



The perspectives of rural high school learners on the value of fieldtrips in tourism education: A case of Pholela Circuit in KwaZulu Natal

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Abstract

Teaching tourism at high school level has remained a challenge in rural KwaZulu-Natal high schools mainly due to inadequately trained teachers, a shortage of resources, lack of exposure to the tourism industry for both rural learners and teachers and the low perception of the subject due to its misunderstood importance towards university entrance. The paper investigated the viewpoints of the learner of the value of fieldtrips in the teaching and learning of tourism at a high school level. The theories underpinning the study were experiential learning and the multiple intelligences which respectively focus on instrumentalism of learning and provision of opportunities to engage all learners at least some of the time. The paper describes how learning is translated into practice during fieldtrips which cater for multiple intelligences thus impacting positively on learning and achievement of learning outcomes. The study used a quantitative approach to data collection and analysis. The aim of the paper was to determine the educational value of fieldtrips in tourism education at a high school level using schools in Pholela Circuit in KwaZulu-Natal. Data was collected from a purposive sample of 142 Grade 12 learners from all the high schools offering tourism in the circuit and data was analyzed using SPSS version 24.0. The results of the study revealed that there were various positive benefits that could be realized from tourism fieldtrips for both the rural teachers and students perspectives. The study also disclosed that fieldtrips could lead to effective achievement of a variety of learning outcomes and at the same time, transform the attitudes of the learners towards the subject, enhance performance in the classroom and help expedite work placement and completion of the Practical Assessment Task.

Keywords: Fieldtrips, experiential learning, multiple intelligences, authentic learning, active learning

Introduction

In South Africa tourism education was developed as part of a socio-economic strategy aimed at opening the industry up to previously marginalized social groups, alleviating poverty through creation of creating job opportunities, and strengthening the South African tourism industry by developing the understanding of the socio-economic, cultural and environmental importance thereof from the high school level. Tourism education was only introduced in schools in 1997. However, 21 years on it still proves to be challenging especially for learners and teachers who have minimal understanding of the field and scarce resources to effectively learn the subject.

This article argues that fieldtrips would be invaluable in terms of providing real-life situations to teach and learn. Sigmon (2014: 17) supports this assertion when stating that in order for tourism teachers to make learning significant and meaningful fieldtrips should be incorporated in the curriculum as they offer experiential learning opportunities in authentic settings. Behrent and



Frankin (2014: 238) regard fieldtrips as a type of experiential learning offering unique opportunities to gain understanding and develop enjoyment for learning. Meiers, College and Vernon (2010: 2) elaborate that experiential learning helps to clarify concepts and theories taught in the classroom and give learners hands on and original experiences and materials making learning meaningful. Berer (2017) highlights the significance of preparing learners for visual and social literacy during a fieldtrips. Berer further states that fieldtrips as learning platforms are energizing, stimulating and exciting. They expose learners to opportunities to learn in an unstructured way and direct their own concentration and learning.

Theoretical framework and literature review

Dewey's theory of experiential learning (EL) promotes learning from experience and learning by doing as it allows learners to discover things by touching, listening to, watching, moving things, dissembling and reassembling things (Behrendt & Franklin, 2014: 237) thus providing for authentic and first hand learning in real-life settings. Wong and Wong (2009) refer to experiential learning as learning in which learners are directly in touch with the realities being studied thus being active participants in their own learning (Mathias, 2014: 8) as they discover for themselves what things mean as well as their interconnectedness and strike a balance between the learner's interests and delivery of knowledge (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012:2). In agreement Wurdinger and Carlson (2010: 1) posit that EL denotes any method of learning that enable learners to apply knowledge and concepts to real-world situations and problems in a (Berer, 2017) learner-centred way that is (Benckendorff & Zehrer, 2017:307) grounded in experience, critical thinking, reflection and action while also teaching learners the competencies and behaviour needed for them to thrive in the real-world.

The Association for Experiential Education (AEE) (2006: 6) views fieldtrips as crucial to the connection of content learned in the classroom to reality and other fields of knowledge while (Power & Morgan, 2010: 6) gaining a better understanding of the community and environment they live in as they learn in a (Berer, 2017) more holistic and less abstract way. Similarly, Antwi and Oppong (2014: 3; Ruegg, 2014) argue that fieldtrips allow for direct experience for the learners in authentic situations thus promoting cross-disciplinary learning beyond the confines of the classroom. Ruegg (2014) further states that fieldtrips are a format of learning that allows learners to access learning using all five senses (visual, auditory, smell, touch and taste) catering for multiple intelligences. According to Kerawalla, Littleton, Scancon, Collins, Gaved, Mulhalland, Jones, Clough and Blake (2012:78) fieldtrips can be used to introduce abstract concepts, consolidate classroom learning and bridge the gaps between different sections of the syllabus, between theory and practice and even between subjects.

Gardner (2010: 2) posits that different learners have different intelligences and strengths, so teaching ought to be designed to enhance their strengths and also developing other areas where they are struggling. Fieldtrips engage a full range of learners' intelligences (Verbal-linguistic: which means understanding of words and sounds, Logical-mathematical: which refers to ability to think conceptually and numerically, Spatial-visual: which has to do with ability to think in images, Bodily-kinesthetic: addressing ability to control of one's movement and coordination, Musical: related to appreciation of sounds and rhythm, Interpersonal: which is linked to ability to accommodate others and their feeling, Intrapersonal related to self-awareness, Naturalist: sensitivity to natural environment and Existential: related to understanding of issues of human existed) Gardner (2010: 1). Fieldtrips therefore afford learners opportunities to access learning in the way that best suits their style. Fieldtrips allow learners to gain knowledge, obtain information and deepen their understanding while enjoying the process of learning that is centred



around them. Weeden, Woolley and Lester (2011: 345) argue that meaningful fieldtrips are based on learning objectives otherwise they would according to Patrick (2010: 172) be less effective in the transfer of knowledge and meaning. Thus fieldtrips should be used when they are effective and efficient in fulfilling learning and curriculum objectives. According to Power and Morgan (2010: 15) fieldtrips provide for active learning and engagement. If fieldtrips are properly designed and conducted they prove to be the most interesting and informative method of teaching and learning (Walter, 2010: 691).

Fieldtrips enhance learning by providing insights into classroom discussions (Arcodia, Cavlek & Abreu-Novais, 2014: 856) thus balancing learner-centredness and teacher-centredness. Goh (2011: 61) argues that while traditional classroom learning is necessary to provide information, introduce and highlight concepts and theories, fieldtrips provide rare opportunities to manipulate learning objects in a practical and stimulating way. The proponents of authentic learning (Dewey, Goh & Brigg,) argue that active participation in the learning process is the best way of learning and ownership of the process (Power & Morgan, 2010: 5; Antwi & Oppong, 2014: 3) and create memories that do not only enhance learning but also improve long-term knowledge retention and develop educational experiences to help learners identify and solve real-life problems.

While Behrendt and Franklin (2014: 238) argue that fieldtrips sharpen the learners' observation skills, as they are able to use all senses, Kerawalla *et al* (2012: 78) is of the view that they help facilitate understanding of the subject in terms of vocabulary, methods, and techniques. Fieldtrips have the capacity to extend the resources available to learners in the class room, provide opportunity to research about the topic of study, provide entrance into an unknown world which learners can later introduce to their parents. A well-organized fieldtrip makes learners aware of the learning opportunities in everyday life, which is an excellent method of teaching through observation and assigning meaning to the learning experience (Lai, 2010: 241). Adjeniji-Neill (2012: 202) states that experiential learning enables learners to interact with the world and change their inert knowledge into knowledge in use.

Methodology

The method used in this study was quantitative, using structured questionnaires to collect data from learners on their standpoints of the value to fieldtrips to their tourism learning experience. The study targeted Grade 12 tourism learners in the Pholela Circuit in Bulwer meaning that a cross-sectional case study design of those schools that offered tourism in this particular circuit of the Department of Education was used after ethical consent was obtained. Data was collected from all 142 learners from 4 high schools offering tourism as part of the curriculum in the circuit. The class registers were as follows:

School A – 35 learners
School B – 30 learners
School C – 35 learners
School D – 42 learners

The questionnaires were personally handed out to the learners and explanations given of what was expected of them. It was important to observe the process of completion to ensure that there was no undue influence from other learners and to clarify whatever concepts they did not understand. All learners remained anonymous throughout. The questions on the questionnaire were short to avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation by the learners and were relevant to the aim



of the study and aligned to research objectives. A total of 142 completed questionnaires were collected.

Since the study was to be conducted at the schools under the Department of Education, permission had to be sought from the District Office to conduct such a study. A letter was then presented to the principals of all the participating schools. The researcher made sure that the information sheet and description of the research was easily understood by the learners. The study ensured that the names of the schools and personal details of the learners were protected.

Findings

Responses were solicited from the learners using the questionnaire which allowed the learners to select one most appropriate response from given options. Figure 1 indicates that 54.9% of learners responded that their schools organized fieldtrips for them. The majority of the learners (60.6%) had not participated in fieldtrips before.

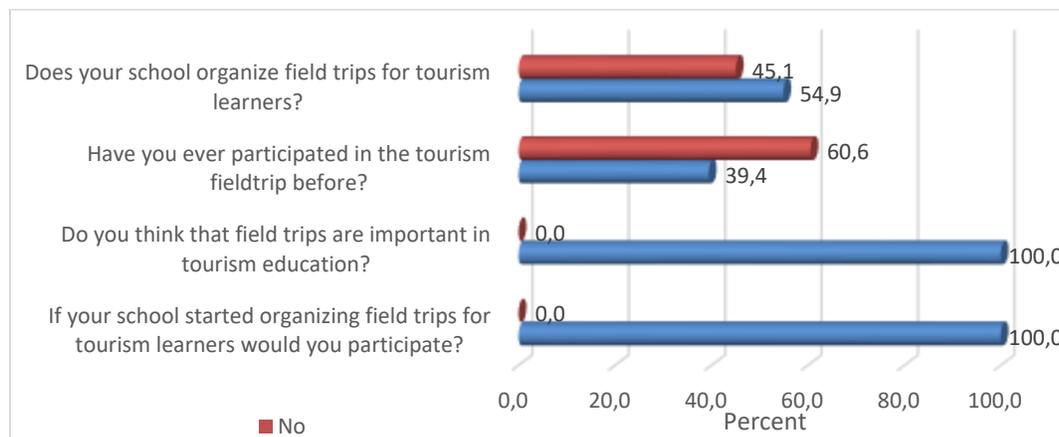


Figure 1. Learner responses on the organization of fieldtrips in their own schools

Less than half of the learners (39.4%) had participated in fieldtrips before. Figure1 shows that all the learners (100%) thought that fieldtrips were important to tourism education and all of them (100%) also indicated that if their schools were to organize fieldtrips for them they would participate.

Table 1. Learners' responses on the organization of fieldtrips in their own schools

	Yes	No	Chi Square p-value
Does your school organize fieldtrips for tourism learners?	54.93	45.07	0.24
Have you ever participated in the tourism fieldtrip before?	39.44	60.56	0.01
Do you think that fieldtrips are important in tourism education?	100.00	0.00	-
If your school started organizing fieldtrips for tourism learners would you participate?	100.00	0.00	-



As indicated in Table 1 the p-value of tourism learners that had never participated in fieldtrips is 0.01 which is less than the 0.05 level meaning that this response was significant and non-participation could actually impact on understanding and overall performance in the subject. The p-value on issue of sampled schools organizing fieldtrips for tourism learners was not very significant at 0.24. H_o (Null hypothesis): *Most of the grade 12 tourism learners would have participated in fieldtrips before* is therefore rejected based on the results of statistical analysis yielding a negative p-value of 0.01 as indicated on Table 1.

The value of fieldtrips in tourism learning

Table 2 shows learners' responses regarding the value they attach to fieldtrips. These questions were asked because they were important as an indication of what the learners thought fieldtrips would contribute in their overall performance in the subject. Their responses would indicate to the teachers as well as the heads of departments the importance that learners attach to fieldtrips. It would also provide justification for their organization and funding by the schools that offer tourism as a subject. The majority of the learners agreed to all the questions as the percentages range from 88.7% to 99.3%. An overwhelming majority of the learners (95.8%) liked tourism as a subject, with 98.6% thinking that tourism learning was useful.

As Table 2 indicates, almost all the learners (95.8%) regarded fieldtrips as useful in making them learn in different ways. About of the 90.1% of learners stated that if they take part in fieldtrip it would consolidate what they learnt in the classroom in their natural environment. Demirkaya and Atayeter (2011: 457) are of the view that it through fieldtrips that learners are able to see objects in their natural contexts and it enables them to deepen their understanding and make a connection with what is learnt previously in the classroom.

Fieldtrip are regarded as a teaching tool which has the ability to cater for than more than one learning style, and afford learners the opportunity to be active and take full advantage of their senses as they walk, talk, observe, smile and hear while they learn. A large number of learners clearly agreed (95.1%) as indicated in Table 2 that fieldtrips will help them learn in different ways. This implies that learners have different learning styles which classroom learning alone cannot accommodate.

Table 2. The value of fieldtrips in tourism learning

		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Chi Squar e
		Cou nt	Row N %	Cou nt	Row N %	Cou nt	Row N %	p- value
I like tourism as a subject	Q1	136	95.8 %	6	4.2%	0	0.0%	0.000
I believe that the tourism I learn in school is useful	Q2	140	98.6 %	2	1.4%	0	0.0%	0.000
I think fieldtrips are necessary as they help me learn in different ways	Q3	136	95.8 %	5	3.5%	1	0.7%	0.000



Fieldtrips will help me increase my knowledge in the subject	Q4	135	95.1 %	5	3.5%	2	1.4%	0.000
Fieldtrips will allow me to see things in their natural settings	Q5	127	90.1 %	9	6.4%	5	3.5%	0.000
Fieldtrips can increase my interest in tourism as a subject	Q6	126	88.7 %	10	7.0%	6	4.2%	0.000
I think that fieldtrips will allow me to see the links in the content that is covered in the classroom	Q7	131	92.3 %	11	7.7%	0	0.0%	0.000
Fieldtrips will help me think logically and critically	Q8	134	94.4 %	8	5.6%	0	0.0%	0.000
Participating in fieldtrips is a worthwhile educational experience	Q9	134	94.4 %	7	4.9%	1	0.7%	0.000
Fieldtrips should be a compulsory part of the tourism curriculum	Q10	141	99.3 %	0	0.0%	1	0.7%	0.000
Fieldtrips will allow me to develop closer relationship with my classmates and teachers	Q11	130	91.5 %	7	4.9%	5	3.5%	0.000
Fieldtrips can help reinforce what my teacher is teaching in the classroom	Q12	134	94.4 %	2	1.4%	6	4.2%	0.000
The school should organize more fieldtrips	Q13	132	93.0 %	2	1.4%	8	5.6%	0.000

The results also show conclusively (95.1%, Table 2) that participating in fieldtrips would increase and enrich their knowledge in the subject. There is vast knowledge gained in the classroom as it clarifies concepts, theories about the subject, however fieldtrips are about discovery, as learners are able to see how the techniques learnt are applied in the real world. According to Power & Morgan (2010: 4) the interaction between the learner and the teacher whilst on fieldtrips can serve as both an academic and social motivator; which provide a good opportunity for the learners to increase their factual knowledge and understanding about the subject.

The majority of the learners (94.4%, Table 2) concurred that fieldtrips would assist them to think logically and critically. Almost all the respondents (99.3%) felt that fieldtrips should be made compulsory in the tourism curriculum. A unanimous 91.5% of the respondents thought that fieldtrips were important because they brought them as learners together. As can be seen from Table 2, 94.4% of learners indicated that if they participated in fieldtrips it will assist them in reinforcing what they are being taught in the classroom.

The results indicate that most of the learners (88.7%, Table 2) agreed that fieldtrips can increase their interest in tourism as a subject. In traditional classroom setting learners play a passive role as the teacher is the main source of knowledge. However, if the learner is active in the learning process they foster a more positive attitude towards the subject being studied (Kerawalla *et al*, 2012: 78).



Table also 2 shows that 92.3% of the learners agreed that fieldtrips undertaken in schools will allow them to see the link between the trip and what they learn in the classroom. Almost all the learners (93, 0%) as indicated on Table 2 agreed that their schools should organize more fieldtrips. Fieldtrips transform relationships between the teacher and the learners as well as develop closer relationship among the peers (Sandell & Öhman, 2012). The majority of learners (91.5%, Table 2) agreed that fieldtrips would assist them to develop a closer relationship with the classmate and teachers. These learners view fieldtrips as a place where they get to know each other. Time spent away from the classroom afford learners a chance to spend time with each other in unfamiliar environment, where they spend time chatting with friends, having fun and learning together (Meiers *et al*, 2010). The chi square values (Table 2) of these responses shows a high level of significance as all their p-values are below 0.05 meaning that they were all significant. While some fieldtrips and activities may be costly and time consuming to undertake, others can place on and around campus providing a measure of activity and pleasurable learning experience.

Factor Analysis

The purpose of factor analysis is to summarize data so that relationships and patterns can be easily interpreted and understood (Yong & Pearce, 2013: 79). Factor analysis was used to reduce data with an aim of presenting a number of questions in the questionnaire with a smaller number of hypothetical or theoretical factors.

Table 3: Rotated component matrix

The requirement is that Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy should be greater than 0.50 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity less than 0.05. In all instances, the conditions are satisfied which allows for the factor analysis procedure. Factor analysis, using the principal component extraction was thought to be suitable for the study. Factor analysis is done only for the Likert scale items. To determine whether the scoring patterns per statement were significantly different per option, a chi square test was done. This test answers questions about 'relationships between different variables'. The results are shown in the Table 3. The highlighted sig. values (p-values) were less than 0.05 (the level of significance), it implies that the distributions were not similar. That is, the differences between the way respondents scored (agree, neutral, disagree) were significant. The highlighted values were indicative of a level of significance between the factor and selected variables.

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
I like tourism as a subject	0.501	0.275	0.094	0.293	-0.114
I believe that the tourism I learn in school is useful	-0.225	0.278	0.120	0.737	0.209
I think fieldtrips are necessary as they help me learn in different ways	-0.135	0.810	0.017	0.050	0.088
Fieldtrips will help me increase my knowledge in the subject	0.052	0.008	0.032	-0.010	0.894
Fieldtrips will allow me to see things in their natural settings	0.675	0.097	-0.017	-0.234	0.008
Fieldtrips can increase my interest in tourism as a subject	-0.034	0.185	0.685	0.117	-0.210



I think that fieldtrips will allow me to see the links in the content that is covered in the classroom	0.670	-0.135	0.056	0.190	0.255
Fieldtrips will help me think logically and critically	0.310	0.467	-0.075	-0.035	0.418
Fieldtrips should be a compulsory part of the tourism curriculum	0.163	-0.122	-0.064	0.600	-0.124
Fieldtrips will allow me to develop closer relationship with my classmates and teachers	-0.043	0.079	0.682	-0.322	0.099
Fieldtrips can help reinforce what my teacher is teaching in the classroom	0.207	0.578	0.216	-0.015	-0.113
The school should organize more fieldtrips	0.298	-0.111	0.660	0.301	0.258

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Correlation Statistics

Correlation statistics were used in the study to identify relationships between constructs and therefore, the Pearson product moment correlations were used. A confidence level of $p < 0.05$ was set to test for statistical significant. Correlations may vary from -1 to 1, and with 0 indicating that there are no linear relationships between two variables. A correlation suggests of -1 suggests a perfect negative linear relationship while a correlation of 1 suggests a positive linear relationship between variables. Bivariate correlation was also performed on the (ordinal) data.

The results indicated the following patterns:

- a. The correlation value between “I believe that the tourism I learn in school is useful” and “I think fieldtrips are necessary as they help me learn in different ways” is 0.270 ($p = 0.001$). This is a directly related proportionality.
- b. There is a strong correlation value between “fieldtrips can increase my interest in tourism as a subject” and I believe that the tourism I learn in school is useful is 0.170 ($p = 0.043$). The respondents indicate the more fieldtrips are undertaken; the more their interest in the subject will be aroused.
- c. There is significant correlational value between “I think that fieldtrips will allow me to see a link in the content that is covered in the classroom” and “fieldtrips allow me to see things in their natural setting” is 0.223 ($p = 0.008$). The respondents seem to think that if they participate in fieldtrips and see things in their natural environment; they will be able to see the link between what they are seeing and what is learnt in the classroom.
- d. The correctional value between “fieldtrips will help me think logically and critically” and “fieldtrips will help me increase my knowledge in a subject” is 0.272 ($p = 0.001$). The values are directly proportional meaning that the respondents indicate that if they participate in fieldtrips they will be able to think rationally and logically which will in turn increase their knowledge in the subject.
- e. There is a significant correlation value between “participating in fieldtrips is a worthwhile educational experience” and “fieldtrips can increase my interest in tourism as subject” is 0.183 ($p = 0.029$). The respondents indicated that if they participate in meaningful fieldtrips; the more interested they will be in the subject.



- f. There is a significant relationship between “fieldtrips should be compulsory” and “I believe the tourism I learn in school is useful” (0.234 with $p = 0.005$). The respondents indicated that if fieldtrips are to be compulsory, the more they would participate.
- g. The correlation between “fieldtrips will allow me to develop a closer relationship between my classmates and teachers” and “fieldtrips can increase my interest in tourism as a subject” is 0.222 ($p = 0.005$). This is a significant correlation as the respondents indicated that if they participate in fieldtrips, their interest in the subject will be stimulated.
- h. There is also a strong correlation between “fieldtrips help reinforce what my teacher is teaching in the classroom” and “fieldtrips are necessary as they help me learn in different ways” (0.224, $p = 0.007$).
- i. There is a significant correlation between “the school should organize more fieldtrips” and “fieldtrips can increase my interest in tourism as a subject” (0.0286 with $p = 0.001$). The respondents indicate that the more fieldtrips are undertaken in school; the more interested they will be in the subject.

Conclusion

The study has shown that there are many benefits associated with fieldtrips and how fieldtrips add value to the teaching and learning of tourism as an important subject. A subject like tourism requires that learners be exposed to authentic learning environments at least some of the time where learners are able to discover things for themselves and associate theory with practice. Properly planned fieldtrips that are aligned to learning outcomes and assessment criteria would enable teachers to accommodate a number of learning styles and increase the opportunities to be actively involved in learning and experimentation. Clearly, it would be ideal to assign a smaller group to a leader/teacher who would direct their attention and facilitate learning amid the excitement of a visit.

The situation for rural learners is exacerbated by the fact that even the teachers themselves do not have much tourism experience and they tend to theorise tourism and related facilities and pass that on to the learners. This kills a very interesting subject leading to the learners losing interest and not wishing to continue with it even in higher education.

Looking at pictures from magazines would never equate to a visit to the airport, aquarium, zoological garden, crocodile farm, game drive to look for and see the Big Five and so on and getting to see what tourists look like and do. Learners all have different learning styles and fieldtrips open up opportunities for teachers to plan to cater for a number of them in one fieldtrip while also enabling them to integrate outcomes from a number of subjects/learning areas.

Imagine the excitement and learning experience of using the fieldtrip to do calculations in Mathematical Literacy, the thrill of seeing live animals, the experience of being taught by a seasoned tour guide and supervised viewing of hotel lobby and reception area, empty rooms, choosing, ordering and being served lunch at a restaurant.

Tourism as a subject by its nature encourages field learning which intertwines theory and practice and helps the learners in completing their Practical Assessment Task (PAT) which is also a key requirement for Grade 12 learners within the South African education context.



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