



**A MODEL TO ENHANCE TOURISM EDUCATION POST THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC: A CASE OF UMGUNGUNDLOVU AND HARRY GWALA DISTRICT
MUNICIPALITIES**

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DECLARATION

I, Acquinath Kholeka Nombulelo Zaca, hereby declare that this dissertation titled: “*A model to enhance Tourism Education post the COVID-19 pandemic: A case of uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipalities*” is my own work and has been carried out under the promotion of Professor DC Hlengwa and the co-promotion of Dr R Sucheran. I declare that this work has not been submitted for any other course or degree and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This dissertation is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy in Management Sciences specialising in Hospitality and Tourism at the Durban University of Technology.

26/07/2023

Acquinath Kholeka Nombulelo Zaca

Date

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my family; my husband Sphe Jula; my Son Luyanda Zaca; my siblings Mathula, Achmat and Mthobisi Zaca and is a memorial to my late daughter Luthando Zaca Jula. To my dad, SAM ZACA, this is for you daddy!

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on tourism education in South Africa, leading to a sudden shift from traditional teaching to digital schooling. While some schools successfully adopted technology-enhanced online learning, socially disadvantaged schools and communities faced challenges in transitioning due to technological limitations, poor internet connectivity, and skills shortages. This research sought to improve tourism education in high schools within the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipalities. The study argues that the tourism curriculum must adapt to the changing needs of the industry by incorporating technological advancements. Resilience-based interventions were explored as a means to help tourism education recover from the pandemic's disruptions. The research utilized Critical and Resilience Theories and employed a pragmatic approach with a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection from tourism educators, subject advisors, and industry partners. Findings revealed that teachers embraced digital technology to enhance teaching and learning but faced challenges such as increased absenteeism, curriculum completion difficulties, knowledge gaps, and reduced morale due to inadequate support. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating tourism education theory and practice and forging strong industry relationships to develop a relevant curriculum that aligns with industry demands. To ensure the survival and adaptability of tourism education, resilient pedagogical strategies are proposed, involving a redesigned curriculum that reflects industry trends. Ultimately, tourism education plays a crucial role in the industry, and its success hinges on the ability of educators to adapt and build resilience in the face of future uncertainties.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Radhakrishna (2008), the main purpose of the introductory chapter in a thesis is to capture the reader's attention, establish a positive initial impression, maintain their interest, and guarantee that the thesis is a cohesive entity. The objective of this chapter is to provide the reader with an orientation to the study. This will be done by presenting the background information, identifying the gaps in the literature, specifying the research problem, aim, objectives, research questions, study setting, and outlining the research structure.

The preventive measure of shutting down the schools in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic had a significant impact on the education, well-being, and overall functioning of all individuals and entities involved in education globally (Duraku and Hoxha, 2020). The global outbreak of the pandemic had a significant impact on education, resulting in the exclusion of more than 1 billion learners worldwide (Onyema, Sen and Alsayed, 2020). The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic posed an unparalleled obstacle to global education systems, leading to substantial interruptions in teaching, learning, and assessment procedures. South Africa faced a severe situation, with more than 14 million students being impacted (Mahaye, 2020). This academic upheaval in the country further worsened existing socio-economic disparities (Ntaka, 2020). According to Wills and Van de Berg (2022) most learners in South Africa had a far lower exposure to school in 2020 and 2021 than in the normal year due to school lock down and rotational timetable applied in schools. On average across all learners in 2020, 54% of contact time was lost due to the changes in the school calendar (Department of Education 2022).

According to the United Nations (UN) (2020), the magnitude and rapidity of the disruption in education on a global level were unprecedented and could have potentially threaten the fundamental right to receive education of high quality if the situation persisted. The methodologies employed for teaching and learning underwent an abrupt transition from the customary classroom environment to novel and unfamiliar conferencing technologies. The pandemic posed significant challenges for millions of students in developing countries who were unable to transition to online learning due to inadequate access to modern technological

platforms. According to Çinar (2020), teachers were required to adjust to novel pedagogical approaches and innovative teaching methods for in which they had not been trained.

Mair (2020) asserts that there was consensus among stakeholders to view and leverage the pandemic as a catalyst for transformation within the tourism ecosystem. Considering the ongoing industry changes, it was seen as imperative that tourism education be reimaged to adequately equip learners with the necessary skills and attitudes to address the emerging demands of the post-COVID-19 tourism industry (McKinsey, 2020). According to UNESCO (2020), the pre-pandemic state of the world and education may be irretrievable. The statement proposes implementing structural modifications and allocating resources via novel financing mechanisms to effectively mitigate the digital divide especially in Africa. According to UNESCO, the percentage of learners in sub-Saharan Africa who possess a household computer was merely 11%, while the percentage of learners who had access to household internet was only 18%. This contrasts with the global 50% learners who had computers in their homes, and the 57% of learners who had access to internet.

Available evidence indicates that the tourism industry and research have reached a level of maturity that enables them to effectively study, design, and implement crisis recovery and response strategies. This knowledge can also be utilised to build resilience and prepare for future crises (Hall, Prayaq and Amore, 2017). According to Çinar (2020), tourism education has undergone significant advancements and is currently highly attuned to the requirements of the industry of (Mungai, Kieti and Cheloti-Mapelu, 2021) equipping learners with a comprehensive set of skills that include knowledge acquisition, critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. This is essential to effectively address economic challenges, foster employment opportunities and promote social responsibility within the tourism industry. According to the World Tourism Alliance (2020), the tourism curriculum should be subject to regular revision in response to practical and industry-specific requirements. Simultaneously, it is imperative to devise delivery mechanisms that guarantee efficacious pedagogy during periods of crisis.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Tourism education refers to the pedagogical process of imparting knowledge and skills related to tourism as a multidisciplinary field of study. The inclusion of tourism as a school

subject in South Africa was a deliberate effort to address historical inequalities and generate employment opportunities, while also serving as a catalyst for economic growth. In South Africa the tourism industry has evolved and developed to such an extent that the current President Cyril Ramaphosa refers to it as ‘new gold’ and the ‘sunrise sector’ (Koga, 2019). The occurrence of the COVID-19 Pandemic served as a poignant reminder that the impact of events in one economic sector can have far-reaching consequences in others.

Considering the new normal, it is essential to re-evaluate the existing paradigms and transform the methodologies of tourism education in high schools. This is necessary to equip future travellers, employees, and practitioners with the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to navigate the post-COVID-19 landscape. According to Neil (2020), the interdependence of global health, and hospitality and tourism necessitates emphasize the responsibility of educational institutions to equip the workforce with the necessary skills to effectively anticipate, adapt to and manage change. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2020), the tourism industry must not only rely on policy solutions to co-exist with the virus, but also prioritise the improvement of its preparedness and resilience.

Two of the nine recommendations made by UNESCO (2020) for the future of global education were: to provide teachers and students with free and opensource technologies and incorporate scientific literacy into the curriculum. These underscore the importance for tourism education to maintain a sustained equilibrium between the industry's demands and the competencies imparted to learners. The central argument of this research is that it is crucial to establish mechanisms that can bolster the resilience of tourism education in high schools in the face of adversity. Various stakeholders in the tourism ecosystem should regards the COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity to learn and grow both the industry and education that supports it.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

According to Tiwari, Seraphin and Chowdhary (2020), the tourism industry relies strongly on tourism education as a fundamental base of support. Paudyal (2019) presents guidelines pertaining to the alignment between the tourism industry and tourism education. Teachers and employers hold divergent expectations, as the latter group places greater emphasis on

acquiring practical and adaptable skills through education (Airey and Tribe 2005), rather than relying solely on theoretical knowledge that may not be applicable to evolving circumstances. According to Tiwari et al. (2020), there exists a reciprocal relationship between the tourism industry and tourism education, whereby any changes or developments in one domain can have significant implications for the other.

Keçi and Qosja (2021) emphasised that a significant obstacle lies in the instruction and acquisition of current knowledge that are necessary to keep pace with an evolving industry. The impact of the pandemic on education and the tourism industry has been analysed by scholars such as Onyema, Alsayed, Sen, and Daniel in recent studies. However, there is a shortage of research on the effects of the pandemic on tourism education, particularly in the context of South African high schools, as noted by Benaraba et al. (2022) and Tiwari et al. (2020). According to Sigala (2020), there remains a gap in understanding how crises can facilitate changes in industry and education, as well as how companies can leverage the disruptions caused by COVID-19 to drive transformative innovation and influence the reconsideration and reconfiguration of what is to come. In 2007, Sheldon, Fesenmaier, Woeber, Cooper, and Antonioli observed that the world was undergoing frequent and drastic seismic changes. The authors additionally recognised the necessity to adopt novel approaches in response to the requirement for a comprehensive overhaul of tourism education curricula.

The tourism sector and its educational institutions are confronted with various challenges that necessitate the formulation and implementation of novel paradigms aimed at producing adaptable employees (Çinar, 2020). Hence, to address the educational disparities that have arisen in the tourism sector due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, a comprehensive and durable model was formulated in collaboration with teachers, subject advisors and a selected sample of industry partners. The statement aligns with Hartmann's (2020) proposition that to withstand challenges, society, economies, and tourism education must undergo a process of transformation towards resilience.

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to identify mechanisms that can potentially improve the resilience of tourism education in high schools situated in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipalities. The study also aimed to create a model that can bolster the resilience of tourism education in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The study aimed to

elucidate potential resiliency-based interventions in facilitating the attainment of the shared objective of revitalising and reinforcing tourism education in high schools.

1.4.1 Research objectives

Research objectives serve to identify precise research concerns that the project intends to explore, expanding on the primary theme articulated in the research aim (Thomas and Hodges, 2010). The objectives are intricately connected to both the research problem and the research aim. The research study was guided by the following research objectives:

- To assess the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on tourism education in high schools located in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipalities.
- Evaluate the importance of tourism education in meeting the needs and requirements of the tourism industry in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Investigate the challenges encountered in delivering tourism curricula during the pandemic in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipalities.
- Determine strategies for enhancing the delivery of quality tourism curricula in response to the evolving tourism landscape.
- Create a model that can improve the resilience of tourism education in high schools located in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipalities following the COVID-19 Pandemic.

1.4.2 Research questions

Coldwell and Herbst (2004: 28) believe that research questions just like research objectives are important because they provide research themes that give a project to the study. As a result, this study answered the following research questions:

- How did COVID-19 impact tourism education in high schools in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipalities?
- Why is it essential that tourism education meets the need and requirements of the tourism industry post-COVID-19?
- What were the challenges faced by tourism educators in delivering tourism curriculum during the pandemic in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipalities?
- What can be done to promote quality tourism curricula delivery for the changing tourism industry?

- What model can be utilised to enhance the resilience of tourism education post COVID-19 in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipalities?

1.5 SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a pragmatic approach by utilising a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies for gathering and analysing data. Data were gathered from various high schools located in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipalities that were purposively selected for their accessibility. Tourism educators, subject advisors and industry partners formed the population of the study. A total of 83 teachers, 36 industry partners and 3 subject advisors were sampled to respond to research questions to satisfy the objectives of the study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the subject advisors using an interview guide. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and industry partners because the sample sizes were larger. The research methodology employed in this study is a case study design, with data collection being conducted cross-sectionally, i.e., at a single point in time. The study employed qualitative methods to present and analyse qualitative data, while quantitative methods were utilised to present and analyse quantitative data. The study adhered to ethical procedures as stipulated by DUT. The process involved completing an online Introduction to Research Ethics course and acquiring a TRREE Certificate (Appendix A), acquiring an ethical clearance letter from the Ethics Committee (IREC 054/22 – Appendix B) and securing a gatekeeper’s letter from the District Managers of sampled schools (Appendix G). Prior to initiating the interviews and administering the questionnaires, each participant was provided with an information letter (Appendix C) that delineated the study's objectives and the anticipated conduct of the research and participant. The participants were invited to voluntarily participate in the study and assured that their identities would not be revealed.

1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The setting of the study was the uMgungundlovu District Municipality (Figures 1.1 and 1.2), and Harry Gwala District Municipality (Figures 1.1 and 1.3). The researcher only selected secondary schools which offered tourism as a subject in uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality at the time of the study. According to (Calitz, 2009) in delimitation, the researcher specifies boundaries to point out areas of inclusivity and exclusivity. The study is delimited geographically as well as in respect of the subject ‘tourism’ being offered in Grades

10-12. Figure 1.1 illustrates the location of uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipalities within KwaZulu-Natal.

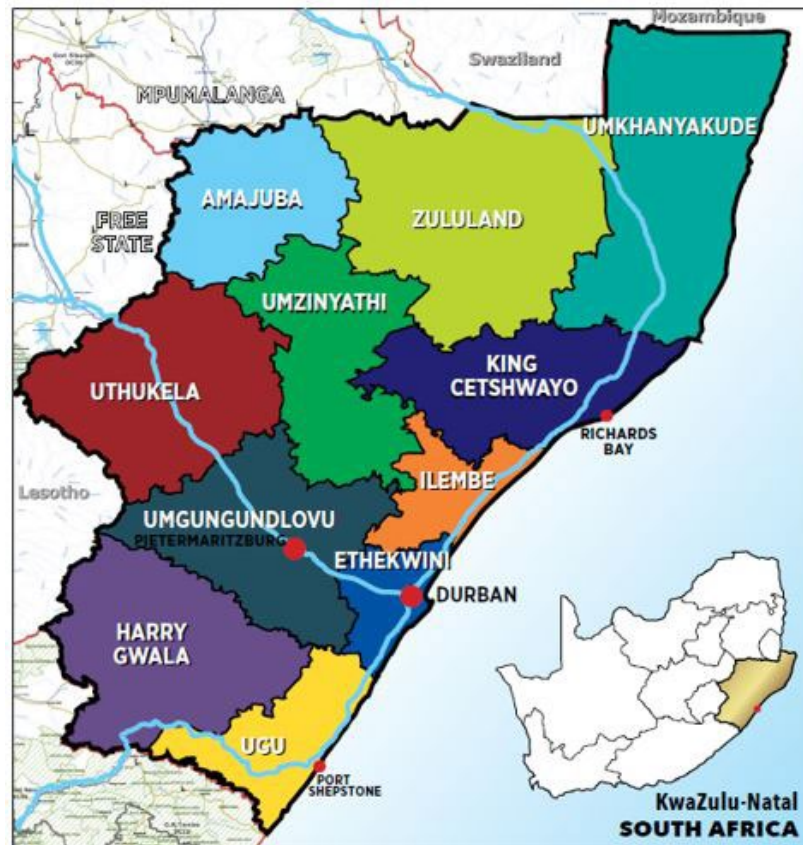


Figure 1.1: Map of KwaZulu-Natal showing all district municipalities
Source: Bing.com (2022)

1.6.1 uMgungundlovu District Municipality

The uMgungundlovu District, situated in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, is depicted in Figure 1.2. This figure illustrates the specific location of the uMgungundlovu District Municipality, highlighting seven local municipalities (Mpofana, Umngeni, Impendle, Umshwathi, Msunduzi, Mkhambathini, and Richmond) where all the schools used for the study are situated. The primary urban center of this region is Pietermaritzburg, which serves as the legislative capital of KwaZulu-Natal. According to the uMgungundlovu District Integrated Development Plan (2019), at the time of this study there were 542 educational facilities within both urban and rural areas, which included 335 primary schools, 137 secondary schools, 61 combined schools (Grades 1 to 12), and 9 ELSEN schools (for learners with special needs). There were 53 secondary schools that offered tourism as subject with 4175

registered learners who sat for the National Senior Certificate examination in 2022. All the schools that offer tourism within the districts were sampled to collect data.

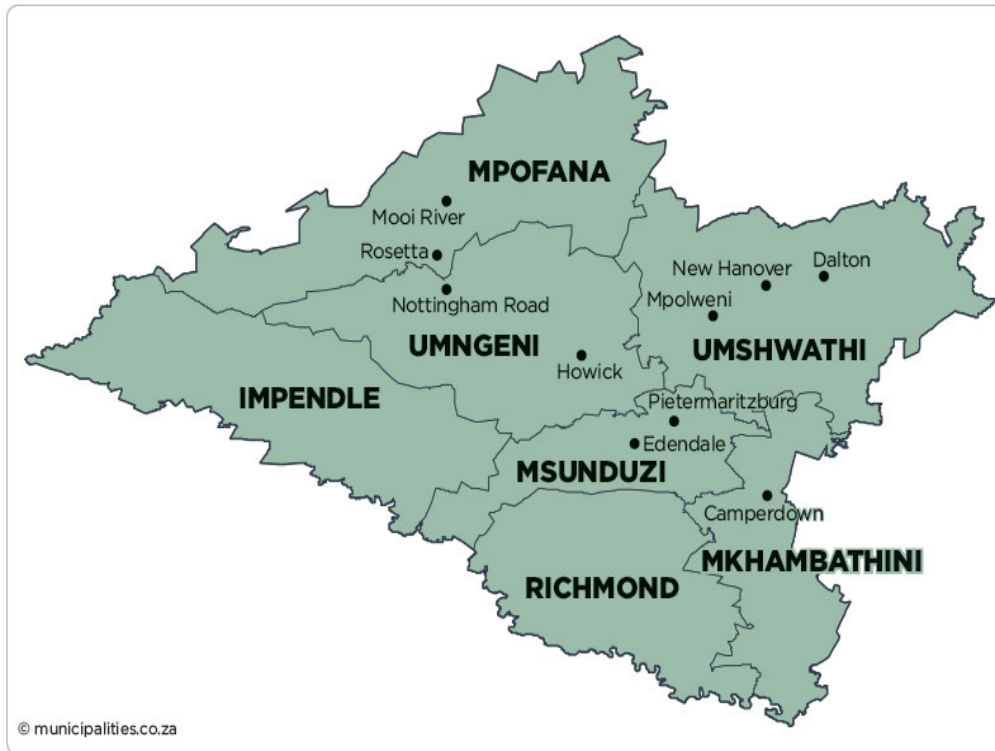


Figure 1.2: Map of uMgungundlovu District Municipality
Source: Bing.com (2022)

1.6.2 Harry Gwala District Municipality

As per the Harry Gwala District Municipality Report (HGDM) (2020), the district comprises four local municipalities: Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, uMzimkhulu, Greater Kokstad, and Ubuhlebezwe (Figure 1.3). At the time of the study, Harry Gwala District had a total of 134 schools, consisting of 234 primary schools and 76 secondary schools. Additionally, according to the Department of Education within the Harry Gwala District Municipality, there were 31 schools that offered tourism as a subject (HGDM, 2020). To collect rich and valuable information for the study all 31 schools were included. These schools offered the subject tourism from Grade 10 to 12. Figure 1.3 is the map of Harry Gwala District Municipality showing all 4 local municipalities where the sampled schools were located.



Figure 1.3: Map of Harry Gwala District Municipality
 Source: Bing.com (2022)

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Brynard, Hanekom and Brynard (2022) describe the conceptual framework as the mental conceptualisation of the relationship between abstract ideas which is affirmed by Bell (2005). Trafford and Leshem (2008) concur by stating that a conceptual framework provides an overview of intended research and the order within that process. The key concepts were derived from the research topic, research problem, aim and objectives of the study. The conceptual framework gives a clear direction of the project, informs the literature to be reviewed and has implications for the research methodology.

1.7.1 Model

As per Ford (2021), a scientific model serves as a depiction of real-world occurrences, utilized by scientists, educators, and learners to enhance comprehension of intricate phenomena. These models offer visual connections between theoretical concepts and actuality, guiding research by providing simplified representations of imagined realities, which in turn enable the development of predictions for various circumstances (Montgomery, 2018).

1.7.2 Enhance

The Webster Dictionary (2022); Oxford Dictionary (2022) define enhance as raising the value, quality, extent or attractiveness of something. The concept has synonyms such as increase, enrich, improve, refine, upgrade, strengthen, reinforce, lift, etc. In the context of this study enhance will imply all given synonyms.

1.7.3 Tourism education

Paudyal (2019) highlights that tourism education establishes a well-defined conceptual framework to understand the interconnection between the tourism industry and education. By doing so, it effectively bridges the gap between the tourism industry and the field of education. This type of education is aimed at equipping individuals with the necessary skills to work proficiently in the development and management of tourism destinations (Malihah, 2017). Therefore, tourism education provides individuals with the necessary skills to work in the tourism industry.

1.7.4 Post COVID-19 education

According to Zhao and Watterston (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in extraordinary disruptions and significant transformations in the field of education. The authors suggest that the pandemic also presented a distinctive chance to promote educational changes that had been proposed before COVID-19 but had not been put into action. These changes include the implementation of a curriculum that is developmental, personalized, and adaptive; pedagogy that is student-centered, inquiry-based, authentic, and meaningful; and the delivery of instruction that effectively utilizes both synchronous and asynchronous learning methods. Muhigana (2022) points to the critical importance of preparing learners for an increasingly digital and technology-driven world to avoid irrelevance and obsolescence.

1.8 THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter One: Introduction and orientation to the study

This chapter presents an introduction to the research problem, offer the background and justification for the study, define the research problem, outline the research objectives, and provide a detailed description of the study's setting.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter provides the literature for the study as informed by the topic, aim, objectives and research questions.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

Chapter three delves into the theoretical framework derived from the comprehensive literature review. This section thoroughly discusses the theories that form the foundation of the study.

Chapter Four: Research methodology

Chapter four elaborates on the methodology adopted for data collection and analysis. This chapter serves the purpose of elucidating the research genre and nature of the study while providing support for the methodological decisions made by the researcher.

Chapter Five: Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

In chapter five, the quantitative and qualitative data collected during the research process are presented, analyzed, and interpreted. This chapter forms the basis for the conclusions drawn, the recommendations provided, and the original contributions made in chapter six.

Chapter Six: Findings, conclusion and recommendations

This chapter represents the concluding section of the dissertation, where conclusions are drawn based on the discussions presented in the previous chapters. Furthermore, it puts forth recommendations, highlights the original contributions made, and identifies areas for future research.

1.9 CONCLUSION

The chapter provided a synopsis of the concerns of the study and its significance in the field of tourism education. The chapter elaborated on the research problem, identified gaps in existing literature, introduced the aim of the study, objectives, and research questions that would be linked to the findings to conclude the investigation. The scope of the study is established to highlight the criteria of inclusivity and exclusivity. Furthermore, a concise exposition of the methodological choices was made, key concepts are defined, and the layout of the whole document was presented. Chapter 2 presents the arguments of experts in the fields of tourism and tourism education are reviewed to contextualize the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter provided an overview of the research, including its intended outcomes, goals, and contextual parameters. The current chapter provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature pertaining to the research topic, thereby enabling subject matter experts to enhance the study with their insights and discoveries. Parajuli (2020) regards the review of literature as a backbone of the research problem as it (Kraus, Mahto and Walsh, 2021) represents the advancement of knowledge and a richer understanding of associated phenomena, factors and contexts. Consequently, the review of literature helped the researcher in locating the study within relevant fields, while also identifying possible theories to underpin the study.

According to the WTTC's report of 2020, the tourism industry made a significant contribution of US\$8.9 trillion to the global GDP, which accounted for 10.3% of the total GDP. Additionally, this industry provided employment to 330 million individuals, which was equivalent to 1 in 10 jobs worldwide. The report further indicated that the industry generated US\$1.7 trillion in visitor exports, representing 6.8% of total exports and 28.3% of global services exports. Furthermore, the industry recorded a capital investment of US\$948 billion, which accounts for 4.3% of total investment in 2019. In addition, the UNWTO (2019) stated that international tourist arrivals reached 671 million in the first 6 months of 2019, which represented a 4% growth from the same period in 2018. The outbreak of COVID-19 rapidly disrupted, and pandemic decimated the \$9.6 trillion industry, halving its output value and leaving an estimated 62 million people jobless due to an unprecedented 72% slump in international arrivals because of national lockdowns, closure of international borders and grounding of aeroplanes (World Tourism Organization [WTO], 2023). International Air Transport Association [IATA] (2020) and Timur and Xie (2021) argue that international departures declined from 4 543 million in 2019 to 1 975 million in 2020 resulting (Škare et al., 2020) in a GDP loss of up to US\$ 2.1 trillion for the travel and tourism industry in 2020 alone. The figure provided highlight the importance of tourism as an engine of economic development and growth, as well as justification for tourism education.

The multi-sectorial nature of the tourism industry makes it highly vulnerable to emergencies (Bonacci and Anwar, 2020; Hlengwa, 2023). Consequently, a lot of studies (Jamal and

Budke, 2020; Seraphin and Yallop, 2020; Škare et al., 2020 and others) have analysed the impacts of the pandemic on the tourism industry. The WTTC (2020) pointed out that the shifts from the normal could only be temporary or could alter the future landscape of travel and tourism to the (Parkin and Brown, 2020) new normal and next normal. Either way, the industry should learn from this experience to mitigate impacts of future disruptions by implementing profound long-term structural changes and transformation (Sigala, 2020). According to Sheldon, Fesenmaier, Woeber, Cooper and Antonioli (2008), individuals who venture into the unpredictable realm of this industry require distinct proficiencies, competencies, and expertise. Consequently, a significant transformation in the approach to teaching and learning is necessary to cater to these demands. According to Tiwari et al. (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the necessity for ongoing redesign and transformation of tourism education, including modifications to both the content and delivery methods.

The education sector globally, like all other sectors was negatively impacted by the pandemic, more so in developing economies. To this end, Zhao and Watterston (2021) asserted that the educational landscape was poised to undergo significant transformations in the coming decade, owing to the combination of several major factors. Education in South Africa was significantly affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. The pandemic has been praised for highlighting pre-existing disparities within the education system, and also blamed for exacerbating them. The temporary shutdown of schools presented significant obstacles in devising effective strategies to address the issue of continuity due to existing disparities (Bonal and González, 2021). During the pandemic, most of the research (Dube, 2020; Kola, 2020; Murphy, 2020; Hlengwa, 2021 among others) centred on actions to curb the spread of the virus while also ensuring continuity of teaching and learning.

The imperative of ensuring uninterrupted access to education was deemed crucial, with the concurrent objective of containing the spread of the virus (Tumwesige, 2020). Attempts to suddenly digitize teaching, learning and assessment brought about significant challenges, as noted by Farrah and Al-Bakry (2020). Hlengwa (2021: 3433) described this transformation as a "crash-landing," where "tele-education" abruptly infiltrated spaces that were previously dominated by conventional forms of education causing destabilizing culture shock. Due to the pressing nature of the situation, there was insufficient time to formulate an implementation strategy or establish a framework for aiding educators and learners.

According to Soudien, Reddy and Harvey (2022), the sudden shift to an educational model that few had prior experience with resulted in both educators and learners being overwhelmed and disarrayed.

2.2 THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In February 2020, the World Health Organisation [WHO] declared the Coronavirus a pandemic on a global scale. This event was notable as it represented one of the biggest biological threats facing modern society in the 21st century (Marivate and Cobrink, 2020). As stated by Mhlangu and Moloi (2020), the National Institute for Communicable Diseases [NICD] officially confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in South Africa on March 5th, 2020. Subsequently, on March 15th, 2020, Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa, the President of South Africa, declared a State of National Disaster (No. 313) in accordance with the Disaster Management Act No.57 of 2002 (Government, 2020; Mhlangu and Moloi, 2020), recognizing the significant and widespread impact of the pandemic on a global level. According to the Government (2020), the rationale behind the declaration of a national state of disaster was to serve multiple objectives, including but not limited to safeguarding and supporting the public, offering relief measures, safeguarding property, mitigating and countering disruptions, as well as addressing the adverse impacts of the disaster. The COVID-19 Pandemic was classified in the same category as other major pandemics, such as the Spanish Flu of 1917/18 and previous outbreaks (Ramrathan, 2020). As the concerns regarding the impact of the Coronavirus escalated, various nations implemented measures to curb the spread of the disease in the absence of COVID-19 vaccine. Countries, including South Africa, implemented non-pharmaceutical measures such as national lockdowns, travel restrictions both within and across countries social distancing protocols, closure of non-essential businesses and social gatherings and closure of schools among others (Grossing, Scott, and Hall, 2020; Mahaye, 2020; Marivate and Cobrink, 2020). These measures had devastating socio-economic repercussions. Gössling and Schweiggart (2022) argued that even after two years of the pandemic, nations are still grappling with the challenges posed by the fifth and sixth waves, emergence of novel virus strains, and differential efficacy in administering vaccinations to their respective populations. Scholars have reached a consensus that the ongoing COVID-19 crisis presents an opportunity to effect positive change in the tourism industry and tourism education with a view to building back better (Gössling and Schweiggart, 2022; International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2022; Sigala, 2021).

2.3 THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON EDUCATION

The outbreak of the novel Coronavirus had significant ramifications on education worldwide. Liz (2020) reported that numerous jurisdictions experienced significant school closures because of pandemics, with some lasting up to four months. The academic schedule for the year 2020 was impacted by the nationwide lockdown imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which mandated the closure of all educational institutions (Mahaye, 2020).

According to Erika and Nicholas (2020), school closures can either be reactive or proactive. Erika and Nicholas further stated that reactive closing schools occur upon the discovery of coronavirus case among the students, staff or parents. While proactive school closure occurs before the disease even reaches the doors of the school.

In response to the escalating transmission of COVID-19, a measure was implemented to close schools and other education institutions to reduce the spread of the virus (Viner et al., 2020). Viner et al. (2020) further highlighted that school closure tactics may encompass national, regional or local, or reactive measures such as the closure of individual schools, in response to student infection rates. In response to the spread of COVID-19, the South African government implemented a nationwide closure of all schools, which, as already stated, was proactive. The closure of schools restricted the opportunities for interactions within the school setting, to contain the COVID-19 transmission when the number of cases started to rise. According UNESCO (2020) public health officials make decisions regarding the appropriate timing and duration of school closures, as well as whether to implement a complete shutdown or to isolate only those students or teachers who have contracted the virus. The author further argued that the selection of the most suitable option is dependent upon its possible effectiveness in reducing an outbreak. School closures can be used as a crucial mitigation strategy in the absence of other viable alleviation measures.

The implementation of school closure as a public health measure may imply that attending school poses a risk. This perception may lead parents to consider keeping their children away from school, regardless of official policies, both during and after a pandemic. The World Health Organisation [WHO] (2020) reported that COVID-19 had minimal impact on the health of children, with approximately 8.5% of reported cases worldwide and a minimal number of fatalities. Educational institutions represent a highly vulnerable demographic group due to frequent interpersonal interactions, rendering them particularly susceptible to

the rapid transmission and spread. Mahaye (2020) opined that for successful execution of social distancing measures schools had to be closed down for a duration deemed sufficient by each respective government to reduce the spread.

Closure of schools can potentially yield benefits such as the reduction of overall cases, deceleration of pandemic spread to allow for vaccine research and production. This can limit the burden on healthcare systems and peak absenteeism in the general population, ultimately enhancing community-wide resilience. Vynnycky and Edmunds (2008) assert that the efficacy of school closures as a measure to arrest the spread of pandemics remains poorly understood, despite their widespread implementation in numerous countries during such outbreaks. However, Viner et al. (2020) conducted a comprehensive analysis of studies conducted in 2018 to investigate the impact of school closure on influenza transmission. The results indicated that school closures can be highly effective in mitigating the peak of the outbreak, with an average reduction of 29.7%, and they also delay the peak by a median of 11 days. In a systematic review conducted in 2020 by Viner et al., it was found that school closures and other social distancing measures during influenza outbreaks significantly reduced transmission, particularly among school-aged children. However, the review also highlighted the considerable evidence suggesting the possibility of transmission resurgence once schools reopened.

According to UNESCO (2020), the concept of school closure is advocated as an essential measure for social distancing. Kekić and Miladinović (2016) warned that the closure of schools can lead to both temporary and permanent harm to the educational system. This was illustrated by a report released by UNESCO in 2020, showing that more than 1.6 billion students had to stay away from school. The pandemic had a significant impact on the education of over 209 million learners in Africa, placing the continent in second place behind Asia, which has recorded over 590 million affected school children. According to UNESCO (2020), South Africa ranked fourth in terms of the number of learners impacted by the pandemic in Africa. This has resulted in over 14 million learners in the country being temporarily unable to attend school (Mahaye, 2020). Figure 2.1 depicts the global distribution of learners who were not able to attend school during the COVID-19 Pandemic across various continents.

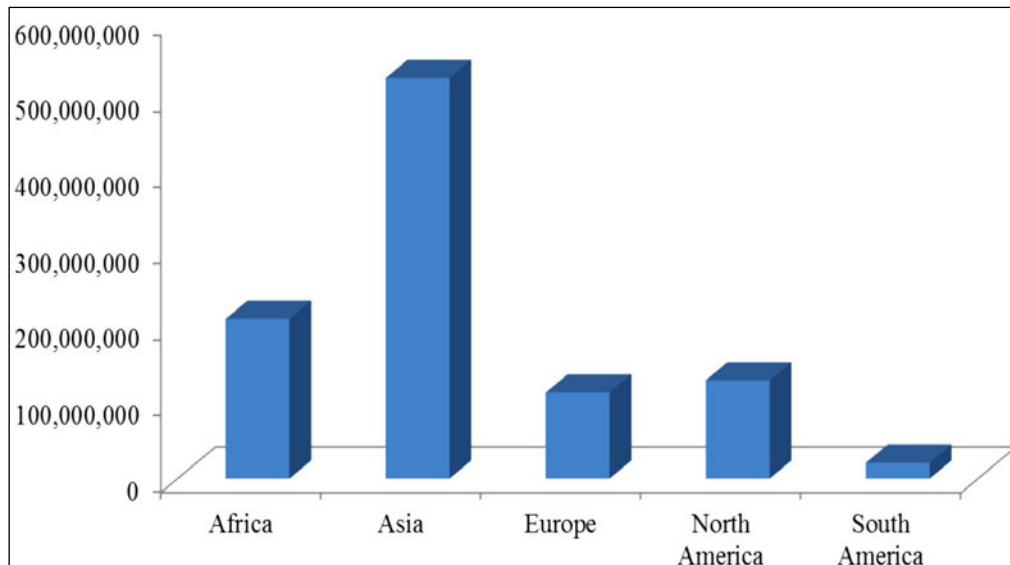


Figure 2.1: Distribution of learners out of school due to COVID-19

Source: Mahaye (2020:6)

As learning continuity had to be ensured, there were significant modifications in the methods of teaching, learning and assessment. According to Bozkurt (2020:1), the interruption of education had been observed in various local situations in the past, including war, civil unrest, famine, strikes, and others. However, the phenomenon as experienced during the COVID-19 Pandemic was “on a global scale and ... a more pronounced and emotional impact on educators, learners and parents.” The consequences of extended school closures during an outbreak in a region with low education indicators can be severe, potentially resulting in adverse effects on the education system, such as teacher availability and school safety (Ngeba and Mansary, 2016). Nations that possess robust and firmly established educational systems tend to exhibit greater resilience in the face of crises, enabling them to recover more expeditiously. Conversely, in countries where educational systems are deficient, the closure of schools can result in learners losing significant amounts of valuable time within the educational framework (Mahaye, 2020). This was further emphasized in a report by the World Bank (2020) which stated that the consequences of the Coronavirus outbreak on education were expected to be particularly severe in nations with poor academic performance, high rates of student attrition, and limited capacity to withstand unexpected disruptions.

According to McDonald (2020), the COVID-19 Pandemic brought to light the severe inequities in the South African education system. These include inadequate access to water,

poor sanitation, overcrowded classrooms, and a chronic shortage of infrastructure and communication connectivity. In agreement, Soudien et al. (2022) argued that in South Africa the pandemic exacerbation of pre-existing education inequalities. Moreover, UNESCO (2020) highlighted that the lockdown measures have resulted in a disruption of essential learning opportunities for learners, thereby compromising their educational progress. Additionally, the nutrition of some learners was compromised as they rely on school-based nutrition programmes. Further, the safety and well-being of learners may have been compromised as they were put at risk of sexual exploitation, abuse, early marriages and teenage pregnancy (UNESCO, 2020). Ngeba and Mansaray (2016) concurred that the closure of educational institutions eliminates a crucial site for safeguarding and shielding children, as they were not able to spend their days in secure settings with educators and classmates. The adverse impact of school closures can have enduring consequences, particularly in settings where motivation is lacking, and educational resources and infrastructure are limited. According to Bonal and González (2021), families with lower levels of education possess limited resources and knowledge to assist their children with schoolwork at home. These constraints are exacerbated in situations where educational institutions have curtailed their assistance and the expectations for self-directed learning by students have intensified. Over and above, there was a relaxation of assessment and quality assurance standards across various levels of education (Gustafsson and Deliwe, 2020).

Parker, Morris and Hofmeyr (2020) pointed out that the extended closure of schools was likely to worsen the pre-existing issues and inequalities of South Africa's dual education system. In South Africa 75% of schools are primarily attended by economically disadvantaged students, who are predominantly of African descent as they form the majority. Furthermore, these schools are marked by issues such as overcrowding, insufficient resources, and suboptimal academic outcomes. Parker et al. (2020) further indicated that the remaining 25% of schools possess sufficient resources and support, including technology-mediated remote learning, and provide a superior level of education. According to a recent survey conducted by the South African Democratic Teacher Union [SADTU] in 2021, it was found that a substantial proportion of learners from poor households experienced a lack of communication from their teachers during school closures. Specifically, two-thirds of such learners reported receiving no form of education while at home.

The decision to gradually reopen schools in South Africa and globally was made due to the uncertainties surrounding the containment of the pandemic, as noted by Viner et al. (2020). UNESCO (2020) emphasised the crucial significance of governmental communication with parents to guarantee the safety of their children upon returning to school. The communication encompassed a schedule of school sanitation measures to be implemented prior to and during the resumption of classes, distribution of screening procedures for both students and educators, and installation of handwashing facilities within school premises (UNESCO, 2020). Sharp et al. (2020) indicated that the government acknowledged the difficulty of striking a balance between the imperative of fully reopening schools and mitigating the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. In Taylor's (2020) perspective, it was imperative for schools to resume operations without delay, given that South Africa had reached a critical juncture where the adverse consequences of the lockdown surpass the potential drawbacks of reopening schools. Wills and Van de Berg (2022) conducted a study which indicated that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds experience a decrease in academic performance when they remain at home for extended periods without access to educational instruction. According to Bozkurt (2020), individuals who had experienced injustices prior to the pandemic did not aspire to revert to the status quo, but rather sought to leverage this crisis to rectify an education system that was flawed and partisan.

2.3.1 Phasing in approach for South African schools

In South Africa, the Department of Basic Education decided to put together a recovery plan to recover lost teaching and learning time. The Department of Education [DoE] (2020) proposed the following recovery plan to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 by creation of required safety conditions for learners to return to school; to ensure safety regulations are followed by the schools the department of education made the following regulations. All the strategic points must be marked with a minimum of 1.2 meters apart for learners to comply with social distancing during screening, nutrition, hand washing, and any other activities in school. Signage must be visible throughout the school and learners must always wear a mask and temperature will be checked every day.

The re-engineering of the schooling system, this demanded that schools re-work their timetables to accommodate all the subjects in schools. Recovery of lost time for all the grades; to recover the 48 days of the contact time that was lost a new school calendar was issued to schools. Re-organisation and trimming of the curriculum content: The purpose of

curriculum re-organisation and trimming was to identify the important core content and skills. The trimming of the curriculum was important to ensure that there was a smooth sequence of the content in each subject. However, for Grade 12 the curriculum was not trimmed but reorganised to allow more teaching and learning times. The National Executive Committee [NEC] (2020) acknowledged the update on trimming of the curriculum.

Figure 2.2 provides a summary of the Amended ATP, for Tourism as a subject post-COVID-19 for 2021-2023 Guideline Mediation of the National Recovery ATP implemented in January 2021 provided by DoE. Figure 2.2 show that the Grade 12 curriculum that was trimmed from the year 2021 to 2023 to manage the learning losses over a period of three years. The DoE (2020) identified the following principles that were used to guide curriculum trimming and re-organisation: Coherence: Implementing a systematic curriculum mapping that establishes connections both vertically and horizontally within subject areas and encourages interdisciplinary coherence. Efficiency: Striving for optimal use of teaching time, resulting in greater outcomes and effectively achieving learning objectives. Feasibility: Analyzing and evaluating the content considering the available resources in schools, taking into account the socio-economic and political conditions. Inclusivity: Ensuring that the learning experience accommodates diverse types of learners and caters to various learning styles. Validity: Ensuring the content aligns with the stated goals and outcomes of the CAPS curriculum. Utility: Providing content that fosters the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes relevant for learners' progress to the next grade and applicable to their living and learning contexts.

Content/Topics	Term	Amendment
Domestic, Regional And International Tourism	Term 1 Week 2	Global events of international significance Concept: Global event Remove the year 2010
Tourist Attractions	Term 2 Week 4 Week 5	Famous world icons and attractions Content for icons was trimmed: Specific icons are allocated to each year in 2021, 2022 and 2023. Icons for study in 2021; 2022 and 2023 for the Recovery Plan are indicated in the Examination Guideline.
Domestic, Regional and International Tourism	Term 3 Week 1	Forms of Payment Removed: Traveller's cheques

**Figure 2.2: Grade 12 Amended ATP (Tourism) post-COVID-19 for 2021-2023
Guideline Mediation**

Source: Department of Education circular S13 of 2020

To ensure that social distancing was implemented in schools, the department suggested a gradual reopening of schools which it described as a “Phasing-in Approach.” This strategy would ensure that schools implemented social distancing while maintaining a quality teaching and learning. In the KZN circular No 48 of 2020, the DoE (2020) proposed the following phase-in approach that schools in KZN could decide to adopt:

- **Platooning/Shift:** The school can adopt a rotational approach, dividing learners into two groups, with one half attending classes in the morning and the other half in the afternoon.
- **Alternative Days:** The school can implement a schedule where different grades attend classes on specific days of the week, alternating between them. **Bi-Weekly:** This arrangement involves a weekly rotation, with grades attending school on alternate weeks.

According to a survey conducted by the National School Readiness [NSR] (2020) across 7162 schools, 57% of schools had chosen to implement either daily or weekly rotation, 15% opted for biweekly rotation, and 5% adopted a platooning approach. Approximately 8% of schools were following a regular timetable, while 4% had adopted a hybrid model, blending in-person and virtual learning into a unified learning experience. This indicated that 72% of schools were losing 50% or more of their contact instructional time (Hoadley, 2020). The school closure resulted in the loss about 82 to 87 days of teaching and learning time. Moreover, the year 2021 and 2022 were not immune to the pandemic with several waves

reported. Schools were due to commence on 25 January 2021, and according to Hoadley (2020) reopening schools on this date once again left learners out of school for an extended period (almost two months), which was likely to compound learning losses already incurred in 2020. Naturally, it was important to minimize the risk of transmission in schools, as learners live in communities (Groupe URD, 2020). According to circular no.1 of 2021, the DoE decided to take another phase in the approach of the return of learners and teachers to schools. School Management Teams [SMTs] and support staff (general assistants, administrative staff, and education assistants) reported for duty on Monday, 25 January 2021; educators on Monday, 01 February 2021 and learners returned on Monday, 15 February 2021. This staggered approach allowed time and space for both the SMTs and the educators to prepare for the return of learners and the smooth resumption of the academic year.

2.4 TOURISM EDUCATION

In the past, tourism education was primarily offered in vocational schools. However, over time it expanded and evolved to meet the demands of tourism development, encompassing a broader perspective of tourism management (Malihah and Setiyorini, 2014). The inclusion of tourism as a subject in high school curricula fosters a comprehension and admiration of the tourism sector. According to Hlengwa and Zaca (2018); Pawgi (2017) and Salgado, Martins, Godinho and da Costa (2011), tourism is a practical discipline that necessitates the integration of theoretical knowledge with experiential learning to establish a connection between academic knowledge and industry requirements. The purpose of tourism education is to equip individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively contribute to the tourism industry workforce. Consequently, numerous academic institutions have endeavoured to align their educational programmes and course offerings with the requirements of the tourism industry. Be that as it may, Paydyaal (2019) argued that there exists a disparity between the expectations of the education sector and employers with regards to the curriculum content. Specifically, employers tend to prioritise practical skills, whereas tourism education tends to emphasise theoretical and content-based instruction. The primary reason for this disparity can be attributed to inadequate communication between the tourism industry and the education sector, insufficient collaboration, and a dearth of educator participation in the tourism industry (Paydyaal, 2019). Tourism education is a fairly recent field, and despite its notable expansion and advancements over time, the creation of tourism courses has been marked by a lack of strategic forethought. The level of immaturity observed

has raised concerns regarding the calibre of tourism education provided in academic institutions (Paydya, 2019).

The popularity of tourism education can be attributed to the expansion of the sector and the corresponding demand for a larger labour force. This is essential for the sector to fully leverage its potential in making a significant contribution to the economic development of a nation (Dube, 2014). The growth of the tourism sector has led to an increased need for high-quality education in the field of tourism. Tiwari et al. (2020) assert that tourism represents a prominent activity in contemporary society, and that the tourism education is widely regarded as a fundamental pillar sustaining the industry. Tourism education offerings ought to align with the dynamic nature of the industry. The tourism industry is widely recognised as a crucial contributor to sustainable development. Considering this, tourism education offerings have a significant responsibility to equip students with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to effectively address the various challenges and transformations that have arisen because of the pandemic and other macro environmental factors (Keçi, 2021).

According to WTTC (2020), deviations from the conventional situation in the travel and tourism industry may either be transitory or have the potential to reshape the future of the sector, leading to what Hlengwa (2021) and Parkin and Brown (2020: 5) refer to as the "new normal" and "next normal." According to the WTTC (2020) it is important to prioritise the improvement of upskilling in addition to policy adaptation to facilitate the recovery and enhance the resilience of the industry. The increasing importance of tourism has led to a corresponding need for educational institutions to cultivate a workforce that possesses the necessary skills and qualifications to deliver high-quality services within the industry (Tiwari et al., 2020).

Tiwari et al. (2020) asserted that in the present context, tourism education possesses significant transformative potential, given that teaching and educational services are classified as professional services that underwent a rapid digital transformation within a matter of weeks. The pandemic and its ramifications provided an opening to reconstruct the industry in a manner that is more sustainable, equitable and resistant, with the aim of ensuring that the industry's advantages of tourism are distributed broadly and equitably (Gössling and Schweiggart, 2022) just like the costs.

Zejda and Zejda (2016) emphasised the importance of technology in facilitating novel experiential opportunities and enhancing educational outcomes. Zejda and Zejda (2016: 179) further highlighted the need to modify 3D virtual environments and make them easily and cost effectively available for the purpose of enhancing tourism education. Virtual spaces replicate physical spaces and incorporate them into digital environments, thereby expanding their accessibility to a larger audience through digital means. The integration of virtual worlds in tourism education has the potential to provide students with more than mere vicarious experiences that are typically derived from conventional materials such as travelogues, pictures, and maps (Zejda and Zejda 2016: 179). Virtual environments enable individuals to be physically available to address guests' enquiries and concerns. As indicated by Huang, Backman, Chang, Backman, and McGuire (2013) and Konstantinidis, Tsiatsos, Demetriadis, and Pomportsis (2010), 3D virtual worlds are recognized as a highly effective educational tool. These virtual environments possess the potential to significantly influence students' perception of education in the field of tourism and provide valuable learning and training resources for both educators and professionals within the tourism industry.

2.4.1 Tourism education in South Africa

The post-apartheid era in South Africa witnessed a significant surge in the development and expansion of the tourism industry, which had become a crucial contributor to the country's economy. As a result, there has been a growing emphasis on incorporating tourism-related subjects into the school curricula to bolster the growth and sustainability of the industry. Dube (2014) stated that the South African government has prioritised the integration of the tourism industry and tourism as an academic subject in schools as a means of achieving its objectives of reducing unemployment, alleviating poverty, and fostering economic growth. In support Chilli (2013) argued that there had been a substantial increase in the availability of tourism-related courses in South Africa in recent years. This trend had been fuelled by the rapid expansion of the tourism industry following the end of apartheid in 1994. According to Saayman's (2002) findings, South Africa had incorporated tourism education into the secondary school curriculum to equip students with a range of necessary skills that were necessary for employment in the tourism and hospitality sector. Khulu (2018) concurred with Saayman that the purpose of incorporating tourism into high school curricula was to acquaint students with the concept of tourism and to stimulate their interest in this area of study. Nhlapo, Moreeng and Malebese (2019) agree when stating that the inclusion of tourism education in national curricula was economically motivated. The subject of tourism has

experienced significant growth in South African schools since its inception and it offered across various educational institutions including public and private schools as well as universities.

The subject of tourism aligns with the educational framework of South African schools, as specified in both the National Curriculum Statement [NCS] and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement [CAPS]. It is among the 29 subjects that schools may choose from to design a curriculum that enables learners to acquire the National Senior Certificate (Dube, 2016). The academic curriculum offers the option of tourism as an elective for learners from the 10th grade. Adukaite, Van Zyl and Cantoni (2016) are of the view that tourism has become a highly sought-after elective in high schools. Despite initial expectations that the subject would primarily benefit learners from historically marginalised communities, it has gained widespread popularity.

The awareness of tourism education in South Africa has demonstrated a notable improvement, associated with a rise in the enrolment of high school learner in tourism-related courses. The rise in the enrolment of students pursuing tourism education is indicative of the expansion and durability of tourism as an academic discipline within educational institutions. This is because it provides learners with the opportunity to pursue a degree in tourism at the university level upon completion of their secondary education. However, several obstacles persist in the realm of high school tourism education. Khulu (2018) argued that the high school tourism curricula are perceived as excessively broad and some are designed to offer students a general understanding of the sector, as well as industry-specific competencies and knowledge.

The current position of tourism within the academic curriculum appears to be lacking, and it is imperative that any skills and knowledge imparted are integrated thoughtfully with other core components of the programme. This is because the unique characteristics of the tourism and hospitality disciplines have a significant impact on the methods of subject instruction and assessment. As outlined in the 2011 Tourism Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, the teaching of tourism as a subject is intended to achieve specific objectives. The topics covered in this subject include various categories of tourists, tourism sectors such as transportation, accommodation, and attractions, tour planning through map work, foreign exchange, world time zones, South Africa and the SADC countries as popular tourism

destinations, world-renowned landmarks and World Heritage Sites, sustainable and responsible tourism practises, marketing strategies for tourism products, the role of technology in tourism, and the importance of customer care.

2.4.2 The impact of COVID-19 on tourism education

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound effect on tourism education. According to Keçi's (2021) publication titled "Tourism Education during the Pandemic: Is Distance Education a Solution?", tourism education is an integral component of the broader tourism ecosystem. As such, any modifications that occur within the tourism industry, including changes to its operations and activities, should be reflected in tourism education. On the other hand, the education pertaining to tourism influences the various entities within the ecosystem, enabling or disabling them to adapt to the alterations and adapt to the novel circumstances (Tiwari et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the tourism industry, which may create a sense of uncertainty for individuals interested in pursuing a career in this field. Consequently, it is vital that post-COVID-19 tourism education exhibits adaptability and resilience in response to the volatile macro environment that impacts the industry due to its multi-sectorial nature. It is therefore important for tourism education to embrace novel pedagogical approaches that will help enhance the resilience of the industry.

As per the UNWTO's 2020 report, the COVID-19 Pandemic had a severe impact on the tourism industry, resulting in increased unemployment, economic distress and instability. The tourism industry was still experiencing the recuperations of the pandemic and battling to rebound to its pre-pandemic state. According to Choi, Robb, Mifli and Zainuddin (2021), it was anticipated that the impact of the pandemic would have lasting consequences on the tourism industry, potentially resulting in permanent transformations, which would have to reflect on tourism curricula. Choi et al. (2021) cautioned that due to the dynamic nature of the tourism industry, it was mandatory for teachers to adopt proactive approaches in managing programmes and implementing active learning strategies that can optimise learning outcomes and the resilience of the industry. Choi et al. (2021) further pointed out that the pandemic accelerated the demand for technology-driven education that should be integrated into the tourism curricula going forward.

Sigala (2021) opined that in the aftermath of the pandemic, there was a pressing need to enhance and modernise tourism curricula and delivery methods. This step was essential to

tackle the evolving demands and skills required in the industry, encompassing health and safety protocols, adaptability, creativity, innovation, effective communication, proficiency in technology, remote working capabilities, and skills for managing and collaborating with virtual teams and staff. The study of tourism in the post COVID-19 era ought to cultivate individuals who possess problem-solving skills, resilience, critical thinking abilities as well as contingent management skills. The beneficial contribution of tourism education towards the development of individuals who possess a comprehensive understanding of tourism and are capable of restructuring and addressing the emerging challenges was emphasised by Sigala (2021).

Tourism education has transitioned to e-learning through the utilisation of various online meeting platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google, as well as through television and radio stations. Tiwari et al. (2020) have noted that this approach enabled educators to acquire valuable experience in preparation for the new normal in educational institutions. Sharp et al. (2020) highlighted that educators were unable to employ fundamental teaching techniques, including group work, practical exercises, fieldtrips and field activities to provide authentic learning contexts as noted by Hlengwa and Zaca (2018).

2.5 MECHANISM TO PROMOTE QUALITY TOURISM CURRICULUM DELIVERY PRE AND POST COVID-19

The viability of the tourism industry is highly reliant on the quality of employees within the industry. This highlights the importance of the development of competencies, proficiencies, and benchmarks to effectively adapt to the dynamic tourism industry and effectively addressing inherent challenges. According to Mínguez, Martínez-Hernandez and Yubero (2021), in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic, certain changes have been observed. According to Mínguez et al. (2021), it is essential for upcoming professionals in the field to possess the ability to adjust to the highly dynamic, vulnerable, and sensitive sector as exposed by the pandemic. To mitigate future crises, it becomes crucial that the relationship between the tourism industry and teachers be strengthened to facilitate feedforward and feedback. Mínguez et al. (2021) postulate that the pandemic will result in a decrease in the enrolment of students pursuing tourism studies in academic institutions, as well as a decline in the number of individuals opting for tourism as a profession. This is primarily attributed to the reduced availability of employment opportunities within the industry. If that happens, it might lead to a reduction in the credibility of tourism curricula and eventually a deterioration of the

industry. Lucia et al. (2021) argued that tourism education ought to supplement contemporary theoretical and managerial viewpoints that are in tune with a world in flux. This is because the co-creation of knowledge through novel pedagogical or learning methodologies encourages the development of research, practise, and conduct at various tiers.

According to Zhao and Watterston (2021), there is a need to reform tourism education in schools in the post-COVID-19 era. These reforms should focus on the content of the curricula, the delivery methods, and the development of leadership capacity to ensure the industry's sustainability. According to Lucia et al. (2021), universities have an essential role in developing the skills, knowledge and attitudes of tourism students and future managers to lead the industry towards a sustainable future in the face of mounting pressures. The development of innovative thinking ought to commence during secondary education, with the aim of fostering resilience among students who may eventually pursue careers or establish enterprises in the industry.

Benaraba et al. (2022) asserted that the acquisition of education in tourism and the attainment of professional proficiency by tourism employees are crucial factors in enhancing service quality, thereby contributing to the growth and capacity of the industry. Benaraba et al. (2022) further explained that the tourism industry necessitates personnel who exhibit unwavering devotion to their work, demonstrate a clear sense of vocation, and embody professionalism and determination towards the industry. Tourism is a service industry that is highly dependent on human resources and requires a significant number of personnel to function effectively. Consequently, numerous academic institutions have recognised the necessity of allocating resources towards the development of tourism education, with the aim of equipping students with the essential competencies and expertise to pursue careers within the industry. Further, Benaraba et al. (2022) posit that amidst the ongoing global transformation triggered by the pandemic, there were numerous changes expected in all areas of pedagogy, industry expectations, and skill requirements.

According to Tiwari et al. (2020), the process of teaching plays a crucial role in education because the curriculum is implemented and understood within the framework of teaching. Mahlaba (2020) highlights the following lessons imparted to teachers by the pandemic: recognition that learners should not be solely reliant on teachers for their education, given the unpredictability of the pandemic and the future beyond it; that traditional forms of education

may not always be feasible; that teachers may not always be physically present to oversee and direct learning; the importance of learners assuming responsibility for their own education. According to Su (2012), the curriculum is a primary area of focus within the education system, as it encompasses significant decisions made by educators regarding instructional content and pedagogical approaches. The curriculum is perceived as a mechanism for attaining particular educational aims and objectives. The pandemic necessitated significant modifications prompting teachers to crash land on online curriculum delivery. David, Greve, Breetzke, Nel and Van Vuuren (2020) stated that the transition to online teaching compelled educators to critically examine and reassess their curricular materials. Educators were required to execute the prescribed course of study amidst challenging circumstances posed by the pandemic. The issue of curriculum recovery in 2021 was marked by significant hurdles, including the persistence of substantial variability in coverage from the previous year and notable levels of heterogeneity within classroom settings (Hoadley, 2020).

David et al. (2020), noted that the shift away from classroom teaching to remote learning was a positive development as it necessitated learners to concentrate on problem-solving, critical thinking, and practical comprehension through an inclusive and integrated approach, given that conventional assessment methods were not feasible. In a study "COVID-19 and online learning blues: Are multiple intelligences out the window for second year ecotourism students?", Hlengwa (2021) found that the sudden shift to tele-education was a daunting experience for both educators and learners and noted that the impact was more pronounced on students hailing from rural regions and socio-economically disadvantaged communities. In agreement, David et al. (2020) argued that learners residing in remote areas faced significant challenges in accessing learning materials due to unreliable electricity supply and inadequate network coverage. A recent investigation carried out by Sharp et al. (2020) revealed that a considerable number of teachers lacked the necessary tools and skills to facilitate distance education from their residences, and they had not received sufficient instruction to accomplish this task. Over and above, Hlengwa (2021) cautioned that online learning does not prepare graduates for real-world intelligence. According to Mahaye (2020), implementation refers to the process of executing a pre-existing plan, decision, proposal, idea, or policy with the aim of attaining predetermined goals.

Therefore, the process of implementing a curriculum involves providing structured support to teachers to ensure that a recently developed curriculum and the most effective pedagogical approaches are effectively delivered in the classroom within a designated timeframe (Mahaye, 2020). Hence, the successful execution of a curriculum, whether in its entirety or in a condensed form, necessitates a platform through which teachers can effectively and suitably disseminate pedagogical guidance to students, unhindered by any constraints (Mahaye, 2020) as were prevalent in South Africa. In South Africa, a significant proportion of students rely on financial assistance to meet their basic needs. Additionally, data expenses are high, and access to mobile connectivity is not universal. Furthermore, devices such as laptops and Smart phones are considered luxuries. Given these circumstances, transitioning to online learning was impractical (Mahaye, 2020) and unfit for purpose as it disadvantaged a lot of learners (Mnguni, 2020).

Regular changes in the educational programme resulted in considerable confusion for educational institutions and educators alike. The provided documents aimed to enhance flexibility in curriculum coverage by delegating responsibility of determining the content to be taught to individual teachers. As stated by Hoadley (2020), teachers exercise their professional discretion in determining the essential content to be covered by their students within a given academic year, as well as the level of depth at which it should be taught, by deciding what to exclude and how to restructure the curriculum. Ramathan (2021) opined that the educational system within schools encompasses a duration of over twelve years in the life of a student. The implication is that students in lower grades have a sufficient duration within their academic tenure to make up for any academic shortcomings incurred during the pandemic. Additionally, learners in Grades 10 through 12 need to be taught to use self-directed study and technology-facilitated learning to compensate for any missed coursework. Therefore, prioritising innovative solutions for teaching and learning should take precedence over solely focusing on curriculum coverage to salvage the academic year.

Table 2.1 presents a concise overview of significant curriculum-related documents generated from May to August 2020. These documents highlight the four primary curriculum strategies implemented by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to mitigate the negative impact of school closures on learning outcomes. These strategies include the reduction of curriculum content, the suspension or rationalisation of certain subjects, modifications to assessment practises, and the implementation of remote learning.

Table 2.1: Summary table of key policy documents with curriculum entailments developed in response to COVID 19

Document	Released	Curriculum relevance / purpose
The directives issued by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in accordance with Regulation 4(3) of the Regulations published under section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002, as amended.	29 May 2020	The postponement of the June SC and NSC examinations, adherence to social distancing regulations, and implementation of timetabling models.
Guidelines for the development of the school timetables reopening of schools COVID-19	May 2020	Details on timetabling models
Circular No. S2 of 2020 pertains to the release of the revised Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) for Grade 7 and Grade 12, respectively.	23 May 2020	Releases the revised (trimmed) ATPs for Grade 7 and 12 Cancellation of June examinations
School Recovery Plan in Response to COVID-19	June 2020	The guidance covers four key aspects: (a) the recovery of lost time, (b) curriculum management, (c) teaching and learning, and (d) school-based assessment and examinations.
Appendix A Fundamental Content and Skills Revised Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) General Education and Training (GET)	5 July 2020	It outlines specific fundamental content/topics/concepts that should be covered for each subject, phase, and grade within the context of the revised school calendar (GET).
Appendix B Fundamental Content and Skills Revised Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) Further Education and Training (FET)	5 July 2020	Outlines specific fundamental content/topics/concepts that should be covered per subject, per phase and grade in the context of the revised school calendar (FET)
Teacher Guidelines for Implementing Revised Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) TEACHER VERSION ('Teacher Guidelines')	6 July 2020	Guidelines for decision-making in selecting content to teach
National Assessment Circular 02 Of 2020 Implementation And Quality Assurance of the Amended 2020 Assessment Programme in the General Education and Training (GET) Band (Grades R-9)	9 July 2020	Principles and procedures for the administration, moderation, and quality assurance of assessment (GET), which include formative assessment, school-based assessment (SBA), and formal assessments. Also, it involves the recording of assessments in SA-SAMMs.

Source: Hoadley (2020:9)

The dynamic nature of the curriculum necessitates a high level of learner engagement and accountability for their own educational progress. These modifications necessitated a shift towards alternative methods of instruction. Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot (2020) argued that due to a lack of time for adjustment and inadequate planning, educators and students were

compelled to adapt to emerging technologies and innovative methods of instruction and learning. The predominant mode of teaching and learning in most schools, namely frontal face-to-face instruction, underwent a sudden transformation to either synchronous or asynchronous instruction, or a blend of both, as reported by Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot (2020). Educators were required to quickly make decisions pertaining to their syllabi, which necessitated adaptation to the novel circumstances. Discussions to either continue with remote learning or resume in-person instruction or adopt blended/hybrid learning continue to date (Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot, 2020).

There exist significant gaps in the learning and curriculum of tourism students, as evidenced by the 2022 cohort of Grade 12 learners. Specifically, these students possess notable knowledge gaps due to the onset of the pandemic during the introductory phase of the tourism subject in 2020. Consistent with Mahaye's (2020) argument, the adoption of online teaching as the sole mode of instruction was perceived as the most viable option. However, the lack of preparedness among both educators and students, as well as inadequate infrastructure, led to the failure of this approach in many South African schools. Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot (2020) emphasised that effective learning in educational institutions necessitates active participation, collaborative and cooperative learning, and peer interaction. However, the transition to online learning posed numerous challenges for both teachers and learners as could be anticipated in a dual education system. The outbreak of COVID-19 has presented opportunities for the adoption of hybrid teaching and learning methodologies, as there has been a significant shift in the pedagogical landscape (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2020). Whether this would be feasible in a dual education system such as the South African, is a topic of study on its own.

2.5.1 Technology-based learning

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic served as an awakening for the education in South Africa, spanning across primary, secondary and tertiary levels. According to Mhlanga and Moloji (2020), the education sector may encounter challenges in reverting to traditional teaching methods due to the impulse that the pandemic provided. Bonal and González (2021) contended that pre-COVID-19, conventional in-person instruction had been accepted to be more effective than remote learning, as evidenced by lower academic performance outcomes associated with online education. Hlengwa (2021) highlighted that although online learning is critical, it is not optimal for acquiring field- and industry-specific knowledge and

character traits essential for addressing 21st-century challenges (such as curiosity, initiative, grit, adaptability, leadership, social and cultural awareness) as identified by the World Economic Forum in 2015. Parkin and Brown (2020) and Hlengwa (2021) emphasised the significance of prioritising students and their backgrounds, guaranteeing their engagement, fostering advanced competencies and character traits to cater for multiple intelligences.

Adukaite, Van Zyl and Cantoni (2016) assert that the South African government has taken significant strides in policy and practise since 1994 to ensure universal access to education. The integration and implementation of technology across all levels of the education system have been instrumental in enhancing educational practises and facilitating improved learning outcomes. Despite the extensive research on the increasing necessity of technology to enhance the learning process, there remains a dearth of research on the utilisation and influence of technology in promoting the education and instruction of tourism, particularly in secondary educational institutions (Adukaite, 2016). The importance of technology as a crucial instrument for the advancement of education is widely acknowledged. Henceforth, discourse pertaining to e-learning and the utilisation of television and radio for educational purposes is a subject for great discourse. Maatuk et al. (2021) asserted that e-learning represents an optimal approach for mitigating the loss of valuable educational time during disturbances. Farrah and Al-Bakry (2020) contested the notion that relying solely on online education as an easy matter, citing technical challenges, access and technical knowhow as significant obstacles.

Students have the right to pursue their educational endeavours despite the occurrence of disasters, crises, and violent situations (Farrah and Al-Bakry, 2020; Mahaye, 2020). This premise is founded on the notion that all students should receive equal consideration and be afforded the opportunity to obtain an education. According to Kola (2020), the world is not static but dynamic and technology is changing human endeavour rapidly. However, the adoption of such systems may pose a significant challenge for countries with limited technological resources, as schools may encounter difficulties in implementing them (Mahaye, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a re-evaluation of the methods by which e-learning is handled or other alternative approaches to supplement or supplant conventional classroom-based educational delivery systems (Tumwesige, 2020).

The conventional approach to teaching using chalkboards necessitates the physical presence of students in a classroom setting, where instruction is limited to textbooks and notes. However, technological advancements have opened new avenues for both educators and learners to access a plethora of learning resources online, irrespective of geographical location (Mirriahi, Alonzo and Fox, 2015). According to Adukaite's (2016) research, most tourism educators frequently incorporate technology into their teaching methodologies. This includes the use of various equipment such as data projectors, computers, televisions, and interactive whiteboards, as well as software and media tools such as Microsoft PowerPoint, YouTube, Google search engine, Google Maps, and Google Earth for the purpose of teaching tourism. Furthermore, Adukaite (2016) reported that educators discussed the utilisation of various software applications, such as Dropbox, WhatsApp, and Google Drive, for the purpose of sharing information with their peers. However, it was noted that these tools were primarily utilised in private or ex-model C schools, as opposed to township and rural schools.

According to Farrah and Al-Bakry (2020), transitioning to a fully online learning environment necessitates careful planning and significant investments from all stakeholders. Several studies have demonstrated that while some institutions have implemented plans for online or distance learning in response to the pandemic, these plans are typically limited in scope and scale compared to the global crisis posed by COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a rapid and unforeseen shift towards e-learning as the sole alternative for schools to fulfil the educational requirements of students during the period. Murphy (2020) noted that a prevalent global trend in response to the pandemic has been the implementation of emergency e-learning. During the period of school closures in Finland, distance learning and teaching were facilitated through the utilisation of educational technology, as reported by UNESCO in 2020. According to UNESCO (2020), several nations implemented the practise of incorporating educational materials on their school websites to facilitate learning for students, without necessarily resorting to online classes. Spain, among other nations, developed digital materials and provided virtual instruction. In many nations, online learning emerged as a crucial means of ensuring the continuity of education. Hargreaves and Fullan (2020) identified the following actions implemented by educational institutions across various regions: In Queensland, Australia, remote farms and cattle stations received curriculum materials delivered via drones. Similarly, the Toronto Board of Education took the initiative to procure and distribute Chromebooks to as many students as possible. In contrast, Nova Scotia opted for a low-tech to no-tech approach and

used a flyer advertisement distributor to deliver printed curriculum materials to all families, irrespective of their technological capacity, as more than 30% of the school population lacked Wi-Fi or compatible devices. On the other hand, Uruguay has been providing all students with laptops and internet access since 2007, and shortly after students were sent home, there was a 1200% surge in platform usage. China has been able to effectively implement distance learning, while other regions such as Vietnam, which have limited access to the internet, cell phones, and television, were encountering challenges in providing equal educational opportunities to all learners. Singapore provided instructional courses to educators on how to conduct virtual classes in preparation for potential school closures. Conversely, certain nations such as Lebanon chose to dismiss students with assignments to complete at home, promoting autonomous remote learning with the assistance of parents (UNESCO, 2020).

The advantages of e-learning are significant, encompassing factors such as flexibility, enhancement of knowledge and qualifications, motivation of learner interaction, and cost-effectiveness, as noted by Kola (2020). Lin (2022) posits that technology-mediated learning has augmented the efficacy of the learning process by emphasising the development of knowledge acquisition skills, cognitive patterns, and ideological attributes, thereby facilitating comprehensive and profound learning. E-learning has been identified as a key factor for success, providing numerous advantages over conventional classroom instruction. These benefits include the ability to access course materials from any location at any time, engage in asynchronous discussions with peers, receive prompt feedback on assessments, and enjoy greater flexibility (Ahmady, Shahbazi and Heidar, 2020). Despite the significant impact that e-learning has on education in numerous countries worldwide, many developing nations, including South Africa, have yet to fully realise its potential. According to Khan, Niazi, Nasir, Hussain and Khan (2012), this mode of learning enables educators to serve as facilitators, while learners are given the opportunity to construct their knowledge in a collaborative manner. In agreement, Mahaye (2020) opined that technology has the potential to enhance pedagogy through various means, including providing teachers with access to vast resources, enabling learners to access unlimited learning materials that enhance their proficiency in the subject matter, facilitating remote learning for both teachers and learners, fostering collaborative interaction between teachers and learners, and providing learners with prompt feedback on their assessments. However, Farrah and Al-Bakry (2020) argue that the effective implementation of online teaching environments in educational institutions is contingent upon the availability of consistent technical infrastructure and support. Farrah and

Al-Bakry (2020) concurred that online teaching can pose challenges for educators as they must possess online teaching competencies in order to effectively plan, implement, and assess their students' performance. Previous exposure is also important, otherwise learners have to clue how to access and utilize materials.

According to the guidelines presented by UNESCO (2020), remote learning should be provided in the following manner: assess the technological proficiency of both students and educators in their ability to utilise technology. The investigation of diverse alternatives for distance learning mechanisms, such as online virtual lessons, downloadable lessons, mobile phone and social media, is recommended. Additionally, radio and television programmes are particularly beneficial for younger students. It is recommended to prioritise subjects and grades that are considered high-risk by parents, such as Grade 12. It is essential to provide training to teachers on effective teaching methods and engagement strategies for distance learning tools. As distance learning lacks interactivity, it is crucial to monitor learners' engagement, which can be achieved through the use of WhatsApp groups.

As a response to the lockdown, the South African DoE implemented several measures to offer alternative support to learners. These measures included radio lessons for Grade 12 subjects, curriculum support material available on the KwaZulu Natal FUNDA platform, workbooks for lower grades, previous common assessment instruments and answering guidelines for the Further Education and Training [FET] phase, and video lessons.

2.5.1.1 Challenges associated with technology-based learning

The implementation of e-learning is not without challenges as already alluded. Bonal and González (2021) noted that the requirements for successful remote learning, including reliable internet connectivity, lucid explanations, scaffolding, and constructive feedback from instructors, are challenging to fulfil. Pruitt (2020) contended that educators were encountering difficulties in traversing an unfamiliar digital landscape for which they had not received sufficient training as noted by the World Bank's report (2020), that a limited number of educators in traditional classroom settings had been equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively utilise online instructional methods and tools. According to Adukaite, van Zyl, and Lorenzo Canto's (2017) research on tourism education in South African secondary schools, a significant number of tourism educators exhibited reluctance towards incorporating technology in their teaching practises.

A significant obstacle to online learning was the inadequate availability or substandard quality of internet connectivity and electronic devices (Farrah and Al-Bakry, 2020). Over and above that, technical support poses a significant challenge for numerous learners globally, particularly in poor and developing nations (Farrah and Al-Bakry, 2020). The World Bank (2020) highlights that individuals who possess a high level of proficiency and familiarity with technology tools, particularly online resources, have adequate access to reliable bandwidth and connected devices, and receive support from their family and peers are best suited to effectively utilise online learning. Lin (2022) asserts that in geographically isolated regions, both educators and students experience inadequate technical support and resource allocation for online instruction. This indicates that the technical infrastructure supporting online education remains underdeveloped, and there is a need for the expansion of curriculum resources.

Some educational institutions, including schools, may be hesitant to adopt various forms of online teaching due to apprehension towards change, concerns regarding technical dependability, workload challenges, uncertainties surrounding learner outcomes in new environments, insufficient training to facilitate online learning, and inadequate resources for conducting online learning (Farrah and Al-Bakry, 2020). Prior to implementing online teaching as a means of instruction during the pandemic, institutions should conduct a thorough examination of this matter. Choudhary (2020); Dube (2020) cautioned that the transition to the novel mode of education amid the COVID-19 pandemic would benefit a select group of South African students who have access to educational resources. According to Mahaye's (2020) argument, the education of African children is anticipated to be significantly impacted in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily due to the economic and technological underdevelopment prevalent in many African nations.

According to Dube (2020), a significant number of learners residing in rural areas have been deprived of educational opportunities and have been unable to access online learning. This mode of learning is biased towards urban and affluent learners, thereby exacerbating the socio-economic divide between the privileged and underprivileged segments of society. The e-learning solution has been deemed unsuccessful as evidenced by the persistence of educational disparities in South Africa. According to Dube (2020), certain urban learners had already adopted online learning methods, while all learners were required to take a uniform year-end examination. The KZN DoE (2020) recognised that despite the Department's

extensive efforts, certain learners were unable to avail themselves of all the alternative programmes that were offered.

The closure of internet cafes during the lockdown had a significant impact on rural learners and educators who heavily relied on these establishments for their online needs. As a result, the accessibility of online learning for rural learners was negatively affected. Despite the provision of complimentary access to online educational resources by the DoE, learners encountered challenges in effectively engaging with the material due to the high cost of data. This predicament was further exacerbated by the economic impact of the lockdown, which resulted in some parents losing their employment. The cost of the data was prohibitively high, rendering it inaccessible to a significant portion of individuals residing in rural areas considering their socio-economic status. The latter observation highlights that the roll out of e-learning resulted in an infringement of learners' right to inclusive education, particularly for those residing in underprivileged communities who have been excluded from educational opportunities. Though e-learning has been hailed for its numerous advantages, its execution poses many challenges (Ahmady et al., 2020). Parker et al. (2020) compiled a report and Hlengwa (2021) conducted a study that identified several obstacles to online education, such as inadequate financial support, restricted internet accessibility, data expenses, emotional hindrances, stress, parental illiteracy, unfamiliarity with online learning, and educators' responsibilities to assist their own children.

According to Tumwesige (2020), despite attempts to integrate e-learning into the conventional curriculum, the education system in South Africa remains entrenched in the traditional approach to routine learning. This approach has limited opportunities for the application of concepts, and one of the key challenges is the lack of access to modern technology platforms that are necessary to keep up with the demands of teaching and learning in the 21st century. Despite the various challenges associated with the utilisation of traditional teaching and learning models, it remains essential to incorporate them in the pedagogy of tourism education in contemporary times. This mode of education enables learners to cultivate their creativity and proficiency in the modern age of electronic learning on a worldwide scale. Zhao and Watterston (2021) proposed that an optimal approach to organising learners, informed by the COVID-19 Pandemic, may involve a hybrid model that incorporates both virtual and in-person learning modalities. However, it is worth noting that

online learning can still be a viable option for students, particularly when their learning opportunities extend beyond the traditional school day.

2.5.1.2 Advantages associated with technology-based learning

The advancement of technology has necessitated a rethinking of traditional pedagogical approaches in tourism education. To ensure that all learners have equal access to educational opportunities, innovative and creative methods must be employed. The prevalence of digital tools such as Zoom, MS Teams, and Facebook among students has become nearly ubiquitous and is expected to persist. Sustained investment in educational training for schools to effectively utilise online platforms may facilitate the preservation of a superior education system, notwithstanding the eventual resumption of traditional classroom instruction (Turnbull, Chugh and Jo Luck, 2021). Yedla and Ajoon (2022) maintained that the integration of technology in tourism education provides benefits in terms of enhancing the quality and delivery of curriculum content. The incorporation of technology in tourism education has resulted in a more engaging, participatory, and student-centered curriculum. They (Yedla and Ajoon, 2022) further stated that the implementation of this approach facilitated practical learning opportunities, encouraged active engagement in cognitive tasks, provided convenient access to educational materials, and furnished personalised feedback. Elmer, Mepham and Stadtfeld (2020) as well as Hlengwa (2021) presented compelling arguments for the positive impact of social support on individuals during times of crisis. Specifically, they highlight the importance of physical proximity, pleasant interactions, friendships, emotional support, informational support, and co-studying as key factors that contribute to feelings of reassurance. Such support would alleviate the potential risks to the cognitive and non-cognitive developmental functions of education (Wai, 2019).

The United Nations (2020) noted that the utilisation of online pedagogical methods has intensified pre-existing inequalities between privileged and marginalised individuals, urban and remote rural populations, technologically proficient and unprepared individuals, as well as those with special needs and fully abled student cohorts. The mandate issued by higher education ministries emphasised the importance of ensuring equitable and consistent access to education for all students, without leaving anyone behind. However, concerns have been raised regarding the potential for certain learners to be disadvantaged by solutions that do not take into account disparities in technological resources (Mathiba, 2020; Mnguni, 2020). The central focus of all discussions should prioritise the interests of students, promoting

inclusivity and equity for all individuals (Parkin and Brown, 2020; Sustainable Development Goal-Education 2030 Steering Committee, 2020). It is crucial to note that if any student is excluded by the online educational approaches, it would render them unjust and unsuitable for their intended purpose (Mnguni, 2020, cited in Hlengwa, 2021).

2.5.2 Blended learning

Blended learning has emerged as the dominant mode of instruction across all levels of education. Blended learning is a pedagogical approach that integrates traditional face-to-face learning spaces with online technologies to enhance the delivery and content of learning (Turnbull et al., 2021). Ching (2020) postulated four distinct models of blended learning. The rotation model is a pedagogical approach in which students alternate between traditional classroom instruction and online learning.

Two models of instruction that have gained popularity in recent years are the flex model and the self-blended model. The flex model involves the use of online methods for lesson delivery, with an instructor being available for in-person support and discussion. In contrast, the self-blended model offers an online version of the face-to-face course as a supplementary resource that students may choose to utilise at their discretion. The enriched-virtual model is a hybrid approach to education that involves a combination of in-person and online learning experiences. Learners are required to allocate their time between attending physical classes and engaging in virtual learning activities (Bordoloi, Das and Das, 2021; Ching, 2020).

Ching (2020) has identified various models that educators can employ to facilitate the implementation of blended learning even post COVID-19 Pandemic. Bordoloi, Das and Das (2021) noted the shift towards personalised, productive, and collaborative teaching in education. This shift is driven by the expectation that learning experiences will shift from traditional methods to technology-based independent methods, with an emphasis on developing learners' potential and creativity in optimal ways. The pedagogical approach of blended learning is depicted in Figure 2.3, wherein computer-enabled learning is integrated with face-to-face learning that is facilitated by human instructors.

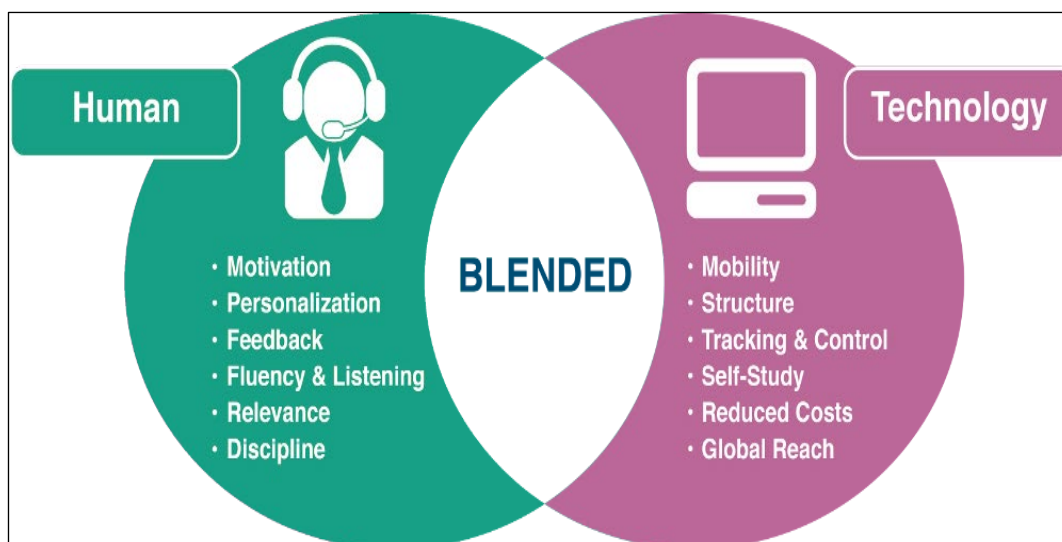


Figure 2.3: Blended learning
Source: Learn Cube (2022)

Equitable access to education, justice, and timely delivery of need-based educational content, coupled with engaging pedagogical support utilising the latest online/blended learning technologies, can be viewed as a driving force for change and a resolution for upholding the democratic principle of education in its entirety (Bordoloi et al., 2021). The instructional approach employed in this context is a combination of online and traditional learning modalities. Online learning is restricted to textual assignments and lacks opportunities for live learning and genuine interaction. The concept of blended learning, incorporating virtual learning, has been suggested by Mahaye (2020) as a potential solution for the government to mitigate the loss of curriculum in schools during times of disruption.

Virtual learning is a mode of education where computer-generated classrooms are utilised by educators to facilitate learning through online tools. This approach allows for the continuation of classes while adhering to the government's regulations on social distancing. Blended learning is an instructional methodology that combines traditional classroom instruction with digital learning tools, as defined by Mahaye (2020). The concept of e-learning endeavours to redirect the emphasis of the educational milieu from the conventional teacher-student interaction in a physical setting, while simultaneously disseminating information (Kola, 2020). In accordance with Turnbull et al. (2021), post-COVID institutions may find a blended learning environment to be the most favourable alternative, as it allows them to capitalise on the insights gained from the online experience while preserving the benefits of conventional face-to-face methodologies. This observation underscores the necessity for the education sector to possess the capacity to effectively

address potential future crises. Turnbull et al. (2021) further argued that in order to alleviate the impact of potential future crises, it is suggested that education systems adopt blended learning as an obligatory element of classroom pedagogy in a post-COVID era.

2.5.3 Self-directed learning

Self-directed learning (SDL) was primarily utilised in the context of adult education. The concept of self-directed learning (SDL) has garnered significant attention in educational research, prompting its application in school settings to explore the ways in which educators can cultivate SDL skills in students, given its potential advantages. Mahlaba (2020) argued that self-directed learning (SDL) is a reliable indicator of academic achievement due to its ability to furnish students with competencies that surpass conventional classroom instruction and learning. Additionally, SDL simulates real-world professional practise and augments critical thinking and reflective thinking. The outbreak of COVID-19 led to a shift towards remote learning, thereby putting the self-directed learning (SDL) abilities of students to the test. The results showed that SDL is a crucial skill that can aid students in making up for the time lost due to the pandemic. The shift towards remote instruction and education alters the instructional and learning context from the traditional physical setting to digital platforms for teaching and learning. The learning environment plays a crucial role in shaping learners' self-directedness, and as such, the transition to remote education necessitates learners to exhibit self-directed learning behaviours (Mahlaba, 2020).

(Medriati & Risdianto, 2020) defined self-directed learning as a process whereby individuals take responsibility for their own learning by initiating and determining their learning objectives, implementing suitable learning techniques, and evaluating the outcomes of their learning. Self-directed learning (SDL) enables many students to identify their unique learning requirements and pursue their educational objectives independently, without relying on the guidance of instructors or classmates, or being confined to a traditional classroom setting. Mahlangu (2020) claimed that self-directed learning (SDL) necessitates a paradigm shift in the conceptualization and implementation of pedagogical practises. In contrast to teacher-directed learning, where instructors dictate the content, objectives, evaluation, and instructional approaches, SDL places the onus on learners to assume responsibility for their own learning.

The COVID-19 Pandemic resulted in a significant number of students depending on self-directed learning due to the absence of traditional classroom instruction and electronic educational resources. Thus, the significance of Self-Directed Learning (SDL) has been recognised as a viable strategy to address educational disparities. Artaliawan, Artini and Padmadewi (2021) outline the advantages of self-directed learning as: the learning process is owned by the learners themselves; the learners are motivated to learn because they are accountable for their own learning; it can enhance communication skills as it provides an independent setting that enables learners to learn and even engage in discussions; and it can expand the knowledge of both the learners and the teacher, as it encourages learners to be more proactive in discovering what they do not know. The outcome of this process is the acquisition of novel knowledge and an enhancement in the standard of learning.

The utilisation of self-directed learning (SDL) during the pandemic has yielded significant advantages for students. According to Mhlanga (2020), self-direction is a crucial aspect that empowers learners to proactively work autonomously towards accomplishing their individual learning objectives, relying on qualities such as resilience, discipline, perseverance, and commitment. The SDL approach fosters the development of self-directed learners who assume responsibility for managing and regulating their own learning process, as well as determining the direction of their learning. According to Artaliawan et al. (2021), this facilitates the development of learners' autonomy and creativity to a significant extent.

Misra and Mazelfi (2020) opined that individuals who engage in self-directed learning exhibit a propensity for retaining acquired knowledge in their long-term memory. This retention enables them to apply their knowledge in diverse learning and problem-solving contexts. Upon recognising remote learning as their primary mode of education, self-directed learners would assess their shortcomings in adapting to remote learning and proactively work towards transforming these weaknesses into strengths, thereby optimising their learning experiences in the current paradigm (Mhlanga, 2020). According to Artaliawan et al. (2021), learners can acquire knowledge and utilize it independently, even in the absence of specific guidance from the teacher. This mode of learning enables learners to exceed the anticipated level learning, as they endeavour to explore supplementary educational resources that are essential for achieving success. Tourism students who exhibit strong self-directed learning tendencies, coupled with the utilisation of online learning features, have the potential to assist the tourism sector in upholding the constantly changing industry benchmarks.

2.6 ENHANCING TOURISM EDUCATION RESILIENCE POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 Pandemic led to several concerns and consequences for the field of tourism education and prospective employment opportunities (Murphy, 2020). The pandemic brought to light major shortcomings in the tourism curriculum. In light of this, there is a need to reconsider the training approaches, methods, teachings, and subject areas to ensure that they are better equipped to prepare for response and recovery policies, strategies, and research (Edelheim, 2020). Ntounis et al. (2021) pointed out that the pandemic highlighted the vulnerabilities of the tourism ecosystem, which can be attributed to the comparatively underdeveloped socio-political, economic, and environmental links between resilience and sustainability in this industry as compared to others. It is imperative to integrate resilient strategies (Bento, Bottino, Pereir, de Almeida and Rodrigues 2021) into the pedagogy of tourism education to mitigate the impact of future disruptions. According to Law (2005), there is a dearth of research that specifically addresses the resilience of tourism education in the face of turbulent circumstances. According to Ntounis et al. (2021), it is probable that disruptions will increasingly impact the tourism ecosystem, necessitating enhanced collaboration among stakeholders to prepare for and effectively handle such situations.

Naidu (2021) asserted that to achieve long-term survival and resilience in the face of present and potential future catastrophes, a comprehensive overhaul and restructuring of educational and institutional frameworks was imperative. The objective of the present study is to construct a resilience model that can enhance tourism education in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic. As Suneeth, Kashyap, Reddy and Kaushal (2021) argued, resilience refers to a system's ability to endure and recover from disruptions while maintaining its fundamental function and structure. This phenomenon exhibits a broad range of applicability across various systems. According to Bento et al. (2021), resilience refers to the ability of a system to adaptively reorganise its structures and practises in response to either internal failures or changes in the environment. The pandemic has presented many opportunities for investigating and enhancing various resilience tactics that could be employed in the occurrence of a subsequent pandemic. According to Bento et al. (2021), it is critical to prioritise the redesigning of the tourism curriculum to facilitate more advanced cognitive skills and knowledge among learners.

Suneeth et al. (2021) asserted that tourism education must exhibit resilience features for graduates to be able to manage resilient tourism facilities. The implementation of a resilience model in tourism education is expected to enhance learners' competencies in various domains, including but not limited to resilience development and disaster mitigation, in the times to come. In addition, Suneeth et al. (2021), opined the present tourism curriculum in educational institutions exhibits a dearth of significant academic integration concerning the enhancement of learners' competencies in managing outbreaks or disasters and implementing measures to foster resilience.

Amidst the complex circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, educators are perceived as catalysts for transformation. Bento et al. (2021) was of the view that the task of teaching and engaging in pedagogical endeavours in the current situation, which is characterised by remote education as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, presented significant challenges. To effectively execute their pedagogical responsibilities, educators must possess the necessary knowledge in managing the various platforms utilised for class implementation, in addition to designing course curricula, generating exercises, and evaluating assessment instruments (Bento et al., 2021). Mínguez et al. (2021) emphasised the importance of incorporating diverse pedagogical methodologies in tourism education to cultivate requisite competencies, abilities, and principles (Belhassen and Caton, 2011). This approach can help contemporary students evolve into prospective professionals who possess the ability to adjust to an exceedingly dynamic, delicate, and highly susceptible industry, as exemplified by the recent pandemic.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Education was one of the sectors worst-hit by the pandemic (Onyema et al., 2020). Mhlanga and Moloji (2020) assert that returning to the previous modes of teaching in the education sector would prove challenging, given the ongoing need for social distancing to contain the virus spread. Consequently, many learners may face difficulties completing their school curriculum and assessments through conventional means. Furthermore, reverting to the pre-pandemic norms would imply that educational systems have not learned from this experience. The sudden and unforeseen onset of the pandemic left most governments with limited time to plan a well-coordinated response (Daniel, 2020), leading to an ad hoc and uncertain approach to ensuring educational continuity amidst systematic school closures (Mhlanga and Moloji,

2020). As a result of the pandemic, there has been a significant shift away from traditional in-person learning and teaching settings to online or blended learning formats.

The closing of schools exposed the shortcomings in the conventional face-to-face teaching paradigm as teaching, and learning suffered severe setbacks all over the world (Kola and Opeyemi 2020). Edelheim (2020) argued that values and field methodologies are critical components for successful and meaningful tourism education and research. If the new normal necessitates shifts in paradigms, then tourism education methodologies in high schools require transformation to prepare new types of travellers and employees. Neil (2020) concurred that due to the interconnectedness of global health and hospitality and tourism, schools have an essential role to train the workforce that is adequately prepared to anticipate and respond to global health crises such as the recent pandemic. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] (2020) stated that while policy solutions were required to enable the tourism industry to live alongside the virus and other disruptions, it was also important to look beyond and enhance the industry's preparedness and resilience, which (Mahaye, 2020) developed countries with well-established and equal education systems might find easier to achieve than underdeveloped countries with dual economic and education systems like South Africa.

The next chapter focuses on the theoretical framework that underpins the study as derived from the literature review. The study is buttressed by both the critical and resilience theories. The Critical Theory (CT) questions and analyses circumstances under which a phenomenon of the impact of COVID-19 on tourism education was studied. The CT represents a rational way of thinking, being concerned with solving a particular social problem within its context (Asghar, 2013). In this study CT was used to analyse the dual education system in which technological teaching and learning was supposed to take place, and how this system favoured a proportion of the population at the expense of the majority. The study was also buttressed by the Resilience Theory (RT). Resilience, as defined by Lew (2014), refers to the capacity to effectively adapt to stressors and maintain psychological well-being in the presence of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, and significant sources of stress. In the context of this study, the stressor was the COVID-19 Pandemic. The concept of resilience was essential for this research, as it sought to develop a model that would bolster the resilience of tourism education in high schools amidst disruptions caused by the pandemic.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter elaborates on two theoretical frameworks employed to support the present investigation. Two theoretical frameworks that are commonly discussed in academic literature are the Critical Theory (CT) and the Resilience Theory (RT). According to the University of Southern California (2022), a theoretical framework refers to a conceptual

structure that can provide a foundation or backing for a research study. Grant and Osanloo (2014) emphasized that the theoretical framework holds significant importance in the research process, serving as the fundamental basis or anchor upon which all knowledge is constructed for a study, while Trafford and Leshem (2008) regard a theory as a paradigm explaining how researchers see the phenomenon under study. According to Adom, Hussein, and Agyem (2018), the absence of a theoretical framework in research poses challenges for readers in comprehending the academic position and the fundamental principles underlying the researcher's assertions and thinking processes. The authors further argued that a theoretical framework offers a novel perspective for perceiving and reasoning about a phenomenon, and influences the methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

This study was grounded in Critical and Resilience Theories, which serve as the foundation for the inquiry. The selection of theories was done with careful consideration to establish a solid knowledge foundation for the phenomenon under investigation. This chapter firstly examined the Critical Theory [CT] in relation to the problem of enhancing tourism education post COVID-19, and secondly, integrated it with the Resilience Theory [RT] to establish a model for enhancing the resilience of tourism education in secondary schools after to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The study sought to enhance the resilience of tourism teaching and learning strategies in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic and in case of other disruptions. The CT is centred on examining the fundamental factors that contribute to the creation of an uneven playing field in general education in South Africa. On the other hand, the RT was employed to map a course for resilient tourism education to develop a support base for a more resilient tourism industry in the event of further disruptions. The integration of these theories with the aim and objectives of the study served to unify the entire research endeavour by guiding the research methodology, shaping the data collection instruments, and informing the data analysis process.

3.2 CRITICAL THEORY

Critical theory (CT) is employed in this study to examine the social issues affect the teaching and learning of tourism, which have been exposed and brought to light by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Dube (2020) posits that the aim of CT is to facilitate the participation of all individuals in transformative experiences that have the potential to liberate them to confront their lived realities. This is achieved through the promotion of values such as social justice,

inclusion and human rights, while also respecting the rights of others. Parker, Morris, and Hofmey (2020) asserted that South Africa is among the most unequal nations globally, characterised by elevated levels of poverty and unemployment, which were further exacerbated by the pandemic and the resultant lockdown and social distancing measures. According to Ramrathan (2020), there is a dichotomous educational system in South Africa. The existence of two distinct types of schools can be attributed to the significant differences in the quality of school infrastructure that is available to facilitate effective teaching and learning. This discrepancy is particularly evident in South Africa, where learners from higher socio-economic backgrounds are afforded more opportunities in this regard, in contrast to their counterparts from the lower socio-economic bracket (Jansen, 2020).

The pandemic necessitated a shift towards online and digital learning, which exacerbated pre-existing inequalities. This was due to a significant proportion of learners lacking access to necessary technological resources such as electronic devices, Internet connectivity, as well as being unfamiliar with the technology employed in the teaching and learning process (Ramrathan, 2020). According to Soudien and Harvey (2020), the intricate nature of the political landscape surrounding the educational experience is the reason why education has failed to fulfil its commitments, particularly in the South African setting characterised by increasing inequalities. Consequently, the significance of the CT in education lies in its ability to provide direction on the prevailing conditions of a society and how education can serve to critique and transform these conditions. The pandemic served as an excellent example of a disruptive, unpredictable, and rapidly changing circumstance, prompting individuals to contemplate how their educational systems can be enhanced regardless of their socio-economic statuses.

The concept of Critical Theory holds significance in both the narrow and broad sense within the realms of philosophy and the history of social sciences. CT refers to a succession of German philosophers and social theorists who belong to the Western European Marxist tradition recognised as the Frankfurt School (Zalta, Nodelman and Anderson, 2021). As per the principles of Marxist ideology, a theory is deemed critical insofar as it attempts to secure human emancipation from enslavement, serves as a force of liberation, and tries to establish a society that caters to the requirements and capabilities of individuals (Zalta et al., 2021). According to Horkheimer (1972) and Zalta et al. (2021), the adequacy of CT is contingent upon its ability to provide an explanatory, practical and normative framework. The CT

framework necessitates an explanation of the inadequacies present in the current social reality, identification of the relevant actors responsible for effecting change, and the establishment of unambiguous standards for critique, along with feasible objectives for social transformation. CT attempts to integrate theory and practice, in that it sees theories as analyses of a social situations, which can be altered to eradicate certain unfavourable situations that a particular society is experiencing (Adams, 2005). As per Britannica (2021), Critical Theory is primarily concerned with understanding and dealing with the societal frameworks that facilitate the subjugation and discrimination of individuals. Critical thinking (CT) is a logical approach that prioritises problem-solving within a given social context. CT encompasses various disciplines and seek to enhance the educational standard by fostering active involvement of both educators and learners in the process of critical analysis and exploration of alternative perspectives, with the goal of contributing to the betterment of society (Molthaka, 2016).

According to Causevic, Minnaert, Morgan and Pritchard (2018), the critical nature of CT lies in its objective to not only facilitate a particular awareness, but also to establish social and political circumstances that are more human-centric, thereby effecting positive societal change. Thompson (2017) pointed out that CT enables individuals to establish a connection with a phenomenon. According to Adams (2005), CT is based on the perceived needs and hardships of individuals, and thus strives to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the actors from the perspective of the populace. Furthermore, the theory acknowledges that individuals' behaviours are determined by societal circumstances beyond their control. Critical social science is founded on the explicit acknowledgement that social theory and social practise are interdependent. The correlation between theory and practise in the context of CT implies that its assertions of knowledge are linked to the fulfilment of human objectives and aspirations (Adam, 2005). Causevic et al. (2018) stated that critical research attempts to enhance the quality of human existence by integrating theoretical concepts with practical applications. Consequently, the application of CT is linked to practical implementation. According to Salehi (2013), the objectives of CT encompass fostering an awareness of critical citizenship, as opposed to mere good citizenship. This involves addressing the political dominance of powerful groups and advocating for the rights of marginalised communities, including those based on ethnic origin and racial background. Additionally, CT aims to reform the curriculum by modifying its goals, content and methods

of instruction. Furthermore, it seeks to redefine the roles of both teachers and students and facilitate their engagement in a changing society.

According to Byker and Marquardt (2016: 30), it is suggested that educators who adopt a critical approach are more likely to foster critical thinking skills in their students. The present study suggests that educational systems and instructors that emphasise a future-oriented approach are instrumental in creating learners with a future-oriented viewpoint. CT is employed in educational research to analyse the preparedness of the education system to sustain its service delivery amidst environmental changes, as exemplified by global disruptions such as the COVID-19 Pandemic. CT promotes a culture of resistance against all forms of oppression, injustice and inequality. Hamman (2018) concurred that the CT aims to deconstruct the essence of social reality in order to gain an in-depth understanding of how society can be enhanced. According to Caton (2012) the integration of CT in tourism education enables aspiring tourism leaders to acquire cognitive abilities that enable them to engage in reflective thinking about their values and actions. Additionally, CT equips them with the necessary skills to effectively participate in debates that promote the sustainability of the tourism industry.

3.2.1 Critical pedagogy

The philosopher of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire, draws attention to the inequities inherent in the education system and the ensuing dehumanisation of individuals. According to Freire's (1970) seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, educators must function as transformative intellectuals who actively participate in effecting social change. They must be capable of integrating pedagogy with political significance and vice versa (Vandeyar and Swart, 2016). According to Freire, it is essential for educators to demonstrate the productive function of education and cultivate a sense of confidence in students to overcome the challenges posed by economic, social and political conditions. This, in turn, enables learners to engage in the process of self-education and personal growth as an integral part of the larger struggle for humanization (Vandeyar and Swart 2016). The relevance of the CT in this study lies in its use of critical pedagogy, which seeks to address social and educational oppression, as laid bare and heightened by the COVID-19 Pandemic. The concept of critical pedagogy highlights the importance of approaching the process of teaching and learning as a means of inquiry and social imagination, while operating within the framework of optimism (Zalta et al., 2021). Zalta et al. (2021) further maintained that knowledge becomes significant when it

originates from the cultural experiences of learners. Its importance is dependent upon the identification of problematic aspects within their experiences. Furthermore, knowledge can be transformative when learners utilise it to empower individuals in their community. The critical pedagogy possesses the capacity to enhance the critical thinking skills of learners, elevate their participation levels in the learning process and cultivate their self-esteem, which in turn motivates them to pursue success and achievement (Mothlaka, 2016).

The significance of CT in contemporary education lies in its influence on the formulation of educational goals, principles and methodologies (Salehia, 2013). Educational institutions are situated within collective frameworks, serving as sites for the acquisition of knowledge. Freire's critical pedagogy refers to a form of knowledge known as problem-posing education. The objective of problem-posing education is to stimulate critical awareness among learners, enabling them to comprehend the unequal nature of social connections (Zhong, 2014). As Zhong (2014) further explained, this approach enables individuals to enhance their ability to critically perceive their existence in the world, including the context in which they find themselves. This perspective allows individuals to view the world as a dynamic and evolving reality, rather than a static one. The implementation of problem posing education enables learners to actively engage in the construction and development of their own knowledge. Motlhaka (2016) opined that critical pedagogy enables students to engage in critical thinking regarding their educational objectives, by acknowledging and addressing their challenges, experiences and societal background to enhance their ability to apply acquired knowledge. Within an educational setting, the primary function of an instructor is to foster the acquisition of knowledge by means of facilitation, thereby enabling students to recognise their areas of proficiency and deficiency.

According to Motlhaka (2016), critical pedagogy regards the learner as an intellectual capable of transformation, who possesses knowledge and skills. Freire's critical pedagogy involves three fundamental concepts, namely critical consciousness, humanization and dialogue. As per Freire's perspective, the development of critical consciousness entails acquiring of the ability to identify social, political and economic inconsistencies and to undertake measures to combat the repressive aspects of the existing realities (Zhong 2014: 21). Freire's critical pedagogical methodology, which emphasises the importance of critical consciousness, could potentially aid students of tourism in comprehending and contesting the prevailing norms and practises related to tourism development and delivery. The

interdependence between critical consciousness and dialogue is reciprocal in nature, as the former is a prerequisite for and a product of the latter (Zhong, 2014). According to Vandeyar and Swart (2016), the Freirean critical education approach constitutes a series of interdependent relationships wherein the teacher and learner collaborate as equals, and knowledge is generated through a process of dialogue. Zhong (2014) went on to point out that dialogue is rooted in individuals' real-life encounters and mirrors the societal and political circumstances that perpetuate inequality and oppression. Vandeyar and Swart (2016) added that a mutually respectful relationship exists between the teacher and learner, wherein they engage in critical thinking and reasoning together. Considering Freirean pedagogy, it is suggested that post-COVID-19 tourism education should facilitate the identification of prevailing social issues by learners and enable them to collaborate with their teachers to devise effective solutions. This approach is likely to foster a communicative environment between the instructor and the students, wherein the latter is afforded an opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions in the classroom. This type of learning approach suggests that learners have the potential to actively generate their own knowledge, rather than merely receiving and consenting to the educators' views (Vandeyar and Swart, 2016), allowing them to create and exchange knowledge that is grounded in their personal experiences. This is achieved through various means, such as discourse, demonstration, conversation and investigation of queries that stimulate learners.

The core of Freirean critical pedagogy lies in the concept of humanisation. The concept of humanisation entails the gradual progression towards achieving a more complete state of humanity which emphasizes that no individual is deprived of knowledge. According to Zhong (2014), the inability of individuals to engage in critical reflection and transformative action results in their dehumanisation. According to Vandeyar and Swart (2016), knowledge is created jointly between the teacher and learner, as they work together to assign meaning to the world. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic, it is recommended that tourism education adopt a pedagogical approach that fosters active building of knowledge among learners, under the guidance of both educators and industry professionals. It is further recommended that individuals engaged in the process of learning, teaching and industry representatives engage in reflection regarding the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that have been acquired or cultivated throughout the learning experience.

Salehia and Mohammadkhani (2013) argued that it is imperative for educational institutions to produce critical knowledge that empowers students to become proactive drivers of social transformation. According to Beyer (2001), CT focuses on the examination of the societal structures and cultures that influence the everyday lives of individuals and shape their future outcomes. In support, Salehia and Mohammadkhanib (2013) contend that schools should not disregard the significance of social changes and should instead adopt a flexible approach to address issues that impact the daily lives of the community. This highlights the importance of addressing pertinent community issues within the educational system. Hence, it is imperative for educational institutions to offer a conducive setting that enables students to modify and adapt their learning experience to suit their individual needs. This statement suggests that it is the responsibility of educational institutions to equip students with the necessary skills to become informed and engaged citizens within a democratic society. Figure 3.1 sets critical consciousness as the centre and explains the prerequisite (dialogue) and the purpose (humanisation) of critical consciousness (Zhong 2014).

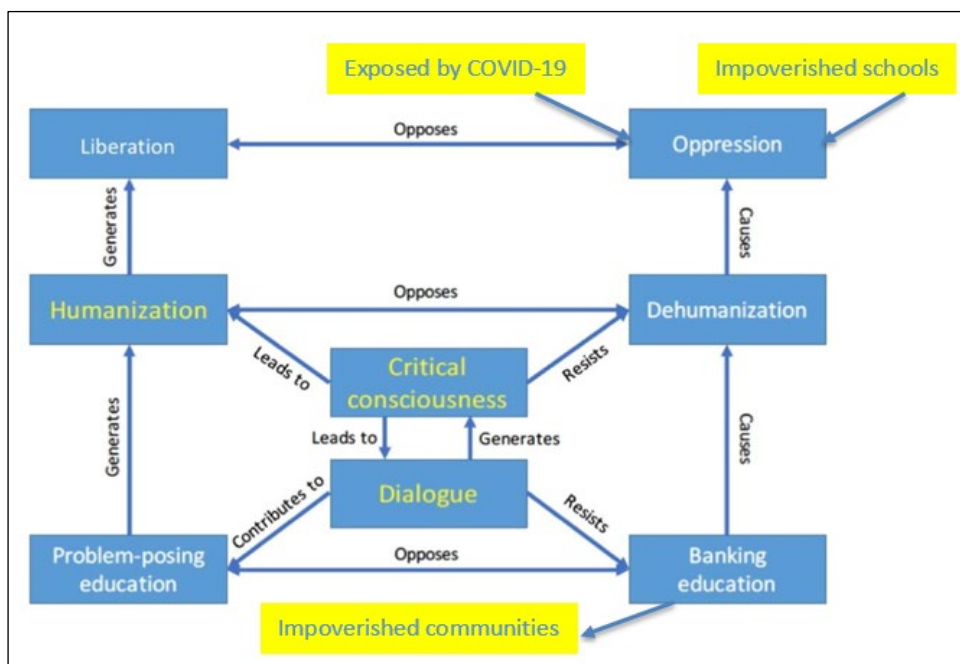


Figure 3.1: Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy
Adapted from: Zhong (2014: 25)

Tourism education post-COVID-19 ought to prioritise an overview of crucial matters that impact the tourism sector, the stakeholders involved in the industry and students of tourism who will eventually become key players and proprietors of tourism enterprises. This puts pressure on the tourism ecosystem to develop tourism education and instruction that centres

on matters of societal transformation amidst challenges. According to Hamman's (2018) findings, CT not only facilitates awareness of the current state of affairs, but also enables individuals to envision and implement positive changes. Thus, the CT approach in education aims to develop novel theoretical frameworks for understanding tourism education by situating the phenomenon within its broader political, economic, cultural, and social milieus (Causevic et al., 2018).

3.3 RESILIENCE THEORY

The pandemic has brought to light long-standing problems within the education sector of the country. According to Naidu (2021), the adaptability of education systems was put to the test during the transition from conventional teaching and learning to modern blended learning, which was made possible by digitalization. According to Shingha (2020), education stakeholders have initiated preparations to enhance the resilience of online education, in order to ensure its continuity beyond COVID-19. Bento et al. (2021) pointed out that the pandemic can be considered a significant environmental disruption for educational establishments, which brought to the fore social disparities within the education sector, including inadequate availability of technological resources required for online and distance learning. Further, Bento et al. (2021) highlighted that the pandemic had a disproportionate impact on emotionally and educationally vulnerable learners from socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Hence, it is of paramount significance to adjust the capabilities of educational establishments and individuals to address transformations triggered by the pandemic and other disruptors. The presence of environmental uncertainties can elicit feelings of fear and anxiety within populations. Consequently, individuals such as teachers, learners and communities may endeavour to employ diverse coping mechanisms to alleviate distress (Zheng, 2021). Resilience theory discusses the attributes and capabilities exhibited by individuals and systems that facilitate their ability to overcome adverse situations. Rivera, Shapoval and Medeiros (2021) argue that psychological and other coping mechanisms are crucial during times of disruption. During these times it is essential to foster a sense of hope (Mostafanezhad, 2020) to enable individuals to navigate challenging circumstances with an optimistic outlook that promotes positive and proactive attitudes towards the future. Resilience theory is especially important for learners and educators in disadvantaged schools of Umgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District municipality as these school faces unique challenges in terms of access to resources and support especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when schools have lack of of access to technology such as computers and internet

which created a challenge for these schools participate to online activities. Educators also had less access to professional development opportunities especially during lockdown which made it difficult to keep with the latest pedagogical approaches. In this context resilience theory can help to address these challenges by providing additional support and resources for learners and educators.

3.3.1 An overview of resilience

Resilience, as described by Lew (2014), denotes the ability to effectively adapt to stressors, maintain psychological well-being, and respond adeptly in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, and significant sources of stress. Holling (2017) defines resilience as the capacity of a system to absorb disturbances, reorganize, and retain its core function, structure, and identity. In the context of significant adversity, resilience becomes a dynamic process of positive adaptation (Toland and Carrigan, 2011) and a meta-capability to anticipate, confront, and actively adapt to environmental challenges (Bento et al., 2021). Resilience is evident when individuals not only withstand adverse circumstances but also rebound and return to their former level of functioning or surpass it, reaching a higher level of performance compared to before facing hardships (Mampane, 2010). Research in the field of resilience suggests that it is a developmental process that interacts with adversity (Mampane, 2010). Resilience cannot be understood if adversity is absent. Moletsane and Theron (2017) posit that resilience is an ability that can be found in an average individual or system, and which can be learned and developed as it is more a process than a trait.

According to Toland and Carrigan (2011), resilience represents the achievement of positive adaptation despite encountering obstacles in the developmental process. The concepts of survival, recovery, and thriving are closely associated with resilience, describing different stages that individuals may find themselves in during or after facing adversity (Ledesma, 2014). Masten (2007: 923) characterizes resilient individuals and systems as "stress-resistant" due to their capacity to overcome adversity and demonstrate resilience. However, as pointed out by Manapo (2010: 27), not all individuals and systems possess equal stress-resistance or the ability to effectively function under adverse conditions, as some succumb to risk and fail to develop optimally. Such systems which struggle to cope and to demonstrate expected or 'normal' developmental goals and 'age salient' developmental outcomes are less-resilient (Manapo, 2010: 27). The resiliency model (Figure 3.2) is a means by which people, adapt to disruptions by choosing consciously or unconsciously the outcomes of disruptions

(Richardson, 2002). The disruption currently depicted as a stressor or adversity, is the COVID-19 Pandemic. Individuals and organisations, whether more or less resilient, were compelled to adjust to the impact of the pandemic. According to Galligan, Barnett, Brennan and Israel (2010), a potential outcome of reintegration into homeostasis is when a learner copes with the disruption and moves on from it as it subsides. Richardson (2002) suggests that integration can occur through three distinct pathways: dysfunctional integration, reversion to the previous state of homeostasis, or resilient reintegration. Individuals are frequently exposed to a multitude of stressors, adversities and life events, which may originate from either external or internal sources. Thomas (2011), argued that protective factors are qualities that facilitate resilience and serve as a safeguard against adversities, thereby promoting a resilient reintegration experience.

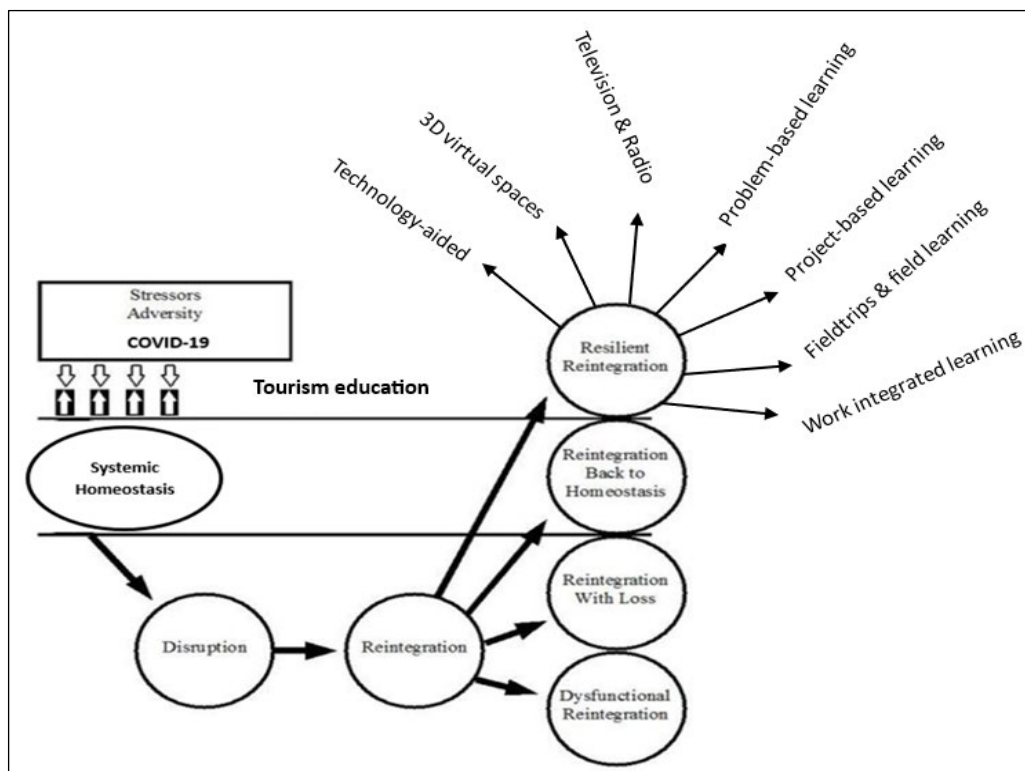


Figure 3.2: The resiliency model
Adapted from: Richardson (2002)

Galligan and colleagues (2010) were of the view that maladaptive integration may result in unfavourable conduct or systems failure. On the contrary, the concept of resilient reintegration suggests that both individuals and systems experience an improvement in their overall state compared to their previous condition. According to Bento (2021), educational institutions serve as venues for the acquisition of problem-solving skills through the

collaborative efforts of various educational stakeholders. The educational institution can significantly contribute to providing students with the necessary skills to become actively involved in critical thinking and effectively manage disruptions. Mitchell (2021) identified several resilience strategies that can benefit both teachers and learners. These strategies include critical thinking, problem-solving, help-seeking, induction, coaching, collaboration, self-regulation, relationship management, rejuvenation, and culture building.

The research centred on the concept of resilience in the context of tourism education in high schools located within the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipalities. According to Riveria, Shapoval and Medeiros (2021:4), resilience in education is characterised by the capacity to achieve academic success despite the presence of stresses and impediments that pose challenges to achieving success. The pandemic presented significant challenges to the education sector, resulting in substantial disruption to the instruction and acquisition of knowledge pertaining to tourism as a discipline in numerous South African schools. Hence, it is crucial that educators and students in the field of tourism adjust to the modifications necessitated by the pandemic, affecting both academic institutions and the tourism industry.

3.3.2 The role of school in resiliency

According to Banatao (2011), schools serve as crucial places for fostering resilience, social competence, and overall well-being among students. In agreement, Kuyper (2014) vouched that there exists a strong correlation between resiliency and academic performance. Specifically, Kuyper claimed that learners who exhibit greater resiliency are more likely to demonstrate enhanced academic achievement. This is because the skills associated with resilient behaviour can be acquired and assessed. Resilience has emerged as a term that is frequently used in the discourses surrounding South African education (South African Council of Educators [SACE], 2022). The ability to deal with uncertainty in modern society is a significant obstacle that demands the development of diverse competencies and proficiencies (SACE, 2022). This is especially important for educators, who are often regarded as catalysts for transformation. Hence, the importance for educators to be resilient in the present educational setting cannot be overstated. Teachers who exhibit resilience are highly valuable to the education system in South Africa. According to Cornelissen (2016), and Wambule (2020) individuals who show those features are more inclined to prevail in unfavourable circumstances and exhibit greater flexibility in response to changes. This

necessitates the development of critical thinking skills and the ability to engage in constructive dialogue to effectively resolve challenges. The concept of resilience is associated with the variability in individuals' responses to challenging circumstances across different contexts. According to SACE (2022), resilience may manifest in various ways among educators, as suggested by their research. For some people, this involved showing resilience during challenges or managing the duties of being an educator, a parent, and a home maker. For some individuals, it entailed posing challenging inquiries regarding the necessary adaptations that education had to undergo to remain effective in a constantly evolving and rapidly advancing global landscape. Wabule (2020) identified seven primary strengths that improve teacher resilience. These strengths included maintaining a positive outlook despite facing adversity, remaining firmly focused on one's values and priorities, showing flexibility in the pursuit of goals, taking ownership of one's actions, promoting an environment of personal and professional support, upholding high expectations for success among pupils, teachers and parents, and encouraging shared responsibility and participation.

The role of a teacher in fostering resilient behaviour among learners is of paramount importance. According to Mansfield, Beltman, Broadley and Weatherby-Fell (2016), teachers who are resilient are better at managing difficult situations, exhibiting empathy towards struggling students and regulating negative emotions. Such teachers experience a sense of pride and fulfilment, leading to an increased commitment to their profession and school. According to Theron and Theron (2014), teachers can establish constructive and empathetic associations with students who may be vulnerable to adverse circumstances. By nurturing these students' social, emotional, and cognitive abilities, instructors can promote their autonomy, involvement, and proficiency, while also maintaining high expectations and instilling a sense of optimism. Given these circumstances, it is anticipated that teachers will provide high-quality instructional support to facilitate improved academic outcomes for students. Hence, the implementation of critical tourism pedagogy has the potential to improve the quality of life of individuals who have faced historical and contemporary forms of marginalisation and adversity.

Resilience pedagogy promotes the development of critical thinking among teachers regarding their instructional practises. According to Meern and Amin (2021), the task of developing individuals through raising awareness and conscientiousness in a unique setting is most aptly accomplished by a teacher who possesses resilience attributes, can adapt to change, and

engages in reflective practise to generate opportunities for students. A teacher who is resilient can adjust to alterations in the curriculum and teaching methods, demonstrating their flexibility, reflectiveness instead of succumbing to pressure.

Resilient behavior not only significantly enhances life outcomes for learners but also improves their academic success, even in the face of significant adversity. According to Kuyper (2014), resilient learners demonstrated notably higher levels of task orientation and satisfaction, social self-concept, achievement motivation, and academic self-concept compared to their less resilient peers. Romano, Angelini, Consiglio, and Fiorilli (2021) found that resilient learners displayed an ability to effectively cope with stressful school-related conditions, maintain high motivation levels, and achieve academic excellence despite difficulties. These learners were more likely to reengage and persevere when confronted with challenging academic tasks, leading to several positive outcomes such as increased enjoyment of school, active class participation, and higher self-esteem.

Riveria et al. (2021) propose that by fostering resilience, schools can counteract undesirable behaviors like procrastination, indecision, or indifference among tourism learners. The overarching goal should be to guide learners in cultivating hope and resilience, which in turn empowers them to pursue and achieve their future aspirations, ultimately contributing to greater life satisfaction (Riveria et al., 2021).Kiswarday (2012) presented the following are eight key qualities of a resilient learner: having stable relationships with peers; possessing well-developed problem-solving skills (highlighted in the CT); considering realistic plans; having a positive sense of being able to achieve and deal effectively with tasks; experiencing success in one or more areas of their life; being able to communicate effectively; possessing a strong attachment with at least one adult; and acceptance of responsibility for themselves and their behaviour.

3.3.3 Resilient pedagogy

According to Bozkurt (2020), the sudden shift in teaching and learning placed a lot of psychological pressure on all parties, as the shift to the online medium required a specific set of technical and pedagogical knowledge and skills. Therefore, this steep learning curve required teachers and learners to think and react critically to the situation and develop resilience of a high degree. Dlamini (2004:38) suggests that schools can foster resiliency in learners through several measures, including creating a nurturing and supportive

environment, establishing and communicating high and well-defined expectations, offering opportunities for meaningful engagement, promoting bonding, teaching essential life skills, and setting clear and consistent boundaries within supportive and enabling environments.

In the academic context, resilience refers to an individual's capacity to deal with long-lasting academic challenges that prevent them from advancing academically (Van Vuuren 2014). In this context, resiliency is how teachers and learners can cope with the academic challenges imposed by the pandemic. Post-COVID-19 parts of the school curriculum must address the everyday problems faced by teachers and learners in their effort to live humanized lives. Thus, a transformative and empowering education practice that addresses real-life concerns through dialogue can become the most effective way build and enhance resilience (Khilji, Ahmad, Suleri et al 2021).

Good teaching methods and access to resources become even more relevant and effective in helping to build learners' resilience. Post COVID-19 teaching and learning should stress the importance of an active learning and problem solving to guide learners into becoming critical citizens. Learners should be able to question, discuss, share views or ideas, and, working together, arrive at joint conclusions. Inquiry-based learning methods in the school curriculum require problem-solving, questioning, and working collaboratively supporting critical thinking (Lombardi, Mednick, De Backer and Lombaert 2021). Cefia et al. (2014) identified the following curriculum themes that are needed to foster resilience in the learners: Firstly, developing a growth mind-set, and changing the challenges caused by the pandemic into opportunities for growth and development. It is imperative that learners develop a positive mind-set, develop optimistic thinking, and positive self-talk. Secondly, developing self-determination; individuals need to feel related, competent, and autonomous for optimal functioning and development. Thirdly, learners need to show courage in the face of adversity whilst maintaining an optimistic mind-set despite setbacks or unfair situations such as a dual education system.

Kuyper (2014) observed that learners from higher-class families have a greater likelihood of academic achievement due to the abundance of resources available to them. These learners have better access to various sources of information, such as radio, newspapers, internet, television, libraries, and other materials that promote learning. On the other hand, learners from lower-class families tended to perform poorly in school as their parents often cannot

afford the necessary textbooks and resources that support learning both at home and school (Kuyper 2014). The socio-economic and educational disparities between different classes became even more pronounced during the pandemic, accentuating the dehumanizing inequality in access to education.

3.4 THE CRITICAL AND RESILIENCE THEORIES: A NEXUS

As per Naidu's (2021) analysis, the pandemic highlighted the need for an extensive revision and rethinking of educational and institutional frameworks to ensure long-term survival and resilience against present and future disruptions. The concept of Critical Theory (CT) is founded on its capacity to effect transformation, empowerment and emancipation of marginalised groups within the educational system. As per the findings of Peters and Rizvi (2020), the outbreak of COVID-19 prompted a rethink of the fundamental goals of education, with a focus on encouraging humanization, empowerment and resilience among learners and schools.

Tourism education should provide learners with the necessary skills to effectively contribute to the growth and development of the tourism industry. According to Lombardi et al. (2021), graduates who are well-prepared and liberated have the potential to become agents of change. Lombardi et al. (2021) further opined that learners come across unfamiliar and changing circumstances as they progress in life, necessitating a diverse set of competencies. These skills encompass a range of cognitive and metacognitive abilities, such as critical thinking, creative thinking, learning to learn, and self-regulation. They also include social and emotional competencies like empathy, self-efficacy, and collaboration. Additionally, practical and physical proficiencies, such as information and communication technology skills, are part of these competencies. According to Vandeyar and Swart's (2016) assertion, a teacher assumes the role of a transformative intellectual whose task is to improve learners' capacity to employ critical thinking in addressing daily obstacles. As per the findings of Kamali and Fahim (2011), learners who achieve academic success exhibit problem-solving, analytical, and critical thinking abilities that augment their resilience in confronting challenges encountered in both personal and professional domains. The study conducted by Kamali and Fahim in 2011 suggested a strong correlation between critical thinking as a cognitive ability and resilience as a personality factor.

The integration of critical pedagogy and critical thinking in the instruction and acquisition of tourism knowledge after the COVID-19 pandemic can potentially enhance learners' capacity

to critically evaluate and examine information in the building knowledge process. This approach, as noted by Molthaka (2016), can have a positive impact not only on education but also on learners' future roles in the industry. According to Canton (2012), the tourism industry is currently under the influence of global capitalism. This system aims to prevent the emergence of critical thinkers who may challenge the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a select few. As a result, many individuals are unable to fully benefit from the economic, social, and environmental advantages of tourism, while still being subjected to its associated costs. In order to effect a change in direction, it is imperative that education fosters the development of independent thinkers who possess an in-depth knowledge of the limitations and possibilities of their respective fields. These individuals should be capable of rationalising how various actions can result in outcomes that align with diverse values and objectives. Furthermore, they ought to prioritise the power of logical reasoning over convention, authority, popularity, or social power, as stated by Catons in 2012. Learners with developed problem solving and critical thinking skills are more resilient than their counterparts.

Post COVID-19 learning loss challenges should be addressed and find ways to access quality education for learners especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. As these groups of learners were severely disadvantaged especial due to the lack of digital technology to continue learning during and post COVID-19 era. There is a great need for tourism education to increase the use of technology particularly in the context of blended learning both critical theory and resilience theory have lot to offer in tourism education in the post COVID-19 world. Resilience theory can help to build the capacity of the sector to adapt to and respond to future challenges while critical theory can be used to identify and address underlying inequalities and injustices strengthen by the pandemic. According to Shi and Wolfe (2022) the future of tourism education, relies on developing learners as critical thinkers, problem solvers and ethical leaders. Critical theory and resilience theory can work together to strengthen the tourism education long term. By building resilience the sector will better prepared to whether future crises and by addressing underlying inequalities, the sector will more inclusive and sustainable. Together these two theories can help to create a more robust and resilient tourism education which is the main objective of the underlying study.

3.5 CONCLUSION

There are differences in how individuals cope with such obstacles as posed by the pandemic. As already discussed, those with established resilience attributes will find it easier to adjust and function in the face of adversity. However, in the case of the dual education systems that exists in South Africa, a dehumanizing situation exists and was accentuated by the pandemic. While systems in some schools enabled teachers and learners to adapt to online distance learning using technologies that they were already familiar with, the majority of schools from marginalized communities suffered triple blows of poor connectivity, lack of gadgets and lack of requisite skills. The utilisation of RT highlights the necessity of instructing students to effectively manage the demands and challenges of life by means of employing discourse as a means to develop and enhance their critical thinking abilities. Attaining a sustained advantage requires a concentration on creating individual resilience and analytical reasoning. The development of emotional resilience and positive self-concept among young individuals can facilitate their ability to cope with the challenges of life. But how do dehumanized learners transcend their socio-economic situations and bounce back from a debilitating phenomenon such as COVID-19? It is even their responsibility to deal with inequalities that persist in the country more than a quarter of a decade after the institution of a democratically elected government. Will critical thinking skills and efforts of inculcate resiliency attributes help improve their conditions? Chapter four explores the methodological choices made by the researcher to conduct the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter three laid out on the theoretical underpinnings that served to buttress the study. This chapter outlines the research design used in the study and also provides justifications for the methodological choices made by the researcher. According to Groundar (2012), research methodology refers to a structured approach for addressing a problem, and it outlines the scientific procedures that are used in conducting research. Hence, this chapter discusses and expounds on the research methodologies and processes that were applied in the conducting of this study. Groundar (2012) further stated that research methods encompass the various techniques employed in conducting research. The chapter examines common assumptions in philosophy and subsequently identifies the pragmatic paradigm as the study's framework. Furthermore, the chapter elaborates on the research methodologies and design that were used in the investigation, including strategies, instruments, and data collection and analysis methods for data collection and analysis.

4.2 RESEARCH ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY AND PARADIGM

Theoretical perspectives in research are informed by the epistemological framework, which subsequently determines the research methodology. The methodology, in turn, determines the selection of research methods employed in the study (Al-Ababneh, 2020; Ai-Saadi, 2014). Further, data collection, analysis and interpretation techniques are informed by underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions. The present investigation has employed a pragmatic epistemological framework, as discussed by Chowdhury (2019) and Ugwu, Ekere, and Onoh (2021). The study views reality as an internal, fluid, socially constructed, multiple and emerging phenomenon, making knowledge subjective, imbued with values, specific and dependent upon context. The objective of the study was to provide a description and an understanding of the input provided by the participants, and to analyse the researcher's interpretation of the participants' verbal and emotional responses towards the phenomenon under investigation.

4.2.1 Research paradigm

According to Allemang, Sitter and Dimitropoulos (2021), a research paradigm refers to a theoretical construct that encompasses a system of beliefs and values that provide guidance on how research is conducted, and knowledge is conceptualised within scientific

communities. Aliyu, Singhry, Adamu and Abubakar (2015), view a paradigm as a conceptual framework that serves as the basis for constructing theories. It has an important effect on an individual's perception of the world, shapes their perspective, and influences their comprehension of the interrelationships between various phenomena. Ugwu et al. (2021), posited that a research paradigm is characterised as the cognitive framework or philosophical view of the researcher that shapes the selection of research topics, the methodology employed, and the interpretation of study findings. Consequently, the establishment of a research paradigm will provide a fundamental basis for subsequent decisions pertaining to methodology, design, and method. In agreement, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) asserted that the term paradigm pertains to a fundamental system of beliefs that directs actions.

The researcher determined that the research objectives align with the criteria of a pragmatic philosophy. Chowdhury (2019) argued that pragmatism aligns research methodology with the objectives of the study and the research problem, while also affording the flexibility to employ any combination of investigative tools, as exemplified in the present study. Pragmatism employs a combination of objective and subjective criteria, as noted by Al-Ababneh (2020). Creswell (2003) concurred that pragmatism facilitates the use of various research methods, diverse perspectives, and various assumptions, as well as different modes of gathering and interpreting data in the context of mixed methods research. Therefore, a theoretical framework that guided this study recommends the utilisation of mixed methods as a practical approach to comprehending human conduct. The study utilised a pragmatic paradigm that incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and analysis. The primary objective of this study was to effect change in tourism education, rather than solely to understand the phenomenon being examined. The rationale behind employing the pragmatic paradigm in this investigation was to employ the experiences of human actors such as teachers, subject advisors, and industry partners as the principal mode of knowledge construction. Utilising a mixed method approach can yield an in-depth understanding of research inquiries and findings, resulting in a fair assessment of the challenges and opportunities associated with the issue under investigation.

4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The researcher purposefully used a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods due to the nature of the research questions and research objectives. The reason for employing both approaches is that some objectives required an assessment of the

information obtained from participants, while others required statistical and mathematical approaches. Therefore, the qualitative aspect of the study focused on an in-depth examination of responses, while the quantitative aspect provided a broad understanding of issues under investigation. The mixed-method approach allowed the researcher to gain more comprehensive understanding of the research topic as well as assisted in overcoming limitation of both qualitative and quantitative research methods and it further allows for a more rigorous analysis of the data. Therefore using the mixed method approach allowed the researcher to meet the objectives of the study as it provide a more practical and actionable understanding of the research topic.

4.3.1 Research methodology

According to Aliyu et al. (2015), qualitative research refers to a type of research that generates outcomes that are not obtained through statistical techniques or other forms of quantification. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) asserted that the use of the qualitative approach in research allows for a comprehensive comprehension of human behaviour and experience across diverse contexts. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative methodologies are appropriate for the purpose of identifying factors and gathering novel information pertaining to populations that have been historically marginalised or understudied. Aliyu et al. (2015) argued that qualitative data can be obtained through various methods such as interviews, focus groups, observation, or document analysis. Interviews were used to gather qualitative data from the subject advisors as well as through the qualitative sections of the questionnaires used to collect data from teachers and industry partners. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data from tourism advisors. This method enabled the advisors to provide subjective interpretations, feelings and descriptions of the challenges faced by educators amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Davies and Hughes (2014), the approach in question is a research methodology that employs interpretive materials to enhance understanding of the world. Furthermore, this methodology entails observing individuals within their respective environments to gain insight into their knowledge and encounters (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The use of the qualitative methodology provided the researcher with the chance to pose open-ended questions to delve deeper into the subject matter and acquire extensive information (Holliday, 2002).

Asenahabi (2019) and Mollel (2020) defined quantitative research as a method of research that generates data that is suitable to statistical analysis and can be quantified numerically. The researcher gathered quantitative data from teachers of tourism in grades 10 to 12 from two districts demarcated in Chapter 1. The survey instrument was employed to elicit the views and first-hand knowledge of teachers regarding the challenges they encountered amidst the COVID-19 outbreak (Appendix 1). Another survey instrument was used to gather information from tourism industry partners in the Harry Gwala and uMgungundlovu districts (Appendix 1). The survey aimed to elicit the industry's perspective on the calibre of learners, knowledge, skills and attitudes they anticipated receiving in the post-COVID-19 era.

4.3.2 Research design

The research design pertains to the plan for connecting conceptual research issues to relevant and achievable empirical research. Asenahabi (2019) emphasized that a research design serves as a guiding framework for research procedures, providing specific direction. It refers to the overall strategy that a researcher adopts to systematically and logically integrate various study components, effectively addressing the research problem (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). The selection of a research design plays a crucial role in determining the nature of the data to be collected and the analytical procedures required to achieve the intended outcomes. It also clarifies the criteria for ensuring data validity and outlines the methodologies to be used for data gathering and analysis to address the research questions.

The study used a cross-sectional research design to obtain data from various high schools various industry partners and subject advisors in uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipalities. Cross-sectional study designs can be employed in population-based surveys and are conducted at a single point in time or within a brief timeframe (Levin, 2006; Setia, 2016). The cross-sectional design is a pertinent approach when the aim of the research is to describe the associations among discrete variables and circumstances, and in this case, it was executed in the form of a survey as suggested by Levin (2006) and Hunziker and Blankenagel (2021) and interviews. Cross-sectional studies are occasionally conducted to examine the correlations between risk factors and the outcome of interest, despite their drawback of not addressing trends.

4.4 RESEARCH POPULATION, SAMPLING FRAME, AND SAMPLING METHODS

The following subheadings deal with the study population, sampling frame, sampling methods, and sample size.

4.4.1 Research population and sample

As stated by Bertram and Christiansen (2014), the study population refers to the total number of cases included in the research. On the other hand, the research population encompasses a larger collection of individuals who are the primary focus of the inquiry. In this study, the study population consists of teachers of tourism from Grades 10 to 12 learners at high schools in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala Districts, tourism subject advisors, and industry partners within these districts. The inclusion of various types of schools, ranging from well-resourced private schools to poorly resourced public schools, ensures a comprehensive representation. Additionally, the involvement of tourism industry partners allows for the collection of detailed information regarding the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by tourism learners to enter the industry.

4.4.2 Population and sampling frame

A sampling frame refers to a comprehensive list of the actual cases that will serve as the source for the sample selection process. According to Shepard (2000) and Taherdoost (2016), it is important that the sampling frame is representative of the population. The selection of a suitable sample is contingent upon the availability of a sound sampling frame. The present study utilised a sampling frame that included all educators who teach tourism to students in Grades 10 to 12 within the Harry Gwala and uMgungundlovu District municipalities. The subject advisors of the mentioned districts were consulted to gather an accurate list of schools and tourism educators within the specified regions. According to Table 4.1, at the time of the study there were 142 teachers of tourism from both districts.

Table 4.1: Population and sampling frame

Schools			
<i>District</i>	<i>Number of schools</i>	<i>Number of teachers</i>	<i>Sampled</i>
Harry Gwala District	31	54	29
uMgungundlovu District	43	89	54
Total	74	143	83
Industry partners			
<i>Sectors</i>	<i>Number of establishments</i>	<i>Sampled</i>	
Accommodation	87	29	
Restaurants	5	4	
Tour Operators	5	0	
Attractions	3	3	
Total	95	36	

The objective of the study was to achieve an equitable distribution of representation for all stakeholders within the tourism sector. The sample population was selected to include a diverse array of tourism enterprises in the respective regions, comprising lodging establishments, tourist attractions, transportation services, tour operators, and travel agencies. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma Municipality in the Harry Gwala District and Pietermaritzburg tourism in the uMgungundlovu district collaborated to generate a dynamic email database list which was provided to the researcher. An additional inventory of all accommodations was obtained from the website of the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA). Since the population size within the defined geographic parameters was 29 individuals (Table 4.1), it was deemed appropriate to incorporate the entire population into the survey. The questionnaires were distributed via email to those participants who had provided an email address. However, owing to a dearth of responses from the mailing list, the researcher opted to personally visit the nearby establishments that were willing to partake in the study.

4.4.3 Sampling method and sample size

Sampling is a methodological procedure that involves the deliberate selection of a representative portion of a population or a subset of individuals from the population of interest (Chandramohan, 2013). The researcher employed two types of non-probability sampling, namely purposive sampling and convenience sampling, to select study participants. Purposive sampling is a method that entails the identification and selection of individuals or groups who possess knowledge or experience in the phenomenon under investigation (Cresswell and Clark 2011). The use of specific criteria to identify the most appropriate

participants who are deemed to be representative of the population is a requisite for this sampling technique (Wagner et al., 2012). The use of purposive sampling afforded the researcher the opportunity to deliberately select participants who were likely to provide in-depth and extensive data, thereby facilitating a better understanding of the study's objectives and research inquiries. The researcher purposefully chose only schools that offered tourism as a subject from Grades 10 to 12. Within the represented schools only tourism educators were selected as they were knowledgeable and informative about the subject of tourism and would have been teaching under the harsh conditions of COVID-19. The inputs of these teachers would provide rich insights required for the study.

For the purposes of this study, an informed choice was made of three subject advisors specialising in tourism. At the time of this study, the uMgungundlovu District was serviced by a single subject advisor who was overseeing all schools offering tourism, while Harry Gwala was serviced by subject advisors who jointly managed tourism alongside another subject. All these advisors were included in the study because it was feasible and cost effective to do so. The selection of subject advisors for the study was based on their considerable expertise, practical skills, and extensive experience as tourism education experts. The participants were chosen by the researcher based on their ability to provide reliable and relevant information that could effectively address the research questions and objectives (Creswell, 2012). The participants were contacted through multiple channels, including email, attached letters, and WhatsApp messages, which were disseminated through tourism teacher curriculum groups. Additionally, content workshops were set up to facilitate discussions regarding the study's objectives, thereby ensuring that data collection was a seamless and comfortable process for all participants.

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that enables the researcher to select study locations, sites, and participants based on their easy accessibility (Cohen et al., 2018). The researcher employed the convenience sampling technique to recruit participants from the tourism industry, based on factors such as cost-effectiveness, accessibility, availability, and time constraints. Mahmoudi-Hamidabad and Farrokhi (2012) argued that convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that involves the collection of data from readily available population members who are willing to participate in the study. Consequently, a comprehensive list of all tourism industry affiliates that were registered was

accessed, and only those sectors that were accessible and willing to participate were conveniently selected for the investigation.

According to Table 4.1, the sample size for the study comprised 74 schools which offered tourism from Grades 10 to 12 with 143 tourism educators. According to Qualitrics (2022); Research Advisor (2005) in a case of a population size of 143, a sample of 83 would yield a 95% level of confidence in the results with a $\pm 7\%$ margin of error. A list with a total of 95 registered tourism companies was obtained, and it was decided to include all of these in the survey. However, the email list did not work due to a lack of response from the participants, therefore the researcher decided to use the convenience sampling method to collect data from participants who were close proximately to the researcher thus reaching only 36 tourism industry partners. The accommodation sector accounted for 80% of the total number of participants, followed by restaurants (11%) and the attraction sector (8%), so the sizeable sample allowed the researcher to refine the data collection methods and adjust the data collection instruments. Therefore the sample size for the study was deemed large enough to ensure that the findings are statistically significant and generalizable to the target participants.

4.5 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study is conducted on a smaller scale in order to prepare for a larger study. The pilot study evaluated the reliability and accuracy of both the research tool and the approach planned for gathering data. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014:55), a pilot study is carried out prior to the main study with the aim of identifying any flaws in the research design and instruments. Calitz (2009:258) added that conducting a pilot study can be advantageous in evaluating the practicality of research tools such as questionnaires and interview schedules, as well as the overall research process. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested through a pilot study, which was conducted in December 2022.

Prior to the study, all research instruments underwent a pre-testing process to ensure their ability to elicit the necessary responses and address potentially sensitive questions. The interview schedule was pilot tested on 5 tourism educators who were not selected to participate in the study. This study assessed the validity of the research questions and objectives. The objective was to detect and address any issues related to unsuitable wording and ambiguity in the questions. The pilot study additionally provided the researcher with insight into the duration required for participants to complete the survey. Following the pilot

study, a number of minor modifications were implemented, primarily pertaining to the phrasing and structure of the questions within the interview guide as provided to the Research Ethics Committee prior to issuing of the Ethical Clearance letter. A pilot study involving industry partners was also conducted, wherein three tourism enterprises in the Midlands Meander (not part of the sample) were involved. The pilot study was used to test clarity and readability of the questions. Flaws that were identified from the pilot study; firstly some questions were too long and complex for the participants to understand. Secondly, some questions were repeated. Therefore, after the pilot testing and all necessary modifications were made such as rewording of questions as well as adding and removing some questions and the order of questions. The questionnaires were administered directly to the sampled participants, who are representative for the purpose of the study.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This study was located within the pragmatic paradigm and so it adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods used within a cross-sectional design contextualizing the experiences of teachers, subject advisors, and industry partners in Harry Gwala and uMgungundlovu District Municipalities. This allowed the researcher to use various methods of data collection to ensure that the limitations of one method were countered by the strengths of another. The use of a mixed method for data collection allowed the researcher to fully capture phenomena, thus making it possible to fully understand the research problem and to answer the main research questions.

Data collection involves systematically gathering and measuring information about variables of interest in a well-established and structured manner, enabling researchers to address specific research questions (Kabir, 2016). The data collection process was done over a period of four weeks from January 2023 to February 2023. Quantitative data collection was done employing two different questionnaires for tourism educators (Appendix 1) and industry partners (Appendix 2), and qualitative data collection was done utilizing semi-structured interviews with tourism subject advisors in uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala districts. Terre Blanche, Durheim, and Painter (2006) suggest that a qualitative approach is appropriate when the aim is to explore the subjective experiences of individuals. For this qualitative research, the semi-structured interview instrument (Appendix 3) was selected as the data collection method, as it allows for in-depth data elicitation through open-ended questions about the study subject (Dutta and Smita, 2020). Blanche et al. (2006), stated that qualitative

interviewing allows the researcher to interview in a more naturally interactive form. Therefore, the interview research instrument had questions on the effects of COVID-19 on tourism education, models that could be used to enhance tourism education post-COVID-19 and was used to collect data from tourism subject advisors. The interviews aimed to collect rich, descriptive data through a two-way conversation between the participants and the researcher (Wagner et al., 2012).

Data from tourism educators and industry partners were collected using a questionnaire. The two different types of questionnaires were useful data collection tools for the researcher to reach a larger population, such as in the case of 143 educators and 95 industry partners. As a result, self-completion questionnaires were developed with a Google form link, and 95 questionnaires were distributed to tourism enterprises via email and a questionnaire was attached to the email. However, accommodation accounted for the highest number (27) of participants followed by the restaurants (4) and the attraction sector with (3) participants. Questionnaires were also distributed to 143 tourism educators, however only 84 responses were received from the participants.

4.6.1 The questionnaire

Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2006) define a questionnaire as a set of written questions used to collect information from participants. Questionnaires offer several advantages, including ease of administration, the generation of reliable data, and relatively simple coding, analysis, and interpretation (Malhotra, 2004). In this study, questionnaires were considered valuable tools for gathering data from two subsets of the sample: teachers and industry partners. The questionnaire's design was based on the literature review and research objectives. The researcher created a preliminary questionnaire and then reviewed its content, considering aspects such as the time required for completion, the participants' comprehension of the wording of questions, and the appropriateness and relevance of the questions before finalizing it.

The questions were simple, short, and relevant to the purpose of the study. The questionnaires were self-administered by the participants after explaining the purpose of the research and the participants were asked to fill in their responses. The questionnaire included both unstructured and structured question items. Two sets of questionnaires were developed - one for tourism educators and the other for industry partners. Each questionnaire took an

estimated 20 minutes to complete. The questionnaire for the teachers (Appendix 1) was formulated in three parts; the first section contained the biographical information of the participants. The second section contained the Likert scale to indicate the degree of agreement and disagreement from 1 to 5 which are: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The third section was composed of semi-structured question items that permitted the participants to use their own words to express themselves in respect of the issue under investigation. The questionnaire was designed to meet the following themes:

- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism education,
- Tourism curriculum delivery challenges during the pandemic,
- Possible resilient approaches to teach tourism post COVID-19.

The questionnaire for industry partners (Appendix 2) where both structured and unstructured, the first part of the questionnaire had closed-ended questions: satisfied; dissatisfied, and yes and no, then the latter part of the questionnaire had open-ended questions. One of the main themes that the questionnaire sought answers to was whether tourism education was meeting the requirements and needs of the tourism industry. The questionnaire was formulated and developed as follows: The questionnaires were formed using Google Forms and a link was sent to tourism educator groups in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala districts. For educators who did not have internet access, the questionnaire was distributed through WhatsApp to participants with instructions and clarification of the purpose of the study. Lastly, the researcher distributed a questionnaire to participants during the orientation workshops that took two days.

Google Forms were used as the platform used to develop questionnaires, which preferred to fill the questionnaire in online and submit it. This was convenient for both the participants and the researcher. Emails were used to distribute the questionnaires to all sampled industry partners, a consent letter was attached to the email explaining the process of data collection.

4.6.2 Semi-structured interviews

The interview guide (Appendix 3) comprised the introduction and details of the interview process as well as the questions that were used for the interviews. An interview is characterized as a distinctive dialogue between the researcher and participants, distinguished from our everyday conversations (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014). This means that interviews involve an interactive exchange of ideas between the interviewer and interviewee.

Maree (2012:87) defines an interview as a "two-way conversation in which the interviewer poses questions to gather data and gain insights into the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions, and behavior of participants."

Ryan et al. (2009) highlights the semi-structured interview as a more adaptable approach to the interview process, granting the interviewer the opportunity to ask open-ended questions that elicit spontaneous and in-depth responses from participants. In this study, semi-structured interviews were employed as the second data collection technique. According to Phellas, Bloch and Seale (2011), semi-structured interview guides provide a clear set of instructions for interviews and can provide consistent comparable qualitative data. A semi-structured interview was employed to obtain information from tourism subject advisors. The interviews allowed the researcher to enter into the participants' perspectives and managed to make them explicit. Questions for interviews had the same format and sequence of words and questions for each participant to ensure reliability and validity. The semi-structured questions meant that the participants were not limited in their responses to the questions. In some cases, follow-up questions were asked to seek clarity and broaden the response. All interviews for the study were conducted in English which was the participants' preferred language, however, code-switching was allowed between Isizulu and English for participants who wished to do so. An interview schedule was used to ensure that relevant topics are covered.

The key themes identified in the interview:

- The challenges faced by tourism educators during the COVID-19 pandemic,
- What could be done to promote quality tourism curriculum delivery for changing the tourism industry.

Appointments to conduct interviews were made prior, thus ensuring that participants were comfortable during interview sessions. The semi-structured interviews were one-on-one sessions with the participants, and data were captured using a voice recorder on a smartphone, as well as taking down notes. The researcher began the interview by summarising the purpose of the study and the role of the interviewee in the research process. The interview method allowed the researcher to seek clarity and probe for deeper understanding during the interview process. Interviews lasted for approximately 20-30 minutes. Transcription took place straight after the interview while the responses were still fresh in the mind of the researcher.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data were subjected to analysis using descriptive statistics via SPSS Vision 24.0. This approach facilitated the researcher in reducing, summarizing, and describing the quantitative data derived from empirical evidence (Polit and Beck, 2004). For the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews and the qualitative sections of the questionnaires, a coding system and thematic content analysis were employed. Thematic content analysis was utilized to analyze the interview data. Since the study adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection, themes were utilized for extracting meaning from the qualitative data, while statistical representation tools were employed for the quantitative data, enabling a comprehensive interpretation of the participants' responses.

4.7.1 Thematic data analysis

This study employed thematic analysis to ensure an accurate representation of the collected data, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The interview schedule's question items were associated with the research questions and objectives that were introduced in Chapter 1. Thematic analysis was described by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a systematic approach that enables the researcher to identify, examine, and present recurring patterns and themes that surfaced from the collected data. The data were subjected to active, analytical, and critical examination in order to extract meaning. This process helped to identify relevant aspects of the data that were pertinent to the research questions, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2012). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the use of this technique has the potential to offer an accurate and detailed representation of data, thereby making it a flexible and useful resource. The researcher initiated the process by meticulously selecting information that could be fully understood by the intended audience. The data was subsequently categorised into themes, and patterns, explanations, and perspectives related to the research topic were identified through interpretation. Thematic analysis was deemed appropriate as it facilitated the interpretation of themes and sub-themes that corresponded to the relevant information extracted from the collected data. The formulated themes were verified with the collected data to ascertain their compatibility. The study presented themes and explanations by utilising a methodology that involved making generalisations based on specific explanations derived from data collected through semi-structured interviews.

4.7.2 Descriptive statistics

As per Hayes (2023), descriptive statistics serve as concise informative measures that summarize a provided data set, which may represent either the entire population or a sample from a population. The quantitative data collected from tourism educators and industry partners through a questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS version 28.0, which enabled the generation of tables, graphs, and inferences to provide insights about the data set. The primary objective of employing descriptive statistics in this study was to offer comprehensive information about the data collected from the participants.

4.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity pertains to whether the measurement designed for a specific concept accurately reflects the intended concept (Mollel, 2020). To ensure the validity of the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted, as detailed in section 4.5. The instruments were refined based on the pilot study results, and evidence of these modifications was provided to the Research Ethics Committee, as explained earlier. These adjustments aimed to enhance the validity of the data collected during the research process.

Reliability, on the other hand, refers to the consistency of outcomes when measuring the same phenomenon using the same methods in repeated research (Mollel, 2020). An instrument is considered reliable if its measurements accurately reflect the true scores of the attribute under investigation (Polit and Beck, 2004). In this study, the reliability of the data was ensured through several measures. Participants were provided with transcripts to verify that the results genuinely represented their views and opinions, ensuring data reliability (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014). The researcher also employed Cronbach's correlation coefficient to assess the reliability and validity of the instrument. The responses from the pilot study underwent a reliability test using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results of the scaled items used in both the pilot test and the final survey data collection are presented in Table 4.1. The reliability score approximated the recommended Cronbach's alpha value, indicating an acceptable and consistent scoring for this section of the research.

Table 4.2: Reliability statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
0,573	11

To address transferability and generalizability of the results the researcher contextualized the findings within existing peer reviewed literature (Chapter 2). Validity and reliability for the questionnaire for testing the questionnaire for both tourism educators and industry partners was ensure firstly through the pilot study. Secondly, reliable statistical methods were used to analyse the data and to ensure that the result are statistically significant.

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study adhered to ethical procedures as stipulated by DUT. The process involved completing an online *Introduction to Research Ethics* course and acquiring a TRREE Certificate (Appendix 4), acquiring an ethical clearance letter from the Ethics Committee (Appendix 5) and securing a gatekeeper's letter from the District Managers of sampled schools (Appendices 6-8). Prior to initiating the interviews and administering the questionnaires, each participant was provided with an information letter (Appendix 9) that delineated the study's objectives and the anticipated conduct of the research and participant. The participants were invited to voluntarily participate in the study and assured that their identities would not be revealed.

The concept of informed consent entails that research participants are provided with sufficient information pertaining to the research, possess the cognitive ability to understand the information, and possess the autonomy to make an independent decision to either consent or decline participation in the research (Polit and Beck 2004). Prior to initiating the interviews and survey, participating organisations were furnished with a document containing of the study details via email, including an information sheet and a consent letter (Appendix 10). These documents explained the objectives of the study and the anticipated involvement of the participants. Invitation letters were extended to sampled participants to participate voluntarily and they were informed that the study was solely for academic purposes. The researcher obtained consent to record all interviews from the subject advisors. The researcher clarified that all recordings would be securely stored on their computer for a period of five years, safeguarded by suitable passwords, and subsequently deleted. A letter identifying the aim of the study was distributed to teachers, requesting their informed consent to participate.

The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and they retained the right to withdraw from the study at any point.

4.9.1 Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity refers to the state where even the researcher cannot connect a participant with the information provided by that person (Polit and Beck, 2004). In this study, anonymity was ensured, and participants' identities remained undisclosed. Participants were duly informed about their right to anonymity and confidentiality, with their names, school names, and organizational details safeguarded. Confidentiality, on the other hand, is upheld when participants' individual identities are protected in the study, and the information they provide is not publicly disclosed (Polit and Beck, 2004).

The concepts of confidentiality and anonymity were clearly explained in the consent letter, which was attached along with the questionnaires and interview schedule. For data capture, each questionnaire was assigned a unique number by the researcher. During the analysis, responses were aggregated to obscure any connection to a specific individual, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. This step was taken to prevent any possibility of attributing responses to particular participants and to safeguard the findings from potential legal issues.

4.10 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter provided a comprehensive and in-depth account of the research design and methodology employed in conducting the study. By delineating the research paradigm, methodology, methods, and design, the researcher has laid a solid foundation for investigating the research problem. The clear description of the target population, sampling frame, and sample size ensures the study's representativeness and enhances the validity of the findings. The explanation of the data collection process reveals the systematic approach taken to acquire valuable data, while the explanation of data analysis methods highlights the rigor and reliability of the study's results. Moreover, the ethical considerations addressed in this chapter emphasises the researcher's commitment to safeguarding the rights and welfare of the participants. As a result of this precise methodology, readers can have confidence in the integrity of the study's outcomes and the credibility of the conclusions drawn from the data analysis in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results that were derived from the process of data collection. It begins by examining the findings obtained from the questionnaire administered to tourism educators in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala districts. The chapter also provides a detailed analysis of the outcomes derived from questionnaires administered to a specific set of industry partners within the tourism sector. The latter section of the chapter centres on the semi-structured interviews that were obtained from subject advisors in the field of tourism. The questionnaire served as a principal instrument for gathering quantitative data from tourism educators and industry partners, while qualitative data was acquired from tourism subject advisors via semi-structured interviews.

This chapter will provide an overview of the descriptive statistics, which will be presented using graphs and tables. The data used for analysis was collected and processed using SPSS version 28.0 and Excel. The presentation of inferential statistics will include correlations and chi-square test values, with their interpretation relying on the use of p-values (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014). The data was presented using a descriptive analysis approach, which involved the utilisation of figures and tables that facilitate quick comprehension by the intended audience. Additionally, a thematic analysis method was employed to identify the underlying themes within the data. Furthermore, an interpretation of the data was provided. The following themes that emerged from the data collection method which are analysed for better interpretation and analysis:

- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism education,
- Tourism curriculum delivery challenges during the pandemic,
- Possible resilient approaches to teach tourism post COVID-19
- The challenges faced by tourism educators during the COVID-19 pandemic,
- What could be done to promote quality tourism curriculum delivery for changing the tourism industry.

The primary focus of this chapter will be a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the data and has been organised in a manner that enhances readability for the reader. This chapter offers a thorough explanation and assessment of the data obtained from tourism

educators and tourism subject advisors. The latter part of this chapter provides a detailed presentation of the data obtained from tourism industry partners that were deliberately chosen for the purpose of this study.

This study aimed to examine the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism education in schools within the Harry Gwala and uMgungundlovu districts. The objective was to develop a model that could strengthen the resilience of tourism education in the post-pandemic period. Data analysis focused on the following research questions:

- How has COVID-19 impacted tourism education in high schools in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality?
- Why is it imperative that tourism education meets the need and requirements of the tourism industry post-COVID-19?
- What are the challenges faced by tourism educators in delivering tourism curriculum during the pandemic in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality?
- What can be done to promote quality tourism curriculum delivery for the changing tourism industry in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality?
- What model can be utilised to ensure the resilience of tourism education post-COVID-19 in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality?

5.2 THE SAMPLE AND RESPONSE RATE

A total of 143 questionnaires was distributed to educators of which 83 were returned completed, indicating a 58% response rate. On the other hand, 36 questionnaires were sent to industry partners and a 100% response rate was obtained. The response rate for the two categories is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Response rate

Category	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of responses received	Response rate
Educators	143	83	58%
Industry	36	36	100%

5.3 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The research instrument utilised by educators was a questionnaire which comprised a total of 12 items, and this was assigned a level of measurement categorised as either nominal or ordinal. The survey consisted of two sections: one section focused on collecting biographical

data, while the other section aimed to assess the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism education. The research instrument utilised for industry partners was a questionnaire which comprised six items, employing a nominal level of measurement. This instrument aimed to assess the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the industry sector and the intake of tourism learners.

5.4 RELIABILITY STATISTICS

The essential elements of precision in this study are reliability and validity. Reliability is determined by obtaining multiple measurements from the same subjects. A reliability coefficient of 0.60 or higher is considered "acceptable" for a newly developed construct. In this research, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was utilized to assess the internal consistency of the factor. Table 5.2 presents the Cronbach's alpha score for all the items included in the teachers' questionnaire. The reliability score aligns with the recommended Cronbach's alpha value, indicating an acceptable and consistent scoring for this section of the study. The questionnaire for teachers consisted of 12 items with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.673, affirming the reliability of each item. However, for the questionnaire designed for industry partners, no reliability test was applicable due to the nature of the questions.

Table 5.2: Reliability statistics (teachers)

Number of items	N of Items Cronbach's Alpha
12	0.673

5.5 FACTOR ANALYSIS

Principal Component Analysis (PCA), also known as factor analysis, was performed on the scales to ascertain whether the items within each scale effectively measured a single representative factor. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS) were utilized for this purpose. The PCA was used in the study to identify the patterns and relationships between variables to reduce the complexity of the data set. The PCA and KMO could be used to inform policy decisions and innervations aimed at improving tourism education post COVID-19 to reach the objectives and purpose of the study.

KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity (tourism educators)

The suitability of factor analysis for this sample was assessed using the KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity, as presented in Table 5.3. These two tests

serve as indicators to determine if the data is appropriate for structure detection. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy represents the proportion of variance in the variables that could potentially be attributed to underlying factors. High values of the KMO statistic, approaching 1.0, suggest that factor analysis may be suitable for the data. On the other hand, if the value is below 0.50, the results of the factor analysis are likely to be less useful.

Table 5.3: KMO and Bartlett's Test (tourism educators)

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
	Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.
0.504	79.262	21	< 0.001

Based on the data presented in Table 5.3, all the necessary conditions for conducting factor analysis have been met. Specifically, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy value exceeded the minimum requirement of 0.500, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance with a p-value less than 0.001, supporting the factorability of the correlational matrix. Although the KMO value of 0.504 was not excellent, it still fell within an acceptable range. Given that all conditions were satisfactory, there was sufficient justification to proceed with the factor analysis in order to further examine the significance of the variables.

The primary objective of factor analysis is to simplify data in a way that facilitates the interpretation and comprehension of relationships and patterns (Yong and Pearce, 2013). In this study, factor analysis was utilized to condense data and present several questions from the questionnaire under a smaller number of hypothetical or theoretical factors. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) define factor analysis as a method of grouping variables that share common characteristics. The matrix tables in the study include a summarized table displaying the results of the KMO and Bartlett's Test, and in all cases, the conditions for factor analysis were met, allowing for the application of the factor analysis procedure. For this study, principal component extraction was chosen as the appropriate method for factor analysis. It was performed solely on the Likert scale items. Additionally, specific sections were further subdivided into finer components, as demonstrated in Table 5.4 in the rotated component matrix.

Table 5. 4: Rotated Component Matrix (tourism educators)

	Component		
	1	2	3
COVID-19 impacted on the teaching and learning of tourism in my school	0.873	-0.157	0.033
I think that the impact of COVID-19 on tourism teaching was similar across the whole of South Africa	0.893	0.196	-0.082
I think that rural areas suffered more than the affluent urban areas	-0.093	0.329	0.749
Tourism education should provide adequate skills that are required in the tourism industry	0.039	-0.160	0.783
The COVID-19 pandemic gave learners new learning opportunities that they were not familiar example online learning	0.144	0.798	-0.154
The changes in the curriculum during COVID-19 impacts on my teaching strategies	-0.117	0.669	0.278
It was easy for me to adapt to the changes in the curriculum, as I received enough training and guidance from DoE post COVID-19	-0.002	0.459	0.020

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

Factor analysis is a statistical technique primarily employed for data reduction. In survey research, factor analysis is commonly used to represent several questions with a smaller number of hypothetical factors. For this study, the principal component analysis was utilized as the extraction method, with the rotation method being Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. This orthogonal rotation method minimizes the number of variables with high loadings on each factor, making it easier to interpret the factors and identify inter-correlations between variables. Items with similar loadings suggest measurement along a similar factor.

An examination of the content of items loading at or above 0.5 (and using the highest loading when items cross-loaded above this value) effectively measured along various components. However, factor analysis was not conducted for the industry partner questionnaire due to its design. Instead, this section focused on individual statements and discussed scoring patterns. The patterns were grouped according to different themes based on commonalities. The values with the highest loading above 0.5 were chosen as indicators of a particular component. Field (2009) emphasizes that factor loadings indicate the inherent importance of a specific variable to a particular factor. In section B of the study, it was observed that the variables loaded along three components (sub-themes). This indicates that participants identified different trends within this section. The use of colour codes was employed to identify different variables that address the same underlying concept, creating sub-themes based on significant levels of agreement about the statements. Each grouping of variables is assigned a subtheme

name and grouped under one factor (component). The variables within each grouping contribute to the strength and significance of the components, thereby impacting the research objectives and the overall aim of the study. It is noted that the variables that constituted Section B loaded along 3 components (sub-themes), as follows:

Component 1: The impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning

Variables include:

- Q1: COVID-19 impacted the teaching and learning of tourism in my school (Factor loading: 0.873).
- Q2: I think that the impact of COVID-19 on tourism teaching was similar across the whole of South Africa (Factor loading: 0.893).

Component 2: New learning opportunities

Variables include:

- Q5: The COVID-19 pandemic gave learners new learning opportunities that they were not familiar example online learning (Factor loading: 0.798).
- Q6: The changes in the curriculum during COVID-19 impact on my teaching strategies (Factor loading: 0.669).

Component 3: Specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism education

Variables include:

- Q3: I think that rural areas suffered more than the affluent urban areas (Factor loading 0.749).
- Q4: Tourism education should provide adequate skills that are required in the tourism industry (Factor loading: 0.783).

5.6 QUANTITATIVE DATA (TOURISM EDUCATORS)

This chapter presents the outcomes and engages in a discussion of the findings derived from the questionnaires employed in this study. The primary instrument employed for data collection was a questionnaire, which was disseminated to a total of 83 tourism educators located in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala districts. The data obtained from the participants' responses was analysed using SPSS version 28.0. The findings are presented in the form of descriptive statistics, which provide a concise summary of a dataset through

visual representations. In the context of reporting research findings, it is typical to include an assertion of statistical significance as part of the traditional approach. The p-value is derived from a test statistic, and findings that are considered statistically significant are denoted by a p-value of less than 0.05 (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014).

5.6.1 Biographical data

Prior to discussing the study findings, this chapter provides an overview of the demographic information pertaining to the study participants, who in this case are tourism educators.

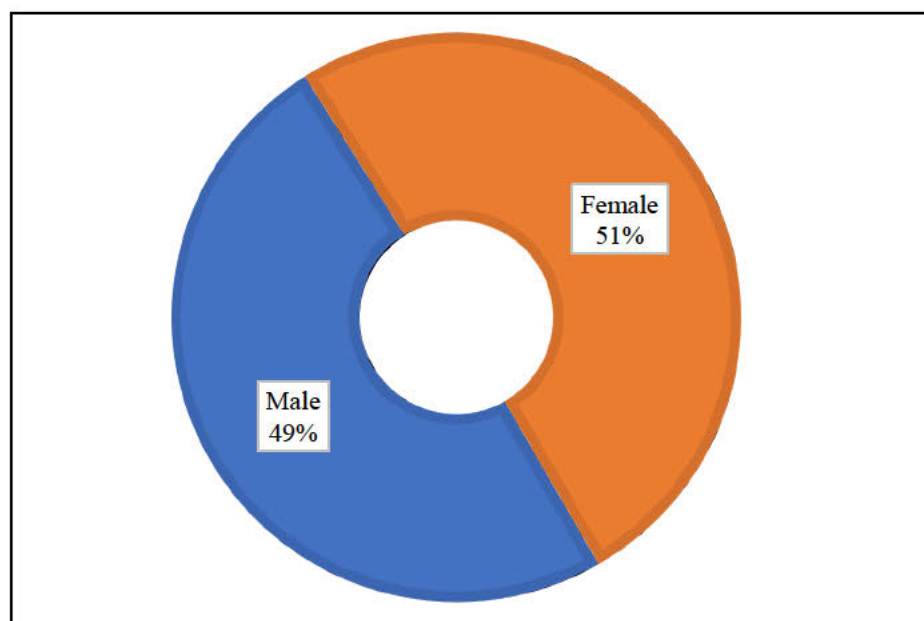


Figure 5.1: Gender of tourism educators (N=83)

According to data presented in Figure 5.1 the sample comprised of an almost similar representation of females (51%) and males (49%). These findings may be influenced by recruitment and hiring practices within the field of tourism education. If there are equal opportunities for both genders to enter and advance in the profession, it could lead to a more balanced representation of female and male educators in the sample. Moreover, over time, there has been increased recognition and support for gender equality in various fields, including education. This societal shift may have encouraged more individuals, regardless of their gender, to pursue careers in tourism education, resulting in a more balanced representation.

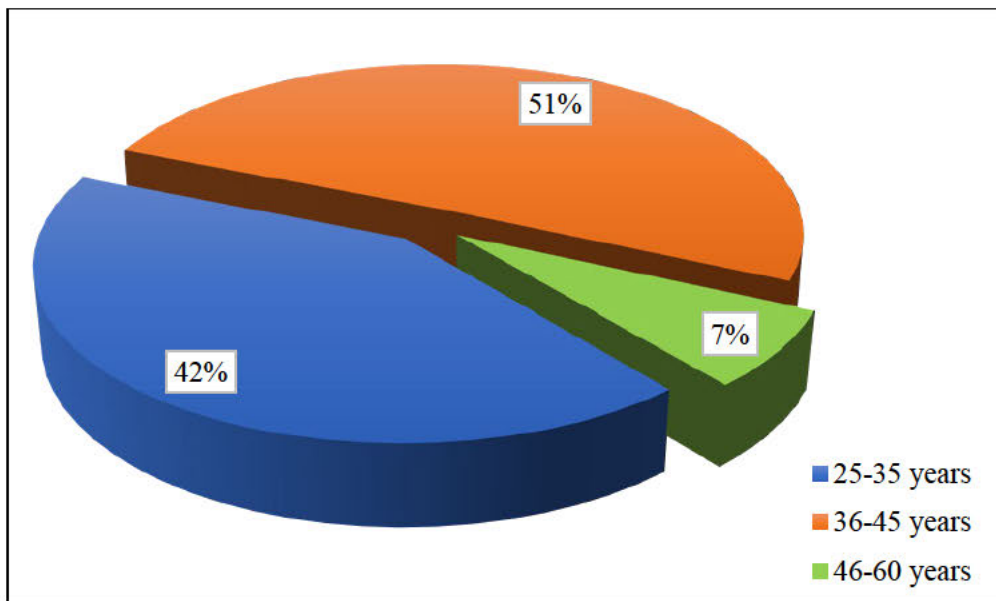


Figure 5.2: Age of teachers

The data that is depicted in Figure 5.2 confirms the age range of the tourism educators who were included in the research. Slightly over half of the participants (51%) fell within the age range of 36-45 years, while 42% were aged between 25-35 years. A minority subset (7%) belonged to the age bracket of 46-60 years. The age of tourism educators can have varying impacts on their teaching effectiveness. Older teachers often possess extensive industry knowledge and real-world examples, which can enhance their ability to impart valuable information to students. Their accumulated experience allows them to provide insights and practical advice that younger teachers may not have. Additionally, older teachers often develop effective teaching styles over time, which can positively impact their delivery of course material and engagement with students. However, it is important for teachers of all ages to remain adaptable and responsive to the needs of current students, as teaching approaches should evolve to meet changing trends and demands. Younger teachers may excel in utilizing technology in the classroom, while older teachers can still acquire technological proficiency through training and support.

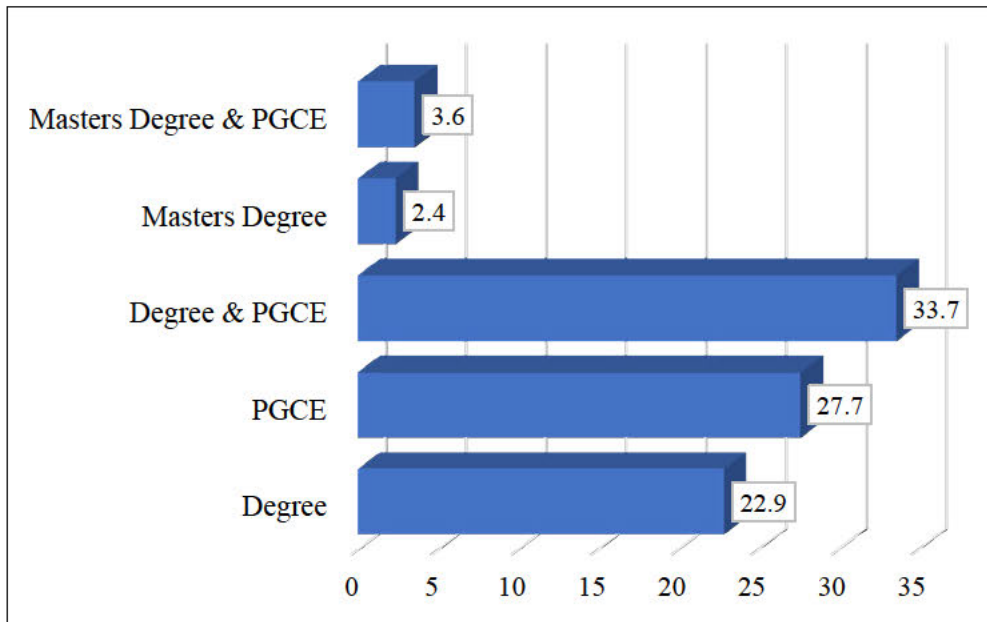


Figure 5.3: Education level of tourism educators

Figure 5.3 presents the data pertaining to the educational background of teachers. Most educators in the study (33.7%) possess a bachelor's degree in addition to a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Subsequently, a total of 27.7% of educators possess solely a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), while 22.9% hold exclusively a bachelor's degree qualification. A minority of educators have both a Master's Degree and a PGCE (3.6%). Furthermore, 2.4% of tourism educators hold only a Master's Degree. This suggests that the data collected for this research was sourced from individuals who possess the necessary expertise and qualifications in the field of education, thereby guaranteeing that the obtained information originates from a cohort that is adequately qualified to offer the desired responses.

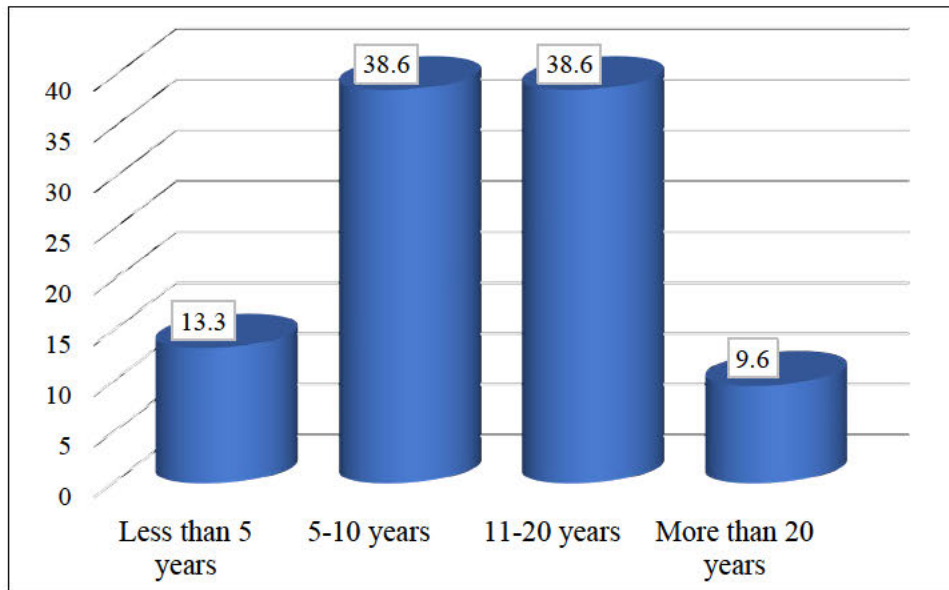


Figure 5.4: Teaching experience of tourism educators (years)

The participants were requested to provide information regarding their duration of experience in the field of teaching. A significant majority of the participants (86%) reported having teaching experience of over 5 years. Only 13.3% of the participants in the study possess less than 5 years of teaching experience, whereas teaching experience for a larger proportion falls within the range of 5 to 10 years (38.6%), 10 to 20 years (38.6%), and 20 years and above (9.6%). This suggests that the participants had been employed for a significant duration, which is noteworthy as it signifies their status as experienced workers with substantial teaching experience in the education sector, specifically in the field of teaching tourism. This implies that respondents had been in employ for a while, and this is also a useful fact as it indicates responses from experienced educators for the study.

Table 5.5: Grades taught by tourism educators (multiple responses)

Grade	Frequency	Percent
Grade 10	60	72.3%
Grade 11	68	81.9%
Grade 12	59	71.1%

The respondents were requested to specify the grade levels that they were currently teaching at school. The data pertaining to this information is presented in Table 5.5. The majority of teachers (81.9%) were found to be teaching at the Grade 11 level, while 72.3% were teaching at the Grade 10 level and 71.1% were engaged in teaching at the Grade 12 level. The

question at hand aimed to elicit multiple responses and suggests that tourism educators were responsible for teaching students across various grade levels as well.

5.6.2 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic of tourism education

The following section discusses the data obtained on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the teaching and learning of the secondary school teaching curriculum.

Table 5.6: Impact of the COVID -19 pandemic on the teaching and learning of the tourism curriculum

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
COVID-19 impacted on the teaching and learning of tourism in my school	94.0%	6.0%	-
I think that the impact of COVID-19 on tourism teaching was similar across the whole of South Africa	84.3%	7.2%	8.4%
I think that rural areas suffered more than the affluent urban areas	86.7%	12.0%	1.2%
The tourism curriculum should be linked with the latest trends of the tourism industry	97.6%	2.4%	-
Tourism education should provide adequate skills that are required in the tourism industry	98.8%	1.2%	-
The knowledge gaps in the tourism curriculum due to the COVID-19 will impact on the learner's interest in the tourism industry in future	81.9%	12.0%	6.0%
Innovative teaching methods are required in the teaching and learning of tourism	100%	-	-
The COVID-19 pandemic gave learners new learning opportunities that they were not familiar example online learning	86.7%	9.6%	3.6%
The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges already faced by rural schools	97.6%	2.4%	-
The changes in the curriculum during COVID-19 impacts on my teaching strategies	97.6%	2.4%	-
It was easy for me to adapt to the changes in the curriculum, as I received enough training and guidance from DoE post COVID-19	6.0%	15.7%	78.3%
It was difficult to teach under the strict conditions of COVID-19	92.8%	7.2%	-

Table 5.6 presents the scoring patterns of 12 statements related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism education. The statements were rated on a 3-point Likert scale ranging from 'agree' to 'disagree'. Eleven statements show (significantly) higher levels of agreement whilst other levels of agreement are lower.

a) COVID-19 impacted the teaching and learning of tourism

The analysis of the data presented in Table 5.6 indicates that a significantly large proportion of tourism educators (94%), expressed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a considerable impact on their pedagogical practises in the field of tourism education. This impact

necessitated a shift towards novel and diverse teaching methodologies. The COVID-19 pandemic therefore forced a shift in educational practises, as educators were compelled to move from conventional classroom instruction to online learning. This transition occurred with minimal prior preparation, limited knowledge, and inadequate skills, all while operating within a distressing context. The change to online learning was not a mere replication of traditional face-to-face instruction on digital platforms. Rather, it required the adoption of novel technologies, methodologies, and platforms, which demanded experimentation and acquisition of new knowledge (Baker, McA, Unni, Kerr-Sims, and Marquis, 2020).

b) The impact of COVID-19 on tourism teaching was similar across the whole of South Africa

Most educators (84.3%) concurred that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were similar across various types of schools, including urban, rural, and township schools, throughout South Africa. However, 7.2% of the participants exhibited a neutral response, while 8.4% expressed disagreement. Avanesian, Mizunoya, and Delamonica (2022) reported that a considerable number of school children globally experienced major disruptions to their in-person instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During a single calendar year after the declaration of the pandemic, globally, an estimated 215 million students experienced an absence of at least 75% of the originally planned in-person instructional duration, whereas approximately 168 million students were deprived of nearly an entire year's worth of teaching. The ongoing pandemic had resulted in a significant disruption and transformative shift in the field of education, impacting approximately 1.6 billion young individuals who have experienced the suspension of traditional in-person schooling (UNESCO, 2020). According to Nhongo and Tshotsho (2021), learners in both rural and urban environments experienced disadvantages due to the implementation of a uniform instructional delivery approach. This approach was hindered by various challenges associated with remote teaching, such as inadequate infrastructure, limited availability of online teaching resources, teachers' expertise and familiarity with online teaching methods, distractions encountered while working from home, and a lack of clarity regarding the most effective teaching mode and pedagogy for online education. The classroom teaching came to a complete halt and subsequently, teachers and learners were confronted with various challenges, which not every person had the required skills to overcome (Sandvik et al., 2023).

c) Rural areas suffered more than the affluent urban areas

Based on the findings of the data analysis, it is evident that a considerable percentage of tourism educators (86.7%), strongly believe that rural schools encountered a greater number of obstacles in comparison to urban and township schools. The observed phenomenon can be ascribed to the geographical isolation of rural schools from urban areas, their predominance in underprivileged communities, limited availability of educational resources, and inadequate infrastructure development in these regions. Therefore, these factors are influential in the escalation of unemployment rates and the decrease in educational attainment within low-income communities. The findings of a study conducted by UNICEF on the accessibility indicators of remote learning solutions reveal that around 30% of school children worldwide encountered difficulties in accessing remote educational platforms. Moreover, the study conducted by Avanesian et al. (2022) revealed that a significant proportion, specifically three-quarters, of the disadvantaged population under investigation resided in rural regions. Additionally, these individuals were found to represent the most economically deprived segments within their respective countries. According to Dube (2020), learners residing in rural areas face challenges in accessing education and online resources. These difficulties arise from inadequate infrastructure, limited availability of electricity and electronic devices, and a shortage of qualified teachers capable of helping in online learning. Consequently, rural schools were denied the opportunity to acquire valuable information, education, and skills that are crucial for fostering community development, personal growth, and mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

d) The tourism curriculum should be closely linked with the latest trends in the tourism industry

The study's findings indicate that a large majority of tourism educators (97.6%), expressed agreement regarding the necessity for the tourism curriculum to align with the prevailing developments within the tourism industry. Hyasat (2022) asserts that the existing tourism curriculum fails to align with the advancements in the tourism industry and its technological requirements, as well as the evolving needs of numerous developing nations. In the present era, educational institutions are mandated to impart skills, knowledge, and techniques to students in accordance with the demands of the industry. Furthermore, it is crucial for these institutions to effectively incorporate these skills, knowledge, and techniques with the prevailing trends in the tourism and hospitality sector. It is also imperative to ensure that the

curriculum remains up to date by incorporating the latest advancements in the tourism and hospitality sector. Li and Li (2021) argue that advancements in technology, specifically Web 2.0, virtual reality, and smart classrooms, have significantly improved both the tourism industry and tourism education. Consequently, online learning has emerged as a prominent future direction in the field of tourism education. Thus, it is essential to reform tourism education in schools following the COVID-19 pandemic. This reform should encompass the content of the curriculum, the methods employed in delivering the curriculum to students, and the development of the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively guide the industry towards a sustainable future.

e) Tourism education should provide adequate skills that are required in the tourism industry

Most tourism educators (98,8%) asserted that tourism as an industry requires a certain level of skills to provide the required service to its customers and needs the requirements of every customer or tourist that utilizes the industry. Learners' skills are to be developed even from the high school level, to create the right kind of employees that the industry requires. The tourism industry currently faces poor workplace skills, including leadership, creativity, and communication skills. Hyasat (2022) concurs that these problems are currently increased by the lack of technology that is needed in most schools to improve learners' achievements. The author advocates that schools providing tourism education should prioritize improving the quality of their curriculum by involving the industry more in its design. Siow et al. (2022) additionally assert that existing goals of the tourism curriculum may need to be adapted and strengthened to better prepare learners to face future challenges posed by global disease outbreaks. Contents that are no longer deemed essential or relevant by subject experts should be re-evaluated and replaced with materials that foster the acquisition of essential "thriving skills" (Maree, 2022).

f) The knowledge gaps in the tourism curriculum due to the COVID-19 will impact the learner's interest in the tourism industry in future

Educators were asked to comment on whether the knowledge gaps in the tourism curriculum due to the COVID-19 will impact the learner's interest in the tourism industry in the future. Majority of educators (81,9%) agreed with this statement, while (12%) had a neutral response and (6%) disagreed. Most of the educators stated that learners might not choose tourism as a

career in the future, and this could be because of its fragile nature which was mostly felt during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hyasat (2022) states that the tourism sector does not employ suitable qualified and well-skilled employees and there is generally a lack of job opportunities in the industry. Currently, tourism learners especially those enrolled between the years 2020 to 2022 have content knowledge gaps that might deter them from taking tourism as a career. The knowledge gaps in the curriculum can directly impact learners' career prospects and employability in the tourism industry. Employers often seek candidates with relevant and up-to-date knowledge and skills. If learners graduate with incomplete or outdated knowledge due to the gaps in the curriculum, it may limit their job opportunities and hinder their success in the industry. This can further discourage learners from pursuing careers in tourism. Hence, according to Siow et al. (2021), it is recommended that tourism education regularly monitors industry developments and assesses their curricula and overall learning approaches to ensure that learners are equipped with the essential skills and competencies required to adapt and succeed in their future careers.

g) Innovative teaching methods are required in the teaching and learning of tourism

In this study involving a sample of 83 tourism educators, it was found that all participants acknowledged the necessity of employing innovative teaching methods in the field of tourism. This observation became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when conventional teaching approaches were no longer feasible, and educators had to adapt and devise new strategies for effective teaching. The recognition that teaching tourism requires innovative methods, highlights the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of the subject matter. The tourism industry is characterized by constant changes, emerging trends, and evolving customer demands. Therefore, educators need to employ innovative approaches to ensure that students are well-prepared and equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the industry successfully. The findings of this research study further highlight the significance of innovation in teaching, especially during challenging circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic. As traditional face-to-face teaching methods were disrupted due to social distancing measures and the shift to remote learning, educators had to explore alternative ways to engage students and deliver content effectively. This necessitated the development and implementation of new teaching strategies that were compatible with online platforms, digital tools, and virtual environments. Therefore, the education sector needs to

develop user-friendly online teaching, and learning tools which will assist, and prepare the education system for any other uncertainty in the future as online learning proved to be an effective model in difficult circumstances (Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2021).

h) The COVID-19 pandemic gave learners new learning opportunities that they were not familiar example online learning

The data reveals that a significant majority (86.3%) of the participants, recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic presented learners with new learning opportunities that they were not previously familiar with. These opportunities included online learning, learning outside of the traditional school environment, staggered start times, and rotational school attendance, among others. The acknowledgment of these new learning opportunities indicates the transformative effect the pandemic had on education. The sudden shift to remote and hybrid learning models compelled educators to explore alternative methods to deliver educational content and engage learners. Online learning platforms became essential tools for maintaining continuity in education, allowing students to access resources and participate in virtual classrooms from the safety of their homes. Ozudogru (2021) highlights that the emergence of digital technologies has paved the way for innovative educational tools like blended learning, social media, and open learning, which play pivotal roles in facilitating effective teaching and learning. As a result of these advancements, both educators and learners have gained new skills and opportunities through the educational process. Moreover, the adoption of staggered starts and rotational attendance aimed to ensure social distancing measures while enabling students to receive in-person instruction on a rotational basis. However, the research findings also indicate that creating a suitable system that accommodates the diverse learning needs of all students proved to be challenging. The implementation of various learning models and formats required careful consideration of factors such as access to technology, reliable internet connectivity, availability of resources, and the ability to adapt to different learning environments. Educators faced the task of designing flexible and inclusive systems that would enable all learners to effectively participate and access quality education.

i) The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges already faced by rural schools

The data confirmed that an overwhelming majority (97.6%) agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on exacerbating the challenges faced by rural schools. This

finding aligns with previous research by Mahaye (2020), which identified the struggles faced by South African schools during the transition from traditional to virtual learning. One major challenge faced by rural schools in the transition to virtual learning is the lack of access to sufficient finances. Many schools in rural areas struggle with limited financial resources, which hampers their ability to fully embrace and implement virtual learning technologies. This disadvantage results in unequal access to online learning platforms, resources, and tools, creating a disparity in educational opportunities for students from rural backgrounds. Moreover, socio-economic challenges further disadvantage learners in rural schools, preventing their effective engagement in online learning. Limited access to reliable internet connectivity, lack of access to personal devices or computers, and inadequate digital literacy skills gravely hinders the participation and progress of students in online learning environments in rural schools. These challenges have a direct impact on the learning outcomes and educational experiences of rural learners during the pandemic.

In addition to financial and socio-economic constraints, educators in rural schools face various other challenges amplified by the pandemic. Insufficient resources, such as textbooks and teaching materials pose significant hurdles to effective teaching and learning. Limited educator capacity within schools, often due to staffing shortages or a lack of specialized training, further strains the provision of quality education in rural areas. The research findings also highlight challenges faced by educators in township schools, where a lack of resources due to increased theft during the lockdown has been reported. The loss of resources further hampers the ability of educators to deliver quality education and support students effectively in rural schools.

j) The changes in the curriculum during COVID-19 impacts on teaching strategies

Most of the educators (97.6%) confirmed that the changes in the curriculum and teaching strategies, the trimming of the curriculum, the changes in the content, the time to cover the content, and the limited time placed on learning all had a major impact on how educators delivered the tourism curriculum to the learners, as educators had little time to adapt to the changes and implement these changes. The curriculum changes during the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated adjustments in teaching strategies, posing challenges for teachers. They had to modify their teaching approaches to accommodate the reduced curriculum and ensure effective content delivery within limited time frames. This involved prioritizing essential topics, adopting innovative teaching methods, and focusing on key concepts to

optimize learning outcomes. However, concerns arose regarding the trimming of the curriculum, as educators faced the task of selecting critical content while ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Time constraints added pressure on educators, making it challenging to deliver content effectively and engage students in meaningful learning experiences. To cope with limited time, teachers streamlined their instructional plans, prioritized key concepts, and made difficult decisions about time allocation. Furthermore, educators had minimal time for adaptation, leading to increased stress and workload. Quick adjustments were required in teaching plans, instructional materials, and assessments to align with the revised curriculum. Hoadley (2020) asserts that during the processes of curriculum changes, teachers are expected to operate as autonomous and highly skilled individuals, capable of making just-in-time professional decisions regarding content selection, in-person and remote pedagogies, and suitable assessments.

k) Adapting to the changes in the curriculum through training and guidance from the Department of Education (DoE)

A significant majority of educators (78.3%) reported insufficient support or training from the Department of Education regarding the modifications in the curriculum and the effective implementation of these modifications amidst the challenging circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The educators were prohibited from participating in content workshops, and subject advisors were restricted from conducting school visits, and instead relied on the use of Whatsapp as a means of disseminating information. This situation presented numerous difficulties, particularly for teachers situated in rural regions with restricted internet connectivity. Consequently, timely receipt of documents was hindered, and the task of maintaining an organised curriculum became difficult. Numerous modifications were made to the curriculum, resulting in newly appointed educators being faced with the challenge of interpreting the curriculum with limited resources and capacity. During the period of school closure, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) provided learners with educational programmes and supplementary curriculum materials through a variety of tools and media platforms, catering to different subjects and grade levels. Nevertheless, it should be noted that not all learners were able to avail themselves of these programmes and school support materials with equal ease (Statistics South Africa, 2020). According to a study conducted by Nomtshongwana and Buka (2023), educators have contended that the Department of Education (DoE) District

Office, particularly subject advisors responsible for assisting teachers, have been ineffective in providing support to schools due to their inadequate understanding of the content they are expected to teach. This concurs with the study findings which suggest that educators encountered a lack of support and training from the Department, leading to significant obstacles for tourism educators in maintaining high standards of teaching and learning.

l) Difficulties of teaching under the strict conditions of COVID-19

The research findings suggest that a significant majority of educators (92.8%) faced difficulties in teaching under the challenging conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The alternative rotation method and irregular attendance of students resulted in a loss of focus on the taught material and made it challenging for learners to track their knowledge gaps. Tsolou et al. (2021) further established that irregular attendance negatively affected learners' ability to keep up with schoolwork and increased the likelihood of academic setbacks. Consequently, teachers and students faced the shared responsibility of ensuring educational continuity during the pandemic. Additionally, it was difficult for educators to ascertain if students were effectively learning at home or receiving support from parents or guardians. The overloaded timetable added to the burden on educators, although some found the smaller class sizes resulting from social distancing measures, to be advantageous compared to the previously overcrowded classrooms.

Table 5.7: Crosstabulation between impact of the COVID -19 pandemic on the teaching and learning of the tourism curriculum and biographical data of respondents

	Age	Gender	Education level	Teaching experience
	χ^2	χ^2	χ^2	χ^2
COVID-19 impacted on the teaching and learning of tourism in my school.	0.033*	0.202	0.650	0.092
I think that the impact of COVID-19 on tourism teaching was similar across the whole of South Africa.	0.226	0.492	0.106	0.004*
I think that rural areas suffered more than the affluent urban areas.	0.378	0.627	0.169	0.208
The tourism curriculum should be linked with the latest trends of the tourism industry.	0.315	0.494	0.176	0.024*
Tourism education should provide adequate skills that are required in the tourism industry.	0.610	0.320	0.386	0.588
The knowledge gaps in the tourism curriculum due to the COVID-19 will impact on the learner's interest in the tourism industry in future.	0.965	0.257	0.624	0.753
Innovative teaching methods are required in the teaching and learning of tourism.	a.	a.	a.	a.
The COVID-19 pandemic gave learners new learning opportunities that they were not familiar example online learning.	0.023*	0.521	0.198	0.040*
The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges already faced by rural schools.	0.315	0.494	0.526	0.024*
The changes in the curriculum during COVID-19 impacts on my teaching strategies.	0.315	0.241	0.375	0.008*
It was easy for me to adapt to the changes in the curriculum, as I received enough training and guidance from DoE post COVID-19.	0.173	0.869	0.202	0.208
It was difficult to teach under the strict conditions of COVID-19.	0.801	0.012*	0.407	0.630

a. No statistics are computed because Innovative teaching methods are required in the teaching and learning of tourism is a constant.

* Significant values ($p < 0.05$) Chi-square analysis

The data in Table 5.7 illustrates the crosstabulation results between the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the teaching and learning of the tourism curriculum and the biographical data of respondents. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted to assess the significance of differences in scoring patterns across options for each statement. The null hypothesis posits that there is no significant difference in the distribution of scores among the various response options for each statement, with an emphasis on analysing one statement at a time. The alternative hypothesis suggests a substantial disparity in the levels between agreement and disagreement. The observed p-values, which are below the predetermined significance level of 0.05, indicate that the distributions under consideration are not similar. According to the findings presented in Table 5.7, the results of the Chi-square analysis specify a statistically significant relationship between age and the influence of COVID-19 on the educational process of tourism in the schools. The Chi-square value (χ^2) was calculated to be 7.29 with 2 degrees of freedom and a sample size of 83 (n=83), yielding a p-value of .003. The findings indicate that the respondents' age had a notable influence on their level of agreement regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the teaching and learning of tourism in the schools. The data additionally demonstrates a noteworthy correlation between age and agreement with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning, with $\chi^2(4, n=83) = 9.41, p=.023$. The Chi-square analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between gender and the perception of difficulty in teaching under strict COVID-19 conditions. This implies that the gender of the participants has an impact on the challenging conditions in which teaching takes place amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Teaching during a pandemic is inherently stressful, and these findings may indicate that the psychological impact of the COVID-19 conditions differs based on gender. Female teachers may face an increased burden of domestic responsibilities while working from home. The closure of schools or the shift to remote learning caused disruptions in childcare arrangements for numerous households. As female teachers typically bear a greater portion of caregiving responsibilities at home, they may have faced the difficult task of juggling teaching duties with caring for their own children or other family members. Establishing clear boundaries between their professional and personal lives became challenging for female teachers, potentially resulting in increased stress and burnout. These challenges could have been amplified if they were also managing household chores and caregiving responsibilities simultaneously.

Understanding how these challenges affect educators' mental health and well-being is essential for providing appropriate support and resources to mitigate stress and burnout.

The analysis of the data reveals several noteworthy correlations between the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the educational process and the level of teaching experience. There was a notable correlation observed between the general agreement on the similarity of the impact of COVID-19 on tourism education across all regions of South Africa and the experiences of educators with $\chi^2(6, n=83) = 16.17, p = .004$. The findings reveal several implications regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the educational process and its correlation with teaching experience. Firstly, it indicates that educators with more experience were likely to possess a deeper understanding of the challenges and implications of the crisis. Their extensive knowledge and expertise may have influenced their perception and ability to effectively navigate the unique circumstances presented by the pandemic. Secondly, the observed correlation provides valuable insights for educational policymakers and stakeholders to develop targeted support strategies for tourism educators based on their level of experience. Recognizing the different needs and challenges faced by tourism educators at various stages of their careers can aid in tailoring support systems, professional development opportunities, and resources to address their specific requirements. Thirdly, experienced tourism educators who have faced previous challenges and adapted to changing circumstances can serve as valuable resources for teachers with lesser experience. Facilitating collaboration and knowledge-sharing among tourism educators of different experience levels can help foster resilience and effective practices in overcoming similar future crises.

A notable correlation was also observed between the agreement on the necessity of aligning the tourism curriculum with current trends in the tourism industry and the number of years of teaching experience. The chi-square test statistic (χ^2) with 3 degrees of freedom and a sample size of 83 yielded a value of 13.41, resulting in a p-value of .024. The belief that the tourism curriculum should closely align with the latest trends of the tourism industry was influenced by the substantial years of experience held by tourism educators. The correlation indicates that more experienced tourism educators are more likely to emphasize the importance of aligning the curriculum with current industry trends. Their extensive years of teaching experience likely

exposed them to the evolving nature of the tourism industry and its dynamic trends. They therefore recognize the significance of equipping students with knowledge and skills that are relevant to the contemporary demands and expectations of the tourism industry. These findings also highlight the importance of periodic curriculum reviews and updates to ensure alignment with industry trends. Engaging experienced educators in the curriculum development and review processes can help incorporate industry perspectives and maintain the curriculum's relevance.

A significant correlation was observed between the degree of agreement with the notion that the COVID-19 pandemic presented learners with novel learning opportunities that they were previously unfamiliar with, and the number of years of experience of educators. The chi-square test statistic (χ^2) yielded a value of 13.32 with 6 degrees of freedom and a sample size of 83, resulting in a p-value of .040. The assertion suggests that the tourism educators' perception regarding the pandemic's impact on learners, particularly in terms of new learning opportunities like online learning, was particularly shaped by their accumulated years of teaching experience. These findings imply that educators with extensive teaching experience were better positioned to acknowledge the new and unique learning opportunities that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their accumulated years of experience in the field enabled them to identify and value the distinct educational possibilities that emerged during this challenging period, including online learning and other alternative learning methods. Educators with extensive teaching experience tend to be more adaptable and flexible in their approach to education. Their exposure to various teaching methodologies and pedagogical strategies over the years have likely enhanced their ability to embrace and utilize the new learning opportunities that emerged during the pandemic, in terms of exploring innovative approaches to teaching and adapting their teaching methods to suit the changing educational landscape. Moreover, teachers with more experience may have been able to serve as mentors and provide support to less-experienced colleagues during times of crisis. Their accumulated knowledge and expertise can assist in guiding and supporting fellow tourism educators navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic.

A statistically significant correlation was observed between the belief that the COVID-19 pandemic intensified the difficulties already encountered by rural schools and the number of

years of teaching experience among educators where $\chi^2(3, n=83) = 13.41, p=.024$. The perception of educators regarding the exacerbation of challenges faced by rural schools during the COVID-19 pandemic was influenced by their years of experience. Educators with more years of teaching experience have a better understanding of the challenges faced by rural schools. Their accumulated experience in working with rural communities likely provided them with insights into the pre-existing difficulties that these schools encounter. This understanding allowed them to recognize how the pandemic further exacerbated these challenges. It also likely that experienced tourism educators in rural schools have developed a greater capacity for adaptability and resilience in the face of challenges. Their years of experience in navigating and finding solutions to the pre-existing difficulties in rural schools may have equipped them with the skills to cope with the additional complexities brought about by the pandemic. Lastly, the Chi-square analysis demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between the duration of educators' professional experience and the influence of changes in the curriculum on their methods of teaching amidst the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This suggests that the way tourism educators perceived the influence of changes to the curriculum during the COVID-19 pandemic on their teaching methods was notably affected by their level of professional experience.

5.6.3 Bivariate correlations (Spearman correlation test)

The Spearman correlation test was utilized to assess the association between two variables and determine the strength and direction of their relationship. The correlation coefficient, denoted as 'r', represents the strength of linkage between the two variables and ranges from -1 to +1. Values close to 0.3 to 0.5 indicate a low correlation, while values greater than 0.5 indicate a strong correlation between the variables. Positive values suggest a direct proportional relationship, while negative values imply an inverse relationship, where the variables have opposite effects on each other. In Table 5.8, significant relationships are denoted by * or **.

Table 5.8: Bivariate correlations

		Covid-19 impacted on the teaching and learning of tourism in my school	I think that the impact of Covid-19 on tourism teaching was similar across the whole of South Africa	I think that rural areas suffered more than the affluent urban areas	The tourism curriculum should be closely linked with the latest trends of the tourism industry	Tourism education should provide adequate skills that are required in the tourism industry	The knowledge gaps in the tourism curriculum due to the Covid-19 will impact on the learners interest in the tourism industry in future	Innovative teaching methods are required in the teaching and learning of tourism	The Covid-19 pandemic gave learners new learning opportunities that they were not familiar example online learning	The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges already faced by rural schools	The changes in the curriculum during Covid-19 impacts on my teaching strategies	It was easy for me to adapt to the changes in the curriculum, as I received enough training and guidance from DoE post covid-19	It was difficult to teach under the strict conditions of Covid-19
Covid-19 impacted on the teaching and learning of tourism in my school	Correlation Coefficient	--											
	Sig. (2-tailed)												
	N	83											
I think that the impact of Covid-19 on tourism teaching was similar across the whole of South Africa	Correlation Coefficient	,592**	--										
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000											
	N	83	83										
I think that rural areas suffered more than the affluent urban areas	Correlation Coefficient	-0.099	-0.068	--									
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.374	0.542										
	N	83	83	83									
The tourism curriculum should be closely linked with the latest trends of the tourism industry	Correlation Coefficient	-0.040	-0.067	-0.061	--								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.721	0.544	0.582									
	N	83	83	83	83								
Tourism education should provide adequate skills that are required in the tourism industry	Correlation Coefficient	-0.028	-0.047	,278*	-0.017	--							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.802	0.670	0.011	0.876								
	N	83	83	83	83	83							
The knowledge gaps in the tourism curriculum due to the Covid-19 will impact on the learners interest in the tourism industry in future	Correlation Coefficient	0.175	0.147	-0.183	,309**	-0.052	--						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.113	0.185	0.098	0.005	0.643							
	N	83	83	83	83	83	83						
Innovative teaching methods are required in the teaching and learning of tourism	Correlation Coefficient												
	Sig. (2-tailed)												
	N	83	83	83	83	83	83	83					
The Covid-19 pandemic gave learners new learning opportunities that they were not familiar example online learning	Correlation Coefficient	-0.099	0.162	0.146	-0.061	-0.043	0.173		--				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.374	0.144	0.187	0.582	0.699	0.118						
	N	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83				
The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges already faced by rural schools	Correlation Coefficient	-0.040	,327**	-0.061	-0.025	-0.017	-0.073			-0.061	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.721	0.003	0.582	0.825	0.876	0.509			0.582			
	N	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83		
The changes in the curriculum during Covid-19 impacts on my teaching strategies	Correlation Coefficient	-0.040	-0.067	0.369	-0.025	-0.017	-0.073		,384**	-0.025	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.721	0.544	0.000	0.825	0.876	0.509		0.000	0.825			
	N	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83		
It was easy for me to adapt to the changes in the curriculum, as I received enough training and guidance from DoE post covid-19	Correlation Coefficient	-0.097	0.064	0.045	-,274*	0.058	-0.181		0.204	0.082	0.082	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.382	0.565	0.684	0.012	0.604	0.102		0.064	0.460	0.460		
	N	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	
It was difficult to teach under the strict conditions of Covid-19	Correlation Coefficient	-0.071	-0.120	-0.109	-0.044	-0.031	0.139		-0.109	-0.044	-0.044	-,535**	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.525	0.280	0.327	0.694	0.782	0.209		0.327	0.694	0.694	0.000	
	N	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83

With regards to the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic on the teaching and learning of the tourism curriculum, the Spearman correlation test, yielded strong, positive correlations between:

- ‘The tourism curriculum should be closely linked with the latest trends of the tourism industry’ and ‘The knowledge gaps in the tourism curriculum due to the COVID-19 will impact the learners’ ($r=.309$, $p=.005$). This observation suggests that as the knowledge gaps arising from the COVID-19 pandemic become more pronounced, there is an increased necessity for the tourism curriculum to be harmonized with the demands and requirements of the industry. These findings highlight the significant disruption caused by the pandemic in the tourism industry and the need to address the resulting gaps in the curriculum. The pandemic has brought about changes in traveler behavior, health and safety protocols, sustainability concerns, and digital transformation. The tourism curriculum needs to adapt to these changes to equip learners with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the post-pandemic tourism landscape. By aligning the curriculum with industry needs, graduates will be better prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of the tourism sector, enhancing their employability and overall industry performance.
- ‘The changes in the curriculum during COVID-19 impact on my teaching strategies’ and ‘the COVID-19 pandemic gave learners new learning opportunities that they were not familiar with example online learning’ ($r=.384$, $p=<.001$). This finding supports the notion that the extent to which curriculum changes are implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic directly correlates with the potential for learners to acquire new skills and knowledge. The research finding emphasizes that the COVID-19 pandemic presented learners with fresh learning possibilities, specifically through online education. The transition to remote learning, prompted by the pandemic, introduced learners to digital platforms, online resources, and virtual tools for collaboration. As a result, learners had the opportunity to develop new skills such as online communication, digital literacy, self-directed learning, and time management. The accessibility and flexibility of online learning created novel educational pathways and expanded learners' horizons beyond the confines of traditional classrooms.

- ‘I think that rural areas suffered more than the affluent urban areas’ and ‘tourism education should provide adequate skills that are required in the tourism industry’ ($r=.278$, $p=.011$). This statement suggests that as rural schools encounter increasing challenges, there is an increased necessity for tourism education to equip individuals with the necessary skills for the industry. These findings confirm that rural areas face greater challenges compared to affluent urban areas. In light of these challenges, there is an increased need for tourism education to equip individuals in rural areas with the necessary skills for the tourism industry. By addressing the disparities between rural and urban areas and providing targeted support, tourism education can play a crucial role in promoting equitable educational opportunities and fostering regional development in rural communities.
- ‘The tourism curriculum should be closely linked with the latest trends of the tourism industry’ and ‘It was easy for me to adapt to the changes in the curriculum, as I received enough training and guidance from DoE post COVID-19’ ($r= -.274$, $p=.0012$). These findings emphasize the importance of aligning the tourism curriculum with industry trends and providing educators with sufficient training and guidance to adapt to curriculum changes. By ensuring a close connection between the curriculum and industry demands and supporting teachers in navigating curriculum changes, educational institutions can enhance student learning outcomes and better prepare students for the dynamic tourism industry.
- ‘It was easy for me to adapt to the changes in the curriculum, as I received enough training and guidance from DoE post COVID-19’ and ‘it was difficult to teach under the strict conditions of COVID-19’ ($r= -.535$, $p=<.001$). This suggests that the level of support in terms of training and guidance directly impacted the challenges faced in teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. This data shows that receiving sufficient training and guidance from the Department of Education (DoE) during the COVID-19 made it easier for teachers to adapt to the changes in the curriculum. This suggests that the level of support provided to teachers, directly affects their ability to navigate and implement curriculum changes effectively.

5.7 QUALITATIVE DATA (TOURISM EDUCATORS)

The data in this section was presented using qualitative tools such as thematic diagrams, word clouds, and cause-and-effect diagrams, as they were deemed suitable for capturing the nature of the questions and responses. In certain instances, the researcher opted to preserve the exact words of the participants without alteration, as it was deemed crucial to retain the essence of their statements.

5.7.1 Lesson learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Participants were asked to indicate the lesson learned from COVID-19. Their responses were reduced into themes as reflected in Figure 5.5.

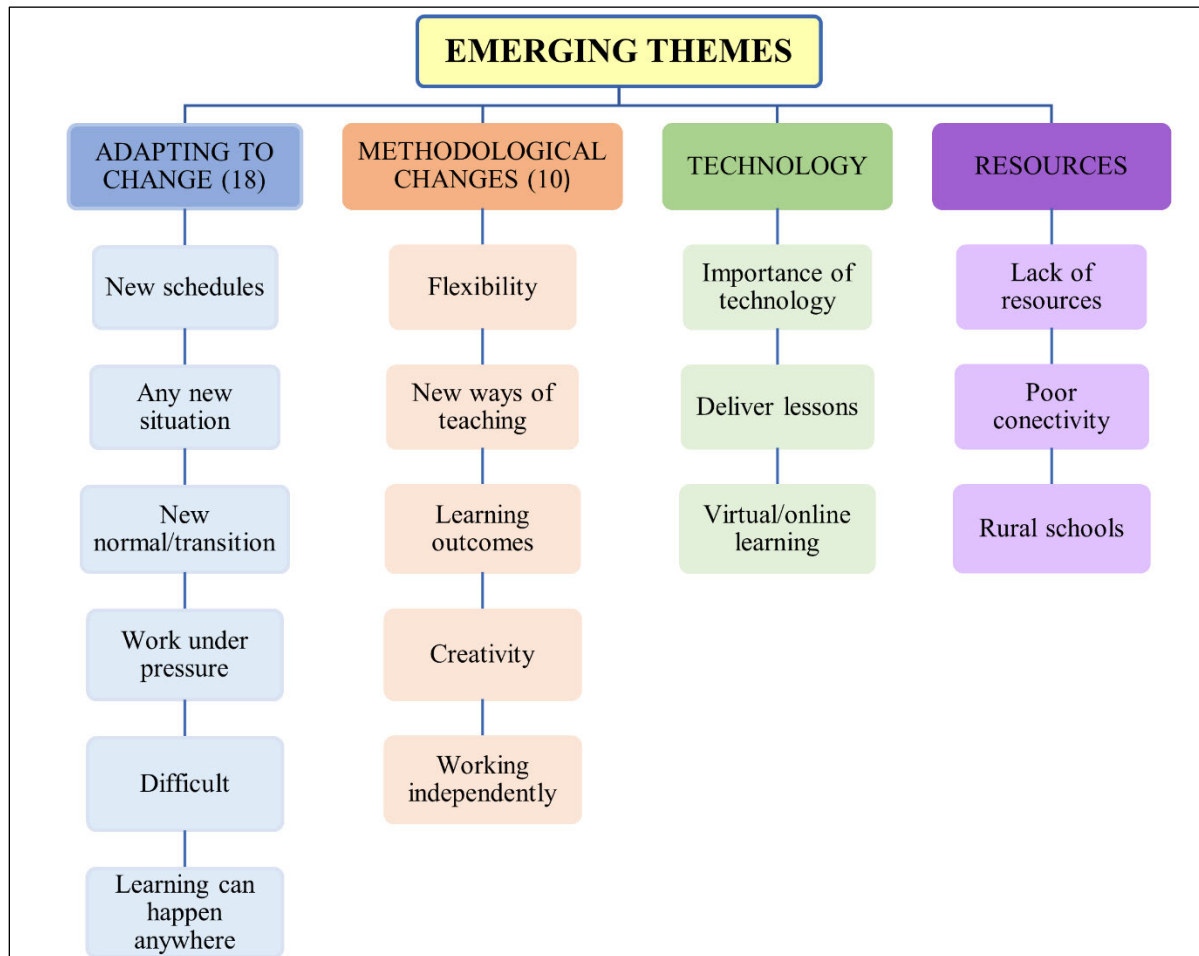


Figure 5.5: Lessons learnt
Source: (researcher's own)

The study's findings, as depicted in Figure 5.5, demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the educational processes and acquisition of knowledge within the field of tourism. The study participants acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic facilitated their exposure to novel digital technologies such as Zoom, Google Classroom, and virtual learning. Furthermore, they reported integrating these emerging teaching methods into their classroom practises. The participants expressed their recognition of the need to adapt to the various changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, as illustrated in Figure 5.6. These changes encompassed modifications in working schedules, alterations in the Annual Teaching Plans (ATP), the experience of working under pressure, an increased workload, the teaching of new subjects, the adjustment to new timetables, whether on a rotational cycle or staggered approach, and accommodating an increased learner capacity due to the implementation of social distancing measures. This is exemplified in one of the responses who stated, *“I had to train myself to adapt to any situation as no matter the situation I had to ensure that teaching and learning continued with my tourism learners”*. The participants reported an increase in the use of various teaching methodologies, as they were compelled to devise innovative and adaptable approaches to teaching in order to cater to the diverse instructional needs of their students.

However even though technology was a useful source to disseminate information to learners, one participant argued that *“our learners who come deep rural communities suffered a lot as they come in disadvantage home, where there some learners did not have, television, access to the internet, lack of smartphones, data, and the sad part is that the same learners had to write the same grade 12 NSC Examination with a learner from urban areas who had access to adequate resources and that was a disadvantage”*. The presence of an inequitable distribution of educational opportunities was identified in chapter three by Ramathan (2020) through the lens of critical theory. Ramathan argued that within the South African context, there exists a dualistic school system, characterised by two distinct worlds. The participants expressed that the pandemic has revealed the true nature of our education system. This finding further emphasizes the limited availability of resources commonly experienced by South African schools. The existence of two distinct educational systems can be attributed to the significant disparities in school infrastructure that learners from different socio-economic backgrounds encounter in South Africa. According to Jansen (2020), students from higher socio-economic families have

access to superior educational resources compared to their counterparts from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

5.7.2 Sustainability of Teaching and Learning post-COVID-19?

Participants were asked to indicate how they sustained quality teaching and learning post COVID-19. Their responses were reduced into themes as reflected in Figure 5.6

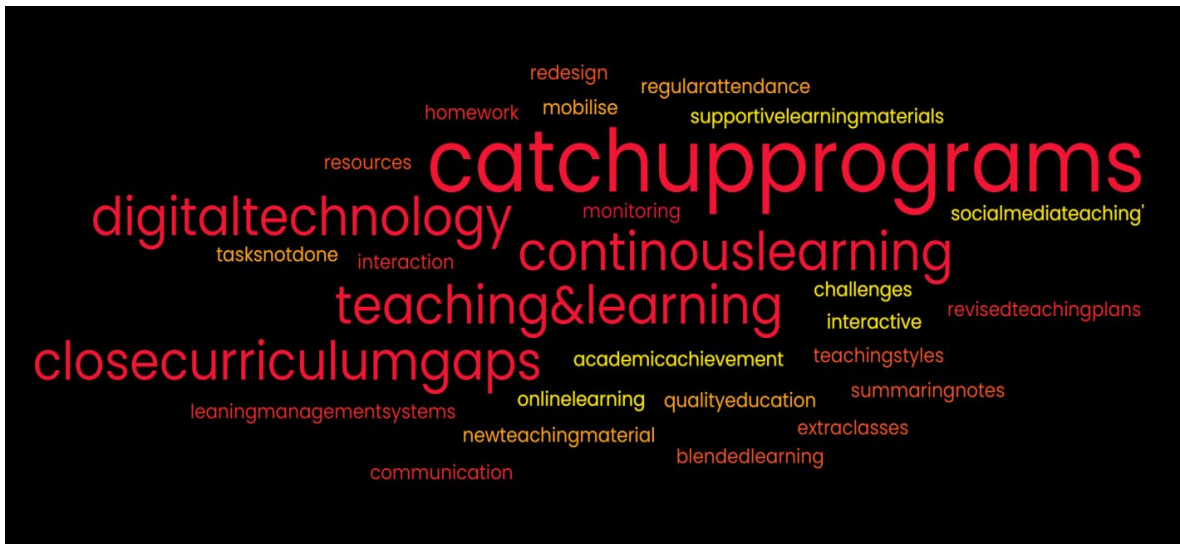


Figure 5.6: Teaching and Learning post COVID-19

Source: (researcher's own)

Examining new approaches that can be used post-COVID-19 is significant to ensure educators deliver quality education to learners. To address the learning losses that were imposed by the pandemic, participants felt the need to introduce remedial programs aimed at assisting learners to catch up lost learning and sustain tourism education post COVID-19. Participants felt that it was important to sustain and clarify the importance of education to learners. One participant stated that *“every learner has the right to education, and learning should not be affected by environmental factors, therefore, post-COVID-19 learners should have the equal right access to education, and knowledge at all times through means of technology”*.

Participants stated that educators, learners, School Management Teams (SMT), School Governing Bodies (SGB) and parents needed to work together for the better achievement of the learner and rebuild schools' posts COVID-19. Participants also highlighted that they had to establish new tourism learning programs that can be followed online on social media, or on interactive digital platforms like Youtube, Facebook or Whatsapp for effective learning even post-COVID- 19. Different methods and tools used for teaching and learning play a significant role in delivering effective and quality education in tourism by creating a positive teaching and learning environment. Catch-up plans such as extra classes were in place to ensure effective continuation to learning. Learners were encouraged to be in school regularly, thus ensuring that educators can cover the content lost during the staggered approach and rotation cycle. The most important role for educators during this period was to ensure that the quality of the tourism curriculum is not compromised and remained a priority. The educators further elaborated those supporting learners who needed intervention was a priority. The Department of Education also played an imperative role post-COVID-19 by creating teaching materials like Step Ahead and Just-in-time (JIT) documents which were created to support teachers and learners, thus making learning easy with lesser time being spent on lesson preparations, gathering activities but strictly focus on content coverage and closing learning gaps. The primary role of tourism educators during this period was to design learning experiences and encounters that enable learners to meet the learning outcomes.

5.7.3 COVID-19 and challenges faced by tourism educators and learners

For this question the researcher chose to use the cause-and-effect diagram to present the responses of the participants. This qualitative data tool was selected because it allows the researcher to highlight emerging themes and their consequences.

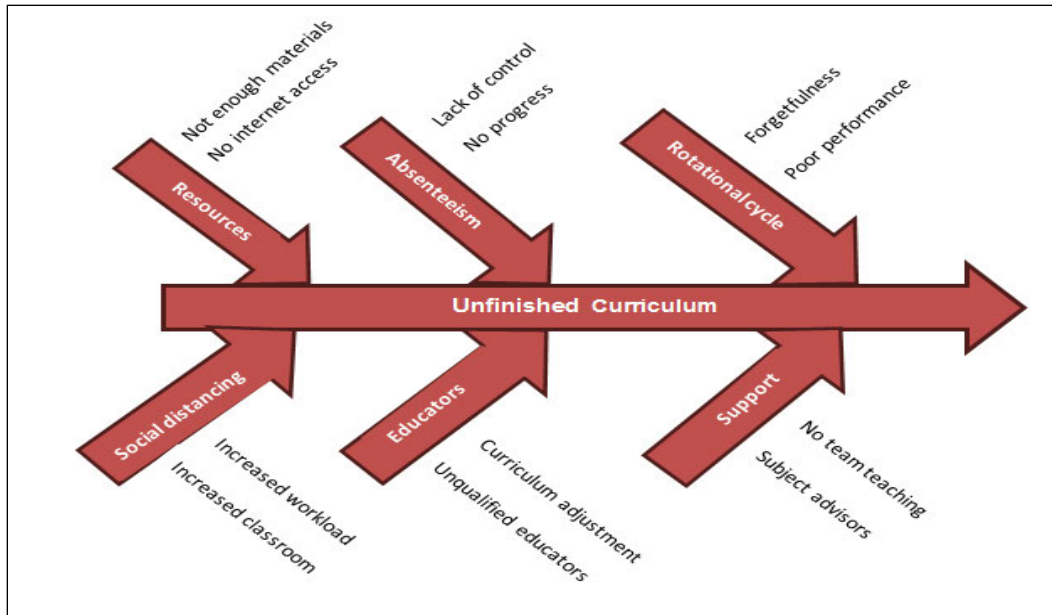


Figure 5.7: Challenges faced during and post COVID-19

Source: (researcher's own)

In Figure 5.7, several challenges faced by tourism educators were brought to attention. Among these challenges, one of the most frequently mentioned by participants was the issue of an incomplete curriculum. This issue arose due to various factors, such as participants expressing dissatisfaction with an increased number of classes because of social distancing measures, as well as educators taking sick leave. Consequently, these circumstances greatly hindered the teaching and learning process, making it arduous and slow. The implementation of a rotational cycle resulted in an increase in learner absenteeism and a subsequent decline in knowledge retention upon returning to school. Therefore, a considerable amount of teaching time was dedicated to reviewing previously covered material. This situation further exacerbated the challenge for educators to maintain classroom management, as they were required to teach in a socially distanced environment. One participant highlighted that the knowledge deficiencies encountered by Grade 10 learners in 2020 during the initial introduction of the subject posed significant obstacles to their academic performance in Grade 12 in 2022. These learners were taught by educational assistants hired by the department, as well as unqualified educators who lacked subject-specific expertise but were enlisted to provide emergency support in Grade 12.

The study's results align with the survey conducted by Yedla and Ajoon (2022), indicating that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental effect on tourism education. This has resulted in a sudden shift in the pedagogical approach to tourism, rendering the current curriculum unsuitable for effective instruction. The lack of organisation in the delivery of classes has resulted in a decline in the students' engagement and commitment towards tourism education. The participant expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of consistency between the Approved Textbook Programme (ATP) and the textbook, which resulted in educators having to reteach the subject within a limited timeframe. Additional participants expressed that the insufficiency of educational materials significantly influenced the process of learning. One participant expressed dissatisfaction with the use of Whatsapp as a means of resource dissemination, citing difficulties in accessing these resources in rural schools. The participant further highlighted the lack of printing and photocopying facilities as a hindrance to providing quality education to learners. Several participants expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of comprehensive support from the department, which resulted in significant confusion regarding instructional methods and content. Another participant stated that *“it was also a challenge to accommodate all the learners’ learning needs during COVID-19, so we had to stick to one method of teaching and learning”*. The predominant pedagogical approach employed was learner-focused instruction, wherein the emphasis was placed on the learners themselves and the distribution of content, with comparatively less attention devoted to ensuring comprehensive understanding of the assigned tasks by the learners.

5.7.4 Quality teaching methods

Educators were asked to indicate which teaching methods worked well for them under social distance circumstance to ensure the quality continuation of teaching and learning.

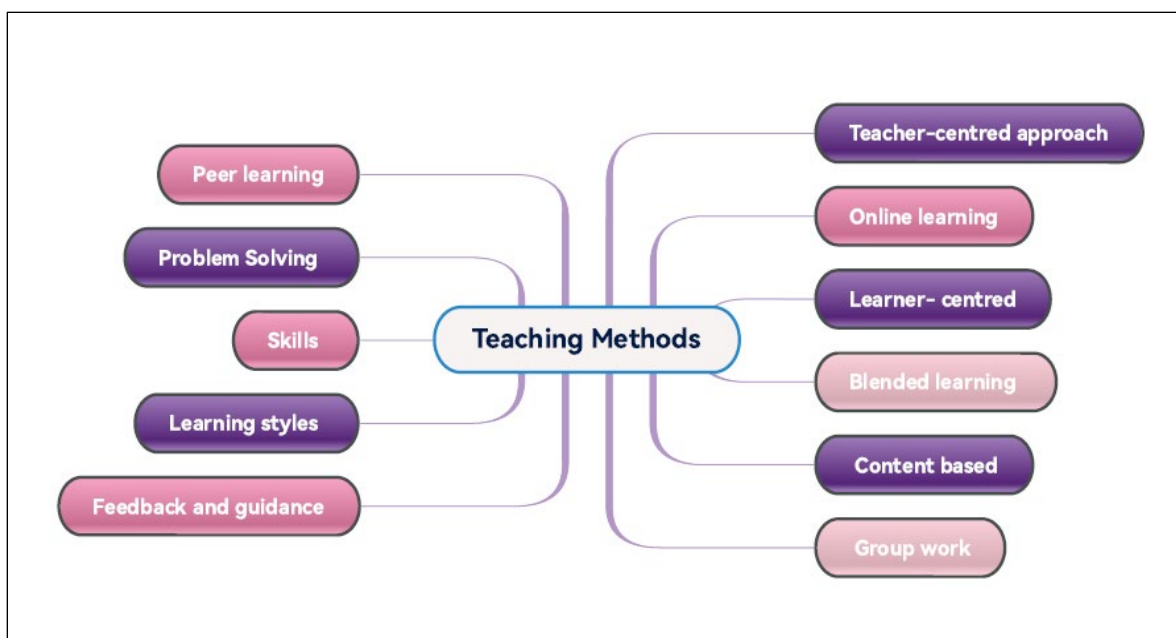


Figure 5.8: Teaching Methodology

Source: (researcher's own)

According to the findings of the study, depicted in Figure 5.8, the tourism educators highlighted the following teaching methods as working well for them under social distancing circumstances.

- Content focused methods which focused more on the content as they were no time to fit other forms of learning. The preference for content-focused teaching methods suggests that educators prioritized delivering essential content within limited time frames. This approach allowed tourism educators to focus on providing necessary information and knowledge to learners, ensuring that important concepts and topics are covered despite time constraints.
- Blended learning, utilising both classroom learning and Internet learning. The utilization of blended learning, which combines classroom learning with online or internet-based learning, allowed for flexibility and adaptability in the teaching process. This approach enabled tourism educators to leverage digital tools and resources to supplement face-to-face instruction, providing learners with a more diverse and interactive learning experience.
- Small group teaching which allowed learners to get individual attention which allowed learners to be productive. This approach also allowed for personalized instruction, fostering deeper understanding and engagement.

- Self-directed learning where learners needed to focus on their own learning without supervision or guidance, learners focused on their learning. The recognition of self-directed learning highlighted the importance of learners taking responsibility for their own learning process. This approach encouraged learners to take initiative, set goals, and engage in independent learning activities.
- Educator-centred approach where the educator is the centre of knowledge. The preference for an educator-centered approach, where the educator is seen as the central source of knowledge, suggests that learners relied on educators for guidance and expertise.

5.7.5 Assessment methods

Educators were asked to determine which assessment methods worked well during and post pandemic to ensure quality assessment method amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

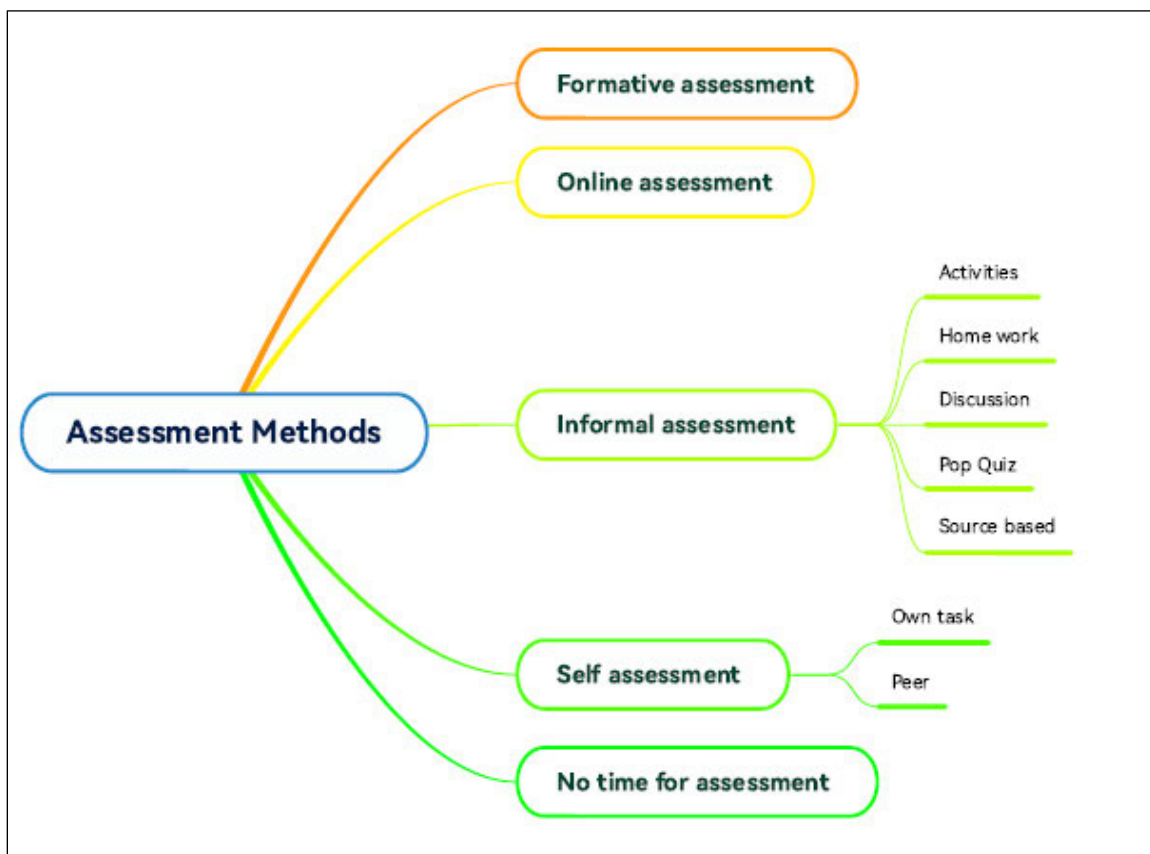


Figure 5.9:Assessment methods

Source: (researcher's own)

Ehrin and Chapman (2020) argue that assessment programmes play a crucial role in evaluating the effectiveness of educational systems. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant shifts to conventional assessment programmes, leading the Department of Education to make several amendments to assessment procedures, including adjustments to the number of tasks in certain subjects (Department of Basic Education, 2020). Consequently, many educators in the field of tourism have been assigned the challenging task of attaining curriculum objectives that may be deemed unrealistic. Hence, the research was conducted to ascertain the strategies employed by educators to attain their assessment objectives. Educators have identified several assessment methods, as depicted in Figure 5.9, that they employed to evaluate the learners' comprehension and knowledge pertaining to the subject of tourism. These methods include formative assessments, peer or self-assessments, informal assessments, and online assessments. Assessment is a crucial component of the learning process. However, online learning and assessment presented numerous challenges, primarily stemming from the inadequate infrastructure for online teaching, limited professional development opportunities, and the passive engagement of learners on online platforms. One tourism educator stated, *"I had to develop an assessment that focused more on developing learners' skills to study alone and at home"*. Participants also stated that were required to use Google to find most of the answers, thereby ensuring their awareness of current events. Another participant emphasised the importance of providing learners with sufficient feedback and guidance regarding their work performance. According to other participants, the assessment strategies primarily emphasised learners' knowledge acquisition rather than aligning with the department's desired content coverage and completion. The participants recognised the necessity for the department to modify the assessment tasks for grades 10 and 11 due to insufficient classroom instruction. Several participants reported that they were required to administer customised assessments based on the individual needs of learners. This was necessary because certain learners lacked the ability to study at home and did not have access to parental or learning support. Consequently, there was insufficient time available to adequately assess the knowledge of these learners.

5.7.6 Tourism learner's readiness to enter a changed tourism industry post-COVID-19

The study aimed to gather participants' opinions on the preparedness of tourism learners to enter or engage in the tourism sector following the COVID-19 pandemic.

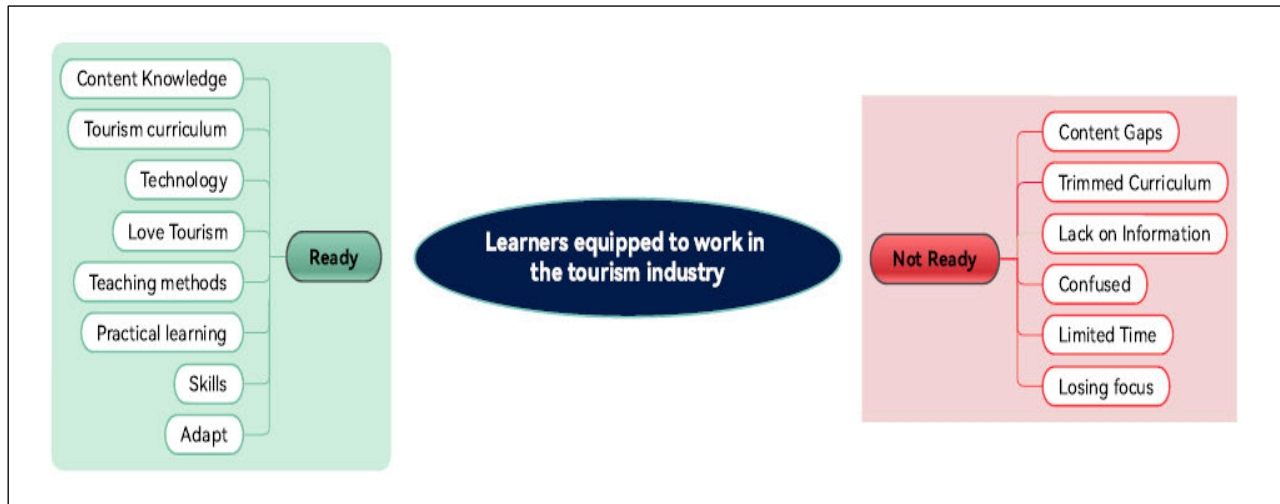


Figure 5.10: Learners equipped for the tourism industry

Source: (researcher’s own)

The findings indicated divergent views among participants regarding the readiness of tourism learners for the evolving industry. Notably, participants recognized the importance of incorporating technology in the curriculum during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for learners with limited prior exposure to the internet. They emphasized that technology provides learners with diverse learning opportunities, allowing them to stay informed about relevant technological advancements and the dynamic landscape of the tourism industry. One participant highlighted the significance of technology integration, stating, *"learners need to show interest in the industry, and they must be willing to learn and adjust with all the changes in the industry"*. This emphasizes the necessity for learners to be proactive and adaptable in response to industry developments. It was also acknowledged that the tourism sector is susceptible to external influences, necessitating continuous monitoring of prevailing patterns. The perpetual demand for individuals pursuing tourism education within the service-oriented tourism industry was recognized by participants. They further observed that a significant proportion of tourism learners possess genuine passion and enthusiasm for the subject matter. Consequently, it is essential to modify the tourism curriculum to emphasize relevant content that equips learners with the necessary skills and knowledge required for their prospective roles as industry professionals.

Conversely, some tourism educators argued that learners who have experienced the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic may not possess the required readiness to enter the tourism industry. The cohorts of learners in the years 2020, 2021, and 2022 have encountered content gaps that have led to a decline in their interest in the subject matter and the industry. This decline can be attributed to their vulnerability resulting from the pandemic. However, Reichenberger and Raymond (2021) found in a recent study that a significant proportion of learners held the belief that the effects of COVID-19 on the tourism industry were temporary in nature. These individuals remained optimistic about the industry's imminent recovery and did not view the pandemic as a deterrent to their entry into the sector. The tourism educators proposed that the focus of tourism education should extend beyond content and place greater emphasis on practical aspects of the industry. Internships, case studies, and field trips are identified by participants as essential components of practical tourism education. The practical dimension of tourism education is gaining importance as it bridges the gap between academic curriculum and real-world industry practices.

One participant highlighted the limited awareness among learners about recent advancements in the industry due to a lack of exposure to technology. The outdated nature of textbooks was also acknowledged, and tourism educators suggested the development of new curriculum materials that encompass the latest trends and address the dynamic nature of the field. Concern was expressed by one participant regarding the presence of students in tourism classes who display a lack of interest, repeat courses, or lack the necessary academic preparation. Regardless of the pandemic's influence, these students may face challenges in entering the industry as their choice of subject was driven by factors other than genuine interest and recognition of its academic value.

5.7.7 Preparing tourism learners for the changing tourism industry

Educators were asked to comment on how learners should be prepared for the changed industry post COVID-19

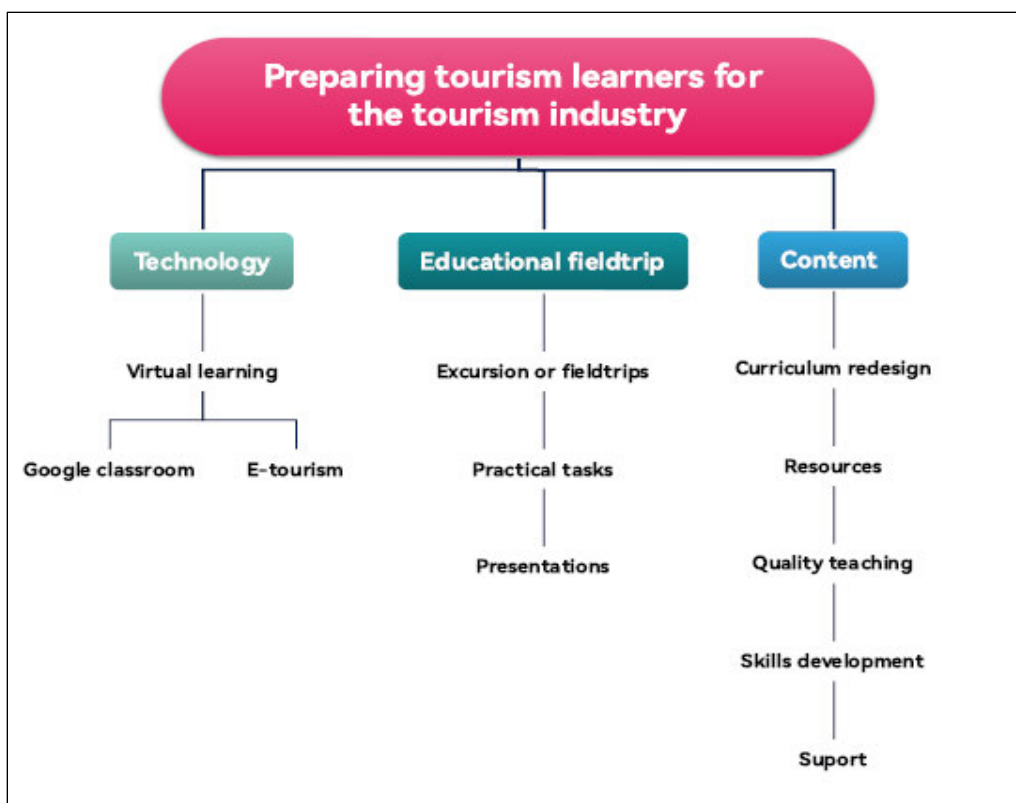


Figure 5.11: Preparing tourism learners

Source: (researcher's own)

According to Zhong et al. (2022), despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the hospitality and tourism industry experienced significant digital transformation and accelerated digitization across society. The pandemic led to the emergence of new business models in the sector, including cloud entertainment, cloud live broadcasting, and cloud exhibition. These are some of the latest trends that tourism learners who leave our schools should be familiar with and aware of to increase the learner's level of knowledge and understanding. Participants were asked to indicate what could be done in schools to prepare learners for the evolving industry. The majority of the educators highlighted that technology is an important element that all tourism learners should be familiar with. According to Soe and Jeong (2022) to place our learners in a better position for their future employment, tourism educators may want to reconsider their curriculum design to enhance learner's knowledge and understanding. Virtual learning should be further refined and utilised in the future as means to broaden learners' perspectives. Shava (2022) highlighted that in South Africa, educators' lack of digital skills was perceived as a barrier to online teaching and learning, leading to concerns about digital inequalities in education.

Whilst other participants highlighted that tourism business awareness programs and training should be adapted to the new tourism era and educational field trips to the industry will assist to strength and tourism education and promote the tourism industry. Another participant specified that being exposed to the industry while in school will develop an interest in learners and want to pursue careers in the sector. *“As a result, the industry will fill with people who are passionate about the industry and ready to provide quality tourism service to the tourists”*. The tourism curriculum should not remain the same it must constantly be developed to accommodate the forever-changing industry and its trends. Tourism educators also felt that tourism materials must constantly communicate with the demands of the industry and the content must be in line with the industry expectations so that learners are well-equipped and prepared for the world of work.

5.8 QUALITATIVE DATA FROM SUBJECT ADVISORS

The purpose of this study was to analyse qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews from tourism subject advisors. The data was analysed using a thematic content framework or approach. The data was subsequently classified into thematic categories following the completion of interpretation and discussion. The subject advisors' responses were in accordance with the study's objectives.

5.8.1 The impact of COVID-19 on tourism teaching and learning

The participants were requested to provide their opinion of the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the context of tourism education.

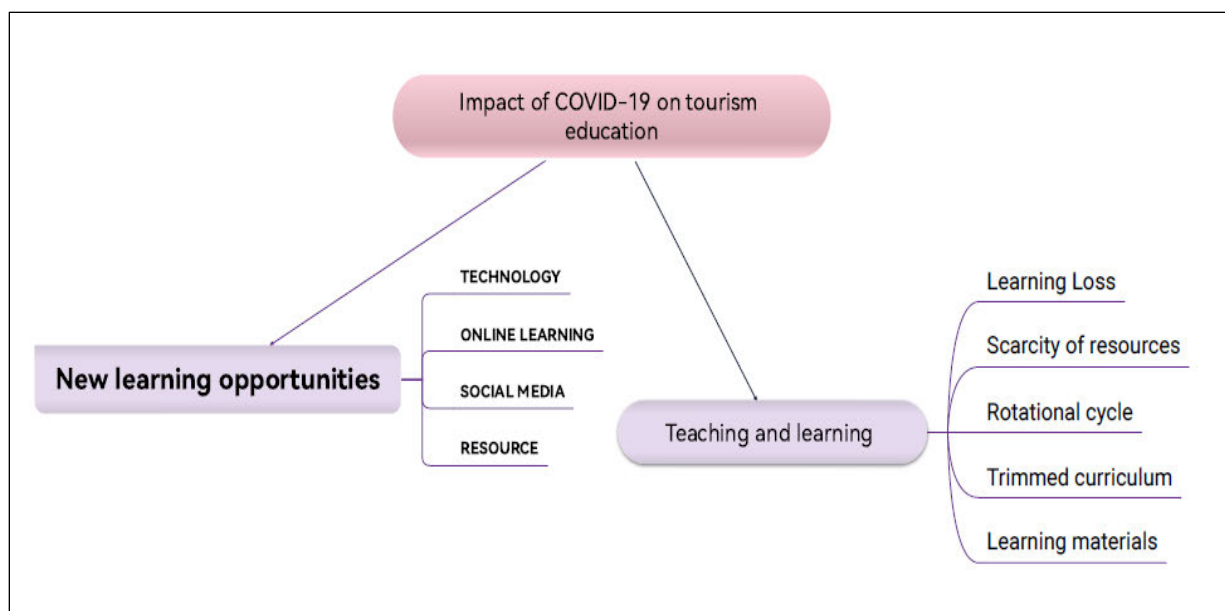


Figure 5.12: The impact of COVID-19 on tourism education

Source: (researcher's own)

Based on the data presented in Figure 5.12, it can be observed that subject advisors expressed significant apprehension regarding the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in relation to the interruption of teaching and learning activities during the nationwide lockdown in 2020. This disruption had a lasting impact on the educational landscape, affecting teaching and learning practises even in the year 2023. One of the respondents expressed that the onset of COVID-19 was sudden and unexpected, leading to the abrupt dismissal of students without a well-defined strategy or guidance on how they would stay on track with the educational syllabus. The participant also expressed that despite the resumption of schools, districts and educational institutions continued to experience learning setbacks because of the escalation in COVID-19 cases detected among students and teachers. This surge in cases further contributed to an increase in the number of days lost in learning. Another participant provided additional details, stating that the learning shortcomings experienced were a result of limited access to remedial resources and instructional strategies to support the teaching and learning in tourism.

The educational system implemented a rotational attendance schedule for learners in the post-COVID-19 era, which had adverse effects on the teaching and learning processes within the field of tourism. The efficacy of the rotational strategy was found to be inadequate, as it resulted in

learners being unable to keep pace with the curriculum. Consequently, adjustments were made to the Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) curriculum to compensate for the instructional time lost due to the pandemic. Nevertheless, a participant expressed appreciation for the proactive efforts undertaken by the provincial office of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (DoE) in creating educational materials known as "Step Ahead" documents. These resources proved beneficial in situations where students were unable to attend school. These documents comprised two distinct components: a learner document and an educator document and encompassed various instructional materials such as notes, lesson plans, daily activities, and memoranda specifically designed to support educators. The primary purpose of these documents was to facilitate the learning process for students at home, particularly during rotational cycles, ensuring their ability to effectively engage with the assigned coursework. However, the distribution of these documents to educational institutions presented challenges. The documents were transmitted to educators through the messaging application Whatsapp, and physical copies were also sent to schools. Unfortunately, certain schools did not receive the documents, and even if they did, they faced obstacles in printing them for all students due to limited resources. Additionally, in some schools, the available resources were insufficient to cater to all tourism learners, as sharing resources was prohibited in adherence to COVID-19 protocols.

The use of technology as a novel educational opportunity that was prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic was acknowledged by all the participants. The implementation of online learning was initiated in selected schools, wherein instructional content was transmitted and received through internet-based platforms and social media channels. The education system implemented virtual platforms as a means of facilitating various forms of interaction and engagement. PowerPoint presentations containing instructional content were created and disseminated to educational institutions through virtual communication platforms. According to one of the participants, Whatsapp has emerged as a widely adopted platform for communication between tourism educators and learners, facilitating effective outreach and engagement within the educational context. The utilisation of Whatsapp proved to be efficacious as it facilitated the transmission of voice notes, presentations, and graphics by educators, thereby enabling learners to actively interact with teachers. The participant elaborated on the continued use of technology as a means of communication between educators and learners in the aftermath of the COVID-19

pandemic. Nevertheless, one participant expressed dissatisfaction regarding the use of technology in rural schools, citing various challenges such as inadequate network coverage, students lacking access to data, and limited availability of resources. Conversely, these opportunities were highly valued in urban schools with greater resources. As indicated by Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021), the effectiveness of appropriate and relevant pedagogy for online education relies heavily on the proficiency and familiarity with information and communications technology (ICT) among both educators and learners. Consequently, in schools, technology was primarily utilized as a means of communication rather than as a tool to enhance the learning process.

5.8.2 Supporting tourism educators during and post COVID-19

Participants were asked to respond on the measures that were implemented during and post-COVID-19 to support tourism educators.

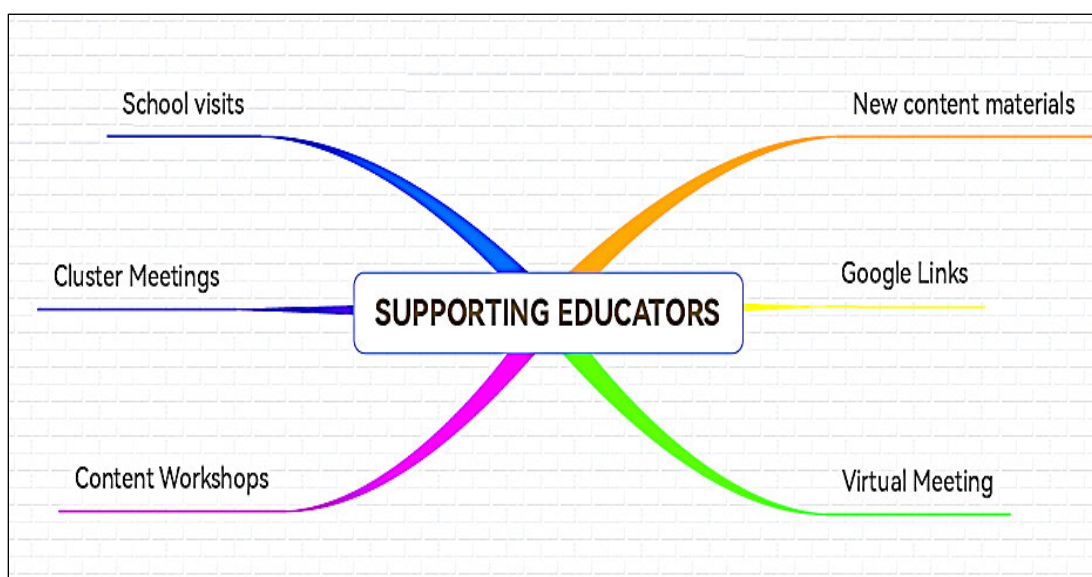


Figure 5.13: Supporting tourism educators
Source: (researcher's own)

As indicated in Figure 5.13, the following were identified as measures to support tourism educators:

- Distribution of content information to educators via Whatsapp and emails.
- Creating links that allowed educators to access large files via Microsoft drive.

- Holding virtual meetings, especially in urban clusters, allowed for interactive engagements with educators especially in explaining critical subject documents like Practical Assessment Tasks (PAT) and recovery ATPs.
- Visitation of individual educators to schools, to give full support, particularly to new educators and educators who were assisting in the subject due to the shortage of tourism educators during COVID-19 and the increase in the number of classes due to social distance protocols.
- Encouraging and meeting educators in clusters, allowed educators to assist and support each other thus ensuring that work continued especially post-COVID-19.
- Making use of lead educators to support educators in vulnerable schools or where the need persisted.
- Subject workshops conducted by the Department of Education via teams to ensure that both the subject advisors and educators were well-equipped with resources to continue teaching and learning despite the odds of the pandemic.
- KwaZulu-Natal, Department of Education recovery program called “Just-in-time”. This program assisted educators to be capacitated to teach the subject comfortably. The program was specifically designed to equip novice educators and educators from vulnerable schools.
- Employment of Educators Assistance (EAs) in schools to assist educators in a time of need and to ease the burden of educators.

One positive aspect of these measures was the use of technology to facilitate communication and resource sharing. Distributing content information through platforms like Whatsapp and emails allowed educators to access materials conveniently and stay updated. Creating links for accessing large files via Microsoft drive also enhanced the efficiency of sharing resources. Virtual meetings provided opportunities for interactive engagement, particularly in explaining critical subject documents, which can be valuable for educators in understanding and implementing curriculum requirements. The individual visits to schools and cluster meetings are commendable as they offered personalized support and foster collaboration among educators. This can contribute to a sense of community and professional development, enabling educators to share best practices and support each other in navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic. The involvement of lead educators and subject workshops conducted by the

Department of Education further highlights the commitment to equipping educators with the necessary resources and professional development opportunities. These initiatives can enhance educators' knowledge and pedagogical practices, ensuring effective teaching and learning experiences. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education's recovery program, specifically designed to support novice educators and educators from vulnerable schools, demonstrates a targeted approach to address the specific needs and challenges faced by educators in different contexts. This program acknowledges the importance of capacity-building and ensuring educators are adequately equipped to teach the subject comfortably. The employment of Educators Assistance (EAs) in schools is another notable measure as it aimed to ease the burden on educators and provide additional support during challenging times. EAs can assist with administrative tasks, classroom management, and individual student support, enabling educators to focus more on teaching and instructional planning.

5.8.3 Training of tourism educators

The research findings reveal significant implications regarding the adequacy of training provided to educators in response to curriculum changes during the pandemic. Participants expressed a consensus that educators lacked formal training and had to rely on subject advisors for guidance and support in navigating the evolving curriculum content and interpretation. This highlights a gap in preparedness and professional development opportunities for tourism educators, particularly in addressing unexpected crises like the pandemic. The participants' perception of inadequate training raises concerns about the ability of educators to effectively facilitate ongoing learning in such challenging circumstances. Educators found themselves in a situation where they had to quickly adapt to new teaching methods, technologies, and curriculum changes while also balancing concerns for their personal safety. The rapid transition to remote and hybrid learning models further added to the complexity of their roles. The research findings also shed light on the unpreparedness of the government in addressing the unforeseen crisis caused by the pandemic. The participants perceived a lack of readiness and support from the government in effectively responding to the educational challenges brought about by the pandemic. This suggests a need for better contingency planning and proactive measures to equip educators with the necessary skills and resources to navigate such crises. However, it is worth noting that the Department of Education (DOE) made efforts to implement a program aimed at supporting

educators in fulfilling their professional responsibilities during the pandemic. While the specific details of the program are not elaborated upon in the research, this initiative signifies a recognition of the challenges faced by educators and a commitment to provide support.

5.8.4 Obstacles faced by tourism educators

Tourism subject advisors were asked to indicate some of the challenges faced by tourism educators during and post CoVID-19.

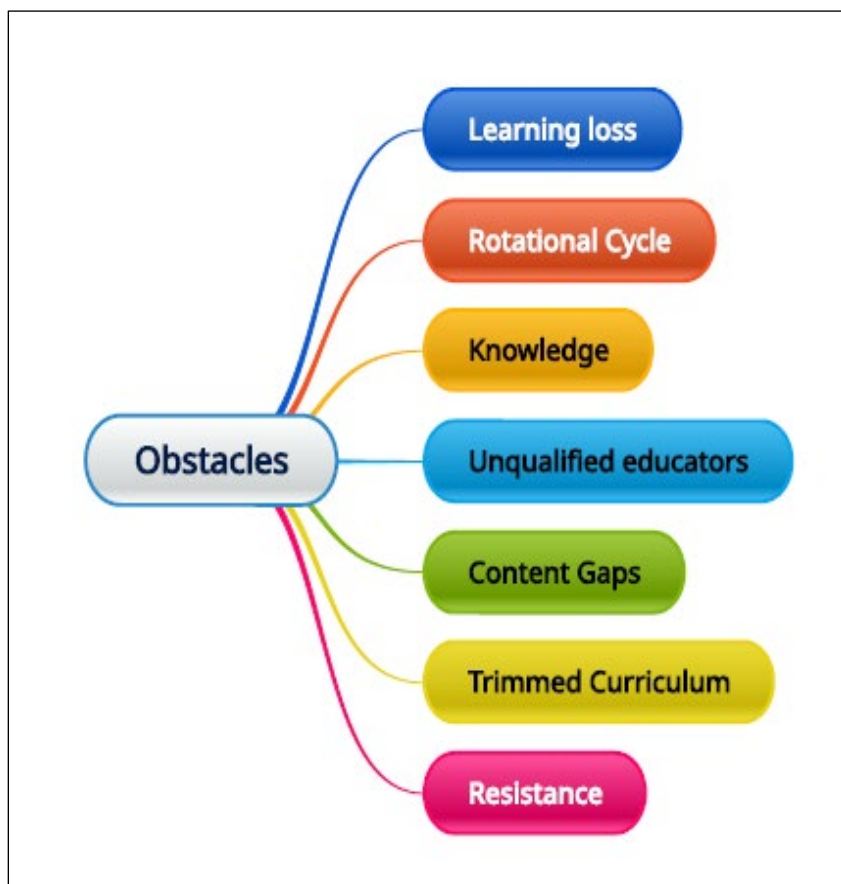


Figure 5.14: Challenges faced by tourism educators
Source: (researcher’s own)

The results depicted in Figure 5.14 illustrate the difficulties encountered by educators in the field of tourism, as perceived by subject advisors. One of the primary challenges encountered by tourism education, whether in a classroom or outside of it, pertains to the issue of learning loss. The implementation of the rotational model in the timetable resulted in significant declines in academic achievement. The participants voiced concern regarding the insufficient number of

qualified tourism educators in many schools. As a result of social distancing measures, educator assistants without the necessary qualifications or subject knowledge were tasked with teaching tourism. Consequently, learners experienced a decline in the quality of instruction and learning in the field of tourism. One participant provided further details regarding the impact of the rotational system in the previous grade. *“This system led to educators being required to exert additional effort to address the content gaps resulting from the reduction of the curriculum. Consequently, educators were unable to complete their Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs), thereby exacerbating the gap in the pedagogy of tourism”*.

Tourism is an applied discipline that necessitates learners' active engagement in field trips to gain first-hand experience of its practical aspects. Hence, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an adverse effect on frequently visited establishments and attractions such as airports and hotels, due to their closure. As a result, learners have experienced a decline in their understanding and familiarity with this mode of learning, which is widely practised by many schools, particularly those situated in urban areas. The participant further emphasised that learners exhibited resistance towards the learning process, particularly in relation to the rotational cycle. A significant number of students exhibited a lack of motivation to engage in learning both within the school environment and at home, resulting in a lack of participation in activities and completion of assigned homework. This phenomenon has placed a considerable burden on educators, leading to heightened levels of stress and frustration.

5.8.5 Adapting to future disasters

The participants were requested to identify coping mechanisms for the future disasters and explore alternative approaches to enhance tourism education in South African schools. Some participants expressed the importance of educators enhancing their technological proficiency in preparation for potential future crises. Other participants stated that educators should enhance their computer skills and transition towards a more technologically oriented approach to teaching. This is particularly important for older educators who lack proficiency in using computers. This recommendation stems from the observation that the use of technology was a significant strategy for facilitating teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, which presented numerous challenges for educators. Another participant highlighted the importance of

teachers adapting to the fourth industrial revolution to ensure that they possess the necessary content knowledge to effectively educate learners. This participant referred to educators as *“lifelong learners who must continuously update their knowledge to stay current with the latest information”*. This is particularly relevant in the field of tourism education, as educators need to be well-informed about global developments.

5.8.6 Impact of COVID-19 on academic performance

All participants shared a unanimous consensus regarding the observed decline in the learner's academic performance within both the school and district contexts over the course of the past three years (2020, 2021, and 2022). The 2022 cohort of Grade 12 students exhibits a higher degree of content knowledge gaps due to their enrolment in the tourism course during their Grade 10 year, which was significantly impacted by the disruptions caused by the pandemic in 2020. Nevertheless, the subject advisors expressed optimism regarding the academic performance of the 2023 cohort of learners, citing their lack of content gaps and minimal learning loss. The 2023 cohort will serve as an accurate representation of the outcomes observed in the educational system following the pandemic. One participant emphasised that *“the performance during the pandemic was evaluated primarily based on quantity, resulting in a compromise in quality, as learners’ marks were adjusted”*.

5.8.7 The extent to which tourism education equip learners for a career in tourism

The significance of tourism education lies in its contribution to the advancement of tourism and the provision of skilled workers who can meet the demands and expectations of both the industry and tourists (Lambulira, Banda, Mhango, and Bello, 2022). Therefore, the participants were requested to provide their feedback regarding the extent to which tourism education adequately equips learners with the essential skills demanded by the tourism industry. One of the participants shared the belief that tourism education enables learners to enter the industry. Furthermore, learners can pursue a range of career paths within the industry that do not necessarily require formal qualifications, as they are exposed to the diverse nature of the sector. The three-year curriculum encompasses a substantial amount of knowledge that equips learners with the necessary skills and understanding to effectively engage with the sector. Another participant asserted that tourism projects, such as tourism skills tasks and Practical Assessment

Tasks (PAT), are intentionally incorporated into the curriculum to cultivate the necessary skills required in the tourism industry. Hence, the subject of tourism presents an opportunity for individuals to enter the industry, as a significant portion of employment opportunities within this sector do not require formal qualifications.

5.8.8 Tourism education in a changing tourism industry

The respondents were asked about potential measures that could be implemented within schools to guarantee that students are adequately equipped for the evolving demands of the industry. The study participant stated that tourism as a subject in schools should be accorded due respect. They argued against the practise of schools offering the subject solely as an intervention strategy to ensure learners pass and improve the school's overall performance. This approach, according to the participant, undermines the intrinsic value of the subject and has negative implications for the tourism industry. The participants contended that the current situation in schools reveals that the subject of tourism does not effectively contribute to learners' understanding and engagement with the tourism industry. Rather, it appears that the subject is primarily offered in schools as a means for learners to achieve passing grades and accumulate sufficient points for admission into higher education institutions. One participant expressed a firm belief in the necessity of recognising tourism as a legitimate academic discipline within the education system, rather than reducing it to a 'dumping ground' for underperforming students. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that the study of tourism in educational institutions adopts a more practical approach, as opposed to relying solely on theoretical content. The traditional emphasis on written materials fails to adequately expose learners to the complexities of the industry. The study of tourism can be highly beneficial when approached with appropriate pedagogical objectives and a well-qualified teacher.

5.9 QUANTITATIVE DATA FROM INDUSTRY PARTNERS

The subsequent section examines the scoring patterns of the participants with respect to each variable within each section. The findings are initially presented through summarised percentages for the variables that comprise each section. The results are subsequently examined based on the significance of the statements. The survey instrument employed in this study involved the distribution of a questionnaire to industry partners, wherein respondents were

provided with a set of predetermined response options from which they could select the most suitable answer. This subsection relates to the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the responses obtained from the questionnaires that were returned.

5.9.1 Perceptions on tourism learners

This section undertakes an analysis of the data pertaining to the perceptions held by industry partners regarding tourism learners. The variables under review include the satisfaction levels pertaining to the skills possessed by learners entering the tourism industry, the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on learners pursuing careers in this sector, the preparedness of learners amidst the pandemic to enter the tourism industry, and the inclination towards employing high school graduates in the field of tourism. This section also examines the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the employment rate within the tourism industry, as well as the financial consequences that the industry has faced because of the pandemic.

a) Satisfaction with skills that learners bring to the industry

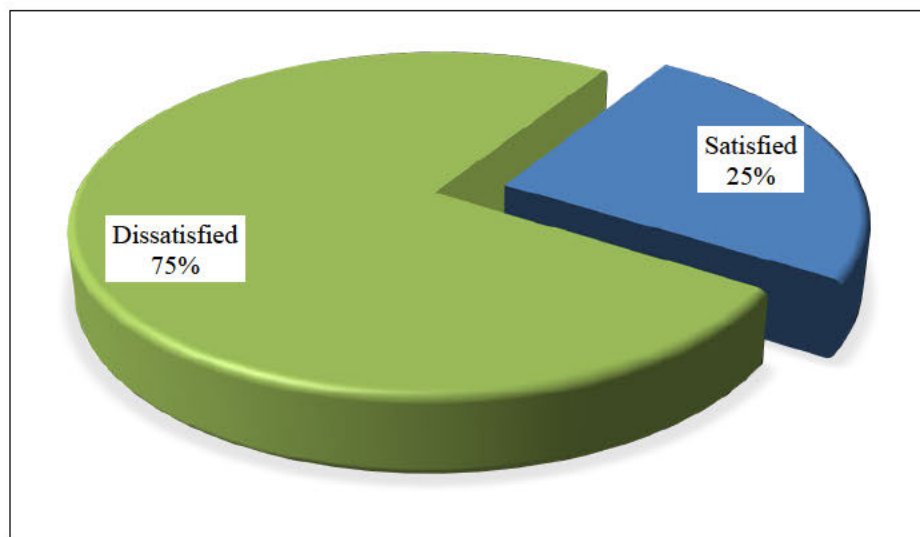


Figure 5.15: Industry satisfaction with skills learners bring to the tourism industry

Source: (researcher's own)

The perceptions of tourism industry partners regarding the skills possessed by tourism learners entering the workforce were examined through a survey. The results revealed that a considerable majority (75%) expressed dissatisfaction with the skills demonstrated by these individuals, regardless of whether they had recently graduated from school or obtained a higher degree.

Conversely, only 25% of the respondents reported being satisfied with the skills exhibited by tourism learners. The significant majority expressing dissatisfaction with the skills of these learners is a cause for concern and indicates a mismatch between the expectations of industry partners and the skills acquired by students.

These findings have several critical implications. Firstly, they suggest that there may be gaps in the curriculum or teaching methodologies in tourism education programs. The dissatisfaction expressed by industry partners could indicate that the skills being taught are not adequately aligned with the industry's needs and expectations. This misalignment can hinder the successful transition of learners into the workforce and may lead to challenges in meeting the demands of the tourism industry. Secondly, the findings raise questions about the quality and effectiveness of the learning experiences provided to tourism learners. The dissatisfaction expressed by industry partners suggests that the skills demonstrated by learners may not meet the practical requirements of the industry. This could be indicative of a lack of practical training, limited opportunities for hands-on experience, or a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and its application in real-world scenarios. The results also highlight the importance of collaboration and communication between the tourism industry and educational institutions. Industry partners play a crucial role in identifying the skills and competencies required in the workforce, and their dissatisfaction may indicate a need for closer collaboration with educational institutions to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This collaboration could involve industry input in curriculum development, internships or work placements to provide practical exposure, and regular engagement between industry professionals and educators.

This finding aligns with Lambulira, Banda, Mhango, and Bello's (2022) assertion that tourism education plays a crucial role in facilitating the growth of the tourism sector by meeting the industry's standards and fulfilling tourists' expectations. Therefore, providing comprehensive training to the workforce is an essential component in fostering the growth and success of the tourism industry. This conclusion is consistent with Hyasat's (2022) recommendation that the tourism and hospitality sector should actively contribute to enhancing curricula related to tourism and hospitality. Moreover, educators are encouraged to act as intermediaries between the industry and students, equipping them with essential theoretical knowledge that can be

effectively applied across various subdomains of the hospitality and tourism industry. In addition to imparting practical skills, the curriculum for tourism education should incorporate personal attributes and managerial proficiencies that align with the sector's current requirements (Hyasat, 2022).

b) The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learners taking on careers in the tourism industry

The participants were asked what the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learners is for choosing careers in the tourism industry in future.

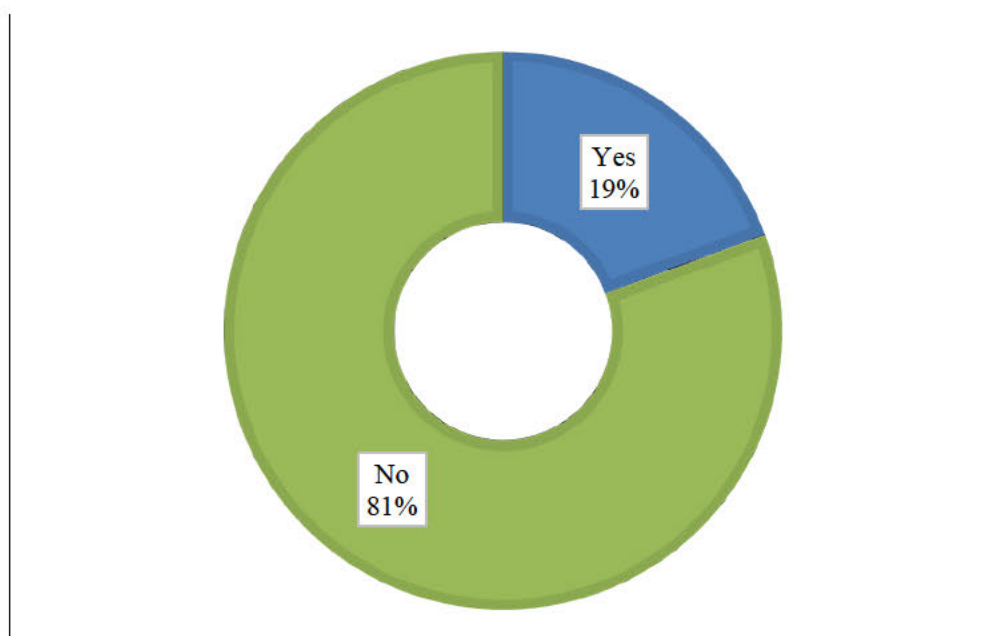


Figure 5.16: The impact of COVID-19 on selecting tourism as a career
Source: (researcher's own)

The COVID-19 pandemic is perceived by a majority of participants (80.6%) as a deterrent for students considering tourism as a career choice in the future. In contrast, only 29% agreed that COVID-19 would negatively impact students' decisions to pursue a career in tourism. Previous studies (Jiang and Tribe, 2009) have shown that low pay, unpredictable working hours, unfavorable working conditions, seasonal employment, and job insecurity contribute to students' reluctance in pursuing careers within the tourism sector. The ongoing pandemic may further diminish students' inclination to join the industry, posing significant challenges for attracting

qualified and passionate individuals to the field. Üngüren and Kaçmaz (2022) assert that circumstances such as the fear of COVID-19 present the most significant threat to individuals' ability to plan their future professions. The industry's reputation has historically influenced prospective workers' career decisions.

These research findings have several implications for the tourism industry. The majority perception that the COVID-19 pandemic discourages students from choosing tourism as a career suggests that the industry may face challenges in attracting future talent. If students perceive tourism as a risky or unstable career option due to the pandemic, it could lead to a decline in the number of qualified individuals entering the industry. The findings also suggest that pre-existing concerns related to low pay, unpredictable hours, unfavorable working conditions, seasonal employment, and job insecurity, as identified in prior studies, continue to affect students' interest in pursuing careers in the tourism sector. The pandemic has potentially exacerbated these concerns and may further discourage students from entering the industry.

c) The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the employment rate in the tourism industry

The study findings, based on the consensus among all 36 participants, highlight the significant impact of COVID-19 on employment rates within the tourism sector. Aguiar-Quintana, Nguyen, Araujo-Cabrera, and Sanabria-Díaz (2022) assert that the global tourism and hospitality industries experienced complete shutdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To curb the spread of the virus, government authorities implemented several measures, such as the temporary suspension of domestic and international flights, restrictions on interprovincial travel, closure of cafes, restaurants, and entertainment venues, as well as the cancellation of festivals, congresses, and sports events (Khan, Niazi, Nasir, Hussain, and Khan, 2021). These significant shifts have led to a substantial reduction in employment and a significant decrease in income for many individuals working in the tourism industry. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2020) emphasizes that the current employment situation in the tourism sector is characterized by numerous challenges such as paid or unpaid leave, wage reductions, and, in severe cases, job terminations. These issues have emerged due to the profound disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry. Therefore, industry partners hold the belief that the

employment rate will continue to decline persistently, and the pandemic has undoubtedly exacerbated working conditions within the tourism sector.

c) The readiness of learners during the COVID pandemic to join the tourism industry

The industry tourism partners were asked to specify tourism learners are ready to enter the tourism industry post COVID-19 pandemic.

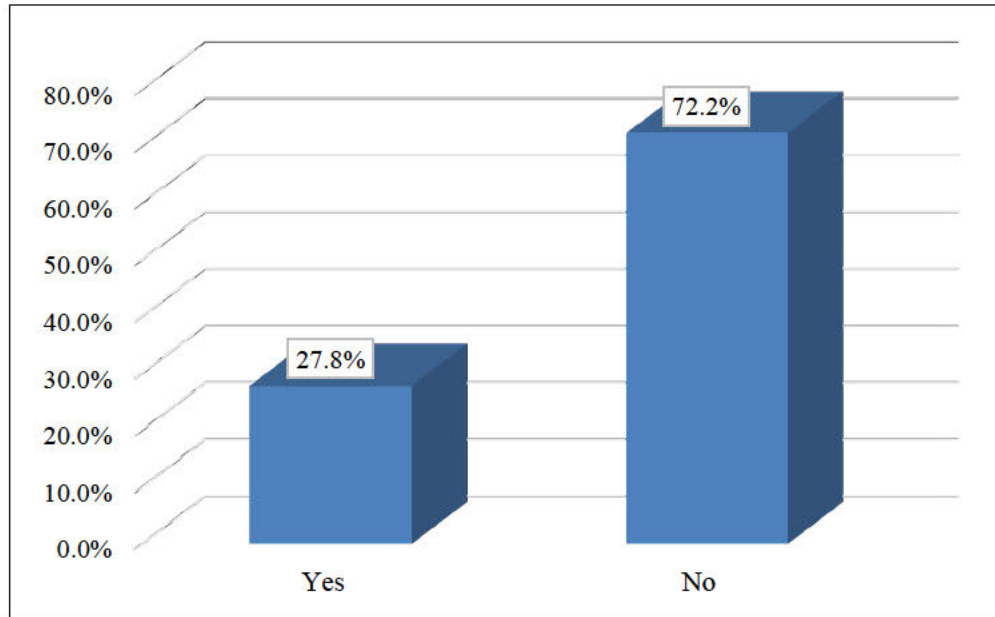


Figure 5.17: Tourism learners' readiness to join the industry

Source: (researcher's own)

A notable percentage of participants (72.2%) from the tourism industry hold the belief that learners in the field of tourism lack the essential skills and knowledge required for a successful transition into employment within the industry. In contrast, only 27.8% of respondents believe that these learners are adequately prepared for the workforce. The varied responses can be attributed to the impact of COVID-19, which has brought significant changes to the lives of learners and the education sector. However, the presence of learning gaps in the curriculum poses a significant challenge for the tourism sector in terms of admitting learners into the industry. This challenge stems primarily from learners' insufficient knowledge of the intricate nature of the subject. Additionally, the increasing use of technology within the industry may hinder aspiring learners from entering the sector, as they often have limited exposure to diverse technological infrastructures. Üngüren and Kaçmaz (2022) argue that gaining a comprehensive

understanding of crises, such as a pandemic, that significantly impact the tourism sector is crucial for adequately training human resources and setting proactive goals for learners. By incorporating insights from such crises at the school level, it becomes possible to identify and develop tourism initiatives that are appropriately prepared, suitable, and possess the necessary qualifications. This highlights the necessity of realigning the curriculum to ensure that the skills and attributes of prospective tourism professionals align with the demands of the tourism industry (Yedla and Ajoon, 2022).

d) The financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism establishment

The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on numerous tourism businesses in South Africa. The figure illustrates the findings that all participants (N=36) unanimously agreed that their establishments experienced financial repercussions because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The tourism industry faced significant challenges because of the travel restrictions implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to difficulties for tourists in their travel endeavours. The study primarily consisted of participants employed in the accommodation sector, where there was a notable decrease in demand during the pandemic. Similarly, research conducted by Dogru, Hanks, Suess, Line, and Mody (2023) reveals that the accommodation subsector of the tourism industry experienced significant negative impacts because of the pandemic, leading to a decrease in demand throughout the industry. However, it was observed that economy-scale hotels demonstrated greater resilience compared to other segments. Nevertheless, it is indisputable that the hotel and lodging sector has been profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The tourism industry and economy of the country have experienced substantial losses due to the sharp decrease in visitor numbers, business activities, revenue, and employment rates (Vu et al., 2022). Tourism enterprises have experienced a state of exhaustion, rendering them incapable of sustaining the essential operational requirements. The present period presents a significant challenge for numerous companies as they find themselves burdened with debts owed to financial institutions, making them nearly incapable of meeting their payment obligations (Vu et al., 2022). Lambulira et al. (2022) have observed that the employment landscape within the tourism sector has been marked by various challenges such as paid or unpaid leave, wage reductions, and, in severe cases, job termination. These circumstances have arisen because of the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry.

f) Preference for high school graduates as tourism employees

The research findings indicate a unanimous preference for hiring university graduates over high school students studying tourism in the tourism industry can be attributed to several factors. Graduates possess advanced knowledge and skills obtained through specialized academic programs, making them well-equipped to understand the industry's practices and challenges. Their professional experience gained through internships or work placements demonstrates their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. Furthermore, graduates are often regarded as more mature and professional, with developed work ethics and a sense of responsibility. Finally, graduates' investment in higher education signals their commitment to pursuing a career in the tourism industry, making them more appealing to employers for long-term growth opportunities. Congruent to these findings, Üngüren and Kaçmaz (2022) assert that the presence of highly educated and skilled personnel is crucial for the tourism sector, as they significantly contribute to the service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty within tourism enterprises. The enhancement of service quality in tourism-related businesses can be achieved through the engagement of appropriately trained and educated personnel, thereby facilitating the employment of a knowledgeable workforce within this sector. In the study conducted by Benaraba, Bulaon, Escosio, Narvaez, Suinan, and Roma (2022), it was found that individuals working in the tourism sector who possess a formal education in tourism and demonstrate professional competence are crucial in improving the quality of services offered, thereby contributing to the growth and expansion of the industry. According to Benaraba et al. (2022), it is imperative for the tourism industry to cultivate a workforce that demonstrates unwavering commitment to their roles and possesses a clear sense of alignment with their chosen career path. The absence of integration between the curriculum and the industry will result in a lack of employment prospects for individuals studying tourism.

5.9.2 Binary Logistic Regression Model

Logistic Regression is a classification algorithm employed when the objective is to predict a binary categorical variable, such as Yes/No or Satisfied/Dissatisfied, based on a set of independent variables. In the Logistic Regression model, the logarithm of the odds of the dependent variable is modelled as a linear combination of the independent variables. For this

study, the dependent variable selected was "Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the skills tourism learners bring into the industry?" All other statements were considered independent variables. The results indicated that both the measurement model and scale model were considered acceptable. Additionally, the goodness-of-fit indices were used to assess the internal consistency of the scale, while convergent and discriminant validity were tested (Table 3).

Table 5.9: Binary Logistic Regression Model

Variables in the Equation		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
Step 1 ^a	COVID-19 might deter learners from taking careers in the tourism industry? (1)	0.252	0.968	0.068	1	0.794	1.287	0.193	8.588
	Do you think that the learners who studied tourism during the pandemic are well equipped to join the industry? (1)	-1.391	1.138	1.495	1	0.222	0.249	0.027	2.314
	Constant	-0.861	0.470	3.358	1	0.067	0.423		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: COVID-19 might deter learners from taking careers in the tourism industry? Do you think that the learners who studied tourism during the pandemic are well equipped to join the industry?

Binary logistic regression in SPSS 28.0 was used to determine the influence of predictor variables on the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry. The three statements with no variation are excluded from the model which indicates that none of the p-values were significant. However, the odds ratios [Exp (B)] are different from 1. The research findings indicate that participants who are satisfied with the skills tourism learners bring into the industry are more likely to agree that COVID-19 might deter learners from pursuing careers in the tourism industry. The odds ratio of 1.287 suggests that these participants have a higher likelihood of agreeing with this statement compared to those who are not satisfied with the skills of tourism learners. One possible reason for this finding is that participants who are satisfied with the skills of tourism learners may have a better understanding of the challenges and demands of the industry. They may recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the tourism sector, leading to job losses, reduced employment opportunities, and uncertainties about the future. As a result, they may believe that learners would be deterred from entering the industry due to these unfavourable circumstances. The implications of these findings highlight the importance of ensuring that learners possess the necessary skills and competencies to succeed

in the tourism industry. Participants who are satisfied with the skills of tourism learners may perceive a potential lack of preparedness among learners to navigate the challenges brought about by the pandemic. Moreover, the findings suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the perception and decision-making of industry participants regarding career choices in tourism. The pandemic has brought about uncertainties and disruptions, leading to concerns about job security and stability within the industry. This, in turn, may deter learners from pursuing careers in tourism, potentially resulting in a shortage of qualified and skilled professionals in the future.

5.9.3 Challenges facing the tourism industry in taking new learners impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

The survey respondents, who were individuals involved in the tourism industry, were requested to identify the main challenges they encountered when hiring novice individuals pursuing careers in tourism. A significant number of respondents expressed that they are presently unable to accommodate new staff members, as they are in the process of recovering from the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The inability to accommodate new staff members suggests a potential workforce shortage in the tourism industry. The pandemic has caused significant disruptions, including layoffs, furloughs, and business closures, which have resulted in reduced staffing levels. As the industry recovers, the demand for employees may exceed the available workforce, leading to difficulties in filling vacant positions.

The industry partners have expressed their concerns regarding the inclusion of tourism learners in the sector, not solely due to the content of their education, but primarily due to the scarcity of job opportunities within the industry. Several participants expressed their inability to allocate resources, such as time and money, towards training individuals lacking qualifications or experience in the tourism industry. The tourism industry recognises that individuals pursuing a career in tourism, including recent graduates, may aspire to secure employment within the sector. However, it is important for these individuals to understand that the industry may not have the capacity to accommodate many employees. Consequently, there exists a notable scarcity of human resources within our companies. As a result, one participant stated that they are actively seeking learners who possess specialised skills and can generate resources of exceptional quality.

“Our emphasis is on recruiting individuals who demonstrate competency in their respective areas”. One of the respondents reported that their business had to cease operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, they have since resumed operations and are currently in the process of expanding. Once the businesses reach a stable state, they intend to recruit new employees. They expressed confidence in their existing staff’s ability to train these individuals, thereby mitigating any potential knowledge and content gaps. One participant expressed the viewpoint that the industry necessitates individuals who possess the ability to swiftly adapt to various circumstances and possess the necessary skills to effectively manage any potential future emergencies. Menona et al. (2022) argue that it is the responsibility of tourism educators to provide learners with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively navigate and adapt to various changes in the industry.

5.9.4 Changes made in industry to deal with learners impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

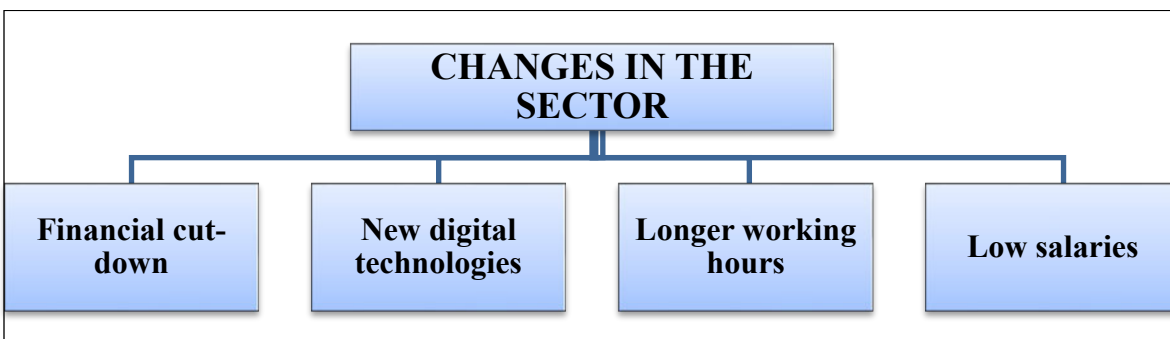


Figure 5.18: Changes made in the tourism sector
Source: (researcher’s own)

The participants were asked to identify changes occurring within the tourism sectors that are considered essential knowledge for individuals studying tourism. The participants expressed that a significant concern arises when accommodating tourism learners, particularly those who possess qualifications and aspire to receive higher salaries. One respondent stated that “*Because of the pandemic, our companies had to implement salary reductions, and we have not yet fully recuperated*”. Consequently, learners should anticipate receiving lower salaries within the sector. According to the study conducted by Vu et al. (2023), the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in detrimental effects on the demand for employment opportunities that necessitate lower levels of qualifications. This can be attributed to the financial constraints faced by

employers, which hinder their ability to afford highly skilled personnel. Lambulira et al. (2022) have reported that the domain of employment within the tourism sector experienced significant negative impacts during the pandemic. The introduction of new digital technologies within the sector has been acknowledged by other participants as a means for companies to stay abreast of the latest trends in the industry and the evolving consumer behaviour in travel. One participant expressed that the organisation currently employs contemporary marketing technologies, such as virtual and digital marketing. One of the featured accommodation establishments has implemented a contactless check-in system, enabling guests to check in without any direct interaction with staff. Instead, guests receive a link or code via email, which they can use to gain access to their assigned room. The participant emphasised that they have extended their working hours and introduced round-the-clock customer service due to the ongoing demand for professional cleaning and hygiene standards in the tourism industry. The implementation of longer working hours will additionally contribute to a swift recovery from the impacts of the pandemic.

5.9.5 The Role of Employees in ensuring sustainability in the establishment post-COVID-19

Participants were asked to indicate the role of employees in the post COVID-19 to ensure that the industry is sustainable

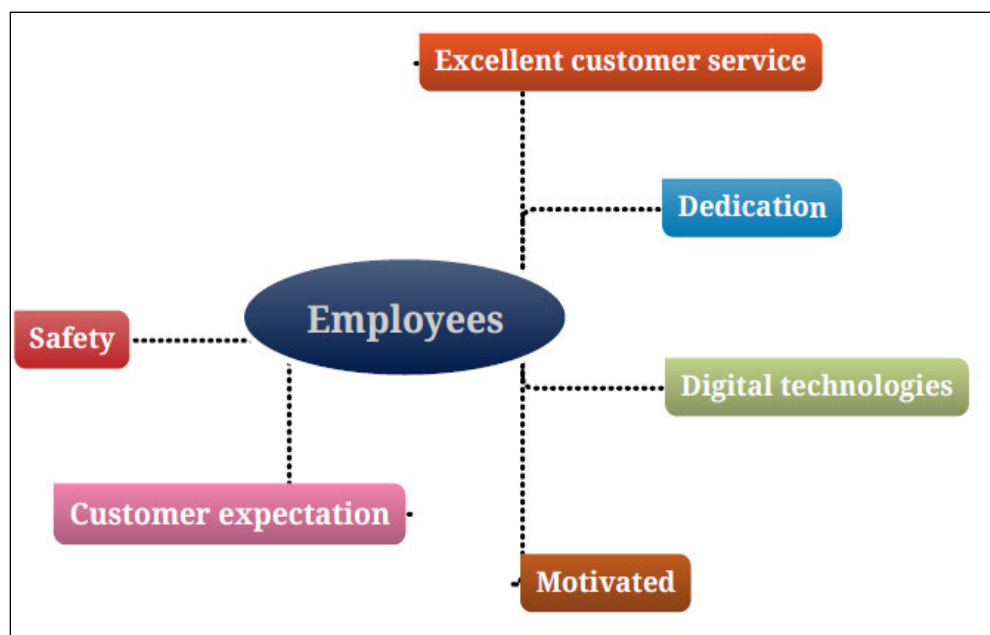


Figure 5.19: The role of employees

Source: (researcher's own)

To ensure the sustainability of the tourism industry post COVID-19, it is crucial for staff members to possess certain qualities and competencies. Participants in this study highlighted several key factors that are essential for the industry's success, including:

- **Job satisfaction:** Participants emphasized the importance of dedicated employees who are satisfied with their jobs. Job satisfaction contributes to employee engagement, productivity, and commitment to delivering quality service.
- **Excellent customer service:** Providing exceptional customer service is vital for the tourism industry's success. Participants recognized the need for employees who are well-equipped to perform and maintain high standards of customer service. This includes effective communication, problem-solving skills, empathy, and the ability to create memorable experiences for customers.
- **Digital technology proficiency:** In today's digital era, participants stressed the importance of employees being familiar with digital technology infrastructure. This includes utilizing online platforms for bookings, managing customer interactions through digital channels, and leveraging technology to enhance efficiency and competitiveness within the industry.
- **Motivated and engaging employees:** Participants identified the significance of having motivated and engaging employees. These employees are enthusiastic, proactive, and go the extra mile to exceed customer expectations. They contribute to creating a positive work culture and play a key role in attracting and retaining customers.
- **Adaptability and flexibility:** The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for employees who can adjust and adapt to any work environment. Participants emphasized the importance of resilience, flexibility, and the ability to navigate unexpected challenges and changes in the industry.
- **Understanding customer preferences and needs:** Participants recognized the importance of employees who have a deep understanding of new customer preferences and needs. As customer behaviors and expectations evolve post-pandemic, employees should be able to anticipate and respond effectively to these changes, providing personalized and tailored experiences.
- **Building a safe tourism environment:** Given the medical crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, participants emphasized the need for employees who can contribute to building a

safe tourism environment for customers. This includes adhering to health and safety protocols, implementing hygiene measures, and creating a sense of trust and confidence among travelers.

5.9.6 Skills requirements of learner in a post-COVID tourism industry

The industry partners were asked to designate some of the skills that might be required from learners who want to enter the tourism industry.

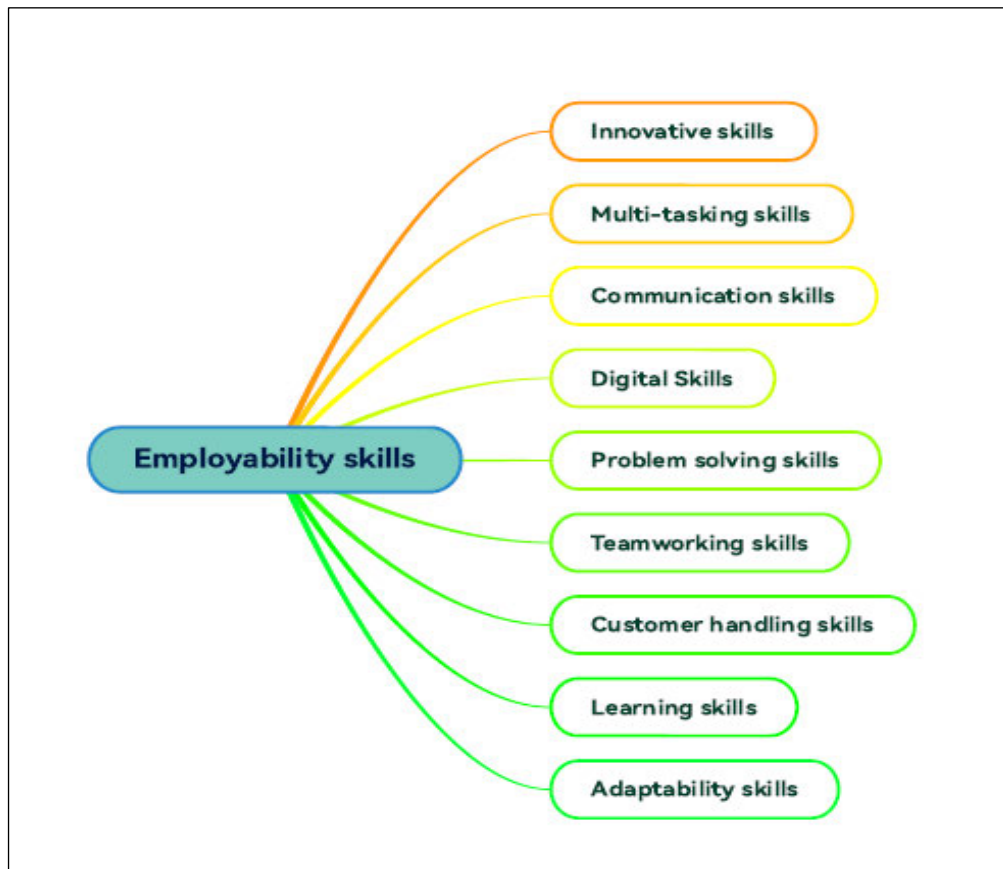


Figure 5.20: Learner/employability skills
Source: (researcher's own)

Yedla and Ajoo (2022) highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about substantial transformations in the tourism business model, customer expectations, tourism activities, and the confidence level of the workforce. As a result, the tourism sector is now seeking a more sustainable business model to prepare for potential future crises. To tackle the current challenges and rejuvenate the tourism sector, a skilled workforce is essential. Figure 5.20 illustrates the

specific skills identified by study participants as necessary for revamping and re-establishing the industry as follows:

- Innovative skills: Employees who are innovative and able to think out of the box.
- Multiple tasking skills: Employees who can multi-task and who can do more than just one job at a time.
- Communication skills: Employees who can communicate with tourists efficiently and professionally.
- Digital skills: The tourism industry is more technologically advanced therefore we need employees who familiar with all the latest technologies.
- Problem-solving skills: Employees need to be able to solve any problems or issues that may arise in the business or sector.
- Team working skills: The sector needs employees who can work together as a team.
- Customer handling skills: Employees who can handle customer need in a professional and productive manner.
- Learning skills: Employees who can learn and grow in the sector.
- Adaptability skills: Employees who are resilient and able to adapt to any changes that might transpire in the workplace.

Despite the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global hospitality and tourism industry, Hyasat (2022) emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and training for employees to enhance guest services and meet future workforce demands. Thus, it is crucial for tourism schools to remain attuned to the skills and education required for employees, not only to meet future job market needs but also to equip workers to thrive in an ever-evolving educational landscape. This context underscores the necessity for a competent and skilled workforce to confront the present challenges and propel the tourism sector towards revival.

5.10 CONCLUSION

The findings derived from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews conducted with tourism educators, subject advisors, and industry partners were presented in this chapter. The researchers used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS V 28.0) to present and analyse the primary data. Themes were presented together with detailed descriptions and an analysis of

the data. The primary data was visually represented through the utilisation of frequency charts, percentage charts, cross tabulations, and chi-square analysis tables. This chapter additionally encompasses an in-depth examination and evaluation of the primary data in conjunction with the secondary data. The subsequent chapter of this research will concentrate on providing a summary of the study's conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter five of the research study conducts a detailed analysis of the survey responses from tourism educators, subject advisors, and industry partners. The chapter is divided into four subsections, each with a specific purpose. The first subsection analyzes the outcomes in relation to the research objectives, providing a comprehensive overview of the survey findings and highlighting key results. This subsection aims to assess the extent to which the research objectives were met and present the significant findings derived from the survey data. The subsequent subsection focuses on the study's contribution and recommendations based on the identified findings. It outlines the practical implications of the research and offers recommendations for stakeholders in the tourism industry. The following section briefly addresses the study's limitations, acknowledging potential constraints or shortcomings that may have influenced the research outcomes, validity, or generalizability of the findings. Lastly, the concluding section explores potential avenues for future research related to the investigated problem.

6.2 RESTATEMENT OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To determine the impact of COVID-19 on tourism education in high schools in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality.
- To evaluate the importance of tourism education in meeting the needs and requirements of the tourism industry post-COVID-19.
- To establish tourism curriculum delivery challenges during the pandemic in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality.
- To establish what can be done to promote quality tourism curriculum delivery for changing the tourism industry in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality.
- To develop a model that could be utilized to enhance the resilience of tourism education in high schools in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality post-COVID-19.

6.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section summarises the findings of the study and is structured according to the research objectives.

6.3.1 Objective 1: The impact of COVID-19 on tourism education in high schools in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality

Theoretical Findings

The study's findings demonstrate the teachers' ability to effectively respond to the challenges posed by the pandemic and make constructive adjustments. Tourism educators emphasised the necessity of promptly and efficiently adjusting to changes in the educational framework and the tourism curriculum. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the necessity of re-evaluating and restructuring educational and institutional structures to ensure long-term survival and resilience in the face of current and potential future disruptions (Naidu, 2021). Despite facing challenges such as teaching in schools with poor working conditions, limited resources, and inadequate teaching infrastructure, tourism educators have demonstrated resilience as well as perseverance. The research findings demonstrate that educators' resilience stems from their intrinsic motivation and confidence, allowing them to transcend the effects of the pandemic. Tourism educators encountered the need to engage in pedagogical efforts amidst the challenging circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the realm of remote education. This presented an enormous challenge for certain educators. However, educators successfully adapted to the circumstances and effectively maintained the continuity of learning. They meticulously planned lessons, ensured a comprehensive curriculum for students, and implemented appropriate assessment strategies. The resilience strategies identified by Mitchell (2021) as stipulated in chapter three can be beneficiary for both teachers and learners. These strategies include critical thinking, problem-solving, help-seeking, induction, coaching, collaboration, self-regulation, relationship management, rejuvenation, and culture building. Therefore post COVID-19 tourism education should create a culture of resilience in schools for both learners and teacher, by building the capacity of learners to adapt and learn form change in future. Therefore tourism curriculum post COVID- 19 should be designed to incorporate resilience-building activities such as critical thinking, problem solving and team work. This can

help learners to develop the skills and knowledge they need to adapt and thrive in a constant changing tourism industry.

Empirical Findings

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the teaching and learning of tourism education, primarily due to the implementation of lockdown measures and social distancing protocols. These challenges have led to a substantial loss of instructional time and learning opportunities for students. The analysis of the impact of the pandemic has been conducted using various educational institutions within the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala Districts. The findings of the study indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has posed great challenges for most individuals involved in the field of tourism education. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the impact of this phenomenon varies among schools, as certain schools exhibit greater resilience compared to others. Well-resourced schools have managed to sustain their teaching and learning activities despite the challenging circumstances. Conversely, other schools have experienced major setbacks, as their limited resources have hindered their ability to continue with educational activities, resulting in a disruption of learning. The study has demonstrated the crucial importance for tourism educators to maintain motivation and adaptability in response to the changes imposed by the pandemic. It highlights the necessity for tourism educators to swiftly transform their practises to align with the new normal and emphasises the significance of using their ability to make decisions to respond promptly to the challenges posed by the pandemic. Technologies have become an essential component of the learning process, particularly in light of the need for educators to address learning gaps. To address this challenge, tourism educators have effectively employed various instructional methods, such as utilising printed materials, WhatsApp, and Facebook groups for online learning. These approaches have successfully facilitated the provision of learning materials to ensure that learners are adequately equipped. The study has additionally demonstrated the efficiency of blended learning as a strategy for enhancing educational resilience. Educators were compelled to employ a combination of in-person instruction and online learning to compensate for lost instructional time and facilitate continued learning opportunities.

6.3.2 Objective 2: Importance of tourism education in meeting the need and requirements of the tourism industry post-COVID-19

Theoretical Findings

The study's theoretical framework suggests that the fostering of critical thinking skills and resilience among individuals studying tourism is essential for their future success in the industry. According to Fullagar and Erica Wilson (2021), it is imperative for the tourism curriculum to provide learners with the chance to examine critical perspectives within a practical industry setting. Additionally, the curriculum should prioritise the cultivation of reflexive thinking skills. The implementation of critical tourism pedagogy has the potential to enhance the educational experiences of students who face disadvantages. The study's findings indicate that there is a need to revise and adapt the tourism curriculum to align it with the demands and standards of the tourism industry. The tourism industry partners have emphasised the significance of various skills, including innovation, multitasking, communication, digital literacy, problem-solving, teamwork, customer service, learning, and adaptability. The skills identified by the industry partners necessitate learners to exhibit critical thinking abilities and possess resilience skills. Hence, the pedagogical approach should encompass a progressive and evaluative approach, while also encompassing the act of constructing and cultivating an integrated creative framework that operates within an optimistic discourse. When modifying the tourism curriculum to align with industry demands, it is imperative to nurture critical thinking among learners regarding contemporary issues that impact both their lives and the industry. Furthermore, it is essential to equip them with the skills to think independently and assume responsibility for their own learning. Critical theory in this regard is an important tool for learners who want to work in the tourism industry because it will help them to understand and analyse the complex and often controversial issues that the tourism industry face.

Empirical findings

The study's participants were mindful of the fact that, despite the significant decline experienced by the tourism industry during the pandemic, the sector is expected to recover and subsequently

generate employment opportunities for individuals pursuing careers in tourism. Considering changing circumstances within the tourism industry following the global pandemic, it is imperative for educators in this field to cultivate learners who possess the ability to effectively adapt and adjust to the emerging work environment. This emphasis on developing adaptability is crucial for fostering future resilience within the industry. It is imperative for tourism education to remain up-to-date and align with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective employment within the tourism industry. The study's findings indicate the importance of establishing a strong connection between the theoretical aspects of tourism education and its practical application. Consequently, it is recommended that robust industry partnerships be established and nurtured in order to develop an appropriate curriculum for students pursuing tourism education, starting from the school level. The tourism curriculum should prioritise the acquisition of skills that are essential for effectively catering to the needs of the industry in the future. Tourism educators ought to prioritise teaching of essential skills that are necessary for aspiring professionals in the tourism industry. By adequately equipping learners with these skills, educators can ensure that learners are well-prepared for the demands of the industry, rather than relying on employers to provide this education and training. Therefore, the study exposed a great need for innovative, creative teaching methodologies in tourism classes which should be constantly modified and updated to meet the needs of employees in the industry.

6.3.3 Objective 3: Tourism curriculum delivery challenges during the pandemic in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality

Theoretical findings

It is evident that private schools and schools situated in affluent regions have demonstrated a considerable degree of adaptability and achieved notable success by using a blend of in-person instruction, hybrid online learning, and digital educational approaches (Maree, 2022). The results obtained from the present study revealed that numerous schools situated in rural areas encountered difficulties in successfully transitioning from traditional classroom instruction to online learning. Dube (2020) posits that critical theory is a theoretical framework aimed at facilitating the inclusion of all individuals in transformative experiences that have the potential to liberate them and enable them to engage with their lived realities. Moreover, this approach emphasises the importance of upholding the principles of social justice, inclusion, and human

rights, while also acknowledging and respecting the role of rural leaders in the context of combating the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, the findings suggest that it is imperative for all learners to be provided with internet connectivity in order to facilitate the advancement of teaching and learning in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is crucial to ensure that no student is excluded during times of crisis, as every student deserves equal access to education. The study's findings also suggest the importance of identifying factors that can contribute to the development of more resilient education systems. This is crucial to effectively address the adverse effects caused by the pandemic, as well as to enhance preparedness for future occurrences of similar crises. A resilient education system is characterised by the presence of multiple connection points within schools, which serve to facilitate distance learning. This infrastructure enables teachers and learners to swiftly and effectively adapt to unforeseen disasters that may arise in the future. Tarricone, Mestan, and Teo (2021) argue that the establishment of suitable protocols is crucial in the development of a resilient education system, as it facilitates the effective delivery of the curriculum across various platforms. Hence, with the aim of bolstering the resilience of their education systems, governments sought to expand the availability of digital learning platforms in schools, encompassing those situated in rural areas, townships, and urban settings alike.

Empirical Findings

The study's findings indicate that there is a disparity in access to education in South Africa, leading to increased inequalities within the education system. Consequently, this impedes learners from achieving optimal performance or functioning during challenging circumstances such as the pandemic. Certain schools, particularly those situated in rural regions, face a shortage in fundamental educational resources, relying heavily on teachers and textbooks as their primary sources of knowledge. Conversely, there are schools that possess ample resources, enabling them to offer high-quality education to both educators and students, thereby facilitating academic success. The pandemic has resulted in a heightened workload for educators, primarily due to the rotational cycle, implementation of social distancing measures, and the absence of educators due to medical reasons. The nature of these challenges can be attributed to the inadequate availability of technology in most schools, which hindered teachers and students from effectively and efficiently accessing them as needed. A limited group of schools has shown efficacy in

sustaining educational engagement by implementing approaches such as blended learning and other innovative methods (Mahaye, 2020). The findings of the study indicate that a number of educators continue to teach in classrooms that are overcrowded. However, the implementation of social distancing measures during the pandemic has provided educators with the opportunity to teach in classrooms that are more manageable in size. This has enabled them to effectively address the diverse needs of all learners. The implementation of curriculum changes generated major discomfort among educators who had to deviate from their familiar teaching methods. The absence of adequate consultation between educators and the Department of Education regarding changes to the curriculum yielded no favourable outcomes in terms of teaching and learning. Educators have identified a deficiency in the support provided by parents, the Department of Education (DoE), and subject advisors, which is necessary for the successful implementation of curriculum changes and the development of effective teaching and assessment strategies.

6.3.4 Objective 4: Establish what can be done to promote quality tourism curriculum delivery for changing the tourism industry in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality

There exists an urgent need for the education sector to devise and execute actions that seek to expedite the recuperation of the education sector or tourism curriculum after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study's findings indicate that digital platforms such as Zoom, Whatsapp, Google Classroom, and Facebook groups are anticipated to persist in their usage for the purpose of enhancing and sustaining the standard of tourism education in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The field of tourism education necessitates ongoing updates to align with current trends and the dynamic nature of the tourism industry. Hence, it is essential to consistently revise and enhance teaching strategies of high calibre to improve the standard of tourism education. This will provide learners with a wide range of learning opportunities, ultimately leading to a complete improvement in the quality of tourism education. The primary objective of developing and continuously enhancing technological instructional approaches is to facilitate learners in acquiring the ability to apply theoretical knowledge in explaining industry transformations. The inclusion of diverse assessment strategies remains crucial in evaluating the progress of learners' educational development. The research findings indicate that the tourism industry's competitiveness is undergoing substantial shifts, which in turn require revisions to the curriculum in tourism education. To effectively adapt to these changes, it is recommended that

practical education pedagogies, such as educational field trips, be employed in tourism education. This approach can facilitate the transformation of teaching methods and enhance the understanding of students of the sector.

6.4 ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

The research study generated results that led to the development of a model that has the potential to improve the resilience of tourism education in high schools in the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality after the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 outbreak has brought about significant transformations worldwide, particularly in areas such as teaching methodologies, industry norms, and skill requirements. These changes are expected to persist in the current era. The study unveiled an important need to provide comprehensive training and readiness for educators in the field of tourism, specifically in relation to technologies and methodologies pertaining to remote learning. This includes adapting conventional teaching approaches to guarantee the provision of high-quality tourism education and fostering the resilience of learners in the face of disruptions. The resilience of tourism education in the face of disruptions and its ability to recover within a reasonable timeframe is of paramount importance. As a result, the findings of the study indicate an urgent necessity to re-evaluate and modify the tourism curriculum. Additionally, the study explores the effective integration of practical pedagogies into the curriculum. The primary objective of the model is to place greater emphasis on improving the quality of tourism curricula by involving the industry in the curriculum design process. This approach ensures that learners develop the necessary skills and knowledge that are specifically required by the tourism industry. Educators play a crucial role as interpreters of the curriculum within the classroom setting. Consequently, it is crucial to improve and adapt the curriculum in a manner that involves educators as active agents, thereby ensuring the promotion of resilient tourism education.

6.4.1 Practical applications of the model

This study provides significant contributions to the existing empirical literature on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism education, which is currently limited in scope. The current study has successfully investigated and measured the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the process of teaching and learning. Furthermore, this study has made a substantial scholarly

contribution by providing an in-depth analysis from the vantage point of subject advisors. Consequently, the research serves as contemporary empirical evidence regarding the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism education, an aspect that has not been explored in any other study. Thirdly, Hysat (2022) suggests that further research is required to determine the precise skills, knowledge, and personal attributes necessary within specific industries. The present investigation has made a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge by successfully identifying the specific skill set necessary within the industry. Finally, this study has made a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge through the development of a novel model. The model was formulated based on the feedback and suggestions provided by professionals in the field of tourism education, as well as industry partners. The development of the model is further substantiated by the regression model as presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Binary regression model

Variables in the Equation		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
Step 1 ^a	COVID-19 might deter learners from taking careers in the tourism industry? (1)	0.252	0.968	0.068	1	0.794	1.287	0.193	8.588
	Do you think that the learners who studied tourism during the pandemic are well equipped to join the industry? (1)	-1.391	1.138	1.495	1	0.222	0.249	0.027	2.314
	Constant	-0.861	0.470	3.358	1	0.067	0.423		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: COVID-19 might deter learners from taking careers in the tourism industry? Do you think that the learners who studied tourism during the pandemic are well equipped to join the industry?

According to the Logistic Regression model, as discussed in Chapter 5, the logarithm of the odds of the dependent variable is represented as a linear combination of the independent variables. Additionally, it has been noted that industry partners hold the belief that a significant proportion of individuals who have pursued studies in the field of tourism lack the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully enter the industry. The potential cause of this phenomenon may be attributed to the disparity between the educational curriculum implemented in schools and the specific skill set demanded by the industry. The subsequent development proposed by the research as its original contribution is the radial structure. This structure addresses the essential requirement for comprehensive tourism education, which aims to provide learners with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively prepare them for the dynamic and ever-evolving

tourism industry. Moreover, it seeks to sustain learners' interest in pursuing careers in the tourism sector even after the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher suggests a model for proactive prompt response and adaptation to potential future catastrophes, based on statistical analysis. The proposed model aims to enhance the resilience and efficiency of tourism education to effectively address potential future crises. This model posits that learners assume an active role in their own learning. Given the imperative for industry transformation, it is necessary for tourism education to adopt a curricular model that is adaptable and multifaceted, capable of addressing the evolving demands of the industry. The global health crisis has brought attention to the necessity of enhancing the resilience and sustainability of tourism education.

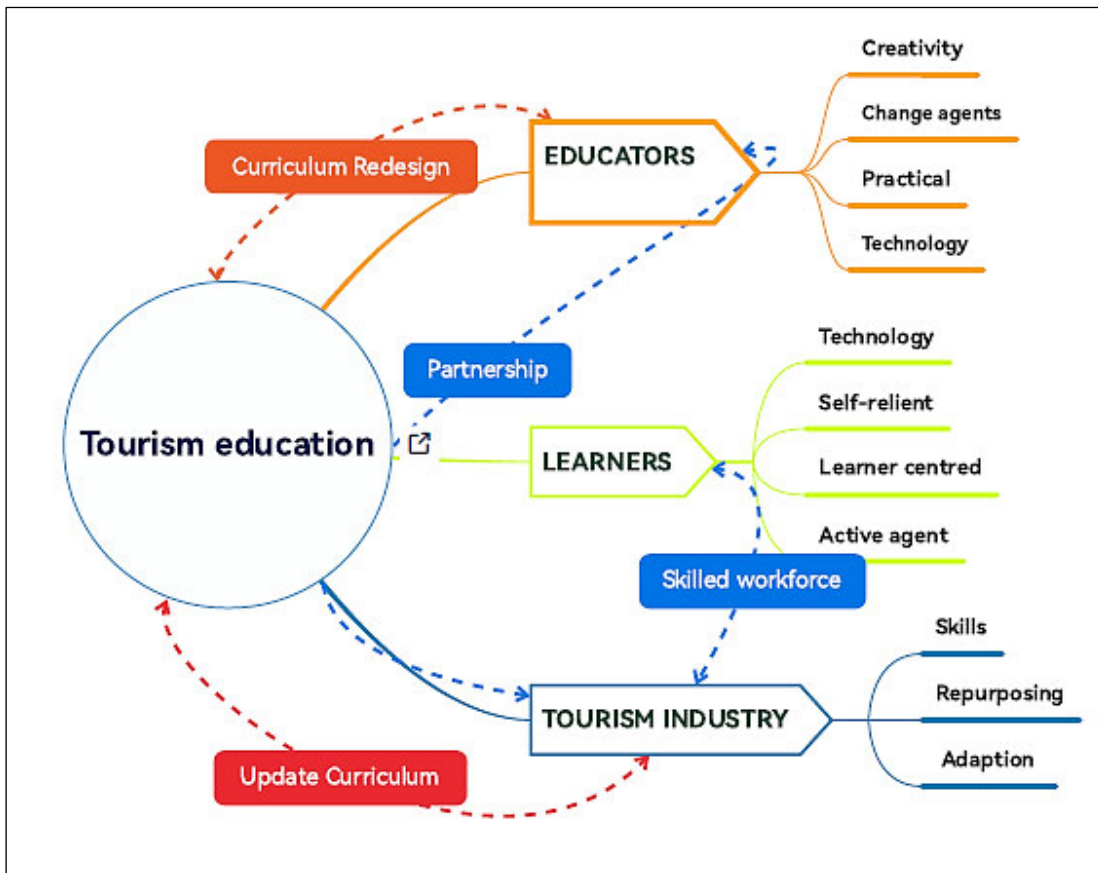


Figure 6.1: A proposed model to enhance tourism education post-COVID-19

Source: Researchers own compilation

Explanation of the researcher's proposed model

The researcher incorporated tourism educators, learners, and the tourism industry as crucial elements in enhancing the resilience of tourism education during the development of the

proposed model. The study did not involve the participation of learners; however, they are incorporated into the model as key stakeholders in the field of tourism education. Tourism educators are recognised as individuals who possess the ability to adapt to change and serve as catalysts for change within the field of tourism education. They are capable of enhancing tourism education by employing innovative strategies to effectively navigate challenging circumstances, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The aforementioned items encompass:

- **Creativity:** It is imperative for educators to ensure the long-term viability of tourism education by devising inventive and forward-thinking approaches to teaching, particularly in times of crises. Additionally, it is crucial for tourism educators to adopt a radical mindset in their instructional methods.
- **Practical:** Educators ought to offer practical learning opportunities to learners, as this enables them to acquire practical skills that are essential in the industry.
- **Technology:** The integration of digital technology in educational settings is anticipated to provide educators with enhanced support in various aspects, including lesson preparation, innovation, delivery, and design.

There is a need for the refinement and redesign of the tourism curriculum in order to establish a pedagogical approach that fosters critical thinking within the classroom. This initiative aims to enhance the educational experiences of tourism learners who have faced previous disadvantages resulting from the repercussions of the pandemic. Therefore, learners play a crucial role in the advancement of tourism education in the post-pandemic era, by means of the following:

- **Self-reliance:** Learners are encouraged to develop a sense of independence in their educational pursuits, enabling them to acquire knowledge and skills without constant reliance on educators.
- **Learner-centred:** The pedagogy should prioritise learner-centrism, wherein learners are positioned as the focal point and are actively engaged as agents in their own learning process.
- **Technology:** Technology should be considered an essential component of the learner's educational requirements, as it empowers learners to assume responsibility for their own learning. Technology plays a crucial role in facilitating rapid recovery and proactive preparedness for future pandemics.

To ensure the provision of effective and high-quality tourism education, it is essential that a solid foundation in both theoretical and practical aspects is established. This approach is necessary to cultivate the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are essential for success in the tourism industry. Therefore, it is crucial for the tourism industry to assume a significant role in enhancing and advancing tourism education. Educators, in turn, should serve as the intermediary between the industry and learners, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and skills. This collaboration is crucial in terms of:

- **Skills:** There is a requirement for proficient employees of high calibre who possess sustainability, comprehensive training, and a profound understanding of the industry's susceptibility.
- **Adaptation:** The tourism industry must possess the capacity to adjust to potential future crises and demonstrate resilience in the face of environmental factors.
- **Repurposing:** It is imperative for the industry to undergo a process of reorientation in order to establish resilience and provide a stable environment for aspiring tourism professionals.

Boluk, Herzog, Åbergand, and Freun (2022) underscore the significance of purposeful tourism, which involves creating sustainable environments that benefit residents, employees, and tourists. This approach is based on collaborative efforts to cultivate shared values with local communities, emphasizing localization, and focusing on objectives beyond pure profit-seeking.

The association between tourism education and the collaboration between tourism educators and industry partners ought to be:

- **Curriculum Redesign:** In order to ensure the enduring relevance of tourism education amidst a dynamic environment, it is imperative to engage in ongoing curriculum redesign, strategically considering long-term implications. The model posits that it is inappropriate to assume that educators possess comprehensive knowledge of all recent developments; however, it is imperative that they remain well-informed. It is vital for educators in the field of tourism to actively participate in the process of curriculum redesign, thereby ensuring their adequate training and support during the implementation phase.
- **Updated curriculum:** The curriculum for tourism should be regularly updated in order to accommodate industry changes and align with current trends.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the empirical evidence and scholarly discourse presented in this study, the subsequent recommendations are proposed:

- There exists an urgent need for the prompt and efficient redesign of tourism educational programmes to align with and fulfil the demands and prerequisites of the tourism industry. Therefore, it is imperative that stakeholders within the tourism industry actively participate in the development of the tourism educational curriculum starting at the primary education level. The integration of tourism resilience into the tourism curriculum should prioritise a strong emphasis on industry resilience. Tourism curricula ought to adapt their educational programmes to enhance the pertinence of tourism education in response to the industry's evolving dynamics. Educators, as proactive catalysts for transformation within the realm of education, ought to engage in collaborative efforts with industry partners to participate in the process of curriculum redesign and modification.
- Tourism educators ought to receive consistent support from the Department of Education. Moreover, educators ought to experience a sense of empowerment and receive adequate support from the Department of Education (DoE). This support will enable educators to exercise autonomy in making independent decisions that contribute to the growth of learners' autonomy skills in the educational process.
- The preservation of high-quality tourism education should be upheld without exception, and the establishment of emergency policies for tourism education should be enacted to mitigate the disruptions observed during the pandemic, thus ensuring the uninterrupted continuation of the learning experience.
- The integration of technology into the tourism curriculum is imperative and should be universally accessible across every school and contexts. The findings of the study indicate that the implementation of blended learning has proven to be an effective strategy for enhancing learners' critical thinking abilities. It is imperative that tourism curricula be easily accessible on various digital platforms to facilitate comprehensive learning experiences and transcend the confines of traditional classroom settings. The integration of digital platforms,

such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), should be considered in the context of tourism education. As stated by Kang (2021), the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is an internet-based educational platform that provides most of its educational resources at no cost. The platform enhances learning efficacy by facilitating individuals to engage in self-paced learning and access educational resources from any location. The Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) also provides learners with the opportunity to personalise their learning pace. This approach facilitates learner engagement and enables them to pursue self-paced learning, both within the confines of their homes and in any other location.

- There exists a vital need to incorporate inventive pedagogical approaches and participatory methodologies within tourism courses, with the aim of placing learners at the focal point of the educational process and empowering them to become active participants in their own learning. Learners must undergo continuous instruction to effectively acclimatise to a novel learning environment, while also assuming responsibility for their own learning. Hence, it is crucial that the instruction of tourism education is conducted by competent educators who possess expertise in the field.
- The study additionally proposes that it is imperative for educators in the field of Tourism to receive ongoing training and be equipped with various methodologies and pedagogies to effectively address the cognitive requirements of diverse learners within their instructional settings. The implementation of active teaching methodologies has the potential to foster analysis and reflection, enhance critical thinking skills across various contexts, and develop reasoning abilities in both educators and learners.
- Tourism education policies ought to delineate the requisite qualifications for instructors to enhance the calibre of tourism educators, thereby ensuring that the subject's intended audience is adequately equipped within the educational framework.
- The imperative for the South African Education system to persist in its investment in digital infrastructure arises from its proven success in mitigating learning loss and ensuring an effective way for learners to access education irrespective of their location.
- Practical education ought to be an essential component of the educational system, encompassing every part of the teaching process. One specific way to promote resilience and innovation in tourism education is through experiential learning. This should be thoroughly included in the tourism curriculum and encourage learners to use their creativity and critical

thinking skills. This could involve developing a strong partnership with the industry partners so that learners get real world experience and feedback.

6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While the current investigation offers a noteworthy contribution to the existing body of literature, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations that are inherent to this study. This study investigates the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the field of tourism education. However, the sample used in this study is restricted to educational institutions located within the uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala districts. Therefore to overcome this limitation, the sample can be increased to all other district in KwaZulu-Natal which will allow generalization of the research data to other districts.

6.8 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The researcher has identified the following areas of need:

- The COVID-19 pandemic had adverse effects on tourism education, prompting an examination of its impact on this field through the lens of tourism educators and subject advisors. Hence, it is recommended that forthcoming studies incorporate the participation of individuals engaged in tourism education to gain insights into the viewpoints and experiences of these learners.
- It is recommended that a correlation study be conducted to assess the performance of tourism learners both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A proposal is put forth for the conduction of a longitudinal study aimed at examining the extent to which tourism educators have sustained or integrated technological infrastructures in educational institutions as effective pedagogical approaches after the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.9 CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the limited empirical literature on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism education. It investigates and measures the effects of the pandemic on the teaching and learning process in tourism education. The study provides an in-depth analysis from

the perspective of subject advisors, tourism educators and tourism industry partners, offering contemporary empirical evidence on the ramifications of the pandemic on tourism education. It also identifies the specific skill set necessary within the industry, filling a research gap highlighted by previous studies. Additionally, the study develops a novel model based on feedback from professionals in tourism education and industry partners. The model aims to enhance the resilience and efficiency of tourism education, addressing potential future crises and the evolving demands of the industry. It emphasizes the importance of learner engagement, practical learning opportunities, technology integration, creativity, and learner-centrism. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for collaboration between tourism educators and industry partners, focusing on curriculum redesign and staying updated with industry changes.

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS



PO BOX 21723
MAYORS WALK
3208
11 October 2022
TO: TOURISM EDUCATOR

DEAR SIR/MADAM

My name is Kholeka Zaca, I am a currently employed at Dingeka high school as an educator and the study is in partially fulfillment of my Doctoral degree in management sciences specialising in Tourism and Hospitality which I am pursuing at the Durban University of Technology.

I am conducting a study on this district, and I hereby would like to request you to participate in my study and complete the attached questionnaire as anonymously as possible. Your identity and your name of the school will remain unknown. This will allow you the freedom to say what you want to say. Please complete the questionnaire as honestly as possible; it will take you at least 20-30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Thanking you for taking your time and being involved in my research study, your contribution to the study is really valuable. Kindly please return the questionnaire using the contact details below

Yours faithfully
Kholeka Zaca
0795704105 (Watsapp)
kholekaz@live.com (email)

Please tick the most appropriate

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. AGE	
25 – 35	
35 – 45	
45 – 60	
2. GENDER	
Male	
Female	
3. LEVEL OF EDUCATION (Tick all relevant)	
Diploma	
Degree	
PGCE	
Master	
PhD	
4. TEACHING EXPERIENCE	
Less than 5	
5-10	
10-20	
20+	
5. LEVELS TAUGHT (Tick all appropriate)	
Grade 10	
Grade 11	
Grade 12	

SECTION B: STUDY INFORMATION

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1. Covid-19 impacted on the teaching and learning of tourism in my school			
2. I think that the impact of Covid-19 on tourism teaching was similar across the whole of South Africa			
3. I think that rural areas suffered more than the affluent urban areas			
4. The tourism curriculum should be closely linked with the latest trends of the tourism industry			
5. Tourism education should provide adequate skills that are required in the tourism industry			
6. The knowledge gaps in the tourism curriculum due to the Covid-19 will impact on the learner's			

interest in the tourism industry in future			
7. Innovative teaching methods are required in the teaching and learning of tourism			
8. The Covid-19 pandemic gave learners new learning opportunities that they were not familiar example online learning			
9. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges already faced by rural schools			
10. The changes in the curriculum during Covid-19 impacts on my teaching strategies			
11. It was easy for me to adapt to the changes in the curriculum, as I received enough training and guidance from DoE post covid-19			
12. It was difficult to teach under the strict conditions of Covid-19			

13. What lesson have you learned from the Covid-19 pandemic?

14. How did you ensure the sustainability of teaching and learning post Covid-19?

15. As a tourism teacher what challenges have you faced during and post-Covid 19?

16. Under the circumstances of social distances, which teaching methods worked well in your classroom to ensure quality continuation of teaching and learning?

17. What assessment methods have you used to ensure that the learners' knowledge/ understanding was tested despite the approach (learners not attend school daily) used in your school?

18. Kindly comment on learner readiness to enter a changed tourism industry post Covid-19.

19. What could be done to better prepare the learners for a changed and changing tourism industry?

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INDUSTRY PARTNERS



PO BOX 21723
MAYORS WALK
3208
12 October 2022

DEAR SIR OR MADAM

My name is Kholeka Zaca, I am a currently employed at Dingeka high school as an educator and the study is in partially fulfillment of my Doctoral degree in management sciences specialising in Tourism and Hospitality which I am pursuing at the Durban University of Technology. I write to request for some time for me to be able to discuss my study and complete the following questionnaire.

My research topic is **A model to enhance tourism education post Covid-19: a case of uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality**

I am planning to collect my data between October/ November 2022. I hope you will be able to give 1 hour of your time any day within this period. I have attached a copy of the questionnaire schedule to give you enough time to look through the questions in advance.

Thanking you for taking your time and being involved in my research study, your contribution to the study is really valuable.

Yours faithfully

Kholeka Zaca

0795704105

PLEASE TICK THE CORRECT ANSWER	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
1. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the skills tourism learners bring into the industry		
	YES	NO
2. Covid-19 might deter learners from taking careers in the tourism industry		
3. Covid-19 have decreased the employment rate in the sector		
4. Do you think that the learners who studied tourism during the pandemic are well equipped to join the industry?		
5. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted your establishment financially?		
6. Would you prefer university graduates to high school graduates as new entrants into your company? Kindly explain your answer.		

7. What do you think will be the biggest challenge when taking learners impacted by Covid-19 into your company?

8. What are the major changes that your company has introduced to deal with the pandemic that you think the in-coming learners may not be ready to deal with?

9. What role should staff play in ensuring the sustainability of your establishment post Covid-19?

10. What type of skills should learners possess when they enter the industry to ensure that the sector survives post covid-19?

11. Do you have any other comments for this study?

THANK YOU
APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SUBJECT ADVISORS

1. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on:
a. Tourism teaching and learning in your district.

- b. Created new opportunities for teaching and learning.

2. What measures have you implemented to ensure that tourism educators received enough academic support during and post Covid-19?

3. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the plans that the government took to minimize the impact of Covid-19 whilst ensuring that both teachers and learners are safe in schools and learning continues?

4. Do you feel that your teachers received enough training and support from the DoE to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic and adapt to the changes imposed on them?

5. What is the most significant obstacle tourism educators face in ensuring quality teaching of tourism under the new normal of the covid-19 pandemic?

6. In your opinion what can be done to ensure that teachers adapt as quickly as possible to future disaster and look for alternative ways to advance tourism education in South Africa?

7. Has the covid-19 pandemic impacted on the pass performance (2020; 2021; 2022) of tourism as a subject in schools and in the district?

8. Do you think that the subject offers enough skills for learners to pursue tourism as career or seek employment in the tourism industry post the Covid-19 pandemic?

9. In your view, what could be done to better prepare tourism learners in school to play an active role in a changed and changing tourism industry post Covid-19?

10. Do you have any other comments for this study?

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX 4: TRREE TRAINING CERTIFICATE



Zertifikat
Certificat

Certificado
Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants



Certificat de formation - Training Certificate
Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

Acquinath Zaca
a complété avec succès - has successfully completed
Introduction to Research Ethics
du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2021/05/20
CID : 18774668

Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator



Fédération Pharmaceutica Helvétique **FPH** Programmes de formation continue

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(RIV : 20170310)

APPENDIX 5: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



Institutional Research Ethics Committee

Research and Postgraduate Support
Directorate 2nd Floor, Berwyn Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of
Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: 031 373 2375

Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za

http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics

www.dut.ac.za

17 February 2023
Ms A K N Zaca
P.O. Box 21723
Mayors Walk
3208

Dear Ms Zaca

A model to enhance Tourism Education post COVID-19 pandemic: A case of Umkungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality

Ethical Clearance number IREC 054/22

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your final data collection tools for review.

We are pleased to inform you that the data collection tools have been approved. Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

In addition, the IREC acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letters.

Please note that **FULL APPROVAL** is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Prof J K Adam
Chairperson: DUT-IREC

APPENDIX 6: GATEKEEPER: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lambede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 392 1083

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Ref.:2/4/8/9

Ms AKN Zaca
PO Box 21723
MAYORS WALK
3208

Dear Miss Magubane

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DōE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"A MODEL TO ENHANCE TOURISM EDUCATION POST COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A CASE OF HARRY GWALA AND UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 06 February 2023 to 31 January 2026.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

**UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT
HARRY GWALA DISTRICT**

Mr GN Ngcobo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 06 February 2023



TO: Ms. K. Zaca

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: A model to enhance tourism education post COVID 19: A Case of Harry Gwala District Municipality in selected schools in Harry Gwala District in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education institutions have been approved.

The Conditions of the approval are as follows:-

- (1) The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
- (2) The researcher must ensure that Teaching and Learning programmes are not interrupted.
- (3) Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
- (4) The copy of this letter is submitted to the principals where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
- (5) Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the selected schools in Harry Gwala.
- (6) Please ensure that the Names of the Schools and Participants are hidden for ethical reasoning.

MR. G.B. KHUMALO
DIRECTOR: HARRY GWALA DISTRICT OFFICE (A)

03/12/2021
DATE



Main Street
Creighton, 3263
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Creighton 3263
Phone: +27 39 833 1038
Fax: +27 39 833 1179
Email: mailbox@ndz.gov.za

A Better Place for All

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL MANAGER

02 February 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: GATEKEEPERS LETTER IN RESPECT OF A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Permission is hereby granted to Ms Kholeka Zaca, to conduct the research titled: "A model to enhance tourism education post Covid-19: a case of Harry Gwala and Umgungundlovu District Municipality"

I trust and hope that you will find this in order.

Yours faithfully

Municipal Manager



APPENDIX 9: LETTER OF INFORMATION



Title of the Research Study: A model to enhance Tourism Education post COVID-19 pandemic: A case of uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala District Municipality

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: AKN ZACA,

Qualification: M Management Sciences specializing in Tourism and Hospitality

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Prof DC Hlengwa

Qualification: D. Business Administration; MBA; MRT

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: The aim of the study is to develop a model to enhance tourism education in high schools post the COVID-19 pandemic.

Good day, Trust that you are well. My name is Kholeka Zaca, I am a Doctoral student at the Durban University of Technology specializing in Tourism and Hospitality. I hereby would like you to participate in my research study.

The purpose for the study is to investigate the impact of the recent outbreak of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on the South African high school education system: paying particular attention on the teaching and learning of tourism in rural high schools of uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala district post COVID-19. Therefore, the study will develop a model to enhance tourism education in high schools post the Covid-19 pandemic using high schools in uMgungundlovu and Harry Gwala district.

What is Research?

Research is a systematic search or enquiry for generalized new knowledge. The primary purpose of this research project is aimed at completing my Doctoral degree in management sciences specializing in Tourism and Hospitality management at the Durban University of Technology. Therefore, your participation in this research project is greatly appreciated, as it will be useful in obtaining new and relevant knowledge for the study and your contribution to this research is valuable. As participants you entitled to discuss the study the purpose of the research with your family and friends and are under no obligation to commit at this stage. For this purpose, a copy of the Letter of Information document will be given to you to take home. Any digital recordings would be safely stored on the researcher's computer for a period of three years and protected via appropriate passwords and will be deleted after three years.

Outline of the Procedures:

After the participants have been selected and recruited a permission letter from the Department of Education to grant permission to conduct research to the selected schools. Secondly an information letter will be sent to schools prior to the commencement of the research to conduct research in schools. The letters will clearly stipulate the purpose of the study, the schools where research will be conducted including the research details and the supervisor's personal details.

A mixed- method to data collection will be used for data collection and analysis, data will be collected through a use of a questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The research will be conducted will conducted at your convenient time and place to ensure that you are comfortable during the interview session.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:

There are no risks anticipated with the research study.

Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may be withdraw from the Study:

As a participant you are free to withdraw from the study at any time during the research and may you choose not to participate from the research for whatever reason.

Benefits:

There are no benefits that will be made to you as a participant in the study.

Remuneration:

There are no payments that will be made to you as a participant.

Costs of the Study: A total of R15000 is the anticipated cost for the research; however, you are not entailed to contribute to the study in any way.

Confidentiality:

Your participation in the research study is confidential, the research is strictly for completion of my studies and all data will be kept safe within the university. To ensure anonymity your personal details will not be included in the study as well as the name of your school or organization.

Results: Upon completion, the research will be made available to anyone who may wish to read and will be made available within the university library and the supervisor's office.

Research-related Injury: There are currently no risks of injury anticipated with the research.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings

All recording and transcript will be destroyed once data analysis has been concluded.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:(Prof DC Hlengwa, 0338458858, 0833074814 dumisileh@dut.ac.za; Dr Sucheran: 0836587426, reshma@dut.ac.za Please contact the researcher (0795704105 or kholekaz@live.com or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Acting Director: Research and Postgraduate Support

APPENDIX 10: CONSENT LETTER



Full Title of the Study: A model to enhance Tourism Education post COVID-19 pandemic: A case of Harry Gwala District Municipality

Names of Researcher/s: Acquinath Kholeka Nombulelo Zaca

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, AKN ZACA about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 054/22
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

