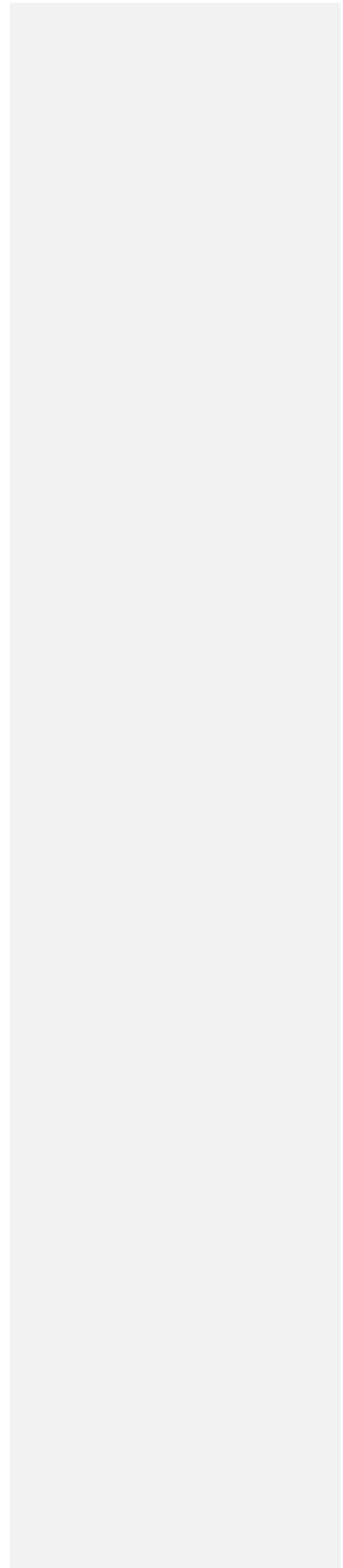


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EXPLORING THE VALUE OF
OUTDOOR EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study attempts to assess the uses and potentials of Outdoor Education in comprehensive schools. A case study school is used to illustrate the range of issues identifiable as connected with an Outdoor Education programme in such a setting.

The literature is examined as a means of selecting lines of enquiry and a combined qualitative methodology is used to investigate the chosen issues as identified from both the literature and initial interviews with central figures.

The data is critically analysed to illustrate the views and perceptions of the programme from teachers, pupils and parents at the school. These issues are connected with those arising from the literature so as to gain a broad picture of the effects of the programme on pupils and the whole school.

The conclusions drawn from these findings give a positive picture of the results of the programme and identify key areas for its further development. It is shown that the programme has strong support and has integrated well into the school, but that the overall situation of the subject at the time of writing is that of an emerging area with need for greater dissemination of ideas. The subject is seen as needing a more cohesive application if its concepts are to be fully understood by schools.

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Chapter One - Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of Outdoor Education as an element in the curriculum for schools.

Outdoor Education in the context of this study is the area often referred to as 'Outdoor Pursuits', or the 'Outward Bound' style of educational approach. This involves the use of outdoor activities such as rockclimbing, abseiling, canoeing, hiking, and a range of associated games and tasks; often in a residential setting in a country area either camping or in centre accommodation.

This area has a history of rapid development since the immediate post-war years and as such is a relatively recent new subject. However, for many people in mainstream education Outdoor Education remains a subject area which is hard to define and often barely understood as an educational medium. Indeed,

'Its very strengths as an educational theatre are considered its weaknesses when it comes to identification and classification'

(Humberstone 1988 p62)

and,

'Paradoxically, both the strength and weakness of Outdoor Education lie in the fact that it is not a school discipline in the accepted sense...'

(Kaye and Kerner 1989 p116)

In the 1940's and 50's a variety of people, notably Kurt Hahn, the founder of 'Outward Bound', conceived of using the outdoors as a method of educating young people. Initially those from inner city areas or deprived backgrounds were given holidays in the outdoors at a new foundation called 'Outward Bound'. This name,

actually that of one organisation, has come to be synonymous with the whole subject of Outdoor Education. The early publicity associated with Outward Bound has led to an enduring image of Outdoor Education involving 'character-building' (a frequently encountered phrase) endurance - style courses where young people are essentially toughened up with early morning cold swims and a strenuous regime of exercise.

In the last twenty years this image has changed and many people are familiar with the type of courses which give the opportunity to try adventurous activities such as rock climbing, canoeing and abseiling. It is generally assumed that this is a 'good thing' and there seems to be an underlying assumption that the whole process must be character - building and enhance trust, leadership and other qualities. Many aims and benefits have been connected with Outdoor Education, and in the main these have been associated with the ideals of a democratic and Christian view of society.

This view is now prevalent, and the subject has been introduced into the National Curriculum. Despite, or possibly because of, this acceptance Outdoor Education has often been introduced into schools as a minor part of the Physical Education area. In most schools it forms a very minor part of the formal curriculum and is in most cases funded by the pupils and parents themselves (Humberstone 1987 p6).

What, then, is the position of Outdoor Education in British schools generally? Despite the support of many teachers and others for Outdoor Education, it is only recently that it has been included in the National Curriculum. This specifies that Outdoor Education can be selected for Physical Education, and is also used in other guises if one includes Geography, Biology and other residential field courses, surely valid uses of the outdoors. The widest interpretation is given to the subject and there is

no specification that any type of wilderness experience should be included although 'Outdoor and Adventurous Activities' comes close to this.

These other uses however do not come within the scope of this study which examines specifically those courses associated with the use of adventurous activities.

The desire for a more objective search for the uses of Outdoor Education has been voiced by Hogan quoted in Kaye and Kerner (1989 p115) who says,

'What I want to say is that outdoor pursuits have added to our educational armoury in a most significant way, but I think it would be prudent of us to assume that we all have a great deal to learn about how most fruitfully they might be employed.'

Outdoor Education may have a great deal more to offer than a simple adventure experience if it can be more fully understood as being a teaching medium rather than as a subject. One does not teach abseiling as an end in itself, but rather to build self-confidence for other tasks (Kaye and Kerner 1989 p116). In this context this study is an attempt to assess the uses and impacts of the subject in a case study school rather than to test any theory or hypothesis; and in this way to give a clearer picture of how Outdoor Education sits at present within mainstream education.

Outdoor Education is at the time of writing high on the public agenda in the wake of well-publicised accidents, and legislation is currently being formed in the shape of the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995. This, and the recent National Curriculum developments, have bearing on this study in that the subject albeit for sometimes unfortunate reasons is for the first time the subject of official interest and

could be seen to be 'coming of age'. It is to be hoped that once the period of examination and formalisation is over this will allow for a greater openness for the consideration of Outdoor Education's uses in education generally.

Chapter Two - Review of the Literature

Some work has been published on the effects of Outdoor Education, although according to Humberstone,

‘Educational settings outside mainstream schools in which ‘socialisation’ processes occur have been largely neglected by researchers...’

(Humberstone 1987 p5),

In most cases literature concerning Outdoor Education has been written from the perspective of those with an interest in promoting it; either teachers or commercial course providers such as myself. This perspective of examining the subject to extol its benefits comes through in much of the literature, even to the extent that Government documents designed to implement regulations concerning outdoor pursuits pay uncalled for tribute to their uses:

‘ The activities allow young people to develop by meeting challenges they do not necessarily face every day and to experience a sense of achievement in overcoming them.’ (Health and Safety Executive 1995 p5)

The very context of the outdoors is in itself a source of mention in much literature in two ways. It seems as if there has always been a gulf of understanding between the ‘layman’ and the mountaineer or adventurer; and there has been a great deal of discussion of the moral and openly spiritual aspects of the outdoors which distinguishes this area from being regarded as just a sport.

Since the early days of mountaineering literature frequent mention has been made of this, and this may be useful to note later for it seems that those involved with the outdoors have such a strong affinity for it and such passionate conviction that their

views may be biased (the author included). Many authors talk of experiences somehow above or separate from everyday life and mention the lack of understanding of the outdoor

experience by non-participants. Harrer (1965, p14). Even the early pioneer Abrahams criticises the ‘armchair critics’ (1907, p1) and extols the benefits of ‘..the pure joys and benefits of mountaineering. Fortunate are those who have tasted of these, and renewed health and strength far above the cares and troubles of the world...’ (Abraham 1907 p2).

Mountaineering has also been seen as far more than just a sport, rather a way of life. This comes across in many mountaineering books, where climbers are seen as either having or gaining different qualities and values to others - ‘Perhaps this supreme dominance of mind over body is the main distinction of mountaineering over other forms of activity, and gives it an added moral value.’ (Terray 1961 p302).

It is from this historical viewpoint that outdoor activities have always been seen to give some kind of moral benefit to participants; and this comes across in too many works to mention - some examples are Bonington (1989 p7-9), Langmuir (1984 p5), Simpson (1994 p150, 213, 327), and Tasker (1982 p1). This may well be the original source of the character building and moral improvement assumed to be a result of Outdoor Education.

The theme of the unique benefits of the outdoors is most strongly carried into the educational sphere in recent years by Colin Mortlock (1984) who is one of the strongest proponents of outdoor adventure, and critics of modern society’s values. He sees great possibilities in the outdoors as a counter to ‘the sickness of modern living’ (p46).

Issues and Images in Outdoor Education

Images of Outdoor Education

The subject area of Outdoor Education has a decidedly contradictory image. Whilst there is widespread support for it in general, some highly publicised events over the last twenty years have led to serious and sometimes ill-informed concerns (Humberstone 1989 p112) about its application. Humberstone (1989) attempts to clarify the position of Outdoor Education in the

curriculum with special regard to Physical Education, but is concerned with the loss of its position following recent governmental changes. She continues, however, in Humberstone (1990) to point out that there is a negative image even among some teachers and published work of Outdoor Education being in some way 'macho'. This is a recurring theme in her work and she is clearly concerned that this should be addressed by outdoor educators in order that the potentially valuable benefits of the medium should not be lost through a misplaced image.

Many authors feel that Outdoor Education is a more appropriate learning method, or has more appropriate goals, than traditional educational methods especially when the needs of young people in a rapidly changing society are taken into account. Humberstone (1987 p10-11) relates theories of those examining the formal education system and finding it to be a tool designed to perpetuate the status quo, as opposed to outdoor courses which tend to foster personal development. Keighley (1991), Mortlock (1984, p17) and Cooper (1994) all cite large scale changes and paradigm shifts in society as giving rise to urgent need for changes in education. This change in society is predicted by Capra (1983) who feels that the type of change needed is

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nothing short of a complete rethink of the norms of society. Cooper takes this argument and applies the educational thinking behind outdoor courses, suggesting that there is a strong match between the values generated in the outdoors and Capra's visions of needs for the future.

These views of Outdoor Education could be interpreted as having aims at variance with 'traditional' or 'formal' education. This is expressed in differing ways by several authors, and it is interesting to establish exactly what the nature of this relationship is at present - how far for example has there been any assimilation into schools? Tiffany (1995 p7) says, 'It

(Outdoor Education) is seen more as a mechanism to enliven academic education rather than a medium for the delivery of social education...’

It would seem as if Outdoor Education’s proponents see it as a much more powerful tool than they believe it is given credit for, and which fits into their view of the future of society and education. Could this view, however valid, be an expression of frustration at anything less than wholesale adoption of outdoor activities by mainstream schools? Those in charge of the curriculum both at policy making and day to day levels clearly have wider considerations and Outdoor Education cannot be their first priority.

The Effects of Outdoor Education

Much work has been published on the effects (usually the benefits) of Outdoor Education, and Kiewa (1992) examines several psychological models which attempt to rationalise the common assumption that adventure experience is ‘good for you’.

There is much evidence to support this view from several authors - Mortlock (1984) for example describes his own long and distinguished career as one of the pioneers of

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outdoor teaching in Britain and founder of the National Association for Outdoor Education. In this his deeply held belief that adventurous experiences are good for young peoples’ development is backed up by countless experiences of groups of young people. His experience at many levels surely carries considerable weight, and yet he himself describes (p13) ‘considerable opposition’ amongst the educational hierarchy to adventurous methods. He describes in detail throughout the book the various benefits, from self-reliance and working together to courage, determination and humility; these contrasting starkly with what he sees as the irresponsible, morally declining values of western society which seem to value ease, convenience and self-centredness so highly.

It has been a widely held view that Outdoor Education (often as perceived as ‘Outward Bound’ style education) could provide some measure of stimulus for disaffected youth and possibly affect their self-perception, confidence and behaviour. One researcher who did not find this view upheld was Roberts (1974) who found no significant changes in character but did note increases in independence and initiative. This was also noted to be at odds with the perception that formal schooling had a tendency to mould pupils into conformity within the system and class structures and stifle initiative.

It was also noted that it was important to examine the motives of those initiating Outdoor Education and of professionals within education. There exists a dilemma between the aspirations of individuals as teachers on behalf of pupils and the constraints of the formal system, which within Outdoor Education is less problematic as possibly the aims of teachers and the courses they operate in the outdoors are more compatible.

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Nichols (1994) clarifies the possibilities of proper evaluation of outdoor methods of teaching by highlighting the need to establish measures of exactly what we are trying to evaluate and why. It is shown that these methods must be justifiable to bodies external to Outdoor Education itself, and in turn this means that we must define what we think can be achieved, and how this can be done.

One of points raised is that if Outdoor Education is thought of as a tool it can be applied in a number of fields. One commonly measured area in the past has been the use of these methods in the rehabilitation of young offenders and there is some positive evidence to show that they have worked (discussed below); but there is little empirical evidence to show any results with other groups. However, this lack of ‘scientific’ or objective data,

‘...should not [be accorded] a lower priority just because it is not quantifiable. We should not devalue the sense of awe at a beautiful mountain view, or a growth in self

awareness just because they cannot be translated into numbers.’

(Nichols 1994 p12)

Nichols goes on to discuss the difficulties in providing validation for what for many are highly qualitative experiences, and this is a recurring theme in the literature.

The application of theories intended to explain causes of boredom, anxiety and alienation among young people provides a conceptual framework to guide outdoor educators when devising programmes. Martin and Priest (in Kiewa 1992 p13) suggest that a balance is sought between levels of competence and risk which if judged correctly will result in an experience of ‘peak adventure’ (this is a development of Mortlock’s ‘Frontier Experience’ theory (Mortlock 1984 p23)). It is theorised that this

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state is optimal for learning and development. The state is achieved by, put simply, allowing young people to participate in activities at a level which to them seems adventurous but is not so adventurous as to be frightening and hence become a negative experience.

Gender Issues in Outdoor Education

There are recurring references to gender differences in Outdoor Education, but fewer specific studies. Levi (1995), for example, demonstrates the gender bias of language in outdoor activities; and Humberstone (1994) examines access into the outdoor world. These are important issues underlying much of the debate overall about Outdoor Education, concerning as they do half of the population in what has been a male-dominated sphere of activity (Levi 1995 p25). Of specific concern to this school-based study, Humberstone (1987 p240-256 and 1991) studies girls’ perceptions of themselves on outdoor courses and notes that many of the differences between boys’ and girls’ approaches to the activities arise because of the preconceptions they have regarding the appropriateness of the activities. Many of these apprehensions later disappear once activities have been undertaken. It was noted that many

girls felt more apprehensive about undertaking a hazardous activity and perceived themselves as unable to cope mentally or physically; and some disliked the harshness of the environment. It is suggested that the perception of taking part in male-generated activities helps to give a sense of irrelevance to taking part, and that the provision of female role models may help to dispel this image.

The results of the camps in Humberstone (1991) were encouraging in that all of the girls studied had improved self-concepts at the end of their experience, and those with

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the greatest improvement over the duration of the course were those with the lowest perceptions of their own physical and psychological capabilities.

The suggestion of all-female courses in Outdoor Education is made, although there is no evidence put forward to suggest whether or why this would be beneficial.

Negative Views of Outdoor Education

Less work has been published regarding any negative impacts of outdoor courses, although these issues do seem to arise regularly within generally more positive summations. These issues are highlighted here as a counterpoint to the overwhelmingly positive nature of most of the existing literature, which without careful scrutiny could lead the researcher to believe that there are no factors weighing against the use of Outdoor Education to consider at all. However, an insightful critique of the assumptions that Outdoor Education is always good has been written by Wurdinger (1995) who introduces a note of caution and questions some of the assumptions which form the basis of outdoor literature. He suggests that those values so cherished by outdoor educationalists depend largely on the methods employed, and may not in any case transfer into 'normal' life.

Kiewa (1992) examines a study by Mitchell in 1983 which outlines a continuum between boredom/alienation on the one hand and over-anxiety on the other. It is suggested that those

with little control over their lives seek stimulation such as the adventure experience, but must not step across the boundary into anxiety. This excess of excitement leads to a retreat into a more stable area, and it has been observed that on occasion outdoor programmes have been too challenging for the participants. This has close associations with Mortlock (1984) and Martin and Priest's (in Kiewa 1992)

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work mentioned above, but formalises the theoretical framework.

Voight (1988), quoted by Kiewa (1992 p15), suggests that supposedly therapeutic experiences involved in her study on emotionally disturbed adolescent hospital patients may in fact be too invasive and demanding, simply promoting fear. Her group showed significant increases in levels of anxiety, stress, depression and other factors when compared with a control group after an outdoor ropes course.

These studies suggest that over-stimulation or excessively 'adventurous' experiences may have a negative effect by proving too frightening for participants and promoting anxiety. The importance for outdoor educators must be to devise programmes which challenge at exactly the right level, and to create awareness among staff as to their personal qualities most likely to promote the aims of the course - friendliness, compassion and respect.

These personal qualities displayed in relationships between staff and participants on outdoor courses are seen as at least as important as the course content by Knapp (1988) and Gaus (1985) as identified by Kiewa (1992 p15). They emphasise the importance of a 'humane environment', or an atmosphere of positive relationships between participants and instructors, as providing optimal conditions for personal growth and realisation of potential.

Rarely mentioned is the nature of the elements of compulsion for students to participate in outdoor experiences and the differing agendas, motives and expectations of students and teachers. Lynch (1991) illustrates that whilst outdoor programmes may well not be

Comment [d1]: Knapp, C. (1988) 'Creating Humane Climates Outdoors: A People Skills Primer' Washington; Office of Educational research and Improvement (ERIC 224 706)

Comment [d2]: Gaus, C. (1985) De La Salle Vocational Supportive Life Skills Learning Program Off Campus: Operational manual (ERIC 269 173)

Comment [d3]: Lynch, Pip (1991) 'Elements of Compulsion in Outdoor education', Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Leadership, Vol.8, no. 4, p 10-12.

compulsory in a school, there are many pressures acting upon students to participate both in attending the course and subsequently taking part in each activity.

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These range from the overt (staff pressure) to the subtle (not wishing to be the only one opting out). This compulsion may well have an important effect on achieving the aims of an Outdoor Education programme, as it effectively removes pupil empowerment.

Comment [d4]: link this in with Hove Park - many points in Lynch can be directly illustrated in the HPS situation but don't give them all away here.

Outdoor Education can be seen as just another problem by many on the school staff (Payne 1993) and this may be due to a lack of information about the methods used and the potential of the subject.

Application of Empirical Methods in the Assessment of Outdoor Courses

Relatively few attempts have been made to examine outdoor programmes using empirical or statistical methods to measure specific outcomes of courses. The difficulties of applying such methods are mentioned in each study as having been highly significant, and an overview is given by Nichols (1994). Many of the practicalities of this area are discussed in Chapter Two on Methodology, but the conclusions of these studies as they relate to the overall picture of Outdoor Education are discussed here.

Of the studies examined only one used apparently pure empirical methods, when Bunyan and Boniface (1995) measured anxiety levels amongst students abseiling. All other studies, however, used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, often commencing with qualitative data only to interpret it in the light of other more subjective inputs.

One such analysis is that of Sakofs (1992) when examining the effects of an outdoor programme for young offenders in the USA. This attempted to cross-reference data from four sources: 1. Self-reporting by students regarding the effects of the

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programme; 2. Questionnaires to parents, teachers and counsellors; 3. Review of school and court records and 4. An overall qualitative investigation of the programme itself.

Some statistically significant differences were found between control groups and experimental groups in some behavioural areas, but the summary of the findings indicates the overriding feeling that participants and their 'significant others' found most benefit in the sense of realising that their aspirations for the future were achievable. These feelings greatly outweighed any direct feeling of benefits from the content of the course itself.

This study also raised points indicating an awareness of some negative impacts of Outdoor Education, although these were often interpreted in the most positive way available to the researcher. For example, it was noted that groups returning from outdoor programmes experienced an increase in the index of 'asocial orientation', or behaviour in an asocial manner. This was interpreted to mean that students had had such a positive outdoor experience that reintegration into the home environment was a difficult process, which therefore reflected well on the outdoor experience. In an alternative, holistic view the aftermath of the course causing a great degree of disruption might reflect negatively on the usefulness of the experience. This was later balanced by an improvement in behaviour after one year, but nevertheless is not an unqualified success.

There were measurable improvements, if interpreted in that manner, on ten out of thirty-three scales and this seems disappointing if one is searching for positive results

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of an outdoor programme. This is summarised in the sentence, 'Thus it appears that although psychological growth had occurred, ... these changes had not translated into measurable difference in concrete behaviours.' (p21)

However the analysis of interviews goes some way to show that the experimental group gained a more positive experience than the statistics would indicate.

Although the statistical side of the study provided some useful data, it still seems that the benefits of outdoor education lie within the subjective and perhaps non-quantifiable fields of description. Statistical data in the social sciences still require subjective analysis, and in this example many seemingly scientific results could be given a variety of conjectural interpretations.

Yaffey (1992) uses the administration of a 'Personal Orientation Inventory' questionnaire before and after an outdoor course, using the course's instructors as a control. He cites improvements in all of the twelve available subscales, although significant improvements in only two of these, as evidence that outdoor courses are a positive experience. There seems, however, to be no acknowledgement of any potential difficulties in the administration of such questionnaires, and other factors are omitted. These include the use of any other method simultaneously as a comparison, longer term studies or a questioning of the validity of the characteristics deemed positive.

McRoberts (1994) gains some results from the administration of a questionnaire on self-esteem but reaffirms that, '...it is not enough to simply take the results of the questionnaire at face value since every individual is unique...', and this study too draws heavily on observation and interview.

It is clear that such empirical methods have innate flaws in this area of study where so much subjective material is available, and that there are lessons for this study in the application of any such methods.

Methods Used in Outdoor Education

One section of material gives information regarding techniques to be used in outdoor training. Whilst much of the practical advice is outside of the scope of this study, some is relevant to the application of outdoor programmes in schools, and some gives an insight into the thinking and methodology behind outdoor programmes in general.

Many of the most innovative outdoor programmes have been developed in the United States, where outdoor methods have long been seen as a way of dealing with some groups of young people such as young offenders. Priest (1988, 1991, and as [Attarian & Priest 1994] and [Priest & Gass 1994]) is a major contributor to theories of methodology from the USA. He advocates the use of a variety of psychological techniques to facilitate outdoor courses, although many of these are quasi-scientific explanations explaining techniques long known to instructors at the most basic level.

Priest (1991) suggests a set of ten basic rules for outdoor instructors which provide a useful framework for training in the outdoors. He continues, however, with 'Frontloading with Paradox and Double Binds in Adventure Education Facilitation' (Priest & Gass 1994) which has less directly useful thoughts on some basic procedures of operating with groups, attempting to rationalise them through analysis.

Much of this debate suggests a research for respectability by legitimising established outdoor techniques using interpretations of psychological methods. This is apparent in much of the literature covering methodology and its usefulness is debatable.

An area addressed by Humberstone (1987) is that of the quality of the learning process itself, and the examination of the nature of the experiences in Outdoor Education from the perspectives of both pupils and teachers.

Comment [d5]: Priest, Simon (1988) 'Outdoor Leadership - A comparison of British experts' attitudes and approaches with those from other nations' British Journal of Physical Education Vol 19 No.2 p59-61
Priest, Simon (1991) 'The Ten Commandments of Outdoor education', Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Leadership Vol 8 No.3 p8-10
Priest, Simon and Gass, Michael (1994a) 'Frontloading with Paradox and Double Binds in Adventure Education Facilitation', Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Leadership, Vol 11 No.1 p8-10
Attarian, Aran and Priest, Simon,(1994b)'The Relationship Between Stages of Group Development and Styles of Outdoor Leadership', Journal of Adventure education and Outdoor Leadership Vol 11 No3 p13-19

She reveals her motives and gives the reader a good pointer as to much of what might be behind Outdoor Education by saying,

‘I felt that enjoyment was a predominant feature of pupil motivation, and that pupils responded when they were given trust and responsibility, which, to me, seemed more easily realisable in an outdoor education situation.’

(Humberstone 1987 p42)

She reinforces this by suggesting that teachers are restrained from pursuing their own progressive ideologies by various factors in mainstream schools (p62). Humberstone also brings to light some interesting factors concerning teaching in the outdoors, some of which are highly relevant to this study. She notes that teachers generally learn alongside pupils at the activities which are new to both groups (p128) and that this affects their relationship. The instructors at her case study school have no preconceptions of pupils’ ‘abilities’ as do the teachers, and therefore a more egalitarian approach is used which diffuses the prior boundaries created at the source school due to ‘ability’, gender and so on (p137). This may well affect pupils’ attitudes towards staff and also their learning experience, and is given consideration in this study. The pedagogy of particular outdoor sessions is seen as a very positive one (p240) which is appreciated by pupils and contributes significantly to the success of the whole experience.

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The Application of Outdoor Education Programmes in Schools

Outdoor Education in schools in Britain ‘seems at present to be something of a curricular misfit’ (Humberstone 1988 p63). This may reflect its relatively recent development and consequent lack of cohesion in its application, with some schools or even countries having highly developed Outdoor Education departments and others having no place for it at all.

Humberstone (1988) and Priest (1988) both draw comparisons between the varying applications of Outdoor Education in most English-speaking countries - although the use of it as a method of education is widely regarded

to have originated in Britain, countries such as New Zealand have taken it on wholeheartedly until it has become a highly regarded area of the curriculum, indeed more so than in Britain itself.

Davies (1992) points out that many Outdoor Education programmes in schools are generated by the individual interest of a teacher in a particular activity, who motivates the programme while s/he is at the school. The programme is allowed to run by default, and is not utilised by the school in any co-ordinated manner. In the main focus of his article he attempts to clarify the options available to teachers, particularly in Physical Education departments, in the delivery of the Outdoor Education section of the National Curriculum. This suggests an holistic view of the possibilities of a programme, involving examination of available human and local physical resources, involvement of staff and outside agencies or centres, cross-curricular work (particularly in Key Stages One and Two), and progressions in the activities. This provides a useful starting point and generalised framework for the teacher with no previous knowledge of Outdoor Education provision.

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Keighley (1993) suggests that the developments within the National Curriculum will require many teachers to reassess their teaching methods and goes on to describe some teaching progressions which may be more appropriate for outdoor 'active learning' methods. These are a useful guide and reminder that Outdoor Education cannot be just adopted as an extra subject or even sport, but differs fundamentally in its approach to many established areas of the curriculum.

Comment [d6]: Davies, Chris (1992)
'Youth, Schools and National Curriculum
with Regard to Outdoor Education' *Journal
of Adventure education and Outdoor
Leadership* Vol.9 No.1 p28-31

Cooper (1994) goes on to develop ideas of the potential uses of Outdoor Education more fully by examining the direction of the education system as a whole and suggesting potential uses in outdoor courses for preparing students for future society. He discusses with feeling the divorce of modern society from nature and the materialistic culture of recent times, together with an educational system which does not always address the needs of its pupils for a need to be able to find a rationale for a life in a new age. This is a much broader debate than is encountered elsewhere, and provides a strongly subjective view which is balanced by a rational analysis of the position of society as a whole.

This further inclines thought towards the benefits of Outdoor Education as being highly subjective to measure, yet it is clear that this subjectivity when analysed in the correct context can provide crucial insight into the subject. Cooper continues by matching the skills thought to be more relevant for people in the future and those thought to be promoted by Outdoor Education - these are remarkably similar.

It is argued by Beedie (1994) that risk-taking is a central issue in the application of outdoor courses in schools. Risk taking is taken to cover physical, personal and educational risks (in terms of teachers willingly losing complete control of the learning

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process). This analysis of educators' views of risk taking proved particularly difficult to interpret as there were such differing views on the nature of educators and the risks perceived. Experiential learning was seen to be the best learning method by most respondents, and concern about the lack of this in most traditional learning settings was apparent.

The respondents in this survey had positive views of risk taking in its broadest sense, there being a general feeling that one has to transcend one's own 'comfort zone' in ordinary life in order to progress (a kind of 'no pain no gain' theory?).

One valuable point which has direct use in Outdoor Education is that of perceived against real risks. (In outdoor instruction it is well known that there are two distinct types of risk; real and perceived. For example, on a multi-activity course most pupils would see climbing as being very dangerous as ropes are involved, but hillwalking as very easy and safe. However, the converse is true - climbing is highly controlled and students are always tied into a safety system, whereas most accidents happen in the less controllable environment of the hills when walking). It was felt that educators have no right to subject pupils to real risks, but every right to increase the perceived risk and thereby enable pupils to transcend their own barriers. There is another dilemma here, however, as the physical risk may be only imaginary but the emotional risk to the pupil of a dangerous encounter may be very real and this real risk must also be assessed. Mortlock (1984 p22-23) develops this argument into four stages of play, adventure, frontier adventure (where most is gained) and misadventure.

This relates to the commonly recurring theme of finding a zone of learning where risk is high enough to facilitate overcoming barriers and progressing, but not so high as to

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bring about a rejection of the process entirely through fear.

Issues Arising from the Review of Literature

Much of the latter examination in this study is undertaken in the light of issues arising from the review of the literature. These include:

- Methodology - the difficulties of the application of statistical or scientific methods
in this field
- the value of the feelings of participants and others close to them in
their evaluation of their experiences compared to any 'objective' data
- the breadth of sources of data to be considered

- General
- differences in perspectives on Outdoor Education between those involved and others
 - the nature of the differences of the aims and methods of outdoor educationalists and mainstream education - the cultural differences between the systems
 - the central importance of gender issues and perceptions
 - the value of the type of experience participants undergo and the 'frontier adventure' experience

Chapter Three - Methodology

General aims of the study

To establish appropriate methodologies requires an assessment of the aims of the enquiry; and these are to:

1. Assess whether the Outdoor Education programme is a 'success' at the school and in what way - whether purely personal in terms of self-esteem or skills improvement;

- whether there is an improvement in academic performance;
- if there is any improvement in the morale or atmosphere of the school
- staff and parent attitudes to the programme

2. Examine the application of the programme in terms of:

- relationships with the curriculum
- fitting in with the running of the formal timetable

3. Recommend future action

A study of this type which aims to look from several perspectives will require a range of techniques for gathering data. Some indications as to the likely effectiveness of various methods can be seen in the review of literature from the results and comments of previous researchers, and these comments can be used as a valid starting point for a general look at an appropriate methodology (Humberstone and Lynch 1991 p30-31; Sakofs 1992 p21). Much of this discussion revolves around the search for, and validity of, 'hard' or scientific data and its relationship to 'soft' or qualitative data. Burgess (1985 p1-16) provides a summary of comparisons between the two types of research and the application of qualitative methods to educational research.

This study utilises a range of qualitative techniques with a brief simple analysis of

overall figures of participation on Outdoor Education at the school. This was used as a starting point for discussion and identified lines of enquiry during interviews at a later stage.

The value of evidence in Outdoor Education

The educational results of outdoor courses are in general highly subjective as they relate to students' perceptions, self-esteem and relationships in society, and in educational terms are difficult to evaluate objectively. Indeed some researchers such as Yaffey point out the complexity of the situation:

‘Considering the complexity of the human psyche and the almost infinite variation of people’s interaction with the elements of any outdoor situation it is no wonder that the subject of the ‘experience itself’ is almost unresearchable. It is vast and elusive, it resists our attempts to create models of it and extract generalities while continuing to inspire and provide motivation for those involved in facilitating its effects.’

(Yaffey 1992 p34)

Methods of measurement designed for scientific or at least more objective studies have also proved to be limited in their success, and are usually reinforced by qualitative data. This is discussed as ‘Application of Empirical Methods in the Assessment of Outdoor Courses’ in the Review of Literature.

Areas of Study

There are two areas within which research will be carried out - the outdoor environment, where the effectiveness of outdoor methods can be assessed; and the school environment, where transfers between the outdoors and the rest of the

curriculum can be examined. Hence it is necessary to assess the types of methodology used in assessing outdoor courses as well as research in the school, although there will inevitably be a good deal of 'crossover'.

In the school setting there are several groups who will have an opinion regarding Outdoor Education - pupils, teachers, parents, and governors. Of these a number of people from the first two groups are actively participating in the outdoor courses, whilst the others are passive and play a supporting role; in the case of parents often financially, and the governors must give approval in the final event.

Whilst observing outdoor courses it will be possible to gain access to pupils actually undergoing the experience central to the study, teachers both as participants and observers and with a view of transfers into school, and instructors.

The methods utilised will be a combination intended to approach the case study from different perspectives; and it is also necessary to establish what facets of the implementation of Outdoor Education in a school are available for study, and which are within the scope of such a dissertation. Each of these aims will require information from all of the partners in the school - pupils, staff and parents. This information will be gained by questionnaire and interview, and observation of outdoor courses themselves.

Statistics

One starting point is a simple analysis of the figures of pupils participating in the programme. This takes the numbers of pupils in each year group and participation levels in the programme. I have also introduced the cost of courses to each year group as a variable.

Whilst analysis of these figures is simple, the conclusions to be drawn are very limited. It is easy to establish figures such as percentages of pupils attending camps in any one year, but the number of possible combinations greatly increases when trying to discover, for example,

how many children have at any stage been involved with the programme. We know that if a certain percentage go in one year with the highest level of participation, then there can be no fewer than this, but what if one half of the pupils attend in Year 7 then the other half decide to in Year 8? Two assumptions must be made here: - that most pupils attending camps have in each year been before; and that the level of participation in each year group does not change drastically from one year to the next, as this would negate the principles of the analysis. The only thing that can be relied upon here is personal experience in running the programme, as there are no central records.

These by necessity generalised and, in statistical terms, vague assumptions mean that information derived from these figures, whilst useful as a background, cannot be used in themselves to draw any hard conclusions.

Non-Participants and the use of a control group

Nichols (1994) discusses the importance of control groups. Ideally a group similar to that undergoing an outdoor course would be selected and would participate in the same tests as the active group; this group would be as identical as possible to the participating group. To achieve perfectly comparable results this group would be selected from the same school but the problem is, if they don't go through the experience being evaluated will they be alienated because they have been excluded from, or are excluding themselves from, the experience?

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The group would be selected from the same school in order to minimise the number of external variables operating on the group. For example, a group from a nearby school at the same age might be appropriate but questions of catchment area of the school, school ethos, teacher personality, inter-school rivalry and a different programme of school holidays and trips under operation might affect the study.

One way (Springett 1987) that has been used is to assess the group under examination themselves, but on four occasions so showing a rate of change in various psychometric tests whilst not undergoing a programme and then during/after a programme.

There are also a variety of reasons why the non-participating group from the same school might not be attending an outdoor course and these are likely to be highly significant in the results from such a group.

These factors could include financial inability to pay for a course where courses are optional, likely to bias the study to observe one socio-economic group; or pupils lacking confidence or social skills who would be intimidated by attending such a course, i.e. those who have been identified as those most in need of the type of benefits available from such a course. (for example in Lynch (1991), Kaye and Kerner (1989 p117), and others). A typical comment comes from Humberstone (1991 p29) who observes,

‘Every girl stated that her confidence had increased as a result of the outdoor/adventure activities. It was found that the shift was most dramatic for those girls who appeared to have the most limited perceptions of their own physical and psychological capabilities.’

Thus the question arises that if this is the response from those attending such a course,

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quite possibly those who do not attend would be those less confident still and thereby those with most to gain. This renders the use of a control group from the same school highly problematic for direct comparison. There is a parallel here with the problem of non-respondents to questionnaires who are likely to be significantly different from those who did respond - it would therefore be helpful to gain access to such a group and this point is addressed below.

The use of a control group is examined as a means of assessing the usefulness of an outdoor experience and its effect on young people. However this is not the only purpose of this study as an overall view is needed. Therefore a control group of non-participants, despite not giving value to a study of the outdoor process, does give insight into the position of the process within the school as a whole.

The position in this case is that the selection and monitoring of a control group is a temporal process, and the requirement would be for this monitoring to cover a more extended period than the scope of the study allows. However as much effort as possible has been made to gain access to pupils and staff not involved in the programme and gain their views in order to provide a more balanced picture and as a counterpoint to some of the data gained from participants.

Interviews

There were problems with using the interview as a technique, which are considered below, when gathering data at various stages of a study. In this case initial interviews were used as a part of a process designed to funnel information gathered from several sources at the start of a dissertation in order to be able to select lines of further enquiry. The information was needed initially to see what teachers think of Outdoor

Education and why they initiate it in schools, and from this it is possible to view a number of common themes to follow and use in later interviews or observation.

One set of interviews was intended to gain the views of members of school staff who are influential in running Outdoor Education programmes, as it is they who determine whether a school will include an element of Outdoor Education in its curriculum. It is assumed that they must be generally of the view that Outdoor Education is a beneficial subject as they

operate these programmes at some cost to the school or their personal workloads; my intention is to establish what these opinions are and why these views are held.

The interview process as a method is more limited than it would at first appear. It appears to be an ideal way of gathering subjective in depth information or 'what is inside a person's head' (Cohen and Manion 1994 p272), but is prone to subjectivity often introduced by the interviewer. Whilst the uses of interviews as a method are not an appropriate subject for discussion in detail here, particular factors were considered in this situation as I had such a degree of involvement in the programme myself.

In some situations an unstructured interview can become a deeper and more two-way experience (Burgess 1995 p63) with subjects gaining information from the interviewer and personal contacts developing. This can enhance the quality of information gained in depth provided that the information is not distorted by introducing the opinions of the researcher. One view is that of Cicourel (cited in Cohen & Manion 1994 p275) who believes that interviews have all of the same faults that everyday life does. This is summarised in differences between personalities, avoidance of in-depth questions, withholding information on both parts, loss of meanings and the impossibility of

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rational control over all elements of a subjective encounter. The interviews held with staff, parents and pupils were designed to elicit the views of the interviewee with as little interference as possible using completely 'open' questions in an indirect mode and a non-specific manner. It was not the intention to refer to my own involvement in their programmes of Outdoor Education as a provider or any specific incidents other than those which would give anecdotal evidence or illustrative examples; however comments reaffirming opinions or prompting answers cannot be entirely avoided when in discussion with colleagues and this is a factor affecting the quality of data gathered in this way.

Whilst opinions on the subject in general were sought, it was also important to establish whether the interviewees had any factual evidence to support their opinions. This could be in the form of specific cases of pupils affected, or possibly via background literature on the subject or feedback from colleagues.

The open-ended approach was used deliberately to gain responses in depth and allow the interviewee to bring up any subject. I was aware of the published material and some generally held opinions regarding the topic and in need of information of how the opinions of influential people were formed.

It is always important to eliminate, or at least be aware of, any bias which might compromise the validity of the information (Cohen and Manion 1994 p282). Such bias might emanate from questions designed assuming preconceived ideas (previously mentioned in the context of 'character-building' and so on); misperceptions on either part of what is being said or asked; the interviewer's own opinions; and other factors such as race, age and gender.

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Several possible sources exist here which are specific to this subject at present. These include:

- awareness of recent media coverage of incidents involving outdoor activities, principally an incident at Lyme Bay in Dorset in 1994 when several young people died in a canoeing accident under inadequate supervision;
- a background of cultural perceptions of outdoor education, especially dating from over 10 years ago - whereas some outdoor activities such as mountain biking, rafting and surfing now have a very positive image, previously activities were often portrayed as 'character building' and militaristic in style;
- parents' perceptions of activities in school are inevitable channelled largely through their children who supply daily information. There may be many reasons for a child to supply

limited or incorrect information to parents, or for information to be misinterpreted. An illustrative example of this was a conversation unwittingly overheard by myself whilst a pupil was calling her mother from France. A group of 19 pupils had spent to that point a week in France with a long journey, arriving in a scenically beautiful area, and taking part in a full schedule of rock climbing, whitewater rafting, abseiling, mountain expeditions and canyoning. Yet the only description of anything occurring on the holiday was that of a friend who had been caught with alcohol the night before, with no mention at all of activities. This example can serve to illustrate two things - the emphasis put on the social side of residential courses by young people, but also the selectivity of information supplied to parents. These parents may well have derived a negative view of such a successful course from such information.

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It is also possible that pupils with a desire to go on a trip with friends, or avoid a trip because they are unconfident about their performance in activities and wish to avoid embarrassment, would represent these trips to their parents in ways which suit them so as to be able to participate or not.

Questionnaires

Consideration was given to sending a questionnaire to a number of schools, but this has possible hazards. A questionnaire sent to a school which asked about Outdoor Education would be passed to the teacher in charge of Outdoor Education as the person best able to answer it; whilst this would say why Outdoor Education was run in a school one would perhaps expect overwhelmingly positive thoughts on Outdoor Education from specialist teachers in the subject and there would be little access to alternative views. Headteachers might be a better target with an overall view, but the tendency to wish to present the school's policies positively might prevail. There are strategies for avoiding this problem, but these are

time-consuming methods both for the sender and recipient of the questionnaire, and in order to gain in depth opinion would be less appropriate for this study in any case.

One important group in the operation of an Outdoor Education programme at Hove Park School is parents. This is not only because of parental involvement in education, but also because in the situation where an outside commercial agency is running the Outdoor Education programme the final decision as to participation resides with the parents.

In this instance I used the tutorial system of the school to deliver questionnaires randomly. Form tutors were asked to give questionnaires to pupils with randomly

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selected numbers from the form register list, eliminating any bias that the tutor might have in, say, selecting pupils that they knew had been involved with the Outdoor Education programme or who were conscientious and therefore likely to get the questionnaire completed. This enabled distribution to a proportionate number of parents who had not been involved with the programme.

The design of the questionnaire (Appendix One) made clear that there was no official request from the school for its completion, and explained its confidentiality. Parents were asked to give their identity only if they were willing to be interviewed. This can be seen to create a predisposition to gaining interviews with parents of participating or possibly more active and conscientious families, but access to other parents is a sensitive area of concern to the headmaster and little alternative was available.

Sampling Bias

This has been a problem where only some people have been studied who were on a particular course. For example, postal questionnaires have been used to follow up after courses, but the problem is that people who answer questionnaires are likely to be significantly different people to those who don't.

‘ Non-response is a problem because of the likelihood - repeatedly confirmed in practice - that people who do not return questionnaires differ from those who do’

(Moser and Kalton 1971 p267)

Interviews with parents volunteering from questionnaires

This self-selection of interviewees (although from a random sample of initial questionnaire recipients) creates some concern as to the representative nature of their views - all of the parents volunteering had already given very positive responses in

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their questionnaire answers. The information gained in these interviews, therefore, was used with far greater weight in the thoughts on improving the Outdoor Education programme than in any thoughts as to whether the majority of parents were in favour of the programme. Within this context parents can be seen to have highly positive and valuable opinions on the subject.

Interpretation of Results

One of the more important themes in this methodology is that of weighing up a variety of indicators because of the nature of the effects under scrutiny. Often the effects of these courses may not be apparent to those participating, or may be long-term and these are particularly difficult indicators to measure. Much useful guidance in this area is given by Nichols (1994). The researcher has additional problems with interpretation where such factors as self-esteem and trust are concerned. For example, one study in New Zealand quoted by Nichols (1994 p13) found an increase in drug abuse reported over the course of an outdoor experience for young offenders. It became apparent that this was due to the increased trust of the group in the confidentiality of their instructors over the course, and the rather unexpected conclusions had to be revised. He (Nichols 1994 p12) also mentions that one indicator used for young offender groups was a reduction in the number of convictions in that

group after an outdoor course; this however might be attributed to them developing more initiative at not getting caught.

The problems of research in Outdoor Education were outlined at the start of this chapter; and it serves to remember that, due to the highly subjective nature of the experience, whatever data is collected must be analysed with great caution.

Chapter Four - Results and Analysis

1. Historical - the Development of the Outdoor Education Programme at Hove Park

In 1984 Outdoor Education at the school was restricted to the Expedition section of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. This was administered by a member of the Physical Education staff and was not actively pursued.

In 1985 a member of staff with an interest in the outdoors began to organise ad hoc hillwalking trips. These increased in frequency and began to include, with the arrival of a new Head of Physical Education, local climbing trips after school.

By 1988 there was sufficient interest to organise an expedition to the Pyrenees and a few members of staff had gained qualifications in hillwalking and climbing. Activity at this time was at a higher level and many courses were available to pupils, although there was no structured programme. In 1990 there was an expedition to the Sierra Nevada in California.

Since then the outdoor courses at the school have been organised by a commercial organisation in close co-operation with the school. The owner of the company is also the author of this dissertation. The format of courses is:-

Year 7 - Induction days in Sussex involving climbing, abseiling and canoeing

Year 8 - Weekend Camps in Sussex

Year 9 - A one-week camp in The Gower or Peak District

One week ski holiday

Year 10 - A one-week camp in the Lake District

Duke of Edinburgh's Award (Bronze)

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Years 11 - 13 Two-week multi activity course in the French Alps

Duke of Edinburgh's Award (Silver and Gold)

Sixth Form Induction Days

Other courses - specialist climbing weekends

- GNVQ day

- work experience placements

Whilst the programme has no formalised place in the school, it is well established and accepted as an ongoing part of the school's activities. Courses are run partially out of school time (excluding the Alps course, ten days of school time are released and twelve days of holiday period).

This history is of the type described by Davies (1992) as discussed in the Review of Literature - ad hoc development by interested staff.

2. Participation in Outdoor Education at Hove Park School - Statistics

Fig. 1 - Overall school figures

Year	7	8	9	10	11	6th Form	Total
Number of pupils on roll	232	224	229	230	219	181	1315
Number of pupils participating in O.E events	140	64	32	18	19	104	377
Level of participation (%)	60.34	28.57	13.97	7.83	8.68	57.46	28.67
Cost of Outdoor courses	17	47	156	156	460	10	

Figure 2 - Levels of Participation in Outdoor Education in Hove Park School

Analysis - Figure Two shows the pattern of participation for the year groups at the school. Whilst the pattern is clear, analysis must be made with knowledge of the operation of the programme. These figures are for the year 1994/5, when Year 7 participation was not compulsory but was highly encouraged, the same applying for Induction Days for the Sixth Form. Both of these events which were more actively 'pushed' to pupils were also low-cost events in consideration of both educational and financial factors.

Participation is high in Year 7 (60.34%), falling steadily to level off at 7 - 8% in years 10 and 11. This could be interpreted by:

1. The cost of a one-day course in Year 7 then steadily increases for one-week courses and therefore finance could discourage participation; (a theme followed in the analysis of Figure Three below).
2. A natural drop-off rate which could be due to a combination of factors. This theme

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was followed through data gathered in interviews so as to establish a possible reason for this decline. Pupils, parents and staff volunteered reasons and these are of interest as they may illuminate problems with the operation of a programme or other as yet unidentified factors.

The reasons suggested were:

- many pupils try the activities as they would any other sport but choose not to pursue it further;

- a range of other competing interests is offered both in and out of school at this period;
- peer group participation is crucial; if a few 'key' pupils choose to participate their friends will also, so a polarisation occurs;
- some pupils are discouraged or frightened by a particular activity or event;
- Year 7 days are regarded by many as a 'taster' and subsequent participation tends to come from a core group who then follow through for the rest of their school careers.

This analysis would seem to indicate that, in the absence of any compulsory programme, a drop off in numbers is inevitable and not necessarily indicative of any fault in the programme or in Outdoor Education itself.

Figure Three: A Comparison of Participation Levels in Outdoor Courses and Cost

Analysis

Figure Three shows that the drop off in the proportion of participating pupils from Year 7 has an inverse relationship with the price of courses, with the very significant exception of Year 11. In this year group pupils were able to go to the Alps at a very much higher cost of £460, yet the percentage actually increased slightly. Were it not for this result one might assume that cost is a strong influence on the levels of participation: it may well be a factor, but this analysis demonstrates that it is not the only influence. Parents will it seems find

money if a course is seen as being sufficiently desirable, and the financial factor must be considered alongside the other contributory factors discussed in the analysis for Figure Two.

Total participation in Outdoor Education programme: In one given year (1994-5) 28.67% of pupils participated.

Total number of pupils who participate at some stage in their school career: this cannot be extrapolated from the above figures but an estimate of 60% can be gained. This is taken from the figure of participation in the highest year (Year 7 = 60.34%). Assuming that this has been the level for some years this shows that those pupils had at least one exposure to a course; the level cannot be lower but may be higher if different pupils take part each year. However, experience in the programme shows that almost all pupils taking part in later years have done so before and it would seem a reasonable assumption that the level is at 60% or not significantly above that level.

3. Questionnaire to parents at Hove Park School

Results

Question 1 - Were you aware that there is an Outdoor Education programme throughout the school?

79% of parents were aware of the programme; and of the remainder all bar one were aware of some activities but hadn't thought of them as part of a co-ordinated programme.

Analysis

This would support the views gained from the literature that a substantial proportion of people do not see Outdoor Education as an integral part of the school curriculum (Tiffany

1995 p7). Interviews subsequently reinforced this point when it became clear that parents' concepts of what constitutes 'Outdoor Education' as they answered the question were somewhat at variance with the author's intention in any case. Often their view was that almost any 'school trip' came in this category.

Question 2 - Has your son/daughter taken part in any of the Outdoor Education programme, and if so which part?

Number of questionnaire respondents: 28

Number of respondents whose children had at some stage participated: 19

Percentage participation in programme among respondents: 67.86%

Analysis

Whilst this figure is higher than the figure extrapolated for the school as a whole (60%), no significance can be drawn from this as there must be an allowance for some pupils not having participated in Year 7 but deciding to do so later; the proportion is

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approximately of the same order.

This question has the purpose of establishing the involvement of the family with participation in the programme and thereby their perspective on it; it will also be useful as a cross check. The percentage of parents whose children participate in the programme and who answer questionnaires may be different to the percentage of pupils overall who participate in the programme - this latter proportion is discussed above.

However there is some distortion here as there is a regular pattern of declining numbers of pupils taking part as they progress through school. The reasons for this are discussed above in the analysis for Figures Two and Three, but for statistical comparison we can only relate either i) numbers participating in any one year or ii) those who have participated at any stage

during their school career. As questionnaires are anonymous and parents do not specify which camps were attended, the latter is the only comparison possible.

It may also be the case that a number of parents who did not answer the questionnaire chose not to do so because they thought it irrelevant to them as their children did not take part, thus further weighting the bias of questionnaire respondents towards participating parents.

Question 3 - If your son/daughter did participate, how do you think the experience affected them?

Positive Comments

- They both gained confidence in themselves and their physical ability
- Gave her confidence as she experienced some activities she hadn't done before

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- Increased confidence and understanding of others. Good for teamwork and teambuilding
- Colin enjoyed the activities. He did things he would not normally have done and gained experience in these, especially in teamwork.
- Very positively - more confidence
- Both daughters were used to physical activities and being away from home. However they were able to:1. Get to know others not in their own classes

2. Realise that an activity/experience connected with school can still be fun and relaxing

3. View their teachers in a different, more informal light

- It certainly boosted confidence and also gave her something different to look forward to as she is not particularly fond of school. My eldest daughter definitely gained confidence as she ended up doing activities with sixth form pupils, when she was in Year 9. Neither child wanted to come home from the ski trip they went on (having already learnt to ski) - they had a wonderful time being independent of their parents.

- Self awareness is increased
- Good character building as well as physical
- Very positively. Always great anticipation - event always lives up to expectations
- The trips added to Ryan's confidence. I feel that he preferred the physical aspect of the trips compared to the academic requirements
- Being the first trip within her secondary education, she was pleased to be allowed to

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walk in small groups without the teacher, allowing her independence. On any trip I think the pupils should always have a Questionnaire regarding the outing to be completed during the day to show what they have learnt.

- Confidence
- I think they thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of different activities and were able to be physically active in a way that was more interesting than doing P.E.

Other replies

Nine parents had not had children involved in the programme and therefore did not answer this question; two parents replied, 'Don't know'.

There were two less clear but not negative answers -

- No obvious change - she seems to bloom generally with life - I guess OE adds/contributes to her well being.
- Not aware of any changes - enjoyed a good time - certainly did not improve attitude to school or school work.

Analysis

The consensus of these answers seems to indicate a very high level of satisfaction with the experience itself among participating parents, with a few uncertain as to any changes in their children but most indicating some kind of positive experience. The most significantly recurring word in this group seems to be 'confidence'.

There is a conflict here between the interpretation of these answers and the assumption that parents feeling negatively toward the programme would not complete the questionnaires. However, weighing against this is the consideration that there is also the perfect opportunity for any parent with a strong feeling against such events or

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a negative experience to register complaint with anonymity; and this has not been taken advantage of.

It should also be noted that both of the parents registering partially negative comments later went on to comment positively on the idea of Outdoor Education in general.

Question 4 - What do you think of Outdoor Education generally?

Question 6 - Do you have any other comments?

I have analysed these two questions together as there was a great deal of overlap between the responses and little to discern between the two areas; respondents mixed the replies between the two.

Comments were: Positive 26 Negative 2

Most parents mentioned the benefits of Outdoor Education as being positive in their effects on pupils; the most frequently occurring comment being that it increases children's confidence, is character building and is conducive to independence. Some parents felt particularly strongly about this and comments included:

- I am sure it gives children much greater experience of living and how to cope on their own.

It's a much more natural and fun way to learn.

- It gives them confidence with other school activities and teaches them to mix better with other children.

- Essential part of children's development.

-I think my son especially has gained a lot of confidence from outdoor activities at Hove Park

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- A valuable part of a child's education - I wish it had been available when I was at school. I think it is an excellent idea...it also helps to build up confidence and independence.

There were two negative responses to these questions; one parent replied, 'Although I am aware of its (Outdoor Education's) existence I do not know enough about it to comment.

I and a few other parents are (after the school trip to Paris) reluctant to allow our children to attend these camps (one parent I know cancelled an already booked weekend camp) due to the bad behaviour of other children - purchasing alcohol, cigarettes etc. and I would be concerned as to the behaviour of certain children.'

The second parent's response was, 'Personally, I am not for Outdoor Education, since I feel that such further education should be the responsibility of the parents. I also feel unsure that there is adequate supervision, and have heard some stories of children being allowed too much freedom.'

It is interesting to note however that the first of these comments does not in fact refer to a part of the Outdoor Education programme but a trip organised in another curriculum area; this still gives some insight into the general concerns of parents regarding school journeys.

Question 5 - If your son/daughter did not participate, why was this?

There were nine respondents who could have answered this question; of these seven also commented that despite their children not having participated they were in agreement with Outdoor Education.

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The principal reasons for non - participation in the camps were:

1. Friends not going
2. Lack of interest
3. Lack of confidence in activities
4. Financial reasons

approximately evenly divided among respondents.

The same two parents registering negative comments to questions 4 and 6 above did not think Outdoor Education was a good idea. One commented, 'Don't agree with school camps', and the other suggested that a) activities with parents were sufficient and that b) too many demands were placed on parents' finances.

Analysis

These reasons concur with those of interviewees; there seems to be no overriding single reason for non-participation although the lack of formal position of Outdoor Education in the school curriculum may lessen its importance in the eyes of some parents. This is seen as an underlying factor by some teachers which would reinforce those factors mentioned above - for example, a parent might be more inclined to encourage a pupil to participate if the course were seen as being central to the pupil's school career.

Analysis - Questionnaire Overall

This questionnaire rendered a good deal of insight into parental attitudes to Outdoor Education; some parents used the anonymity of an open questionnaire to register some dissatisfaction although it must be noted that this was within another curriculum area.

The overwhelming response, however, was that of very strong support for the

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concepts and practice of outdoor courses at the school, and this support must be recognised in any summary and recommendations for future action.

There are inevitably several sources of potential distortion of the quality of information when operating a questionnaire, and these must be borne in mind when interpreting the results. The number of respondents was not great (2.13% of the total of parents at the school), but these were randomly selected and anonymous and in this respect some reliability is expected.

Some misinformation or misinterpretation caused the introduction of comment on courses not involved in the programme - despite the courses involved in the Outdoor Education programme being described in the introduction to the questionnaire. Several parents referred to day trips to Dieppe, the Paris trip, and day trips from the history department. One or two registered complaints about incidents on these other courses, although there were no complaints about outdoor courses. It is deduced from this that 'Outdoor Education' as a discrete area is not understood by many parents, and school journeys are possibly often pooled together as one separate area of activity whatever their purpose.

4. Questionnaire Results - Pupils participating in Alps Trip August 1995

This questionnaire was designed and administered by the teachers in charge of the trip at their own request; it was given to students on their return to school a few weeks after the course. The course was a two-week multi-activity course in the French Alps.

14 pupils (the whole group) responded.

Results

Pupils were asked in three questions to rate on a scale of 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent) three factors:

Question 1. As a holiday, how would you rate the two weeks? Average response: 5 (all pupils responded 'excellent')

Question 2. Was it value for money? Average response : 4.29

Question 3. Did you enjoy the activities? Average response: 4.71

Analysis

It would seem from these initial questions that the response was highly positive; the slight dip in Question 2 being a response to the £460 cost.

Other questions were open in nature:

Question 4. Did you like the atmosphere? Please comment on a) the teachers, b) instructors, c) peers.

All of the responses here were again positive, with two out of the fourteen registering critical comments regarding specific incidents but otherwise positive in nature.

A selection of comments is given as typical of the positive responses:

- The atmosphere was excellent! Before the trip I was a bit worried about the way everyone would get on but after a couple of days I realised I needn't have. Both the teachers and instructors were brilliant and very patient!
- The atmosphere was perhaps one of the best things about the holiday and to my knowledge everyone got on well, with the exception of the instructors attitudes on a few occasions. But generally (sic) they were great fun and this reflected within everyone else.

- Yes, I loved it all. the teachers were the best. It was more of a friend relationship than a teacher/pupil relationship Everybody had there (sic) ups and downs especially me. The instructors were brilliant. I loved them all although I though Dean was unfair sometimes.

- Mr. C and Mrs. B handled the situation very well and kept in line and the best bit was they treated us like adults. Instructors couldn't of been (sic) better good bunch of people. Everyone else was fine and I got on really well with everyone.

Most comments were in a similar vein; recurring comments were complimentary towards all staff and especially mentioning repeatedly 'they treated us like adults.'

Question 5. Would you recommend the trip to anyone else? All students responded 'Yes'

Question 6. Is there anything else you would have liked to do? - Responses to this mentioned some other activities which had been seen by students such as mountain biking, and some which are not undertaken in the area visited such as horseriding.

The responses to this were elicited to see whether some pupils would like more activities from the school's viewpoint; some of these were impractical or non-existent in the area but would give the school an idea for changes to the format of the trip in future.

Analysis

The answers received in this questionnaire are overwhelmingly positive and in favour of the holiday which had just ended. The questionnaire's administration by school staff removes some bias in that the operating company was not involved, and answers particularly to questions such as 'Do you think it was value for money?' are more

valuable for that.

Almost all of the responses regarding the atmosphere were strongly positive. Pupils' attitudes towards their own teachers is also very positive - they are clearly regarded as being 'fun', 'patient', and 'fair'; they 'gave us our independence', and 'treated us like adults'. This

indicates an attitude towards teachers that is highly supportive and it is clear that they were regarded as friends on the course. The pupils valued very highly the freedom that they felt they had compared to a school situation, and this was connected with trust - they assumed that the teachers were allowing more freedom because they trusted the pupils not to misbehave - this was very important to them.

They saw the instructors as being 'great', 'brilliant', 'a good laugh', 'friends', and they, 'didn't treat us as children'. This reflects the view that instructors are in some way outside of the generally accepted bounds of everyday school life, despite in reality fulfilling the same role as teachers but within a different subject area. The instructor's role towards pupils is in practical terms more akin to that of a Physical Education teacher than that of a friend, but they are regarded as the latter. This difference in the perception of status between instructors and teaching staff is a theme common to all of the interviews and questionnaires.

Comments regarding their peers were also on the whole positive, although less numerous. These generally portrayed relations within the group as being good.

This was an overwhelmingly positive questionnaire response, although with a limited scope of questions. The information was untainted with influence from the operating company and provides some verification of this not being a great influence in other results.

6. Opportunistic Data - Observations and Brief Interviews

Over the course of the summer of 1995 I sought to interview and observe as many pupils, teachers and other participants as possible whilst instructing on outdoor courses. I attended all of those courses in the Hove Park programme, and had the opportunity to observe or be working on courses from a good number of other schools. These provided a variety of sources with differing viewpoints and give a valuable source of information on outdoor matters not directly connected with Hove Park.

The input included: other mainstream comprehensives; a sixth form college from inner London; University lecturers on a teamwork course; schools from Sussex, Essex, London, Nottingham, and Worcester; a major public school; disabled pupils; roofing contractors taking a weekend course; trainee instructors; and staff and students at the National Centre for Mountain Activities at Plas y Brenin, North Wales.

There would be too much data to report fully , but the various samples are categorised and summarised to give the sense of the information received.

Interviews and Observation with Pupils

Approximately twenty pupils were interviewed semi-formally, and dozens more opportunistically whilst, for example, walking to activities or when out hillwalking or climbing for the day during a quiet moment.

Questioning concentrated on enjoyment initially, in order to stimulate debate. Once discussion had been opened it was possible in most cases to examine such issues as motivation, interpersonal relationships, and negative aspects of courses.

Preconceptions of courses

Pupils were asked what they thought the course would be like before they came; whether they had any particular expectations of the course in advance and what persuaded them to come.

Many pupils thought that they would have to get up early in the mornings, 'say six o'clock' and would have a fairly harsh regime in terms of the level of physical difficulty involved in the activities.

Pupils were concerned that their friends came on the courses and they would not go on their own, but after one or two courses this became less important as they knew they would make friends whilst on camp and the activities became more important in their own right.

Gender Issues

The activities undertaken were popularly perceived as 'boys' activities' in advance of courses, although in most cases this was seen in a different light during the course itself. One group of girls commented that during the week 'we're treated the same as the boys'.

Many girls said they were frightened of doing some activities; the activity varied according to personal preference. Some were afraid of the water and going underwater if they fell out of their canoe; others were afraid of heights. Boys were slightly more reluctant to admit fear of activities, although a similar range of apprehensions was often present.

The approach to activities is often very different between the sexes - boys usually perceived that they would be better at climbing than girls, but the instructors'

observations on this do not bear this out. One instructor, Dean, commented that in his experience boys tried to pull themselves up using their arms and a 'go for it' approach with little thought. This contrasted to the girls who listened to the advice given that legs were

much bigger muscles and that balance and footwork was of far more importance,. In this way girls frequently made much faster progress at climbing than boys.

Most outdoor activities do not rely on body strength and should in theory be equally accessible to both sexes; it would seem that once pupils have had an experience of outdoor activities they would agree with this and follow-up courses are especially popular with girls.

The higher levels of participation among girls were commented upon, the response being that girls were more likely to undertake this type of activity under instruction, whereas boys would be more likely to try it themselves or, say, at scouts. This was not borne out by observation however - most outdoor activities are very hard to take up at the initial stages and there are almost no young boys participating entirely on their own initiative. Other possible reasons put forward for this were that girls have fewer opportunities to get away from adults as there are so many concerns for their security and therefore seek ways of getting away more on school trips; and that girls participate in fewer other outdoor sports such as football or rugby as these are less accessible to them.

Activities and Instruction

Perceptions of the instruction given on activities varied mainly according to how friendly the instructors were perceived to have been. Great emphasis was placed by all

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participants on the atmosphere of the session; this was often related to the fact that they were in an unfamiliar situation. Friendly and helpful instructors rather than 'bossy' ones created the right conditions for participation in a possibly frightening activity.

The character of staff was seen as crucial - one girl who had been on three camps in successive years said that she checked who was going each time and wouldn't go if she didn't think staff would be fun.

Some pupils observed that they could ‘ see the point’ of rules on camp, so they didn’t mind doing duties, listening to instructions and so on. They also appreciated the fact that the instructors treated them all the same as they had never met them before; so that nobody received preferential treatment. This was particularly mentioned by a few pupils who were identified by teachers as disruptive or underachieving at school.

Teacher/Pupil Relationships

In almost every case pupils saw their teachers in a different light outside of school, usually more positively. Many teachers were seen as being very relaxed and ‘not like they are in school’. One or two members of staff who were seen as particularly strict at school were surprisingly normal when on camp. Teachers were not seen to be using their normal position of authority except under extreme circumstances, and were often joining in activities just like the pupils, as they often had the same level of experience of outdoor activities as the pupils. This enhanced the feeling that the experience was different and that teachers acted differently.

Teachers were almost uniformly seen to be ‘more laid back’ at camp and were noted to turn a blind eye to some things (for example smoking).

Some pupils said that teachers ‘changed back to being boring at school’ when they

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returned after a camp; most said that their relationship with staff who had been on a camp was better than that with other teachers generally.

One disaffected pupil ventured the opinion that the teacher/pupil relationship was based on hate; he also believed that the headmaster did not approve of school camps and does not trust the pupils in general, but would probably approve of the results. This boy had a very high opinion of participating in outdoor courses and had a good deal of respect for the teachers taking part.

The Effects of Outdoor Courses

Pupils frequently commented that they had talked to people who they would not normally mix with at school; either from another form or year group, or someone who was just not in their normal circle of friends. There was not always a positive benefit; some pupils reaffirmed their attitudes towards others as being loners or uninteresting to them, and on occasion some social groups maintained a distance from others on a course. The overall effect, however, was that pupils generally made some new friends and were introduced to new people, and often gained respect for others. This was particularly noticeable in one or two cases where previously unpopular pupils were seen to do well at an activity or be friendly and helpful in the residential setting.

The most commonly occurring theme from pupils was that of an increase in confidence - many pupils had very low levels of self esteem and felt that their confidence had been boosted. The events significant in this were:

1. successful participation in a new activity; especially in front of peers;
2. 'getting on' with the rest of the group for the duration of the course;
3. making new friends;

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4. not looking stupid in front of others;
5. being able to talk to adults on a more equal and friendly level;
6. feeling that they had the trust and respect of adults.

One teacher was particularly impressed by an incident with a difficult pupil. A new student at a sixth form college, he was overweight, had learning and behavioural difficulties and was 'destined to be a shit'. On an induction day he started with extreme disinterest but was gently coaxed through most activities.

At college he still has major difficulties but the tutor, Jasmine, has the best relationship with him and 'the catalyst had to be the trip'. She is convinced that the experience helped him greatly to get to know the others and herself, and,

'As a result of the day, I'm quite certain that students developed friendships more rapidly within the group as they had an accomplishment in common - I can't imagine what the people who went to the cinema gained in comparison.'

Analysis

These results contain a summary of a wide range of input from all of the participants in the programme and at the time when the programme is actually in operation - in the outdoors and on residential courses. This leads to a very high quality of information about what is actually being felt at the time, although the interviewer was involved with the running of the programme. Observations were both specific incidents and the observations of other instructors and teaching staff. This was the most valuable data in terms of the actual operation of the outdoor programme and particular weight is given to the personal observations of all participants in the process. Observations regarding

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the personal enjoyment, changes in confidence and character building nature of these activities has been shown to be of particular use given the problems associated with statistical data in this field (Sakofs 1992).

Instructors' Views

Instructors generally held the view that the benefits of activities out of doors were so obvious that questions were almost pointless. The feeling is a strongly held belief that outdoor courses can definitely benefit most people if handled in the right way - i.e. if adventure is aimed at 'Peak Adventure' (as in Kiewa 1992 p13; Mortlock 1984 p23) - the zone where self-progress is maximised.

One recurring observation which perhaps gives insight into the level of commitment and to the benefits as perceived by instructional staff is that it was frequently mentioned that 'if only we could have them for a bit longer', then perhaps we could do a lot with the group. This reveals a feeling that there a great potentials for the personal development of pupils, but that more time or money is needed than at present.

Several instructors felt that a significant problem with group outdoor courses was that of the environmental impact, both now and for the future. They were uneasy about introducing young people to outdoor environments as they would be causing damage not only during the course but in the future by the increased awareness of these areas.

7. Interviews with Teachers and Parents

Interviews were conducted in a variety of situations ranging from formal and timetabled to opportunistic conversations whilst in the outdoors. They were recorded in writing, yielding a great deal of data. An analytical synthesis of this information is given in this section, highlighting individual points of interest with a brief general analysis ending each section.

Interviews with Teachers

Interview with Mr. Bratton, Headteacher of Hove Park School

This interview is reported individually in consideration of the central role of the interviewee.

1. What effects do you think Outdoor Education has on the school as a whole?

'I gave a speech only last week at the School Review and Awards Evening in which I mentioned some of the benefits of Outdoor Education in my opinion:

'Last week, Madame Chairman, I saw some photographs of the school expedition to the Alps which took place during the summer holidays. They showed students and staff tackling together some quite challenging activities which included rockclimbing and canyoning. The photographs epitomised for me the kind of values which I hope we try to encourage throughout the school - achievement , enjoyment, mutual respect, self - confidence and trust in each other. The Alps Expedition is the culmination of our Outdoor Pursuits programme which starts in Year 7 with one-day visits to an outdoor centre in the east of the county and develops during the next few years into an increasingly demanding and challenging programme.

We are fortunate to have so many enthusiastic and skilled staff who are willing to give

up their time at weekends and during holidays to organise these character-building

activities for our pupils. The benefits of these staff - pupil activities are evident in the positive relationships between staff and pupils which result, and the development of self-confidence in our pupils.

In fact my own self- confidence was boosted earlier this year when I tackled the abseiling wall at the Year 8 Camp, placing all my trust in Mr. Morley holding the rope at the top - what temptation he must have felt! I have now thrown down the gauntlet for this activity to the Deputy Heads and wait for one of them to pick it up sometime later in the year.'

He also felt that the Outdoor Education programme was an important part of the Hidden Curriculum and quoted several examples of qualities which he felt were transferred to the pupils, repeating that he had no evidence for this but felt strongly that it was the case. He felt that it probably helped the academic standards of the school but that this was of course impossible to prove.

2. Are there any negative aspects?

Two main areas arose for discussion here - cost and disruption.

Cost to pupils of a scheme for which they pay is one factor - for example this year's Year 7 Activity Days had a 60% attendance and he wanted every pupil to go, he is thinking of subsidising it next year so that they all go. Why do 40% not go? If because of cost this is unacceptable and the school will find a way of organising that; if because of lack of enthusiasm to go or interest in mixing with other pupils then this is another issue which must be addressed - those pupils lacking confidence to go would probably be those who would benefit most from the confidence- building side of the

activities.

Another issue was the cost in terms of paying to provide supply cover, and the disruption to the timetable. He has not had any complaints from senior members of staff about the

sometimes considerable disruption and therefore assumes that they broadly agree with the aims of the programme in any case. There is a cost in time of organising them and to those organising cover.

The main issue, though, is that of the quality of education offered to those left behind, and the cost to the pupils who attend in school time is '...the cost to them is the education they left behind'

3. Are there any effects on particular groups or issues?

No, he wouldn't single out any special groups for mention nor could he objectively assess whether an Outdoor Education programme would have an effect on any issues (e.g. bullying, race, gender) However, if he were an advisor looking at say bullying in a school which did not have an Outdoor Education programme he would certainly recommend it as something which addresses those qualities of self-esteem and so on with which bullying is associated.

4. Staff

In general he feels that after a trip staff get on with each other much better - there is cross - faculty contact which does not normally occur and respect for other staff members with whom people had not mixed previously is engendered.

He felt particularly this year that the involvement of newly qualified teachers in the Year 7 days was beneficial in giving them confidence with pupils, meeting other staff and cementing relationships with their new form groups with whom they might have

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contact for several years to come.

Mr. Bratton was well aware that he had no facts on these issues but just felt strongly that this was the case. He is in clear support of the programme and seemed well aware of its benefits and problems of its application.

Analysis

The data in this interview is most valuable and much of this was used to define further lines of enquiry, but there are some points in particular to note: Mr. Bratton's perception of 'character - building activities; the heightened perception of the activities following personal involvement; his awareness of the lack of scientific data and his awareness of the negative sides and therefore the full view of the programme.

Interviews with other members of school staff

Teachers were interviewed at varying lengths; either formally for up to 45 minutes or opportunistically for as little as ten minutes. Notes of a few selected interviews are summarised very briefly here, and themes in common discussed as one.

Typically teachers were greatly in favour of Outdoor Education and the benefits were perceived by all interviewees to be visible in pupils. Interestingly, teachers' positive views on the subject were almost always backed up with examples of pupils or groups of pupils and this proved to be a valuable source of data.

The outdoor programme was seen as a 'bolt-on' to the school curriculum and some felt it had greater potential for cross-curricular involvement. It was felt that this would be most beneficial if whole groups were involved, but that this would be difficult financially.

One teacher was Head of Physical Education at a Catholic school. He has had many

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years of experience of residential and outdoor courses, and expressed strong support for the ethos of Outdoor Education. This connects with his Christian beliefs in that the qualities seen as the outcomes of outdoor activities are those desirable in young people from his viewpoint.

An English teacher had been heavily involved with the outdoor programme for several years and has been a strong supporter of these courses. Among other examples she quoted one pupil as having had a potentially disastrous school career which had been helped greatly by his involvement in outdoor courses. Despite his lack of academic ability and numerous

behavioural problems he had found an area in which he could gain self-esteem and have the opportunity for leadership.

One teacher was instrumental in organising induction days which in previous years have been optional but this year (1995 intake) were, if not compulsory, very actively encouraged. The school had subsidised the days and given the use of school minibuses and staff. One of the main benefits of induction days was that pupils come from several feeder schools and have the opportunity to meet each other and work together. This effort gave an indication of the value felt by the school of Outdoor Education.

Analysis - General

Overall a great deal of information was gained from teachers which was insightful and reinforced with examples of pupils, and this specific evidence was particularly valuable. Teachers are happy to support the programme as they can see its benefits. Although they would appreciate more school time for it, most are willing to give up some of their own time as it is also seen as an enjoyable experience and a way of improving relations with pupils; this indicates their perception of its value.

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Interviews with Parents

Initial questions regarding the image of courses and pupil behaviours were posed to parents as a way of introducing the true atmosphere of school residentials and to provide a reminder of the situations encountered and of pupil-teacher relationships. This creates a framework and sense of realism for later discussion.

The Effects of Outdoor Education

Parental views were unanimous in their support for Outdoor Education; all felt that it was good for pupils' characters, individuality and initiative and yet helped them to work in a team by co-operating with others.

Quotes included that Outdoor Education was a 'wonderful' opportunity and that pupils had returned with greatly increased confidence.

There was no criticism of the results of outdoor courses for those who had participated, although parents could not always point to any specific evidence of improvements. There were however several specific instances of a perceived strong change in a pupil's outlook, confidence or character as a direct result of outdoor experiences.

The Programme at Hove Park

All of the parents interviewed were very supportive of Outdoor Education and were heavily in favour of the school's involvement. Many positive comments were made, typically for example Mrs. K who has three sons at Hove Park; she is very keen on the idea of Outdoor Education and thinks it a 'wonderful idea' despite having had no experiences of it herself.

Most parents were not aware that there was a 'programme' of Outdoor Education at

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the school, although every year they receive different handouts regarding various trips. They felt that it would be much better to give each parent a full set of information about a 'programme' at the beginning of the pupil's career at the school so that parents knew what to expect and could plan accordingly. This was particularly a problem for larger families where financial planning is crucial.

Parents do not really see the cost of such courses as a problem; if anything they are keen to see them being offered more frequently by the school - although one or two parents felt that the level was 'about right'.

This indicates a level of willingness among parents to pay for courses as they are perceived to be valuable; even though the school asks for money it is seen to be providing extra educational opportunity.

When asked whether they had any worries about issues such as safety these had not occurred to most parents, who assumed them to be the responsibility of the school. It was taken for granted that such issues as qualifications had been verified by the school on their behalf.

One parent, Mrs. S., felt particularly strongly that the elder daughter had benefited from the ski trip as this daughter was very reluctant to take part in school camps for fear of appearing inadequate at outdoor activities in front of the other pupils. However, as she had skied since the age of five she felt confident about this and was put into the advanced group with the sixth form boys. In her view this was a great confidence booster and she went on to excel at other activities (such as the evening 'triathlon' of curling, skating and other activities). She came back from the trip 'glowing'. If she could afford it she would go every year.

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Mrs. N's son and daughter have both participated in many outdoor camps. Her son was the 'typical boffin' type and many were surprised that he participated so enthusiastically. Her daughter had to be persuaded to go on the first camp, but thereafter had been most enthusiastic.

She felt that outdoor activities had a somewhat 'macho' image but this was partially dispelled for her by the involvement of her academic son. The outdoor programme was seen as an 'affordable benefit' of the school, and that the results in terms of self-esteem could not be measured.

The specific examples of personal benefits resulting from the programme gave valuable evidence of the effects of courses and transfers of these afterwards.

Mrs. D's son had been a particularly difficult pupil at times and had frequently clashed with staff. She felt that a large part of his calming down since his first few difficult years at school had been due to the positive role models and influence of specific male teachers, who were also involved in the outdoor programme. He greatly enjoyed the outdoor experiences and

looked forward to them immensely. It was clear that these experiences were very significant in his case.

Both Mrs. D and her son felt that the teachers involved with the programme (and other out of school activities) were more dedicated to the pupils than average and this was greatly appreciated, all the more so for being unpaid.

Mrs. D's daughter by contrast was rather shy and had reluctantly participated on her brother's assurance that all activities were not compulsory; but had enjoyed the experience. Particularly valuable in this case was the comparison between two sons in

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the same family, one of whom participated in the programme and the other did not. Describing the sons as similar in character, she said that she wished her elder son had taken part having seen the benefits to her younger son.

This comparison cannot of course be made directly and it would be erroneous to draw the conclusion that two siblings differ due to their varying levels of participation in Outdoor Education. What is revealing however is that there is certainly a feeling that children gain some definite benefit from such activities and that it does make a difference to them.

Mrs. M has two daughters, one at Hove Park and another at a fee-paying girls' school. She felt that the outdoor programme at Hove Park was less strong than at the other school; yet this appeared to be a misconception as her daughter had often not reported that courses were available, and she had received little information about the programme in contrast to the actually smaller programme at the other school. This is another pointer to the difficulties in the transmission of information.

Mrs. M was very unclear about the definition of Outdoor Education and referred often to a history day trip - an interesting consequence of this was that she felt that a dispute resulting

from this trip had been resolved exceptionally well by the Head of Humanities and hence her confidence in the school was increased.

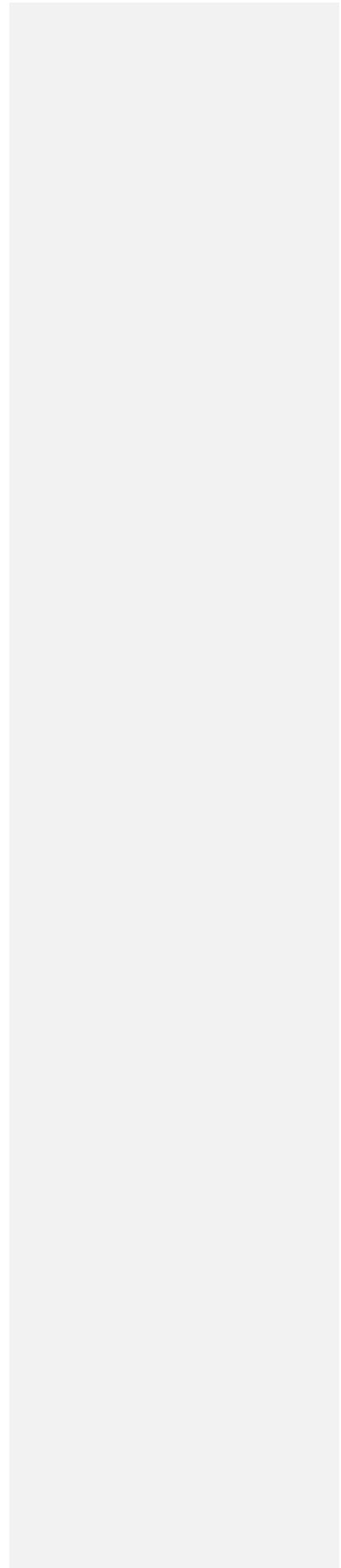
Analysis - General

Parents provided a valuable and alternative perspective into the effects of the programme. Of interest was whether the perceived personal effects transferred to home life as parents have such deep insight into their children; and what information parents received and thereby their perception of the programme. Particular examples,

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some included above, illustrated this and provided new material for discussion.

It is clear that the school and staff gain a great deal of respect and good feeling from parents as a result of Outdoor Education; there was a sense that the school was providing more opportunity than it was obliged to and this had a positive effect on the school's image.



Chapter Four - Conclusions

The central focus of this study has been upon the practical applications of, and potential uses for, Outdoor Education within a comprehensive school. It is not to be expected that a study of this sort would produce comprehensive guidelines or definitive conclusions, but rather to form an illuminative study of the condition of Outdoor Education in one circumstance.

The investigation has attempted to gather as broad a spectrum of data as possible from within the case study school. Some factors have to be considered with regard to the validity of the findings in general:

- The author of the study is also involved with the organisation of the programme as a commercial provider of outdoor courses;
- The results of this study are specific to the conditions prevailing in the case study school; many of the observations may be common to other outdoor experiences but cannot be extrapolated in the case of other schools. Significant differences for example could be found in a school where Outdoor Education was compulsory for all pupils.

The Outdoor Experience

One factor common to all of the observations and comments gathered is that pupils clearly regard Outdoor Education as an experience entirely separate from the everyday school experience. This attitude is particularly strong with regard to the activities undertaken and the instructors present, but after an initial settling in period usually extends to the teachers taking part in the course.

This can be a significant step in the development of the teacher/pupil relationship - for a short time the usual rules are suspended and teachers are seen in a different light as

more human, approachable and as fellow learners, and the popular view is that there is usually a partial transference of this positive feeling into the school setting.

Pupils seem to feel that on outdoor courses they have almost all achieved some progress or positive change, although in varying ways. This may be due to the different way in which 'success' is perceived - with a much more open framework the stress is not on concrete achievements nor is it displayed by measurable criteria, but is seen to be 'felt' by pupils.

The issues of gender have an effect on the Outdoor Education programme in that girls tend to regard the experience with more trepidation than boys in the school; despite this there are higher participation levels amongst girls. There is a perception before courses that the activities are more appropriate to males, yet once actually participating in activities this idea usually fades.

Most importantly the findings indicate that participants almost all enjoy Outdoor Education; and pupils, teachers and others involved unanimously feel that it is a tangibly beneficial area for the school to be involved with and for the development of pupils.

The principle benefits observed are in the areas of self-confidence and co-operation with others; some of this benefit can be seen to be derived from most residential experiences, but is more strongly felt where outdoor activities are undertaken.

Pupils clearly agree with Humberstone's (1987 p42) views as quoted in the Review of Literature that enjoyment, trust and responsibility are key areas in outdoor education.

Opinions of the Outdoor Education Programme

The level of support and involvement among staff in the Outdoor Education programme is very high at Hove Park. It is seen as a very positive addition to the curriculum and to have significant benefits on participating pupils; most staff are concerned to see as many pupils as possible involved. Those staff not involved with the programme are generally supportive;

although some could see little point and the main objections were disruptions to the timetable. These teachers had limited knowledge of its operation or potential uses, and often regard it as inconsequential to what are in their view the central functions of the school; although they generally regard it as a 'good thing'.

Staff involved in the programme or those (for example Year Seven form teachers) who have experienced it in some way are all very much in favour of Outdoor Education and extol its benefits.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of Outdoor Education although many remain ill-informed as to the actual nature of the activities and format of the programme. In general they feel that at best many pupils derive great benefit from such activities and residential; and at worst it is an opportunity to try new activities and get away from parents and school for a while.

Despite recent publicity most parents are not greatly concerned by issues of safety in terms of verifying qualifications of instructors or the operation of courses. Whilst this is paramount in the minds of outdoor providers and schools, parents are in general happy that these issues should be abdicated to the school.

The Programme in the Curriculum

There is no formal place for Outdoor Education in the curriculum at Hove Park, in common with many schools (Humberstone 1987 p6), with the exception of the expedition section of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

At present the outdoor programme is fully developed and operational but has no formal basis within the curriculum, despite the involvement of the majority of pupils at some stage in their school career.

Developments in the last few years in the National Curriculum may have seemed to many to have solved the issue of where, if anywhere, Outdoor Education 'fits' in the curriculum. The problem has been tackled by placing emphasis on residential courses within Geography and allocating within Physical Education an outdoor adventurous activities area. This is seen by some however as leading to the marginalisation of Outdoor Education (Williams 1994) and this issue has yet to be resolved.

Whilst this neatly files Outdoor Education into appropriate subject areas and serves the purposes of many, the real issue concerning outdoor education for those involved with it is that it requires, and engenders, a paradigm shift in those involved. This cannot be categorised in this way and until this is fully appreciated much of the potential in this area will remain unused.

The Effects of the Programme

There is no objective evidence to suggest that the outdoor programme has an effect on any quantifiable measure of school performance such as academic performance, attendance or some behavioural issues. Previous discussion in the Review of Literature attempts to measure scientifically the effects of outdoor experiences (Nichols 1994,

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Sakofs 1992, Yaffey 1992) make it clear that this would be in itself a major study and could yield dubious results. There exist so many variables as to make statistical measurement almost impossible, and as previously mentioned (for example Sakofs 1992 p21) much of the most valuable data ultimately came from participants' feelings about their experiences which would in any case be unquantifiable.

The most valuable evidence in favour of the effects of the programme, therefore, come from the views of those involved and there is no doubt that in this sense the programme is

‘successful’. There is evidence in several cases of outdoor experiences, either singly or cumulatively:-

- strongly affecting individual pupils;
- engendering improved pupil/teacher relationships;
- facilitating greater respect between pupils and staff or between pupils; and
- increasing parental support for and contact with the school.

These results can only be of positive benefit to the school as a whole, but weighed against these must be considered:

- disruption to the timetable (‘the education they left behind’);
- alienation of non-participants in the programme;
- and the financial burden to parents.

The most important of these factors is the one about which least has been learnt in this study: the effect if any on the large group of non-participants.

Recommendations

In School - organisation of the outdoor programme

Parents should receive full information about the Outdoor Education available for each year at the beginning of a child’s school career. This would:

- facilitate greater understanding of what is available for pupils and what the purpose of the journeys was in terms of a cohesive educational aim; and
- enable parents to plan financially over the course of a school career, especially where more than one child in a family means greater potential expenditure; and

- enable parents to plan their own family holidays more easily.

There should be regularity in the programme in the long term, so that trips could be relied upon to occur for each sibling and none would 'miss out' on an opportunity.

This should be paralleled with information to the school's staff and governors on the educational methods, values and outcomes normally associated with Outdoor Education. Whilst staff are generally supportive this could give some substance to their feelings and generate a more positive view of the programme as being of benefit to the school's aims as a whole.

Recommendations for Outdoor Courses

Whilst many recommendations for the running of courses would ordinarily address such issues as safety, qualifications of providers and so on, these do not come within the scope of this study. It is expected that a school will follow, in conjunction with any outside providers of courses, Government guidelines on outdoor courses. This will soon be formalised in the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995 and will provide improved guidelines as well as, in all probability, a licensing system.

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Recommendations in this case concern course content and specific comments in the case of the case study school.

It is important that the programme of any outdoor course is designed to give all pupils the opportunity to experience personal challenge and hopefully progress through 'Frontier Adventure' (after Mortlock 1984). Activities should be selected and designed to facilitate this wherever possible, in order that the experience have some educational meaning in the broadest sense.

This should be organised by the person in charge of the activities on each course in liaison with the representative teacher from the school. It is not acceptable to provide 'conveyor -

belt' style courses where the educational purpose of the course is lost and where timetables are rigid to suit the needs of the provider rather than the school.

A large part of this experience can only be facilitated by instructors who are qualified and, crucially, are able to create a friendly and non-threatening atmosphere. This creates the optimum conditions for pupils to benefit from the activities themselves and the residential experience in general.

The participation of female staff wherever possible, both teachers and instructors, should be encouraged. The presence of female role models will hopefully reduce pre-course anxieties among girls regarding the appropriateness of activities and their physical ability to participate; as well as dispelling the notion that outdoor activities are an exclusively male dominated area.

Apart from the presence of female staff a pre-course presentation should include slides or accounts and descriptions of girls participating in activities; and give descriptions of the relative difficulties or physicality of the activities.

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Pupils should be made aware of exactly what is available on each course and be given accurate information regarding the areas which are of most concern to them prior to a course: whether all activities are compulsory, the type and layout of accommodation (e.g. how many friends in a tent), which school staff will participate and so on. This should prevent the dissemination of false notions regarding what is involved, and help pupils make a more rational choice about their participation.

Outdoor courses should wherever possible avoid areas of environmental sensitivity; this may mean holding courses for example outside of National Parks, or even concentrating on areas already so environmentally degraded (for example Stone Farm Rocks in East Sussex) that further damage is inevitable yet maintained in one small area.

Outdoor Education in the School Curriculum

Much work remains to be done on further uses of Outdoor Education, but at this stage the missing element is that of information at almost all levels. Whilst adventurous activities may well be best placed within Physical Education and Personal/Social Education areas, there are possibilities for further residential experiences and links with other subject areas. School camps with cross-curricular themes are a relatively easy step in this direction; it seems that demonstration of the value of Outdoor Education in all of its senses would further its cause as a useful tool. However, teachers of other subjects have other considerations often connected with those negative factors such as timetable disruption mentioned above which at present may hinder development of such initiatives.

At this relatively formative stage of the development of cross-curricular links the

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major step is to expose as many staff as possible to Outdoor Education, its methods, uses and philosophy. This initial dissemination of information could well result in the generation of initiatives which utilise cross-curricular themes.

Summation

A scan of many of these recommendations reveals that much of what is missing from Outdoor Education is information. Its position as a subject area is not established, and its marginality to the core of school activities has meant that much of its potential may be unused at present. Mortlock (1984 p63) suggests,

‘There is a tragic, traditionally held attitude that the important use of intelligence..
must be confined to academic subjects.’

There are great possibilities for the uses of this medium; at Hove Park School these are explored to a far greater extent than in the majority of schools and yet there is still some potential for a more cohesive approach. The success associated with Outdoor Education at

the school indicates that it can be assimilated into mainstream schooling with highly positive benefits; it remains to be seen whether its full development will in time be realised.

Suggestions for further research

One way in which the practice of Outdoor Education differs significantly from mainstream educational methods is that it normally takes place within a short and defined timescale and at a location away from school. These of course are the very attributes of a residential experience as defined in the National Curriculum, but because of this it is hard to see whether benefits derived from Outdoor Education are derived from the method itself or from the condition of being away from the school environment.

It may be that if the residential experience is the key to the success of Outdoor Education, then the activities themselves are merely occupying the time purposefully (and perhaps gainfully) as a sideline to the main issue of 'being away together'.

Comparison with other residentials such as Geography and Biology field trips or sports tours would throw light on this. The difference between field trips as an extension of school activities using the same teachers and outdoor activities with instructors from outside may form some part of the comparison.

In connection with this line of enquiry is the logical question that if the separateness of the experience is crucial, then does it follow that Outdoor Education, which is held up as a good example of personal development, have the same shortcomings as mainstream schools if pupils were to have the experience over a much longer period of time, or is the pedagogy as radically different and successful as is claimed?

Another area for further study is that of the aims and methods of Outdoor Education in general. There exists no real synthesis of what the medium is supposed to achieve, nor a clear analysis of the development of methodologies in the area. This approach

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could provide the key to a much more complete acceptance of Outdoor Education, and integration into the curriculum wholeheartedly. This could well be connected with the need for further research into gender bias, roles, and perceptions which are vital issues underlying all other questions.

Ties with specific established curriculum areas could be extended significantly given the limited uses and knowledge of Outdoor Education at the moment; this is another area outside the scope of this study in which a good deal of productive research remains to be done. Whilst many recommendations have been made, these are often in vague terms and more practical guidelines for teachers might provide stimulus for further action.

Crucial areas of future research which this study has not been able to address are the effects on the non-participatory group of pupils (and parents); and potential statistical studies connecting attendance, academic performance and behaviour records of pupils with outdoor

experiences. Work in this vein has been undertaken for many years in the United States especially with young offenders, and whilst fraught with difficulties of methodology could prove of use in demonstrating the veracity or otherwise of the claims of outdoor educationalists.

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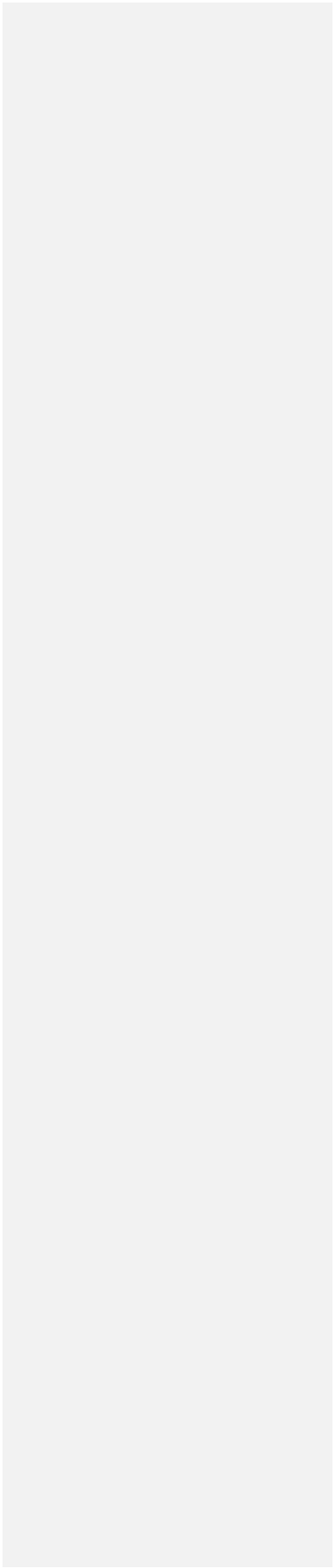
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Appendix One - Questionnaire to Parents



Appendix Two - Questionnaire to Pupils Participating in Alps Trip

(This is a typed version of the hand-written original which was administered by teachers after the course)

ALPS 1995

An Evaluation

1) As a holiday, how would you rate the two weeks?

1	2	3	4	5
Poor	Below Average	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent

2) Was it value for money?

1	2	3	4	5
No! Far too expensive	A bit pricey	Fine	Yes	Yes, without a doubt!

3) Did you like the atmosphere? Please comment on a) Teachers
b) Instructors
c) Peers

4) Did you enjoy the activities

1	2	3	4	5
No, they weren't for me	Some were O.K.	Those I did I enjoyed	I enjoyed most a great deal	Excellent All activities were enjoyed thoroughly

5) Would you recommend the trip to anyone else? Yes No

6) Is there anything else you would have liked to do?

7) Please comment on anything else. The evaluation helps us, and Steve with future trips, which you might well go on!

Thanks

