traditional examinations, formal tests, and research projects (Abell & Siegel, 2011). On the other hand, formative assessment is concerned with assessing the quality of learner responses in various pieces of work to shape and improve the learner's competence (Torrance, 2013). Thus, formative assessment is "a practice of eliciting, interpreting and using student achievement to make decisions about the next step in instruction" (Black & William, 2009: 5). Formative assessment is expected to help learners grasp their subject/module content and other topics using facilitation and related pedagogies with the aim of achieving learning goals (Black & William, 2018). Although formative and summative assessment processes are presented in the above discussion as two discrete purposes for assessment, there is considerable overlap. Black and Harris (2014) highlight that the formative and summative purposes of assessment are interwoven in that they are mutually supportive rather than contradictory. Thus, assessment information from both systems can be used to enhance teaching and learning.

SBA is an approach which endeavours to integrate formative and summative components of assessment. SBA is viewed as an ideal system that fulfils both the formative and summative roles of assessment and thus serves as a means of attaining educational goals (Mansor et al., 2013). In other words, SBA is form of assessment that is intended to provide feedback and enhance learners' learning while awarding marks for progression and promotion. This means that SBA offers a more holistic appraisal of learners' abilities and readiness through continuous assessment designed to provide information on individual learner's growth, development and readiness for promotion.

While SBA has been considered effective in enhancing learning and improving learner performance, it is unrealistic to assume that what has worked in other countries, such as the UK, will work in the South African context. With the introduction of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in South Africa in 2006, the SBA which focuses on formative assessment, was introduced to be used for promotion in conjunction with year-end traditional examinations. This meant a shift from an approach that was dependent on once-off final examinations to an integrated approach that is continuous. In that sense, SBA is integrated into the teaching and learning process and based on scheduled assessment tasks that require the collection of information on learners' ongoing learning and are included in the annual teaching plan (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2012).

Effective use of SBA allows learners to demonstrate cognitive skills and provides them with opportunities to apply and further develop generic skills such as oral communication skills, collaboration and teamwork (Bisman, 2009; Baviera-Puig, Escriba-Perez & Buitrago-Vera, 2017). For Tourism, these types of knowledge and skills to be assessed might affect the choice of assessment methods used by teachers for SBA as Carless (2011) opine that SBA measures the teaching and learning process and is the main driver of learners' learning. In essence, SBA might improve learners' capability to direct their learning, which in Tourism is necessary for learners to succeed in the tourism industry.



Given that the tourism industry is a labour-intensive sector and an important contributor to the creation of employment in South Africa (National Department of Tourism, 2017). According to StatsSA (2014), one in 22 employed individuals in South Africa is working in the tourism industry. This is a great contribution in a country like South Africa, which is characterised by high unemployment rate of 25.60% (StatsSA, 2013). Tourism education plays a major role in preparing learners to gain professional and practical skills required by the tourism industry. It is therefore undeniable that the nature of SBA activities provides the opportunity for learners to apply what they have learned into practice and gain work related skills. In this regard, Killen (2006), argues that SBA reduces the power of formal tests and examinations by encouraging and making provision for the implementation of a variety of other forms of assessment. Therefore, assessments in Tourism have to include practical tasks and projects, rather than an emphasis on textbook-learning and standardised tests and examinations. For Tourism it is important to have SBA that includes various methods either than a pen-and-paper method as Tourism has been criticised by the industry for not adequately preparing learners for employment in the tourism industry which is very practical (Irimiea & Şerban, 2014). In this regard, education, including assessment in Tourism has to balance three imperatives: the need to promote individual development, the need to advance knowledge, and the need to be practical and relevant to industry (Patel, 2012).

Despite much work having been done over many years on SBA (Kapambwe, 2010; Maile, 2013; Poliah, 2009; Tong, & Adamson, 2015), SBA has not been fully transformed to really address concerns about learning. The literature notes several challenges associated with this system, such as inadequate training and sufficient knowledge for teachers (Byabato & Kisamo, 2014; Kanjee & Sayed, 2013; Maile, 2013; Omorogiuwa & Aibangbee, 2017), lack of resources and time consuming (Reyneke, et al., 2010), and uncurbed and high levels of absenteeism among learners (Purvin, 2011). Another major disadvantage around the issue of SBA is that learners might not take advantage of it (O'Farrell, 2005).

Learners are mostly motivated by what will contribute to their final mark as this will be the ultimate measure of success, particularly in the South African education system, because the country predominantly measures the success of its educational endeavours in terms of end-of-year (particularly Grade 12) examination results (Poliah, 2009). Therefore, if SBA has no direct link to a final year mark and is not efficiently utilised, it could be nothing but a waste of time by learners. This implies that teachers, including those who need to use their knowledge and agency to effectively link formative assessment to the summative high-stakes tasks, so that there is a whole, connected, sensible assessment plan that benefits learners, particularly in Tourism. Thus, learners must be made aware of the impact of and contribution that SBA has on their final promotion mark (Byabato & Kisamo, 2014). A proper quality assurance system for assessment in vocational education, Tourism in particular has proven to be a challenging task (Irimiea & Şerban, 2014). Vocational subjects such as Tourism need assessments that are sensitive to the unique features of the vocational context to prepare learners the tourism industry. Patel (2012) argue that assessment in vocational subjects, including Tourism should develop critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration, and creativity and innovation.

### **SBA in the Context of Tourism in South Africa**

Tourism was chosen because its subject content is embedded in a real-world industry and reflects situations and vectors that are authentic in the experiences of people. In more ways than one, Tourism as a school subject (Grades 10-12) plays a major role in contributing to the development of the tourism industry in many countries around the world, including South Africa (Earle, 2008). In South Africa, Tourism was introduced in 1998 and in 2006 was included in the NCS as an elective subject in secondary schools. The main aim of Tourism was to develop entrepreneurial skills and reducing unemployment (Dube, 2014; NBI, 2005).



This aim should be reflected in the assessment practices at school level. In this regard, the practical component of the SBA of Tourism (generally referred to as the PAT) carries a significant weighting in the final matriculation assessment mark for this subject, and this determines learners' potential for future integration into the tourism industry. It was against this background that learners' views and experiences of SBA in the context of Tourism were elicited and evaluated.

Offering Tourism in schools requires adherence to assessment policies that are expounded in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document and the Protocol on Assessment for Grades R–12. As outlined in the CAPS (Department of Education, 2011), the Tourism SBA framework in South Africa consists of six tasks, namely a project, a March test, a May test, a midyear examination, an open book test, and the preparatory examination. All the marks that are attained are weighted to 25% and culminate in the final grades of a learner for promotion. The practical assessment task (PAT) is weighted to 25% of the end-of-year examination mark. However, the PAT is conducted as a task in the SBA component although the marks are calculated as part of the final examination each year (Grades 10 – 12). In grades 10 and 11, all SBA tasks, the PAT and the end-of-year examination are set, marked and moderated internally, while in grade 12 the SBA tasks are set and marked internally while moderated externally; the PAT is set externally, marked internally and moderated externally; and the final NSC examination is set, marked and moderated externally. Both SBA and end-of-year examination marks affect the overall grades of a learner and thus have a significant impact on promotion and certification. The contribution of SBA to the promotion mark is twenty five percent (25%). Given the vocational- oriented and practically-based focus of Tourism as a school subject it was deemed important to explore the views and experiences of learners on SBA.

### **Learners' views on SBA**

While SBA has been considered effective in enhancing learning and improving learner performance, it is unrealistic to assume that what has worked in other countries – such as the UK – will work in the South African context. The literature has revealed that learners in secondary schools have various – and often contradictory – views of assessment (Brown, Harries & Harnett, 2012; Brown & Harris, 2014; Tong & Adamson, 2015). To illustrate, a study on learners' perspectives of SBA in Hong Kong by Tong and Adamson (2015) showed that many learners in one school held a positive outlook on the initiative. For example, their participation in oral discussions were active and relaxed, and this allowed them to demonstrate their actual abilities better. In contrary, Brown, et al. (2012), in New Zealand, found that learners in secondary schools were perturbed by more assessment tasks in secondary school and some thought that teachers' assessment decisions were too subjective. However, little empirical research has been devoted to the views of learners in the South African context, as the voices of teachers have mainly been highlighted in terms of formative assessment (Maile, 2010; Reyneke et al., 2010; Van Staden & Motsamai, 2017). This is an area of concern given the strong learner-oriented focus of SBA (Brown, 2011). As argued by Stobart (2018), it is important to include learners' voices if we want to take theory into practice with respect to assessment. In this regard, it was important to obtain the views of learners in order to improve SBA practices in Tourism which is a practical, industry-focused subject which really lend itself to more formative assessment.

### **Methodology**

This paper draws on the original data-set of Author 2's prior study on learners' voices on SBA (Author 2, 2019). The study was qualitative in nature and was underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm as it emphasised "understanding[s] of social behaviour, and how people make meaning of their views" (Lichtman, 2012:35). The nature and purpose of this



study facilitated an interpretive framework that assisted us in gaining an in-depth understand of the experiences and views of Tourism learners in an under-resourced secondary school in the Uthukela District, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. A qualitative case study approach was utilised to examine selected Grade 11 learners' perspectives on SBA. The motive for adopting a qualitative research was an overarching need "to understand how the participants interpret their views, how they construct their world, and what meaning they attribute to their experience" (Merriam, 2009:5). The use of a case study provided an understanding of a phenomenon, in this case, Tourism learners' perceptions and use of formative assessment in a real situation as suggested by Cohen Mannion and Morris (2011).

The study was conducted in a school in a township where most of the community is black and struggles with a plethora of social issues mostly inherited from Apartheid, including marked poverty (Department of Cooperative Governance & Traditional Affairs, 2011).). At the time of the study, the school that was selected was classified as under-resourced as it had under-equipped classrooms with only black chalk board, no whiteboards, computers or projectors and dilapidated furniture. The school and participating learners were purposively sampled as we had enough knowledge of the aims of the study to make an informed decision about who should serve as participants (see Paul, Kleinhammer-Tramill and Fowler, 2009), and it was also the only school in the area offering Tourism at that time. The Grade 11 Tourism class consisted of both boys and girls who were in the second year of studying Tourism as a school subject. Grade 11 learners were selected because in this grade they would have been exposed to SBA in Grade 10 and they may thus have understood formal SBA tasks well enough to provide in-depth data. Furthermore, the Grade 11 learners were not at the exit year, and would possibly be available the following year should additional data be required for the study.

Eight learners were selected based on their performance on SBA tasks, three learners performing above average, three learners performing on average, and two performing below average. Data were generated by means of focus group discussions and the selected learners' reflective journal writing. An audio-recording was made of the focus group discussions to capture verbatim the words of the participants. In addition, Author 1 also kept field notes. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The data were coded and segmented into themes and categories as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2012). The analysed data were utilised to generate interpretations and assertions about the learners' perceptions of the use of SBA to acquire knowledge of the tourism field. Themes that emerged spoke to positive aspects of SBA: contribution to promotion mark; providing opportunities for collaboration; and creating opportunities for self-regulated learning, as well as challenges in SBA tasks, such as tasks being difficult and time consuming, and lack of support resources.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The findings are presented based on the themes that emerged from the study and learners' verbatim quotes and extracts from learners' journals were used to substantiate the findings. Pseudonyms has been used to identify the participants.

### **Learners' views on opportunities of SBA in Tourism**

The learners in this study view SBA as providing opportunities for learning. Learners' views on the opportunities of SBA in Tourism are presented in the discussion below.



### ***SBA provides opportunities for improving promotional mark***

The learners unanimously perceived SBA as a series of tests to obtain marks on a continuous basis to add to their year-end or final marks. All eight learners who participated in this study strongly perceived SBA as an opportunity to get marks that will contribute to their promotional mark which would put them in a better position to pass. For example, in the focus group discussion, learners expressed their views in the focus group discussion as follows:

The teacher takes a certain percentage, though I can't remember she said how many percent, but those marks are added to the final promotion mark. You may not do very well in the examination, but if you have good marks for the SBA and PAT you pass. (Phindi)

I think SBA is conducted to award us marks according to our performance in each term and is done by our teacher and we get better marks in SBA than in the year-end written examination. (Vuvu)

The other six learners shared a similar perception to Phindi and Vuvu. This perception suggests that the learners saw a connection between SBA and their final examination marks for progression, which seemed to be an opportunity they took advantage of. The learners seemed to view SBA from a largely summative function where the marks obtained for SBA tasks and the PAT in Tourism (which they thought was similar to an SBA task) were used for promotion and progression (Yates & Johnston, 2018). The learners' view is corroborated by Van Staden and Motsamai's (2017) findings which reveal that in South African secondary schools, learners' scores for SBA tasks are indeed used for the purpose of promotion. The learner will then write an examination to obtain the required remaining marks for progression to the next grade. Therefore, even though SBA is viewed in the literature as fulfilling both formative and summative roles (Mansor et al., 2013; Black & William, 2018), the learners' perception was that these tests placed emphasis on the summative role of SBA.

Learners also viewed SBA as an opportunity to obtain good marks. It was not surprising that these learners focused more on the summative aspect of SBA as South Africa measures its educational success by end-of-year examinations (Poliah, 2009). Hence learners felt a need to obtain high marks in Tourism SBA, as it contributes 50% of the promotion mark. This view was apparent with all eight learners when learners reflected after receiving feedback on their SBA tasks. For example, entries in the reflective journals read as follows:

I got full marks for the project (50) and today I almost got full marks for the test (90). I think I will have good marks for all my tasks in order to get a good percentage for my year-end results. (Thumpu)

I did well in this test. At least I will have better marks for my SBA, but I am worried about my PAT mark which is not back yet. (Thoti)

I got the marks I was hoping to get for my SBA. (Msizi)

It is evident from the above learners' voices that they were satisfied about achieving high marks and they felt that SBA was meant to improve their marks. Thus, the learners' main perception of SBA was that the marks they achieved had to augment the final examination mark. In this regard, Maile (2013) argues that learners are influenced by the pressure to attain good marks. For the participants, SBA was then seen as a summative process linked to the standards of conventional testing and examination, and hence they put more focus on the marks rather than on the skills they needed to acquire through engaging in SBA tasks. Kapambwe (2010) also notes the narrow view held by learners that SBA marks are summative and that these assessment activities are done to score good marks to effect a



pass at the end of the year. In this context, SBA becomes one-sided and fulfils only a summative role, which is undesirable in any healthy educational context.

Another pervasive view was that SBA prepared learners for the year-end examination. It emerged during the focus group discussions and in the reflective journals that SBA tasks clearly prepared the learners for the examination because the questions and the style of questioning in tasks and term tests were often repeated in the examination. This implies that the learners were guided to perceive SBA as a measure of examination preparation and less as a measure of their learning. For example, Msizi in a focus group discussion stated:

Completing SBA tasks clearly prepares us for the examination because some of the questions are repeated in the final examination paper. If you pay attention to the topics assessed in SBA you just pass the examination because those topics will be repeated.

The other seven learners shared similar sentiments as those shared by Msizi in the above excerpt. Although SBA was a tool for learning for some of the learners, the others focused solely on SBA tasks as a means of preparing them for the final examination. This practice is perceived by Ryan and Weinstein (2009: 229) as “teaching to [the] test”, which has a negative effect on learning. However, it was not unusual that these learners perceived SBA as a test or an examination, as they were likely to be influenced by the education system which puts emphasis on learners’ accountability in terms of examinations which determine promotion or failure, and nothing else (Spaull, 2013).

### ***SBA provides opportunities for collaboration***

The findings revealed that SBA tasks were viewed as an opportunity to collaborate with peers, and most learners were of the view that SBA promoted group work. All the learners commented that when they had to complete an SBA task, they were given an opportunity to work with other learners in the class. To illustrate, learners expressed the following views in the focus group discussion:

When we complete the project of PAT, we have to share the resources and that forces collaboration amongst ourselves. Group study helps with more commitment and [access to] a variety of resources. (Phindi)

This principle was embraced by other learners, as Senzo and Thonti for example stated:

We work in groups and assist one another to complete tasks as we can argue until we get the correct response. (Senzo)

In SBA we are told you have to get your own marks there are no group marks in Tourism but with my friends we assist each other with drafts so that we all follow the instructions correctly. (Thonti)

Mqondisi reiterated:

Although we do not complete SBA tasks in groups but some of us had set up our own self-help group where we discuss the project or PAT and study for the tests together.

Collaboration opportunities were thus embraced by most of the learners as it was felt that it assisted learners to share available resources and information. Given that fact that the school was under-resourced at the time, it seemed a beneficial practice for learners to share resources. This assisted them to learn from one another while completing their SBA tasks.



For them, collaboration facilitated understanding of content and maximised opportunities for scoring high marks. This finding is confirmed by Talib et al. (2014), who argue that learners who work in small groups tend to learn more and retain information longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats.

Enthusiasm is a valuable attribute in any teaching and learning context (Arndt & Wang, 2014). It was thus notable that the learners expressed a sense of enthusiasm for cooperation. This was evident in some of the learners' reflective journal entries such as the following:

Working with Mandi in PAT helped me to locate different attractions in the map for the itinerary. (Vuvu)

and Zaza's journal entry which read:

Tomorrow, I will have to ask Boni to work with me on the project because she is good with map work.

These comments show that the learners used SBA tasks to create collaborative learning opportunities. This finding corroborates a statement made by Kennedy-Clark, Kearney and Galstaun (2017), who assert that collaborative learning enhances deep learning because their peers model and discuss their own learning and motivation strategies, which are then distributed across the group for individuals to pick up and modify to suit their own needs.

### ***SBA creates opportunities for self-regulated learning***

Another perspective of the learners was that SBA inculcated a sense of self-regulation. Learners expressed that they were 'made to go all out' looking for information on their own in order to complete the tasks. Most of the learners corroborated the point that the teacher would give them the task and instructed them to look for information on their own. For example, in the focus groups discussion some of the learner expressed the following comments:

Completing SBA tasks sometimes makes you look for information on your own. The teacher wants us to look for correct answers on our own before rendering assistance. (Senzo)

She expects us to look for information on our own. I guess it is good as she gives us projects and PAT that forces us to study specifics. For me that is important because I get that feeling of mastering something on my own. (Msizi)

These comments indicate that the SBA tasks were used by learners to become actively involved in their learning as they searched for information independently. This suggests that SBA tasks can encourage self-motivation to study, do research, and complete tasks. Such a perception implies that completing SBA tasks inculcated a sense of self-regulation in some learners. When learners reach this stage, they are more responsible, and they can work on their own without the teacher's constant supervision. In this regard, Carless (2011) is of the view that assessment fosters learners' autonomy. They develop a strong urge to complete tasks and, through self-regulation, and may ultimately gain the capacity to direct their own learning in school and beyond as argued by Brown and Harris (2014).

Most of the learners were of the view that they used SBA tasks to guide their own learning. They felt that SBA tasks encouraged them to become active learners as they were forced to complete certain tasks on their own. These learners revealed that they used SBA tasks to



enhance their ability to learn different concepts in Tourism. For example, an entry in one reflective journal reads:

Today I have learned new concepts in Tourism as I was working on my project while I was not under pressure. (Thumpu)

Another reads:

Today I have to look for my grade 10 notebook because there is work that we did which is in the PAT. (Thoti)

Such comments contained information about learners' use of SBA to drive self-regulatory learning. The learners revealed that they had to formulate their own task goals in order to complete a specific SBA task. This encouraged self-regulated learning and assuming control over their learning. Zimmerman (2008) also found that assessment assisted the learners in their study to become self-regulated and less dependent on teacher support when they engaged in SBA activities. This, according to Brown and Harris (2014), is the formative role of assessment, which encourages learners to monitor and direct their own learning.

### **Learners views on challenges of SBA in Tourism**

In spite of these benefits, in this context there were also constraints and challenges identified by learners. These are presented in the discussion below.

#### ***SBA tasks are difficult and time consuming***

The literature emphasises the point that time is a major limitation in the effective adoption of SBA practices (Reyneke, et al., 2010). Most of the learners in this study were of the view that it took too long to complete the project and the PAT, which both took up much of their time needed for other subjects. They stressed the point that they had six other subjects to work on and they could not devote so much time to one subject alone. To illustrate, one student commented as follows in the reflective journal:

I am very disappointed with my PAT results because I have spent quite a bit of time on the PAT, but I do not see much improvement in my PAT. I could have studied for my Geography test then. (Msizi)

The PAT seemed to be one aspect that was perceived by the learners as time consuming. The PAT in Tourism consists of two phases that must be completed in the second and third terms respectively. It is quite an intensive task that requires a great deal of research and writing. Without the use of a library or access to the internet and a printer, a PAT can be very difficult to complete. Most participants depended largely on resources supplied by the teacher to complete their PAT. Learners' views expressed in the focus group discussion were captured in the following comments:

PAT and projects take are a bit difficult to complete because looking for information outside school like in the community library seem to be complicated for us. (Vuvu)

Most of the work in the PAT and the project for Tourism is difficult. (Thoti).

Today the class ended before I even got halfway with the task we were doing for the PAT. I did not understand exactly what was required of me, it was too hard for me. (Zaza)



The PAT and the project are two tasks that are completed continuously and that assess various skills. As was mentioned earlier, the learners seemed to be comfortable with those SBA tasks that focused on examination skills. This may have been why they perceived the more practical SBA tasks that assess other skills as difficult to complete and are time consuming. Although completing a PAT is viewed as low-level desktop research project (Booyse, 2009), a great deal of internet research and writing are required to complete it. This implies that it is very difficult for these learners given their home and school context to complete the PAT and other SBA tasks because the resources needed are hard to find. One can conclude that the poorly resourced context may make relatively low-level tasks seem much harder than they should be.

The length of the tasks was also perceived by the learners as contributing to the complexity and difficulty of the SBA tasks. The learners commented that source-based questions, usually found in common tests, were long and difficult to read. They thought that common tests could be much easier without scenarios. For example, learners explained the focus group discussion:

SBA tasks are too long. They must be reduced because they take long to complete. (Msizi)

There are too many readings, especially in March and June tests and by the time you finish reading you have little time to write answers. (Mqondisi)

Tasks take not less than three weeks to complete, especially those that require pictures and graphics take too long to complete. (Vuvu)

Some of the learners argued that SBA tasks were time consuming and thus some failed to see the benefits for learning. The literature also emphasises the point that time is a major limitation in the effective adoption of SBA practices (Reynek, et al., 2010). Given that the school is under-resourced and the community is severely disadvantaged, the fact that learners are being assessed in a language other than their home language might result in slow reading and poorer comprehension skills in the sense that for them they regarded the task as having 'too much reading'. Maybe the readings are at the grade 11 level but their ability and access to resources is not at grade 11 and thus they felt that the time was limited.

In addition to task difficulty and limited time, the resources were highlighted as one of the key challenges.

### ***Lack of material resources to complete SBA tasks***

In addition, the learners perceived that difficult tasks were linked to generally inadequate support material for Tourism in the classroom. A lack of resources such as magazines, the internet, and additional books was lamented. The onus appeared to be on the creativity of the teachers to provide additional resources. For example, in a focus group discussion, learners expressed their views as follows:

Tasks like projects and practical assessment tasks, commonly known as PAT, are difficult. We don't have resources to complete them. Only the teacher brings us some resources. (Phindi)

The PAT requires researched information and we do not have access to the internet. Our teacher would download and print resources for us. In most cases they are few copies and we must share, or they are not in colour to give us a clear picture. (Thumpu)



The learners proposed the use of additional resources for SBA tasks in Tourism to enhance their performance. They felt that original copies would be far better than black and white pictures. Thumpu added that projects and case studies would be better understood if they were in colour. This implies that there was an urgent need for adequate quality resources and support material in this school.

Learners in this study revealed that they struggled to access resources outside of school as well. The project and the PAT required that they look for pictures and extra information before tasks could be completed. They had to visit the town library because the library in the school was dysfunctional and did not have adequate resources to support teaching and learning. To illustrate, one learner lamented:

The project that I submitted was incomplete because it was too long and required internet. (Senzo)

Completing the project required research and putting together pictures and graphics, which was challenging, unusual and difficult for these learners. As was mentioned, the PAT and the project are two tasks that are completed continuously and that assess various skills. Given that the learners seemed to be comfortable with those SBA tasks that focused on examination skills, they tended to perceive the more practical SBA tasks that assess other skills as too difficult and time consuming. However, this was a concern as Tourism is the subject which is practically and vocationally-oriented. SBA tasks that are more skills oriented would be important - maybe even more important than 'textbook knowledge' which is assessed through a pen-and-paper approach. In that sense learners may struggle to make the shift from textbook learning and exams to more practical, self-directed learning due to the nature of the subject.

## Conclusions

The focus of this study was to explore the views of learners about SBA in the context of Tourism in an under-resourced secondary school. The data was generated through focus group discussion and learners' reflective journals. The findings of this study demonstrate the learners were of the view that SBA in Tourism provides opportunities for them. These opportunities were seen in the light of viewing SBA from a largely summative function where the marks obtained for SBA tasks and the PAT in Tourism were used for promotion. The findings thus revealed that, for these participants, SBA had the strongest significance when it contributed to the examination requirements for promotion. This finding raises concerns, as the learners did not understand the relationship between getting a good score and good quality of teaching and learning. Their perceptions thus emphasise a one-sided perspective on SBA and relegate this approach to a summative assessment process. They were consequently prone to be more focused on their performance in terms of marks, rather than seeing that the tests and tasks required for SBA in Tourism could assist them in gaining a variety of other relevant skills as well.

The findings also revealed that SBA created collaboration opportunities while creating self-regulated learning in Tourism. Learners were 'made to go all out' looking for information on their own or in groups, in order to complete the tasks which were thus embraced as it was felt that it assisted learners to be active in their learning and share available resources and information. This role of SBA is important as it guides learners towards self-regulated learning. Although SBA tasks in Tourism were completed individually, the learners in this study had set up their own self-help group where they discussed and resolved challenges and studied for tests together. The findings thus reveal that the learners used SBA tasks as self-motivating tools to study on their own or in groups and to make sure they completed these tasks.



Yet, most of the learners also viewed SBA tasks as challenging. The main challenges were the difficulty level, the time-consuming nature of these tasks, and a lack of resources to complete the tasks effectively. The length of the tasks completed for SBA in Tourism contributed to the complexity and difficulty of the SBA tasks since the source-based questions in common tests were long and difficult to read. In addition, the learners perceived that tasks were difficult because there was inadequate support material to assist them. This lack of resources was perceived as a factor that contributed to the difficulty of the tasks that had to be completed.

Taken together, our study suggests the existence of the clash between curriculum plans and materials context, means that sometimes what we aim for in assessment is not possible unless we actually plan for all the aspects needed for that assessment to work in practice. This study could inform the teachers, curriculum designers on learners' views and experiences of SBA practices in a Tourism context. This may help teachers and curriculum designers to further investigate the strengths and weaknesses of SBA practices in Tourism. It would also assist in improving the current SBA in Tourism to prepare learners for the future by equipping them with appropriate skills and knowledge that are needed in the tourism industry.

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