Highly effective teachers

Adelle Faull
Coordinator, Quality Teaching and Learning, Avondale School, Cooranbong, NSW

Abstract

The question “What makes an effective teacher?” is an ongoing concern for those involved in education and teaching. This article argues the importance of taking into account both pedagogic and dispositional characteristics when examining what it might mean to be a highly effective teacher. In doing so, two theoretical frameworks are described; namely, the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model (QTM) (NSW, DET, 2003) and the Dispositional Cluster Model (DCM) (Faull, 2008).

Introduction

There is a rich array of perspectives relating to quality of teacher behaviours in the classroom. There is also a rich array of perspectives relating to the nature of dispositions. Katz and Raths (1985) explored the notion of disposition as “an attributed characteristic of a teacher, one that summarises the trend of a teacher’s actions in particular contexts” (Faull, 2008).

Does the QTM adequately describe effective teachers?

Each of the three dimensions is conceptualised as being inter-related and inter-active in nature. At the heart of the model is the dimension Intellectual quality. Teacher involvement in the process of teaching and learning is expressed in terms of how effectively it facilitates quality learning outcomes for students. With regard to the dimension Intellectual quality, the teacher is called on “to select and organise the essential knowledge, understanding, skills and values from the syllabus” (NSW, DET, May, 2003, p. 11). This is based on the assumption that the teacher is able to construct his or her own meaning and knowledge that demonstrate the defining characteristics of intellectual quality. The teacher’s role also includes the ability to develop “the students’ deep and critiqued understanding of the selected knowledge, understandings, skills and values and of the connections among them” (ibid). This necessitates that the teacher has mastered the prerequisite skills and strategies for facilitating students’ active involvement in the learning process. The dimension Quality learning environment calls upon the teacher to demonstrate the ability to create, maintain and promote a quality learning environment that can extend well beyond the classroom to include “all adults who share the learning environment” (NSW, DET, May, 2003, p. 13). Finally, the dimension Significance necessitates that the teacher demonstrates the ability to promote the significance of students’ learning by making “the connections between and among the student as an individual and social being, the nature of the work at hand, and the contexts in which such work matters” (NSW, DET, May, 2003, p. 14). It follows that if teachers are to be effectively and successfully facilitate quality learning, taking into account each element of the three dimensions of the QTM, then they need to demonstrate the abilities and qualities that they seek to promote in their students.

Does the QTM adequately describe effective teachers?

A key question posed by Killen (2007) was, “What type of person does a teacher need to be in order to be able to implement each of the elements of Quality Teaching effectively?” (p. 33). This question is of considerable significance because it broadens the debate about what it means to be an effective teacher to include the quality of the teacher as an individual. This quality can be expressed in terms of teacher dispositions.

In the research analysis of the Productive Pedagogy Model (Gore, Griffiths & Ladwig, 2002), a precursor to the QTM, it was found that relatively few teachers were able to perform at consistently high levels of productive pedagogy. Various reasons were given for this: curriculum design may have restricted the scope of teaching and learning; the organisational structures in the schools, themselves, may have imposed limitations on teacher performance and effectiveness; or time constraints may have precluded teachers’ mastery of the demands of the model. These constraints are worth considering by school administrators and educational decision makers in order to assist teachers with enhancing the quality of their teaching.

In spite of these limitations, however, it was found that a relatively small percentage of teachers were able to sustain consistently high levels of productive pedagogy across all dimensions.

A closer examination of the nexus between teacher attributes and dispositions, on the one hand, and pedagogy on the other, may enhance our understanding of what it is that differentiates competent teachers from highly effective teachers.

Teacher dispositions

Usher (2002) concluded that, in the context of teaching and learning, it is essential that we find a way to understand the “internal dispositions” that underpin effective teacher behaviour. Research led him to conclude that dispositions are expressed in terms of “certain more stable characteristics and recurring perceptions of self, students, the job and its purposes, people and the world-in-general which are operative in a teacher’s perceptual world and render much of the effect of their efforts” (n.p.). He noted the need for further research on the question of the distinguishing features of the teacher that are manifest in effective teaching behaviour.

There is a rich array of perspectives relating to the nature of dispositions. Katz and Raths (1985) explored the notion of disposition as “an attributed characteristic of a teacher, one that summarises the trend of a teacher’s actions in particular contexts” (p.301). This definition does not suggest that dispositions cause behaviour. Rather, dispositions are manifest in behaviour. A similar notion of dispositions is evident in Ennis’ (1987) definition, “A disposition is a tendency to do something, given certain conditions” (in Raths, 2006, p. 19). Here, emphasis is placed upon the teacher’s tendency to do something, rather than the action itself. A final definition of this discussion, is “Dispositions are inherent qualities that incline a person to act in consistent ways that can be observed through patterns of behaviour in particular contexts” (Faull, 2008).

Having enunciated these different perspectives on the nature of dispositions, it is appropriate to examine the Dispositional Cluster Model as a second theoretical framework for discussing what it might mean to be a highly effective teacher.
Using the Dispositional Cluster Model (DCM) to describe effective teachers

Based on an extensive survey of literature that included the fields of effective teaching and effective teachers, giftedness and talent, creativity, intelligence, and dispositions, Fauli (2008) identified five clusters of dispositions that appear to epitomise highly effective teachers. For the purposes of conceptual clarity, the clustering of these dispositions is represented as the Dispositional Cluster Model (DCM) (see Figure 1). The ‘umbrella’ term selected for the first dispositional cluster is Authentic. A second cluster of items tended to focus on the teacher’s sense of purpose and engagement. This cluster was given the descriptor Communicative. A third group of items were predominantly associated with the teacher being Creative. A fourth cluster was found to be associated with the teacher’s knowledge and the way this was communicated. This cluster was given the descriptor Communicative. There appeared to be a fifth group of dispositions that had to do with teacher enthusiasm and energy. This fifth cluster was given the descriptor Passionate. Each of these five ‘primary’ dispositional clusters can be defined in terms of ‘secondary’ dispositions that are conceptualised as being interactive and interdependent.

Examples of teacher comments that support the identification of these primary dispositional clusters and their secondary dispositions have been taken from cases study interviews of 12 teachers (A through L) who were identified by their school principals as being exceptional (Fauli, 2008). The identification of these teachers was chiefly based on their perceived performance on the QTM and on observed teacher behaviours.

Highly effective teachers are AUTHENTIC

Considerable attention has been given to the terms ‘authentic’ and ‘authenticity’ in research on dispositions. [Authenticity is a multifaceted concept that includes at least four parts: being genuine, showing consistency between values and actions, relating to others in such a way as to encourage their authenticity, and living a critical life. (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004, p. 7)]

Brookfield (2006) maintained that for a teacher to be seen as authentic there needs to be “congruence between words and action, between what you say and what you actually do” (p.74). Cranton and Carusetta further stated that authenticity is “a quest for a personal state of teaching to identify and critically examine their individual sense as it relates to personality, teaching style and interactions with others” (p. 6).

Be natural. Be yourself. Don’t put on an act. Don’t try to be someone that you’re not, because children see through that. (Teacher H)

In the DCM, ‘secondary’ dispositions that characterise the AUTHENTIC teacher include: caring, empathic, open, and reflective. The concept of caring is an integral characteristic of effective teachers. At the most basic level, authentic teachers should demonstrate a consistent pattern of practising the ‘ethic of caring’ (Duijng & Bhindi, 1997). Authentic teachers should also show a genuine concern for their students’ academic welfare (Felton & Goh, 1995). More specifically, the literature suggests that authentic teachers should: show “respect and compassion for others” (Bunch, 2006, n.p.); “be approachable, sensitive and persistent” (Keeley, Smith & Buskist, 2006, p. 85); and provide “constant encouragement to students” (ibid).

When asked what they would most like to be remembered for, four teachers from the case study (Fauli, 2008) commented that they would like to be remembered for the fact that they cared about their students and about teaching.

There is considerable support in the literature for authentic characteristics that could be interpreted as being empathic. Highly effective teachers “see sensitivity and understanding of the learner’s private world of meaning as a priority of helping others learn” (Usher, 2002, n.p.). Edwards (2007) and Killen (2002) argue that empathic teachers are sensitive to student differences and inclusive of cultures. A disposition to be “open” is invariably associated with effective teachers. Brookfield (2006, p. 68) asserted that for a teacher to be regarded as authentic, there needs to be, “The perception that the teacher is open and honest in attempts to help students learn”. In support of this view of openness, Usher (2002) maintained that authentic teachers “should not be afraid to reveal their own idiomatic approaches to teaching” (n.p.). Further support for openness as a desirable disposition came from Keeley et al. (2006, p. 85) who stated, “Teachers should be open and humble and admit mistakes”.

There’s nothing hidden about me. I’m very open and very honest with the kids. I think they know what I value. They know I value them. (Teacher A)

The ability to be reflective is seen as an essential characteristic of being an authentic teacher. Perspectives on teaching are an expression of personal beliefs and values related to teaching that are often formed through careful reflection. (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004, p. 6)

This highlights the importance of teacher beliefs and values. Gliathorn (1975) associated reflection with authentic awareness.

Authentic awareness can only come as we move to these deeper levels of the self through self acceptance, self confrontation and self-prizing. (p. 38)

The disposition to be reflective can be observed through the degree to which teachers are “self monitoring and sensitive to how teaching affects student learning experiences” (Keeley et al., 2006, p. 85). Teacher B values the practice of reflection. When asked what advice he would give a novice teacher he identified this key disposition.

It’s important to reflect—I think reflection in your teaching is a really underrated quality. (Teacher B)

Highly effective teachers are COMMITTED

The notion of commitment permeates much of the discussion of teacher effectiveness in literature from this field and provides convincing support for its selection as a primary disposition.

In the most general terms, Usher (2002) asserts that effective teachers are committed to “goals, attitudes and values that are broad, deeply held and person centred” (n.p.). More specifically, highly effective teachers show commitment (Crosswell & Elliot, 2004) through “positive emotional attachment to the work involved in teaching generally or to a specific act of teaching” (p. 6).

Teaching is a calling...it is more than just a job or a career. For me, it’s become a ministry. (Teacher G)

They demonstrate their commitment through an enduring belief that children are able to achieve (Kagan, 1992) and that teaching and learning are worthwhile. Finally, effective teachers are often “committed to their own professional and personal growth” (Bunch, 2006, n.p.). Secondary dispositions that characterise COMMITTED teachers include: purposeful, organised, motivated, and resilient.

The sense of enduring purpose is an inherent part of being a committed teacher (Collinson, 1996). Purposeful teachers are identified as being likely to exhibit the following behaviours: first, a visible striving to be a better teacher (Bunch, 2006); second, high expectations of themselves and others (Bain, Lintz & Word, 1989); and finally, a “willingness to engage with the school and the school community” (Crosswell & Elliot, 2004, p. 6). Teacher B demonstrated an enduring sense of purpose and goal orientation.

I like to challenge myself. I think that’s really important, to stay challenged...I like to read a lot of educational style journals and try different things...another big goal of mine would be to continue teaching. Another goal is to stay motivated. (Teacher B)

Being well organised is an important underpinning quality for the disposition of being committed. Keeley et al. (2006) best encapsulated this disposition by asserting that effective teachers should be “highly prepared, well organised and hard working” (p. 85). Murray (1999) identified being “organised” in terms of ways of organising or structuring subject matter as one of his 12 traits of effective teachers.

I love to be organised. I love children to be organised. I know that I need to have a thorough plan before a lesson. Once you’re organised, being enthusiastic is extremely important. (Teacher C)

Highly effective teachers are motivated. Crosswell and Elliot (2004) stressed the importance of motivation as a driving force “to engage in ongoing learning and to maintain professional knowledge” (p. 6). Strong motivation and commitment are manifest through high expectations of self and others (McFadden & Munns, 2002).

This resonates strongly with the QTM dimension ‘intellectual quality’. Teacher C was asked whether the marks students achieved were more important than other factors in teaching.
A highly effective teacher will demonstrate all these aspects of being resilient (Vialle & Quigley, 2003, p. 124). Teacher K shared anecdotal evidence of a strong disposition for humour in her teaching. This was particularly evident when she recounted a conversation with her Science class of Year 9 boys.

“So what did you do for the holidays, Miss?” I said. “Oh, we marked cattle.”

“What does that mean?”

And I said, “Well, you put your ear tag in and you give them a shot and you turn all the boy cows… all the boy bulls into steers.” (Teacher K)

When asked what she wanted to be remembered for in her teaching, she also valued fun.

“I’d really like to be remembered as a teacher that had fun and made Science—which a lot of kids think is really boring—interesting.” (Teacher K)

Highly effective teachers are CREATIVE

“Real life creativity requires the proper conjunction of personality, cognitive skills and situational conditions” (James & Asmus, 2000–2001, p. 150). From a different perspective, Cropley (1984) asserted that effective teachers demonstrate successful creative thinking in the way they facilitate creativity in their students. In more practical terms, Simplicio (2000) stated that effective teachers deploy “new and creative approaches to everyday instruction” (p. 670).

Being a CREATIVE teacher involves secondary dispositions such as risk taking, originality, curiosity, and problem solving.

An important factor in a teacher’s risk taking is the capacity for experimental endeavour. As Feldhusen and Goh (1995) observed, teaching is regarded as an experimental endeavour that entails risk. Risk takers are not afraid to try new ideas or to take risks with decision-making.

[Effective teachers need to have] the humility and courage to live with uncertainty and to take the risk of questioning whether they can do better and become active participants with the student in the learning process. (Arlin, 1999, p. 16)

Highly effective teachers are PASSIONATE

In this context, passion is conceptualised as a driving force for the emotional and psychic energy that underpins high quality teaching. Metcalfe and Game (2006) asserted, “Teachers who change lives are invariably characterised by their passion and their enthusiasm” (p. 59). In a similar vein, Day (2004, p. 3) stated, “For those teachers teaching in a creative and adventurous profession, passion is not an option. It is essential to high quality teaching”. Kottler et al. (2005) made the observation, “Passionately committed teachers are those who absolutely love what they do” (p. 149). Day argued that to be passionate about teaching is not only to express enthusiasm but also to enact it in a principled, values-led, intelligent way. Passionate teachers are “deeply stirred by issues and ideas that challenge our world” (Fried, 1995, p. 1). In the context of teaching in an independent Christian school, Teacher F’s interview comments provided a powerful perspective.

Highly effective teachers are able to communicate at a range of levels with their students, colleagues and others engaged in teaching and learning.

Communication with kids is really important. You’ve got to find out about them, show them you’re interested. You’ve also got to teach them how to be communicative. That’s how we learn. And that’s how I learn; by being communicative. (Teacher E)

Secondary dispositions associated with the teacher being COMMUNICATIVE include knowledgeable listener, engagement and humour. Several important aspects of being knowledgeable are worth noting: first, the display of a “rich factual knowledge about teaching” (Arlin, 1999, p. 13); second, the possession of “in-depth knowledge of subject matter” (Vialle & Quigley, 2002, p. 3); third, “a rich procedural knowledge about teaching strategies” (Arlin, p. 13); fourth, the presentation of current information (Keefy et al., 2006, p. 85); fifth, the willingness to become learners in the act of constructing knowledge (Arlin, 1999); and finally, the encouragement of “higher level thinking about knowledge constructs” (Vialle & Quigley, p. 2). A highly effective teacher will demonstrate all these aspects of being knowledgeable. Teacher A demonstrated the disposition knowledgeable when she shared her belief.

“It’s important to be constantly learning… being abreast of the issues and understanding all the things that are going on.” (Teacher A)

Being a good listener is a recurring theme in the discussion of communication capabilities. Kottler et al. (2005) best summarised the importance of listening in the communication process as, “Listening to and responding to authentic feelings and ideas” (p. 75). In order to be a good listener, Norton (1977) asserted that effective teachers are attentive and not dominant. This correlates strongly with the element ‘substantive communication’ in the QTM dimension Intellectual quality. An example of the disposition to be an effective listener was evident in Teacher C’s advice to novice teachers.

Listen. You need to listen to the people you teach with—your colleagues. You need to listen to the children… Listening to children is so important. (Teacher C)

A strong consensus is evident in the literature that communication is essentially a process of engagement. The engaged teacher will focus on demonstrating to students that they are being taught to learn in a way that is likely to be most helpful to them (Brookfield, 2006). This involves planning for effective classroom communication (Kottler, Zehm & Oppliger, 2002, p. 3). Teacher B demonstrated a “demonstrate confidence through clear speech, eye contact and precise answers to questions” (Keeley et al., 2006, p. 85). Engagement includes the ability to maintain consistent rapport (ibid). The effective teacher will “promote student-teacher conversations that extend issues beyond the specifics of course assignments and information” (Aylor & Oppliger, 2003, p. 132). Finally, engagement implies that the effective teacher acts “as a good facilitator” (Vialle & Quigley, 2002, p. 3). Teacher B demonstrated a strong propensity for engagement.

To get kids involved you’ve got to give them choices… Every different assignment I do, I try to pull in different learning styles. You’ve got to engage the kids by taking into account their learning styles… And you’ve got to be engaged in learning, too. Just like the kids. (Teacher B)

A number of experts have seen humour as an essential ingredient of being communicative. Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1991) stated that the effective teacher should “skillfully produce humorous messages on a regular basis in the classroom” (In Aylor & Oppliger, 2003, p. 124). Teacher K shared anecdotal evidence of a strong disposition for humour in her teaching. This was particularly evident when she recounted a conversation with her Science class of Year 9 boys.

“So what did you do for the holidays, Miss?” I said. “Oh, we marked cattle.”

“What does that mean?”

And I said, “Well, you put your ear tag in and you give them a shot and you turn all the boy cows… all the boy bulls into steers.” (Teacher K)

When asked what she wanted to be remembered for in her teaching, she also valued fun.

“I’d really like to be remembered as a teacher that had fun and made Science—which a lot of kids think is really boring—interesting.” (Teacher K)
Concerning the link between being an effective teacher and being energetic, Rosenberg (2003) p. 2) proposed that the most important thing was “the energy that comes from bringing more of you into what you do”. Day (2004) noted that passion was vital for interpersonal cooperation and he argued that passionate teachers are “intellectually and emotionally energetic in their work with children, young people and adults alike” (p. 2).

Teaching is not just a job. You’re living teaching. You’re not just an, ‘I’ll get out of bed at 8 o’clock and you come here. You’re constantly seeing and reading and hearing and moving the minds of kids. (Teacher B)

Concluding the discussion: The question of teacher values

In his expose on dispossession, Freeman (2007b) proposed a syntax of dispositions that included ‘values in action’. He argued that it is one thing for a teacher to have values; it is another for the teacher to activate those values — to live them in his or her teaching. In this discussion of what it might mean to be a highly effective teacher, it is reference has been made to the NSW Quality Teaching Model and the Dispositional Cluster Model. With each of these theoretical perspectives, it is one thing to know about highly effective teaching; it is another to actively engage in highly effective teaching.

Have a humble heart and a willingness to learn—a teachable spirit. Don’t give up. It’s hard work. It takes a lifetime to learn this craft…These are people’s lives and your most important tool is your emotional intelligence. To be a re

As teachers and educators, we need to reflect on the nexus between quality pedagogy and teacher dispositions when coming to understand what it means to be a highly effective teacher. TEACH

References


Feldman, J. S. C. (2000). Teaching classroom educators how to teach; it is another for the teacher to activate those values — to live them in his or her teaching. In Proceedings (pp. 43–89).


Hunt, & Seney, P. (2001). Of high levels of energy, long concentration spans on topics of interest, powerful emotions and the desire to take risks. Teacher B


Introduction
The iPod, more than any other device, is indicative of the times in which we live. It provides entertainment and information at the click of a wheel, whenever, and wherever we want it. The iPod is tool of choice for many of the current generation of youth who fill their days with electronic devices, computer games, Youtube, Myspace, Facebook and talking to friends on MSN. These youth have been referred to as the Generation, or Google Generation; whatever you choose to call them, they are the young people in our schools.

Life is not simple for many of these students. They are growing up in a world vastly different to that of their parents. Today’s world features “cultural pluralism, increased anxiety about personal and environmental risks, precarious employment, rampant consumerism, the information deluge, greater individualisation and increased instability in families” (Hughes, 2007).

Within this quickly changing world, there is a need for students to develop the capacity to cope with their ever-changing environment. They need to be resilient. Outdoor education activities have been proposed as one way of increasing a person’s resilience through increasing ‘Life Effectiveness’ skills. These skills equip students to handle the demands of life and impact a person’s capacity to adapt, survive, and thrive (Neill, 2008). They will enhance a person’s resilience and their sense of wellbeing.

Benefits of outdoor education
As the name suggests, outdoor education involves experiences that take place in the outdoors. Most of these programs focus on the personal and social development of participants (Neill, 2008). Outdoor education programs have been shown to impact students’ self-concept, self-esteem, social skills, decision making skills, problem solving skills, communication skills, and aspects of life effectiveness such as time management, social competence, task leadership and emotional control (Allen-Craig & McLeod, 2005).

These results should not surprise us. For many years educators such as John Dewey have advocated experiential education as the best medium for gaining developmental outcomes in students (Neill, 2008). While traditional curriculums often struggle to develop connections between the theoretical and the practical, the use of the outdoors natural world has been found to be effective for instilling authentic, real life experiences into the learning process. (Bunting, 2006).

Youth require authentic activities to build connection to real world meaning for the value of one another and the need to protect our environment. Often lost in a make-believe world of video games in a mass marketed culture of violence and escapism, today’s youth need mentoring to guide them to the world of authentic experience and personal connectedness. (Goodman & Jelmberg, 2008)

Outdoor education offers authentic, holistic experiences. Educators have long supported approaches that combine the mental, the emotional, the social, the spiritual and the physical (Gilbertson et al., 2006). Natural settings provide direct and immediate consequences, along with positive and negative feedback from peers, in safe facilitated arenas. Students are required to use initiative, make decisions, and be responsible for outcomes (Gilbertson et al., 2006). The many choices required during an activity encourages individuals to make decisions based on their ethics and values, and personal growth is characterised by increases in self-esteem, confidence and motivation (Prouty et al., 2007). The resultant learning is personal and spontaneous.

Many of the approaches used in outdoor education are based in the theory of constructivism where prior knowledge is recognised and built on. Outdoor education provides teachable moments where students grasp concepts and facts that are
The brain performs better with meaningful challenges that aren’t overwhelming. Learning that engages the entire physiology, from emotions to cognitive processes, produces a greater likelihood of developmental, and more likely to be retained in the student’s memory (Goodman et al., 2008). Another reason for the success of outdoor education activities may lie in the way that it connects the senses. Bunting (2006) claims the brain searches for meaning in interconnectedness.

### Table 1: Significant differences in life effectiveness skills (p<0.05)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life effectiveness scales</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
<th>Effect size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task leadership</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional control</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active initiative</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self confidence</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self efficacy</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current study seeks to explore how participation by year nine students in a multidisciplinary, integrated (Petts, 1994), experiential education program, based loosely on the model developed by Kurt Hahn, as used in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, impacts upon their Life Effectiveness.

### Table 2: Life effectiveness variables included in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>The extent that an individual perceives that he / she can achieve excellence and put the required effort into action to attain it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social competence</td>
<td>The degree of personal confidence and self-perceived ability in social interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement motivation</td>
<td>The extent to which the individual is motivated to achieve excellence and put the required effort into action to attain it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual flexibility</td>
<td>The extent to which the individual perceives he / she can adapt to / her and accommodate new information from changing conditions and different perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task leadership</td>
<td>The extent to which the individual perceives he / she can lead other people effectively when a task needs to be done and productivity is the priority requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional control</td>
<td>The extent to which the individual perceives he / she maintains emotional control when / she is faced with potentially stressful situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active initiative</td>
<td>The extent to which the individual likes to initiate action in new situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self confidence</td>
<td>The degree of confidence the individual has in his / her abilities and the success of their actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative teamwork</td>
<td>The extent to which an individual can work as a member of a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self efficacy</td>
<td>The degree of personal confidence and self-perceived ability in situations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

The results from the scales showed that at the beginning of the year, students were, on average, above the half way mark of the various Life Effectiveness scales. At the conclusion of the expeditionary component of the program, students had increased significantly (p<0.05) in Time Management, Task Leadership, Emotional Control, Active Initiative, Self Confidence & Self Efficacy (see Table 1 & 2). That is, students increased their optimum use of time, their leadership in tasks, their emotional control when faced with potentially stressful situations, their ability to initiate action in new situations and positive changes in their abilities and the success of their actions, and their beliefs of what they are capable.

While students do show development in these skills during a normal school year, one would not expect such significant increases in the relatively short time period (2 months) from the beginning of the school year to the completion of the expeditionary part of the program. Of particular note are the increases in Time Management and Task Leadership which achieved an effect size greater than 0.4. These results support the notion that outdoor education programs do assist students to develop their Life Effectiveness skills and are in line with other studies that have found similar results (Hattie et al., 1997; Neill, 2008).

During the bushwalking activities, the students were split into groups that were ability and gender streamed. Significant between group differences were found for Task Leadership. All groups experienced the stresses that come with leadership and found that the most successful way to navigate was to use a collaborative approach.

Each person had to be a leader for some part of the trip. When I was leader it helped me because I got to ask people which way they think we should go and I could lead the group with compass and map. When I was leading I felt, like, listened too because everyone was following. I experienced a bit of stress choosing which way to go. It’s important not to go the way you want to go but to get other people’s ideas. (Student 3)

The more able groups showed a significant gain in Task Leadership while the less able groups showed little gain. This could have been a result of greater teacher dependence because the less able groups were over challenged. These groups, required more frequent intervention by the facilitator, which led to the students not developing significantly in Task Leadership.

There was also evidence of a significant gender effect on Task Leadership with boys making more significant gains than girls. Interviews suggested the style of facilitation in the girls groups was more directed and did not make use of error as constructively as the boys groups. It would seem that the facilitators of these groups may have had less confidence in the girls’ ability to navigate and do about it, rather than giving up, and just keep fighting through. If things are going that wrong, you might just lose it anyway, because that is just too hard, you just have to keep trying. (Student 2)

These results are very encouraging and reveal that students felt an increase in self-efficacy and emotional control.

### Task leadership

During the bushwalking activities, the students were split into groups that were ability and gender streamed. Significant between group differences were found for Task Leadership. All groups experienced the stresses that come with leadership and found that the most successful way to navigate was to use a collaborative approach.
manage the party. Overall, the results suggest facilitation style can affect amount of change measured in an outcome.

Time management

Many of the students appreciated the importance of good time management as seen in the following interview statements:

You have to plan your time wisely so you can get to your destination before it gets dark. (Student 4)

You have to plan where you are going to go, your menu and how to pack your pack. It also helped mo in my study. Before bushwalking I wouldn’t plan, whatever comes up I would just do it, but after bushwalking I learned to plan each day what I would study, English, Maths, Science. (Student 5)

Significant between group differences were found for Time Management. The student interviews revealed that the style of facilitation in the groups was quite different. Those students in groups where time management skills were emphasised were those that increased in this area.

Educational implications

This study has significant implications for schools. Life Effectiveness skills are important and this study has added weight to the argument that these skills can be enhanced by outdoor education programs. Although Task Leadership and Time Management are two skill areas where the impact on the students was greatest, student levels of Emotional Control, Active Initiative, Self Confidence, and Self Efficacy all showed significant improvement. These outcomes do not happen by chance but are the result of purposeful facilitation by outdoor educators. Hayllar (2005) believes that outdoor education goes beyond the mere supervision of an activity; but rather involves the purposeful facilitation of learning from a meaningful outdoor experience. Outdoor educators who are trained in the delivery of specific outcomes achieve better results (Allen-Craig & Miller, 2007). Neil (2000, p.2) goes as far as to state the disadvantages of running a poorly facilitated program can outweigh any possible gains from the experience.

This study supports the view that desired outcomes are best achieved by staff who effectively facilitate the outdoor experience. The differences between the groups were more likely the result of the different teacher facilitation styles than differences in group ability. To maximise the outcomes of outdoor education experiences, schools need to ensure that their outdoor educators have adequate facilitation skills.

Conclusion

In a digital world where students are often called to make sense of an increasingly complex environment, to become resilient and to develop adequate life skills, we find ourselves endorsing a call to interact more with the natural world and to participate in well facilitated outdoor education activities. In doing so, students may develop better life skills, and on the way, a clearer understanding their God.

For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

You have to plan where you are going to go, your menu and how to pack your pack. It also helped mo in my study. Before bushwalking I wouldn’t plan, whatever comes up I would just do it, but after bushwalking I learned to plan each day what I would study, English, Maths, Science. (Student 5)

References


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