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A Case Study of Outdoor Education: Implications for New Zealand Schools.

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Masters in Education.

At Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

James Neilson Park

2003
Abstract

This descriptive case study explores outdoor education, one of the key learning areas in the Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum. It is a single site case study based on an Intermediate School’s end of year camp programme and explores the teachers’, students’ and parents’ before and after perceptions related to the camp experience. The methodological tools used were teacher interviews, student and parent questionnaires, field notes and teachers’ logs.

The focus of the study and the analysis of the data were based on a number of themes: teacher, parent, and student expectations, personal and social development, learning about self, others and the environment, transfer of learning, safety in the outdoors and the use of outside providers at residential outdoor centres.

The results of the study suggest that teachers and parents have similar expectations of a camp experience for the students: fun and enjoyment, teaching of outdoor skills, environmental awareness, a concern for safety and the use of the outdoors as a leisure outlet. This study showed that the students’ expectations have a far greater focus on fun and enjoyment and social aspects and less on the learning of outdoor skills and environmental awareness. The findings of the study put a focus on the importance of transfer of learning and impact of a residential camp experience on the development of friendships and social relationships as well as the management of safety and use of outside providers, in instructing outdoor pursuits activities with Intermediate School students in a residential outdoor setting.
The study reinforced the philosophy behind the new Health and Physical Education curriculum and the role of outdoor education as one of the key learning areas. Outdoor education is still a powerful learning medium in the development of the students’ personal and social development and outdoor pursuits activities can have a positive effect on students developing a positive attitude about self, others and the environment.
Declaration

I declare that this thesis represents my own work and the contents have not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation, or a report that has been submitted to this University or any other tertiary institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

Jim Park
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title page</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of contents</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter One: Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research questions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The researcher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization of the thesis</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Two: Literature Review</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of outdoor education</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning process in outdoor education</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining the term outdoor education</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor education and the Health and Physical Education curriculum</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and the management of risk</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential outdoor education programmes</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of learning</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Three: Research Design- Methodology in Theory

Design  ................................................................. 24
Data collecting techniques  ........................................ 26
Ethical considerations  ............................................. 27
A case study approach to research  .............................. 27
Theoretical considerations- reliability / validity / triangulation 29

Chapter Four: Research Design- Methodology in Practice

Focus questions of the study  ..................................... 33
Interviews  .................................................................. 34

Chapter Five: Emergent Themes.

Introduction  ............................................................ 37
Outdoor programme aims and objectives  ...................... 38
Teachers’, parents’, students’ expectations  ................. 41
Personal and social development  ............................... 43
Learning about self, others and the environment ........ 45
Transfer of learning  .................................................. 53
Safety in the outdoors  ............................................... 56
Taking responsibility for student welfare ................. 58
Use of outside providers  .......................................... 59
Use of residential outdoor facilities  ......................... 62
Summary  .................................................................... 63

Chapter Six: Discussion

Aims and objectives of the camp programme  .............. 65
Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum 68
Administration of the outdoor programmes
Parents' perception of outdoor education
Students' perceptions
Teachers' perceptions
Safety in the outdoors
Transfer of learning

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Limitations of the study and further research
Principles for conducting outdoor education

Appendix: I Human Ethics Committee Application
II Teacher interview questions
III Parent questionnaire before / after camp
IV Student questionnaire before / after camp
V Teachers' logs
VI Information sheet for participants
VII Consent form for participants
VIII Parents information letter
IX Outdoor education camps 2001
X School policy LEOTC
XI Johnston Report (1978) aims and objectives
XII Parent survey outdoor education camps

Bibliography
Acknowledgements

This study has been the result of personal experience in the outdoors and the influence of a number of fellow colleagues who have had an effect on my thinking related to teaching and learning and outdoor education in particular. As a young teacher I was fortunate to spend a year as a post-graduate outdoor education student at Charlotte Mason College of Education, University of Lancaster. At Charlotte Mason College of Education Colin Mortlock and Jack Parker the outdoor tutors on the course, challenged my thinking about outdoor education and provided me with personal experiences in the outdoors that enriched my own personal life. As a teacher I have been in contact with fellow colleagues who have made themselves available to discuss, debate, and share their thinking on what teaching and learning is all about. To Shayne Gallagher, Innes Kennard, Dave Patchett, Joe Harrison and Peter Harper, I thank you for your time, support and assistance over the years with aspects of this study which has been the result of a lifetime spent in education and the outdoors. A special thank you to the principal, staff, parents, and students at the school that was used for this study. Their cooperation and support in administering and managing the survey materials was very much appreciated especially as for extended periods of time, I was living and working in Tokyo, Japan. This situation presented its own set of hurdles and difficulties being an extra-mural Masters student living and working in a very different cultural and social environment.

Finally I wish to thank Jenny Poskitt and Peter Lind at Massey University, my two thesis supervisors for their assistance, guidance, and support. Peter for
his knowledge, experience and interest in the area of study and Jenny for her guidance in the structure of the thesis. Your insights and responses were always valued and appreciated. A special thanks to Mike Boyes a lecturer in Outdoor Education at Otago University who a number of years ago suggested that I undertake some post-graduate studies. Little did I realize at the time, that some ten years later, it would result in the completion of this study into outdoor education.