

Institution: Cardiff University
Unit of Assessment: UoA25 Education
Title of case study: Campaigning for equal opportunities in learning outside the classroom (Casestudy1)
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research undertaken at Cardiff University provided important evidence about unequal access to Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) between social groups as well as providing the foundation for campaigning for equal opportunities in this area. Learning Outside the Classroom covers those activities which children undertake beyond the confines of the school walls. These can range from residential trips to international destinations to short visits to local museums and parks. These kinds of activities are widely recognised as being beneficial for children’s emotional, cognitive and social development.</p> <p>The impact of this research can be traced through collaboration with voluntary sector organisations and the UK government to evidence given to various House of Commons Select Committee enquiries, to the raising of the debate in Parliament through an Early Day Motion and then to support for the establishment of the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC) – which provides a link to LOtC organisations and professionals.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research, carried out by Professor Sally Power (2004 – present), Professor Chris Taylor (2000 – present), Professor Gareth Rees (1995 – present) and Katie Jones (Researcher, 2006 – 2008) involved two externally funded projects which investigated a) the extent of LOtC activities taking place across schools in the UK and b) the vulnerability in local authority LOtC centres.</p> <p>Provision of and participation in LOtC activities</p> <p>This project was funded by the Real World Learning Campaign (sponsored by the Field Studies Council, PGL, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and others) and was carried out in 2006-7. The research involved a survey of a stratified random sample of UK local authorities and secondary schools which yielded a comprehensive picture of the provision of and participation in LOtC activities. This was the first systematic UK-wide survey, covering all curriculum areas and including independent and state-maintained schools, as well as special schools. These data provided a map of patterns of provision and participation and were used to identify ‘over- and ‘under-providing’ schools where qualitative research was undertaken with teachers and children. The survey provided the first robust evidence of the extent to which there are systematic variations in the provision of LOtC activities, with those schools with the highest proportion of students eligible for free school meals offering the fewest opportunities. The qualitative research revealed further in-school processes which meant that those students most in need of enrichment – those from minority ethnic groups, with learning and behavioural disabilities, and those from poor families – took part in even fewer activities [3.1 and 3.2].</p> <p>Local authorities and LOtC Centres</p> <p>The second project, which was a collaborative project with CRG Research Ltd (an independent research organisation), was funded as a result of competitive tender by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families in England. This project, undertaken in 2007-8, comprised a mapping and feasibility study to chart the provision offered by Local Authority outdoor education centres. Detailed information relating to local authority provision and funding arrangements was gathered through telephone interviews with 136 local authorities in England. This information included the location, size and facilities of all English LA outdoor education centres across the UK. Local Authorities were also asked to provide details about past, current and future approaches to funding these centres. Following the national survey, interviews were carried out with 48 selected centre managers and 7 case study visits to provide more in-depth information relating to issues such as running costs, maintenance, management, staffing, educational programmes, user groups and sustainability. From this mapping exercise a number of key outputs were developed. These included: the first Geographical Information System of English Local Authority outdoor education centres (identifying their location, facilities and educational themes) to be used by policy-makers and providers to better coordinate provision. Secondly, a typology of funding models was</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

developed to demonstrate how future funding of such centres could become more sustainable during a period of financial constraints and what kind of impact any changes in funding might have. Finally, the study was able to report the varying levels of uncertainty for future provision of these centres [3.3].

Once both studies were completed the data were combined for further analysis that demonstrates the relationship between levels of local authority support (through reports by schools and in the provision of local authority outdoor education centres) and school-level provision of learning outside the classroom and consequently the different levels of learning opportunities for children depending on who they were, which schools they attended and which local authorities they lived [3.4].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Publications:

[3.1] Power, S., Taylor, C., Jones, K. & Rees, G. (2008) *Out-of-school learning: variations in provision and participation in secondary schools*. Final report to the Campaign For Real World Learning.

<http://orca.cf.ac.uk/47652/>

[3.2] Power, S., Taylor, C., Jones, K. & Rees, G. (2009) Out-of-school learning: variations in provision and participation in secondary schools, *Research Papers in Education*, 24 (4) 439-460. DOI 10.1080/02671520802584095

[3.3] CRG and Cardiff University (2008) *Assessment of Capacity and Viability of Local Authority Outdoor Education Centres*. Final Report to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (15th August 2008).

<http://orca.cf.ac.uk/51429/>

[3.4] Taylor, C., Power, S. and Rees, G. (2010) Out-of-School Learning: the uneven distribution of school provision and local authority support, *British Educational Research Journal*, 36, 6, 1017-1036.

DOI 10.1080/01411920903342046

Research grants:

October 2006 - April 2007 *Provision and Participation in Out of School Learning Activities*. £40,000 Funded by the Real World Learning Campaign, a consortium of organisations including the Field Studies Council, PGL, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. Awarded to: Prof. C Taylor, Prof. S Power, Prof. G Rees.

November 2007 - March 2008 *Assessment of Capacity and Viability of Local Authority Outdoor Education Centres*. £62,000 Funded by the Department of Children, Schools and Families (with CRG Research Ltd). Awarded to: Prof. C Taylor, Prof. S Power, Prof. G Rees

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The research was pivotal to the ongoing efforts of voluntary sector organisations to lobby the government in order to raise the profile of outdoor learning, to draw attention to the current crisis and to persuade the government to put in place protocols and policies to stop the decline in such activities. The impact can be traced through from evidence given to House of Commons Select Committee, the raising of the debate in the House of Commons through an Early Day motion, to support for the establishment of the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom which provides an important forum for the dissemination of policy and practice relating to outdoor education.

Evidence to Parliament

In 2010, the English Outdoor Council launched its campaign *Time for change in outdoor learning: Hard evidence on the value of the outdoors and a challenge to deliver fair access for all* [5.1]. The report draws heavily on the evidence of inequalities which our research revealed, eg:

“This disparity of opportunity is described in detail by Professor Power et al. Their research shows a clear link between the level of provision of outdoor education and the proportion of pupils in the school who are eligible for free school meals - the greater the level of disadvantage, the less provision.”

Our research was also cited in evidence given to the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Select Committee in the 2009-2010 session. The Select Committee report [5.2] refers to our finding that ‘the higher the levels of pupils eligible for Free School Meals, the lower the number of trips and visits offered (at Key Stage 3)’. In the oral evidence given to the Select Committee, the Chair of the English Outdoor Council claims:

“What I can do is quote some research by Professor Sally Power from Cardiff University. She identified that there are winners and losers in this...The smaller the school, the lower the number of visits that go on. In those schools, the proportion of youngsters taking up the opportunity to go on a visit is lower. Professor Power identifies a whole group of others who also don’t get that opportunity: Traveller children, Turkish students, Sikh girls, asylum seekers and Asian girls, particularly from a Muslim background.”

Our research has also been drawn on in submissions from the Field Studies Council and the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom to the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee’s enquiry into *Practical experiments in school science lessons and science field trips* [5.3]. At this hearing, the evidence from our research is used to underpin the Schools Minister’s assertion that schools should use the Pupil Premium as a means of helping disadvantaged children afford field trips to ‘experience the natural environment’ and to argue that the Government needs to offer explicit guidance to headteachers and governors to ensure this happens.

Bringing the debate to the House of Commons

This research has contributed to the raising of debate on this issue and the development of policy proposals on LOtC. In our research we emphasised the importance of making LOtC an entitlement for *all* pupils rather than an optional extra. The issue of entitlement then appears in the recommendation by the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Select Committee. In the same Report that cites our work, the Select Committee proposed that “There should be an individual entitlement within the National Curriculum to at least one out of school visit a term” [5.2]. Not long afterwards, on the 25th May 2010, the English Outdoor Council generated an Early Day Motion (tabled by Bob Russell, LibDem MP, Colchester) which called on the “Government to find a way of making this a reality for all young people, including those who need financial support” [5.4]. Although very few Early Day Motions go to full debate or lead to new legislation, these formal motions are an important vehicle in drawing MPs’ attention to issues.

The research has informed efforts to protect and expand LOtC opportunities. The importance of the viability of Local Authority outdoor education was featured in an HM Government e-petition calling to save these centres, “Our petition calls for the government to protect outdoor education centres from imminent closure by creating a fixed-term transition fund and providing business training which will enable Local Authority Centres to survive long enough to become self-sufficient” – issues that were highlighted in the DCSF study [5.5]. The petition received over 6,000 signatures.

Contributing to the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom

Both projects provided evidence to support the establishment of the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC) [5.6]. The Council, established in 2009, is a registered charity to champion learning outside the classroom. Echoing our own recommendations, its main aim is that ‘that EVERY child should be given the opportunity to experience life and lessons beyond the classroom walls’ (<http://www.lotc.org.uk/about/>). The Council provides an important link between the academic research and LOtC professionals and its membership includes over 100 educational and environmental organisation. For example, the findings from the DCSF study were presented at the first National Conference for the CLOtC in 2009 – where the interactive GIS was exhibited. Since then CLOtC has grown to become the leading voice in promoting learning outside the classroom through accrediting activities, offering training courses and disseminating the latest research evidence and policy initiatives.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[5.1] English Outdoor Council (2010) *Time For Change In Outdoor Learning: Hard evidence on the value of the outdoors and a challenge to deliver fair access to all*. <http://www.englishoutdoorcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Change.pdf>. Direct references to the research can be found on page 5 and relate to the finding that schools with higher levels of free school meal (FSM) eligibility have lower levels of out-of-school learning provision.

[5.2] House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee, *Transforming Education Outside the Classroom, Sixth Report of Session 2009–10*, HC418: London: The Stationery Office.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmchilsch/418/418.pdf>

Citations which draw directly from our research can be found on pages 13 and Ev12. The evidence cited relates not only to the problem of FSM eligibility, but also to the fact that rural schools offer fewer LOtC opportunities and that those offered by schools in less affluent areas tend to be more local and vocational in orientation. Other findings from the research which are also cited as evidence to the Committee relate to the difficulties which some minority ethnic children face in participating on LOtC opportunities and the extent to which schools use participation as a means to reward and punish behaviour.

[5.3] House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, *Practical experiments in school science lessons and science field trips, Ninth Report of Session 2010–12*, Volume II: Oral and written evidence, HC 1060-II: London: The Stationery Office. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmsctech/1060/1060ii.pdf> Again, this report refers directly to our research. References to our research can be found on pages Ev58 and Ev61 and relate to the finding that not only do schools with higher proportions of FSM offer fewer field trips, but that these experiences tend to be narrower and less inspiring.

[5.4] Details of this motion designed to trigger the debate are as follows: Early day motion 24, Learning Outside The Classroom, Session: 2010-12, Date tabled: 25.05.2011 <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2010-12/24> The motion makes reference the principal finding of our research – namely that significant inequalities in access to LOtC endure despite the Manifesto.

[5.5] This e-petition *Save Our Outdoor Education Centres (Closing Date: 23/01/2013)* was informed by our research on the vulnerability of provision and participation. It highlights the precarious situation of many outdoor education centres and the implications of their closure for children from disadvantaged homes in particular. Details of the number of signatories can be found at: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/26661>

[5.6] Contact: The Chair of Council for Learning Outside the Classroom. Will confirm the significance of our research for the campaigns and the establishment of the Council.