

## THE PRACTICE OF EDUCATION TOURISM: A CASE OF BERUGA' ALAM INSTITUTE

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### ABSTRACT

Education tourism refers to a travel program to a location with the primary goal is to engage in learning activities directly associated with a tourist destination. The current study explores the practice of edutourism as implemented by Beruga' Alam Institute which involved college students of English language education. This case study employed participant observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation to gain a deep understanding regarding the case under study. 13 participants consisting of 7 students of English language education, a program coordinator, 2 tour guides and the head of the institute took part in the interviews. Collected data were analyzed interactively to conclude the study. The findings of this study revealed that the concept of educational tourism practiced in Beruga' Alam Institute reflected its five fundamental vision namely: a) well behaved; b) being insightful; c) being skillful; d) being self-reliant and; e) contribution. The promoted model of edutourism in Beruga' Alam begins with meditation, followed by exploration, reflection and ended with a publication. These stages feature every edutour program. The edutour programs offered to college students include nature exploration, art and culture exploration, Kings and Saints (graveyards) visits, charity and social life exploration, staying with the locals, local figures visits and other programs. Students were also offered short courses like photography writing, cooking class, and public speaking during the tours. Finally, based on the participants' reflection on their edutour experiences, all of them express positive views on the programs and were willing to participate in the future education tourism programs.

*Keywords: Beruga' Alam, Education Tourism, Exploration and Reflection; Meditation*

### INTRODUCTION

Of all the regions in the archipelago, the province of West Nusa Tenggara (henceforth NTB) has quite rich and diverse tourist attractions. This is evidenced by the existence of natural tourist destinations, culture-history, and special interests. The province which consists of two islands (Lombok and Sumbawa) is like a hidden paradise that has not been exposed. Nature tourism, for instance, with the main attraction in the form of

Mountains (i.e Rinjani and Tambora) beaches, waterfalls, tropical rain forests, rice fields, and gardens are of great attraction for visitors, especially those who are looking for opportunities to interact with nature.

To develop the NTB tourism potency, a myriad of efforts has been made by the provincial authority, for instance, by involving private tour operators and local community as the hosts. This is found quite successful as indicated by the increasing trend of visitors each year. Such a measure deserves our appreciation by jointly presenting a sense of security and comfort to the visitors and by collectively carrying out nature conservation and historic sites. Even so, there is one thing that needs to be targeted by all tourism stakeholders to advance tourism of NTB, especially on the island of Lombok, namely education tourism or Edutourism. Edutourism is necessary to promote as it has the potency to positively impact the attitude of visitors, tour operators and transform the local community perception on tourism. The present study examined an instance of an education tourism program by a non-formal educational institution in East Lombok district, Beruga 'Alam Institute.

### **Education Tourism**

Educational Tourism is meeting and melting pot of two different fields: Education and Tourism. Education is defined as “*a conscious and objective effort for developing human resource to be a better person*” (Malihah and Setiyorini, 2014) while tourism comprises the activities of person traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes (UNWTO, 2018). Education Tourism as suggested by Maga and Nicolau (2018) is “*all learning activities undertaken outside of home geographical environment within a duration of between 24 hours and 12 consecutive months*”. For this study, this definition will be adopted. These activities include excursions, summer camps, courses (under 12 months), one-year master program, gap year tour, (Maga and Nicolau, 2018) and the like. Simply put, Education Tourism deals with any learning activity done out of school or campus under cultural, nature (eco), historical, and language theme for at least 24 hours and lasts less than 12 months. The current study explored the implementation of fo Education Tourism as organized by Beruga' Alam Institute.

## **Related Studies**

A wide range of studies have been conducted on Education Tourism. A study by Rahayu and Utami (2018) focused on describing the potential of Trawas Mojokerto as an Education Tourism destination. Studies with similar purposes were carried out by Anak (2016); Winarto (2016) and Priyanto, Syarifuddin, Martina (2018). Wijayanti et al (2018) investigated the management model education tourism at Smart Park Yogyakarta. Of these studies, none of which examined the potential outcomes of education tourism to the participants. Another recent study (Wijayanti, 2018) investigated whether education tourism is effective to understand the historical offered by managers through collectibles. The findings of this study revealed that education tourism was very effective and was successful in bridge bridges between educational institutions and Vredeburg Fort Museum to get practical training for learners. This implies that when education tourism is integrated with school or campus subjects, we could expect that learning outcomes could be achieved in a more relaxing and encouraging manner. This study investigated the philosophical background of Education Tourism implemented by Beruga' Alam Institute and how participants respond to activities they involved in.

Based on the discussion above, this study focused on investigating the following

1. What is the proposed model of Education Tourism as organized by Beruga' Alam - Institute?
  - a. What are the philosophical backgrounds of such a model of education tourism?
  - b. What are the learning activities which students involve in?
2. How do participants respond to the proposed education tourism activities?

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The present study aimed at discovering several aspects related to tourism education. It further sought to gain a deep understanding of the practice of edutourism as practiced by Beruga' Alam Institute, a non-formal educational institution in East Lombok West Nusa Tenggara. Hence, a qualitative case study was employed to do the investigation. Data were collected through participant observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation as a method to collect data from 13 participants (7 college students, 1 program

coordinator, 2 tour guide, and head of the Insitute. A purposive sampling technique was selected to choose the sample of this study. Furthermore, collected data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis. Before analyzing the data, we first began with data transcription and translation into English. It was due to the interviews were conducted in Bahasa and the local language to gain further information from the information. The translated transcripts were then analyzed inductively by employing the method as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994)..

## DISCUSSION

### The Philoshopy Underpinning the Beruga' Alam Education Tourism

Beruga' Alam Institute has been a place not only to gain knowledge but it has its wisdom in shaping one's personality to be able to contribute to other communities. The scope of Beruga' Alam Institute movement encompasses human relation to nature but also man to man and man to God. The director of this institute believes that through heart purifying one can serve Allah the Almighty better. The focus of the Beruga' Alam Institute educational programs is to educate and train the broader community in need of education. The educational programs mainly targetted youngsters either those school students, school leavers or college students. These programs were delivered through diverse modes such as school visits, community engagement or educational tourism. All of which were directed to meet the golden vision of Beruga' Alam institute which is depicted by the following pyramid.

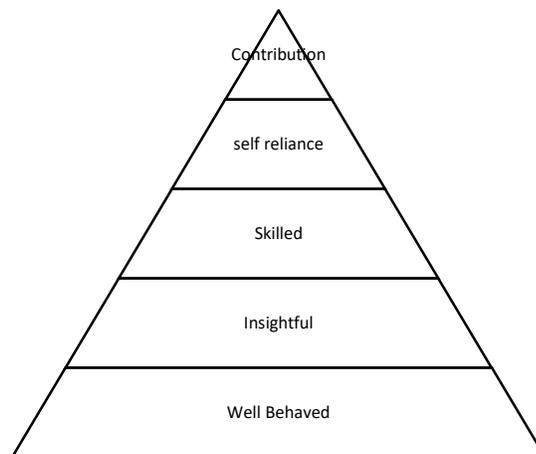


Figure 1. Five principles of Beruga' Alam

## Education Tourism model

The education tourism concept introduced in Beruga' Alam Institute is called "**WIKAN**". The term **WIKAN** stands for "*Wisata*" (tourism) and "*Pendidikan*" (education). This has a similar meaning to edutourism. WIKAN is simply a combination of learning and travel activities involving many parties such as schools, universities, communities, and government According the to initiator as well as the head of Beruga' Alam, the choice of using this term is philosophically based as the word "WIKAN" is derived from Sasak polite word which means "being aware and understand". With the introduction of the term Wikan, tour participants and other stakeholders are focused on one point, namely making the tour as an educational vehicle and raising awareness.

To realize the vision of Beruga' Alam Insitute, a model of educational tourism was applied. This model consists of cyclical activities as illustrated in the following discussion. In the initial stages, the orientation of Beruga 'Nature is to build a new soul followed by building a body. The founder of Beruga' Alam believes that it is important to strengthen the inner side of humans to strengthen their outer parts. Based on these principles, Beruga Alam always begins every education tourism program with awareness-raising activities.

*"Many of us are trapped in choices that are essentially meaningless which indicates the loss of direction in life. Hence, we need to recognize what matters in our life. I believe that through meditation we could identify our true intentions in life"* (Excerpt from the script)

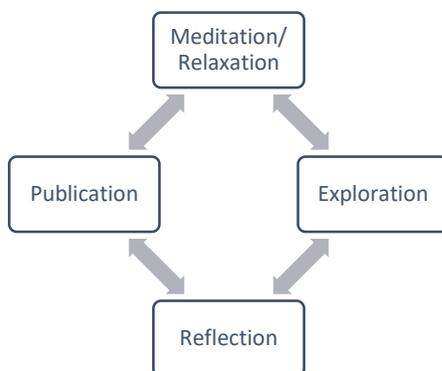


Figure 2. Model of promoted Education Tourism by Beruga' Alam

Awakening one's awareness will appear in the aspect of their intention or motivation. It is believed that Intention is a determinant of one's actions. For this reason, the first thing that will be touched in Beruga' Alam is the hearts of everyone involved in its every program. It was done to make them aware of their true intent to participate in the edutourism program.

The concept of Beruga' Alam edutourism begins with meditation and relaxation activities. Meditation is defined as the activity of focusing the heart on the one who has created nature. Meditation becomes a medium to help identify choices that should be a priority for one's life. Meditation can bring someone to a single zone, which is the zone of calm or the God spot. With meditation, the one could see their true intent in life that she/he has to focus on. Furthermore, meditation also allows the practitioner to do self-healing or to be relaxed. Self-healing is an activity aiming at identifying and resolving a variety of personal problems disturbing one's life. The core teaching of Beruga' Alam meditation system is to believe that the main source of our problem comes from our selves. Hence, through practicing meditation, we could go further to another phase, which is self-healing or relaxation.

After completing the meditation and relaxation stage, it is usually continued with advanced learning activities in the form of exploration. Exploration was intended to gain deeper insights about anything which interests the edutourism participants. Exploration was carried out through discussions, observations, experiencing, and interactions with nature and people (through interviews). Exploring activities could take a day or even a month depending on how deep insights the participants want to gain.

Following the exploration, each participant was assigned to critically reflect on what they have explored. This is done through relaxed talks and diary writing or filling in a form. Reflection allows them to knit their understanding of the object being explored. It also enables them to hear different perspectives from other participants. Reflection can be done on-site or indoor and is guided by the program coordinator and head of the institute.

Upon the completion of reflection activities, each participant was encouraged to go on the step, namely publication. To publish means to communicate what they have learned from their exploration to the public. They can choose whether to publish through social media in the form of photos and texts or through youtube and blogs. At the end of the

whole program, they were asked to write comments or feedbacks to Beruga' Alam about their experiences. Normally, this feedbacks were used to improve and vary the edutourism program.

### **Education Tourism Activities in Beruga' Alam**

The following presents a few examples of learning activities (exploration) in which the participants interact and learn. These include nature exploration, art, culture exploration. Nature Exploration allows the participants to explore mountains, rice fields, gardens, beaches, waterfalls, and the like. The exploration was filled with discussion, observation, photography and video taking. These activities were intended to enable participants to interact positively with nature and gain positive energy from it. It is expected that doing this would make the participants understand and realize their crucial roles in the balance of nature and human life. Other models of exploration were Art and Cultural Exploration.

As reported by the founder of Beruga 'Alam, loving the diversity of arts and culture possessed by the Indonesian people is our responsibility as all Indonesian citizens. This diversity is a wealth of the Indonesian people that must be preserved so as not to be stolen or imitated by other nations. To foster a love for the arts and culture of the nation, efforts must be made to introduce them through both formal and informal approaches. By introducing them through learning activities (exploration) the love for art and culture will likely grow. Besides, the founder of Beruga 'Alam also stressed that anyone has the responsibility to preserve the nation's culture without being limited by age, social status, or educational background.

From the tour guides and education coordinator Beruga Alam, it was revealed that in preserving the arts and culture in West Nusa Tenggara, especially in Lombok, is to involve students or the general public to visit villages where there are arts and culture which is still thick in wisdom. In addition to building good relations (*silaturahmi*) with local village customary stakeholders, participants can also gain a deep understanding of local arts and culture. The participants were given space to directly discuss with the leaders in the village.

In addition to conducting interviews or discussions with figures and actors of art and culture in the village, the tour participants are also directed to document the arts and

cultural activities. Taking pictures/videos must be done after getting permission from the relevant parties. The publication activities aim at introducing the arts and culture in Lombok to the wider community.

## **Participants' Critical Reflection**

### **General impressions**

The participants were also interviewed regarding their responses to the activities they involved in. One of the participants reported that she felt very interested in taking part in all the activities organized by Beruga' Alam. She felt excited and did not want to miss any of the program. Besides, from interviews with the participants, it was revealed that education tourism activities for instance traveling and camping allows them to be more aware of the importance of nature conservation. One of them asserts that going deep into nature enables her to get connected more closely to nature. She felt the rise of a sense of care to nature. Another student expressed her motivation to join the education tourism activities of Beruga Alam. She reported that the concept of tourism offered in Beruga' Alam particularly the ' The Travelling, Learning, and Sharing' really suits her hobby who loves traveling and exploration.

The concept of Travelling, Learning, and Sharing (TLS) which participants involved in was perceived encouraging by all participants of Beruga' Alam Education Tourism. One of the students found herself very encouraged by every single touring and learning activity she attended because she thought that she could not experience out of campus learning activities from the university as many as those she had in Beruga' Alam. To her, the major differences between learning in Beruga' Alam and that of her university is that exposure to the learning sites. In Beruga' Alam she could directly observe objects and learned directly from experts in the villages. Furthermore, she insisted that she would feel disappointed in missing any of the education tourism programs offered by Beruga' Alam.

### **Benefits of participating in the Education Tourism Program**

All of the participants expressed that they had very rewarding learning experiences and every single activity give impacts on their academic and personal lives. One of the students affirmed that through the programs she became more self-reliant, gain

invaluable insights and experiences as well as being more self-confident. Adding to that, another student felt that her communication skills and ability to interact and adapt to different settings experienced an increase. She also believed that she became more aware of what was happening in her surroundings.

Other benefits of participating in every program run by Beruga' Alam include the growth of a sense of brotherhood and social solidarity. As one student reported that interacting with people in villages especially the local figure opens up her mindset and changes her perception of the beauty and peace of living in a village. She also learned that from participating in the socializing activities, her sense of respect to cultural diversity and local wisdom arose.

This study also uncover important lessons that the participants learned from the activities. These include: patience, seeing opportunity, and time management. One of the participants opined that she became more patient when dealing with problems in her life after joining several education tourism programs in Beruga' Alam. She also learns to use and manage her time effectively. Besides, she found that being exposed to other communities allows her to uncover business opportunities to take during or after completing her study

## **CONCLUSION**

In this paper, we have discussed the philosophical background underpinning the model of education tourism as practiced by Beruga' Alam Institute of East Lombok. The philosophy comprises of pyramid model in which well behaved principle is placed at the bottom followed by other principles such as being insightful, being skillful, and being self-reliant. At the top of the pyramid is the principal contribution. This study revealed that the model of education tourism implemented by Beruga' Alam Institute starts with meditation activities, followed by exploration and participants' reflection. By the end of every education tourism activity, each participant was encouraged to publish the experiences, in any form for instance video, album or texts on social media such as Facebook, youtube or weblogs. Also, students gained positive experiences and lessons learned from joining the education tourism they participated in. All of which affect their personality.

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