

Evaluation of Learning Away

Hypothesis 7: Student leadership, co-design and facilitation of learning

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This report should be cited as: CUREE (2012) *Evaluation of Learning Away: Hypothesis 7: Student leadership, co-design and facilitation of learning*. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

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High quality residential learning programmes can offer rich opportunities for student leadership, co-design and facilitation of learning that can be extended and sustained back in school to positive effect.

Background

There are 3 connected concepts in this hypothesis: student leadership; co-design and facilitation of learning that can be extended and sustained back in school.

Student leadership roles typically include school prefects, sports' leaders/captains, and mentors or coaches of younger pupils. Allowing students to shoulder some 'teacher responsibilities' provides a good learning opportunity for student leaders who can gain intellectually, socially and emotionally from their experiences as well as develop leadership skills for the world of work. There is a wide range of definitions and models of youth leadership.¹ One such model describes leadership as falling into three categories²:

- *Little l leadership* where students:
 - support the learning and personal development of their peers and younger children; and
 - make choices and take action.
- *Big L leadership* where students:
 - lead a group; and
 - make decisions and take responsibility or actions that affect others.
- *Baton passing leadership* where:
 - the leader may be supported by other students or even hand over leadership.

For this hypothesis we have understood co-design as involving students in planning their own learning. Engaging students in co-construction of their learning is now recognised as 'a prerequisite for the development of effective learners who possess independence, responsibility, confidence and maturity'³. From our evidence we see the most useful understanding of facilitation of learning that can be extended and sustained both in school as relating to the development of an infrastructure of students' little and big leadership skills and their growing abilities to hand over the baton, students' capacity to contribute to learning design and to take an active role in learning activities. Now this infrastructure is becoming established and more visible to teachers, plans are in place to build upon it back in school. But as yet, with one or two notable exceptions, follow up activity of this kind had not taken place by the end of the 2010-11 academic year.

Examples of residential interventions that provided opportunities for student leadership, co-design and facilitation of learning

Student leadership

¹E.g. Omatsu, G. Student leadership training booklet: www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/leadership_booklet.pdf & Ricketts, J.C and Rudd, R.D. A Comprehensive Leadership Education Model to train, teach, and develop Leadership in youth available at <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JCTE/v19n1/pdf/ricketts.pdf>.

² Sing Up Youth Leadership report

http://www.singup.org/fileadmin/singupfiles/previous_uploads/11.Youth_Leadership.pdf

³See Specialist Schools and Academies Trust: Personalising learning www.sst-net.net/pdf/Background%20to%20Personalising%20Learning.pdf

Several clusters identified the cross-phase peer support mechanisms they were putting in place to facilitate transition as an opportunity to develop older students' leadership skills. These related to both *Big* and *Little I leadership*. For example, student leaders from Bulwell were involved in planning and delivering activities, contributing to camp safety and set up, as well as being involved in other activities associated with primary-secondary transition, facilitated by the cluster. Teachers and other school and community staff observed, often with surprise, how easily the student leaders built relationships with younger pupils, helping them feel comfortable and relaxed during the residential. The young leaders became strong and positive role models for the children. But their involvement had a positive impact on their own development too. Not only did they find an area of studies they were passionate about, many also completed their qualification and two even secured paid employment as a result.

Secondary students' involvement in the planning and delivery of residential experiences was central to Bulwell's Learning Away programme. The secondary students were offered training and support to help them develop their leadership skills and establish rapport with primary-aged children. The secondary students collaboratively planned activities (using Outdoor Education Cards developed by Nottingham Outdoor Education team) they would like to lead with the primary children in order to achieve the residential objectives (team building, problem-solving, developing confidence, etc.).

Staff from the partner schools all emphasised how much they were impressed with the leadership skills the secondary students developed:

'The sports leaders did really well at getting the students involved – the activities were very well thought through and encouraged the teams to bond'.

'The young leaders were great – they encouraged our children to participate and made it a great fun experience for them'.

One teacher highlighted how involving the young leaders for a second time helped enhance their leadership skills and confidence in being a leader:

'This was the second residential for some of our young leaders and the added confidence they had in their own abilities to deliver the carousel of activities was noticeable. They delivered the activities in a confident and mature manner, ensuring that the kids had fun! Both the kids and the staff were very impressed with them. Their input was a valuable and welcome support for the staff team'.

Whilst the activities at Burwell included a combination of *Big* and *little I Leadership*, with the students taking responsibility for leading groups and also supporting the learning and development of younger children, at BEMAT the focus was on *little I* leadership. The cluster set up one residential to train student mentors and set up mentor partnerships between Year 12 and Year 8 students, planning that the mentoring process would then be continued back in school.

A number of clusters noted that the group work activities which took place during the residential provided opportunities for *Big I* and *Baton passing leadership* to emerge. For example, Christ Church cluster staff were pleased to see one usually quiet girl shine as a leader during a problem-solving activity. When making a shelter, two Thomas Tallis students naturally took lead roles. When one of

these suggested a better way of constructing the roof the other students noticed the improvement and praised the student. At this point the 'baton was passed' and she took sole lead. Walney cluster teachers similarly noted that members of the group seemed to take the role as natural leaders, but also reflected on the importance of ensuring that all students contributed, through for example, establishing roles to ensure one person does not over-dominate. In this way all could play an active role in supporting the leader. Children from Burley learned how important it was to plan something first when working as a team so they all knew what their roles were and could all take part.

Co-design

Student co-design ranged from making decisions about the activities they would like to take part in through to planning residential and shaping the entire programme. Students at Samuel Whitbread College for example, were encouraged and supported to plan and organise as a team, a residential experience that they as sports lovers would enjoy. They were responsible for deciding on the venue, costs, transport, and activities and tasks during the residential. They planned and prepared for the residential during after-school sessions and during classes held at the college during school hours. The students felt that their leadership skills benefited as a result and that they had a better understanding of the skills required to develop their PE training.

Whilst older students frequently designed their residential experiences themselves, clusters involving younger children often consulted the children when planning the activities for their residential. In South Hetton, for example, the children were asked to think about what activities they would like to do related to a forthcoming topic, such as World War II. Merging several ideas around WWII with residential learning opportunities, the class came up with the idea of the evacuation trip where they would be able to visit the steam railway, stay overnight and go to the open air museum, Eden camp. As a result of working in this way, the cluster noticed that the children were becoming more independent learners. They were beginning to take on more responsibility with their learning and beginning to question why things happen. The children started to ask more searching questions and initiate their own research to find answers rather than sit back and let the teachers answer their questions. The children were also more willing to take risks without the fear of failing. The children's motivation and engagement in learning improved as a result of the residential programmes. This was seen through their motivation to research and write things at home and bring them back into school to show others.

Walney cluster was successful in involving primary pupils in the process of co-design of their residential leaning at a number of levels, including determining and assessing the skills they need for successful transition and designing a residential that would support the development and assessment of these skills. Staff and pupils were worked in parallel and together to construct a programme of activities, which would take account of the needs of all pupil groups. Core teams developed visual presentations of the initial planning process and co-coached each other to prepare other pupils and staff for the residential. Following the residential the pupils are now taking more responsibility for their learning in school and being more proactive as learners.

Taking an active role through group tasks

During the residential, clusters frequently supported students in facilitating their own learning through problem-solving group work tasks that enabled the students to take an active role in their learning. For example, during Thomas Tallis' Year 12 business residential, the students took part in a

number of 'Apprentice' tasks (based on the TV programme) that included budgeting, designing and market research activities. The students in each group worked together to decide how they would approach the task. They were expected to carry out their plans and take responsibility for modifying them as they went along.

Common features in the clusters' approaches to fostering student leadership, co-design and facilitation of learning

Training for student leadership

Four clusters promoting *Big and little I leadership* provided students with specific training for their leadership roles. Calderglen gave their S5 students the opportunity to train by going on a leadership residential. This was connected with learning back in school by, for example, exploring how it would enable them to develop skills that would be useful to them when applying for prefect and school captain positions within the school the following year and also when applying for a university place and employment in the long term. During the residential the students were taken through various leadership and communication tasks. Similarly BEMAT set up a residential to train their students as mentors and to set up an infrastructure of support that could be used back in school. At Walney students were involved and trained in leadership from the outset and then were involved in training other teachers and pupils as leaders.

Bulwell cluster used a highly structured and hierarchical (four-stage) approach to fostering student leadership which spanned the students' entire secondary school career:

1. Year 7 and 8 students were introduced to the role of a leader and enabled to develop their communication skills whilst being given opportunities to lead warm-up and down activities and small games. This evidence contributed to the Level 1 Sports Leaders qualification and took place one hour a week over a term.
2. Year 9 students got the opportunity to opt into the Sports Leadership route when they were re-introduced to the role of a leader and communication skills were recapped on in order to complete the remaining units of the Level 1 course started in Years 7 and 8. This took place for one hour a week over a term plus some after school opportunities.
3. Year 10 students who had successfully completed the Level 1 Sports Leadership award or who demonstrated the appropriate skills and qualities were given the option of completing the Level 2 Sports Leadership qualification. Students who successfully passed this course had opportunities to work in local primary schools to deliver extracurricular learning.
4. Students who had successfully completed the Level 2 Sports Leadership award were given the option of completing the Level 3 qualification. This was delivered through external providers during curriculum time in Year 12/13. Students working towards their Level 3 course worked alongside those doing the Level 2 and helped with the delivery of the Level 2 course. Some were also employed (using funding) to work in local primary schools during curricular and extracurricular learning. Students who passed the course could run activities from the academy site during school holidays, thus providing an enterprise opportunity.

Becoming part of the PHF Learning Away programme provided Bulwell with an opportunity to

increase the opportunities for young leaders to further develop their skills on residential. One of the residentials, for 90 Year 5 and Year 7 students at Hartington Hall Youth Centre, was supported by 12 young leaders as well as staff from primary and secondary schools. Local one-night camps on the Bulwell Academy site held during the Easter holidays provided a further opportunity. During these camps, young leaders set up and ran a range of team building activities such as orienteering and den building as well as sport activities. They also demonstrated camp procedures to the younger students, setting out and putting away tents, mats and sleeping bags.

Incremental involvement in co-design

In general (with the exception of Walney) the extent to which students were expected to plan and design their learning experiences tended to increase as the students got older and as the programme developed. (At the start of the Learning Away programme, clusters involving primary aged children in particular felt the children's prior experience of residential learning was limited and therefore they did not know what was possible). A number of clusters (e.g. Christ Church, South Hetton, New Forest) expected their children to become increasingly responsible as they progressed through primary school. At Walney, pupils played an active role in designing the learning content of their residential from the start. All of the children contributed their ideas about the transition issues which should be the focus of the residential and were involved in co-designing activities. This infrastructure of skills has subsequently been used, for example in supporting the children's leadership of enterprise activities. Secondary students, such as those involved in Samuel Whitbread College's sports residential were sometimes expected to completely organise the residential themselves, including the venue and travel arrangements as well as the activities.

Setting problem-solving activities and standing back

The clusters found that setting problem-solving group work tasks enabled the students to take an active role in their learning. Staff deliberately stood back and gave students the opportunity of finding their own way to complete the task. For example, groups of students on the Thomas Tallis business residential were given a shopping list and a budget and challenged to see who could come back with the most items and the most change. One group selected items from a supermarket and then asked to speak to the manager. They managed to negotiate with him so that he gave them the items for free. As noted in hypothesis 5 (teachers' pedagogical skills) several clusters noticed how enabling students to work in this way increased their ownership of and responsibility for their learning and commented on their intentions to continue to provide such opportunities for students to think for themselves, solve problems and decide how they would approach a task for themselves back at school.

Possible explanations for the outcomes

The findings from the Paul Hamlyn LA clusters illustrate the finding from the wider evidence base that residentials can provide an opportunity for students to develop increased independence and the ability to make choices⁴. Both prior to and during the residentials students made decisions about what and how they would learn, and took on responsibility for these decisions. The young

⁴ Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education [CUREE] (2010) *Learning away: a small scale literature review*. Available at: <<http://www.phf.org.uk/page.asp?id=1015>>. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

people not only displayed independence in making choices that affected themselves but also took on leadership roles where they made choices and took responsibility for others.

Whilst there was only limited evidence at this stage of this being extended and sustained back in school, the wider evidence base strongly indicates that doing so would have a positive effect. A systematic review which focused on identifying the evidence for the impact of independent learning⁵ found it was associated with:

- increased achievement;
- increased motivation and confidence; and
- greater pupil self-awareness and self-management.

The review also identified elements that were important in supporting independent learning. These included:

- the key role of teachers as facilitators in helping pupils become more independent; and
- the importance of a supportive learning environment with strong relationships between pupils and teachers.

It seems that the residential provided an ideal environment for teachers to take on this more facilitative role. The new context for learning seemed to help them stand back and let students work things out for themselves. This is explored in more detail in the report for hypothesis 5. It also seems that the residential with the practical and social demands they made supported the development of a learning environment which enabled the students to take on this independent role. There was extensive evidence from the clusters that relationships between teachers and students were strengthened during the residential. This is likely to have made a significant contribution to developing a supportive environment which fostered independence. Relationships are explored more fully in hypotheses 4 and 8.

Conclusions

Leadership opportunities during the residential related to both *Big* and *Little I* leadership. So secondary students becoming involved in leading primary-aged children in outdoor, team-building and problem-solving activities and older students mentored younger ones, for which they usually received some form of training. Some students established themselves as natural leaders during group work activities and there were examples of *Baton passing leadership*.

Student co-design ranged from contributing to the planning or making decisions about residential activities to organising the whole residential themselves – the latter enabling students to gain further leadership opportunities. Clusters frequently enabled students to take an active role in their own learning by finding their own way of completing a task. Doing this increased their ownership, responsibility for their learning and independence.

Whilst several schools reported on plans to build structured leadership co-design, and problem-solving activities into the facilitation of learning back in school, there is, as yet, very little evidence available of this happening on the ground the wider-evidence base indicates that doing so will result in positive learning outcomes.

⁵ Meyer, B., Haywood, N., Sachdev, D. & Faraday, S. (2008) Independent learning: Literature review. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.[Research Report 051]