

Active Citizenship Coursework

This coursework is all about being an active citizen, and what it takes to be one. I will be giving an example of an activity in which I was being an active citizen. Then I will be showing how I have been an active Citizen.

Brief Details of the Activity

From late 2007 to the early months of 2008, I was taking part in a programme of activities known as the Duke of Edinburgh's award (D of E), at the silver level. This involved me carrying out work in different forms of activities with the aim of completing set objectives, as well as planning and training for an expedition by my D of E group to cover 14 miles in 2 days by foot.

The activities context

The role of other people/planning

The D of E award required a lot of planning spread out over different aspects. Below I will explain the layers of planning required in order for me to have successfully completed my D of E.

The first level would be organising the instructors. The instructors would have to be trained adequately in order to assist the participants. There are different areas in which they would have to be trained - they would have to have knowledge about the objectives which are required in order for participants to complete the award. Furthermore, if they are assisting with an expedition, they would have to have an even greater knowledge about what is required to complete the objective successfully (such as knowing about map reading or tents). All this training is important for them to be able to help us plan our D of E successfully. As we meet up regularly to check on the progress of our D of E, the instructors will be there to see if we are on target to achieve our set objectives, and their input can be important for us to have our D of E planned.

With instructors being trained adequately, the next stage of other people's planning would be my peers. When we take part in the D of E award, we also have to take part in an expedition. In order for the expedition to be successful, a lot of different work will be needed to be carried out before we set out on our expedition. Firstly, the group needs to create a planned route that we set out on, and this requires full participation from all the group's members. After the route has been created, the next aim would be to organise where the camping location would be. Part of the team will be allocated the job of locating possible areas for the location. After possible locations are found, the group has to come together to make a decision on the best camping place, based on location, facilities (such as showers) and costs.

Finally, after all the details are agreed on by the group, the instructors have to make sure the route they would take out would be feasible, based on the factors of its distance, contours (up/down hill), or if the route is safe to undertake. After the instructors have accepted the route, they will have to submit the route to the head D of E offices. This is

required for the group to have their route validated, as well as make the personnel undertaking the award eligible for the insurance required to do the expedition. This final stage of the planning required lots of paperwork to certify the route to meet the criteria required, such as organising the insurance for the group.
[improvement - possibly choose skills I have not already undertaken]

What I have done for the award

There is a large area of work which I have done in order for me to have achieved the award. My first step towards achieving the award is to sort out my activities I will be undertaking to meet the set objectives of the D of E - the skills, service and physical sections.

In my skills service, I had the aim to encourage the discovery and development of practical and social skills and personal interests. I decided to play the piano for my skills section. Choosing to have piano lessons for my skills section was handy, as I already played the piano. I found there were lots of benefits I had when I undertook piano for my skills. It helped me a lot to manage my time, as playing the piano wasn't just about piano lessons, but also find the time to practice.

For my service section, I decided to help the Bronze D of E group - the group that were starting doing their D of E for the first time. I helped them forwards in achieving their D of E, especially preparing them for their expedition, giving them advice or skills on map reading, setting up tents, lighting stoves (which could potentially be a hazardous task), and what to bring in your rucksack. I found that doing this voluntary work for my service was really enjoyable, as well as making me an active citizen by supporting and helping others in their goals.

Finally, for my physical section, I decided to choose tennis lessons. I feel that choosing tennis for my physical recreation was a good choice, as it was something new, and it gave me a challenge. At the beginning, my tennis was not that good, but after a few months of playing, my tennis has improved.

I thoroughly enjoyed taking out those activities, it provided me with an enjoyable, challenging and rewarding programme of personal developments, which has improved my character, given me more self-confidence, and given me a sense of responsibility.

What taking part means to me, and what I have learnt

Taking part in the D of E means a lot to me. It means that I have achieved a lot personally, and have more confidence in myself. I didn't believe that it was possible for me to walk 14 miles in 3 days, carrying a 25kg rucksack on my back, but I have proved to myself that it is possible.

Taking part has given me a range of experiences that I can learn from and improve. One of the experiences I have taken on board is for me to plan prior the routes I take - not just in an expedition, but in life. In one situation, I was stranded on a steep scree face, which

I could not climb up. I was map reading, and I took a wrong route, and ended up slipping down a steep hill. I eventually managed to get back up to the top by changing my approach to the situation, but it was a scary experience, unable to crawl back up the hill.

I have learnt that your major decisions should be made as soon as they can. Another lesson I have learnt whilst on the expedition is that if my approach to a problem, I need to change it in order to successfully achieve my goals. With this knowledge I have gained, if I were to encounter a similar situation like that one, or if I may encounter another one whilst doing my Gold D of E very soon, I would change my approach to find a solution, such as instead of me trying to climb back up, I could climb safely down and find a rendezvous point for my group.

Another situation my group faced was right at the end, after walking around 13 miles, we thought we were in the right place for meeting the instructors, but we found out that we were lost. In this situation, we were very demoralized, exhausted and close to tears. After using the GPS, we found we were about another 2 miles from where we were meant to be. We had to co-ordinate the GPS reference with our OS map, and found out a new route we would have to take. Our legs were so tired, and we were cold, but we all decided to keep each other in good moral so we at least had the mental state to make it. Finally, about another half hour later, we made it to the end, as a group.

After this experience, I have learnt that you don't have to make things harder than they are, and you have to make sure that the whole group is fine, because if just one person doesn't want to participate, then it could jeopardize the efforts from the rest of the team. Here we had to make sure that everyone was fine and was willing to carry on walking - otherwise if we didn't arrive back as a group, then they would have failed us for not sticking together, and we would have to re-do our entire expedition.

If on my Gold D of E, or anywhere in my life I am working with a group, I have learnt to make sure that everyone in the group is ok, otherwise we won't be as productive as if they are working

Problems suffered whilst undertaking the D of E

When undertaking any D of E activity on any level, there are always going to be problems. The most common problems suffered were when my group was undertaking the expedition. As the expedition requires a lot of a person, both physically and mentally, it means that you have to prepare yourself; but however much you try to anticipate those problems, some problems which can not be anticipated may happen. One common example of this is when doing an expedition. You can anticipate the fact that there is a large amount of walking, but you can't anticipate the exhaustion you feel if you don't regularly walk that distance.