T H E S I S

The effects of long-term sail training trips as part of alternative education on young people´s personal development
Case study: Ocean College

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to investigate which educational approaches work best in sail training and should be incorporated and emphasized more. This was done by researching the effects of sail training trips on young people. A case study on Ocean College was conducted. Ocean College relocates high school education on board a sailing ship for half a year.

There has been no feedback collection on the long-term impacts of these sail training trips before. To reach a deeper understanding of the impacts on the participants, the study aimed to collect feedback from the trips. Quantitative and qualitative methods were applied for this purpose: a survey and interviews were conducted among Ocean College participants. The survey received 70 responses, while the interviews were conducted with 30 participants.

An analysis of the respondents' answers and personal experiences shows that Ocean College mostly reaches its targets in the areas of personal development. The participants reported predominantly beneficial experiences. Many of them described an increased confidence and a better understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses after returning from the trip.

The results also reveal multiple areas for improvement. The participants desire greater involvement in decision-making processes and wish to acquire more knowledge and skills in certain areas, for example nautical knowledge. Ocean College can meet these needs by including the participants more and giving them greater responsibility in those areas.

Keywords: sailing, sailing ships, young people, adventure, adventure education, outdoor recreation, travel

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with understanding which educational methods work best in sail training. This topic was researched by investigating the long-term effects of sail training trips on young people. For this purpose, a case study on Ocean College was conducted. The title of this thesis stems from the facts that Ocean College offers sail training trips that are longer than usual trips of this kind and combines them with high school education.

1.1 The commissioner

The commissioner of this thesis is Ocean College. Ocean College is a project originating from Germany (Ocean College 2021a). It relocates high school education on board a traditional sailing ship for half a year. About 34 young people ages 15-19 travel with three teachers and a professional nautical crew of about seven members from Europe to Central America and back. During this time, they participate in all aspects of sailing and life on board of a tall ship and attend high school classes in the core subjects. During land programs the participants experience local cultures and nature by attending a language school, hiking and visiting local projects like a rainforest reserve and a coffee farm.

Ocean College was founded in 2013, and the first voyage started in October 2017. Ever since that, Ocean College set sail with a new group of students every October. This means that until now, four voyages took place with a total of 130 participants.

Image 1: Approximate route of an Ocean College trip. Ocean College (2015)

Image 2: Ocean College´s current ship. Ocean College (2022b)

1.2 Goals of this thesis

Ocean College has big goals: the aim is for the "students to learn through life and thus be better prepared for their futures." (Ocean College 2021b)

But has this goal been achieved, do former participants really feel that the experiences from this sailing trip have helped them in their future? Do they feel more prepared for life´s challenges after participation? How did it actually change their world views? What was the most impressive and transformational part of the voyage?

As there is no arrangement for receiving feedback after the journey has ended, Ocean College has no information on the actual long-term impact that the trip has had on the participants. Finding answers to the above questions is important to know what works best and which of the educational approaches should be emphasized or improved.

Finding this out will be the goal of my thesis. I will collect feedback on what the participants think looking back on their experience. I will try to understand what they actually learned the most from and how it influenced them later. Based on their feedback, I will determine what can be improved in order to optimize the long-lasting effects of an Ocean College voyage. To be more concrete and to be able to give more specific development suggestions, I will focus on two areas of personal development: independence and responsibility.

As Ocean College is really interested in how the trip impacted the participants in the long term, the main result of the thesis will be a survey and interviews and based on them, development advice. I will summarize the research results, which will show what aspects of the trip affect personal development the most and how. With the help of the research results, I will formulate advice and recommendations on what can be done to emphasize those positive aspects even more.

2 ADVENTURE EDUCATION

To be able to fully assess sail training and its power in eliciting personal development, I will review its broader context. According to Morgan, Langford & Vassallo (2021, 2,3) sail training is a form of adventure education, because it is a positive and powerful educational intervention outdoors with perceived benefits such as improved self-esteem, mental health and leadership skills.

Generally, adventure education is the process of learning by means of adventure-centered experiences (Eglington 2021). Beames and Brown (2016) suggest to define adventure as an unusual or exciting experience which involves risk and an unknown or uncertain outcome. Adventure Education partly concentrates on learning technical skills, but the main focus is personal development, for example learning to confidently face new challenges or thoughtfully approach risks.

For this thesis, I interviewed Sintija Lase, a trainer of non-formal education and sailor with yearlong experience in designing and delivering sail training programs on different ships. According to Lase (2021) adventure is the best way of education if you want to discover yourself, the world and nature. She also points out that learning results really depend on how you organize the process and how deep you want to go. This means that it is important to purposefully set goals to achieve those expected positive outcomes. What goals and outcomes are commonly pursued in adventure education?

2.1 General goals and outcomes of adventure education

"One reason OAE [Outdoor Adventure Education] is popular is its ability to change people."
(Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014, 173)

As adventure education is quite a broad term that can be used for many different educational settings, the goals and expected outcomes can differ depending on the target group, their needs and abilities. Nonetheless, adventure education has some general goals and outcomes that apply to practically every adventure educational program.

According to Priest and Gass (2005, 17-20), adventure education is primarily concerned with intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. That means that it focuses on individual devel-

opment and on group development. Intrapersonal goals include developing new confidence in oneself, greater reflective thinking and increased logical reasoning. Interpersonal goals can be enhanced leadership, improved problem solving and more effective communication skills. To achieve these outcomes, adventurous activities are used to provide the individual or the group with compelling tasks that they have to accomplish. "By responding to seemingly insurmountable tasks, participants often learn to overcome self-imposed perceptions of their capabilities to succeed. They turn limitations into abilities, and as a result, they learn a great deal about themselves and how they relate to others." (Priest & Gass, 2005, 18)

Ewert and Garvey (2007, 28-31) state four general outcomes of adventure education: moral development, personal growth, group development and leadership development. Moral development means that participants learn how their behavior affects others and supports them in creating positive social interactions. To a big extent, this happens through the means of active reflection. Participants must be given the opportunity to analyze their own behavior and other people's behavior. This provokes their level of moral development to improve, as they learn to view themselves differently, and consequently choose better behavior in interactions with others. Personal growth, one of the most commonly sought outcomes in adventure education, describes positive changes in a person's self-concept, confidence and self-esteem. Although often considered as an automatic outcome of adventure educational programs, personal growth requires a skillfully designed curriculum and trained leaders. The learning context, for example group dynamics, is critical, so it should be created in a thoughtful and meaningful way to be able to achieve positive changes within individuals. Group development means that the group performance is improved, the group becomes more effective. As adventure educational programs can have concrete and demonstrable outcomes, the group process and performance can become visible and assessable. Well-designed activities help improve communication within the group and its functionality. Also, a group reflection after the activities helps to examine what worked well and what can be improved for the group to become more successful. Leadership development, another very popular outcome of adventure education, includes many aspects connected to being in a leading position. Participants are trained to empower others, lead by example and institute change, as those abilities are applicable in all kinds of leadership situations.

However, it is important to remember that Adventure Outdoor Education does not automatically create outcomes for participants, it rather offers opportunities to reach such outcomes as

personal development and growth. What and how much the participants take away from participation in a program depends partially on what is provided by the program, but also on what the participants, consciously or subconsciously, choose to process and learn from. (Ewert & Sibthorp 2014, 126).

2.2 Adventure educational programs

To purposefully achieve the goals and benefits mentioned above, adventure is used deliberately as a method. It is then called adventure programming (Priest & Gass 2005, 23). The commissioner of this thesis, Ocean College, is one of many adventure educational program providers. What kind of adventure educational program offers are already existing, and how can one access the success of such a program?

Priest and Gass (2005, 23) mention four types of adventure programming: educational, recreational, therapeutic and developmental. An adventure program can be categorized as one or more of them, meaning that it can fit multiple categories. For example, corporate clients can engage in programs that are both developmental and recreational. Most importantly, the program should fit the client's needs, not the client's type. For instance, school kids can take advantage not only of educational programs, but also of therapeutic programs if there is a need for it. Therapeutic practice outdoors can be called adventure therapy, adventure-based counselling or wilderness therapy and tries to address problems that cause difficulty or distress in order to change some aspects of behaviour and help the individual move towards functioning more effectively in everyday life (Richards 2016, 253).

The settings in which adventure programming occurs are diverse. They range from kindergartens to military training, including colleges, outdoor clubs, non-profit organisations and youth camps (Guthrie & Yerkes 2007, 208, 215-220). Schools can offer wilderness or outdoor expedition trips staffed by teachers or professional outdoor leaders. Students can also receive adventure education at specialized outdoor centres as part of academic classes or club offerings. In higher education, adventure programs can be part of the academic curriculum or recreational. To complete some degree programs, for example in physical education, credits in adventure educational courses are required. In the UK, there are many university programs with the terms of Adventure or Outdoor in the title (Stott 2016, 131). Many universities in the United States, for example Aurora University or Mankato State University, offer programs in outdoor leadership. As for non-credit adventure programs, colleges can offer clubs or orienta-

tion modules. Also non-profit organisations use adventure education programs to their benefit. It serves as a tool in team building and leadership development. Especially environmental education programs apply expeditionary challenges to reach their learning goals. On a governmental level, adventure education is used for example in parks as the Yellowstone national parks or the James Island Park in the US for recreation and environmental education. There are programs like mountaineering, sea kayaking and hiking trips. A big governmental provider of adventure education are for example the American Armed Forces. In the recreation offered to soldiers and their families on bases, adventure programs play an important role, for example in activities such as rock climbing or rafting. Commercial programs also represent a big part of adventure programming. They include outdoor stores and guide services as a part of adventure tourism. The providers range from big companies with many hundreds of employees, to one-person businesses; often, the offers are seasonal. Adventure programs can also be found in youth camps. Many thousands of those are held in the US every year and in the past years, the aspect of adventure programming has seen a big growth. 50 percent of the camps contain adventure facilities like climbing walls or challenge courses. Also in Brazil there are multiple educational camps that focus on the development of physical, cognitive and psychological abilities and skills through outdoor and recreational activities (Palhares & Carnicelli 2016, 325).

There are certain hallmarks to recognize a good adventure program (Priest & Gass 2005, 22). One of the many attributes is experiential. This means that the program is rather active than passive, it encourages learning by doing and facilitates reflection. Though there is a perceived risk, the activities are safe. They are used as a medium or process to enable learning. Another attribute is transferable. Adventure experiences cause learning not only in the moment of the experience, but the learning is transferable to situations later in life. It helps people to approach their life from a new perspective. Dramatic is another attribute of a good adventure program. The excitement and the emotions experienced during program activities sharpen the mind and create focussed attention. Great involvement and consciousness are demanded from the participants, as suitable engagement increases the ability to learn.

2.3 The impact of adventure educational programs on personal development

How do adventure educational interventions achieve their desired results? Passarelli, Hall & Anderson (2010) mention several aspects that contribute to developmental outcomes. Also McKenzie (2000) describes them thoroughly in her article on adventure education program outcomes. For a start, the unfamiliar physical environment has been identified as contributing to the outcomes experienced by program participants. The contrast between the familiar environment which the participants came from and the new, unfamiliar environment enables the gain of new perspectives. Also, the unfamiliar environment is important as it causes a certain level of anxiety and a sense of the unknown, as well as a perception of risk. Overcoming these feelings of discomfort by mastering tasks offered by the new environment is believed to create positive benefits, for example an enhanced self-concept. Though multiple types of different environments are able to provide these benefits, a wilderness or outdoor environment has some advantages. It provides clear rules "in the form of natural consequences which participants are unlikely to discount as being unfair or inappropriate (Kimball & Bacon, 1993). In addition, the straightforward nature of the tasks associated with the wilderness environment is believed to encourage mastery" (McKenzie 2000, 20).

Then there is the element of challenge that is inherent to adventure and outdoor activities. The challenge contributes to a certain level of anxiety and achieving success by mastering the skills necessary for overcoming this anxiety can lead to personal growth. The challenges should be holistic for maximising program outcomes. Some suggest that physical, mental and emotional resources should be combined to encourage concurrent mastery of all three domains. The challenges are thought to have the biggest influence if they increase gradually, as through the mastery of new skills more and more challenging activities are required to elicit the same sense of discomfort. It is important to remember that in order to be educative, the activities must be matched with the students' particular requirements and needs. Letting students even choose their own level of challenge or participation helps to create a respectful and supportive environment. Challenges become more meaningful when participants can take ownership for what they try to achieve. (McKenzie 2000.)

Another factor believed to contribute to positive program outcomes is success. In the activities, success should be achievable as it can build a strong belief in one's self efficacy. The activities should be structured in a way that success in not just possible, but rather probable.

To achieve this sense of success, participants should be able to define their personal goals that are realistic and applicable. This can increase their motivation and confidence when the goals are achieved. However, many argue that also failure plays an important role in achieving beneficial outcomes. Bandura (1994) says that difficulties and setbacks serve a great purpose in teaching that for achieving success, sustained efforts are usually required. A very important aspect for eliciting positive program outcomes is processing one's experiences or making sense of them, as this is critical for learning from experiences (Passarelli, Hall & Anderson 2010). This process of reflection can be done by the participants themselves without provided facilitation. Another way is to have a leader or facilitator who helps the participants to make links between their daily life and the activities and encourages discussion and reflection. (McKenzie 2000.)

Groups are thought to have an impact on program effectiveness. Some writers in the outdoor education field, for example Leo H. McAvoy or Denise Mitten, claim that group dynamics and group development are the cornerstones of adventure and outdoor education. There is evidence that indicates that in outdoor education programs, the most lasting impressions revolve around the group experience. Programs where everything goes according to plan can be disappointing if the group dynamics do not work. Conversely, programs that seemingly go wrong, for example because of bad weather or poor food, can leave the participants happy and fulfilled if the group experience was a positive one. Practitioners in the field of Outdoor Education know that what is happening to and within the group is one of the main influences on the dimension of personal growth, as the group represents the milieu that those personal growth processes are happening in. (McAvoy, Mitten, Stringer, Steckart & Sproles 1996, 1). It was even found "that the most important learning came from social interactions" (Trainor 2014). As personalities are shaped and formed largely through contact and interaction with others, it can also be reshaped through the same kind of intimate contact. There are certain characteristics that have an impact on the group experience. Group size is an important factor: the ideal size is supposed to be from 7-15 participants. Common objectives of the group and a feeling of mutual dependence can create a group bond and encourage a feeling of belonging, which is a basic human need. Building personal relationships influences participants' social and personal development. (McKenzie 2000.)

3 SAIL TRAINING

"We do not train youth for a life at sea ... we use the sea to educate youth for life"

(A common maxim of Sail training organizations, EcoClipper B.V. 2018)

First, to make clear what is understood under the term of sail training in this thesis, a short definition on this term will be given in the following.

Sail training is an adventurous activity taking place on different types of sail training vessels all over the world (Tall Ships Australia & New Zealand 2018). It is not just about learning how to sail, but involves a wide range of different tasks and activities like keeping watch, climbing masts, cooking and maintenance (Sail Training Ireland 2017). It can be referred to as youth work at sea or youth sailing (McCulloch 2016, 236). Although "instruction in all aspects of sailing" is a great part of sail training, "its purpose goes far, far beyond this." (Mast Charity 2013) For an experience to be able to qualify as sail training, learning seamanship and sailing skills are not the primary purpose (McCulloch 2016, 236). The unique seafaring environment rather acts as a basis for learning in the cognitive and affective domains (McCulloch, McLaughlin, Allison, Edwards & Tett 2010, 1). So what are the goals that are tried to be achieved by the means of sail training?

3.1 Aims of sail training programs

The experience of sailing and being at sea is used as a medium to "help people learn about themselves, discover hidden strengths and talents and understand the value of working as a team" (Mast Charity 2013), as well as "understand the value of others regardless of their social or cultural origin" (Santander Festival del Mar 2019). This means that the majority of all sail training programs offered by tall ships are meant as a form of personal development. Also, they typically have a preference for the participation of young people (Easthope 2007, 209). Sail Training International names several benefits that sail training programs aim at (Clipperbrig Morgenster 2022). First, there are communication skills that improve in consequence of an increased social confidence. The ability to overcome challenges and fears is enhanced, as sailing requires stepping out of one's comfort zone on a daily basis; be it by climbing up the rigging and overcoming fear of heights or working through seasickness. Of course, there are also technical skills to be acquired: everything from setting sails to navigation can be

learned on board. Another aim is to increase environmental awareness and understanding of sustainability in the marine environment. Sea animals but also sea pollution can be experienced at first-hand. Teamwork and also integrating into hierarchical structures are learned on board: both are vital for successfully sailing a ship together. Other essential skills acquired during sail training are self-management skills, like time management, problem-solving and stress management. Another big factor are cultural competences: mostly, the crew on board of sail training vessels is international or the travel route takes the ship to different countries. This enhances understanding of the world's diverse cultures and societies.

The Sea School 'Ocean Youth Trust North' describes the aims and objectives of their 'Adventures under sail' as helping young people to learn a variety of interpersonal and transferable skills. These skills include intrapersonal skills like greater self-confidence, forward planning, problem solving and focus and determination. Interpersonal skills to be learned are effective teamwork, leadership and communication and social skills. Those skills enable the participants in the short term "to take control of their own voyage, and subsequently their own lives." (Ocean Youth Trust North 2022)

According to Sintija Lase (2021), the trainer of non-formal education and sail training who was mentioned before, "these little and big situations, that you have in the sea, with the sea and with the people can initiate some learning processes." She says that in the perfect case, sail training is a mixture of social skills, practical sailing skills and reflection, which acts as a bridge in between. Once the links between those different aspects become more visible, you can become more aware of your personality and skills. That is the first step to initiate changes or improvements. The role of the trainer is to help the participants see these connections and link them to their life reality.

3.2 Theoretical framework

Sail training can be seen as an outdoor education experience, hence the theoretical framework used in outdoor and adventure education is also applicable to sail training (Schijf, Allison & Von Wald 2017). Sintija Lase (2021) explains what theories she likes to use to create her sail training projects and consequently help the participants reach the benefits that sail training aims at producing. She uses David Kolb's experiential education circle as a basis (see Figure 1, Kolb 2011). First comes action, which is an immediate concrete experience and forms the basis for the next phase (Kolb 2014). This is observation and reflection. To facilitate this

stage, Lase creates moments of reflection by coming together with all project participants, asking them specific questions and giving topics and time for discussion. These new insights are collected into a 'theory', which leads to adjustments and experimentation for new ways of action. In turn, new ways of action cause new experiences, which lead to new reflections.
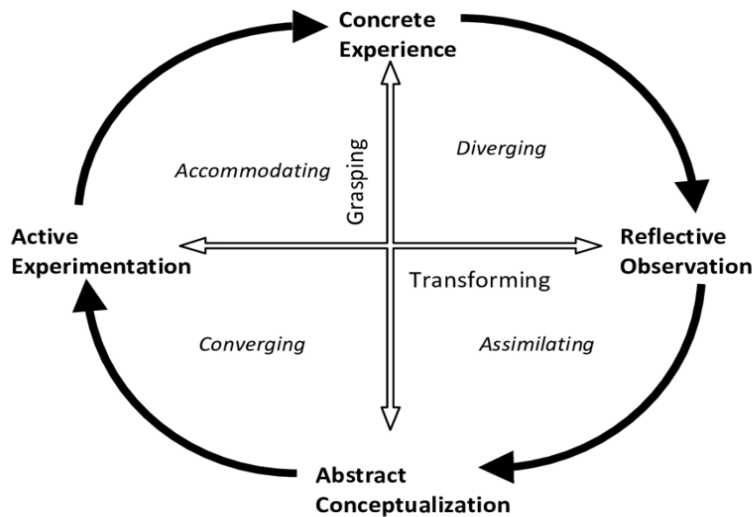

Figure1: Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb 2011)

Lase puts a special focus on group dynamics. She uses Tuckman's group development model, which describes the stages that a group has to go through in order to become effective and efficient. Roughly, a group has to pass 3 stages to become an established group: Forming, Storming and Norming (Lämsä 2018, 14-18). In the Forming stage, the group gets to know each other, and members try to find their role in the group. The behavior is cautious and careful. During the next stage, the Storming, conflicts may develop, as the courage to voice opinions and challenge each other increases. Then, in the Norming stage, the group develops a positive sense of identity, as rules and priorities are agreed, and acceptance of differences establishes. The fourth stage is the goal for every group development: Performing. Here, the group's atmosphere is open and flexible and there is cooperation and commitment to the common tasks. In Lase's opinion, Tuckman's group development model can help to take care of the group and support them. As sailing is a demanding environment, it requires the participants to act as one group; otherwise the experience could go bad. Sometimes it can force the people to form a group before they are ready. This is why, when coaching and leading sail training projects, Lase tries to do something with the group before going sailing to get through with the group development process. In her opinion, the worst thing that can happen is that the storming phase starts when being out sailing. This can be dangerous physically and men-

tally, so Lase tries to give some space for storming before that. Going through storming is necessary to get to the performing stage.

Another theory mentioned by Lase and popular in adventure education is Dale's Cone of Experience (Stremba & Bisson 2009). This concept is visualized through a pyramid, which shows different learning methods that are arranged by their efficacy (see Figure 2). On top of the pyramid, meaning the least effective, are verbal symbols like words. Hearing or reading them, for example in textbooks or lectures, does not stimulate much learning (Zanzig & Singer-Towns 2000). At the base on the cone are learning tools that consist of personal, purposeful and direct experiences. Powerful learning environments should be full of memorable and rich experiences that allow students to hear, see, taste, touch and try (Lee & Reeves 2018). Something that was learned through experience will not so easily be forgotten. Teachers or trainers can use the Cone of Experience to enhance their understanding of how experiences can be formed and how they can be interlinked in order to add interest, efficacy and further the skills of the students (Dawn, Harkin & Turner 2012).
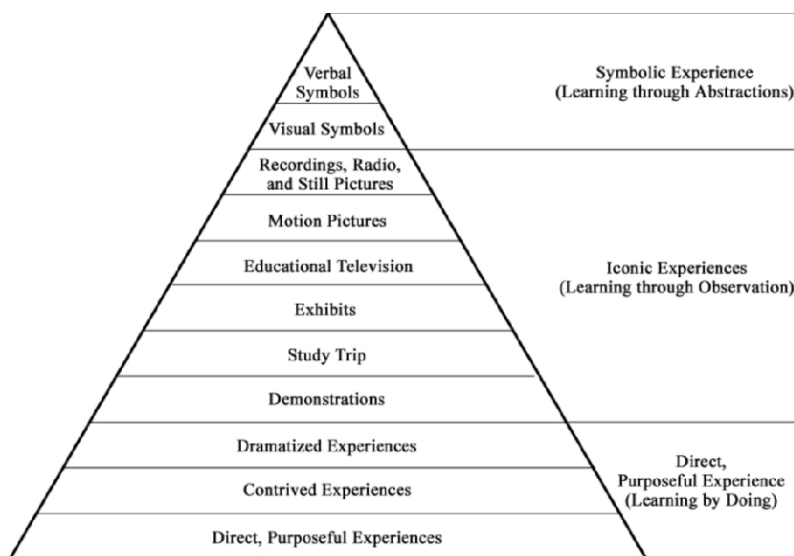
Figure 2: Dale's Cone of Experience (Lee & Reeves 2018)

3.3 Case study: Ocean College

To analyse what effects a long-term sail training trip has on participants, Ocean College as a sail training trip provider is taken for a case study. As Ocean College's ways of implementing and conducting their trips are crucial for what effects the trip has on the participants, it is also important to analyse and understand what background ideas they are underpinned by.

3.3.1 Background ideas

"In an increasingly complex, multi-layered and interconnected world, the old concepts of school are becoming increasingly useless."

(Ocean College 2021d)

Ocean College is convinced that Germany's educational system is not able to adequately prepare young people for life after finishing school (Ocean College 2021e). Memorization, uniformity and a linear curriculum can no longer meet the challenges of the 21st century (Ocean College 2021d). Ocean College believes that the only way to make education sustainable is to make it practice-oriented with "real challenges, unfamiliar environments and relevant content for the development of young people." (Ocean College 2021c) The goal is to achieve intrinsic motivation by teaching in the context of their current location.

The pedagogical approach is based on many different theories, for example of Heinrich Pestalozzi and Kurt Hahn (Ocean College 2021d). Pestalozzi's idea of 'learning with head, heart and hand' provides a base for Ocean College's concept. It is supported by modern neurobiology of learning, that states that learning happens with all the senses. This means that in order to understand, one must experience. Hahn's concept to allow youth to gain authentic experience in fields of action provides an inspiration for Ocean College. Hahn believed that rather than just sitting and receiving information students should do things in school. In his opinion, learning requires challenge. (Hanford 2015). Hahn expressed his appreciation of sailing and its educational effects (Veevers & Allison 2011, 11, 12). He said: "I recommend that training under sail or training in mountain craft be recognized as character building activities" (Hahn 1947, 5). Also, modern scientists support those theories. Recognised experts in natural philosophy and psychology present radical critique against the conventional schooling system. They say that traditional school learning methods do not serve the needs of modern life anymore (Ocean College 2021d).

Ocean College wants to counteract those educational problems by providing a challenging environment that offers deep learning and development impulses (Ocean College 2021e). The limited living space on a sailing ship creates an intensive experience of group dynamics and the processes of living together. Teaching on site allows to apply theoretical knowledge directly. The community on board demands personality-building qualities like teamwork, com-

mitment and discipline from all participants. These are then encouraged and challenged daily over a time period of many months.

3.3.2 Practical implementation

" I've never frozen and never sweated as much as during Ocean College, but I've also never before learned that much."

(Ocean College participant Finja in a blog post, Ocean College 2021i)

What does Ocean College do to live up to their ideas?

During the trip, all the core school subjects are taught on board (Ocean College 2021c). This ensures the student's successful return to their home schools after arrival. Due to the rotating system of watch, kitchen duty, cleaning and school the classes have a maximum of 15 students, which provides individual and intensive support by the teachers. Coming from different schools, all the students have individual learning needs, which are taken into account with the help of a learning plan for every student.

To connect theory with practical context, Ocean College uses many approaches. History becomes tangible when following Columbus footsteps and travelling on the slave trade route, as well as seeing colonial buildings and experiencing socialism in Cuba (Ocean College 2021c). For example, a slave museum on Curaçao, a centre of the Atlantic slave trade (Wikipedia 2021), is visited to help the students understand this important topic. Languages are taught rather practically then in theory: the language on board is English, as the ship and its crew are British. Spanish is taught in intensive courses in Central America and applied directly by living in local host families. In biology classes, flying fish that land on deck are dissected. Many geographical and climate zones and diverse habitats are being crossed, discovered and experienced. On Tenerife, the highest mountain of Spain, the Teide, is climbed. This allows to experience the geography of a volcano first-hand. In Central America, expeditions to the jungle in Costa Rica present a great opportunity to discover this unique biotope with its massive variety of plants and animals. Also important topics, that are normally quite far away from the students' life reality, like economy, are considered. So, a coffee farm is visited and the students are involved in the process of coffee picking and coffee production. This helps them to understand the economic process connected to the trade of the commodity coffee. Through the support of external experts, who accompany the students, different fields of activity can be tried

out in a pedagogical space (Ocean College 2021d). The experts work together with the students in so-called Pathways. There are three of them: Science, Economics and Media. This gives the students the opportunity to concentrate on one area of interest, dig deeper into this topic and work with a professional of this field (Ocean College 2021h).

Another main area of life during an Ocean College trip is the nautical education. It mainly takes place during the watches (Ocean College 2021f). Nautical training involves steering, setting sails, lookout and safety rounds. With a rotating watch system, every student is responsible for those tasks for some time of the day. A professional crew leads and supervises the students, while at the same time leaving enough space for them to take over responsibility and act autonomously. This culminates in a handover, where the students take over the ship for some days. All positions on board, like captain or engineer, are filled with students, who are in command and responsible for ship handling. Of course, the professional crew is always watching over the students' activities and is there for help and support.

Other important areas of day-to-day life on board are cooking and cleaning (Ocean College 2021g). Every student has kitchen duty from time to time, where a group of 3 students, with help from the crew, is responsible for providing for the entire ship. This duty starts in the morning with preparing breakfast, continues with cooking lunch and dinner, preparing snacks, washing all dishes and ends with cleaning the kitchen. Other parts of the ship also need to be cleaned every day, so cleaning duty is compulsory for every student.

Reflection also plays a significant role during an Ocean College journey, so there are several ways of facilitating it. There are feedback talks conducted between a project management member and a student (Ocean College 2021j). They are based on observations of the crew and help to chart the student's development. Goals for the further time on board can be set and also the student's feedback and opinions are collected. Then there is competence training, where a special focus is set on team performance and communication skills. For example, a ship's council is formed that takes action if a conflict arises and sanctions have to be imposed. Also, every student receives a 'learning book', which is a notebook, calendar and journal at the same time. It proposes many questions for reflection and space to write down thoughts and ideas.

4 RESEARCH METHODS

4.1 Justification of methodology

The goal of my thesis is to collect feedback from Ocean College participants on their trip. Feedback needs to provide specific suggestions on strengths, strategies for improvement and areas for development, so I will formulate development advice based on the feedback for future trips (Bloxham & Boyd 2007, 104). There are many different ways of collecting feedback. Some say that interviews are the most effective method to gather information about needs (Kris 2021), while others claim that the best way to listen and get feedback is through a structured questionnaire or a properly designed survey (Sugandhi 2003, 121). So, like done in some recent research, I decided to combine them and used both qualitative and quantitative methods in my study (Ewert & Sibthorp 2014, 150). According to Abudi & Abudi (2015, 201), a combination of methods for feedback collection is optimal as it allows for more effective information sharing. The fact that two other university theses dealing with the impact of long-term sail training programs also used both a questionnaire and interviews as their research methods supported my decision (Sand 2014; Marshall 2016). I created a survey and conducted interviews. A survey offers broad, numeric data which is easy to display and understand, while the interviews allow a deeper insight into the emotional processes and background. The target group of my research were former participants of Ocean College trips.

As surveys are the most common evaluation method in Outdoor Adventure Education (Ewert & Sibthorp 2014, 120), I decided to use a survey for my quantitative data collection. Following the most typical technique, the survey was a self-report instrument. Program participants are one of the most willing groups to provide evaluation data, so I could be sure to get a good amount of data from it. According to Ewert and Sibthorp (2014, 120), program alumni understand the strengths of a program and can give recommendations for improvement, which is very valuable for my research.

If only analyzing quantitative information from a survey and not looking for patterns in observations or interviews, important clues might be missed and it could result in failing to draw valid conclusions (Baimyrzaeva 2018). So, considering that "interviews are often a good way to get detailed information from participants" (Ewert & Sibthorp 2014, 120), I collected qualitative data through the method of interviewing. The goal of an interview is to let people tell

their own story on their own terms (Harvard Sociology Department 2020). As the personal development processes that my study is concerned with are very individual, personal stories are an effective way to gather relevant data.

4.2 Survey

4.2.1 Survey creation

I created my survey with the help of other studies already made in the field of sail training. The biggest help in finding suitable survey questions was the *Survey into the effectiveness of R. Tucker Thompson Sail Training Programmes* published in 2014. This is a study on the 7-day youth development voyages organized by the R. Tucker Thompson Sail Training Trust. The goal was to find out if the promoted key participation outcomes, which are confidence, leadership and teamwork, have been achieved. The survey asked questions about expectations for the trip and perceived trip outcomes. As these types of questions are also relevant for my research, I used similar questions for my survey.

I found another source of inspiration for survey questions in *The Characteristics and Value of the Sail Training Experience*, a study into the effectiveness of sail training conducted by the University of Edinburgh on behalf of Sail Training International. This study helped me to formulate fitting questions and also answer options. One more helpful reference was the *Case Study of 'Blue Watch' on STS Leeuwin* conducted by the Research Board of the Leeuwin Sail Training Foundation Ltd. It's "purpose was to determine the effects of a specific 10-day STS Leeuwin voyage" (Gordon, Harcourt-Smith, Hay & Priest 1993, 4). This study also offered a table with different questions that supported my thinking process.

To create the survey I researched a lot of advice for survey creation. One important aspect was to define a clear goal and explain it to the respondents, so that they know what this data is collected for and why their participation is important. I did this in the very beginning, the introductory text of the survey, where I explained my goal for this survey and why I do it. The introduction was, as recommended, not more than five sentences long and answered the what- and why-questions. It also ensured the confidentiality of the data (Lindholm 2020). To make the survey clear and not overwhelming, I intended to ask not more than 20 questions, if possible around 10. I tried to group in the questions in a logical order, so that the beginning questions review aspects from before the trip, the central questions deal with the trip and the end-

ing questions ask about a retrospect on the trip. Also, I put the more personal questions towards the end of the survey, when the respondents have already gotten into the topic and the flow of responding. I tried to keep the language of the survey only as complex as it needed to be – meaning as plain and easy to understand as possible (Bradford & Cullen 2012). The questions were very specific in order to get concrete and tangible answers. For example, I avoided using 'and' in a question, as this could make the question double-barrelled, meaning dealing with two aspects at the same time, which would falsify the results (Olson 2008). Also, I kept the questions and answer options neutral without adding any own opinions into them, and tried to keep the answer options as diverse and balanced as possible. When formulating the questions I focused on closed-ended questions, using a maximum of one or two open-ended questions at the end. The aim of a survey is to collect quantitative, clear data and receiving simple and clear answers is the best way to do so. A good question type for that are multiple-choice questions. I wanted to avoid yes-no-questions, as these cannot give a deep insight into the respondents thinking, but ask what- and how-questions instead. To mix the question types and make the questionnaire more interesting to answer, I also used response scales. These need to have a neutral midpoint and the scale should be consistent. To keep the survey simple and understandable however, I wanted to avoid grid or matrix questions, because they are not very clear and can be difficult to answer (Vannette 2016). To make the survey easier to answer, the participants could see a progress bar at the bottom of the page and also skip questions that they did not want to answer.

I decided to create my survey on Webropol, a website specifically for online survey creation. As it was free to use for me and I had previous experience with it, this was the most convenient option. The survey that I created contained 10 questions and one additional question. The questions were multiple-choice or rating scale questions, and one additional open-ended question. In multiple-choice questions, participants could always select up to three answers or give their own. In the end of the survey, I asked for contact details if the person would like to participate in an interview. The survey data was collected anonymously. Personal data regarding gender and age was not taken into account, as it does not play any role for the research question.

4.2.2 Data collection

To avoid sampling errors, every Ocean College alumni was invited to answer the survey, not just one single alumni group (Clark & Bell 2012, 113-139). The survey was published in all

Ocean College alumni groups in the evening. 20 people had answered it the same day. Most of the replies came on the next day: 43 participants gave their answers to the questions, most of them in the morning. The last filled-in questionnaires came over the course of the next days, the last of them three weeks later. In total, the survey was answered by 70 people. Ocean College has a total of 130 alumni, which means that 54% of them answered the survey. 29 participants left their contact details for an interview, and some contacted me directly.

The full questionnaire with its results can be found in the appendices.

4.2.3 Data analysis

To analyse the data from the survey I used the tools that Webropol, the website that I had created the survey on, offers. It can construct a frequency distribution, which is the first step in survey data analysis. For every multiple-choice question, I could see all the possible pre-set replies listed with the percentage of how many people had chosen this answer. In another table below there was the specific number of how many people chose it. Below that, there was a third chart which listed all the personal answers that some respondents had given to this question. For the rating scale questions, I could see the lowest and the highest rating that were given, the average rating, the median and the sum. The most important number here was the average, as it revealed a summary of the answers and a general tendency of what the participants were thinking. (Kumar 2006).

To have a better overview of the opinions that were shared in the questionnaire, I sorted the answers to each question by their percentage with the most-chosen answers at the top (Trochim 2022). This helped me to see what the majority of the respondents think and how most of them feel about a certain topic. For a better understanding of the replies to the open question I categorised them into different groups and then counted how often each of the groups was mentioned.

For my result analysis I examined the findings from the survey and from the interviews together. This means that I used mixed methods data analysis: I drew my conclusions from both the qualitative and the quantitative strands of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011, 212). This approach improves the quality of the interpretations. The survey results helped me especially to see the big picture and the tendencies that dominate the mood of the respondents. They gave a rough impression of what the majority thinks. The survey results can be seen as a simplification of what was also expressed in the interviews in a more diverse way.

4.3 Interviews

4.3.1 Interview creation

To create the interview frame, I used other studies conducted previously in the field of sail training. Of great help was the PhD thesis of Aaron Marshall written in 2016. Marshall researched the perceptions of Class Afloat alumni regarding their personal and social development during the program. Class Afloat is a project similar to Ocean College – it relocates high school education on board of a tall ship for one to two semesters. This made Marshall′s study particularly useful to help me creating my study on Ocean College. Marshall interviewed 17 participants 2-29 years after their participation in Class Afloat. The interview questions asked for example for self-descriptions at different points in time and for reflections on the role of the program in the person′s life. I adjusted the questions to Ocean College and used them in my interviews.

Another source of inspiration was the PhD thesis of Manuel S. Sand from 2014. Sand investigated the effects of the sailing-school project Klassenzimmer unter Segeln (Classroom under sails) on the personal development of youth. This project is also very similar to Ocean College – it has approximately the same number of participants, the same itinerary and it uses a similar ship. Sand interviewed 8 participants. The biggest difference to my study is that Sand conducted the interviews before and during the trip, but not afterwards. Nonetheless, the questions inspired me on what and how to ask to examine personal development.

When designing my own interview, I wrote down all the questions that I found in the other studies and that seemed interesting to me. Then I reviewed them to find which ones are also suitable for my research. I read every question and asked myself how this question will contribute to answering my research questions and to my understanding of the topic (Lumen 2022). According to the Harvard Sociology Department (2020), the best interview questions are the ones that elicit long answers from the respondents. That is why I focussed on asking open-ended questions that start with words like what, why and how, as those types of questions require a broad answer. If a question was short, I asked a follow-up question to get a deeper insight. I tried to keep the questions as simple as possible and not ask more than one question at a time. I put the questions in a more or less chronological order – first questions about before the trip and in the very end about the retrospective view on the trip now. Also, I opened the interview with easy questions to make it simpler for the interviewees to get into

the topic and feel comfortable talking about it (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl 2019). The interviews that I conducted were semi-structured. This allowed me to have a standardised set of questions that were the same for all of the participants, while at the same time having the opportunity to ask individual questions to get more from the respondents (Baimyrzaeva 2018). I decided to record the interviews as audio files, as a verbatim account is important to be able to analyse data from the interview (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin 2009, 312). Also, I conducted two test interviews beforehand. This allowed me to assess the formulation and time frame of the interview questions and the test interviewees were able to give me feedback on them. (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl 2019).

My interview template can be found in the appendices.

4.3.2 Data collection

I contacted every person who shared their contact details in the survey for the interview. I asked them for an interview time and platform convenient to them (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl 2019). Before the interview, I sent each participant an information sheet that stated that participation is voluntary and informed about a possible audio recording of the interview. Former participants of Ocean College live across different European countries, which means that the interviews were conducted during a video or audio call. In total, I interviewed 30 people and the interviews were on average 25 minutes long.

In the beginning of each interview, I thanked the interviewee for their willingness to participate in my study and share their personal experiences. I explained that there are 14 questions, but the interviewee does not have to answer every one of them if they feel uncomfortable about a certain question. Then I asked explicitly for permission to record the interview as an audio file and to use quotes from it in my thesis. Permission was granted from every interviewee. To keep the audio recordings anonymous I numbered them in the order that I was conducting the interviews in, for example Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on. Then I told the interviewee that they can take their time to think about the questions and also pauses are tolerated (Harvard Sociology Department 2020). Lastly, I asked if the interviewee has any questions left and then I started the interview. After each interview, I asked how the interviewee felt about the questions and if they felt comfortable answering them. Then I shortly told them how I will proceed with the information I received from them and thanked again for participation.

4.3.3 Data analysis

As recommended by McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl (2019), I started my interview data analysis by converting the audio recordings into written form, meaning transcribing them. I ordered my transcriptions according to the questions: for every question I had asked, I used a separate paper on which I wrote the answers that were given to this question. Then I started coding the data. There were many repeating opinions and views, so I created categories and coloured answers that were similar to each other, touched the same topic or included the same opinion in the same colour. In the margin I wrote what theme each colour represents. This made it easy to see how often one topic was repeated and by how many interviewees. I counted how many times each theme came up and wrote it down so that it was clearly visible which topics mattered to the participants the most. (Saaranen-Kauppinen 2020)

Then I started summarising the results and writing them out. I dealt with every question separately by looking at what are generally the most popular themes in the answers and what are some concise and catchy phrases that the interviewees had said. In my interview results, I reported how often the topics were mentioned and supported these statements by quoting one to three participants. This is important because interview quotes are compelling and are part of a rich description of the worldviews and lives of the participants (Kendall 2008, 143). When choosing the quotes I was careful to pick quotes that were short and precise while at the same time conveying the full meaning of what the interviewee was saying. Some of the personal stories that the participants told were so meaningful that I decided to include them as well. During the interviews it also happened that the same topics were mentioned in answer to different questions. In my results I summarised them under the heading of 'personal changes', where I stated how many people talked about them and again added some quotes.

As mentioned before, my result analysis brought the quantitative and qualitative data together. The main objective of the data analysis is to address the research questions (Awang 2012, 191). I did this by first looking into topics that were touched in the survey and proved to be important to many. Then I reviewed the qualitative data for similar aspects and what precisely the participants had said. The quantitative data gave me exact numbers to use in my analysis while the interviews allowed a deeper insight into the emotional aspects and feelings. Based on these findings I was able to formulate answers to the questions posed in the beginning of my research. I also looked into ways to emphasise the most positive and influential aspects of

the trip. For that, I researched different approaches and methods that could help to enhance the learning in these areas and formulated advice based on them.

5 RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 Survey

To assess how the participation in an Ocean College trip affected the participants, it is important to understand what starting point the participants came from regarding their personal development. An aspect here are their reasons for participation. Did personal development goals play a role in the decision to join the trip? When answering the question "What were the main reasons for your participation", 74% of the respondents chose the option "Visiting new countries". This is by far the most selected answer. The second most-popular reason for participation is "New challenges", with 43% having chosen this as a reason to participate. This shows that many of the participants have the goal to challenge themselves; probably they expect to grow and develop from the experiences they make. The answer on the third place is "Become more independent". 33% of the respondents chose this answer, which shows that personal development in this area played a role for many in deciding to participate. Only on fourth place comes the answer "Learn more about sailing/sailing ships". For 30% of the participants this was a reason to participate. This is surprising, as one could assume that the main reason for joining a sail training voyage is sailing.

1. What were the main reasons for your participation? (max. 3 answers)

Reason	Percentage
Visit new countries	74
New challenges	43
Become more independent	33
Learn more about sailing/sailing ships	30
Experience unknown environment	29
Meet new people	29
Practical learning	20
Experience bord community	20
Improve/learn languages	16
Other	6
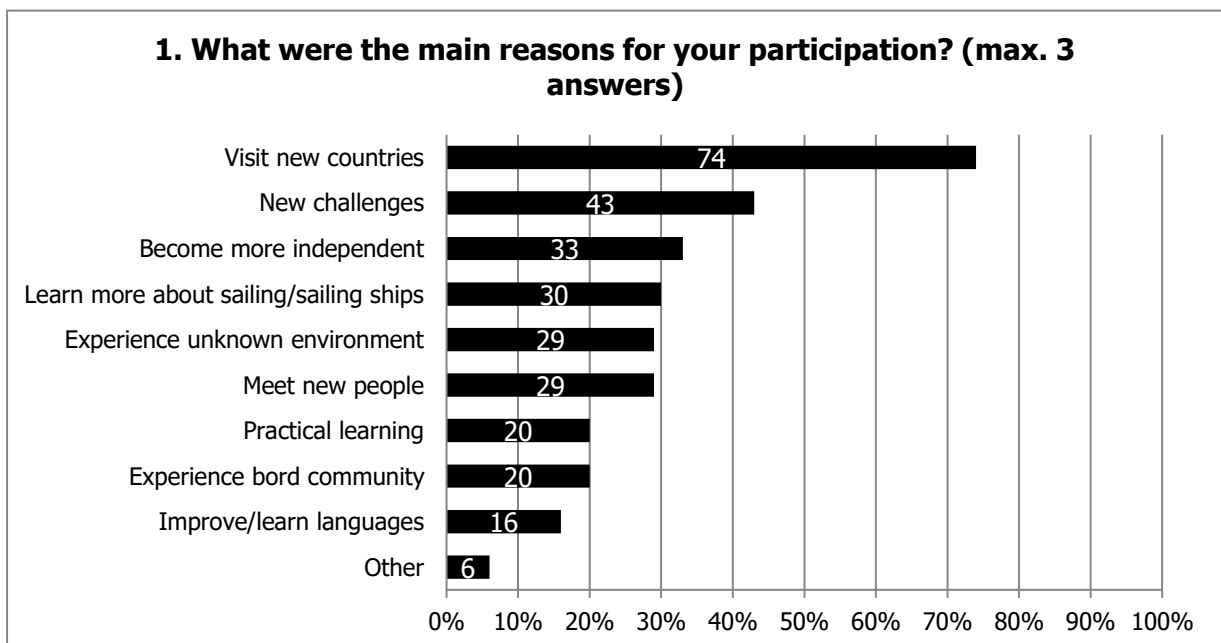
Figure 3: The main reasons for participation. Ordered by percentage.

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To get a clearer picture of the participants' starting point in their personal development, the next question was "What were your main concerns before the trip?". The most selected answer was by far "Finding one's own role in the group". 56% chose this answer. This can be a surprising result, as one could expect that young people who go on a sailing trip with strangers for half a year are quite confident and self-assured. The second most-chosen answer, selected by 34%, was "Physical challenges (sea sickness, lack of sleep,...)", the third (27%) was "Keeping up with school work".

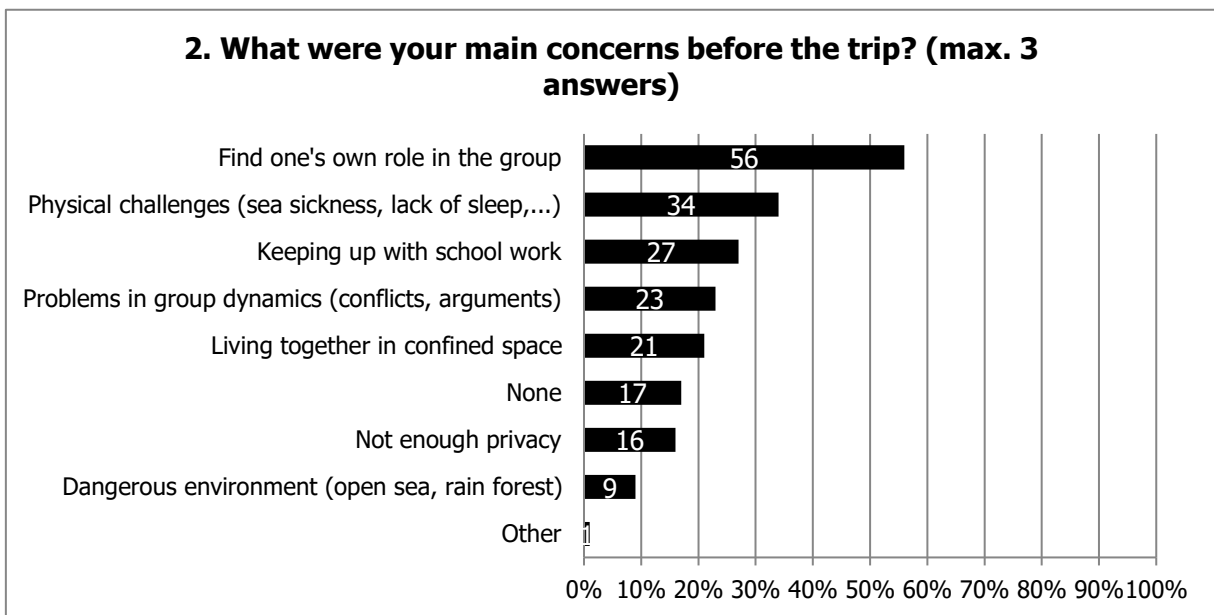Figure 4: The main concerns before the trip. Ordered by percentage.

The third question dealt with the effects of the trip. It was "In which areas could you gain the most from the trip?" The most popular answer, chosen by almost half of the participants (49%), was "Changed viewpoints". Right after that (46%) came "Became more confident". The third-most selected answer (42%) was "Got to know one's strengths/weaknesses".

3. In which areas could you gain the most from the trip? (max. 3 answers)

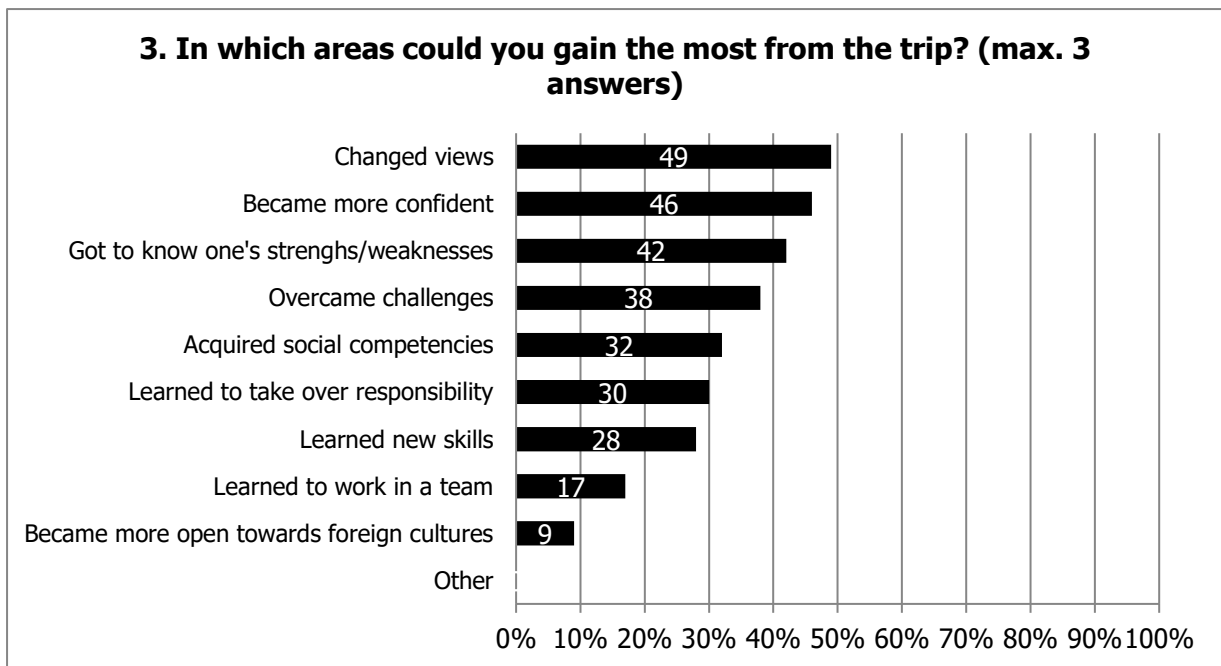| Area	Percentage
Changed views	49
Became more confident	46
Got to know one's strenghs/weaknesses	42
Overcame challenges	38
Acquired social competencies	32
Learned to take over responsibility	30
Learned new skills	28
Learned to work in a team	17
Became more open towards foreign cultures	9
Other	

Figure 5: The areas where the participants could gain the most from the trip. Ordered by percentage.

The next question asked to what extent the trip affected the person's independence. The participants could choose from becoming "Much less independent", "A bit less independent", "No change", "A bit more independent" and "Much more independent". They also had the option to say "I don't know". Only one person answered "Much less independent". 10% said that there was no change, but most people stated that they became "A bit more independent" (40%) or "Much more independent" (42%).

The fifth question was "In which areas did you learn the most?". Most of the participants, 78%, said that one of the areas they learned the most in was "Nautical knowledge". 65% also chose "Ways of life in different countries/cultures" and 59% "Nature/environment in different countries". 35% learned a lot in their "Language competences". Only 10% said that an area with the biggest learning was "Economic correlations" and 3% "Scientific working".
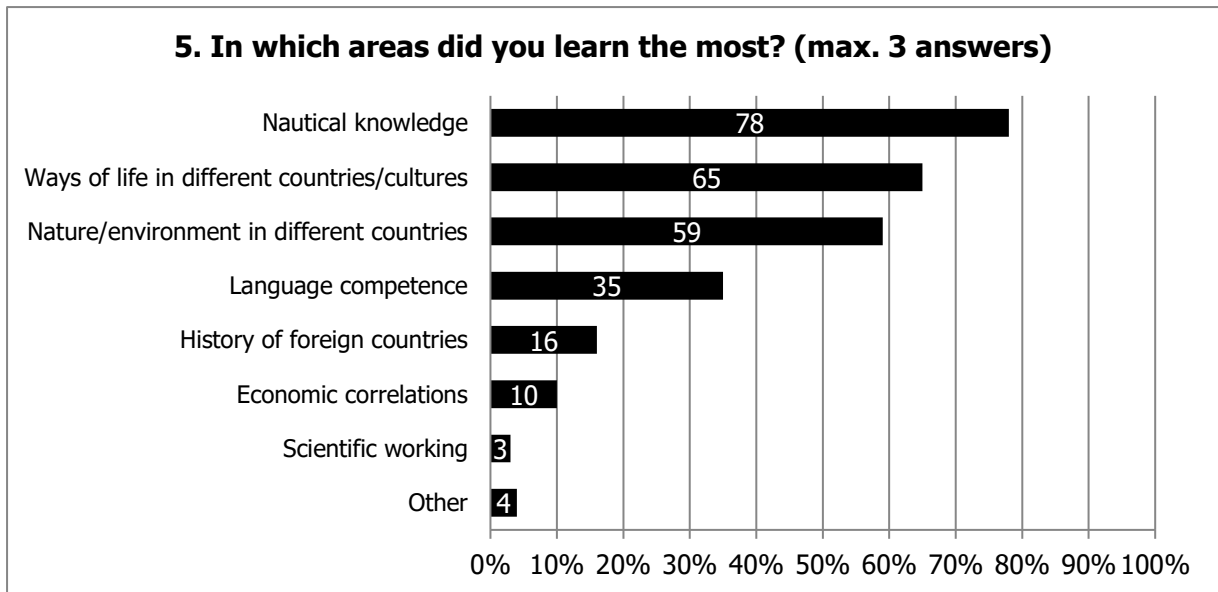
Figure 6: The areas that the participants learned the most in. Ordered by percentage.

Question 6 asked if Ocean College has influenced the person's vision of their future. Answer options ranged from "Not at all", "A little bit" and "Partially" to "Strongly" and "Very strongly". 7% said that participation has not changed their future vision at all. Most of the participants, however, think that it was influenced. 52% say that participation in Ocean College influenced their future vision very strongly or strongly, and for 27% it was influenced partially.
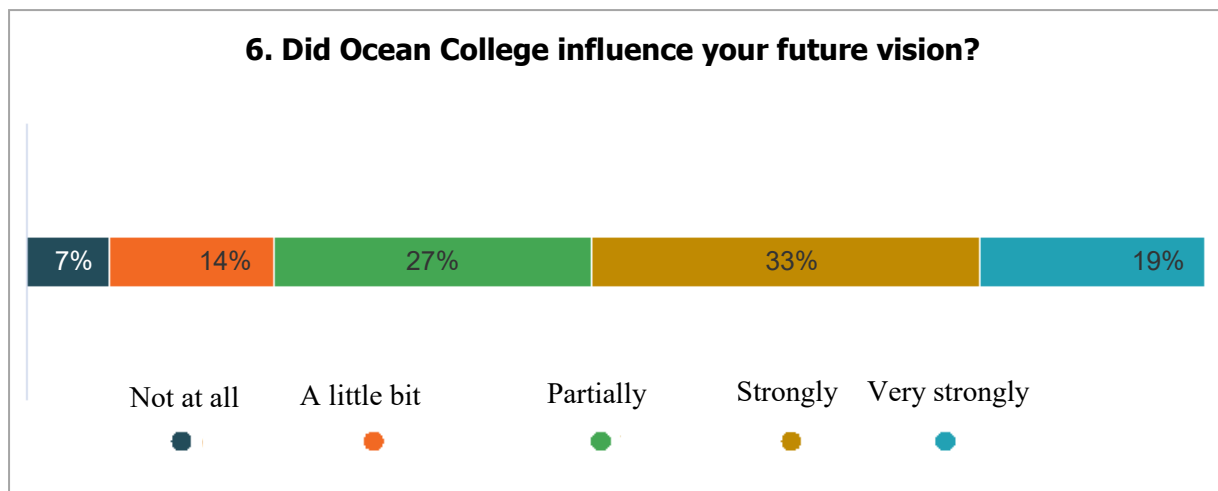
Figure 7: The influence of Ocean College on the future vision. Divided by percentage.

The next question dealt with the negative sides: "What were the most difficult/negative aspects for you during the trip?". The most selected answer was "Rules on board and on land" (43%). One person made an additional comment saying that sometimes they wished to have been granted more self-determination and opportunities for involvement in decision-making. The second-most selected answer was "Physical challenges (sea sickness, lack of sleep,...)", chosen by 34%. This means that every third person struggled with this to some extent. It is

closely followed by "Keeping up with school work", selected by 31%. Interestingly, only 13% chose "Finding one's own role in the group", which shows that this initial concern mostly stays unanswered.

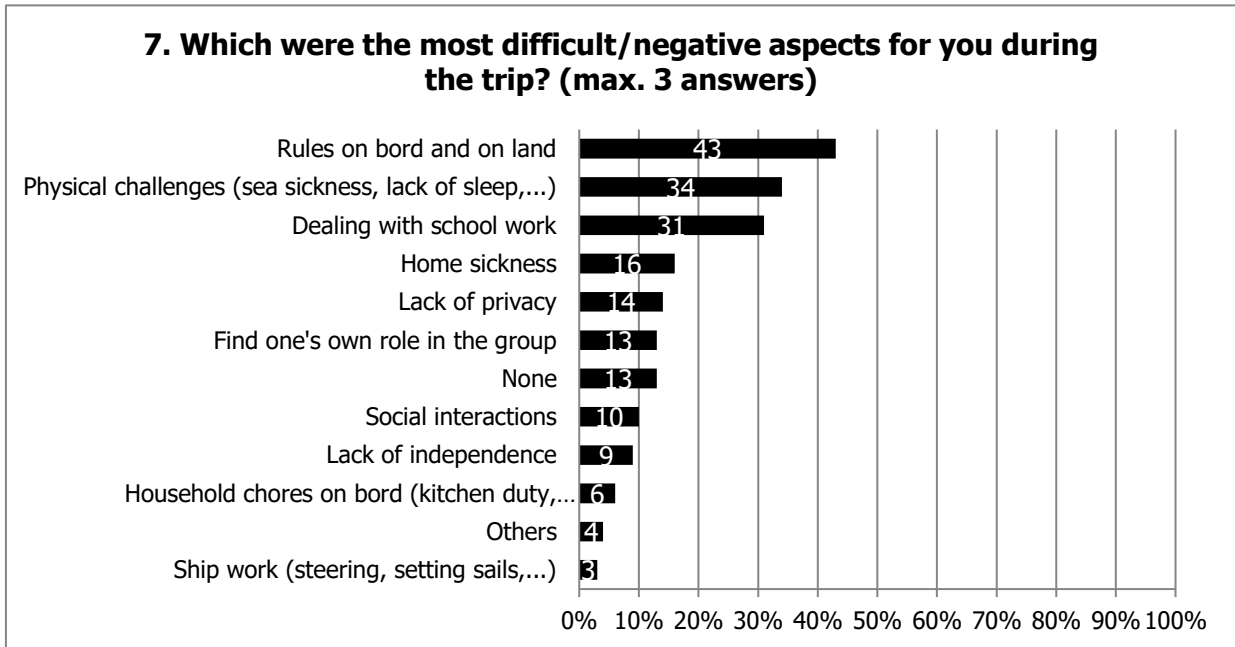Figure 8: The most difficult/negative aspects during the trip. Ordered by percentage.

Question 8 was "Do you think that you have changed through the trip?". Answer options ranged from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much), and "I don't know". Lowest number chosen was 1, meaning some believe they did not change at all. The highest rate was 5, so others think that they did change a lot. The medium is 3,6. This shows that most of the participants believe that they changed to some extent, but not very much.

Then there was an additional question, which asked "How have you changed?". This question received 48 answers. 21 people, equalling 44% of this question's respondents, explained that they acquired new viewpoints or their opinion or (world) view have changed. For example, they said:

> "I have found my own point of view and I know now why I hold it."

> "Through experiences got to know many new things and that shaped new views."

19 people (40%) stated that they have become more self-confident, have more self-trust or are more self-assured.

> "Mainly I became much more confident."

> "I learned to like and appreciate myself more."

8 people said specifically that now they are more independent and also 8 people said they became more open.

> "New goals and became more independent."

> "Became more open to new things."

To help Ocean College develop in the future, question 10 asked in which areas participants would have liked to learn or experience more. Almost half of the respondents (49%) said "Sailing knowledge". After that came, both chosen by 40%, "Intercultural encounters" and "Trip planning/organisation". Interestingly, "Language competences" was chosen by 34%, meaning every third person would have liked to have a deeper language immersion. 2 people also left comments saying they would have wanted to gain more historical knowledge.

10. In which areas would you have liked to learn or experience more? (max. 3 answers)

Area	Percentage
Sailing knowledge	49
Trip planning/organisation	40
Intercultural encounters	40
Language competences	34
Sustainability	26
Job insights	26
Economic correlations	14
Scientific working	6
Media compentences	6
None	3
Others	3
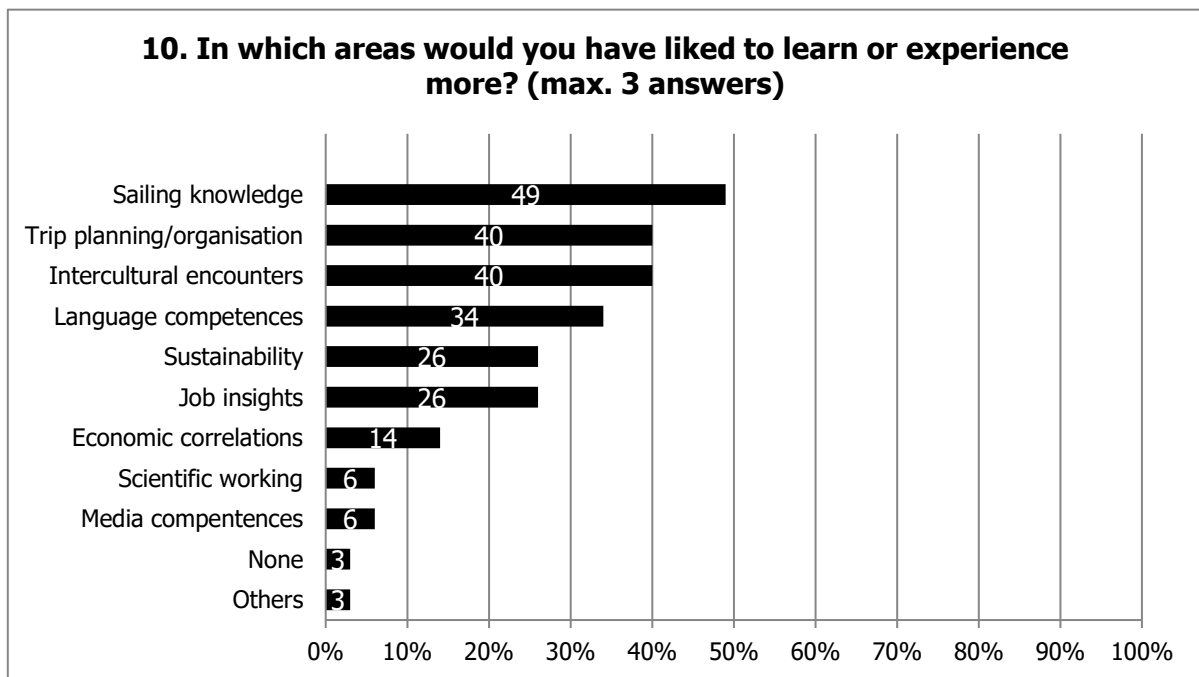
Figure 9: The areas where the participants would have liked to learn more. Ordered by percentage.

The last question rounding up the survey asked if the participants think they benefited from participating in Ocean College. The rating went from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). The lowest rating that was given was 3, meaning that all respondents benefited at least partially. The average was 4,7, so most participants chose the highest score.

5.2 Interviews

In the following, the participants will be labelled with numbers, e.g. Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on. To many aspects that we talked about I will give examples of what the participants said by quoting some of them.

Each participant had a very individual experience and also perception of the trip. Everybody encountered different challenges and learned different things depending on the person´s background and history. Nevertheless there were many aspects and themes that reoccurred in many interviews and played a role in many people´s experiences.

5.2.1 Reasons for participation

To start off the interview, the first question asked why the participants decided to participate. 17, meaning more than half of them, said that they wanted to go abroad, see new countries and the world. A reason for choosing specifically Ocean College for that was, as expressed by 10 people, that they wanted 'something else'. Participant 27 explained:

> "Above all, the project interested me because you do something totally different, it is a very different way to have a stay abroad."

Sailing and wanting to learn (more) about it was a participation reason for 10 of the interviewees. Six mentioned interpersonal aspects as reasons to join the trip: they wanted to get to know new people or experience teamwork. Five people mentioned that they did not like the conventional school system or that they wanted to experience a different kind of learning. Participant 13 describes it as follows:

> "For me, a big factor was that I was so tired of school and I was on the verge of dropping out."

Participant 26 had similar experiences, he said:

> "When it comes to school, I was tired of it and I was a bit too frustrated."

Four people mentioned their wish to 'get out', out of everyday life, their friend group or routine. Three of the participants said that they appreciated being able to see the world without having to fly.

5.2.2 A memorable moment

Then I asked the participants to tell a memorable moment or situation from the trip that they learned something from and grew from. The experiences they talked about were very diverse. Four of them recounted memories that had to do with group experiences and dynamics. Four told about situations during hikes: two participants particularily remembered their hike to the top of the Teide, the highest mountain of Spain, and two others told me about their jungle hike in Dominica.

> Participant 21: "Already on the way there [to the hike destination] I was tired and I said, when we arrived there, 'I can't do this anymore'. And then I had to walk all the way back again. And I just knew, I can't give up now, I have to keep going, because nobody can get here to pick me up. And it was for me so that I just walked and tried to keep going. And in the end such a burden fell off me, that I really made it and somehow kept going. Afterwards I often thought about it, also now. When something is challenging, where I think 'Can I do this' or 'Can I keep going', I often think back to this moment, because I think 'Okay, there I had this feeling so early, that I can't do this anymore. I did it anyways. I kept going.' I know I can follow through and trust myself and my abilities."

> Participant 27: "These were pretty long treks, very big hikes. To have done those and have them behind, to have this success experience and at the same time to have no choice to just quit – I think this taught me that if you carry out something completely, there is a success experience."

Four interviewees remembered moments that had to do with communication or interaction, that went well or that went wrong. Also sea sickness played a role in the participants´ experiences, as mentioned by four of them.

> Participant 3: "What definitely changed me was that in the beginning I was very, very seasick. There I noticed very well how you stick together on a ship. And it was that after some weeks you had the feeling that you know the people forever. This support that you got from the others, because you just sat in the corner all the time, that was incredible."

> Participant 9: "Where you definitely learned from was when you were seasick, you had to do things anyways, and then you noticed 'Okay, I can get over it. I have to keep going now.'"

Another reoccurring aspect were tasks on the ship that the students had to do. The tasks that impacted four of the interviewees were watches, galley duties, cleaning, packing sails or steering.

> Participant 1: "When we started sailing and they really told us 'Now you have to steer the ship'. And they really taught us how to do it. I was always together with a friend, I didn't dare to steer alone. And in the English Channel, there were metre-high waves and I thought 'I will never be able to hold the course alone'. Then when the wind had eased a bit and my friend was suddenly gone, and I thought 'Now I have to steer all by myself'. And it worked. That was real-

ly cool, because we were taught before and now we could apply it, and I could steer the whole ship. That was where I said 'Wow, here I learned something really big'."

Participant 27: "I feel like every time when steering I changed a bit, because you just had to take over such a responsibility for many people and the ship itself. It was such a responsible position. That I can remember very well, that that challenged me a lot. I had to overcome myself to take this position. But there I learned a lot about what it means to take responsibility."

Three people talked about how climbing the masts influenced their fear of heights and what they learned from it.

Participant 19: "I am a kind of person, when I am scared of something, I always run away or try to duck out. And I have fear of heights. And I feel like that was such a moment where I noticed myself 'I want to overcome my fear of heights'. And that I got myself to climb up there, I would have never done this before this half year [the trip]. Because it goes high, I don't like this. But I think that I got myself to do something that I actually didn't want to or what scared me. To just overcome this short moment and do it, that was one of the key moments. (—) Now, when in the first moment I think 'No, I don't go there, I don't know this', then I think 'It can be cool too'. Then I try anyways. I think before this half year I would have never done this."

Two participants remembered the ship handover, where they took over a certain position.

Participant 12: "I was First Mate. The First Mate [from the professional crew] had just left and said 'Do a bracing now'. And I was alone on deck and just thought 'What should I do now? Nobody's here [from the professional crew]. I have no idea how to do this'. I went ahead with it anyways, especially because everyone on deck was like 'Now we're here, what should we do? It's cold'. That was the most intense, she threw me in at the deep end."

5.2.3 Short trip description

I asked the participants how they would describe their trip with Ocean College in three words. The three most popular terms were adventure/adventurous, challenge/challenging and fun. Other words that were chosen multiple times were exciting, unique and friendship.

5.2.4 Personal changes

All the participants who I talked to went through certain changes during the trip, or changed some things when they came back. Although everybody's experiences were very different, there were many remarkably similar changes that the participants went through.

Many of them said that their problem-handling approach has changed. Eleven said that they became less conflict avoidant or became more "a person who addresses problems directly" (Participant 13).

> Participant 11: "Now I know that when you are forced to talk something over, you can find a solution if all parties also want to solve it. I think that afterwards I tried more often, if there were problems or things that bothered me, to really solve it, because it feels better then to carry it with you."

> Participant 19: "On the ship I learned a bit to go to confrontation and if I have a problem to address people and talk to them about it. I don't keep conflicts to myself anymore, but I can talk to people about it."

Nine participants said that they became "more relaxed" (Participant 18) or "don't let things stress [them] out so much" (Participant 1).

> Participant 2: "I think I became more relaxed. On a ship, you often can't stick to plans, but you have to act at short notice. (—) In the end everything works out, maybe not as you imagine, but this flexibility, that has established itself."

> Participant 28: "I think [I became] a bit more relaxed towards many things. Some things you just can't change, it is how it is. I can't change it, and then it is like that. That is a thing that has changed. That you don't think and get upset so much if something doesn't fit, if you can't change it anyways."

Eight of the interviewees said that their "friend groups changed extremely, because you have changed yourself, and it doesn't fit so well anymore with your friends from home" (Participant 8).

> Participant 15: "Some of those people, I don't have any contact with them anymore. Because looking back, I think 'Why am I still so attached to those people', because they do some stuff that I'm not up for at all."

> Participant 23: "I noticed that maybe some friends don't suit me anymore, because I had the feeling that I had changed. It wasn't that I completely let them go or didn't do anything with them anymore, but it just didn't fit anymore, and with time it also came to an end."

For nine people sustainability started to play a bigger role or they became more aware of the environment, for example they "pay much more attention to sustainability then before" (Participant 14).

> Participant 25: "You became sensitized to topics, also environment, like the problems. That wasn't like at school, where they tell you 'The environment is suffering'. When you come to the coolest island, which looks like 'Pirates of the Caribbean', and you go to the beach and you think 'What is this garbage dump?

Is this for real?' Then it is a totally different feeling then if you only know it from stories."

Participant 20: "Also before I was always a bit into climate and that. But after the trip I noticed that that became significantly more. (—) I make sure to eat significantly less meat. With many things, I think if you could make it more climate-neutral. I think that for me this was the biggest impact."

Ten participants said that after the trip, they "started to help much more at home" with household chores, maybe because they "noticed 'it doesn't do itself'" (Participant 7).

Participant 27: "Especially my family life and living together with my mother changed a lot, because I noticed how much work comes up in the household. I had less illusions then before and tried to help more. And I had more of an idea how to help. Before I did help a bit, but I had much less knowledge, for example about cleaning toilets, then afterwards. I had much less experience in housekeeping, for example cooking."

Participant 21: "I started to clean a part of the apartment. Also to do the dishes, and we divided it a bit more between each other as a family."

Seven interviewees shared that after the trip, they cleaned out their room or wardrobe or rearranged their room. They "decluttered" and "threw out so much" (Participant 11).

Participant 14: "I was in my room and I sorted everything out. I came back from the trip and I stood in my room and thought 'Wow, that's not me at all anymore'. That was such a strange feeling. I really cleared everything out. My room was completely empty. 80% of what I own I gave away or threw out. Because on the trip I noticed that it does me so much better if I own little or have less. Now I don't have so much stuff. And I also completely painted my room. I still don't have much stuff."

Participant 7: "I remade my whole room. I decluttered my entire room and dissolved my childhood room a bit. I made a totally new room. I think that was important for my personality, because I noticed that now after the trip, from now on I more adult, I'm not a child anymore."

Some of the participants told how different their social behavior was during or after the trip.

Participant 24: "I think the way you deal with people has changed, like approaching new people. In my class we got two new people, and they are somehow being bullied. And also my best friend is involved in it and says 'You can't do anything with him, he's a loser' and I said 'Let me see for myself'. And I went up to him without prejudices and actually noticed that he's all right. I did something with him and of course it doesn't put me in a position that I'm super cool, but if I see a nice person I don't have to find them not cool just because others find them not cool. So just approaching people without prejudices, no matter what the others say."

Participant 12: "To the people at Ocean College, to many, I built a bond within two weeks that I haven't built at my boarding school within three years. (—) It's about different things. At school it is about grades, brand clothes, cars. On the trip it was more about personal stuff, what you think about, what you say. I can put it simply: in the boarding school I still speak about cars and clocks, and with the people from Ocean College I talk about attitudes to life, feelings – it's something totally different. It's much more personal."

Some people also explained that their use of electronic devices has changed.

Participant 3: "Before the trip I was sitting a lot in front of the computer and played a lot. That changed extremely. On the trip I noticed all the time, because we didn't have our phones for a long time and got it only for shore leaves, then at some point I realized 'Okay, I don't need this. Our world is beautiful enough, I don't have to flee to other worlds'. That's why I'm much less in front of the computer."

Participant 19: "I think what changed extremely for me was my phone usage. Before the trip I always had the reflex 'I am bored, I have my phone'. By now it isn't like that at all, but I am the one weird person who sits and looks out the window and everybody else looks at their phone. That also stands out. (—) I deleted Instagram on my phone. I just didn't need it anymore."

5.2.5 Sense of responsibility and independence

To get a clearer picture of if and how the sense of responsibility and independence had changed throughout the trip, I asked the participants about their experiences. The results for both aspects were fairly similar. About 1/3 said that their sense of responsibility or independence were similar before and after the trip - not that much had changed. For 2/3, something or a lot had changed over the course of the trip. This is what some participants say about their independence:

Participant 7: "Before the trip, I wasn't really independent. On the trip I learned for the first time to really clean, really cook, I learned to do the laundry. I would say I wasn't really independent before. (—) After the trip, I suddenly helped much more in the household, because I noticed that it doesn't get done by itself; it was suddenly much more present, what work comes up in the household. Also more independent in the sense that I solved problems by myself and tried not to push them away, but solve them directly."

Participant 14: "I think that before I was already quite independent. In all aspects, also school. (—) I think that [after the trip] it became a bit stronger. Before the trip, I was already independent, but I often called my parents and asked for advice with big decisions. Now I just do something and inform them later 'I did this and that'."

Participant 13: "I have always been a very independent teenager. Yes, very independent. (—) I would say it stayed the same throughout the trip. In the end of

the trip there was this handover, where you were chosen, which position you had. There I was captain. Through that, my self esteem increased, that's why I maybe became more confident. "

Also in the area of responsibility the participants have made different experiences.

> Participant 6: "Before the trip I already took much responsibility in some areas. But I think that I handle some things more responsibly now. And I also stand by my decisions more in all areas, and am not so insecure if I should do it now or not."

> Participant 12: "I think this is also the biggest point. Before, I always perceived responsibility as annoying and exhausting. Now it is that I like to have responsibility. Responsibility for myself, for other people, especially – it became better. (—) Sense of responsibility – I think that was the most intense. That it developed, especially."

> Participant 7: "I would say that I have always been a very responsible person and aware of the consequences of my actions. But I think that due to the trip I became much more aware of my responsibility in other areas; before I wasn't so aware of it. That's why I would say that I became more responsible."

> Participant 22: "I think that I take over more responsibility or generally have taken over more responsibility after the trip, because through the trip you realized how much responsibility you can or could actually take over. Because you know that the limits are very far away and a lot has to happen, at least for me, until I reach my limits of responsibility that I can take. Then I do it gladly and often."

5.2.6 Most important insight

What was the most important insight or the biggest lesson that the participants learned on their trip? What new knowledge stayed with them also after they came back home? Eleven of the answers to this question were connected to some new understanding in the areas of social life and "knowledge of human nature and what makes a person tick" (Participant 24), because the participants learned "to have a different perspective on people".

> Participant 25: "Before the trip, at school, I was … I don't want to say a 'bully', but I was rather mean to people. I must say that after the trip, in my opinion, that really improved. Because you were with people who you would never do something with. For example some of them, I would have had nothing to do with them, still I got along with them very well. Afterwards at school, I had the feeling that I could get along better in the class community. (—) The different people that were there [on the trip]: from somebody who does their chemistry homework during summer vacation to somebody who never did his homework before; everything is there. And it's good that way. (—) There are people in all shapes and colors. Not just in terms of shapes and colors, but people all over the

world are different and certainly good in their own way. That the world is a colorful place."

Participant 8: "That you have to be more open for new things, that you engage more with people. Also if from the first impression they don't seem like it, but get a bit involved with the people, and then you notice 'They are actually pretty cool, I wouldn't have thought that in the beginning'. That is an important point."

Participant 10: "I am not alone. In the sense that there are people there for me, there are people who are interested in me and there are people who feel the same as me. But also I am not alone and I can't just do what I want and not care about other people - so also this responsibility aspect."

Four people told an insight that has to do with confidence: Participant 5 said that "maybe I can do more then I think I am physically capable of" and Participant 27 realised "that you shouldn't mind what other people think". Four other participants' most important insight had to do with a broadened horizon or new (world) view.

Participant 21: "My view on learning and education. That there are many different possibilities and many possibilities to connect it to fun. That many are very interested in certain things and that this should be incorporated in school, that learning is fun and is not a burden all the time. Also that you can greatly learn in a team."

Participant 1: "How much more there is out there then your own little world. How wide it is, how many other cultures, other countries, other ways of life – what there is still to learn out there."

Two participants noticed that "we have it pretty good here in Europe" (Participant 20) and "how many things we actually do not need, or vice versa, how little you need to be happy" (Participant 9). Two others realized "how important communication is and that without communication nothing works and everything can go wrong" (Participant 22) and "that you have to stay in communication and talk about the problems that you encounter" (Participant 26).

5.2.7 Role in life

I asked what role the trip plays retrospectively in the participants' lives. For them, the trip was 1 month to 3 years ago, meaning that for some it was more recent and naturally still more present then for others. 13 people said that the trip stills plays a big role in their life. This opinion was shared by participants no matter how long ago their trip was.

Participant 10: "It was a bit like a turning point between child and adult. (—) I think that when I will later think about it, my youth, it will certainly be a lot of memories from the trip, because so much has happened. (—) I actually can't imagine a life as the person who I was before, with those views and how I was."

Most of the participants answered this question by mentioning some sort of personality change, because the trip has changed them and the "changes are still there until now" (Participant 23). They became "more confident at that time" (Participant 27), "more environmentally conscious" (Participant 23) or "became more open" (Participant 24).

> Participant 22: "My parents always say 'You came back as a totally different person'. (—) I think I would have a less strong sense of responsibility and less of this 'just tackle it and do it'."

> Participant 12: "[Without the trip] I would still have an insanely bad relation to my family, I would still do nothing but gaming and I wouldn't go outside because I just wouldn't dare to. The trip was what has changed me the most until now in my life. If I hadn't had this, also just the view on the world, what you want to do, what you want to reach, goals - I just became much more adult. If I hadn't had this – difficult, very difficult."

The aspect mentioned the most was friends. 13 interviewees told about how the friends they made on board still play a role in their life.

> Participant 13: "I still have extremely much contact to the people from the trip – really on a daily basis. You find really good friends. You always have somebody who understands you, because these people have seen you in every situation."

> Participant 16: "What remained the most is the contact with the people. We meet regularly in a smaller group on Skype or Zoom, and WhatsApp groups."

> Participant 12: "Those from the trip, who I still am in contact with, it's basically not just friendship anymore – you could almost say it's family."

Nine interviewees told me how they changed their (life) plans after and because of the trip. Participant 28 decided to start university in a city further away from home, because she realized "that it is not so terrible to be away". Participant 27 changed schools to a bilingual school, because she realized that she wanted to learn English more deeply to have the possibility to travel and communicate with other people, and Participant 5 changed her whole career plans.

> Participant 5: "When I started Ocean College I was in the 4th semester of political studies. That was the plan since 9th grade, political studies, master, I go into diplomacy. Well, I finished it, because I thought 'I am already so far', but I abandoned this plan and said 'No, that's not it'. Now I study nautics and say I'm going into seafaring."

> Participant 26: "I came back, had seen the whole world and suddenly I sat again in a stupid classroom where nothing happens. I realized that my classmates had done nothing. (—) Then I realized 'They sit there for 8 hours, learn nothing, waste their nice youth, that can also be interesting, and make nothing of their

time'. Thereupon I left school with a lower secondary school certificate and said 'I find my own way, maybe a bit aside from the normal path'."

Four participants said that the trip, what they had learned or memories from it, has especially helped them in Covid times.

> Participant 7: "Now in the Corona time you draw a bit on those experiences."

> Participant 22: "Now I can say, when looking back at it, especially now during the Corona pandemic, that I was abroad and it has satisfied my thirst for adventure a bit, but also awaken it even more."

5.2.8 Improvement ideas

The last question I asked was what could have been better during the trip, what improvement ideas the participants have and what they would have changed looking back if they could. Many different ideas came up as results.

Seven participants brought up communication or role distribution as problem areas.

> Participant 18: "The organization of [the project leader in the back office] and [the project leader on site] is not always so well agreed. That was often a bit weird for us, because [the project leader on site] said one thing, and then [the project leader in the back office] said something totally different. That they come to an agreement a bit more. The organization was sometimes a bit difficult."

For three of them especially the role of the mentors, participants who already finished high school, and "the relation between mentors and students" (Participant 5), was questionable.

> Participant 14: "On one hand we were treated like students, but on the other we got the full responsibility from the beginning, for example we were watchleaders from the beginning. But we did not know at all what to do. None of us could do it, but they immediately expected something from us. And we often heard from one captain 'You are the role models, you are the mentors'. I always found that difficult, because we also paid for the trip, and we paid the same price [as the students]. It did not make sense in my head how I can pay for something and then something is expected from me. Expectations where I thought 'I'm not in a role model function for anybody and I can also make a mistake'. That was strange. At the same time, on land we were treated like the students. Partially it wasn't clear what we are actually doing. Basically we also 'worked' a lot, we were always there during the watches and did the 8 hours. It took very long until it was clear what role you had on the ship."

> Participant 20: "The ship owner saw us like their normal watchleaders during the summer voyage, that is like somebody who doesn't pay any money, doesn't get any money, in return gets room and board and the flight, and works there for that time. Meanwhile [the project leader in the back office] made us pay the

same amount [as the students] and promised us the earth, what after all wasn't implemented. (—) In our opinion there was a problem in the communication between [the project leader in the back office] and the ship, how exactly it is to be implemented. (—) Because the students get a teacher on top, they do 4 hours of watch a day, whereas us mentors had the feeling that we have to really work."

Six interviewees said they would have wanted to "do more with the ship" (Participant 4), because the "sailing, it fell a bit too short, there we could have learned a bit more" (Participant 22).

> Participant 4: "I always had the feeling that the ship was a bit secondary, it was the means to an end. (—) We could have done more with the sailing, like once a week a class or two about sailing."
>
> Participant 5: "Personally, [I wanted] to be more involved into these sailing things."

Six participants criticized certain environmental aspects that were not handled very well in their opinion. They talked about the food on board and the use of the engine: "meat every day and we often just fired up the engine to move forward faster" (Participant 9).

> Participant 13: "On board we ate tons of meat. That was so disgusting at some point. That's why now I'm vegetarian. I found that really really bad. On board we were not super sustainable."
>
> Participant 3: "It would have been cool to have different food; we had pretty much industrial food. The trip is under the banner of environmental friendliness. If they'd try to take organic food, that would have been cool."
>
> Participant 26: "I'd have found it super exciting to not always, when the wind is gone, immediately fire up the big engine. We are a sailing boat."

Another aspect that came up in five interviews was the wish to get more in touch with the local cultures or people, for example by having "more projects with the local people, so that you can get to know the culture closer" (Participant 9).

> Participant 19: "We sometimes saw the countries as tourists. For example this bike trip on Cuba was super cool, but two busses followed us all the time. I think that you could have learned and also experienced much more if you could just explore it on your own and not from far away. Because I think it was not always the reality what we saw there. (—) One bus was for us, because we never cycled the whole distance, but just a part, and the rest with the bus. The second bus was for the bikes. That was like - so environmentally friendly and then we go with two busses. Whereas if we just drove, we would have needed only one bus. That was a contradiction in itself."
>
> Participant 11: "In the countries where we were, I would have liked to learn even more about them."

Five participants said that they would have liked to get more responsibility. One of them compares Ocean College to a similar project by explaining that he met somebody who participated in a different 'sailing high school', where "they were allowed to take much more responsibility for the ship, so they really sailed it by themselves" (Participant 22).

> Participant 12: "One point that could have been better and that we also criticized quite a lot on the trip, is that we couldn't decide as much as we would have wanted to. If we were thrown in at the deep end more often or were told 'How would you do it? You have to organize it now', then we would have gotten more out of it. Like at the Handover for example. That could have been intensified."

> Participant 11: "Maybe that there is more responsibility. That we can have a say, but that it is connected to responsibility, so that it doesn't result in nonsense, but you really think about what you want to do. Because I had the feeling that sometimes you just rested on what the project management came up with. There I'd find it nicer if you were more stimulated to think."

One participant had an idea what could have been part of the program.

> Participant 1: "What they could have maybe done, is a bit more travelling by ourselves. Maybe that would have even encouraged independence, if they told us 'Now you have a certain budget, we meet again there and there. Do something'. Or with a teacher who accompanies. I would have found that cool."

5.3 Result summary

The main reason for participation, as shown in the survey and the interviews, is the wish to visit many new countries or see the world. For most of the participants this is the most decisive factor for choosing to participate in Ocean College. To do something different or unusual or encounter new challenges is the second-most popular reason. For one third of the participants wanting to learn more about sailing and sailing ships is also a participation reason. Before the trip, most of the participants were concerned about finding their place in the group. Some were also worried about physical challenges and keeping up with school work.

How did the trip change the participants? Most say that they have changed noticeably. Many came back with changed views. This includes views on sustainability, conflict resolution or human nature. So, some started to pay more attention to a sustainable lifestyle. Some starting dealing with conflicts in a different way: they learned how to address problems more directly or became more relaxed when handling tough situations. New views on human nature sometimes led to a different approach to people. For some, all these new views resulted in a change of friends or reorganisation of private belongings, like the own room or wardrobe.

Many participants became more confident, for example in their abilities or decisions. Some realised that they should not pay so much attention to what other people think and now know more what they want. Many people learned about their strengths and weaknesses or noticed that overcoming challenges taught them a lot. These challenges were for example climbing the masts and overcoming fear of heights, strenuous hikes that boosted stamina or taking responsibility for certain tasks.

As reflected in the survey and interviews, the trip had a crucial impact on many participants' independence. Most of them experienced a positive change, and many even became much more independent. For example, some became more independent in the household and began to do more chores and help more at home. The sense of responsibility of some participants stayed the same, but for most of them it increased as well. Some feel more responsibility for their behaviour in aspects like sustainability or learned to take initiative for work that needs to be done.

The area that the participants learned the most in is usually nautical knowledge. This includes work on the ship, for example steering and sail handling. Other areas where most of the learning happened are ways of life and nature in other countries. These were experienced through hikes and encounters with locals. Often, important and emotional moments were connected to learning in one of these areas, for example the hikes created intense experiences that the participants remembered for a long time.

The trip with Ocean College influenced the future vision of most of the participants. They got new ideas for how they want to shape their future, for example what and where they want to study. Some changed their plans in a way they would not have without the trip.

The aspects that were rated the most negative on the trip were the rules and unclear or confusing communication. Some did not understand why certain rules were in place and wished for a clearer communication from the project management to the participants. Another aspect that was difficult for many were physical challenges like sea sickness or lack of sleep. For example, some particularly remember how hard it was for them to keep working and doing their tasks despite of sea sickness. Also keeping up with school work was difficult for many. Some participants criticised certain sustainability aspects of the trip, for example what food there was.

The research data identified specific areas where the participants would have liked to learn more in. One of them is sailing and knowledge in the nautical area. Some felt that work on and with the ship was secondary and wanted to be more involved into all aspects of sailing. Another requested area is international encounters, where the participants could get more in touch with local life. Some felt that their experience of the countries was rather tourist-like. Also, getting more responsibility is one of the wishes. For example, many participants would have liked to be able to learn more about trip planning and organisation.

Summing up, all the respondents say that they benefitted through the trip and describe it for the most part as a positive experience.

6 RESULT ANALYSIS

In this chapter I will answer the research questions that were posed in the beginning of this thesis. The goal was to find out how this trip influenced the participants, what they learned the most from and what changed for them when they came back.

6.1 Motivation and concerns before the trip

What motivates participants the most to do this journey is the wish to go abroad and see many new countries. This shows that Ocean College's promise to visit 8 countries in half a year (Ocean College 2017) plays a vital role in attracting participants. Since most other stay abroad programs for high school students in Germany are stationary, meaning taking place in one country, and connected to a high school exchange (Kum 2021), Ocean College has a big advantage for people who want to do something different than the usual high school exchange. Offering the opportunity to visit many countries puts Ocean College on quite a unique position among all students-going-abroad programs and should hence be a central aspect in the promotion. Sailing itself is a participation reason for 1/3 of the participants, which in turn means that 2/3 probably do not have much previous experience in this area. So, the nautical education has to be started from the very beginning, explaining basics of sailing and providing elementary knowledge in the functionality and handling of the sails. To involve everyone in this process of education, peer-to-peer learning could be used effectively. Those participants with sailing experience could share their knowledge in small presentations or workshops, as peer-to-peer learning can enable a feeling of safety and feel less intimidating (Reeves 2021).

As Sand (2014, 189) also found in his study, participants have some doubts before the start of the voyage. The biggest concern by far is finding one's own role in the group. Although Ocean College organises a getting-to-know-each-other meeting before the trip, more than half of the participants worry about this before starting the journey. This is nothing unusual, as teenagers have a particularly strong need to fit in (Scott 2017). The length and intensity of the time that will be shared together on the trip only intensifies the initial wish to find a position in the group that you will feel comfortable in. To help participants with this common concern it is advisable to use tools that can improve group dynamics and understanding. Lase (2021), who was interviewed for this thesis, believes that a group needs to go through the storming

phase of group development before being able to become a performing group. She likes to give space for the storming phase before the sailing even starts, in order to minimize physical and mental risks. She says:

> "If we try to skip this process the group will never fully develop. (—) You cannot get to performing stage if you don't go through storming."

To trigger this process, Lase likes to use different activities like simulation games and team building activities. The focus here should be trust-building, getting to know individual personalities and creating a culture of honesty (deBara 2021). As mentioned by Lase, the process of group development should be started as early as possible, so preferably during the first meeting of the future participants. For example already there, they can discuss everybody`s roles and responsibilities, share their expectations and especially what they expect from each other (Ferguson 2021). This exchange of thoughts and feelings can help the participants to see that they are not alone with their concerns and encourages a trusting atmosphere. However, it should also be noticed that after the trip only 13% of the participants say that finding their own role in the group was a big problem for them. This means that this initial concern mostly turns out to be unfounded.

Concerns like being able to manage physical challenges or keep up with school work can be allayed by providing the possibility to talk and ask questions to participants from previous journeys. They already know what kind of challenges in these areas are to be expected and also how they can be managed. Those experiences are very valuable for future participants, as they can help them to realistically asses what challenges will come up and get prepared for their own trip. A possibility here is to appoint contact persons from previous trips, who volunteer to answer questions to new participants, maybe by providing their contact details like phone number or email.

6.2 Personal changes

Many personal changes occurred during the trip. The most prominent ones are that the participants changed some of their views, they became more confident, got to know their strength and weaknesses and overcame challenges. New understanding in the knowledge of human nature was gained by many participants. Often, they became more open towards other people and started to see them from another perspective. Very impressive were the examples of participants who changed their behaviour from a rather close-minded attitude to approaching

people who they did not like initially (Participants 24 & 25). Those personal transformations often even led to a change of friends or friend groups after the return. Many also decided to rearrange their room and reorganise their personal belongings, because those things did not represent who they were after coming back. This shows that the personal changes that occurred during the trip are not superficial and do not regress once the participants come back home. They stay and massively influence the participants' social life in a way that changes their social environment.

One of the views that many of participants changed is their view on sustainability. Things and situations that they saw or experienced on the trip taught them to pay more attention to their surrounding nature and raised their environmental awareness. This shows that the way that Ocean College deals with this topic has a lasting impact also on the participants' future life. For example, micro plastics is a topic that is talked a lot about on board. Awareness towards this issue can accompany participants after the trip and change their ways of action (Participant 6). Ocean College should be aware of its influence on the participants in this area and use it to bring those topics closer to them. Nonetheless, sustainability is an area that is also criticised by some participants. They think that if the trip is guided by sustainable development goals (Ocean College 2022), those should be followed more consistently. This concerns the usage of transportation on land as well as the usage of fuel on the ship. For example, in certain situations the participants wondered if it is now really necessary to turn on the engine in order to arrive somewhere faster, or if it would be possible to rely more on the power of nature, the wind, even if that means that it takes longer to arrive (Participants 9 & 26). Another aspect that is criticised by some is the 'industrial food' on board, especially the meat (Participants 3 & 25). Of course, it is not easy to buy in bulk for so many people and in different countries along the travel route. But nonetheless, it is possible to pay more attention to sustainability also in regard to the food that is consumed on board. The amount of meat can be easily reduced simply by replacing it with other food. Also food ingredients can be taken into account when choosing what to buy, for example by trying to avoid ingredients like palm oil (Participant 9).

What has changed for many participants is the way how they approach and master challenges. Many said that throughout the course of the trip they learned how to address problems more directly, and thus became less conflict-avoidant. On a ship there is not so much space to run away from your problems or avoid somebody, so speaking up and trying to solve the issue,

maybe also with the help of others, is a key take-away for many. Another aspect mentioned by many of the participants was that they became more relaxed and are now able to deal with many situations more calmly. A reason for this is often that on a sailing ship, there is much that you cannot influence or change. For example the wind is how it is, you have to adjust to it and change your plans according to how the wind changes. It is important to be able to work around those things that you cannot change and show flexibility. These new behaviour patterns stick with the participants when they come home and have a lasting impact on their character.

The trip also influenced most participants' independence and sense of responsibility. 82% say that they became more independent, 42% of who increased their independence very much through participating in the trip. Although during the trip everything is organised and planned by Ocean College and the accompanying adults, the participants have to take care and look after their own school tasks and personal matters. Since for most of them it is the first time living without the help and guidance of their family, they have to handle those matters independently and also start to take responsibility for them. So, considering the data it can be concluded that Ocean College does have a big effect on those kinds of character traits like independence and sense of responsibility.

One of the most influential aspects that was mentioned in many interviews was how taking on responsibility taught the participants something particular. Also Marshall (2017, 101) noticed the benefits connected with ship responsibilities in his research. Examples here are the responsibilities of steering the ship (Participants 1 & 27), leading some sail handling operation (Participants 12 & 14) or taking a position during the ship handover (Participants 7 & 13). This observation is supported by Dave Barber, a teacher of adventure education, who says that creating a sense of responsibility in his clients helps him to shift the emphasis away from himself as a leader and helps his clients to make the adventure their own (Hodgson & Bailie 2011, 60). According to Hodgson & Bailie (2011, 59) many of the benefits of adventure education build on the feeling of mastery that is experienced by participants when overcoming challenges that are inherent in performed activities. If this experience is denied, the activity might even lose its transforming power. Based on these insights it can be concluded that taking on an appropriate level of responsibility is a powerful impulse for personal development. Ocean College can use this purposefully as a tool to stimulate growth and help the participants develop further. For example, the participants could get more responsibility in the area

of trip planning and organisation, as 40% of them would have liked to learn more about this. There are different ways to facilitate that. One possibility is to create an independent trip that the participants could do in one of the countries. In a predetermined timeframe of a few days, they would travel to a certain destination in small groups and with an accompanying adult, using a pre-set budget. Having the responsibility to decide how they get there, what they do on the way and how they distribute the money would inevitably teach them how to organise and plan an own trip. Especially experiencing this in a small group would help the participants to learn how to take different opinions and wishes into account when organising and planning, while at the same time having a personal responsibility in the decisions that are being taken. Another way of teaching trip organisation would be to delegate the responsibility of organising a part of the land program to a few participants at a time. They could decide what sights they want to see or what places the group should visit, but at the same time the participants in charge would be responsible for organising the time table, transportation and meals for the whole group. Those two methods would increase the responsibility that the participants have to take while granting them more autonomy in decision making and providing the opportunity to learn about trip planning and organisation.

6.3 New knowledge

The areas that the participants learned the most in are clearly 'nautical knowledge', 'nature and environment of different countries' and 'ways of life in other countries and cultures'. This shows that Ocean College undoubtedly does a good job in teaching the sailing skills that are important for life on a sailing ship. Almost 4/5 of the participants believe that nautical knowledge is one of the areas that they learned the most in. Nature and ways of life in other countries are learned about when travelling through them. So, the land excursions and involvement with local organisations, like the rain forest station, do a great job in bringing local knowledge closer to the participants. 35% believe that they were able to increase their language abilities a lot. This means that for most of the participants, no major change occurred in this area.

34%, so approximately every third participant, would have wanted to improve their language competences more. Since Ocean College's ship is British and the language on board is English, the German-speaking participants have to adapt quickly and learn to communicate in this foreign language. But as mentioned in some interviews, the focus was not very much on

speaking English – it happened rather incidentally, only when it was demanded (Participants 20 & 21). To counteract this tendency, Ocean College could consider taking English-speaking teachers on board. Since quite a lot of time is spent in school lessons, more time would automatically be spent speaking English, thus strengthening speaking skills and widening the vocabulary. Also, having English-speaking teachers on board would enable Ocean College to take non-German students on the trip, which would in return force German-speaking participants to speak more English.

Another insight that should not be neglected is that 49% of the participants, meaning almost half, would have liked to gain more nautical knowledge during the trip. Although the data shows that most of them learned very much in this area, apparently there still is a gap that needs to be filled. Studies on sail training proof that the most effective experiences are the ones that put a greater emphasis on programme activities that are specifically designed to develop the trainees' skills, meaning structured and purposeful programmes (McCulloch, McLaughlin, Allison, Edwards & Tett 2010, 14). To create this kind of programme also here the transfer of responsibility could be used successfully. There is already a method for facilitating that: the ship handover, where the participants take certain positions of the nautical crew for a short time to learn the crew's tasks. So, the question would be how this method could be used more effectively to satisfy the participants wish to gain more sailing knowledge. One idea is that there are more handovers or they last longer, so that the participants get more responsibility and one could try out different positions (Participant 7). Also, some say that the experience would have been intensified if they were thrown in at the deep end by having to decide and organise more by themselves and even sail the ship more independently (Participant 12 & 22). But the responsibility of ship handling can also be learned without a whole handover: the coordination of a short sail handing operation can be given to participants during their watch, so that they experience having the responsibility of instructing people and leading a manoeuvre. Since Ocean College puts an emphasis on practical learning, this would be the best way to deepen the nautical education and sailing knowledge.

6.4 Additional improvement ideas

One more aspect that 40% of the participants would have wanted to experience more in is intercultural encounters. As they move around together as a closed group practically all the time, it is understandable that some participants feel like they experienced the countries most-

ly from a tourist perspective (Participants 16 & 19). There are multiple options to put more emphasis on this aspect. For example, Ocean College could partner up with a high school in one of the visited countries. The participants could visit the school for one or some days and follow the local students around. Living in a host family of a local student would deepen the connection that they build with the locals and create new international bonds. This would be a great possibility to really get to know the local life as well as peers from a different country and culture. Another option to emphasise intercultural meetings would be to get in touch with a local youth association or club. Ocean College participants could meet local youth and implement some activities together with them. Example activities are hikes, workshops for each other or language exchanges. Even a 'youth exchange' would be possible: Ocean College participants and local teenagers could travel somewhere together to get to know a new place and each other. Generally, cooperating together with local organisations and implementing projects together would give a deeper insight and understanding of the life in this country.

One of the most negative sides of the trip was, for 43% of the participants, the rules on board and on land. They criticise that there were not enough opportunities for involvement in decision-making and some rules did not make sense from their point of view (Participants 12 & 14). Of course, strict rules are necessary on such a trip to provide safety and a coordinated communal life. A possibility to help the participants feel more comfortable with the rules would be to involve them more in the process of rule-making, because "students are more likely to buy into the rules if they have a hand in creating them." (Shalaway 2005) At the beginning of the trip there could be a session, where everybody can suggest rules that they find important and vital for living together in the next six months. Those suggested rules can be discussed and negotiated, and later voted for which ones should be adapted as official rules. Of course, also consequences of breaking those rules should be decided upon at the same time. This method will help to foster the participants' sense of responsibility for their own behaviour (Eastern Washington University 2018) by giving them a sense of ownership of the rules (TeacherVision Staff 2022).

6.5 Influence on future

Almost 93% of the participants say that Ocean College has influenced their future vision, and for around 50% it was even influenced strongly or very strongly. In the interviews many talked about how exactly their life plans changed, for example deciding for a profession that

is connected to the sea. This shows how big the impact actually is that the trip has on the future of the majority of the participants. It can change the path that they choose to take and thus influence the course of their life.

The last question of the survey asked if the participants believe that they benefited from the trip. All respondents said that they benefitted, at least partially. Most of them said that they benefitted greatly. Also, the interviews show that the trip takes a very positive role in the participants' lives. These findings support the observation made by many other studies that conclude that "it is clear from the data that participants respond in overwhelmingly positive ways to their sail training voyages" (McCulloch, McLaughlin, Allison, Edwards & Tett 2010, 14).

7 CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis was to answer the research questions on the effectiveness of the sail training trip of Ocean College for the participants. Although there are already many studies and research projects done on the impacts of sail training, for Ocean College it was important to know and understand how exactly their trips and their implementation of sail training in combination with high school education affect the participants. They wanted to know specifically if and how their educational approach regarding the connection of theory and practice as well as the transfer of responsibility to the participants work out. To receive tangible answers, it was important to ask the participants directly and personally how they think and feel about it. Since no feedback on the long-term impacts of the trip was ever collected, I did this through the methods of survey and interviewing. By using these methods, I was able to collect a considerable amount of data. I received more feedback than I hoped for and expected to get. The participants were very open to tell me their opinions and experiences - the positive ones as well as the negative. This allowed me to see what educational approaches worked best for them and what was missing. My research methods proved to be beneficial and suitable for my goals and answering the research questions. The survey received many answers that confirmed the trips' positive impact on the participants' independence and confidence that is also suggested by other studies conducted previously in this field, but it also opened new perspectives on the participants' concerns and wishes. The interviews allowed a deeper insight into the individual perceptions and changes that the participants went through during and after the trip. To sum up, all the respondents reported an outstanding, predominantly positive experience. Every one of them was able to benefit from it. In my thesis, I initially planned to focus on the development of young people's sense of independence and responsibility by means of sail training. But when gathering the data, I quickly realised that there was so much that happened for the participants through the trip and that changed their personality and world views. Considering only these two aspects of personal development would not do justice to the true impact that the trip has of the participants. It should be noted that a limitation of this study is that possibly, students who had a predominantly positive experience are more likely to answer survey questions and be ready to talk about their memories. Students who had more negative experiences from the trip would probably not feel the wish to talk so much about it or may have even broken off contact to Ocean College, which made it impossible for me to reach them.

Of course, there is always room for improvement. Ocean College constantly strives to develop their operations and grow as a business. They take into account what went well and what went wrong on previous trips to change it in the future. The feedback collected through this thesis will help Ocean College to recognise more aspects that can be changed and what could be done better to be able to achieve stronger results. Many Ocean College participants would have wanted to gain more sailing knowledge. Also getting more in touch with local life in the destination countries as well as learning about trip organisation are wishes that they expressed. These demands could be met by incorporating more personal responsibility that the participants accept for certain tasks on the ship or on land. The development suggestions from this thesis can also be used by other sail training providers, as well as by adventure educational program providers in general. Most of the advice is applicable, in one form or the other, to different settings and educational environments. Generally, it can be said that Ocean College reaches its goals of better preparing the participants for their life after school and improving their understanding of prevailing issues in today's world to a great extent.

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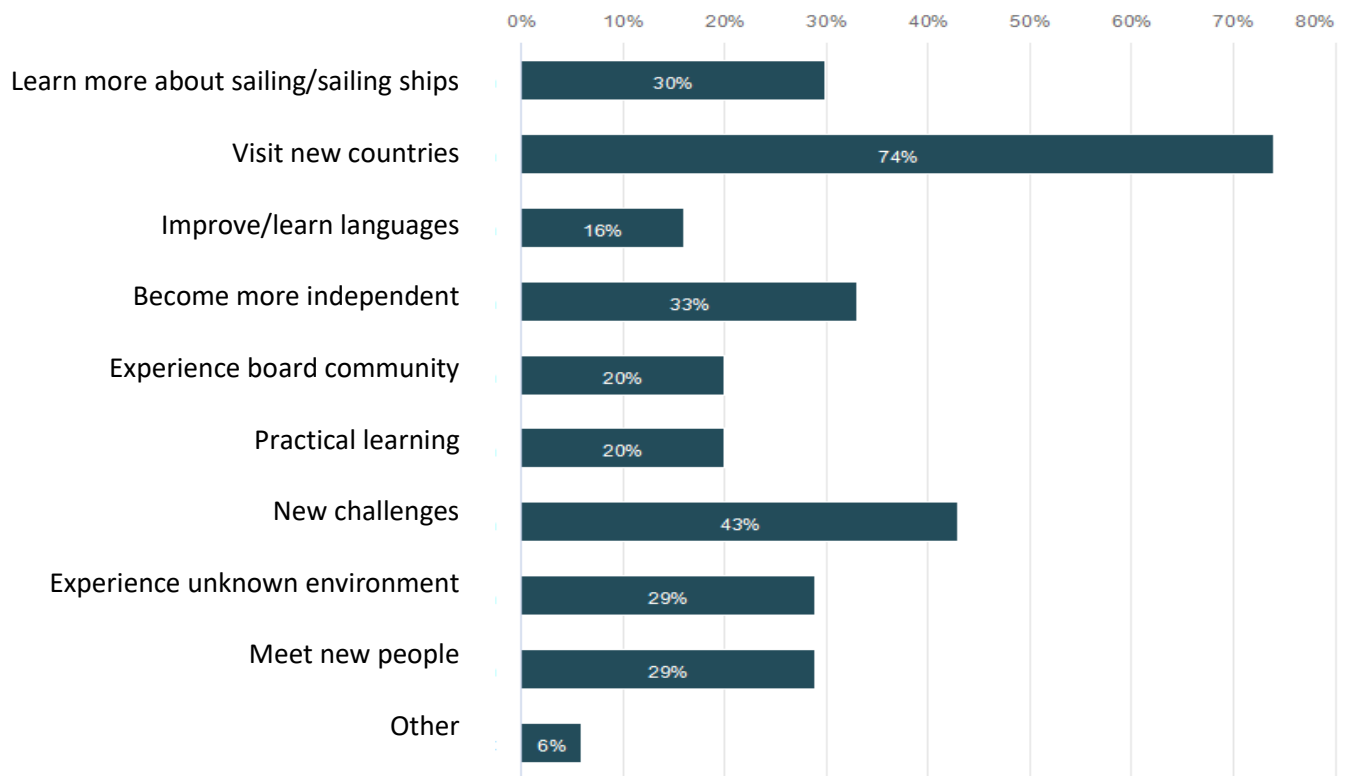
APPENDICES

Survey about long-term effects of a Sail Training trip on the participants

Total number of respondents: 70

1. What were the main reasons for your participation? (max. 3 answers)

Number of respondents: 70, selected answers: 209

	n	percent
Learn more about sailing/sailing ships	21	30.0%
Visit new countries	52	74.3%
Improve/learn languages	11	15.7%
Become more independent	23	32.9%
Experience board community	14	20.0%
Practical learning	14	20.0%
New challenges	30	42.9%

Experience unknown environment	20	28.6%
Meet new people	20	28.6%
Other	4	5.7%

Answers given into textfield

Optionsnamen	Text
Andere:	Andere Kulturen erkunden
Andere:	Zeit zwischen Schule und Studium optimal nutzen
Andere:	Ich bin fasziniert vom Meer und wollte schon immer am/auf dem Ozean leben und mehr darüber lernen
Andere:	Unabhängigkeit

2. What were your main concerns before the trip? (max. 3 answers)

Number of respondents: 70, selected answers: 143
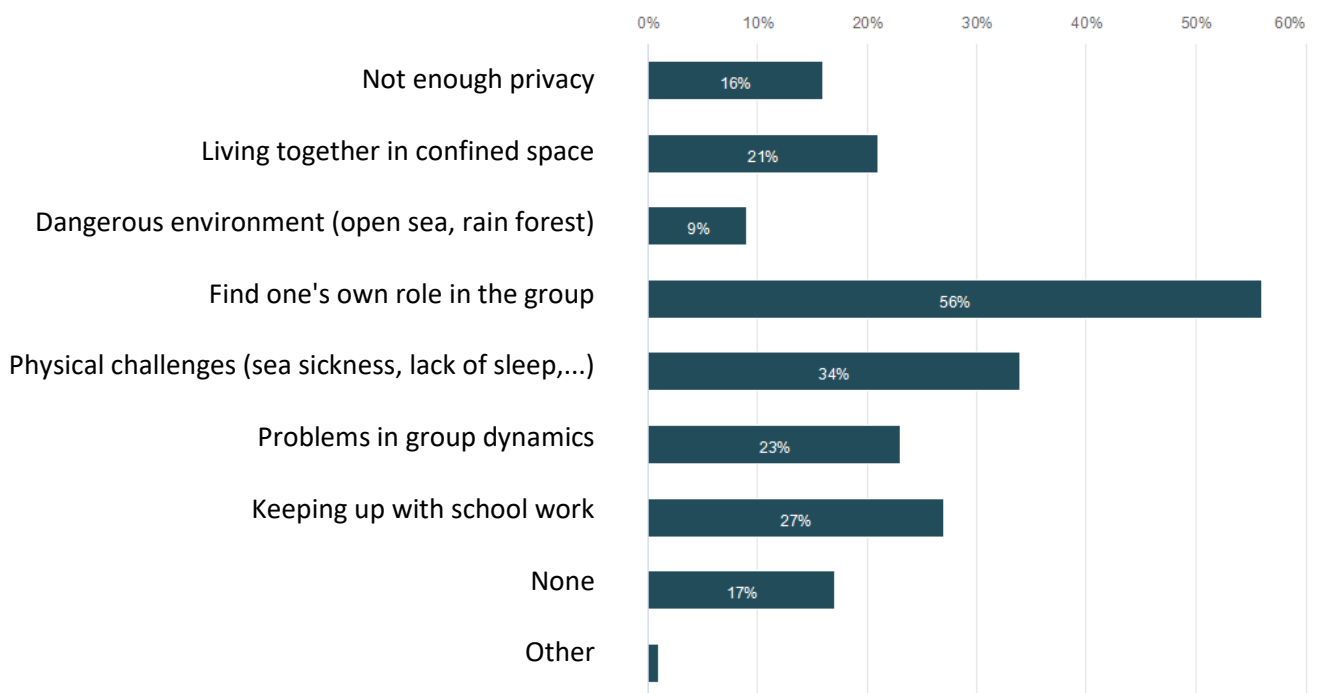
|	n	Prozent
Not enough privacy	11	15.7%

Living together in confined space	15	21.4%
Dangerous environment (open sea, rain forest)	6	8.6%
Find one's own role in the group	39	55.7%
Physical challenges (sea sickness, lack of sleep,...)	24	34.3%
Problems in group dynamics	16	22.9%
Keeping up with school work	19	27.1%
None	12	17.1%
Other	1	1.4%

Answers given into textfield

Optionsnamen	Text
Andere	Heimweh

3. In which areas could you gain the most from the trip? (max. 3 answers)

Number of respondents: 69, selected answers: 201
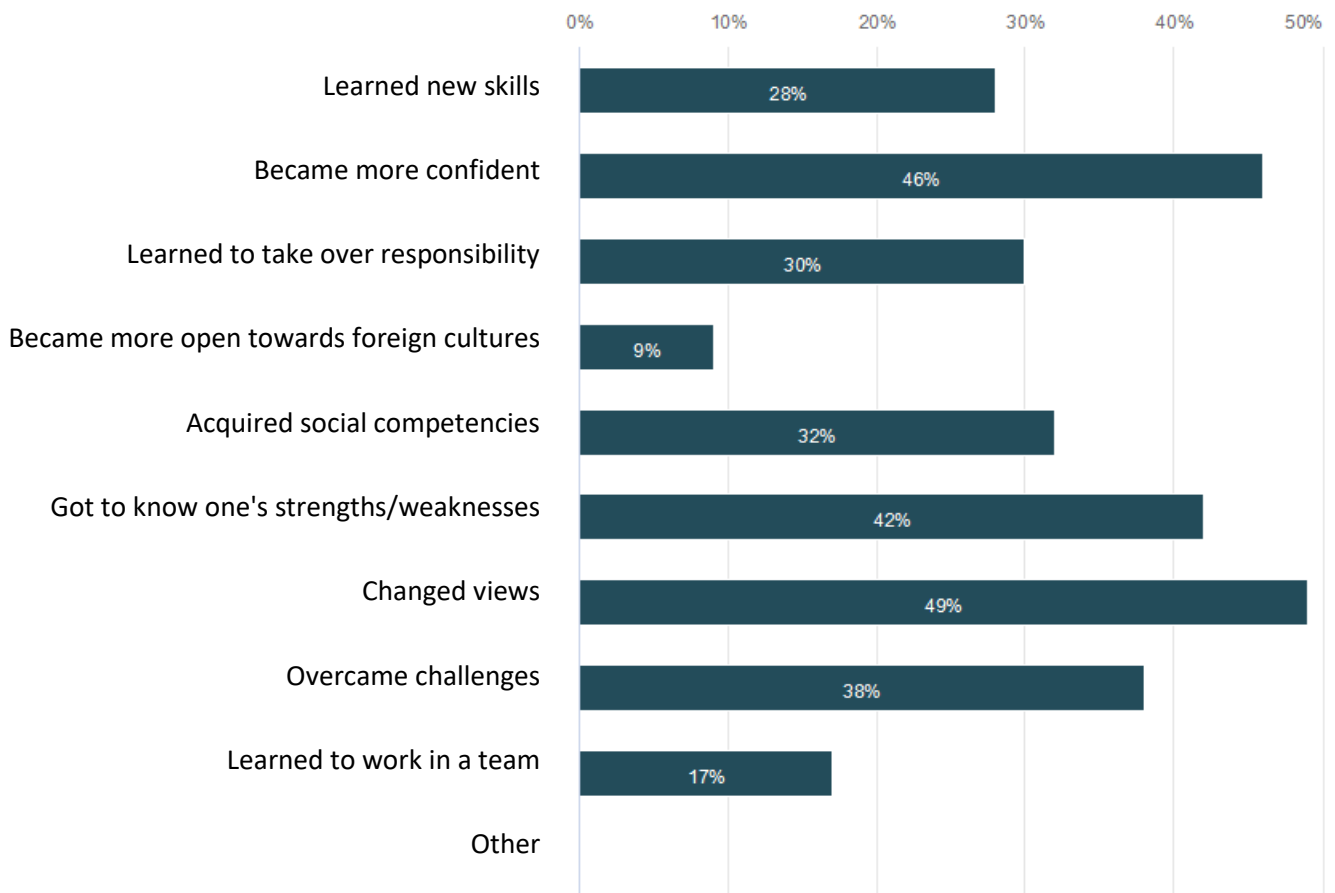
	n	percent
Learned new skills	19	27.5%
Became more confident	32	46.4%
Learned to take over responsibility	21	30.4%
Became more open towards foreign cultures	6	8.7%
Acquired social competencies	22	31.9%
Got to know one's strenghs/weaknesses	29	42.0%
Changed views	34	49.3%
Overcame challenges	26	37.7%
Learned to work in a team	12	17.4%
Other	0	0.0%

4. How did the trip affect your independence? After coming back, you were..

Number of respondents: 70
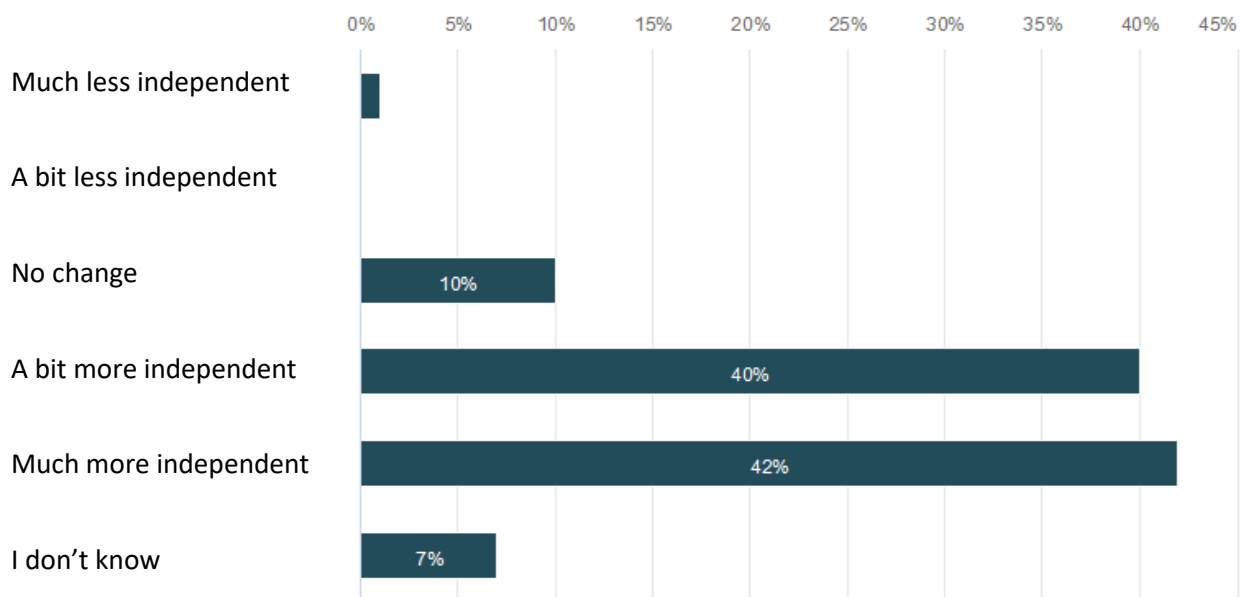
	n	percent
Much less independent	1	1.4%
A bit less independent	0	0.0%
No change	7	10.0%
A bit more independent	28	40.0%
Much more independent	29	41.4%
I don't know	5	7.2%

5. In which areas did you learn the most? (max. 3 answers)

Number of respondents: 69, selected answers: 187
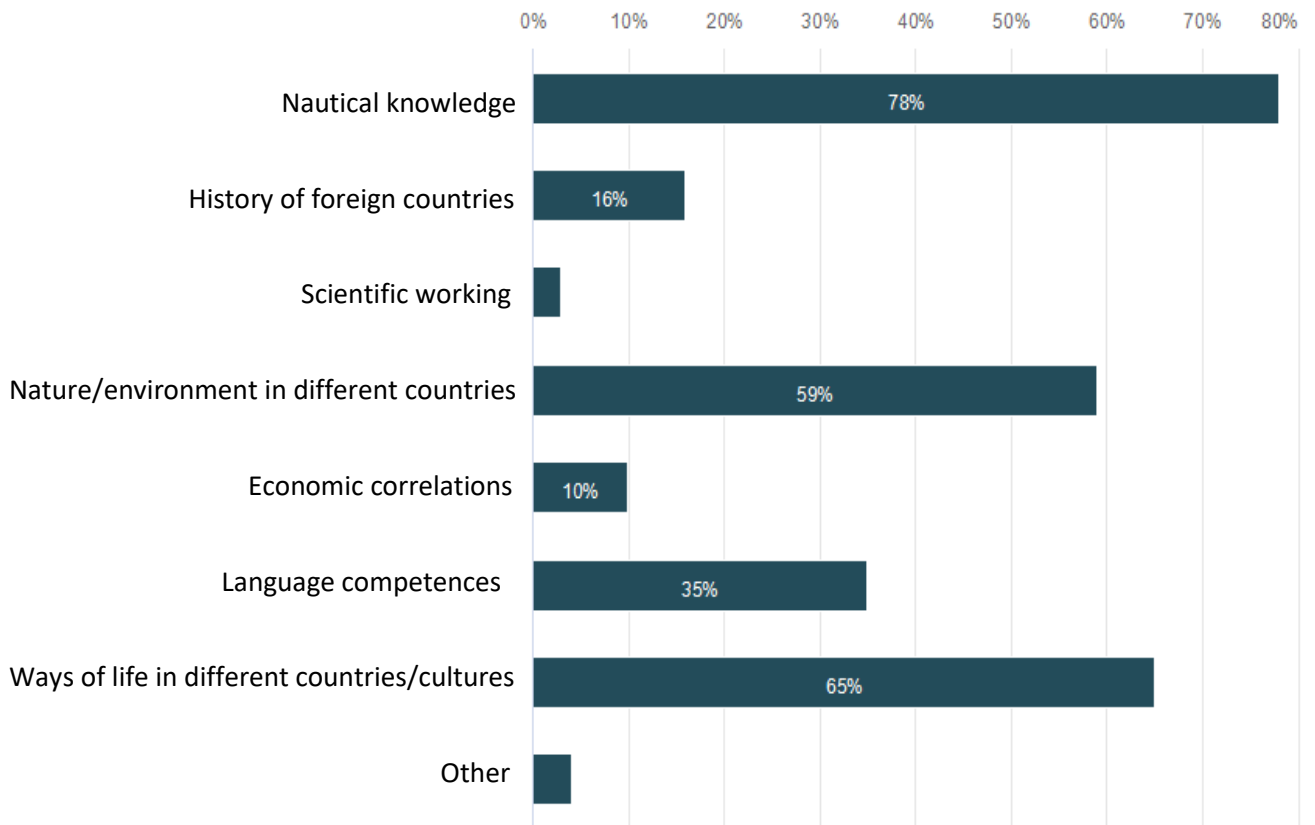
	n	percent
Nautical knowledge	54	78.3%
History of foreign countries	11	15.9%
Scientific working	2	2.9%
Nature/environment in different countries	41	59.4%
Economic correlations	7	10.1%
Language competences	24	34.8%
Ways of life in different countries/cultures	45	65.2%
Other	3	4.3%

Answers given into textfield

Optionsnamen	Text
Andere:	Freizeitgestaltung in anderen Kulturen

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Andere:	Lebensweisheiten
Andere:	persönliche Grenzen und Stärken

6. Did Ocean College influence your future vision?

Number of respondents: 70

Not at all   A little bit   Partially   Strongly   Very strongly
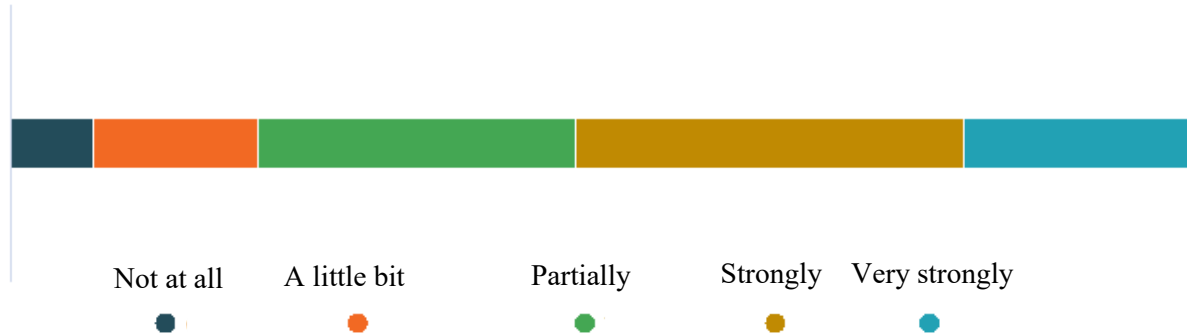
	Not at all	A little bit	Partially	Strongly	Very strongly		Total	Average	Median
	5	10	19	23	13		70	3.4	4.0
	7.1%	14.3%	27.1%	32.9%	18.6%				
Total	5	10	19	23	13		70	3.4	4.0

7. Which were the most difficult/negative aspects for you during the trip? (max. 3 answers)

Number of respondents: 70, selected answers: 137
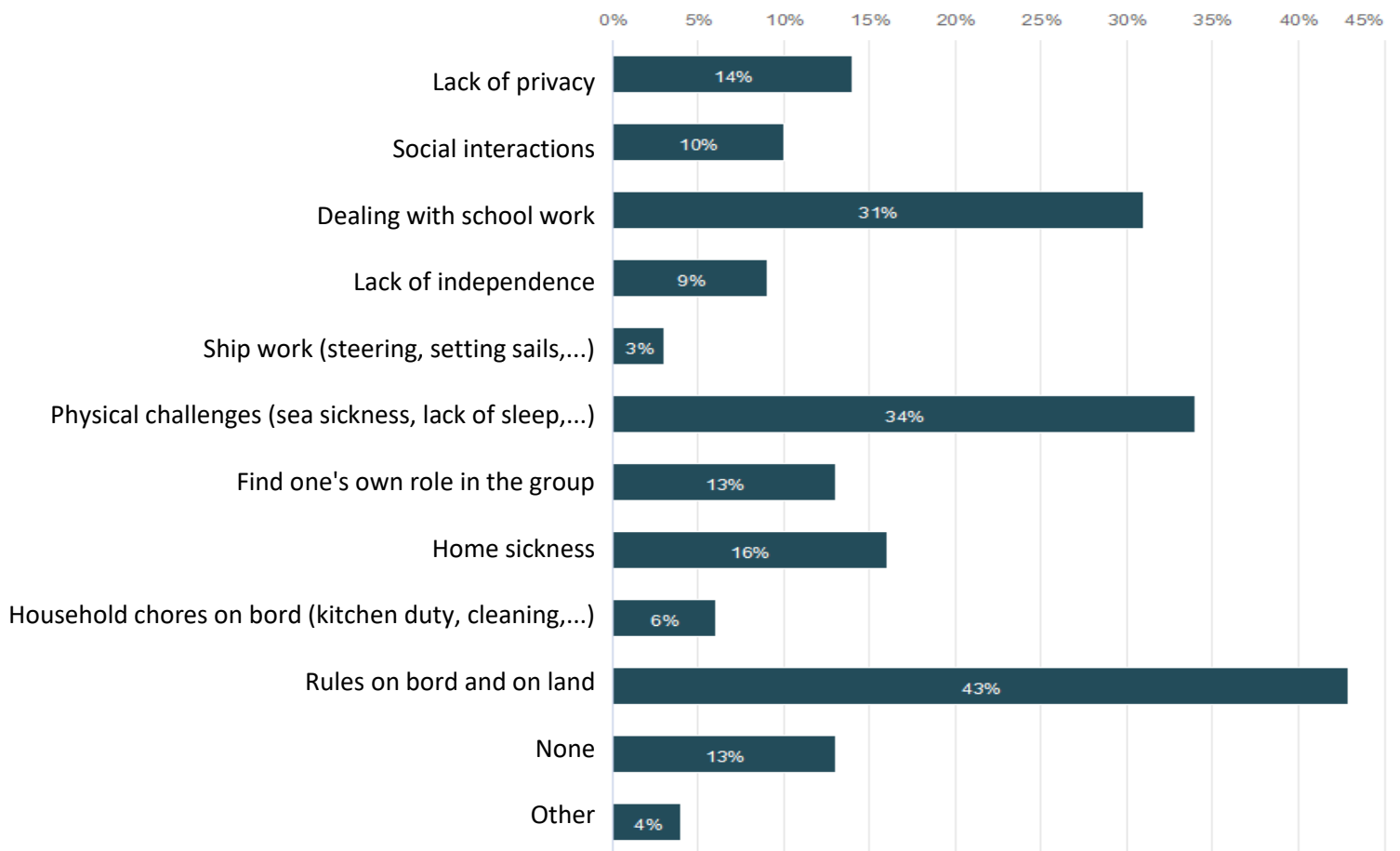
	n	percent
Lack of privacy	10	14.3%
Social interactions	7	10.0%
Dealing with school work	22	31.4%
Mangel an Selbstständigkeit	6	8.6%
Ship work (steering, setting sails,...)	2	2.9%
Physical challenges (sea sickness, lack of sleep,...)	24	34.3%
Find one's own role in the group	9	12.9%
Home sickness	11	15.7%
Household chores on board (kitchen duty, cleaning,...)	4	5.7%
Rules on board and on land	30	42.9%
None	9	12.9%
Other	3	4.3%

Answers given into textfield

Optionsnamen	Text
Andere:	Das Projektleiter von Ocean College keine Kontrolle über sich selbst und seine Wut Ausbrüche hatte
Andere:	hund daheim ging es schlecht, wollte sie noch ein letztes mal sehen, die unsicverheit darüber, ob ich dass noch schaffen würde
Andere:	Anmerkung zu den Regeln: ab und an hätte ich mir da mehr zugestandene Selbstbestimmung und Möglichkeiten zum Mitentscheiden gewünscht

8. Do you think that you have changed through the trip?

Number of respondents: 68

Minimal value	Maximum value	Average	Median	Sum	Standart deviation
1.0	5.0	3.6	4.0	247.0	1.0

9. Additional question: How have you changed?

Number of respondents: 48

Insofern als das ich meine Denkweise durch neue Erfahrungen beeinflusst wurde.
Ich habe meine eigene Standpunkt gefunden und weiß jetzt warum ich diesen vertrete
Ansicht darauf wie glücklich wir sein können in einem Land wie Deutschland zu leben
körperlich bin ich natürlich brauner zurückgekommen. Sonst war ich selbstständiger und nach meiner definition auch ein Stück weit erwachsener
mehr Selbstreflexion, mehr Unabhängigkeit, erweiterte Sichtweise
Selbstsicherheit
Ich habe begriffen was mir im Leben wichtig ist und dass man an Herrausforderungen wächst :)
Meine Einstellung und Sicht über das normale Schulsystem und neue und praktischere Lernmethoden hat mich stark beeinflusst. Ich habe gelernt zu sehen, dass ich ein sehr starkes Durchhaltevermögen habe und mich darauf verlassen kann. Außerdem habe ich eine sehr enge und tiefe Freundschaften erlebt, was auch meine Beziehungen außerhalb von Ocean College beeinflusst hat.
Durch Erlebtes viele Neues kennengelernt und das hat neue Sichtweisen geprägt
Ich bin selbstbewusster geworden
Ich habe viele neue freunde gefunden und neue länder kennengelernt was meinen horizont sehr erweitert hat.

Gefestigtere Persönlichkeit und Selbstvertrauen
Vor allem bin ich viel selbstbewusster geworden.
Ich bin sehr viel selbstsicherer geworden und das Leben in dieser Gemeinschaft mit so vielen Menschen jeden Tag um mich herum hat auch mein Bedürfnis nach Sozialeninteraktionen sehr verändert. Ich bin offenen im allgemeinen geworden und sehe die Dinge meistens lieber positiv, als negativ.
Mehr Selbstvertrauen; entdeckt, dass die Seefahrt (bzw. Sail Training industry) für mich beruflich eine Alternative ist, wenn mein aktuelles Feld nicht funktionieren sollte
Selbstsicherer, rede mehr mit erwachsenen und traue mich vor einer Gruppe zu reden, arbeite mehr im Team, interessiere mich deutlich mehr für Medizin
weniger anxious, weiß was ich später machen will, selbstbewußter.
Meine Einstellung zu allem ich bin viel offener und genieße das Leben zu hause viel mehr. Jetzt kann ich hier viel besser wertschätzen was ich hier alles habe und welche Privilegien ich besitze
Ich sehe mich und mein Umfeld anders. Ich nehme Menschen anders war.
Offener für Neues geworden
selbstständiger, offener anderen gegenüber
Selbstständiger, verantwortlicher und offener
Ich bin selbstbewusster geworden, ich weiss was ich kann und ich scheue viel weniger zurück von Konflikten.
Neue Ziele und unabhängiger geworden
Anderes Lebensbild
ich vertrete stets meine Ansichten und habe es nicht mehr nötig meine Meinung der Masse anzupassen
Neue Sichtweisen auf Gruppen und Gemeinschaft Eine Vorstellung davon, was ich in Zukunft (anders) machen möchte Geringere Abhängigkeit von der Erwartung und Meinung anderer
Ich bin deutlich offener und selbstständiger geworden
Ich habe gelernt meine Ziele zu verfolgen, im Team zu arbeiten und gut zu funktionieren auch wenn einen Müdigkeit oder Schlechtes Wetter oder andere Kleinigkeiten die Laune vermiesen
Mein Blick auf viele Dinge hat sich verändert und da ich mit so vielen Jugendlichen 6 Monate am Stück zusammen war, kann ich viel besser mit Menschen umgehen. Es sind auch viele kleine Dinge dabei, die man so zwischendurch bemerkt.
Ich bin weniger naiv
Selbstbewusster geworden
Ich habe sehr viel über mich selbst gelernt und das man sich manchmal einfach zurückziehen muss. Ich habe auch gelernt wie man am besten in einer Gruppe klarkommt

positiver - selbstbewusster - Ich versuche, die Dinge aus einer anderen Perspektive zu betrachten
Selbstständiger, reflektierter, entwickelter? Selbstsicherer, hab mein eigenes kind in mir gefunden
Ich habe gelernt mich selbst mehr zu mögen und wertzuschätzen.
Neue berufliche Orientierung
Andere Sichtweisen. Selbstständiger. Weniger abhängig von der Meinung anderer
Ich bin bin sehr viel selbstbewusster geworden und weiß, was ich will.
Geduldiger und sozialer
Ich habe durch die ganzen Erfahrungen viel gelernt
vollkommen neue berufliche Orientierung, "unkomplizierter" geworden
Offener
Mich selber kennengelernt
Ich habe eine Vorstellung für die Zukunft bekommen
Meine Weltbild sowie meine Persönlichkeit haben sich verändert, ich habe meinen Horizont extrem erweitert. Das viel vor allem im Vergleich mit meinen alten Freunden und Klassenkameraden auf, welche sich während einem halben Jahr Schule kaum oder gar nicht verändert haben.
Nach der Reise war ich viel umweltbewusster und sparsamer. Ich hab Konfliktpunkte offen angesprochen, war allgemein offener neuen Leuten gegenüber und war selbstbewusster.
Bedachter

10. In which areas would you have liked to learn or experience more? (max. 3 answers)

Number of respondents: 70, selected answers: 172
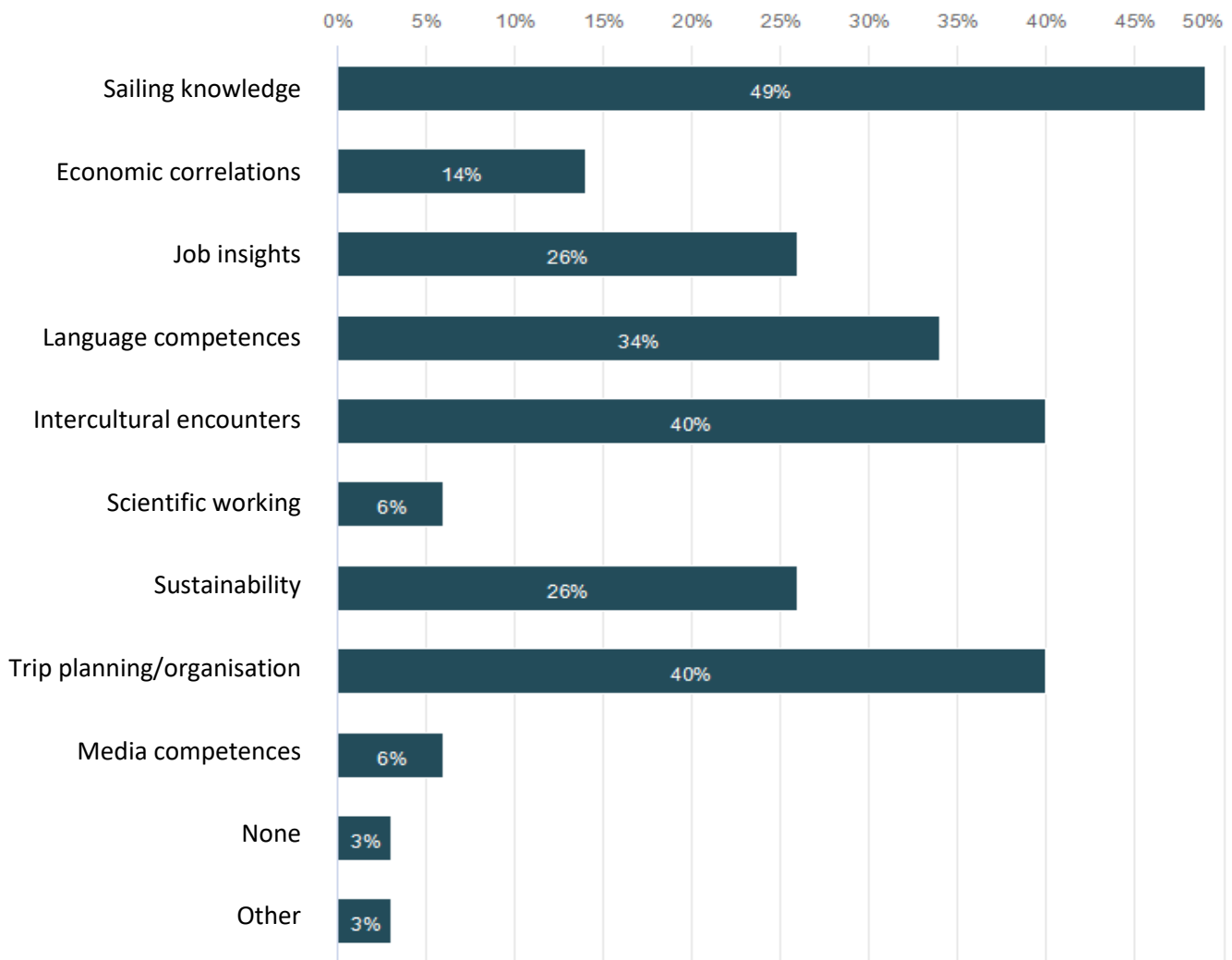
	n	percent
Sailing knowledge	34	48.6%
Economic correlations	10	14.3%
Job insights	18	25.7%
Language competences	24	34.3%
Intercultural encounters	28	40.0%
Scientific working	4	5.7%
Sustainability	18	25.7%
Trip planning/organisation	28	40.0%
Media competences	4	5.7%
None	2	2.9%
Other	2	2.9%

Answers given into textfield

Optionsnamen	Text
Andere:	Geschichtliche Hintergründe zum Segeln und den Ländern die man besucht
Andere:	Geschichte der Länder etc. (Mehr über die Länder erfahren)

11. In conclusion, do you think that you have benefitted from the participation in Ocean College?

Number of respondents: 69

Minimal value	Maximum value	Average	Median	Sum	Standart deviation
3.0	5.0	4.7	5.0	323.0	0.6

Interview template

1. If anybody asked you before the trip, "Why are you doing this", what would you have answered?

2. Assess your independence before the departure (To what extent were you independent?).

3. How were your feelings one day before the departure?

4. Tell an experience [from the trip] that has changed something for you. Where you noticed that you have learned something from it, that you grew from it.
   -How have you applied the learning afterwards/ How would you like to apply this for your future?

5. Are there any concrete behaviour patterns that have changed after the arrival?
   -Did you notice it yourself, or did others?

6. To what extent has your independence changed after the journey?
   -Give examples, where you behaved more/less independent than before the trip.

7. Is there anything that you have actively changed in your life after the trip?

8. To what extent has changed how you deal with problems and challenges?

9. Has your sense of responsibility changed? (Do you feel more or less responsible for your decisions and what is happening around you?)
   -How does it show?

10. In three words, how was the trip?

11. What was for you personally the most important realisation from the trip?

12. In retrospect, what role does Ocean College play in your life?

13. What would be different if you hadn´t participated in Ocean College?

14. In your opinion, what would have made your experience with Ocean College better, brought it to the next level?