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First holidays abroad: authenticating the learning environment through memories and storytelling

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ABSTRACT

Authentic learning has gained prominence as a pedagogical strategy educators can adopt to address concerns regarding curriculum effectiveness. While support for the development of an integrated approach to the curriculum is evident, especially in tourism education, concerns regarding a lack of congruence between business practice and the curriculum are apparent, with claims that tourism education has little relevance for practitioners. This has resulted in an encouragement to ground tourism education within authentic learning through a community of practice, concerned with collaborative engagement. The purpose of this paper is to explore how storytelling can contribute to authentic learning in tourism education. Our findings reveal how authentic learning through storytelling contributed to the educational development of students through facilitating self-reflection, supporting an empathetic understanding of tourism development concerns and knowledge transfer. It also provided opportunities for remembering, conversation and reflection, facilitating positive social change amongst those stakeholders engaged in the project.

Introduction

Authentic learning is often considered a means of addressing concerns regarding curriculum relevancy and effectiveness (Lombardi, 2007; Paddison & Mortimer, 2016; Remidez & Fodness, 2015). Understood as circumstances that resemble the complexity of the real- life application of knowledge (Elobeid et al., 2016; Godfrey et al., 2005; Smeds et al., 2015), authentic learning "focuses on educational activities related to real-world problems and issues" (Deale, 2008, p. 57). Although support for the development of an integrated approach to the curriculum is evident (Barnett & Coate, 2005; Currie & Knights, 2003; Steiner & Watson, 2006), especially in tourism education (Miller et al., 2019; Stergiou et al., 2008; Zahra, 2012), there is a lack of congruence between business practice and the University curriculum, with a danger that tourism education becomes constrained with little relevance for practitioners (Duane, 2012). This has resulted in the encouragement to situate tourism education in the context of authentic learning through a community of practice (Albrecht, 2012; Dredge et al., 2012; Elobeid et al., 2016).

A community of practice is concerned with the collaborative engagement of stakeholders through shared knowledge and understanding (Albrecht, 2012). For Dredge et al. (2012), the emphasis here is on the importance of collaborative dialogue and shared understandings in the design, content, and delivery of higher education curricula, offering a more subjectivist approach to curriculum design and therefore allowing learners to take control of their own learning (Garvey & Williamson, 2001). It is within

this context that the purpose of this paper is to develop a critical understanding of how authentic learning may be supported in tourism curricula through the use of storytelling as a pedagogical tool. The research documented here seeks to illustrate how an interactive research project, the "First Holidays Abroad" project, facilitated authentic learning in tourism education.

Literature review

Deale (2008, p. 57) defines authentic learning as "learning that focuses on educational activities related to real-world problems and issues." These real-world issues are embedded within a domain-specific culture, with Brown et al. (1989, p. 34) defining authentic learning as "the culture in which a domain of knowledge is practiced." This allows for the rediscovery of business values (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Elobeid et al., 2016). In a related definition, Borthwick et al. (2007, p. 16) suggest, "authenticity comes from the connection between a student's experience and the disciplinary mind", with learners engaging with the discipline as a genuine activity. All of these definitions highlight a domain-specific (here tourism) component to authentic learning.

Further support for the cultural-embeddedness of authentic learning is highlighted in Tochon's (2000) model of authentic learning situations, where authenticity is perceived as intersections of the situated lived experiences of the students and the disciplinary "mind". In this context, authenticity is expressed through planned and enacted pedagogical contexts. Authentic learning becomes evident through the process of "enminding" learn- ing activities within the historic mind of the discipline (Stein et al., 2004). As Borthwick et al. (2007, p. 17) argued, learners should be engaged in genuine reflective activities about the discipline to produce "shifts in self-knowledge". Therefore, authentic learning is a socially interactive and reflective process that supports and promotes learners' thinking (Airey, 2015; Belhassen & Caton, 2011; Coghlan, 2015; Nicaise et al., 2000).

Authentic learning intentionally integrates knowledge and practice as "portable skills". This enables students to develop a systematic, integrated and critical understanding, allowing for knowledge transfer and the synthesis of information within different contexts (Lombardi, 2007). It is a culture of both practical engagement and academic rigour that enables this to be achieved (Miller et al., 2019; Paddison & Mortimer, 2016; Tochon, 2000). It is argued here that learning should be concerned with developing knowledge within educational institutions and also the process of reinventing, refreshing and renewing the culture within communities of practice. For Van Oers and Wardekker (1999), communities of practice are not stagnant and instead offer the potential to be simultaneously related to the process of authenticating personal learning. Authentic learning means learning to participate from a personal perspective within culturally bound, often pre-set, meaning structures (Leont'ev, 1978), much of which is heavily Western orientated (Airey, 2015). However, the community of practice can quickly become inauthentic as the real-world experience is often artificial or staged within the institution (Stein et al., 2004). To facilitate meaningful experiences for students, which are appropriate within the context of the community of practice,

curriculum designers seek a combination of practical knowledge and academic rigour (Borthwick et al., 2007).

Researchers in education have distilled authentic learning into several design elements and approaches. This enables educators to either embed authenticity into the curriculum through special projects or as part of assessment and feedback processes (Altomonte   et al., 2016; Reeves et al., 2005). Authentic learning can be embedded in the curriculum through a number of learning strategies, including capstone projects which combine subject areas together as part of a case study or an industry-sponsored project (Athavale et al., 2008; Bailey et al., 2007), situated learning activities, such as field visits (Brown & Duguid, 1993; Croy, 2009; Herrington & Oliver, 1999), scenario-based learning, action research, and problem-based learning (Coghlan, 2015; Lombardi, 2007; Weber & Englehart, 2011; Whitelaw & Wrathall, 2015). For Lombardi (2007), critical to the successful implementation of authentic learning is the assessment context. Methods of assessment should be linked with the programme learning outcomes and the learning and teaching strategy (Creme, 2005). Attention should also be given to concerns regarding engage- ment and consistency in assessment design (Borthwick et al., 2007; Rule, 2006; Zahra, 2012). This supports Yeoman's (2012) reflective research on authentic learning where assessment design should facilitate creative and critical skills through action research that encourages students to construct and negotiate knowledge.

Storytelling as a pedagogical strategy for authentic learning

Stories or narratives are increasingly considered as tools for learning and research design, with storytelling usually regarded as a pedagogical strategy and narrative as a research method (Coulter et al., 2007). Storytelling can be perceived as tangible and inform nearly every aspect of cultural life through which customs, values and perceptions are shared and those engaged begin to understand the world around them (Coulter et al., 2007; Kent, 2016; Weick, 1995). In the context of nursing, Koch (1998) for example, describes how highly personal and emotional stories of everyday life as lived by clients and witnessed by practitioners made nursing practice more visible and authentic. Stories facilitate reflective practice and evaluation but may also be therapeutic and catalysts for change (Koch, 1998). Authentic learning through storytelling can contribute to the dialogical educational development of students, with an emphasis on the importance of dialogue for learning and dialogic spaces that allow for the co-construction of new meaning to take place (Wegerif, 2006). Storytelling, therefore, is a powerful vehicle for communication (Koch, 1998) that has the ability to educate, inform, motivate and provoke a response, whether emotional or action orientated (Kent, 2016).

Stories are reconstructions of a person's experiences, remembered and told from a particular perspective. They do not necessarily represent "life as lived" in a factual sense, but rather representations of those lives. Storytelling allows for the sharing of memorable, interesting knowledge that brings together layers of understandings about

a person and their culture. It helps to organise information about how people have interpreted events, the values, beliefs and experiences that guide those interpretations, and their hopes, intentions and plans for the future. Complex patterns, descriptions of identity construction and reconstruction, and evidence of social discourses that impact on a person's knowledge creation from specific cultural standpoints may emerge (Sandelowski, 1991). Narrative knowledge, therefore, is created and constructed through stories of lived experiences and the meanings created (Riessman, 1993).

Storytelling can take a variety of forms and is not necessarily limited to the written word. Performance, narratives and imagery are often employed as methods of capturing and conveying stories (Christensen, 2012). In the context of education, storytelling has been found to result in transformative pedagogical work (Coulter et al., 2007). Storytelling as an educational tool can support critical and multicultural understandings, develop connections between personal narratives and those of others, and develop reflexivity (Clark & Medina, 2000). Teaching through stories allows for a wider appreciation of the external influences which shape our understanding. For example, in the context of art education, Deniston-Trochta (2003) recognises the social aspect of learning and therefore encourages the use of storytelling as a means for students to understand how social communities significantly impact their aesthetic taste and how they influence the aes- thetic tastes of others.

Reflecting on the variety of perspectives put forward in this review of the literature, the notions of engagement, reflection, practical implication and communication are domi- nant features of current critical thinking around curriculum development. Higher Education providers have a lot to gain from authentic learning through joint engagement with students, academics and external stakeholders. This would enable the development of a curriculum within a culture that acknowledges the importance of academic research, sustaining and underpinning opportunities of practical application and reflection (Alstete & Beutell, 2016; Miller et al., 2019; Paddison & Mortimer, 2016). This raises questions of how to foster authentic learning and what makes it effective. Here, there is a suggestion that high levels of practical application, reflection and thinking are required by both the student and the educator in order to provide opportunities to activate skills developed in the programme (Blaxell & Moore, 2012). The premise of this paper is to develop a critical understanding of how authentic learning may be supported in tourism curricula through the use of storytelling as a pedagogical tool. The study seeks to develop an understanding of how authentic learning was achieved through the "First Holidays Abroad" project, an interactive narrative research project, concerned with facilitating student engagement in understanding past encounters in tourism through storytelling.

Methodology

First holidays abroad research project

It is widely recognised that the period after the Second World War experienced a significant expansion in overseas leisure travel. The beginning of this period in

modern tourism was characterised by new destinations, infrastructures and travel by air, leading to new experiences for both travellers and host communities. The "First Holidays Abroad" project sought, through narrative research, to draw on the thoughts, memories, and stories of people's experiences of overseas holidays in the period between 1950 and 1975. The first stage of the study involved identifying 30 volunteers who were willing to "tell their story" of their first experience of foreign travel. We were particularly interested in how it felt to be in another country for the first time and the instances that people remembered most about their experience of travel and of being in a new environment. Those interviewed were aged between 55 and 85, with an equal gender split and were encouraged to reflect upon the journey, the food, the weather, the people, the language, funny incidents, the hotel, how it felt then and how they feel now. Participants were recruited via a university contacts database and resided in the United Kingdom. The vast majority of those contacted were willing to participate, 30 in total. Interviews followed a semi-structured schedule, with each interview audio recorded and approximately 45 minutes in length.

Study methods

In the second stage of the study, these stories were shared with students to provide an authentic learning resource. These stories were used as a pedagogical resource to encourage students to consider and evaluate tourism and leisure experiences in the period after the Second World War from the perspective of those who had witnessed this tourism boom first-hand. A variety of activities were employed to facilitate authentic learning, such as listening to either the full audio or extracts from the audio and identify- ing key themes, creating audio summaries, students sharing their own stories, and comparing stories of those collected as part of the "First Holidays Abroad" project with those of their peers. A total of 18 students participated in the classroom activities over a 12-week semester. While most of the stories captured for the "First Holidays Abroad" project were shared with the students, some stories were omitted due to a lack of relevance or detail. All students were first year undergraduate tourism management students. The majority of the students were from the United Kingdom, with two students from overseas, including one from China and one from Spain.

The stories we presented to students align with the interpretive approach we wanted to adopt in making sense of students' learning. The interpretive approach is concerned with those being studied providing their own explanation of their situation or behaviour (Veal, 1997). In this context, it is assumed that people create and associate their own subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them (Orlikowskil & Baroudi, 1991). The purpose of this research was to develop an understanding of how authentic learning was supported through an interactive narrative research project. The research was concerned with facilitating student engagement in understanding past encounters in tourism through storytelling. Following Weber's Verstehen tradition in the social sciences (Weber, 1949), understanding a social process involves understanding the world of those generating it (Rosen, 1991). While we are unable to turn back the clock and provide students a truly authentic experience of what tourism

was like in the post-war era, being able to listen to stories from those who did participate offers a means of accessing these times. Although students were unaware of the storytellers' identities, the connection to these stories was strengthened by the fact that storytellers were part of the local community.

Qualitative data relating to students' views and experiences were elicited through a focus group. Focus groups are a popular and well-documented method of gaining insights into students' learning experiences in higher education (e.g., Alpert & Hodkinson, 2018; Kubberød & Pettersen, 2017; Won & Choi, 2017). Prevalence of the data collection method aside, we chose to use a focus group because it would allow for the generation of shared understanding among participants. Other benefits of using a focus group are their ability to generate and evaluate ideas, thus enabling the exploration or explanation of concepts (Saunders et al., 2019). In this study, we also used a focus group because of their potential as a learning tool for students themselves in the sense of co-creating a shared, inter-subjective understanding. We acknowledge that there are also limitations of using focus groups. For example, they are not always able to generate as rich and in-depth data as a one-to-one interview might (Stokes & Bergin, 2006). However, as the aim of supporting students' learning was just as, if not more important, than gaining access to data, the focus group approach fitted this requirement.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed which resulted in the selection of eight students who had undertaken the authentic learning activity to participate in the focus group. Only those students that were part of the class that used the stories for authentic learning were invited to participate in the focus group to evaluate the effectivity of using these stories in their learning. The focus group itself lasted 65 minutes, was audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. The focus of the discussion was framed around storytelling as an approach to teaching and learning.

A thematic approach to data analysis was adopted which seeks to identify, analyse and describe patterns and themes within a qualitative data set (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that there is an absence of any clear guidelines regarding thematic analysis and consequently outline a framework in which thematic analysis can be undertaken providing rigour and validity to such analysis. The approach of thematic analysis was therefore applied in this research providing a flexible framework adaptable to the research question and data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach for thematic analysis was adopted within this research. Its process is shown in table 1 below.

The first phase included data management and transcription which also facilitated data immersion (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although passing the task of transcription to others may appeal as a time-saving device, it was decided not to outsource this activity to strengthen familiarity with the depth and breadth of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The second phase involved the generation of codes and the initial coding of the

data. During this phase initial patterns between the data were also noted. Phase three is concerned with re-focusing the analysis and involved the sorting of different codes into

Table 1. Thematic analysis framework.

Phase	Description of the Process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic manner across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Phase 1) and the entire data set (Phase 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

(Source: adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006)

potential themes. For Braun and Clarke (2006), the emphasis within this phase is to begin identifying the relationships between the different codes and to consider how these codes could be combined. Therefore, codes were combined into potential key themes. For example, initial codes such as authentic learning, the learning environment and classroom were combined into "Storytelling and the Learning Environment".

Having identified emerging themes from the data, during the fourth phase, the themes were further refined. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that during this phase it is important to review the themes which have been identified by revisiting the data extracts and check- ing that they appear to form a coherent pattern. As a result, it was possible to elicit meanings and insights from the data extracts. Patterns which emerged were further refined and connected conceptually with the research aim and objectives and insights from the literature review. Phase five involved the refining of existing themes and ensuring their grounding in the data. Braun and Clarke's (2006) final analysis phase involves the presentation of the themes through a coherent, logical and interesting narrative. Furthermore, the write up should include sufficient and appropriate supporting evidence of the themes. As a result, direct quotations from the transcript of the focus group were used both to substantiate the points being made, but more importantly in the spirit of the interpretive study, to convey a sense of participants' "lifeworld" (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001, p. 69).

Discussion

A number of themes emerged from the analysis and provide a structure to the discussion as follows. First, the role of storytelling for knowledge creation and self-reflection is examined. This is followed by a discussion of storytelling and the learning environment. Finally, we explore how storytelling provided opportunities for collaboration and com- munity engagement.

Storytelling, knowledge creation and self-reflection

For Coulter et al. (2007), storytelling results in transformative pedagogical work. Teaching through stories allows for a wider appreciation of the external factors which shape individual understanding, such as social-economic, political and cultural factors. Overall, the findings support this view where listening to and reflecting on the stories provided students with a "different point of view", an alternative source of knowledge to that typically found in textbooks or that is related second-hand via a lecturer. Here, the stories as a source of knowledge was novel to the students and one that they appreciated because, not only did it support learning, it was also an "enjoyable experience". Thus, students were very vocal that it had helped them understand, in a more empathic sense, the growth of tourism and, crucially, how it had affected people (hosts as well as guests). The focus group made it very apparent that the stories collected as part of the "First Holidays Abroad" project resulted in students "having a better appreciation" and a "more in-depth understanding" of the topic of tourism

development. With regard to depth of understanding we refer here to the aforementioned notion of "empathic understanding" (Weber, 1949). Students were able to engage with others' experience, to see the world through others' eyes.

An additional benefit of the stories was their role in bringing the "teaching to life" and "made the topic seem more relevant" and "enjoyable". For a number of students, it was this very personal nature of the stories which "made it seem real" and "genuine". One student in particular commented, "I felt I was able to personally connect with the stories being told and then, as a result, better reflect on my own travel experiences and how they compare." Another student added that the activity "[Storytelling] really made me think about and reflect on my own holiday experiences and think differently about the choices I make in the future." Here our findings confirm those of others who have claimed storytelling as an educational tool may support critical and multicultural understandings, develop connections between personal narratives and those of others, and develop reflectivity (Clark & Medina, 2000). For Deniston-Trochta (2003), it is the social aspect of learning that is important here and it is evident in this study that student understanding was significantly enhanced due to the social and personal nature of the stories being told. This is echoed by Koch (1998), who describes how highly personal and emotional stories result in more visible and authentic forms of learning. This level of understanding, because relating to a fuller appreciation of the phenomenon of tourism development, extends beyond Bloom's notion of understanding but relates to evaluation (Bloom, 1956). Furthermore, it is likely, though not proven here, that being able to relate to others' experiences will support the remembering level of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy. Although educators aspire to the higher levels of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, it is easy to ignore the base of the pyramid (reflection) upon which the other levels rely.

Storytelling and the learning environment

One of the important aspects of authentic learning is enabling students to apply their theoretical knowledge to real-world contexts (Stein et al., 2004). In other words, authenticity comes from the connection between a student's experience and the disciplinary "mind" (Borthwick et al., 2007; Smeds et al., 2015). Students responded to the opportunity of engaging with the stories, commenting that:

> "It has not only transformed my way of thinking about travel experiences, but also how I interpret the concepts discussed in class. I feel I now better understand the practical implications of the theoretical concepts that we have been looking at."

Although students were not given the opportunity of directly applying their learning, for example, making decisions as to a destination's development, they certainly gained a more in-depth appreciation of the consequences of destination managers' decisions. Again, we can refer to the enminding model, where authenticity comes through the intersections of the situated lived experiences amongst students and the disciplinary "mind", expressed through planned and enacted pedagogical contexts and events (Tochon, 2000; Whitelaw & Wrathall, 2015). In other words, authentic learning acts as a social interaction process that guides and promotes learners' thinking (Airey, 2015; Coghlan, 2015; Nicaise et al., 2000) but also their actions (here in a hypothetical scenario).

As highlighted in the review of the literature, a number of approaches can be adopted in making the learning environment more authentic in programmes of study. Common approaches to achieve this include case studies, work-based activities and projects with local organisations, and research activities (Paddison & Mortimer, 2016). For Reeves et al.

(2005) and Gupta et al. (2015), a number of design elements and approaches should be considered that allow educators to embed authentic learning into the curriculum through either special projects and activities or as part of the course assessment and feedback strategy.

Storytelling and community engagement

In the context of this study, it is evident that authentic learning through storytelling contributed to the dialogical educational development of students through self-reflection and knowledge creation (Wegerif, 2006). The project provided students with the oppor- tunity to integrate their subject knowledge with real-life social contexts. The engagement with stakeholders outside of the institution resulted in students feeling that learning was "more relevant" and "authentic", with one student commenting: "hearing other peoples' stories was a great experience and one where I learnt a lot about myself." For Paddison and Mortimer (2016), stakeholder collaboration and community engagement is a core element in the facilitation of an authentic learning environment.

For Tribe (2001) and Whitelaw and Wrathall (2015), curriculum development should consider the breadth of stakeholder values and embrace tourism's broader role and contribution in society. From the student perspective, the concepts being applied to real life represent expressions and understandings of the community of practice (Elobeid et al., 2016). The engagement of members of the community, to listen to their stories, may be understood as a form of civic engagement which could then strengthen their sense of community and citizenship (Benn et al., 2015; Weber & Englehart, 2011). This was not something we had anticipated as an outcome of engaging with the stories of others, but further demonstrates the transformative nature of the students' experience. It is expected that in a future-focussed, rapidly changing world, young people are rarely given the opportunity to stop, listen to and reflect upon stories from the past (at least this is likely to be the case in "Western" societies that tend not to value age as much as in Asian cultures) (Levy & Macdonald, 2016). The opportunity provided in this learning scenario suggested this approach to authentic learning holds much sway to connect the past to the present, serving as a platform to look into the future.

The role of situated learning where authentic contexts reflect the way knowledge will be used in real life has been highlighted in the literature (Blaxell & Moore, 2012; Brown & Duguid, 1993; Herrington & Oliver, 1999). As acknowledged, a situated learning environ- ment provides learners with the opportunity to reflect the way knowledge will ultimately be used where knowledge is not fragmented and simplified by the facilitator (Coghlan, 2015). The findings reveal that storytelling as a pedagogical tool for authentic learning allowed students to understand different points of view through collaboration and understanding of lived experiences.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to develop an understanding of how authentic learning can be supported through the use of stories of past encounters in tourism when storytelling was employed as a pedagogical strategy. Authentic learning has attracted significant attention in educational debate as a means of addressing longstanding concerns regarding curriculum effectiveness (Lombardi, 2007; Paddison & Mortimer, 2016; Remidez & Fodness, 2015). A number of curriculum design elements and approaches to embed- ding authenticity into the curriculum are evident in the literature. This was the starting point for this study which contributes to the body of knowledge of authentic learning techniques, concerned with storytelling as an educational approach to making the learn- ing environment more authentic. This research has identified that storytelling can make an important contribution to authentic learning. This learning was not only engaging for the students but supported critical reflection. Consequently, authentic learning in this context allowed individuals to become aware of the relevance of their own learning. It provided students with a vicarious experience of the benefits, as well as the dangers of (excessive) tourism development, that went beyond the pure soaking up of facts. Given the short-term nature of the study, it is not possible to say to what extent the emotional engagement resulted in longer-term changes in students. Nonetheless, in the short term, the experience of the stories did make them (the students) appreciate the nuances and ethical dilemmas inherent in tourism decision-making (from a destination management perspective), and being emotionally involved is likely to strengthen the base of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy: remembering. This was reflected strongly, and unexpectedly, in an increased sense of civic engagement and community spirit.

Whilst the approach adopted to authentic learning was part of an undergraduate course, the activity could be adapted in several ways. The activity would be relevant for both undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study. Whilst the activity is ideally posi- tioned within a seminar/workshop, this could be facilitated over a number of weeks, involving a combination of field work and in class activities. The activity can easily be adapted for online delivery, with both the field work and class-based activities facilitated online. Also, whilst the activity was primarily a one-way approach, i.e. students listened to stories but did not feedback to storytellers, the method could be adapted to enable storytellers to tell their story, students to listen, interpret and then go back to the story- teller. This would then more closely align with the notion of knowledge co-creation in terms of the creation of a true dialogue. However, this would require additional commit- ment and resources from faculty and participants. Nonetheless, given the learning that ensued in this study, we would argue this is a reasonable investment to make, not least as a mechanism to bring students closer to their own locality. As was demonstrated, bring- ing students and locals together in this storytelling format resulted in a form of civic engagement that can strengthen universities' third mission. While this was not the primary focus of the study, it is an outcome worth mentioning.

There are a number of limitations and research avenues that merit further investigation which should be acknowledged. First, limitations of generalisability associated with

small sample sizes should be considered. However, given that such rich data was collected during the focus group this is not seen as problematic, not least because as an exploratory study the aim was not to seek statistical generalisation. Rather, this study has explored the potential of storytelling as a pedagogical strategy that facilitates authentic learning. It has demonstrated the value of the technique and how it shaped a number of student outcomes beyond what was initially anticipated. Thus, stories as an alternative form of knowledge are able to provide a greater sense of empathic understanding. This may itself support the appreciation of more abstract forms of knowledge and their relevance to practice, it may serve as a motivation to learn, and also enhance a feeling of civic

engagement (at least within the context of our study which drew on members of the local community to share their experiences). We suggest research using larger and more diverse samples could use these insights as a basis for further investigations into the benefits, but perhaps also challenges, associated with using storytelling as a means to enhance authentic learning in the tourism curriculum.

The study also engages with the emotional side of learning. It has long been recognised that emotions feature strongly in learning (Mercer, 2019). Further research may explore the extent to which storytelling can bring forth both positive as well as negative emotions and the implications of this for learning. Further studies may also explore the extent to which the inclusion of stories as a form of authentic learning has long-term effects, and also in comparison to other forms of authentic learning, and traditional classroom learning. For this to occur, larger samples would be required. Finally, studies could build on our work by creating a situation that fosters genuine co-creation of knowledge, where students are given the opportunity to listen to stories, but are also given the opportunity to engage with the storyteller so that a real dialogue takes place.

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