

Education and Heritage: Teaching the Tourism Curriculum from a Community Sustainability Perspective in South Africa's Rural and Township Schools

Sibiya Thandeka

*Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary, Budapest
thandumuntu@yahoo.com*

Tourism is one elective subject in South Africa's school curriculum. Through Tourism, learners learn about the activities, services and industries that deliver a travel experience to individuals or groups. The subject is also charged with studying the expectations and behaviour of tourists and tourism's economic, social, and environmental impact on South Africa, which relates to sustainable and responsible tourism. Teaching the Tourism as a subject appears to be a valuable and practical platform for schools, teachers, and other relevant stakeholders to contribute meaningfully and innovatively to sustainable development, policy framework, local community involvement and participation and in supporting and promoting local tourism as a platform to support social cohesion and economic development, as per the vision, mission, and objectives of the World Heritage Tourism. This paper aims to explore the schools' roles in forging a partnership and relationship with local communities in the generation and preservation of knowledge about local heritage sites located, near schools. It further explores the implementation of a tourism curriculum in this regard, emphasising on the interplay between education, heritage, and sustainable community development. The study is premised in the Community-Based Education, Cultural Heritage Education and Sustainable Development Theories. Through surveys, reviews of existing literature and analysis of case studies, this paper highlights the benefits and challenges of such educational initiatives and proposes strategies for effective curriculum delivery. The results suggest that teachers regard Tourism as a bridge that connects schools and communities and an approach to transform how heritage sites are perceived, particularly in rural and township communities.

Keywords: Tourism, heritage, community, sustainability, education, teachers



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Introduction

Education plays an important role in giving a voice and agency to students and transforming communities. Teachers are at the centre of this process, and they are believed to be the custodians of agency, which

they are expected to pass on to their students. Agency is defined as the ability to operate autonomously in determining social constraints of social structure and temporal-relational contexts. Agency is a key element in influencing change (Pantić, 2015; 2017). This paper

investigates how the Tourism subject teachers particularly in rural and township schools can teach the subjects to reinforce the view of creating relationships with local communities, with the aim of preserving heritage and creating a sustainable tourism future.

The Tourism subject has an important role in South Africa's education, in endowing schools with the ability to construct and preserve sustainable heritage sites as well as forging socially cohesive communities, through the curriculum. Tourism education is perceived as "*the way tourism destinations prepare the human resources to be able to work professionally in the development of the tourism sectors*," (Bellos et al., 2021, p. 1). This implies that tourism development depicts a better quality of life for the tourists and the local community at the destination. Similarly, in the South African context, education is perceived as a transformative tool, particularly after the collapse of apartheid. This system used education as a tool to suppress rural and township education in favour of urban education, which predominantly promoted white supremacy. Education was used as a device to oppress, control and divide the South African population along racial and cultural divides.

In this study I share similar sentiments with Rogerson and Rogerson (2020), where they argue that the literature review in their study suggests that there is limited informed historical research that explores the racialised dimensions of tourism landscapes, across the international academic discourse, hence why in this study I attempt to base my argument within the scope of the South African history in order to achieve what Saarinen et al. (2017, p. 311) refers to as "*the extended application of historical perspectives in order to inform contemporary debates and practices*". Even though there have been equity and equality measures put in place by the new government dispensation to address the inequalities of the past, the legacy of apartheid continues to be evident in various sectors of the economy and culture, including tourism spaces which are still associated with power imbalances (Witz, et al., 2004). The long-term effects of this system led to a failure to address democratic principles, which are based on access, participation, and equity, argues Msila (2007). Therefore, this paper argues that

learners' active participation in their education is key in creating sustainable communities.

The system of apartheid in South Africa reinforced colonial land dispossession policies, resulting in Black communities losing vast tracts of ancestral lands. These lands were often reallocated to white ownership and have since been developed into tourism enterprises that benefit the descendants of apartheid-era beneficiaries. For instance, the Natives Land Act of 1913 and subsequent legislation confined Black South Africans to only 7–13% of the country's land, facilitating white ownership of the remaining areas. This historical colonial land dispossession has had lasting impacts, with many tourism ventures operating on land that was historically taken from Black communities. The concentration of tourism assets in the hands of a few, predominantly white individuals, underscores the enduring economic disparities rooted in apartheid-era policies; Maharaj, (2006).

These historical puzzle pieces; colonialism and apartheid, significantly shape the readers' understanding of why the curriculum is at the core focus of this study, and why the study examines the Tourism curriculum's role in promoting socially cohesive and heritage-sustainable communities. In this context, the curriculum presents itself as a bridge and springboard to manage local tourism innovatively, but most significantly to address the past injustices for rural and township communities. However, with poor implementation of the curriculum due to various reasons, such as lack of knowledge and innovation and creativity from the side of the teachers, and or subject advisors, Tourism as a subject, has not yet reached the level at which it can elevate local communities, particularly rural areas and townships, to gaining World Heritage status. This view is based on the belief that knowledge should be based on a bottom-up approach and used to foster partnerships with communities; promoting the view that schools are not isolated institutions but have a transformative role to play for the wider society. This study draws from different contexts yet similar experiences of implementing the Tourism curriculum worldwide.

One notable situation is discussed by Tribe (1999; 2005a; 2005b; 2005c). Tribe notes that the curriculum was cushioned or supplemented by multi-disciplinary

knowledge at the early developmental stages of tourism in the United Kingdom. Based on this approach, scholars believe that curriculum developers and planners have managed to incorporate multiple ideas, skills, and methodologies to inform the teaching of the subject. Tribe (2000a; 2000b; 2000c; 2002) argue that this brought a significant maturity of tourism as an academic subject, and emerging vocational subject, focusing on the economy and business. According to this literature, the approach to teaching Tourism, should be viewed as a tool to capacitate and empower students to think critically, and being able to study disciplines from a cross and inter-discipline perspective and being able to transcend the different parts that contribute to the totality of the subject or discipline. For this reason, this study argues for the practical inclusion of local heritage as extended knowledge in the formal curriculum by teachers and relevant stakeholders as one of the routes to achieve sustainability within the teaching of Tourism as a subject in South African schools. This is necessitated by the justifications highlighted in the subsequent sections of this article.

Justification and Background

Post-1994 South Africa's objective of the tourism subjects is to empower the students with practical skills and knowledge needed to pursue careers in the tourism sector, while instilling an understanding of the rights and responsibilities associated with tourism for both tourists and tourism practitioners. This study argues that incorporating tourism education from an indigenous heritage perspective can assist students recognise the significance of the heritage passed down by their ancestors and encourage them to engage in conservation efforts for the benefit of future generations. However, owing to the general lack of access to resources and challenges faced by teachers in terms of curriculum flexibility, in rural and township schools (Tapala et al., 2021), the tourism curriculum is not yet fully maximised as a platform to assist preserve indigenous knowledge that natives had been denied to, during colonial and apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, the subject also empowers citizens to develop sustainable livelihoods from their heritage. According to Mtapuri and Giampiccoli (2020), tourism with

a community-based aspect and vision is essential in empowering poor communities, and in South Africa, rural communities are often marginalised and impoverished, which makes this approach even more relevant.

Problem Statement

Even though the curriculum addresses the topic of heritage multiple times in the distinct phases of its implementation, there are still gaps that exist in the way in which the Tourism pedagogy is perceived. Often, it is regarded as a classroom-bound subject instead of a platform for connecting schools and communities and bringing about community transformation. Jamal et al. (2011) describe tourism as a social and cultural phenomenon. This perspective is aligned with the move that higher education institutions instituted after the Bologna Process should re-invest in the tourism curriculum from a pedagogy renewal view. It is in the interest of this investigation to view pedagogy as a platform that designates local heritage as a strength of communities, particularly after the demise of apartheid. The curriculum should not only be a means to accumulate grades but also a springboard to facilitate social values, such as peace, social cohesion, non-sexism, non-racialism, and democracy (Muller, 2020). The term sustainability is used without necessarily understanding what sustainable education is. Youness (2017) argues that sustainability means enhancing jobs and improving the economy. South Africa has a diverse population, which also means diverse economic sources. Still, the curriculum seemingly has not yet been exploited to the level at which it can be applied to tap into the different economic sources, such as local heritage, to provide local economies with sustainable living and heritage preservation.

Research Questions

1. How can schools implement the Tourism curriculum in a way that contributes to heritage preservation and sustainable tourism in rural areas and townships?
 - RQ 1.1 Does valorising the tourism curriculum encourage stakeholder engagement in preserving local heritage in rural and township communities?

- RQ 1.2 Does the tourism curriculum require further reforms to encourage schools to play a meaningful role in community development?
2. How can Tourism curriculum be put on the same level with other subjects?
3. What impact does tourism education have on students' understanding of community sustainability?
- RQ 3.1 What knowledge and skills do students gain from the tourism curriculum regarding sustainable practices?
- RQ 3.2 What are the long-term impacts on students' attitudes and behaviour towards sustainability in their communities?

Research Aims and Objectives.

- Investigate the role of schools in forging partnerships and relationships with local communities to generate and preserve knowledge about local heritage sites.
- Examine the benefits of teaching the tourism curriculum from a community sustainability perspective in South African's rural and township schools.
- Investigate the long-term benefits for students regarding community sustainability.
- Investigate the role of teacher capacitation in uplifting the status of Tourism subject.

Literature Review

This study contributes to the existing literature on the role of the Tourism curriculum in fostering and bolstering sustainable heritage in rural and township communities. However, it is imperative to review the literature that discusses the school curriculum development and reform stages in South Africa from 1995 to 2014 to present a rather comprehensive, coherent, and logical argument. The curriculum amendments were intended to direct education towards a quality education, especially after most of the population had been subjected to subjugation for about five decades. From 1995, after the democratic elections, national audits were conducted to assess the different curriculums, and the results revealed significant gaps for

each audit. Subsequently, in 1997, a new curriculum policy was launched, curriculum 2005, which was outcome-based. In 2002, this curriculum was reconstructed and approved into the Revised National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and implemented in 2004. It was reviewed in 2009 regarding the quality of learning and teachers. As a result, the 2009 findings of the NCS were reviewed in 2011. Its subsequent amendment led to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), claims DoE (Department of Education 2009; National Education Policy Act 1996; 2009) and Pinnock (2011).

The Tourism Curriculum Concept

Based on the evolution of the school curriculum in South Africa, as documented by the CAPS Tourism Package published by the Umalusi, a Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, in collaboration with the Department of Tourism in South Africa, the Tourism curriculum appears to be aligned with Curriculum levels and associated curriculum documentation (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009). This characteristic presents Tourism as a key subject in the country's various economic strategies. In 2009, the subject was therefore identified as a priority economic sector as well as one of the growth areas which are expected to contribute to the development of economic activities in rural areas by the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP2), according to the National Tourism Sector Strategy, (February 2011). Therefore, it is assumed that the tourism subject, as early as the school phase, is recommended as part of the improvements that can potentially influence the implementation of the curriculum both in and outside the classroom.

Heritage and Economy

According to Timothy and Boyd (2006) and Stoddart and Rogerson (2009), tourism is regarded and described as a strategy in rural areas to market less developed heritage asserts. One of the effective ways to achieve this, according to Snowball and Courteney (2010), is documenting them. Although most of the publicity is often done by tourism boards and municipalities, for example, on wine routes in the Western

Eastern Cape and in KwaZulu-Natal Midlands Meander and the Eastern Cape, heritage trails are named after local chiefs; on such occasions, schools can also get involved by researching the names and even the roles these individuals played in the political-liberation struggle for freedom or cultural roles, which is a way in which the subject of tourism can apply the knowledge gained from the history curriculum.

The preservation of heritage in South Africa is intrinsically linked to the political context of the country before 1994. According to Timothy and Boyd (2006), the history of certain races was excluded, which Kim et al. (2007) refer to as collective amnesia. The deliberate suppression of certain histories can be addressed through revitalising local heritage, which Snowball and Courteney (2010), described as a healing process and an attempt to correct the gaps in South Africa's history. While this requires a substantial amount of financial funding, schools can contribute from an academic point of view.

A study in Indonesia (Hampton, 2005) advocates for community participation, presenting tourism as a bottom-up, participatory, and benefit-oriented activity. While schools may not be involved in the financial planning and management of the heritage sites for tourism, their involvement could be a step forward in the practical education and training of learners about the Tourism industry. More significantly, if we single out the Midlands Meander, which is mainly rural, the local community, according to Snowball and Courteney (2010), was not benefiting from the tourism offshoots; it is only a recent development that emerging Black entrepreneurs are obtaining membership in the route association. Most factors responsible for the lack of rural Black participants in heritage and tourism development include limited information and lack of finance and experience. Schools, as centres of knowledge, can educate communities about the role that they can play in developing a sound tourism economy. One example would be to discuss a much simpler and user-friendly White Paper, a policy paper which stresses the advancement of tourism to develop even those areas that are lagging because the tendency, even for the government, is to focus only a few

destinations already enjoying publicity, argues Viljoen and Tlabela (2006).

Theoretical Framework

This study is shaped by three theories, Community Based Education, Cultural Heritage Education and Sustainable Development theories. According to the community based education theory, residents' views on the benefits of tourism shape the attention that scholars have afforded the subject (Almeida-García, et al., 2016). Studies show that community members will support development initiatives if they realise that community initiatives are a platform for development (Lee, 2013), which leads to supporting such programmes. Bui (2011) and Bui et al. (2020), argue that community-based environmental education is a participatory, collaborative, action and information based process, hence the positive reaction of communities towards development programmes, such as community based tourism (Abdul Aziz, et al., 2023). This approach to education is empowering and preserves community heritage. Cultural heritage education asserts that culture has many layers, movable, immovable, tangible and intangible heritage, and is highly contested discipline (Jagielska-Burduk, et al., 2021). Cultural heritage and sustainability are aligned because, culture is a non-renewable resource, therefore its preservation is crucial, according to Jagielska-Burduk, et al. (2021). In light of this, education is an integral part of its preservation, through awareness and other forms of education. Thus far, UNESCO has been crucial in developing the existing legal framework in the area of culture, by adopting six conventions in the area of heritage. According to the Agenda 2030 for sustainable goals, SDG 4.7 ensures that by 2030, learners acquire knowledge and skills required to promote sustainable development, human rights, equality and the promotion of culture, peace, diversity and global citizenship. According to the Sustainable Development Theory, the curriculum has a role to promote and encourage tourism practices that merge economic growth with environmental stewardship and social equity. The Brundtland Commission presents this theory as a lens through which learners' learning patterns should be guided. They should learn

about how tourism impact communities in the communities where they live and go to school (Brundtland & Khalid, 1987). This aligns educational outcomes with broader goals of sustainable community development.

Methodology

We present a constructivist qualitative study. Adopting a constructivist approach, according to Crotty (1998), allows the researcher to search for culturally and historically explained interpretations of the social life world. The construction of meaning and knowledge, according to constructivism, is a societal-driven process through interaction with reality (Schmuck, 1997). This paper aims to pool multiple teachers' knowledge about the topic at hand to contribute to the Tourism curriculum in the South African context. The sample consisted of a total of ten (10) teachers, nine (9) who are experienced, and one (1) who is a novice, in schools located both in rural and township South Africa. Due to the logistical dynamics, an internet survey was chosen as the most practical way of administering the research questionnaire to teachers. It was designed in Microsoft Word format and emailed to the respondents.

The purposeful sampling of the respondents was based on the idea that I am a teacher and have worked with some of the respondents as colleagues in different schools. In the process, they could suggest names other teachers I did not know, who could also be potential respondents. However, the results of this study cannot be generalised because of the size of the sample.

The choice behind the use of email as a tool and platform for conducting online research data collection is supported by the idea that as early as year 2002, emails were already used in Iceland in a study involving teachers and students (Lefever et al., 2007). Electronic data collection methods vary widely, including computer-administered, electronic mail, and web surveys (Nayak & Narayan, 2019). Since the early 2000s, the Internet has become the most convenient tool and platform for survey research, argues Van Selin and Jankowski (2006). Online surveys present themselves as both advantages and liabilities; for this paper, the positives surpass the challenges. It should be mentioned

that internet-based surveys provide the researcher with economic relief based on the logistical factors posed by the distance and financial costs, according to Van Selin and Jankowski (2006). The ease is also provided by the accessibility by which potential respondents can be reached. In this study, using email was particularly attractive because the participant teachers work in different schools across a large South African region, meanwhile the researcher is based in outside South Africa. However, despite the benefits, challenges were still encountered. For example, communication with some teachers stretched much longer because of the poor internet networks, leading to receiving responses later than anticipated. Other teachers were concerned about their privacy and anonymity because, as Van Selin and Jankowski (2006) argue, email-based responses are prone to invasion of privacy, where the identity of respondents can be compromised due to the nature of the Reply Function of an email programme.

The study also references two case studies. Case studies in education can bring to the fore challenges faced by teachers in education (Broudy, 1990). In the context of this article, teachers are unable to some extent to implement the Tourism curriculum to effect community transformation, through the two case studies below, we can draw some conclusions that it is a possible feat.

Results

In rural and township schools, the tourism curriculum can serve as a vehicle for teaching students about local heritage, environmental stewardship, and sustainable business practices. By embedding sustainability principles within the tourism curriculum, educators can prepare students to become custodians of their heritage and proactive participants in local economic development, however teachers also should be prepared. This means that curriculum transformation and teacher training is crucial to the achievement of the roles that the subject is expected to fulfill.

Discussion

Lack of a Strong Will

Some teachers agree that tourism remains a vocational subject that is not taken as seriously as it should be,

partly due to the country's symbolic nature of curriculum changes. In the wake of South Africa's democratic elections in 1994, the then minister of education launched national processes that aimed to transform the curriculum and purge its apartheid-subjugating matter. However, these changes did not legitimately usher in change; instead, they exposed the symbolic and superficial transition, argues Jansen (1999). The gaps in the curriculum implementation are visible generally across the curriculum, including the Tourism subject.

South Africa's Tourism curriculum seems advanced and detailed compared to countries that implement the IGCSE Curriculum, like Kenya, Lesotho, India and the UK, because its objectives include content that discusses culture and heritage, mapwork and marketing the country (Department of Education, 2014). However, it still does not occupy the same status as other subjects in the school curriculum. Teachers and school managers' perception of the Tourism subject, according to Nhlapo et. (2019), poses a challenge of rendering it an easy subject for those learners who are struggling in the STEM subject. This attitude is also popular among teachers in Lesotho. In 2011, when the subject was introduced in the country, learners did not hesitate to elect it as part of their high school curriculum package. Teachers who participated in a study conducted by Nhlapo et al. (2019), Lesotho also holds similar sentiments about the Tourism subject resembling a dumping site for learners struggling with other elective subjects.

According to Sean (2010), there is a general feeling that Tourism is a generic subject that utilises everyday knowledge. While this may be true to some degree, it still threatens to tarnish the image of the subject and water down its significance. Dube (2014) argues that these phenomena present a paradox because while the government designates the subject as an integral contribution to the economy, on the ground, it is perceived as a soft discipline, which may be interpreted to mean that it has no significant value, which this is a direct opposite of the sentiments shared by this study. Based on the above claims in the South African context, it can be argued that the extent of commitment and support from key decision-makers to formulate

policies to address particular social issues by utilising the curriculum seems to be an inevitable practical trajectory. This is reflected by the coastal part of Lebanon and Syria, which, according to Bellos et al. (2021) and Bou (2021), the tourism industry will thrive and be shielded from threats such as terrorism, conflict and political corruption, and become a smart and sustainably worthwhile investment if there is a visible political will to transform tourism, a process that is contingent on the power of education as a reform tool (Airey & Tribe, 2006). This perspective portrays and regards the youth as the custodians of heritage, which is achievable through a meaningful education system. Considering this view, this paper understands that Tourism education or Tourism curriculum can promote sustainability and economic development since sustainable tourism has become a popular trend worldwide, according to UNWTO (2020a; 2020b; 2020c; 2020d).

A Self-reliance, Community-based Curriculum

The self-reliance community-based concept in education is a philosophy linked to Tanzania's former statesman, Julius Nyerere, which he popularised across the African continent after recognising that the Western-based education system was not benefiting Africans, instead, it was turning Africans into dependent individuals. He further criticised it as being theoretical and lacking practical skills (Nyerere, 1967). He campaigned to adopt a community participation-based curriculum. In this light, one of the participants agreed that tourism as a vocational subject should be taught in a way that triggers an entire community's awareness of tourism attractions available in their communities. Nhlapo (2018) argues that communities are an asset which can assist schools and learners in reaching a state of self-reliance, which is an idea that is also supported by Kretzmann and McNight (1993; 1996) and Moeller and Bielfeldt (2011). According to Russell (2009), communities play a significant role in improving local education in Mexico, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Kenya. Community participation is a well-documented concept (Fan & Williams, 2010; Moeller & Bielfeldt, 2011; Barron, 2013; Fathi, 2014).

Nhlapo (2018) argues that community participation goes a long way where the community members have low levels of education because once community members see a value in the knowledge that they possess and begin collaborating with schools in the form of capacity building, they can significantly gain self-esteem (Myende, 2014). This therefore informs us that in addition to the heritage asserts that exist in communities, it can be the beginning of a long-standing relationship between communities and schools, if utilised meaningfully. For this section of the study, I am presenting the participants views on the contributions of the example of Mount iNhlankakazi.

This mountain lies in the valleys of Ndwedwe. It is a pilgrimage mountain of the Nazareth Baptist Church, founded by Isaiah Shembe, a Zulu prophet who holds a special place in the hearts of the members of this church. This church is one of the oldest and largest independent African churches, also known as an indigenous church, founded around 1910 (Van der Heyden, 2004). The church has Zulu traditions and culture at the centre of its doctrine, making the mountain a shrine and a heritage site. Apart from that, the Nazareth church is one of the many Zionist churches that sprung up to resist colonial religion, which rendered it an enemy of missionary work, leading to being labelled as a black nationalist organisation that was threatening public safety and their leaders' charlatans and rebels in disguise, argues Lea (1924) and Van Wing, (1958). Therefore, the historiography of the church describes a strong political, religious, and cultural heritage that exists mainly in rural areas. The historiography presents the mountain and the whole religion as heritage, and the community living in Ndwedwe and the schools located there are said to be the main initiators and beneficiaries of the heritage. This idea is aligned with the Community Cultural Wealth Theory that acknowledges that Indigenous knowledge from the community is worthy for educational purposes (Mahlomaholo, 2012; Graven & Schafer, 2013). Such an approach to teaching tourism is believed to be useful in assisting teachers who sometimes are not adequately trained or lack resources to gravitate towards learner-centred teaching, which renders the subject effectively vocational; Park, (2008).

Teacher Capacitation and Empowerment

The teaching of Tourism as school subject, but significantly as a vocational subject, is not executed in earnest, according to the view of some participants. Previously, the subject did not enjoy the same status as other subjects to qualify learners for university entrance. This is one of the reasons that contributed to the relegation of the subject to an inferior status compared to academic subjects.

Participants believe that the threat of the subject not being taught justly looms, if a subject is not held in high regard (Chili, 2013; Adukaite et al., 2016). Therefore, it is paramount that Tourism teachers and school management be capacitated on available ways of elevating the subject so that it becomes a tool to prosper the subject and uplift the status of local heritage. In Lebanon and Syria, a study conducted, provides perspectives on the role of educational institutions in encouraging local development through educational tourism; Bou (2021).

Tourism in South Africa is renowned for its role in the economy and its ability as a sustainable labour attraction (Adukaite et al., 2017). Considering this view, Tourism teachers and learners, as early as high school, should be aware of the subject's critical role (Adukaite et al., 2016). According to Adukaite et al. (2017), teachers can implement the curriculum flexibly in deciding which methodologies to adopt. However, such knowledge comes with extensive training and experience. Generally, Tourism teachers are not qualified to teach the subject argues Adukaite et al. (2017) and lack innovation, interest, and exposure. To address the challenge of student apathy regarding the subject, we must create relationships with the community to forge a participatory teaching and learning approach to heritage as one of the aspects of the tourism subject.

Case Studies

The Madikwe Game Reserve in the Northwest Province is an example of a successful integrating tourism education with community sustainability. This programme facilitates the participation of local schools in the wildlife conservation, eco-tourism, and economic development benefits of sustainable tourism. Through

this programme, community participation in various tourism initiatives has increased. One of the key factors that renders this programme a success, is education. The Madikwe Reserve operates various educational programmes that aim to conscientise locals of the importance of conservation, empower locals with the knowledge and skills needed to engage in sustainable practices. Some of the significant benefits of this initiative is the income generated from tourism. The funds help fund local schools and educational projects, thereby contributing to long-term community development. There is an increasing demand for programs that produce socially conscious students armed with practical and contextual knowledge and ready to act accordingly (Arrobas, 2020). The tourism sector requires students who can interpret theoretical views into practical realities.

Another case, is that of Khayelitsha Tourism Education Project. Khayelitsha is one of the biggest Black townships situated in Cape Town, formed by the apartheid state (Mokoena, 2022). Upon its formation, it was characterised by overcrowding and poverty. Today, Khayelitsha is a predominantly characterised by informal housing and unemployment and lack of infrastructure (Phelanyane, 2021; Kongo, 2022). Despite these challenges, schools and other institutions remain radical in capacitating the youth. The Tourism Education Project focuses on empowering youth through tourism. The curriculum includes modules on local history, cultural tours, and sustainable business practices. The project has fostered a sense of pride in local heritage and equipped students with practical skills to enter the tourism industry (Lange, & Bricker, 2024), empowering the youth to contribute to the local economy.

Conclusion

The study explored how Tourism education is perceived through a community sustainability lens, particularly in terms of preserving and promoting local heritage via the tourism curriculum. The literature highlights that community engagement, collaboration, participation, and the recognition of community cultural wealth are essential elements of a successful curriculum. These aspects also contribute to expand-

ing learner knowledge beyond the classroom. Recognising Tourism's vital role in driving economic growth and addressing historical inequalities in post-apartheid South Africa, this approach may offer a pathway to job creation through heritage-based initiatives, depending on whether communities are aware of the significance of heritage in this context. However, implementing this vision poses challenges. One key concern is the shortage of professionally trained teachers who understand the subject's depth and societal relevance. Such educators are crucial in influencing school leadership to actively involve communities in the educational process. The study suggests that adopting a community sustainability perspective in the Tourism curriculum, particularly in rural and township schools, can reframe the subject to emphasise heritage preservation, sustainable development, and community-based education. This approach promotes a more integrated, relevant, and engaging curriculum. It prepares learners to become proactive agents in their communities and supports long-term impact through strengthened school-teacher-learner-community relationships. Ultimately, the study advocates for a resilient educational model that fosters community empowerment and sustainable development through Tourism education.

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