

## TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY CURRICULUM AT PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN ZIMBABWE

Edmond Marunda and Prof. I Chaneta\*

### ABSTRACT

Tourism development in Zimbabwe is grounded on the country's unique cultural and natural heritage which is made up of sensitive ecosystems encompassing national parks and wildlife. The increasing investments in tourism may cause adverse long term effects of developments in biodiversity and loss of wildlife. It is therefore vital that communities living next to tourist attractions be educated so that they practise eco-tourism or sustainable tourism as a matter of priority. The focus of this article is to identify a curriculum for the education of primary school learners in Zimbabwe. Such a curriculum should equip primary school learners with the requisite knowledge to preserve and protect their environment effectively. In a bid to come up with a primary school curriculum incorporating tourism and hospitality education some 145 out of a population of 300 respondents were interviewed in and around the tourist resort areas of Nyanga, Harare, Bulawayo and Victoria Falls. The findings from the study tendered a realistic and practical framework for the development of a primary school curriculum incorporating "Tourism and Hospitality" as a subject in Zimbabwean primary schools.

*Keywords: Tourism, Management, Communities, Sustainability, Education*

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\* Faculty of Commerce, University of Zimbabwe

## 1.0 Introduction

Realising the potential of generating foreign currency through tourism, Zimbabwe has promoted international visits to the country, which have increased steadily since independence from 80 thousand visitors in 1980 to over 2million in 2010 (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2011). Likewise tourism revenues increased to over US\$ 634 million annually over the same period. This situation has brought with it opportunities and challenges. More than 46 thousand people are now directly employed in tourism businesses such as game ranching, tour operations and the hospitality sector (WTTC, 2011). Zimbabwe has a high biological diversity which forms the basis of its tourist attractions. Tourism based on wildlife, demands large tracts of land to be set aside as animal habitats, thereby forcing land planners to forego other activities giving rise to conflicts over land use options. Moreover national parks are extremely fragile ecosystems. In order to avert the possible adverse effects resulting from tourism growth and loss of wildlife it has become imperative that communities living next to tourist attractions be educated through existing primary schools, so that they practise eco-tourism or sustainable tourism as a matter of priority.

This article is borne out of the need for a primary school curriculum incorporating tourism and hospitality which has become inevitable. In order to facilitate an investigation and data collection to develop this curriculum, a population of 300 was drawn up encompassing education officials, tourism stakeholders and workers within tourism resort areas and tourist attractions. Although a population of 300 had been drawn up the researcher managed to conduct 145 interviews from the targeted respondents altogether, whereby 44 of those responses were from Harare and 33 from the Eastern Highlands in Nyanga, Mutare and Vumba, 30 from Bulawayo and Matopos and 38 from Hwange and Victoria Falls.

The investigation encompassed observations, in-depth and semi-structured face-to-face interviews which included asking open-ended questions, listening to and recording the answers and then following up with additional relevant questions. In-depth interviewing helps to probe beneath the surface, provides a means for soliciting feedback and ensures a more holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view. In addition the researcher being close to the respondents could probe to get wider responses out of the respondents. Harare, Eastern

Highlands, Bulawayo, Hwange and Victoria Falls were chosen because they embrace major tourist resort areas in Zimbabwe.

## 2.0 Development of tourism in Zimbabwe

Tourism is a global multidimensional, multifaceted, economic activity encompassing many different sectors and involving travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes.

Doswell (1997) examines three ways of looking at the tourism experience: what happens before leaving home – making the purchase, what happens on the way – the journey, departing and arriving and what happens at the destination – the experience and memories created. While tourism is widely perceived as a set of business activities or movements of people, it is also a social phenomenon; people travel from place to place, and so do their cultures (Rojek and Urry, 1997). This clearly has an impact on the locals in the destination and their involvement as a result of the tourism development process. Page and Connell (2009) add a further dimension that tourism development has led to a deterioration of environmental quality, the environment being the natural and social worlds. This calls for a need for the locals where the tourism products are produced and consumed to play a distinctive role in the maintenance of the product itself. Given the complexity, sensitivity and diversity of players involved with the tourist experience, the economic, environmental, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic values of the destinations need to be carefully monitored, and an optimum balance created between economic growth, sustainable development, environmental conservation and protection (Krippendorf, 1987). Tourism is therefore a global, vibrant economic activity encompassing many different sectors involving travel for recreational, leisure, education or business purposes.

Although visitors inevitably gain a fulfilling experience through tourism, and the operators maximise on their equity returns, what is lacking is a guarantee to equitable access to benefits, derived from natural resources by the locals within the vicinity of the tourist resort areas and destination. It seems education at schools and community level will provide an answer to ensuring such distribution of benefits to the locals.

Petersen (1991) reveals that studies already carried out on the subject area of community beneficiation, have focused on Communal Areas Management Programmes For Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) projects. These in turn have concentrated on wildlife management

especially, the management of elephant populations and distribution of proceeds from hunting and photographic safaris (Murphree, 1991) Recommendations have been made regarding institutionalised guidelines. The Zimbabwe Trust Report (1991) in respect of community based tourism projects in Muzarabani and Mavuradonha suggests creating an institutional structure that ensures genuine community participation in eco- tourism and the equitable distribution of benefits to local communities. McIvor (1994) recommends the establishment of guidelines and regulations between communities and private operators to ensure equitable distribution of benefits derived from hunting or other types of tourism. He argues that while CAMPFIRE is a step in the right direction, it does not go far enough towards realising its aim. Of late sustainability is seen as the logical approach to matching the requirements of conservation and development to ensure long term viability. CAMPFIRE clearly shows that a gap exists between policy endorsement and policy implementation (McIvor, 1994). Shortcomings in the implementation process arise because of conflicts between resource management agencies, tourism developers and the communities affected. To achieve greater tourism environment compatibility, the introduction of education to all tourism interest groups especially the host communities, tourism developers and school children who are the future custodians of the industry is necessary.

### 3.0 Sustainable tourism

Swarbrooke (1999) notes that all forms of tourism that respect both the visitors and the hosts, together with their cultural heritage and biodiversity fall under the realm of sustainable tourism. He adds that sustainable tourism attempts to make as low an impact on the environment and local culture as possible, while helping to generate future employment for local people. The aim of sustainable tourism is to ensure that tourism development brings a positive experience for local people, tourism companies and the tourists themselves. Sustainable tourism implies responsible tourism that is sensitive to its environment or surroundings. Hence it can also be termed ecotourism as observed by Wight (1993), Honey and Gilpin (2009) and Mawere and Mubaya (2012). Tourists who promote sustainable tourism are sensitive to the local cultures and environments and seek to protect tourist destinations. Sustainable tourists aim to reduce the negative impact of tourism by informing themselves about the culture, politics and economy of

the communities of and in the places visited and contributing to intercultural understanding and tolerance.

#### **4.0 Basic Education in Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe's basic education system comprises the Early Childhood Education made up of ECD "A" for the 3-4 year olds; and ECD "B" for the 4-5 year olds encompassing the pre-school level of education. The Primary Education level is for 6 – 12 year old children lasting 7 years. Secondary Education comprises 2-years of Junior Secondary education, a 2-year Ordinary Level education and finally, a 2-year Advanced Level education. Government determines and provides the school with the curriculum and the teaching subject areas. Schools select subject areas from the curriculum and subject syllabi are prepared by the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU). Schools are specialised educational communities assisting the family in the education of the child and introducing the child to the wider world (UNESCO International Bureau of Education 2001). In a bid to buttress the local skills base, government predominantly invested in skills training programmes with the support of local authorities (UNESCO 2001: 11).

#### **4.1 Focus of primary school curriculum**

The Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture designs, develops and has since localised the school curricula for primary and secondary education. The aims of this school curriculum are geared towards improving literacy and intensifying the technical/vocational curriculum to link education with entrepreneurship and production (Moesac, 2011). The pre-school curriculum focuses on educative play that encompasses subject areas from the curriculum including communication skills and health and nutrition. Surprisingly Health, Peer Education, Civic Education, Guidance and Counselling, Gender Equity and Tourism and Hospitality are not integrated into the curriculum.

#### **4.2 Curriculum development**

Curricula generally specify the main learning content expected to take place during a course or programme of study in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, teaching methodologies and assessment methods. This means that the curricula outline what all children must learn in accordance with their special interests and circumstances. The national curriculum provides for the intellectual, moral, physical and social training of the child based on the existing and future



essentials, goals and objectives of the nation or society at large. Specifically, the curriculum assures individual and national achievement via the acknowledgement and appreciation of the different capabilities and requirements of learners. This explanation assumes that learning is planned and guided and curriculum theory and practice emerged in the school in relation to other schooling ideas such as ‘subject’ and ‘lesson’.

#### 4.3 Curriculum review

Respondents were of the view that the current curriculum review should give the education fraternity, an opportunity to realise that sectors of the economy contributing strongly to the GDP like agriculture, mining, manufacturing and tourism should all be introduced from primary school level through the teaching of related subjects. In this way communities would be geared to tackle any empowerment issues related to socio economic development.

Responding to questions related to the quality of primary education in Zimbabwe insofar as tourism developments were concerned, **figure 1** below shows that the respondents were agreed that Zimbabwe does not have a viable long term policy framework on education and training which addresses the current socio-cultural, economic, political and environmental concerns of the country.

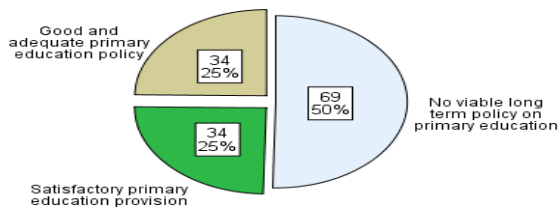


Figure 1 Does Zimbabwe engage a viable primary education policy?

This position supports the idea expressed elsewhere by respondents that they would like to see more locals within the vicinity of tourism resorts favourably employed in tourism operations. The position further echoes the notion expressed by the respondents that the Zimbabwe school curriculum laid far too much emphasis on academic education as shown on **figure 2** below. Consequently, respondents were backing up a school curriculum with more emphasis on manual

and practical subjects which have a greater bearing on eco- and cultural tourism's impacts on schools and local communities.

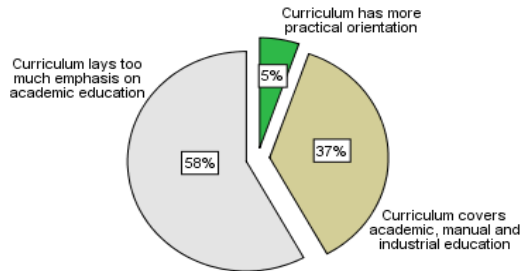


Figure 2 The primary school curriculum is too academically oriented than manual or industrial

They raised the concern that the curriculum does not provide for in-depth coverage of tourism and hospitality issues except for skeletal content on historical sites. Practical oriented subjects such as Environmental Science, Geography, Social Studies, Art and Culture, Wildlife Management, Home Economics and Physical Education integrating Sport also found favour with the respondents who contended that the content on the subjects could be refined to show their practical relevance to jobs in the tourism and hospitality sector. Moreover in the current setup, there is very little by way of practical skills included in the existing curricula that are tested at Grade 7 and respondents believe that such a stance shows a general disregard for industrial training and job creation.

According to the current primary school curriculum, learners are examined in the core subjects, (English, Shona, Mathematics and Content) at Grade 7. The practical subjects (Environmental Science, Geography, Social Studies, Art and Culture, Wildlife Management, Home Economics and Physical Education) which are not examined could be examined under Tourism and Hospitality. Incidentally, respondents suggested that areas with a potential for investment opportunities within the tourism and hospitality industry in Zimbabwe included the management of conservancies in the country, tour operations, prospects in the accommodation sector and investments catering for Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions. Other sectors forming part of tourism and hospitality, albeit receiving less support were sport, music, art and drama.

#### 4.4 Subjects with practical orientation

Making reference to the introduction of subjects with a practical orientation, examples of the National Foundation Courses written at “O” Level were cited with a recommendation to emphasise the importance of sport, music, dance, arts and culture in the primary school as shown in figure three.

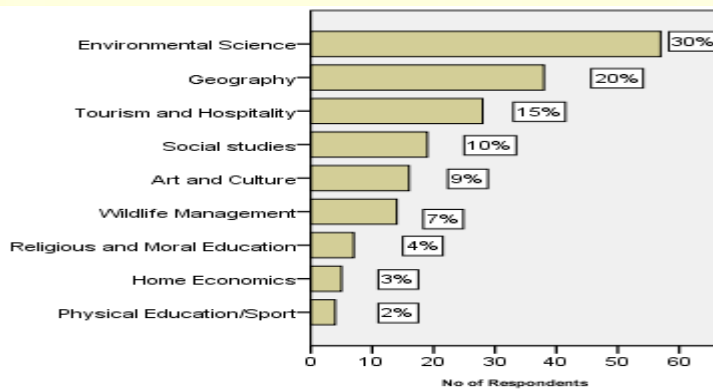


Figure 3 Recommended primary school subjects for schools in resort areas and among communities

It was further mentioned alongside this reference that the current National Foundation Courses should be given an “O” level status in order to enable one to use them to eventually pursue a higher qualification: diploma; higher national diploma; or degree in technical vocational, business / commercial studies.

Further comments on curriculum review dwelt on recommendations encouraging developing e-learning software to cater for education using computers on music, dance, home economics, sport, arts and culture. Respondents expressed the need to resuscitate the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau to rope in local publishers to write and print education materials locally. The Literature Bureau is credited with promoting indigenous languages development which constitute the pillars of basic learning and positive cultural development. Once revived, the Bureaux could also spearhead the development of drama, visual and performing arts. Emphasis was also given to the grooming of budding artists in practical areas with special emphasis on tourism teaching and learning materials. What the authors would need to do would be to collaborate with the CDU to enable them to use the CDU syllabuses to guide their writing and publications.



#### 4.5 Incorporating the learning domains of Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives and Possibilities

Reviewed literature reveals that Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives Bloom, *et al.*,(1956)is widely used to develop schools curricula, normally incorporating aims commonly written in the form of affective cognitive and psychomotor domains. Basing on these domains, schools prepare learners and educate them to accept their social responsibilities ina democratic society and contribute to society as active, informed and confident citizens.

When asked to explain what needs to be done to the primary school curriculum to be responsive to the needs of the labour market and to prepare learners for the world of work in the tourism and hospitality industry, as shown in **figure 4**, respondents advocated for the introduction of *Tourism and Hospitality* as a separate subject at primary school level. They even went on to suggest that primary school teachers be trained in the teaching of *Tourism and Hospitality* and its related disciplines be taken as examinable subjects. They were adamant about the inevitable active interface between industry and schools through pupil, learner or student excursions to resort areas. Another demonstration of the importance of incorporating the psychomotor domain in the primary school curriculum is the proposed assimilation of Tourism and Hospitality with a new subject under review called ‘*Design and Technology*’.

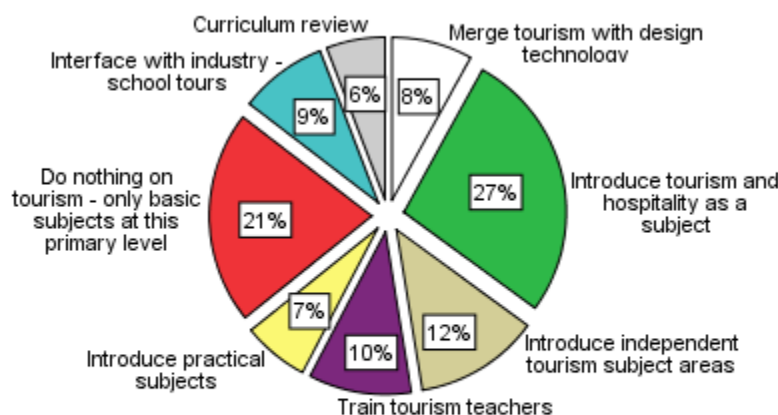


Figure 4 Steps towards the creation of a reponsive curriculum to the tourism and hospitality industry labour market demands

Respondents reiterated that a learner-centred curriculum provides a basis for personal fulfillment and prepares learners for coping with today's dynamic changing environment. Such a curriculum also provides a basis for enhancing the learners' future employability.

If the apparent concern of a school is to develop language, mathematical, scientific and other academic and vocational abilities, and if there is no comparable study of culture, language, art, music, traditional customs, tourism and hospitality, then the absence of attention to these areas can alert young people that there is no educational interest in the way they perceive their environment, their heritage and ultimately their visitors. The perception is that the environment, heritage and visitor management can take care of itself, or it will happen incidentally while the 'real' education goes on.

Reviewed literature revealed that way back in 1966, the Rhodesian government introduced what they designated F2 secondary schools to provide selected learners who had failed to make it to the traditional secondary school, with an education supporting largely the practical oriented semi-skilled labour in the economy. In contrast the normal secondary F1 schools were more academically oriented. During interviews, the researcher probed the idea of introducing F2 schools at primary level. In their responses interviewees raised the problem of stigmatization likely to emerge besides arguing that learners at primary school level are too young and small to cope with the challenges brought about by the practical work.

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education records show that an attempt to reintroduce practical subjects at secondary level was made after independence in 1980 when the Zimbabwe government introduced a pilot project known as the Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production (ZIMFEP). The much advertised programme was dubbed '*Education with Production*' but it inadvertently failed to garner support apparently due to stigmatisation according to the respondents. Resistance to this system of education also came from pressure groups lobbying against the perceived exploitation of learners through child labour as well as the widespread teachers attitudes against the practice which tend to frustrate the idea. The notion of '*Education with Production*' was perceived to be appropriate for developing specialised skills but it proved to be too expensive to undertake viably.

Although there was repeated allusion of the need to guard against specialisation at primary school level under the pretext that, learners should be exposed to the general education as a base for future specialised training, paradoxically it became apparent that it is at this level where technical/vocational subjects ought to be introduced. Learners at primary education level should be able to choose or be streamlined among availed technical, vocational, business/commercial and academic career paths. It should not be policy that technical or vocational education is offered to those who have failed Grade 7 or Form 4 only, because this leads to stigmatisation which became the case with the previously introduced F2 stream resulting in this strategy being regarded as a ploy to keep the black child down and uneducated.

It would be prudent at this stage, for Zimbabwe to introduce practical oriented subjects at primary level but such a move calls for the involvement of parents and their traditional leadership in crafting the curriculum. The local leadership should be drawn into planning the use of resources, the cutting down of trees for use by wood sculptures in schools and communities and the use of stones for stone sculptures together with the digging up of clay for pottery and cutting of reeds for weaving. The parents have to support the preparations for the assessments and streaming of their children in their choice of subjects and career paths.

Respondents stressed the importance of education on the use of sustainable energy sources that curb the indiscriminate cutting down of trees, soil erosion, air pollution and hunting of wild animals. They voiced their wish that everybody should play a role in ensuring the prevention of veld fires which destroy tourist resorts, wildlife and biodiversity.

Probed further, respondents supported a national shared vision on tourism development and green issues that allows incorporation of a teacher's guide which could be reliably developed to empower the subjects' resource persons. Having noted the prominence of primary education as the key foundation of any person, respondents proceeded to advocate for a second level involving the curriculum development by colleges for those teachers who would develop an effective educational methodology for practical education at primary level. They pointed out that the significance of coming up with an education curriculum at this delicate level must not be

taken lightly as a lot of 'experts' can come up with glaring course contents and still fail to implement their writings effectively.

Quite a number of respondents reiterated the challenges that led to the failure of the policy of education with production which revolved around mostly, stigmatisation and limitations on the number of available resource persons or the number of experts with experience to deliver effective content from the curriculum at primary level. Throughout the education system most experts on tourism and green issues are found at post-secondary school or college level which identifies a big gap on primary school teachers.

#### **4.6 Inclusion of practical subjects in the school curricula**

The research indicated that the Zimbabwe school curriculum laid far too much emphasis on academic education. Tourism and hospitality content is more practically oriented. A school curriculum with more emphasis on manual and practical subjects which have a greater bearing on eco- and cultural tourism developments is therefore strongly recommended. Practical subjects such as music, dance, drama, physical education, computers, home economics, art and crafts need to be drafted into the primary school curriculum and examined at Grade 7 level together with English, Mathematics, languages and General Paper or Content. The practical options are to examine these subjects as individual subjects in their own right or to incorporate them into the new proposed subject "*Design and Technology*" or to have them be under "*Tourism and Hospitality*" as a separate subject.

This incorporation of academic and practical subjects can be buttressed by an active interface between industry, schools and communities through organised, sponsored and regular pupil, learner or student excursions to major tourist resort areas.

#### **5.0 Conclusion**

The objective of this study was to identify a tourism and hospitality management curriculum to teach learners at primary school level in Zimbabwe. This objective was realised because the study proffered a realistic and practical framework for the development of a primary school curriculum in Zimbabwe. *Tourism and Hospitality* as a subject encompasses largely practical learning areas comprising music, dance, drama, home economics, physical education, computers,

history, geography, environmental science, languages, art and crafts. All these disciplines can be offered under the banner of tourism and hospitality management. Learners can be given the freedom to choose areas of specialisation as they progress through various levels of primary education.

Care should however be exercised when implementing the above, since there is need to guard against specialisation at primary school level, as learners should essentially be exposed to the general education as a base for future specialised training.

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