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EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL SCIENCES TEACHERS ON EXCURSIONS AS A PEDAGOGIC PRAXIS FOR TEACHING SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Abstract

This paper sought to explore the experiences of Social Sciences (SS) teachers on excursions as a pedagogic praxis for teaching SS. Data were generated qualitatively using an interpretive paradigm and sampled purposively with five School-Based Departmental Heads (DHs) and six SS teachers. This study adopted semi-structured interviews for data generation. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis revealed seven themes, which were: preparing for an excursion requires more time, SS teachers, as organizers, are accountable for anything taking place during the excursion, excursions contribute to the development of students' skills and enhance comprehension of the subject matter, and excursions enable educators to establish networks with external organizations. Lastly, SS teachers should ensure the safety of learners during excursion. This paper recommends that excursion organisers should be provided with additional time to plan and prepare for excursions so that the service delivery of the excursion might not be a fiasco. Excursions should be made compulsory for SS learners for them to experience, understand and better remember what they have learned outside the classroom. Schools should permit parent volunteers to take on significant roles during excursions to ensure that parents are assured of their children's safety.

Keywords

Social Sciences, Excursion, Pedagogic, Praxis, Teachers' Experiences



1. Introduction

SS teaching integrated with praxes can make teaching and learning activities explicit for learners because the link between theory and practice can be demonstrated through excursions. The employment of excursions provides the best opportunities for both learners and teachers to explore and discover first-hand and unique experiences (Olin-Scheller *et al.*, 2021). Excursions are one of the distinctive pedagogic praxes that teachers can draw from to instill practice that can assist learners to understand better the content (Bentsen *et al.*, 2009). To complement this argument, Bentsen *et al.* (2009) suggest that in every subject, content should be effectively demonstrated in and outside the classroom for learners to gain direct and practical knowledge, and skills. By so doing, learners are likely to be exposed to nature and the things surrounding them. Most teachers consider excursions as crucial to their teaching (Ngcamu, 2000) and learners appreciate excursions because they are an important learning tool for SS (Ngcobo, 2023). Excursions refer to an educational tour arranged by teachers for learners to visit any relevant location or place with educational benefits for learners. The motive behind visiting these places is for learners to acquire knowledge relative to what they learned in class. These visits serve best as opportunities for exploration, discovery, first-hand and original experiences (DeWitt & Storksdieck, 2008). On the other hand, pedagogic praxis refers to educational mechanisms that offer a platform in teacher education for teachers to begin to develop practices that can assist learners in understanding better (Loughran & Hamilton,

2016). SS is a subject done in the Senior Phase, i.e., grades 7 - 9, and combines Geography and History. However, as modern SS teachers organize excursions for their learners, they acquire experiences that can shape their insight and pedagogy relative to future excursions. SS teachers organize excursions to integrate theory with the environment or primary sources (Lee *et al.*, 2021). They organize excursions to avoid a traditional practice that Vennah and Gichugu (2022) view as a failure to adopt excursions. This on its own suggests that traditionally, excursions were dearth in schools, but nowadays, some SS teachers employ excursions as part of their pedagogy to ease content understanding. Loughran and Hamilton (2016) accentuate that excursions offer a platform for teachers to develop a practice that can assist learners to understand content better. While utilizing textbooks to cover theoretical concepts, practical learning through excursions significantly enhances student understanding. Therefore, we advocate for the incorporation of excursions in the curriculum, as these experiences allow learners to engage with the material in a real-world context, fostering deeper cognitive connections. By emphasizing excursions as a vital component of practical learning, we can enrich students' educational experiences beyond the confines of the classroom. Therefore, it is important that SS teachers organize excursions so that learners can marry theory and practicals. This paper sought to explore the experiences of Social Sciences (SS) teachers on excursions as a pedagogic praxis for teaching SS. Even though a lot has been written on

excursions but authors have not come across a manuscript that addresses experiences on the undertaking of excursions, more especially for Social Sciences teachers. The challenges that SS teachers face as they organise excursions have not been fully explored. Our observation and experiences as SS teachers show that very few schools organise excursions and this is a worrying factor. The authors of this paper advocate for the implementation of excursions that can enhance the educational experience of learners in the Pinetown District. It seeks to engage various stakeholders, including SS teachers, school districts, principals, and teacher preparation programs, encouraging them to recognize the value of such initiatives and actively support their integration into the curriculum. The study is shaped by the question: What are the experiences of SS teachers on excursions as a pedagogic praxis for teaching SS? Undertaking this study will provide insights into how SS teachers can use excursions as a pedagogic praxis to assist learners in interpreting their humanity, nature, and the physical world through tangible experiences. Furthermore, this study will help understand SS teachers' experiences and views on learning outside the classroom with learners as active participants.

2. Materials

Experiences of SS teachers on excursions as a pedagogic praxis for teaching SS vary with planning, organisation and participation (Darby-Hobbs, 2012). Excursions can contribute to educational reform and policy by promoting social harmony, deepening the curriculum understanding and providing practical learning experiences that

can allow learners to participate and be active than traditional classroom settings (Jay, 2022). Excursions can also contribute to learners' academic success, address their social issues while they encourage learners' personal growth. Consequently, excursions can be viewed as a vital component of the SS curriculum, enriching the educational experience and promoting deeper comprehension of the subject (Poponi, 2019). Excursions in the SS context, are observed by teachers as the key teaching methods that are vastly evaluated and directed by the curriculum as specified in the work programme for SS Grades 4 - 9 such that other topics, have to be done using exploration (Sitali-Mubanga *et al.*, 2018). Excursions have evolved beyond the conventional exploration of cultural and historical sites, embracing a more innovative and adventurous spirit (Dolynska *et al.*, 2024). However, today's excursions embody a spirit of innovation and adventure inherently involve elements of risk, danger and engagement with the natural environment, making them essential experiences (Farkić & Gebbels, 2022). The types of excursions that are frequently used within SS education include excursions to historical landmarks comprising, monuments, museums, civic centres, parks, memorials etc. and outstanding geographic natural features (Ruck & Mannion, 2020). During excursions, SS teachers observe better interactions among learners, which enable teamwork and support as learners collaborate on group projects (Poponi, 2019). Learners should engage with their environment in a practical and realistic manner to effectively observe, practice, document and

develop understanding through personal experiences (Preston, 2016). Consequently, it falls upon teachers to facilitate this exposure by organizing excursions that provide such applied learning opportunities. The Department of Education (DoE) relies on teachers as professionals equipped to implement the curriculum effectively (Kenna, 2014). Therefore, in addition to traditional classroom instruction, SS teachers are expected to incorporate excursions into their teaching strategies. SS teachers encounter difficulties with excursions around time, among learners' actions and financial difficulties, and administrative hindrances pertaining to outdoor learning (Çengelci, 2013). Therefore, the curriculum should be planned so that there is ample time for both learning in and outside the classroom. Teachers also want to organize excursions, but they experience some problems with learner behaviour and scarcity of money since learners have to pay for excursions. Teachers' experiences of excursions have revealed that their prior knowledge of the place to be visited is essential and that they may be able to appreciate and familiarise themselves with the place first before visiting it with their learners (Kitchen & Petrarca, 2016). So, according to Beltman *et al.* (2015), this practice should limit teachers' lack of confidence in teaching outside the classroom. The study by Marcus *et al.* (2012) on excursions found that teachers' selection of SS excursion sites is often limited, and very often, they acknowledge that they are unfamiliar with the places they are visiting; hence, visiting the place before bringing learners is of utmost importance. Most teachers fail to specify the learning outcomes linked with

peculiar excursions, making it difficult for learners to provide the expected learning outcomes (Kenna, 2014). This may suggest that teachers organize excursions with no clear direction or motivation for organizing them. To address these issues, it is essential for the curriculum to allocate sufficient time for both classroom instruction and outdoor activities. SS teachers also experience difficulties related to the enactment stage of the excursions method in terms of SS education (Elden, 2013). These difficulties that teachers encounter result from not having acquired the necessary level of awareness concerning the precise didactic method in their undergraduate education (Park, 2010). Seemingly, as stated by Nadelson and Jordan (2012), teachers felt that they could not be able to control their learners outside the classroom, mostly without any assistance, as they have large numbers of learners in the classes they teach. Teachers have appreciated the presence and assistance of the tour guides provided by places they visited and the company of the parent chaperones who accompany learners on the excursions (De Beer, 2023). The presence of the tour guides and parent chaperones is a relief on the teachers' side because learners are generally divided into small groups, allowing better social interaction and understanding of the subject matter (Çengelci, 2013). Given that the presence of tour guides during the excursion is a relief on the teachers' side, seemingly, for these teachers, being part of the excursion allows them also to get to know the place better, receive social interaction together with the subject matter as they would not have to worry that much about learners in the presence of the tour guides and parent chaperones.

The majority of teachers still acknowledge that the use of excursions is a highly valuable pedagogical experience, yet they admit that the experience would have been better if they thoroughly prepared, followed up and gave feedback (Kenna, 2019). So, it is advisable for SS School-based DHs to provide teachers with time to prepare thoroughly, follow up and give feedback after each excursion for it to be effective (Ngcobo, 2023). Apparently, more experienced teachers pertaining to planning, organizing, and participating in excursions viewed their roles as critical in understanding pedagogical purposes and their teaching approaches. Also, from the discussed literature, SS teachers' experiences of excursions as a pedagogic praxis seem to differ. Hence, the SS excursion discussion could transform teaching methodology and pedagogy.

3. Methods

It was stated by Blandford, Furniss and Makri (2016) that when exploring human experiences, it is fruitful to use various data collection methods. The researcher adopted the qualitative research approach as the purpose of the study was to explore the use of excursions as a pedagogic praxis for SS. Not only did the qualitative approach assist in exploring excursions as a pedagogic praxis, but it also helped to understand SS teacher's experiences with using excursions as a pedagogic praxis. Vears and Gillam (2022) posit that qualitative researchers are interested in the terms, meanings, ideas, characteristics, codes and descriptions of issues. The interpretive paradigm was adopted in this study. Interpretive paradigm is a methodological approach which focuses on the understanding that reality and human experiences are shaped by

subjective perceptions and social constructs (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Interpretive paradigm was useful in this paper because it assisted in discerning and analyzing the experiences of SS teachers on excursions as a pedagogic praxis for teaching SS as the subject. In the interpretive paradigm, peoples' understanding and clarification of social phenomena are researched (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Researchers using this paradigm acknowledge that which exists in the world and that their responsibility is to understand the world and avoid changing it (Otoo, 2020). Due to the nature of this qualitative study, this paper was located under the interpretive paradigm. In this study, it was used as the lens through which we viewed and analysed my study. Researcher sampled five School-Based DHs for Humanities from each Circuit and six SS teachers to determine experiences of SS teachers in secondary schools within the Pinetown District on excursions as a pedagogic praxis for teaching SS. DHs are included in this study due to their curriculum management roles. DHs approve excursion during application and this makes them aware of any excursion activities taking place in their schools hence they provided knowledge about the implementation of excursions in their respective schools. Also, in the South African educational landscape, DHs are integral members of the School Management Team (SMT), responsible for overseeing curriculum implementation and ensuring the delivery of quality education (Mpisane, 2015). Their selection was essential for this research, as they possess valuable insights into the phenomenon under investigation. The selection criteria for the SS teachers focused on

determining whether the schools and grades involved had previously participated in SS excursions, as this was a key aspect of the study. The researcher opted for purposive sampling also called judgment sampling, which is described as the deliberate selection of research participants due to the abilities they hold (Subedi, 2023). The emphasis was on quality rather than quantity, and the objective of this study was not to maximize numbers but to become “saturated” with information (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Gender of participants, racial groups and types of schools

were not set as prerequisites for teacher representation in the study. A concise overview of the demographics of the research participants is provided below, detailing the grades and subjects they teach, the number of students in each grade, and their respective districts. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to teachers involved in the study. The 11 participants’ pseudonyms are DH 1, DH 2, DH 3, DH 4, DH 5, SS Teacher 1, SS Teacher 2, SS Teacher 3, SS Teacher 4, SS Teacher 5 and SS Teacher 6.

Table 1: A brief table of the research participants, grades, subjects, number of learners per grade and CMCs

Teachers	Grades teaching	Subject/s teaching	Number of learners per Grade
DH 1	10 - 12	History	Grade 10 - 45
			Grade 11 - 33
			Grade 12 – 11
DH 2	10 - 12	History	Grade 10 - 65
			Grade 11 - 43
			Grade 12 - 101
DH 3	10 - 12	Geography	Grade 11 - 32
			Grade 12 - 14
			Grade 11 - 49
DH 4	11 - 12	Geography	Grade 12 – 15
			Grade 12 - 55
			Grade 12 - 55
DH 5	12	English	Grade 12 - 55
			Grade 12 - 55
			Grade 12 - 55
SS Teacher 1	8 - 9	SS	Grade 8 - 135
			Grade 9 – 114
			Grade 9 - 144
SS Teacher 2	8	English	Grade 9 - 144
			Grade 9 - 144
			Grade 9 - 121
SS Teacher 3	8 - 9	SS	Grade 8 - 117
			Grade 9 - 121
			Grade 9 - 121
SS Teacher 4	8	Creative Arts	Grade 8 - 132
			Grade 9 - 108
			Grade 9 - 108
SS Teacher 5	9 - 10	History	Grade 9 - 61

		IsiZulu	Grade 10 - 55
SS Teacher 6	8 - 9	SS	Grade 8 - 165
			Grade 9 - 151

This paper was qualitative in nature and it resulted in massive transcribed data generated through semi-structured interviews. For this reason, the researcher analysed gathered data using thematic analysis. Open coding by constructing emerging themes through an inductive process (Naeem *et al.*, 2023) was used. The themes were reviewed, defined and coded to explain a particular thought, showing numerous implications to be utilized to improve a complete explanation of data as perceived by the respondents in their ordinary setting. Open coding was used by constructing emerging themes through an inductive process (Smith & Davies, 2010). We identified, analysed, organised, described themes using the thematic analysis, which identifies themes and patterns making sense through a dataset related to the research questions. Seven themes were produced which were, preparing for an excursion requires time, accountability of SS teachers as organizers is critical, excursions contribute to the development of student's skills, excursions enhance the comprehension of the subject matter, and excursions enable educators to establish networks with external organizations. Before this paper was written, ethics were first sought with the university and department of basic education since the study involved teachers. Further to this, all participants were given consent form that they signed voluntarily. Entailed in this consent form was the assurance that their identity would be observed

through pseudonyms and that they were free to withdraw from interview anytime if they feel uncomfortable.

4. Results

Results reveal that organizing an excursion consumes much time because SS teachers need to make pre-excursion visits, amongst other things, to ensure that they take learners to a good and convenient place. On top of that, they need to do risk assessments, inform parents, secure parental consent, gather information about learners and supervisors, organise transport, take care of accident and emergency procedures and collect funds. Time is considered a critical issue when organizing an excursion and it can impact the excursion negatively or positively. An organizer of an excursion is expected to organize the excursion and at the same time undertake teaching and learning activities; if this does not happen, SMT members, specifically the school principal complain about time lost without teaching. Additionally, results indicate that the SS teacher who organizes excursions is accountable for various activities taking place during the excursions. The organizer is responsible for planning the venue, date, budget, obtaining approvals and consent. They must also supervise learners, maintain a suitable teacher-learner ratio, prepare learners and manage their behavior during the trip. Additionally, the organizer must communicate with the personnel involved and

account for any issues that arise. Should something go wrong during the excursion, the organizer is held accountable for any issues that may arise, such as learners arriving late or expenditure discrepancies. In essence, the excursion organizer is responsible for all excursion procedures and activities throughout the trip. Furthermore, results reveal that excursions significantly develop learners' skills, particularly in SS education. By taking learners to relevant locations, excursion organizers can facilitate the development of essential skills like observing, visualizing, listening, exploring, interacting, touching and presenting. These skills are sharpened as learners engage with tour guides, explore their surroundings and interact with their environment. Furthermore, excursions encourage learners to move beyond mere listening and writing, instead encouraging them to view, observe, and touch the subjects they are learning about. Finally, excursions provide opportunities for learners to develop their presentation skills by sharing their experiences and results with their peers. Moreover, results divulge that excursions play a vital role in enhancing learners' understanding of academic content by providing hands-on experiences that complement theoretical knowledge. By seeing and interacting with the subject matter firsthand, learners are more likely to retain information and develop a deeper understanding of the content. Well-organized excursions can help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application, making learning more engaging and effective. Also, SS teachers considered excursions a learning method promoting a better understanding of the content. As a practical subject, SS learners

understand better when they see things they learned about in class. Excursions add more and new information to what learners already know, thus leading to a better understanding of the content. According to SS teachers, learners understand better if they are in an unusual environment, like an excursion, where they can learn in a non-traditional setting. Results have also shown that excursions are considered a valuable tool for teaching and learning SS by numerous teachers. These excursions have been found to develop learners' interest in the subject, expand their worldviews, and serve as a team-building mechanism. Moreover, excursions provide an opportunity for experiential learning beyond the confines of the classroom, allowing learners to explore and discover things for themselves. This hands-on approach helps learners develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter and enables them to form their own meaning and understanding of the content. SS teachers appreciate the practicality of excursions, as they provide a more engaging and interactive way of learning. In fact, many SS teachers believe that excursions should be made compulsory for each school, as they are instrumental in promoting deep learning and fostering a better understanding of SS subjects like Geography and History. Likewise, results indicate that excursions offer SS teachers a valuable opportunity to build networks and connections with organizations and specialists in their field. By doing so, SS teachers can tap into the expertise of others, discuss and share their pedagogic approaches and gain new insights that can enhance their teaching practices. As a result, many teachers have reported a positive impact on

their teaching, leading to more effective learning outcomes for their students. By planning for informal learning activities and making concrete connections to the subject matter, teachers can create a more engaging and meaningful learning experience for their learners. In addition, results have also revealed that parents are always concerned about the safety of their children, particularly when it comes to transportation and supervision during school excursions. In fact, when organizing an excursion, the first thing parents ask about is the safety of their children. As a result, some parents tend to interfere with the organization of the excursion to ensure their child's safety.

5. Discussion

This study explored the experiences of Social Sciences (SS) teachers on excursions as a pedagogic praxis for teaching SS. The results of this research was synthesized into seven key themes. Firstly, preparing for excursions is a time-consuming task for SS teachers. Secondly, the organizers of these excursions bear a significant level of accountability. On a more positive note, excursions were found to be effective in developing learners' skills and promoting a better understanding of the subject content. The usefulness of excursions in teaching SS was also a common thread throughout the study. Furthermore, excursions allow SS teachers to create networks and connections with external organizations and parents. Lastly, the safety of learners during excursions was a significant concern for parents. These themes will be discussed in further detail in the next section.

5.1. Preparing for the excursion is time-consuming

Results suggest that preparing for excursions is time-consuming because SS teachers need to identify curriculum issues first that will guide the excursion and this cannot be done haphazardly but needs time to do it thoroughly. Thereafter, they need to think of activities that will take place during the excursion, make quotes for transport and any other activity that will need learners to pay and they need time to do all these things. DoE puts its trust in teachers as professionals to make the curriculum implementation effective by also planning relevant excursions (Jay, 2022). Teachers should first familiarize themselves with the issue at hand and merge it with excursion planning, which is time-consuming. Kenna (2019) clarifies that teachers require time to thoroughly prepare for the excursion, follow up and give feedback after each excursion for it to be a success. This is in line with what **SS Teacher 6** affirmed:

“As the organizer of the excursion, I spend a lot of time planning the excursion, working out a budget, consulting with personnel from the place to visit, informing parents, distributing and collecting consent form, it really is stressing and time-consuming.”

To complement this argument, Vears and Gillam (2022) maintain that planning the excursion takes time and determination but is worthwhile. Wall and Speake (2012) explain that organizing transport for the excursion can be perceived as demanding and time-consuming and the organizer must devise

ways to simplify the process to ensure that the excursion runs efficiently. Therefore, planning the excursion and organizing transport are some of the activities that organizers need to undertake and they need more time for that. According to Lee *et al.* (2020), careful attention should be given to place selection, pre-visit preparation, appropriate follow-up and evaluation of the excursion to measure if it was successful or not. **SS Teacher 1** stated:

“When I organise the excursion I constantly need time, because there are many things to prepare”.

Also, **SS Teacher 2** argued:

“As the organiser of excursion I spend a lot of time planning the excursion”.

For excursions to succeed, more time should be spent on planning. Hence, Hennink and Kaiser, (2022) explain that site frontrunners have countless responsibilities to communicate with the organisers about different issues that can impact on excursion. Engaging with site personnel also requires extra time since organizers should continuously engage with site people in planning for the excursions to be effective. For this reason, most teachers pre-visit the site to communicate with the site people, which is necessary. Pre-visits mean that teachers should set aside time to go on-site to meet with site personnel, familiarise themselves with the venue to be visited and activities to be undertaken. These affirmations from participants show that there is much effort and planning put into excursions which demand extra time when teachers plan excursions. Therefore, if SS teachers do not spend more time planning excursions, the service delivery of the excursion might be a fiasco.

5.2. Accountability of excursion organiser

As excursion organizers, SS teachers are accountable to all the stakeholders during the excursion. They need to ensure that everything goes well and they keep watch of learners since they are accountable for anything happening during the excursion. SS teachers are required to undertake their responsibilities during excursions since they are accountable for everything happening during the excursion. **SS Teacher 3** specified:

“Overall, it is exciting to organise the excursion, but it is a lot of work to put together as the teacher is expected to be accountable at the end of it all and to report back to the school, School Governing Body (SGB) and to parents as well”.

To emphasize the accountability of excursion organizers, Ferreira and Schulze (2014) suggest that it is the organizer's responsibility to assess the dangers of engaging in various activities by offering procedures to control those risks (Naeem *et al.*, 2023). This begins to say that SS teachers, as excursion organizers, should use a shared regulation as their responsibility to solve problems they might encounter during an excursion. This also means that teachers' priority should be mainly to embark on their responsibilities as excursion organizers. Subject to the nature of an excursion, it is critical for the SS teacher to be mindful of his/her managing responsibilities throughout the excursion (Preston, 2016). This implies that excursions as a pedagogic praxis require organizers to determine the significance of educational excursions and thereafter assume responsibility for ensuring

significance. Learner education needs should be considered during the excursion. At the same time, teachers evaluate risks that the excursion may pose to the safety of learners and postulate how the threats can be managed and avoided. Again, the teacher is responsible for removing learners from conditions that could harm them during the excursion. When excursions are organized, accountability goes with transparency and outcomes, so teachers are indebted with the responsibility to answer to the DoE and parents (Jonasson, 2011). According to Nadelson and Jordan (2012), excursions are educational and yet fun for learners and at times, learners take advantage of excursions and misbehave. Therefore, Darby-Hobbs (2012) discloses that since the excursion is not a daily event, learners must be notified well beforehand of what is expected of them. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) state that it is the SS teachers' responsibility to discuss the excursion behaviour rules with learners beforehand to allow them to be familiar with them.

This concern was further rebounded by **SS Teacher 4** who clarified:

"I have to keep records as proof, specifying how money paid by parents for their children's excursion was used. Everything has to be in black and white, so it is my duty to keep the relevant records. I must have the details and keep records of the venue to be visited, those of transport people and keep all the receipts".

Excursion organizers need to account for how they spend money to both parents and the school

principal; hence, they should keep records of how they spend money. It is true that excursion organizers should always check learners during the excursion to ensure that learners are always well-behaved (Ngcobo, 2023). This means that even though teachers have much on their plate when organizing excursions, they must confirm that they consequently embark on their various responsibilities.

5.3. Excursions develop learners' skills

Excursions serve as a skill-developing mechanism for learners. After attending the excursion, learners can be able to identify, view and compare what they observed during the excursion with what they learned in the classroom. **SS Teacher 2** asserted:

"Prior to the excursion, I always encourage learners to focus on everything they will be learning during the excursion as they know that when they come back I will randomly select any one or two learners to report back in the presence of the whole school about their excursion. Such a practical activity sharpens learners' presentation skills".

Subbiah (2016) clarifies that when learners attend excursions, they develop observation skill which allows them to operate individually and in groups. Smith and Duncan (2019) explicate that when learners attend excursions, they develop viewing skills and can gather and create information, which is essential in SS. Even though reading school books helps to add and improve learners' knowledge but excursions allow learners to compare what they learn in the classroom with what

they observe when they go on excursions (Schumann & Sibthorp, 2016). In line with this, **SS Teacher 5** stated:

“When I take my learners for the SS excursion, I do so with the aim of assisting them to explore, extend and enrich their learning skills development in a non-schooling setting”.

Going on the excursion not only assists learners to observe and touch what they learn during the excursion, but it also sharpens their listening skills as they learn during the excursion. Learners who listen to tour guides during the excursion get clarity and better understand the content. Generally, the listening skill is regarded as a neglected skill and yet the most substantial one (Behrendt & Franklin, 2014). An objective of an excursion is to examine activities that help learners develop their listening skills with tour guides explaining pertinent issues to them (Kenna, 2019). As learners sit and listen attentively, they tend to develop listening skills (Kitson & Husbands, 2011). These views can make SS teachers realize the variety of skills excursions as a pedagogic praxis brings out from learners, which may not be perceived as important. Learners can also develop their presentation skills since they have to, amongst other things, make presentations after excursions. Seemingly, this skill is amongst the result of the excursion, as may occur when learners return to school after the excursion (Bentsen *et al.*, 2009). This implies that after the SS excursion as a pedagogic praxis, most teachers give learners the platform to report on what they learned while on the field. The presentation skill can be

observed by teachers in a customary classroom setting when they engage learners in classroom discussions, group projects, or presentations soon after the excursion (Coughlin, 2010). The presentation skill can help learners develop independent and critical thinking (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). This presentation skill develops when learners present, discuss and report back in class about what they explored during the SS excursion. Yilmaz (2020) specifies that excursions enrich learners' learning and social skills development in a non-schooling setting. To inspire interaction skills, one can create opportunities to practice effective social skills (Thomas, 2011). This implies that when learners are in a non-schooling setting, their social skills can develop as they interact with other people during the excursion.

SS Teacher 1 explained:

“Learners even get a chance to listen to tour guides when they explain certain things to them. Keeping learners in the classroom deprives them to know more. I believe that going out to the unknown environment will allow learners to be open-minded”.

Therefore, excursions can improve learners' different skills. Consequently, this makes one realize the variety of skills excursions bring out of learners after each SS excursion. Seemingly, according to SS teachers, going on the SS excursion not only assists learners in observing and touching what they learn during the excursion but also develops and sharpens numerous other skills during and after the excursion.

5.4. *Excursions promote a better understanding of the content*

The results suggest that excursions assist in promoting the understanding of the content they learned in the classroom. When SS teachers organize excursions, they expose learners to different contexts, which enhance their understanding of subject knowledge. This is complemented by Jay (2022) when arguing that excursions assist learners to understand the world better and improve their space. On the same note, Matthews (2017) observes that excursions to museums can assist learners in developing, enhancing their awareness of historical events, understanding of their own history and heritage. Learning SS in the classroom is insufficient; hence, learners can go on excursions to view what they learn in the classroom for better understanding. Poponi (2019) explains that SS teachers ought to expose learners to excursions because they are lived social events that become resources that offer motivating understandings that are crucial to successful education. When one sees something, one is likely to remember and understand it much better than what they heard (Bozdoğan, 2018). Teacher's associate theory learned in the classroom with practical work, thus changing learners' former understanding into a different aspect of understanding (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). This indicates that excursions as outside practical activities are to be implemented by SS teachers for learners to understand the subject matter better because they enhance better understanding of content to learners. So, the great possibility is that information gained during the excursion can assist

learners in improving their understanding of the environment. The experience of SS teachers on excursions as a pedagogic praxis for teaching SS means that linking theory with practice can improve learners' understanding skills for them to relate to such SS excursion learning strategies. **DH 2** explained:

"In my school we do go on excursions because teachers understand that it is a challenge to teach SS without excursions, but excursions make it easier for learners to understand the content taught in class. I have noticed that it is easier for learners to understand if they are more in touch with the environment".

This view relates to the one for **SS Teacher 5** who explained:

"For learners to understand what I teach in the classroom, I simply organise excursions for them. When I was still at school as a learner, our teachers will force us to cram and recall what they have taught us from the textbook. We will sing all that information, but at a later stage I will forget everything that I have crammed".

Learner exposure to various contexts using excursions has shown the role of SS excursions as critical in understanding educational purposes and their teaching approaches. Learners seem to be exposed to realistic contact with the environment and understand content based on personal experiences. Therefore, SS teachers consider

excursions an academic technique that encourages a better understanding of the content and lets learners understand better when they see what they learned in class. For learners, this context means they get to experience, understand and better remember what they have learned outside the classroom.

5.5. The usefulness of excursions

Excursions are useful as a pedagogic praxis in the learning experience of SS (Schumann & Sibthorp, 2016), meaning that SS teachers consider excursions useful to learners because when they participate in them, they benefit greatly. Excursions are paramount tools that teachers can utilize to offer learners applied experiences and make theory more memorable (Otto, 2020). SS teachers consider it useful to take learners to the actual environment where they can explore and discover things for themselves, not to entirely rely on what teachers teach them in the classroom setting using books only. Elden (2013) elucidates that with outdoor learning, learners get the opportunity to experience new things that are not available at school, such as nature, diverse cultures and iconic regions. Learners get to interact with genuine matters, while teachers link realistic experiences with theory. Tour guides offer information, clarifications about the place, work honestly and reliably in all dealings with their visitors (Park, 2010). In line with this, Ruck and Mannion (2020) maintain that during the excursion, learners are given a platform to ask questions to make sure that they clearly understand what is taught and explained by the tour guides. These views mean that learners are given a chance

to interact with tour guides. **SS Teacher 3** stated: *“Excursions keep learners motivated to learn”*.

In line with this, **DH 1** explained:

“To take learners on the excursion ignites the interest of the subject to them, and it allows learning to take place easily and provides more knowledge/ information about the subject matter/ topic(s) taught in class.”

SS Teacher 4 emphasized:

“Excursions expose learners to reality and give them an experience into spaces and environments that they are not familiar with”.

This serves as proof that excursions are useful and beneficial to learners as a pedagogic praxis in the learning experience of SS because being part of the excursion allows them to know the place better and receive social interaction. Indeed, excursions as pedagogic praxis benefit both SS teachers and learners.

5.6. Excursions help teachers create a network and connections with external organization

Excursions enable teachers to build networks, endure connections with organizations and specialists (Çengelci, 2013), and these networks and connections help improve their teaching.

DH 2 explained:

“Learners also get to meet other people who are visiting the location and they also get to interact with the tour guides. Learners are still young and are at a tender age of mixing, mingling and associating with their

peers and other people unknown to them. So, going on the excursion will give them an opportunity to get to know other people”.

This view is complemented by Wall and Speake (2012) when they explain that most teachers have had a positive impact from excursions because their teaching improved. Through excursions, SS teachers get an opportunity to meet with other people who are experts who might be more knowledgeable than them. This affords SS teachers an opportunity to discuss and share their previous experiences and pedagogic approaches.

SS Teacher 5 added:

“This means that learners get to interact freely with their peers, with the teacher and with nature itself”.

These opinions postulate that excursions as a pedagogic praxis are useful to both teachers and learners. SS excursions benefit teachers as well because they expand teachers’ perspectives of information while lengthening the scope of their curriculum. Consequently, allowing learners to access their surroundings during excursions also benefits SS teachers to improve their teaching skills and become innovative. **DH 5** specified:

“On site learners are handed over to the tour guides who give them relevant knowledge about museum activities”.

SS Teacher 1 explained:

“Excursions also serve the intervention purpose. Apart from witnessing learners enjoying themselves, meeting new people and having fun, I always get to hear them

talk about the impact of going out of their comfort spaces has on them”.

DH 3 asserted:

“Learners get to interact freely with their peers, with the teacher and with nature itself”.

Going on the excursion means learning and enriching social skills, interacting with other people, including peers and tour guides, and creating a bond between a teacher and learners in a more relaxed environment.

5.7. Parents’ concerns over safety of learners

When learners go for excursions, their parents are concerned with the safety of the learners. **SS Teacher 3** who stated:

“When organising SS excursions I have encountered difficulties with parents pertaining to different issues like safety of learners when they use buses during the excursion, supervision at school level, to mention a few things they’ve complained about”.

Preston (2016) discloses that excursions in schools are disturbed by a variety of barriers, one of which is safety for learners. Teachers should learn about excursion policies and should know that large numbers on an excursion make safety an issue (Bhattacharjee, 2012). **SS Teacher 1** argued:

“As the SS excursion organiser, I have to ensure learners’ safety. At times, I feel like parents are nosy because time and again, individually they will personally call me asking me a number of questions about safety of

their children. At the end of it all I have to understand that it is their children that they worry about”.

To guarantee learner safety when they are on an excursion, SS teachers should be able to control learners outside the classroom because they have many learners in their classes. Safety is an ancient and ongoing worry when learners go on excursions (Mackay, 2020). This means that teachers should always ensure that learners are safe during excursions. The first way of ensuring learner safety is to get consent from parents (Ngcobo, 2023). Parents should know about the excursion, so teachers are expected to communicate with parents about the excursion (Hsieh, 2016). The teacher should decide on a safe route and mode of transportation to use during the excursion (Karppinen, 2012). Teachers should ensure that the location is also safe (Nadelson & Jordan, 2012). This reveals that teachers should begin by informing parents about the excursion as they are always concerned about their children's safety. Similarly, the teacher is responsible for organizing safe transport for learners. So, SS teachers should not do business with any transportation company but with the one that they consider safe and trustworthy. Teachers should have additional adults to supervise learners on excursions for safety and security (Preston, 2016). Ridley (2016) clarifies that other teachers should accompany excursion organizers to certify the teacher-learner ratio. Poponi (2019) suggests that a sufficient number of teachers who accompany learners at least guarantees learner safety.

DH 4 indicated:

“Parents do not believe in excursions, they think their children go out just to have fun, but from what I have realised is that parents are overprotective of their children and their main worry are accidents”.

This means that there can be sufficient teachers to accompany learners on excursions to ensure learner safety. When taking an excursion, continuous safety precautions are given to learners by their teachers or tour guides (Schumann & Sibthorp, 2016). This implies that SS teachers should bring the required number of learners to the venue to accommodate all of them and to have enough tour guides to avoid risking the safety of learners. It is often assumed that should an incident occur during a school excursion, the teachers responsible will be prosecuted for breaching safety laws (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

6. Conclusion

This paper explored the experiences of Social Sciences (SS) teachers on excursions as a pedagogic praxis for teaching SS. Sequel to this, this paper concludes that organising excursions is a cumbersome task that requires organisers to require more time in order to make excursion effective. This study also concludes that SS teachers should monitor all activities taking place during excursion since they are accountable with anything taking place. Excursions are significant because they develop crucial life skills that can be used in everyday life. Lastly, excursions help to establish networks with other stakeholders sharing same sentiments.

7. Implications of results

It should be borne in mind that this paper was undertaken to explore the experiences of Social Sciences (SS) teachers on excursions as a pedagogic praxis for teaching SS. Therefore, this study recommends that excursion organisers should be provided with additional time to plan and prepare for excursions so that the service delivery of the excursion might not be a fiasco. If organisers do not get adequate time to organise excursions, they may not attend to critical and crucial issues that can make excursion successful. Taking into consideration the significance of excursions in terms of content knowledge and skills they develop, excursions should be made compulsory for SS learners. This can afford them sufficient time to experience, understand and better remember what they have learned outside the classroom. Ensuring the safety of learners during excursion is not an easy task, organisers need extra support to ensure safety. Therefore, schools should work in tandem with School Governing Bodies to always provide parents who can accompany teachers to monitor what happens, especially safety of learners.

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