

THE INFLUENCE OF A 6-DAY FIELD TRIP ON STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

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SUBTHEME: Modes of learning

BACKGROUND

Today's students are the future and will need to make informed decisions towards sustainability targets. Fostering a positive perception of sustainable agriculture among students is vital for ensuring that future generations are prepared to support and advance practices that promote ecological balance, economic stability, social well-being and foster increased agricultural outputs to support a growing global population. Structured field trip provides an opportunity to immerse students in a diversity of agriculture practices and expose them to real-world applications and challenges in the field thereby giving them a toolbox to identify and develop sustainable practices.

AIMS

The project aimed to examine the influence of a structured field trip on students' perceptions of sustainable agriculture.

DESCRIPTION OF INTERVENTION

Students enrolled in the Bachelor of Agricultural Science program at The University of Queensland embark on a 6-day field trip to Central Queensland as part of their capstone course. The field trip undertaken in 2022 and 2023 involved visiting 11 locations where students attended presentations and tours with farm owners, engaging them in discussions around practices in agriculture, with a focus on sustainable approaches.

DESIGN AND METHODS

A pre-test and post-test quantitative study was conducted using a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale containing 18 statements (9 positive, 9 negative) related to perceptions of sustainable agriculture. Descriptive statistics analyzed cohort level shifts in perceptions. For students who completed both the pre- and post-questionnaire, a Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was used to assess perception shifts at an individual level.

RESULTS

The results showed a positive impact on student perceptions with overall cohort data (N = 23 (2022) and 18 (2023)) showing an improved shift in student perceptions across all statements. This was also consistent with the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test which showed significant shifts in 7 (4 negative and 3 positive) statements related to productivity, innovation and economic viabilities.

CONCLUSIONS

Two years of student cohorts have highlighted that the structured field trip had a positive impact on their perceptions of sustainable agriculture. The exposure to real-world applications and challenges in the field through the farmers' eyes were key to this impact.

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