Action Research in Outdoor Learning: Promoting Social and Emotional Learning in Young People with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

By

Alan Charles Price

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Faculty of Disability Inclusion and Special Needs
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ABSTRACT

An action research approach has been applied to bring about change to an outdoor learning curriculum within a UK special school. The rationale for the research is based upon practitioner assumptions that an earlier, skills orientated, outdoor learning curriculum neglected opportunities for the augmentation of social and emotional learning (SEL) skills. The research design was qualitative using video, semi–structured interviews and self-reflective diaries as data sources. The constant comparative method (CCM) (Glaser, 1965) was used for data analysis, leading to the production of situated theory.

The case study focused on a small participant group of boys (n = four increasing to seven) aged 12 – 13 years, identified as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Programme duration was for one day a week for an entire academic year, with three residential opportunities. Three outdoor practitioners staffed the programme.

Structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) was used to gain an understanding of previous outdoor learning interventions and to create a narrative from which to describe the augmentation of SEL skills within the participant group. Findings showed that SEL augmentation in individuals contributed toward the production of improved social structures within the participant group. It was also found that participants demonstrated improved attendance, punctuality and motivation on the days of the intervention.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Action Research
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
ASDAN	Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network
BESD	Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties
CASEL	Collaboration for Academic Social and Emotional Learning
CCM	Constant Comparative Method
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EBD	Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
IEP	Individual Education Plan
LEA	Local Educational Authority
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NACRO	National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders
NGB	National Governing body.
OLP	Outdoor Learning Programme
OP	Outdoor Practitioner
SEBD	Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SIMS	Schools Information and Management System
SSP	Self Perception Profile
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

INTRODUCTION

(i) Research Context and Rationale

This thesis has been written to fulfil the criteria of the Professional Doctorate in Learning and Learning Contexts at the University of Birmingham. It describes a non-typical action research project that considered the role of outdoor learning within the curriculum of a secondary (eleven – sixteen years) special school in the United Kingdom for learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is non-typical because action research is traditionally a participatory research method; in this case the research was conducted when I was employed full-time as a teacher of science and outdoor education. The research was self-funded and conducted part-time over a five-year period in addition to any normal teaching duties.

The rationale for conducting the research related to a professional value conflict that I was experiencing in relation to the delivery of an earlier outdoor learning curriculum. Learner participation in outdoor learning prior to my employment had been sporadic. A new whole school curriculum initiative to improve learner engagement in education was the beginning of regular and planned outdoor learning opportunities. Learners could participate in a range of outdoor learning activities each afternoon during enrichment sessions. Morning sessions within the new whole school curriculum retained a strong focus on the teaching and learning of academic subjects like English, maths and science. Afternoon sessions offered learning activities that were more creative, active or physical. Activities were rotated on a six weekly cycle.

Major changes within the school leadership caused the new initiative to be abandoned after only a term. The curriculum reverted back to a more traditional model, but importantly outdoor learning remained on the revised curriculum allowing the young people regular participation.

Outdoor practitioners and learners positively received the retention of outdoor learning, but, it lacked any specific purpose, beyond, it should be beneficial. Therefore the purpose of outdoor learning fluctuated between reward, confidence building and technical skill development or as an alternative to physical education.

The professional value conflict I was experiencing related to the school's vagueness of purpose for outdoor learning. Recognising the potential of outdoor learning, I decided to create a sustained outdoor learning programme with the specific purpose of improving the social and emotional learning (SEL) skills of the young people and hence reduce problematic behaviour. An action research (AR) approach seemed the most appropriate way to empirically understand the situation. Action research uses the questions, or problems from the perceptions of practitioners within local situations and through intervention experiments and testing, effect desired change (Herr and Anderson, 2005). There is recognition when operating within an AR paradigm that the research cannot be truly objective as claimed of research within a positivistic paradigm. The presence of the researcher within the research process inevitably influences elements of the research. To counteract claims of subjectivity, a reflexive approach was adopted,

requiring continuous reflection throughout the research process on the reactions of the research participants, the researchers actions and any approaches to data collection and analysis (Webb, 1992).

The research began in 2008, when reflection on the technically orientated outdoor learning curriculum, revealed its inadequacies for the learners. Early learner observations identified, difficulties of working with others, becoming easily frustrated, unwillingness to practice or rehearse skills and limited self-confidence.

Reflection suggested that a technical outdoor learning curriculum built around the learning objectives of an accredited award was inappropriate for the learners at that point in their lives. Learning how to navigate with increasing degrees of complexity as required by an awarding body was too demanding a task for young people who simply couldn't get along with each other and became extremely frustrated at the slightest of things. These realisations not only initiated this research but also lead to the action of developing the outdoor learning programme (OLP) that had the specific aim of improving SEL skills in an engaging and stimulating way. As practitioners' become aware of what is important to them- their values- and how they might act in the direction of those values then action research has begun (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 2003).

The population within the research context fluctuated at around thirty-five learners during the period in which it was conducted. It is acknowledged that the

school population represents a small percentage of the total national population of 13,245 learners with statements of special educational need for behaviour, emotional and social development (BESD) across all schools in England as of January 2012. Of this population, 12,895 learners with statements for BESD were educated within special schools (DfES, 2012). Learners under this category are defined within the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a) as 'Children and young people who demonstrate features of emotional and behavioural difficulties, who are withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing, hyperactive and lack concentration; those with immature social skills; and those presenting challenging behaviours arising from other complex special needs' (Section 7.6, p.87). For the purpose of this study I define a young person with SEBD in accordance with Groom and Rose (2005, p.21) as, 'a child who is in receipt of an individual plan recognising a target to support progress in the development of either behaviour, social or emotional skills'.

Throughout the thesis I use the terms young people, participants, learners or learners with SEBD to represent the research participants or others similarly described within research literature. The term SEBD is used instead of BESD in agreement with the House of Commons, Education and Skills Committee (2006) that recognised that although the special educational need is, 'normally referred to as BESD, SEBD is a better reflection of the priority of need for these young people' (Footnote 95, p.31). The term learner with SEBD is non-offensive towards individual learners, hence its usage within this thesis.

Regarding practitioners on the outdoor learning programme (OLP), the term

outdoor practitioner (OP) is applied; this is a generic term to represent teachers, instructors and learning or behaviour support assistants. The application of terminology to specific groups of people never truly captures the complexity of the human condition but it does ensure writers reach their intended audiences.

(ii) Situating the Research

Literature pertaining to the outcomes of outdoor learning is well developed in studies of North American or Australasian origin (Gass, 1993; Cason and Gillis, 1994; Hattie, Marsh, Neill and Richards, 1997; Miles and Priest, 1999; Garst, Scheider and Baker, 2001; Bruyere, 2002). The term 'outcome' refers to the changes, benefits, learning or other effects that happen as a result of the services or activities provided by an organisation. For outdoor learning, Rickinson, Dillion, Teamey, Morris, Choi, Sanders and Benefield (2004) have categorised these into cognitive, affective, social or interpersonal and physical or behavioural changes in the participant. Within a UK context, studies pertaining to behaviour change in young people include: an adventure experiment with boys on probation (Day, 1975); an evaluation of an outdoor education programme for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties (Fox and Avramidis, 2003); the use of sports programmes to reduce youth crime (Nichols, 2004); and the value of outdoor learning with people with disabilities (Crossbie, 2014).

The Fox and Avramidis (2003) study reports that participation on a short-term outdoor learning programme that occurred for a half-term, half a day a week (thirteen hours of teaching time), was associated with a reduction in exclusion rates. Through applied systematic observation and in-depth interviews with

eleven learners with SEBD, the evidence suggested that 'the programme was successful in promoting positive behaviour' (*ibid.,* p. 273): following general rules, meeting individual behavioural objectives, and completing learning tasks. In particular, five learners demonstrated consistently positive behaviour during outdoor education lessons in marked contrast to their generally inconsistent, poor behaviour in other lessons. The observational findings were supported by interview data from school personnel. Each 'reaffirmed the success of the programme in promoting positive behaviour' (Fox and Avramidis*,* 2003, p. 275). However the paper identifies the '… need for more longitudinal studies which enable pupils to participate in outdoor activities over more meaningful periods of time, therefore, allowing a more careful monitoring of their academic and behavioural performance throughout their participation' (*ibid.*, p.281). The idea of extending the exposure that learners receive to outdoor learning programmes was more recently reported by Karppinen (2012). The author reports on a forty-week outdoor learning programme in Finland with learners, described as having 'average intelligence but have problems with their behaviour and motivation for learning' (*ibid.,* p.41). The study is situated within a national culture of the outdoors. 'Forest school,' an outdoor learning approach recently introduced to the UK that derives its origins from Scandinavia.

Karppinen, a practitioner/researcher similary working within the action research paradigm, found that outdoor experiences generated situations that enhanced the emotional life of the learners in his study. He concluded that 'it is difficult to include dimensions of emotional life in traditional formal learning,' and 'that nature offered freedom, silence, calming down and space' (*ibid.*, p.58). The report

concluded that there is the potential for outdoor learning to be used as an interventional approach within a whole school curriculum, suggesting that it has value as a 'rehabilitative and a holistic method to transfer knowledge, personal development and social growth directly in everyday life and connect them with formal learning by constructivist and reflective learning theory' (*ibid.*, p.58).

This research although similar to that reported by Karppinen (*ibid.*) is situated in a national culture that is becoming ever more urbanised, producing young people with limited experience of nature or the outdoors. This study addresses the recommendation to conduct research on an extended outdoor learning programme (Fox and Avramidis, 2003). Through action research, a contribution can be made to the existing body of knowledge through a reflexive account of the development, implementation and outcomes of a long-term outdoor learning programme on SEL augmentation.

(iii) Research Question and Aims

Although the research occurred as a result of a professional value conflict related to the suitability of the outdoor learning curriculum for learners with SEBD, it was guided by the overarching research aim: Can participation in a programme of outdoor learning improve the behaviour of learners with SEBD?

For the research aim to be achieved it was necessary to generate more specific research questions to investigate. The first question relates to learner engagement; I wanted to examine if outdoor learning as a specific educational approach had the capacity to engage learners with SEBD over an entire academic year.

Q1. Is particpation in an outdoor learning programme engaging over time for learners with SEBD?

The second main area of interest was in relation to behaviour change. Would it be possible to change the behaviours of the young people through participation in outdoor learning? To understand the specifics of this, structuration theory was used as a tool to analyise the effects of agency and structure upon both individual participants and the particpant group. The questions relating to this area are:

Q2. What was the role of agency in the augmentation of social practices amongst individual participants?

Q3. What was the role of structure in the augmentation of social practices amongst individual participants?

Q4. How does the interplay between structure and agency create systematic change within a group leading to behaviour modification?

Q5. How can outdoor practioners, influence structural change within participant groups?

(iv) Action Research as the Methodological Approach

Action research (AR) as a methodological approach is not to be distinguished from other research traditions because of a particular set of research techniques (Kemmis, 1982), but rather by its method which is based on spirals of self-reflection (cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting). Action research is also recognised as an appropriate tool for educational enhancement projects, because of its emphasis on action (Kember, 2000).

Action research is applicable to the research context because it is concerned with social practice, making it a suitable approach to study social and emotional learning within an outdoor learning programme. The approach is a cyclical process that guides practitioner/researchers in reflexive practice, with the specific aim of improving an initial situation and developing personal practice. The method has a major advantage, in that it is possible to conduct research whilst still fulfilling the professional requirements of teaching. Further cycles of action, data collection and reflection allow evaluation of the situation that might in turn lead to further actions and cycles.

Action research is pursued through a process of systematic enquiry and is a recognised practitioner/researcher approach that ensures rigour and validity. Through a reflexive process, the researcher/practitioner can say with confidence that they know what they are doing and why they are doing it because they have shown in a systematic way how they have developed praxis, which is morally committed practice (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). Action research is typically participative, but for this project although approval from school leadership was obtained to conduct the research and implement the curriculum changes, it was only myself that actually conducted the research. Although collaboration with two OPs did occur during the planning stages of the OLP, and during data capture, further scrutiny occurred during tutorial meetings with my academic supervisers and through the peer review process of publication.

Action research as a process has no fixed data collection methods; rather the choice of method is about its suitability to the specific situation under scrutiny,

data collection and analysis was, therefore, emergent to meet the demands of changing situations. The data for this study was mostly qualitative, video evidence, questionnaires, semi -structured interviews, focus groups, and unstructured observation and research diaries. Quantitative data was collected to monitor attendance on the outdoor learning programme and provided a comparison against whole school attendance.

(v) Chapter Layout

Chapter one is split into three sections. The first section defines outdoor learning in relation to this research project. The next section provides a brief historical context to outdoor learning within the United Kingdom. The final section describes terminology associated with young people that I describe as having social emotional and behavioural difficulties for the context of this research.

Chapter two applies structuration theory to consider the influence of structure and agency on the development of anti-social behaviour and to consider how outdoor learning has been applied to ameliorate such behaviours.

Chapter three describes the action research process as an empirically valid research method.

Chapter four sets out the design frame for the research project and includes descriptions of each data collection method.

Chapter five describes action cycle one and includes a consideration of the research problem from the perspectives of, pedagogy, curriculum theory and social and emotional learning. Evidence to support the curriculum change is also discussed.

Chapter six describes action cycle two along with how the action cycle informed and shaped the planning of a new outdoor learning curriculum with its stronger

focus on social and emotional learning. The new curriculum was termed the outdoor learning programme (OLP).

Chapter seven describes the analysis of data relevant to the augmentation of SEL skills with the use of the constant comparative method (CCM). The chapter concludes with the presentation of a social theory of SEL augmentation through participation in outdoor learning.

Chapter eight considers possible links between participation in outdoor learning and improved school attendance. The chapter is set in the wider discourse of alternative curriculum developments.

The concluding chapter nine provides a summary of the research findings, a discussion of the limitations of the research design and proposes recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER ONE: DEFINING KEY CONCEPTS

(1.1) What is Outdoor Learning?

It is useful at the beginning of this research to establish what the terms outdoor learning and outdoor education mean, which I use interchangeably throughout this research. Like Ogilvie (2013), I too had the tricky problem of deciding how to refer to the process that was an intrinsic part of my research. 'It had so many descriptors it was virtually un-nameable! This was because in its origins it had been quite eclectic as it borrowed from many different disciplines and spheres of activity' (p.xxv).

This diversity within outdoor learning is recognised both by Higgins and Nicol (2002) and also by Rickinson, Dillion, Teamey, Morris, Choi, Sanders and Benefield (2004), the former suggest that this is because the concept of outdoor learning is a cultural construct, so across different countries, it is thought of and applied differently. While the later describe 'the concept of outdoor learning as a broad and complex one which touches on a wide range of educational activities in many different settings' (Rickinson *et al.,* 2004, p.15). In agreement, each description recognises that outdoor learning is essentially comprised of three spheres; outdoor activities, environmental education and personal and social development. In the Review of Research on Outdoor Learning, conducted for the Field Studies Council, Rickinson *et al.* (2004, p.15) list examples of the kinds of sectors that comprise outdoor learning, these include 'outdoor adventure education, field studies, nature studies, outdoor play, heritage education,

environmental education, experiential education and agricultural education.' Higgins and Nicol (2002) take a more holistic approach, recognising that each specific type of provision can be encompassed within one of three overlapping spheres (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 The range and scope of outdoor education (Higgins and Nicol, 2002, p.1).

Having acknowledged the broad range of sectors contained under the umbrella term outdoor learning, Rickinson et al. (2004, p.15) suggest that 'outdoor learning can be seen as a concept and practice with a range of different foci, outcomes and locations'. Similarly, diversity in the location that outdoor learning occurs and within the range of approaches used is also recognised by Higgins and Nicol (2002). 'For example, teachers in an inner city school may want to make use of their school grounds, or nearby park or woodland, to pursue learning outcomes. Equally, teachers may have access to rural areas and pursue learning outcomes in wilder nature. If a teacher is trained in adventurous activities then they may want to pursue learning outcomes through these means in either urban or rural settings' (*ibid.,* p.2). While different approaches and

theoretical understandings and practical applications may be related to each teacher's particular situation 'they will include ideas about the cultural and natural heritage *including* ideas about 'a sense of place'' (*ibid.,* p.2).

However, what is common to all forms of outdoor learning, is that 'the teacher and pupils pursue learning outcomes beyond the classroom. This is not to suggest that outdoor education is a better form of learning than class-based learning. It is to suggest that some learning is better suited out-of-doors and that there are good educational reasons for identifying and capitalising on these opportunities' (*ibid.,* p.2). The Manifesto for Learning Outside the Classroom recognise the valuable contribution of outdoor learning to the holistic education of young people. 'Learning outside the classroom can often present the most memorable learning experiences, helping young people to make sense of the world around them by making links between feelings and learning' (DfES, 2006, p.1).

My own definition for outdoor learning is: 'an approach to learning that occurs predominantly outside of the classroom, which encompasses a strong emphasis on working with others and includes practical activities that provide opportunities to learn about the self, others and the natural environment'.

(1.2) Historical Context: Outdoor Learning and the Social Concerns of Youth.

This section provides a brief history of the roots of outdoor education within the United Kingdom (UK), between the late 1800s until the 1990s with a particular

emphasis on youth anti-social behaviour. More recent interventions are discussed in chapter 2.

An early exploration of the hills and mountain areas of the UK and Europe began in the 1800s and served two purposes; to gain scientific understanding and to provide excitement, venturing into mostly unknown territories. Adventures of a different kind followed this era of exploration as war gripped Europe and beyond. The major events of two World Wars dominated the political sphere and influenced educational policy during the early part of the 20th century.

Britain in the mid 19th century was a rapidly changing place as a result of industrialisation. The growth in manufacturing led to the creation of many new towns, but with the new developments, came many health concerns. 'Chadwicke's 1844 Report on Health of the Towns, for example, found that only 6 out of 50 had good water and none had any sewage disposal at all' (Ogilvie, 2013, p.170). In response to the growing social problems, such as the plight of young people in towns, the church along with other voluntary bodies 'developed various ways of using sports, clubs and youth organisations to attract urban youth into more wholesome lifestyles' (*ibid,* p.171). It was these early youth organisations that became pioneers in using the outdoors. 'The fitness of the mind in a healthy body – a classical Greek idea which kept cropping up over the ages, had by the later half of the 19th century reinvented itself as Muscular Christianity, already seen strongly at work in the Public schools, which was eagerly and readily adopted later by the uniformed organisations, such as the Boys Brigade' (*ibid,* p.173).

In 1883 William Smith, a Sabbath school teacher and officer in the Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers wanted to make Sabbath school more attractive to males. Keen to promote the ideal of Muscular Christianity, Smith combined his skills in teaching and the military to establish the Boys Brigade. Cook (2001) regarded this as a means of tempering the behaviour of unruly, teenage working-class boys from Glasgow, where Smith was living. The movement was successful and by 1910 there were 2200 groups connected with Churches throughout the UK, the British Empire and the United States (Chisholm, 1911). Camping was introduced in 1886 when the 1st Glasgow Company held a camp at Tighnabruach on the Kyles of Bute (Ogilvie, 2013, p.174). Significantly, prior to this, camping under canvas was regarded as suitable only for vagrants, gypsies and the army. It was Smith who introduced camping 20 years before Baden-Powell and although there were initial reservations, the camps became the highlight of the year for the organisations' members and continue to the present day.

Between 1883 and 1914 many youth organisations aimed at attracting working class children were established by well-meaning middle-class individuals (See Ogilvie, 2013). Following his return from the relief of Mafeking (1900, Boer War) Baden-Powell was concerned that such a humiliation should never happen again. He therefore wanted to ensure that something was set in motion to better prepare the army of the future (*ibid*). The idea for the Boy Scouts arose from Baden-Powell's connections with William Smith, acting as vice president to the Boy's Brigade in 1902. Initially, Baden-Powell had hoped the Boy Scouts could be an additional attachment, 'but Smith sensing the incongruity of such a merger would change the character of Boy's Brigade, too much declined the offer'

(Ogilvie, 2013, p.177). Baden-Powell's notion of the Boy Scouts was bolstered by a meeting with an American, Ernest Thompson Seton, who had founded a similar organisation in America, the Woodcraft Indians in 1902. While the two men had much to talk about, their respective woodcraft organisations differed in one essential respect. The use of the outdoors by Thompson Seton was more apolitical and more animated than a purist's conviction of the educational use of the outdoors. As an ex-solider, Baden-Powell regarded the outdoors more as a means of developing nationalistic and political goals. However, important to both men was that youngsters should be outdoors. (*ibid*.).

The growth of the Boy Scouts organisation occurred very differently from that of the Boy's Brigade, which grew slowly by word of mouth as Baden-Powell, using his contacts in publishing, gained the support of national newspapers, the Daily Express and the Daily Telegraph, who provided an intense publicity campaign. Baden-Powell held the Boy Scout's first camp on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour in 1907 mainly as a publicity stunt. The Boy Scout organisation grew rapidly and by 1909, 6000 girls had also registered as Girl Scouts. It had not been expressly forbidden for girls to join, so to meet the enthusiasm the Girl Guide Association was formed in 1910 and Agnes Baden-Powell as its president in 1912 (Olgvie, 2013). Both Scout organisations were important in the development of the educational use of the outdoors. It was often the main way in which youngsters between the two World War years would experience the outdoors (*ibid*.).

The Board of Education was sympathetic to the aims of many of the youth organisations and gave its approval to school journeys, the use of open-air schools, camps and excursions. This use of the outdoors was a new addition to the school curriculum and occurred in response to the commonly held perception that young people were to blame for the ills of society (Cook, 2001). The school leaving age at this time was 12 and potentially explains the preoccupation amongst politicians and educationists about the way that working-class boys, in particular, spent their leisure time. Some of the earliest Local Education Authorities (LEAs) set up open-air schools included Bradford, Birmingham, Sheffield, Norwich, Swansea, Nottingham and Manchester (Ogilvie, 2013). The aim of these schools was to give 'attention to the basics like washing, bathing, proper meals, clothing, breathing exercises, personal hygiene followed by some lesson work with an outdoor emphasis called out-of-school activities, which might include gardening activities, nature study, historical games and geography' (Ogilvie, 2013, p.182). The locations of some of these schools were to become the sites of future outdoor centres; Humphrey Head on the shore of Morecambe Bay and Malvern Hills Outdoor Centre in Worcestershire.

At the same time as the growth of youth organisations and open-air schools, another development was occurring within Public School education. The movement known as Progressive education wanted to move away from the cramming of knowledge, towards the development of the whole person. In relation to the development of outdoor education, Abbotsholme progressive school, formed by Cecil Reddie in 1889, 'combined intensive studies and close individual instruction with a programme of physical exercise, manual labour,

recreation and arts' (Ogilvie, 2003, p.167). An early example of how outdoor activities were used to build the boy's character is provided by Cook (2001) in which she describes how boys from the school were required to plunge from a high bridge into the river Don below, with their headmaster urging them on, with cane in hand.

Kurt Hahn, possibly the most influential person in the field of outdoor education, attributed as the founder of the field by Hopkins and Putnam (1993), established Gordonstoun School in the north east of Scotland. Although the school was progressive, it was a title Hahn did not like; 'For him, the purpose of education was simple: To develop a righteous person who is an active citizen, vigilant and has a sense of duty to his fellow man and to God' (Ogilvie, 2013, p.238). As a progressive educationalist, Hahn was familiar with Abbotsholme and 'liked the concept of training designed to produce a whole, well-balanced adult – physically fit, alert in mind, independent and generous in spirit' (Ogilvie, 2013, p.237). Hann promoted outward recognition of success at Gordonstoun by the creation of the Gordonstoun Badge. This became the Moray Badge in 1936 as the concept was used locally for boys in other schools along with boys in work or unemployment. The badge comprised three parts, athletics, including swimming and life saving, expedition work and a hobby (*ibid.*). At a Headteachers conference in Oxford in 1938, Hahn proposed the idea of his badge scheme, it was accepted and was introduced nationally as the County badge just at the beginning of World War Two. The County Badge was the basis for the first course held at Aberdovey Outward Bound School and later became the foundation of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme that remains popular today.

The King Georges Trust offered grants to organisations that used outdoor activities to promote the wider use of leisure and help to improve fitness and strengthen character. In addition, The Physical Training and Recreation Act (1937) and the Social and Physical Training Grant Regulations (1939) all focused on increasing the recreational, physical and social facilities of the 14 – 20 year population. The Youth Service was also formed in the same year, as a result, of The Board of Education circular (1939).

Returning to the inter-war years Cook (2001, p.47) recognised that, 'War influenced policy with emphasis swings between fitness for war and reducing incidences of juvenile delinquency.' This is notable when we consider that the Norwood committee (1942) when preparing for a new Education Act at a time when war with Germany was not going too well, initially recommended that Scouting and sailing school camps should be used as ways to prepare boys for war, or life at sea. But, in 1943 when the Norwood Report was published the committee's recommendation was altered to reflect the role of schooling in the development of young people; 'there should be such other wholesome outdoor activities as circumstances of the school allowed,' (Smith, 1987, p.211).

Earlier tensions between fitness for war and juvenile delinquency seem to have been resolved as the Education Act (1944) made it the legal duty of LEAs to ensure that provision was made for recreation, along with social and physical training. This proved influential in the post-war period, with the establishment of residential outdoor centres by many LEAs, fulfilling the Acts requirement that

young people should spend time in the outdoors. Bradford LEA established a camp school in 1945 on land that they rented. The intention was to send groups of problem children, specifically with the idea of modifying their behaviour (Cook, 1999). No further reference is made to this intervention, but it does at least provide evidence that LEAs were beginning to investigate the potential of outdoor education as a form of behavioural intervention. Derbyshire was among the first LEAs to open White Hall residential outdoor centre in 1950, (Hopkins and Putnam, 1993), Cumberlands Denton House possibly in 1949, Eskdale Outward Bound mountain school 1950 and Ullswater Outward Bound school following in 1955 (Ogilvie, 2013, p.286).

The Rainer Foundation, working with young people at-risk of offending, provides an example of outdoor learning as a behavioural intervention. The programme ran between 1960 and 1961 specifically for at-risk boys (Day, 1975). The early experiential programmes lead the Foundation to develop its own outdoor centre, Hafod Meurig in Wales. This operated between 1963 and 1985 with 90 percent of its clientele consisting of learners with EBD. Each programme introduced elements of social and physical success. This was achieved through exploration of the depth and benefit of group living. Each programme also aimed to reduce the hostility of young people toward authority figures. Following completion of the programme, the young person received a comprehensive personal report (Hopkins and Putnam, 1993, p.49). Hafod Meurig's approach was considered ahead of its time, the Foundation regarded each programme as a potential investment in each young person's future (*ibid.*).

Political concerns about young people continued into the 1980s. Particular attention was focused on inner cities, with high levels of deprivation, poor employment prospects and a high proportion of young at-risk people (*ibid.*). Government funding supported many new initiatives that often folded once the short-term funding ended. Option Zero run by Ackers Trust in Birmingham was an example of an initiative that continued to receive funding (*ibid.*). Ackers (as known locally) a local outdoor learning provider worked in conjunction with the National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders (NACRO) to provide a programme for young people with a particular emphasis on personal and social growth. The programme was aimed at fourteen–eighteen-year-olds and provided sixteen hours of practical activities a week.

Option Zero was designed so that teachers and youth leaders could replicate it, thus multiplying the effect. Option Zero aimed to provide young people with a worthwhile participative experience through exposure to a variety of initiative and decision-making tasks. The young people were also given the opportunity to practice leadership in a safe and controlled environment. The programme helped young people to understand and develop relationships with their peers and facilitated growth and progress in social and personal attitudes.

This short history of outdoor education describes a field with multiple roots, at its heart it could be argued, is a desire to see people develop holistically, through direct experience. In chapter 2, I apply structuration theory to consider more recent applications of outdoor learning.

(1.3) Social emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD): A Short History of Terminology

The aim of this section is to provide a historical context to my use of the term, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) to describe the young people for whom my intervention was intended. For the purposes of this research project, a young person with SEBD is defined in accordance with Groom and Rose (2005, p.21) as 'a child who is in receipt of an individual plan recognising a target to support progress in the development of either behaviour, social or emotional skills'. The definition was provided by the local authority (LA) within Groom and Rose's (2005) study and was standard across all schools within the LA.

In the late nineteenth century, both within the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), young people presenting with SEBD were regarded as, 'mental defectives, moral imbeciles, or minor delinquents'. Such terms would be deemed offensive in current society. The 1944 Education Act, introduced an umbrella term 'maladjusted' following a mandate to local education authorities (LEAs) to 'ascertain and to make suitable provision for all children in need of 'special educational treatment'' (Cole, 2005, p.34). It was not, however, until 1953, in the School Health Service and Handicapped Pupils regulations, that the category 'maladjusted' became legally defined as: ' … pupils who show evidence of emotional instability or psychological disturbance and require special education treatment in order to effect their personal, social or educational readjustment' (Ministry of Education, 1953, Part 3, 9g). Two years later in 1955, the Underwood Committee wishing to clarify some of the

vagueness of the term suggested that 'pupils with maladjustment had nervous habit, organic or psychotic disorders or educational and vocational difficulties' (Visser, 2003, p.10): an attempt to clarify this matter was included with the report '… maladjustment is not the same as unconventionality or oddness of behaviour or belief, which may not do a person or his fellows any harm' (Ministry of Education, 1955, Chapter 1, Section 12). 'Nor can maladjustment be equated with educational backwardness or mental dullness. It may affect people in the whole range of intelligence' (Ministry of Education, 1955, Chapter 1, Section 13).

The Underwood Committee argued for the careful matching of the provision to children's need. This was rarely achieved and most specialist provision had generally to respond to young people with a diverse range of difficulties that could be said to be reactions to environmental factors rather than within-child problems requiring medical-leaning treatment (Cole, Visser and Upton, 1998). During this period, the literature refering to 'the maladjusted' suggested that behaviours were regarded as within-child in origin (Visser, 2003). This view continued because 'many of the children labelled 'maladjusted' in the 1960s and 1970s could have been described as 'socially deprived', 'disruptive', 'disaffected', or 'mentally ill' (Cole, 2005, p.32). Cole regarded maladjustment as stigmatising and unsatisfactory and the term was abolished in the 1981 Education Act.

The term 'emotional and behavioural difficulties' (EBD) was used in the Underwood report and unofficially replaced 'maladjustment' because a descriptor was required for policy construction and resource allocation (Cole,

2005). It was not until a Government circular 9/1994 that another definition was provided: 'Children with EBD are on a continuum. Their problems are clearer and greater than sporadic naughtiness or moodiness and yet not so great as to be classed mental illness' (Department for Education, 1994, p.4). The problems of young people identified with EBD ranged from 'social maladaptation to abnormal emotional stresses' (DfE, 1994, p.7) and they 'are persistent and constitute learning difficulties' (*ibid.*) Cole (2005) suggests that additional problems included emotional factors, issues around relationships and externalising factors such as truanting, aggression, violence and destructive behaviour: 'The causes were usually complex and ecosystemic, involving school and home factors' (*ibid.* p.39).

The Government influenced by school improvement research issued circulars 8/94 and 9/94 advising schools how to cope with difficult behaviour whilst educating young people in both mainstream and EBD settings. Also in 1994 the Government introduced the first Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice (DfE, 1994) that offered a shorter definition (cross-referenced to Circular 9/94). Young people with EBD, 'have learning difficulties [as defined in paragraph 2:1 of the Code]. They may fail to meet expectations in school and in some but by no means, all cases may also disrupt the education of others. Emotional and behavioural difficulties may result, for example, from abuse or neglect; physical or mental illness; sensory or physical impairment; or psychological trauma. In some cases, emotional and behavioural difficulties may arise from or be exacerbated by circumstances within the school environment. They may also be associated with other learning difficulties… Emotional and

behavioural difficulties may become apparent in a wide variety of forms including withdrawn, depressive or suicidal attitudes; obsessional preoccupation with eating habits; school phobia; substance misuse; disruptive, anti-social and un-cooperative behaviour; and frustration, anger and threat of or actual violence' (DfE, 1994, Section 3.64 –3.66)

In 1999 the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) published 'Principles into Practice'. Visser (2003) suggested that OFSTED (1999) had adopted a social constructionist perspective when they stated there was a 'need for schools to look to their organisation, curriculum and support systems to improve the relations between the child with EBD and his or her environment' (*ibid*, p.14). OFSTED (1999) were also concerned that 'placing children with EBD together in a special school may provide a plethora of inappropriate role models that can exacerbate EBD' (Part A, section 11) although in Section 12, the report later recognised that effective special schools provide the respite and expertise that can benefit some young people (Visser, 2003).

In 2001, the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a) was introduced and in the section considering statutory assessment arrangements, it defines a broader term behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)(Section 7.6, p.87). The Code (2001a, p.87) defines those with BESD as, 'children and young people who demonstrate features of emotional and behavioural difficulties, who are withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing, hyperactive and lack concentration; those with immature social skills; and those presenting challenging behaviours arising

from other complex special needs.'

The above definition in commonality with earlier definitions continues to be considered a poorly defined phrase existing merely as an organisational and administrative device (Macleod and Munn, 2004). Macleod and Munn (2004, p.171) also acknowledge that, 'other more sociologically minded writers argue that the term SEBD is not representational of anything existing in reality. SEBD can be viewed as a socially constructed label, which fulfils a social function. What particular function is being served and which behaviours or groups of pupils attract the label will vary according to which social theory is favoured'.

I have found through this short, historical exploration of terminology, that precise definitions do not capture the essence of learners who are described as having SEBD. This challenges practitioners to regard the young people in their care as individual learners. Throughout this thesis I have chosen to refer to learners labelled with the above terms as 'learners', 'learners with SEBD' or 'young people with SEBD'. In doing so, I stress the social and emotional need that generally gives rise to their behaviour. This view is consistent with the House of Commons , Education and Skills Committee, Special Educational Needs, Third Report of Session 2005–06: 'Normally referred to as BESD but SEBD is a better reflection of the priority of need for these young people' (Footnote 95, p.31).

Since beginning this research, the Government implemented the Children and Families Act (2014) in England and in response, produced a new Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (2014) that was

subsequently revised to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (2015), thus replacing the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001a). The 2015 Code of Practice has extended SEN provision to the age of 25. The terminology describing SEN has remained unchanged in both the Code of Practice (2014) and the revised Code of Practice (2015). However, there have been revisions to specific categories of need; Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) have been removed and replaced with, Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). Behaviour difficulties are no longer recognised as a SEN, instead, they are viewed as symptomatic of a possibly unmet SEN.

CHAPTER TWO: APPLYING SOCIAL THEORY TO OUTDOOR LEARNING: A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON INTERVENTION

(2.0) Introduction

This chapter introduces social theory and briefly describes the dominant conceptions of agency and structure as they relate to education. Following this discussion, structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) is presented as an alternative approach to educational research. This approach provides a narrative for social interactions within outdoor learning; 'instead of viewing structure and agency as separate phenomena, structuration theory lays stress on the duality of structure; *structures* are rules and resources which are both the medium and outcome of social interaction' (Shilling, 1992, p.83). The theory is concerned with understanding social interaction and the reproduction of social systems, thus making it applicable for researchers wishing to understand interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions in outdoor learning situations.

Human activity is intrinsically situated within cultural, political and societal structures that are open to examination through the concepts of agency and structure. Individuals or agents have the capacity to act either on their own or collectively with others. Agency is concerned with the decision-making ability of individuals and the way circumstance or other agents influence capability. Structure refers to factors that limit a person's ability to act autonomously. 'They include social class, education, religion, gender, ethnicity, customs,

norms, geography, weather, and much more, including basic biological and genetic factors' (Angle, 2011, p.633).

The interplay of agency and structure upon the human condition is long debated, within the social sciences. At the heart of the issue is the question of social ontology: what is the social world made of and what effect does each component have upon human behaviour? Emile Durkheim regarded structure and hierarchy as essential to stabilising society, his work emphasised the importance of 'social facts' and rules which structure and organise human behaviour (Tan, 2011). Karl Marx also acknowledged the role of structure but regarded it as having a detrimental effect on the majority of individuals. In contrast, Max Weber places a theoretical emphasis on agency rather than structure; by suggesting that individuals reason and decide on certain actions through micro-level processes of interaction and meaning-orientation (*ibid.*). Individuals are no longer at the mercy of powerful social forces; instead, they are capable, dynamic, rational, and motivated actors in any given social context.

For the contemporary social theorists, Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens neither agency nor structure holds greater influence over individual action. Instead, they propose that a combined position provides a more realistic view of the social world. Structure and agency for Bourdieu (1977), are not recursively related in a simple manner but are influenced by habitus and field. 'Being the product of history, habitus is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by

them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.133).

A field is described as 'a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions' (*ibid.,* p. 97). Hence external structures become inscribed into an individual's own disposition or habitus to be acted upon later, should it come into contact with the field in which it was initially formed. Individuals, therefore, act in and through their habitus in relation to given fields, although their habitus may have been conditioned by prior experience (Tan, 2011).

Key to structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) are the particular definitions of structure and system. Rather than being external to human agents the concept of structure recognises 'that people produce their social systems employing rules and resources (structures) during interaction (agency), knowingly or unknowingly reproducing these structures via routines and rituals that are often taken for granted or unquestioned' (Hardcastle *et al.*, 2005, p.223). Agency and structure, no longer independent of each other, exist in a reciprocal relationship or duality of structure. Structuration, therefore, refers to 'the structuring of social relations across time and space' (Giddens, 1984, p.376).

Although 'Giddens is to be commended for doing theory as opposed to tracing the history of ideas or providing yet another metatheoretical analysis of the

early theoretical masters' (Turner, 1986, p.974). The theory has attracted criticism, with it having been described as a 'Giddens industry' (Shilling and Mellor, 1996). It is argued that much of the attraction of the theory is due to Giddens' ability to communicate and interpret sociological traditions (Sica, 1991) and the immediate and compelling attraction of his concepts lie at the root of his influence, rather than any actual theoretical substance (Willmott, 1999).

In a review of literature relating to deviance 'behaviour outside of social norms' (Collins, 2005, p.) and delinquency 'behaviour of young persons associated to committing or at risk of committing minor crime' (*ibid, p.*) conducted by McCormack (2003) the author recognised that potential causation factors '… appeared to be divided into two distinct groups and so the theory of human behaviour in terms of agency and structure was considered' (p.163). Drawing on structuration theory, McCormack (2003) presents a framework (Figure 2.1) that I have used to critically analyse targeted outdoor learning interventions. The use of the term 'delinquent' within McCormack's writing reflects literature of North American origin and as such might suggest a lesser emphasis on the social and emotional components of SEBD. Although it is important to recognise that any description of deviant behaviour, '… not only describes behaviour but behaviour in relation to a particular situation. This situation will usually include the viewpoint of an individual (or shared by a group) that judges the behaviour to be deviant or disordered' (Cooper, 2005a, p.106).

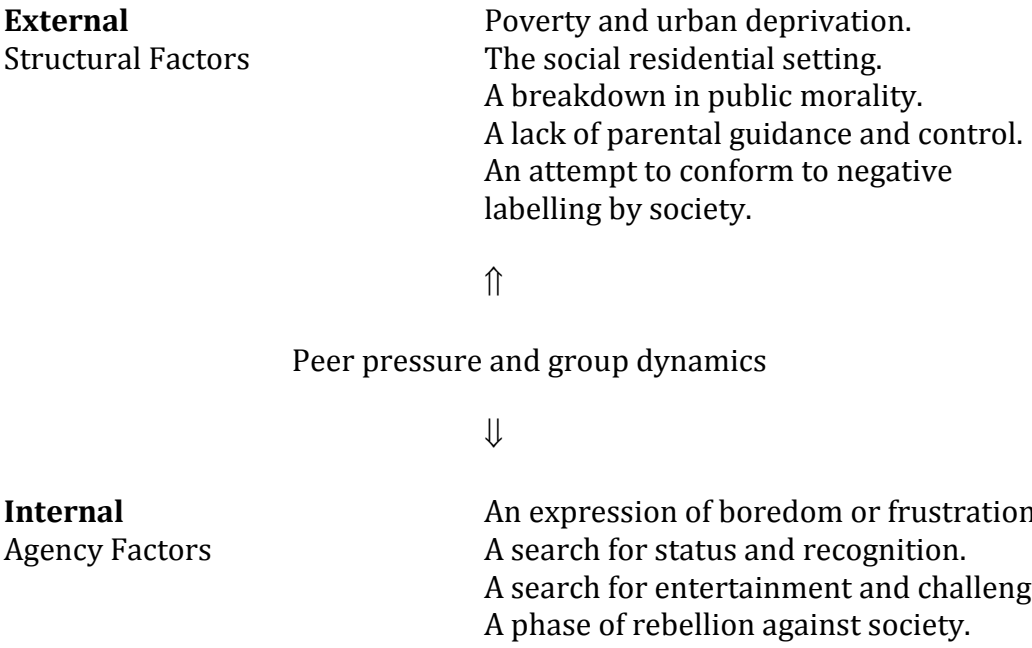


Figure 2.1 McCormack (2003). A framework for understanding causations of delinquent behaviour.

Social theory is an appropriate perspective for research into SEBD contexts because 'there has been a growing attraction in research for the idea that SEBD may well, in fact, be a social construction rather than an objective phenomenon' (Fovet, 2011, p.252). In the next section, research pertinent to structural or external causation factors for SEBD is critically considered. This is followed by further discussion on outdoor learning interventions relevant to the specific causation. Subheadings are used to identify separate components within the framework.

(2.1) External or Structural Influences for Social Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties

This section considers the effects of structural and external factors on SEBD. These are considered in order to gain an understanding of what might be an appropriate interventional strategy (ies) to incorporate into the proposed

outdoor learning programme. McCormack's (2003) framework is applied to each casual factor with the exception of 'A breakdown in public morality' as that is considered to be mostly outside the scope of outdoor learning. The framework, therefore, allows consideration of the possible ameliorating effects of outdoor learning in each case, as described below.

(a) Poverty and Urban Deprivation

Over the last 100 years of social science research, it has been shown that a strong association between social class and educational attainment exists (Cooper, 2005b). A further association between poor educational attainment and social, emotional and behaviour difficulties is also recognised by DfES (2004), while Schneiders, Drukker, van der Ende, Verhulst, van Os and Nicolson (2003, p.702) suggest that 'living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood thus represents an independent risk factor for children.' Although the study acknowledged that it was unable to confirm the pathways that might influence behaviour due to a lack of data. It nonetheless suggests that 'possible mechanisms include perceived danger (which can lead to anxiety in children and coercive parenting styles), exposure to inappropriate peers and adult role models and low levels of neighbourhood cohesion, informal social control and collective efficacy' (*ibid, p.702*).

Young people growing up in areas of social deprivation suffer from poorer health, attain lower educationally and earn less when compared to their peers in more affluent areas (Blanden, Hansen and Machin, 2008; Feinstein, Budge, Vorhaus and Duckworth, 2008; Feinstein, Sabates, Anderson, Sorhaindo and

Hammond, 2006). Further evidence from an analysis of postcode area in respect of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results support the idea of differential educational achievement. Learners from the most socially deprived postcode areas generally attained least well when compared to those of more affluent postcode areas (Webber and Butler, 2007).

The research provides a simplistic representation of a more complex picture that confirms the negative effect of deprivation upon an individual's social mobility. While outdoor learning cannot directly address the issues of deprivation, it could provide opportunities for young people to; learn alongside positive role models, make new friends and gain new experiences.

(b) Social Residential Setting

Centres offering outdoor learning are more commonly located away from urban conurbations with a high prevalence of social deprivation. The locality of residential centres has received criticism, 'that they fail to address the social setting and therefore the most persistent and influential factor in the development of delinquent behaviour' (McCormack, 2003, p.165). In response to this, two arguments are proposed. Firstly the residential outdoor centre experience provides opportunities to 'go somewhere different, young people can adjust their horizons and see a wider perspective of opportunities presented in society' (*ibid.*, p.165) although actual evidence supporting this position is limited. The second argument is to provide outdoor learning programmes within the learners' social setting. Option Zero provided by The

Ackers Trust, Birmingham (Chapter one) is an example of a programme that located itself in the social setting of the user group.

Combining the above two approaches, but over a longer duration has the potential to counter the above criticism. Stoddart (2004) combined these approaches in an outdoor learning programme that aimed to develop the social capital of a group of socially excluded young people in Cumbria. The programme consisted of blended learning activities that occurred locally along with residential opportunities further afield. The intention was to strengthen friendships and allow learners to gain a wider perspective on their lives. It was found that 'a positive attitude towards supporting one another appeared to evolve amongst the group as their friendship developed' (*ibid.,* p.12) Also reported was that 'another aspect of the programme which revealed a type of reciprocity within the group was their individual willingness to train to be peer mentors for the group of young people who would be involved in the project the next year' (*ibid.,* p.12). The recognition that outdoor learning programmes foster trusting relationships amongst participants is not a new idea, but Stoddart (*ibid.,* p.14) recognises that while 'the intensity of an outdoor education programme which demands that the participants live together, do risk taking activities together and socialise together offers a unique opportunity for those involved to get an in-depth understanding of one another. This type of understanding may only be established over a much longer period of time in a neighbourhood community context where the nature of social interaction would be less regular and less

intense compared to residential experiences on an outdoor education programme'.

Programmes of the type reported by Stoddart (*ibid.*) address the initial criticism that outdoor learning frequently fails to address the participants' social setting. Utilising urban locations; local parks, canals etc. for learning activities, whilst including short residential experiences to more remote locations can provide a good compromise that still broadens the experience of the learner. Schools could be well placed to offer programmes of this type, given the right blend of personnel and resources.

(c) A Lack of Parental Control and Moral Guidance

Primary caregivers and key adults in society have been raising children and providing moral guidance across cultures for millennia. For most children, this is still the case, but from the meta-analysis produced by Cyr, Euser, Bakermans-Kranenburg and Van Ijendoorn, (2010) for those children growing up in high-risk families, with risks indicated as: income; substance abuse; adolescent mothers; ethnic minority groups; poor education attainment and single parenthood (Cyr *et al.* 2010, p. 98), whether maltreated or not, they are more likely to develop insecure or disorganised attachment patterns than children living in low-risk families (*ibid.*).

Attachment theorists, Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1973) suggest there is a strong need for individuals to form interpersonal attachments to develop a sense of security. A dynamic equilibrium between mother and child (*ibid.*)

exists such that the distance between the two of them is allowed to develop, but should it become too great then either the mother or the child behave in ways that reduce that distance (Major and Eccleston, 2005). A similar dynamic equilibrium can exist within groups; membership implies a connection or ties to other group members that a person can rely on for security, support and safety. 'For this reason, too much distance (psychologically or physically) between the self and the group can lead to distress, as it implies a lack of self-in-group attachment and the potential loss of the in-group as a source of support' (*ibid.,* p.64).

In common with adolescents who have developed weak attachments 'it may be that being subjected to traumatic experiences interferes with normal development of psychological functions, including the formation of self-concept, or the formation of basic beliefs about trust and safety' (Wals and Verhust, 2005, p.17). It is therefore unreasonable that outdoor learning could replace the primary caregiver role in childhood development; but through group work, opportunities to develop trust and respect for peers and adults in authority could be provided. However, 'the extent to which an approach allows for or sustains and maintains the abilities of adults to build positive relationships is, for me, a measure of the extent to which the approach will be successful' (Visser, 2005, p.238).

In outdoor learning, outdoor practitioners (OPs) have traditionally been viewed as separate from the group they are facilitating, rather than included within the group (Stan, 2009). Remaining in an outsider position makes it

difficult for OPs to develop positive relationships with members of a group (Visser, 2005). This could be due to the power position that OPs have over the groups they work with. Similar power positions can exist between teachers and learners. More recently the OP role has been challenged (Stan, 2008 and 2009). Stan's observations supported the notion that OPs employed three operational modes: detached, controlling and approachable (also referred to as part of the team).

Stan reported that OPs adopting the detached approach during small group problem-solving tasks at a residential outdoor learning centre, 'did not manifest an obvious interest in the activity, failing to motivate the pupils to get involved in the activity. Their lack of interest could cause the pupils to lose interest themselves in the activity, as pupils often appeared to rely on the facilitators (OPs) support' (*ibid,* p.31). Outdoor practitioners that were unable to step back and allow learners to solve the task adopted a controlling mode. A position of power was used to achieve the OPs personal goals; this often resulted in the task failing because of too much intervention. OPs employing the approachable mode maintained a balance between the physical and psychological safety of the learners, whilst allowing them greater independence and responsibility. When issues arose between learners the OP would step in and generate a group discussion to promote learning. Choice of language also seemed relevant to the success of this approach, with the use of 'we' instead of 'I' or 'you'. This choice of wording avoided singling people out who might not have been playing their part.

Detached and controlling modes have an unbalanced involvement on learning activities, either too much or too little (Stan, 2008). Both modes of operation fail to engage learners through a lack of encouragement or support, but the approachable mode allows greater flexibility to step in and support or to step back. This approach places the OP on the inside of the group and recognises learning as a socially constructed interaction. Higgins (1997, p.11) recognised that 'the teacher (OP) and the learners will have had different previous experiences. It is likely that the teacher (OP) will have a greater range of experiences to draw upon and these will be set alongside the new ones. The result is a sharing of experience and subsequent development'. This process of learning will continue for both learner and OP, but as the learner gains more shared and independent experience there is a lesser requirement for the OP to be involved or interpret the experience. The OP is also learning from the experience (*ibid.*).

The discussion now examines research relating to the use of groups and social learning as an educational approach to develop social and emotional learning (SEL). In a study conducted in the USA, Long (2001) examined '… the influence that experiential education had upon a group of girls with emotional and behavioural disorders who resided in a long-term residential wilderness camp' (*ibid,* p.100). The paper focused on learner experience/perception of the high ropes course throughout the nine months of the programme, because of the high-perceived risk element of the activity. On average about twelve hours each month was scheduled to problem-solving and low rope course activity and an allocation of four hours each month was given to high rope

course activity. Nine girls (aged fourteen-seventeen years) participated in the study, each selected from a convenience sample. Each participant had to provide written consent, complete three interviews and belong to a group when the study began.

The constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) was used for data analysis; this revealed that in relation to the ropes course experiences, the girls moved through three distinct perspectives. The new member perspective identified that new members, 'tended to view the ropes course as fun and exciting' (Long, 2001, p.103). Reflecting on her first experience, Cynthia confessed, 'I was excited, but I still had that type of attitude where it was like, it doesn't matter if I do or I don't.' In this early stage, the girls were still acting as individuals, with no regard for the rest of the group or demonstrating any realisation of how the activity could benefit them in their lives (*ibid.*).

The established member perspective described as 'a member that demonstrates an increased level of trust and responsibility within the group' (*ibid.,* p.104). By this stage of the programme the girls were beginning to realise that group success was also beneficial on an individual level, the activities were beginning to connect on a deeper level. Having fun was no longer a primary motive, instead, the girls started to relate the sessions to their own lives.

The final theme, advanced member perspective, demonstrated a positive shift in regard to the high rope sessions. 'The characteristics of this theme included

the perception of the ropes course and the experiential trips as a serious treatment modality with the ability to relate the learning experiences to their own lives and treatment' (*ibid.,* p.105). Prominent role models within the group were a positive aspect for new group members. Girls that had attained this stage were equally as happy to open up and share their experiences with newer members, as they were to stand back if they felt it was beneficial. Trust was also a key component of the ropes course, 'with girls in the advanced member perspective being the prominent role models for others' (*ibid*, p.105). This finding is suggestive that other activities of high-perceived risk could replicate the experiences of the girls, thus strengthening the case for SEL skill acquisition.

(d) An Attempt to Conform to Negative Labelling by Society

The reasons why young people conform to societal negative expectations are multifaceted, however coercion theory (Patterson, 1982: Patterson, Reid and Dishion, 1992: Patterson, 2002) and more recently, the comprehensive model of antisocial development (Granic and Patterson, 2006) provides an understanding of how early onset antisocial behaviour can lead young people to reject societal norms.

Coercion theory in its most basic form 'is a model of the behavioural contingencies that explain how parents and children mutually 'train' each other to behave in ways that increase the probability that children will develop aggressive behaviour problems and that parents' control over these aggressive behaviours will decrease. These interchanges are characterised by

parental demands for compliance, the child's refusal to comply and his or her escalating complaints and finally the parents' capitulation. Coercive interactions are the fundamental behavioural mechanisms by which aggression emerges and stabilises over development' (*ibid*, p.101).

Coercion theory has more recently become the foundation for a comprehensive model of antisocial development (*ibid*). The model (Figure 2.2) utilises a dynamic systems approach to provide 'a framework that can integrate disparate findings and offer an explanatory level of modelling that is often missing in other approaches' (*ibid*, p.102). The model also addresses some of the gaps within coercion theory. To understand the model it is necessary to explain some of the technical language used to describe dynamical systems. Patterns or interactions are referred to as *attractors,* therefore 'developmental acquisitions can be described as attractor patterns that emerge over weeks, months, or years' (Thelen and Smith, 1994 in Granic and Patterson, 2006, p.102).

As a system develops a unique *state space* 'defined as a model of all possible states a system can attain' (Granic and Patterson, 2006, p. 103) is created comprising of all attractors relevant to the situation being modelled. In figure 2.2, two state spaces exist, represented by the parallelograms at the bottom; the ovals within these represent attractors. It is the intention to focus on the dyadic relationship of the parent / child that represents earlier onset antisocial development, being most relevant to the learners within the study.

The remaining part of the model describes late-onset antisocial development that is influenced significantly by peer associations (Patterson, Dishion and Yoerger, 2000; Patterson and Yoerger, 1997, 1999), this is not applicable to the research participants, all of whom were identified with SEBD earily in their education before peer influences would have become a significant attractor.

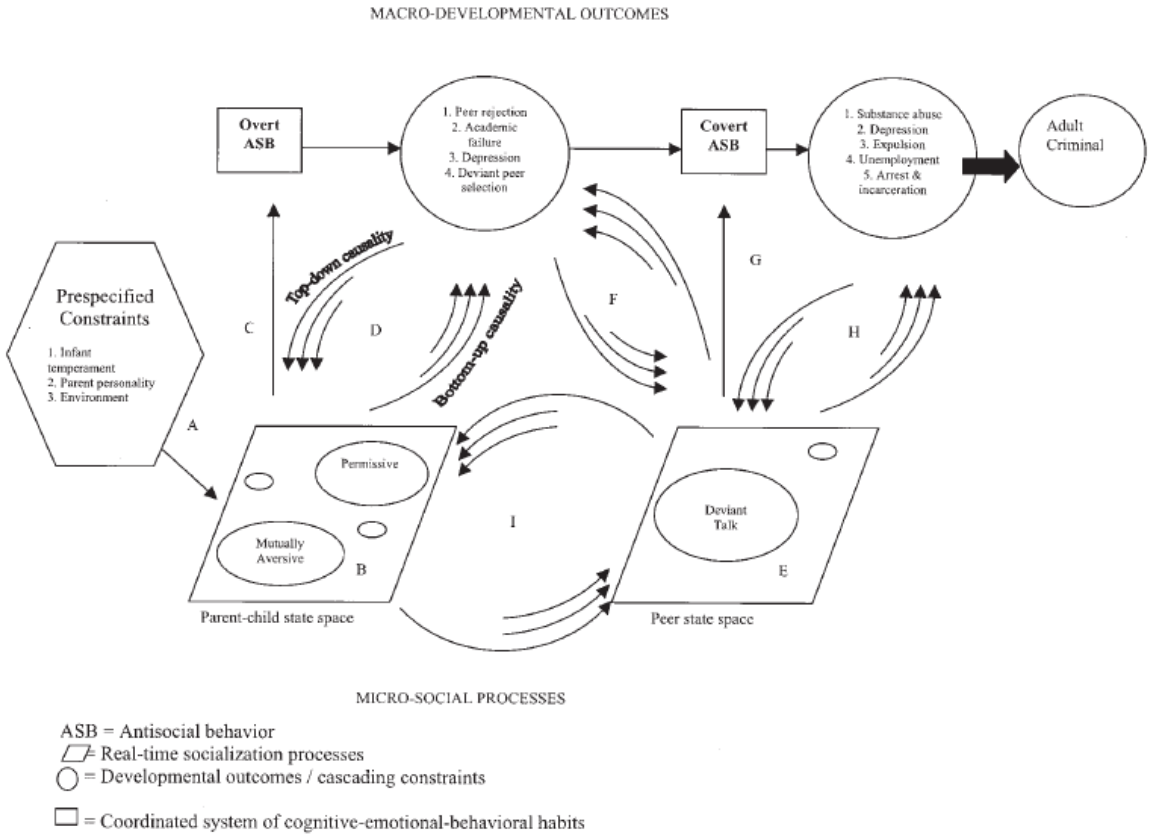


Figure 2.2 A Comprehensive Model of Antisocial Development (Granic and Patterson, 2006, p.113).

In the model, Pathway A represents pre-specified constraints (infant temperament, parent personality, environment) that over time 'probabilistically influence the emergence of micro social coercive family patterns' (Granic and Patterson, 2006, p.114). Coercive exchanges between parents and children are represented in Pathway B. It is recognised that such exchanges can begin as earlier as 18 months (Martin, 1981; Shaw, Keenan and Vondra, 1994; Shaw and Winslow, 1997). However from about 18 to 24 months of age, it is normal for children to become oppositional, saying 'no' and throwing tantrums (Maccoby, 1980). If behaviours persist beyond a transitional point of about two years becoming atypical, then the research suggests that inappropriate parental responses to oppositional outbursts have triggered the transition (Belsky, Woodworth and Crinc, 1996; Shaw, Winslow, Owens, Vondra, Cohn and Bell, 1998).

Once the patterns of behaviour within parent / child dyads have developed, they become increasingly more predictable: dyads have a dominant behaviour pattern and alternative behaviours become less common. As the behaviour pattern develops, some attractors become larger and more accessible, whereas others (e.g. playful interactions, cooperative problem solving) become smaller and less accessible (Granic and Patterson, 2006). In maladaptive family interactions the flexibility to change between positive and negative state spaces becomes increasingly rigid. From the perspective of Granic and Patterson (2006) 'the extent to which parent and children can flexibly and appropriately respond, emotionally, cognitively and behaviourally, to shifts in contexts may tap a repertoire of alternative

strategies that correspond to how children will adapt to future challenges at school and with peers' (p.115 -6). This rigidity is represented by Pathway C. Children that do not experience a range of affective states and the dyadic regulation of them may develop a narrow set of coping behaviours. This is supported by studies that show the benefits of increasing children's awareness of emotion (Gottman, Katz and Hooven, 1996: Izard, 2002).

Children adept at regulating their physiological arousal and emotional expressions have learnt to express a wide range of emotions. It follows that children that are not able to adjust their behaviour to contextual changes at home are therefore, ill prepared for the phase transition of beginning school (3 to 5 years) and the new set of contextual demands (peers and school environments) (Granic and Patterson, 2006). This is represented by loop D. In addition to the above issues, children at the age of beginning school, develop a theory of mind: the ability to understand that others may hold beliefs about the world and about themselves that is different to their own (Perner, 1991; Wellman, 1990). Granic and Patterson (2006, p. 117) have recognised that 'With the advent of theory of mind, children are able to understand that other children or teachers may not like them or may think of them as 'bad.''

Entry to school may be the first experience for some children of social comparison. Children that are overtly aggressive and unskilled enter school unable to cooperate, share, attend quietly and flexibly regulate and inhibit their angry and distressing emotions (Eisenberg, Guthrie, Fabes, Shepard, Losoya and Murphy, 2000; Kochanska, Murray and Coy, 1997; Zahn-Waxler,

Schmitz, Fulker, Robertson and Emde, 1996). This can result in peer rejection and neglect (Dishion, Andrews and Crosby, 1995; Dodge and Coie, 1987: Laird, Jordan, Dodge, Pettit, and Bates, 2001; Patterson *et al*., 1992). Repeated experiences of rejection have the potential to trigger self-evaluative emotions most significantly, shame (Tangney, Miller, Flicker and Barlow, 1996). In order to regulate emotions relating to shame, the child may actively avoid his normal peers and instead select like-minded deviant peers, who are less likely to reject them. A consequence of this is poor academic performance (Hawkins and Lishner, 1987; Hinshaw, 1992; Moffit, Gabrielli, Mednick and Schulsinger, 1981).

Returning to loop D, top-down causal processes; rejection by normal peers, academic failure and association with deviant peers, increase micro-social coercive interactions at home. School failure may become an issue of contention, increasing, both child and parental anger, leading to mutual blame. This reaction deepens the mutually hostile and permissive attractors. In response to the increasing aggressive behaviour of the child, the parent may feel increased anxiety about their deteriorating relationship with the child. This in turn deepens the permissive attractor because the parent feels less able to effectively monitor the child, a critical factor in controlling delinquency (Patterson, 1982; Patterson, *et al*., 1992). A lack of effective control, combined with a deteriorating parent-child relationship, strengthens the attraction of the deviant peer group, as represented by the bottom-up loop in the recursive cycle D, strengthening the child's rejection of societal norms.

Social and academic skills interventions have a limited effect on deviant behaviour (Patterson and Capaldi, 1990). Research using randomised controlled trials to establish the most effective forms of intervention (Parent management training, Forgatch and DeGarmo, 1999; Multisystemic therapy, Henggeler, Schoenwald, Borduin, Rowland and Cunningham, 1998) found variability in outcomes, thus questioning the effectiveness of such approaches. However, there is evidence to suggest that outdoor learning and also physical education programmes have the potential to improve social and emotional well-being (Lubans, Plotnikoff and Lubans, 2012). Although the authors advise caution because of the high risk of bias within the studies reviewed. Further support can, however, be found in research into the use of sport / outdoor learning in positive youth development (Armour and Sandford, 2013; Sandford, Duncombe and Armour, 2008).

The effective features of the positive youth development programmes were; effective matching of learners with specific programme aims, locating activities outside of normal school context, encouraging learners to set targets and choose activities, establishing positive relationships between project staff and learners, providing opportunities for learners to work with others (Sandford, Duncombe and Armour, 2008). The group experience can also provide opportunities to learn how to work together closely and value the qualities that others bring to the group (McCormack, 2003). More recent research into positive youth development (Armour and Sandford, 2013) supported the need for careful selection of learners to programmes and the importance of positive social relationships. It was also found that post

intervention, participation in further additional curriculum programmes such as Duke of Edinburgh Award helped to sustain the positive benefits of the initial intervention (*ibid.*).

Concluding the discussion on structural causation factors for SEBD, a broad range of outdoor learning programmes have been used as interventions, in the hope of making a positive contribution to young people with SEBD. The next section of the discussion continues as above, but considers agency factors of causation for SEBD.

(2.2) Internal or Agency Factors

In McCormack's (2003) framework of casual factors for deviant behaviour, peer groups and group dynamics are shown to act on both structural and agency factors. It is not the intention to discuss further the influence of the peer group upon deviant behaviour (see previous sections, 'A Lack of Parental Control' and 'Moral Guidance and An Attempt to Conform to Negative Labelling by Society') instead attention is given to specific agency related interventions.

(a) Searching for Excitement

The search for excitement by some young people can be explained through sensation-seeking theory (Zuckerman 1979, 2007). The theory suggests that sensation-seeking is a trait, which is defined '… by the seeking of varied, novel, complex and intense sensations and experiences and the willingness to take physical, social and financial risks for the sake of such experience' (Zuckerman 1994, p.27). Sensation-seeking is a motive for some individuals

in some situations (Zuckerman, 2007). Risk is associated with sensation seeking activities and is defined as, 'the possibility of incurring misfortune or loss' (Collins, 1994, p.1336). However, there are many kinds of misfortune or loss. Six types of loss have been suggested by Yates and Stone (1992), financial (money), performance (for a product), physical (ranging from discomfort to death), psychological (self-esteem), social (esteem of others) and time. As for risk, four major areas in relation to voluntary activities have been identified, crime (offences serious enough to warrant arrest), minor violations (traffic offences), financial (loss of money from gambling or business investment) and sports (injuries occurred in sporting activities) (Horvath and Zuckerman, 1993). Risk is subjective and decisions about whether to accept the risks associated with any activity depend on the benefits or anticipated positive outcomes. The hedonistic rewards of sensation-seeking are perceived as benefits only by high sensation seekers, who either underestimate the risks or are more willing to accept them because the benefits are judged to outweigh them (Zuckerman, 2007).

Young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have fewer opportunities for adventure and excitement than their counterparts from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, who are more likely to travel and participate in activities such as; scuba diving, surfing, rock climbing, mountain biking, etc. Therefore, sex, drugs and crime are more readily accessible sources of sensation-seeking activities (*ibid*).

Adventure programmes have been used as interventional strategies to prevent problem behaviour (Hansen and Breivik, 2001; Durgin and McEwen, 1993; Day 1975) and therefore, may be relevant to use as an intervention for young people with SEBD. Adventurous or outdoor learning approaches differ from other learning approaches because they purposefully exposure learners to real-life situations that challenge participants. At this point, it is worth considering what is meant by the terms 'adventure', 'risk' and 'challenge'. Adventure can mean different things to different people, but Varley (2006) has suggested viewing adventure as a continuum of the '… paradoxical relationship between the controlling demands of the marketplace and the essential ideal of the original adventure' (*ibid.,* p.188). Varley is contrasting the commodified, predictable or packaged experience at one end against true adventure at the opposing end, where participants '… are required to use skills developed over time, make decisions relating to risk management and take responsibility for their actions' (Beames and Brown, 2016, p.19).

Relating adventure to situations of learning, Beames and Brown (2016) have broken the meaning down into four elements to avoid the vagueness associated with the term and to locate it within the parameters of the Varley's model. These elements are; Authenticity (keeping the activities real), Agency (ensuring that learners' have the power to shape what is learned and how it is learned), Uncertainty (being willing to move away from rigid and prescribed processes and allow creativity in finding solutions), Mastery (helping learners develop applicable knowledge and skills) (p.20-21).

Clearly, risk has been associated with adventure education, but its purposeful use has been described as a distinguishing feature above other learning approaches (Miles and Priest, 1990, 1999; Priest and Gass, 1997; Wurdinger, 1997). As described above, risk is associated with incurring misfortune or loss; therefore, any pedagogic approach advocating the use of risk is predicated on the assumption that taking learners out of their comfort zone causes change. This may be true for some learners, but is not the case for all. Evidence from the field of postive psychology suggests that when learners feel safe, secure and accepted the greatest amount of change occurs (Davis-Berman and Berman, 2002). The authors argue that 'more productive avenues of change exist, based on participants safety and security (p.310). Instead of moving participants out of their comfort zone, greater emphasis should be placed on ensuring emotional safety and stability. This is possibly even more important for young people with SENs who may be emotionally less secure.

Challenge defined as 'the situation of being faced with something that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person's ability' (Cambridge dictionary online, n.d.). Requires learners to invest in the learning and mastery of skills and knowledge, to have perseverance and to learn how to deal with setbacks. Beames and Brown (2016) are clear that they 'do not use challenge interchangeably with risk (p.86) although they do recognise that some elements of risk may be present, but are not the driving force behind learning situations. It has to be acknowledged that risk is present in everyday life and therefore it is

unrealistic to remove risk entirely, however, the authors, 'believe that the emphasis on risk as a learning strategy is too narrow and restrictive and frankly, is out-dated' (*ibid*). In relation to school-based programmes, Karppinen (2012, p.56) asserts 'that formal school is not the right place to practise high-risk adventures, which induce situations too risky for the pupils.' Instead adventure activities should be authentic, creative and sensitive and adapted to the needs of the individual learner.

Contrasting any possible excitement gained from participation in adventurous activities to those gained during sensation-seeking acts, Day (1975) recognises that it would be an oversimplification to suggest that activities such as rock climbing or any other outdoor activity could satisfy the sensation seeking desire of activities that do not meet with the same censure. Although the justification for including elements of adventure in rehabilitation programmes is the realisation that excitement can be obtained legitimately through adventurous activities (Maitland, 1986; Mckay, 1993), although it may be that longer term behavioural change is more dependent on boarder learning processes than specific activities (Sandford, Duncombe and Armour, 2008).

(b) A Search for Status and Recognition

Extreme sports have become more popular in recent years, but taking part in adventurous activities 'will not confer status on any individual in conventional terms (scholastic, employment or community recognition)' (McCormack, 2003, p.165). Although, improving a participant's self-esteem is

often cited as a programme outcome or as an argument for the value and importance of outdoor education programmes (Leather, 2013). In agreement with (Leather 2013; Mruk, 2006; Smith and Mackie, 2007) I use the definition: 'self-esteem reveals a person's overall evaluation of their own worth and encompasses an individuals beliefs and emotions' (p.160) or more simply, self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves. Considering the link between self-esteem and sensation-seeking behaviour, evidence suggests that young people with low levels of self-esteem are more prone to sensation-seeking behaviours (Donnellan, Trzensniewski, Robins, Moffitt and Caspi, 2005; Fergusson and Horwood, 2002; Rosenberg, Schooler and Schoenbach, 1989; Sprott and Doob, 2000).

As discussed earlier in the section 'An Attempt to Conform to Negative Labelling by Society' young people tend to seek out similar peers who confer status and recognition through joint participation in sensation-seeking activities. Although increased status may not be achievable through participation in outdoor activities, such activities can lead to an increase in learner self-concept. Harter (1999, p.5) uses this term to refer to 'evaluative judgements of attributes within discrete domains' for example the discrete domains; scholastic, social, athletic, physical and behavioural as used in Harter's (1985) Self-Perception Profile for Children.

The concepts relating to self, such as, self-esteem and self-concept are shown to influence a person's behaviour, either positively or negatively, even if the processes by which this occurs are not clearly understood (Ostrowsky, 2010).

Self-esteem (feeling) and its related constructs, self-concept (thinking) and self-efficacy (acting) have been frequently measured outcomes of outdoor education programmes (Bruyere, 2002; Leather, 2013). In an American study that examined the influence of an outdoor adventure trip, on the self-perception of learners immediately after and four months post trip. Increases in participant self-esteem were reported (Garst, Scheider and Baker, 2001). The learners for the study were recruited from a convenience sample of fifty-eight non-deviant adolescents from the youth service, each volunteered to attend one of three separate outdoor adventure trips; nineteen learners attended each trip. Quantitative results demonstrated that two of Harter's Self-Perception Profiles (SPPs) Social Acceptance and Behavioural Conduct, increased immediately after the outdoor adventure trip; some behavioural conduct impacts remained four months after the trip (*ibid.,* p.46). Qualitative data also identified the themes 'novelty' and 'escape' these acted as catalysts for self-perception change. The programme offered a form of escape mechanism from which they could get away from family pressures and negative peer influences. In addition, it was found that a sense of 'equality' emerged between learners represented from various school, ethnic and socioeconomic groups, 'the "we're in it together" attitude' (*ibid.,* p.47).

Similar experiences to those reported by Garst et al, (2001) have been recognised by Berman and Davis-Berman (2005) who suggest that people change for positive reasons often assisted by supportive communities. These can be created when conditions such as; working with nature and experiencing the outdoors leads to an appreciation of the environment, in a

context where sharing and safety (physical and emotional) are important factors when focusing on group member strengths.

Meta-analytical research positively affirms the ability of outdoor education to create positive changes in self-esteem and self-concept (Cason and Gillis, 1994; Gillis and Speelman, 2008; Hattie, Marsh, Neill and Richards, 1997; Neill and Richards, 1998). Leather (2013) advises that however seductive it may be to hear that adventure programmes improve self-esteem, such a generalisation provides a simplistic understanding of the complex and contested construct. In research, it is necessary to be more precise and provide substance to the label. Higgins (2009) supports this view, suggesting that it may be problematic to simply seek to raise self-esteem through experiential programmes, unless facilitators provide a structure that enables participants to learn from their experiences, so the values context is not left to chance.

Finally, considering if age is a factor in the development of self-esteem, Leather (2013, p.167) commenting on Carson and Gillis (1994) notes that the authors statistically integrated previous research findings from similar age groups. Their analysis concentrated on adolescents as they formed a significant part of the participant population. Harter, Waters and Whitesell (1998) suggest that adolescence is a time when a fluctuation in self as a result of changing environment and situation is particularly noteworthy. Slightly stronger changes in self-esteem were reported by Carson and Gillis (1994) in younger, rather than older adolescents. This is supported by Bruyere (2002),

who suggests that schools wishing to use outdoor learning approaches to development the construct, self, should target younger adolescent groups as this is an appropriate stage in their development.

(c) A Phase of Rebellion Against Society

Deliberately deciding to avoid school can be regarded as a form of rebellion against the educational system and would be reflected in attendance data for SEBD educational settings. To improve attendance, some educational contexts offer 'alternative educational approaches' to make their curriculum more attractive to young people. This section reports outdoor learning in relation to alternative curriculum.

The discourse of participation in outdoor learning and school attendance can be traced back to a brief mention in a meta-analysis (Cason and Gillis, 1994). Nine effects from forty-three unreferenced studies are reported, but no further comment is made regarding attendance. The link between outdoor learning and school attendance re-emerges in the alternative curricula discourse, as a response to the needs of disaffected learners in London (Riley, Ellis, Weinstock, Tarrant and Hallmond, 2006). 'The term "disaffected" is a powerful one which can be interpreted in many different ways' (Riley *et al.*, 2006, p.5). This was represented by the broad spectrum of learners that schools tried to place on the alternative programmes within the study. When schools were asked to identify learners who were disaffected, they were able to come up with ten to fifteen individuals in a year group. Each learner was

at-risk of failure through poor attendance, lack of interest in lessons, bad behaviour, or absence of motivation.

Addressing poor attendance, especially amongst disaffected young people, became the focus of a range of Government initiatives. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) identified 'relationships between poor attendance at school, for any reason, and academic performance' (DfES, 2001b and 2002). Hallam *et al.* (2007) confirm this by recognising that both reducing exclusion and improving attendance are crucial for individual learners and society as a whole.

The factors that contribute towards low attendance are complex and multi-facetted, but possible reasons include:

> 'illness or anxiety; holidays, special occasions, outside activities; family circumstances (helping at home, family needs or desires, extreme family pressures); issues within school (the environment, school requirements, school circumstances, attitudes towards school, relationships with teachers and peers, exclusion, perceived irrelevance of the school curriculum); and attractions outside school (peer pressure, excitement of truanting, employment opportunities)' (Hallam *et al*., 2007, p.45).

Age is also a relevant contributing factor with attendance reducing amongst older learners, attributed to the irrelevance of the curriculum (Bayliss, 1999). The view is supported by Hallam *et al*. (2007) in a report on a Ministry of Defense (MOD) sponsored youth initiative, Skill Force, an alternative curriculum for Key Stage 4 (age fourteen to sixteen years), for learners identified as disaffected by the school. Ex-service personnel of the Skill Force programme used outdoor learning to develop interpersonal and

intrapersonal skills, delivered through vocational learning programmes offered by ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network).

The study reported that 'sixty-one percent of learners indicated that their attendance had improved since participating in Skill Force' (Hallam *et al*., 2007, p.61). Although some learners had reported positive attendance effects, this was not reflected across the whole school curriculum. Instead, improvements were limited to the alternative curriculum provision. Interviews with learners revealed that overall attendance had improved, but that this was limited to the Skill Force programme in some cases.

In a follow-up study (Hallam *et al.*, 2010), perceptions of the Skill Force programme reported by school personnel revealed high rates of perceived attendance. Ninety-seven percent of Skill Force employees and seventy-nine percent of school personnel perceived that the programme had been at least quite successful in improving attendance, while ninety-five percent of Skill Force employees and seventy-two percent of school personnel, thought the programme had had similar levels of success in reducing unauthorised absence. Again improvements were limited to the Skill Force initiative, but this represented significant improvements in attendance for certain learners. In addition, the authors reported that participation in Skill Force had provided positive experiences of schooling for certain learners.

Learner drop out was recognised as an inevitable part of any type of programme aimed at reaching disaffected learners. The reasons for this may

go beyond those over which the individual learner has control: chaotic family life, unsupportive primary caregivers, or the need to care for family members. In recognising these factors the Skill Force personnel believed that they were more successful with students at-risk of exclusion, rather than those whose behaviour had already deteriorated beyond that point (Hallam *et al*., 2010).

An additional factor possibly contributing towards drop out is that not everyone enjoys outdoor learning. Fox and Avramidis (2003) report that a learner with SEBD developed strategies to avoid participation in an outdoor learning programme, the learner in question became violent in order to be excluded from participation.

Accepted within the discourse of outdoor learning and school attendance is the link between poor attendance and low academic achievement. This can be attributed to curriculum mismatch (Bayliss, 1999), suggesting that academically orientated curriculums do not engage learners with SEBD. The Skill Force programme provides an example using outdoor learning within schools as an alternative for those not engaging with current curricular. The emphasis of learning to work with others on the Skill Force programme contrasted with the learner's prior experiences of school. Skill Force employees reported that a 'focus on teamwork was crucial in this process' (Hallam *et al.*, 2007, p.61).

(2.3) Summary

The Skill Force programme (Hallam *et al*., 2007) provides a good example of an alternative curricular programme that utilises outdoor learning approaches. Such programmes can positively affect school attendance although this may be limited to programme participation alone. It almost seems obvious: give the learners what they want or enjoy and they will attend, but is it really that simple?

The social theory of human behaviour introduced within this chapter provided a perspective on the causes of SEBD, by acknowledging the influences of structure and agency (McCormack, 2003). The review of literature also considered how outdoor learning programmes had been applied as interventional tools. The literature review confirms that an intervention based on the philosophy and practices of outdoor learning might be an approach that is attractive to learners with SEBD as well as having the potential to develop social and emotional learning skills.

CHAPTER THREE: THE RESEARCH APPROACH

(3.0) Introduction

The choice and subsequent application of a particular research approach and subsequent design intrinsically reflects a researcher's philosophical understanding of the world and becomes more than a mere technical exercise. 'Ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions, these in turn, give rise to methodological considerations and these in turn give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection' (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995, p. 21).

This chapter describes the rationale behind my decision to use Action Research (AR) as the approach for this project and how it developed into a working design frame. It may be helpful to distinguish between approach and design. A research approach is regarded as a particular framework that guides a project, whilst the design more specifically describes how a framework is applied to a particular situation. The quotation from Hitchcock and Hughes (*ibid.*) above in some ways neatly summarises the personal experience of the researcher in trying to assess the suitability of potential research approaches. Ethnographic, evaluative and pragmatic research approaches were initially considered, then rejected, revisited and then finally rejected again, unlike the AR approach which even after critical reflection seemed the most appropriate research approach.

Selecting a suitable research approach became much more than a technical decision. Instead, the process prompted reflection and questioning; what is

knowledge and how can social reality to be understood? The process caused deep consideration pertaining to the nature of knowledge, how people interrelate with others and my own position acting as researcher/practitioner within research context. Decisions at this stage were as much philosophical in nature as they were technical. Ultimately, after pragmatic consideration about what really mattered in the selection of a particular research approach was that it should enable reflexive action.

(3.1) Approaches to Research.

The aim of all research is to test hypotheses, produce theories or create new knowledge about situations or events with the view to generalising the findings (Thomas, 2015). Two dominant research frameworks or paradigms within the social sciences exist. The choice of which to use, can depend on the researcher's philosophical position or the appropriateness of the approach in relation to the research context / research question/s. These two paradigms are referred to as positivism and anti-positivism (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The philosophical position of the researcher is important because it shapes the nature of the research (Thomas, 2015) and will also dictate the method/s used by the researcher (Allen, 1995).

A useful model for considering the philosophical position of a paradigm and hence its suitability to a research context is presented by Burrell and Morgan (1979). The model assimilates a wide range of social theory, considering commonality between theories, and proposes four paradigms: Radical Structuralism, Functionalist Sociology, Radical Humanism and Interpretive

Sociology. The paradigms are represented on two axes within the diagrammatical representation of the model shown in Figure 3.1 (Lane, 2001).

The vertical axis represents the variations in assumptions relating to the nature of society. The Regulative perspective is concerned with theories that emphasise the essential cohesiveness of society and is seeking to understand how the status quo is maintained and how to describe the processes that satisfy human need. The contrasting perspective, Radical Change is concerned with theories that describe societal conflict and how power leads to domination and states of alienation (Lane, 2001).

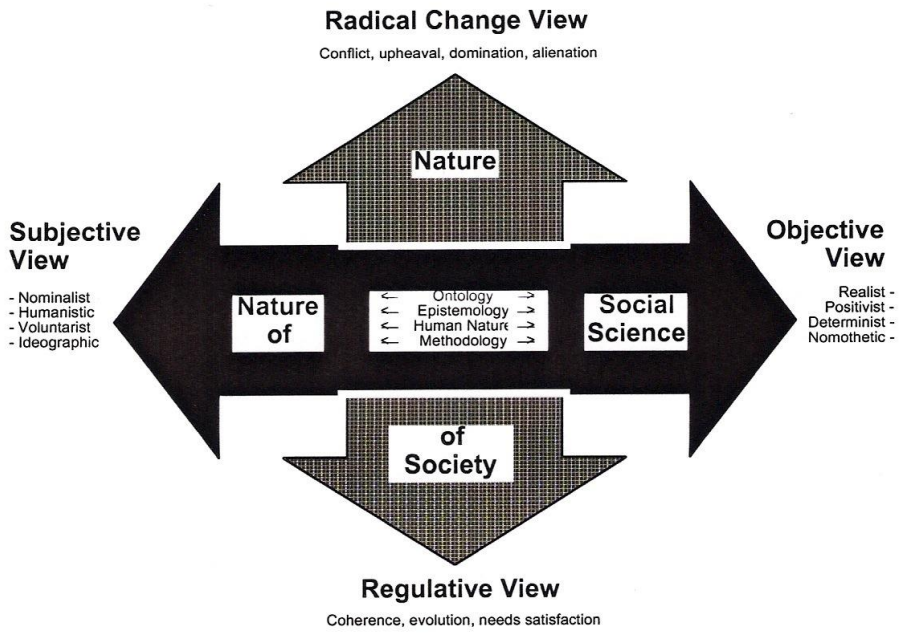


Figure 3.1 Illustration of the two axes of Burrell and Morgan's Framework. Lane (2001, p.101)

Assumptions about the nature of social science research are represented by the horizontal axis: a researcher can choose to adopt an objective or subjective position, each of which will have opposing positions of an ontological,

epistemological, structural and methodological nature (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

Ontological assumptions question the kind of things that we think exist in the world and the way in which they can be viewed. Two main ontological positions are represented within the model: Positivism (also known as Realism) assumes that the social world is considered as external to social actors and Anti-Positivism (also referred to as Nominalism) views the social world as something that people are in the process of fashioning (Bryman, 2012), or as a product of human description (Lane, 2001).

Epistemological assumptions are related to 'the way in which the world can be known to us and as such, involves issues as to what it is to know anything' (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997, p.5). Epistemology can be explored by posing a series of questions: 'what is knowledge and how do we know things? Are there different types of knowledge? And finally are there good procedures for discovering knowledge?' (Thomas, 2009, p.87).

Two opposing epistemological views emerge. Positivism, that was extended to the social world from the natural sciences by Comte and refers to accounts that study systematically what is clear, factual and open to observation (Pring, 2004). The humanistic view is concerned with the significance and meaning that humans ascribe to their actions, drawn out via the textual interpretation that is hermeneutical analysis (Lane, 2001). Research conducted in this manner is also referred to as 'interpretive,' seeking social understanding through explanations

provided by the learner involved in the social action. The intentions and motives behind social actions offer subjective meanings of the social action being studied. Given the belief that the social world is constituted by the intentions and meanings of its social actors, there can be nothing to study objectively (Pring, 2004).

Human nature concerns the way that humans relate to their environment. The deterministic view sees humans acting in an almost mechanistic way, 'functioning as products of an environment which both forms the situations they encounter and the conditioning they imbibe' (Lane, 2001, p.100). The opposing voluntaristic approach views humans 'as initiators of their own actions with free will and creativity, producing their own environments' (Cohen *et al*., 2007, p.8).

Methodology relates to the investigation of phenomena. 'Nomotheticism promotes the measurement of general concepts, whilst ideographic approaches aim to access the unique insights and interpretations that individuals have of the world' (Lane, 2001, p.100).

Action research (AR) was chosen to enable reflection on the research situation and effect change to the outdoor learning curriculum. The approach is unique because it is context bound and involves action that is designed to change local situations. For these reasons, AR sits outside of the two main research paradigms. An emerging approach to educational research is the paradigm of critical educational research. From this perspective, the two previous paradigms are regarded as presenting incomplete accounts of social behaviour because they

neglect the political and ideological contexts of much educational research (Cohen Manion and Morrison, 2011).

Critical educational research is influenced by Habermas (1971) who regards knowledge and human interest as inseparable from each other. This view contradicts objectivity where the researcher's bias is separated from the research situation as the only valid way of producing knowledge. Instead, Habermas argued that through a process of self-reflection the illusion of researcher neutrality was shattered (Herr and Anderson, 2015). The recognition that knowledge generation occurred through the interest of the mind prompted Habermas to propose that three distinct interests could be recognised as researchers strive to generate knowledge: technical, practical and emancipatory (*ibid.*) represented in Table 3.1.

Technical interests characterise the scientific, positivist method, with the emphasis on laws, rules, prediction and control of behaviour with passive research objects, producing instrumental knowledge (Cohen *et al*., 2007, p.27). The practical interest represents a weakening of positivism and leans more toward interpretive methodologies and qualitative approaches. Researchers with practical interests are seeking to gain understanding from learners (*ibid.*). The emancipatory interest subsumes the positivist and interpretive paradigms and instead goes beyond them, concerned instead with praxis, which is an action that is informed by reflection with the aim to emancipate (*ibid.*).

Knowledge interest	Research Aims
Technical (uses empirical analytical science and instrumental reason) Practical (uses hermeneutical/interpretive sciences) Emancipatory (uses critical reflection/action sciences)	Explanation through empirical facts and generalisations. Illumination of understandings of learners. Critical reflection – how understandings are constrained and distorted by power.

Table 3.1 Continuum of intentionality based on Habermas's knowledge interests. Herr and Anderson (2005, p.28)

The work of Habermas was attempting to conceptualise the positivistic, the interpretive and the emancipatory ideological critical styles into a critical theory that has its own research methodologies of which AR is one. In the next section, AR is defined and in subsequent sections traditions from which educational AR emerged is discussed.

(3.2) Defining Action Research

Action Research is a generic term that is applied to a broad range of research conducted either by or in collaboration with practitioners/community members. Examples are action research, participatory action research, practitioner research, action science, collaborative action research, educative research, etc. (Herr and Anderson, 2015). Each of these examples has different purposes, positionalities, epistemologies, and ideological commitments that grew out of different social contexts.

Unlike traditional social science each branch of AR demands some form of intervention. Each intervention constitutes a spiral of action cycles in which the researcher undertakes:

1. To develop a plan of action to improve what is already happening;
2. To act in implementing the plan;
3. To observe the effects of action in the context in which it occurs;
4. To reflect on these as a basis for further planning, subsequent action and on through a succession of cycles (Kemmis, 1982, p.7).

The cycle of activities that form each spiral should help increase the researcher's understanding of the original problem and help to inform a solution. The process was described as self-reflective problem solving (McKernan, 1988) with reflection forming a key component of the approach.

A process of reflexive exploration was undertaken to better understand the process of improving social and emotional learning through participation in outdoor learning. The process, although reflexive, was not strictly solo, but at times was supported via collaboration with academic supervisors, acting as critical partners, colleagues in the field who were willing to try new ideas and offer reflective comments, and the research participants who allowed the capture of their reactions through audio and visual media.

(3.3) The Roots of Educational Action Research.

Kurt Lewin (1946) is accredited for introducing the term 'action research' in his paper, Action Research and Minority Problems. The AR process enabled Lewin to understand organisations through a process of imposing change (Robson, 2011).

Lewin was critical of social science, suggesting that '… research that produces nothing but books will not suffice' (Thomas, 2009, p.112). Instead, Lewin wanted a research method that would lead to social action. He proposed a spiral of steps each comprising a cycle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the action. The basic premise behind the method is that it would lead to a refinement of thinking, built upon a foundation of reflection about the problem that might lead to a solution. Lewin saw each stage as a discrete step, although this has been criticised for limiting change to short-term interventions that move from one stable state to another. Discrete steps fail to encourage continuous organisational learning over extended periods (Argyris and Schon, 1974).

In education and health, AR is commonly used in practitioner research and has enjoyed widespread success as a route to individual professional development as well as institutional change (Herr and Anderson, 2015). The theoretical foundations of AR in education are grounded in the work of John Dewey (1944) who recognised the important contribution of human experience in the generation of knowledge. This approach was partly ignored in education in favour of more positivistic methods, but in Britain a renewed interest in AR is usually accredited to Lawrence Stenhouse with the teacher as researcher movement in the 1970s. More recently Schon's (1983) notion of reflective practice and the reflective practitioner, in common with Dewey has helped AR become an accepted educational research approach (Herr and Anderson, 2015).

(3.4) The Researcher's Biography

Action research was chosen as the design for this project because the approach is concerned with developing interventions in existing practice (Cohen *et al.*, 2011), which suited the intentions of the project. Educational AR commonly provides opportunities for organisational insiders to conduct research in their own contexts with the view to improving their personal reflection, practice, problem-solving and professional development (Herr and Anderson, 2015).

Action research also has the capacity to be empowering or emancipatory (Herr and Anderson, 2015) due to the unique position of the researcher practising and researching inside the research context; thus understanding the hidden complexities of the situation. The strength of the claims about empowerment for researchers using AR is debatable, for AR might be relatively powerless in the face of mandated changes in education.

The acceptance of the researcher as an insider within AR suggests that the researcher's positional influence on observations and interpretations plays an important role in the AR process. 'Because of the importance of the nature of the relation between the researcher and the research learners, the researcher's biography – including class, gender, ethnicity, ideas and commitments – needs to be made explicit' (Thomas, 2009, p.110). However in doing so, the research is potentially laid open to claims of subjectivity by positivistic biased researchers. Authors in support of AR suggest, researchers should accept their subjectivity and not be ashamed or afraid of it (*ibid.*).

The attraction of studying a known context was the amount of first-hand knowledge already known. The learners were known, which motivated the action to do something to hopefully help them in later life. Insider knowledge also allowed me access to the research context, that as an outsider I would have had difficulty obtaining. Outsider generated knowledge can also be regarded as unhelpful by some practitioners (Herr and Anderson, 2005). To help researchers consider their own positionality, a continuum of positions can be referred to.

1. Insider (studies own self/practice)
2. Insider in collaboration with other insiders.
3. Insider in collaboration with outsider.
4. Reciprocal collaboration (insider–outsider teams)
5. Outsider in collaboration with insider.
6. Outsider studies insiders (*ibid.*, p.31).

The position that most closely resembled my own within the present study was Insider. This enabled me to concentrate on my personal practice and the specific aims of the project. A common criticism is that it may be deceptive to attempt to separate the study of one's self and practice from the study of the outcomes of actions initiated in a setting (*ibid.*). The tendency for self-promotion is often too great and it is recommended that any evaluation is left to external researchers (*ibid.*). This has been carefully avoided in my project by maintaining a focus on the blend of professional practice and evidence capture for SEL through participation in outdoor learning.

Recognising my own positionality as an insider, it is important to acknowledge key influences within my biography so that any claims of subjectivity can be countered and the reader is able to know where I stand, metaphorically as well as literally (Thomas, 2015).

My personal philosophy of outdoor learning is rooted in the work that came out of the Dartington Conference on Outdoor Education in 1975 (D.E.S, 1975 pp 1-3). The conference recognised that the most important aims of outdoor learning are to foster awareness and respect for:

Self – through the meeting of challenge.

Others – through group experiences and the sharing of decisions.

Environmen**t** – through direct experience.

The aims promoted through outdoor learning have been influential in my personal practice and in the development of this project. Sympathetic to the critical pedagogy movement founded by Paulo Freire, an indirect intention for this research was that it could help the participants to break away from any social inequalities they experienced in their everyday lives. This is of particular relevance to young people living in urban areas where unemployment and underemployment are pervasive and schools struggle to confront a crisis of relevance (Jelmberg *et al*., 2008). Educators, therefore, need to engage with the mission of critical pedagogy by making education relevant to the communities that most need it (*ibid.*). It is hoped that through this research the participants will have improved their life opportunities through a broadening of their horizons and an augmentation of their social and emotional learning skills.

(3.5) The Process of Action Research

The process of AR 'is flexible in design, the assumption is built in at the beginning, that as the research proceeds you will go back to revisit your aims, assumptions, beliefs and practices, think about these critically, then revise them' (Thomas, 2009, p.112). The flexibility of the approach suited the necessity for data collection processes to emerge during the project, because time pressures dictated the start date for the outdoor learning programme. Critical thinking about the research process and the initial research questions, prompted several revisions throughout the project; however, one of the advantages of AR is that this is possible.

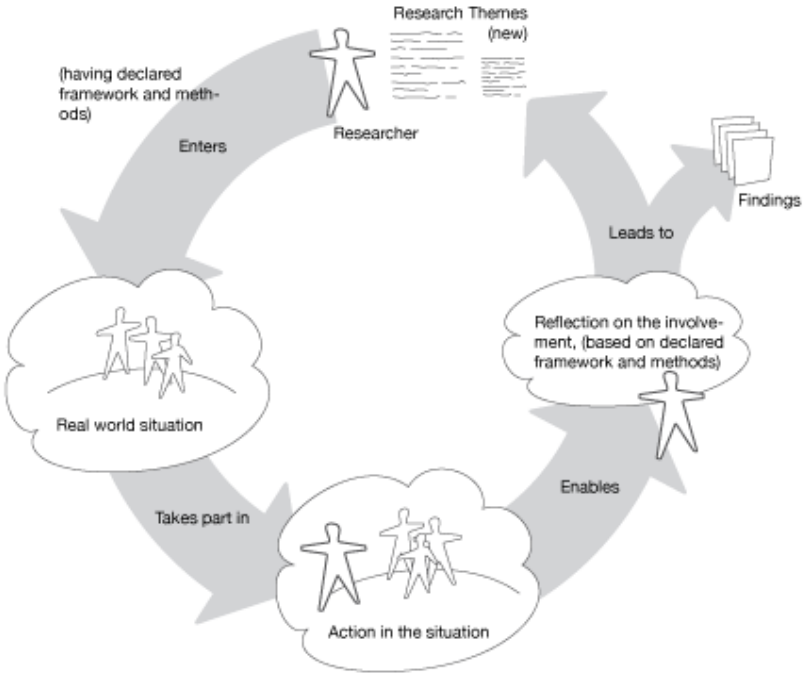


Figure 3.2 An action reflection cycle [Brooks. Online. Accessed 16.2.16]

The action reflection cycle (Figure 3.2) developed from the work of Lewin, begins by asking, what is the problem? The term problem should be interpreted

loosely: it could refer to a curriculum innovation, as in this project and identifying some research questions. The second stage requires the researcher to refer to relevant literature to help gain an understanding of the research context that then contributes towards the formulation of an action plan. It is one the most important principles of AR that literature should inform both the research question(s) and any subsequent action.

Following the implementation of the action, data is collected so that the action can be critically evaluated (Macintyre, 2000). At this stage, it might be that findings are presented or that further reference to literature to aid reflection on the data analysis might be required that could lead to further informed action. A cycle is completed at this point, but the process of reflection may prompt further action that initiates further cycles of action.

A weakness of this system is that it supposes 'that life goes along only one track at a time, forgetting that related but dissimilar problems will arise and oust the main focus and that real people will have the flexibility and creativity to move easily to the new problem and then return to the original one' (McNiff, 1988, p.28). Reflecting on a previous AR project, I found that although the stages of the cycle were often represented in the literature as discrete entities, in practice the process was messier with stages blending into one another.

(3.6) Ensuring Rigour within Action Research

Research that is rigorous is regarded as credible and trustworthy, with rigour linked to the concept of validity, which in broad terms asks, does the research

answer or address that which it is claiming to? In relation to AR, it should not be judged by the same validity criteria that are applied to positivistic and naturalistic research. 'This is not to say that there is no overlap or that it is less rigorous, but that a new definition of rigour is required that does not mislead or marginalise action researchers' (Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.53).

Developing a new definition of rigour for AR could be fraught with problems if considered only from an academic perspective that ignores personal practice. Recognising the significance of both the academic and practice based nature of AR (Table 3.2) five validity criteria; outcome, process, democratic, catalytic, and dialogic are applied to the goals of AR (Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.55).

Goals of Action Research	**Quality/Validity Criteria**
1 The generation of new knowledge.	Dialogic and process validity
2 The achievement of action-orientated outcomes.	Outcome validity
3 The education of both the researcher and learners.	Catalytic validity
4 Results relevant to the local setting.	Democratic validity
5 A sound and appropriate research methodology.	Process validity.

Table 3.2 Herr and Anderson's goals of action research and validity criteria. (2005, p.55)

To ensure rigour within the research the following actions were taken, each is described alongside the corresponding validity criterion as in Table 3.2.

'Dialogic and process validity – asks to what extent problems are framed and solved in a manner that permits ongoing learning about the individual or system. In this sense outcome validity is dependent on process validity, 'if the process is superficial or flawed, the outcome will reflect it' (Herr and Anderson, 2005,

p.55). Throughout the research process, the purpose of my research was consciously acknowledged and offered up to peer review prior to publication (Price, 2015). This helped to ensure that the research process remained rigorious. Offerring the work to academic scrutiny, through the peer review process, was a daunting step to take, but a necessary one in the research process.

'Outcome validity – the extent to which actions occur, leading to a resolution of the problem that lead to the study' (Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.55). This form of validity is closely associated to process validity. Chapters seven and eight provide comment on research outcomes and verify that they have addressed the research questions.

'Catalytic validity – the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses and energises learners toward knowing reality in order to transform it' (*ibid.,* p.56). By obtaining multiple perspectives, it was able to prevent the production or reporting of a distorted view of reality. The use of triangulation that is recognised as the 'hallmark of the good social–researcher' (Thomas, 2009, p.111) ensured data was not generated from a single source. When 'stripped to its basics, triangulation is supposed to support a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with it or, at least, do not contradict it' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.266). This poses the problem of what to do if the different views do in fact contradict each other. In the instances where this might occur, Miles and Huberman suggest that like a good detective some pieces of data can help build a stronger case than other pieces. The use of different data collection methods to capture multiple data relating to the same situation helps

to build a more robust case. The research used multiple data collection methods (Table 4.1) to develop as complete a picture of the research situation as possible, thus ensuring methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978).

'Democratic validity – refers to the extent that research is done in collaboration with all parties who have a stake in the problem under investigation. If not done collaboratively, how many perspectives and material interests are taken into account in a study? *EG*. Teachers, nurses, social workers, management' (Denzin, 1978, p.56). In this study, two outdoor practitioners assisted with the planning and delivery of each session. Future actions were decided following reflection on the day's events and discussions about learner progress. These periods of reflection acted as a dialogical sounding board, grounded in both practical and relational reality. Outside the research context, academic supervisors acted as critical friends.

The validity criteria described above was used to ensure the AR remained credible and trustworthy. To help fulfill validity criteria, researchers might choose to collect data through multiple methodologies that seek multiple sources. Valid data analysis can be achieved by comparing data and interpretations to similar research contexts and through the use of critical friends that stand outside the research context.

(3.7) Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the research project was obtained from the University of Birmingham ethics committee prior to the commencement of the second data

collection phase that involved learners. Data collection in the initial phase of the project focused upon a personal reflective diary and the target section of the learners' Statements of Special Educational Need. Permission to use these was granted by the Headteacher, primary care giver and young person within the research context and the data contained within these has remained anonymous.

The project, with the exception of the residential elements, occurred within normal curriculum time. An initial intention to hold a meeting for primary caregivers and a separate meeting for school personnel to explain the project, to detail what participation involved and to offer assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, ran into difficulty. On the day of the intended meeting none of the parents turned up, although each had agreed to attend prior to the meeting. In order to seek parental consent, an alternative track of either visiting primary caregivers at home or meeting with them when they came into school was applied. Consent was eventually obtained, but this highlights the difficulties of working with disadvantaged families, who are often intimidated by educators, possibly resulting from prior negative educational experience. Gaining consent from school personnel within the research context proved easier to obtain.

The University of Birmingham Code of Research Practice has been adhered to throughout the research project. In addition to the University guidance the research and personal practice was conducted in accordance with the safeguarding practices and policies of the research context. Additional ethical considerations ensured the emotional and physical safety of the learners throughout the OLP. This included providing clothing or food so that learners

were warm, dry and fed on the occasions when they forgot to bring suitable clothing or lunch. All research participants were aware of their right to withdraw from the research without consequence or loss of a place on the OLP.

The University of Birmingham ethical consent letter can be seen in Appendix 1 along with examples of the consent letters used with learners, school staff and parent/carers. The examples are blank to protect the identity of the research participants.

(3.8) Summary

This section provided a rationale for the use of AR as the guiding research approach. Briefly discussed were the historical routes of AR in the UK and how AR became an established form of enquiry within education. AR was applicable to this context because it commonly provides opportunities for organisational insiders to conduct research in their own contexts. It is therefore concerned with improving personal reflection, practice, problem-solving and professional development. Additional qualities of AR lie in its similarities to learning cycles commonly used within the field of outdoor learning, these were familial to the researcher. Finally AR is well placed to bring about informed change within educational settings. The research design for this project is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN

(4.0) Introduction

The designing of research provides the researcher with 'a structure that guides the execution of a research method and the analysis of any subsequent data' (Bryman, 2008, p.30). The choice of research design reflects the priority that the researcher has given to a range of dimensions concerning the research process. Elements of design include methods for understanding behaviour and its meaning in relation to a specific context. A design should also allow for temporal appreciation of social phenomena and their interconnections (*ibid.*, p.31).

This chapter makes explicit the detail of the research time-scales for data collection, participant recruitment, resources and how permission was gained to conduct the research. At the beginning of the research journey, a lecturer explained that all research is time-bound, the full implication of this was not realised until the near completion of the project. At the beginning my whole focus was on the future, what could be researched and what approaches or methods might be applicable? As the research progressed my reflections became more focused on issues of data collection and programme planning. Once the data collection was completed, the focus again changed toward data analysis, what was the data indicating. The research presented here like any other research is time bound and therefore only represents a snapshot, in the same way, a photograph might preserve a single moment in time. During the remainder of the chapter, detail of the research design is presented to help the

reader understand this specific snapshot and additionally so that it might be of use to those researching similar contexts.

(4.1) The Research Context

The research was located within a local authority controlled secondary (eleven–sixteen years) special school in the UK. The school was smaller than an average UK special schools (OFSTED, 2012) and educated learners with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties. During the period that the research was conducted the school population fluctuated around approximately thirty-five learners. All the participants had a statement of special educational needs for social emotional and behaviour difficulties; two of the participants also had autistic spectrum disorders. The participants were white boys of UK origin with the exception of one boy whose origin was African-Caribbean. The proportion of learners eligible for free school meals was higher than the national average of 37.5% (DFE, 2013, p.1). One of the participants was in the care of the local authority.

The research focus relates to the outdoor learning curriculum and pedagogic practice in the outdoor classroom, a term commonly used to describe a learning environment without physical boundaries.

(4.2) Participant recruitment

The research participants were recruited from a convenience sample consisting of year eight learners (aged twelve – thirteen years) that were about to begin the year-long outdoor learning programme (OLP) as part of their normal curriculum. Participant numbers changed during the study period (twelve months). Initially

there were four participants, later increasing to seven. Participants joining from other educational facilities accounted for the increase. There were no refusals to be research participants. One of the advantages of the insider position was that the participants knew and trusted the researcher. All new participants also agreed to take part in the research; possibly because they were aware the other participants were doing so and did not wish to be different. All participants had statements of special educational need for SEBD. Two of the learners had additional diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD).

(4.3) Research Resources

The resources for this research can be considered under two separate categories: resources required to deliver the OLP and those required for data capture and analysis. The type of learning activities that could be included within the OLP was dependent upon the correct equipment and the appropriate national governing body award (NGB). The school was supportive in helping OPs gain or progress NGB awards and contributed both financially and with release time.

Concerning data capture, a portable audio recorder was used to capture participant voices during interviews or micro-teaching moments inside the classroom. Audio capture was less successful outside with background noise making it difficult to record clear voices. Instead video recording and photography was used to capture data from the outdoor classroom. A digital compact camera and digital video recorder from school combined with a

personal digital video camera allowed video data capture from two separate viewing positions.

The financial cost of the research is difficult to quantify precisely because this was not a research priority. But as a guide the OLP had an annual budget of £7,000 to cover equipment, use of outside providers and facilities, residential costs, accommodation and food. Personnel and transport costs were allocated from other areas of the school budget. Funding from grants contributed towards equipment purchase. Activity equipment was built up over successive years and at the period the research was conducted, there were resources to enable cycling, caving, climbing, hill walking, problem-solving, canoeing, navigation, archery, camping and woodland activities within the OLP. Participation on the OLP was free to all young people within the target group and personal academic fees were self-funded throughout the entire project.

(4.4) Permission to Conduct the Research.

Permission to conduct the research was granted verbally by the Headteacher of the school at the initiation of the project and all school personnel were aware of the project. The Headteacher was very supportive of outdoor learning and this is reflected in the support provided that made the OLP possible. Permission was also obtained from other school personnel as required, prior to any data collection.

(4.5) Methods of Data Collection

This section critically examines the data collection methods employed in this study. Multiple methods of data collection were used because there is no single prescription for which type of data collection instruments to use; rather, the issue here is a 'fitness for purpose' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p.146). The next section begins by explaining the data collection methods, observation and interviewing, these were trialed with varying degrees of success during a pilot study. Table 4.1 provides a summary of data collection and analysis methods used during the main study; each is discussed later in the chapter.

Source	Type of data	Data Analysis Method	Purpose of data
School management and information system (SIMS)	Quantitative	Numerical comparison Graphical	Comparison of learner attendance on OLP and non-OLP days
Research diary attendance data	Quantitative	Numerical comparison Graphical	Second source Comparison of learner attendance on OLP and non-OLP days Also attendance on residential trips
Field Notes	Qualitative	Constant Comparative Method	To capture evidence of social and emotional learning.
Learner Questionnaire Structured questionnaire	Quantitative	Numerical comparison Graphical	Learner perspectives of OLP
Research diary Reflective account	Qualitative	Constant Comparative Method	Positive and negative indicators of attendance Evidence of social and emotional learning
Semi-structured interviews with participants	Qualitative	Interview transcripts Constant Comparative Method	Positive and negative indicators for attendance Evidence of social and emotional learning
Semi-structured interview with Headteacher	Qualitative	Interview transcript Constant Comparative Method	Perceptions of the value of outdoor learning Understanding of the support given to OLP
Video	Qualitative	Segmenting Transcription Constant Comparative Method	Positive and negative indicators for attendance Evidence of social and emotional learning

Table 4.1 A summary of the data collection tools and analytical techniques used within the study. Also shown was the purpose for which data was collected.

(a) Observation as a Data Collection Method

A distinctive feature of observation as a data collection method is that it allows the researcher to collect 'live' data from social situations that occur naturally (Cohen *et al*., 2011). This enables the researcher to look directly at what is occurring instead of having to seek a second-hand account of the event. The strength of observation is that the method allows researchers to establish if what people are saying they are doing, is actually what they are doing (Robson, 2011). 'Observation is, therefore, a matter of collecting information about the nature of the physical and social world as it unfolds before us directly via the senses, rather than indirectly via the accounts of others' (Foster, 1996, p.vii). Another strength of observation is its ability to allow the researcher to look at the everyday behaviour that would otherwise go unnoticed (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Researcher/practitioners are well placed to experience first hand or 'live', the phenomena under study. However, a pilot study using the observation method revealed that its application was not as straightforward a process as initially considered.

It was hoped that the observation method might identify learners using SEL skills inside the classroom. In practice, the structured observation method was too difficult to apply in the research context.

(b) Interviews

The interview when 'used as a research method typically involves you, the researcher, asking questions and, hopefully receiving answers from the people

you are interviewing' (Robson, 2011, p.278). The process can be less formal and more like a discussion with someone from whom you are trying to seek information (Thomas, 2015). The type of information generated varies, but may include facts, opinions or attitudes. Typically interviews are conducted one-to-one, face-to-face, or more increasingly via a video link and can take place in a group setting, or as one-to-one interviews.

The interview situation can be unnatural and artificial because it has been socially constructed for the specific purpose of gathering data (Pole and Lampard, 2002), thus making the process very different to conventions within everyday communication. Therefore, any knowledge generated from the interview process is inevitably constrained and shaped by the particular circumstances of the interview context. These constraints may need to be taken into account during analysis. A caregiver who has a dispute with the school provides an example of a potential constraint within the research context. The disagreement could influence any interview responses concerning the parent's perceptions of the school. Consequently it would be better to delay any interview until the dispute has been resolved. Additionally, it may be difficult for the participant's primary caregivers to separate the roles of researcher and teacher. Researchers, therefore, need to be emotionally sensitive to the needs or circumstances of their participants if reliable data is to be obtained.

The guiding structure for an interview is on a continuum from the highly structured, where researchers ask exactly the same questions to each participant, to unstructured interviews that are participant driven. Quantitative

interviewing is a highly structured approach where the interview structure is kept tight; researchers ensure they ask each question in an identical manner, even down to intonation. A tight structure avoids issues of bias or potentially leading the interviewee, thus ensuring the data is reliable and generalisable. Unstructured interviews lie at the opposing end of the structure continuum, with researchers only using a few prompts to aid memory. Less structure makes the approach highly qualitative, but it aims to uncover depth and detail, specific to a much smaller number of cases. The choice over the amount of structure for an interview relates to the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher (Mason, 1996).

For the main research interviews were chosen for data collection over structured observation because they allow direct human contact, so participants respond in an entirely different way, than when they are observed or receive questionnaires. Most people want to help and give their opinions unless the area you want to discuss is sensitive for them (Thomas, 2015).

(c) Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews provide the 'best of both worlds' through a combination structure provided by an interview schedule, with the freedom of direct participant interaction (Thomas, 2015). The combination makes the method highly suitable for small-scale research projects. The choice to use semi-structured interviews to collect data reflects the positionality of the researcher; the research context and the type of information required. In this case, an

understanding of how participation on the OLP was perceived by each participant.

There were reservations about interviewing the participants following Thomas's experience interviewing children aged thirteen with behaviour difficulties. Thomas's most extended response was 'Dunno' (Thomas, 2009, p.161). The participants in the present study talked more freely.

The direct contact between participant and researcher made the method a flexible way to collect data. It was possible to modify lines of enquiry and follow up interesting responses in a way that is not possible with questionnaires. Researchers have the freedom to veer off the interview schedule if the conversation seems helpful (Bryman, 2012). Contrasting the method with observation, interviews can provide the researcher with an obvious shortcut to their research questions because they can directly ask about what is going on in a situation, rather than implying meaning from what they see (Robson, 2011).

During data collection, each interview typically lasted forty-five minutes with participants keen to provide rich data to the questions. Interviews did not go on too long because more than an hour can place unreasonable demands upon the participant and they may experience respondent fatigue (Robson, 2011). This 'is a well-documented phenomenon that occurs when survey learners become tired of the survey task and the quality of the data they provide begins to deteriorate' (Lavrakas, 2008, p.674).

(d) Constructing an Interview Guide

An interview schedule was produced prior to commencing the interviews. The schedule is regarded as a checklist of topics that the interviewer wishes to cover, it might include, default wording and an order for asking the questions. Use of an interview schedule maintains flexibility and also allows the researcher to add written prompts or comments (Robson, 2011). Interviews followed the common convention of audio recording and transcribing recorded audio into text at a later stage to assist analysis. Written notes were also made during the interview and recorded on the interview schedule, this provided a useful backup when one interview failed to record. Using the written prompts it was possible to recall near word perfect each response, but this ability would have diminished over time.

Each interview schedule was prepared so that a certain order of topic areas was known and specific questions were formulated so that the questions flowed.
The type of language chosen for the questions was in an attempt to make it relevant to the young people being interviewed. There were no leading questions and each schedule had a section to record participant information, such as name, age, gender, etc. This type of information can be useful for contextualising answers (Bryman, 2008, p.442). (To maintain anonymity this information is omitted from the interview guide in Appendix 2).

A 'mind-map' proved to be a helpful tool in the initial construction of the interview schedule and helped to sequence the questions before generating the complete schedule. Questions were sequenced in the following order:

'Introduction → Warm up → Main body → Cool off → Closure' to assist the smooth running of the interview (Robson, 2011, p.284). The introduction was not necessary because of my familiarity with the participants. (An example interview schedule and transcript are included in Appendix 2).

During the interview, a good researcher will be prepared to cut short a line of questioning if it is clearly a source of concern. Ethically sensitive interviewers will not want to place undue pressure on the person he or she is interviewing (Bryman, 2012). This reduces the risk of emotional harm to the interviewee and may make the difference between them agreeing or not to further interviews. During interviews there was never a need to stop a line of questioning, possibly because the questions were not of a directly personal nature and because the young people knew me.

In the research context, the observational method was time-consuming and was limited to situations that were observable. The semi-structured interview was a better method because it was possible to maintain a structure, whilst allowing the flexibility to follow up lines of interest should the need arise.

(e) Documentation – Attendance records

Although this study is predominantly qualitative, attendance data were collected from two sources; the OLP register of attendance and the schools information management information system (SIMS), the latter records daily learner attendance for national data collection purposes. The quantitative data allowed a comparison between percentage attendance on OLP and non-OLP days. Small

discrepancies between OLP records and SIMS were noted, related to recording errors in relation to SIMS. It is acknowledged that the small participant sample size renders the quantitative data statistically insignificant. However, this does not render it worthless, instead, when the quantitative data are considered alongside other data sources, it is may be possible to judge the attitude of the participants towards the outdoor learning approach.

(f) Questionnaires

Data gathered from participant questionnaires, completed at the midpoint of the OLP allowed information from a learner perspective to be gathered. The defining feature of a questionnaire is that it is a written form of questions. These may be open or closed and might elicit a numerical or written response (Thomas, 2015). In the construction of the questionnaires, the reading and writing difficulties of the participants had to be acknowledged. The need for writing was minimised to make the questionnaires more attractive to the learners and to achieve a higher completion rate.

A five-point scale was included in the questionnaire this consisted of smiley faces ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, again to increase the completion rate. Additional questions allowed the learners to expand their answers. Questionnaires were completed during programme time and additional help with reading was available. These approaches proved successful with all learners completing a questionnaire (Appendix 3 An example questionnaire). Results were collated and charts were produced representing the learner response to each question.

(g) Diary Accounts

Throughout action cycles one and two, diary accounts of each day's teaching session were rigorously maintained. Diary keeping by teachers is not an unusual instrument for methodological reflection and professional development. The method is embedded in the 'teacher as researcher' movement that began in Britain in the 1960's. The movement is most associated with Lawrence Stenhouse and it encouraged teachers to investigate context specific issues out of the reality of their own classrooms. More recently the diary remains a valuable instrument for 'reflective practitioners' (Schön, 1983) trying to gain an understanding of how practitioners learn their craft.

A teaching diary may contain observations, feelings, reactions, interpretations, reflections, hunches, hypotheses and explanations (Elliott, 1991), thereby making them a potential source of rich data (McDonough, 1994). Within the the research context each dairy account contained a record of OP and participant session attendance, details specific to the location, the type of activity, observations on participant activity and reflections on the day's teaching and learning. Each account concluded with points for action and overall reflections of the session. The accounts were diligently written up within a few hours of the day's session. The recording of events as closely after the action occurs helps researchers to maintain accuracy whilst recognising that over time the capacity to recall events with clarity reduces.

Diary accounts were chosen as a data collection method for a number of reasons. Although some teaching and learning micro sessions within the OLP were video recorded, it was not always possible to capture video data without access to a dedicated camera person. It also became apparent that the type of activity affected the ability to capture video data easily; activities such as problem solving that occurred in defined spaces made video capture possible, whereas for activities like mountain biking it proved particularly difficult to record anything more than short sections.

Reflecting on the process of keeping a diary, although time consuming, it would often take two to three hours to complete an individual account. The method was a manageable way of collecting data while fulfilling the dual roles of researcher/practitioner. The method also allowed freedom to teach without the interruptions that recording data in-situ imposed and it made data capture possible in situations that would have been extremely difficult to do so, due to location, activity or weather, (e.g. leading a canoeing session on moving water in the rain). A diary account enabled the description of events that video or other data collection methods would not have captured, such as conversations with primary caregivers or discussions with members of the school leadership. Reading a diary account provides a sense of what it would be like to be there participating in the event (Elliott, 1991), this ability to view events with such closeness makes the method a real insider instrument (McDonough, 1994).

The narrative accounts within the diary recognise that the outdoor classroom in similarity to the school classroom is a learning environment bound by social and

cultural constraints. The action of creating accounts of teaching and learning within the outdoor classroom contributed toward my own reflective learning, the development of professional practice and the generation of theory specific to the research context. But it has to be acknowledged that a diary alone cannot cope with all possible issues or dimensions, therefore, other data collection methods were required. However, what a diary can do is to help document and formalise the everyday teaching and learning experiences that might otherwise have been lost (McDonough, 1994).

(4.6) Summary

This section explained the rationale behind the selection and broad range of data collection methods employed in the study. Some of the methods like structured observation, where the researcher was required to use a rigid observation schedule, were discounted during the pilot study. Each method had its strengths or weaknesses, but in each case the method was chosen on practical merit and ability to capture data relevant to the research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: ACTION CYCLE ONE

5.1 The Initial Concern

Action cycle one was prompted by my own personal enquiry and includes reflections on the different components necessary to establish an outdoor learning intervention. 'The notion of enquiry suggests some initial puzzlement or curiosity, a question which the individual seeks to clarify and answer' (Bridges, 1997, p.179). Action research cycles begin with planning, during which stage the researcher an attempt to identify what the problem or desired area of improvement is. In this case, the research project was conducted to resolve a professional value conflict. The conflict related to an outdoor learning curriculum that was primarily focused on the acquisition of skills and neglected the teaching of social and emotional learning or appreciation for the natural environment.

As a practitioner, I found that orienteering and mountain biking sessions were becoming increasingly frustrating to teach because the young people seemed to be resistant to any attempts to improve their performance in either activity. Skill development and improving personal performance were necessary components of the formal qualifications that the school's outdoor education curriculum was based upon. The lack of learner interest in performance development caused me to consider the appropriateness of the curriculum for the learners and additionally, if a particular pedagogy might be more applicable to developing social and emotional learning skills, outside of the classroom. Acknowledging

the possibility of change to the outdoor learning curriculum, I posed five questions.

1. What is social and emotional learning?
2. Is there any evidence the learners would benefit from the teaching of SEL?
3. Is outdoor learning a relevant medium to deliver SEL?
4. Is there a pedagogical approach that values the holistic development of the child: one that acknowledges social and emotional and academic learning?
5. Is there a specific curriculum approach that would promote social and emotional learning outside the classroom?

In order to gain a greater understanding of the questions posed above, I referred to literature pertaining to social and emotional learning (SEL), pedagogy and curriculum. The reference to literature is a normal part of the second or action stage of the AR cycle and is conducted to facilitate the development of an informed action plan. The above questions will be considered in turn.

Q1. What is social and emotional learning?

The roots of social and emotional learning can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Aristotle who spoke of the importance of anger management (Weare, 2004). Similarly, Plato writing about education in *The Republic* suggested that attention should be given to personal and social facets as well as academic subjects within a curriculum (Humphrey, 2013). The link between the emotions and education and learning has therefore, long existed. Dixon (2012) provides a more concise history of educating the emotions but provides clear

evidence that the link has existed for at least two centuries. Of interest to outdoor education, the progressive education movement led by John Dewey laid further foundations towards a model of education that recognised the importance of the social and emotional (Humphrey, 2013). The progressive education movement incorporated a strong emphasis on experiential learning, critical thinking and problem-solving. In relation to SEL, there was a strong emphasis on social skills, co-operation, and collaboration, as indeed there is in outdoor education. Social and emotional learning has become much more accepted within recent educational practice as a result of the popularity of Daniel Goleman's (1996 onwards) work on emotional intelligence. The beginnings of this can be traced to Thorndike and Stein (1937) who provided broader parameters of what constitutes intelligence (e.g. 'social intelligence') and additionally, Howard Gardener's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences along with Salovey and Mayer's (1990) work on emotional intelligence.

The Collaboration for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the largest and most influential organisation working in this field, define social and emotional learning as;

> 'a process for helping children and adults develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness. SEL teaches the skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships and our work effectively and ethically. These skills include recognising and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically. They are the skills that allow children to calm themselves when angry, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices' (Humphrey, 2013; p.18).

The above definition contains several key principles: Firstly SEL is a process, a course of action, a method or a practice in which schools engage. Secondly, it is for children and adults, so it is applicable to a school community. Thirdly, SEL teaches skills that everyone needs and that are fundamental to life effectiveness. Fourthly, the skills endowed through SEL are social-emotional in nature, they relate to both intrapersonal and interpersonal (Humphrey, 2013).

The principles outlined above have been critiqued by a number of different academics (Craig, 2007; Ecclestone, 2007; Furedi, 2009; Hoffman, 2009; Weare, 2004) expressing concerns about the extension of a deficit model to all learners; that emotional lives become subjected to assessment, difficulties of achieving a common framework for SEL and the universal teaching of SEL, might be detrimental to the health of young people. Craig (2007) suggests that the introduction of the UK Social Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme introduced by the government in 2005 for primary schools and 2007 for secondary schools was premised on the assumption that all children required specific teaching relating to social and emotional skills. Prior to the introduction of SEAL, some young people were singled out for remedial work to develop their social and emotional skills. The SEALs programme was supposed to have eliminated the deficit approach through the universal teaching of SEL. But, rather than eliminate the deficit approach the SEAL programme has actually extended the deficit to all children (Craig, 2007). In agreement, Ecclestone (2007) suggests that the expansion of the deficit model gives learners '… the message that they all need to be taught about feelings and relationships in order

to function properly' (*ibid.,* p.465), this view reflects a 'deeper cultural shift towards pessimistic images of people's resilience and agency' (*ibid.,* p.465).

Furedi (2009) has raised concerns that the increase in social and emotional learning within schools is reducing children's emotional lives to a series of checklists, subjected to assessment in a similar fashion to academic subjects. Assessment, in itself, raises questions about the applicability of any universal framework for social and emotional competence, because inevitably it would have to acknowledge developmental patterns and cultural differences (Humphry, 2013). Additionally, Hoffman (2009) suggests that the prevailing articulation of emotional expression and experience predominately relates to white, middle-class Americans, suggesting a strong Western cultural bias. The difficulty of achieving any universal framework may be that 'Deciding what goes on a list of emotional and social competencies cannot be value-free, culture-free or an apolitical exercise' (Weare, 2004, p.19).

Criag (2007) in relation to the highly prescribed SEAL programme introduced into UK schools has significant concerns about the effect on learners: 'There are good reasons to believe that activities like SEAL may not simply be neutral in their effect and a waste of time and money, but actually harmful' (*ibid.,* p.60). Craig (2007) recognises that 'For some young people this may well be a recipe for depression, anxiety, self-obsession, inertia, mental health problems, external locus of control and blame. It may also erode their resilience and confidence as well as their academic skills. Some may end up feeling worse about themselves

since they aren't naturally the type of person which SEAL encourages young people to become' (p.87).

Reflecting on the criticisms of SEL in relation to an SEBD context, the universal application of SEL interventions warned about by Ecclestone (2007) and Furedi (2009) may not be applicable due to the difficulties learners experience relating to others, forming positive friendships and the negative self-images they each have; these factors act as barriers to academic learning.

Q2. Is there any evidence the learners would benefit from the teaching of SEL?

Figure 5.1. The five core elements of an SEL programme.
(Bridgeland *et al.*, 2013, p.16).

Social and emotional learning programmes are based on the five core elements, represented diagrammatically in Figure 5.1. Each element is described below to identify its key features (Bridgeland, Bruce and Hariharan, 2013, p.16).

> **Self-awareness:** The ability to accurately recognise one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behaviour. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.
>
> **Self-management:** The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.
>
> **Social awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathise with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behaviour, and to recognise family, school, and community resources and supports.
>
> **Relationship skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, co-operating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
>
> **Responsible decision-making:** The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

Research relating to two UK school-based interventions is considered. The first evaluates the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) programme using a cluster randomised control trial (RTC) involving 5074 children (across reception, year 1 and year 2) in 56 primary schools in a UK city. The study sought to examine the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of PATHS for reducing children's levels of behavioural and emotional difficulty (Berry, Axford, Blower,

Taylor, Edwards, Tobin, Jones and Bywater, 2016, p.240). The study reported that at one-year, post baseline there were no statistically significant differences between the programme and the control groups, with the same being reported for two-years post baseline (p.238). The PATHS programme cost £139 per learner and although the results did not find evidence of behavioural improvement, it showed that evidence based programmes could not work in all contexts.

The second, school-based SEL intervention evaluated the UK Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme, introduced into secondary schools in 2007 by the UK government (Wigelsworth, Humphrey and Lendrum, 2013), reported '… that the SEAL programme failed to impact significantly on the emotional symptoms and conduct problems of either (a) the student population as a whole or (b) a subsample of those deemed to be at-risk by virtue of their pre-test scores' (p.107). Wigelsworth *et al.* (*ibid.*) suggest that these results are inconsistent with other SEL research that has reported consistent positive outcomes for students participating in SEL interventions (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger, 2011; Horowizt and Garber, 2006; Wilson and Lipsey, 2007)(*ibid,* p.105). Although a null evaluation was reported the research has added to the knowledge of the type of SEL programme that does not work. In the case of SEAL, a single model of implementation was lacking across the participant schools making it difficult to assess. Four key approaches to the delivery of SEL were identified: use of whole-school, direct teaching of social and emotional skills, teaching and learning and staff development, each with varying degrees of success (*ibid*). There was no mention of outdoor learning in the

research.

Q3. Is outdoor learning a relevant medium to deliver SEL?

In contrast to the school-based SEL intervention, a mixed methods study (Ee and Ong, 2014) conducted in Singapore set out to establish, what SEL competencies would be enhanced through participation in a two-day, one-night SEL camp. A participant group of ninety-three secondary age students (fifty-five males and thirty-nine females, mean age fourteen years) were randomly selected from a population of students involved in a larger SEL programme. The study collected data using pre-camp and post-camp questionnaires, a camp handbook that served as a student daily reflective journal and teacher observation checklists. Before the camp ended handbooks and observation checklists were collected. The SEL questionnaire was completed after the last activity of the camp (*ibid*.). The post-course data collection, in this case, could be influenced by post-course euphoria generated by the nature of the situation, the enjoyment of the activities and the camaraderie within the course, therefore the reported effects may not be applicable long-term. Having recognised this, the participants reported a greater sense of self-awareness (49%) through participation in outdoor learning. Outcomes also reported; relationship management (26%), self-management (16%), social awareness (5%) and responsible decision-making (4%)(*ibid.*). Participants also felt more confident with a greater trust in their own abilities. The importance of teamwork to develop supporting type roles and effective communication was also acknowledged (*ibid.*).

The research on the SEAL and PATHS programmes indicated that the school-

based interventions were ineffective at improving social and emotional learning skills; evidence from non-UK sources contradicts these findings (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger, 2011; Ee and Ong, 2014: Horowitz and Garber, 2006; Wilson and Lipsey, 2007). However, research of a non-UK origin may need to be regarded with caution, because of the cultural context of social and emotional constructs. Research into SEL interventions requires mixed methods research designs because of the complexities of human interaction. The emphasis on social skills, cooperation, and collaboration of SEL interventions, may mean that outdoor learning is a suitable approach from which to deliver a school-based intervention for learners with SEBD.

Q4. Is there a pedagogical approach that values the holistic development of the child: one that acknowledges social and emotional and academic learning?

Pedagogy is commonly considered in Britain to be the art and science of teaching (Alexander, 2009; Smith, 2012). However, this suggests a simplistic view of pedagogy that ignores the influences of national culture and history, the migration of ideas and practices and any constraining factors such as policy and resources (Alexander, 2009). It is because of such influences that pedagogy is a difficult concept to define, '… it does not begin or end in the classroom. It is comprehended only once one locates practice within concentric circles of local and national and of the classroom, school, system and state and only if one steers constantly back and forth between these, exploring the way that what teachers and students do in classrooms reflects the values of the wider society' (Alexander, 2009, p.2). Pedagogy as discourse is distinguished from teaching as

act, while remaining inseparable (Alexander, 2009). 'Pedagogy then encompasses both the act of teaching and its contingent theories and debates. Pedagogy is the discourse with which one needs to engage in order both to teach intelligently and make sense of teaching – for discourse and act are interdependent and there can be no teaching without pedagogy or pedagogy without teaching' (*ibid.,* p.4). By acknowledging the complexities of pedagogy Alexander proposes the following definition: 'Pedagogy is the observable act of teaching together with its attendant discourse of educational theories, values, evidence and justifications. It is what one needs to know and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted' (*ibid.*, p.5).

Pedagogy as a practice stems from the ancient Greek tradition of employing pedagogues (*paidagögus*), 'men who by age and experience were qualified to serve as both leaders and custodians of children' (Longenecker, 1982, p.53). The role of the paidagogos was three-fold, they were to accompany, carry books and bags for and keep their wards safe. The role of the paidagogos was considered more important than the teacher, because the teacher only taught a boy his letters, while the paidagogos instructed boys how to behave and this was considered more important by the parents (Smith, 2009). In the late nineteenth century, Dewey sought to develop a child-centered theory of education, which drew inspiration from the works of Herbart, Rousseau, Frobel and Pestalozzi but importantly recognised that the experience required for learning was participation in community life. For Dewey community was considered in terms of sharing in a common life, the classroom could be regarded as a community

because it is a place where there are group activities and where learners cooperate. Dewey recognised that this environment was social and that people learn through interactions within social environments (Smith, 2009).

In congruence with Dewey, Social Pedagogy shares the notion of a holistic view of education (Cameron and Moss, 2011). As a practice, it is common across Europe, but its diversity makes it difficult to define precisely. Cameron and Moss suggest that 'It can be described as where education and care meet, as being concerned with children's upbringing, as a broadly educational approach to social problems, education that takes place in everyday lives and as education in its broadest sense' (*ibid, p.8).* Although Social pedagogy is diverse the following principles remain consistent across different types of pedagogic setting (*ibid, p.9*).

- There is a focus on the child or young person as a whole person and support for the child / young person's overall development.
- The practitioner sees himself or herself as a person, in relationship with the child or young person.
- Children / young people and staff are seen as inhabiting the same life space; not as existing in hierarchical domains.
- As professionals, pedagogues are encouraged constantly to reflect on their practice and to apply both theoretical understandings and self-knowledge to the sometimes challenging demands with which they are confronted.
- Pedagogues are practical, so they share in the many aspects of children's / young person's daily lives and activities.
- Pedagogy builds on an understanding of children's rights that is not limited to procedural matters of legislated requirements.
- Children's / young person's lives in groups are seen as an important resource; workers should foster and make use of groups.

- There is an emphasis on teamwork and on valuing the contribution of others in 'bringing' up children: other professionals, members of the community and especially parents.

- The centrality of relationship and allied to this, the importance of listening and communicating.

Social pedagogy is therefore a strongly social and inclusive process that includes building dialogue to help explore different human perspectives. This is exemplified in the work of Paulo Freire the author of 'The Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1970). Freire's work with adults was motivated by his love for and desire to improve the lives of the poor in Brazil. His vision was achieved through literacy projects, involving teachers working alongside people to help create social change. Freire's work depicts the modern pedagogue, a person who is reflective, able to make sound judgements and remains responsive to need (Smith and Smith, 2008).

The Social pedagogic research into grouping (SPRinG) project (Blatchford, Kutnick, Baines, Galton, 2003; Baines, Blatchford, Webster, 2014) applied the principles of social pedagogy to address the gap between the limited use of group work within schools and the potential of group work to influence learning, motivation and attitudes to learning and relationships (Blatchford, *et al.* 2003). Evidence (Galton, Simon, and Croll, 1980; Galton, Hargreaves, Comber, Wall and Pell, 1999; Kutnick, Blatchford and Baines, 2002; Baines, Blatchford, and Kutnick, 2003) has shown that 'whole-class teaching and independent work are the dominant learning contexts and group work is relatively rare' (Baines, Blatchford, Webster, 2014, p.1). The evidence suggested that in the majority of primary classrooms, 'children sit in groups, but rarely work together as groups'

(Baines, Blatchford, Webster, 2014, p.1). After a five-year project involved in collaborative work with primary and secondary schools in London reported that 'findings from the evaluation phase of the research were impressive: they showed that relative to the control sample, KS2 SPRinG pupils made greater progress in general science tests at the end of year. They also made greater progress in specific science lessons that had made use of the SPRinG group work' (*ibid*, p.2-3) The research also found that 'through systematic observation that during group work, SPRinG pupils were more actively engaged in task interactions, were engaged in more sustained interactions and engaged in high-level reasoning talk' (*ibid,* p.3). However, in relation to learners with special educational needs (SEN) Baines, Blatchford, Webster (2014) found evidence to suggest a separation of learners with SEN from the rest of the class. Possible reasons for this include poor social and or communication skills, withdrawn or shy behaviour, an aggressive or confrontational manner, or inappropriate or odd behaviour. Also having lower levels of attainment made it difficult for learners with SEN to engage with peers on whole class tasks. Although this finding is relevant to mainstream primary settings it is less concerning in the context of special schools, where learners provision is likely to be matched to the category of SEN and they will be in classes with learners of similar abilities.

What is, significant, is the evidence for a common strategy for improving learners' social skills by involving them in individual or group interventions outside of the classroom. The class-based work is important because it provides the context for peer interaction and where peer relationships develop rather than just social skill development and reflection upon them (Baines, Blatchford,

Webster, 2014): 'There is also a disconnect in the sense that these skills are worked on outside of the context of their use and leave the children to determine themselves how and whether to apply them once they get back to the classroom context' (*ibid*, p.8). In relation to my intended intervention, the research suggests that it would be preferable to ensure that the whole class is incorporated into any social skills intervention so that relationships between learners can be developed.

The principles of social pedagogy recognise that social and emotional learning skills are important for the holistic development of the person. These can be achieved through an emphasis on group work, inhabitation of the same life spaces, sharing within activities and fostering reflection. These principles would be found in many outdoor learning contexts, thus suggesting the pedagogic approach has the advantage that it could be applicable both inside and outside of the classroom.

Q5. Is there a specific curriculum approach that would promote social and emotional learning outside the classroom?

A curriculum is 'all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried out in groups or individually, inside or outside the school' (Kelly, 2004, p.7) and is planned in advance in light of the specific aims the school is wishing to achieve. Reflecting on the skills-orientated outdoor learning curriculum that I had been delivering at the commencement of this project, I realised a benefit was that individual achievement could be easily demonstrated.

The ability to show evidence of progress was desirable for school inspection purposes. Having recognised why a curriculum that was heavily orientated towards the gaining of accredited awards was encouraged by school leadership, it became necessary for me to understand if a different perspective of curriculum might be more suited to my planned intervention. Smith (2000, p.2) suggests 'four ways of approaching curriculum theory and practice:

1. Curriculum as a body of knowledge to be transmitted.
2. Curriculum as an attempt to achieve certain ends in students – product.
3. Curriculum as process.
4. Curriculum as praxis.'

Curriculum as a syllabus to be transmitted – This approach relies heavily on a syllabus provided by an awarding body and is often connected with courses leading to examination, such as a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). A document specifying the syllabus sets out headings and additional notes, in no particular order of importance. This type of approach focuses on the delivery of specific knowledge and ignores any potential to develop other areas of the person. Practitioners adopting this approach limit their planning to specific knowledge and consider other issues relating to the wider school curriculum of no concern to them (Kelly, 2004). The outdoor learning curriculum which I was delivering prior to this project was a good example of the knowledge transmission approach of curricula. The attainment of each learning objective ultimately became the main focus of each session and little consideration was given to any additional skills or attributes a young person might require in order

to achieve any given learning objective. This problem also relates to the next curriculum approach, where teaching can be regarded as a prescribed process.

Curriculum as a product – When a curriculum is viewed from this perspective, education is reduced to a mere technical exercise (Smith, 2000). Learning objectives are set; lessons are planned from each objective, the lesson is taught and the outcomes are measured. Several criticisms exist of this approach, the first suggests any plan assumes greater importance than and exists outside of the learning experience itself. This takes much away from the learners who are instructed what to learn and how to learn it. The curriculum is imposed and success or failure is only considered in relation to a predetermined learning objective or a behavioural change, in the case of behavioural objectives (Smith, 2000).

Product type curricula are measurement-heavy, implying behaviour can be objectively measured, which is inherently difficult due to uncertainties surrounding what to measure (*ibid.*). The problematic nature of measuring behaviour leads to each behaviour being broken down into ever-smaller units to enable more accurate description. This generates long lists of trivial skills or competencies that distract the focus of learning from the whole to the part. Another criticism is concerned with unanticipated results. 'The focus on pre-specified goals may lead both educators and learners to overlook learning that is occurring as a result of their interactions, but which is not listed as an objective' (*ibid.*, p.5).

Reflecting on the transmitted and product view of the curriculum it is possible to see that the skills-orientated outdoor learning curriculum was constructed to fulfil the requirements of specific award syllabi. The curriculum was accordingly too dependent upon the measurement of predetermined learning objectives that were inconsequential to the young people. Acknowledging the above points lends support to a rethinking of the future direction of the outdoor learning curriculum. However any intended changes should acknowledge that objective based schooling has previously failed the learners, hence their placement in an SEBD school. With these points in mind, the next section considers the curriculum from a process perspective that is concerned with the actual goings on in the classroom and the preparation for and evaluation of learning (Smith, 2000).

Curriculum as process – If behavioural objectives are negated, learning can become more explicit enabling curricula to become grounded in practice. No longer are curricula regarded as physical things, shaped by award syllabi, but rather they occur through the interactions of 'teachers, students and knowledge' (Smith 2000, p.5). In Figure 5.2 an example is given of a typical educational experience within a process-orientated curriculum (Smith, 2000).

The example shows that practitioners should be able to think critically, in action, and to have a clear understanding of their roles and the expectations of others. They also need to be prepared with a plan of action to guide each learning encounter. These requirements mean that the process perspective of the

curriculum is only applicable to formal educational contexts (*ibid.*), such as a programme of outdoor learning.

Teachers enter particular schooling and situations with

An ability to think critically, in-action
An understanding of their roles and the expectations others have of them, and

A proposal for action, which sets out essential principles and features of the educational encounter.

Guided by these, they encourage

Conversations between, and with, people in the situation.

Out of which may come

Thinking and action.

They

Continually evaluate the process and what they can see of outcomes.

Figure 5.2. An educational experience from the perspective of the process-orientated curriculum (Smith, 2000, p.6).

Any delineation between formal and informal education relates to the use of a plan of action. A plan of action sets out the essential principles or features of the intended educational encounter within formal educational contexts. In contrast, informal educators ignore this approach. Instead, their aims and interventions are developed through practitioner/learner interaction (Smith, 2000). In an SEBD context, informal learning encounters may prove more challenging to establish due to the difficulties of obtaining sufficient practitioner/learner dialogue to guide meaningful learning encounters. Formal educational approaches overcome this difficulty through the use of plans of action and are therefore more appropriate to SEBD contexts. The use of such plans would not

necessarily preclude learner involvement in shaping the learning encounter but would be something that required time to embed in practice.

The process view of curriculum is, therefore, a form of specification about pedagogy, rather than a package of materials or a syllabus to be covered. The approach is a 'way of translating any educational idea into a hypothesis testable in action' (Stenhouse, 1975, p.142). Accordingly, the uniqueness of each learning situation makes critical evaluation a necessary part of the process curriculum. A number of potential problems have been noted about the process approach (Smith, 2000). The concentration on interaction can pose problems for learners wanting to study for formal qualifications; this would not be the case with an outdoor learning intervention. A related issue is that of achieving uniformity, given the uniqueness of each situation. A weakness or strength of the process approach is its reliance on the quality of the teacher: 'the approach is dependent upon the cultivation of wisdom and meaning-making in the classroom. If the teacher is not up to this, then there will be severe limitations to what is achieved educationally' (*ibid.*, p.8).

Curriculum as praxis – This approach acknowledges that curricula develop through the dynamic interaction of action and reflection. At the centre is praxis: informed, committed action. This approach to curriculum is in some ways a development of the previous process model but differs because it intentionally makes a commitment to emancipation (Smith, 2000). The same commitment is also rooted within the paradigm of action research, in which, the action researcher is interested in generating theory out of practice, through the

development of a critical framework of understanding that makes it rational, appropriate and prudent. The wise and prudent action of the practitioner in a practical and concrete situation is the root of *Praxis.* 'It is action which is considered and consciously theorised, and which may reflexively inform and transform the theory that informed it. *Praxis* cannot be understood as mere behaviour; it can only be understood in terms of the understandings and commitments that inform it. Moreover, *praxis* is always risky; it requires that the practitioner makes a wise and prudent practical judgment about how to act in *this* situation' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.190).

My intention to help learners improve the quality of their lives through the augmentation of social and emotional learning skills could be considered as praxis, if it was acknowledged as planned action that embodied the qualities of seeking to help others (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) and making the outdoor learning curriculum relevant (Jelmberg *et al*., 2008) to the young people that I teach.

More recently in the field of outdoor learning a different way of considering the curriculum as emerged: Curriculum as dwelling. Many approaches to curriculum design are regarded as 'more than the specification of content, or the sequencing of standardised pedagogical strategies and instead begin with a concern with the material context of learning and/or, the lived experience of participants' (Ross and Mannion, 2012, p. 304) have ignored the role of place and material. However, 'ideas concerning place, the embodied experience and the role of technologies, nature and physical materials in social practices (Thrift, 1999;

Latour, 2000; Massey, 2005; Jones, 2009)' (*ibid.,* p.304) are now beginning to engage current understanding of curriculum making and education. The perspective of curriculum as dwelling recognises that all actors, therefore, teacher and learners are part of the curriculum making process, sharing in a common lived and embodied experience of place. Similar to place-responsive pedagogy there is a rejection that social reality is constructed through mental schemas of the world, instead, understanding of the world is achieved through active inhabitation or dwelling. This conceptualisation of curriculum enables both teachers and learners to make a connection with the world or environment. While this concept of curriculum does not suggest applicability to behaviour change, it may be that through attunement learners become more harmonious with nature.

Reflections on curriculum approaches showed that the purpose of the skills-based outdoor learning curriculum was the attainment of awards, associating itself with the product perspective of curriculum. This aim was valuable to the school as a mechanism for demonstrating progress to the school inspectorate. However, from a learner perspective, the acquisition of awards was irrelevant and failed to meet their social and emotional needs. Therefore, any changes to the outdoor learning curriculum should incorporate a learner-centred approach that remains conscious of the principles of social pedagogy described earlier. The curriculum also needs to reflect praxis, planned action that is seeking to help others (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) rather than being objective driven at the determent of the young people.

5.2 Collecting Data to Support the Intended Action

This section is the third part of action cycle one and is concerned with collecting data. Data collection more typically is related to an imposed action, but here I have sought documented evidence to lend support for the introduction of a SEL intervention. My search for evidence began with an audit of the statements of special educational need for each participant. A statement is a legal document setting out the kind of learning difficulties a child or young person might experience, it sets specific targets that educational provision should achieve and the type of educational provision that would best support this.

Part 3b of the statement contains the main educational outcomes to be achieved for individual learners during their education. These are written as targets, for example: to develop improved levels of attention, on-task behaviour and cooperation. Educational establishments further break down the outcomes into smaller gradual learning targets that a child should achieve each term and are monitored via an individual education plan (IEP). I collected 119 educational outcomes from section 3b of the combined statements of special educational need, these were collated in a spreadsheet to facilitate grouping them into categories by common features. Additional evidence was obtained from my diary account of earlier outdoor learning sessions, prior to action cycle one.

5.3 Analysis of Data

The aim at this stage was to create groups by common association. I wanted to discover the extent to which the educational outcomes related to social and

emotional learning skills, rather than academic skills. The educational outcome; *to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills* was grouped as 'none applicable academic' because it had no SEL component and was therefore outside the remit of the intended intervention. The educational outcome: *to improve self-esteem and self-image as a learner* was grouped under the heading 'self-awareness'. Five groups emerged at this stage of analysis: none applicable academic, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills.

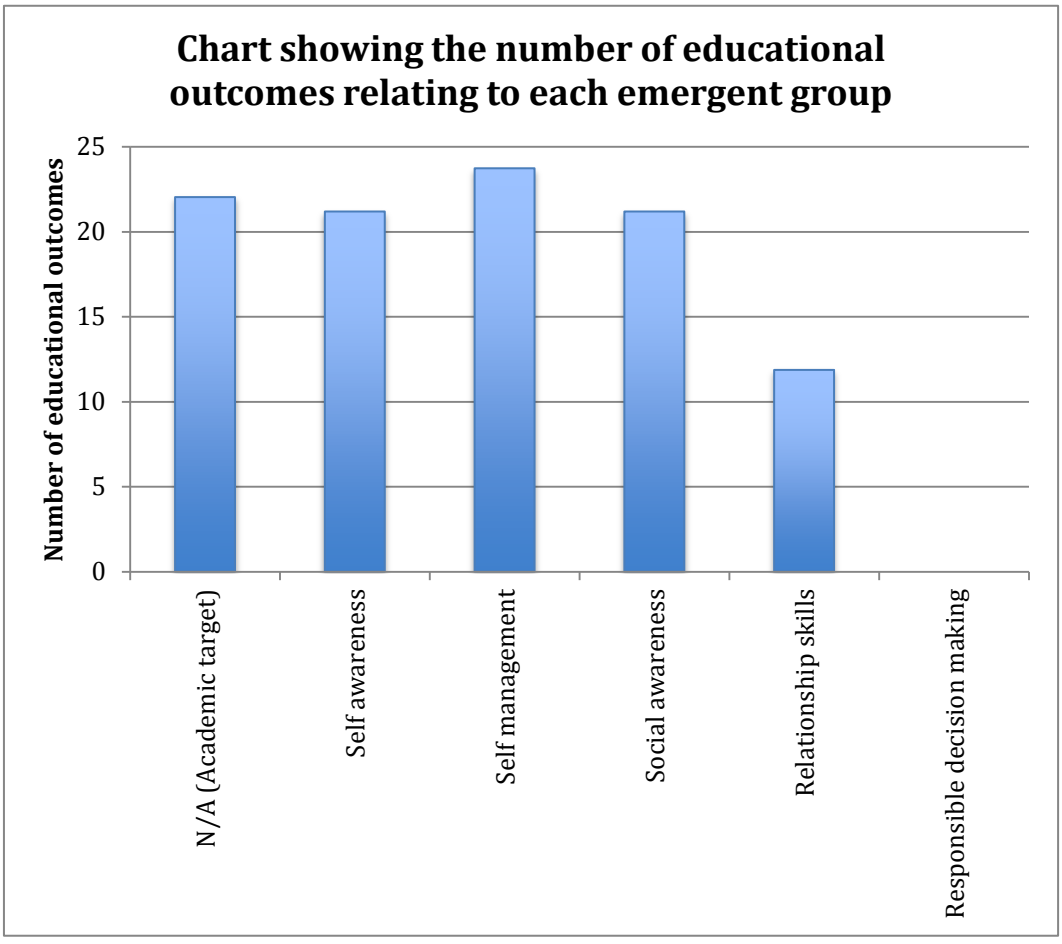


Figure 5.3 Chart showing the number of combined educational outcomes of each research participant within each group.

The number of educational outcomes relating to each group can be seen in Figure 5.3 with the original data in Appendix 4a. The allocation of educational outcomes

to groups allowed me to ascertain that a significant proportion, with the exception of 'none applicable academic', were related to social and emotional learning skills. Educational outcomes were assigned to groups by the definitions of each core element of SEL (Bridgeland *et al.*, 2013). This finding supports the requirement for an SEL intervention programme to help the learners achieve the purpose of their statement of special educational needs.

To further aid critical reflection and build a more comprehensive picture of evidence I also referred to my reflective diary of the earlier outdoor learning sessions. The diary contained information about learning encounters, included comments on progress. The diary was kept for half a term, consisting of six sessions. The first three sessions focused on learning basic orienteering skills while mountain bike skills provided the focus for the final three sessions. The first session was mostly classroom based and ran without significant events. The following excerpts from the diary demonstrate incidences of learner frustration and researcher reflections at that time of writing.

Session two Orienteering 10.6.2008

In the classroom the session began with some moaning about having to do more map work, this was countered by explaining that the session was not going to be based in the classroom for long.

The learners were split into two groups and each group was sent to find a different control point from which they were to return to the base. One group was successful, whilst the other group went wandering.

We moved back inside the classroom to discuss what we had learnt from the session and to try to explain that the next session would be in a local park, but it was difficult to keep the learners focused and I was glad when it was time for the session to finish.

Session three Orienteering 17.6.2008

I had been pleased so far, but the groups' interest was waning and Jordan would not take his turn leading, so I led the group to the next point, from where it was suitable to let them have a go at finding another control point.

I felt that we had only partly met the learning objectives, but at least, everyone had completed the planned route, if not having all found a control point.

Session one Mountain Biking 24.6.2008

I sensed that the learners wanted to do more than just this, so we headed off up the road to the local country park. This was an eye opener; the learners showed no sense of road awareness and were all over the place.

Session two Mountain Biking 1.7.2008

I thought that the learners had been taking this in, (referring to a demonstration of a front wheel lift) so I tried to get them to ride a small circuit that included riding over a log to rehearse the intended action. This proved difficult to coordinate, with the learners getting frustrated that others were approaching from the opposite direction. I stopped the session again and tried to get them coordinated, but two of the learners were sulking and would not try the action. One was pulling wheelies and the other was going 'this is shit can't we carry on'.

I found that today's session was interesting on a number of levels; the learners liked the freedom that having a bike gave them. Their unfamiliarity with the location meant that they stayed within sight of the outdoor practitioners. But two areas were the cause of an escalation in behaviour. The first had been the mini teaching session, it may have been that the learners were not expecting to be taught skills on the ride, or that they thought the skill was irrelevant. Although I had tried to give it a context of improving the safety of a ride and preventing damage to the bikes when tree roots or fallen branches are encountered. I think that the social skills required to coordinate the rehearsal in such a way that gave everyone an equal chance to practice the action might be underdeveloped. Once things were not going the way they should have

some of the learners opted out, which signaled to the others that it was alright to say the task was shit when, in fact, they meant that it had been difficult for them. The cause of frustration at the end of the ride was I think due to fitness levels, the rider who had thrown the helmet down was the least fit within the group.

Session three Mountain Biking 8.7.2008

As we got into the ride the waits became a little longer and the fitter riders became frustrated with the slower riders, so some verbal abuse was exchanged as they came closer. Outdoor practitioners tried to prevent this by suggesting that we each have our strengths and weaknesses. At the first small hill, one of the learners threw his bike to the floor in frustration.

The aims of the day had been achieved; all riders completed a longer route although some of the previous frustrations remained. Some relate to fitness levels, but these are exacerbated by the lack of tolerance of others within the group. The way that the learners speak to each other and their lack of self-belief and any acceptance that working together can achieve greater things remains underdeveloped.

The diary excerpts suggest that many of the incidents of learner frustration arose from insufficient interpersonal and relationship skills, poor self-image and low levels of fitness. Young people with low self-esteem are more likely to have difficulty in forming and sustaining social relationships (Emler, 2001). Active lifestyles promote mental health and improved well-being (Ekeland, Heian and Hagen, 2005; Parfitt and Eston, 2005).

In conclusion the evidence supports my proposed change to orientate the outdoor learning curriculum towards the teaching of social and emotional learning skills. This completes action cycle one but begins the planning, implementation and evaluation of the proposed curricula changes that form the

second action cycle. To avoid confusion with the previous (earlier) outdoor learning curriculum, the intervention became known as the OLP, the outdoor learning programme.

CHAPTER SIX: ACTION CYCLE TWO – SHAPING A NEW CURRICULUM

6.1 The Initial Concern

The professional value conflict that initiated this research arose from my frustrations of teaching a skills orientated outdoor learning curriculum to learners with SEBD. The teaching of specific skills with the intention of improving individual performance ignored the social and emotional needs of the young people. Many of these found it difficult to learn with and to cooperate with others as a group. Rather than continue to battle against the young people, teaching them something irrelevant, it seemed that a resolution could be found by improving the outdoor learning curriculum so that it became more relevant for the learners it served.

Referring to the literature on social and emotional learning (SEL), social pedagogy and curriculum and it was possible to bring clarity to the situation. If meaningful relationships with the learners could be built, beyond those established within the classroom, then it might be possible to get the young people to accept adult influence. The rationale of the social pedagogue, a person who supports and models appropriate behaviour could support this aspiration. The earlier curriculum focus on award syllabi and knowledge acquisition was concluded to be irrelevant and was rejected. A new curriculum based on a praxis model with the specific aim of augmenting SEL skills seemed to be a more appropriate direction to take.

The next section describes the planning and implementation of the new curriculum, known as the outdoor learning curriculum (OLP).

6.2 Action: Creating an SEL Focused Outdoor Learning Curriculum

Planning for the OLP began six months prior to the commencement of any teaching. The first thing to be achieved was an increase in the time allocation to outdoor learning. Significant reasons for this existed; on a practical / logistical level an increased time allocation translated into the ability to include a greater range of learning activities, it would also make it possible to travel to a wider range of venues.

A second and more complex reason for increasing the time allocated to outdoor learning relates to child attachment, small group theory and the role of the social pedagogue. There is a strong need for individuals to form interpersonal attachments to develop a sense of security (Bowlby, 1969). In healthy relationships, the distance between primary caregiver and child increases over time, moving from close contact, child sitting on the lap of primary caregiver, a child in the next room, slowly progressing to child outside or at school as trust is built. This is referred to as, 'dynamic equilibrium' (Bowlby, 1969, p.236) and exists in primary caregiver-child relationships, so that the distance between the two of them is allowed to develop, but should it become too great then either the primary caregiver or the child would behave in ways to reduce the distance between them (Major and Eccleston, 2005, p.64).

A similar dynamic can exist within small groups. Membership of a small group implies a connection or tie to other group members that a person relies on for security, support and safety. 'For this reason, too much distance, psychologically or physically between the self and the group can lead to distress, as it implies a lack of self-in-group attachment and the potential loss of the in-group as a source of support' (Major and Eccleston, 2005, p.64). As a consequence, people with weak attachments find it difficult to trust authority figures or build secure relationships. It is unreasonable to conceive that outdoor learning could replace the primary caregiver role in childhood development; but the reliance on small groups means it is well placed to provide opportunities where young people can develop trust and respect for their peers and adults in authority, with whom they have regular contact.

Traditionally, outdoor practitioners have been viewed as separate from any group they are facilitating (Stan, 2009). This role has been challenged, suggesting that three operational modes are observable, detached, controlling and approachable (Stan, 2008 and 2009). Practitioners operating in a detached mode do not demonstrate an obvious interest in the activity. Learners lack motivation or involvement, looking toward the practitioner for support when activities become challenging. The opposite is observable in practitioners who are unable to step back and allow learners to solve tasks on their own.

The controlling mode employs a position of power to achieve the practitioner's own goals, often failure to complete the task occurs because of too much intervention. Practitioners that operate with an approachable mode, maintain a

balance between physical and psychological safety while still allowing independence and responsibility. Practitioners operating in this mode step in and generate group discussion to promote learning, rather than take over when issues occur between learners.

Detached and controlling modes have both been reported as having an unbalanced involvement with the learning activity, either too much or too little (Stan, 2009). Each mode fails to engage learners through a lack of encouragement and support. The approachable mode differs from the other modes, remaining flexible, the practitioner knows when to step in and support or when to step back. This type of approach places the practitioner on the inside of the group; any learning that occurs is due to socially constructed interaction, with the practitioner and learners sharing the learning experience. Practice employing the approachable mode (Stan, 2009) shares commonality with the practice of the social pedagogue, a person who is reflective, able to make sound judgments' and remains responsive to the needs of learners (Smith and Smith, 2008). Each of these elements is significant for the way that practitioners operate within an SEL orientated outdoor learning programme.

Practice reflecting the principles of social pedagogy is not always possible in schools, due to the large demand it places on teacher/ learner time. But the idea remains a worthy aspiration, simply being a part of other people's lives. Incorporating the accompanying principle into the OLP necessitates the programme runs longer than six afternoons (Fox and Avramidis, 2003). Increasing the amount of time practitioners spend with learners may allow

accompanying type relationships to develop, which over time influence the augmentation of SEL skills.

Following a discussion with the Headteacher and timetable manager, it was agreed that the time allocation for outdoor learning increase from one afternoon a week per half term, to one whole day a week for a year. The senior management team decided that a year eight group would be the most appropriate group to pilot the OLP because they were just beginning their second year in school, so they were no longer strangers, but they still remained young enough to benefit from intervention.

Providing a focused outdoor learning curriculum was a break from the normal way schools traditionally provide outdoor learning. Instead, a more common approach is to take young people away on a visit to a residential outdoor centre, typically for five days. Criticism of this approach suggests that centres offering outdoor education are more commonly located away from urban conurbations where social deprivation tends to be more prevalent (McCormack, 2003). Criticism levied at the remoteness of outdoor centre locations, proposes that any learning that occurs, ultimately fails to address the learners' social setting and, therefore, any influence upon delinquent behaviour will invariably be short-term (*ibid.*). In reply to her own criticism, McCormack proposes two responses in support of the residential experience, 'that by going somewhere different, young people can adjust their horizons and see a wider perspective of opportunities presented in society' (*ibid,* p.165) although little actual evidence exists to support this position. A second response is to locate outdoor education

programmes within areas of high social deprivation, such as the Option Zero programme once offered by the Ackers Trust in Birmingham (Hopkins and Putnam, 1993).

Combining the use of locations near to where the young people reside with extended trips to locations further afield enables the best of both positions to be obtained. This combined approach was attempted in a programme that aimed to build social capital amongst a group of socially excluded young people in Cumbria (Stoddart, 2004). The programme blended learning activities that occurred locally with residential opportunities further afield, the intention behind the approach was to strengthen friendships and allow learners to gain a wider perspective on their lives.

A simple model presented by Beames, Higgins and Nicol (2012, p.6) (Figure 6.1) provides a useful way for outdoor practitioners to consider the location of outdoor learning activities. The most accessable location for outdoor learning is the immediate vicinity, potentially the school grounds. The ability to walk to the location means that outdoor learning could happen at any time during the school day and because of this, outdoor learning is likely to take place on a regular basis (*ibid.*). The second zone from the core is the 'local neighbourhood' Beames, Higgins and Nicol (2012) suggest that the principle reason for locating an outdoor learning programme 'in the school neighbourhood, should not simply be one of convenience; learning and playing with one's people and one's place has the capacity to firmly build an individual's sense of who one is' (p.41 -42). This notion is supported by Percy-Smith and Malone (2001, p.18) who explain that,

'the value of local place experiences for children goes beyond issues of place use and provision, yielding also potential opportunities for developing a sense of belonging, identity, self-worth and advocacy as fellow citizens within neighbourhood communities.'

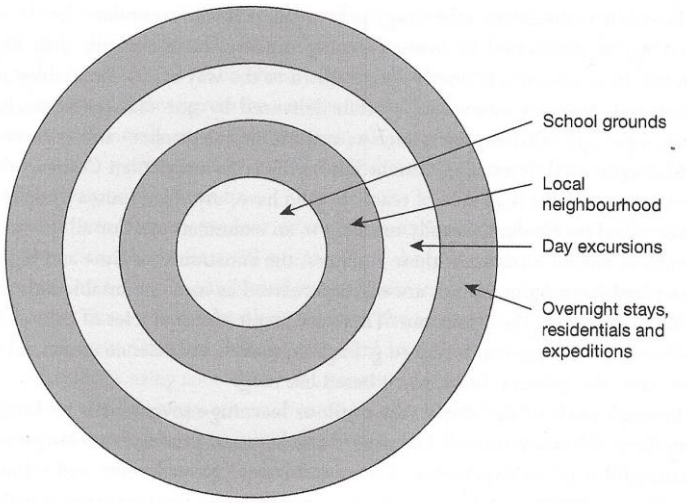


Figure 6.1 The four 'zones' of outdoor learning. (Beames, Higgins and Nicol, 2012, p.6)

Through consideration of the location of outdoor learning activities based on the four-zone model it is possible to address the criticism that outdoor education frequently fails to address the learners' social setting. The provision of outdoor learning that utilises school grounds and the local neighbourhood (local parks, canals etc.) can help young people to form connections that develop their agency, belonging and competence within their social setting. Learning activities further afield 'day excursions and overnight stays' are also valuable because they can help broaden the young person's experience.

Participation in an outdoor adventure trip provided young people from various school, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the USA with a sense of equality

during the trip; summarised as a 'we're in it together' attitude (Garst *et al.*, 2001, p.47). Participants additionally reported the trip acted as an escape mechanism, allowing time away from family pressures and negative peer influence. The findings suggest incorporating residential elements into outdoor learning programmes is beneficial, if only because it offers respite from chaotic home situations.

Summarising progress thus far, the school leadership team had agreed to support the proposed changes and continued to support the research into action cycle two. Contact time for the OLP was increased to one day a week for the entire academic year. The intention was to blend learning activities, utilising suitable local areas with residential elements further afield. Residential elements would be included at significant points, one at the end of each term. Initial planning, including themes, aims and learning outcomes for each half term is described in the next section.

6.3 Planning: The Programme Takes Shape.

Knowing that the OLP was to begin at the start of the next academic year practitioners were conscious that the planning needed to reflect the increased contact time while achiving a blend of learning activities using both local environments and residential visits further afield. The planning also needed to allow the newly adopted pedagogic practice of accompanying, caring and bringing learning to life to develop.

An overview plan divided into six sections, each section representing a half term of a school year was developed. Splitting the programme this way enabled a targeted approach that would hopefully sustain learner interest and allow progression. Different activities were used each half term to provide variation and reflected the learning theme. This is shown in table 6.1 below.

Theme	**Aim**	**Learning Outcome**
Getting a Taste!	To introduce learners to a range of different activities/experiences	To improve working with others. To understand when to ask and how to receive help from adults. To gain knowledge of the resources and equipment required for a variety of activities.
Out in the wild	Improving the way we work together.	To communicate effectively with peers. Understand and accept individual and team rules and responsibilities. To help plan for an overnight visit. **First residential** Peak District (Bunk House) One night.
Aiming high	Learning to trust others	To cooperate with others to achieve set tasks To improve self-confidence and independence. To trust others.
Journeying on land	Learning to trust our own decisions and those of others.	To cooperate with others to achieve set tasks To improve self-confidence and independence. Taking turns. Trusting others decisions and our own. **Second residential** Peak District (Camping) One night.
Journeying on water	Working with others to make journeys on the water.	To cooperate with others to achieve set tasks. To improve self-confidence and independence. Trusting others. Being patient with others when things go wrong.
Going further	Facing the challenge	To cooperate with others to achieve set tasks To improve self-confidence and independence. Improving personal responsibility. To see a task through till completion. **Third Residential** North Wales (Camping) three nights. Reflecting on the year.

Table 6.1 The themes, aims and learning outcomes of the OLP.

Programme aims and learning outcomes based around SEL were identified for each session. Learning outcomes were never intended as measures of behavioural or assessment foci, this practice would be contradictory to the curriculum model.

Residential elements were programmed one per term and provided a point for young people to look forward too. They also concluded a stage of the OLP before a holiday period. Heeding the earlier warning that schools are not the right places to practise high-risk adventures that induce situations too risky for learners, (Karppinen, 2012) each residential was designed to be progressive. For learners with SEBD, going away with school can be an anxiety provoking experience. To reduce anxiety, a progressive approach to planning would aid acclimatisation, in the hope it would reduce anxiety about the residential. To achieve this the residentials, began with an overnight stay, using bunkhouse accommodation, followed the next term with another one night stay, but using tents. The final residential was extended to four nights, again camping. Locations were chosen to offer specific challenges; for example caving.

This concludes the description of the planning for the outdoor learning curriculum. A full plan of the curriculum is included in Appendix 5.

CHAPTER SEVEN: EXPLORING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR LEARNING

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the evidence commensurate with the overall research aim: to explore if learners with SEBD can augment their social and emotional learning skills (SEL) through participation in outdoor learning. The process described relates to the observational and critical reflection stages of the second action cycle. The constant comparative method (CCM) (Glaser, 1965) was used for data analysis. Each stage of the process is described in detail in the hope that other practitioners wanting to use the method in their own research contexts may learn from the application of the method and also by openning up data analysis to outside scrunity supports the validity of the research.

The augmentation of SEL skills in common with outdoor learning relies on human activity that is open to the hidden influences of cultural, political or societal structures. Structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) has been used to provide a fresh perspective from which to consider SEL augmentation through participation in outdoor learning. Participants may produce their own social systems that employ rules and resources (structures) during interaction (agency) and knowingly or unknowingly reproduce the structures via routines or rituals that are often taken for granted (Hardcastle, Usher and Holmes, 2005).

7.2 Analysis of Data: Using the Constant Comparative Method

The constant comparative method (CCM) (Glaser, 1965) was used for data analysis. The technique utilises an inductive process to generate data-driven theory (Glaser, 1965). This involves going through the data again and again (this is the constant bit), comparing each element, phrase, sentence or paragraph - with all the other elements (this is the comparative bit). 'There is nothing more complicated than that' (Thomas, 2009, p.198).

Unlike other qualitative data analysis methods, CCM is 'concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting (not provisionally testing) many properties and hypotheses about a general phenomena' (Glaser, 1965, p.438). Some of these properties may be causes, but unlike other data analysis methods they might also be conditions, consequences, dimensions, types, processes etc. and they should, like other methods, result in an integrated theory. However, Glaser cautions that the method still depends on the skills and sensitivities of the analyst. CCM is not designed to guarantee that two independent analysts working with the same data will achieve the same results, unlike quantitative methods. Rather a method allows for the vagueness and flexibility that aids the creative generation of theory.

CCM is applicable to mixed method data collection because it can be applied to any kind of qualitative data within a study; including observations, interview transcripts, documents and even articles. (Data sources are shown in table 7.1)

Source	Type of data	Purpose of data
Research diary (3 in total, 1 for each academic term)	Textual account	*Qualitative analysis* Primary coding – Inferred codes taken from Kagan and Kagan (2009). Secondary coding - Emergent evidence of SEL.
Field notes	Textual account	*Qualitative analysis* Primary coding – Inferred codes taken from Kagan and Kagan (2009). Secondary coding - Emergent evidence of SEL.
Video evidence	Visual and audio Transcription of audio	*Qualitative analysis* Primary coding – Inferred codes taken from Kagan and Kagan (2009). Secondary coding - Emergent evidence of SEL.
Participant questionnaire 2	Textual account	*Qualitative analysis* Primary coding – Inferred codes taken from Kagan and Kagan (2009). Secondary coding - Emergent evidence of SEL. Seeking evidence of participant reflection
Interview transcripts with participants following the second residential.	Textual account	*Qualitative analysis* Primary coding – Factors relevant to SEL Secondary coding - Emergent evidence of SEL.
Interview transcript with outdoor practitioners.	Textual account	*Qualitative analysis* Primary coding – Factors relevant to SEL Secondary coding – Barriers or enablers to SEL

Table 7.1 Data sources relating to social and emotional learning.

Data analysis using CCM consists of four stages. In stage one, incidents are compared to ensure they are applicable to each category. During stage two, categories are integrated and properties are assigned. The theory is delimited in stage three and in the final stage theory is generated (Glasser, 1965, p.439).

The application of CCM was difficult due to a lack of examples; 'researchers often describe at great length how their studies were carried out, but remain vague when it came to giving an account of the analysis' (Boeije, 2002, p.392). Little is written that explains how researchers 'go about' constant comparison, or if different types of comparison exist (*ibid.*) apart from, 'each piece of data must be compared with every other piece of relevant data' (Morse and Field, 1998, p.130).

The final stage of the analytical process requires the researcher to inductively develop theory situated in the research context. Abstract knowledge is used to create an account from a group of common facts or phenomena, representative of a specific context (Grbich, 2007, p. 186).

The description of how CCM was used in this research is included for reasons of transparency and also as a contribution towards the body of knowledge pertaining to CCM, hoping that others may find it helpful.

Stage 1: Comparing incidents applicable to each category

During this stage, codes representative of incidents in the data were generated. A list of social interaction skills (Kagan and Kagan, 2009) was useful in generating

an initial coding list, the use of predetermined codes is known as inferred coding. The list produced by Kagan and Kagan (2009) was helpful because it consisted of explicit actions that could be observable within the data. Initial coding attempts confirmed that the inferred codes applied to social interactional data and further codes emerged, representative of situations not accounted for on the initial list.

The methods that were used for transcription of video data, diary accounts, field notes, interviews and questionnaire responses are shown in Figures 7.1 and 7.2. **Bold** type represents codes while *italic type* represents notes added post-transcription. Furthermore the coding process acted as a checking mechanism, ensuring the accuracy of the transcription.

Diary accounts, field notes, interview transcriptions and questionnaire responses were coded using the comment facility of Microsoft Word. This enabled sections of text pertaining to a code to be highlighted. Figure 7.2 provides an example of the comment facility during on an interview transcript.

All incidences relating to a code were gathered together on a coding record card as shown in Figure 7.3. Record cards allowed comparison between incidences and acted as checking mechanisms, thus maintaining consistency between incidences. This is consistent with the first rule of the constant comparative method, 'while coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents coded in the same category' (Glaser, 1965, p.439).

Video Transcript Record

Video Code: 9112
Video Duration: 0.30
Date 6/12/11

Topic of Conversation: Using tools, trip away, strength of shelter, start of orienteering course.

Context: A collection of short clips in which two learners work together with OP's to build a large shelter. Brandon makes a fire to heat water for hot drinks with lunch. Introduction to map reading.

Clip 2 Tying a knot Th and Aidan

No.	Person	Transcripts	Notes
1	Th	To start it off (.) come round (.) yeah **FC**	
2	Aidan	Sir (.) why don't you show us (.) why don't you show us a type of	
3	Th	This is the easiest knot **FEO**	
4	Aidan	No, (.) how come you don't show us a knot that we haven't done before	*Learner hadn't mastered the knot so wasn't ready to move on to a new one.*

Figure 7.1 Example of video transcription.

FC = Coaching — *Facilitator showing / talking through a task with a view to improving performance*

FEO = Encouraging others — *Facilitator offering encouragement to a learner / group of learners*

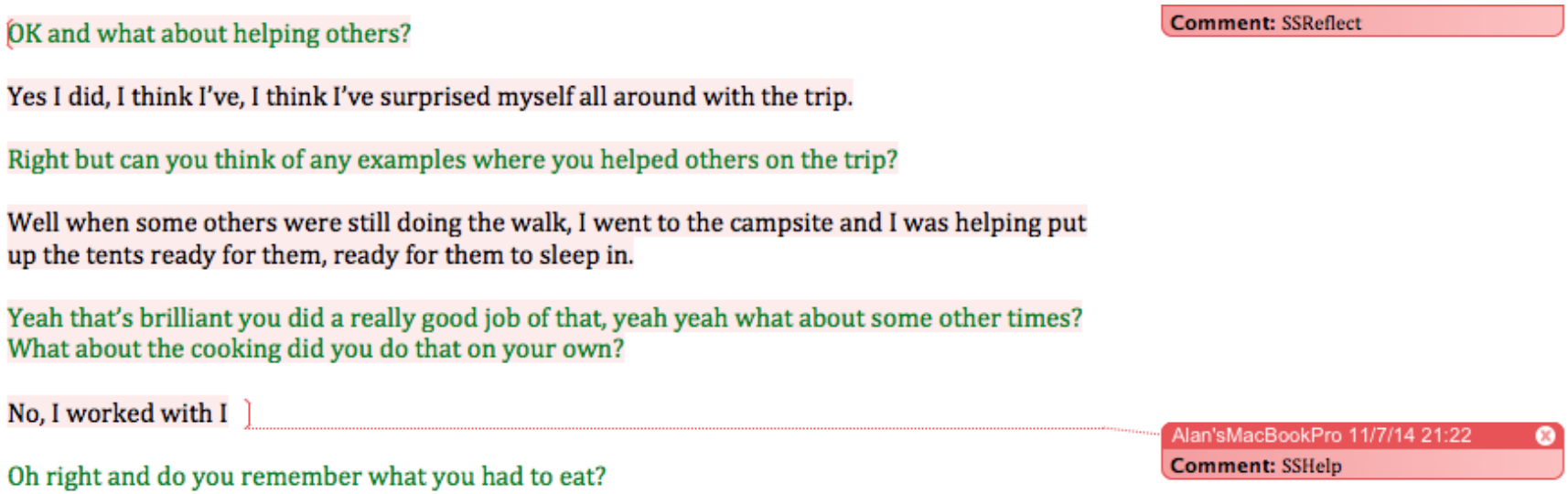


Figure 7.2 Example interview transcript. Codes added using comment feature within Microsoft Word.

SSA	Agreement	Learner agrees with another learner about a decision or plan or accepts the decision of another learner

Example	Reference
Yeah 'A' (.) tie it round this tree.	1112VTR 17
yes	1121VTR 2
((Nods))	1121VTR 7
Yeah (.) come on then (.) lets just do 'S's' idea (.) come on then	7124VTR 88
That's a good idea	7124VTR 105
What about that one	7124VTR 110
The raft building began with a planning session using a white board inside the sailing centre. All the learners agreed on a design for the raft they were going to build.	Research diary 3 p.17
Once outside with the equipment that was available for the raft it became obvious that the original plan needed to be amended. A new design was again agreed by all.	Research diary 3 p.17
Okay (.) leave it there	4122VTR 77
Tp explained that the caving wouldn't go ahead that evening but that it had been moved to the following day because they would be too late back and that the noise would be unfair on the other campers. B & I were fed up on hearing this. However Tp promised to show the group some stars after a hot chocolate and biscuits.	Research diary 2 p.44

Figure 7.3 Coding record card.

Stage 2: Integrating categories and their properties.

In stage one, the comparison between incidences within the same code ensured consistency. During stage two the comparison was broadened across codes. This required a comparison across code properties; a working definition that describes a code and ensures that a systematic standard is applied throughout comparison. A second comparison revealed several of the initial codes were, in fact, representing similar types of incident, the code **directing** was found to be similar to **leading**. This was resolved by merging the two codes under the heading **leading** and adjusting the property to reflect the change. All codes were subjected to systematic scrutiny and amended as necessary.

Following systematic scrutiny, codes were assigned to one of the five core elements of effective SEL programmes; self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (Bridgeland *et al.*, 2013). Figure 7.4 provides an example of an SEL Core Element record card, containing all relating codes. In order to observe the ethical decision to always represent the participants positively, codes that represented the participants negatively (shown in red) were withdrawn from analysis once the matching exercise was complete, I do not feel that this decision affected the overall research findings.

SEL Self management	Self Management	An ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

SSDA	Disagreeing appropriately	Learner disagrees with the choice / action but is not negative towards others	6
SSEone	Excusing oneself	Learner walks away from group / task but offers reason.	3
SSpat	Patience	Good natured tolerance of delay or incompetence.	2
SSSOT	Staying on task	Learner is continuing to carry on with a task - even when it proves difficult	16
SSTol	Tolerance	Learner able to tolerate unfavourable environmental conditions.	6

AtenS	Attention seeking behaviour	Use of language to draw attention to the speaker.	6
AWWO	Avoiding working with others	Behaviour that distracts a learner from working with others	2
DR	Deflecting responsibility	Learner blaming another, or neglecting to complete a task they were given responsibility for	5
Fr	Frustration	Learner swearing or getting annoyed with another or the learning task.	26
POD	Putting others down	Making negative comments about another learner	16
RtoP	Refusal to participate	Refusal to participate in the learning task.	1
SSD	Departing	Learner leaving the group / walking away from the task. No reason given.	6

Figure 7.4 Example of themes relating to the SEL core element Self-management.

Stage 3: Delimiting the theory.

Delimiting is concerned with establishing the boundaries of any given theme. The comparison continues until reduction generates a conceptual theme. Constant comparison between themes ensures commonality and can, therefore, be considered as findings in their own right (Harding, 2013). Establishing conceptual themes 'enables the researcher to move beyond identifying findings to building theory' (*ibid.*, p.109).

The theme to SEL core element record cards (Figure 7.4) enabled further reduction between themes. Further comparison continued until conceptual themes were generated. Figure 7.5 shows how the delimiting process was tracked. The remaining part of stage three considers each conceptual theme in relation to the core SEL element it was assigned too.

SEL Relationship skills	Relationship skills	An ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, co-operating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

Merging themes to building a concept

SSAD	Accepting decisions	Learner accepts decision of another learner
SSAg	Agreeing	Learner agrees with another learner about a decision or plan
SSAC	Appreciating contributions No evidence in video	Learner gratefully acknowledging the contribution of another
SSN	Negotiating	A situation intended to bring about agreement.

Emergent Concept

SSA	Agreement	Learner agrees with another learner about a decision or plan or accepts the decision of another learner

Figure 7.5 Example of a delimiting record card.

(a) Core SEL Element: Relationship skills

Relationship skills encompass the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, co-operating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively and seeking and offering help when required (Bridgeland *et al*., 2013). Participation in outdoor learning activities was strongly associated with developing Relationship skills. The conceptual themes, **agreement, contributing** and **responsibility** emerged from the data pertaining to relationship skills, each is discussed separately.

Agreement

The conceptual theme **agreement** was generated from the themes *accepting decisions, agreeing, appreciating contributions* and *negotiating* (Figure 7.6). The ability of individual group members to agree is a necessary skill for achieving an effective group. The use of groups in outdoor learning activities means they are well placed to provide opportunities for learners to develop the social skills of agreeing and negotiation.

During a raft building activity, the participants were challenged to construct a raft from plastic barrels, wooden spars and rope (Photos 7.1). Once completed, participants were to make a small test journey. '*The raft building began with a planning session using a white board inside the sailing centre. All participants agreed on a design for the raft they were going to build*' (Research diary three, p.17). An error in the original plan was soon discovered. '*Once outside with the*

available equipment it became obvious that the original plan needed amending. A new design was agreed by all' (Research diary three, p.17).

Photo 7.1 Raft building and journeying.

The theme agreement was not restricted to participants alone, but also included the outdoor practitioners. On occasions, it was necessary to change a planned activity, in these situations outdoor practitioners tried to include participants in the re-planning. A residential camping trip demonstrates this, '*Tp explained that the caving wouldn't go ahead that evening but that it had been changed to the following day because the group would be too late back. The noise would be unfair on the other campers. Instead, Tp promised to tell the group about what they could see in the clear the night sky before hot chocolate and biscuits*' (Research diary two, p.44), Planning and delivery of outdoor learning needed to be responsive and flexible as demonstrated in this extract from a forest school session (Photo 7.2). '*The time had passed with each participant engaged in the productivity of the woodland crafts, so the plan was changed. The plan had been to go orienteering, but the group wanted to play hide and seek, so remaining flexible*

and learner-centred we changed the planning to incorporate the game' (Research diary one, p.32).

Photo 7.2 Forest school activities.

Negotiation was a tool used by outdoor practitioners to help create participant ownership in the OLP. '*There was some negotiation of activity for the following weeks, caving proved most popular, so I have booked the cave for the following weeks afternoon activity. I am hoping that by giving participants a choice over the activity they might develop a sense of ownership for the programme, or feel that outdoor practitioners listen to them'* (Research diary two, p.8).

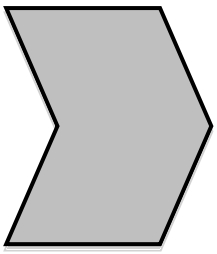
The data suggested that **Agreement** was a multi-layered concept, operating on three levels: between participants, between outdoor practitioners and participants and as a cultural tool for developing ownership of the OLP.

Accepting decisions

Agreeing

Appreciating contributions

Negotiating



Agreement

Figure 7.6 Themes generated the conceptual theme Agreement.

Contributing

Contributing was generated from the themes; *working together, taking turns, helping, encouraging others, making friends, humour, contributing ideas* and *expressing an opinion* (Figure 7.7). Each theme represented a social skill required for effective social interaction and had a positive benefit for individuals, the social group or improving the overall situation.

Participants were expected to help clean and return equipment after sessions from the beginning of the OLP This was an initial shock, but quickly a culture of helping developed. *'The participants were much better than the previous week, unloading the kit into the outdoor education store. Tp washed the canoes down while they were still on the trailer and working together everyone helped to unload them into the canoe store'* (Research diary one, p.10). The end of day tasks helped the outdoor practitioners but also promoted working together and helping behaviours.

Working together helped participants acquire many new skills, '*Brandon and Declan used the billhook and mallet to spilt some of our wood for the dry pile that had been brought from school. They worked safely throughout*' (Research diary one, p.28). The new skills helped participants develop independence and were

often beneficial to everyone, as this example taken for a session in the woods during the winter shows. '*Working together to make hot chocolate drinks for the group'* (Photo 7.3).

Photo 7.3 Working together to make hot chocolate.

Occasionally it was worth taking a risk with the participants, crate stacking was one such occasion. If the entire group failed to participate the activity would fail. *'I decided to include the crate stacking activity because I felt it would get the group working together. I was however worried that it might fall flat and that they wouldn't engage in it. My worries were unfounded and I was surprised how well the learners engaged with the challenge and worked together. Each taking a turn to be on top of the crate stack as it grew. Those that wouldn't go on top of the stack belayed and the remainder worked together passing crates up to increase the height of the stack. At times, the group performed like the perfect team'* (Research diary two, p.8).

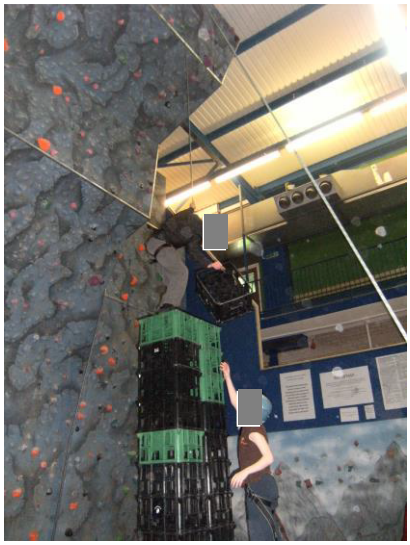


Photo 7.4 Stacking crates.

Crate stacking required participants to build a tower using milk crates (Photo 7.4). One participant stands on top of the forming tower (protected by a belayed rope) to locate crates correctly as they are passed or thrown upwards. When the tower can go no higher, the group push the tower over (that's the bit they enjoy most) leaving the crate stacker suspended mid-air, waiting to be lowered safely to the ground.

Planning for residential also provided opportunities for participants to develop **contributing** behaviours. Prior to the first camping trip, participants practised erecting the dining shelter they would use while on camp. *'Once the other group had returned from their walk, we began to put up the dining shelter. The group worked well together and the shelter was soon up'* (Research diary two, p.36). Another planning task required participants to write a letter home with information about the forthcoming camping trip. During this task, I observed that most participants had chosen to work with someone, '*paired learners*

involved in putting together a letter for the forth-coming residential trip.' (Field notes, p.24)

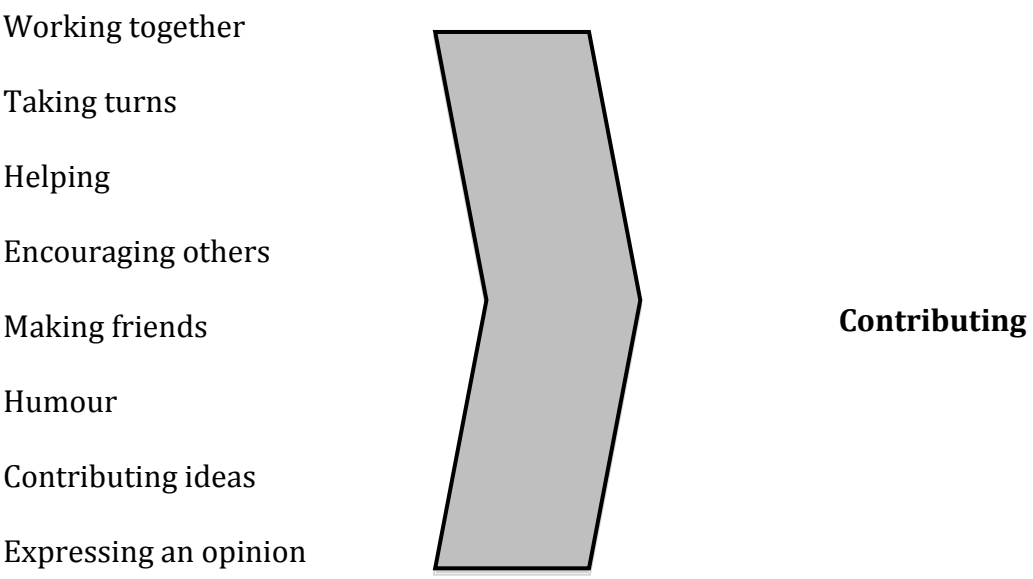


Figure 7.7 Codes that led to the conceptual theme Contributing.

Responsibility

Responsibility was generated from the themes; *reminder of rules, coaching, leading* and *asking questions* (Figure 7.8). The commonality between these themes was 'taking responsibility', either for a task or for a specific group role. The influence of agency is noticeable within this conceptual theme; when participants' were acting as leaders or coaches they relied on their social influence to enlist the aid and support of their peers. Early in the programme it was possible to identify the participants that could naturally control situations. A problem-solving task demonstrates this. The participants were required to transport a bucket of water from a platform across to a rope scramble net, they could only use the rope swing and one other rope for help (Photo 7.5).

Photo 7.5 Bucket of water controlled by a learner.

'Declan, '*Put the bucket on the rope'*, (Line 23) Brandon, '*Put the bucket through the (.) put the bucket through'*, (Line 24) Brandon, '*Sling it (.) NO DON'T YOU GO WITH IT*' (Video transcript Record 3111, Line 27). Declan and Brandon, having crossed over the span, could not physically attach the bucket to the rope. Instead, they took responsibility by actively instructing Aidan who was left behind with the bucket. Aidan was reminded to not cross with the bucket, but to make his journey separately.

Photo 7.6 How to get the water and the group across the span.

Tyre crossing, a similar activity, required the participants to transport a bucket of water across a span, using tyres suspended from a wire. Declan took

responsibility, '*Brandon come across'* (line 12) '*Brandon come across (.) then get Henry across and then Aidan goes too'* (Video transcript Record 3113, line 15). Declan had worked out a way to resolve the problem and by taking responsibility he was able to contribute towards the tasks completion.

During the year the more confident learners took responsibility for their peers, either by encouraging them to try new routes; '*In the cave Brandon took on a leader role and encouraged the others to try different tunnels*' (Research diary 1, p.21). Or by helping outdoor practitioners in situations that individuals were being difficult. '*Even Brandon tried to persuade Henry to wear the waterproofs, having recognised the sense in wearing them when it's appropriate*' (Research diary one, p.39). Henry didn't see the sense of wearing waterproofs when the weather suggested otherwise, Brandon knew this and tried to encourage him to wear them, knowing it would be more comfortable for him.

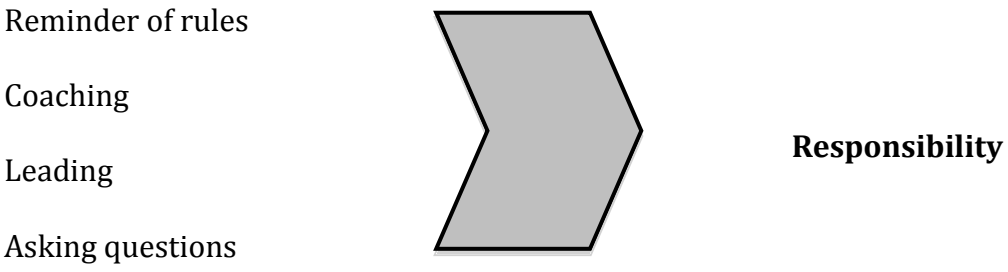


Figure 7.8 Codes that led to the conceptual theme Responsibility.

(b) Core SEL Element: Responsible decision-making

Decision making is about individuals developing their ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others' (Bridgeland *et al*., 2013). The conceptual themes related to this SEL element include **planning, problem-solving** and **safety consciousness**.

The generation of the conceptual theme **planning** was unsurprising because an emphasis was placed on the learners to try to generate a plan at the beginning of each problem-solving task. However, participants remained reluctant to develop a plan of action possibly due to the impulsivity of SEBD behaviours.

Prior to the data analysis, planning had been regarded as a discrete process, but now it was clear that it required the sub-skills; *application of prior knowledge*, *building on the ideas of others* and having the ability *to come to a consensus* with others. Participants rarely involved others when developing a plan or discussing a sequence of steps to enact a plan. Instead, plans would arise from individual participants and would often be imposed upon, but rarely rejected by the other participants. Plans were rarely developed in any detail prior to beginning the activity, instead they emerged out of activity; plans evolved as participants experimented to reach a solution, in the spirit of active experimentation (Kolb, 1984).

The acquisition of prior knowledge about a situation proved to be significant for the successful completion of learning tasks. It was, therefore, necessary to provide experiences of which the participants had no prior knowledge. '*Participants were looking at a weather forecast for the following day to help decide what activity they were going to do. The forecast was predominantly rain. But the group still chose cycling regardless of the weather, even after outdoor practitioners suggested that it might be wiser to go climbing indoors and cycle the following week*' (Research diary two, p.14). A consensus was achieved between participants for cycling, but the situation demonstrates how the limited prior knowledge about inclement weather, led to an activity being chosen that was unsuitable for the conditions. The decision of the group was however accepted; knowing that the experience of personal discomfort and difficult ground conditions that made the cycling more hazardous would be remembered. The ability to offer participants experiences similar to the one described built memorable experiences that became useful in other situations; '*the participants were beginning to make links to earlier parts of the programme, some remembered using the camping stoves previously, four of the five participants dressed appropriately at the start of the day for the activity and the weather*' (Research diary two, p.23).

An advantage of working within a group is each member has encountered different life experiences, these provide a wide range of knowledge to draw upon in challenging situations. Declan, following a visit to a local fire station, was able to recall how a fire person had not used a knot to secure a rope to a tree. Putting his prior knowledge into practice, Declan was able to emulate the action of

wrapping the rope around a tree instead of tying it; *'He saw it last week at the fire station (.) the chap there didn't do knots he just did a wrap'* (Video transcript Record 4122, Line 92). Each of the themes discussed in this section has contributed to the conceptual theme, **Planning** (Figure 7.9).

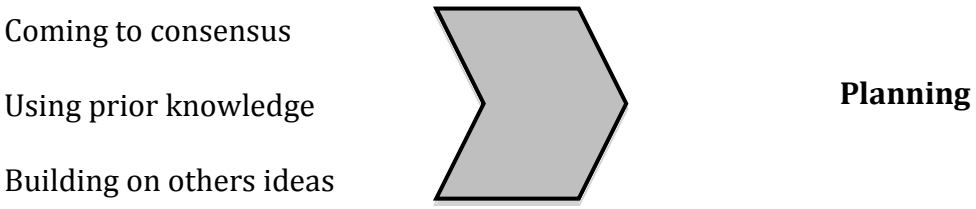


Figure 7.9 Codes that led to the conceptual theme Planning.

The next conceptual theme that emerged was **problem-solving.** This was generated from the themes *problem solving, improving ideas* and *using prior knowledge*. Although prior knowledge was included in the previous conceptual theme, it also contributed to resolving tasks that required problem-solving skills. Consistent with **planning,** participants' remained reluctant to consider possible solutions to problems. During the raft-building activity, limited evidence of prior planning was observed. The participants were given modelling materials (cotton reels, kebab sticks and string) that could be used to evaluate possible designs prior to constructing an actual raft. The use of modelling materials during the raft building exercise proved to be an exception, in other situations, participants preferred to explore solutions using a hands' on approach.

In the learning task 'River crossing' active problem solving was observed. If participants wanted to remain dry they needed to construct a simple bridge for the limited equipment; two ropes, a sling and a karabiner. Assistance could be

obtained from a passer-by (Outdoor practitioner) on the far riverbank if asked. Realising a bridge was required the participants experienced difficulties securing the rope to each tree. Steffan, '*well they could put it there and (.) that one there'* (Video transcript Record 4122, Line 51). A little later, Steffan had refined his thinking, '*no that has to go there (.) no actually we need to clip this on and then that'* (Video transcript Record 4122, Line 88). With two ropes in position across the river, one below the other, participants became distracted with attaching their safety lines to the higher rope as they crossed. The river could be simply crossed keeping feet on the lower rope and hands on the upper rope. Aidan realised the sling was a decoy, '*go on (.) What you doing (.) actually you could go without that thing (.)*' (Video transcript Record 4122, Line 146).

Throughout the river crossing activity, the participants remained actively focused, experimenting with different approaches to creating a safe bridge over the river. Although the group neglected any prior planning, their active approach was not reckless. Attention to fall prevention and general safety was observed in another situation. '*What if it snapped? (.) You have to be careful man'* (Video transcript Record 7124, Line 58) hence the theme *spots safety issues*.

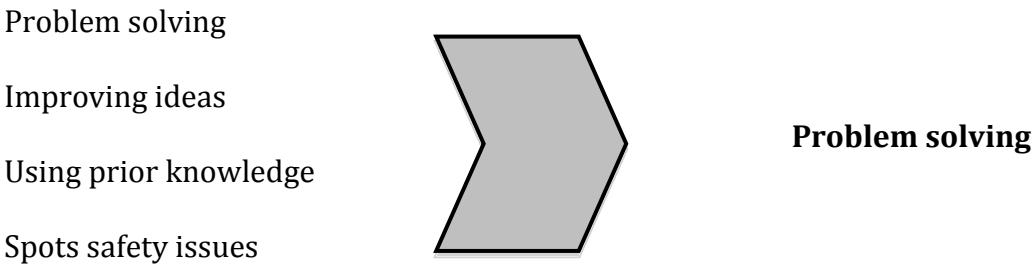


Figure 7.10 Codes that led to the conceptual theme Problem solving.

Practical experimentation remained the dominant *modus operandi* in situations that required planning and problem-solving skills.

(c) Core SEL Element: Self-awareness

Self-awareness is described as, 'the ability to accurately recognise one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behaviour. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism' (Bridgeland *et al.*, 2013).

The conceptual themes **anxiety** and **reflection** emerged out of the data for Self-awareness**,** with the property for **anxiety** understood as, 'participant demonstrates behaviour / speech that shows a state of anxiety'. Behavioural changes were usually accompanied or began with, the onset of a defiant attitude and defensive language, such as the simple flat refusal, '*No*' (Video transcript Record 1122, Line 60) or with threatening language, '*If I fall, I'll kill you'* (Video transcript Record 1124, Line 22). Working closely with the participants the outdoor practitioners became more adept at recognising the sometimes subtle changes in behaviour that were attributable to anxiety.

Understanding the influence of anxiety on behaviour helped determine if a behavioural intervention was necessary. A cave trip provides an example of an experience that invoked anxiety. After entering the cave the participants progressed along a stream passage, '*the moving water in the cave had increased the noise adding to everyone's anxiety*' (Research diary one, p.52). At the furthest

point on the trip, the water dropped vertically for ten metres, forming a cascade. Using a safety line, participants could view the water descending into the depths of the cave. '*The noise of the water got Aidan very excited, he wouldn't stop talking while Tp tried explaining how the safety line worked*' (Research diary one, p.52). Aidan's behaviour was exacerbated by the external stimuli, increasing his anxiety. Recognising this, Aidan was secured to the safety line by an OP, instead of letting him do it independently. This speeded up the attachment to the line, allowing Aidan to view the waterfall safely and then return to a part of the cave with less external stimuli.

Exposing young people to adventurous situations like the cave trip can develop confidence, but experiences that provoke anxiety can have a detrimental effect. The comfort, stretch, panic metaphor is a useful way to think about anxiety levels in outdoor learning situations (Panicucci, 2007). In the comfort zone, everything is calm and there is no disequilibrium. In the stretch zone, interest is piqued and senses are enlivened, there is some disequilibrium. In the panic zone, stress is so high that information processing isn't functioning optimally and adrenaline makes learning difficult (*ibid.*). Tasks that stretch an individual enable growth, while tasks that evoke panic, restrict growth (*ibid.*). The comfort, stretch, panic metaphor in the first two stages is similar to the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1930- 1934, 1978). The stretch zone is therefore the distance between an individuals' actual independent development and their potential development if supported by more capable others. More recently the notion of stretch zone experiences as positive forces for change has been reconsidered (Beames and Brown, 2016). The authors suggest that activities should not begin

with the premise that the learner will be outside their comfort zone as the starting point. Rather challenges should allow the learner to build on and extend their skills and attributes possibly to the point where 'the learner may wish to explore areas that initially feel uncomfortable, but they are making the choice of how far to extend themself, rather than someone making this decision for them' (*ibid.*, p.90).

The difficulties of achieving the balance between comfort and stretch, while avoiding panic are demonstrated in the following incidents. During an outdoor climbing session, Iain, a new recruit to the OLP chose to opt out of the activity. '*A low-grade route was selected at a less intimidating angle for Iain, but he refused to tie on to the rope. Instead, he walked off shouting, "climbing's shit" undoing his harness as he went. When Iain returned, he rejoined the group but didn't attempt a climb all session'* (Research diary two, p.8). On this occasion it was progress that Iain rejoined the group, accepting his anxiety, he was not pressurised into any further climbing. But it was hoped he might attempt a climb later in the day.

A different approach was taken with Steffan, knowing he was a confident indoor climber. '*Steffan was reassured that he wouldn't be forced to do anything, but he was also reminded that at the climbing wall he had proved to be a good climber*' (Research diary three, p.10). Throughout the OLP, it was reinforced that '*Success is about having a go'* (Research diary three, p.10). A canoe trip provides an example of another anxiety-induced incident. During the previous canoe trip, Steffan and Calum had capsized. '*They were not keen to go … to ease their fears they were encouraged to paddle with an outdoor practitioner and each had a good*

day' (Research diary three, p.28). The fragility of the learners' confidence was acknowledged, yet they were still encouraged (working within the stretch zone or ZPD) to function at their potential development level.

Reflection on experience is necessary for learning to occur. Reflection on action, enables the key events of the experience to be replayed and captured before the applications of issues arising from reflection are considered (Panicucci, 2007). Through reflection, individuals can be helped to recognise the effect of their actions, emotions and thoughts on behaviour.

Incorporating reviewing into the OLP to enable reflection remained a difficult and potentially underdeveloped part of the programme. Many constraining factors acting against quality review times; time pressure, the need to be back at school to catch transport home, over running of activities, participant behaviour and inadequate communication skills. *'Managed to include a simple review, each participant said what they were proud of from the day'* (Research diary three, p.11).

Although it was often difficult to conduct reviews at the end of each OLP session, alternative approaches were developed. The most effective of these was the use of video or photos, with the images acting as visual prompts. '*There we go if we'd listened to Steffan we'd have been there by now'* (Video transcript Record 7124, Line 108) and '*See if we'd done it like this we'd be there'* (Video transcript Record 7124, Line 116). Stretch moments were sometimes prompted during reviews, '*Aidan was describing what he saw and what was going on in each photo'* (Field

notes p.15) he was supported, *'... to help him structure his responses'* (Field notes p.15).

Two places became significant for naturally facilitating reviews. The first was evening time on residential trips, *'so have you learnt anything about yourself during the trip? Did you surprise yourself about anything? I surprised myself about the walking, but I guess I could have done a bit more if I'd put my mind to it*' (Transcript of Review of Residential 2 16th April 2012 with Steffan, p.3). The second significant place was around a campfire, '*with drinks in hand the review of the day began. Aidan was the first to speak, answering, teamwork, to every question. He was asked what made up teamwork. He thought, then replied; 'communication, giving ideas and helping.' So the direction of the review moved to consider ways that each learner had helped the group'* (Research diary one, p.10).

Occasionally reflection occurred on the minibus, *'on the return journey a conversation briefly occurred between participants about spare clothes. Iain's idea of spare clothing was to wear two sets, one on top of the other. This enabled him to take off the outer set once they became wet. The wearing of two sets of clothes is common practice amongst the participants. It is a tactic to avoid Police recognition when they are up to no good. Iain hadn't considered the need to keep a set of clothes back in the minibus to change into after the activity. The participants had now processed this idea and were suggesting what they should bring in the future, underwear, towel, trousers etc.'* (Research diary two, p.16).

(d) Core SEL Element: Self-management

Self-management is defined as the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals' (Bridgeland *et al.*, 2013). Two conceptual themes **coping with difficult situations outside individual control** and **anti-group behaviour** were generated from the data. The later conceptual theme is not discussed because of the ethical decision to only represent the research participants positively and this was an area they found particularly challenging.

Coping with difficult situations outside individual control emerged from the themes *disagreeing appropriately*, *staying on task*, *tolerance* and *excusing oneself,* shown in Figure 7.11. When participants *disagreed appropriately* with each other their language was brief and simplistic, '*No it needs pulling out'* (Video transcript Record 1112, Line 16.1), '*No Henry don't (.) no'* (Video transcript Record 5113, Line 19). Occasionally language was more complex, '*it still could be extended and that's just wasting distance'* (Video transcript Record 7123, Line 24). A practice that aided the assessment of learning in this area was doing the unexpected. '*At a path junction Tp deliberately took the wrong turning to see if any of the learners were paying attention, after some hints from T, Iain again had the confidence to say that Tp was wrong, so the group turned around to rejoin the correct path'* (Research diary two, p.33).

Outdoor learning was considered a possible intervention for learners with SEBD because of its active nature. In the research context, it was often difficult to

engage learners inside the classroom for meaningful periods of time, by taking them outside it was hoped they would be more stimulated to learn. Whilst coding *staying on a task* it was noticed that participants showed greater perseverance to complete outdoor challenges. The following selections exemplify incidences of participants showing determination.

An artificial cave provided an excellent introduction to caving and allowed assessment of their reactions to tight spaces and darkness. The cave comprised a series of restrictive tunnels *'Henry was worried about this, "the tunnels are small" learners have to mostly slide on their fronts, but in places they can sit up or stand when there is a climb. There are, no walkthrough sections. Henry became more confident as he engaged more with his peers'* (Research diary one, p.21).

A testing mountain bike trail provided a different challenge. Half way around there was '*a long tough section of uphill, Brandon the only learner to ride all of it, collapsed on the floor at the top, Henry did the same. Declan also collapsed but twenty metres from where the group waited, Aidan kept walking till he reached the group. No complaints were heard'* (Research diary one, p.23).

On the first day of a camping trip, four participants were dropped off at an unknown point (accompanied by two OPs) with the plan to walk to the campsite. The weather was unexpectedly hot and the walk proved too strenuous in the heat for Steffan and Aidan, who lasted until lunchtime. '*Brandon and Iain continued to their credit. They did extremely well because it was a very hot day and*

the walk had taken about two and a half hours longer than expected' (Research diary two, p.43).

The final example occurred during the concluding residential (four days and three nights in Wales) that provided the participants with their toughest challenge. *'There is no doubt that the climb to the summit of Cader Idris is the most serious test for each participant on the programme. Steffan took the most encouraging, but each OP was really pleased that everyone reached the summit'* (Research diary three, p.26).

The theme *tolerance* was not concerned with the ability of an individual to tolerate others but instead was about the ability to tolerate difficult environmental situations, such as poor weather. During the year, the participants experienced their fair share of inclement weather. *'It was a very cold day, but the participants did exceptionally well, even during the brief hail shower'* (Research diary one, p.51).

Woodlands were regularly used as learning spaces and over the year the participants became very competent at erecting tarp shelters to provide a dry area for equipment and an operational base. One particularly wet afternoon, it had been planned to make hot drinks, boiling the water on small fires. This was something the participants had looked forward to and even in the pouring rain they persisted with their fires until all the dry wood was exhausted. '*Henry, "I lit it four times and it still went out"*' (Video transcript Record 4111, Line 8). After such effort, reserve flasks provided the hot drinks.

On occasions, things simply got too much for individuals, hence the theme *excusing oneself*. Sensibly managed outdoor spaces allow individuals to learn coping strategies for situations they find difficult. The outdoors provides ample space for walking away from conflict and calming down. An incident that occurred during an earth walk activity illustrates this strategy well. *'I was trying to get the participants to tell me what sounds they had heard in the wood. When I noticed that Brandon's' face had changed. "Tell him!" Referring to Aidan. I didn't see what Aidan had been up to, possibly pulling faces. Brandon's' response was to storm off into the woods, both myself and Th shouted for him to stop, but he wouldn't', so I followed him at a safe distance. Eventually, I found Brandon sitting on an old fallen tree trunk with his hands in his face. I didn't say anything but just sat down on the trunk a little way from him. I had expected that he was going to walk off again, but he didn't. I then reasoned that if I just sat there he might say something to me. Five minutes passed and he began playing with the fallen leaves on the ground in front of where he was sitting. I watched looking for mini beasts because I thought spotting something might help break the ice. Next I heard Brandon saying, "Can we go back now sir?" "Yes if you want" I replied. Then off he went back to our base walking ahead of me. On the way, I said to him, that I had followed him because I was worried about where he might have gone, but the use of time out can be a positive way of managing anger'* (Research diary one, P.39).

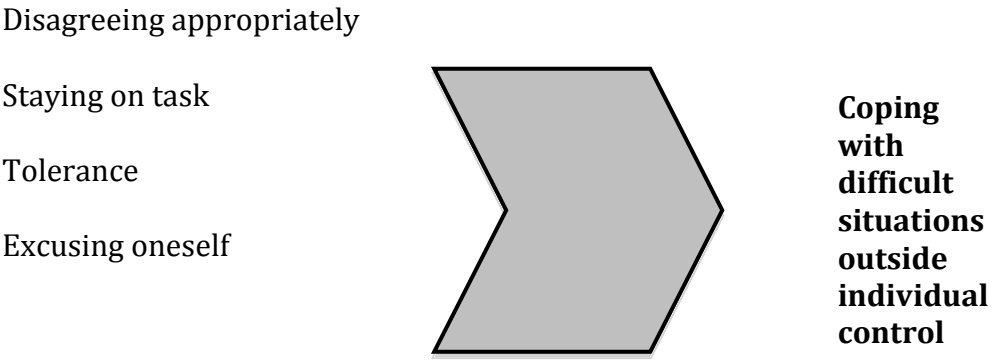


Figure 7.11 Codes that generated the conceptual theme Coping with difficult situations outside individual control.

(e) Core SEL Element: Social Awareness

Social awareness is defined as the 'ability to take the perspective of and empathise with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behaviour, and to recognise family, school, and community resources and supports' (Bridgeland *et al.*, 2013). The conceptual theme **alternative perspective** was generated from the themes *switching roles* and *taking different perspectives,* shown in Figure 7.12.

Switching roles relates to incidences when a role exchange occurred within the group. The 'construction of a square' task, required participants to construct, using rope, a three-metre square on the ground. During the task, the responsibility for measurement was exchanged between two participants. The measurement tool, a trundle wheel was also exchanged for a metre rule. The switching of roles at first appeared trivial, but the act gave those that complained the opportunity to experience the complexity of the task that the other person

was performing. This simple exchange could build empathy because others were able to appreciate what the role entailed.

The theme *taking different perspectives* defined as; participant understanding another person's point of view is similar to *switching roles* but is distinguished by action. Individuals experience the role of another person, but *taking different perspectives* is about understanding the other persons' viewpoint, without actively experiencing the situation.

An indoor climbing session demonstrates how a participant was helped to understand another persons' perspective. Normally participants would climb in pairs, but today I wanted them to climb as a three. This caused Iain concern, so, *'I explained to him that the addition of the extra climber gave each person in the group a chance to have a small rest between climbs. Meaning that you won't get worn out so quickly because of the physical nature of rock climbing. Iain seemed OK with this*' (Research diary two, p.11). Explaining the rational enabled Iain to consider the decision from an alternative perspective.

A second example occurred at a café, where participants were been rewarded with a hot chocolate after a tough days walking. *'Sat at the table next to our group were two older people, sharing the little bit of cover there was from the rain. The participants demonstrated their politeness, there was no swearing expected from Calum who slipped up just before we left, 'We're going to get fucking drown" he said referring to the heavy rain. It appears that the visits to* cafés *over the year*

have helped the group to develop social awareness. Perhaps hot chocolate can be justified after all' (Research diary three, p.21).

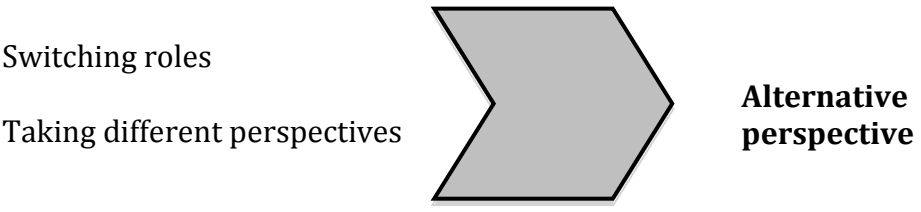


Figure 7.12 Codes that led to the conceptual theme Alternative perspective.

The generation of conceptual themes for each core SEL element was the final analytical stage before theory generation.

Stage 4: Writing the theory.

The primary role of the social researcher is to formulate a theory to explain and potentially transform social processes (Kettley, 2010). Within stage four of CCM, the abstract knowledge represented by each conceptual theme is transformed into an account describing the facts or phenomena revealed through systematic enquiry (Grbich, 2007). This type of explanation is situated within the research context and refers to the emergent behaviours of the research participants that remain sensitive to the spatial and temporal processes of intergroup associations (Kettley, 2010). Generating situated explanations through procedures like CCM is a developmental, iterative and judgmental process. The researcher deploys critical imagination to help establish links between the biographical, socio-cultural and historical. Building a situated theoretical account for the provisional truths of context-specific events, remains, 'an act of creativity which entails

making critical distinctions grounded in rigorous empirical observations and interpretive techniques' (Kettley, 2010, p.157).

7.3 Building theory: SEL Skill Augmentation as a Means of Achieving Social System Change.

This section sets out theory situated in the context of the OLP. The theory links the augmentation of SEL skills achieved through participation in outdoor learning to wider social system change. Structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) has provided 'a set of thinking tools' (Thomas, 2007, p.83) to create a narrative to explain how SEL skill augmentation has assisted in the production of new social structures that in turn have lead to the production of a more positive social system.

Structuration theory has particular definitions of 'structure' and 'system'. The concept of 'structure', rather than being external to the action of human agents refers to a set of rules or resources that human agents draw upon to enact social practices (Ashley, 2010). 'Structure, then, becomes the medium for a social practice (agents employing rules and resources) as well as the outcome of a social practice (the enactment of which leads to the continuation of structure)' (*ibid.*, p.341). Structures can be knowingly or unknowingly reproduced via routines and rituals that are often taken for granted or remain unquestioned (Hardcastle *et al.*, 2005). The concept of 'system' refers to social practices gaining permanence through repetition, with actors repeating routines and rituals across time and space until the pattern becomes a taken for granted feature of social life (Ashley, 2010). A central idea within structuration theory is that the rules and resources employed to create social practices are at the same

time the means of system reproduction, this being termed the 'duality of structure' (Giddens, 1984, p.19). The term structuration is therefore understood to mean the 'structuring of social relations across time and space, in virtue of the duality of structure (*ibid.*, p.376).

Through participation in the outdoor learning programme (OLP), the participants were able to ameliorate their pre-existing social practices. When this was achieved in more than one individual within the participant group, it was possible to achieve a shift within the structural system employed by the group. When a shift is achieved a new structural system is produced. Any new structural system cannot be the product of a single influence, but is instead an amalgamation of the influences of working with others, learning tasks that promoted both cognitive and SEL skill augmentation, programme ethos that encouraged new social practices, programme duration, pedagogic practice and residential. Figure 7.13 illustrates the influences significant to the production of any new social system. Each contributory influence is discussed in turn, although in reality neither influence acted in isolation.

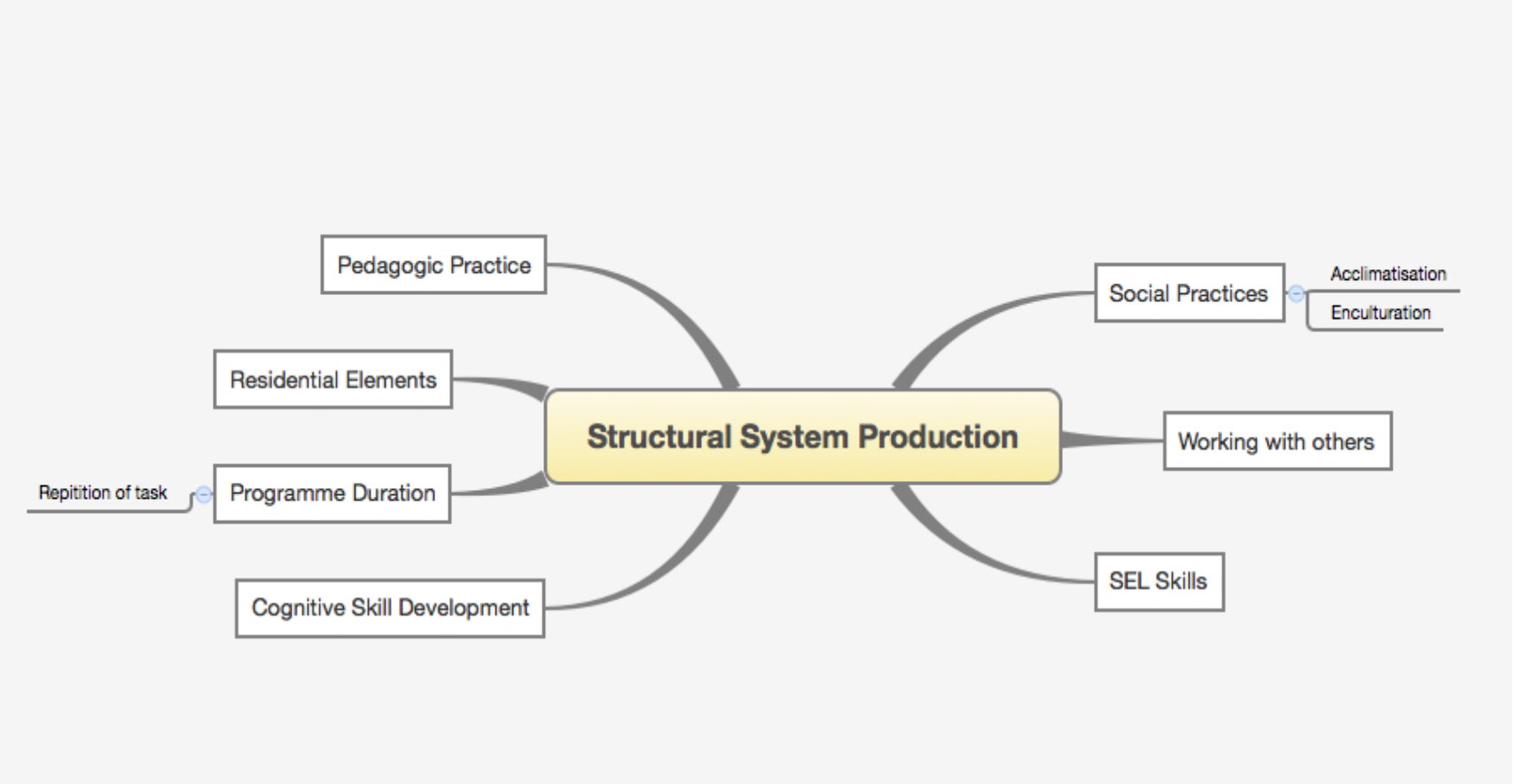


Figure 7.13 Influences significant to the production of structural change within the participant group. The diagramme does not reflect any hierarchical differences between influences.

‘A **social practice** is a product of training the body in a certain way: when we learn a practice, we learn to be bodies in a certain way (and this means more than to ‘use our bodies'). A practice can be understood as the regular, skillful ‘performance’ of (human) bodies’ (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 251). The acquisition of SEL skills through engagement in outdoor learning trains the body to handle certain objects of mental (talking, reading and writing) and emotional activity (turn taking, giving praise and helping) in the same way that physical activities (knot tying, belaying and fire lighting) are acquired and develop into routinized actions.

Two processes assisted the production of social practices during the OLP: **Acclimatisation** and **Enculturation.** The process of acclimatisation gradually exposes participants to situations that might cause anxiety (Canoe session on a small lake, progressing onto a canal journey, progressing onto a river journey). Acclimatisation acknowledges the need for progression from simple and easy activities towards more sophisticated and challenging experiences to maintain ‘adventure’ (Karppinen, 2012), an important aspect for maintaining participant interest. Repetitions of tasks at increasing levels of complexity help actions become routine.

Enculturation is concerned with the development of context-specific social practice, for example; learning outside the classroom. Littering provides a good example; initially participants dropped litter during outdoor learning sessions. The practice was common to them and when challenged about the action, they expected a street cleaner would come along and clear it away, a reasonable

assumption. Once the practice had been unpicked, the participants became more litter aware. The practice was reinforced through teaching them about the countryside code and the repeated use of the phrase ‘take only photos, leave only footprints'.

Working with others should be a pervasive and intentional element of any outdoor learning programme and without which it would be difficult to augment SEL or communication skills. In some educational contexts, the use of groups is more for convenience than educational benefit. Children work in groups, but not as groups. ‘As such, groups are no more than physical juxtapositions of children engaged on individual tasks’ (Bennett and Cass, 1988, p.19). If SEL augmentation is to be achieved, then group work has to be deliberate and of educational benefit. Participants that easily learn physical practices can be encouraged to help develop the same practices in others, this helps practices to become routine.

SEL skills are concerned with a person’s ability to manage their emotions, show concern for others and form positive relationships, and as such are important skills to facilitate effective working with others. The development of group cohesion and social system change is not an immediate process; any development lags behind the acquisition of SEL skills by individual participants. Outdoor learning programmes that aim to challenge pre-existing social systems need to recognise the importance of augmenting individual SEL skills if their aims are to be achieved.

Programme duration will be dependent upon the aims of the specific outdoor learning programme. In the case of this research it was pertinent for the programme to be of longer duration (tweleve months) to affect any positive change in participants with SEBD. The array of experiences that longer duration outdoor learning programmes are able to provide allows repetition of social practices, bringing permanence to them. It is only when the social practice becomes an unconscious action that it is possible to shift pre-existing social systems, causing them to become more positive.

Through increased time spent with participants and in sharing the unique experiences provided by outdoor learning programmes, outdoor practitioners are well placed to listen and support individuals to effect positive behaviour changes. They can also help young people find new directions rather than offering them solutions for behaviours that may be deemed problematic. Such an approach might take a long time to reach as can be seen using Henry as an example. Henry was a defiant, self-negating young person, never admitting to enjoying anything throughout most of the OLP. Towards the end of the OLP, however, Henry began to open up. He was spotted smiling and laughing about a descent he had made on a mountain bike. This seemingly small act was, in fact evidence of massive progress. Henry later admitted that biking was his favourite activity. It had taken the best part of a year to see him show some excitement and acknowledge that he was enjoying an experience. Had OLP continued, it might have been possible to build on this behavioural change.

Cognitive skill development involves the cumulative building of learning skills, such as attending, memory and thinking. These skills help people process the sensory information they experience and eventually learn to evaluate, analyse, remember, make comparisons and understand cause and effect (Perkins and Solomon, 1989). The types of learning tasks used within outdoor learning programmes aid cognitive skill development, particularly in relation to planning, experimentation, individual perseverance and problem-solving. The specific SEL skills of respecting the opinions of others and accepting alternative perspectives, are also necessary if problem-solving tasks are to be successfully completed. Practices that remain context-specific and do not transfer beyond the outdoor learning context, are not fully embedded, where this is the case participants; require further opportunities to make practice permanent.

Residential elements could be significant for shaping group identity through the building of self and social awareness, self-management and relationship skills. Given time, the skills change into social practices. For example, participants may be anxious about being away from home. This can cause a greater reliance on others and can trigger new and unexpected relationships. To illustrate this point, Brandon's befriending of Aidan, on the first residential, was triggered by his anxiety about been away from home and the absence of his other friends. Free from peer pressure, Brandon's perception of Aidan was challenged. Brandon's authoritative resources enabled him to influence the social system of the group, reflexively monitoring his actions through discursive or practical consciousness (Russell, Simmons and Thompson, 2011).

Pedagogic practice is an important aspect of helping participants develop SEL skills. The modeling of SEL skills by outdoor practitioners can lead to participants emulating the practices. Self-management can also be promoted through the use of time out or space out, behaviour management. Participants frustrated with the activity and or others can be offered time, or space, out until they are ready to re-engage. They can either be left alone, or practitioners can try to engage individuals in conversation or activity. This practice is often difficult to achieve inside a classroom, because of the constraints of physical space. Participants should be free to rejoin learning activities, provided it is safe to do so.

After considering the contribution of each of these influences upon the production of a new social system, the theory is extended below to explain the role of individual actors or agents within the process.

7.4 The Role of the Individual in Structural System Production.

Imagine the situation where a group of participants are listening to a briefing from an outdoor practitioner, prior to commencing a learning challenge. The briefing explains the objective of the activity along with any rules and equipment that can be used to complete the task. The outcome of the exercise hinges on several factors or social practices: a willingness to participate in the activity; an ability to work with the other participants (using SEL skills); having practical knowledge useful to the situation; and the ability to communicate ideas.

The ways that the social practices of an individual operating within an outdoor learning task can be represented diagrammatically. In Figure 7.14, below, A basic response framework represents the existing social practices of an individual; the outdoor learning experience; and the reflexive monitoring undertaken by the individual. The framework acknowledges that individuals with SEBD already use social practices in their everyday lives, with differing degrees of success. Through exposure to outdoor learning tasks, pre-existing social practices can be challenged, thus effecting positive change. Changes either enhanced pre-existing social practices or stimulated the production of new social practices.

Figure 7.14 The basic response framework.

Structuration theory proposes that the way in which individuals make sense of their social world is through a feedback system known as reflexive monitoring, whereby 'actors not only monitor continuously the flow of their activities and expect others to do the same for their own: they also routinely monitor aspects, social and physical' (Giddens, 1984, p. 5). The action of reflexive monitoring provides feedback, informing agency and the capability people have to do things or make things happen. If acted upon, agency can have the transformative capacity to effect the social practices employed by individuals. When change is

effected across a number of individuals, then the overall social system of the participant group is similarly effected.

In any given outdoor learning experience, the reflexive monitoring of the individual provides three possible responses: A positive response shown in Figure 7.15 below, represents a situation where the indivdual has attempted a response and it worked effectively. Positive responses stimulate new social practices or augment existing social practices, hence the larger box in the diagram to represent growth. The outdoor learning experience acts upon the pre-existing social practice, the individual, in this case, has chosen to try a new response to the situation, possibly sharing an idea, or deciding to work with another person during the outdoor learning experience. Positive reflexive monitoring improved the chance that the social practice was repeated. A positive reception resulted in a changed social practice for the individual.

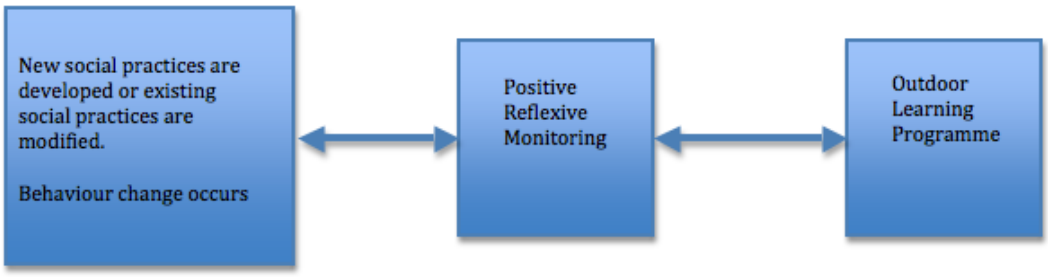


Figure 7.15 A positive response framework.

Through repetition across time and space, small changes to social practice produce new social practices. The more the social practice is rehearsed, the greater the chance of it transferring beyond the context of the learning situation.

The positive response framework describes the ideal situation where positive responses over time create new social practices. However, having considered the ideal situation, two further frameworks represent a negative response to the reflexive monitoring.

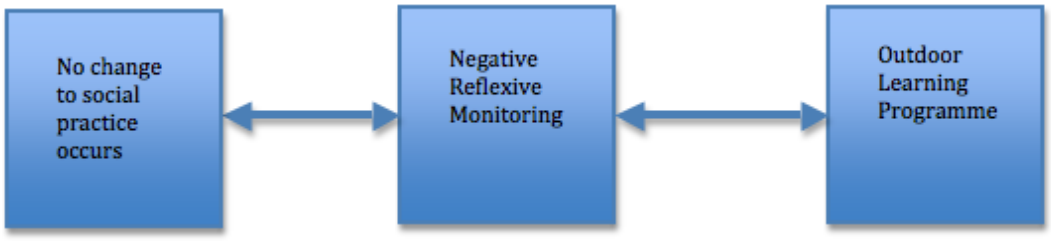


Figure 7.16 The individual makes a response to the outdoor learning situation, the response does not achieve its intended aim so negative feedback is received. No change to social practice occurs.

In the response shown in Figure 7.16, the individual attempts a response to the outdoor learning situation; the interaction does not achieve its intended aim. Reflexive monitoring reveals a negative response, so no change to pre-existing social practice occurs. However, following the negative response two possible situations can occurr. The first and preferred option is that the individual makes a second attempt. The new successful response triggers the positive reflexive montoring feedback that initiated the desired effect of achieving a modification to social practice. This process is shown in Figure 7.17 below.

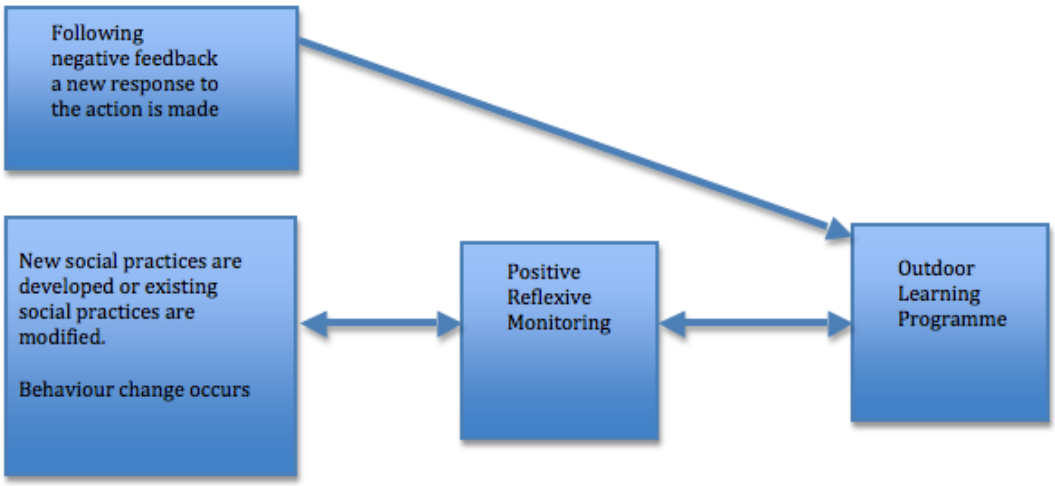


Figure 7.17 The individual after receiving initial negative feedback, makes a new response which receives positive feedback. Augmentation of social practice is achieved.

The second situation describes what happens when an individual receives continued negative responses to their actions. This is shown in Figure 7.18 below.

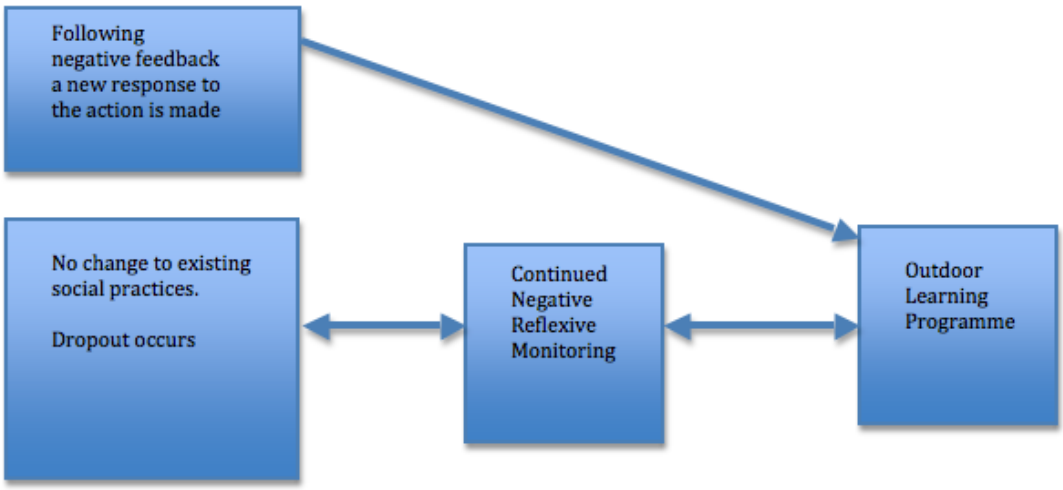


Figure 7.18 The continued negative response framework. Repeated negative feedback to responses results in programme dropout.

Where continued negative responses and additional support from outdoor practitioners are unable to resolve the situation, then programme dropout is inevitable. This occurs because of weak affiliation to the participant group and highlighted inadequacies in programme selection processes and support from within school. Although each framework describes the process leading to changes within the social practices of an individual, it is the combination of each individual's social practices that contribute towards social system production.

7.5 Summary

Significant in the production of the new social system was the augmentation of SEL skills. Through a theme reduction process, it was possible to evidence participants using specific SEL skills during outdoor learning tasks. The generation of the conceptual themes of; agreement, contributing, responsibility, planning, problem-solving, coping with difficult situations outside individual control, and alternative perspective showed the complexity of the skills and social practices that outdoor learning as an educational approach had facilitated.

A response framework made it possible to understand the role of reflexive monitoring in the augmentation of social practices that ultimately influenced the operant social system of the group. Positive feedback helped to augment existing social practices and aid the production of new social practices. Opportunities providing repetition reinforced new social practices. Repeated negative feedback and a weak affiliation to the participant group were contributory factors to

programme drop out. The acquisition of SEL skills provided opportunities for participants to develop potentially lasting social practices and effect change within the group's social system.

CHAPTER EIGHT: PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR LEARNING: INFLUENCES ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

8.1 Introduction

Participation in alternative curricula is known to positively influence school attendance (Hallam, Rogers, Rhamie, Shaw, Rees, Haskins, Blackmore and Hallam, 2007; Hallam, Rogers and Rhamie, 2010). This chapter reports individual participation on the outdoor learning programme (OLP) and school attendance, consistent with the initial research aim of establishing individual levels of participation in outdoor learning. Participation was monitored to establish engagement with outdoor learning as an interventional process. In addition to the previous chapter, this section is related to the stages of observation and critical reflection within action cycle two.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2001b, 2002) recognises that school attendance is a key indicator of academic performance. Improving attendance and reducing school exclusion is a priority for schools working with disaffected young people. Attendance data for one academic year was gathered from the schools' information and management system (SIMS) and research diaries. The data enabled a comparison of attendance between outdoor learning and non-outdoor learning days.

To help identify barriers or enablers to participation in outdoor learning, qualitative data collected from field notes, research diaries and learner

questionnaires were used to compliment the quantitative attendance data. Blending qualitative with quantitative evidence helped to ensure the robustness of the research. Qualitative data analysis was conducted using the constant comparative method (CCM) (Glaser, 1965).

8.2 Analysis of Data: Using the Constant Comparative Method

As with the previous chapter the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) was used for data analysis. The stages of the analytical process are described to ensure the research is credible, reproducible and valid. In laying bare each stage of the analysis, fellow practitioners may be encouraged to use CCM in their own research contexts.

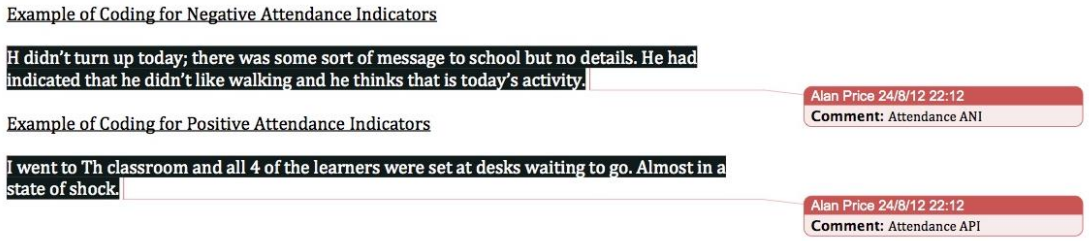
The sources of data are set out in Table 8.1 below. Qualitative data were obtained from a reflective research diary, field notes and participant interview transcripts. The data were in various formats, some handwritten by the researcher, other sources include voice recordings and participant handwritten responses. Quantitative data was collected using researcher attendance records and attendance data from SIMS.

Source	Type of data	Purpose of data
Learner attendance data from school management system	Statistical	Quantitative analysis – compares attendance
Research diary	Statistical	Quantitative analysis – compares individual participant attendance for outdoor learning sessions and attendance on residential trips.
Field notes	Textual account	Qualitative analysis – Primary coding - positive and negative indicators of attendance. The primary codes were decided prior to the coding. Secondary coding – subcategories of the primary categories. The secondary codes emerged from the data.
Learner questionnaire 1	Statistical	Quantitative analysis – Do the participants enjoy outdoor learning?
Research diary	Textual account	Qualitative analysis – Primary coding - positive and negative indicators of attendance. The primary codes were decided prior to the coding. Secondary coding – subcategories of the primary categories. The secondary codes emerged from the data.
Interview transcripts from learners	Textual account	Qualitative analysis – Primary coding - positive and negative indicators of attendance. The primary codes were decided prior to the coding. Secondary coding – subcategories of the primary categories. The secondary codes emerged from the data.

Table 8.1 Sources of data relating to participation in outdoor learning.

Stage 1: Initial Coding

The initial coding process began on completion of transcription; written notes into electronic text. The comment facility within Microsoft Word was extremely useful for coding; an example can be seen below.



Coding with the aid of comment bubbles made it possible to allocate codes to specific pieces of text. When coding was complete, all examples of a specific code were collected in tabular form. Codes at this stage represented positive or negative influences on attendance. Collecting all examples in one place (Shown in Table 8.2) assisted comparison.

Stage 2: Integrating categories and their properties.

The initial codes for negative or positive influences on attendance were opened up to further scrutiny, during the second stage. Properties were assigned to each code that allowed themes to emerge out of the data (Table 8.3).

First coding for attendance			
Attendance Positive Indicator API	Where located	Attendance Negative Indicator ANI	Where located
All the participants were in school on time today and Aidan was allowed to join in by his primary caregiver, possibly some progress there. I went to Th classroom and all 4 of the participants were set at desks waiting to go. Almost in a state of shock. On return to school, the head teacher informed me that Aidan was buzzing after his day out, saying it was the best day ever. I was pleased with this turnaround of events because yesterday at lunch he was saying that he wasn't very keen on going.	RD1 P23 RD1 P27 RD1 P33	Henry didn't turn up today; there was some sort of message to school but no details. He had indicated that he didn't like walking and he thinks that is today's activity. He is partly correct because today's session links with a lesson in school known as 'ASDAN' The day began with a message from the school secretary. Aidan's primary caregiver had phoned saying that she had told Aidan that he couldn't go on outdoor education today. He then soiled himself and she had put him in a nappy and sent him to school in his normal taxi. The head teacher and I were very annoyed about this.	RD1 P12 RD1 P20

Table 8.2 Grouping examples of initial coding together for comparison.

Second Coding of Negative indicators of attendance seeking subcategories			
Activity is walking		**Withdrawal of consent by careers**	
Henry didn't turn up today; there was some sort of message to school but no details. He had indicated that he didn't like walking and he thinks that is today's activity.	RD1 P12	The day began with a message from the school secretary. Aidan's primary caregiver had phoned saying that she had told Aidan that he couldn't go on outdoor education today. He then soiled himself and she had put him in a nappy and sent him to school in his normal taxi. The head teacher and I were very annoyed about this and tried to contact the primary caregiver and social worker for Aidan but could not get a response from either party. Aidan, therefore, had to remain in school with a different year group for the day because it appeared that consent had been withdrawn for Aidan.	RD1 P20

Table 8.3 Generating a first set of sub-categories from the initial coding.

Stage 3: Delimiting the theory.

Delimiting is concerned with establishing the boundaries of any given theme. The comparison continues between themes and may lead to a reduction from which a conceptual theme might emerge. The establishment of conceptual themes 'enables the researcher to move beyond identifying findings to building theory' Harding (2013, p.109).

Before creating conceptual themes, a critical friend checked the analysis, providing confirmation of the process and adding a fresh perspective to the analysis. Critical friends can help to bring out points missed and add points that the researcher may not previously have considered (Glaser, 1965). 'Above all they (*Critical friend*) have to be prepared to offer critical feedback, to enable you to see things you have missed, or to find new directions. It is their job to help you to see whether you are extending your thinking and developing new insights or whether you are doing your research to justify and continue your existing assumptions' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006, p.159).

The new perspective provided by the critical friend recognised a connection between two barriers to participation that had been overlooked; the exclusion of a participant and the withdrawal of consent by a primary caregiver. Previously, each incident was regarded as different. The fresh perspective of the critical friend helped establish that the effect of each action was essentially the same; each prevented participation in the OLP intervention.

To provide further checks, quantitative attendance data from SIMS and my research diary was incorporated. The data enabled comparison between attendance on outdoor learning and non-outdoor learning days. Small discrepancies between SIMS and my research diaries were observed, these related to recording errors on SIMS. In addition, data from questionnaire one (Appendix 6) enabled me to gain some knowledge about the participant perspectives on issues relating to participation. Microsoft Excel for Macintosh was used to collate responses. The software also enabled the production of response charts.

The limited size of quantitative attendance data makes it too small for statistical analysis. Therefore, I have described each participant's attendance separately, to further illuminate individual situations and avoid losing the richness of the data.

Aidan

The story of Aidan's attendance on OLP is touching. Aidan was in the care of the local authority and lived with Foster carers. At the time of the research, Aidan had a soiling issue. The severity of which was never fully understood by OLP or school staff. On a number of occasions the foster carers, withdrew consent for Aidan to attend OLP sessions because of his soiling issue. This went against the wishes of the young person, who begged school staff to resolve the consent issue for him. A social worker did overrule the carers so that Aidan could attend the first and second residential trips and be allowed back onto the OLP. Sadly Aidan was unable to attend the final residential, because of exceptional demands from his carers, insisting that a one to one care-person was provided for Aidan. The social worker for Aidan was informed of the demand because the school was

unable to meet this need, but the issue remained unresolved. Aidan would have had a 100% attendance if the withdrawal of consent had not remained an issue.

Brandon

Brandon's attendance was better on OLP days than the remainder of the week. The slight difference in OLP attendance and SIMS data for Tuesdays is due to a discrepancy. SIMS showed Brandon as absent on a day when he was offsite on the OLP. Late marks may also affect percentage total figures. Bradon was the only young person to attend all three residential visits.

Calum

Calum's attendance was better on the OLP days than the rest of the week. Calum attended the final four-day residential.

Declan

Declan's situation was more complex because it was affected by home circumstances. Declan began the OLP positively but as the year progressed, crisis outside of school had significant implications on his behaviour and attendance. Declan was an absconder and this meant that the school could not risk allowing Declan to attend residential visits. For Declan, the OLP had been a positive area of his education, but it had not been a significant enough force to cause him to positively change his behaviour. Declan was placed on a reduced timetable for the later part of the school year that meant he was no longer able to attend OLP.

Henry

Henry was a hard to reach, young person. He had limited interests that could be used to by staff to connect with him. However, his attendance on OLP was regular and he made good progress over the year. He was invited to all of the residential visits, but for some unexplained reason, would not come away

overnight as part of the OLP, even at the bequest of Brandon his close friend. Another area of educational success for Henry occurred on Wednesdays, when he attended a construction programme. He also enjoyed this, because it related to something he wanted to do when he finished schooling.

Iain

Iain joined the programme at the beginning of the second term. His attendance was initially very good and he was excellent on the camping trip in March. However, his overall school attendance declined, but significantly so in relation to the OLP. He had expressed a dislike of water and the final term was mostly water sports. It remains uncertain if this was the underlying reason for his absence. Behaviour in school had significantly deteriorated and Tuesday the day for the OLP became Iain's day of poorest attendance.

Steffan

Joining the OLP the latest of the all the pupils, Steffan had excellent attendance all round. Steffan had an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) but after building up good relationships with OLP staff, he realised that his concerns would be taken into account and enjoyed his time outside the classroom. Steffan attended the final two residential visits and coped really well.

The data suggests that attendance on outdoor learning days was higher for participants with no barriers to participation. Barriers included withdrawal of a guardians' consent (Aidan) and school exclusion (Declan). The exception was Iain; his day of lowest attendance was Tuesday the day of the OLP. Data from SIMS confirmed that participation in another alternative educational programme 'construction' was as high for Henry, as his OLP attendance. He was the only

young person from the research participants to attend construction. Drop out was recorded for two participants, Declan and Iain. Declan's repeated absconding from school premises and increases in the severity and frequency of challenging behaviour, resulted in a timetable reduction, effectively barring him from the OLP.

Iain was a late starter to the OLP joining in term two. He initially responded positively, even attending an overnight camping trip. But on return from Easter holidays, *'Iain would stay off school or make up excuses to avoid participation. 'Iain made up a story about a bad ankle to avoid coming with us today'* (Research diary three) and '*Declan and Iain both made up excuses to avoid today's activities. Unsure why?*' (Research diary three). Iain's drop out could be attributed to his dislike of water; the activities after Easter were predominately water based. Additional reasons may relate to Iain's communication difficulties. His Statement of SEN reported that 'he will experience some difficulty in accessing the National Curriculum and significant difficulty with social interaction with adults and peers. This will affect his ability to work collaboratively with peers and express his emotional states and identify emotions in others' (Iain's Statement of SEN). This confirms Iain's inability to express anxiety and his use of well-rehearsed avoidance strategies to ensure he wouldn't have to do something he was anxious about.

Returning to the literature for comparison, drop out was reported by Fox and Avramidis (2003) and Hallam *et al*., (2007, 2010). Often the reasons are beyond the control of the individual, chaotic family life, unsupportive primary caregivers,

or the need to care for other family members. In the study a participant was described expressing verbally their desire to take part in outdoor learning, but, would shy away or become violent to avoid participation. Perhaps the participant was psychologically unable to engage with the challenges presented by the OLP at that particular moment. A model proposed by Maslow (1971) represents the needs of an individual in a hierarchical structure, taking the shape of a pyramid. The bottom and largest layer represents a person's primary need for love, security, stability, food, drink and shelter. Engagement in learning would, therefore, be impaired if these primary needs remained unmet. It may, therefore, be more appropriate to select young people for intervention programmes whose primary needs are fulfilled and that have also shown an ability to learn and work with others, even if this is in a limited capacity.

Poor programme attendance by limited participants was attributed to participant refusal; illness and school exclusion from the programme because of reported violence and absconding (Fox and Avramidis, 2003). Although the study does not specifically consider attendance, this is a necessary factor if positive views of schooling and personal change are to be achieved. Illness and within school issues influenced attendance on 'Skill Force' an alternative educational programme (Hallam *et al*., 2007, 2010). Anxiety, holidays, special occasions, family circumstances (helping at home, family needs or desires, extreme family pressures) and attractions outside of school (peer pressure, the excitement of truanting, employment opportunities) were also reported as contributory factors.

In my own research, the punctuality of participants was also monitored. Several of the participants travelled a considerable distance to school on public transport and would often arrive several hours late for school (SIMS Data). On the OLP days, punctuality was improved and participants also demonstrated their resourcefulness by arranging collection on the way to venues, so they wouldn't miss the day. *'The school received a phone call at 09.00 asking if Brandon and Henry could be picked up outside the Supermarket in town because they were running late and didn't want to miss outdoor learning'* (Research diary two). On another day*, 'Brandon arrived at 10.30 having overslept but still came in'* (Research diary one). *Later in the day whilst sitting around a camp fire, Brandon admits that he wouldn't have come into school today if it had been science'* (Research diary one). These examples suggest that participants valued the OLP and were developing trusting relationships with the OPs, explained by their willingness to make collection arrangements.

In addition to the above observations, several examples of participant excitement were captured, hence the inclusion of the theme excitement in the theoretical framework (Figure 8.1). *'On return to school, the head teacher informed me that Aidan was buzzing after his day out, saying it was the best day ever'* (Research diary one) and later in the year after consent was obtained for Aidan to go on a camping trip. *''Th' told Aidan this today, the response was that Aidan leapt out of his seat jumping into the air with his fist held high shouting 'YES'! He was so excited; it was impossible to tell him any more details'* (Research diary two). Towards the end of the OLP, a big breakthrough occurred with Henry, who had shown no interest in anything for the previous eighteen months at school, with

the exception of construction. The first glimmer of interest during the OLP was hinted. *'Henry was very pleased that it was going to be archery today. This is a big step for him to admit that he is interested in something'* (Research diary three). Another incident was captured after a big descent, cycling. *'Today Henry was really animated, talking about how he had missed the fallen branch partly blocking the descent. I had never seen him so excited'* (Research diary three). Questionnaire responses (Appendix 6) were positive and reflected a real enjoyment of learning outside. Participants spoke of a sense of space and freedom that the outdoors gave them. Aidan referred to '*the peace of nature'* (Interview transcripts). Physical activity and walking in nature are important strategies for individual reflection and may have long-term beneficial effects (Henry, 2006). This possibly occurs because people are removed from the pressures of everyday life. Improved well-being in at-risk children in relation to group work conducted in natural settings is also confirmed by Ungar *et al.* (2005).

My data showed that authority figures could create barriers pertaining to participation on the OLP. Aidan was a good example of this phenomena, as a looked after child (LAC) he was the responsibility of the local authority (LA). LAs have to ensure that they act 'to improve the outcomes and actively promote the life chances of children they look after, this is referred to as 'corporate parenting' in recognition that the task must be shared by the whole local authority in partnership with partner agencies along with the parents. The role of the corporate parent is to act as the best possible parent for each child they look after and to take action by speaking out on their behalf, arranging for

appropriate services to meet their needs, standing up for them and representing them as needed, to ensure they grow up in the best way possible' (DfE, 2000, 2.1, p.11). To help the LA carry out its duty towards the child, placements can be arranged with foster carers. 'Foster carers have a challenging and key role to play within a foster care service. They need skill, knowledge, expertise, self-awareness, commitment and the ability to work as part of a team, providing a high quality, effective service to vulnerable children. To undertake this role successfully it is essential that their contribution to improving outcomes for looked after children is appropriately recognised and acknowledged, their status respected and their levels of authority clearly defined so that they can give children in their care a full experience of family life, safeguard them and help them to grow and reach their potential' (*ibid*, 2.4, p.11). The barriers for Aidan related to consent for his participation on the OLP. At times consent was granted, and then subsequently withdrawn*. 'Aidan was really upset at breakfast club because he couldn't go on the OLP today with us'* (Research diary two). The unpredictable nature of consent, in this case, was a way the young persons' foster carers, exerted pressure. When consent was withdrawn, Aidan was in effect, excluded from his entitled curriculum and isolated from his peers. Medical appointments for Aidan were always arranged for the OLP day, again preventing participation in something he clearly enjoyed. This type of barrier that prevents participation in normal and acceptable age-appropriate activities is recognised within The Children Act (1989) Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4 (DfE, 2011). 'Difficulties obtaining permission for sleep-overs is often highlighted as a particular concern by looked after children. Looked after children should as far as possible be granted the same permissions to take part in normal and

acceptable age-appropriate peer activities as would reasonably be granted by the parents of their peers' (*ibid*, 3.17, p.17). To help foster carers the act suggests that: 'In making decisions about whether or not to permit a looked after child to stay overnight with a friend or to have a holiday with their friends or with relatives of their foster carers, or to go on a school trip, foster carers and responsible authorities should consider the following factors:

- Whether there are any relevant restrictions contained for exceptional reasons in the child's care plan, including the placement plan.
- Whether there are any court orders, which restrict the child from making a particular overnight stay, visit or holiday.
- Whether there are any factors in the child's past experiences or behaviour, which would preclude the overnight stay, visit or holiday.
- Whether there are any grounds for concern that the child may be at significant risk in the household concerned or from the activities proposed.
- The age and level of understanding of the child concerned.
- What is known about the reasons for the overnight stay, visit or holiday?
- The length of the stay. (*ibid*, 3.19, p.17)

Exclusion by school leadership was acknowledged as another form of withdrawn consent. Unlike other categories of SEN, learners with SEBD are often excluded on the grounds of their SEN. *'The previous day in school there had been some disruptive behaviour from many of the year groups, in response to the change of Headteacher I suspect. As a result, the Headteacher decided to exclude Brandon, Henry and Declan for two days'* (Research diary two). Later in the same year *'Declan was placed on a reduced timetable due to the extremeness of his behaviour.*

This will mean he misses the OLP in the future' (Research diary three). Each incidence of exclusion resulted from the participants' SEN. Learners with SEBD can present extreme behaviour and it is understandable that school leaders choose to exclude. On occasions, outdoor practitioners felt that certain participants presented significant absconding risks, meaning it would be difficult to ensure participant safety. Ignoring such risks would be negligent, but inclusive strategies could be developed to prevent exclusion, such as developing areas of school grounds for outdoor learning where possible.

Further barriers to participation on the OLP included illness, this is inevitable and issues with transport to school. *'Calum not in today, he has had some sort of issue over transport to school'* (Research diary three) and '*Brandon and Henry have returned to school today (one week after school break ended) there has been some concern over incidents on the estate that they live on, concerning them and they were worried that there might be repercussions of this on the public transport they now use to get to school'* (Research diary two). A home crisis was also identified as a barrier to participation and prevented one participant attending residentials.

Final Stage: Developing a Theory

Theory or abstract knowledge can be developed as an account regarding a group of facts or phenomena' (Grbich, 2007, p.186). The above data revealed the influences affecting participation in outdoor learning for young people with SEBD and the relationship between alternative curricula and school attendance.

The findings are presented diagrammatically (Figure 8.1) as a theoretical framework representative of the themes that emerged during literature review and data analysis. Actions that prevented participation are termed barriers while themes encouraging participation are termed, enablers. The theme **activity choice** is floating, because the type of activity had both enabling and barrier qualities. Hill walking was strongly disliked, possibly because it provided the greatest physical challenge, but a climb to the summit of Cader Idris was chosen as the final challenge of the OLP and all that attended the final residential succeeded. Other activities moved in and out of favour as the year progressed, the weather changed or the mood of the participants altered.

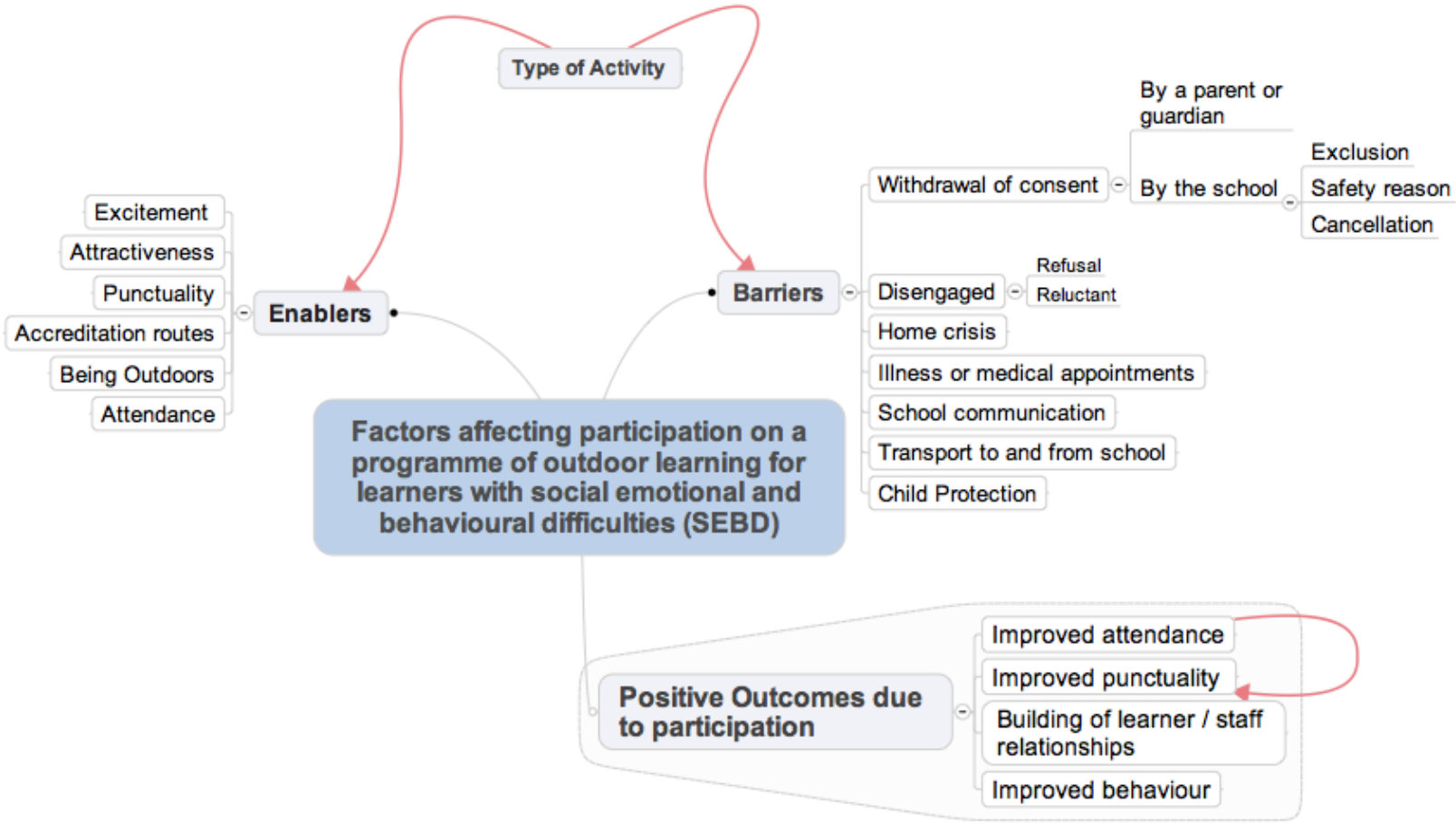


Figure 8.1 A Model Representing the Barriers and Enablers to Participation in Outdoor Learning.

8.3 Summary

The participants looked forward to the OLP and it remained a positive part of their whole school experienced curriculum. The positivity of the participants was noticeable in the areas of improved attendance, improved punctuality, increased efforts to make it into school on the days of OLP, moments of excitement and improved behaviour on the OLP.

The young people faced many barriers to their participation in the OLP, outside their SEN. External barriers related to transport issues, home crises, medical appointments booked for the day of the OLP and withdrawal of consent by primary caregivers. Internal barriers included exclusion and the cancellation of the OLP when participant numbers were low. These were regarded as forms of withdrawn consent because the outcome for the participant was the same. Schools and primary caregivers should consider ways of increasing participation rather than creating further barriers that significantly impact upon the young people the OLP intervention was designed for. 'Aidan *was really upset at breakfast club because he can't go on outdoor ed. today with us. His guardians are still preventing him attending outdoor learning.'* At the end of the school day, *'the school medical assistant told me that Aidan had begged her and also the Headteacher to try to resolve the situation for him'* (Research diary two).

Two participants dropped out of the OLP, possibly because of the type of activity, although as a recent entrant to the school, it is more likely that the cause is

attributable to limited group affiliation. The late entry onto the OLP also placed him at an acclimatisational disadvantage having missed earlier progressive activities.

These findings are confirmed (Hallam *et al.*, 2007, 2010) and acknowledge the complexity of factors affecting school attendance. Although this research suggests that school attendance can be improved by offering alternative types of learning provision, even if improvements are limited to the days that alternative programmes are offered.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Introduction

The research project began as a way of resolving my own professional value conflict in relation to an outdoor learning curriculum for learners with SEBD. Prior to this project, the school that the research was situated in had undergone a major curriculum change to improve learner engagement in education. The curriculum initiative was split into morning and afternoon sessions. The mornings retained a strong focus on the teaching and learning of traditional subjects like English, maths and science, and the afternoon sessions offered more creative activities; arts, various sports, technology and outdoor learning. The choice of activities changed each half term.

Following major changes to the school leadership, the new initiative was abandoned after only one term and the school curriculum reverted back to its previously more traditional model. Outdoor learning could have easily been withdrawn from the curriculum during this revision, but it survived and regular participation for the learners was able to continue. Although outdoor learning was secure on the curriculum, any specific purpose for its inclusion remained unclear, other than the school's leadership considered it should be beneficial with arguments fluctuating between reward; confidence building; physical skill development; gaining awards; and an alternative to physical education.

The lack of specific purpose for outdoor learning was frustrating. So to provide some initial purpose, outdoor learning sessions were based on the syllabi of various awards. The curriculum that developed quickly showed its inadequacy. Learning how to navigate with increasing degrees of complexity as required for a skills award by an accreditation body, was too demanding a task for young people who simply couldn't get along with each other and became extremely frustrated at the slightest of things. It became apparent that a different focus was necessary.

Although it was difficult to teach skill development to the learners, there were sufficient improvements amongst some to gain Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA) unit awards in mountain biking and orienteering. What became apparent was that skill development was not a priority for them, although the physical challenge that learning outdoors presented was enjoyed. When outdoor learning was first introduced onto the school curriculum, the social and emotional skills of the learners were not sufficiently developed enough to value technical skill enhancement. But knowing the young people enjoyed the physical challenges of outdoor learning suggested the approach could form the basis of an interventional strategy with the purpose of improving social and emotional learning (SEL) skills. An intervention of this type would hopefully be more beneficial to the young people as improved SEL skills have been shown to improve academic performance (Bridgeland *et al.*, 2013).

Before further changes to the outdoor learning curriculum were decided upon or implemented, I realised that the application of a research framework would provide a way of empirically understanding the situation. Two factors influenced

the choice of research approach: the first related to my awareness that outdoor learning sessions could be more significant to the young people in the longer term and the second was that a change of emphasis from skill acquisition to social and emotional learning was inevitable. The choice to use action research (AR) enabled me to better understand the situation, my role within it, to gain new knowledge specific to the situation and implement and develop theory specific to the research context.

Both the research and the outdoor learning programme were framed around the question: Can participation in outdoor learning improve the social and emotional learning skills of secondary age learners with SEBD? In order to address the research question, an initial literature review was conducted. The review considered literature specific to outdoor learning interventions applied to SEBD or equivalent populations. McCormack's (2003) application of structuration theory (Giddens, 1985) introduced a useful framework for understanding the causations of social emotional and behavioural difficulties and exploring the impact of outdoor learning interventions from the perspectives of agency and structure.

The research recognised that human activity is intrinsically situated within cultural, political and societal structures that are open to examination through the concepts of agency and structure. Individuals or agents have the capacity to act either on their own or collectively with others. Agency is concerned with the decision-making ability of individuals and the way circumstance or other agents influence capability. Structuration theory has particular definitions of 'structure'

and ‘system’. The concept of ‘structure’, rather than being external to the action of human agents refers to a set of rules or resources that human agents draw upon to enact social practices (Ashley, 2010). ‘Structure, then, becomes the medium for a social practice (agents employing rules and resources) as well as the outcome of a social practice (the enactment of which leads to the continuation of structure)’ (*ibid.*, p.341). Structures can be knowingly or unknowingly reproduced via routines and rituals that are often taken for granted or remain unquestioned (Hardcastle *et al*., 2005). The concept of ‘system' however, refers to social practices gaining permanence through repetition. Actors’ repeat routines and rituals across time and space until the pattern becomes a taken for granted feature of social life (Ashley, 2010). A central idea within structuration theory is that the rules and resources employed to create social practices are at the same time the means of system reproduction, this being termed the ‘duality of structure’ (Giddens, 1984, p.19). The term structuration is therefore understood to mean the ‘structuring of social relations across time and space, in virtue of the duality of structure (*ibid.*, p.376).

Following the brief synopsis above that explained the reasons for conducting research into SEL augmentation. The next section summarises action cycles one and two.

9.2 Action Cycle One

The starting point for the research was to establish if there was an actual need to implement further change to the outdoor learning curriculum. It was, therefore, important to eliminate any possible personal influences that I might have had

and focus on empirically grounded facts. Following an audit of the educational outcomes contained within each learner's statements of special educational need, support for change was confirmed. Common association grouped the combined educational outcomes of all the participants and it was found that they replicated the core elements of SEL (Bridgeland *et al.*, 2013).

Having established via the audit that a change of focus would address the learning needs of the young people, further literature pertaining to social and emotional learning, social pedagogy and curriculum was sought. The three areas became interwoven in the delivery of the OLP, thus making it difficult to separate them. The pedagogic practice used within the OLP became consistent with the principles of social pedagogy, through an emphasis on group work, practitioners were able to share in activities and spark reflective moments when possible, these practices are important for achieving a holistic development of the young person. To facilitate this kind of pedagogic practice, a new approach to curriculum had to be developed.

A curriculum is generally considered as, 'all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried out in groups or individually, inside or outside the school' (Kelly, 2004, p.7). Reflections on different curriculum approaches revealed the skills based curriculum I was initially delivering was a transmission model, whereby knowledge was seen as something to be passed on and progress could be easily monitored. A curriculum of this type is valuable to schools because it provides a mechanism for demonstrating progress to outside agencies and is easily quantifiable. However, this approach was irrelevant

because it failed to meet either the learning objectives contained within each statement of special educational need or the social and emotional needs of the young people. A more helpful model for curriculum is praxis; this involved planned actions that are other seeking (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). Actions within the OLP were intended to help each learner augment their SEL skills, even though this would have been more difficult to quantify to outside agencies.

Although the universal teaching of SEL has been criticised for reducing young person's emotional lives to mere checklists (Humphrey, 2013) and for promoting deficit models that suggest young people cannot function properly unless they are taught about emotions and feelings (Ecclestone, 2007). The criticisms were not considered relevant to the research context because the young people exhibited difficulties relating to each other, forming positive friendships and maintaining positive self-images.

Action cycle one concluded in the knowledge that the intended action of creating an outdoor learning curriculum based around SEL skill augmentation not only provided a way of meeting some of the educational outcomes of the statements of special educational need, improving SEL skills would benefit the young people in the longer term. These confirmations initiated the start of action cycle two; the planning, delivery and evaluation of the OLP that began at the start of the new academic year.

9.3 Action Cycle Two

Planning began six months prior to the commencement of the OLP. The first achievement was in the gaining of an increase in the time allocated to outdoor learning, from one afternoon a week per half term, to one whole day a week for a year. This opened up a greater range of learning activities and venues. But more importantly allowed practitioners to have more time to spend with the participants, who may have had the need to form interpersonal attachments to develop a sense of security, consistent with child attachment, small group and social pedagogic practices.

Providing a focused outdoor learning curriculum was a break from the normal way schools traditionally provided outdoor learning. The more common approach was to take young people away to residential outdoor centres. This has been criticised because centres offering outdoor education are more commonly located away from urban conurbations where social deprivation tends to be more prevalent (McCormack, 2003). In response, two suggestions are proposed, 'by going somewhere different, young people can adjust their horizons and see a wider perspective of opportunities presented in society' (*ibid.*, p.165). The second is to locate outdoor education programmes within areas of high social deprivation, such as the former Option Zero programme at the Ackers Trust in Birmingham (Hopkins and Putnam, 1993).

The OLP combined the two approaches in order to gain the best of both positions. The approach was also used in a similar programme in Cumbria,

locally occurring learning activities were blended with residential opportunities further afield (Stoddart, 2004). This was done to strengthen friendships and allowed learners to gain a wider perspective on their lives.

Planning began with the development of an overview divided into six sections, each section representing a half term of a school year. Splitting the programme this way, enabled a targeted approach, sustaining learner interest and allowing progression. Different activities were used each half term to provide variation and reflected the learning theme. Programme aims and learning outcomes based around SEL were also identified. Residential elements were programmed one per term and were used to conclude a stage of the OLP before a holiday period. Each residential was designed to be progressive so that anxiety could be reduced.

The implementation of the OLP was monitored through an emergent data collection process, due to the immediate need to begin the OLP in the new academic year. The start date placed considerable time constraints on the project, so planning and delivery were the initial priorities of the early sessions. As the year progressed, data collection methods were constructed and refined. Video capture and reflective diary keeping proved to be the most useful data capture methods because they both freed the practitioner from the data collection role. Further comment on data collection and analysis methods is contained in Section 9.6.

The second action cycle was concerned with the implementation of the OLP (the action). The constant comparative method was employed as a data analysis tool to provide an evaluation of the action. Two distinct areas were considered: SEL augmentation through participation in outdoor learning; and learner attendance on the OLP was used as an indicator of engagement with the programme. These two areas are discussed in the following sections.

9.4 Theoretical Considerations for SEL Augmentation through Participation in a Long Duration Outdoor Learning Programme

SEL skills are regarded as fundamental for life effectiveness, they are social and emotional in nature and relate both to intrapersonal (ability to control one's own behaviour or emotions) and interpersonal (the way one interacts with others)(Humphery, 2013). Social and emotional learning in common with outdoor learning is concerned with human activity and is, therefore, open to the hidden influences of cultural, political and / or societal structures. The reliance on human activity meant that structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) was well placed to offer a fresh perspective on SEL augmentation.

Over the duration of the OLP, the SEL skills of the participants improved noticeably. The reliance of working with others during outdoor learning tasks meant the participants developed both inter- and intra-personal skills. Through a theme reduction process, the SEL skills: agreement; contributing; responsibility; planning; problem solving; coping with difficult situations outside individual control; and alternative perspective were identified as been in process

during outdoor learning tasks. To help the SEL skills become permanent, repetition was encouraged across time and space in each additional learning task. Applying structuration theory, operational SEL skills correspond to social practices, the augmentation of which was found to positively influence the social system of the participant group.

The response framework developed in chapter eight demonstrates the significance of reflexive monitoring in the process of augmenting existing social practices or forming new social practices. A combined improvement in social practice across individuals within a group can directly influence the overall operant social system of the group. Positive feedback reinforces new social practices, but repeated negative feedback when combined with weak affiliation to a participant group can be a contributing cause of programme drop out.

9.5 Theoretical Considerations for Improving School Attendance

The OLP was a positive component of the research participants' whole school curriculum. This was demonstrated through the higher attendance of some learners on the days of the OLP. Also worthy of comment was the increased efforts by some participants to make it into school on Tuesdays, so they didn't miss OLP sessions.

The research revealed that many barriers to participation in the OLP existed outside of individuals' special educational needs. External barriers related to transport issues, home crises, the scheduling of medical appointments and

withdrawal of consent by caregivers. Internal barriers included the exclusion of participants from OLP sessions and the cancellation of the OLP when participant numbers were low, due to absence. Exclusions of this nature are similar to withdrawn consent causing the learner to forego participation in an interventional strategy that they enjoy and engage with. In light of this, schools and primary caregivers need to be conscious of their role in creating further barriers that significantly impact upon the young people for whom interventions are designed.

Two participants did not complete the year on the OLP. One dropped out of the programme, possibly because of anxiety over the type of activities, or because of a weak affiliation to the participant group. The learner in this case, had transferred from another school, a term into the academic year. The second participant was effectively barred from participation on the OLP due to a reduction in the timetable as a result of behaviours that became increasing difficult to manage within the school.

The research contributed to overall improvements in school attendance, demonstrating the important role that alternative types of learning provision play in improving attendance and hence the life outcomes of young people with SEBD. The factors affecting school attendance remain complex but in agreement with Hallam *et al.* (2007, 2010) alternative learning programmes of which the OLP can be considered, have a role to play in improving school attendance even if it is limited to the day's alternative curricula are offered.

9.6 Critique of the Methodology

Action research is a common research method in the field of education (Herr and Anderson, 2005) and used by practitioner / researchers operating within their own research contexts. AR made it possible to empirically understand the research situation through my own reflexive action. The AR process relied on the questions and problems that arose from my own perception working inside my local context and through intervention and testing, desired change was affected.

AR is unique as a research approach because it is context bound and involves action that is designed to change local situations. For these reasons AR sits outside of the two main research paradigms, but is located within an emerging approach to educational research, the paradigm of critical educational research. Habermas (1971) influenced critical educational research through his recognition that knowledge and human interest remain inseparable from each other. The view contradicts objectivity as the only valid way of producing knowledge, requiring the researcher's bias to be separate from the research situation. Instead, Habermas argues that through a process of self-reflection the illusion of researcher neutrality is shattered (Herr and Anderson, 2005). Therefore, AR cannot be truly objective as claimed of research conducted within a positivistic paradigm, but the presence of the researcher within the research process inevitably influences elements of the research through insider knowledge that may remain hidden to outsiders.

To counteract any claims of subjectivity, a reflexive approach (Webb, 1992) was adopted throughout the research, requiring continuous reflection on the reactions of the research participants, my own actions and on the data collection and analysis processes. It has also been argued that the solitary reflective teacher is blind to reflection about how to change (Elliott, 1991). While it is acknowledged that this research project was my own work, I challenge this viewpoint by suggesting that through interactions with research participants, academic supervisors and the research process, the work should not be regarded as solitary. Instead, the process was continually re-defined and refined during a process of self-reflection on practice. In addition elements of the research were opened up to independent scrutiny, via a peer review process, prior to publication (Price, 2015).

Data collection and analysis methods emerged to meet the demands of changing situations throughout the OLP. The data collected was mostly qualitative and obtained via video capture; questionnaires; semi -structured interviews; focus group; unstructured observation; and research diaries. While some of these data collection methods were well reported, the use of video capture was underrepresented in the literature. Therefore, an exploratory approach was adopted towards data capture and data analysis. The use of video recording equipment for the data collection also allowed me to re-visit the data over the duration of the project. A video camera's presence amongst learners will inevitably change the actions and affect the discussion of the participants. The presence of the camera went mostly undetected and when learners played up to the camera, it was ignored in order to reduce the reaction. Sharing the

captured video with the learners during reflection sessions further reduced camera reaction. While it has to be acknowledged that the presence of a video camera will inevitably affect the research. It did allow me to collect data that might not have been possible because of my teaching activities. The video also allowed me to study the body language of learners in relation to the dialogue and it allowed transcription of narrative, the, who said what, and when, much more accurately.

The collection of quantitative data allowed participant attendance on the OLP to be monitored. This was useful for making a comparison between whole school attendances and attendances on the OLP. However, because of the small participant group size, the data is not significant enough to generalise beyond the research context. Emergent approaches are consistent with the AR process because it lacks specific fixed data collection methods; rather any choice is about suitability to the specific situation under scrutiny.

9.7 Limitations of the Research

A multitude of research approaches could have been adopted to report on the inception and progress of the OLP, with each having the potential to reveal different knowledge. An ethnographic approach would have provided greater insight into the participant experience or the practices and motivations of the outdoor practitioners. An evaluative approach would have yielded quantitative data, making it possible to quantify precise differences in SEL skills resulting from participation in outdoor learning. Whilst recognising the potential of each

approach to provide different insights, both approaches would not have resolved my initial professional conflict that initiated the enquiry. The research began as a personal desire to improve the lives of young people with SEBD. The early part of the research required evidence gathering and knowledge seeking which lead to the implementation of the OLP. The latter part of the research was concerned with the evaluation of the OLP and the development of a theoretical framework attributing SEL augmentation to the production of new social systems.

An original aspiration for the research was to provide greater reflection on personal practice within outdoor learning. The small scale of the study made collecting suitable data difficult and data collection often conflicted with the practitioner role of the researcher. For future studies, two possible ways forward exist: the first would be to create a partnership with other practitioners working in similar situations. Collaborative working would allow the development and sharing of common practice and also provide a platform for further research into SEL augmentation. The second would be to engage outsider researchers with a view to illuminating specific pedagogic practice employed by outdoor practitioners working outside the classroom.

9.8 Implications of the Research and Future Areas for Research

Although this research is specific to an SEBD context it has implications beyond the research context. The research is applicable not only to school-based interventions but also to outdoor service providers who would like to appeal to the special educational needs sector.

Outdoor learning has been shown to be an effective medium in which young people can develop their social and emotional learning skills (Price, 2017 unpublished Doctorial Thesis). Such skills are enhanced during active situations that rely on working together with others. Through supportive outdoor learning programmes, young people can be assisted to augment existing SEL skills. A combination of improvements to SEL skills within other group members gives rise to a positive change within the overall operant social system of the group. This has direct implications for schools that want to improve behaviour within teaching groups or build effective skills for life within their learners.

Beyond the school context, providers of alternative curricula such as outdoor learning providers, social work, youth or probation services could benefit from implementing long-term outdoor learning interventions into their current practices. Outdoor learning proved to be an attractive approach to challenging young people (Price, 2015) and therefore, provides a way of augmenting the SEL skills required for appropriate interactions with others.

The attractiveness of alternative curriculum initiatives of which the OLP was an example has been shown to improve school attendance, although improvements were limited to alternative curriculum days. There is no reason to suspect that gains in attendance on other interventional programmes cannot be replicated. Curriculum planners should, therefore, be encouraged to design curricula that engage learners not stimulated by conventional curricula. Those with management responsibility for young learners should recognise their own role

in creating barriers to participation and instead seek to ensure enabling practices to increase overall participant engagement on interventional programmes. Having suggested implications for the research to a wider context of youth support, the next section recommends future areas of development that would allow a greater understanding of SEL skill augmentation.

The role of the practitioner in supporting SEL skill augmentation remains misunderstood. SEL skills because of their social component rely on human interaction that suggests practitioners are significant within the process. To negate some of the issues experienced within this study, it may be better to conduct research from an outsider perspective. This has the advantage that a researcher would be distanced from practice within any programme, freeing them to collect data specific to practice.

The research showed that certain SEL skills are augmented through participation in outdoor learning. The collective acquisition of SEL skills by individuals' influenced the social structures employed by the group. None of the practitioners with the OLP were trained in therapeutic techniques or SEL education. However, because of the significance of social interaction the OLP practitioners wondered if SEL acquisition could be enhanced through access to counselling of cognitive behavioural therapy. Future research could, therefore, conclude if the use of such therapies could assist in the acquisition of SEL skills in SEBD populations.

An area considered at the literature review stage, but subsequently not followed up, was neuroscience. Limited research (Steinberg, 2008) has tried to establish if

an increase in adolescent risk-taking behaviour was related to increases in reward sensitivity in the social-emotional brain system. This growing field has the potential to demonstrate the effects on the brain of specific interactions and as such, might have the potential to establish the affect of participation in outdoor learning programmes.

An important follow-on from this research would be to consider ways that the advances in SEL skills of the participant group could be transferred to other areas of education. It may be possible to replicate some of the processes of outdoor learning inside the classroom through group work or cooperative learning approaches. If this were possible then any gains in SEL skills achieved through participation in outdoor learning, could be further enhanced, greatly improving the chances of them becoming permanent skills used throughout the remainder of the participant's life.

A final recommendation for any future research is to consider if an intervention similar to the OLP could be effective with other young people categorised with special educational needs other than SEBD. This could include; young people with moderate learning difficulties, or autistic spectrum disorders. Research specific to these groups of learners could be useful in identifying differences required in personal practices, any possible amendments to learning activities or acclimatisation processes.

9.9 Concluding Comments

The motivation for this study arose from a personal value conflict concerning the applicability of an outdoor learning curriculum to learners with SEBD. The curriculum prior to commencing this research focused on skill development in a variety of outdoor activities, such as mountain biking; orienteering or climbing. Completing awards allowed the school to provide evidence of progress to outside agencies. However, the awards were meaningless to the learners, who were required to develop new or existing skills in each activity. This was difficult to achieve because at that point in their education they were not socially or emotionally able to purposefully engage in the coaching process of specific skill acquisition.

What was required was an outdoor learning curriculum that allowed the young people to enhance their social and emotional abilities, so that they could become more successful learners in the future. Discrepancy over this purpose became the inspiration for developing the OLP. What remains, now that my personal value conflict has been resolved, is to continue to seek social pedagogic practices that support the development of social and emotional learning. So that young people can be prepared for everyday life. I also hope that I might inspire other practitioners to embrace social pedagogic practices, that bring education and care together in order to provide a holistic education to the young people they educate.

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