"Rekindling the spirit of adventure: through participation in the expedition component of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award: the value of this challenge for the participant"

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"REKINDLING THE SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE -
THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN THE EXPEDITION
COMPONENT OF THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD.
THE VALUE OF THIS CHALLENGE FOR THE PARTICIPANT."

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

from

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

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2003
DECLARATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted for any degree.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged.

Signed

29th January 2004

Date

PETER L. BAILEY
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researching and writing of this thesis has been a very exciting journey and a stimulating experience. To arrive at this point has required the assistance of a wonderful group of friends. These friends have always shown an interest in what I have been doing and kept stoking the camp fire to keep the light glowing. Since starting this study I have gained professionally in my educational career through two promotions. My children have continued to grow into beautiful young people who must think that being a dad involves reading and writing. We as a family often laughed about my role modelling and that the children would finish their homework faster than their father. I am pleased to be able to tell my parents that the ‘book’ has been written as it was difficult for them to understand what I have been doing.

This study has involved a wonderful group of students from a Southern Highlands High School. They were prepared to step out of their comfort zone to seek adventure. It is delightful to see these students when they return home as the seeds that were planted some years ago have grown and blossomed into young citizens of our community. Thank you to the 1997 Principal, Phillip Crampton who granted permission for a research project within his school. Thank you to a good friend and Duke of Edinburgh’s Award adventurer, Mark Canterbury for his expertise and company during the expeditions we have shared with each other and our students.

My supervisors, Dr Tonia Gray and Dr Ted Booth have guided my journey with patience, understanding and wonderful advice. They allowed me to learn through reflecting on the experience rather than telling me what to think; I thank them for that as I have grown as a person as well as meeting my professional goals. Dr Ted Booth taught me the value of the draft, re-draft model of writing and provided invaluable feedback on many occasions. Dr Tonia Gray has been an inspiration to me, as she is to everyone she works with. Tonia is an exceptional facilitator and her passion for the outdoors and outdoor education has influenced the lives of so many of her students.
I am forever thankful to have been one of those students. Tonia has become a family friend and I thank this study for providing this opportunity.

During the early readings, I often cite the names James Neill and Gary Richards as prolific writers and these two researchers have provided wisdom and hospitality to support this research from its inception.

To Bob Cresswell, Phil Prentice, Linda Hanna and the staff of the NSW Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, thank you for your excellent work for the youth of Australia. Your efforts in supporting the program coordinators is appreciated by all of us.

The computer has been a companion to me more often than my backpack and, as I am sure others have experienced, has bitten me more often than the insects in the wild. My daughter Brooke and my son James have taught their dad the finer points of word processing, scanning, graph making and saved me from many late night disasters. I thank you both for simply being yourselves. My greatest supporter has been my wife Deb. She is an adventurer of the theatre rather than the outdoors and yet we share so much in common when working with our students. Deb has been a beautiful mother, a motivator when it would have been easy to stop walking, a dear friend who left little notes of encouragement on the computer screen and a believer that lifelong learning is good for us all.

I am looking forward to the next Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Expedition with my students and being able to continue Rekindling the Spirit of Adventure.
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ABSTRACT

Each year thousands of students are involved in the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The Award is divided into four components: community service, a physical recreation pursuit, a personal skill development and the expedition component. The expedition component requires a two day one night preliminary expedition and a two day and one night qualifying expedition. This research explores the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award Expedition in terms of active involvement, cooperative teamwork, self-confidence, social effectiveness, stress management and time efficiency during these expeditions.

This research involves a case study of the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award program at Southern Highlands High School, N.S.W. Australia. The study targeted participants from the Year Nine cohort of Southern Highlands High School. The study investigates gender differences by conducting single-gender expeditions throughout this research.

The report that follows provides a view of how a school can evaluate one of the programs that has been implemented in an attempt to understand the theoretical and practical implications for the students involved in the program.

The study was designed to provide a research tool that was transferable to other school settings. The importance of this study lies in the fact that the findings could add to a base of knowledge from which school-based facilitators could reflect and learn more about the field of interest and methods of enhancing learning through rekindling the spirit of adventure with secondary school students.

The problem under investigation

The exploration of this research question will lead the author to navigate towards gaining a better understanding of the pathways the participants experience during their adventure. This journey includes:
• Examining the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Expedition experience to observe any changes in the participants’ active involvement, cooperative teamwork, self-confidence, social effectiveness, stress management and time efficiency.

Participants were administered a R.O.P.E. Evaluation Questionnaire (Review of Personal Effectiveness) prior to each expedition and on completion of each expedition. This instrument contained 38 statements on a 1 to 8 rating scale. The participants were involved in intensive pre-briefing during the three days prior to the expeditions. These briefings included initiative activities, skill development, group planning and motivational strategies in preparation for the expeditions. Each expedition experience was held over a two day duration. It was during this stage of the preparation that the expedition metaphor was explored with the group. The metaphoric transfer is a type of learning where parallels exist between the two learning environments. This often occurs in adventure education, because the activities can have a strong similarity to actual life experiences (Priest and Gass, 1997). The Bronze Duke of Edinburgh’s Award participants were also required to maintain a “My Journal” and participate in interviews reflecting on their personal experiences.

The Bronze Duke of Edinburgh’s Award participants were all Year Nine students from Southern Highlands High School during 1997. The control group was also comprised of Year Nine students from the same cohort at Southern Highlands High School. The participants in the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Bronze Expedition were self selecting. The age range of the participants was 14 years to 16 years of age.

The school’s senior executive was enthusiastic in their support of the program and the research potential of the program. The parents/caregivers were involved in each stage of the expedition preparation process, providing the physical and monitory resources required by the participants.
The implications of the research

Before the benefits of the Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze expedition can be seen for the participant in terms of personal growth, research needs to be conducted. Many facilitators have observed the impact of a two day program and witnessed the sights of students emerging from these experiences only to find great difficulty communicating the value of the experience to a colleague on returning to the world of classrooms, set times and the playground environment. The need to research the expedition experiences may help to develop an understanding of the factors that contribute towards individual change. An understanding of the adventure process, the desire for participants to be faced with challenges, opportunities to solve real problems and to interact with others and the natural environment will add to the base of knowledge we have already established about educating students.
PREFACE

This study has evolved from the author’s continuing interest in the use of outdoor educational settings and experiences to enhance the educational stimulation of students. The author became aware of the potential of the outdoor educational experience during expeditions with students over a period of 20 years while teaching secondary school students for the New South Wales Department of School Education. It was during a Duke of Edinburgh’s (D of E) Award High Alpine training course, when the role was reversed and the author became the student, that the author felt the personal growth created by the experience. This potential for personal growth was confirmed during an expedition component of an Outdoor Education course with the University of Wollongong. The experiences the author has been able to share with students during these expeditions has been a powerful influence on the author’s educational philosophy ever since.

The retention of learning experiences gained by the students during these expeditions and the positive rapport developed between student and teacher, led the author to explore the values of outdoor education further. This research examines one group of students’ experiences, however, the author is convinced that students elsewhere are gaining lifelong skills in personal growth through “adventure” whilst completing their Duke of Edinburgh’s Award.

For outdoor educators, this research provides a richness of understanding, of the values gained by the students who participate in these expeditions. These understandings reinforce the facilitation of adventure in the outdoors for students, similarly it rekindles the spirit of adventure in future learning experiences with our young people.