

**Process and impact evaluation of the
Educo Africa Leadership Project:**

A pilot study

Research Report

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Introduction

Educo Africa is a non-profit organisation based in Cape Town that aims to raise the quality of life of people and communities in post-apartheid South Africa. Their emphasis is on young people, focussing specifically on youth who are vulnerable, at risk or in need. Their programmes provide the platform for the stimulation of a sense of self and of agency for those who find themselves in situations of poverty, violence and HIV/AIDS. Since Educo Africa was established in 1994, it has endeavoured to help thousands of youth by providing healing, empowerment, training and development. Experiential learning and exposure to nature and the outdoors are the means by which Educo aims to impact the lives of youth through tasks that work on building their confidence, self-worth, courage and personal mastery.

One of Educo Africa's main programme streams is the Leadership Project (LP), which uses a Transformational Leadership approach to foster a new sense of purpose in those involved in the programme. The LP is aimed at youth and adults from the age of 10 upwards, school groups and tertiary institutions, unemployed youth and contracting agencies like government and NGO's. Participants are either involved in the LP as individuals, or as groups. Individual streams include the December open-enrolment programmes and the Youth Service Programme (YSP; open enrolment and screened). Groups are intact preselected groups through client agencies or organizations, and have included the following:

- The Desmond Tutu Emerging Leaders Programme (DTELP, now Global Development for Peace & Leadership)
- The Masakh'iSizwe Bursary Programme (MBP)
- TSiBA Education
- Wilderness Leadership School / Wilderness Foundation (WLS; Pride of Table Mountain Project)
- Environment Quest
- Fairest Cape Association
- Numerous Primary and High Schools
- Corporates, e.g. Haw and Inglis Engineering Contractors
- Community youth groups, e.g. Silvertree

No formal evaluation of the LP had taken place before 2008 to document the reach, implementation and impact of the LP on those who have participated in the programme. The aim of this study was therefore to conduct a process and impact evaluation of the LP, with the focus of the process evaluation being reach and implementation.

The objectives of the study were to:

- Assess the reach of the LP;
- Assess the implementation of the LP, including its evolution and development, the nature of the relationship between Educo Africa and its LP clients, and the recruitment, qualifications and training of LP facilitators;
- Describe the impact of the LP, including the nature of this impact, mechanisms of impact and factors influencing impact; and
- Describe the alignment between the intended outcomes of the LP and the impact described by participants.

Methods

For the assessment of the implementation of the LP, key documents pertaining to the LP were examined and two key informants within Educo Africa were interviewed to gather the necessary information: the Director of Educo Africa and the Leadership Project Coordinator. In terms of the reach of the LP, information on the numbers of participants was obtained from organisational records for each year that the LP has been implemented.

A qualitative approach was taken to assess issues around the impact of the LP as well as participants' experiences of and views on the LP. Qualitative methods included semi-structured interviews and semi-structured focus groups with LP participants (n=46; 20 female, 26 male). A sampling frame was designed for the recruitment of participants who had participated in the LP for the following time periods and recruitment / enrolment streams:

- 1995 – 1997: December programmes
- 2001 – 2003: December programmes, YSP, WLS and Environment Quest
- 2005 – 2007: December programmes, TSiBA and MBP

Participants for whom contact details were available were then contacted and invited to participate in either an interview or focus group. The distribution of participants and their recruitment / enrolment streams is outlined in Figure 1.

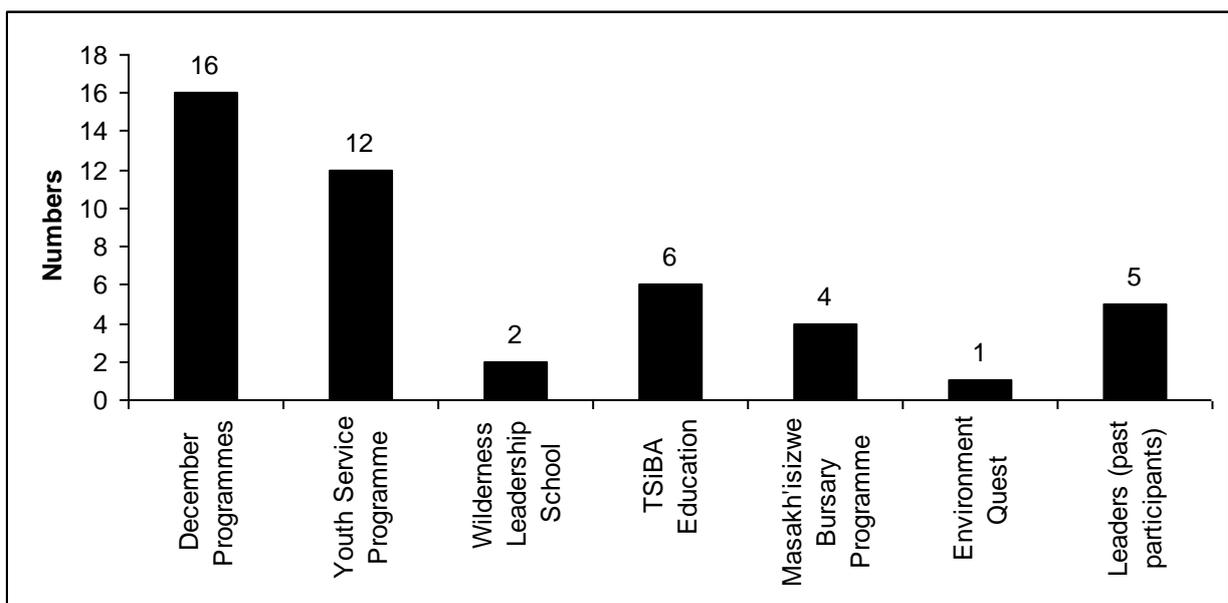


Figure 1: Participant distribution

One-on-one, interviews were conducted with 13 individuals, and three paired interviews (i.e. two participants) were conducted (i.e. with 6 individuals). Five focus groups were conducted (n=24). The majority of participants (n=40) resided in the Cape Metropole region, and interviews and focus groups were therefore conducted either at the participants place of study (TSiBA Education), at the Educo offices (in Plumstead), or at the UCT/MRC Research Unit for Exercise Science and Sports Medicine at the Sports Science Institute in Newlands (the interviewer's place of work). One participant was interviewed in Wellington (where she lived), two were interviewed at Stellenbosch University (where they are students), and three participants were sent the interview questions as a questionnaire, since they were either unable to schedule an interview time or reside outside of the Western Cape.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted in English and were recorded via audio. All participants gave informed consent for their involvement in the study, and ethical approval this study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Cape Town (REC REF 278/2008).

The interviews and focus groups explored the following issues relating to impact of the LP:

- Their experience of the LP;
- Highlights and challenges of their experience of the LP;
- What they think has made the Leadership Project work well or not work well in terms of programme content, methods and staff; and
- Their perception of the impact of the LP on their life, from an intra- and inter-personal perspective.

Interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim, and were analysed along with the questionnaires using a content analytic approach with the assistance of Atlas.ti Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Scientific Software Development GmbH, Berlin, Germany). The following themes emerged regarding the participants' experiences of the LP and the impact of the LP:

- Experiences:
 - 'Self' in relation to 'environment'
 - 'Self' in relation to 'others'
 - Challenges

- Impact of the LP:
 - Intrapersonal impact
 - Interpersonal impact
 - Mechanisms of impact
 - Factors influencing impact
 - Nature of impact

These themes will be presented under 'Findings – Impact', with supporting quotes from the interviews and focus groups.

Findings – Implementation and reach

The development of a logic model (Figure 2) for the LP was the first step in evaluating implementation and reach by providing a thorough description of the programme. This logic model, developed in consultation with key informants, outlines the inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes of the LP.

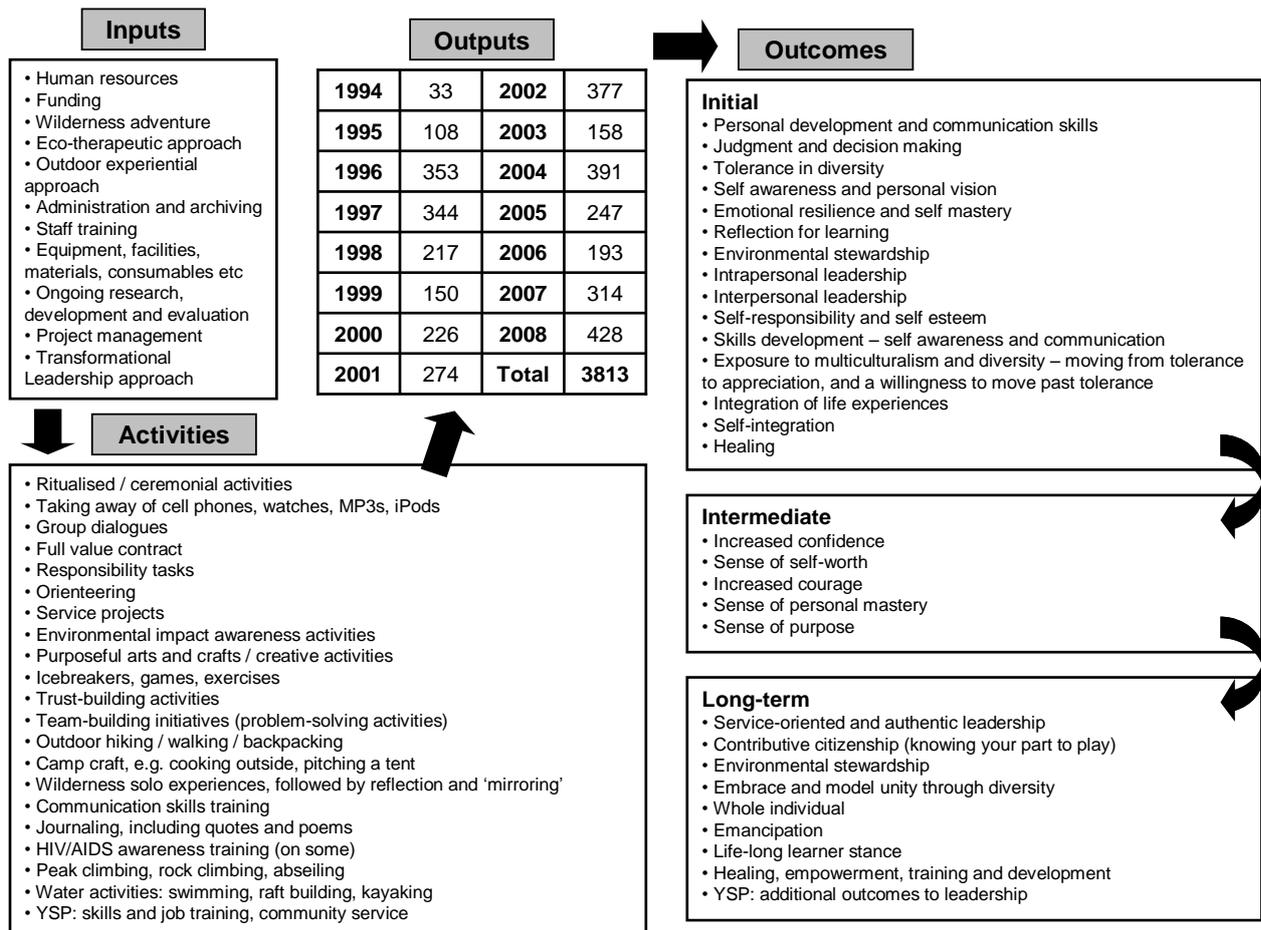


Figure 2: Leadership Project logic model

Evolution and development of the Leadership Project

Educo Africa is an independent member of the Educo International Alliance, a network of organisations that focuses on leadership development and character building for young people. Programmes and projects within this network are enriched through direct and indirect experience with the wilderness as teacher and classroom, and education is seen as a process of drawing forth the inherent qualities of character from participants. Educo was started in Canada in 1969. Educo Africa was established in 1994 and its programmes focus on child and youth development, HIV/AIDS and leadership development.

The core aspects of the Leadership Project (LP) were derived from the original Educo methodology, particularly the Educo Canada and Colorado programmes, which have a strong academic base. Educo Colorado was involved in directly mentoring the start-up of Educo Africa and its early programme design, and the director from Colorado in fact spent six months in South Africa. In terms of developing its own identity, Educo Africa has maintained diversity as a key aspect of its programmes, and this is one of many aspects in which Educo Africa is seen to have led the field.

Educo staff spoke of a constant keenness for increasing refinement, increasing excellence, re-evaluating, reflecting, and striving towards excellence. They acknowledged that the needs met by Educo are not necessarily the same as when the programme started in 1994. The fundamental combination of experiential learning and the wilderness has not been altered, nor have the core elements of the programme been changed, such as solo experiences, journaling, arts and crafts, hiking, as well as some additionally challenging activities, such as abseiling and peak climbing.

What has changed however is the process of combining and adding, and the way in which these experiences and activities are delivered has shifted over time in order to meet changing needs. The application of these experiences and activities has also changed over time based on clients' requirements and needs as well as facilitators' knowledge and the experience that they bring. Other changes included more capacity building and input on life skills, which are not necessarily wilderness based, and the matching of facilitators and participants' demographics and mother tongue.

Relationship between Educo and Leadership Project clients

Relationships between Educo and their LP clients were described as involved, engaged, intermeshed, interlinked, multi-ranged, interactive, and partnering, as opposed to Educo just running wilderness programmes or providing a service. One particular client referred to Educo as "family". It was seen that both Educo and the client add value to the process, and that the client adds value to the impact of the programme. Added to this was a fundamental recognition that the value of the programme is increased if there is a supportive undergirding of the programme by the client, and that an Educo programme is not a stand-alone event or process. Educo places a high value on the alignment of a client's philosophy with the philosophy of Educo, and that the client needs to 'buy into' the

fundamental components of experiential learning and the wilderness, and sees Educo as fitting in with what they want and need.

Over time Educo has developed a framework around the meanings of 'partnering' and 'involved', and extensive communication and discussion are seen as a key aspect of this framework. Within this communication process, specific client needs are expressed, and where necessary, Educo is involved in providing additional services, such as motivational talks, mentoring, coaching, communication and HIV training. These client relationships have provided links to other clients over time.

Recruitment, qualifications and training of facilitators

Recruitment of Educo facilitators (referred to by participants as leaders) has been varied, and over the last few years there has been little recruitment. Recruitment has often been in response to specific needs within the programmes, although Educo has had frequent requests by people wanting to work with children. Educo has not experienced a high turnover of staff, but turnover within the organisation has gone through phases. It appears that there has been a 'tipping point' in staff retention that is age-related, and that since remuneration for facilitators is not that high and a large amount of time is spent away from home, other commitments and needs have taken priority, such as family and financial security.

Educo facilitators are not trained exclusively for the LP, but are generally also involved in facilitating other Educo courses. For the most part, facilitators range in age from 25 to 35 years old. According to key informants, if facilitators are younger than 25, this can be an issue if they are facilitating participants who are older than them, as there may be power or cultural dynamics that come into play. If they are older than 35, it is possible that they may be 'out of touch' with younger people. Regarding the demographics of the facilitators, it is important that there is a spread of ethnicities, as well as a spread of English, Afrikaans and Xhosa, due to the diversity of the programme participants. Occasionally there has been a deliberate effort to fill gaps within the staff demographic, because of the client's needs.

Skills that are required to be an Educo facilitator can be divided into 'hard' and 'soft' skills, and there is a certain tension within the organisation between the demand for these two types of skills. Hard skills would be those that relate more to the technical or task aspects

of a programme, whereas soft skills would be those that relate more to the process of a programme (see Appendix for Course Leader Qualification). An Educo training manual exists for both hard and soft skills.

Hard skills include First Aid, rock climbing and abseiling, driving, and mountain walking / guiding. An individual does not need to necessarily possess all these skills at the time of applying to be an Educo facilitator as training would be provided in the skills they do not possess. An Educo facilitator would need to have or be trained for a number of qualifications that are aligned with the National Qualifications Framework. An additional First Aid training programme is provided to all new Educo facilitators in order to ensure that their skills are current.

Soft skills are those skills that are considered necessary for group facilitation within an experiential learning framework. Some Educo facilitators may start with an academic qualification in a field in which these types of skills are commonly used, but this is not necessarily a requirement as it depends on each individual's experiences, background and other skills that they may bring. The core soft skills, for example, how to do a debrief session, are trained from within the organisation, while many other soft skills are transferred experientially through observation, modelling, dialogue and debriefing with other facilitators and Educo staff. In terms of training for dealing with the diversity of programme participants, day to day interaction amongst facilitators and staff (because of the diversity within this group) could be considered part of facilitators' core training.

On each Educo course, there would be three types of facilitators present:

- Course leader, who is responsible for managing the process aspect of the programme
- First instructor, who assists with managing the process
- Volunteers / interns / other new facilitators

A facilitator's progression towards course leader is dependent on their competency and confidence in the soft skills, and these soft skills are regarded as a fundamental criterion in the expertise of Educo facilitators. Experience on courses is therefore seen as a major contributor to an individual's expertise in this area, and hence new facilitators are sent on as many courses as possible. The majority of facilitators take between six and twelve

months to reach course leader level, and this would take at least a year for those facilitators starting with no soft skills.

Educo invests a great deal of time and resources to develop hard and soft skills in new recruits, and they are aware of the time taken to develop someone with no existing soft skills. The preference has therefore been to hire individuals who are relatively close to being competent in the area of soft skills, and potential facilitators are scrutinised for their capacity in this area. Educo facilitators are also expected to be open to the process of self discovery and the development of oneself.

Reach of the Leadership Project

In the LP logic model, information under ‘outputs’ refers to the reach of the LP since its inception in 1994, and gives the number of participants for each year. Table 1 gives further information on the reach of the LP as it outlines the recruitment and enrolment streams operational between 1994 and 2008.

Year	Recruitment / enrolment streams	Numbers
1994	December programmes	33
1995	December programmes	108
1996	December programmes	353
1997	December programmes	344
1998	December programmes	217
1999	December programmes	150
2000	December programmes	226
2001	December, YSP	274
2002	December, YSP	377
2003	December, YSP, WLS	158
2004	December, DTEL	391
2005	December, WLS, DTEL, TSiBA	247
2006	December, DTEL, TSiBA	193
2007	December, WLS, DTEL, MBP, TSiBA	314
2008	December, MBP, TSiBA	428
Total		3813

Table 1: Reach of the Leadership Project

Findings – Impact

Based on participants’ responses, a conceptual model of the impact of the LP was developed (Figure 3). As mentioned previously, participants’ experiences of and views on the LP were explored in the focus groups, interviews and questionnaire in order to provide a backdrop to the discussion on the impact of the LP. Regarding this impact, specifics about the type of impact have been identified, along with the nature of this impact, mechanisms of impact, and factors influencing impact.

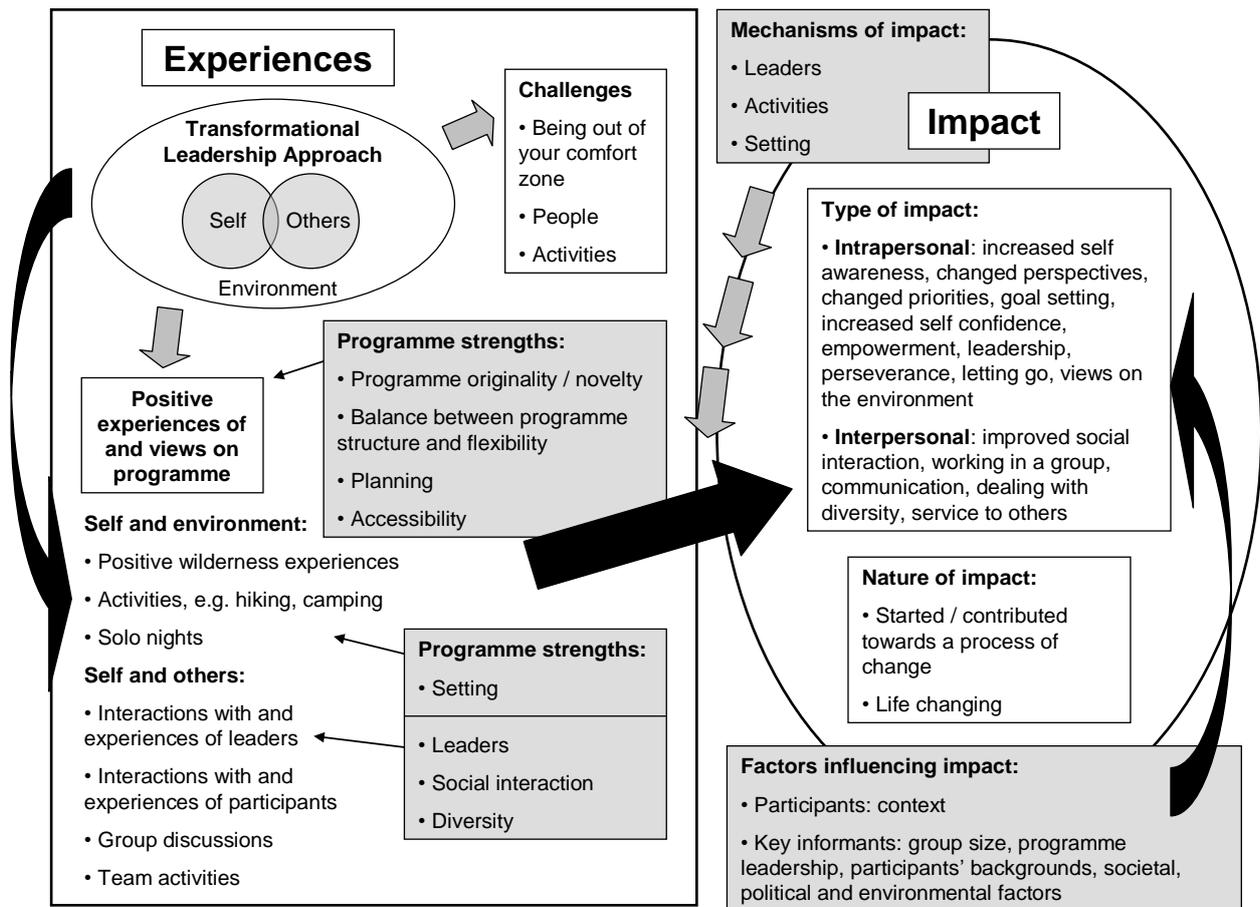


Figure 3: Conceptual model of the impact of the Leadership Project

Participants’ experiences of the Leadership Project

Central to Educo programmes is the notion of ‘self’ and ‘others’ interacting with each other and with ‘environment’, which is central to the Transformational Leadership Approach. This is represented under ‘Experiences’ in Figure 3. The findings show that the interaction of these three concepts has led to positive experiences of programme activities. Participants expressed generally positive views on the LP, and spoke in positive terms about

interactions between 'self' and 'environment', as well as between 'self' and 'others'. Out of the dialogue on views and experiences, certain strengths of the LP were identified and discussed.

"...smile, happiness...a platform to be who you want to be without judgement...the word Educo, it just brings excitement to me..." (YSP)

The views expressed by participants on the LP were overwhelmingly positive, and this was particularly evident when participants spoke about the LP and Educo in general.

"...absolutely fun, I loved it thoroughly, like 110%. I just always looked forward to going to Educo every year...I always thoroughly enjoyed it..." (December)¹

"Fun...playing...it was a great experience that I've ever had in my life, and I know that I will never ever again have such an experience. It's just one of those things whereby you just have it once and that's it..." (YSP)

"...it's so different to anything you've ever done before..." (December)

One of the strengths of the LP that appears to underpin the positive experiences of participants is the originality and novelty of the programme. This is not only in terms of the exposure to the wilderness and adventurous activities, but also in terms of the programme content and what it requires of participants.

From participants' comments it is evident that this novelty can be for two different reasons. For some participants, possibly from more advantaged backgrounds, the activities they did on the LP were new to them, but are generally accessible if they went out to find them. However, for other participants, particularly those who have lived in disadvantaged communities, the whole experience of the LP is novel, and is something in which they would ordinarily almost never have the opportunity to participate.

"I had a feeling of appreciation of the opportunity, like most of us don't get opportunities like that, to be in spaces like those where you are basically able to get in touch with yourself and sharing that with others." (MBP)

¹ Indicates the enrollment / recruitment stream through which the participant was involved in the LP.

“Things that you don’t get to do every day. Like over the weekend you don’t actually do that stuff - so getting out there and experiencing something new, especially in a place like the Cederberg which is not like a park down the road.” (December)

“I think it’s just like the experiences that we don’t usually have in the townships or in town where you can actually sleep under the stars and in a sleep bag or in a tent, or when it rains so hard, and when you swim in the rivers there and you have to share food, you have to work in a team and abseiling and climbing - I think those are the experiences that you come back up with and you go like, wow, I only saw these things in TV - and when you actually do them it’s like a dream come true.” (Leader)

The originality and novelty of the course activities do not only seem to increase the enjoyment of participants, but seem also to contribute to the profoundness of the experience. It is as if the unfamiliarity (in a positive sense) of what the LP has to offer gives the experience more prominence and an increased ability to leave a lasting impression on the lives of participants.

“...Sitting and looking up into the night sky and seeing stars and knowing that there’s no one around you - like, or there is but not very close to you. It’s something I’ve never experienced before, to be that alone...I just sat there thinking to myself. I’ve never in my life sat in the middle of nowhere, in the middle of the night on my own, with no one around me. That was just a new experience for me and I really enjoyed it...” (MBP)

“It was something I never thought would come my way. I was going through a rough time of my life then. The programme took me out of the usual way of thinking about things and gave me an opportunity to begin a new chapter of my life, which was under my control. I was able to take responsibility of my life and I was able to shape it to what it is today.” (YSP)

“...we learnt a lot of things...” (TSiBA)

Being a participant in the LP was characterised by participants as a learning experience and a time of development. Areas of learning that were mentioned ranged from specific skills such as cooking, facilitation skills, counseling, listening, language, and conflict resolution, to learning about the environment as well as other more general areas such as responsibility, ownership, trust and dealing with people. For some, the process of learning and development was described as ‘growing up’. Framing these areas of learning was an understanding that the knowledge and skills gained from the LP were relevant and transferable to everyday life and not learnt in isolation.

"I think taking responsibility, that's what I've learned towards my career. I'm not blaming, like say if I think an exam, if I don't want to study because the lecturer's bad or this is bad or that bad - so you take ownership of yourself if you don't get it right." (EQ)

"You actually learn a lot about people and where they're from, and how they're raised, etcetera...Just the programme itself - they don't take just a certain group of people. They try and make it as broad as possible for everyone to experience and everyone to enjoy." (December)

"I would say that it's a good programme because like I've said being a part of a conservation team you learn a lot; there's a lot of things that you learn, not only, you don't only apply that to the group that you're in but you apply that to your lifestyle when you're outside the programme." (WLS)

"Skills... And I didn't only learn in the classroom and I didn't only learn from other people around me. I learned because of the environment that I was in, and the fact that you had to go and do solitude time and go alone and just reflect on yourself, reflect on the past and making a decision about those reflections alone the whole night - it tend to give me a certain perspective of my life and what I want to do about it. And as from that day I always reflect on what I do." (YSP)

"I can understand dynamics in a community well, and now I can understand why certain things happen. And I think for me the main course in that three months that helped me was the counselling...I've learned to listen..." (YSP)

"...they create a space for you to dance..." (Leader)

The flexible structure of the LP was acknowledged by participants and key informants as a strength of the programme. From participants' comments it is clear that the programme itself manages to achieve a balance between various types of activities and experiences. Furthermore, the leaders are able to maintain a balance between structure and flexibility in their delivery of the programme. The structure is provided by the purpose and intention that lie behind each activity and experience on the LP, and the flexibility refers to the ability of the leaders to effectively adapt to each situation, group and individual in order to maximize the impact of the activity or experience. Participants spoke of leaders "creating a space" for each individual to take what they needed from the LP, and facilitating this with their ability to draw on a range of skills to assist participants in this regard.

"And I think the way the programme itself is structured...that's also a big strength. Like even when you're having serious discussions and that sort of thing, it all blends in quite nicely; you never feel like, okay, this is serious discussion time or there's no like set structure, you just kind of go with the flow which is quite nice and everything happens at its own pace." (December)

“I love that their aim is to facilitate you in your realisation of your own potential and just what they do to create a container of safety and how absolutely focused they are on holding that energy for the group, and the care they take with each individual.” (December)

“And also with the processes that they’ve got, like they actually allow you to go as far as you can go. Deep, if you want to deep; shallow if you want to go shallow - it’s just they create a space for you to dance. They put the music there - dance, dance until you’ve done it and then you’ll like, whew, I’m tired now, turn off the tape. So it’s the space, the adventurous and the atmosphere that they bring...it makes you go, wow.” (Leader)

“...what I appreciate about the leadership programmes was we developed, there was a sense of a basket of tricks, there was a bag of tricks that we all kind of knew about and we could use them, and we had a clear sense of, well, you would use these kinds of games and these kinds of initiatives and do these kinds of challenges and you’d work with them in a particular way...that’s what made for a good leadership programme was, you’d get together on the day, you decide, alright, we’re going to use these three initiatives today because this is where we think we’re up to with the group.” (Leader)

“...in planning the course it will be like -. It won’t be like, okay, cool, when will we do the abseil because we’re walking past the rock? It’s when we do the abseil in the right process of the course. So we need to do it as way to like launch ourselves in the beginning because they’re a group of people who are ready to launch themselves. Or it’s a slow process of building enough strength and personal courage to get to that moment of acknowledging that you’ve changed, and then it’s used at the end of the course...it’s about what the purpose of that activity is and each activity has a purpose.” (Leader)

“I think that’s what makes it such an enjoyable programme is because it’s got something to offer to everyone in different aspects of their life. So if everyone brings something different to the table then everyone gets to take something different away from it as well.” (December)

“...it’s a heck of a lot of planning and they do it well...” (Leader)

The LP was described as a well organized programme, and the effort that goes into ensuring that all participants’ needs are catered for has not gone unnoticed. This organization and planning included the communication and coordination between the leaders of different courses. Related to this was the high safety standards of the LP, and the training and experience of the facilitators in this area.

“...all of the courses that I’ve been on, there’s never been a hitch where we come to a certain place and they say, oh, but you weren’t supposed to be here. Or, oh no, you can’t go climbing today because the spot’s already been booked. Or we come across that there’s another course and the

same place where we were supposed to be and it sort of throws things off. It's never happened."
(Leader)

'Self' in relation to 'environment'

"...adventure...fun, camping, mountain..." (MBP)

Being in the wilderness emerged as central to the positive experiences of participants, and participants shared good memories of being in the mountains. They appreciated the exposure to nature, and described feeling 'connected' to nature. This connectedness led to a sense of adaptation to this different environment and a sense of belonging and safety within nature, away from the stresses and distractions of city life. At the heart of these positive wilderness experiences was a feeling of freedom within an open, yet secure, environment, triggering a sense of things being as they were originally intended to be.

"And just the exposure in wilderness, I just love the place, like being out there and sleeping in the tents, knowing that I'm going to walk for four hours and just walk - and actually in that walk developing a lot of skills, just being in a solo within while you are walking; and looking and all of those things...it became a part of me...The only process that always comes there is that I'm part of the wilderness, I'm just there. When I'm in the wilderness there is nothing that can stop me; I can go as far as I can, and that's it...there's a quote that says if you've been in the mountains and you disappear for ten years the mountains will always remember you...every time I come to the mountains that's the first thing that clicks immediately...these mountains remember me and I always feel safe." (Leader)

"I just think of the mountains, the streams, the dry open spaces we were exposed to... you're just free, man, you're just free...everything it's like free like it's supposed to be..." (TSiBA)

"I just remember myself being with nature, like I was part of nature at that time...I was feeling that I belonged there in those mountains...it also brought back the memories because I'm originally from the Eastern Cape, so being out there in the rural areas, that's a privilege when I lost when I came to Cape Town and living in over crowded areas. When I get there, the memories come back that I actually lost that privilege of the outdoors, being out there and having time to be in touch with myself." (TSiBA)

“...activities were fun... they kept us busy every day ...” (December)

Another aspect of the positive experiences of participants was the adventure activities. Camping and hiking were particularly popular, while others shared cherished memories of abseiling, rock climbing and swimming.

“...the four hiking days - for me that was brilliant...sleeping outside, walking in the veld - I've never done that before, with a backpack, you know - sleeping outside in a sleeping bag...For me that was just amazing, man. Amazing, amazing, amazing.” (YSP)

“I loved hiking at that time and Educo just made me love the outdoors even more and appreciate what we have.” (December)

“...we went on a hike and it was I think four days long, and we didn't stick to the path, like it was just like bundu bashing and making your own way that way. The leaders just led us. But that whole experience for me was very good and it made me think quite a lot of what I want to get out of the whole experience...” (YSP)

“...the solo nights, I think that was quite an amazing experience...” (MBP)

The solo night experienced on the LP stood out as an incredibly profound experience, and possibly one of the most common highlights for participants. Although it was described as a challenging and sometimes scary task, participants articulated a sense of appreciation for this experience as somewhat of a turning point for them on the programme as it led them to look inwards, engage in ‘soul-searching’ and self-reflection. The experience was therefore able to assist them in discovering themselves and being comfortable with this, uncovering their inner voice and preparing them to share this voice with others, and possibly even finding their purpose in life. For some, the solo night was about facing their fear of being alone in a secure environment, connecting with nature, taking time out from the group or realizing their need for personal time in their life back home. Journaling is a key aspect of these solo nights, where participants were able to record their thoughts and feelings during this process. These journals were provided to participants, and within the journal were motivational pieces of writing, poems, stories and other things to trigger the individual reflection process.

“It was tough. I mean, I think you did a lot of self-reflection and it was hard to do at first because it wasn't something that you were used to doing, or even comfortable doing - especially when it was

something that was kind of expected of you, like from now to now this is what you're going to do. It was strange...I grew to like it..." (December)

"Solo time as well - I think it's something that a lot of people are scared of, just generally in life to be alone with oneself. So to provide a secure environment with which to be alone and in nature you're in an expansive environment, so in a sense you're even more alone. But if you can be comfortable when you're alone you can be far more comfortable with people." (December)

"...on that solo night you come to find yourself, your inner-self, because I was talking alone that night, trying to find myself - who am I? And eventually I did find myself." (TSiBA)

"And the most highlight for me was the solo night. It's when you spend time on your own in the mountains; and for me that just brought to vision in my life where do I want to be in five years to come or ten years. Just to spend time on your own in the mountains and think about yourself, and just to allow me to stop and think about you and think about your future and where do you want to be, and to really connect with your inner voice..." (YSP)

"...the solo nights, I think that was quite an amazing experience. Definitely, it shook you to the core kind of experience, I think, which is fantastic...Being so vulnerable and exposed...sitting and looking up into the night sky and seeing stars and knowing that there's no one around you..." (MBP)

"I didn't know anything about your having personal time, having your own time, having solo. You know, this quiet time for yourself, you know, just you, your thoughts, it's also a dream. But after the course and going through that, now it's something that you need in your life...just be all by myself and just, you know, reconnect my energy and focus..." (YSP)

'Self' in relation to 'others'

"...they're just amazing, amazing people..." (December)

It was clear that the LP leaders played an integral role in making participants' experiences positive, and they were widely acknowledged as one of the programme's strengths. LP leaders were described as welcoming, friendly, accepting, empathic, sensitive, warm, easy to relate to, positive, encouraging, approachable, concerned, fair and trustworthy. Although many of these terms were used to describe leaders in general, participants did mention the different qualities of various leaders, and there was an acknowledgement that the diversity in their strengths was an asset to the programme. Participants felt that leaders were also sensitive to the needs and abilities of individuals, and were able to give personalised feedback to contribute to the growth of participants. Appreciation was expressed for the

fact that leaders are genuine, down to earth, grounded and open, and noted that in a group discussion or debriefing sessions, leaders would also open up to the group, bringing 100% of themselves to the process.

“I think that Educo was, I don’t know how they pick their staff because everyone was just so real...everyone was just amazing...The staff is amazing. And just like the energy of everyone, it’s just always positive. I think when you walk into a place and you feel comfortable and supported and loved you just can’t - that’s just somewhere you want to be.” (December)

“They would always be concerned about you after, how you’re doing today, how you feel today. They were just always there for you. I’m just saying if you had a problem and you don’t want to speak to anyone, the way I felt then you could have spoken to any one of them and tell them anything and they would keep it in confidence for you...the counsellors or facilitators look out for each and every kid and they make you feel welcome all the time...I can remember like we used to do maybe rock climbing or anything - one thing they would always try not to make you give up; no matter how bad you want to give up or try to stop they will always encourage you to at least maybe if you can’t finish the whole rock, maybe half way or just set another goal so that you know you achieve something with the day.” (December)

“I think the people within Educo, their genuineness, like they are not doing this for the sake of doing it, like, no, it’s like my job, I have to be there and be a facilitator or whatever. They became genuinely part of the processes. It was at some point like it was almost a new experience for them as well - like they were going through the same things that all of us was going through. You know, you didn’t feel like you are there going through stuff and then they are standing on the side watching you. They were going through the same things as everybody was going through - and, ja, they seemed very genuine and believed in and love what they’re doing. I mean, I saw that in all of them...” (MBP)

“There’s a particular something about presence that I think was required of people, that you had to bring yourself a hundred percent to the process as a facilitator. And that was part of what you were expected to be in the workplace as well. So it was a constant request that you really bring as much of yourself as you can, and you’re present, and there’s part of that that’s very joyful and alive in a way that I think a lot other facilitation processes or programmes or organisations might not be. I’m not say that they’re totally not, but there’s something that that in itself brought something amazing - just the ability to laugh, have an amazing time or to really cry or to really feel and be happy to speak about those things that I think was for me what makes Educo programme successful...” (Leader)

“To add on that I think the leaders, the Educo leaders, they were not like lectures or like teachers where you can see the space between a teacher and the lecturer, that’s somebody who’s old and I know everything and I just have to teach your or lecture you and then you must take advises from me. There was no such distance. They themselves were people who’ve been there in a camp who always take certain groups there. But each and every time for them it’s also a learning, it’s also different for them. They don’t take it as like - I know, last week I was with the other group. No, they

go there telling their minds that it seems like they're going for a first time because they're going with different people...When we do those reflections it's like they also reflect because there's something new that happened. They're not saying, no, I've done this before and I'm used to it. It was also difficult for them." (TSiBA)

Participants commented on the effective team work that was visible between the leaders on a programme, and that the leaders were an affirmation of the values of Educo by the way they interacted with one other.

"And I think the way that they handled themselves and the way they worked as a team, the actual leaders - I think that was probably one of their big strengths as well - because you'd never know if they were having an argument, or if they even had, I can't remember ever thinking that there was some tension between any of the leaders." (December)

Regarding the professionalism of leaders, participants spoke of how leaders were well trained, experienced and hard working. Linked to this is their ability to work with any situation, by being sensitive to each situation and group dynamics, and by having a range of necessary skills to draw on. The importance of facilitation skills was emphasised, and these include listening, creating an environment for listening, reflecting and giving feedback to participants.

"And for me, with all Educo staff their expertise, like their experience in what they do and their professionalism - it's like just amazing to see. And they always seem to become better and just from knowing a little bit more, they always have training going on as staff, and I think there's a good culture within the organisation when I was there, just of being the best you can be and just being yourself as well. So that really stand out about the Educo staff people. And then the fact that they are crazy about people - so you can just see that in every one of them - caring, very loving, and they accept you just the way you are...Ja, definitely. Even knowing how the equipment works - that for me was really amazing, that they know exactly what they're working with as well." (YSP)

"I admired the - one could experience and sense the experience that those guys have in doing this type of thing and that made one feel safe. And just the way they prepared us, they went through every detail, from day one, how to do, so we didn't feel like, we didn't go out there with questions how do you do this and how do you do that? ...The appreciation, you know, it's almost like part of them - not that it's not part of us but I think we living in the city, we tend to forget that we need to appreciate nature more. Ja, and they brought us back to that level again." (MBP)

"I love that their aim is to facilitate you in your realisation of your own potential and just what they do to create a container of safety and how absolutely focused they are on holding that energy for the group, and the care they take with each individual...and especially their work in the wilderness -

they're all highly trained, they have lots of experience...They have intimate knowledge of the wilderness. They're very experienced in themselves, and the care and the focus that they bring to what they're doing makes an overall amazing process really. And I know they're always very sensitive to the situation and to the dynamics of each group and what is needed; so what works for one group won't necessarily work for another group. So I think they're very careful about that...What I value the most is the feedback they give in the group; even in that short space of time you develop as a person because of how others are experiencing you, and they constantly give you that feedback...I'm not sure if any of the same staff are still there as when I was there but just watching them together - they reaffirm what they're trying to do, you know what I mean, in their structure as a company." (December)

Furthermore, leaders were able to support this growth by empowering participants, by treating them as equals, by not being overly domineering, overly protective or authoritarian, by giving participants and the group responsibility, particularly through highlighting the consequences of their actions, and giving participants the power to choose through promoting 'challenge by choice'.

"The staff, they treated you, they treated everyone equally and they treat you as a friend, but they also were, they put in strict measures of what you can do, what you can't do, what's allowed, what's not allowed. But then they let you just be free and let you do what you want and let you express yourself whichever way you could...And also the leaders are definitely the core to the programme, I think." (December)

"...they allowed the participants on the course to take control to a certain extent without the guides saying: We're doing this now, follow - being a leadership course it's necessary to not be domineering...And they handled upsets within the group as well as structuring different tasks, and so on, very well. And they were always safety conscious...Great guidance, it starts with that. If you've got incompetent people that run the programme, no matter how good the structure is it's not going to work. So full thumbs to them. They know the environment, they understand how youngsters want to have fun and explore. So that's that aspect. And not getting, the instructors not getting overly involved in terms of disputes that might arise, letting them work themselves out and intervening when appropriate...Ja, because I mean if you're too protective of a situation there's no learning that can take place." (December)

"...the first one is they're always pushing this 'challenge by choice' - I'm coming back to what you were saying in terms of they would never force you to do something but they will open up so that you see why you should or your should not. That's your choice." (YSP)

“...you’re brought into a situation with strangers who you end up loving at the end...” (December)

In addition to participants’ positive experiences of the Educo leaders, they also spoke positively about their interactions with other participants, the camaraderie that developed and the bonding that took place between participants. Dominant in participants’ descriptions of these actions was the process of moving from being strangers to being friends, or even feeling like family. This transition is brought on by shared experiences, experiencing day to day life with people over a long period, getting to know people through communications, and seeing people in a new light.

“...it’s love, it’s passion, it’s friendship...getting to know each other like deeper, not just knowing someone by name but knowing each other because we stayed there for three months together, sharing everything, the house, bathroom, bedrooms, cooking together, eating food that’s been cooked by one of us all the time. So, ja. And knowing what’s happening when someone is not well, or if something is happening at home and they get a call and being there to support.” (YSP)

“For me the highlights was - there’s two highlights for me. The one was the absolutely fantastic bonds; I really bonded with the people who were on the camp, like my group. And I really feel like even though I only got to know those people within a week, you know, if I bump into them on the street now I really do feel that there’s that connection and you kind of fall back into that time.” (MBP)

“...the relationships that you build over that few days. You kind of saw people in a new light, it was not that pre-conceived ideas or perceptions because you experience people quite differently when you do, when you spend time with them, like we did - and their characters, features and you’re able to identify with those. So that was quite enriching.” (MBP)

“I believe I have another family, even though I don’t see them I just believe that I have another family. Educo is my family. I’ve got a family at home. I’ve got my family that I stayed with even though we had fights, that for me it was great.” (YSP)

“...learning different cultures, different people...” (YSP)

Central to the positive nature of these experiences with others is the diversity of participants, in terms of gender, life experiences, and background, which would include socioeconomic status and culture. Participants’ appreciated this diversity, the new and interesting experiences that it brought, and the opportunity it presented to be enlightened on the differences and the similarities between participants.

“...it made me aware that we’re all people, it’s not about the colour of the skin, the difference lies in the backgrounds and the cultures. And those processes for me highlighted the difference in culture and how that dictates who you are...we openly explored the differences in culture and we looked for things that we could learn from each other. We were all able to discuss any differences in a very civil manner - there wasn’t anything that was negative or any issues around that.” (December)

“Essentially as different as everyone is they’re all the same. Like from whatever background you come from, from a big family to a small family, to a rich one from a poor one, you’re all there for the same reasons, you’re all doing the same things - and eventually you will break out with that same camaraderie.” (December)

“Getting to know a lot of different people and getting a lot different perspectives on life...like in our country was a new democratic country and it was the first time that I really - how can I say - interacted with whites, blacks; it was a new experience for me, something that I liked, that was something positive for me and today I can look at it so much differently from other people...nobody judged and thought but he’s black or he’s coloured or he’s white; everybody was together and there was something different for me.” (December)

“...spending ten days with someone that has not been through the same upbringing, that doesn’t have the same culture as you helps you realise that they’re not as different as you are. They might have been brought up differently, but they have beliefs, they have values that you need to respect as you would assume that they will respect yours.” (Leader)

“And it also gives you opportunities in terms of exploring different culture...Well, for me the highlight was that initially we didn’t understand each other because of different race and different languages and our different backgrounds. And eventually...there was a sense of belonging, a sense of understanding whereby we worked as a team, as brothers and sisters - and there was no argument about a person speaking a different language; we were all in a team, in a family...” (YSP)

“Everybody was equal, nobody was looked at differently, nobody was treated differently...” (December)

The way in which Educo and the LP managed this diversity was considered by participants to be a strength of the programme. Firstly, participants were aware that within the LP, background was of little consequence – activities were not structured around the differences between participants but rather provided an opportunity for participants to relate to each other on a basic level that emphasized working together. Furthermore, leaders did not treat participants differently on the basis of their background or gender and were non-judgemental in their approach to participants.

Secondly, participants spoke of how the programme itself provided a safe space for any of their preconceptions about others to be challenged and helped participants to figure out their place in the diverse environment of South Africa. One participant remarked on the unique opportunity that South Africa provides for experiencing diversity, and how Educo maximizes this opportunity and these experiences.

“...there was a whole mixture of people; everyone wasn't from the same income bracket - you had like really poor people and really wealthy people all on the same camp...what you realise is that it made no difference. You weren't more smart or less smart depending on how much money your parents made, or what school you went to. But you can have just as much fun together as you would have with your normal friends, if not more fun...I never felt that I was being judged or that someone else on the camp was being judged by anyone, which I also think is probably one of their strengths... nothing was structured around where you came from, what you believed in, anything like that.”
(December)

“...when it comes to Educo Africa, I think that they've done and are doing such amazing work in terms of what's relevant in our country with diversity work and multi-culturalism. And I know because my experience with going to Canada, it was kind of, if you were to compare the two, there was much more of a depth when it came to what actually happened in groups in South Africa than what happened internationally, I think because of our social structure, our social economic cultural structure in this country. I think that provides such amazing material to work with...there's so much to tap into here and I think there's so much that people can learn from each other here...” (December)

“And I think for me, I think the whole Educo experience contributes to the whole nation building concept where people are put in vulnerable positions and they have to deal with issues that we avoid every day. Because we don't want to talk about issues of culture and race and language. And when we were there we had to deal with those issues and we had to find a way of surviving together and put aside what we identified as that but see ourselves as this one group of people who need to survive together, who rely on each other for survival...I think any programme in a multicultural society like South Africa will always have a challenge of addressing certain issues which are in most cases not really personality issues but are issues of people coming from different cultural backgrounds. And I think people at Educo, I think they did well in not defining themselves as certain people but rather as these open minded people, and I think the challenge for us is people outside of the world, is how we go about in finding a common identity with a common vision. And I think as _____ said earlier, there's always a need to re-evaluate ourselves in that regard. I'm guilty of preconceived ideas about other people, about the way that they look, about their race, about, you know -. And I think it is purely because we've been socialised in such a way for a very long time and I think these programmes tend to help us in that regard. And I think one of the major, major, major achievements of the programme is kicking or starting that process of seeing yourself as part of this very diverse world that is not revolved around the way that you were brought up in your home, but rather as this complex intertwined multicultural society. And I think that part of the many problems

that we experience in workplaces or school, anywhere, is they're based solely on that - as I don't know how to relate to this guy, he doesn't know how to relate to me. So what do we do? We basically sit where we are - and that's it - we don't try hard to try and understand how he sees things and how I can get off my horse and try and understand his way of seeing things and a way of doing things. Because ultimately you're all about nation building, and if we are serious about that we've got to start dealing with those issues, and this programme really did get to that point." (MBP)

"Talking though is the necessary start. What is unfortunate is that there aren't enough safe spaces to start that process even, as in people to be able to come and contribute in the talking, not coming from a point where they see themselves as superior to others, or others seeing themselves as inferior to others - like coming into a space to talk with the understanding that your contribution is equally important as the contribution of others - and in that way instilling that sense of respect. And that worked wonders there...the space didn't allow for anyone to come in with motives to be above others; so everybody came there as were all equals, to a point that even with the facilitators themselves we kind of got to the same level on issues that affected all of us. So that's I think a major lesson that I think goes far beyond that programme." (MBP)

"...in that moment and in that place or in that time you feel free by telling them anything that's on your mind..." (TSiBA)

One of the positive aspects of the interaction between self and others were the group discussions. These typically took place after an activity, such as the solo night, where participants were asked to reflect on their experiences of, and thoughts and feelings about the activity. These times of discussion stood out for participants as a very meaningful part of the programme where they were given a platform and a safe space in which to genuinely share about difficult issues that they had or were dealing with. This type of sharing, sometimes accompanied by intense emotion, required being open and vulnerable with one another, and enabled some individuals to shed long-standing burdens in their life. Others gained perspective on hardships they had experienced. Key to this process of opening up was the trust that existed amongst participants and between participants and leaders. Leaders played an integral role in these discussions, and their contribution to the process through sharing about themselves, providing feedback to participants, and giving advice where it was appropriate.

"...you discuss about like things that go under your skin sometimes... And in the beginning you take it lightly but as you grow older through the courses you understand and whoever will be mentoring the circle at that time would be saying whatever we say in the circle stays in the circle. And you have to take it to heart because you're sharing. Because we had like heavy moments...heavy, heavy moments and you're sharing people's deepest darkest secrets." (December)

“...once I spoke, to talk about my story to the other people I gained more confidence. I felt more lighter than I used to be. I felt like the, you know like we normally say when you go on courses we, the first day we carry this bag full of food and clothes and stuff, but each and every day when we take out a tin of whatever, bully-beef, the bag becomes lighter and lighter. And for me that comes to me when I’ve spoken about my challenges in life I felt more lighter; I felt like I’m taking something out of the bag. And I could feel the anger, the ball of anger rolling down, going out of me.” (YSP)

“...the morning sessions and night sessions helped me tremendously...because the environment was created for me to do that and to speak out. Because I wanted no one can know that I was a gangster before, you know. And I wanted no one to know but the platform was set for me to say, listen, no, you can’t keep it inside, you have to bring it out...the platform was there, everyone was like so - they came across as being so understanding...if you listen, if you talk to us we’re going to listen to you.” (YSP)

“...everyone open themselves; no one was shy at all. And you could see that this person is genuine over here...she’s saying it out of her heart and what is coming out is the truth. And that makes me feel free by telling my deepest secrets which I will share with no one else but I feel free to share it with them.” (TSiBA)

“I don’t know what made us to just open up because we shared things that we never shared with anyone...it just comes out from your heart, no one forced you, no one ask you but it just comes automatically, when you’re there. And at the end of the reflection thing like, oh, my God, I said thing that I haven’t said for the whole life of mine. Not that the leaders ask you to do so. No. it’s just happened automatically.” (TSiBA)

“I think for me, I’m not quite sure, it was actually challenging but also beautiful in a way when we were actually just sharing about our own personal problems that we’ve experienced. I think at the time when people were speaking I was actually very much reluctant at the begging to tell myself, actually this is not what I want to do right now. But I think what helped me to open up was actually just the listening - because I just start to listen to people sharing and all of that - I think that actually made me ease because I was actually sitting with the impression that my story is the story, but actually hearing other people’s stories, you actually feel, well, I can say my piece here, there’s nothing that would make me feel like, oh, actually I’ve opened up.” (YSP)

“...all that the activities we did was based on teamwork...” (December)

Another positive aspect of the interaction of self and others was the team activities. These activities were either games that encouraged engagement and connection between participants, or activities that promoted team work and the development of trust between participants. The trust developed out of these activities then fed into the sharing process

discussed earlier. There was an understanding amongst participants that all games and activities had an intention or purpose behind them.

“The other activities were great, the games that we played. It’s not just a game; there’s always some feeling or emotion or something deeper than just the physical. I remember this one, I think it’s called magic boots where you had one set of boots and you had to get your whole team from one side of the rope to the other side of the rope; and you could do it whichever way you wanted, except the person who was walking needed to have on the boots, and no one else could be within that space without the boots. And people invade your personal space and you get carried over, you get thrown over the shoulder, they pick you up in their arms - but just the relationship that you build with these people while you’re on this course, it’s a bond that’s there and it’s easily recognisable. So you don’t really care whether they’re in my space. They understand, respect me and that’s all - I trust them, I go out into the mountains with them for ten days. If I can do that, they can carry me.” (Leader)

Challenges

Although participants’ experiences of the LP were predominantly positive, participants recalled some of the challenging aspects of the programme. It should be noted though that these challenges were not linked to criticisms of the programme, but rather part of the process and overcoming these challenges was viewed as an invaluable aspect of the LP.

“...challenging. I think just being out of your normal comfort zone...” (YSP)

Most of these challenges experienced were to do with participants feeling out of their comfort zone in some way or another. This ranged from adjusting to living with others, being away from home, living in the wilderness without technology, braving the elements, sharing with and opening up to others, overcoming shyness, being alone on a solo night, and working with others when one is used to being independent.

“...my main challenge was, when I came in the programme I was this person that was so closed; not an outspoken person, and it was so challenging for me, the members of the group would piss me off sometimes, but because I was so angry, I was so scared to show my anger so I couldn’t really express myself fully...because sometimes I was really scared of my anger, what will come out when I’m angry.” (YSP)

“I guess the whole being part of a team which was something new, at least it was for me - I’m very used to being very independent. So conforming to a team and you having certain tasks like you guys have to stay wherever, wherever, wherever, it was a learning curve ...It was tough. I think you did a lot of self-reflection and it was hard to do at first because it wasn’t something that you were used to

doing, or even comfortable doing - especially when it was something that was kind of expected of you..." (December)

"And the biggest challenge for me was to be surrounded by people you don't know and you having to sort of tell them things that probably have haunted you for years and you never really wanted to actually think about them and do something about them...I know that personally I'm someone who sort of bottles up things and never really want to expose myself." (MBP)

"...the challenge for me was going out into the wild and knowing that we were going to be exposed. That was the exciting and nerve wracking part; I was part excited and part nervous about knowing that we were going out there and sleep in the wild and not have much creature comforts. But, ja, I was anxious because while they did come and tell us about Educo, they were very secretive about some aspects of it, so we kind of didn't know what to expect in a way. We knew kind of what we were going to be doing but we didn't know the exact kind of things - which they do for a reason, I understand." (MBP)

"...challenges were like the group dynamics..." (YSP)

Challenges experienced that related to people were mostly to do with the diversity of participants, and the process of adapting to other cultures.

"...it was hard at the beginning because there was like different race groups and those type of things, so all of our guys from the one school kept together and the other guys from their school kept together." (Environment Quest)

"I think as a country we tend to see things from not just race, but cultural, different cultures. We've got eyes, different eyes based on race, colour, you know, and sometimes just purely language. I think one of the challenges was to...because I normally speak to _____ in Sotho, and the other people who were there in Xhosa - and personally it's very difficult to actually speak to this guy in English and to the other people who speak Xhosa in Xhosa, because I speak to him in Sotho...I realised that we're all there together...I needed to stop things my way and started seeing from other people's perspectives." (MBP)

One participant from the YSP also spoke of the challenge of dealing with different levels of commitment.

"Another challenge that I had was just the different work ethics that were in the group, where some of the guys would be really hard working and when things need to be done they do it, and others a bit more slow and didn't quite do exactly what were asked all the time as well. And sometimes, like I'm not a perfectionist, don't get me wrong, but sometimes it was a bit challenging for me, like just trying to give my best all the time but because we're in a team, like you're not judged just as an

individual but as a team you kind of, not like necessarily judged but just like if the one person does something not okay then it's the whole team - which was good as well, but at point that was a bit frustrating for me." (YSP)

Other challenges that were overcome included activities such as hiking, particularly with heavy bags, cooking, abseiling and swimming. For one participant, the challenge was faced when he returned home after the LP, and getting people in his community to understand his experience.

"From my side I would say I had a lot of expectations of things and I was quite satisfied with the training and all the skills that I gained from Educo...So when I came back to my community it was quite challenging to make people understand about the training that I received and how useful it can be especially to young people....you had to design a project in your community organising young people. So my thing was to do a clean up campaign. I really struggled with that thing. It was easy for me to write it down and everything and organise it, but to get people and also to get people to understand me, why do we have to do this clean up campaign?" (YSP)

One of the challenges that related to the structure of the programme was raised by one participant, and it was to do with the balance of time spent doing activities and time spent sitting and reflecting.

"In a way it kind of felt like, walk then we stop, then we've got to do this, then we've got to do that...I kept on wanting just that extra few moment just to like sit and reflect. And I think it's a combination, because were in the middle of winter and the sun sets so early so we had to quickly put up the tents before the sun sets. There were times when I felt quite rushed; it was difficult to stop and just absorb it, we were constantly on the move, whether it's an activity as a group or walking." (MBP)

Impact of the Leadership Project

It was clear from participants' responses that the LP had a meaningful impact on participants. This impact comprised both intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects, and this will be elaborated on below.

Intrapersonal impact

Figure 4 below outlines the process of intrapersonal impact on participants. The reflective process within the LP, a key component of the group discussions mentioned earlier, could be described as the catalyst that triggers this process. The changes triggered by this reflective process then contribute to a greater sense of self, or identity, and the development of leadership within the individual participants.

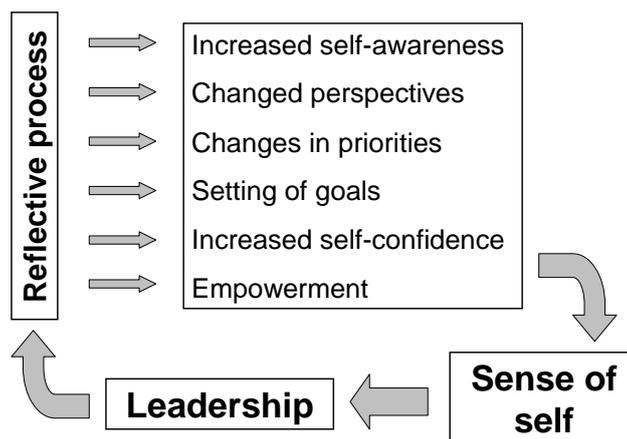


Figure 4: Process of intrapersonal impact

“...it helps you to discover yourself...” (YSP)

The reflective process underpinned a number of aspects of the LP: solo time and journals, debriefings with the group after activities, as well as the completion of personality profile questionnaires by some participants. Participants recognized the value of reflection, both in the sense that it increased their self-awareness, but also in the sense that reflective tasks such as solo time and journaling highlighted the importance of taking time out to reflect.

“...the whole experience gave us the opportunity to be able to understand ourselves to basically get you out of yourself and like you put yourself there and kind of observe yourself externally, that these are the issues that I need to deal with...learning about or identifying different areas in your life that need to be worked on. In our normal lives we go about life and we don't normally get a chance to stop a bit and say what is it that is really not working in my life...” (MBP)

“And you learn a lot also your inner ability what you have which you never known that time or you only started to realise it on the camp - like, yo! There's a lot of things that you can say about yourself and what happened around you - like, I wasn't this person before, or I never knew I had this ability...it brings out everything in you...There was a reflection which we did, we were alone and we had to write in the booklet... it's like you think back like how...what's your purpose of being here at this moment, and how your life has been and what impact it had on you. And what made you this what you are today. Because if you're like normal in a city...you never think back to your childhood days or things like that; you're more focused on television, video games and other hobbies that would occupy you. There you have the time to engage in yourself and you can track back like that's the reason why I am like this today is because of that that happened five years ago, or something that happened seven years ago and that links to everything and which makes you a person today...” (TSiBA)

The self-awareness gained by participants related to realising one's strengths and weakness, particularly regarding leadership and working in a team.

“Those courses you realise what your strengths and you weaknesses are, and the minute you identify those weaknesses you can work on it, especially on those times or the solo times or the reflection times or whatever times that maybe - and coming back after the courses or even till today, in my life to day it's more of where I know my strengths and I know how to contribute it positively because of Educo.” (December)

“...when I was on the course it just made me to really see what I do and see my qualities...my leadership qualities that I have, and know about them, not just do something because I'm just doing it, but know about it...it made me be aware of myself and what my capabilities are...”(YSP)

Furthermore, this self-awareness related to discovering one's identity and cultivating a sense of self. Understanding oneself was seen to contribute to a great understanding of others, and an ability to relate to others, and a stronger sense of purpose.

“Being on Educo I think it helped me realise once you know who you are you really don't have to be afraid of anything else. And that is basically what I learned on those December courses is you find out who you are first and know who you are as a person, trust who you are and then you can then easily relate to other people...” (Leader)

“...it gave me that opportunity to think about myself. Who am I? Where I’m from, where I want to go, where I see myself...I actually thought about things that makes me happy, that I can do and then I’ll be happy doing it for myself, not just doing for other people so that they can be happy...I think it’s not just only to understand yourself, it’s also to understand other people. And I think it’s got an impact to understanding who you are, where you’re going and yourself...” (TSiBA)

“...it’s just made me very much more self-aware and especially in group situations, definitely...I think probably growing up it definitely gave me more of a sense of self-awareness and more of a sense of quiet confidence...I feel that it gives you a sense of self...” (December)

“Educo does create those kind of spaces for people to really see themselves differently, learn about themselves, have a chance to I guess make peace with certain things in their life and confront certain other things they have difficulty with that we never really speak about or talk about, and just have a chance to learn and reflect amongst each other... Some of the little things that I definitely know I can attribute to Educo in my life is a sense of thoughtfulness or questioning around my purpose and where I’m supposed to be and what I’m supposed to be doing in the world...” (Leader)

“...it’s something that has definitely changed my perspective ...” (Leader)

One of the dominant themes around the impact of the LP programme was the changing of perspectives as a result of the programme. These perspectives included tangible issues such as camping and being in nature, as well as less tangible issues like being more thoughtful.

“I wasn’t really into camping or that sort of thing. Ja, the Educo camp has really changed my perception of camping and being out in nature. You know, it’s a different way of looking at it because when we go camping these days it’s just an extension of home, really; you take all your luxury items with you: you have sleeping bags and you’ve all got a mattress and sometime you take a radio, a TV - and this is a completely different way of camping, like proper camping - you kind of feel like a cave man sometimes because we only slept in tents when it was raining, and sometimes we slept in caves, which is cool...afterwards you just think about things differently or approach things differently...” (December)

“It actually changed the way I think or transformed the way I think. Back then I didn’t think at all, I just did what I wanted to do. Back then my tongue was faster than my brain, but I learned a lot... And the way I look at things now, I look at things very differently. I take more responsibility of what I am doing and I also create a space for disappointment and failure...now if I’m doing something and I fail I can look at it as a learning process for me, and also maybe time to listen to myself, what did I do wrong? What can I improve to make sure that I succeed next time when I’m doing this thing?” (YSP)

Regarding other less tangible issues, participants spoke of how the LP influenced their perspectives both on their own lives as well as their perspectives on other people. In terms of participants' perspectives on their own lives, this was to do with being aware of what they may be taking for granted and how the challenges they are experiencing in their life compare with seemingly more serious challenges that other participants were grappling with. For those participants dealing with these more serious challenges, their perspective changed to allow them to see new or other opportunities that were available to them, and to move away from seeing themselves as a victim. Regarding participants' perspectives of others, the changes were being able to see things from someone else's perspective, as well as seeing others in a different light, and this related particularly to the issue of diversity.

"And that day there were people who were saying something that makes you feel that, okay, I have personal problems; when you compare your problems with his problems you feel better." (WLS)

"I was free...free from anything. Free from saying to myself I will never do it, I'm a victim, I grew up in the township, oh, shame, me. Free from that. Free from those sayings. I wanted to do things. I wanted to climb even Mount Everest if there was a possibility...I don't know how to put it - new paradigms...the way I see life, the way I view life, things became more lighter around my life and more easier. And I think that goes with the fact that I understood myself more than I used to, and accepted the mistakes that I've done in life." (YSP)

"I guess for me it was basically dreaming bigger - because I come from a community where there's not a lot that you can become if you just stay there - and like the mentality of the people in the community is more like young people finish school, want to go work in Shoprite or Pick 'n Pay - and just so they can get some money. So I grew up in that environment. But I can mention the opportunities that opened up just by knowing there's so much more to achieve in life." (YSP)

"It was quite a shaping experience I think for some of us, it really was like an eye opening experience. I think one of the themes that was in the course running up to the programme and including the actual programme itself, the time away, they talked about you need to step down off your mountain and go and stand on somebody else's mountain and see it from their perspective. And I think that's something that really just rang through - you see things from other people's perspectives." (MBP)

"...the relationships that you build over that few days. You kind of saw people in a new light, it was not that pre-conceived ideas or perceptions because you experience people quite differently when you do, when you spend time with them, like we did - and their characters, features and you're able to identify with those. So that was quite enriching." (MBP)

“It was something I never thought would come my way. I was going through a rough time of my life then. The programme took me out of the usual way of thinking about things and gave me an opportunity to begin a new chapter of my life, which was under my control.” (YSP)

“The programme had a significant impact on my goals and priorities in life”. (TSiBA)

For some participants, a shift in perspective triggered a change in their priorities and goals in life. Priorities that were mentioned by participants included relationships, the environment, communication with others, family, working hard, and service to others.

“When I started Educo I was, I guess, I don’t really, I just did stuff to a minimum and I didn’t think about what was important enough. And I went on Educo and thought I’ve got this one opportunity for life and I need to make the best of it...” (December)

“...so it made me more want to experience life, change, you know, like see the world and not be stuck in my little box all the time...Ja, it is a choice that I made because in the area where I stay out of my friends who I went to primary school with they end up in gangs, they’re living like in the Cape Flats area, so gangs, drugs, especially now with drugs it’s crazy...I think that camp did actually make a big impact in life because from there onwards I worked hard with school, my school career. I got a scholarship to study and those type of things, so I basically chose a different path from what my friends - not all of them though but some of them, because some of them are not with us anymore, they’re doing violence and stuff like that.” (Environment Quest)

“And also like the priority for me was my family as well, because my mother was like a alcoholic, she was drinking a lot, and my family was falling apart and it’s something that I wanted to come and shift and change, you know, before I go out and develop other young people out there I wanted to clean where I come from.” (YSP)

Participants’ responses about how the LP had impacted their goals in life centred around the fact that the LP had helped them to set goals in areas of their life where they previously did not have goals. In terms of achieving these goals, participants maintained that the LP had helped them become more focused and determined.

“Educo has had a major role in helping me determine what it was that I really wanted to do. I didn’t come here and ask them for advice, but the things that I’d learned along the way, the lessons and just the little things that they say to you, ja, that helped me realise that, no, go the other way, this is not what you want to do.” (Leader)

“...with me, dreams awaken when you’re just living life and taking days as it comes, but now you’re more focused, more determined - more like I want this, I want this to happen in my life. You know, you’re more driven now....you’re alive...that’s how I was rejuvenated.” (YSP)

“I got to know exactly where I was at and that gave me a clear vision of where I wanted to go and how to get there...I am now able to dictate the direction I want to take in life. I am more responsible. I am more confident in everything I do. I had made promises to myself, and I am fulfilling those promises everyday...” (YSP)

“...My career path...I think it helped me a lot...” (December)

Relating to the impact of the LP on participants’ priorities and goals, the impact on career path was also acknowledged by participants. Some participants would like to pursue or have pursued a career related to the outdoors and the environment because of their experiences in the wilderness with the LP. Others were more drawn to a career that was more people-oriented owing to their involvement in the LP. The ability of the LP to open up new opportunities for participants was acknowledged, as well as the way in which participants were able to use what they had gained from the LP in their work or studying environment.

“...my experiences on Educo has had a huge influence on me choosing to study Environmental Science at UCT...The camps also helped spark a great love and respect for the environment which has subsequently shaped my choice in what to study and my career...The way in which we were taught to interact with the environment (such as leave no trace) had the hugest impact on me because it has influenced what I want to do.” (Leader)

“You see like when I was in Standard 7, maybe or like from Standard 5 up to - I was wishing after I pass my Grade 12 I can become a policeman. Then after I joined the Pride of Table Mountain, the Pride of Table Mountain shows me many opportunities, like how to deal with nature. And now in future I see myself working like on, you know Kruger National Park, or South African National Park or things like Educo.” (WLS)

“...first I was a person who just wanted to be an accountant or work on the private side; no teamwork, no working with people. So now when I came back from that camp it made me realise that now that’s not what I really want. And so then I just took another path to work with people and try to see how I could help the next person who needs my help.” (TSiBA)

“I wouldn’t say Educo has moved my direction, I think it’s just sharpened it, it’s just added more light to the path that I want to take. It just affirmed, is that the word, everything that I wanted.” (December)

“It hasn’t impacted me directly in my career path, but a lot of the things, I think it’s taught me how to overcome difficulties, how to set goals. And, yes, that’s helped, impacted me in what I’m doing at the moment, but it hasn’t said, look, you can be studying this. But I’ve taken things that I’ve learned from Educo and applied to what I’m doing now.” (December)

“From what I’ve seen from me and the other guys from Mannenberg, it’s like I don’t believe that I’m the only one that’s actually here. I mean, look, I was in matric, no money to study, I didn’t know what I was going to do, I was a shop assistant - and when I went on the course I came home and I thought to myself, but I can use this. I can use this. I don’t have a degree, I don’t have a diploma, but I’ve got experience and at least I’m a people’s person so I can use that, you see. So they bring out stuff that you didn’t know you had.” (YSP)

“They have helped make me feel comfortable in my own skin and increased my self-confidence.” (Leader)

One of the areas in which the LP seems to have had a substantial impact is on the self-confidence of participants. Participants spoke of feeling more confident, self-assured and outgoing, and less reserved and shy as a result of being on the LP. Participants felt that the programme had helped them to be more comfortable with being themselves, better equipped to express themselves, and more able to be proactive and take initiative in their life.

“...when I was younger I was a lot more shy, I was quite withdrawn and an introvert. And then I went on the camps and then like when I went there then you’d start, just, you’d have to let yourself out and just talk to everyone else because you can’t just be within yourself for the whole camp because otherwise it’s not going to be enjoyable. And I think that it did build confidence in me because, ja, being able to do certain tasks by yourself, that built confidence in me. And also just having to talk to people and just, ja, learn social skills...And I think that’s also helped me also to be more outgoing and try and be more confident I guess.” (December)

“...more confident in yourself, and also just not to care about what people think of you, just to be yourself, and just show the best in yourself to anyone and if they don’t like you they don’t like you, if they do they do.” (Environment Quest)

“I think I was actually a bit laid back before then. I wouldn’t actually just take the initiative and go out there, but it made a difference to me to say I’m here and I’ll be here to stand up and be counted.” (December)

“To be yourself no matter where you go. Sometimes it’s hard - and that’s one thing that the programme helped me with, and also just to speak who I am and from who I am, and not trying to fit in and be like the rest of the world around me.” (YSP)

“It’s given me confidence. Going into a lot of the camps I was very hesitant to want to do things. I’m very scared of what people may think. I know I used to doubt my own abilities and going on the camp showed me that I could do just as much as anybody else in the group can do. So definitely it helped my confidence.” (December)

Comments from some participants helped to clarify the development of this self confidence and maintained that increased self awareness – ‘knowing who you are’ – led to a point of ‘trusting who you are’. A deeper sense of security in oneself, fearing the rejection of other less and an improved self esteem all seemed to contribute to self confidence.

“I think Educo gave you the trusting yourself, that voicing your opinion is okay. And if you think that your opinion - I mean, of course you’ve got to be open to listening to everybody else’s valuing your opinion as much as you value everybody else’s - but it gave you that courage, like it just built it in in you that it’s okay to say yes, it’s okay to say no, it’s okay.” (December)

“I remember being very introverted; I wasn’t afraid of people but I was just afraid to express myself, I wasn’t very sociable. And being on Educo I think it helped me realise once you know who you are you really don’t have to be afraid of anything else. And that is basically what I learned on those December courses is you find out who you are first and know who you are as a person, trust who you are and then you can then easily relate to other people.” (Leader)

“They make you realise your potential.” (YSP)

Empowerment emerged as a dominant theme in participants’ comments, and relates strongly to increased self confidence and a greater sense of self awareness expressed by participants. An aspect of self awareness that can lead to empowerment mentioned by participants was the realization of one’s own potential, capabilities and strengths. The LP was seen to make participants aware of things that they did not know they had or that they could do.

“Empowerment... For me I kind of like realised I’ve got a great potential and it’s just that I need to find the right moment and the right time and the right equipment or whatever to just do it...there was nothing that we couldn’t do because we were a team...we were given any task, we could do it....anything,” (YSP)

“...being able to do the things that I never thought I can do...and actually do that without much struggle. Ja, just being able to be open minded and just putting myself into things and allowing myself to do without thinking much, and doubting and analysing things too much like I used to and stuff.” (MBP)

“And you learn a lot also your inner ability what you have which you never known that time or you only started to realise it on the camp - like, yo! There’s a lot of things that you can say about yourself and what happened around you - like, I wasn’t this person before, or I never knew I had this ability - but look now what can nature do to me. Like it brings out everything in you...within you.” (TSiBA)

“And also the other side of myself - like I’ve learned things that I didn’t know and I saw that I was strong; I never knew that I was that strong. But I saw that if I believe in something and actually put all my efforts on it and the focus, I will actually do it. Because I did things that I wasn’t even supposed to do...I went there and I did things people they didn’t expect that I would do. But I did it...So when I came back, that vibe that I had there and the spirit that I had there, and I came back, I’m like okay - and when you say, no, I can’t do this, even normal school work, you know I can’t do it - and I think, no, I’ve done bigger things there, where I thought I’m not going to do it but I actually did it...So it gave me the courage and show me the part where I’m strong and I know I can do something.” (TSiBA)

Built on this foundation of self confidence and a greater sense of self awareness, participants spoke of feeling more independent, more in control, taking ownership, and thinking for yourself.

“And also I try and do stuff more on my own; I don’t try and look for help first which is also what I think I learned from Educo where they first let you do something on your own and then if you can’t do it then they will help you...So, ja, I think kind of an independence and also thinking for yourself.” (December)

“...at Educo you learn to take control of your situation. No one else is going to, they’re not going to force you to do a climb, they’re not going to force you to abseil. But if you don’t do it you’re going to have to walk down by yourself to get to where the rest has climbed down or where the rest has abseiled down. So they nicely tell you if you don’t want to do it then do it another way.” (Leader)

“Being able to take on what life throws you so that you can live with a sense that whether you know it or not, whether you are aware of your surroundings there are those people that are looking out for you - and that gives you a freedom to be more confident...I remember on one, I think it was either the first or the second camp I wanted to rock climb and couldn’t get one foot up the rock and I gave up. And the next course I almost didn’t and I insisted eventually that I do it and I was up in a flash. So it definitely made me very determined to show that I can get things done and overcome challenges.” (December)

One aspect of the LP that specifically contributed to these feelings is the notion of 'challenge by choice', mentioned earlier on, and one participant (previously a leader on the LP) explained how this acknowledges that choosing to *not* do a task in the LP can be as powerful, and possibly even more powerful than choosing to do a task.

"...'challenge by choice', which is the notion that no challenge should be forced on...all the sort of created challenges like abseiling or overnight solo or those kind of things were always challenges by choice, but I think the other principle with that was that this is a useful experience and we're going to support the person to get to that place to be willing to take the challenge. And at the same time we're doing that we're going to make it very clear that if they don't do it that that is as powerful a position as doing it....And a lot of courses have been and people didn't do it, when we had the debrief afterwards, they would be the ones with often the biggest learning around either in their lives that they needed to say no and they haven't said no, and this was a moment of saying no for them, or they're acknowledging their own boundaries or challenges and they hadn't done that. So a lot of the time I think those learnings, if they are well supported are sometimes the bigger learnings that the person who easily went over the edge and abseiled down and it was fun and what a joy, but never struggled." (Leader)

Another participant described the freedom he gained from the LP, and this could be seen as important step in the direction of empowerment.

"I was free - I want to put it that way, I think that's a simple word, that I was free, you know, free from anything. Free from saying to myself I will never do it, I'm a victim, I grew up in the township, oh, shame, me. Free from that. Free from those sayings. I wanted to do things. I wanted to climb even Mount Everest if there was a possibility..." (YSP)

Other feelings mentioned by participants that speak to a sense of empowerment include feeling more powerful and courageous, and feeling like anything is possible.

"Anything can be done... They teach you that the sky's the limit - and that is it... And if you're limited it's because you've limited yourself. It's you, you've got to search within to find the fire within, you know....it gives you lots of courage. It builds courage; it builds the courage to, as I said earlier, there's no limit. There is no limit, and also it builds the courage within you, like you could do whatever you want." (December)

These feelings of empowerment appear to contribute to a greater sense of purpose for one's life. In this regard participants spoke of enlarging their view of what the future may hold, and feeling more ambitious and determined.

“...but it’s how I took a stand on my life and what I want to do, and where I was. When I went to the programme and when I came back and I told myself I’m not going to allow this, whatever that was happening in my life to happen now, it stops now. And how I took that stand and -. So, ja. I had the confidence with my strength knowing that even if it doesn’t work I know I’ve made the decision, I will do something about it...[Do you feel it’s given you a sense of purpose?]....Ja. It’s given me that. And, ja, just what I am capable to do.” (YSP)

“...it helped me become a better leader...” (December)

As was indicated in Figure 4, increased self-awareness and self-confidence, changes in perceptions and priorities, the setting of goals, and feelings of empowerment assist in contributing to participants’ sense of self, which then impacts on the development of leadership in these individuals. Through the LP, participants were able to develop a better understanding of leadership in general and what makes a good leader. Qualities of a good leader that were mentioned include being self aware, listening to others and valuing their contribution, encouraging and developing others, being able to contain a process and maintain balance, being able to follow another leader and be a team player when required, being able to take control when this is required, and having vision.

“...a good leader knows both how to lead and contain the people following him; but also how to follow...in terms of goals and making a difference, to always be the leader that looks out for people - that’s the most profound thing.” (December)

“We were told a leader is not a person who’s in front; sometimes a leader can be a person who’s at the back or in the middle of the group...Or if they elect you for example to be a leader, so you don’t have to be a bully and say, no, I’m a leader so then what I say must go...” (TSiBA)

“...being a leader it’s not just doing your own thing, and in life it also works like that - it’s not just about doing your own thing but it’s about listening to what somebody else has to say and working as a team together...the fact about leadership became more open and clear to me than what I understood what a leader should be...what made a good leader.” (WLS)

“I think for you to be a good leader you must know who you are, what you want and where you see yourself, so that you can also try to encourage the people that you are leading as a leader to know themselves and you must also know them so that you can work along with them...if you’re leading a company, the company has to have its certain objectives...if you as a person you’re leading with those in order people to come and satisfy and give all the things that you need from them as a team, you as a leader you must encourage them...giving them the opportunity to learn and set their own goals and go somewhere and grow. So by understanding yourself it will be better to make the team work and then make them understand you.” (TSiBA)

A few participants mentioned specific role models, including leaders on the LP and Educo staff, regarding leadership that they had been exposed to through the LP.

“I think also _____’s leadership was a modelling of something that I hold with very strongly around just what’s possible as leader, I guess, how it’s possible to be and what’s possible to carry it...I think her particular attempt to hold the whole at all times is for me one of the big differences between her and other leaders...so what’s going on individually with her or each person, what’s going on in the sub-text of the structure or the process of the organisation, what’s going on in terms of the finances and the fundraising, and holding all these varieties of pieces at the same time that they’re almost equally important...I think is an amazing gift she has. And an ability to hold a calm centeredness in amongst everything, like a real sense of no matter how challenging you are or this is or whatever, I will, I hold a space where we can cope with that...also an ability to create space for people for discussion, for critique.” (Leader)

Relating specifically to self awareness, and building on their understanding of the different types of leadership, participants spoke of how the LP had helped them discover the type of leader they are, had brought out their individual strengths as leaders and assisted in the development of leadership skills amongst participants.

“...that’s the other thing I sort of learned. I know it’s a leadership course but I kind of accepted myself that I - I mean, unless it’s something I really feel passionate about, I’m not going to go and put myself in that position. You see people who are natural born leaders; those people come out on Educo camps and stuff. But also like I found, it wasn’t such a bad thing, it’s not a bad thing if you’re not that natural born leader type person. But it also teaches you a different sort of notion of leadership; you don’t have to be the most outgoing person or the number one at this or the best in that thing - you know, leadership comes in different forms. So leading a group doesn’t necessarily mean that you’re in the front of the pack and you walk into the mountain and you can still be a leader by, or, you know, taking the initiative...” (December)

“...you had to bring out your strengths, your leadership qualities...And even though we were working as a group but there were times that the individual has to show up and take charge and lead...when I was on the course it just made me to really see what I do and see my qualities, my leadership qualities that I have, and know about them, not just do something because I’m just doing it, but know about it.” (YSP)

“...I would never say, okay, if you don’t do it I’ll take the lead. And I’ve kind of built on that now where if something needs to be done and no one is willing to do it I’ll do it, I’ll step up and I’ll say, fine, I’ll take the responsibility and I’ll do it - and that was never possible before. And I definitely think that it stemmed from Educo...” (Leader)

“And of course with the opportunity to lead the groups one was just inspired by the way things were done, and when it was your opportunity you would just embrace the chance to explore, and to do and to learn.” (MBP)

Linked to the development of leadership, a number of participants mentioned the issue of responsibility regarding the LP. This included the management of their own responsibility as a leader on the LP, and becoming more responsible as a result of the LP. Central to this was the concept of ‘action – consequences’ which highlighted the importance of taking responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions.

“...here I was being responsible for a whole group of people, not just physically which was in itself a task, but also in social terms and emotionally. So that was a huge growing up experience for me.” (Leader)

“I am now able to dictate the direction I want to take in life. I am more responsible. I am more confident in everything I do. I had made promises to myself, and I am fulfilling those promises everyday...The training phase of the programme taught me a lot about responsibility and about being a good and efficient team player...With responsibility, owning up was one part of it, the other part was seeing whatever task entrusted to me through.” (YSP)

“But I know one of the things that he actually taught me was responsibility. Because one of the examples that I’ve actually hold him accountable in return, not because I want to, it was because we were given a task to do as a team; and sometimes you’ll put all your effort in it and then some of the people, you know they will just slip out and they give you 100%, and later at the end, whatever the task to him might not look good as he wanted to. But then one day I told him but I give my 100%, I was actually responsible at that moment in doing what you told me in terms of your explanation, and you cannot actually tie us with the whole tie in the actual sense, you know where as you know you’ve put in -. So there’s quite a lot of things in terms of responsibility in that sense. He actually taught me responsibility. If you know what you need to do you’d better be responsible for that. Those action consequences I think I love that.” (YSP)

“...it’s taught me how to overcome difficulties...” (December)

Other areas of intrapersonal impact that participants spoke of include perseverance and letting go. Perseverance related to an increase in feelings of dedication, motivation and a sense of being able to overcome difficulties.

“It’s like I said, like I can’t lose hope because, I mean, there was times like I could say when we were maybe on a long hike and I was tired and I didn’t want to continue anymore, I had to go because I

knew we're going to get somewhere. Like now I might be tired but I know I have to go on because I'm going to get somewhere." (December)

"And then also just in my dedication to things that I do; especially when it comes to work, and trying to give my best all the time, even if there's no reward coming for that." (YSP)

"The programme has made a significant contribution to my level of motivation and gave me the opportunity to put all my hardship into perspective." (TSiBA)

Notions of letting go that were mentioned related to feelings of release regarding trauma that needed to be dealt with and anger around life circumstances.

"But eventually I actually loosened myself, I became more open, and what I understood - the more open I was the more it was easy for me, and I was actually learning things and I was getting much more free as a human being because I had lots of things burning inside of me that I needed to take out but I had no right platform to do so or maybe the opportunity to do so." (YSP)

"...I almost got killed in a shoot out. But instead two of my friends got killed in front of my eyes, you know, and that was an eye-opener for me. That gave me a huge fright, a huge fright. And I just decided now I'm going to give this stuff up that I'm busy with...And when I went up to the mountains, that fright that I had, that shock that I got seeing my two friends die in front of my eyes, it was still in there but I needed to talk, and I just to pour it out." (YSP)

"I came to Educo at a time where I was very in a space where I didn't know myself...I was coming from the bushes a Xhosa man, initiation school a year ago. So I was full of anger with them because I grew up without a father. But I didn't realise that at the time. So when I went to the camp I find out that what was pulling me back was the anger that I was having inside. All the things that I've done that are wrong I was doing because I didn't have peace in myself. So when I was there and being part of that nature, that's where it releases all of the anger and the other stuff..." (TSiBA)

"I think it definitely has had a big improvement on my life...it's had quite a big personal impact..." (December)

Some participants articulated the intrapersonal impact that the LP had on them in more general terms, and described this impact as growth and change, feeling enriched and becoming a better person.

"I suppose, I don't know, some sort of growth for me at least, like I really feel after, before the programme and after I just feel totally, like, I feel like I've learned a lot emotionally..." (December)

“I think it made me a better person than to what I am today. Because, I mean, where I live a lot of kids don't have the same opportunity I had then, and I can see today where they are and where I am.” (December)

“So it was a life change, I will say, for me...just being here, ja, it made me to grow in so many ways... coming here was the best decision that I made, and I appreciate everything that happened, it doesn't matter if it was hard, painful or whatever, but it did something for me.” (YSP)

“...that camp changed me...they [family] see many changes like I don't realise that I do change, you see. And they tell me and now you became like a right child, because at that time before you joined that project you were like...I was up and down...I was with gangs and I was smoking like those like daggas.” (WLS)

“...Educo just made me love the outdoors even more and appreciate what we have.”

(December)

An area of impact that related more to a change in feelings and perceptions and less to personal growth was the change in participants' views on the environment. The LP was reported by participants to have increased their awareness of environmental issues, and heightened their consciousness of their impact on the environment. This awareness links to a greater sense of appreciation for those things that are often taken for granted in an urban environment, such as the availability of water. Other participants maintained that the LP had imparted in them greater respect and an appreciation for nature and the outdoors, as well as an increased desire to spend time outdoors. For some, their appreciation was enhanced, while for others, this appreciation was new as a result of their exposure to the LP. As was mentioned earlier, participants' love for and appreciation of the outdoors and nature led their career in a particular direction, or has it least impacted on their career aspirations.

“...I think you learn to appreciate nature, which does add a whole new spin onto life, especially when you're living in a city...I've always been like a city boy. And so getting into nature and being able to be in nature does put an entire new spin on things. And it's very comforting to know that there is something outside...There are places that are quiet and peaceful.” (December)

“You learn to appreciate everything more, even something as simple as water because then when you run out and you don't have it and crave it all the time and when you do have water it tastes terrible because it's been inside your water bottle - and when you get home, I normally don't drink water but then I remember getting home and all I would drink is water, cold water from the fridge all the time.” (December)

“The camps also helped spark a great love and respect for the environment which has subsequently shaped my choice in what to study and my career...The way in which we were taught to interact with the environment (such as leave no trace) had the hugest impact on me because it has influenced what I want to do.” (Leader)

Although this particular area of impact was largely at an individual level, one participant spoke of how he was able to extend his own raised awareness of the environment to those in his community.

“...in the area that I live people, they do not understand why we should look after the environment because they don't understand the importance of the environment, and so did I. I used to take it for granted; litter was a big part of who I was and things like that. But then when I started going with the programme and I was taught about the environment, I could see that it started changing the people around me because we would walk and they litter - why did you do that? And I would explain to them what they are doing and all these things, and I would explain to them about the water conservation and stuff like that. So I could see that not only has it affected me it's affected the people around me. So they could understand more about the environment and why it's so important to us...I think it should be for everybody because I know that when I started with the Pride of Table Mountain project I had no interest in conservation whatsoever, I had no interest in plants, I didn't know anything about it and I wasn't interested in learning. Then on the first hike that I ever went on it was so exciting that I wanted to go again - and that's where I started with the programme.” (WLS)

For another participant, who is non-white, his exposure to the outdoors was linked to his perception of the outdoors as a something for white people.

“...most people who do the hiking and mountain climbing it's white people. So I know that for a fact that I've been in mountains in the Eastern Cape where I'm from...But when I was there I realised that, no, I never paid attention to these mountains that we have in the Eastern Cape...but when I come back I see nature at a totally different way now; the way I appreciate it, the way now I'm one of the whities now! ...So to me the solo night was one of those days that I'll never forget because it helped me to really connect with the nature. That's what I have found there that me and the nature, we are friends, you know. Ja, we are soul mates.” (TSiBA)

Interpersonal impact

Increased self-confidence and a greater sense of self amongst participants provides a platform for the improved social interaction for participants, which emerged as a dominant theme regarding the interpersonal impact of the LP.

“I am the master of inter-personal relations now because of the skills I acquired in the programme.” (YSP)

The improvement or development of social skills was mentioned frequently by participants, and these skills included empathy and sensitivity to others, patience, opening up to or trusting others, dealing with others' expectations, and being with people you do not know. Some participants felt that the LP had helped them to become more open to others and less anti-social.

“I think the exercises that we did, like the games that we played it got us to, you know, ice breakers and those type of things got us maybe more better social skills, able to then mingle with a different type of crowd easily at the moment, because that's what I've learned, I was young and actually when I started the camp I like shy and those type of things, but the games that I played me realised, oh, but can be friends with anyone...” (Environment Quest)

“...I was just a person who would sit in a room and not talk to anyone. So now when I came back I was open, I started talking them and then I even try to show them, give them ideas when they say that there's something wrong in the family, there's a problem - then I try to solve the problem.” (TSiBA)

“Just briefly, I think its really made me more perceptive to people. I think if I hadn't attended it I would have been maybe more reserved and try and keep that wall up around me, but I think I'm more perceptive to people in a sense.” (MBP)

“For me the impact that the course had, it's to learn to trust people. Previously before I went to this course, you know for me it was so difficult to open up to people. And I'm a person who is calm, friendly, and my friends they always come to me if they want to open up. Even sometimes my neighbours, where I'm from, even other people, they used to trust me like I'm this disciplined child and I'm this kind of person who's caring, and always put other people first than myself. And then I'll help people the way that I could, and I'll even encourage people to open up and help them. But I've never done something like that to myself. I never listened to myself but I always listened to other people. So the course gave me that opportunity that sometimes you have to think about yourself.” (TSiBA)

“With me I hated meeting or being stuck with a group of people I didn’t know. And going on Educo I was stuck with ten people for ten days and I just had to get along with them no matter what. And just knowing how to or learning how to get along with other people, even though you don’t really want to at times, it just teaches you a lot.” (December)

In some instances, development of interpersonal skills was mentioned with reference to its impact on relationships, such as a change in the priorities regarding relationships, or being able to make friends more easily.

“So for me I think interaction with people made me more interested in who they are and getting to their true essence of self as opposed to where they come from, what they do, blah-blah-blah - you get past all of that and you want to be able to enjoy them and who they are really... I would think it’s also to do with allowing or helping to bring out the other person’s beauty, strengths in any relationship. It’s also made me able to work on my friendships and relationships and build them...take them to that deeper level. And I think that’s got a lot to do with witnessing group dynamics and seeing how people, what situations bring people out...to kind of facilitate their growth - and, ja, ja. And whether that’s just one of my abilities or not I don’t know, but it’s made me value one-on-one time and one-on-one connection and put emphasis on quality time with people, as opposed to having a whole big group of friend that you just go out with or whatever. I really value having deep one-on-one connection and conversations, and that comes from trusting myself and having a sense of self - and that’s because of my experiences being out there on these leadership programmes and having those kinds of connections with people.” (December)

“...I could never really speak about me. I would be very friendly to people...but when it came to talking about who I was and what I wanted in life, that was never really there. And after sharing a couple of Decembers with people, you learn that people generally...will be interested if you just allow yourself to open up, allow yourself to be who you are...I was very anti-social, so after Educo I think the group of friends that I had, the circle of friends I had just widened, and I made friends easier. I could talk to whoever, wherever I was. And at first a lot of my friends didn’t understand that, like you went from not spending any time with us, not having any time to spend with us because you spent so much time with a lot of other people...If I must think of the person that I would have been without Educo I would have still been sitting at home in my room studying, not really bothering, not really going out, not spending any time with people; just being surrounded by my family.” (Leader)

“I think for me at home prior to going away, I was, am still the middle child. And even though being in the house with my siblings, I never really sat down and spoke about issues. And going on the trip with Educo we had time where we had to deal, we were forced to deal - and today I have a much better relationship with my brother and my sister because I was forced to deal with it. And, ja, that’s meant a lot to us. We’re much closer than we were, now we can talk about stuff that irritates us or we feel wasn’t appropriate.” (YSP)

“...now I’m much more comfortable working in groups.” (December)

Within the area of interpersonal skills, participants believed that the LP significantly enhanced their ability to work within groups. For some, this meant that they were just more comfortable in group situations, and better equipped to deal with group or team situations in the future. Other participants mentioned specific team- or group-work skills such as being able to get one’s ideas across, valuing other group members’ contributions, tolerance, relying on and trusting others, compromise, and leadership, which was discussed earlier.

“...group dynamics are always so interesting and they really work on bringing out each person and finding their strengths and focusing on their strengths. So it’s really made me very comfortable in group situations and group dynamics...” (December)

“Everything, the group has to decide together. And I found that sometimes we get, we have arguments about should we go now, because some people wanted to sleep early, whatever, but you had to compromise. And I thought that was good in terms of we were learning how to deal like a group dynamic and again teamwork came through that.” (December)

“I must say afterwards it taught me to work with other people so much better. Like before I came on Educo or even like after one year maybe, I never understood why other people wanted different things from me. Like I was only 12, but ever since Educo’s helped me because you have to make things as a decision together like almost, and you can’t do something alone because you can’t get split from the group and you can’t just go off like ____ did because then you get airlifted out. So it’s helped me so much more with working with other people and understanding where they come from and that sort of thing.” (December)

“I don’t think it necessarily just focuses on the leadership aspect because I think it teaches more about groups - because I felt that there’re usually like on a course if there are a few people that would try to dominate, so like with those kind of people I thought it taught them to compromise a lot more.” (December)

“...really communicating and listening properly.” (December)

The interpersonal skill of communication was mentioned frequently by participants as a key feature of their experience on the LP. Firstly, the LP served to highlight the importance of communication, understanding and feeling understood, and listening. It was evident from participants’ comments that the skill of listening was valued more highly as a communication skill than the ability to speak. Secondly, participants identified

communication as something that the LP taught them or helped them to develop, and this included being able to articulate what you wanted, expressing your feelings more easily, and most notably, being able to listen to others. Related to listening were the ability to acknowledge or appreciate other people's ideas or perspectives.

"I think the communication part was quite a thing, because we had a similar experience in our group, we had to address people to use a common language where everybody can understand...But just to consider how important it was for the entire team to understand each other because we had to cooperate, we had to survive together, and we had to be able to understand each other to be able to work together. And the moment you didn't understand the language it brings back that scepticism or maybe they're talking about me, or whatever. And those are negative things that doesn't have a place or that shouldn't be there in that group, and we would work on it together. So, ja, the concept of understanding and feeling understood was quite important, especially if you rely on your team in a difficult situation, you know, when you have to give instruction or delegate certain tasks it's important that each one understands and accepts his role so that together you can do this thing. So communication was very important." (MBP)

"...it helped me a lot to be able to communicate with people and then also to listen to their ideas and then check the feasibility of it, like especially with projects at university and in engineering we do a lot of that type of things where we discuss ideas and opinions...it's helped me a lot in being able to listen to people because sometimes you hear but you don't listen." (Environment Quest)

"It was a time of really having to learn how to listen for me - before often I got accused of being this kind of hot headed elitist academic type because I came with all these sort of big words and ideas and whatever. So I really had to learn to listen and to engage in a way that wasn't alienating or made people uncomfortable. So that was a big learning for me." (Leader)

For a few participants, the experience of the LP was instrumental in opening up lines of communication between participants and those close to them.

"...facilitation tools that I use in my personal relationships that are really important to me, so things like being able to give feedback to my partner and speak about difficult things and be able to listen better than I would have, and seeing that change over time..." (Leader)

"And then after that when I came back home I did speak to my father...because there was no communication between me and my father and then they advise me we have to communicate; you are the leader so you have to build up your communication between you and your father. And then when I came back home I tried to do it and now I do communicate with my father..." (WLS)

For some of the YSP participants, the counseling course offered as part of their programme was viewed as something particularly helpful in developing their communication skills.

“Like now I can go out and speak to people more confidently. I can understand dynamics in a community well, and now I can understand why certain things happen. And I think for me the main course in that three months that helped me was the counselling, they did basic counselling. Because in my community where I come from there’s so many painful things...so many hurt. Like people, they just need, or the kids need someone to talk to. They need someone to listen to them. And so I’ve learned to listen basically from them.” (YSP)

“...with the programme I did a course, a counselling course and other courses which guided me on how if someone comes to you and is telling you about whatever problem that they have and how you should listen and what to say, what not to say...it showed me how to, when I’m talking to people or participants on the course, how and what should I say. Because most of the time we, as human beings, if someone comes to you and tells you, you want to help the person and you tell him what to do; and sometimes it’s not that that you must tell them, you should just maybe guide them to what they are going through and maybe help them to find what they need to do. Because most of the time we know what we need to do but it’s just that we’re struggling to get to that...” (YSP)

Of the LP leaders who were interviewed, a few mentioned a specific communication skill: mirroring. This referred to giving participants feedback during group discussions, and being able to reflect back an interpretation of what participants were saying. The value of this skill was emphasized by those leaders that referred to it, and it is likely that leaders exercising this skill were powerful role models in the area of communication skills.

“...it taught me to be calm and listen... listening to people. And now that’s actually one of the greatest things that I’ve come up with, actually I can just sit and listen to you and connect with you while you’re speaking. And, ja, I think it really opened me to be the fullest person that I’d probably want to be in terms of listening and developing a career that probably black people are not used to...When you bring a story and they can actually mirror it to you in a different way that you can actually see, wow, and you come up with a story, this is what I’ve dreamed...and what is happening. And actually a person can say to me, you know what, this is what I’m seeing. And that part has come a long way with me, and it’s also of the things that I’ve actually learned...you can grow from listening to other people. For me what’s important is that communication, is that I want to be able to communicate with a two-year old and a 125 year old person, and actually to be in the middle of them and just be there, and I want to just be able to talk and talk and talk to people.” (YSP)

“...people just get beyond their differences and find a place where they all can meet...” (December)

Diversity within the LP has already been mentioned, both as a characteristic of the programme participants, and the way in which it is dealt with. The LP was seen to provide opportunities for learning about other cultures, and for also stimulating a desire to learn about other cultures. For many participants, the LP helped them to develop interpersonal skills to deal with this diversity. These skills included non-judgementalism, acceptance of others' differences, and generally learning to relate to people from a different culture. In terms of developing a non-judgemental attitude, participants were challenged to deal with their assumptions about others, and participants spoke of the way in which their perceptions were changed regarding diversity.

“I think I've learned not to pre-judge people and kind of give everyone a chance. And that could really only have come from those camps because I lived a relatively sheltered life. I went to a single sex school my whole life, and it was quite a good school, so we were always kept in the confines of the school and then I went home at night, it was just me and my mom. So I think I'm accepting of other people. My mom's got a very open mind as well, so she would never pre-judge other people. But doing it in practice and thinking it are two different things, and I think in practice I have learned not to pre-judge people and to see everyone for who they are really, or try to get to know people before you make any real judgement about them.” (December)

“Well, just be yourself, I think, and put all the negative things that you have or the perceptions that you have to the side because normally, because of the way the country's been and stuff, you have this negative perception maybe towards other race groups. But I've learned to just put that aside and start afresh and look forward - and that's the only way. And, I mean, I've been on die Burger Yeug Leierskap Konferasie as well where I was the only student amongst white Afrikaans students and being a coloured Muslim student it was kind of hard, but that was after the Educo Africa camp, so I knew I could deal with the situation. They wanted to know about Islam and the Koran. I explained to them because they were very like ignorant. So I think that's what makes us afraid of each other is the ignorance, you don't really know. But once you get to know the person, and I think just with putting away that perception, locking that feelings or whatever you have, putting it aside and just moving forward - it helps a lot...Actually staying with people and being in that type of situation - because I'm been meeting someone here and then just saying howzit - that it - but being in a situation where you know you need to work together, camping outdoors, cook food together, if you get caught in the mountain in a storm you really get to know how to mix with people and, I mean, you put everything else aside and pull together.” (Environment Quest)

“I remember one course in particular where we had a real mixed crowd in the group and it was kids from Newlands, kids from Khayelitsha, kids from Mitchells Plain or Hanover Park or the Cape Flats,

and Strand and so on. And I remember the first impression I had of this one boy who was on the course with us, I was just really scared, kind of, like he looked dangerous to me and he looked sort of typical gangster and this is what I had in my head. And just after the next day I was just so comfortable, I was friends with him; we were the best friends afterwards, we were talking all the time, we just like were inseparable basically. And I was so ashamed of myself. I was just really, really, really, really upset with myself for thinking that. Because I've never thought of myself as being a judgmental person, but I think we all are, and I think Educo's just helped me to sort of peel that away..." (December)

"...the most amazing thing about Educo is it takes society, your every day society...and you put like kilometres away from town and you're put into a situation where you're my everyday person, let me get to know you - you know what I mean? And then you see when you say that, where do you come from? What is it that makes you have that opinion on certain things? And what makes it that I have that opinion on certain things? So when you come out of it you definitely see people in a different light. You have a much higher respect for a stranger; you don't just turn the cold shoulder." (December)

"...Don't judge people. I mean, that's one thing that I've learned from the programme. You know what they say - they say that you don't judge a book by its cover - and that's the beauty of it, it's a clean example. I mean, I learned so many things from people that I thought that, ag, he's a loser. But eventually as the programme went on, you listen and this guy has got some good things in him; and what he shares is give me actually the courage to do what I want to do...never judge a person, just accept people how they are and learn to listen to them and understand them, and accept the differences that we have together - and that's it." (YSP)

"I think one of the themes that was in the course running up to the programme and including the actual programme itself, the time away, they talked about you need to step down off your mountain and go and stand on somebody else's mountain and see it from their perspective. And I think that's something that really just rang through - you see things from other people's perspectives. And a theme that was quite strong for me; I was the only white person on the trip and all of a sudden I realised, crikey, colours are - you know, in the city a colour divides people, people are so divided by their colour. But in that environment everybody was just - there wasn't a colour and I think walls were broken down for me and I think that was really amazing. Ja, I was able to appreciate other people's perspectives and other people's way of thinking and doing things that maybe I wouldn't have been able to understand before." (MBP)

"...just around diversity there was something beautiful that learned...because sometimes black people think their culture is the...It is a very interesting culture because it's got quite a lot of interesting traditional practices and all of that. But I think what I took out of that time in staying with other people, they actually made me realise it's not about only my culture. It's about also trying to reach out and finding about more around other people's culture...The reason why we were all there was to actually, so that we can cross culture and then learn from all of us, from all the cultures that

were there. So for me I've actually learned quite a lot about even coloured culture, white culture...it was just nice to also just try to understand for myself that it's not actually about me...And always the focus turns or the spotlight often turns to black people. And, ja, so for me I've learned quite a lot about other cultures." (YSP)

With respect to acceptance of others differences, an emphasis within the LP seemed to have been to focus on similarities, not differences, and to work towards a point where differences are put aside and accepted, where participants learn to deal with differences and are able to see things from someone else's perspective.

"And just realising how different we are, like even like there were some other coloured people on the programme with me, and even we, like we were just worlds apart. Ja, that was good for me to realise that... I think one thing for me about the diversity is that it was so clear and is still is, wherever you go, that diversity divides, it doesn't matter where you go, it will divide people. But even in that I realised that we have so many similarities actually - even though we are so diverse. And like I think you mentioned earlier about talking with people that had similar experiences as you; and even in that you just kind of realise that even though we are so different there's a lot that makes us one actually, and being from the same country as well - like even that can bring us together." (YSP)

"Essentially as different as everyone is they're all the same. Like from whatever background you come from, from a big family to a small family, to a rich one from a poor one, you're all there for the same reasons, you're all doing the same things - and eventually you will break out with that same camaraderie." (December)

"None of it actually matters when you get down to it, when you all have the same amount of equipment, the same everything, and then none of that actually affects anything. You all have to go through the same challenges and go through it on your own." (December)

"...it's definitely made me very aware of the importance of service to others..."
(December)

Following on from participants' changes in perceptions and priorities mentioned earlier, there were participants that were motivated to reach out and help others as a result of their involvement in the LP. This was described as the desire to help or be of service to others, and to make a difference in the lives of others.

"Well, when I entered Educo I was very young and I did not have so much of a choice of what I really want to do...And I've realised that especially after Educo I've been, and likewise with you, and I don't know, like the whole family, the whole focus has been: where can we help...in whatever I'm doing

I'm helping myself and who else am I helping? Just always lending a hand, just always lending a hand." (December)

"What's also important to me is that getting young people involved in projects such as the Pride of Table Mountain project...or whatever project there is, it's become a priority to me to encourage them to do and get involved in such programmes." (WLS)

For some YSP participants, this was about giving back what Educo has given them, particularly to their communities where other individuals would benefit from what they have learnt and experienced on the LP.

"...so I saw it for me, and then I felt I loved it and I wanted to be part of it by working here and also giving back what Educo has given me. So, ja. Anyway, my priorities didn't change because anything that has to do with a human being I love...I just have shifted from being the one who's a rescuer - just being the one who's making people, bringing out what people, they already know, just bringing out into them, you know, awareness of themselves and all that." (YSP)

"And I'm sitting here and I'm fortunate that I've been there, I've done that and I'm on the other side now. And I know I've made a point that I will never go there again. And I do feel that it's time for me now to give back in my community as a whole, not just the section that I'm staying in, but Khayelitsha as a whole. And I believe that that's possible." (YSP)

Mechanisms of impact

From the findings thus far, three aspects of the LP could be identified as the main mechanisms of impact: leaders, programme activities, and the programme setting. These three aspects have already been discussed at some length, particularly in light of the strength they add to the programme, and to the way in which they have contributed to participants' positive experiences of the LP. However, further comments from participants provide insight into the ways in which these aspects have specifically contributed to the impact of the LP.

"Our leaders were amazing..." (December)

The particular areas identified by participants regarding the contribution of leaders to the impact of the LP could all be classified under the skill of facilitation: creating a safe space for participants, dealing with diversity, facilitation methodologies, leaders' personal contribution to the facilitation process, and working together as a team. Creating a safe

space for participants was discussed previously, and it could be argued that it is an ability that underpins the facilitation process, forming a strong foundation for all other facilitation skills.

“...I was always comfortable to voice my opinion or anyone, it’s not like if you were to say something about another team member or something and you that you don’t feel comfortable with, that you’d be in any way treated differently or, what’s the word, like, I don’t know, made to feel uncomfortable after that...I felt so comfortable saying whatever I wanted to say, whatever was on my mind ...Our leaders were amazing...” (December)

“...just the way they urge you, the way they sort of push you...I think they play a big role. If it’s just anyone they might not be able to speak to you in a certain way or get you to do what they feel you need to do. So I feel that these are people that definitely know where they’re coming from, they know who they are and they know how to help you, because some or other way they’ve been in a similar situation and they will become, which enables them, basically, to give the nudge...And I think most of them are just...I won’t say sensitive in terms of frail but they’re sensitive to how you feel, sensitive to your emotions, and they’re just warm people...There’s this thing about Educo staff that...it’s easy to relate to them, it’s easy to open up and speak to them. I definitely think it’s because of the culture that they surround themselves with and that they build on.” (Leader)

Diversity included both promoting an atmosphere of non-judgementalism and being role models for multi-culturalism.

“...there were no class distinctions. You had no idea where people came from until you asked; the leaders never initiated any of that kind of conversation at all. If you wanted to know you’d ask, oh, okay, what school do you go to, what area do you live in?” (December)

...the people who are involved...incredible service orientated, compassionate, full of integrity, just amazing individuals...For me Educo actually really lives its mission statement, it embodies it, it embodies what they’re wanting to be, just through the people and how they are - multi-culturalism, the diversity. And I think that that’s always been a huge part in creating space for people to have experiences that they have, because the people are just so like there and focused and passionate about what they’re doing...I think it’s because the tools and the processes that are used really invite people to go deeper in themselves and with each other. It’s guided towards people being able to have a self realisation moment and that kind of open a way for people to give feedback as well. It’s been like sort of moments where people are in the moment and they really want to honour you...there will always be someone who will appear to bring that person out of their shell and out into themselves. And it never ceases to amaze me how there’s always a role for that person in a group; and it’s the group dynamics that bring them out...just no pressure. Like there was no sort of calling on them to pinpoint or highlighting them, or pinpointing them, or making an example...it was like, trust that when they’re ready they will step up...Even when it looks like they’re not doing anything,

they are, you know what I mean? With their communication with each other, their observation of what's going on within the group." (December)

Facilitation methodologies refer to the ability of leaders to use any situation within the LP as part of the process.

"But it was also an explicit methodology in some ways for the instructors to kind of use, whatever the programme was, over five day or ten days or whatever, to know that moments of conflict were going to arise but to use that as a methodology and build that into learning a set of tools about what it means to be in a group. So in some ways there's like the kind of softer aspects of that which is just an experience or as you say, those gems, nuggets of experience. But at the same time we'll turn them into tools about how to handle yourself, how not to freak out." (Leader)

Leaders were noted for investing themselves personally in the group process, thereby encouraging participants to do the same, but also communicating clear boundaries in their relationships with participants. This further promoted a feeling of safety and containment for participants within the programme.

"...the lovely thing about there in the mountains is that there is a space to be serious, there is a space to focus and facilitate the process that needs to be facilitated. There are times when we play, and when we play as if we have never played before. And once a young man sees that you can also play, what can stop him to play - and that's when you start journeying. And then that's how easy it is to pass the message through playing, through having fun - because these young men, they still want to play. Because in today's world these young boys, they don't have enough time to play...to visit their inner child. Because that inner child is still alive but is lonely now because we say you're playing with real things. So when they see this man, old man playing there - so why don't you play?" (YSP)

"Because the leaders themselves, they expose themselves and they spoke about their deepest secrets, like probably relationship problems, what happened in their marriage, or what went wrong somewhere along the line with their parents and why they're like that today. And that made us feel comfortable and also telling them that what we are going through... You know what I noticed when we first came there. We were told that we will put our bags aside, you know. Then we're given the gear, the hiking gear. And we didn't know anything about those in the mountains, but because we were there and we were telling us that, okay, we're going to be part of this programme for the next seven days, so we trusted, we put our trust in them. That's what I think made us to trust them even further when we do our reflections, and even when we do the hikings, you climb...you know that you rely on other people. We started putting our trust in them, but automatically we put our trust in each other, you know, as students. So they allowed that to us that, okay, we can rely on the team...So that's what made our reflections come out very naturally and easy for anyone to open up, every time." (TSiBA)

Participants also spoke about the balance between leaders on a course, and the effective way in which the leaders worked together in the facilitation process. Leaders were therefore valuable role models of good interpersonal skills for participants.

“...their roles as well, you can never say that one was superior to the other - like they would always have three leaders or two. So you could see what they preached to us is the same...” (December)

“When I think of particular situations, like how well each person fulfils a certain role in what they’re doing - there is the fun, like there will be one staff member who all the kids love, very high energy, but then when there’s something wrong or whatever, that’s not necessarily the person that they’re going to go to, they’re going to go to someone else. So slowly each situation and each exercise and each process that’s set up - each person’s role and what they have to contribute and strength is actually brought forward - which I think is what they do so well, because they really want to facilitate that for the kids so they’re used to having to do that for themselves I would think...it’s an awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, what they’re good at, what someone else is good at, who works well together. I think they’re very good at pairing themselves off and knowing what they do well and knowing what the other person does well, and that only comes from experience.” (December)

“...in terms of leadership, my personal leadership, my role as a follower in the group, the different types of leadership, like in servant leadership...And that’s modelled as well by...the staff modelling that. So whether it be the staff giving each other space to talk, respect in terms of how the team just resolves its own decisions and manages things in a democratic way, how the teams and different voices are respected - you know, so each little thing is modelled as well like that.” (Leader)

“...the team building exercises build the group...” (December)

Central to the contribution of activities to the impact of the LP is the existence of purpose behind all activities, as was previously mentioned. This purpose may not need to be clearly articulated by leaders, but participants have a sense that all activities are part of the programme for a specific reason.

Activities contribute to the impact of the LP by promoting diversity, building trust and team spirit amongst participants, developing participants as leaders, promoting self-awareness, and promoting interpersonal engagement. Certain activities such as orienteering and hiking specifically help to build trust and team spirit amongst participants as they are required to rely on each other to accomplish certain tasks, support and encourage one another through challenges, and show patience and sensitivity to other participants who

may struggle during these activities. Team building initiatives are activities specifically aimed at developing team spirit amongst participants.

“...as we hiked further and further and then everyone helped each other and we just entertained each other and encouraged each other and kept the morale up with stories and songs and just talking to each other we actually, I think we bonded more on the hikes that we did actually at the base camp.” (December)

“And also when you hike because you hike for hours and hours under the heat, and, you know, you just always have to remember that you’re a team and you’ve come here together and you’re all leaving together. I remember when one of our team members got ill on the trip, and it was amazing how everybody just grouped, just like grouped and made sure that everybody’s doing well, everybody’s got their water bottles. Everybody was just checking on everybody and it’s just that it teaches you to trust as well; if you don’t trust yourself no one can trust you and you won’t trust others.” (December)

“I remember when before we went on the hike we used to have these activities before, I don’t know if you remember this getting across to the other side of the river kind of activities...And I think putting so many different people with so many divergent views, especially the fact that a lot of them were engineers and thought they had the answers, the actual exercise was 30% of the activity; the 70% was the debriefing and discussing that activity, because people got incredibly - you know, they felt so passionate about their point and there was just such a breakdown of communication between people, and I think that was, people learned so much about themselves. I remember there was a tension, a very bad tension, and people learned a lot about themselves and the way that they deal in leaderships, roles and stuff.” (MBP)

“...when you say we’re going to do a team building you know, immediately you think that we have to work as a team. And what I always do, I always say let’s push the limits, because when you push the limits you actually get the real person. And you see when people fight that that’s the a real thing - and then you’ve got to deal with that stuff...once a mind has been stretched to a new experience it will never return to it’s old origin. So that experience is like stretching you and it just grows from there.” (Leader)

“...to encouraging people who are struggling...but if you struggle with a heavy pack or walking and you’re encouraged and helped and you manage to show yourself that you can do it, you find a confidence within yourself that stretches far beyond these specific tasks that you’re doing at the time...both the support from the people around you that lifts you up.” (December)

“...I had to put aside my emotions and my selfishness aside and think that I have to be part of the team, and the only way we can do this, we can only do it if we work together. So I think that for me was the highlight of the whole experience, having to -. Because when I looked at it first I didn’t see

myself up there, and then halfway through I realised that it was actually difficult, but then there're a couple of people who motivated you and supported you.” (MBP)

Leadership qualities are developed in participants when they are provided an opportunity to lead in certain activities.

“We used to do trainings and courses and there, like let's say we had a task we had to do as a team and most of the time one person will shine up and say, okay, take charge of it and make sure that everyone knows what they're doing, they understand and just bringing the group to work together in times like that. And I think all of us had our own times when we will shine up and show our leadership...” (YSP)

Self-awareness has already been discussed fairly extensively, and activities such as journaling, solo time and debriefing sessions help participants learn more about themselves and become more comfortable with who they are. Team building activities also provide an opportunity for heightened self-awareness.

“Well, there was a part of the programme where we had novels and we had to write down how we feel as a person, and I think that helped a lot because at the time I was very insecure, but like I said I am now very confident because I took a deep look at myself, look at my strengths and my weaknesses, and the team and that weekend had improved my weaknesses and also my strengths as well...I can remember that we had to stand in a circle and we had to talk to the other person. We had two circles and then we spoke about failures in life and how we can empower that failures and what are the things we would like leave behind when we go back to the community - and those were the things that actually brought us together because we heard and we witnessed things that we never heard or witnessed before.” (WLS)

“...the power of wilderness...” (Leader)

It is already clear from participants' comments that the wilderness setting of the LP played a pivotal role in the programme, and that this setting is a strength of the programme. For some, this setting was a key contributing factor to the impact of the LP, and they maintained that the programmes intended outcomes would not be achieved if the programme took place out of the wilderness.

“I will think that for me the highlight of the whole programme, it was because it was done in that environment, in the wilderness area. If it was done in an urban area or in another place in the city centre it wasn't going to be the way it was. The fact that were out in the wilderness, the fact that we were out under the skies, under the stars, the fact that it was dark, you hear the birds during the day,

you could breathe fresh air, you could stroll and take a walk, you could go out and watch the mountain, you could do anything outside there. I think that was the best thing that could happen in this programme, otherwise if it was not the environment, it was not going to be so successful as it is or as it was.” (YSP)

“I think for me is the natural setting. I think we spent most of our time in an urban area with a lot of noise, pollution and sort of rushing around. We don’t have much time to reflect on ourselves and where we want to go. And I think the fact that we were in this natural setting and being part of nature sort of opened new perspectives. And I think you could have a similar programme or the same programme in Rondebosch or Newlands, but I don’t think that the outcome would be the same as in where we were. We all were in a completely different environment, and I think that on its own contributed to how we also received and participated in all the activities....because I saw things that I don’t normally see most of my time. I realised that actually I’m part of nature and nature is part of me. The river that runs along where I slept was my life line. I didn’t have a bathroom to go to, so I suddenly realised that that on its own basically says to me that there’s always another option out there, and the fact that you’re not used to it does not necessarily mean that you cannot use it for survival or to pursue other things in your life. So I think that natural setting on its own, having to rely on nature and having to respect nature.” (MBP)

“...the environment, we were outside. If you had to do this anywhere else, like in town or something, in a building or sitting in a room like this, it wouldn’t have felt the same. But we were outside in the wilderness...talking then you will hear something outside which will calm you down, like some kind of animal just making a noise or something, or you’d hear the trees...that for me was brilliant...that made me open up more and talk - men or no men or whatever I will just like *gooi* and that was it for me...[Did you feel that there was a safety in being far away?]...Exactly, yes, definitely.” (YSP)

The wilderness is seen to bring a unique depth to the programme experience by providing space for participants that they do not normally have in their everyday life, and an opportunity to rely on nature, which is new for most.

I’m a great believer in the wilderness as a container for like awesome....all of the major life changing things have happened in the wilderness anyway...Most people aren’t used to, they don’t have a connection or a sense of the environment at all. And I know for myself it’s been incredibly helpful and important, and just creating a sense of like, it’s actually not dangerous out there, the wilderness is a safe place and it can actually be an amazing experience if you’re open to it - and that for me is very special because it’s led me to really have a special relationship with being out there in the wild. And I’ve experienced first hand what that can facilitate in my own personal development...” (December)

“There’s another thing and I guess it’s the power of wilderness if you allow it to come into a programme, which is not something you control but it’s like whether that comes, or the waking up in a sleeping bag and on your own and it’s frosty and the sky light and there’s a bat or whatever. So I think there’s moments there that have not anything to do with what anybody creates but can make

an amazing experience for someone. And also just particularly because I think so many people don't have silence in their life or they're not used to space, physical, mental or emotional space. And that's something about being out in the mountains - it helps deepen that whole reflection space ...” (Leader)

The ‘power of the wilderness’ was a rather enigmatic concept, but some participants attempted to articulate the meaning behind it. Considering the primacy of reflection and the development of self-awareness within the LP, the wilderness setting was seen to provide an appropriate space for this process. Participants described the space as calm, quiet, peaceful, an environment that teaches you to listen and brings clarity to one's life.

“And I think the important things is just the space that they create, wilderness itself - it does something to a human being; I don't know what it is, maybe it's spirits or maybe it's just the space, and it just makes me grow...I think it's just the exposure of the wilderness and the way of expressing self...And just the exposure in wilderness, I just love the place, like being out there and sleeping in the tents, knowing that I'm going to walk for four hours and just walk. And actually in that walk developing a lot of skills...I don't think there's one year since '99, since '96 that I don't go in the wilderness every year. So it became a part of me...When I'm in the wilderness there is nothing that can stop me; I can go as far as I can, and that's it...there's a quote that says if you've been in the mountains and you disappear for ten years the mountains will always remember you...And every time I come to the mountains that's the first thing that clicks immediately. And I'm, like, ja, these mountains remembers me and I always feel safe than what I used to feel then when I started to sleep and go like that. I like feels safe in the mountains now...[a sense of belonging]...Ja...it taught me to be calm and listen...” (Leader)

“The most thing that love about being there is that when I got angry I would go, and there's a place we call a reservoir, it's a tank that supplied water to base camp, so I will go and sit up on that tank and look at the view...And something that I can say, it really stopped me from expressing my anger in a negative way...And the lovely thing about there in the mountains is that there is a space to be serious, there is a space to focus and facilitate the process that needs to be facilitated...And some of them are like - I'm not an outdoor person. That's the first day. I'm not the outdoor person. I can't. Here we're going to sleep outside under this. I can't do this. But the last day when we're going home - I don't want to go home! ...And that's the magic of the mountains.” (YSP)

In terms of promoting diversity within the LP, the wilderness was deemed a neutral space in which culture and background became irrelevant. This supports the focus of activities on similarities rather than differences, and the way in which these activities require participants to focus on working together.

“In the mountains culture doesn’t even come...backgrounds doesn’t even come into play, it is who you are and how I relate to you and that is all that matters.” (Leader)

“For me I look at it this way...we come from different backgrounds and all of those kind of things. I think the physical environment for me also speaks volumes because you come up in a place where you don’t all know, it’s not like this is _____’s place - and so we all don’t know the space, which in a way firstly it will let us wanting to be in our own selves. And later noticing that actually this is no one’s home, this is all our place and we all can claim this. And also just the fact that we are actually being taken away my family’s, homes, it’s not actually something that’s been done in the township where there’s music, cars, all of those kind of stuff. It’s out there, you know, I have to rely on this person. Even if I don’t like _____ actually - but when I need him the most this is the only one I can try to call...So you actually gradually and slowly starting to trust people.” (YSP)

Factors influencing impact

In terms of factors that influence the impact of the LP, a number of these have already been addressed in the discussion of the programme’s strengths. One other factor that did emerge is the context of the LP, i.e. the recruitment stream through which participants were involved in the LP. The two streams that featured in this regard were the Youth Service Programme (YSP), TSiBA and the MBP. The LP component of the YSP was accompanied by skills and job training, as well as long-term community service and in-service training. One participant’s comment suggested that this in-service training provided a valuable opportunity for the realisation of the impact of the LP. It may also be the case the since the LP component of the YSP is three months, therefore involving more exposure to the programme, that the impact may be more profound.

“I think what has worked for the Educo project is like immediately after your three months, right, they put you into a in-service where you’re going to a internship with a certain organisation and where you actually get to go and working with people. And I think that is when you start seeing it. That is when you start seeing the results of the three months up in the mountains; it’s where you come in and you have to work and you have to go and do your work apart from the theory or whatever it is that you have to go and do there. Especially yourself, you discover these things about yourself, man, like okay but I, funny enough is I’m doing things now differently, I wouldn’t have done this before, you see. And that’s for me when you start seeing the results.” (YSP)

TSiBA participants’ comments suggested that the LP built on the reflective process in the TSiBA orientation programme (prior to the LP) and also contributed to relationship building amongst TSiBA students. For MBP participants, the LP was seen to help contribute to the

development of interpersonal skills that would be valuable in their academic and professional career.

“And what also was important about being there was the way we interact as students out there was different to the way we interact while we’re in the campus. There’s a huge difference there. So, and it was good to see the other side of the people, because we were still new, I think were only four months in the campus, it was our first year so we were not yet understanding each other...So it was a best opportunity for us to actually bond deep than we usually are. And that has been there since then. I still have that relationship with those people that I went with...To me it was really a beginning of a journey. Here in TSiBA, when you come here we have an orientation where we ask ourselves who we are, like who am I? So when we go to Educo you had that question in your mind. Who am I really? Then when you’re there and these answers that you never thought of, they’re just coming, coming, coming, you know, and you find yourself have an idea of where you’re going, where you are at the moment, and what can you change in future, things like that.” (TSiBA)

“...you know people just as class mates...you don’t know what happens now in their lives and stuff, and then you started learning that stuff...I think the kind of work that we’ll be doing as professionals requires us to work in teams, and everyone relies on each other...you do realise that you have to rely on someone else or else whatever that you’re trying to do is not going to work. And I think for us going to the professional world we are going to encounter those problems, despite the fact that we’ll probably be coming from different backgrounds or we’ll come with different values and from different school of thoughts or different universities. We will be obviously trained to do things differently and we have to find a common ground and achieve what we’re expected to achieve to provide service to the people...It’s quite challenging...at university for instance you have to sometimes work in groups and it’s people that you know. In a workplace you might have to work in different projects with different people all the time and it’s going to be completely different. And I think if one uses that experience and reflects back and that with them wherever they go I’m sure we’ll be able to find a way of surviving I think.” (MBP)

A number of factors were mentioned by key informants that were believed to influence the impact of the LP: group size, programme leadership, participants’ backgrounds, societal, political and environmental factors. The optimal group size stated was 12 participants, and it was maintained that a group bigger than 12 people would have a detrimental effect on the process within the group. Regarding environmental factors, the weather was said to play a role in shaping the outcome of a course as certain types of weather, e.g. heavy rain, may present an additional range of challenges within the programme setting.

In terms of programme leadership, key informants stressed the importance of leaders being experienced, well trained, and of a high standard, and emphasized the role of Educo leaders as role models for participants. They referred to an inspirational quality – ‘X factor’

or 'Educo magic' – that these leaders needed to have, a quality that is not easy to clearly define but vital nevertheless. Key informants also highlighted the need for leaders to be able to relate to participants, and suggested that this may become more difficult with leaders who are much older than participants. Other essential qualities included the capacity to manage risk (both physical and psychological), service oriented leadership, authenticity and openness.

With regards to the background of participants, key informants believed that support from participants' peers and family members play a role in helping participants to continue to achieve the long-term outcomes of the LP. A balance between participants and staff was deemed important, and this was in terms of language, culture, gender and age. Related to this, key informants maintained that extremes within the backgrounds of participants were difficult to bridge, and hard to manage, particularly with participants who had experienced a history of violence or abuse.

Societal factors influencing the impact of the LP referred to current leadership role models and perceptions of leadership in society, as well as the perception of the value of the LP, which uses experiential learning - an alternative educational methodology. Key informants felt that a lack of understanding regarding the methodology and a lack of belief in the LP's success could hinder the impact of the LP.

Factors that were more political in nature included pressure on government to deliver in areas that the LP addresses, and how delivery or lack thereof reflects on the government. Furthermore, a demand for programmes such as the LP to be delivered to a high volume of individuals may negatively impact the quality of programme delivery. This in turn may have an effect on the perceived cost-value ratio of the programme.

Nature of impact

“Life changing, absolutely...It shaped in my life” (Leader)

With respect to the nature of the impact of the LP, two positions were evident: firstly, that the LP either started or contributed to a process of change within an individual, or secondly, that the LP was a life changing experience. Some participants felt that it was a combination of both, as evidenced by the quote at the beginning of this section. Either

way, the nature of the impact of the LP is underpinned by a component of intrapersonal impact: changed perspectives.

“I don’t think that any programme can really claim to be changing people’s lives per say, like all it can do really is start a process of making you see things differently and teaching you how to see things in the right way, right in the sense of seeing things in a way that would make you a better person. So what Educo has done is just to begin that process of making me aware and able to reflect and as I go on in life to be able to stop, reflect and be open minded in stuff.” (MBP)

“To me it was really a beginning of a journey.” (TSiBA)

Participants’ comments that indicated that the impact of the LP started or contributed to a process contained phrases and words such as “added more light”, “sharpened it [my direction]”, “shining me up”, “starting blocks”, “opening up”, “stepping stone”, “shaping”, “kick start”, “begins a process”, “foundation”, “develop”, and “beginning of a journey”.

“...Educo, actually what they did was probably shine those things up. Because when I was there I was already in a leadership programme, and so they were just like shining me up.” (Leader)

“...I owe to Educo for just giving me that stepping stone that I needed at that time and that upliftment, because there was nobody else, and here came these people, they gave me what I needed and that was that.” (YSP)

“I think one of the major, major, major achievements of the programme is kicking or starting that process of seeing yourself as part of this very diverse world that not revolved around the way that you were brought up in your home, but rather as this complex intertwined multicultural society.” (MBP)

“...it still took a while to implement the change, it just didn’t happen over night.”
(Environment Quest)

Some participants highlighted the gradual nature of this process, and this seemed particularly relevant for December programme participants who had been involved in more than one LP. The notion of a gradual process is that although the change may be slow in coming, it is long-lasting and sustainable. However, this does highlight the need to consider the context to which a participant is returning, and the importance of having some kind of follow-up in the later stages of the process.

“...with Educo things are kind of gradual; nothing happens over night, really, well, besides like the little things like becoming more conscious of littering and things like that. But a lot of things are a bit gradual so I can’t really say...It’s not like an immediate benefit; you don’t go in there with the expectation to have a life changing experience, but it just kind of happens afterwards.” (December)

“...they just saw a person that is growing gradually or every time, every time. And in 2001 when I was fully here and they could actually say, ja, we’ve seen you growing. And they were happy with the growth that I have. Even like today I’m still this person who is gradually growing all the time...it’s been a great journey.” (Leader)

“...definitely it begins a process, it seeds. I think the initial experience is a shift in a sense, but that kind of fades away, but it’s the process that it begins I think that is more lasting.” (MBP)

“...I think it’s a long-term thing. And even if you have this moment of insight you still have to figure out how to live in reality...because it is hard to sustain that.” (Leader)

“...it’s really changed my life” (WLS)

In terms of the LP as a life changing experience, participants that held to this spoke of their life or themselves being changed, and being seen as a different person after their LP experience. For some, just the start of the change process, as discussed in the previous section, was in itself life changing.

“...Educo was e-mailed by one of the parents saying how he could not believe - this particular little girl was very quiet, extremely, extremely quiet and she really came out of herself at the end, and we got this letter from her parent to say I can’t believe this is the same person that I said good-bye to ten days ago.” (December)

“...when I talk about my experience and my community it’s like you know when you take a tar road, the tar and inside this tar there’s gold and you must kind of like shape the tar and then you can see the gold. I think this is what is happening in my community now, that at first there was this black tar, you know, dirty tar and then I shaped myself and I cleaned myself. I cleaned myself out of drugs, I cleaned myself out of gangsters, even though like it was not an easy journey but I managed to do all of that.” (YSP)

“Well, I think for me, as I was saying, it’s a life changing experience. Because, you know, you can look at it the other way around, that the mountains that we’ve climbed, I mean, it was hard...you climb the mountains, there’s always going to be two ways. There’s the physical mountain that we climb that is the actual mountain, but also there’s an internal which is your emotions and the things that you deal with. And when you come out of that experience comparing the two, it’s easy to apply it in your life, because you can then see, okay, that actually reminds you - it was very hard when I was

climbing that peak and I made it up to the top, and it actually just brings it back - it's very metaphoric for me because then you can apply that into your life and say, okay, I can try, nothing's going to stop me, I can always try and put that little bit, step forward. And even if I come to my boundaries it actually just stretches you a little bit to try and see what's actually happened, not to be in the box all the time. Because before I used to be in that box...So that's why I'm saying it's a life changing experience for me." (YSP)

The debate around the nature of the impact of the LP was discussed in a fair amount of detail in one of the paired interviews with two individuals that had been leaders on the LP. In this discussion, a question was posed regarding the claims that could be made about the impact of the LP, particularly in terms of how life changing the experience would be. These two participants also discussed the responsibility they felt as leaders to live up to these types of claims, and how leaders needed to deal with the expectations surrounding these claims. The conclusion that was reached in this discussion was that the LP presented an opportunity for a range of experiences, and that all participants would walk away from the programme with at least aspect of themselves changed or developed. Furthermore, the claim of the LP providing a life changing experience serves an ideal to be strived for and something that inspires and motivates those in the organisation.

"On the one hand also feeling this responsibility of, the kind of weighty responsibility of working with people's real feelings and emotional kind of stuff in this intensive touchy-feely kind of way, which really excited me at the time...I feel like I went in, as I arrived feeling quite over-awed by the scope and the potential, and I remember leaving thinking on the one hand, oh, I can do this stuff, and also being a little bit kind of critical or cynical about some of the methods and some of the, what I thought maybe even a slight disappointment with myself or what I thought I was doing in people's lives, just thinking, well, maybe - I'm not confident that I can claim to do what I'm doing. Maybe I'm not hitting the big claims but I'm not so sure what we were doing. At the time when I left I felt pleased to be doing this kind of work which we really need to all be very qualified psycho-analysts, ja, and we're not and I'm feeling this is slightly out of, we're out of our depth...I think my feeling at the time was that there was a challenge in setting up particular goals or intentions, and then always battling with this sense of thought that, well, maybe we're not quite hitting, we're not quite able to follow through, partly because of the stated goals sometimes were too inflated I think. You know, we're going to change this person's life radically, and then having to claim, well, we did make this radical change in this person's life - but for me the feeling is always, well, the vehemence with which you assert, that you claimed that you changed a person's life, it seems somehow to suggest that you're somehow doubtful that you didn't, - and there's always this threat that you didn't if you have such grand claims. I personally think that there's very much a place for having a short one off experience and it can be utterly life changing in some ways. But the difficulty is when you set up for yourself, we're going to make this course absolutely life changing for this person, I guarantee you. And that, one of the tensions for me at the time was, it was kind of these discrepancies, like almost like a tension that had

built into what we were doing which is that we can't save this person's life. And we experienced huge angst and anxiety about what are we doing with these people's lives if we're not changing them absolutely? What do we think we're doing? We had big arguments about what we thought we were doing, at least when I was there...So one of the things that I always struggled with was we're making these big claims but can we really say we're delivering on it?" (Leader)

"So I think that expectation that I would have to do that for other people and create that for other which I think was quite nerve wracking, like the sense of responsibility, like each course was supposed to be the most amazing thing with this amazing magic, and this meant that 24/7 we were responsible for this unbelievable sort of experience, like a life changing thing everyone was supposed to have...I think that probably in the courses I was on I had a sense that everybody who went to those courses, something happened for them. It could have been just the chance to communicate in a different way with somebody or a chance to lie under the stars, they'd never done before. Or there was some moment of a little opening in their lives...I think there's generally a moment for everybody on those courses...The interesting thing, I think what you felt again at the time was the sort of blank statement and it is a few people who would have been that clear that we are saving and changing all these people's lives...and on some level that obviously is impossible to ever live. But on the other side of that is another part of Educo which is quite inspiring, which is the whole notion that we are trying to save and change and make these amazing opportunities for everybody. And that's actually what we believe in, and then that's what keeps people pushing the whole time, and what makes the courses I think amazing...and what makes them exhausting for the staff as well, because it's a constant pressure around have you done everything you can to make this course the moment for the 12 people or 15 people or whatever on that course? And are you able to go back with stories of magic, which is always coming back from each course...So I think those moments do happen and there's lots of moments of amazing magic - and that I could never articulate even at the time to people in my life because they were hard to explain." (Leader)

Summary and interpretation of findings

The findings of this study indicate that the LP has a solid foundation within Educo Africa, and offers a relevant programme within the South African context. Educo Africa is a dynamic and flexible organisation in the sense that it responds to the changing South Africa context, and to the needs and requirements of its clients, while remaining true to the original combination of experiential learning and the wilderness. The findings suggest a strong staff base that supports Educo's dynamic nature and its efforts to remain relevant. This is in part due to the staff's ability to be flexible, as well as to the valuable skills and experience of the staff, which contributes to the delivery of the programme as it is required by clients.

The LP has a wide reach through its range of client agencies and organisations as well as the financial accessibility of the open-enrolment streams. The nature of the relationship between Educo and its clients seems to add value to both Educo and the clients, and this relationship appears to help facilitate Educo's efforts to ensure that the LP remains relevant to those participating in the programme. In terms of the types of clients that Educo works with, it would appear that there has been a slight shift towards clients whose core business is not leadership development, but they have nevertheless acknowledged its importance by partnering with Educo.

If the outcomes articulated in the logic model are compared with the impact described by participants, there is evidence of a strong alignment between the two. All initial, intermediate and long-term outcomes listed in the logic model have emerged or are alluded to (some to a greater degree than others) in participants' descriptions. Regarding participants' experiences of the LP, the interactions between self and environment, and self and others indicate that the LP is operating within the transformational leadership approach, of which a key tenet is 'self in relation to others, in environment'.

No major improvements to the LP were suggested by participants, but rather their responses affirmed the content and delivery of the programme. The many strengths of the LP described by participants give weight to the recommendation that Educo should continue to implement the LP with the same emphasis on leadership, flexibility to participant and client needs and desired outcomes, and consideration of relevant societal and political factors in South Africa.

Regarding the mechanisms of impact (leaders, activities and setting), the findings do not imply any changes that need to be made within these aspects of the LP. Rather, the findings make it clear that these influence and facilitate the reflective process, which as was indicated in Figure 4, forms the basis of the intrapersonal impact of the LP. Furthermore, the findings indicate that this *intrapersonal* impact underlies the *interpersonal* impact of the LP, making the reflective process in a sense the cornerstone of the programme's impact.

In terms of the nature of the LP's impact, it does not seem necessary to label the LP one way or the other. Due to the scope of possibilities within each group and individual for impact, 'life changing' and 'a process of change' need not be mutually exclusive, and there would seem little value in trying to estimate differences in the nature of impact for all LP participants. The focus should rather be on understanding that due to the inherently reflective and therefore very personal impact of the LP, the LP has contributed to life changes in all participants, although the speed and extent of these changes will differ.

Lastly, with respect to the factors influencing the impact of the LP, the majority of these are factors over which Educo has some control. Once again, no suggestions for improvement emerged strongly but rather the findings were in support of facilitating the reflective process, be that through the group size, programme leadership, and the context of the course. This last factor is impacted on by the relationship between Educo and its clients, and the findings suggest that the nature of these relationships will continue to positively influence the impact of the LP. Factors over which Educo has less or little control include participants' backgrounds, as well as societal, political and environmental factors. However, it is evident in the findings that the strength of the LP is to work within these factors and in fact use them to the advantaged of the programme and its participants.

Conclusion

Within the diverse and ever challenging social, economic and political landscape of our country, it is encouraging to encounter a programme such as the LP that is working at developing young South Africans into the leaders of our future. They do this by taking individuals from all walks of life on an inward journey to a point of self-awareness that allows them to uncover their identity and unleash their potential, giving them the confidence and courage to step into a better future for themselves. While the size of these steps may be enormous and life changing for some, even the smallest steps begin a significant journey, and have the potential to impact each LP participant both in terms of how they work out their own sense of self and how they interact with those around them. It could be said that the possibilities for the impact of the LP are endless, and it is perhaps this ideal that fuels the enthusiasm and commitment of those managing and leading the programme, imparting a sense of empowerment for all it reaches.

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Appendix

Course Leaders are qualified staff members who have been determined by the CEO and the Training Coordinator to have demonstrated the necessary competencies and skills to be an Educo Africa Course Leader. They have the following qualifications.

Course Leader Necessary Qualifications:

- Minimum 21 years of age

External:

- St John's Level 3 First Aid (or ideally Wilderness First Aid – 80 hr course)
- Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation Certification
- Lifeguard Award
- NQF- Basic Mountain Walking Guide with off trail, navigation and overnight (TG 19)
- NQF- Abseil Guide (TG 20)
- NQF- Top Rope Supervisor
- Counselling Course (minimum 90 hours)
- Driver's License and PDP
- Criminal record check (confidential)
- SAQA Accredited Trainer

Internal:

- Internal Abseil and Rock Climbing Site Training LOC
- Water Safety and River crossing
- Facilitation, reflective learning processes
- Knowledge of history, theory and practices of Experiential Education
- Knowledge of Environmental Conservation Principles (Leave No Trace)
- Proper Use and care of Equipment
- Demonstrate administration skills such as computer skills, course preparation and closure
- Possess sound teaching skills
- Possess sound leadership and group management skills
- Ability to plan the journey and flow of a course
- Demonstrate team leadership and team management skills
- Pass fitness assessment
- Proper use and implementation and range of activities

- Demonstrate arts and crafts skills
- LOC in Radio Use
- LOC in GWOLC Site Use
- Knowledge of Risk Management Plan, Operations Manual, Safety Manual, Training Manual
- LOC in Use, Care and Maintenance of Vehicles and Trailers
- Cooking skills
- Low Rope Course Facilitator

Additional Desired Qualifications:

- Canyoneering
- Rites of Passage / Vision Quest Guide
- Mountain Rescue
- Radio Operator's Certificate