

Scottish Outdoor Education Centres



DEVELOPING CONFIDENT YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND

**Scottish Outdoor Education Centres
in collaboration with
The Centre for Confidence and Well-being**

A summary of the pilot research and progress following the results



Introduction

The development of 'confident individuals' is a major part of the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence. There is a significant amount of anecdotal evidence to support the value of residential outdoor learning in the development of confidence but there is little empirical evidence to support this view. In 2007, Scottish Outdoor Education Centres (SOEC) and the Centre for Confidence and Well-being developed a pilot project to work toward addressing this gap in research and develop our understanding and knowledge of this field.



The Project

The project tested different interventions with secondary pupils involved in outdoor education. The aim was to gain insight into the effectiveness of interventions involving mindset, optimism and positive writing. It would also give some indication of the impact outdoor education on various psychological attributes such as self-efficacy, self esteem, happiness and satisfaction.

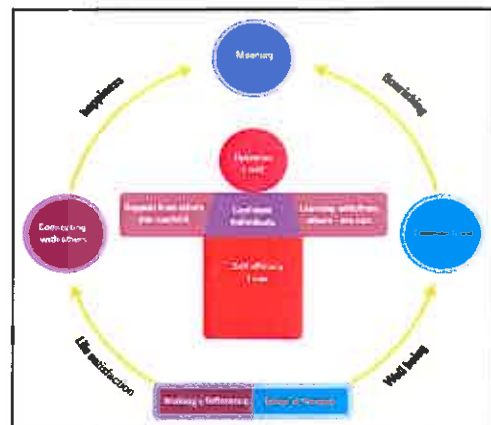
The Study

The study group of primary/secondary school pupils attended a 5 day residential programme based at SOEC. Each tutor group comprised of 10-12 participants. All pupils completed questionnaires before, and immediately after the 5-day programme which included specific interventions.

The project pupils were divided into four research groups:

- A control group which simply had the outdoor programme without specific interventions;
- A group which participated daily in a Positive Writing exercise with a facilitated discussion;
- A group which had the programme plus information on Mindset; and
- A group which had an input on Optimism.

SOEC tutor staff delivered the materials on Optimism and Mindset as well as facilitating the exercise on Positive Writing. To be able to do this, the Centre for Confidence & Well-being trained SOEC tutors on using these concepts with young people. The training was delivered to a large number of the SOEC tutors with the aim that if the pilot was successful then SOEC could incorporate the relevant material into future courses.



Pupils involved in the study were asked to complete a suite of questionnaires before and after the study. These included questionnaires on mindset, resilience, optimism and self-efficacy. The following is a summary of the relevant findings.

Key Results

As a pilot the sample size was quite small but given the intensity of the programme and specific nature of the interventions the following results are an indication that a positive impact was made in the areas assessed.

1. The control group which had the residential outdoor programme with no interventions showed an increase in all areas which were assessed. (Table 1)

Table 1: Outdoor education only group (control group) scores pre- and post-intervention

Questionnaire	Pre score (n=37)	Post scores (n=36)	Change
Happiness	68%	72%	+4%
Life satisfaction	68%	72%	+4%
Mindset	52%	56%	+4%
Optimism	56%	60%	+4%
Self-efficacy	61%	65%	+4%
Self-esteem	63%	67%	+4%

2. The group which received the Mindset intervention group showed a significant improvement in their Mindset and an increase in their optimism and self-efficacy scores. Even when allowing for the 4% increase measured in the control group these results show a significant improvement.

Table 2: Mindset group scores pre- and post-intervention

Questionnaire	Pre score (n=29)	Post scores (n=27)	Change
<i>Mindset</i>	<i>45%</i>	<i>54%</i>	<i>+9%</i>
<i>Optimism</i>	<i>57%</i>	<i>64%</i>	<i>+7%</i>
<i>Self-efficacy</i>	<i>66%</i>	<i>73%</i>	<i>+7%</i>



Implementation

Following the pilot project, the Mindset intervention has been developed and integrated into nearly all the programmes which SOEC deliver. The Centre for Confidence and Well-being have returned to do further training with SOEC tutors and there is ongoing development of the integration of the concept into SOEC programmes. There are several reasons for choosing to integrate this concept into the programmes:

- Initial results from the pilot project showed it to have a significant impact;
- Effectiveness in the development of young people relative to the cost of delivery;
- Appropriateness of the outdoor learning context for a method of delivery;
- The ability of trained SOEC tutors to deliver the interventions;
- Confidence in the concept which is based on 15 years research and development by Carol Dweck who was invited by the Scottish Government to present her work in Scotland.

The Future

Given national concerns about the confidence of young people in Scotland, and other research showing that many young Scots are pessimistic about their future, as well as the impact of the economy and narratives about austerity, we believe it is essential to better understand and develop this work with young people. The training which SOEC received has allowed the organisation to fully understand the concept of confidence and how it can be effectively integrated into programmes that they deliver to around 18,000 young people every year. In doing so, they contribute to meet the needs of the Curriculum for Excellence and Government National Outcomes, in particular National Outcome No. 4.

While SOEC has worked to integrate the findings of the pilot project into their programmes it also highlights that one of the initial reasons for the pilot project was the lack of empirical research to support the value of residential outdoor learning. The positive results from the project must be seen as an initial indication that there is value in conducting further longitudinal studies with a larger sample. SOEC is currently looking for funding to undertake this research in the near future.



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