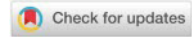


# THE OBSTACLES AND LIMITATIONS IN REALISING EDUCATIONAL EXCURSIONS IN MODERN-DAY EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** The modern approach to teaching is based around stimulating a student's activities as well as developing their subjective position in the teaching process. With their engagement and independence a student gains longer lasting knowledge for which they feel greater emotional and experiential attachment, which significantly increases its functional value. Frequent patterning and uniformity create an inadequate atmosphere for complete achievement of high-quality educational assignments, this is why it is necessary to suppress teaching monotony, thus inspiring more innovative concepts which create a positive teaching climate. An innovative concept, as well as a modern teaching form are precisely educational excursions. Considering the role they play in the educational process, the main purpose of this paper is to identify hurdles in realising educational excursions, and to explore suggestions for their traversal. During 2024. research has been conducted using a mixed-method approach in the Republic of Serbia using a sample of 224 teachers. Financial troubles were named as the biggest obstacle by the teachers, which confirms previous research in the same field. Besides that, low motivation for their realisation, as well as a neutral view of the teachers for additional training in this area has been determined. Their suggestions for improving educational excursions were explored using qualitative analysis in hopes of gaining a complete picture of the current state. It was established that a need for change and improvements is much needed. The examinees see potential improvement in: mutual cooperation, better relationships between teachers, students and parents, aligned goals of schools and travel agencies, financial support for both teachers and parents, a greater offer of destinations, therefore gaining a better connection between educational content with the contents of the destination itself, more substantial student activity in preparation and systematisation phases, sharing experiences and better feedback about the achieved goals and outcomes.

**Keywords:** educational excursions, teacher motivation, teachers, modern-day education, educational innovations.

**Field:** Social sciences

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Educational excursions are an adequate way to get acquainted with what is needed to be learned, but is not teachable in a classroom. Some of the reasons for their execution are of a cognitive, motivational and recreational nature. Teachers notice a rise in the students' freedom of expression, compared to a usual classroom setting, thus the function of the excursions is not only motivational towards the students, but also helps with their socialization. When the reasons for choosing this form of teaching are further broken down, we can discern the basic goals of educational excursions. Those are: immediate familiarization with phenomena and relationships in the natural and social environment, raising ecological consciousness, getting to know the cultural, historical and spiritual heritage, etc. (Bakovljević, 1998; Bognar & Matijević, 2002; Miljatović, 2016; Stanić-Jovanović, 2015). Besides representing an enjoyable and a significant experience for the students, the excursions by their nature represent a proper foundation for achieving different educational goals.

The process of realistic observation of the researched area, its improvement is based on objective consideration of its shortcomings and weaknesses. With the aim of contributing to a more systematic theoretical grounding and effective improvement of the field of teaching excursions, in the continuation of the work, we presented the key research postulates about the shortcomings of teaching excursions.

Research conducted in Australia identified limitations of educational excursions which were further categorized in four basic groups: interpersonal weaknesses, structural weaknesses regarding the chosen destination, structural weaknesses relating to school shortcomings and interpersonal limitations. Interpersonal limitations include insufficient previous knowledge of students, lower quality training of teachers and lack of required knowledge for the realization of the excursion. Structural weaknesses that refer to peculiarities of the destination of the excursion include weaknesses such as inadequate accommodation and insufficient number of educational tourist attractions. School shortcomings imply financial expenses, difficult arrangement of the logistics of the educational excursion, great amount of time invested in its organisation and the distance of destinations. Interpersonal factors include insufficiently motivated and prepared teaching staff (Dale & Ritchie, 2020). All four factor groups can be found in

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related research both in our country and abroad.

Research findings show that teachers emphasize that this type of teaching is more demanding for them to plan, prepare and realize. They point out that they invest a greater amount of energy and time, while a more demanding engagement in maintaining discipline is expected from them during the educational excursion (Astalin & Chauhan, 2018; Borić et al., 2010; Glišović & Petrić, 2020; Radivojević & Jelić, 2016). Teachers, however, recognize another pedagogical and didactic problem of the organization of educational excursions, and refers to the connection of educational excursions with contents from the curriculum. More than half of the teachers (51.69%) in the research conducted in 1999 by the author Ćurčić considers that a connection is achieved only partly, and 23.97% of them believes that relations between the contents do not exist at all. Anđelković (2012) also points out that the content of educational excursions can rarely be connected with the material taught in school. Inconsistency in acquired knowledge among students creates cognitive discomfort and an intellectual gap, which prevents the completeness of knowledge. Vuletić and Anđelković (2024) believe that the teacher's task is to pay more attention to the integration of content from the curriculum with the experiences students gain on educational excursions, that is, to provide students with the determination of connections between the topics they learn in class and the topics they deal with on the excursions.

The complexity of the organization of educational excursions calls into question the results achieved and their educational value. During educational excursions, it is difficult to maintain an educational focus and to design activities that are aligned with learning goals and that consistently promote educational values (Hasrat et al., 2023). Students confirm the belief that there is a loss of the educational significance of the excursion and its positive and beneficial impact on students. The main feature that stands out is the fun and recreational character (Taneska, 2017). Although, by their very nature, educational excursions are aimed at student recreation, rest and entertainment, they still bear the epithet of teaching and their form is educational. The teaching form must also realize didactic values, while the educational excursions must not lose their educational functions.

The most frequently cited omission of educational excursions is related to the financial aspect. Finances refer to the dissatisfaction of teachers with the compensation they receive for the duties they undertake, and the unrest of parents who allocate large amounts of money for the implementation of teaching excursions. Both teachers and parents, as actors of educational excursions, agreed that the prices of educational excursions are unjustifiably high and do not correspond to the quality of the service (Ćurčić, 2017). Educational field trips require a lot of financial resources from parents and schools, and not every excursion program is universally acceptable (Astalin & Chauhan, 2018). Research shows that teachers often face problems in the domains of: financial possibilities of parents, high accommodation prices, complexity of organization of extracurricular activities, irresponsibility of individual students, lack of understanding and lack of interest of parents and students, etc. (Bistrović, 2019). The financial shortcomings of excursions prevent equal participation in this teaching activity, i.e. monetary compensation for participation in the excursion may affect the decision of students to enroll. (Jones & Washko, 2021). Nevertheless, teachers do not consider that material and technical means and lack of knowledge of the locality are the reasons why classes are not organized outside the school classroom more often (Borić et al., 2010). There is a need to overcome the financial problems of organizing educational excursions. Higher monetary compensation for teachers can contribute to their greater desire to invest more materials and their time in the preparation of a teaching excursion, which leads to better effects of its implementation. However, the question of how educational excursions can become available to all students and be profitable investments for teachers still remains open and suggestions for its solution are being sought.

Another stumbling block to a quality educational excursion is the mismatch between the goals of the school and the travel agency. The teachers are not satisfied with the time of their realization, their price, the safety of the students, or the transportation (Ostojić, 2016). Teachers need more freedom in planning educational field trips to be conducted. According to the teachers, by providing the technical and organizational conditions and turning to the educational and pedagogical issues related to the implementation of the excursion, some of the problems faced by the teachers would potentially be overcome (Taneska, 2017). Relations between the school and the travel agency must be complementary, harmonious and enriched by open communication. The aspirations of both parties should be looked at in detail and based on them, the outcomes of the educational excursions should be formulated.

Ritchie and Coughlan (2004) believe that the limitations of educational excursions are mutually complementary and correlated. Institutional, or structural, barriers can contribute to the development of motivational barriers. Due to the lack of teaching staff in the school and some more specific support, teachers may not have a strong will nor persistence to devote themselves in detail to planning school excursions. The most important step in overcoming the barriers of educational excursions is achieved

through the motivation and education of teachers and professional associates. With their engagement, creative contributions and training, teachers can significantly contribute to overcoming shortcomings and improving the pedagogical and didactic values of teaching excursions in direct practice.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of the paper is to analyze teachers' reflections on the weaknesses of teaching excursions, as well as a comparative presentation of previous research postulates and the results of the conducted research. In order to ensure the complete expediency of the conducted research, the work is aimed not only at discovering the shortcomings of educational excursions, but also possible ways of improving the existing practice in this area. By operationalizing the research objective, the following tasks are distinguished: (1) Identify potential weaknesses in the implementation of educational excursions. (2) Perform a comparative analysis of the data obtained in the research with the research postulates about the weaknesses of teaching excursions. (3) To highlight teachers' recommendations for improving the existing practice of the excursions.

The research sample consists of 224 teachers who differ from each other according to the length of their working experience, the type of subject area and the level of education at which they teach. The largest number of teachers who participated in our research have more than 20 years of experience (58.9%). The research sample consists of 38 teachers who have worked in education for up to ten years (17%), while 54 of them have between 10 and 20 years of experience, which is 24.1% of the total number of respondents. 12 technical-technological subject area teachers (5.4%), 68 social-linguistic subject area teachers (30.4%), 51 mathematical subject area teachers (22.8%), 11 art teachers (4.9%) and 82 classroom teachers (36.6%) participated in the research. The research sample consists of 157 teachers who teach in primary school, which is 70.1% of the total number of teachers, and 67 teachers who teach in secondary school, which makes up 29.9% of the total number of respondents. The structure of the respondents is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Specification of respondent characteristics in relation to variable treatment

Work experience		The level of education at which the teacher teaches	
Up to ten years of service	38 (17.00%)		
Between 10 and 20 years of service	54 (24.10%)	Primary school	157 (70.10%)
Over 20 years of work experience	132 (58.90%)	Secondary school	67 (29.90%)
The teacher's subject area			
Technical and technological area		12 (5.40%)	
Socio- linguistic area		68 (30.40%)	
Science area		51 (22.89%)	
The field of art		11 (4.90%)	
Classroom teachers		82 (36.60%)	

Source: Research author Anisijević Katarina

A mixed method approach was used in the research, which allows obtaining data that would not be possible to obtain using only a qualitative or only a quantitative approach. An instrument designed for the purposes of this research was used to collect data. The initial basis for the creation of the instrument was the research at our disposal (Borić et al., 2010; Ćurčić, 1999; Sever et al., 2017; Zelembz et al., 2021 et al.). The last research task was accomplished by means of a qualitative analysis of teachers' answers to questions from an open-ended survey questionnaire regarding the possibilities of improving the existing practice of teaching excursions. For this purpose, teachers were asked three questions that were formulated on the basis of a detailed analysis of relevant research (Anderson & Zhang, 2003; Bistović, 2019; Ostojčić, 2016; Ritchie & Coughlan, 2004; et al.), as well as based on the experiences and assumptions of the authors of this work: (1) In your opinion, is there a need to improve the existing practice of educational excursions; (2) Who/What is a key factor in the process of improving teaching excursions; (3) In your opinion, in what way can the existing practice of educational excursions be improved? The application of the mentioned methods and techniques ensures the highest level of reliability of the collected data.

The research was conducted in the period from July to September of 2024. Primary and secondary school teachers in the Republic of Serbia participated in the research, and the data was collected online using the Google Forms platform.

### 3. RESULTS

Educational excursions are an organizational form of teaching that requires significant time and effort to ensure their adequate implementation and didactic validity. To provide appropriate support and assistance to teachers, it is useful to single out the key limitations of the current practice. Therefore, the first research question is focused on identifying the shortcomings of educational excursions that teachers observe in real-world practice.

Table 2. Potential limitations of educational excursions

<i>Potential limitations of educational excursions</i>		
	M	SD
Educational excursions have a good curriculum of implementation.	3.55	1.11
Student discipline on educational excursions is satisfactory.	3.62	1.00
The educational excursions are accompanied by adequate financial compensation for the implementers of the educational excursions.	2.65	1.31
Students are interested in educational excursions.	4.15	0.96
I am motivated to participate in the organization and realization of educational excursions.	3.33	1.33
I am competent to organize a school excursion.	3.84	1.17
I am competent to organize educational activities on educational excursions.	4.06	0.97
Teachers need additional professional development in the field of effective organization and implementation of educational excursions.	2.95	1.34

Source: Research author Anisijević Katarina

The conducted research identified the following key weaknesses of educational excursions: (1) inadequate financial compensation for those implementing educational excursions; (2) insufficient motivation of teachers to participate in the organization and realization of educational excursions. This is verified by the low arithmetic means of teacher agreement with these claims  $M=2.65$  with a standard deviation of  $SD=1.31$ , and  $M=3.33$  with a standard deviation of  $SD=1.33$ . Teachers consider themselves sufficiently competent to organize an educational field trip ( $M=3.84$ ;  $SD=1.17$ ), and to carry out educational and developmental activities during them ( $M=4.06$ ;  $SD=0.97$ ). However, there is divided opinion among them as to whether they should undergo additional professional development in this area ( $M=2.95$ ;  $SD=1.34$ ). This leads to the conclusion that teachers feel unqualified for some segments of excursion implementation. It is important to discover in which areas teachers believe they are not trained enough, and which skills they consider not properly developed. Discerning these areas should precede all future teacher training for this educational field. The demonstrated insecurity not only causes a feeling of being uneducated among teachers, but can also be a reason for weaker teacher motivation to execute educational excursions. Their opinion on ways to improve educational excursions will be further analyzed in the remainder of the paper.

Table 3. Potential limitations of educational excursions (in relation to variable treatment)

<i>Potential limitations of educational excursions (in relation to variable treatment)</i>			
	df	F	p
Potential limitations (in relation to work experience)	2	0.94	0.39
Potential limitations (in relation to the teacher's subject area)	4	1.66	0.16
	df	t	p
Potential limitations (in relation to the level of education at which the teacher teaches)	222	- 0.16	0.87

Source: Research author Anisijević Katarina

The statistically significant difference in respondents' answers to the items concerning the potential obstacles of educational excursions in the overall score was not distinguished in relation to any independent research variable, considering that the values of statistical significance are  $p=0.39$ ;  $p=0.16$  and  $p=0.87$ . Teachers have homogeneous opinions in relation to all three defined independent variables, from which it is concluded that they recognize similar limitations of educational excursions regardless of years of service, subject area or level of education at which they teach.

Based on qualitative data processing, the following conclusions about the possibilities for improving educational excursions could be listed: 1) Most teachers recognize the need for improvement in this area (as many as 144 of them answered affirmatively); 2) Emphasis should be placed on a more adequate

selection of travel agencies and achieving quality cooperation with them; (3) The basic principle must not be “organization exclusively based on the principle of tourist and financial interests”; (4) It is crucial to provide a competent tourist guide “who will be able to deftly present interesting facts about the place being visited”; (5) Teachers, especially history and geography teachers, should participate in the selection of excursion routes; (6) To inhibit excursions recurrence.

According to teachers, the key factor in the process of upgrading educational excursions is the Ministry of Education, which should redirect its efforts towards providing support for the organization of this specific form of teaching. Respondents are aware of the importance of financial resources and their impact on the effects of educational excursions. Financial resources that would improve educational excursions include: financial compensation for teachers, financial investments in the preparation and provision of materials for the implementation of excursions, and the price of the offered arrangements. Teachers believe that it is important to develop awareness among parents about the purpose of educational excursions. Good preparation and organization, consistency of content and location, and greater teacher motivation were also listed as major factors for development. Respondents also acknowledge the importance of cooperation between travel agencies and schools, and relationships among teachers, parents, and students, stating: “Collaborative coordination of all factors that influence the fulfillment of expected and necessary outcomes when conducting excursions and nature lessons by the Excursion and Nature Lessons Team, representatives of the agency (responsible for application of) implementing excursions/nature lessons, and parents of students.”

When it comes to suggestions for improving educational excursions, the majority of teachers also deem that educational excursions should have lower prices which would make them available to all students regardless of their social status. Besides the price, teachers find fault with the greater autonomy that tourist agencies have compared to schools. According to teachers’ attitudes, schools should participate more in the process of deciding time and place of excursion realization. A more “carefully selected” and “diverse” selection of destinations and locations is needed (e.g., “Younger students would benefit from an excursion that includes a visit to a farm or a rural household. There has never been such an offer before”). One of the responses offers a suggestion that “tourist agencies should be given certain conditions that they would have to fulfill in order to organize an excursion; the agency should receive a detailed plan of activities from the institution and should organize the excursion based on that.” Teachers suggest that educational excursions last shorter, but that they be organized more frequently throughout the year. They believe that students should be much more active on excursions, in all phases of their development. There is a need for more preparational activities carried out by students (“preparational presentation about the visiting place, searched text, quiz; studying the material, discussions or research assignment”), but also more activities in the systematization phase (e.g., “to inform parents in writing form about what they saw and heard”). According to respondents, educational excursions would accomplish set outcomes if “interactive content” was chosen for their activities and if more attention was paid to student motivation and interests. Support from the Ministry of Education for teachers is important for improving the current practice of educational excursions. As a starting point for innovation and upgrade, teachers cite the current practice. “Public presentation of preparation, realisation, evaluation and attainment of set outcomes” would give insight into specific shortcomings that could be overcome through the cooperation of educators. For them, “feedback from students and their parents”, as well as mutual support and cooperation between parents and the school are very important.

Concern is raised by the responses of several respondents who believe that educational excursions should be abolished. It is important to determine the reasons for which teachers regard that educational excursions don’t accomplish goals and assignments in accordance with set standards, and that as such they are no longer relevant to modern education. Some of the answers such as: “I don’t have a solution, I don’t have the tools or resources to engage in such a problem” and “Students mostly don’t show interest in offered content”, prove that teachers don’t doubt the pedagogical-didactic values of well organized and realized educational excursions, but their motivation and the support they receive have noticeably decreased.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

As the most common shortcomings, teachers recognize finances in the form of unsatisfactory monetary compensation for the implementers of educational excursions, as well as the motivation of teachers for the realization of the excursions. These two items can be closely related such that weak financial support for teachers can affect the weakening of motivation to participate in the organization of activities on educational excursions. It is important to mention the indecision of teachers about whether

additional professional development of practitioners is needed for this teaching field. Future research could be directed towards examining the insecurity, that is, the security, of teachers in different didactic and methodological competencies, knowledge and skills necessary to achieve the results of teaching excursions. No independent variable was significant in making a difference in respondents' responses to any research task. Regardless of the years of service, the subject area and whether they teach in primary or secondary school, teachers have developed their own views on the specifics of teaching excursions.

Respondents believe that there is a need to improve educational excursions. They cite cooperation at all levels and among all involved actors as a key factor for improvement. Teachers expect greater support from the Ministry of Education and greater autonomy for making key decisions regarding the organization and implementation of educational excursions. They direct attention to the fact that financial problems are not only related to financial compensation of teachers, but also to financial investments in the preparation and provision of materials for the realization of excursions and the price of the offered arrangements that would suit a larger number of students. Also, teachers suggest a more careful choice of destinations, which opens up another key question about the convenience of different destinations for the realization of teaching content and the achievement of teaching outcomes according to the curriculum.

## 5. CONCLUSION

From the point of view of recommendations and pedagogical implications, it is important to point out that the basic principle of organizing educational excursions should be their compliance with the key principles of modern education and realistic learning needs. In addition to the views of teachers, it is important to examine the opinions of parents and students. Also, a higher level of involvement of parents and students in the process of planning, programming and realization of educational excursions is desirable. Considering the recognized shortcomings of the existing practice of teaching excursions, there is a need to improve this area both in terms of regulations and in terms of more systematic dealing with this area. In addition to surveying, it would be important to collect qualitative data by analyzing and evaluating the implemented teaching excursion programs. More significant effects of educational field trips would be achieved by directing teachers towards teamwork and cooperation in the process of planning and implementing teaching field trips. Future activities that could improve the existing practice of teaching excursions are a more responsible approach in the pedagogical-didactic-methodical initial education of future teachers and a more effective organization of professional training and professional development of practicing teachers in this area.

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