Hannibal – "The honesty table"

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Introduction

"We are living in a world where the entire concept of honesty and truth is under cultural assault. We've come to expect that people in leadership positions within our financial and political institutions will bend the truth. The distinction between spinning, twisting the truth, and outright lying has been blurred." *(Rosalind Wiseman, 2013)*

Areas needing attention within the school environment:
• Intrinsic ability to do the right thing needs strengthening
• Plagiarism
• Corrupt and dishonest behaviour
• Increased number of excuses for poor behaviour

The Research Question

How might the use of an honesty table help Grade 9 boys develop the courage to be honest?

Research Context

• St Andrew's College, Grahamstown, South Africa
• Six boarding houses with vertical structures
• 490 boys in total - 450 of these boys are termly boarders

Participants

• Sixteen Grade Nine boys in Mullins house participated in the project
• Fourteen of the group were boarders and two were day boys
• Boys are at a critical stage as they mature into young men

The Research Action

1. 'Hannibal' the honesty table was built

2. How was Hannibal used?
• Boys signed in for meals on weekends (No formal roll-call)
• Boys were asked to place disciplinary statements on table
• Boys were asked to "own up" at the table

3. Four one-hour sessions were held over a period of eight weeks:
• Boys discussed the concept of honesty
• Boys were educated as to how to use Hannibal
• Boys answered questionnaires about honesty in journals

"Whenever I hear 'Hannibal' or see the table I just think of honesty." — Jimmy / Gary

"Honesty has always been important to me but it has been on my mind more." — David

"The honest guys have become more honest." — Fred

"awakens your moral compass"

"...now during the term it has given me more confidence and it is more easy to say or to be honest." — Basil

Data Collection

• Questionnaires were given to each boy every two weeks and responses were recorded in their journal
• Observation of boys' actions took place during the entire process
• Interviews with three of the sixteen boys were held to discuss key themes
• A focus group was held with three other boys who worked collaboratively to place feedback on blackboards
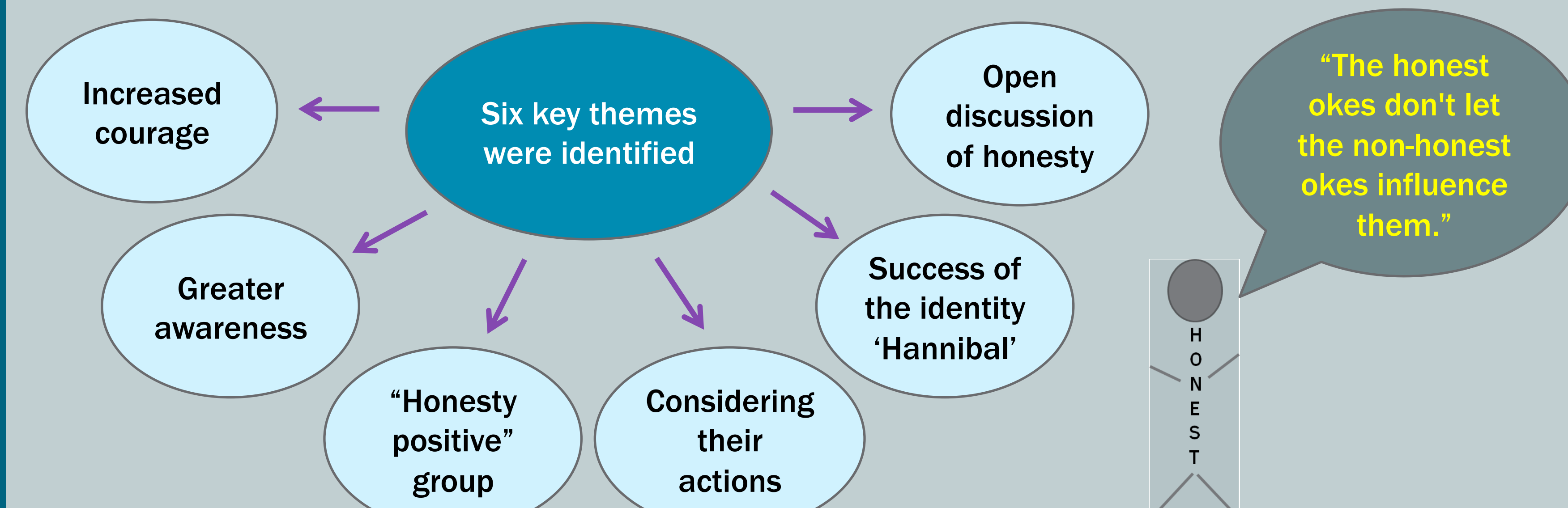
Data Analysis

• All responses from questionnaires, excerpts from interviews and focus group recordings were tabulated in Excel
• Each piece of data was numbered according to a theme and then sorted to reveal common threads
• Responses to open-ended questions were placed in *Wordle* to detect and display common words: the more frequently the word was used, the bigger it appeared

Key Findings and Discussion

Six key themes were identified
- Increased courage
- Greater awareness
- "Honesty positive" group
- Considering their actions
- Success of the identity 'Hannibal'
- Open discussion of honesty

"The honest okes don't let the non-honest okes influence them."

HONEST

Conclusions

• The project was a success in terms of creating awareness , increasing moral courage and getting boys to think about honesty.

• It takes time for this type of change to root itself into a system, but as more boys bought into the concept, the stronger it became.

• Boys will still make mistakes, but they will reflect on their decisions and although long-term changes cannot be recorded at this stage, it is hoped that when boys leave school they will consider the honesty of their actions in the real world.

• Hannibal The Honesty Table will remain a key feature of the Mullins boarding house, and is a concept that could be easily implemented at any other institution.

"There is always a bit of dishonesty in us or something to hide but I think there is less being hidden". — Jimmy

"Okes are more confident and comfortable to talk about honesty. It is something really important here." — Fred

Key Readings

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Further Information

The full report of this project and an online copy of this poster are available at http://www.theibsc.org/.