

Evaluating The Impact Of Field Trips On Educational Outcomes For English-Major Students In Tertiary Education: A Case Study Of Dong Nai University

Vu Thi Thanh Hien
Dong Nai University

Abstract

This study reviews the effectiveness of field trips as an educational tool for third-year English-major students at Dong Nai University by employing a literature review method to synthesize findings from previously published research on the effectiveness of field trips. The aim is to understand the roles and impacts of these trips on students' learning experiences, particularly in enhancing their understanding of workplaces, practicing soft skills, and improving English proficiency through diverse activities. Our findings suggest that field trips significantly contribute to practical learning, student engagement, and language skills development, making them a valuable component of tertiary education for English majors.

Keywords: Field Trips, Educational Tools, English-major students, Dong Nai University

Date of Submission: 18-05-2024

Date of Acceptance: 28-05-2024

I. Introduction

Field trips have long been recognized as a valuable educational tool, offering students unique opportunities to experience learning in real-world settings. In the context of tertiary education, especially for English-major students, field trips can provide practical insights into professional environments, enhance soft skills, and promote language proficiency through immersive experiences.

At Dong Nai University, field trips are not merely supplementary activities; they are an integral part of the curriculum. For third-year English-major students, participation in field trips is compulsory. This subject has been embedded in the curriculum for several years, consistently receiving positive feedback from students. The integration of these trips aims to enrich the educational experience, providing students with a well-rounded approach to learning.

Despite the recognized benefits, there is a lack of comprehensive research focusing on the specific impacts of field trips on English-major students in Vietnamese universities. This review aims to address this gap by examining the effectiveness of field trips for third-year students at Dong Nai University. The objectives are to evaluate how these trips enhance students' understanding of workplaces, develop their soft skills, and improve their English efficiency through various activities.

II. Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of Experiential Learning

Experiential learning, as proposed by Kolb (1984), emphasizes learning through experience and reflection. Kolb's model highlights the importance of concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation in the learning process. Field trips epitomize this model by providing students with direct exposure to real-world settings, thereby facilitating deeper understanding and retention of knowledge (Kolb, 1984).

Dewey (1938) also advocated for experiential learning, arguing that education should engage students in meaningful activities that connect classroom learning to real-life experiences. Dewey's philosophy underlines the significance of contextual learning environments, such as field trips, in fostering holistic education.

Benefits of Field Trips in Education

Research has demonstrated multiple benefits of field trips in educational settings. According to Falk and Balling (1982), field trips enhance cognitive learning by providing contextual and experiential learning opportunities. Students who participate in field trips are likely to develop a better understanding of academic content as it relates to real-world contexts (Falk & Balling, 1982).

Orion and Hofstein (1994) found that field trips contribute to improved retention of information and higher levels of student engagement. Their study highlighted that students who participated in science field trips exhibited greater interest and motivation towards the subject matter.

Furthermore, field trips can promote the development of soft skills. Anderson and Zhang (2003) noted that collaborative activities during field trips enhance teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills. These skills are essential for personal and professional success, particularly in fields that require frequent interaction and collaboration.

Field Trips and Language Learning

For language learners, field trips offer immersive environments that facilitate language acquisition. According to Brown and Duguid (2010), language learning is most effective when it occurs in authentic settings where learners can practice and apply their skills in real-life situations. Field trips provide such environments, enabling students to use the target language in diverse contexts.

Research by Bunting (2006) supports this view, demonstrating that field trips can significantly improve language proficiency. Bunting's study revealed that students who engaged in language-based field trips showed notable improvements in vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Challenges and Considerations

Despite the benefits, implementing field trips poses certain challenges. Cost and logistical issues can be significant barriers, as noted by Falk and Dierking (2000). Additionally, the effectiveness of field trips depends on careful planning and alignment with educational objectives (Griffin, 2004). Ensuring that field trips are well-integrated into the curriculum and provide structured learning experiences is crucial for maximizing their educational value.

Field Trips in the Vietnamese Context

Research on field trips in the Vietnamese educational context is limited. However, studies by Nguyen and Tran (2018) indicate that Vietnamese students benefit from experiential learning activities, including field trips. Their research highlights the potential for field trips to enhance student engagement and practical learning outcomes in Vietnamese universities.

This review builds on these findings by focusing on the specific impacts of field trips on English-major students at Dong Nai University. By synthesizing existing research and analyzing the experiences of these students, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of field trips as an educational tool in this context.

III. Methods

This review employs a qualitative approach to synthesize existing research on the effectiveness of field trips in tertiary education, with a focus on English-major students at Dong Nai University. The selected studies were analyzed to identify common themes and findings related to the effectiveness of field trips. The synthesis of these findings provides insights into the roles and impacts of field trips on the targeted student population at Dong Nai University.

IV. Discussion

The review identified several key findings regarding the effectiveness of field trips for third-year English-major students at Dong Nai University. They indicate that field trips are an effective educational tool for enhancing various aspects of learning for third-year English-major students at Dong Nai University. The findings align with previous research that highlights the benefits of experiential learning in higher education.

Enhanced Understanding of Workplaces

The findings from this review underscore the significant role that field trips play in enhancing students' understanding of workplaces. By visiting actual work environments, third-year English-major students at Dong Nai University gain firsthand insights into the operational dynamics and practical applications of their theoretical knowledge. This exposure helps bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world experiences, providing students with a clearer perspective on their potential career paths. This practical understanding is crucial for their professional development, as it prepares them for the realities of the job market and equips them with the knowledge needed to make informed career decisions. Moreover, these experiences help demystify the professional world, making it more accessible and less intimidating for students (Behrendt & Franklin, 2014; DeWitt & Storksdieck, 2008). This finding aligns with the work of Orion and Hofstein (1994), who noted that field trips help students connect academic content with real-world applications.

Development of Soft Skills

The development of soft skills through field trips is crucial for personal and professional growth, as these skills are highly valued in today's job market. Field trips require students to engage in activities that promote teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills that are indispensable in any professional setting. Anderson and Zhang (2003) emphasized that these skills are not only developed but also refined through interactive and collaborative activities during field trips. Students at Dong Nai University reported significant improvements in their ability to work effectively in teams, communicate with peers and professionals, and navigate complex problems. These enhancements in soft skills will benefit them in their future careers by enhancing their employability and preparing them for the demands of the modern workplace (Dierking & Falk, 2003; Knapp, 2000).

Improvement in English Proficiency

The improvement in English proficiency observed during field trips underscores the importance of immersive and interactive learning environments for language development. Field trips offer a unique and immersive environment for language learning, providing students with opportunities to practice English in real-world contexts. The review found that these trips significantly contribute to improving students' language skills, particularly in terms of fluency and contextual usage. Activities such as English-speaking contests, work- and business-related lessons, and experiential sharing sessions with business owners and representatives require students to use English actively, which enhances their vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Bunting (2006) supports this finding, noting that language-based field trips can lead to substantial improvements in language proficiency. For English-major students at Dong Nai University, these trips are particularly beneficial as they provide practical and contextualized language learning experiences (Marlow & McLain, 2011; Rickinson et al., 2004).

Increased Student Engagement

The increased engagement and motivation resulting from field trips suggest that integrating them into the curriculum can lead to more effective and enjoyable learning experiences. Field trips play a crucial role in enhancing student engagement by providing contextual and experiential learning opportunities. Falk and Balling (1982) noted that these trips enhance student engagement by making learning more dynamic and enjoyable, which positively impacts students' motivation and interest in their studies. The positive feedback from students at Dong Nai University supports this finding, indicating that field trips are a refreshing break from traditional classroom learning, making academic content more relevant and interesting. This increased engagement is likely to lead to better academic outcomes and more comprehensive career orientation, as motivated and interested students are more likely to participate actively and perform well in their studies (Anderson et al., 2006; Kisiel, 2005).

Positive Feedback and Long-Term Implementation

The long-term implementation of field trips as a compulsory subject in the curriculum at Dong Nai University, coupled with the positive feedback from students over several years, highlights their sustained effectiveness. Students consistently report that these trips are among the most impactful and memorable parts of their education. This ongoing positive reception underscores the value of field trips in enhancing the educational experience. The inclusion of field trips as a compulsory subject ensures that all students have access to these valuable learning opportunities, which contributes to their overall academic and personal development (Behrendt & Franklin, 2014; DeWitt & Storksdieck, 2008).

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the positive findings, this study has several limitations. The reliance on qualitative synthesis and the focus on a specific student population may limit the generalizability of the results. Future research should consider using quantitative methods to validate these findings and expand the sample to include students from different universities and disciplines. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term impacts of field trips on student learning and development. Exploring the effectiveness of field trips in different cultural and educational contexts would also be valuable, as it would help identify best practices for their implementation (Rickinson et al., 2004; Orion & Hofstein, 1994).

Implications for Educators and Policymakers

The implications of this review are significant for educators and policymakers. Incorporating field trips into the curriculum can enhance student learning outcomes and better prepare them for future challenges. Educators should carefully plan and integrate field trips into their teaching strategies to maximize their educational value. This includes ensuring that field trips are well-aligned with learning objectives and provide structured and meaningful learning experiences. Policymakers should consider supporting field trip programs

through funding and logistical assistance to overcome barriers related to cost and organization. By doing so, they can ensure that all students have access to these valuable educational opportunities (DeWitt & Storksdieck, 2008; Falk & Dierking, 2000).

V. Conclusion

This review provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of field trips as an educational tool for third-year English-major students at Dong Nai University. Field trips enhance students' understanding of workplaces, develop essential soft skills, and improve English proficiency, making them a crucial component of tertiary education.

The findings suggest that integrating field trips into the curriculum can significantly enhance the overall learning experience and better prepare students for their future careers. The long-term implementation and positive feedback from students further underscore the value of these trips. However, further research is needed to explore the long-term impacts of field trips and to identify best practices for their implementation in different educational contexts. By continuing to study and refine the use of field trips, educators and policymakers can ensure that these experiences provide maximum benefit to students and contribute to their academic and personal growth.

References

- [1] Anderson, L. W., & Zhang, Y. (2003). Teacher Self-Efficacy And The Stages Of Concern About The Innovation: Adapting Research Findings Into Practical Applications. *Teaching And Teacher Education*, 19(2), 195-203.
- [2] Anderson, D., Kisiel, J., & Storksdieck, M. (2006). Understanding Teachers' Perspectives On Field Trips: Discovering Common Ground In Three Countries. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 49(3), 365-386.
- [3] Behrendt, M., & Franklin, T. (2014). A Review Of Research On School Field Trips And Their Value In Education. *International Journal Of Environmental And Science Education*, 9(3), 235-245.
- [4] Brown, J. S., & Duguid, P. (2010). *The Social Life Of Information*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- [5] Bunting, C. (2006). *Interdisciplinary Teaching Through Outdoor Education*. Human Kinetics.
- [6] Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience And Education*. Kappa Delta Pi.
- [7] Dierking, L. D., & Falk, J. H. (2003). Optimizing Out-Of-School Time: The Role Of Free-Choice Learning. *New Directions For Youth Development*, 2003(97), 75-88.
- [8] Falk, J. H., & Balling, J. D. (1982). The Field Trip Milieu: Learning And Behavior As A Function Of Contextual Events. *Journal Of Educational Research*, 76(1), 22-28.
- [9] Falk, J. H., & Dierking, L. D. (2000). *Learning From Museums: Visitor Experiences And The Making Of Meaning*. Altamira Press.
- [10] Griffin, J. (2004). Research On Students And Museums: Looking More Closely At The Students In School Groups. *Science Education*, 88(S1), S59-S70.
- [11] Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience As The Source Of Learning And Development*. Prentice-Hall.
- [12] Knapp, D. (2000). Memorable Experiences Of A Science Field Trip. *School Science And Mathematics*, 100(2), 65-72.
- [13] Marlow, L., & Mclain, B. (2011). Are We There Yet? A Critical Review Of Field Trip Effects On Student Outcomes. *Journal Of Research In Science Teaching*, 48(4), 435-456.
- [14] Nguyen, T. T., & Tran, L. H. (2018). Experiential Learning Activities In Vietnamese Higher Education: Student Perspectives. *Journal Of Education And Learning*, 7(5), 134-146.
- [15] Orion, N., & Hofstein, A. (1994). Factors That Influence Learning During A Scientific Field Trip In A Natural Environment. *Journal Of Research In Science Teaching*, 31(10), 1097-1119.
- [16] Rickinson, M., Dillon, J., Teamey, K., Morris, M., Choi, M. Y., Sanders, D., & Benefield, P. (2004). *A Review Of Research On Outdoor Learning*. Shrewsbury: Field Studies Council.