

The information contained in this document is a summary of a Master's Dissertation for the Award of an MSc Outdoor Education from the University of Edinburgh.

It is a case study of a group of school pupils who participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. It focuses on the expedition part of the award and the multidimensional construct of self-esteem.

NB. THIS IS NOT THE FULL THESIS!!

Contents detailed below are taken (without any further edit) from the finished work.

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**Does a short, self-planned expedition have an impact on the  
multidimensional construct of self-esteem?**

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## **Abstract**

This research investigates the impact of a short expedition on the multidimensional construct of self-esteem. The bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award expedition forms the focus for this work.

The participants studied completed a pre and post-expedition self-assessment profile which has been statistically analysed using a t-test. The self-assessment profile used was designed by Harter (1988). As a result of studying the relevant literature the construct of self-esteem has been interpreted as multidimensional. The Harter Self-Perception Profile (1988) assesses self-esteem as such a construct. The pre-expedition profile was completed on the Thursday prior to the weekend of the expedition. The post-expedition profile was completed on the Tuesday or Wednesday after the expedition.

The study group were school children aged between 14 and 15. The total number in the study group was 29. In addition to statistical analysis, informal interviews and participants expedition journals have been used to add depth to the research.

The findings suggest that, as a result of an expedition, there is a measurable change, for some participants, in some domains of self-esteem. For the majority the change is positive. The implication is that a short expedition can have a small positive impact on some domains of self-esteem for some individuals.

# **Does a short self-planned expedition have an impact on the multidimensional construct of self-esteem?**

## **1. Introduction**

### **i) The focus of the study.**

This piece of research investigates the hypothesis that a short self-planned, expedition can have an impact on the self-esteem of the participants. The context for the study is a secondary school in east Devon. The school has a fully comprehensive intake from a rural catchment area. There are 785 pupils on the role from the age of 11 to 16 (See Appendix I for full details).

The expedition I will consider is part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. The focus of the study is the expedition component of the Bronze Award. The duration of the expedition is two days and one night. The expedition is self planned but with guidance from staff. The participants complete the expedition without staff accompaniment. The overnight is in tented accommodation.

### **ii) Reasons for conducting the study.**

I have taught at the school in question for a number of years and I am heavily involved in the outdoor programme that the school runs. There are numerous outdoor, extra-curricular, residential opportunities for the pupils at the school. Some residential have a curriculum bias, for example music or geography, but the majority of experiences can be termed 'outdoor education'.

From a professional perspective I am involved with outdoor education and I am interested in assessing its impact. As a teacher I am well aware of current curriculum changes and in particular, the introduction of Citizenship, Key and Basic Skills and increasing Government emphasis on Personal and Social Development. These

changes are well documented in the National Curriculum and circulars (Department for Education & Environment, 2001). It has been argued that the Duke of Edinburgh's Scheme has the potential to contribute a great deal to these changes (Hunt, 1989; Huskins, 1990; Gibbs and Bunyan, 1997; Hopkins & Putnam, 1998). It is suggested in The award Handbook that,

“Through a commitment to its programmes, young people will be acquiring self reliance and a sense of responsibility to others, both essential qualities of citizenship.” (1998:4)

The residential or expedition experience could also be seen as 'a rite of passage' towards adulthood. Some of the key questions that arise for young adolescents can be addressed in an adventure that is detached from their every day life. A recent press article cites the lack of a rite of passage for adolescents as one of the failings of modern society and in particular of schools (Wragg, 2001). The detachment of an expedition from regular timetabled school activities enables individuals to explore issues about the self without the constraints of four walls and a desk. The questions teenagers are able to explore; 'who am I?' and 'what can I do?', do not perhaps need to be explored in a formal fashion on an expedition, but the outdoor experience may provide focus for the mind.

The 1988 Education Reform Act entitles every child to a 'broad and balanced' curriculum. Academic opportunities are well catered for and are subject specific. This is well documented in The National Curriculum (DfEE, 2000). The skills associated with the development of self, values and attitudes are encompassed in Personal and Social Education. In my experience this key theme can be under valued in school. Many teachers have a primary concern for academic success in their own subject. This is evident at staff meetings where the focus of discussion often revolves around pass rates at GCSE. These discussions are fueled by the Government's publication of school league tables based purely on examination results. Much of the personal and social development that does take place is left to chance. Alternatively, it takes place in extra-curricular activities and is therefore limited to a small proportion of students. Extra-curricular activities may run the risk of excluding some of society because of the financial contribution and moreover the commitment from pupils and parents that is often required. However, a DES survey carried out in 1991 revealed that 71% of primary schools and 56% of secondary

schools use outdoor education because it is seen as a valuable contributor to the 'broad and balanced curriculum'.

Furthermore it would seem that employers and government are increasingly concerned about the need for school leavers to be armed with decision making, communication, planning and leadership capabilities. This is illustrated by the establishment of the Government's Skills Task Force. In a recent progress report, the task force state that,

“Employers repeatedly expressed concern about the employability and Key Skills of young people entering the labour market for the first time”  
(DFEE, 1998:7)

In order to address this perceived lack of skills schools have introduced Key Skills initiatives. The Key Skills are defined as communications, application of number, problem solving, team working and information technology. In order to reflect the views of employers the additional skills covered by the initiatives include personal values and attitudes, such as motivation, discipline, judgment, leadership and initiative.

The stated aims of The Duke of Edinburgh Award expedition appear to bear direct comparison with the agenda for the task force initiatives. The Award Handbook (1998) stresses the objectives of the expedition include working as a team, developing leadership skills, making decisions and planning and executing a task. However, there does not appear to be any research evidence to suggest that these objectives are achieved. If the expedition does achieve its objectives, it could be suggested, that a vehicle for the skills initiatives already exists and perhaps access to the scheme needs to be improved and promoted.

I believe it is valuable to assess whether a very short expedition experience can measurably contribute to an individual's development in some way. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme (The Award) remains prevalent in many British schools despite pressures on staff and pupils. Can this prominent position be justified in the current climate where schools are judged by the public on academic results and league tables rather than advances in the personal development of pupils? Numerous references in the education media, for example, The Times Educational Supplement (TES), suggest that the pressure on teachers' and pupils' time continues to increase.

I believe it is therefore valid to investigate whether a short experience can have any impact. There appears to be very little research into the impact of short expeditions.

Further inspiration for this research came from an article in The Times Educational Supplement by Howard, who is a course director and moderator on the Basic Expedition Leader Award. He says of sharing experiences forged over a few days or weeks,

“There is something indefinable about self-sufficiency, being in a trained team and having mates with you while you tackle a climb or trek. Pitching yourself against nature, having fun as you do so and coming home safely: the satisfaction is immeasurable.” (TES September 22, 2000)

The trend for justification and accountability in outdoor centres and added value in schools may mean that an ‘immeasurable’ impact is not sufficient. This piece of research attempts to measure the ‘immeasurable.’

Throughout this study I have used the term outdoor education. As the fundamental base to the study the term requires some clarification:

“Outdoor education is now seen within the profession as drawing on three main areas of outdoor activities, environmental education and personal and social development.” (Higgins & Loynes, 1997:6)

In 1970 The National Association for Outdoor Education (NAOE), which has been replaced by the Association for Outdoor Learning from 2001, stressed the importance of direct experience in its definition of outdoor education. The NAOE suggests that outdoor education is a means of approaching educational objectives through guided direct experience in the environment. The environment’s resources are therefore seen as the learning aids.

A national curriculum working group adds to this by emphasising personal development:

“Outdoor education is not a subject but an approach to education which is concerned with the overall development of young people. It is an organised approach to learning in which direct experience is of paramount importance.” (National Curriculum Physical Education working group in Hopkins & Putnam, 1993:3)

Hunt (1989) asserts the contribution outdoor education can make to values and attitudes:

“It emerges that for young people and adults alike, outdoor education is perceived as a vehicle for building values and ideals, for developing creativity and enterprise, for enhancing a sense of citizenship and for widening physical and spiritual horizons” (Hunt, 1989: 21)

The need to discuss whether outdoor education is an approach or a subject is worthy of note but perhaps of little relevance in this research. However, the concept of direct experience or experiential education is, in my opinion, a pillar of outdoor education. It is through the experiential process that individuals may develop a sense of connection, responsibility and awareness. As Higgins & Loynes, (1997) suggest

“Participants (in outdoor education) should take increased responsibility for their own learning, and consequently develop increased confidence in their own judgment and ability to direct their lives” (1997:7).

It would seem reasonable, from the definitions given, that certain aspects of The Award could be defined as outdoor education. Specifically, the expedition component of The Award which forms the focus of this research. The expedition component relies most heavily on a direct outdoor experience and attempts to generate a learning opportunity for the participants. If, as is suggested by Higgins & Loynes (1997:6), outdoor education draws on three main areas of outdoor activities, environmental education and personal and social development, the expedition component of The Award attempts to address all of these areas. At times the focus may be on one or other of these areas but the underlying ethos and structure of The Award facilitates the opportunity to experience the complimentary areas. The outdoor activity is represented by the physical task of walking, canoeing or biking and perhaps forms the main focus of expedition; particularly in the early planning stages. Personal and social development could result as a consequence of team work, leadership, challenging situations, self reliance and decision making. The environmental education component may be addressed by some, through a purposeful journey, with the aim, for example, of monitoring footpath erosion. Although all participants will have direct experience *in* the environment through the expedition section.

### **iii) The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme**

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme was set up in 1956. The origins of the scheme lay in the Moray Badge (1934) and the County Badge Scheme (1941). The award was guided by the philosophy and ideas of Kurt Hahn, developed by Prince Philip under the leadership of Sir John Hunt. The scheme was initially established for young boys but in 1969 girls were integrated into the scheme. Today the scheme is open to all young people between the ages of 14 and 25. The scheme is intended to develop those qualities of maturity and responsibility that it suggests will help young people throughout their lives; in their homes, in their jobs and in their relationships, whatever their personal abilities or circumstances. The Award Handbook (1998:4) states that:

“The Award programme is a vehicle for spiritual, personal and social development and the overall benefits of the award are therefore greater than the sum of its component parts”

The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme (The Award) has three levels of entry; Bronze, Silver and Gold. Within each level of The Award there are four sections that participants need to complete. One section of The Award is based on ‘Service’ the aim of which is to encourage service to others. It is suggested in The Award Handbook (1998:55) that this section offers the participants the opportunity to overcome prejudice and fear, to appreciate the needs of others and contribute to their well-being, to show personal commitment, to accept responsibility and care for the environment and to increase self-esteem by receiving positive feedback from peers and adults. This section is based on the belief that members of the community have a responsibility to each other and that voluntary help is needed. The personal development and learning that takes place as a result of a service can be regarded as educational but the service component need not be outdoors. It may, therefore, not be regarded as outdoor education as there may not be any direct link to, or experience in, the environment.

A second section of The Award is termed ‘Skills’. The aim of this section is,

“to encourage the discovery and development of personal interests and social and practical skills.” (The Award Handbook, 1998:8)

The Skills section of The Award should offer participants the opportunity to develop social and practical skills, meet new people, get organised, make progress, enjoy working with adults, have fun, discover how to research information and discover new talents and to raise self-esteem through pursuing a challenging activity (The Award Handbook, 1998:203). It is suggested that this section should stimulate young people to take up and persevere at satisfying and purposeful pursuits.

The third section of The Award is termed 'Physical Recreation'. The aim of this section is to encourage participation in physical recreation and improvement of performance. This section should provide opportunities to enjoy keeping fit, extend personal goals, respond to a challenge, discover new abilities and to raise self-esteem through improvement of performance (The Award Handbook, 1998:271). It is suggested that this section offers a wide range of programmes in the belief that the activities are enjoyable in themselves and can lead to the establishment of a lasting active lifestyle.

The final section of The Award, for Bronze and Silver participants, is the 'Expedition'. This encourages people to have direct experience of the environment through journeying. The Award Handbook states that participants must complete a self-reliant journey in the countryside. This journey must, for the Bronze Award, include an overnight stay. Some degree of technical competence will be needed to successfully complete this for example, navigation skills. However, The Award aims to encourage a more holistic approach than this; communications, human relations and social skills are all embedded within the scheme. The Award Handbook suggests that it is concerned with "*the development of the individual and the social interaction of the group*" (Award Handbook, 1998:137) The guidelines for The Award do not state that developing self-esteem is an outcome of the expedition but a number of factors that would contribute to the development of self-esteem are foundations for the expedition. The Award Handbook (1998: 138) asserts that the expedition should provide opportunities to work as a member of a team, respond to a challenge, develop self-reliance and leadership skills, recognise the needs and strengths of others, make decisions and accept the consequences, successfully complete a joint task, enjoy the countryside and finally, reflect on the direct experience. It would seem reasonable to suggest that such opportunities may also

encourage development of self-esteem and it is thus a reasonable hypothesis to suggest that an expedition will impact on self-esteem in some way.

For Gold participants there is an additional requirement of a residential project. The aim of which is to broaden experience through involvement with others in a residential setting.

The activities in each section are designed to compliment each other and so provide a balanced programme which reflects different aspects of a young person's development. Hence, if outdoor education is an approach that attempts to provide opportunities for holistic education through direct experience, it would seem that aspects of The Award do fit with this definition of outdoor education. I would suggest that the expedition section of The Award makes the strongest claim for being termed outdoor education. It takes place in the environment. It is based on an outdoor activity and the residential element of the expedition provides an excellent context for developing personal and social skills.

The perceived contribution that outdoor education can bring to the development of an individual is outlined specifically in the curriculum guidance documents in the Scottish Education system:

“Outdoor education can provide an invaluable means of delivering all the outcomes of personal and social development. In particular, residential experience, with its different rules and conventions, provides excellent contexts for developing skills. The various activities offered can provide opportunities for working in smaller groups; for negotiation and collaboration; and for developing initiative, independence and confidence, self-esteem and sensitivity to the feelings of others. Experiences can be tailored to individual needs, extending pupils' confidence in a natural environment and offering for enjoyment and satisfaction.” (Scottish Office Education Department, 1993)

Most would agree that outdoor education is not purely an adventure. The stated aim of the expedition component of The Award is to *"encourage a spirit of adventure and discovery"* (Award Handbook, 1998:137) Many Award co-ordinators would agree that an element of adventure or challenge is essential but I would not regard adventure for the sake of it as outdoor education. All expeditions within the scheme involve self-reliant journeying within the countryside or on waterways. All

expeditions require participants to take part in a residential experience. The expedition is designed to present participants with an appropriate challenge in terms of purpose and achievement with the minimum of leader intervention.

“Challenge is the essence of the concept. The Award scheme presents to young people a balanced noncompetitive programme of voluntary activities which encourage responsibility, self reliance, personal discovery and perseverance” (Award Handbook, 1998:2)

The Oxford Dictionary defines an expedition as ‘ a journey or voyage with a definite purpose.’ It involves leaving the status-quo and journeying into uncertainty and change. By its very nature it therefore involves an element of risk of the unknown and challenge of new experiences. March & Wattachow (1991) suggests that,

“Adventure education may be thought of as the required capabilities necessary to function in the natural environment, which involves living and traveling in an ever increasing, independent manner on the part of an individual or the small group.”

It could therefore be suggested that an expedition may be the most appropriate and effective vehicle to fulfil the aims of ‘adventure education’ as well as outdoor education. The expedition may provide an opportunity for an individual to validate information, make decisions, act upon decisions and be accountable for the consequences of their actions.

Completion of The Duke of Edinburgh Award is viewed by some as one of the greatest achievements a student can make. Gibbs & Bunyan (1997) conducted a study of 126 Award participants. Their conclusions suggest that the expedition component of The Award can have much potential for enhancing personal and social qualities. Others, basing their assertions on personal experience, have gone as far to describe The Award as the ultimate educational experience (Mortlock, 1984; Keighley, 1993).

#### **iv) Challenge is the Essence?**

Ogilvie (2000) argues that the element of challenge in The Award expedition has been eroded over the years. He suggests that to the objective observer the expedition now makes lower demands on the individual. He states:

“Objectively, the physical value of the expedition has been eroded over the forty odd years of its existence ... The only absolute left is the 80 km gold requirement.” (2000:18)

Ogilvie (2000) also suggests that ‘wild environments’ in some parts of the United Kingdom have become manicured to suit the tourist industry and are thus not truly ‘wild’. Additionally, equipment has become lightweight, well manufactured and generally more sophisticated. These developments and others have, it is suggested, reduced the challenge and endurance required to complete the physical aspects of The Award. Ogilvie (2000) comments,

“If the expedition is seen as a physical journey in the external world of the outdoors then earlier standards have been eroded and measures are required to reinstate the quality of the challenge.” (Ogilvie, 2000:19)

However, if the expedition is regarded as a developmental journey ‘inwards’, where the exploration of self and connection with the landscape is of greater focus, then perhaps the challenge has remained. Coming to terms with success or failure and developing a sense of responsibility are challenging concepts in their own right. The less active lifestyle adopted by many adolescents would mean that they themselves perceive it to be of equal challenge to the participants of the 1950s.

Ogilvie (2000) following a ‘flight of fancy’ concludes that perhaps,

“..the Award and what it represents is one of the few institutions left in this country attempting to stem a decline in the backbone, resilience, vigour, grit - a last stand and guardian of the national psyche against the blandishments of modern life” (Ogilvie, 2000:19)

In reality many practitioners would not uphold the flight of fancy suggested by Ogilvie (2000). Even Ogilvie himself suggests that this is an extremist view. To polarise the arguments, an alternative view may be that The Award is a relic left behind by a modern world and young people, who see physical endurance as facile. I suggest the true impact is likely to lie somewhere between the two.

Priest (1990) along with others has presented a model for adventure. Priest terms this the ‘adventure experience paradigm’. It suggests that it is only possible for growth in self- concept to occur when the perceived risk offers a degree of uncertainty which is challenging to the individual. He suggests that there is a tension between risk and

competence, and adventures need to be pitched at the right level. Hopkins & Putnam (1993) also suggest that adventure by its very definition involves uncertainty and risk. The risk is offset by the competence of the individual so that, to quote Priest (1990:158)

“...adventures are personally specific (based on personal competence) and situationally specific. In other words an adventure for one person, in a particular place, at a given time, may not be an adventure for another or for the same person in a different place or time”

This would suggest that, the experience of the individuals in The Award team will only have an impact on self-concept if it is seen as challenging. One's self-concept may therefore be altered if the individual or the others within the group see the activity you are doing as challenging. The perceived level of challenge is therefore important to this study. The experience of the individual will also be influenced by the level of adventure experienced by the rest of The Award group. Additionally, the impact will be effected by the relationships with others in the group. Moreover, Harter (1998) suggests that one may like the self more in some relationships than others this will have an effect on self-esteem.

In summary, it could be suggested that, in order to have a measurable impact on self-concept, The Award expedition should be enjoyable and challenging as well as offering opportunities for team work, decision making, and self-reliance.

#### **v) The Position of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Uffculme School.**

The context for the study is Uffculme School a comprehensive secondary school in Devon (Appendix I). In terms of numbers, the largest group of participants to embark on an outdoor experience at Uffculme School, are those who are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Approximately 40 pupils begin The Award each year. The Award is only open to pupils over the age of 14. Consequently, it is in Year 9 or 10 that pupils will begin The Award. Pupils generally complete the award by the end of Year 10 or the beginning of Year 11. The scheme is administered by the Deputy Head and completion is acknowledged by staff and parents as a positive achievement for an individual. Many of the 52 teaching staff

are involved with the scheme as supervisors. Such commitment from staff and parents increases the profile of The Award within the school. I am one such member of staff and it is from this perspective that I will be conducting my research.

A further reason for investigating The Award is its proliferation within the outdoor education programme of British schools. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is perhaps the most common form of outdoor education seen in British schools. In a survey of Exeter and Edinburgh schools, Leather (2001) has found that the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is the most common form of extra-curricular outdoor education. Huskins (Her Majesty's Inspectorate), referring to anecdotal evidence gained through inspecting schools, suggested in a speech to the NAOE that,

“The Duke of Edinburgh's Award introduces more young people to the outdoors through its expedition than any other organisation.” (1990:29)

In 1997/98 there were 97,922 new entrants to the scheme (D of E, 1999). Hunt (1989) suggests that half of all secondary schools participate in the award scheme. Participation is voluntary and entry must be by free choice. It could not therefore be adopted within a compulsory curriculum, but as suggested previously it may provide a valuable extra-curricular experience addressing many aspects of citizenship and personal social development. The preliminary findings of Dunbar & McLaughlin suggest that this may be the case. Through investigating the impact of the expedition component this study may contribute to establishing whether its dominance in school is justified.

There is resistance to some outdoor education programmes in schools on a number of grounds, mainly based on economics. Outdoor education appears to have a number of negative connotations. On many occasions colleagues have informed me that the week residential I have organised is merely a 'jolly'. Leather (2001) implies that most outdoor education, within the majority of schools, occurs during extra curricular time. This reinforces the notion that the activity is primarily extra experience for a few. It is implicit in this criticism from colleagues that the 'jolly' is perceived as an enjoyable experience and therefore not real work. The number of willing participants may indicate that this is also the perception of the students. Students are, in many cases, prepared to give up their own time and money to be part of an outdoor

expedition experience. The experience is primarily seen as enjoyable. The personal development and learning outcomes are often not foremost in the student's mind.

Despite my experience of an apparent suspicion in school to outdoor education in England, The Award Scheme appears to enjoy a higher status. Some might suggest that the high status is based on the premise that the scheme leads to a nationally recognised qualification. The Award Handbook (1998:26) suggests that as an extra curricular activity, The Award can act as a value-added component for the personal and social development of pupils. Furthermore, pupils who receive The Award carry forward the recognition to their place of work or further education. This reflects well on the school and it is perhaps a sort of currency for employability in the future. Additionally, there may be some cache with being associated with the Duke of Edinburgh. Other outdoor programmes may have less tangible results and therefore afford lower status in terms of recognition for the school and the individual.

#### **vi) A Definition of the Terms**

Over the past two decades there has been a resurgence of interest in studies of the self. There has been much debate over the relative merits of using the terms self-esteem, self-concept, self-worth and perceived competence as well as other associated terms. The myriad of terms used has led to confusion. Shavelson *et. al.*, (1976) criticised research associated with self-concept studies because of the lack of consistency in definitions. They suggested,

“Definitions of self-concept are imprecise and vary from one study to the next” (1976: 408)

In addition, they further criticised the research tools used for measuring self-concept. They suggest that in many cases researchers developed their own instruments to measure their own particular interest. Thus not only is the variety of definitions of self-concept complex, the number of ways of measuring the construct are also complex and numerous.

Shavelson *et. al.*, (1976: 411) broadly define self-concept as self-perceptions that are formed through one's experience with interpretations of one's environment. They suggest that self-concept is influenced especially by evaluations by significant others, and reinforcements of one's own behaviour. The authors appear to be influenced by the work of Mead (1934) who popularised the notion of self as an object of awareness.

Mead (1934) suggested that a person's response to himself is in some way influenced by how others respond to him. He saw the individual as an object of awareness composed of a variety of different selves. He acknowledged the importance of significant others in the construct of self-worth. He defined significant others as those who administer punishment and rewards in a person's life. The formation of self is therefore dependent on how a person perceives he is judged by significant others and comparing these perceptions to the ideals and standards he has developed for himself. Essentially, Mead is suggesting that the concept of self is a social product arising out of an individual's experiences with other people.

More recently, Fox (1988) has suggested that there is an emerging consensus regarding the definition of the concepts that give us an understanding of the construct of self. Self-concept, Fox suggests, has been ascribed a descriptive capacity. Self-esteem, in contrast, is concerned with evaluative judgments where individuals formulate a perception of their own worth. Fox (1988) exemplifies this; self-concept is a series of statements such as 'I am female', 'I am black', 'I am a student'. These statements are compounded to produce a multifaceted awareness of the self as an active object. Self-esteem in contrast is evaluative and may carry at its roots a multitude of situation specific evaluations such as 'I am the best runner in the team' or 'I am the brightest in the class'.

Harter (1982,1985,1990) uses the term 'global self-worth' which she defines as,

“the overall value one places on the self as a person, in contrast to the domain specific evaluations of one's competence or adequacy.” (Harter, 1990:67)

The Personal Perception Scale devised by Harter (1988) measures Global Self-Worth as a separate domain. It will be influenced by the other domains but is still measured as a distinct domain.

Shavelson (1982), Fox (1988) and Harter 's (1990) interpretation of self-concept all appear to come from an interactionist perspective. Therefore, the authors are suggesting, self-worth or self-esteem is a phenomenologically defined standard. It will be different for each individual dependent on their terms of reference or experience.

In this research I have taken the term self-esteem to be phenomenologically defined. It would seem that this reflects the view taken by Shavelson, Fox and Harter. The focus of my study is an event, and the impact of that event on an individual. If self-esteem is not phenomenologically defined there is likely to be little or no impact. I will be using a measuring tool devised by Harter (1988) and it would therefore seem appropriate to work with her definitions. Harter defines self-esteem or global self-worth as an overarching construct that describes the overall value that one places on the self as a person.

## **vii) Limitations of the Study**

In summary, the issue I am interested in is whether a short expedition can have a measurable effect on the self-esteem of participants. In order to do this I have read and reviewed literature on measures of self-esteem. The literature reviewed shows the impact of an outdoor experience on self-esteem. Where possible this literature focuses on expeditions but, as the material is thin, I have also reviewed the literature on the impact of residential outdoor programmes in general.

This study examines the impact of the expedition component of The Award in one school. It tracks the progress of one cohort of Bronze Award participants. The study must be viewed within that context. The numbers of participants involved is small

and therefore reduces the power of the statistical findings. By using rigorous statistical analysis in addition to qualitative findings I aim to increase the validity of the results. The research methods used in this study, by their very nature, make participants aware that some sort of investigation into their views is being conducted. This may affect their responses and bias the results. In addition the time scale involved between pre- and post expedition surveys may lead to encourage the potential threat of maturation in the participants. To minimise this the surveys were conducted as close as was possible to the event.

A further limitation of the study is a lack of multiple time sampling to show the long term impact of the expedition on self-esteem. It was felt that this was beyond the proposed outline for this piece of work

## 5 Conclusions and Discussion

This research set out to investigate whether a short self-planned expedition could have any effect on self-concept. The research has revealed that an effect on self-concept can be measured using mainly quantitative and some qualitative techniques. The effect has been statistically analysed to show, that with the whole group studied, a significant change took place in some domains of self-worth. The fact that the change was small and only in particular domains reflects comments made by Marsh *et. al.* (1986). The authors suggested that changes as a result of an intervention programme were specific to a particular dimension of self-concept rather than generalising across all dimensions of self-concept. Thus,

“self-concept is relatively stable, but changes that do take place are specific to particular dimensions of self-concept” (Marsh *et. al.*, 1986:196)

By using a multidimensional approach to self-concept it has been possible to identify which domains of self-concept are affected by the expedition. In common with other studies; Fox & Corbin, 1989; Harter, 1990; Gibbs & Bunyan, 1997, I have found that self-concept and in particular the domains of physical appearance and global self-worth are influenced by an expedition experience.

I have used evidence from unstructured interviews and expedition journals to help interpret the data and give more depth to my study. The conclusions are specific to the group studied and generalisations to other Award groups should be treated with caution.

### **i) Implications for professional practice and or policy.**

Evidence from authors (Clifford & Clifford, 1967; Heap & Thorstenson, 1974; Lambert *et. al.*, 1978; Marsh *et. al.*, 1986; Fox & Corbin, 1989; Ewert, 1989; Cason & Gillis, 1994; Kishton & Dixon, 1995; Hattie *et. al.*, 1997; Hopkins & Putnam, 1998; and Harris, 2000) and the present study supports the view that an expedition can have an impact on an individual's self-concept and that change can be positive

for a proportion of participants. The minority of students experienced a negative impact. Where there was a negative impact in previous research this was attributed to stress of competition (Kishton & Dixon, 1995) overly positive initial self-perceptions and studies that were not designed to measure changes relevant to the goals of the programme (Marsh, 1986).

The implication for this in practice is that schools need to promote opportunities for experiences that will encourage self-growth. The development of self is an educational objective given in numerous school prospectuses. These experiences need to be monitored carefully to assess whether the impact is positive or negative. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award expedition provides one opportunity, but there will be many other opportunities outwith outdoor education that may provide a similar catalyst for growth. It is beyond the scope of this research to investigate the impact of other experiences on self-esteem. However, Hattie *et. al.*, (1997: 70) in their comprehensive meta-analysis of outdoor education programmes conclude that,

“The effects of adventure programmes on self-esteem exceed that of other educational programmes”.

Not all experiences need to be successful but they need to provide sufficient challenge to stimulate development of the individual. The Award expedition provides an intense experience and participants seem to remember and recall the adventure over a long period of time. My contemporaries still relate stories of their own Award expeditions and the participants journals state they will remember the experience for a long time. It should however be noted that a memorable experience is not necessarily a good experience. Therefore, it seems that the experience, good or bad, lives on and is discussed long after leaving school. Hattie *et. al.*, (1997: 70) comment that,

“It seems adventure programmes have a major impact on the lives of participants, and this impact is long lasting.”

This study does not look at the long term impact of the expedition. Hattie *et. al.*, (1997) have evidence to suggest that there is a change in some aspects of self-esteem and that effect is long lasting. This study merely suggests that there is a small change in self-esteem as a result of a short expedition. The said

change reflects the findings of Hattie *et al.*, (1997) but I am unable to say other than through anecdotal evidence whether the effect is long lasting.

Hattie's work would suggest that there is an opportunity for schools, through outdoor programmes, to achieve a significant and long lasting effect on an individual. This opportunity could be promoted. The experience would need to be sensitively organised, monitored and reviewed in order to enhance the value of the event. Perhaps schools need to provide opportunities for what has been called a 'rite of passage'. It may be that The Award provides one such opportunity for individuals. This notion is summarised by Wragg (2001:15),

“Young adults ....have no proper rite of passage in society, other than grasping the accoutrements offered by a seedy commercial world.....Schools should be staffed and resourced to give all these individuals advice and support, not just those who are flagging, to run projects and challenges that stretch the intellect and imagination.”

This research has raised an issue for me as a practitioner with regards to access to The Award. It seems that those who are perhaps most in need of an experience to raise their self-concept do not volunteer themselves. By definition; in order to volunteer pupils need to be motivated. Those who lack motivation will not put themselves forward for a challenging experience. This assertion is based on the findings of Rosenberg (1963). Perhaps for those pupils The Award is too great a challenge or the image is not appealing and a lower level of award with equal recognition is needed. The alternative would be to actively encourage lower achieving pupils to embark on The Award programme or another similar residential opportunity. A large number of pupils would take a lot of persuading. The financial implications for the individuals, availability of equipment and transport could also further restrict their access to The Award.

## **ii) Relevance of study**

The conclusion that a short expedition can have an impact is relevant for schools in the current climate of increasing teacher workload and statutory curriculum demands. The literature suggests that a longer experience reaps the greatest benefits. However, I have found that some change, although small, is evident immediately after a short expedition. Outdoor activities are inherently demanding on resources and staff time.

This is generally in order to maintain safety standards and low ratios for activities. If a measurable positive impact, however small, can be made in a short time then the drain on resources would be less and the impact still have value. Whether the impact was lasting would require further research although, Hattie *et. al.* 1986, and Cason & Gillis 1994, suggest that the effect of outdoor programmes is long term.

This research does not suggest that a short expedition for a Duke of Edinburgh's Award can contribute all that is necessary for an individuals personal and social development. It does, however, appear to contribute to specific areas of development. The recent Government agendas for Key and Basic Skills (DFEE, 1998) have a number of components that an expedition can facilitate.

Communication, team work and problem solving are fundamental to a successful expedition experience. They are also some of the Key Skills that recent Government initiatives (DFEE, 1998) have advocated as essential for 'life-long learning' and for responsible citizenship.

### **iii) Suggestions for action or further research**

It would seem that outdoor education still suffers from a lack of quantifiable evidence that it achieves its aims.

I have learnt a great deal from my results and the research process. I am still heavily involved with various outdoor programmes within the school and feel I have the opportunity to put into practice some of the suggestions I have made.

It has also become evident to me the areas where further research is needed. My recommendations for further research would be:

• To establish whether 'front loading' and reviewing the expedition had a significant impact on the personal and social development outcomes of the participants. The research design could be similar to this work building on my findings. Two groups of participants could be established in the same school. The participants could be randomly assigned to the two groups. The groups would follow the same training and skills practice. However, one group would have the stated

objective of improving self-concept, through a group challenge, outlined at the start. The same group would then go through an active reviewing process after the expedition. The other group would not receive the additional input. This would enable the researcher to determine whether front loading and reviewing made a difference to the outcome. The difference between the groups could then be measured for significance.

ÿ An investigation could be conducted into the impact of the teacher or instructor on the study group, during training. There is little research in this field within outdoor education although in classroom teaching the impact of the teacher is attributed significance.

ÿ To investigate whether the impact of short expeditions is maintained over time. I have previously acknowledged that attributing change in self-worth to a short expedition is difficult when the post-expedition measure is administered some time after the experience. There seems to be clear evidence that a variety of longer programmes do have a more lasting impact.

ÿ Research could be conducted into individual's development in other areas of the school curriculum using multidimensional measures of self-worth, such as the Harter Self Perception Profile. Schools are required to monitor academic progress of the pupils but little appears to be done to monitor or measure the personal development of individuals.

The outcomes of this research are pleasing. Whilst the benefits measured are small and not across all domains of self-worth, short expeditions do have an immediate impact. I have made suggestions for further development of this work. I hope to be able to put into practice some of the recommendations that I have made.

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