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Field inquiry for Singapore Geography Teachers

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Workshop Summary
Vietnam’s tourism industry has high growth potential with forecasts of double digit growth in the next few years, as the tourism industry contributed more than 13% of its GPD even during the global economic recession in 2009 (RNCOS Market Research, 2010). With this unprecedented rate of growth in the tourism industry, two important questions arise. What are the causes of this growth and what is the impact of this growth? The Singapore Teachers’ fieldtrip offers opportunities for teachers to deepen their content and contextual understanding of Hanoi, as well as a chance to foray into conducting field based enquiry. In Singapore, a revised Geography syllabus will be implemented for the GCE ‘O’ levels in 2013 for Secondary 3 students. A key feature of this revised syllabus is the use of an enquiry approach in the teaching and learning of Geography to engage independent learning, critical thinking, reflective thinking and enquiry. In particular, the “enquiry approach” proposed in this revised syllabus is contingent on both fieldwork and classroom learning. This workshop draws on the experience in the field to advance the discussion on the enquiry process.

Create a Need to Know

Introducing Tourism in Vietnam

Vietnam’s tourism industry has high growth potential with forecasts of double digit growth in the next few years, as the tourism industry contributed more than 13% of its GPD even during the global economic recession in 2009 (RNCOS Market Research, 2010). With this unprecedented rate of growth in the tourism industry, there are two important geographical questions that arise:

1. What are the causes of this growth?
2. What is the impact of this growth?

Figure 2: Location of Hanoi
Purpose and Relevance of Study

In Singapore, a revised Geography syllabus will be implemented for the GCE ‘O’ levels in 2013 for Secondary 3 students. A key feature of this revised syllabus is the use of an enquiry approach in the teaching and learning of Geography to engage independent learning, critical thinking, reflective thinking and inquiry. In particular, the “enquiry approach” proposed in this revised syllabus is contingent on both fieldwork and classroom learning. As part of the curriculum design process, the officers from CPDD/MOE have undertaken a pilot study on field inquiry on the topic of Tourism. This will be presented as a paper session during the SEAGA 2010 conference.

Questions

We therefore feel that it is important to understand the nature of and the process to inquire about tourism in Hanoi (as a case study of Vietnam’s tourism industry – see Figure 2 for the location map of Hanoi). Hence the objective of this fieldwork is to examine several questions (including but not limited to):

1. What are the factors that contribute to the continued growth in the tourism industry in Hanoi?
   a. What role does the provision of amenities play in the tourism industry in Hanoi?
      i. E.g. Physical infrastructure
      ii. Service orientation of tourism industry players
      iii. Accommodation
   b. What role do attractions play in the tourism industry in Hanoi?
2. What is the impact of the continued growth in the tourism industry in Hanoi?
   a. How do tourism activities impact the physical environment?
      i. E.g. Air
      ii. Water
      iii. Waste Disposal
   b. How do tourism activities impact people’s livelihood?
      i. E.g. Income
      ii. Cost of Living

The physical environmental problems that Hanoi faces include, solid waste pollution, water pollution, and air pollution. The persistence of such phenomena raises some issues over the livability and sustainability of the city.

Identifying the ISSUE

We would like you to take some moments to look through the main big questions we have raised above and then jot down what you would like to find out from this trip. You may
want to distinguish between what you can gather first-hand in the field and what you would need to do secondary research on. Please ensure that your enquiry question is one that is best answered using mostly primary data.

Using Data

Now that you have decided on what you want to find out, you will have to decide what type of data you need to collect in order to find answers to the question you have posed. This stage requires you to:

1. locate evidence
2. collect data
3. select evidence
4. sort data
5. classify data
6. sequence data

To assist you in the collection of field data, some of the following data collection techniques may be used to answer the questions that you have.

1. Observation and note taking
2. Annotated Photographs or sketch diagrams.
3. Quick Tourist Traffic Count (by type of tourists).
4. Questionnaire

A collection of materials on these methods above have been included in this package for your use.

Observation and field note taking

Observation is simply the most basic way of understanding the fundamental components of geography and geographers have been observers for centuries. Homer and other Greeks who observed their surroundings and wrote about them are today recognized as geographers as much as they are by other disciplines.

Observation has formally been incorporated into geography through fieldwork. Fieldwork is nothing more than systematic observation by a geographer of his or her subject matter. Virtually anyone can do it because fieldwork is, at its most fundamental, just going out and looking at the environment.

However, relevant and accurate observations need to be developed over time and there are some tools that will be helpful for the beginner in observing things in the field.

The most important tool for observation is an observation recording form or log book (or an iPad™). The observations to be made can then be recorded on the medium and used as one of several sources of data. To this end, a record sheet is designed specifically for the needs of
the person. But the greatest consideration in designing your observation/field notes will be the questions of

1. What do I observe?
   a. Sight (eg. Many people on the streets)
   b. Smell (eg. Sulphur in the air)
   c. Sound (eg. Traffic Honk)
   d. Taste (eg. Salt on underside of leaves)
   e. Touch/sense (eg. Hot or cold)

2. Where do I observe this?
   a. Location in absolute coordinates
   b. Location in relation to other landforms or objects of interests

3. When do I observe?
   a. Time of day
   b. Duration of observation

An example is given here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Duration (if appl)</th>
<th>Location (lat/long)</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Other Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

You can then tabulate the response to these questions or simply list them in your notes as you observe them. However, there is also an important data collection tool that you should use in combination with note taking – annotated photograph/sketched diagram.

**Annotated Photographs and Sketch Maps**

While digital photography and mobile photography have become very popular, unless you own an iPad™ that allows you to annotate your photographs on the spot, a more reliable method to capture the information you observe will be to draw a quick sketch diagram. The technique used in annotating the sketch diagram will also be applicable to a photograph.
Adapted from Taylor L. (1997) Geographical Techniques

Quick Tourist Traffic Count

A quick human traffic count can be used to investigate differences in the type of people that pass a certain point in space. This is especially useful if you are asking questions such as “Who are the types of Tourists that come to this attraction” or “Does this craft village cater to the international tourists?”
To assist you in designing your own field worksheets, an example is given below for your consideration:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and day of week</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type of Tourist</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>No. of passengers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total pedestrians: ………………

You will have to solve one big problem though. How will you determine if the person you are counting is a domestic or international tourist?

Would you use a quick poll to help you?

You may also want to consider explaining why you chose a certain time or a certain place to conduct your count.

**Questionnaire Design**

There are many types of questionnaires. They can vary in term of their purpose, their size and their appearance. However, a good questionnaire is one that will allow you to collect data to answer your enquiry question. It should consist of a written list of questions which allow you to gather information by asking people directly.

**0 When it appropriate to use a questionnaire?**

1. When used with large number of respondents in many localities;
2. When what is required tends to be straightforward information-relatively brief and uncontroversial;
3. When social climate is open enough to allow full and honest answers;

**1 What kinds of data are collected by questionnaires?**

1. Questionnaires rely on written information supplied directly by people in response to questions asked by the researcher.
2. Factual information does not require much in the way of judgment or personal attitudes on the part of respondents. It just requires respondents to reveal (accurately and honestly) information: their address, age, sex, marital status, number of children etc.
3. Opinions, attitudes, views, beliefs, preferences etc. can also be investigated using questionnaires.

**2 Essentials for questionnaire design:**

The questionnaire should have some information about:

1. The organisers [under whose auspices is the research being undertaken?]
2. The purpose [what is the questionnaire for, and how will the information be used?]
3. Confidentiality.
5. Thanks.

3 Types of questions:
There are a variety of ways in which questions can be put in a questionnaire.

Open and closed questions: open questions are those that leave the respondent to decide the wording of the answer, the length of the answer and the kind of matters to be raised in the answer. The open questions tend to be short and the answers tend to be long.

Closed questions, where answers are predetermined by a set of categories, such as, how long have you lived in this village? (i) less than 1 year (ii) 1-5 years (iii) more than 5 years. Some time the option can be restricted to as few as two (e.g. Yes or No OR Male or Female)

For the purposes of this very limited field trip, it may be impossible for you to conduct a proper questionnaire survey. However, you may conduct the questionnaire (see Appendix 1) to let you get a feel of how this is to be done.

Selection of respondents and administration of questionnaire.

A convenience/purposive sampling method will be used here. This non-probablistic and sometimes rather biased sampling procedure is chosen because of the timing to the site and short duration in the field. Select any two tourist you can find and administer the following questionnaire. In pairs, you will each conduct 2 questionnaire interviews with the form on the following page. One person will ask the questions and the other will record. After completing one survey, swap roles and complete the second survey.

Making Sense of your data

As you progress on the trip, you would have collected a fair amount of data individually and as a group, we will need some time to make sense of all the data you have collected. Always remember the enquiry questions you have determined.

You will need to relate what you have found to your existing understanding to:

1. Describe
2. Explain
3. Compare
4. Contrast
5. Analyse
6. Interpret
7. recognise relationships
8. Clarify values
9. reach conclusions

In order to do these actions, your data needs to be organised and presented in certain ways to enable you to make sense of your data. These representations depend on the nature of the data
collected. Quantitative data can be summarised using descriptive statistics while Qualitative data types are usually analysed and presented using narratives and explanations (we believe this is a skill you have problems in).

**Descriptive Statistics**

With the advancement in computing technology, software applications such as Spreadsheets allow rapid data analysis and presentation of findings. Instead of focusing on how to calculate mean or how to plot a histogram, these processes are very much automated on the computer. The issue will be the proper and relevant use of graphs and tables when organising data. A brief description of the types of descriptive statistics you may use is included here for reference.

There are 3 types of descriptive measures:

1. Central Tendency measures. They are computed to give a “center” around which the measurements in the data are distributed.
   a. **Mean**: Sum of all measurements divided by the number of measurements.
   b. **Median**: A number such that at most half of the measurements are below it and at most half of the measurements are above it.
   c. **Mode**: The most frequent measurement in the data.

2. Variation or Variability measures. They describe “data spread” or how far away the measurements are from the center. There are two common measures of dispersion, the range and the standard deviation.
   a. The **range** is simply the highest value minus the lowest value
   b. The **standard deviation** describes how far values lie from the mean.

3. Relative Standing measures. They describe the relative position of specific measurements in the data.
   a. **Percentile** refers to the relative position of a data point, expressed as a percentage of the total number of points in that sample. For example, the 75th percentile of heights for this group of 28 participants refers to the height of the person who is ranked number 21 is were line everyone up from the shortest to the tallest.
   b. So the median is the 50th percentile!

**Reflect on Learning:**

This is the 4th stage of the enquiry cycle and we are dedicating a special session on 26th November at the conference for all of us to consolidate and reflect on our learning for this trip.

However, for this session to be fully beneficial to everyone, each group will be given 5 minutes to quickly present the following:

1. The enquiry questions they have formulated.
2. What data collection methods they employed.
3. What they found out

Your presentation can incorporate data from your fieldwork, and you may use any mode/product for your presentation.
We will then have a roundtable discussion on how the enquiry exercise can be improved by being critical in relation to:

- data sources
- skills/techniques used
- criteria for making judgments
- opinions
- how it has been learnt
- how the enquiry can be improved
- the value of what has been learnt

We hope that this fieldtrip will be a very useful experience for you to consider and design your own fieldtrips for students.

The reflections from this session will be posted on a blog where you can all visit and read.

-end-