

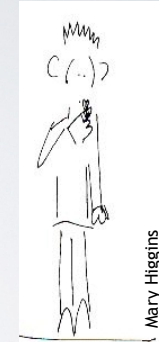


Examining Out-of-Classroom Learning Experiences at Gordonstoun School

Simon Beames

WHY, OH WHY?

- Hahnian history – OB, DoE, etc...
- If not me, then who?
- Methodological challenge
- Build stronger evidence base...



...but one that we could all benefit from.

PERSONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

A 'slippery fish'...

- Conceptually
- Politically
- Pedagogically
- Empirically



RESEARCH AIMS

- Understand the **perceived outcomes** of the non-academic aspects of required school activities
- Understand the **critical elements** of these out-of-classroom experiences



MIXED METHODS RESEARCH DESIGN

- **Online Surveys** (1183 Old Gordonstounians, 235 current parents)
- **Focus groups** (100 Students, 50 OGs, 30 parents, 22 staff)
- **Ethnography** (10 days observations / informal discussion, student material)

Four researchers: Me, Roger Scrutton, Jenni Hume, Chris Mackie

LIMITATIONS of DATA COLLECTION

- Focus groups: Parents and OGs mostly UK residents; OGs mostly older; no students under 16 years
- Ethnography: Only 10 days on site; many data sources not examined



DATA ANALYSIS & VERIFICATION

- **Online Surveys** (descriptive and inferential statistics)
- **Focus groups** (deductive and inductive coding, investigator triangulation)
- **Ethnography** (deductive / inductive coding, peer review)

Central challenge =

Reducing data from eight main sources into key findings

O.G. SURVEY QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

O.G. Survey Question	Percentage claiming positive benefit	Percentage claiming very positive benefit
Influence of OCCs on personal growth and development	94%	83%
Influence of international community on personal growth and development	83%	64%
Influence of OCCs on career path	74%	52%
Influence of OCCs on academic studies	57% (as opposed to 43% claiming no benefit)	

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Gained enduring personal and social development

- Developed a 'give it a go' / 'just get on with it' attitude
- Built a 'generalisable resilience'
- 'Social levelling'
- Increased 'interpersonal ease'
- Learned to manage competing demands on time

KEY ELEMENTS

- Expeditions and sailing voyages especially powerful
- Multiple opportunities to lead / take responsibility for others
- Unfamiliar challenges with support, but minimal direction
- International mix of students
- Breadth of activities
- Varied student / academic staff interaction
- Caring, attentive staff

STUDENT CONCERNS

- Tension between academic achievement and broader curriculum
- Services perceived as being resourced unequally and valued
- Inconsistency between responsibilities students required to take in some areas and lack of responsibility afforded them in others

OTHER VALUED FEATURES OF OOCLEs...

- Performing arts
- International service projects
- A break from technology



THE 'TAKE-AWAY' MESSAGE

- OOCLEs feature a powerful mix of novel and challenging experiences—in a supportive environment—that demand high levels of resolve in order to overcome.
- Crucially, these varied experiences need to be woven into student life over *time*.

Key generalisable features

- Positions of responsibility / leadership
- Expeditions
- Community service
- Expectation to try new things
- Staff / student interaction outside of academic work

