

## Importance of Field Trips in Learning Home Economics and Technologies Curriculum

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**Abstract:** The general principles of organization the field trips and the importance of the provision of modern and high-quality education are discussed in this article. On the basis of theoretical research, recommendations for teachers how to organize field trips are worked out, as well as the topics and plans of field trips which correspond to the "Home Economics and Technologies" training content and the curriculum model at elementary school are offered. The goal of this study is to raise the importance of field trips at learning and training diverse skills of Home Economics and Technologies in depth.

**Keywords:** school education, outdoor activities, field trips, subject "Home Economics and Technologies".

### Introduction

One of the essential conditions in ensuring a modern and innovative learning process is providing the learning environment that enhances the interest and activity of adolescents. A skilful teacher has to change every environment into a promoting and interesting learning and training place. It means that the teachers should be able to generate new ideas, to develop a creative use of materials, to choose and to use the most appropriate methods and a diversity of technologies in order to implement high-quality training content in their professional activity. Emphasis should be placed on the organization of such learning and training process that makes teachers more as advisors, co-organizers, coordinators and initiators of training activities.

Already J.A. Komensky (1592-1670) (Draidens, Vosa, 2008, 71) has suggested that teachers help the students to learn by using all their senses. To learn from the things we see, hear, touch and feel, taste, smell and do. A similar opinion was also expressed by J. Dewey (Dewey, 2009 cited by Draidens, Vosa, 2008, 74) calling to involve mind, brain- the entire body, in the exercise, because it composes pupils' knowledge, creative abilities, spiritual repository and experience.

The methods which promote students' learning activities in different social experience forms teach the adolescents how to learn by developing their ability of mind, emotions and will; promote their perception and persistence of information, should be used at elementary schools (Maslo, 1998). Equally important it is to choose methods of problem- solving approach which require more independent and active learning the from the learner, encourage to go into the learning and training content, stimulate creativity, develop independent reasoning skills, responsibility, ability to anticipate changes and adapt to them. (Šmite, 2004). Innovative activity is possible if it is provided with a close relationship between theory and practice, knowledge in real life situations.

D. Kalniņa (2014) considers that the content must be constructed of interdisciplinary subjects where solving real life problems and dilemmas help students to transform the information into knowledge and wisdom of life. All the best methodological approaches are linked by three things: they are fun, fast and give satisfaction.

G. Dryden and J. Voss (Draidens, Vosa, 2008a; Draidens, Vosa, 2008b, 20, 78) mean that training includes relaxation, activity, stimulation, emotion and joy. They therefore believe that today the whole world is like a class in which everyone can successfully learn, especially if it is kind, helpful and generous. The key to learning: it is meaningful, interesting, and motivating; students understand how the world is bound and that it is interesting to learn. Also, students are aware that they are learning in their own interests, expanding their options for action (Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 1993, Wells, 1999).

## Materials and Methods

The explanations of the concepts “outdoor activities”, “outdoor classroom” and “study trip” are given in the theoretical study. Similarly the advantages, disadvantages and requirements of organization of the field trips are evaluated in it. The general recommendations for teachers on high-quality field trip organization are worked out in the practical study. Also the information on field trip sites, two complex field trip plan samples that are prepared in accordance with the subject "Home Economics and Technologies " training content and the curriculum model at the elementary school are provided.

## Results and discussion

In the context of the learning environment the concept of an outdoor classroom is used (Cope, Children..., 2007). The essence of the concept is- a limited area in natural environment, which provides integrated classes and activities outside the regular classroom (Limbu, 2012; Andrušaitė, Langenfelde, 2010). Concept “the outdoors” is attributed to the interaction between people and the outdoor environment where students are able to use all of their senses, obtaining personal and immediate, direct experience of the real world, encouraging curiosity and imagination (Orien, 1993; Claiborne, Morell, 2011). Only through a direct contact with the environment, students can develop awareness and gain knowledge about the surrounding world around them, develop the necessary skills and promote the progress of global development (Birziņa, 2006). Pupils learn about the reality in reality. M. Bendix and H. Grefot hall be understood as: about the nature- in nature, about the society- in society and about the closest surroundings- in the closest surroundings (Bendix, Grefot, 2003 cited by Children in the Outdoors, 2009).

The *work outside* makes it possible for students to develop their skills that can be useful in learning, as well as in their lives, such as information gathering and processing skills, ability to work as one and get involved into a group; to develop experience and being together. Also, using an outdoor trial experience, in-depth knowledge of a particular subject is acquired. Further scientific research and experiments can follow as the logical extension of the simplest outdoor activities. Innovation and different impressions during outdoor classes can become unforgettable events and remain in memory for a long time (Hacking, 1992).

The author believes that the outdoor class and field trips principles are similar and can successfully be used not only in the areas of Natural Science subjects, but also in Home Economics and Technology. As a method field trip has been known for a very long time. It was introduced in 1827 by George Shillibeer (1797-1866) for a Quaker school at Abney Park in Stoke Newington, London, United Kingdom (Limbu, 2012).

The concept "field trip" is very widely explained. Key features:

- complex and diverse form of learning organization that develops students' cognitive interests, broadens their mind;
- attendance of a place usually in a group for cognitive or learning purposes while learning certain program, topic (Pedagoģijas terminu...,2002, 84; Collins English Dictionary, 2014; Macmillan Dictionary, 2014);
- to link theory with practice;
- both teaching and social objectives are being implemented (e.g. not only the knowledge and skills for implementing it are acquired, but also co-operation and fact finding, selecting and using skills are gained)
- extracurricular training and educational form of organization of the program topics, moving from object to object in their natural or artificially created conditions (Verziļins, Korsunskā, 1979);
- investigation of an object or phenomenon in natural conditions (Боровицкий, 1955).

The given explanations mean that the field trip is a carefully planned event, which enables the opportunity to get acquainted with, observe and explore a variety of subjects, phenomena and processes, their interaction in natural conditions. Theoretical research suggests that there are several types of tours (Asafreja, 2001; Birziņa, 2006; Andersone, 2007; Stola, 2002):

- according to the teaching target (introductory, current and final);
- according to the length (one hour, one-day and multi-);
- according to the content (excursions in nature, production companies, regional studies);
- according to the topic of learning content (about a certain topic, a number of topics, interdisciplinary, folklore);
- according to the methods (research, inquiry, project, and data mining).

R. Birziņa (2010) describes two approaches to organization the tours: 1) inductive (coming to a common conclusion from certain facts) and 2) deductive (comparing one object to others, identifying the common and distinctive features, only then generalizing and drawing conclusions). Inductive method is more appropriate for explanation of the simplest facts. In the deductive approach the teacher talks about certain regularities or expresses his /her opinion on the subject, and only then mentions the facts confirming these correlations. It should be admitted, that the deductive method can be too complex for the primary school students.

When planning a field trip, the teacher has to schedule a number of organization and procedure stages: preparation, planning, procedure and summarizing the results of the excursion, processing, evaluation, analysis of the collected materials, introspection, and use of the materials for teaching.

Authors in Latvia: R. Birziņa (2006), R. Andersone (2007) and the authors in foreign countries: N. Orien (1993), C.L. Rudman (1994) etc. have studied and described the principles of organization the successful field trips. The findings expressed by the above mentioned authors are summarized in several suggestions.

1. Think carefully about and get familiar (through theoretical and/ or practical research) with observation objects in advance. Better plan to incorporate a limited number of the objects of interest, so that they could be thoroughly explored.
2. A clear route with detailed trip plans, time allocation, observations that should be taken, necessary materials, tools and visual aids, for example: maps, plans, charts, tables - have to be worked out.
3. The aim, objectives and content of the tour have to be set. If necessary, problem questions for the tour programme have to be developed. Making sure that students are theoretically and practically prepared for the tasks.
4. The question about the tour leader (the teacher by himself, a guide or another specialist) should be decided upon. In the case the tour is led by another person, the teacher should discuss the methodology, characteristics, age peculiarities of the students' group and other specifics, as well as the main issues, items, facts and phenomena in relation to the curriculum links.
5. The most appropriate techniques and methods have to be chosen for completing the tasks.
6. The general form of organization the students should be set (frontal, group or individual work).
7. The tasks should be concise and precise (for example, to observe, interview, love), such that the tour participants had the opportunity to work actively, rather than passively watch or listen to. Teach students to observe, describe, analyze, take notes, because all they see and hear cannot be memorised. It is desirable to create worksheets with tasks of different difficulty levels, types and with creative and independent tasks.
8. The form in which the results of a field trip are reflected and summarized should be well considered and prepared (the conclusive negotiation, systematization of the collected material and design in worksheets, presentation). Information about the tasks to be given to students should be provided before the field trip.
9. The approach to evaluation has to be considered and agreed on together with students. Evaluation criteria have to be prepared and students should be informed about them. If students know that their work in the field trip will be evaluated on a scale, they work during the field trips with a greater sense of responsibility.

10. Students who do not participate in the field trip have to be informed about the alternative options in learning the given curriculum links.
11. Before the field trip, a special attention has to be paid to issues of students' security,
12. discipline, behavioural culture and nature protection.
13. Parents have to be previously informed about the field trip, the aims of it, the material expenses and the other issues that are related to the excursion.
14. Before the excursion, the responsible teacher has to submit the written information to the headmaster of the institution about the field trip showing the aim of the excursion, route, length, the list of participants, their age, the way of transportation, the information for communication and the first aid possibilities (Kārtība, kādā..., 2009).
15. After the field trip, the results have to be discussed, and evaluated.

Despite all of the above mentioned and the positive impact of field trips on the organization of high-quality learning activities, the teacher has also deal with potential problems.

In fact teachers have to prepare for the field trip even more carefully than for lessons. It requires a great deal of time and energy consumption. Furthermore, you have to reckon with the school administration and aid of the other subject teachers, because field trips may disturb the usual work at school and lesson plans (Falk, Balling, 1979; Muse, Chiarelott...,1982; Orien, 1993).

Already while planning a field trip the teacher has to predict the possible difficulties and problems and be ready to handle with them. Problems may arise if, for example: the weather is too bad, it is impossible to meet the necessary people, you are not able to find the planned objects, some activities take more time than it has been planned, not all of the students get the same experience, students are unwilling to participate in the activities of the field trip, some problems with discipline or health occur (Andersone, 2007).

The issue of field trip funding is also actual. The teacher must take into account that not all parents are able and motivated to pay the costs.

The same, when a school tour is not properly organized, its pace is not controlled and the results are not considered, time and finances are spent in vain.

If the field trip is not properly organized, its procedure is not under control and the results are not evaluated afterwards, the trip may become a waste of time. Ignorance of the field trip organization principles should not be permissible; otherwise a field trip may turn it into an amusement ride.

It is true that modern technology allows the use of different types of information to be found on web sites. However, lose contact with their real life is one of the important reasons for field trips should be recognized and supported as a teaching method.

Field trips can be organized by the teacher on a variety of subjects as well as practical and scientific research.

They may be especially effective entering or ending a study subject. In cases where the amount of teaching material has been narrowed and ideas and concepts have not become sufficiently clear and specific, study trip allows you to study the subject matter in depth and clarify the confusion.

Students, comparing several objects with each other and on the basis of the observations in exploratory study tours, can learn to draw conclusions by themselves and collect materials for further observation.

Hence field trips help to check and notice the phenomena, which are beyond the classroom, shows learned the importance of theory in practice to students (hands-on), helps to create an overall impression about the subject. They also develop effective learning and collaboration skills; enable experience of all five senses and the use of different methodologies.

A.Tūna (Kompetents pedagogs..., 2013) believes that the interaction (sharing knowledge, experience, feelings and beliefs) leaves a significant impact on students' learning process, forms their knowledge and development.

One of the ways to promote teacher interaction with students is collaboration with colleagues at school and with professionals in surrounding community.

Given fact that the same subject "Home Economics and Technologies" is an interdisciplinary, as it is tested in other subjects acquired knowledge and skills, cooperation is possible with all the curriculum subjects (Pridāne, 2009, 61).

Co-operation is also possible with the surrounding community professional (Kompetents pedagogs..., 2013).

Perhaps that's why teachers from Latvia chose the museum staff for their direct cooperation partners - professionals.

Educational tour in a museum is a traditional and frequently used method. The museum employee desires to stimulate students' interest in various topics and to do it in an acceptable and intelligible manner for the students, using modern techniques and interactive technologies, and it should be appreciated.

A field trip is mutual preparatory work between teachers and museum staff. Good results can be obtained only if teachers, preferably together with students, had previously consulted with the museum staff and purposefully chosen the topic, that is the most necessary for acquiring the learning content and that can be better provided by the museum from its resources at the given moment.

Besides the direct visits to the museums, seeing several museums is also possible virtually. It is a good alternative for students who, for various reasons, cannot participate in the tour personally, but the choice of teaching tasks and the subjects is limited. It is positive that the museum staffs is increasingly familiar with the course content, form thematic measures preparing worksheets with exercises for students. Also, the museum staffs have opened negotiations with the teachers on the best possible way to exchange information. The teacher, together with the museum's staff is responsible for the quality of field trips (Jamison, 1998).

The author has established a good cooperation with the Museum of Decorative Arts and the Design Museum in Riga, where students can gain a comprehensive picture of Latvian applied art history and its modern manifestation.

Thanks to the school and parents support each year 9th grade schoolgirls can visit the museum.

In order the process of getting exhibits research went more qualitatively, teachers, in collaboration with the museum staff, specially prepare work sheets with various independent and creative tasks as well during the preparatory phase, as during the tour, as well as after visiting the museum.

Every time before the tour, it is necessary to clarify questions about the existence of the exhibits in showrooms, about innovations and other specific issues.

A regular business correspondence has been developed the with the museum staff, thus obtaining regular information about exhibitions, seminars, workshops for students and teachers.

Learning outside the traditional school environment – in nature, at the local community, in various local authorities, in private enterprises, in farms etc. - can be very valuable. This makes learning livelier and more authentic. It also gives students the opportunity to meet different people and learn from their experiences.

More than 25 years of work experience has shown that a lot of valuable information and good practice students can gain not only at museums but also in science centres, the best companies in Jelgava, Riga and surrounding areas. Individual entrepreneurs- both artisans and food producers and household goods manufacturers increasingly are showing interest and their desire to popularize their craft and production. An insight in organizing various excursions, in relation to learning content and model curriculum, is given the table 1 (Table 1).

Table 1

**Places and organization goals of field trips in subject "Home Economics and Technologies"**

Place	Goal of the field trip
Jelgava Museum of History and Art by Gederts Eliass, Riga Museum of Decorative Art and Design and other museums of the surrounding towns and regions Jelgava House of Culture	Gain insight into: - Latvian national costumes (especially of Zemgale region); - tools, devices and instruments used in housekeeping and house holding in different times; - clothing, types of furniture in different eras; - applied arts. - attend exhibitions of decorative and applied arts.
At the artists' workshops	Get acquainted with the types of decorative and applied arts, objects fabrication technologies, materials and craftsmen.
At Latvia University of Agriculture, Institute of Education and Home Economics	Get acquainted with the Home Environment Education student works - in a showroom. Gain an overview of the study program Home Environment in Education (Home Economics and Technology, household economics teaching profession learning opportunities).
Jelgava, Rīga and other enterprises of surrounding towns : Bakery „Lāči”, Rīga Milk Processing Plant, Household garbage dump „Getliņi”, furniture factory „Nakts mēbeles” etc.	Gain an overview of the Latvian producers: - foods, their diversity, the production process; - clothing, furniture, packaging and other items for manufacturing processes and forms; - cooperation with various service providers: types, costs, quality.
„Latvenergo” Energy Efficiency Center	To get acquainted with the latest and most modern household appliances and home furnishing and improvement principles.
Latvian Bank museum „Naudas pasaule”	To deepen their knowledge of financial matters, household and state budgetary relationships, gain insight on cash flow, household financial security and structure of consumption.

Field trips can be organized in both single and multi- subjects within the (package tours). Two field trip plans which were created in collaboration with Latvian language and chemistry teachers can be viewed in Table N 2 (Table 2). The trips are organized several consecutive years, and students have always taken part in them with interest.

Despite the field trip organization principles and methodology can be found in pedagogical literature, the author was not able to find a meaningful approach to the interpretation and evaluation of the student performance during field trips.

That's why the further research could be linked to elaboration of evaluation principles and criteria. This raises important questions:

1. How to evaluate the students work during the field trip and if it is necessary to do it?  
Possible approach:  
- motivation (learner's involvement in planning, organizing);  
- benefits (understanding the topic - the knowledge, skills).
2. Which forms of assessment (formative or summative) are the most effective for the evaluation?

Table 2

**Two package field trip examples**

<b>Form</b>	<b>Form 8</b>	<b>Form 9</b>
School Subjects	Home Economics and Technologies Latvian Language	Home Economics and Technologies Chemistry
Topic	Catering establishments in Jelgava	Garment care facilities in Jelgava
Subtopic	Healthy eating opportunities for public catering establishments.	<i>Garment care types and costs</i>
Goal	To evaluate the food variety, quality and presentation in the writing culture (menus, titles) in Jelgava catering establishments.	Obtain a comprehensive picture of dry cleaning service types technologies and costs in Jelgava.
Overall objectives	1. Visit caterers. 2. Discover the range of dishes. 3. To evaluate compliance of the dishes with healthy nutrition conditions. 4. Evaluate the menus' and products' name correspondence to the language norms.	1. Obtain information about dry cleaners' point places and costs in Jelgava. 2. Visit dry cleaner's. 3. Get acquainted with clothing and other item cleaning technologies.
<b>Stages and aims of field trip process</b>		
1. Before the tour stage	1. Get acquainted with the layout of the dishes on the menu. 2. Repeat conditions of healthy diet. 3. Create a list of your catering establishments that are worth seeing. 4. Form groups. 5. Clarify the groups' objectives in public catering. 6. Agree on the safety conditions during the field trip.	1. Find out which cases require dry cleaning services 2. To study how the chemical cleaning is located in Jelgava. 3. Form groups. 4. Clarify the objectives in dry cleaner's in groups. 5. Agree on the safety conditions during the field trip.
2. While the tour stage	1. Get acquainted with the types of dishes and their costs. 2. Evaluate the names of dishes' and the label writing's correspondence to the language norms. 3. Interview staff about the most popular dishes.	1. Get acquainted with the dry cleaning work costs. 2. Explore what clothing and other items are taken in for cleaning and which items are good for cleaning technologies. 3. Interview the staff.
3. After the tour stage	1. Evaluate food according to healthy diet conditions. 2. Prepare recommendations for improvement the menu assortments. 3. Do a self-assessment of the work and cooperation in the group. 4. Draw up a report on the worksheet. 5. Present the results in groups.	1. Explore alternative ways of stain cleaning, compare the quality and cost and make recommendations. 2. Do a self-assessment of the work and cooperation in the group. 3. Draw up a report on the worksheet. 4. Present the results in groups.

**Conclusions**

One of the essential conditions for a modern and innovative learning organization is adolescent cognitive interest and activity stimulating learning environment.

Nowadays the issue about outdoor lessons is raised- a place where the students:

- gain direct experience of the real world,
- are helped to notice and examine phenomena which can not be implemented in the classroom,
- are showed the importance of the learned theory in practice,

- are deepening the knowledge in a particular subject,
- are encouraged to use their curiosity and fantasy, and all of their senses,
- learn to operate and integrate into the group.

The principles of outdoor activities are in tune with the principles of field trips and are successfully used in Home Economics Education at a primary school. According to the explanations given in the literature, a study trip is a carefully planned event that enables natural conditions to meet, observe and explore a variety of subjects, phenomena and processes and their interaction.

Teacher has to prepare for the field trips more carefully than for the lesson, taking into account the above mentioned principles of organization a successful field trips in the article and anticipating problems, possible complications, he/she has to be prepared to deal with them.

One of the ways to promote teacher's interaction with students is collaboration with colleagues in the school and the surrounding community professionals. This makes learning more valuable, livelier and more authentic, enables students to meet with a different people and from their experience. In collaboration with colleagues in the school it is possible to organize interdisciplinary field trips within several school subjects about a single or multiple related topics. Since "Home Economics and Technologies" is an interdisciplinary subject, cooperation is possible within all the subjects that are included into the curriculum.

Learning outside traditional school in the subject "Home Economics and Technologies" may take place: in nature, in the local community, at science centres, museums, various municipal institutions, private enterprises, farms in Jelgava, Riga and surrounding areas.

Field trips are an essential component of reflection and evaluation, so further studies could be related to elaboration higher quality evaluation principles and criteria.

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