

UTILIZING FIELD TRIPS AS AN EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL SOLUTION FOR ASSISTING CHILDREN TO GAIN LONG-LASTING KNOWLEDGE IN A REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCES

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Abstract. The present theoretical framework presents challenges regarding the implementation of organized one day trips in kindergartens, especially within the scientific community and state policies related to education. The purpose of this theoretical construction is to enrich the cognitive horizons of students specializing in pedagogy. The highlighted positive emotional, academic, and socializing effects of children's field trips make the article relevant and informative to parents of preschool children. The material collects, describes, and summarizes the current international research experience on preschool field trips and their educational effects on young children today. Based on the scientific methods, theoretical analysis and theoretical synthesis, the author promotes in the specialized media current researches and author's ideas for organizing day trips in the context of preschool education with the assistance of specialists in the field of tourism.

Keywords: preschool education; early childhood socialization; day trips in kindergartens; long-lasting knowledges; practical knowledge

Introduction

The problem of field trips in preschool age, organized by kindergartens through state education policy, has received little attention from scientific community and is still poorly commented on in tourism and pedagogy. Some researchers are skeptical about the value of conducting such studies, which sharply contrasts with the need to develop policy and organizational solutions regarding the rich nuances of modern culture and the socialization of children. In today's habitat, increasingly referred to the "new normal", the words "pandemic", "war", "COVID", "crisis" permanently mark the human memory and express everyday life with social alienation. Despite years of advancing technology and AI-assisted reality, and years of cross-scientific research, the professional community of children's teachers is demotivated and

reports a personal sense of heaviness to educate in a real group of children. Many experienced teachers are tired and some experience burnout syndrome because they work in cities, where the groups consist of many children, including those with special educational needs. Observations of unfavorable post-COVID changes in children regarding the socialization process, manifested in a lack of socially desirable behaviors, are beginning to be shared in the social media associations of educators. On the other hand, contemporary crises and socially significant difficulties (humanitarian, spiritual, economic, international) affect parents, whose feelings did not noticed by their children. All this requires rethinking the research experience, “digging” into the pedagogical treasury, returning to the traditions in education and refreshing the pedagogical practice in an interdisciplinary spirit. The author proposes one day trips in preschool age as a modern organizational and pedagogical solution for the socialization of children.

Methodology

Today’s preschoolers form the so-called “Alpha” generation. These are the children born entirely in the technological “new-age”, raised in a pandemic and asking their parents and teachers what war is and why it exists. The “new normal” and the psychological-pedagogical characteristics of these children encourage the author to look for ideas to refresh the pedagogical practice to make it more attractive, without neglecting the classics and innovations, by carefully rethinking the pedagogical experience and looking for additional organizational and pedagogical solutions. A theoretical analysis of registered modern interpretations on the problem of field trips in preschool age has been conducted, and their pedagogical benefits and effectiveness in the social and educational context have been assessed. Influenced by the concepts of interdisciplinarity and cross-science, the author invites specialists in the field of tourism and pedagogy to focus their intellectual resources on socialization of modern preschool children.

Results

Currently, preschool field trips are not particularly popular or attractive, and the problem has been largely forgotten. Obtaining reliable and credible data on tourism for children and adolescents poses a significant challenge. The limited analysis available in this area further compounds the issue, creating the initial obstacle that needs to be addressed. In an article F. Dallari and A. Mariotti find out there is much more needs to be done to create a valid and universal travel methodology...supported by a range of tourism products that meet the expectations of children and adolescents, and meet their needs...so this would enable social and civic development both in developed and developing countries, contributing to a sustainable future society (Dallari 2016).

Several authors argue for the usefulness of field trips in general. For A. R. Krakowka field trips are any learning experience that takes place outside the classroom, including those taken by children's groups' kindergarten (Krakowka 2012). Another interpretation is that field trips are an outstanding pedagogical experience for learning with the potential to bring many benefits to science learning, compared to traditional teaching, as they provide a multisensory environment that creates strong long-term memories (Bravoeta 2021). Another researchers found that children learn by doing, they remember what they have personally experienced and field trips are a type of experiential learning that takes children out of the traditional setting into a new way of learning and increases children's knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live (Nabors et al. 2009).

The theoretical overview of the interpretations on the problem of field trips in preschool age allows them to be grouped in several more specific directions, including educational and socializing effects.

In terms of educational effects, preschool field trips are associated with transmitting of knowledge, developing skills, and creating attitudes. The field trips involve direct experience, purposeful reflection on that experience, and application of newly developed learning to new situations (Stern 2020). They also offer an opportunity to motivate and connect students to appreciate and understand classroom concepts, which increase their knowledge base, especially further learning and higher-level thinking strategies (Behrndt 2014). Regarding teachers, A. Martin and R. Sewers developed a "Guide for planning field trips for the educational engagement of all children", which is based on empirical data and theoretical analysis and is addressed to teachers, parents and the staff of the host community and organization (Martin 2003).

Regarding the socializing effects of field trips, a study by M. Kennedy refers to the search for a positive influence on the development of social skills and the acquisition of practical knowledge from experiences in different situations (Kennedy 2014). The author argues with the strong episodic memories that are formed during such an event. Two years later, N. Karaca, F. Senol, T. Akyol and N. Aral conducted a curious experiment with a social and cultural sight by taking preschoolers to visit a Turkish delight factory (Karaca et al. 2016). As a result of the experiment, a comparative analysis of children's drawings before and after their visit to the factory was made. At the initial stage, children externalized rich and complete impressions of their experience during the field trip through their drawings. The authors concluded that field trips enable children to live and learn through concrete experiences and support social life, helping children achieve more lasting and effective learning.

Field trips in preschool age develop children's communicative competences. It is curious the study by E. Kızıldaş and R. Sak, which included 36 preschool children (ages 4 – 5,5) whose organized preschool education integrated field trips

and their impact on socio-emotional benefits for preschool children (Kızıldağ 2018). According to researchers, preschool experiences help children discover their own skills, realize their responsibilities, develop self-confidence, self-regulation, become more independent, improve their self-esteem and attention skills, and develop positive attitudes toward school and learning. Scientists also pay attention to the positive communication effects of interaction with the peer group and informal communication of children with their teachers. This is also supported by the study of M. Ulfah, S. Saifuddin and K. Khoirunnisa, who suggest that field trips are very effective for kindergarten children because preschoolers can learn directly about different events and they are stimulated to ask questions (Ulfah et al. 2022).

Discussion

Based on the presented theoretical statements about the field trips in kindergarten, the following educational and socializing effects can be summarized. Educational effects: increasing the motivation for learning and knowledge acquisition; stimulating the sensory perceptions of preschool children; developing intellectual education; developing perceptions and observation skills; acquisition of quality knowledge in a real environment and in different fields; formation of attitudes and relationships; developing emotional intelligence; implementation of social and emotional education concepts; expanding the cognitive worldview; forming an attitude towards nature and promoting ecological education; enriching active vocabulary with new words; sustainable knowledge and interconnections for a given technology; strengthening the “kindergarten-family” interaction. Socializing effects: social engagement and social interest; introduction to different social roles/professions; preparation for life and knowledge of the cultural features and way of life inherent in the homeland; preparation for a changing world (climate change); developing communication skills and competencies; acquisition of social experience; formation of stable relationships and friendships in the peer group (one of the leading socializing factors at this age).

Certainly, more positive effects of the field trips can be added, especially those that refer to the principles of education for demandingness and respect for the individual, for the unity of educational effects, for humanism and tolerance, diversity of educational activity, compatibility with nature and cultural suitability, and above all, the principle of activity and effectiveness. Field trips also correspond to the didactic principles of visibility, awareness, activity, accessibility, scientificity, systematicity and consistency, and above all, the principle of permanent assimilation of knowledge, skills, and habits.

Despite their positive effects, field trips have been a forgotten pedagogical practice long before the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The reasons for this are different: lack of skills for planning and organizing such events among teachers, reluctance to take on such a big responsibility due to fear of accidents, state-

political financial deficits in the direction of educational trips, high fuel prices, but above all, a lack of pre-developed destinations and prepared, educationally adapted workshops for day field trips for preschool children. On the one hand if tourism industry in this direction works together with specialists in the field of education, each on the periphery of their field with coordinated efforts, they could develop wonderful travel programs for kindergarten children. That would be useful for enriching the cognitive and their socializing horizon, and on the other hand, provide financial benefits and development for the tourism.

The barriers mentioned above are surmountable because there are high-level scientists in both tourism and pedagogy. The problems are rather organizational, as indicated by the questions asked by children as young as five, such as “How is tomato pepper souce made?”, “How is milk produced?” and “How is a pizza made?” In response to this, the author proposes the idea of converting decommissioned business entities or abandoned farms to turn into workshops for children. These farms should be located in small villages near cities, so that they can be visited in a day trip. Workshops can also be organized in active, ready, and functioning factories and enterprises. In both cases, there should be a hall where children can be welcomed, a place where they can walk and observe the technology of production, a space where they can play, rest, and eat.

For example, a dairy workshop could demonstrate to preschoolers where and how cows, sheep, and goats live, how they are cared for, what they are fed, where they sleep, and their babies. The the process of milking and making cheese and butter can also be explained.

Similar ideas can also be implemented in stables, canning factories, mill, bread bakery, pastry shops, greenhouses and vegetable gardens for tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, orchards, fields with watermelons, melons, lavender, roses, sunflowers, rapeseed, wheat, and other productions specific to each country. The field trip can end with a small gift (such as a card, lavender soap, rose oil, small jar of jam) for the children to take home, along with the memories they will carry for a lifetime.

In summary, the author’s idea aims to enrich the knowledge of preschool children on issues relevant to them, establish a connection with nature, provide experience outside the physical boundaries of the kindergartens, facilitate socializing with people’s livelihood, and form ideas about man’s interaction with the nature and how he uses it for his existence with a reason and a hardwork.

The success of such a project depends on the desire, good organization, imagination and managers’ skills. Teachers and future educators should be equipped with organizational-pedagogical skills to plan a preschool field trip. This includes careful consideration of the relevant place; ensuring safety measures are in place; pre-arrangement with the staff and people of the community to be visited; confirming on a travel date and time of arrival; arranging a safe and reliable transport;

considering the connection between the preschool curriculum and the visited location; preparing the children for the upcoming trip; informing parents of the event and obtaining their written permission; obtaining permission from the management of the children's kindergarten; including a volunteer medical student from the last year (to carry medicines and a first aid kit) and finding parents who are able and willing to travel with the group, so that way would be available one adult per five children. It is necessary to consider also the needs for children with disabilities. Teachers should be obliged to explain in the kindergarten, to the children, and to the parents the educational benefit of the field trip. They should be reasonable about the distance that will be traveled and its appropriateness for the age group. They should provide time for rest and meals, and to be prepared with fun activities and games throughout the trip.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the author proposes field trips as an organizational-pedagogical solution for assisting children to gain long-lasting knowledge of relevant topics to their age in a real environment that promotes socialization. Field trips provide children with a change of environment and an opportunity to spend time outside the traditional classroom. Any preschooler would be excited and enthusiastic about the prospect of field trip. Field trips at preschool age are a reliable and fresh tool for practical learning that not only create pleasant emotions, but also create lasting memories and children's impressions, because real experiences are created in a real-life environment. The author's idea and similar ones generated by experts in tourism and education present a difficult and avant-garde model, but with clear intentions to overcome organizational difficulties and financial uncertainties, it is possible.

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