

Group Interaction in the 'Outdoor Classroom': the Process of Learning in Outdoor Education

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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Abstract

This research is concerned with the educational process within an outdoor centre involving groups of primary school children. It studies group interaction between the participants in a natural setting by taking a holistic approach, giving an account of their outdoor learning experience in the context of a group. It appears that there is little focus on groups in the outdoors, even though most outdoor programmes involve groups. Most of the research done on groups is quantitative and laboratory based. Such traditional approaches have been challenged, as empirical limitations and theoretical problems have been identified. It is argued that a study of group interactions within a natural environment, such as the outdoor classroom, would allow for a more insightful understanding of the phenomena involved, and it could also shed light on the outdoor educational process, which has been neglected by research in outdoor education. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews were used as part of an ethnographic approach. This enabled the collection of varied data, which resulted in a thick description of the phenomena explored.

The findings show that the concept of team building is central to the philosophy of the outdoor centre and of its staff. The activities, which are used as learning tools, are group orientated. Teamwork is seen as essential for the learning experience at the outdoor centre. The study also revealed that the different approaches of the participants influenced the way learning was constructed. The two main themes that have emerged were empowerment and control. The empowering approaches offered support and encouragement to the participants, allowing for collaboration and co-operation to exist between them, which enabled learning to be more effective. The controlling approaches were characterised by a lack of dialogue between the participants, which interfered with the learning experience, by not creating an environment where the participants could work together as a group. A social aspect of learning was thus identified, which emphasised the importance of viewing learning as a joint process. The research shows that a well-designed process does not always result in the participants achieving the 'desired learning outcomes'. The teachers/facilitators need to be aware of the impact that their approach may have on the learning experience of the participants.

Table of contents

Abstract	i
Table of contents	ii
Table of Figures	vii
Tables	viii
Acknowledgements	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter One: Groups and the Outdoors: An Overview of Research in Outdoor Education	9
1.1. Why a Study of Groups and Group Interactions in the Outdoors?	9
1.2. Reviewing Research in Outdoor Education	10
Chapter Two: Exploring the Theoretical Framework of Outdoor Education	24
2.1. Experiential Learning	25
2.2. Outdoor Learning	27
2.3. Outdoor Adventure Education	29
2.4. The Outdoor Classroom	33
Chapter Three: The Socio-psychological Approach on Groups	35
3.1. Understanding the Concept in Socio-psychological Terms	36
3.2. Group Formation	38
3.3. Traditional Views on Group Development	45
3.4. The Social Identity Approach on Groups	48
Chapter Four: Classroom Interaction and Its Relevance to Group Interaction in the Outdoor Classroom	60
4.1. Classroom Interaction	61
4.2. Symbolic Interactionism	65
4.3. Dialogic Talk	69

Chapter Five: Looking at Group Interaction through an Ethnographic Spectrum – A Methodological Overview.....	73
5.1. Why a Qualitative Approach? And Why Ethnography?.....	73
5.2. Foreshadowed Problems	79
5.3. Research Design.....	83
5.4. The Researcher as Human Instrument	86
5.4.1. Indwelling	87
5.4.2. Reflexivity.....	89
5.4.3. The Interpretive Approach	91
5.4.4. Emic and Etic Perspectives	92
Chapter Six: Being in the Field.....	96
6.1. Gaining Access.....	97
6.2. Ethical Considerations	100
6.2.1. Overt Versus Covert.....	100
6.2.2. Issues of Consent, Confidentiality and Anonymity	102
6.3. Participant Observation.....	103
6.3.1. Criteria for Selecting Participants and Description of Participating Schools	107
6.3.2. Being There.....	113
6.3.3. Researcher’s Roles	117
6.3.4. Field Relations	119
6.4. Interviews.....	122
6.5. Issues Surrounding the Credibility of the Research.....	125
6.6. Thick Description or the Ethnographic Tale.....	128
Chapter Seven: Data Analysis Procedures.....	131
7.1. Identifying Cultural Domains	134
7.2. Constructing Taxonomies	135
7.3. Componential Analysis of the Cultural Domains	137
7.4. Identifying Recurrent Themes	138
Chapter Eight: The Educational Setting: Locating the ‘Classroom’.....	140
8.1. Aims and Objectives of the Centre	140
8.2. The Staff.....	142

8.3.	The Setting	145
8.4.	The Activities	146
8.5.	The Structure and Organisation of the Programmes at the Centre.....	147
Chapter Nine: Perspectives on the Outdoor Educational Process.....		159
9.1.	Organisational Perspectives	159
9.2.	Facilitator Perspectives	162
9.2.1.	Facilitator Views on Possible Learning Outcomes	163
9.2.2.	Perceived Qualities of a ‘Good’ Facilitator	166
9.2.3.	Facilitator Perspectives on Teachers.....	167
Chapter Ten: Analysing Participant Approaches.....		170
10.1.	Teacher Approaches.....	171
10.1.1.	The Safety Conscious Teachers	171
10.1.2.	The Controllers	172
10.1.3.	The Detached Teachers	173
10.1.4.	The Sympathisers	178
10.2.	The Pupil Approaches	180
10.2.1.	The Strong Characters.....	180
10.2.2.	The Sympathisers	181
10.2.3.	The Emotionals	182
10.2.4.	The Outsiders	183
10.2.5.	The Independents	186
10.3.	The Facilitator Approaches	189
10.3.1.	The Detached	189
10.3.2.	The Controllers	190
10.3.3.	The Approachables	191
Chapter Eleven: The Educational Process in the Outdoor Classroom.....		194
11.1.	Empowering Approaches in the Outdoor Classroom	196
11.1.1.	A Sense of Ownership and Reflective Thinking in the Outdoor Classroom.....	198
11.1.2.	Co-operation and Collaboration in the Outdoor Classroom	207
11.1.3.	Self-control in the Outdoor Classroom	211
11.2.	Controlling Approaches in the Outdoor Classroom.....	215

11.2.1. Order and Instructions in the Outdoor Classroom	216
11.2.2. Lack of Self-control	224
Chapter Twelve: The Social Aspect of Learning within the Outdoor Classroom ...	232
12.1. The Social Aspect of Learning: Social Learning – Theoretical Considerations.....	232
12.2. Social Constructionism and Socio-cultural Learning Theory	233
12.3. A Socio-cultural Perspective on Learning within the Outdoor Classroom	235
Chapter Thirteen: Conclusions.....	243
13.1. Introduction.....	243
13.2. Theoretical Considerations for a Study of Groups and the Social Aspect of Learning in the Outdoor Classroom	243
13.3. The Social Aspect of Learning at the Outdoor Centre.....	245
13.4. The Impact of the Participant Approaches on the Outdoor Experience – The Social Aspect of Learning in the Outdoor Classroom	246
13.5. Considering the Implications of an Ethnographic Approach.....	249
13.6. Suggestions for Further Research	250
References	252
Appendix 1 –Description of Activities at the Outdoor Centre (Formal Documents)	299
Appendix 2 – Description of Activity Areas and of Activities Based on Researcher’s Observations.....	309
Appendix 3 – Programme Timetables for Visiting School Groups	313
Appendix 4 – Letters to the Outdoor Centre Regarding Consent	326
Appendix 5 – Letter of Consent from the Outdoor Centre	328
Appendix 6 – Teacher Consent Form	329
Appendix 7 – ‘The Non-formal Education through Outdoor Activities Project’ Article.....	330

Appendix 8 – Questions for Interviews with Staff at the Outdoor Centre.....	332
Appendix 9 – Cultural Domains Identified in the Data Analysis Process	334
Appendix 10 – Kinds of Teachers Taxonomy Diagram	337
Appendix 11 – Kinds of Activities Taxonomy Diagram	338
Appendix 12 – Kinds of Pupils Taxonomy Diagram.....	340
Appendix 13 – Kinds of Pupil Leadership Taxonomy Diagram	341
Appendix 14 – Kinds of Facilitators Taxonomy Diagram.....	342

Table of Figures

Figure 1	Kolb's experiential learning cycle	26
Figure 2	The ingredients of outdoor adventure.....	31
Figure 3	The management structure of the centre.....	144

Tables

Table 1	Six Generations of Facilitation	32
Table 2	An Overview of the Visiting School Groups	343
Table 3	Paradigm Worksheet: Componential Analysis of Kinds of Teachers (Binary Values)	344
Table 4	Paradigm Worksheet: Componential Analysis of Kinds of Activities (Binary Values)	345
Table 5	Paradigm Worksheet: Complete Componential Analysis for Kinds of Activities	346

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Introduction

The main aim of this research is to study group interaction within a natural educational setting, by taking a holistic research approach, which involved describing, discovering, analysing and understanding the interactions that go on within groups of primary school pupils taking part in outdoor activities at an outdoor centre. The study also focuses on the educational process itself by looking at the learning experience of the participants within the outdoor classroom.

There has been a considerable amount of research within formal educational settings, such as schools and universities, however, Delamont (2002: 49) argues that educational research needs to leave the boundaries of the indoor classroom and look at the educational process within other settings, since learning is not limited to the formal setting of the school (see Tight, 1996). Also, the “Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto”, launched by the Ministry of Education, Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in November 2006, emphasises the importance of using other places than the classroom for teaching and learning. Studying the interactions that occur between pupils and teachers in a different environment, such as an outdoor centre, may shed more light on the learning processes that take place during outdoor activities, as the outdoors can provide opportunities that may not be available to the researcher in the indoor classroom.

This research was carried out at a residential outdoor centre, set in the rural surroundings of the English countryside. The centre offers educational programmes for children, young people and adults. The visitors come from youth organisations, schools and corporations. There are also programmes for terminally ill and disabled young people. The programmes provided for the primary school groups were negotiated with the schools themselves, and this ensured, according to the centre and its staff that the particular needs of the groups were met. The teachers conducted some of the activities themselves, however they were provided with a description of the activity by the centre (see Appendix 1).

Because of my experience as a teacher, and my particular interest in primary school education, I decided to focus on the residential programmes provided to primary school groups. Also I would argue that if I had focused on youth at risk or disabled young people, I would have moved away from what I initially set out to study, i.e. group interactions and the outdoor educational process. Moreover, although I consider sex and gender differences an important issue in education, I did not specifically look at interaction in terms of gender, as this did not emerge as a significant category in the data. Thus I explored how the interactions between the participants taking part in outdoor activities influenced the outdoor learning experience. By observing how various groups of pupils were facilitated, I wanted to shed light on how pupils learned in the outdoors, which has not been given the attention it deserves in the outdoor education literature.

Since I was studying an educational process, since the interactions were taking place in an educational setting, and since the participants were facilitators, teachers and pupils, I have referred to the research setting as the outdoor classroom, a term used by Rickinson *et al.* (2004).

It has been suggested that research within the field of outdoor education has not paid sufficient attention to the educational process itself, focusing mostly on outcomes (Beames, 2004). Rickinson *et al.* (2004: 56) point out that research needs to be aimed more at the process and the social interactions between the participants, as these represent some of the 'blank spots' within research in outdoor education (see also Beames, 2004 and Seaman, 2007). This study attempts to fill in some of these blank spots by gaining an insight into the outdoor learning experience and by moving away from the traditional focus on the individual (Seaman, 2007) and recognising the importance of group interaction within the outdoor classroom.

This study started with a particular interest in group processes, however it moved away from traditional socio-psychological theories on the small group and group dynamics, as these have been criticised for their empirical limitations and theoretical problems stemming from their reliance on concepts such as cohesiveness and attraction (see Hogg and Abrams, 1988), which tend to obscure, rather than allow for an understanding of the process. It is argued that a more holistic approach to the

study of groups is needed, an approach that would look at the human group in its natural setting, and not within the controlled environment of the laboratory. Educational research on classroom interaction has closely examined the intricacies of how pupils and teachers communicate with each other and act within the classroom, shedding light on the complex interactions within such groups. Such studies consider the perspectives of both the teachers and the pupils as significant, and essential in order to gain a holistic view of what goes on within the classroom (Pollard, 1985).

Research on classroom interaction is relevant to this study, because group interactions and the educational process are at the centre of both this research and the research on classroom interaction. Also both the indoor and outdoor classrooms are educational settings, and they both host the same participants, i.e. the pupils and the educators. This research has considered the interactions and relationships between all the participants as significant, as they were all part of a group engaging in outdoor activities.

Many of the studies on classroom interaction take an interpretative/qualitative approach with regard to the methodology, which has been argued to allow for a more in-depth understanding of a particular social phenomenon (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The methodological approach of this study is, therefore, qualitatively informed, using the ethnographic tools of participant observations and semi-structured interviews to collect a variety of data. Ethnography puts an emphasis on understanding the perceptions and cultures of the people and organisations studied and this has been quoted as its key strength (see Walford, 2002). Moreover, the ethnographic approach is sensitive to the individual and to the social processes (Davies, 1984; Griffin, 1985; Willis, 1977). Griffin (1985) sees the qualitative analyses of ethnography as a means to understand the experience of individuals in a group context. Ethnography is a sensitive approach that allows the capturing of the process in its wholeness (Fetterman, 1989), and it makes it possible for the researcher to have an insight into other people's experiences.

This research is not concerned with evaluating a particular outdoor education programme, nor does it attempt to test any existing theories, but rather it assumes an

emergent design. This means that my research evolved as my knowledge and understanding increased. The study describes and interprets how primary school children interact with each other and their teachers/facilitators while taking part in outdoor activities at a residential outdoor centre. It is an exploration of the way in which the approaches of the participants impact on the learning experience and group interaction. By examining the ethos and the philosophy of the centre where the research was conducted, and by looking at the perspectives and values of its staff, group work was identified as central to the educational process. Learning to work together, to communicate and acquire transferable skills were seen as important possible learning outcomes by the staff at the centre.

The study analyses how the teachers/facilitators contributed to the learning experience within the group and how their specific approaches influenced the group work. Moreover, it also looks at the approaches that the pupils adopted while taking part in group activities, and how their specific approaches influenced their own ability and the others' to work as a team. Thus participant approaches are examined in great detail and they are used to explain some of the actions of the participants during group work. Control and empowerment emerged as the main themes within the outdoor classroom. Their interplay governs the interactions between the participants in this study and unravels the complexity of the relationships within these particular school groups.

Studies on classroom interaction have identified the teachers' need for control over their classroom (Bellack *et al.*, 1966; Eggleston *et al.*, 1968; Pollard, 1985; Swidler, 1979). This need translates in order and instructions being used at times to manage the situation (Pollard, 1985), which puts the pupils and teachers into different bargaining positions, where the teachers have the upper hand (Delamont, 1983). This is also true for the relationship between the pupils and the facilitators. Dickinson (2005) deconstructs Priest and Gass's (1993) five-generation model in outdoor facilitation and emphasises the dominance of the instructor and the submissiveness of the participant, which stems from the focus on the central role of the facilitator in controlling the experience of the learner. This research examines how controlling practices influenced the learning of the pupils in the outdoor classroom.

Dialogue also plays a significant role in the educational process, since, according to Heaney (1982: 16 cited in Robinson, 1994), it is the way in which knowledge is created and shared. According to Robinson (1994) dialogue can lead to empowerment, which is both a personal and a social process. The research explores how some of the participants adopted empowering approaches, and the impact that these approaches had on the outdoor learning experience.

This study considers the importance of the teachers/facilitators to find a balance between stepping back and getting involved in the group activities, and brings into question whether a well-designed process can ensure that the participants will achieve the desired learning outcomes. This research looks at the impact of the teachers/facilitators' approach on the learning experience of the pupils within the outdoor classroom.

The first chapter of this thesis reviews literature from the field of outdoor education, looking at the main research themes in this area, and the themes that need to be developed further. This chapter emphasises the focus on the individual and on the outcomes within research in outdoor education, and brings to the attention of the reader the limitations that ensue from this, making the point that group interaction and the understanding of the outdoor education process have to be explored to a greater extent.

The second chapter explores the theoretical framework of the concept of outdoor education, which helps towards an understanding of the educational process itself. It presents the different learning theories and philosophies on which outdoor education was built, showing the complexity of the concept. Moreover, the term 'outdoor classroom' is introduced and explained. A description of the learning environment where the study was conducted was seen as appropriate, as it combines elements of formal and non-formal education.

The third chapter pays particular attention to socio-psychological theory and research on groups. It looks at how the small group was defined in socio-psychological terms, and explores the limitations of the traditional approach on the study of groups. It is

suggested that a study of groups within a natural environment would allow for more discovery and insight into group interactions.

The fourth chapter examines educational research on classroom interaction, which provides a description of the group interactions within the natural setting of the indoor classroom. Most of the studies mentioned have used ethnography as a methodological approach, and contribute towards an understanding of the learning experience and the interactions between pupils and teachers. This helps to shed light on the phenomena that take place within the outdoor classroom, and on the outdoor educational process, as both research on classroom interaction and this research explore a learning situation, albeit in a different setting.

The fifth chapter explains the methodology behind the study. It elaborates on the reasons behind choosing a qualitative approach and on what ethnographic research entails.

The sixth chapter describes the fieldwork experience and presents the methods used as part of an ethnographic study, i.e. participant observation and semi-structured interviews, which allowed for varied data to be collected. The ethical considerations involved in conducting an ethnography are also discussed, referring to specific issues that arose as part of this research endeavour. I also consider issues surrounding triangulation and validity, and argue that the application of 'triangulation' is not appropriate to validate ethnographic research, as it applies quantitative criteria to qualitative research, which makes it susceptible to errors. Instead, I attempt to achieve credibility by using thick description, which presents the data in sufficient detail, so as to allow the reader to visualise the world under study.

Chapter seven is dedicated to illustrating the data analysis procedures, which took the form of a thematic approach. This entailed identifying cultural domains, constructing taxonomies, and carrying out a componential analysis of the cultural domains, which led to identifying the components of meaning assigned to the cultural categories. These procedures allowed me to identify recurrent themes within the data, which helped toward understanding the patterns within the outdoor classroom.

The eighth chapter describes the research setting, its physical picture and the ethos. It also introduces the activities and the organisation of the outdoor programmes in which the participants take part. This allows the reader to envisage the outdoor centre as it was at the time of the study and the kind of work that the outdoor centre does with school groups.

Chapter nine introduces the reader to the philosophy of the centre and the perspectives of the staff on the educational process. It brings into focus the concept of team building as central to the learning experience at the centre. It also presents the desired learning outcomes of the centre and its staff, and illustrates the views of the staff on facilitation and teacher intervention.

Chapter 10 examines the different kinds of approaches that the teachers, pupils and facilitators adopt while taking part in group interaction within the outdoor classroom. It illustrates with examples the practices that characterise the participant approaches, and how they relate to each other.

Chapter eleven draws on classroom interaction research and the theories developed from this. The concepts of control and empowerment are considered and related to the findings in this research. The chapter examines how the learning experience is constructed within the group interaction and how the specific approaches of the participants influenced not only the interaction within the group, but also the educational process itself. Within the outdoor classroom, open dialogue between the teachers and the pupils was identified as having an important role in the learning experience. Thus, a dialogue that allows pupils to contribute to the construction of knowledge is seen to have beneficial effects on the learning experience.

Chapter twelve outlines the main themes and issues of the study and considers the findings discussed in chapters eight to eleven. Social constructionism and socio-cultural perspectives on learning contribute to partly explain how learning is constructed through interaction in the outdoor classroom. The chapter points out the importance of the teachers'/facilitators' approaches on the learning experience of the pupils, and that learning can be more effective when collaboration and co-operation are encouraged, and when the specific needs of the pupils are met.

The concluding chapter summarises the theoretical considerations of the thesis on the study of groups. It also discusses the issues surrounding the social aspect of learning uncovered by this research, in relation to existing theories. The findings of the research are brought together, and their significance is emphasised. The implications of an ethnographic approach are taken into account, and suggestions for further research are made.

1. Groups and the Outdoors: An Overview of Research in Outdoor Education

In this chapter I explain why I have chosen to focus on studying groups and particularly why I explored group interaction within outdoor activities. I also look at the kind of research that has been conducted within outdoor education, in order to uncover the extent to which groups have been studied in this field, and how this has been done.

1.1. *Why a Study of Groups and Group Interactions in the Outdoors?*

As I was reading literature about the research done in outdoor education, I noticed that there was a main focus on the individual, that is, most of the research looked at how outdoor activity programmes were aimed at bettering the individual, at providing support for the individual, at educating the individual. However, the vast majority of outdoor activity programmes involved groups: groups of children, groups of teenagers, groups of adults, families, teams and so on.

So, no matter what the programme was trying to do, or no matter what the research was aimed at, it almost always involved groups, but without, for the most part, actually taking into consideration the group factor. I consider that looking at what actually goes on within a group, how the relations within the group affect the learning process, and how group interaction influences the members within the group involved in the activity is a useful and interesting subject of research. Such research would not only provide information about group interaction, which might be transferred to other group contexts, but it could also contribute to learning more about human nature. Focusing on group interaction, means focusing on all the participants involved in the outdoor programme, which could help toward having a more holistic view of their experience and a deeper understanding of the complexity of the outdoor education process.

Groups have been studied extensively in psychology, sociology, and social psychology (see chapter 3). However, most of this research is done from a

positivistic point of view, within a controlled environment, which limits the spectrum of research (cf. Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). With this in mind, I consider the outdoor education environment as a suitable natural setting for the study of group interaction. In my opinion groups have not received the attention that they deserve in outdoor education research, especially when, as mentioned before, groups are more often than not the media through which outdoor activity programmes operate.

Another reason for which groups are an important area of study, and this fits more into the larger scheme of things, is that society in general is made up of a variety of groups, and education in particular, be it in the indoor or outdoor classroom, is about learning in groups, and therefore groups are an undeniable reality within the educational environment. It seems that contemporary research has become overly focused on the individual, without, for the most part, taking into account the importance of groups (see section 1.2).

As mentioned earlier, literature suggests that research in outdoor education has focused very little on groups, even though most outdoor activity programmes and projects do involve groups. In order to support this argument, this chapter looks into more detail at research done in the field of outdoor education. Consequently, I have examined reviews on existing research, by going through conference proceedings and analyses of articles and studies, as well as journals of outdoor education.

1.2. Reviewing Research in Outdoor Education

The purpose of this review is to provide a general perspective of what has been studied in outdoor education so far, and how much of the research conducted focuses on groups and/or group interaction. A review of the literature has shown that concepts such as group dynamics, group norms, group size and leadership are referred to extensively in outdoor education. Outdoor education has adopted a model approach on groups. The most often used model is Tuckman's (1965) *forming, storming, norming, performing* model of team-development, which aims to predict how a group develops. In fact, most of the information on groups is prescriptive, as

the literature provides steps that a facilitator should take towards achieving 'good' teamwork.

Thus, outdoor education tends to use already developed theories from the field of socio-psychology, which I will look at in chapter 3. However I wanted to know if there was any new knowledge about groups being developed by outdoor education research. This overview attempts to provide answers to this question.

Rickinson *et al.*'s (2004) review of research on outdoor learning examines 150 articles published in English between 1993 and 2003. Their review focuses mainly on the impacts of this research, but does offer a very clear picture of what this research has focused on. Thus the literature included in this review encompasses three types of outdoor learning: fieldwork and outdoor visits, outdoor adventure education and school grounds/community projects.

According to Rickinson *et al.* (2004) a considerable number of articles have focused on the declining opportunities for outdoor education in the UK (e.g. Barker *et al.*, 2002; Harris, 1999). However they argue that there is much less published research on the factors that influence this decline, like the fear and concern for the health and safety of the young people (Jacobs, 1996; Simmons, 1998; Michie, 1998; Thomas, 1999), or the school and university curriculum and timetable requirements (Humberstone, 1993a; Michie, 1998; Titman, 1999).

When looking at research that focused on factors influencing students' learning, Rickinson *et al.* (2004) have identified studies exploring:

- ***programme duration*** and how this influences the students' learning (Bogner, 1998; Cason and Gillis, 1994; Emmons, 1997; Hattie *et al.*, 1997; Zelenzny, 1999);
- ***the value of preparatory work*** prior to outdoor learning (Ballantyne and Packer, 2002; Healey *et al.*, 1994);

- *the need for effective follow-up work* after outdoor learning experiences (Farmer and Wott, 1995; Orion and Hofstein, 1994; Pommier and Witt, 1995; Uzzell *et al.*, 1995);
- the importance of *carefully-designed learning activities and assessment* for students' outdoor learning (Ballantyne and Packer, 2002; Clay, 1999; Keighley, 1993; Thom, 2002);
- *the role of the instructors and educators* in facilitating young people's outdoor learning (Boniface, 2000; Openshaw and Whittle, 1993; Neill and Heubeck, 1997; Tucker, 2003);
- the importance of *the structure and format of outdoor learning programmes to be closely aligned with the aims and goals they intend to achieve* (Andrews *et al.*, 2003; Haluza-DeLay, 1999; Russell, 1999; Simpson, 1999).

Moreover, due to a growing recognition within outdoor education research literature of the important role that the learners themselves play in designing outdoor learning, Rickinson *et al.* (2004) have identified several studies that look into students' expectations and experiences of outdoor learning (Ballantyne and Packer, 2002), the manner in which learning outcomes differ between various groups of students (Purdie *et al.*, 2002) and the way in which young people perceive different kinds of learning activities and outdoor contexts (Bixler *et al.*, 1994). More specifically, this research has focused on the factors associated with people that can influence outdoor learning, such as:

- *the age of the participants* (Ballantyne and Packer, 2002),
- *the prior knowledge and experience* (Brody and Tomkiewicz, 2002; Dalton, 2001; Lai, 1999; Russell, 1999),
- *fears and phobias* (Bixler *et al.*, 1994; Bixler and Floyd, 1999; Wals, 1994),
- *learning styles and preferences* (Cottingham and Healey, 2003; Lai, 1999),
- *physical disabilities and special educational needs* (Cooke *et al.*, 1997; Healey *et al.*, 2001)

- *gender* (Hattie *et al.*, 1997; Humberstone, 1993b; Hurtes, 2002; Maguire, 1998;)
- *ethnic and cultural identity* (Purdie and Neill, 1999; Purdie *et al.*, 2002)

Their analysis into the factors that have an impact on outdoor learning goes even further, and brings to attention another theme present in outdoor education research, i.e. the importance of the location of outdoor learning. This is by no means a new theme, but recent studies have put an emphasis on the importance of the setting as a factor affecting student's outdoor learning, as outdoor learning environments can place learning demands and emotional challenges on students (Anderson and Moss, 1993; Bixler *et al.*, 1994; Bixler and Floyd, 1999; Burnett *et al.*, 1996; Orion and Hofstein, 1994; Wals, 1994).

Rickinson *et al.* (2004) emphasise the importance of improving and deepening the understanding of the outdoor learning process based on research and call for more research to be done in certain areas that would help with learning more about how and why programmes work or not. Although they mostly stress the importance of research describing impacts, they do note the need for a better understanding of what goes on within the groups and for more ethnographic research:

“...we would echo others in calling for: more comprehensive descriptions of programmes and interventions; clearer and more fine-grained descriptions of impacts, including the differences within (as opposed to between) groups of students; and the combined use of a range of quantitative and qualitative methods, particularly in the context of observational/ethnographic studies.”
(Rickinson *et al.*, 2004:56)

This statement supports the argument I made at the beginning of this chapter. There is a need for a better understanding of what goes on within groups taking part in outdoor activities. Rickinson *et al.* (2004) also point out that there is some mystery as to how outdoor programmes actually work, with little research focusing on describing the actual process of outdoor learning.

To gain further knowledge concerning research in outdoor education, I, therefore, examined articles that were presented at conferences and congresses on outdoor education. The purpose of this was to go more into detail and try to find out whether there is research that may have, if not a primary, at least a secondary focus on groups.

The collection of papers presented at the “Whose Journeys?” conference (see Humberstone *et al.*, 2003) encompasses a variety of themes and subject areas which have been organised into seven sections: Inclusion and the Outdoors, Philosophy and the Outdoors, Adventure and Society, Outdoor Practitioners, Research and Outdoor Experience, Encountering Nature and Contested Adventures and Identities. Such a variety of themes is also present in the other collections of papers on outdoor education, such as Humberstone and Nicol (2005), EOE (2001), Higgins and Humberstone (1998), and Higgins and Humberstone (1999). I have also included papers presented at the Third International Outdoor Education Research Conference, held in 2006 at the University of Central Lancashire, under the title ‘Widening Horizons: Diversity in Theoretical and Critical Views of Outdoor Education Conference’. All in all, there are 113 papers written by authors from various countries, and English is not necessarily the only language used. Thus, the research examined is not limited to Anglo-Saxon culture, but offers a broader perspective of how outdoor education is seen and used in many parts of the world, including Europe.

Following this examination of various papers, I have identified topics and subject areas that seem to be the most debated within these studies, the ones that have been explored more extensively and more frequently. Since I have had the opportunity to go through these articles thoroughly, I have also looked at the extent to which groups and group interactions are integrated, if at all, in these studies.

Many of the issues present in Rickinson *et al.*'s (2004) review reoccur, such as cultural inclusions/exclusion and ethnicity (see Aitchison, 2003; Anderson and Harris, 2003; Bowles, 1998; Humberstone, 1999; Wong, 1998), the role of the location of the outdoor experience (see Barnes, 2003; Tucker, 2003; Stewart, 2003; White, 1998) or gender differences within the outdoor environment (see Allin, 1998,

2003; Collins, 1998, 2003; Humberstone, 1998b, 2000a, 2001; Lugg, 2003; Pedersen, 2001; Richards, 2003; Spratt *et al.*, 1998), although, in many cases, from different perspectives.

These issues are not only discussed from the point of view of the young person participating in Outdoor Education, but also from the point of view of the facilitator. For instance, gender is not seen just as a 'problem' for the young girls taking part in outdoor activities and trying to 'keep up with the boys', but it is also seen as an issue for women working in the outdoors, seen as a male dominated environment, and their struggle for inclusion and self-identity. Also relating to women in the outdoors, the very sensitive issue of eating disorders and the link between eating disorders and outdoor adventure education is explored (see Richards, 2003; Richards and Allin, 2001).

Another reoccurring theme is the environment and the use of outdoor education in order to raise awareness of the environment and ecological issues (see Cooper, 1999; Higgins, 2003; Higgins and Nicol, 1998; Humberstone, 1998a; Lemmey, 1998; Lugg, 2006; Khan and Fawcett, 2005; Nicol, 2003a; Price, 1999).

In the spirit of celebrating culture diversity, some studies present the outdoor education philosophy and/or specific environments in the researcher's home country (Higgins, 2003; Lynch, 2006; Nerland and Vikander, 2006; Öhman, 2001; Pedersen, 1998, 2001, 2003; Pedersen Gurholt, 2005; Szczepanski, 2001; Stähler, 1998; Stewart, 2006). There are also cultural comparisons exploring the differences and similarities between the practices and/or principles of two countries (Mygind and Boyes, 2001; Stähler, 1998, Stokes, 2006). Festeu and Humberstone (2005) bring to the attention of the reader how the creation of the European Community and the process of globalisation have led to a convergence of cultures, and warn against a tendency for old traditions to be seen as obsolete and replaced with new trends. The issue of old cultural traditions and new trends in outdoor education is also discussed by Becker (2005) and Pedersen Gurholt (2005), situating outdoor education in the larger social context.

A considerable amount of research on outdoor education is based on the concept that the outdoor environment and adventure activities can be used to help the integration of young unemployed women and men (see Kaiser, 2001; Rademacker, 2001) and the social and personal development of young people at risk (Chobeaux, 2001; LeBreton, 2001; Lenartowicz, 2001; Lilley, 1999; Martin and Hardy, 2005; McCornack, 1999; Ruck, 1999; Sudds, 2006). Therapy and group work are considered to be important elements in the development of programmes aimed at youth at risk. Thus developing relationships of trust, co-operation and teamwork are among the aims of such outdoor adventure programmes (Lilley, 1999). Although this research involves groups, they are considered as a therapeutic tool and no attention is paid to group interaction and group processes per se. The individual is the main focus, as the actions are aimed to promote the self-esteem of the individual, self-confidence, self-respect. Teamwork and social skills are encouraged, but they are not explored, nor explained.

In his article on games theory and motivation, Storry (2003) describes the concepts of collective action problem (CAP)¹ and co-operation. Group size is discussed along with frequent significant interaction, contact viscosity and communication. Small group theory is used in order to explain individual motivation behind participation in outdoor adventure activities². Groups are not explored, but rather theoretical concepts regarding groups are being used.

However, this is only one perspective of how group psychology can be integrated into outdoor education. Beringer (2003) in her discussion on dominant forms of adventure and wilderness therapy, states that:

“Human life, all human activities – like therapy and healing – occur embedded in relationships, in social as well as human-nature relationships. At times, these relationships are neglected, disregarded, or refuted – leading to pathology visible in personal, societal and/or environmental crises [...] Given this, and given that the individualistic, atomistic conceptualisation of the self is one

¹ CAP is described as a situation in which “to gain a mutually desirable outcome it is obviously better for all those involved to take one course of action, but in which it is obviously better for any one individual (self, person or group) to take another course of action” (Storry, 2003: 216).

² See chapter 3 for an overview of small group theory.

probable cause of the environmental crisis [...], the relational or ecological self – the self embedded in and defined by human and ‘nature’ relationships – is a more viable conceptualisation for our time [...]" (Beringer, 2003:361)

She argues that adventure therapy recognises the importance of human relations, not only the therapist-client relationship, but also group relations in the outdoors. Nevertheless, her article deals mostly with the therapeutic potential of natural environments and the human-nature relationship, and group relations are only briefly mentioned and not thoroughly explored.

Nevertheless, I did come across a study, which focused mainly on groups and group phenomena. Bergsten and Seger (2001) describe two projects involving first-year and third-year physical education students in Sweden. One of the aims of the projects was to “stress the possibilities of using outdoor education as a setting for understanding organisational and group phenomena” (Bergsten and Seger, 2001:29). In this case, it is not the knowledge about groups, which is being used for the sake of outdoor education, but the other way around, outdoor education is used for understanding group phenomena. Furthermore, Bergsten and Seger (2001) state that:

“Traditionally, physical education and sports tend to focus on **the product and the skill**, whereas our purpose is to present a model of broadening the learning frame by involving learning outcomes such as **the process and the awareness**. These are considered in relation to personal development, organisational and group dynamics (including leadership style) and integrated into the established design and structure of the outdoor education curriculum.”³ (Bergsten and Seger, 2001:29)

Thus this research is based on the traditional concepts of group dynamics and leadership, which limits the spectrum of study and brings no innovations that would contribute to the development of knowledge and understanding about groups. As Rickinson *et al.* (2004) pointed out, there is a need for further research into relationships and interactions within groups, rather than between groups, which can lead to a better understanding of individual behaviour. However research of this

³ Original emphasis on the words.

nature needs to be done from a fresh perspective, which is critical of these traditional concepts.

There were several authors that aimed their research at evaluating projects, focusing on the outcomes of particular outdoor programmes. These are mainly based on case studies and make use of either qualitative or quantitative methods of research or combine qualitative and quantitative methods. These articles do not describe the outdoor programme itself, but rather discuss the methodology, the findings and the implications of these findings for the participants in particular and outdoor education in general (see Christie, 2005; Gasser, 2005; Goodyear, 2006; Loynes, 2005; Martin and Hardy, 2005; Richards, 2005; Richards *et al.*, 2005; Szczepanski, 2006).

Another important source of information for research in outdoor education is the Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning (JAEOL), which encompasses a variety of themes, covering research and perspectives from various countries. This journal is considered a prestigious and reliable publication within the outdoor education community.

It was of course inevitable for some of the research issues to reoccur, but there were new themes that emerged as well. One of the main issues that I have come across again and again was that of gender differences and the inclusion of women in outdoor education, both as participants and as facilitators (Boniface, 2006; Cook, 2001; Humberstone, 2000b; Little, 2002; Warren and Loeffler, 2006). However, Humberstone (2000) in her discussion on the processes of differentiation, ideology and hegemony, raises the issues of equal opportunities for participation in outdoor education not only of girls and women, but also for boys and men from various backgrounds, races, ethnicity, or of a different sexual orientation.

A frequently encountered theme is the use of outdoor activities as part of the therapy process (Freeman and Zabriskie, 2002; Gibson, 2000) and also related to therapy, the importance of the natural environment in adventure therapy is also brought to attention in Beringer and Martin (2003). Some articles are concerned with setting the basis for a theory behind such terms like adventure therapy and wilderness therapy (see Gillen, 2003; Russell, 2006; Russell and Farnum, 2004). The relationship

between outdoor education and environmental education is broadly discussed in some of the articles present in this journal (Lugg and Slattery, 2003; Nicol, 2003b).

Motivation for participation in outdoor activities has been given considerable attention, be it in the case of young or adult participants (Boniface, 2000; Davidson, 2001; Festeu, 2002; Keng *et al.*, 2004; Sugerman, 2001). The methodology used is either qualitative or quantitative, but it is also combined in some cases. Also targeted at the participants, some research has focused on the outcomes of outdoor education programmes, for instance, whether or not adventure education programmes are able to enhance 'psychological resilience' (Neill and Dias, 2001), or whether the skills learned through outdoor education are transferable to home environments, school, society or life in general (Dismore and Bailey, 2005; Sibthorp, 2003; Stott and Hall, 2003).

Beames (2004) points out that there is too much focus on outcomes and that not enough attention is paid to the process determining outcomes. He conducted a study on an expedition in order to have a greater understanding of the key elements of such an experience. This research looked at the influence of the physical setting, of the social environment and of the activities on participants in an expedition. He uses theory from interactionist sociology to explore the ways in which the social environment in expeditions influences the individual. He argues that:

“There is little research that examines the mix of individuals in a group and how this influences participant outcomes.” (Beames, 2004:148)

Different aspects of the group are discussed such as group size, group norms, conflicts, similarity between members, but also cultural diversity of the individuals forming the group. All of the data related to these group phenomena were used to gain insight into the participants' experience as part of a group and how this influenced personal and social growth:

“The data demonstrate how participants recognised that although it may not be fun to be in a group with people they had not chosen, it is an element of the experience that may yield interpersonal growth.” (Beames, 2004:151)

He also argues that the data suggested that there was a strong link between being part of a diverse group and interpersonal growth. Even though this study has a theoretical background in interactionist sociology, and the concepts are quite similar to those belonging to socio-psychology, it is relevant for this research as it explores human relations within a group, following the growth of the individual through the group. Moreover, this research looks at groups in a natural setting and considers the cultural diversity of the individuals in the groups, which situates the research in the larger social context. However, Beames' (2004) approach is limited as it explores the traditional aspects of a group, i.e. the size, the norms, conflicts and similarity⁴, a narrow focus which may not allow much room for discovery and for new information to be learned about group interaction. A new approach is needed for the study of groups, which allows for a more holistic view and which is not based on theory testing⁵.

On the other hand, Seaman (2007) looks at learning as a shared, social process, and emphasises the need to understand the ways shared meanings are established in adventure experiences, how they relate to different contexts of interaction and how these processes constitute experiencing and learning. His research aimed to discover any 'new' programme characteristics that may have an influence on the outcomes and to develop theoretical work on the ways experiencing and learning are situated in specific social and institutional contexts. The methodological framework guiding the research is Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), which offers 'principles for studying people working together to accomplish ill-defined tasks in natural settings' (Seaman, 2007: 4). Unlike research that is focused on outcomes and makes the individual's perceptions the central unit of study (see for instance, Wolfe and Dattilo, 2007), CHAT puts forward the idea that social relations precede individual thinking and development.

CHAT research intends to have a more holistic, relational view of learning by using a unit of analysis that contains the interaction between subjects and the environment (Leontiev, 1977). A unit is a product of analysis that has all the basic properties of

⁴ See chapter 3, which examines socio-psychological theories on groups size, norms, conflicts and similarity between group members.

⁵ See chapter 5 for a discussion on the appropriateness of using an ethnographic approach for the study of group interaction within outdoor education.

the whole and which cannot be divided without losing these properties (Vygotsky, 1962). The basic unit of analysis in CHAT consists of the processes of the socio-cultural activity that involve active participation of people in socially constituted practices (Rogoff, 1990). Seaman (2007) argues that this framework views learning as an inherently dynamic, joint process in which creativity, collaboration and reproduction are central. He goes on to describe some examples of interaction between the participants, the facilitators and the environment, showing how human action and thinking are mediated, instead of being simply 'direct' or 'authentic'. According to Seaman (2007: 17), CHAT can help illustrate how learning takes place 'as an indivisible part of continually changing physical and social conditions', rather than being a phenomenon located 'in the privacy of ones' own head' (Horwood, 1989: 6). By recognising the importance of human interaction, and by moving away from the traditional focus on the individual and the outcomes, Seaman's (2007) research sheds light on learning through adventure experiences, and how this is a mediated process, and not just the result of individual reflection. This confirms my own conviction of the importance of the study of group interaction within the outdoor educational setting, and how this can enable a better understanding of the experiential learning process, which will be illustrated in chapters 11 and 12.

A significant number of the articles in the JAEOL are targeted at the facilitator, some of them being quite technical and prescriptive, consisting of examples of good practice or providing a theoretical model (see Hovelynck, 2000; 2003; Phipps *et al.*, 2005; Tozer *et al.*, 2007). Hovelynck (2001) presents an example of 'good practice', and introduces the reader to the concept of 'relational learning', underlying the Outward Bound practice-theory in Belgium. The practice of facilitating Outward Bound programmes is said to be understood as the 'enactment' of the relational theory. Thus, the Outward Bound practice-theory sees learning as intertwined with the development of the learning group. The assessment of the relational safety in the group is done in terms of three closely related development tracks: the evolving depth of conversation, the developing degree of 'owning up' and the changing of the group 'theme'. It is argued that experiential learning is facilitated through group development. This research is worth mentioning as it recognises the importance of group development in the outdoor education process, and it explores group processes by assessing relational safety within the group. However, it is my contention that this

assessment is problematic, as it quantifies human relations, instead of providing a qualitative, in-depth study of these relations.

A number of articles have as their main focus the role of the facilitator/instructor/leader, and his/her impact on the outdoor experience of the participants (Bobilya *et al.*, 2005; Rea, 2006). Bunyan and Boniface (2000) state that more research is required for a better understanding of the leader anxiety phenomenon and argue that there is a potential need for the leaders to take into consideration the implementation of stress level management strategies during extended residential periods. Decision-making is another fairly often discussed topic in connection with the role of the facilitator/leader (see Boyes and O'Hare, 2003; Galloway, 2002), along with emotional crises management (Berman and Davis-Berman, 2002).

As shown above, a wide variety of issues have been explored, and new themes arise every day. Research in outdoor education is certainly dynamic and interesting, but as Rickinson *et al.* (2004), Seaman (2007) and Beames (2004) point out, research needs to be aimed more at the process and the social interactions between the participants, as these represent some of the 'blank spots' within research in outdoor education (Rickinson *et al.*, 2004: 56; see also Wagner, 1993). Somehow the focus has shifted toward the individual and the interest on the group interaction has been lost along the way. There are undoubtedly some studies that do take the group into consideration, but some do this in a very limited way. Instead of using the group as a means to an end, instead of referring to group development in a technical prescriptive manner, I suggest that research should concentrate more on the overall process, on the group as a whole, and not to always try to categorise it and break it into little pieces like size, homogeneity, norms, leadership, conflicts etc. Only a full understanding of the whole process can lead to a better comprehension of group interaction, and the fact that groups are so widely used in outdoor education should justify this. In my view, the process is the key to understanding the outcomes.

This chapter has explored the research that has been carried out in the field of outdoor education, pointing out the most common themes and the themes that need to be developed further, i.e. group interaction and the understanding of the process. I

have used the terms ‘outdoor education’, ‘adventure education’, ‘outdoor experiential learning’ and ‘outdoor learning’ interchangeably, however I consider that it is important to explain the meanings behind such terms (see chapter 2). I intend to also look at the socio-psychological theories on groups as they appeared to be prevalent within outdoor education and, therefore, there is a need for an understanding of the concepts behind these theories (see chapter 3).

Although this research started with a main focus on groups, as groups were considered within an educational setting, it became necessary for considerable attention to be also given to the educational process. Therefore, an examination of educational research within the formal settings of schools has been carried out (see chapter 4), in order to allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study, i.e. group interactions and the outdoor educational process.

2. Exploring the Theoretical Framework of Outdoor Education

In this chapter I discuss the theoretical concepts that underpin outdoor education and I explore the various terms that have been associated with it, such as experiential learning, outdoor learning and outdoor adventure education. I also look at some of the more influential theoretical models that are used in this field, and discuss their appropriateness. The term ‘outdoor classroom’ is explained, as well as its relevance for this research.

Within the literature on outdoor education there are various definitions and descriptions of this concept (Lugg, 1999), many of which seem to raise more questions than answers (Martin, 2005), such as the frequently cited definition ‘education in, for, and about, the outdoors’ (Ford, 1981: 12). Priest (1999b: 111) discusses the differing descriptions of outdoor education: ‘a place (the natural environment), a subject (ecological processes), and a reason (resource stewardship) for learning.’ Moreover, outdoor education has been referred to as ‘a method (experiential), a process (sensory), and a topic (relationships) of learning’ (Priest, 1999b: 111). All of these explanations do not consider the fact that outdoor education could take place indoors, while preparing a trip, for instance, or that it is not limited to ecology, but that it may also be concerned with human interactions. In Priest’s view, the following definition considers all of the above:

‘... outdoor education is an experiential method of learning with the use of all senses. It takes place primarily, but not exclusively, through exposure to the natural environment. In outdoor education the emphasis for the subject of learning is placed on relationships concerning people and natural resources.’
(Priest, 1999b: 111)

There are several terms used within the literature on outdoor education, such as experiential learning, outdoor learning and outdoor adventure education. The use of these terms depends on the provider, the educational context and the aims of particular programmes (Tucker, 2002). It is important to explore the meanings that have been associated with these terms in order to have a better understanding of the concept of outdoor education.

2.1. Experiential Learning

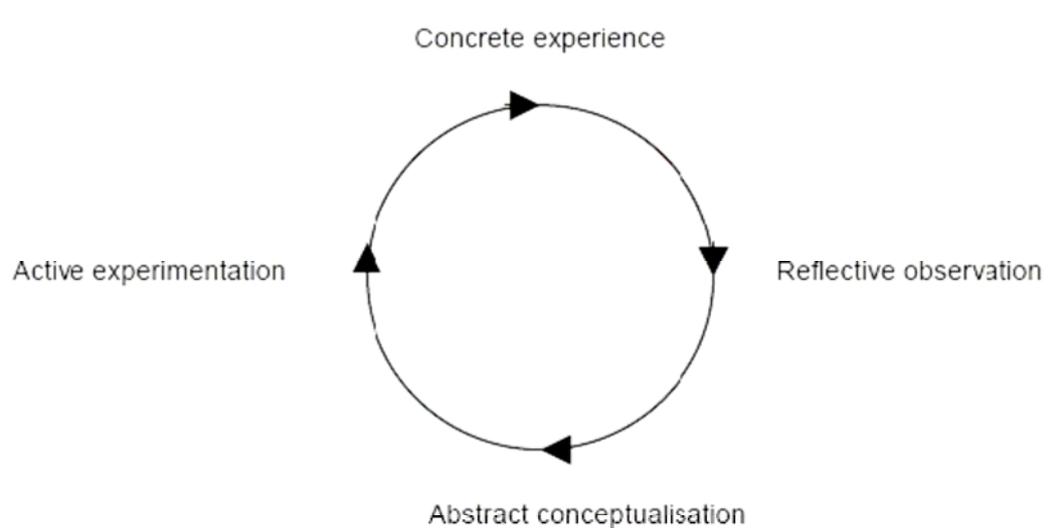
There seems to be a strong link between experience and learning (Beard and Wilson, 2002). Kolb (1984), for instance, sees learning as the process through which knowledge is created by transforming experiences. Moreover, Wilson (1999) describes learning as change of knowledge, attitude or behaviour which may be relatively permanent and which occurs as a result of formal education, training or informal experiences. Because they appear so closely intertwined, experience and learning mean almost the same thing, according to Beard and Wilson (1999), who consider the term ‘experiential learning’ as tautology, a repetition of the same concept. Nevertheless, they do not discard the term and define it as ‘the insight gained through the conscious or unconscious internalisation of our own or observed interactions, which build upon our past experiences and knowledge’ (Beard and Wilson, 1999: 16).

Therefore, experiential learning is viewed as the underpinning process of all forms of learning because it embodies the transformation of the majority of new and meaningful experiences, incorporating them within a larger conceptual framework. Boud *et al* (1993) seem to have the same view when stating that there can be no worthwhile discussion about learning in isolation from experience, since the latter is the central consideration for all learning. Rogers (1996: 107) also expresses a similar belief as he argues that ‘experience forms the basis of all learning.’

However, even though it appears that experience underpins all learning, it does not always result in learning. In order for learning to occur, one has to engage with the experience and reflect on what happened, how it happened and why it happened. Not every single experience is significant. Our brains tend to filter the various stimuli around us, and that is why not all experiences stay with us. Perception and interaction are not sufficient in themselves, for learning to happen, there has to be a meaningful engagement with external stimulants, in which previous knowledge is used to bring new interpretations to an interaction (Beard and Wilson, 2002). Moreover, everyone interprets an experience differently, based on the person’s past, the genetic make-up and disposition. This makes all learning experiences unique and personal (Beard and Wilson, 2002; Boud *et al*, 1993).

Kolb (1984) is seen as one of the most influential writers on experiential learning (see Beard and Wilson, 2002), he drew on the perspectives of his predecessors on the subject, such as Lewin (1957), Dewey (1934; 1938) and Piaget (1977) and developed his own model of experiential learning (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Kolb's experiential learning cycle



Although Kolb's model of experiential learning has become strongly established, it does have its critics. Miettinen (2000) argues that Kolb interpreted the work of Dewey, Lewin and Piaget selectively, when developing his learning cycle, without really representing the facts. By comparing Dewey's and Kolb's work, Miettinen (2000) brought to light the fact that Kolb did not consider the distinction that Dewey made between the habit which enables people to function predictably when faced with recurrent challenges and the habit which traps people into behaving in the same way, without taking into account any alternatives. According to Miettinen (2000), people spend much of their lives on automatic pilot, without really thinking, let alone reflecting on many of the actions they undertake. This is a process, which is not included in Kolb's learning cycle. Moreover, Kolb places experience and reflection in isolation from each other, however Miettinen (2000) maintains that it is necessary for the individual to interact with others and the environment in order to enhance the reflection process.

Other critics, such as Reynolds (1997) and Holman *et al* (1997), have suggested that the model, even though influential, especially in management education in the USA

and the UK, divorces people from the social, historical and cultural aspects of self, thinking and action and situates itself in the cognitive psychology tradition, as it overlooks important aspects of social life and tries to explain it in a mechanical manner. Also, Holman *et al* (1997) criticised the model for representing experiential learning through four independent stages, disagreeing with the idea of sequential progression through the cycle. They argue that thinking, reflecting, experiencing and acting are different aspects of the same process, and should not be isolated from one another.

Although it is not easy to define and appears to be rather complex, experiential learning remains a strong and enduring learning concept, which has been supported by prominent figures throughout history. What appears evident about experiential learning now, is that it involves the 'whole person', engaging his/her thoughts, feelings and physical activity, and it can take many forms: recreational or leisure activities, exciting journeys or adventures, experimentation or play (Beard and Wilson, 2002). Therefore, experiential learning does not necessarily occur in the outdoors, it may be, however, one of the desired processes of outdoor education.

2.2. Outdoor Learning

In their review of research on outdoor education, Rickinson *et al* (2004) use the terms 'outdoor education' and 'outdoor learning' interchangeably. They argue that the concept is a broad and complex one, relating to a great variety of educational activities taking place in many different settings. Such activities would include: outdoor adventure education, field studies, nature studies, outdoor play, heritage education, environmental education, experiential education, and agricultural education. Rickinson *et al* (2004) seem to prefer the term 'experiential education', to 'experiential learning' and see this as an aspect of outdoor learning, rather than a concept in itself, as they do not explore it further, and simply limit themselves at enumerating it among other educational activities.

In order to explain the concept of outdoor learning, Rickinson *et al* (2004) draw on the differing conceptions of 'environmental learning' developed by Scott and Gough (2003), who establish nine categories of interest, which attempt to represent a range

of various foci and objectives that would support and promote environmental learning. This idea is applied to outdoor education and it results in outdoor learning being seen as a concept and practice encompassing a variety of foci, outcomes and settings.

Among the foci of outdoor learning, Rickinson *et al* (2004) list several learning activities, such as learning about nature through outdoor ecological field study; learning about society, by means of community-based gardening initiatives; learning about nature-society interactions, enabled by visits to outdoor nature centres; learning about oneself through therapeutic adventure education; learning about others by taking part in small-group fieldwork and also learning new skills through outdoor adventure activities.

Rickinson *et al* (2004) enumerate several possible outcomes of outdoor learning, among which are: gaining knowledge and understanding of geographical processes or techniques for growing food; developing attitudes towards, for example, the future or peers or the family; gaining values and feeling about the environment or oneself; gaining skills, personal coping strategies, personal development such as self-confidence or personal effectiveness. The settings or locations of outdoor learning identified include school grounds or gardens, urban spaces, rural or city farms, parks and gardens and field study/nature centres.

It is important to mention that Rickinson *et al* (2004) emphasise that their categorisation of outdoor learning activities and outcomes is purely practical and not definitional. I did however find it rather helpful for getting to grips with what outdoor learning entails. Thus, three kinds of outdoor learning activities are identified: fieldwork and outdoor visits, outdoor adventure education and school grounds and community-based projects. Fieldwork and outdoor visits focus on involving the participants in learning activities usually linked with particular curriculum subjects such as science, geography or environmental studies, taking place in outdoor settings such as field study centres, nature centres, farms, parks or gardens.

Outdoor adventure activities usually aim at promoting personal and/or interpersonal growth. The participants undertake adventure activities such as mountaineering, climbing, orienteering and canoeing usually away from the participants' familiar environment. This is unlike the school grounds and community-based projects which tend to take place within or near the school, having a range of curricular, cross-curricular and/or extra-curricular purposes connected to notions of personal and social education, active citizenship, health/environmental action or play.

The learning outcomes are divided into four categories for practical reasons only. Nevertheless I find them relevant and useful for making sense of the concept of outdoor education. Thus, Rickinson *et al* (2004) distinguish between cognitive impacts, referring to knowledge, understanding and academic outcomes; affective impacts including attitudes, values, beliefs and self-perceptions; interpersonal or social impacts comprising communication skills, leadership and teamwork, and physical/behavioural impacts concerning physical fitness, physical skills, personal behaviours and social actions.

Although recognising a possible overlap between the categories, Rickinson *et al*'s (2004) hope was that they would be recognisable and understandable to practitioners within the field of outdoor education. I consider that this approach provides a credible understanding of the concept of outdoor education, since it is based on a meta-analysis of recent research on outdoor education.

2.3. Outdoor Adventure Education

It is not uncommon for 'outdoor education' to be seen as synonymous with outdoor adventure activities (Rickinson *et al*, 2004). The origins of the outdoor pursuits side of outdoor education are traced back to a document on Camping in Education published in the 1920s (Smith, 1987). Moreover, Cook (2001) brings to our attention the military origins of much outdoor adventure education. Baden-Powell's scouting movement was developed with a militaristic philosophy at its basis (Rickinson *et al*, 2004). The Outward Bound movement had aims that were not 'simply intrinsic and psychological, but instrumental and social' (Nichol, 2002: 33). The main focus of

such movements was to enable the individual development of children in a natural environment (Cook, 2001).

There are many learning theories that can be found at the basis of adventure education. Among them Piaget's and Bruner's cognitive theories of learning have had a great influence on the development and understanding of the process of adventure education (Tucker, 2002). Hopkins and Putnam (1993), as well as Kraft (1999) emphasise Piaget's relevance to adventure education. The theory on problem solving and critical thinking developed by cognitive psychology sheds light on and supports the learning process in adventure education (Luckner and Nadler, 1997). Moreover, Bruner's notion of learning being a process, and not simply a product is significant, too (Kraft, 1999).

But what is outdoor adventure education? First of all, it has to be pointed out that there are several terms used to describe it, depending on the provider, educational context, the content and the objectives of particular programmes (Tucker, 2002). Thus, one may encounter terms such as outdoor adventure activities/education, adventure education, and adventure experience. Barrett and Greenway (1995), who use the term 'outdoor adventure', describe it as a 'package' consisting of several different ingredients, which may significantly influence the personal and social development of young people involved in the adventure activities. Figure 2 (p. 31) outlines the ingredients suggested by Barrett and Greenway (1995).

In order to better understand the different terms used in outdoor adventure education, it is useful to consider the four categories of adventure programming developed by Priest (1999a) and Priest and Gass (1993; 1997; 1999). These categories are based on whether they change the way people feel, think or behave. They are recreational, educational, developmental and therapeutic. The aim of the recreational adventure programmes is to entertain, energise and teach skills, whereas the educational ones are intended to bring awareness and understanding. The developmental adventure programmes are designed to improve functional actions, while the therapeutic ones are meant to reduce dysfunctional actions (Priest, 1999a).

learning about ourselves and about interrelationships. Bailey (1999) argues that adventure education makes use of kinaesthetic learning through active physical experience. The structured learning experiences that it involves may enable an increased human performance and capacity. Reflection on the experience and application allows for the experience to be carried beyond the present moment.

Table 1 Six Generations of Facilitation (Priest and Gass, 1999: 215)

Six Generations of Facilitation Skills		
Decade	Generation	Explanation
1940s	Letting the experience speak for itself	Learning and doing
1950s	Speaking on behalf of the experience	Learning by telling
1960s	Funnelling or debriefing the experience	Learning through reflection
1970s	Front-loading (by direct method) the experience	Direction with reflection
1980s	Framing (by isomorphic method) the experience	Reinforcement in reflection
1990s	Front-loading (by indirect method) the experience	Redirection before reflection

So far, I have attempted to illustrate the meaning behind outdoor education and what it entails. There is no clear-cut answer, no single illuminating definition. Outdoor education is far too complex to be explained by one theory or by one philosophy. It is a mixture of learning theories and philosophies, which translates in practice in a variety of activities.

Next I will explore the meaning behind the term ‘outdoor classroom’ and why I considered it to be appropriate for this study. I will explain where the term comes from and how it relates to this research.

2.4. *The Outdoor Classroom*

The term ‘outdoor classroom’ was used by Rickinson *et al.* (2004) in their meta-analysis of research on outdoor learning, where they emphasise among other things the need for a deeper understanding and more reliable research evidence of the teachers’ conceptions of ‘the outdoor classroom’, as well as the curricular aims and pedagogical strategies that are seen as significant for effective teaching therein. I found this term to be appropriate for my study, as it reflects both the setting, i.e. the outdoors and the phenomenon I was exploring, i.e. the educational process.

Recent government policies in the UK, such as the “Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto”, launched in November 2006 by the Ministry of Education, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), emphasise the importance for young people to learn “through experience in the world outside the classroom”⁶. This manifesto states that there is strong evidence to support the idea that ‘good quality’ learning outside the classroom enhances the learning inside the classroom, and that these experiences provide opportunities for learning in various areas, such as “general and subject based knowledge; thinking and problem-solving skills; life skills such as co-operation and interpersonal communication.”⁷ Moreover, residential visits at outdoor centres, which are the research setting for this thesis, are seen as “a powerful way of developing key life skills, building confidence, self esteem, communication and team working”⁸. Also the Second Report of the Education and Skills Committee of the United Kingdom Parliament from 10 February 2005, acknowledges the cross-curricular nature of out-of-classroom learning and states that outdoor education contributes to learning in a range of areas, among which group activities that develop self-confidence and social skills. However, it is not clear from these official documents, on what kind of research they base their statements. They argue that learning outside the classroom is beneficial in many respects, but they appear to assume that such learning always occurs and that it always leads to the educational benefits, which may not be true in practice, since “well-planned” and

⁶ Quote taken from the “Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto”, accessed online at http://www.outdoor-learning.org/external_affairs_policy/lotc_manifesto.pdf [29.01.2008]

⁷ *ibid.* 6

⁸ *ibid.* 6

“inspiring” activities do not guarantee the desired outcome (see Dickson, 2005). Moreover, the Manifesto refers to ‘meaningful’, ‘good’ or ‘high quality’ learning experiences, without making it clear whether there are any differences between these experiences, and if so what those differences are, and what each entails, which can lead to unclear and possibly unrealistic expectations.

Although outdoor activities are often seen as non-formal education (see Festeu and Humberstone, 2006), they can also be part of a formal-education programme (see Rickinson *et al.*, 2004). When I initially started my research, I had a great interest in non-formal education and I believed that what I was observing during my fieldwork was exactly that. Siurala (2006: 12) defines non-formal learning as

“... a voluntary, situational and experiential learning process which is not easy to break down into measurable didactic phases leading to a clear-cut quantifiable certificate or a learning result.”

Moreover, non-formal education is learner-centred, emphasising intrinsic motivation, the usefulness of knowledge and critical thinking. Non-formal education can be an autonomous field of learning, but it can also be used as an alternative to formal learning or as complementary learning (Siurala, 2006).

The outdoor educational process I observed combined elements of formal and non-formal education, as there were elements characteristic of a formal educational setting, i.e. the pupils, the teachers and a structured programme, which used non-formal learning as a complementary form of learning, with no formal evaluation or accreditation. In this light, the term ‘outdoor classroom’ seems an appropriate description of the learning environment under study.

The next chapter will explore the socio-psychological theories on groups, as these seem to be used extensively within the field of outdoor education, as it has been shown in the chapter 1. An investigation of such theories is important, not only because of their wide use within the literature on outdoor education, but also to explore their relevance for this study on groups.

3. The Socio-psychological Approach on Groups

This chapter explores some of the theories that have been developed by socio-psychology regarding groups and group dynamics, as they have been used to a great extent within the field of outdoor education. The aim of this chapter is to allow for an understanding of the major theoretical concepts that have been developed on groups, and which have, for the most part, influenced how groups have been viewed, studied and utilised within the field of outdoor education. This is a critical examination of the socio-psychological approach on groups, and will therefore identify some of the shortcomings that have been identified with regard to some of the theories on groups.

As I have shown in chapter 1, outdoor education has focused very little on the interaction in groups. However psychology and sociology have long seen the importance of studying groups within society and have focused much of their research on the study of groups. In fact, much of the theory on groups used in outdoor education is taken from the field of socio-psychology. Crosbie (1975) gives several reasons in order to justify research on groups. He argues that studying groups provides an understanding of the varieties of individual behaviour as a result of the influences of small group associations, an understanding of society and as we are all members of small groups, studying groups allows for an understanding of groups themselves.

From the above statement, Crosbie (1975) appears to have a rather functionalist approach on groups. However Mills' (1984:5) reasons for the study of groups cover a broader spectrum:

“small groups are studied (1) out of curiosity about the human condition, (2) to help understand the psychology of the individuals, (3) to help understand the structure and dynamics of larger social units, (4) to advance social system theory in general, and (5) to help social scientists understand how groups affect actions and thoughts as scientists.”

I have explained my own reasons for studying groups in chapter one and, therefore, I continue the discussion on groups by looking at the type of research that has been

done so far and the theory that has been developed. First of all, I will consider the concept of the group and how it has been understood and defined by socio-psychology.

3.1. *Understanding the Concept in Socio-psychological Terms*

Many researchers have tried to define the concept of group, each having a slightly different approach, or a different terminology, but they all highlight the distinction between a group and a collective of individuals. The term 'group' is usually associated with the adjective 'small', i.e. 'small group', in order to differentiate it from any random collection of individuals who just happen to be together in the same place, at the same time. We might describe this collective as a group, using the general meaning of the word, but which is not at all what social scientists refer to as the 'small group'. A collective of people has to have particular characteristics in order to be considered a small group, and social scientists seem to have agreed on what those characteristics are:

- there must be interaction and communication between members,
- there must be a common goal,
- members must share the same beliefs and standards,
- each member must fulfil his/her own role within the group (see Bales, 1950; Hare, 1962; Sherif, 1954; Znaniecki, 1939).

According to Hare (1962) the most commonly used definition of small groups is given by Bales:

“A small group is defined as any number of persons engaged in interaction with each other in a single face-to-face meeting or a series of meetings, in which each member receives some impression or perception of each other member distinct enough so that he (sic) can, either at the time or in later questioning, give some reaction to each of the others as an individual person, even though it be only to recall that the other person was present.” (Bales, 1950:33)

As we can see, for Bales (1950), interaction, which leads to a later recognition of fellow members, is the most important characteristic of define a group. Hare (1962)

emphasises himself the importance of interaction between the members of a collective, so that the collective should be considered a small group.

For Sherif (1954) four other conditions have to be met in order for a collective to be considered a small group in its own right (see also Znaniecki, 1939):

1. common motives or goals determining the direction the group will go in
2. a common set of norms, setting the boundaries within which interpersonal relations may be established and activity carried on
3. a set of roles for the group members
4. a network of interpersonal attraction on the basis of 'likes' and 'dislikes' of members for one another

Thus, here we also have present as characteristics of a small group, besides interaction, a common set of norms, a set of roles and attraction between members. Some of these are found in Crosbie's (1975:2) definition of the small group:

“a *small group* is a collection of people who meet more or less regularly in face-to-face interaction, who possess a common identity or exclusiveness of purpose, and who share a set of standards governing their activities. Because they must possess these characteristics, small groups will usually be limited in size of from two to twenty people, and this is the reason for the adjective small.”

Crosbie (1975) thus draws attention to the aspect of size, as a small group characteristic. Vernelle (1994) also sees the size of the group as important, when she argues that size influences the overall performance of the group and the way in which group members feel about each other and themselves as part of the group. Vernelle (1994) also stresses the significance of communication within the group and of the common goal, which are strictly connected to group size.

In order to summarise the earlier definitions, one can conclude that according to the socio-psychological perspective a collective of people can be considered a small group when the people of that collective interact with each other, engage in communication, have a common goal or purpose, a common set of norms, each of

them fulfils a certain role in the group, there is a certain degree of attraction between the members and their number is limited, hence the adjective 'small'.

This appears to be a 'ticking-box' system in order to identify the 'small group'. But this is the sort of approach that characterises most of the theory that has been developed on groups, as it can be seen from what follows. I will refer to this approach as the traditionalist approach on groups, in order to differentiate it from another more recent one, i.e. the social identity approach.

According to the social identity theory, a collection of individuals "becomes a group to the extent that it exhibits group behaviour" (Hogg and Abrams, 1988:106). There is no restriction on the number of individuals that can form a group and the group behaviour referred to here could be defined by unique qualities of those present and by the unique purposes and goals of the collective, but it can also be determined by the qualities of a far greater number of people than those that are present in the collective, e.g. a religious group, or an entire race (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). The social identity theory describes intragroup behaviour as interaction between two or more individuals, which is influenced by a shared social self-categorisation, i.e. common social identity.

I will explore both the traditionalist and the social identity approach in much greater depth. I will also look at how social identity theory attempts to overcome the empirical limitations of the traditionalist theories (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). First I will examine how group formation is explained by both approaches, as some of the concepts reoccur within the literature on outdoor education.

3.2. Group Formation

Theories on group formation have evolved greatly over the years, and group formation has been the object of interest as far back as the ancient Greeks. It was therefore the philosophers that first took interest in this phenomenon. The social contrast theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are the peak point of the philosophers' interest in man's (sic) affiliation tendencies (Crosbie, 1975:10). According to Hobbes, people came together in groups out of fear of mutual

destruction, however Locke and Rousseau argued that people formed groups as a matter of convenience in order to regulate themselves (see Crosbie, 1975:10).

Later on, in the nineteenth century, behavioural scientists attacked the philosophers' assumptions on group formation, and developed their own ideas, which they argued to be based on observation and fact. Thus, according to the sociologist Comte (cited by Crosbie, 1975) people came together out of a social impulse, which was partly innate and partly derived from dependency attachments in infancy. Another theory introduced by Spencer (cited by Crosbie, 1975), who was a contemporary of Darwin, argued that social groups were formed spontaneously and randomly out of the simple proximity of some men to each other.

The twentieth century psychologists introduced the instinct theories as explanations for group formation. On the one hand, it was argued that man (sic) associated with others and formed groups as a result of the interplay of gregarious, reproductive, acquisitive, and constructive drives that were instinctual in a man (sic). On the other hand, it was believed that man (sic) had a herding instinct, just like other animals, and this instinct accounted for his social grouping (see Crosbie, 1975). Freud (cited by Crosbie, 1975: 10) combined both instinct and evolution theory, and argued that group formation could be attributed to an instinct surviving from the primal horde of the primitive man.

Despite the eminence of these scientists, none of their explanations is widely accepted today; new theories dominate the realms of psychology and sociology. This is probably due to the fact that these were 'armchair theories' that were based on the scientists' own inferences and were not supported by actual research (see May, 1993).

Crosbie (1975) identifies two major levels on which explanations about group formation are given: man's (sic) dependence on groups and the affiliation motives. He argues that social deprivation and social isolation can have disastrous effects on infants. The family is the primordial group and the most important one for any individual, without it, the individual is deprived of the guidance he/she needs to

function in society (see also Brim, 1958; Johnson, 1963; Maccoby, 1968; Winch, 1962).

However, this influence does not stop with the family group, through his/her entire life, the individual's behaviour will change and develop, as he/she becomes part of different groups: play groups, friendship groups, occupational groups and so on. Thus groups will continue to influence the individual's development (Campbell, 1969; McClandless, 1969).

The second explanation for group formation that Crosbie (1975) has identified assumes that affiliation satisfies certain motives in man (sic), these motives are: instrumental, expressive and ascriptive. The instrumental motives refer to those motives that are satisfied by a group's goal or accomplishments (Crosbie, 1975). Thus, it is argued that because groups benefit from their members' unified resources, the division of labour and status within the community, they can often provide accomplishments that their members could not attain individually. Such instrumental groups could be therapy groups, work groups, committees, juries, or problem solving groups. Crosbie (1975) argues that in this case, group interaction itself, has relatively no effect on the satisfaction of the group's goals and accomplishments, except when it is actually related to that particular goal. According to him, a member who joins a group for instrumental reasons only, may be unaffected by most of the group interaction.

Thus, he argues that an individual may join a work group with no intention of developing friendships, or to socialise with any of the members, his/her main motives are instrumental, i.e. he/she is part of a group for the sake of the group's purpose only. This statement is quite problematic, since Simmel (1949) suggested that individuals have an impulse for sociability that determines associations. Arguing that people can be part of a group simply to satisfy a specific goal, with no emotional attachment to the others in the group is over simplistic, and ignores the complexity of the human being.

At the opposite pole, we find the expressive motives. Thus members join groups for the sake of the interaction and the activities of the group, rather than for the group's

goals or purpose (Crosbie, 1975: 37). Therefore joining fraternity or sorority clubs, college activity clubs and so on could provide the individual with gratifying activities, which might not be available to him/her otherwise. Again, I have to argue that motives behind joining any club, any fraternity or sorority are more complicated than just enjoying the company of others, or being able to take part in activities that one enjoys. It is also related to the social background of the person joining, the class, race, and ethnicity (see Hogg and Abrams, 1988).

Another motive satisfied through interaction was identified by Festinger (1954), and it refers to the individual's need to evaluate his/her opinions and abilities. Festinger (1954) developed a theory of social comparison processes according to which an individual's uncertainty regarding the validity of his/her beliefs and abilities can cause psychological discomfort and as a consequence the individual will seek to evaluate his/her beliefs and abilities as being good or bad, right or wrong. In the case of those beliefs and abilities for which there are no physical, non-social means of validation, e.g. the belief in extraterrestrial life, or academic ability, the individual will validate them through social comparison, that is, he/she will compare his/her beliefs and abilities with others' beliefs and abilities. This need to reduce uncertainty regarding our beliefs and abilities appears to be an expressive motive for affiliation of great importance (see Festinger, 1950,1954; Festinger *et al.*, 1950; Suls and Miller 1977).

Crosbie (1975) suggests that not all motives for group affiliation are positive, some people join groups because they are forced to do it, avoiding in this way punishment or loss. These are ascriptive motives. Such examples of groups are found in prisons, mental institutions and the military (in times when people are called up for national service), and they involve people who are part of those associations not because they choose to or they want to, but in order to avoid punishment. Therefore, in the case of ascriptive affiliation, simple membership is all that is important and the individual is concerned neither with the group's goals, nor with the interaction within the group.

Crosbie (1975) acknowledges that the three categories of motives mentioned above (instrumental, expressive and ascriptive) are more ideal than real, as an individual may decide to join a group having more than one reason in mind.

Parks and Sanna (1999) identify groups as being of two types ad hoc and natural groups. Ad hoc groups come together only to accomplish a goal and natural groups, are actually friendship groups. They limit their study of group formation to natural groups, since ad hoc groups are seen as coming together as a consequence of outside impetus. Parks and Sanna's (1999) discussion on how natural groups forms is based on the same theories that Crosbie (1975) uses in order to describe the sociometric structure or friendship structure of the small group which actually describes the sentiment relations within groups, the expression of likes and dislikes between group members after the group has already formed.

On the one hand, Parks and Sanna (1999:10) argue that attraction is the strongest factor in the formation of natural groups. On the other hand, Crosbie (1975) argues that *attraction* is a determinant of sentiment relations that lead to the formation of the sociometric or the friendship structure within the group. Thus, in both cases, attraction is related to the formation of friendships only at different times, i.e. Parks and Sanna see attraction as the trigger that determines formation of a friendship group, whereas Crosbie sees attraction as determining the formation of friendship relations within any group, after the group has formed. Parks and Sanna's (1999) approach seems not to take into consideration that friendship can develop even in ad hoc groups as well, a common goal may create an atmosphere of solidarity and this can motivate the members. If we look at the educational settings, children are brought together in an ad hoc manner, with the purpose of learning. This however does not stop them from creating friendship groups (see Pollard, 1986).

In Parks and Sanna's (1999) view unless the individuals are attracted to each other, they will not come together as a natural group. They emphasise the fact that attraction here is not referred to in its general sense of romantic attraction, but that it is seen as a wanting to be with other people. In their view, attraction is determined by several factors: rewards, similarity and proximity.

Consequently it is argued that one likes people that provide one with rewards (Aronson and Linder, 1965). In other words, one is most attracted to those groups that offer one social rewards (Parks and Sanna, 1999). These rewards might be in the form of prestige gained by joining a well-known high status group, or in the form of

praise and appreciation from group members. The social desirability of a group can also be considered as rewarding, because this means that the interactions between its members are usually very pleasant (Parks and Sanna, 1999). Social desirability describes people that possess characteristics such as truthfulness, honesty, friendliness, loyalty etc. (Anderson, 1968; Lydon *et al.*, 1988). The reward argument is quite similar to Crosbie's (1975) instrumental and expressive motives for group formation, and therefore has the same weaknesses that have been noted above, i.e. that a person would join a group only to satisfy a specific goal, or the desire to interact with others. The issue is more complex than that, as Hogg and Abrams (1988) argue that being part of a group is also linked to a person's social background.

Similarity is also seen as very important in determining attraction between individuals and consequently the formation of groups, as it is believed that we are usually most attracted to people that are similar to us, in that they have similar beliefs, interests, values and personal backgrounds (Simpson and Harris, 1994). According to Rosenbaum (1986), individuals like interacting with similar others because it is more pleasant, since there are fewer chances for them to have their beliefs and interests criticised. Moreover, Parks and Sanna (1999) argue that people like similar others because they have the same qualities that they have. It is also argued that people who are similar develop a feeling of "belonging together" (Arkin and Burger, 1980).

The concept of similarity implies that an individual would associate with other similar ones only to avoid conflicts, and having his/her view challenged. However, one could argue that people form friendships with others that may appear to be very different from themselves in many ways, they may not have the same political views, they may come from different backgrounds, they may have completely different personalities. In fact being different from one another is what characterises us as a human race, it may be that because we respect one another's values and beliefs, and we see one another as equals that we are able to come together in groups (see the concept of 'human plurality' in Arendt (1958)).

Parks and Sanna (1999) argue that proximity also plays an important part in bringing people together, thus it is thought that it is very unlikely that people who are not in

close contact with each other come together as a group. One reason for which physical closeness is a precursor of attraction is familiarity, i.e. the closer people are physically, the more frequently they encounter, and thus the more familiar they become with each other. This is what Zajonc (1968) calls the *mere exposure* effect. However, it must be pointed out that with the development of technology, it is now possible to bring together people that are actually physically apart. Chat-rooms and the Internet have led to the formation of virtual groups or e-groups, and close relationships have been developed through the internet.

I have shown that the traditionalist views on group formation can be challenged and that they do not necessarily reflect what happens outside the controlled environment of the laboratory, which is the setting where these theories have been developed. I believe that it is difficult for such studies to capture the complexity of human interaction and I will explore this further in section 5.1.

The social identity theory brings a new perspective on groups and came about as a result of research on the effects of social categorisation on intergroup behaviour, which generated data that could not be explained in terms of the conventional theories (Taifel *et al*, 1971). According to the social identity theory, society is made up of “social categories which stand in power and status relations to one another” (Hogg and Abrams, 1988:14).

Hogg and Abrams (1988:18-19) summarise the social identity model in the following way:

“Society is treated as a heterogeneous collection of social categories which stand in power and status relations to one another, and whose dynamics are subject to the forces of economics and history. People derive their identity (their sense of self, their self-concept) in great part from the social categories to which they belong. The group is thus in the individual, and the psychological processes responsible for this are also responsible for the form that group behaviour takes (e.g. ethnocentric). Individuals belong to many different social categories and thus potentially have a repertoire of many different identities to draw upon.”

Therefore, following the social identity theory, psychological group formation is accomplished by self-categorisation in terms of the relevant category (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). An individual may see himself/herself as part of a small *ad hoc* face-to-face short-lived experimental group, or as being a member of a large-scale widely dispersed trans-generational social category (Hogg and Abrams, 1988).

Thus far I have looked at how different researchers have defined the concept of group and how they have explained group formation. Moreover, I have shown how the social identity approach contradicts the traditional theories on group formation, arguing that groups are formed through self-categorisation.

Traditional theories on group formation are still being used within outdoor education (see Beames, 2004; Storry, 2003). Such studies consider group size as an important factor that has a great influence on the group dynamics. Moreover, as I have mentioned in the first chapter, outdoor education has adopted traditional socio-psychological models on groups, and particularly on group development. Therefore I will briefly examine some of the theory behind these models of group development.

3.3. *Traditional Views on Group Development*

According to Crosbie (1975:64), a collectivity goes through a sequence of stages in developing into a group, in acquiring its identity and in forming its norms. He identifies three stages in the development of all groups: the exploratory stage, the evaluational stage and the consensual stage. Crosbie (1975) argues that the amount of time needed for this development varies from group to group depending on the type/nature of the group. The size of the group is also considered important, as it is believed that smaller groups develop more rapidly than larger groups. Moreover, similarity of members is seen as another significant factor, since members with similar social backgrounds will reach agreement easier, and also the familiarity of members could also account for a quicker development of the group, if the members know each other from past interactions, and thus, have already reached and communicated their evaluations. According to the traditional perspective on groups, after consensus has been reached interaction is no longer awkward, nor superficial, members communicate more easily with each other and repetitious patterns appear:

some members will tend to talk to particular members more than with other members, some members receive more information than others, some receive more deference than others, some exert more influence than others. The group can function as a unit.

This is a scientific model of the group, a model that assumes that a group goes through clear cut stages and in which similarity, familiarity, a reduced number of members and a sufficient amount of time determine the formation of a perfectly connected human mechanism capable of making decisions, carrying out tasks and finding agreement. What this model does is to make predictions about how people may act and react in a group without really being able to account for instances that deviate from this model. According to researchers adopting a naturalistic approach, people's behaviour is not caused in a mechanical way and therefore it cannot be analysed causally and manipulated according to the variables, which are characteristic of quantitative research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). They call for an approach that allows access to the meanings that guide that behaviour and that enables the researcher to describe cultures.

The abstract traditionalist model goes even further and translates the complexity of human relations within a group into fixed structures that can be identified by simply following the prescribed steps. Thus the repetitions or patterns of interaction mentioned above are what small group theorists identify as group structures, they distinguish between four group structures: the sociometric structure or the friendship structure, the status structure, the leadership structure and the communication structure (Crosbie, 1975).

The values, norms and roles within a group are important components of what Crosbie (1975) calls the social order of the group, which he sees as the foundation of the group structures. It represents a common set of ideas that develops in the minds of the group members and it influences significantly the repetitive patterns of interaction that occur in the group. Values here are seen as the representation of what the group considers to be appropriate or inappropriate conduct. Values vary from group to group, and some of them are more important than others.

Moreover, traditionalists argue that each member in a group fulfils a certain *role*, associated with that role are rules of behaviour (Parks and Sanna, 1999). The term *role* refers to the set of general and specific normative expectations that apply to each member in a group (Crosbie, 1975). Each member's role is distinct from each other member's role, depending on the extent of normative differentiation in a group. Turner (1962) argues that roles often develop according to the individual and his/her personality characteristics and if the individual feels that a role is inconsistent with his/her own personality, he/she may be able to convince others to modify his/her role in the early stages of interaction, thus, while he/she is behaving according to others' expectations, he/she is also being himself/herself. Crosbie (1975) states that role expectations influence behaviour in spite of personality. Neither Turner (1962), nor Crosbie (1975) take into consideration the larger social context that may influence the role of the individual involved in group interaction and how this role can be partially defined before he/she enters in the group through social expectations (see Pollard, 1986 on the role expectations of teachers and pupils within the classroom).

Parks and Sanna (1999) see cohesion as the major factor that holds a group together and they define it "as a general sense of community and attraction to the group and its members"(1999:15). Cohesion is influenced by a number of factors, such as the level of attraction among the members, the level of satisfaction with the group's performance, coincidence of personal and group goals, external forces that discourage leaving so on and so forth (Cota *et al.*, 1995). Cohesion increases, as the factors become stronger.

Crosbie (1975) sees cohesiveness as "the degree of attraction for the group among the group members as a whole" (1975:124). He describes a highly cohesive group as having an overall high degree of attraction, greater satisfaction, greater goal achievement, greater uniformity of opinion, and greater attempts at social control, i.e. the attempt of members to control differences of opinions or inconsistencies in behaviours of other members.

Both views on group cohesion are quite similar, they both refer to cohesion as attraction to the group, they both identify a higher degree of satisfaction in highly cohesive groups, and they both take into consideration the importance of consensus

between members. The social identity theory however challenges the concept of cohesion. This will be discussed further, along with some of the empirical limitations of the traditional small group theories.

3.4. *The Social Identity Approach on Groups*

Social identity theory has been already mentioned briefly in the previous discussion on group formation (see section 3.2). However the social identity approach not only has a different view on how groups form, but also on how they develop and why they stay together. Social categories and self-categorisation lie at the heart of the social identity model and its explanations about group behaviour. Social identity theorists challenge the traditional views on groups, as empirical limitations and theoretical problems are identified. Hogg and Abrams's (1988) critique of the traditional theories brings to light these limitations and provides an alternative view on groups.

According to Hogg and Abrams (1988) traditional theories tend to fall in either of the following two categories: those emphasising explicit interindividual interdependence (e.g. Sherif, 1936; 1954) and those emphasising interindividual similarity (e.g. Festinger, 1950; 1954; Heider, 1946; 1958), as the basis for attraction. Indeed, my analysis of the literature on small groups has revealed that attraction is at the root of many traditional group theories, from the early stage of group formation to the group structures.

Hogg and Abrams (1988) argue that traditional theories place interpersonal attraction at the core of their conceptualisations of the social group and that current definitions of the social group use an admixture of components drawn from these theories. Their claim that all of these theories see interpersonal attraction as the fundamental process leading to group formation and influencing group processes is expressed in the following statement:

“The group is essentially a numerically small face-to-face collection of individuals interacting to perform a task or fulfil shared goals. The members like each other and have role relations with respect to each other, which emerge from intragroup structural divisions developed in the fulfilment of the group's purpose. A product of continued interaction is a sense of identity as group

members. However, the fundamental process responsible for the psychological formation of the group and the degree of cohesiveness of the group in all these approaches is interpersonal attraction.” (Hogg and Abrams, 1988: 99)

They consider that by reducing group cohesiveness, which was intended as a group quality, to an interpersonal process of attraction and the determinants of group formation to the antecedents of interpersonal relations, leaves the concept of group cohesiveness with no independent theoretical status separate from that of interpersonal attraction. They also identify several specific theoretical weaknesses. The first problem is that there is no qualitative distinction between the sociometric choice as an indicator of friendship and as an indicator of attraction between group members. Furthermore, the study of communication patterns in small groups takes into consideration only the quantity of communication between group members in terms of categories based on task management functions and the valence of socio-emotional reactions, but makes no qualitative distinction between intragroup and interpersonal relations (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). This can be explained by the fact that the quantitative methods used to analyse communication are not sensitive enough to be able to look at the quality of the communication acts (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

The second problem Hogg and Abrams (1988) identified is that it is not possible for one unique conceptual definition of cohesiveness to be selected for the purpose of operationalisation as the concept contains a multitude of different sources of attraction (e.g. prestige of the group, the group’s goal, the members’ traits, the group’s activity etc.), lending itself to a number of valid operationalisations which research has revealed not to be significantly correlated (Bovard, 1951; Eisman, 1959, Jackson, 1959). Thus, a group, which is cohesive by one definition, may not be by another, because one single operationalisation does not cover all aspects of group cohesiveness, and interpersonal attraction is only an incomplete explanation (Hogg and Abrams, 1988).

Another issue that needs to be taken into consideration regards motivation in group formation. It is generally believed that individuals join groups in order to satisfy certain needs, such as the need for validation of beliefs, the need for an identity, the

need for reinforcement, the need for affiliation, or the need for a specific goal. However, from Hogg and Abrams's (1988) point of view all of these are in fact 'reasons' for, rather than 'causes' leading to group formation, and it is the interpersonal attraction, which is the causal process. Moreover, the individual's needs, aims, goals, attitudes, beliefs and so on may be seen as motives for affiliation, but they can also be determined by one's group membership. For instance, Christians share similar beliefs because they are Christians, but it is also true that they are Christians because they share similar beliefs. Hogg and Abrams (1988) emphasise that the relationships in a group develop not only due to what the individuals want or need, but they are also influenced by group belongingness:

“In so far as group memberships determine similarities between people then they also determine interindividual bonds and variations in cohesiveness and are not merely an effect of purely individual motives and needs.” (Hogg and Abrams, 1988:102)

A fourth problem identified by Hogg and Abrams (1988) is related to group size. If we look at the definitions presented in section 3.1, they all refer to the small group in which face-to-face interaction between members is possible, thus size, and, more precisely, limited size is very important for traditional theories on groups (Bales, 1950; Crosbie, 1975; Vernelle, 1994). Hogg and Abrams (1988) argue that:

“Defining the group in terms of number generates problems in specifying precisely the parameters of small-group dynamics and hence cohesiveness.” (Hogg and Abrams, 1988:102)

In order to demonstrate the limitations of the limited size approach, they present Shaw's (1981) reasoning relating group size to cohesiveness, which appears to be rather shaky. According to Shaw (1981) less than ten individuals can be considered a small group, and more than thirty represents a large group, yet, he states that a cohesive group of twenty-five is a small group whereas a non-cohesive fifteen-person group cannot be considered a small group. Thus “small” is “cohesive”, and there is no independent criterion of the range of applicability of the social cohesion model. Hogg and Abrams (1988) propose a solution to this dilemma by accepting the fact that mutual face-to-face interaction between individuals (interaction which is

restricted by number, time and place) leads to behaviours, which may be dependant on such conditions. It is also important to recognise that there may be a different process than interpersonal attraction responsible for group behaviour specifically. Consequently, Hogg and Abrams (1988) argue that interpersonal attraction is only relevant for analysing small-group phenomena, being inadequate for explaining large audiences, crowds, nations, that is groups where interpersonal attraction between all the members is impossible. Furthermore, cohesiveness cannot explain why as the group becomes larger and its cohesiveness decreases, the impact of the social norms becomes stronger (see Latané's (1981) social impact theory), increasing group belongingness.

Although research has shown that interpersonal liking in small groups increases productivity (Schachter *et al.*, 1951), performance (Goodacre, 1951), adherence to group norms (Festinger, Schachter and Back, 1950), improves morale and job satisfaction (Gross, 1954), it has failed to show the increase of cohesiveness if there is an emotionally charged or salient intercategory boundary (e.g. class, ethnicity) between the group members. It seems that success is only achieved in well-established common category membership (Brewer and Silver, 1978; Brown and Turner, 1981).

Taking into consideration the theoretical and empirical limitations of the social cohesion perspective on group formation, group cohesiveness and group processes in general, the social identity approach becomes more and more worthwhile to consider. Social identity theory overcomes the empirical limitations mentioned above by focusing on group behaviour as a product of self-categorisation, and thus, separating group belongingness (cohesion), from interpersonal attraction (Hogg and Abrams, 1988).

From the social identity perspective, as I have mentioned earlier (see section 3.1), a collection of individuals is considered a group provided it exhibits group behaviour, group size being irrelevant. The group behaviour may be the result of the unique qualities of those present and the unique purposes and goals of the collective, but it can also be determined by the qualities of a greater number of people than those present, e.g. a religion, a race, or a gender (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). This broadens

the view on groups, allowing us to understand more clearly certain phenomena, such as disliking or deviance, for which small group theorists could only give their own presupposition as to the cause and reasons behind them.

Hogg and Abrams (1988) argue that self-categorisation determines group belongingness, and group belongingness can generate intragroup attraction in various ways. First of all, it can allow the development of conditions under which the traditional determinants of interpersonal attraction operate (similarity, proximity, rewardingness). Self-categorisation can also function independently as a determinant of interpersonal attraction, thus individuals realise that they have the same beliefs and therefore they must be members of the same category.

The categorisation process itself can generate attraction in a more direct manner: on the one hand, categorisation of self and others as belonging to the same category leads to stereotypical identity of self and other, i.e. self and other are stereotypically interchangeable when it comes to cognitive and affective reactions (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). Consequently, an individual likes, is attracted to and positively evaluates members of the same group because that individual generally likes and positively evaluates himself/herself, that is, the individual has a positive self-esteem (Martin *et al.*, 1984). On the other hand, stereotypes formed within the group lead to positive evaluations because self-categorisation confers such characteristics on self and they thus contribute to self-esteem (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). Hogg and Abrams's (1988) conclusion is:

“So self-categorisation imbues other group members with stereotypically positively evaluated characteristics and renders them stereotypically attractive. Outgroup members are of course rendered stereotypically unattractive and are thus disliked.” (Hogg and Abrams, 1988:107).

For Hogg and Abrams (1988) this represents true intragroup attraction as it is grounded in group membership and is a result of self-categorisation responsible for psychological group belongingness. They term this *social attraction*, and consider it as theoretically distinguished from *personal attraction* which is interindividual attraction that is based on idiosyncratic preferences and has firm roots in close

personal relationships (Hogg, 1987). Thus, although both forms of attraction are subjectively experienced as an interindividual attitude with cognitive, conative⁹, and affective components, they differ in the fact that the object of personal attraction is a unique idiosyncratic individual person, while that of social attraction is completely interchangeable, as it is attraction to an ingroup stereotype and consequently to any and all the individuals who are stereotypic or prototypic of the group. Moreover, based on the evidence that people make attributions to group memberships-social attributions, or to individuality-personal attributions (Deschamps, 1983; Hewstone, 1983), rather than more traditional distinctions between internal and external (Kelley, 1967) or dispositional and situational (Jones and Nisbett, 1972) attributions, Hogg and Abrams (1988) claim that social attraction is attributed to shared (in the case of liking) or disjunctive (in the case of disliking) category membership, as opposed to personal attraction which is attributed to idiosyncratic characteristics of the other and the relationship.

In Hogg and Abrams's (1988) view, interindividual liking can result in group belongingness. However, this can only take place in circumstances which do not allow the development of personal attraction, but rather social attraction, such as first encounters between strangers, early stages of developing relationships, and most of all, psychological experiments, where individuals have limited information about each other. Therefore, the anomalous findings regarding the relationship between attraction and group behaviour in literature dealing with "small groups" (see Lott and Lott, 1965) can be explained by the use of methods, which generated personal attraction rather than social attraction. Hogg and Abrams comment:

"Most experiments tend to involve social attraction, because they deal in short-lived groups, first encounters, homogenous subject samples (as regards age, education, race, etc.), and so forth, and hence obtain the traditional positive relationship between cohesiveness (as interpersonal attraction) and group

⁹ Conative is derived from conation, which is 'the mental faculty of purpose, desire, or will to perform an action; volition.' (Oxford Dictionary of English)

behaviour. But some, no doubt, involve personal attraction and hence do *not* obtain the traditional cohesiveness/group behaviour relationship.” (1988:109)¹⁰

The social attraction hypothesis suggests that attraction between individuals varies quantitatively, but also qualitatively according to the nature of the relationship between the individuals. In time, relationships become more idiosyncratic, leading to personal attraction. Usually, the nature of the relationship between two or more individuals shifts back and forth between social and personal, and the origin of affection may change, consequently a friend may be disliked as an outgroup member, or a fellow member may be disliked as a person (Hogg and Abrams, 1988).

The social identity theory has a different perspective to that of the small group theorists on group motivation as well. The most widespread explanation in social identity theory for why individuals choose group identities is the maintenance or enhancement of self-esteem. Thus, it is argued that self-esteem may be enhanced by positive comparisons between personal self and other individuals, but it can also be achieved through positive distinctiveness of the ingroup from the relevant outgroup. However Brewer (1993) believes that evidence to support the role of self-esteem as a determinant of social identification is equivocal. In fact, research suggests that positive distinctiveness and ingroup bias are consequences of self-esteem and social identity, rather than their causes (Brown *et al.*, 1988). Positive distinctiveness is unable to explain why members of socially disadvantaged minorities maintain a positive self-esteem when confronted with negative intergroup comparisons (Crocker and Major, 1989).

Abrams and Hogg (1988) suggest that besides self-enhancement, self-integrity is also a primary motive that can be associated with self-esteem, thus salient intergroup distinctions and inclusion of the self in differentiated social groups promote a sense

¹⁰ There is much to be said about the use of experiments in human study, however, I believe that ‘anomalous’ findings are not simply the cause of using ‘inappropriate’ methods, but rather, it is the artificial environment itself that is not the ideal setting for the study of human behaviour (see Christians, 2005; Denzin, 1997; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). There is also the question of defining what is ‘anomalous’ data. In fact, it is data that does not fit with the researcher’s expectations, pre-judgements, and pre-conceived ideas, which is characteristic of the positivistic paradigm.

of coherence of the self. Brewer (1993) considers this view close to her own theory of group identification as a result of the attempt to reach 'optimal distinctiveness'.

Brewer's (1993) model of optimal distinctiveness combines the self-categorisation theory (Turner *et al.*, 1987) with the uniqueness theory (Snyder and Fromkin, 1980) and:

"It assumes that social identity is activated in order to meet competing needs for *differentiation* of the self from others and *inclusion* of the self into larger social collectives." (Brewer, 1993:3)

Differentiation and inclusion are considered to be powerful motives or drives, where the term 'drive' is referred to as "the activation of goal-directed behaviour" (Brewer, 1993:3). The reasoning behind this concept is that if differentiation and inclusion are opposing processes (Solomon, 1980), then increased inclusion should stimulate a greater need for differentiation and, conversely, increased differentiation should stimulate the need for inclusion (Brewer, 1993). The maximal satisfaction of the need for differentiation is represented by personal identity, which refers to those characteristics that make an individual appear different from all others in a given social context. On the one hand, personal identity represents the "highly individuated self" (Brewer, 1993:3), on the other hand, social identities are "categorisations of the self-concept into more inclusive social units that depersonalise the self-concept and satisfy the need for inclusion" (Brewer, 1993:3). Optimal identity is the middle way between inclusion and differentiation, where the need for inclusion is satisfied within ingroups, while the need for differentiation is satisfied by comparisons to outgroups (Brewer, 1993).

According to Brewer (1993) satisfaction of both of these needs, when identifying with a particular social group or category, depends on the level of inclusiveness of that particular social group or category. The level of inclusiveness refers to the number or variety of the ingroup members, and the higher the level of inclusiveness, the more the need for inclusion is satisfied. However, Brewer (1993) argues that extremes on the inclusiveness dimension threaten the individual's security and self-integrity. Consequently, if an individual is highly distinct, this could lead to isolation

and stigmatisation. Conversely, if an individual is part of a highly inclusive group, then there will be a reduced possibility for comparison or self-definition. Therefore, individuals are uncomfortable if they find themselves to be either too distinctive, or too indistinctive.

But what are the implications that optimal distinctiveness theory has on social identity and intergroup behaviour? According to social identity theory perceived differences between groups are exaggerated while differences within the group are minimised. The self-categorisation theory (Turner *et al.*, 1987) argues that social identity involves a reduced differentiation between ingroup members, and therefore intergroup comparisons should minimise interpersonal comparisons within groups. Brewer (1993) states that this perceptiveness leads to a 'functional antagonism' between personal and social identity. She argues that research has shown that categorisation results in the enhancement of intergroup differences (e.g. Krueger and Rothbart, 1990) and associated ingroup bias (Brewer, 1979), but that there is little empirical evidence to support the idea that intergroup differentiation leads to assimilation within social categories. On the contrary, some research indicates that there is a higher differentiation between self and others associated with greater differentiation between ingroup and outgroup (Codol, 1984; Doise, 1988).

Brewer (1993) argues that along with the clarity of the boundaries that distinguish between category membership and non-membership, the number of people that qualify for inclusion in a particular category also play an important role in the distinctiveness of a particular social category. She believes that categories that include a large number of people in a given social context do not constitute meaningful social groups, as they are not sufficiently differentiated. Consequently, according to the optimal distinctiveness theory, ingroup identity and loyalty will be achieved more easily for minority small groups than for larger groups.

Earlier, in the discussion on the theoretical limitations of the traditional social cohesion model, Hogg and Abrams (1988) argued that one of the weaknesses of this model was the definition of the group in terms of number, which made it difficult to specify the exact parameters of small group dynamics and therefore of cohesiveness. They also mention that cohesiveness has failed to explain why, as a group grows

larger, the impact of the norms can become stronger, increasing group belongingness. Furthermore, they argued that from a social identity point of view there is no restriction on number when it comes to groups, as long as group behaviour is exhibited. Thus, for Hogg and Abrams (1988) group size does not have a significant impact on group belongingness, which does not coincide with Brewer's (1993) optimal distinctiveness perspective mentioned above.

Brewer (1993) supports her statement by quoting research on ingroup bias. She argues that:

“Results of research on ingroup bias support the predicted relationship between group size and ingroup preference. In both real and laboratory groups, evaluative biases in favour of the ingroup tend to increase as the proportionate size of the ingroup relative to the outgroup decreases (Mullen, Brown & Smith, 1992). Further, strength of identification and importance attached to membership in experimentally created groups are greater for minority than for majority categories (Simon & Brown, 1987; Simon & Pettigrew, 1990).”
(Brewer, 1993:11)

According to Mullen *et al.* (1992), if we consider intergroup differences in status, then the effects of group size are more complicated. Brewer (1993) argues that it is often the case that group distinctiveness and positive evaluation may be negatively related, due to the fact that minority size is often associated with disadvantages in status or power. Consequently, members belonging to low-status minorities have to choose between group identification based on optimal distinctiveness and positive social identity. If minority members choose to dissociate themselves from their group and look for positive identity somewhere else, then this may lead to loss of distinctiveness (e.g. becoming part of a majority group) or to too much individuated distinctiveness (e.g. becoming a “solo” representative of a deviant group). In both cases, optimal distinctiveness is not achieved.

Most of the research done on groups has been quantitative and experimental (see Crosbie, 1975; Hogg and Abrams, 1988), and more recent literature (Douglas, 1995; Vernelle, 1994; Wilke and Meertens, 1994; Worchel *et al.*, 1992) tends to also focus on predictive models. Research on small group dynamics has focused on problem-

solving and small-scale hypothesis testing rather than on theory development (Hogg and Abrams, 1988) and tends to be highly influenced by psychodynamic analyses of psychotherapy groups (see Kellerman, 1981). Research based on the social identity model, although it brings a new perspective on the study of groups, by focusing on self-categorisation and social categories which have not been taken into consideration by earlier research, is still situated in a positivistic paradigm, as it still uses the experiment for its studies and issues hypothesis and makes generalisations.

I consider that a qualitative study of groups in naturalistic settings, i.e. groups performing outdoor activities, would contribute to the development of knowledge on group interaction, and it could also allow, due to the richness of the data and its naturalness, to better understand the outdoor education process. A new approach is needed for the study of groups, an approach that takes the group out of the laboratory and puts it outside, in a more natural environment, such as the outdoor classroom. By studying group interaction as part of an outdoor education process, I believe that it is possible to have a more holistic view both of the individuals' experience and of the learning experience. Such a study may help uncover and explain what goes on within a group when taking part in outdoor activities, and how learning is constructed. Therefore, it would be possible to not only learn more about groups and group interactions, but also about the outdoor educational process, and how this process is experienced within groups of primary school children.

Chapter 3 introduced the reader to the traditional concept of the small group and the theories that have been developed on group formation and group development. It also explored how these small group theories have been challenged by the social identity theory, which introduces the new concepts of self-categorisation and social categories in order to explain group formation and group behaviour. These approaches are situated in a positivistic paradigm and use the experiment as a

research tool. They are relevant, however, as they are prevalent within outdoor education, and have influenced how groups are studied and used in this field¹¹.

I started to look for a different perspective on the study of groups, and therefore I turned to literature on educational research as this provided more appropriate observations on group interactions, although the group was not necessarily the focus of that research. My own research, as explained in the introduction, was carried out in an educational setting, albeit outside of the school, and it involved teachers, facilitators and pupils. Research carried out in educational settings has often taken the form of ethnographic studies, as many researchers argue that the ethnographic approach is both sensitive to the individual and to the social processes (Davies, 1984; Griffin, 1985; Willis, 1977). Moreover, the qualitative analysis of ethnography is seen as a means to understand the experience of individuals in a group context (Griffin, 1985). Qualitative studies, which involved groups of children have been conducted extensively in educational settings and therefore they provided a more relevant understanding of my own research.

¹¹ See Storry (2003) who referred to group size along with contact viscosity (cohesion) and communication in his article on games theory and motivation, and also Beames (2004) who considers group size, group norms, conflicts, similarity between members, and cultural diversity of the individuals forming the group in his study on expeditions.

4. Classroom Interaction and Its Relevance to Group Interaction in the Outdoor Classroom

This chapter is concerned with discussing two of the main theoretical frameworks underpinning classroom interaction and relating them to the group interaction within the outdoor classroom. It is argued that symbolic interactionism and dialogic talk contribute to the uncovering of how classroom interactions influence the learning experience, as well as to the understanding of the educational process itself. It is pointed out that the perspectives of all the participants in the classroom are significant and that dialogue plays an important role in how learning is constructed within the classroom.

Following the first stage of my fieldwork conducted at an outdoor centre, and after analysing the data collected, I realised that my research had become more focused on the educational process, than the leisure aspect of the outdoor activities studied. I do not intend to make a detailed description of the data collection process here, as this is the subject of chapter 6, however, it is relevant to make a short introduction of the sort of research I have pursued in that outdoor centre in order to justify the literature review on classroom interaction, which followed the initial fieldwork. In the summer of 2005, I conducted observations on groups of primary school pupils involved in outdoor activities. Most of the activities were facilitated by the staff at the outdoor centre, however some were facilitated by the visiting teachers accompanying the school groups. The teachers accompanied the groups most of the times, whether they were facilitating the activity or not. Thus, because this was an educational setting, and because the participants were teachers and pupils, it became evident that a review of the research that had been conducted in classrooms would be extremely valuable. Moreover, because I was studying primary school children, I tried to identify studies that had been conducted on this particular age group.

As I have shown in chapter 1, research within the field of outdoor education focuses very little on the interactions of those involved in outdoor activities and the studies carried out tend to treat the facilitators and the participants in the programmes as separate subject matters, which I consider makes it difficult to gain a holistic view of the social phenomena that come into play and the educational process. Consequently,

looking at how studies on classroom interaction have explored both the perspectives of teachers and pupils, and how their interplay impacts on the learning experiences, can contribute to helping us understand more of what goes on when facilitators, teachers and pupils interact within groups in the outdoors.

What follows is, therefore, an enquiry into the literature on educational research, and more specifically on classroom interaction. Even though I have paid particular attention to research conducted in primary schools, my intention was not to solely focus on these types of studies, but rather to have an overview of the kind of research that has been conducted in the classroom environment. Nonetheless Kutnick *et al.* (2005) argue that there is limited research on secondary schools in comparison with the wide range of studies undertaken at the primary school level (e.g. Bennett, 1994; Galton *et al.*, 1999; Galton and Williamson, 1992; Hastings and Chantrey Wood, 2002;).

There is a great variety of studies on classroom interaction, nonetheless I have tried to identify the concepts and theoretical frameworks that are at the basis of most of the studies. Also, I have particularly looked at qualitative research into classroom interaction, focusing on ethnographic studies, as this is the approach I have adopted for my own research into group interactions in the outdoor classroom¹². However, some of the studies mentioned in this chapter have used different methodologies from my own (e.g. Myhill *et al.*, 2006).

4.1. Classroom Interaction

As my research into groups progressed, the word ‘interaction’ started to become more and more meaningful. Eventually it became more evident that ‘interaction’ was a significant phenomenon worth looking into. It was not just a by-product of group development, it was perhaps the essence of it. The overview of research on groups within socio-psychology (see chapter 3) has revealed that the spectrum of study of interaction was very limited as the studies were mostly positivistic and experimental

¹² I explain in chapter 5 how ethnographic research allowed me to move away from the traditional focus on groups, and adopt an approach that was more exploratory. This allowed for more discovery.

and underpinned by a functionalist theoretical framework. Research on outdoor education (see chapter 1) pays little attention to groups and most of the theoretical models are either borrowed from or based on socio-psychology. Nevertheless, educational researchers have been greatly interested in interaction. Thus both qualitative and quantitative studies have been conducted on interaction in the classroom environment, looking specifically at classroom talk and action.

Research on classroom interaction began in the 1950's and 1960's (see Bellack *et al.*, 1966, Flanders, 1970) and flourished in the 1980's (e.g. Delamont, 1983, 1984; Pollard, 1985; Woods, 1983). According to Kumpulainen and Wray (2002) classroom interaction can provide a rich source of data, which can be approached and explored from a range of perspectives. In its early stage, educational research into classroom interaction focused mainly on whole-class interactions between the teacher and the pupils. Such studies revealed, among other things, the existence of typical classroom interaction patterns, such as the widely known Initiation – Response – Feedback/Evaluation (IRF/E) sequence (Cazden, 1986, 1988; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). Within the IRF/E sequence the teacher often tightly controls the structure and content of classroom interaction, as he/she initiates the discussion by posing questions. The pupil's response to the question is followed by the teacher's feedback, which finishes the interaction.

It has been argued that even though identifying typical sequences in the classroom setting has allowed us to better understand the interactional exchanges between teacher and pupils, also highlighting the unequal communicative rights present in transmission classrooms (Kumpulainen and Wray, 2002), this has not however revealed much about the communicative functions of interactions and their consequences for the construction of meaning in the social context of the classroom (Orsolini and Pentecorvo, 1992). Moreover, Wells (1993) points out that even though the exchange structure between the teacher and the pupils may be constant in whole-class discussion, its communicative functions are not. This means that the purposes for which language is used may vary considerably. Thus, the triadic interaction sequence could also be found in teaching episodes following a view of learning and teaching as a collective meaning-making process.

The shift in teaching and learning perspectives began to emphasise the active role of individuals in meaning-making and knowledge construction (Wells, 1999) and it affected the nature of social interactions in classrooms, which transformed classroom interactions from structured discourse patterns to dynamic teaching and learning conversations that are normally found in everyday settings (Kumpulainen and Wray, 2002). This type of classroom interactions emphasises the role of the pupil as an active participant in social learning.

Kumpulainen and Wray (2002) note that in recent years educational researchers have started to be increasingly interested in the meaning of social interaction in mediating and supporting the practice of learning in institutions of education and a number of research studies exploring the ways in which knowledge is socially constructed support this statement (e.g. Edwards, 1993; Lemke, 1990; Mercer, 1995; Wells and Chang-Wells, 1992). Studies have also been conducted on the way teachers use discourse strategies to orchestrate classroom interaction and to scaffold pupils' learning (Wood, 1992). Research has also been carried out on pupils' social interactions during collaborative learning activities and the processes and outcomes of these (e.g. Cowie and van der Alsvort, 2000; Mercer and Wegeriff, 1999).

What all these studies show is that social interaction is seen as a valuable learning tool and the growing interest in classroom interactions and the processes of learning inherent in social interaction reflect the theoretical shift in perspectives on learning and instruction. Kumpulainen and Wray (2002:3) concur this when they say:

“Learning tends to be seen not only as a constructive process that takes place in the mind of the learner but also as a process of meaning-making and enculturation into social practices. According to this line of thinking, there is a pedagogical need to construct spaces in classrooms that invite and support learners' participation in diverse communities of practice, including specific subject domains and their discourses.”

Social interaction is very relevant to interaction in the outdoor classroom, mainly because pupils take part in many activities, which involve the whole group¹³, and not just the individual. Furthermore, Wells (1999) emphasises the need for classrooms to allow for difference by encouraging all the participants to make a contribution to the ongoing interaction with their own opinions and views.

The contemporary views on learning affect the way pupils are taught, allowing them to have a greater participation in social interaction. However, according to Kumpulainen and Wray (2002) this will not necessarily lead to meaningful learning experiences, and therefore, much attention needs to be paid to the patterns and content of pupils' interactions and how these support or challenge their learning, as well as to the contexts in which social interaction takes place. This implies that there is a need for a summary review of existing knowledge about classroom interaction and learning in order for practitioner and researchers to underpin future work in the classroom setting (Kumpulainen and Wray, 2002; Myhill *et al.*, 2006). Also, as Kumpulainen and Wray (2002) point out, there is a need for wider research in this area using more sophisticated analytical tools and methods in order to shed light on the subtleties of classroom interaction and their effects on learning. I consider that ethnographic research, which involves sensitive and complex methods and an in-depth analysis of the data (see Spradley, 1980), can contribute to revealing some of the subtleties of classroom interaction mentioned by Kumpulainen and Wray (2002) and could also help us understand how learning is constructed through interaction. This could therefore provide an insight into groups, since it would be group interactions that would be studied.

Furthermore, Delamont (2002: 49) points out that educational research needs to leave the boundaries of the indoor classroom and look at the educational process within other settings. Indeed, learning can take many shapes or forms and it may occur in various settings and it is not limited to the formal setting of the school (see Tight, 1996). I would argue that studying the interactions that occur between pupils and teachers in a different environment, such as an outdoor centre, can shed more light on the learning processes that take place during the outdoor activities, as the outdoors

¹³ See Appendix 2 for a description of the activities in which the school groups were involved at the outdoor centre where this research was conducted.

can provide opportunities that may not be available to the researcher in the enclosed and, perhaps, more rigid setting of the classroom. It gives the study a ‘naturalness’ that may be limited in the classroom setting, while at the same time being an appropriate environment for the study of groups and group interaction, which has been limited to the artificial laboratory environment (see chapter 3).

Rickinson *et al.* (2004) note that research in outdoor education has focused on the learning processes, the learning styles and the individual learners, nonetheless, they argue that there is a need for further consideration of the nature of ‘learning’ in outdoor education, calling for more studies of outdoor learning that draw on learning theory.

In chapter 2, I explored the theoretical principles and philosophies of learning that have contributed to the development of the concept of outdoor education as it is now. I will now look at two of the theories that underpin classroom interaction: symbolic interactionism and dialogic talk. These theories contribute toward explaining some aspects of the interaction within the outdoor classroom, and therefore I would argue that they are relevant for this research.

4.2. Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is one of the major theoretical frameworks used by researchers in their studies on classroom interaction. Symbolic interactionists share a set of theories about the way in which social life works, which derives mainly from G. H. Mead (Rock, 1979; see also Mead, 1934). The idea that people are the constructors of their own actions and meanings is central to symbolic interactionism (Woods, 1983). It implies that people have different meanings for the same objects in their physical world and they interpret situations in different ways. Moreover, all people are possessed of a self, they are all reflexive or self-interacting (Delamont, 1983).

According to this view, most of human interaction is symbolic, which means that it involves interpretation. Thus, when two people are interacting, they each constantly interpret their own and the other’s acts, becoming part of a continuum in which

reacting and reinterpreting take place. Symbolic interactionism theory assumes the existence of joint actions or social acts in which a number of individuals act together and share their construction of what is going on (Delamont, 1983). Such joint actions could be weddings, pop concerts, football games and, why not, classroom encounters. Successful participation in social acts depends on the ability of the participant to recognise them or recognising the normal definition of others. Power comes into play, as some may be able to enforce their definition of the situation upon others (Delamont, 1983).

Looking at the world from G. H. Mead (1934)'s point of view necessitates a different approach to research, an approach which implies seeing the world from the participant's point of view. But what happens when this approach is used in the study of classrooms? According to Delamont (1983: 28):

“When the symbolic interactionist approach is applied to classrooms, certain consequences follow. The classroom relationship of teacher and pupils is seen as a joint act – a relationship that works, and is about doing work. The interaction is understood as the daily ‘give-and-take’ between teacher and pupils. The process is one of negotiation – an on-going process by which everyday realities of the classroom are constantly defined and redefined.”

Woods (1983:11) sees school life as a ‘continuous process of negotiation’:

“The persistent properties of the act of identifying, interpreting, reckoning, and choosing, maintain a dynamic which, in interpersonal relations of a conflict nature, makes the actual interplay between persons the most important element, as each seeks to maximise his [sic] own interests. In schools, therefore, one might expect the whole day to consist of negotiations of one sort or another.”
(Woods, 1983:11)

Talking about the relationships within the classroom, Pollard (1985) notes that ‘flexibility’ and ‘adaptability’ are the only viable strategies in the long run, and that the establishment of a ‘good relationship’ between teacher and pupil is essential for the successful work with young children. Yardley (1976: 67) stresses the importance

of 'good relationships' when he points out that: "the quality of relationships within the school is at the root of the discipline which pertains there..."

Thus the relationships between pupils and teachers are very complex and beg for careful consideration. Delamont (1983) looks at classroom interaction bearing in mind several aspects, such as the temporal setting, the formal organisation of the school, the social and educational context and the physical surroundings in which they take place, portraying both the teacher's and pupils' perspectives and cultures, as well as their strategies. A complex approach is also taken by Woods (1983) and Pollard (1985) who also consider these aspects in their research on classroom interaction.

Pollard (1985) underlines the value of considering the perspectives of the teachers and the children when studying teaching and learning. These subtleties can be overlooked if one uses systematic observations, which have been abundantly used in educational research, and some researchers have acknowledged the difficulties with studies based on 'systematic observation' (see McIntyre, 1980). Pollard (1985:7) states that:

"...teaching and learning are processes which have social, interactive and pragmatic dimensions. The issues are not simply cognitive or organisational but involve the perspectives and practical concerns of teachers and children as they work together. An understanding of common patterns in the subjective perception of teachers and children is thus a necessary complement to other types of insight about teaching and learning in classrooms."

Therefore in order to be able to gain an insight into the interactions between teachers and pupils, it is essential that both their perspectives be studied. Ignoring one or the other, would mean that the researcher would miss out on the whole educational experience and he/she would not be able to piece together the whole picture. Within the outdoor classroom, I would argue that it is important to consider all the participants, i.e. the teachers, the facilitators and the pupils, as they are all part of the group involved in the outdoor activity and they can, therefore, have a great influence on the outdoor experience. The group is a living organism and all the relationships and interactions within the group are significant.

In addition, it is important to pay considerable attention not only to the role of the teachers/facilitators, but also to the role of the pupils within the group. According to Delamont (1983) the pupils' strength is in their number. Indeed, one of the aspects of their classroom experience is being part of a 'crowd' (Pollard, 1985). Pupils can thus be seen as disruptive and anarchic (Pollard, 1985) and any power that they may exercise is not socially sanctioned, it is in fact considered to be illegitimate (Delamont, 1983).

Pupils are expected to play the role that society has designed for them. Traditionally, they have to learn and behave in such a way that will facilitate learning, either by sitting quietly and absorbing the lecture or being preoccupied with solving the tasks or completing the work they are given. Also, their speech, dress, morals and behaviour are constantly monitored and corrected, their knowledge is under constant examination and critique. Pupils are expected to accept all these, as it is part of their role. The term 'role' is used to describe "common sets of mostly adult assumptions which provide part of the social context to which children must respond" (Pollard, 1985: 39). However the role of the child reflects the ambiguities in the conceptualisation of childhood, as Calvert (1975: 19) illustrates:

"...children are important and unimportant, they are expected to behave childishly but are criticised for this childishness; they are supposed to play with absorption when told to play, and not to mind stopping when told to stop; they are supposed to be dependent when adults prefer dependence and responsible when adults prefer that; they are supposed to think for themselves, but they are criticised for original solutions to problems."

All these contradictions lead to confusion and acute dilemmas for children, especially in the increasingly highly evaluative context of the classroom. This confusion is increased by their experience of being part of a crowd, which is in strong contrast to their experience at home (Pollard, 1985). At home children may have their parents' full attention, at school there is very little individual contact with the teacher, this problem being made worse by the uneven distribution of contact between teachers and children (Garner and Bing, 1973). Many studies have shown that boys tend to receive more attention than girls (Evans, 1979; Howe, 1997; Swann

and Graddol, 1988). More recent studies found that ‘high-achieving’ pupils tend to get more involved in whole-class teaching than others (Myhill, 2002; Myhill *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, children do not experience being part of a crowd in the same way (Pollard, 1985) and ‘interactivity’ is experienced in different ways by different children (Myhill *et al.*, 2006).

However, in the outdoor classroom, pupils normally work in small groups of five to ten, and not in classroom sized groups. This is an extremely significant aspect, as the interactions within such smaller groups may lead to the development of different relationships between the teachers and the pupils and between pupils and pupils. Some aspects of classroom interaction may be enhanced and some may not be so obvious, nonetheless, given the specific characteristics of the outdoor classroom, i.e. smaller numbers of pupils to adults, and the non-formal nature of the learning experience, which means that the pupils are not usually formally evaluated and are not given accreditations, the outdoor classroom may provide for more opportunities to build on the learning within the indoor classroom (cf. Humberstone, 1987). Moreover a study of interactions in such smaller groups involved in outdoor activities could allow for new knowledge to be uncovered about interaction within groups and the outdoor educational process.

Another important concept underpinning classroom interaction is dialogic talk. This concept is not only relevant for classroom interaction, but it can also be considered within group interaction and the outdoor learning experience, as dialogue appears to be an important aspect of the learning process within the outdoor classroom (see section 11.1).

4.3. Dialogic Talk

The idea of dialogic talk in the process of learning has its origin in Socrates’ philosophical dialogue in which teacher and pupil share a joint inquiry in the search for a truth that is unknown to both parties (Myhill *et al.*, 2006). This notion is also central to Bakhtin’s (1981) line of thinking, who argues that dialogue allows participants to create new meanings and new understandings, instead of simply reproducing previously constructed understanding.

Myhill *et al.* (2006) argue that dialogic talk builds on the participants' prior knowledge and it is a process of constructing knowledge together. Howe (1963) claims that the lack of dialogue in education, relationships and communication, which characterises much of the traditional classroom teaching, is destructive and exploitive. This is in tune with Freire's (1970) idea of the banking concept of education, which describes the traditional teaching as the depositing of information in the pupil's head and his observation that education is used to manipulate and prevent pupils from becoming fully human.

At the opposite end of traditional didactic teaching is dialogical interaction, which implies collaboration and an invitation to become a person by allowing the 'I-You' relationship to develop:

“Relation is reciprocity. My You acts on me as I act on it. Our students teach us, our works form us. The ‘wicked’ become a revelation when they are touched by the sacred basic word [I-You, the dialogical word]. How we are educated by children, by animals! Inscrutably involved, we live in the currents of universal reciprocity” (Buber, 1970: 67).

The beneficial effects of dialogue in education have been illustrated by Skidmore's (2000) study in which two different interaction styles are compared. One of the teachers controlled the learning in an authoritative style through her use of the IRF sequence, which has been discussed earlier (see section 4.1). The other promoted more open-ended thinking and response to the text, without using the IRF sequence, and by asking questions that invited the children to articulate their views, handing control to the children. By comparing the two different styles of teaching, Skidmore (2000) compares pedagogical dialogue with dialogic pedagogy. The former casts the teacher as the possessor of knowledge that must be conveyed to the children. The latter, is the internally persuasive discourse that celebrates ‘the primacy of dialogue, the impossibility of any word ever being final’ (Skidmore, 2000: 292). Skidmore comments on the teaching observed:

“a chaining of pupil utterances, in which each utterance builds on preceding contributions, qualifying, questioning, or contradicting what previous speakers have said.” (2000: 292)

Alexander (2004) provides the most recent and comprehensive account of dialogic talk and how it may apply to the classroom. On the one hand, the question-answer-tell routines of conventional teaching are critiqued and Alexander (2004) questions whether this type of teaching deserves to be characterised as ‘interactive’, as this sort of talk fails to promote real thinking and frequently offers insufficient cognitive challenge. On the other hand, dialogic talk is described as more searching and it is argued that by using interaction strategies, contributors are encouraged to work together and build upon the answers of others. Alexander (2004: 27) identifies five underlying principles of dialogic talk:

- *Collective*: learning tasks are addressed together by the teacher and the pupils as a group or class.
- *Reciprocal*: there is a sharing of ideas and a consideration of alternative points of view as teachers and pupils listen to each other.
- *Supportive*: pupils are free to articulate their ideas, without being afraid of being embarrassed if they give the ‘wrong’ answers; they help each other to reach a common understanding.
- *Cumulative*: the teacher and the pupils build on their own and each other’s ideas and put them together into coherent lines of enquiry.
- *Purposeful*: classroom talk is planned and steered by the teacher having in mind specific educational goals.

Myhill *et al.* (2006) point out a very important aspect of classroom life when they state that:

“The fact that teachers are more likely to ask factual questions, to dominate the talk time and to direct talk very strongly towards the curriculum goals is a reflection of the practical realities of classroom life, not an indictment of teachers’ professional competence. Moreover, teachers recognise and value those moments in the classroom when talking and learning are different in character, when children are questioning, thinking and fired up with enthusiasm, and when the teacher’s carefully-formulated plans are set aside in favour of the live flow of ‘thinking energy’” (Myhill *et al.*, 2006: 27-8)

Indeed, it is easy to blame the teachers for the inefficiencies of the educational system. The purpose of educational research is not to cast blame, but to try and understand why things happen the way they happen, to find out what lies beneath the surface and attempt to go deeper when analysing classroom interaction. I consider that a study on the interaction that goes on between pupils, facilitators and teachers in the educational environment of an outdoor centre can shed more light on the nature and complexity of these interactions, revealing more about how learning is constructed within the group and the impact that the participants have on the learning experience. Stepping out of the restrictive setting of the indoor classroom is of great importance for discovering new dimensions of the teacher/facilitator-pupil and the pupil-pupil interaction, as it is illustrated in chapter 11.

This chapter has examined some of the findings and theories that have been developed within educational research. The main theoretical concepts of classroom interaction have been discussed: symbolic interactionism and dialogic talk, as well as their influence on classroom interaction. It has been pointed out that the perspectives of all the participants, be it in the indoor or outdoor classroom, are significant, as they may shed light on how learning is constructed and may contribute to explaining some of the actions of the participants. In addition, research has suggested that when the interaction between the pupils and the teachers is based on a dialogue to which pupils can contribute as well, this can have a positive impact on the learning experience. The aspects of interaction and dialogue within the outdoor classroom will be explored in greater detail in chapters 11 and 12.

5. Looking at Group Interaction through an Ethnographic Spectrum – A Methodological Overview

This chapter is an overview of the methodology adopted for this thesis. It explains why I have chosen an ethnographic approach for this research and it explores what such an approach entails, by looking at the scientific endeavours that an ethnographic study requires.

5.1. *Why a Qualitative Approach? And Why Ethnography?*

My research began in the library, inspired by my interest in groups. In the first chapter, I have given several reasons as to why I find the study of groups so important. Nevertheless, I will remind the reader that the aim of my research is to explore and understand group interaction of primary school pupils involved in outdoor activities through an ethnographic study. I must note that I was born in a former communist country, where I was raised to believe that the common good and the community spirit were considered to be above individual needs, where the focus was on group thinking and individuality was not encouraged. In 2004 I came to the UK in order to undertake my doctoral research, and this was my first time visiting this country. It appeared to me at that time that the UK had a very different approach than the one I had experienced in my home country, one that was more focused on the individual. In the literature review (see chapter 3), I discussed some of the research that focused on groups, which was mostly carried out in the 1960s and the years leading up to that (see Crosbie, 1975), and which was done from sociological and socio-psychological perspectives (see Anderson, 1968; Aronson and Linder, 1965; Back, 1948; Bales, 1952; Blau, 1964; Festinger, 1950). The interest in the study of groups appeared to decrease in the following decades, although there was some research done in the 1970s (see Crosbie, 1975) and 1980s, and the 1990s, but this followed the canons of the previous research, i.e. largely positivistic and laboratory based.

However, traditional views on groups have been challenged by the social identity approach (see Hogg and Abrams, 1988). This approach focuses on group behaviour in relation to self-categorisation. The social identity approach deconstructs the

traditional theories on group formation, group cohesion and group dynamics, by showing their empirical limitations, and replaces them with the concept of group behaviour in relation to self-categorisation. According to this approach, there is no limitation on numbers and group behaviour may be the result of the unique qualities of those present and the unique purposes and goals of the collective, but it can also be determined by the qualities of a greater number of people than those present, e.g. a religion, a race, or a gender (Hogg and Abrams, 1988).

There appeared a shift from the traditional views on groups and group dynamics, to the social identity approach. This latter approach brought a new innovative perspective on the study of groups. Considering the history of research methodology in social sciences, and the debate between the researchers adopting the positivistic/quantitative paradigm and those adopting the interpretative/qualitative paradigm, one can identify that new concepts and ideas have determined a change of how research is conducted, and especially how the world is viewed. Positivism is modelled on the natural sciences, more specifically physics, and is therefore conceived as a scientific method, where method refers to the testing of theories (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Social science often adopted physical and biological metaphors that served as models of social processes (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Pepitone, 1981).

In social psychology, the experiment was the dominant method used, as the variables could be measured in the controlled environment of the laboratory. Moreover, the group was compared to a molecule where the people are the individual atoms and inter-atomic forces represent interpersonal attraction (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). Positivists argue that only by exercising physical or statistical control over variables and by rigorously measuring them can science produce a body of knowledge with a conclusive validity that is able to replace the myths and dogma of common sense (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The hallmark of positivism is an insistence on explanations, prediction and proof. Because interpretative research utilising qualitative methods does not follow these canons, it has been criticised for lacking scientific rigour, being dismissed as inappropriate for social science on the grounds of producing 'subjective' data and findings (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

The belief in objective observation, quantifiable data and verifiable truth has been deemed by researchers from feminist perspectives to be a patriarchal view of the world (Keller, 1985), marginalizing non-experimental, non-objective ways of doing science (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). As a reaction to positivism, naturalism developed as an alternative view, which proposed that the social world should be studied in its 'natural' state, undisturbed by the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

Objectivity was still an important element in conducting research, the researcher was supposed to be a neutral observer of the culture he/she studied, giving an account of the 'real' world by focusing on describing what takes place in the setting, how the people involved regard their own actions and those of others and the context in which the action goes on. According to naturalism, social research had to first of all manifest fidelity to the phenomena under study and not to the methodological principles (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Naturalism made a clear distinction between the physical and the social phenomena, and argued that the social world cannot be understood through simple causal relationships or by assuming social events under universal laws, because human actions are based on intentions, motives, beliefs, rules and values (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

Those arguing for a naturalistic approach remark that people's behaviour is not caused in a mechanical way and therefore it cannot be analysed causally and manipulated according to the variables, which are characteristic of quantitative research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). They plead for an approach that allows access to the meanings that guide that behaviour, thus description of cultures is the primary goal of the naturalist movement. This approach took the form of early ethnographic research. It is argued that the value of ethnography in naturalistic research as a method of social research is based on the existence of various cultural patterns across and within societies, and their important role in understanding social processes (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Early ethnography draws on the capacity of a social actor to learn about new cultures, and the objectivity of this process, thus researchers from the naturalistic perspective were committed to neutrality.

However, commitment to neutrality of those adopting the naturalistic perspective and their claim to the realism of the description of the social phenomena have been seriously challenged. Kuhn (1970) was a fervent critic both of positivism and naturalism. He believed that all knowledge was mediated by paradigmatic presuppositions, in that the validity of scientific claims depends on the paradigm within which these claims are considered and cannot be seen as a simple reflection of some independent domain of reality.

With all its limitations, naturalism had the merit of taking the researcher out of the laboratory and into the natural setting, studying 'real' people doing what they normally do, that is live their lives. However the idea that the researchers have no influence at all on those they study, that they can assume the role of the distant and objective observer was abandoned if not completely, at least by many of the researchers.

Philosophical hermeneutics had a great influence on social research in the twentieth century. It challenged traditional views of objectivity and put forward the idea that understanding the social world could no longer be seen as independent of the socio-historical position of the researcher, the researcher's values and beliefs would inevitably influence his/her reflections and interpretations of the social world (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

Post-structuralism has also influenced ethnographic research extensively in recent years. This is a very complex and diverse movement, but the central thought lies in the "commitment to strip any text of its external claims to authority" (Denzin, 1997:9). In Denzin's view "A good text exposes how race, class, and gender work their ways into the concrete lives of interacting individuals" (1997:10). Denzin (1997) presents the history of qualitative research by dividing it into five moments, to which Denzin and Lincoln (2000) add two more, poststructuralism being the fifth, while postexperimental and the future are the sixth and the seventh moment, respectively. What is interesting about this history was the fact that they talk about a crisis of representation in the mid 1980's (the fourth moment), which, according to them, was the result of an increased uncertainty about how social reality should be described adequately.

Consequently, there was a reassessment of dominant ideas across the human sciences and it was not only the ideas themselves that were challenged, but also the paradigmatic style in which they were represented. However Sparkes (2002) argues that this crisis of representation is still present today, as the assumption that the qualitative researcher is able to directly capture lived experience continues to be questioned. He notes that such experience is believed to be created in the social text by the researcher and therefore the relationship between the text and the experience is seen as more and more problematic, which begs for a serious rethinking of the terms validity, generalisability and reliability¹⁴.

Traditionally, ethnographers believed that their methods explored and uncovered lived experience, assuming that the word of the 'subject'¹⁵ was always final, and that talk was a direct means of reflecting subjective and lived experience. According to this view, translating talk literally is the same thing as the lived experience and its representation (Denzin, 1997). This is what Denzin (1997) refers to as the representational crisis, which he argues is defined by a single, but complex issue, i.e. the assumption that a great deal, if not all, of the writing in qualitative and ethnographic research is a narration that keeps the writer, the text and the subject matter separate (Denzin, 1991). Thus, the qualitative or ethnographic text presumes that there is a world, which is 'real' and can be captured by an author who is aware of it through a careful transcription and analysis of the field materials, such as interviews, notes, etc. The author is considered to be "the mirror to the world under analysis" (Denzin, 1997: 5), and the experiences of the 'subject' are represented by this reflected world through a "complex textual apparatus" (Denzin, 1997:5). As a consequence the 'subject' becomes a textual construction, as the real person is "always translated into either an analytic subject as a social type or a textual subject who speaks from the author's pages" (Denzin, 1997:5).

Post-structuralism challenges the assumptions that the word of the 'subject' is always final and that talk is a direct means of reflecting subjective and lived experience. Denzin (1997) argues that:

¹⁴ I will come back to the discussion on validity, generalisability and reliability later in chapter 7.

¹⁵ As an ethnographer, I prefer the use of the term 'participant' instead of 'subject'. The use of the term 'participant' implies that the people are part of the ethnographic study and not outside it. The research is not done 'on' them, but rather 'with' them.

“Language and speech do not mirror experience: they create experience and in the process of creation constantly transform and defer that which is being described” (Denzin, 1997:5).

In other words, what a ‘subject’ means by a statement changes all the time, and therefore, translating talk literally is not the same thing as the lived experience and its representation. He elaborates:

“There can never be a final, accurate representation of what was meant or said – only different textual representations of different experiences” (Denzin, 1997: 5).

Nevertheless, this does not put an end to representation, but rather announces the end of “pure presence” (Lather, 1993). This means that the written text presents the experiences of the ‘subject’ and the task is to understand what it is meant by textually constructed presence, which leads to the issue of text authority.

The issue of authority translates into what Denzin (1997) calls the legitimation crisis, where the postpositivistic arguments for validity are challenged by poststructuralists as they understand the postpositivism’s validity “to be a plea for epistemological certainty” (Denzin, 1997: 6). Postpositivists consider the text’s authority to be established by a set of rules that refer to a reality outside the text. If these rules are properly followed, validity can be established. Without validity there is no truth, without truth, the text is not valid. Validity gives power (Cherryholmes, 1988)¹⁶. Thus by claiming epistemological validity, the text of the postpositivists asserts its own power over the reader. This takes us back to the patriarchal views on the world of the traditional positivists that have been challenged by many qualitative researchers.

The dynamic quality of qualitative research is what draws me to it. I have made this short presentation of how sociological research evolved because I believe it to be relevant to my own research, since this contributed to my decision to take a qualitative approach, even though I was coming from a positivistic background. At the beginning of my PhD, I had an idea of what I wanted to look at, the

¹⁶ Further discussion on the issue of validity later in chapter 7.

‘foreshadowed problems’ (Malinowski, 1922), and this developed from my interest in groups in particular and education in general.

5.2. Foreshadowed Problems

Reading through research done in outdoor education, I have noticed that little attention had been given to groups and group interactions (see chapter 1). So I started to look into the research that had been done on groups and group interactions (see chapter 3). I wanted to gain as much theoretical background as I could on this topic. To this respect Malinowski (1922) argues that:

“Good training in theory, and acquaintance with its latest results, is not identical with being burdened with ‘preconceived ideas’. If a man [sic] sets out on an expedition, determined to prove certain hypotheses, if he [sic] is incapable of changing his [sic] views constantly and casting them off ungrudgingly under the pressure of evidence, needless to say his [sic] work will be worthless. But the more problems he [sic] brings with him [sic] into the field, the more he [sic] is in the habit of moulding his [sic] theories according to facts, and of seeing facts in their bearing upon theory, the better he [sic] is equipped for the work. Preconceived ideas are pernicious in any scientific work, but foreshadowed problems are the main endowment of a scientific thinker, and these problems are first revealed to the observer by his [sic] theoretical studies.” (Malinowski, 1922: 8-9)

Nevertheless, I did gain a positivistic perspective that influenced the first part of my research. This was reinforced by my background, which was in no uncertain terms positivistic. Although I was bent on doing an ethnographic study, I found myself trapped in a paradigm that did not suit the purpose of my research, i.e. exploring and understanding the processes that go on within a group and not attempting to evaluate or measure outcomes. Thus I went back to reading, as my supervisor says: “When you get stuck, just keep on reading!” (probably not her exact words, but something to that effect in any case). This is how I came to realise that ethnography has much more to offer. I needed to find a method of research that was on the one hand, rigorous enough to satisfy my scientific self and, on the other hand, that was flexible enough so as not suppress my creative self.

Fetterman (1989: 11) defines ethnography as being “the art and science of describing a group or culture”. This dual quality of ethnography suited my personality like a glove and made me feel more comfortable in my own skin, giving me more confidence as a researcher. This is because I am quite creative and I like to do work that allows me to explore and discover things, but I also like structure. On the one hand, ethnography allows one to use one’s creativity in research, to uncover the world, rather than test hypotheses and this is what I consider the ‘art’ in ethnography. On the other hand, conducting an ethnographic study requires a great deal of discipline, hard work (Walford, 2002) and a solid theoretical background (Delamont, 2002; Malinowski, 1922). This is what I consider the ‘science’ in ethnography.

What I felt lacked in sociological research was an insight into how regular people made sense of working, socialising and, why not, playing, having fun, with those that are closer to them. I am not talking about interaction in general, but the close intimate relationships of friendship, collegiality, comradeship and affection. So my focus of inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) turned to exploring what goes on within a group. I intended to discover, describe, understand and interpret group interaction.

I considered that outdoor activities provided an ideal context for my study. Research that involved groups in outdoor education treated them from a rather traditionalist perspective, using concepts such as group size, group cohesion, and group dynamics, concepts which limit the spectrum of study. As I have mentioned earlier in this thesis (see chapter 1), groups are hardly ever the focus of research in outdoor education, despite the fact that groups are used extensively in outdoor activities. I believed that an ethnographic study on groups involved in outdoor activities would give me the opportunity to gain knowledge and an insight into human interaction within groups in that context.

Furthermore, as my study evolved, another issue came to light. I realised that although research in outdoor education was increasing, covering a wide variety of issues, there was still a need for a deeper research-based understanding of the outdoor educational process (Rickinson *et al.*, 2004). There is also a need for bridging the gap between research, theory and practice in outdoor education (Richards *et al.*, 2005). Such gaps exist, because much of the research carried out in

outdoor education has mainly looked at the outcomes of outdoor education, rather than the process itself. Beames (2004) supports this argument, when he points out that there is too much focus on outcomes and that not enough attention is paid to the process determining the outcomes. I considered that by exploring the interactions between participants taking part in outdoor activities, i.e. the teachers, the pupils and the facilitators, I could uncover what goes on within the outdoor classroom.

The educational setting was quite familiar to me as I had myself been actively involved in teaching, as a qualified teacher in Romania. Ethnography was no stranger to education either, as there have been numerous studies done in schools and universities (see Conteh *et al.*, 2005; Delamont, 1983, 1984, 2002; Fetterman, 1989; Hammersley, 1983; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Massey and Walford, 1999; Pollard, 1985; Robinson, 1994; Sparkes, 2002; Walford, 2001; 2002; Wolcott, 1988). The ethnographic approach in educational research has often been categorised as story telling and sometimes not viewed as serious and rigorous research. However Walford (2002: 1) disagrees stating:

“There are still those in the educational research world who believe that ethnography is an easy option for those who cannot deal with statistics. But as anyone who has ever conducted such a study knows, this is far from true. Doing ethnographic fieldwork, analysing the data and writing the full account are immensely time-consuming and energy-sapping activities. They demand personal commitment of a very high order and a vast amount of sheer hard work. Nobody should start an ethnographic doctorate thinking it will be easy. It won't be.”

It is the emphasis that ethnography puts on understanding the perceptions and cultures of the people and organisations studied that is its key strength (Walford, 2002). Moreover, the ethnographic approach is sensitive to the individual and to the social processes (Davies, 1984; Griffin, 1985; Willis, 1977). Griffin (1985) sees the qualitative analyses of ethnography as a means to understand the experience of individuals in a group context. This sensitivity of ethnography, its capability of capturing the process in its wholeness (see Fetterman's (1989) holistic perspective of ethnography), the fact that it allows the researcher to have an insight into other people's experiences were factors that influenced my decision to use this approach in

my research on group interaction in the outdoor classroom. Denscombe's (1983: 107) argument is quite relevant here:

“Ethnographic research on teachers (and pupils), like ethnographies in general, aims to describe and explain the culture of a social group and examine the circumstances in which this culture arises. Rather than focus on the outcome of the teaching process – its end-product measured in terms of its efficiency at instilling knowledge or its contribution to the persistence of capitalism – ethnographers are primarily interested in the customs and behaviour of the group and, in particular, the members' *understanding*¹⁷ of the world in which they operate.”

Therefore, my research will not deal with numbers, I do not wish to find out how many pupils have said that they enjoyed their experience in the outdoor centre, or how many think that they have changed. As poststructuralists argued, what people say does not always reflect what they feel (Denzin, 1997). Spradley's (1980) advice to the researcher who wants to learn what the participants think and feel, is to set aside his/her belief in naïve realism, i.e. the belief that all people define the 'real' world in the same way. Nevertheless, this assumption may unconsciously influence all researchers, but the ethnographer has to somehow rise above it¹⁸.

Another important characteristic of ethnography is its flexibility of location, and Delamont (2002: 49) points out the importance of educational research not to limit itself to one sort of research site:

“Rather than focusing the sociology of education ever more closely on teachers and teaching, the sociology of education should look outwards to other social settings, and campaign for teacher-researchers to have the challenging experience too.”

What she is referring to is the fact that educational researchers should go outside the formal classroom and explore other settings where learning may occur. Learning takes place in a variety of circumstances and ethnographies have been conducted in

¹⁷ Original italics.

¹⁸ How and why the ethnographer should do this will be discussed further on, in chapter 7.

many different places, not just schools. Therefore, my intention to study the outdoor classroom can be seen as contributing to the expansion of the boundaries of educational research.

I have attempted to explain to the reader why I have chosen a qualitative approach to my research. In addition, I have given arguments as to why I considered ethnography is appropriate for this study. What follows is a detailed description of how I have used ethnography during my study.

5.3. Research Design

As a novice ethnographer I had much to learn about conducting an ethnographic research. Reading was the simple most natural way of acquiring knowledge. I soon found out that there is no strict set of rules to follow and to ensure that you have done it the 'right' way. There is no instructions manual that shows you the exact steps you need to follow, although some have attempted to do so (see Fetterman, 1989¹⁹). Ethnography generally assumes an emergent design, one can anticipate and plan as best as one can for a broad or narrow focus of inquiry that will lead to studying new people or new settings (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994), but this may change as the research progresses. This type of research can hardly be programmed, its practice is full of the unexpected and it requires the use of judgement in the context (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Pugsley (2002: 91) describes her ethnographic experience of educational research as a 'white knuckle ride', a ride that she enjoyed for the very reason that everything was so unpredictable and yet exciting, and this clearly comes out when she asserts that:

“Conducting qualitative research involves the researcher in the messy realities of the social, there are always unanticipated pathways and pitfalls in the process. However, for me, this is part of the thrill, undertaking an ethnographic study is, by definition, an exploration into the unknown. There can be no neat

¹⁹ Although Fetterman's *Ethnography Step by Step* is very useful for a novice ethnographer to get acquainted with the ethnographic approach, I did not agree with some of the ideas he puts forward, as these appeared to adopt positivistic criteria on occasion. This will be discussed further on in this section.

template, no perfectly written protocol, the qualitative paradigm requires the researcher to make instant judgment calls and to live with the consequences.”

Therefore the course of ethnography cannot be predetermined, and the ethnographer relies much on his/her judgement to help him/her decide where to go and what to do next. Still, considerable progress can be made if the research problems are clear and developed before beginning fieldwork (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

Pelto (1970) has a more systematic view on research design, which appears to adopt positivistic criteria on occasion and this can have limitations for interpretative research. He believes that research design is a combination of essential elements of investigation that results in “an effective problem-solving sequence” (Pelto, 1970: 331). Similarly, Fetterman (1989: 18) describes research design as a roadmap that helps the ethnographer envision “how each step will follow the one before to build knowledge and understanding.” According to Fetterman (1989) the researcher generates several hypotheses that he/she tests during the fieldwork. Fetterman (1989) argues that generating hypotheses, prior to fieldwork, does not limit the scope of the research, however this may affect the richness of the data or even influence the researcher in a certain direction. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) mention that one starting point for research can be a “well-developed theory from which a set of hypotheses can be derived”, nonetheless they state that most ethnographic research is concerned with descriptions and explanations of particular phenomena or with developing theories.

Walford (2001) also uses the term ‘hypothesis’, more generally used in positivistic research, when he talks about a cycle of hypothesis and theory building, which he finds characteristic of ethnographic research, since an ethnographer constantly modifies hypotheses and theories in the light of further data. Thus, as new data emerge, some of the existing theories may not be adequate any longer, also, the ethnographer may change his/her focus or may replace interpretations with others that seem to be more appropriate. This process does not stop in the data collection phase, it may well go on further, because this is what an emergent design implies, and this is one of the distinguishing features of ethnography. However, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:26) emphasise that “the absence of detailed knowledge of a

phenomenon or process itself represents a useful starting point for research.” And this is where I feel my research is situated.

Books such as those of Moser and Kalton (1992), and Cohen and Manion (1994), which are still widely used, present research as an unproblematic process that deals with sampling, questionnaire design, interview procedures etc., presenting an idealised conception of how social and educational research is designed and executed. Nevertheless Walford (2001: 1) argues that:

“In essence, such books take what they perceive to be the methods used in the natural sciences and their model, and seek to present the social and educational research as being equally ‘scientific’ in its methods.”

The reality is different, as the careful, objective, step-by-step model of the research process is unrealistic and it perpetuates a myth of objectivity (Medawar, 1994). Walford (2001) argues that autobiographical accounts by scientists themselves and academic studies by sociologists of science reveal that natural science research is more often than not based on compromises, shortcuts and hunches (see Watson, 1968). Furthermore, the ethnographic study that looked at the everyday life of the scientific laboratory, conducted by Latour and Woolgar (1979) clearly shows that scientific ‘facts’ are not ‘discovered’, but rather the result of a complex process of social construction. According to Walford (2001), although there is increased recognition of the fact that the individual researcher in natural science does not behave as an objective robot, social and educational research has traditionally tried to justify its research methods by making them as scientific and as objective as possible by imitating the methods of natural sciences. Walford (2001: 2) does not deny the importance of such methods, however he does remark that they might not be enough:

“While it might be argued that these idealised models of research presented in traditional textbooks are a necessary part of understanding research, they certainly do not prepare novice researchers for the political and social realities of the actual research practice. They need to be supplemented by rather different accounts of the research process in action.”

Consequently, because I did not formulate any hypotheses prior to my fieldwork, as I felt that this was characteristic of the positivistic research done previously on groups, and also, because I had no theory to begin with or base my research on, as I considered the traditional theories on groups as unsuitable for my focus of inquiry, an emergent design seemed the most appropriate. This meant that the research would evolve as my knowledge and understanding increased. To put it simply, I intended 'to let it flow'.

Although I did not wish to burden my thinking with preconceived ideas before entering the field, I did have my own beliefs and values that affected my judgement. This is however impossible to avoid, that is why I chose to take them into consideration all the way through the ethnographic study and make them explicit during my research, always reflecting on how they may or may not influence me. As I was conducting the research, I became part of it, I was the human instrument of that research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thus, in an ethnographic study the researcher himself/herself becomes the research tool par excellence, as he/she is the only instrument flexible enough to be able to capture the intricacy, subtlety, and ever-changing situation of the human experience (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Fetterman's comment reinforces this view:

"Relying on all its senses, thoughts, and feelings, the human instrument is a most sensitive and perceptive data gathering tool." (1989:41)

He does, however, warn against the 'subjectivity' of this type of data. I will discuss these implications in the following section, which deals with the role that the researcher plays in the research process and the position he/she assumes regarding the research.

5.4. *The Researcher as Human Instrument*

The ethnographer himself/herself is the primary source of data (Woods, 1994), consequently subjectivity is an inescapable reality of the research act:

"The ethnographer must aim to keep an open mind about 'what is going on here' and what might be the best way to talk or write about whatever is being

studied. But recognising the presence of subjectivity is not the same as saying ‘anything goes’. Somehow a balance must be struck between suspending preconceptions and using one’s present understandings and beliefs to enquire intelligently.” (Walford, 2001: 9).

Dey (1993) makes a clear point that it is not the danger of having preconceived ideas that should worry us, but whether we are aware of them or not. In order to be able to achieve such awareness, Walford (2001) argues that the ethnographer must be involved in a constant review of how his/her ideas have evolved, giving careful consideration to the reasons behind particular decisions made, certain questions asked or not asked and why data were produced in a particular way. But most of all, according to Walford (2001), the ethnographer must attempt to bring to light the assumptions and values implicit in the research and the implications behind acknowledging that the researcher is part of, rather than outside, the research act.

Such a balancing act may prove to be quite difficult, especially for a novice researcher like me, who is just beginning to get to grips with conducting an ethnographic study. As I have mentioned above, I assumed the role of human instrument in conducting my research, relying on my senses and judgements throughout the whole process. Nevertheless, certain concepts, which I will discuss below, guided me through my research and helped me stay grounded.

5.4.1. Indwelling

Indwelling in qualitative terms means:

“being at one with the persons under investigation, walking a mile in the other person’s shoes, or understanding the person’s point of view from an empathic rather than a sympathetic position.” (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 25)

This concept was introduced by Polanyi (in Grene, 1969), and it is on this that the notion of ‘human as instrument’ was built (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Polanyi (1967) sees people in their whole complexity and unexpectedness and concludes that the study of human beings can hardly be compared to that of inanimate objects. The

subject matter is as complex as the researcher. Indwelling in these complexities helps the researcher learn about significant aspects of reality.

Human plurality (Arendt, 1958) is a concept linked to the idea of indwelling. It puts forward the principle that all human beings are equal, but distinct. Consequently, Arendt (1958) argues that we can understand each other as equals and we need to understand each other because we are different. In order to be able to understand each other we need to access each other's worlds. Furthermore, if we see one another as equivalent to ourselves, it allows us to access other peoples' worlds and experiences. And because we are aware that we are different from one another, we realise that our understanding of a situation may not be the same as the understanding of somebody else. Human plurality makes it possible to approximate this understanding, but does not guarantee it (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

We are able to indwell in a human setting, a human activity or with a human being due to human plurality, i.e. we are equal to one another, but we are distinct from one another. Indwelling is not arbitrary; it is based on our tacit knowledge of the person or situation. Tacit knowledge is what we know, but we cannot say (Polanyi, 1967). Explicit knowledge is what a researcher enters into his/her field notes or research diary, while tacit knowledge is what will help the researcher understand the environment relying on instinct rather than logic. By articulating his/her observations, reflecting on what he/she knows explicitly, the researcher can begin to uncover his/her tacit knowledge and then this too can be reflected upon. Consequently, the researcher gains access to tacit knowledge by indwelling, by focusing away from the object of study and toward its meaning (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

This understanding is not easy to achieve, and it depends a lot on the researcher's tolerance for ambiguity²⁰. The qualitative researcher does not have the comfortable position of the traditional researcher who situates himself/herself in one or more hypotheses, which constitute the focus of inquiry and which tell the researcher what

²⁰ Ambiguity must not be interchanged with vagueness here, although in some instances they may denote the same thing, in this case ambiguity refers to understanding a situation in more ways than one, while a vague situation is characterised by a lack of precision (see Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

to include or exclude from the study. Qualitative research is more ambiguous, it does not follow a pre-set research script, but it follows the contours of the research as it unfolds (see Merleau-Ponty, 1964). The qualitative researcher assumes an open-ended perspective, which is not clearly focused in its initial stages (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

5.4.2. Reflexivity

Both positivism and naturalism do not take into account that the researcher is part of the social world he/she studies. This stems from the desire to eliminate the effects that the researcher may have on the data. Reflexivity recognises the fact that the researcher's views will be influenced by his/her socio-historical locations, which include the values and interests that these locations bestow upon them (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). This rejects the idea that social research is or can be done in isolation from the wider society and from the researcher himself/herself, so that social processes and personal characteristics do not affect findings.

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), reflexivity is a significant feature of social research and they argue that all social research takes the form of participant observation, because it involves participating in the social world, in any role, and reflecting on the products of that participation. Therefore, since I, the researcher, am inevitably part of the world I study, instead of trying to deny this fact and remove myself from it, I should embrace it, I should be aware of the effects that my presence has on the people within that world and their actions. How people react to the presence of the researcher is as important data as how they respond to other situations and should therefore be taken into consideration when analysing the data. Instead of trying to completely eliminate the effects of the researcher, it is best to try and understand them (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

An important aspect of reflexivity is that it helps the reader of the research to gain some knowledge as to how the research has been constructed, be it theoretically, methodologically, emotionally or perceptually. It also allows the reader to gain an insight into "the ways in which webs of power work in both the culture under exploration and within the particular research process" (Humberstone, 1997: 200).

Thus, reflexivity in ethnographic research not only helps the researcher to understand and to be in touch with his/her research, but it also enables the reader to make his/her mind up regarding the credibility of the process.

Walford (2002: 3-4) acknowledges that the reflexive account should take into consideration the importance of the researcher within the research and an analysis of the personal influences on the research process, but also points out that: “the essence of the account is to show that a successful piece of research has been conducted, and to explain where justifiable decisions were made”. According to him, there is no need for a researcher to give too much of a detailed account of all the problems and mistakes of the research process. Such an account is found in ethnographies that adopt the form of a ‘confessional tale’ (Van Maanen, 1988).

When conducting research, the researcher can use the ‘knowledge’ he/she has, as long as he/she keeps an open mind and engages in systematic inquiry where there is reasonable doubt. By doing this, Hammersley (1992) argues that it can still be reasonably assumed that the researcher is trying to describe phenomena as they are, and not as he/she perceives them or as he/she would like them to be²¹.

Research is an active process, which involves selective observation of accounts of the world and theoretical interpretations of what is seen, this being done through writing field notes, transcribing audio/video recordings, writing research reports. Because the findings or even the data are constructed, it does not mean that they do not or cannot represent social phenomena (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). And also, because the researcher can have an effect on the people under study, it does not mean that the data is not credible. For:

“Once we abandon the idea that the social character of research can be standardised out or avoided by becoming a ‘fly on the wall’ or a ‘full participant’, the role of the researcher as active participant in the research process becomes clear. He or she is the research instrument *par excellence*.”
(Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 19)

²¹ Denzin (1997) has criticised the view that the researcher represents the world as it is, together with concepts of validity, reliability and credibility. This will be discussed further on in chapter 7.

But it is essential that interpretations are made explicit and that their limits are always tested and alternatives are assessed (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). I have tried to do this in my own research, by keeping a fieldwork diary where I would put down my thoughts for the day, sometimes considering the reasons behind my reactions to certain situations or the reactions of the participants to myself, to the environment or towards one another. I tried to be as honest as possible with myself, and keep an open mind.

5.4.3. The Interpretive Approach

Denzin (1989) encourages the researcher to first immerse himself/herself in the lives of the people studied and, after acquiring a deep understanding of these lives through rigorous effort, to produce a contextualised reproduction and interpretation of the stories told by the participants. This will result in an integrated synthesis of experience and theory. He believes that the “final interpretive theory is multivoiced and dialogical. It builds on the native interpretations and in fact simply articulates what is implicit in those interpretations” (Denzin, 1989: 120). Class, race, gender and ethnicity exert a huge influence on the process of inquiry, making the research a multicultural process (Denzin, 1997). The qualitative research act can no longer be viewed from a neutral or objective positivistic perspective.

Through ethnography, one culture is decoded, and at the same time recoded for another (Barthes, 1972). This process is an interpretive act that takes place when the texts are written, therefore, it is subject to certain constraints, like any piece of writing (Van Maanen, 1988). The results achieved following fieldwork are conditioned by the fieldworker’s experiences and vary considerably according to the setting and person. Furthermore, Van Maanen argues that: “Ethnographies are politically mediated, since the power of one group to represent another is always involved” (Van Maanen, 1988: 4). Nevertheless, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) warn against research being directed towards achieving particular political or practical goals, because this could cause the findings to be perverted by ideas about how the world should be and what people should believe. This does not imply, according to them, that the researcher should abandon his/her political convictions, but that the primary goal has to be to produce knowledge and to try to minimise

distortions of findings by political convictions or practical interests. I do not think the researcher can escape his/her own political convictions, but it is his/her duty to make them explicit and to always be aware of the influence that they may have on how the data is interpreted (see Fetterman, 1989).

5.4.4. Emic and Etic Perspectives

The emic perspective refers to the insider's perspective of reality and is at the heart of ethnographic research. According to Fetterman (1989), the insider's perception of reality helps the ethnographer to understand and describe situations and behaviours in an authentic manner²². This perception does not conform to the objective reality, and it helps the researcher understand why members of a social group do what they do.

Fetterman (1989) argues that ethnography does not make pre-assumptions about how a system works from a simple, linear, logical perspective, that may lead the researcher in the completely wrong direction, but it follows a phenomenologically orientated research approach. He states:

“An emic perspective compels the recognition and acceptance of multiple realities. Documenting multiple perspectives of reality in a given study is crucial to an understanding of why people think and act in the different ways they do.” (Fetterman, 1989: 31)

Fetterman (1989) believes that ‘good’ ethnography combines the emic perspective with the etic, i.e. the external, social scientific perspective on reality. According to him, ethnographic work is not done until the researcher steps back and makes sense of the situation from both an emic and etic perspective.

Although not using the same terms, Woods (1996) talks about the ethnographic enquiry along the same lines as Fetterman, when he argues that both involvement

²² Denzin (1997) addressed the issues of authenticity in interpretative research, and argued that such claims cannot be made. This will be discussed more extensively in chapter 7. However, I would argue that an emic perspective gives credibility to the research, as it locates the research in the social context.

and distance are necessary features of qualitative research. The concept of distancing is quite similar to Fetterman's etic perspective on research, since through distancing the researcher has to engage in comparison with the worlds outside his/her own research and situate the research setting in the social and political context:

"The methodological concept of distance accepts that the researcher is part of the research frame ... Distancing is achieved by comparing and contrasting the researcher's close involvement with alternative research material of similar sites and comparing analysis with other perspectives derived from relevant theoretical models. The research site is also considered and analysed within its geographical, social and political context." (Jeffrey, 1999: 164)

Such a process of distancing is achieved mainly through written texts, which are put alongside each other and the other collected material and reconstructed in order for an 'authentic' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) version to be constructed²³. This process allows the researcher to engage, to get involved, which is important for insight and imagination, but which is done in connection with other analyses and re-analyses through the researcher's cognitive reflections (Jeffrey, 1999).

Framing my own research was very important. Initially, I reviewed research conducted in outdoor education and have tried to identify studies that involved groups in the outdoors (see chapter 1). As I found little research within the outdoor education field that focused mainly on groups and group interaction, I looked at traditional research done on groups in the field of socio-psychology (see chapter 3). I then decided to look at educational research that studied classroom interaction (see chapter 4), which allowed me to explore some of the social phenomena I was interested in, but in a different setting. Even though at first glance the settings seemed very different, I soon realised that there were great similarities. Studies on classroom interaction explored the intricacies of teacher-pupil relationships. My own study identified as participants in the outdoor education process: the teachers, the pupils and the facilitators. The relationships between these participants in the 'outdoor classroom' were much the same as those in the 'indoor classroom'. The

²³ See chapter 7 for a discussion on issues of authenticity of the ethnographic text, and why credibility is seen as a more appropriate term.

literature reviewed in the first four chapters of this thesis contributed toward establishing the theoretical frame for my study. Thus comparing research done in outdoor education and in the indoor classroom played an important role in situating my research within the social context.

Fetterman (1989) also brings into discussion the non-judgemental orientation, which helps researchers to prevent contamination of data and pushes the researchers to explore new directions, but most of all it prevents them from making value judgments about what they observe that may be inappropriate or uncalled-for. This orientation requires the suspension of personal valuation of any given cultural practice. He makes a good point when he states that ethnographers must restrain from making value judgments about unfamiliar practices, but that they cannot be completely neutral. According to Fetterman (1989), the only way that ethnographers can protect themselves from possible prejudice is by making them explicit and by trying to look at another culture's practices from an impartial point of view. Hammersley and Atkinson's (1995) statements also support this view. Fetterman goes on to state that:

“Ethnocentric behaviour – the imposition of one culture's values and standards on another culture, with the assumption that one is superior to the other – is a fatal error in ethnography.” (Fetterman, 1989: 34)

Therefore, the ethnographer needs to try and get into the heads of the people he/she studies, feel what they feel, see what they see, listen to what they say, but he/she also needs to be capable of taking a step back and consider what he/she has learned, without making judgments on what is wrong or right, and making his/her own values and beliefs explicit, so that there is no confusion on whose perspective is presented. Although I found this difficult at times, and was very often in doubt, not knowing whether I was heading in the 'right' direction, I realised that there was no 'right' or 'wrong' way in ethnographic research. However, one has to be aware of the implications of one's own judgements on the research, and situate each situation and each participant account in the broader context.

Next I will describe how I have conducted my research, referring to the methods I used in the field and the ethical issues I had to consider when conducting an ethnographic study.

6. Being in the Field

This chapter gives a description of the methods I have used when conducting fieldwork as part of an ethnographic study at a residential outdoor centre. Issues of finding an appropriate setting for my research and of gaining access are discussed, as well as the ethical considerations that arose as part of the ethnographic research. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews have been used in order to collect varied data. The chapter also looks at the process involved in the data collection and discusses issues surrounding the concepts of triangulation, validity and credibility and the implications on qualitative research. I argue that the use of triangulation in order to validate ethnographic research is not always (or necessarily) appropriate and I discuss why that is. Finally, I explain how I attempted to achieve credibility with regard to my own research.

Fieldwork is at the core of ethnographic research and it involves taking part in the lives of the social group studied, with all that this entails: participating in activities, eating strange foods, taking part in ceremonies, learning about different customs and languages, all the while recording what goes on (Fetterman, 1989; Spradley, 1980). Walford (2001: 8) argues that: “Ethnographers work on the premise that there is important knowledge which can be gained in no other way than just ‘hanging around’ and ‘picking things up’”.

In my fieldwork, I combined participant observation with semi-structured interviews, in order to get rich and more diverse data. I also collected various documents, such as activity description sheets, brochures, the timetables for each week etc. The timetables for instance contained valuable information, such as the name of the school that was going to be present that week, the period of the stay, the activities that would be made available, who was going to conduct the activities, i.e. the visiting teachers or the facilitators at the centre, sometimes they even contained the number of pupils and their age (see Appendix 3).

Walford (2001) emphasises the importance of collecting varied data in order to be able to gain an insight into the social phenomena under study. Thus records of discussions, chance conversations, interviews, overheard remarks, observational

notes, audiotapes, videotapes and even some quantitative data, are in fact types of data that can help the ethnographer in the process of understanding and constructing the world he/she is trying to find out about. My field notes and my fieldwork diary contain many records of chance conversations that I had with the visiting teachers, the pupils and the facilitators at the centre. I also recorded the writings that I found on the boards at the centre, which I considered relevant to explain the ethos of the place. A careful examination of the centre's website revealed a great amount of useful information, which also contributed towards understanding the philosophy of the centre. Before collecting all these data, I first had to find a place where to conduct my research. What follows is a description of the process involved in the search for the most suitable setting for this ethnographic study.

6.1. *Gaining Access*

Finding an appropriate setting to conduct my research needed careful consideration, but it involved a little luck as well. I was pressed for time, because it was summer, and therefore, the perfect time for conducting outdoor activities. More importantly the summer holidays were approaching, which meant that schools would soon stop going to outdoor centres. I was looking for an outdoor centre that would give me the opportunity to observe groups, not just individuals, taking part in activities in the outdoors. I also needed to take into consideration practical issues (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995), such as how far I would have to travel, as this had financial implications.

After considering several possibilities, I was told about an outdoor centre that provided outdoor activities to school groups, focusing on team building activities. My initial entry to the setting was ensured by a former student at the university where I am a student myself, he was a valuable intermediary or go-between (Fetterman, 1989). He had written a report for his degree course on the facilities and activities provided by the centre and had built some rapport with the people working there. To get better acquainted with the centre and to what sort of programmes they ran, I read this report, and I also looked at their website. The centre stated that the activities conducted there were very much group orientated. After my supervisor had contacted the centre formally over the telephone, I visited the centre to introduce

myself personally. My supervisor also wrote to the centre on two occasions explaining to the staff about my research and raising issues of consent (see Appendix 4).

The first encounter with the management of the centre was quite pleasant. Indeed, I was so impressed that I recorded the whole experience in my fieldwork diary:

“Arriving there, I was received with a very friendly welcome by Lynn²⁴, she remembered L. from his visits two years ago and she told me that the [deputy] director was expecting me. The [deputy] director was very friendly as well. He listened a little to what I wanted to do, i.e. observe groups doing a variety of activities in the outdoors [...]”²⁵ He then told me that he was very interested in groups and group development and that the activities that they conducted there were focused mainly on groups. He gave me a tour of the premises, starting with the building [...]” (Fieldwork diary, 8.06.2005)

These two members of the management staff represented the two ‘gatekeepers’ that allowed me entry to the setting. ‘Gatekeepers’ have been described as actors that have control over key sources and avenues of opportunity (Atkinson, 1981).

But gaining access to the actual setting does not automatically mean that the researcher has access to all the data he/she needs. Although the problem of access is more prominent in initial negotiations to enter a setting and in the first days of fieldwork, it also continues throughout the fieldwork to different degrees (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Indeed Walford (2001) describes access as a process, because once you have negotiated access with the primary gatekeepers, a long process of access starts during which you try to find out more information about the place and the people there. He sees access as a problem, because access is provisional as it can be withdrawn at any time, and is never total, since the researcher has to continuously develop trusting relationships with the participants.

This was very true in my case, because during my fieldwork, I came into contact with many different school groups and I encountered many gatekeepers, i.e. the

²⁴ This name is a pseudonym.

²⁵ [...] marks that some parts of the conversation were not included.

teachers accompanying the school groups, with whom I had to negotiate access to the groups they were supervising. Nevertheless “A strong recommendation and introduction strengthen the fieldworker’s capacity to work in a community and thus improve the quality of the data” (Fetterman, 1989: 44). The ice was broken, and with such a good start, my fieldwork was well on its way.

It was however important to establish my independence in the field, I needed to disassociate diplomatically from my first ‘gatekeepers’, so as not to cut off other lines of communication with other possible sources of access (Fetterman, 1989; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) make this point more clearly when they say:

“Negotiating access is a balancing act. Gains and losses now and later, as well as ethical and strategic considerations, must be traded off against one another in whatever manner is judged to be most appropriate, given the purposes of the research and the circumstance in which it is to be carried out.” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 74)

I also realised that access had to be negotiated with the children themselves, I could not expect that by gaining access through their teachers that they would be ready to accept me and be open to talk to me (Boyle, 1999). Mandell (1988) also points out that researchers are wrong to assume that by gaining permission from adult supervisors to observe children, there will be no gatekeeping problems. The reality is that children are gatekeepers themselves and in order to learn about their world, researchers need to be ready to negotiate with them as well. I found that by being honest with them and ready to answer their questions, helped me with building a relationship with them based on trust and respect.

Gaining access is closely linked to gaining consent to conduct the research, which I will be discussing further on. Due to the fact that my fieldwork involved being in close contact with children, I also had to gain formal access from the authorities, which involved a CRB check (i.e. a check with the Criminal Records Bureau). This check is required for any adult working in an institution where small children are present and it is requested by the institution itself, upon entry to its premises.

Therefore gaining access is not as straightforward as being given permission to enter the research site, but rather, it is a complex process that requires ethical considerations and involves issues of consent, not only from the main gatekeepers, but from all the participants involved in the research.

6.2. Ethical Considerations

When conducting an ethnographic study there are serious ethical issues that the researcher has to consider before entering the field and while being there. The goal of ethnography is to produce knowledge, however this has to be done without causing any harm to the participants involved in the research, without deceiving (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) or infringing on the privacy of the participants. I will discuss these issues below and relate them to my own research.

6.2.1. Overt Versus Covert

The ethnographer has the choice between conducting his/her research covertly or overtly. Covert research is conducted without the knowing of those being studied or even of the gatekeepers. This type of research is quite rare and has serious ethical implications that have to do with deception and misrepresentation. Deceptive and covert research does not normally subscribe to the ethical practices and postulates of the qualitative approach (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994) the people studied are participants in the research, and therefore they should be seen as essential collaborators who, together with the researcher, can shape and determine what is to be understood about them and their situation.²⁶

Bulmer (1982: 172) argues that deception is “neither ethically justified nor practically necessary, nor in the best interest of sociology as an academic pursuit.” Not only is deception unethical, but it can also have a negative influence on the research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). However Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) also mention that in some circumstances covert research may be the only

²⁶ That is why I have chosen the word ‘participant’ to refer to the people in my study, instead of ‘subject’, which implies superiority of the researcher (Van Maanen, 1988; Vidich and Lyman, 2000).

option, since the researcher may not be able to gain access to the research site any other way, for instance in the case of research done on ‘gang culture’, and other types of criminality²⁷.

When I began my fieldwork I made sure that all the staff and visiting teachers were aware of the fact that I was conducting research. The centre took the responsibility of informing the schools of my presence and that I was conducting research there (see Appendix 5). This was due to the fact that they were in constant contact with the schools and had developed a relationship of trust over the years. This was of tremendous help to me, as this meant that the initial stage of getting consent from the schools was done through the main gatekeepers, which alleviated any issues of trust I may have encountered, if I had asked for consent myself from the individual schools. Trust in the researcher is not something to be taken for granted as schools may often be reluctant to be involved in any kind of research (Walford, 2001).

The extent to which I explained what my research entailed varied, depending on the person soliciting the information. I did not see it necessary to go into much detail, unless the person would manifest further interest (Fetterman, 1989), so I only presented a general idea of the research. Therefore, when pupils would ask me what I was doing there, I would simply tell them that I was writing a book about children and that I needed to record what they were doing and what they were saying. They seemed to be very pleased about it and many of them asked me if they could read it. My answer would be: “Of course, but you have to wait two more years until I finish it.” Their response usually was: “Oh no, that long!”

²⁷ Cromwell (2006) points out the dangers and dilemmas associated with conducting field studies with active criminals.

6.2.2. Issues of Consent, Confidentiality and Anonymity

With undertaking overt research comes the issue of consent. In my case, it was an even bigger issue because I was around young children. Therefore, after having the oral consent of the staff working at the centre, I also asked for a formal letter of consent, which was written evidence of my being allowed to conduct research there (see Appendix 4, 5). As mentioned before, I also had to undergo a check with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) due to the fact that I was in contact with young children.

The centre was very helpful in providing the written consent and also carried out the CRB check. The visiting teachers were informed of my presence over the telephone prior to their coming to the centre and I would also ask them to sign a consent form on the day of their arrival (see Appendix 6). When enquiring about how I would be able to ask for consent from the children's parents, I was told both by the teachers and the outdoor centre that their consent was sufficient.

Before beginning any observations, I would also ask the permission of the pupils to accompany them on their activity and if they minded if I took notes of what they were doing and saying. The response was always positive, and they did not seem to be too bothered by my presence, and on many occasions, I was asked for advice or encouraged to join in the activity. I also made sure that I had the oral consent of the facilitators working at the centre, asking for their permission before I accompanied them on the activity.

Confidentiality and anonymity

I assured the participants in my research at each occasion that confidentiality was ensured, and that no real names would be used, only pseudonyms, which would protect their anonymity. It is however inevitable that some of the participants may recognise some of the people described in this research, but I have tried as best as I could to hide the identity of those involved, by changing names of people or institutions (Christians, 2005) and by not referring to exact contexts. Therefore I will refer to the setting where I have conducted my research simply as 'the centre', and

all the names that appear in any extracts are not the real names of the participants, but pseudonyms.

I have explained some of the ethical considerations involved in carrying out an ethnographic study. Next I will explain in more detail the methods I have used to collect the data, and the process involved.

6.3. *Participant Observation*

Participant observation is something that every one of us has experienced at one stage or another in our lives. Whenever we find ourselves in a new environment, with new people, be it a new job, or a new school, we all have had to ‘learn the ropes’, as they say, in order to be able to function in that new environment. Thus, the participant observer has to listen carefully and observe keenly what goes on around him/her in order to acquire a deep understanding of the people in the social situation, organisation or culture (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The difference between an ordinary participant and a participant observer conducting fieldwork is that the latter is explicitly aware of the learning process he/she is going through, whereas the former goes through this process unconsciously (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). The participant observer makes records of the phenomena that he/she is the witness of or the situations he/she is part of, either in his/her field notes or in the fieldwork diary.

Being a participant observer can be quite strenuous, the researcher, cast in an unfamiliar setting, may experience estrangement or culture shock. He/she may simply suffer from exhaustion, from being actively involved in the activities that take place in the setting and having to constantly be on the alert, always recording what he/she has learned, how he/she has acquired this knowledge and the social transactions that lead to acquiring it (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). In many respects, this type of research can be more difficult than research conducted in laboratories, but it also can be more rewarding (Fetterman, 1989; Walford, 2002). The participant observer will no doubt make mistakes and even find himself/herself in embarrassing situations, but he/she has to rise above them and learn from them (Fetterman, 1989; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

At the beginning of my fieldwork I had to consider the different roles available to me in the field. Therefore as a researcher doing participant observation I could sometimes be the 'acceptable incompetent', when novice in a setting or be cast in the role of expert or critic, especially when research is done in familiar settings (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

Junker (1960) distinguishes between 'complete participant', 'participant-as-observer', 'observer-as-participant' and 'complete observer'. When assuming the 'complete participant' role, the researcher does not make his/her purpose known, he/she 'goes native', becoming a member of that social group, organisation or culture. This has serious ethical implications, and brings into question the issue of covert versus overt research, which has been however discussed in section 6.2.1. Although this role may seem attractive, as it gives access to inside knowledge and makes the entry to a setting much easier, I would have found it difficult to pretend, to act for extended periods of time. Also, if the true identity of the researcher is discovered, this can have disastrous effects on the research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

At the opposite pole, the 'complete observer' has no contact whatsoever with the people he/she observes. Even though it may seem a contradiction, 'complete participation' and 'complete observation' share many of the same disadvantages and advantages. Thus, they both minimise reactivity, because in both instances the ethnographer does not interact with the people being studied in the role of researcher. However, there are severe limitations on what can or cannot be observed, and questioning members cannot be done without compromising the researcher's position, whether it is that of complete participant or complete observer. Ethical issues notwithstanding, I realised that adopting any of the two roles may not help my research at all, since minimising reactivity is not the key problem in ethnographic research, as it has been discussed earlier, such ideas have been abandoned (see chapter 5). I consider that as long as the researcher is aware of the influence he/she has on the participants and records this, then reactivity to the researcher can become data in itself.

Most researchers adopt roles somewhere between these two poles, i.e. participant-as-observer or observer-as-participant. Hammersley and Atkinson, (1995) argue that one should not get stuck into one fixed role, but try and adapt. Generally, in open research, one has some choice over whether or not to take on one of the existing roles in the field. Shifts in roles can often be made over the course of fieldwork, which was the case during my fieldwork experience. I had to be flexible and adapt to situations quickly so as not to compromise my position in the field. According to Patton (1990) the ethnographer is faced with the challenge of combining participation and observation in order to understand the setting and the participants as an insider, while describing them for the outsiders.

As a novice researcher, I considered that the best way of learning how to conduct fieldwork was actually doing it. I adopted the ‘trial and error’ approach, in order to find out what weaknesses and strengths I had, and what I needed to improve. I was given the opportunity of conducting a pilot, during which I could ‘practice’ my participant observation skills. Gregory (2005: 43) stresses the importance of a pilot study when stating: “In its widest sense, a pilot study allows you to dip your toe into the water without getting too wet.” The pilot research was conducted in an outdoor centre in England. It was a five-day intensive training programme for young facilitators from various European countries (see Stan, 2005 and Appendix 7), as part of a project conducted by the European Institute for Outdoor Adventure Education and Experiential learning (EOE), entitled the *Non-formal Education through Outdoor Activities Project*²⁸. It brought together people from different cultural backgrounds, but they all shared an interest in outdoor education.

During this pilot, I adopted the role of participant-as-observer. Although I did make it clear that I was conducting research, I soon was absorbed by the group, and became one of them, in other words I overidentified with the other participants. Even though I felt I was part of the group, I did not escape the occasional comment: “Watch her, she’s a spy!” This was a great opportunity for me to learn and find out what would be the best way for me to conduct my research. The first thing I realised was that being involved in the outdoor activities myself, gave me little opportunities

²⁸ More information about the NFE project can be found at www.nfe-network.org. Also see Festeu and Humberstone (2006)

to record data, as I felt awkward walking around with my notepad and pen, especially when doing the activities, and also the English weather was not very friendly, my hands were frozen most of the time. So I had to spend my evenings and nights writing down my field notes. This proved to be quite difficult since there were fun activities going on every night, until quite early in the morning, such as singing, table tennis and table football championships, and other games, and it was hard to resist getting involved. I also became very emotionally attached to the members of the group, we all became friends and we enjoyed each other's company, therefore it was not easy to break away from the group and record my data, and it was even harder to take a step back. It all became too familiar, I was 'going native'.

Delamont (2002) identifies this as one of the major problems that ethnographers are confronted with when conducting fieldwork. Furthermore, I was not quite sure what would be important to record. In the end I realised that the data I had gathered was not as rich and as revealing as I would have wished. At the end of this experience, I found myself emotionally and physically exhausted. But after I had time to recover and think things through, I was left with an invaluable experience that helped me in my 'real' fieldwork.

I have conducted fieldwork over two periods. The first was conducted in the summer of 2005, between the beginning of June and the end of July. This was during the first year of my PhD. The second was conducted in 2006, and it started in May and ended in June. By then I had gained more experience and felt more comfortable doing fieldwork.

Throughout my fieldwork I made use of pen and notepads. I made sure it was not a felt tip pen or a fountain pen, because I was aware that I needed to spend a lot of time outside and that my notes could get wet. I did not want my writing to get smeared. These instruments did not seem at all intrusive, and were very practical, inexpensive and easy to use. I felt that using more sophisticated equipment, such as a laptop or a video camera, would be rather cumbersome and impractical. Also, using images had further implications on consent. I was told by many of the visiting teachers that they agreed with me taking notes, but that they could not give consent for taking photos or video recording, because of child protection issues. I could only get that consent

from the parents, which would have been very difficult, and would have delayed my research, especially when I had never had the intention of using images in my research. Before beginning my actual fieldwork, there were certain issues I needed to be concerned with.

6.3.1. Criteria for Selecting Participants and Description of Participating Schools

In a discussion with one of the gatekeepers, Paul, I was informed as to the kinds of groups that came to the centre and the programmes the centre runs for each group. After careful consideration I decided to focus my research on the programmes that involved primary school children aged between 6 and 12 for several reasons:

1. These programmes were structured, they were meant to be educational activities within the outdoor classroom.
2. The activities within these programmes were group orientated according to the description I was given in which ‘teamwork’ and ‘team building’ were key concepts.
3. This was an age group I was most comfortable with, having had experience in working with young children that age.
4. The other programmes involved participants with disabilities or youth at risk to offend. This would have had further implications on my research, as disability and youth at risk to offend need to be treated separately, in order to be able to conduct an in-depth study. I felt that this would have diverted my focus of inquiry, which was group interaction.
5. The other programmes were less structured, to use Paul’s words: “These programmes are more informal, we basically let them do what they want.” Therefore, the focus was more on leisure, rather than education, and I intended to conduct an educational study, as this was the direction that my research was taking (see section 5.2 Foreshadowed problems).

I observed a total of 14 different school groups, during the two phases of data collection at the centre. The groups came from ten schools, which means that, in

some cases, there were two different groups coming from the same school at different times. Most of the groups stayed for two days and a half, either arriving on the Monday morning and leaving on Wednesday before lunch, or arriving on the Wednesday morning and leaving on the Friday before lunch. There were two school groups that stayed for five days, arriving on the Monday and leaving on the Friday, and one group that only stayed for one day (see Appendix 3 and Table 2 on p. 343). Appendix 3 contains the programme timetables of visiting groups, which also show the interval of each group's stay at the centre. Table 2 illustrates more clearly the make up of the visiting school groups, i.e. period when they were at the centre, the number of pupils and the number of teachers.

The schools that visited the centre were not all the same; there were certain differences with regard to the setting that they came from, i.e. rural or urban, but also with regard to the ethnicity and social background of their pupils. In order for the reader to have a greater understanding of the interaction in the outdoor classroom of these groups, it is important to provide a description of each school and its pupils, which will help situate the visiting school groups in the larger social setting. The information for all of the schools, with the exception of School A, was retrieved from the Ofsted inspection reports on the schools. Therefore the description is not based on my personal judgement or opinion, but rather on the evaluation of the Ofsted inspectors. I will not source the reports I have used, and the information is meant to be general, so as to ensure that the anonymity of the schools is kept intact. I was unable to find an Ofsted report for School A, and that is why I have provided information found on its website, which I will also not source for the above mentioned issue of anonymity.

School A is an international primary and secondary school, situated in a rural setting. According to information found on its website, the school was opened in order to educate children of scientists working on a nearby European project. However it now welcomes pupils from the wide local international community. It is a mixed school, teaching pupils aged between 4 and 19 years of age, and the total number of children in the school was 860 in 2007. The Primary and Secondary Schools have five language sections: German, English, French, Italian and Dutch. All pupils from the age of six onwards are taught a second language, which may be English, French or

German. The learning of languages is a defining feature of this school, which gives it its special character. The two groups I observed from this school were of primary age (see Table 2, p. 343) and the pupils were German, French, Italian, Irish, English and Dutch.

School B is a mixed Roman Catholic primary school, which is set in an urban area. Ofsted categorises the school as voluntary aided. The pupils are aged between 3 and 11 and the total number of pupils was 221 in 2007, which makes it an average size school, according to Ofsted. The 2007 Ofsted inspection revealed that “indicators of socio-economic disadvantage are higher than those found nationally.” Also approximately three quarters of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, the largest group being of Black African heritage. Approximately half of the pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), and approximately a tenth of all pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is about the national average. In the 2001 inspection, Ofsted recorded that the school drew its pupils from a wider catchment area than just locally to the school and that attainment on entry of the children aged five was in line with that expected for children of that age. The Ofsted report states that this is “an improving school, where pupils enter with average attainment and achieve standards which are broadly in line with the national expectation by the time they leave the school at age 11. The overall quality of teaching is sound and leadership and management are satisfactory. The school gives satisfactory value for money.”

School C is a mixed semi-urban primary school, with a non-denominational religious character. Ofsted categorises it as a community school. The pupils’ age ranges between 4 and 11 and the total number of pupils was 206 in 2006, which makes it a smaller than average primary school, according to Ofsted. The 2006 Ofsted inspection report states that there is a below average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, from minority ethnic groups or for whom English is an additional language. Even though there are fewer pupils eligible for free school meals than in most schools, pupils come from varied social backgrounds. Children enter the Reception Year with attainment that is broadly in line with expectations for their age.

School D is a community mixed primary school, with a non-denominational religious character, situated in a suburban village. The total number of pupils was 446 in 2008, aged between 3 and 11. In the 2008 inspection report, Ofsted identifies it as a much larger than average school with most of its pupils being of White British heritage. There is also a small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups. There are very few pupils who are learning to speak English and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. According to the same report children enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills typical of their age, although this varies from year to year. Moreover, the school offers before and after school care, as well as holiday clubs, as part of its extended school provision. The school has won several awards for achievement, arts and sports and it has been involved in innovative work pioneering different ways of ensuring that teachers are given enough time to plan their lessons.

School E is a Church of England mixed primary school. It is situated in a rural area, and is categorized by Ofsted as voluntary controlled. The pupils are aged between 4 and 11, and there were in total 216 pupils in 2005. It is described in the 2005 Ofsted inspection report as an averaged-sized primary school, with a majority of pupils of White British heritage. According to Ofsted the pupils' home circumstances are generally favourable, both socially and economically. Fewer pupils than is usual have special educational needs and the number eligible for free school meals is well below average. The 2000 Ofsted inspection report states that when the pupils start school their attainment is above the national average, particularly in English and mathematics. Moreover the 2000 report refers to the school as being very effective school, providing a very good quality of education for all its pupils. It goes on to say that: "The excellent relationships between all members of the school community promote a warm and caring ethos where pupils feel secure and are keen to learn. As a result, pupils achieve consistently high standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2. All the staff have high expectations of work and behaviour. They work very well together to challenge each individual pupil. Teaching is good overall and excellent at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment. They make good progress and develop very good attitudes to learning that prepare them well for secondary school. The school gives good value for money."

School F is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school, situated in a disadvantaged urban area. It serves the needs of families from three parishes. The gender of the pupils is mixed and their age ranges between 3 and 11. The total number of pupils was 227 in 2006. According to the 2006 Ofsted inspection report the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. A high proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic groups and a high percentage speak a first language other than English. The main languages represented in the school are Polish and Portuguese. An above average number of pupils join or leave the school other than at normal times. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is well above the national average. The 2001 Ofsted inspection report describes the school as smaller than most other primary schools, with an attainment on entry below average overall. The same report states that “this is a good school in which pupils make good progress overall and achieve standards that are generally better than the national picture. The school’s very strong emphasis on promoting high self-esteem and confidence amongst its pupils leads to excellent relationships and personal development. The school is managed well and it provides good value for money.”

School G is a rural community secondary school, with a non-denominational religious character. The gender of the pupils is mixed and their total number was 781 in 2007, and they are aged between 11 and 18. According to the 2007 Ofsted inspection report, the school is situated in an affluent area. Moreover the report states that because the school is non-selective in an area served also by grammar schools, there are relatively few very able students. However, in most year groups, there are few whose prior attainment is very much below average. Most of the children are from White British and other White families. A very small, but growing proportion are from Asian backgrounds and very few have Black British and other heritages. The school attained specialist status in Business and Enterprise.

School H is a large community junior primary school, with non-denominational religious character. It teaches both boys and girls aged between 7 and 11, and the total number of pupils was 458 in 2005. According to the 2005 Ofsted inspection report pupils come from very varied social backgrounds. Most pupils enter the school with broadly average attainment. The proportion of pupils who have learning

difficulties and statements of special need is broadly average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is similar to that found in other schools. Most of the pupils who attend are of White British Heritage, although there are small groups of pupils from a wide variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. A few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. Their home languages are Gujarati, Japanese and Somali. According to the 2005 report, the school used to be a middle school catering for pupils aged between 8 and 12. Because of the change of designation, there was a significant staff turnover and half of the pupil population changed between July and September of 2005.

School I is a Church of England voluntary controlled primary school, situated in a rural area. It caters to boys and girls aged between 4 and 11. The number of pupils was 477 in 2008, which makes it a much larger than average primary school, according to Ofsted. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are of white British heritage. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is much lower than in most schools. According to the 2004 Ofsted inspection report, there was an unusually high rate of mobility of pupils starting in the school after Year 2. This was due to pupils transferring to the school from local infant and first schools in the surrounding area. The report states that assessment data shows that children start in the Nursery with above average skills. Children attend the class part time for two terms, before transferring to the Reception classes in the term they reach age five.

School J is a community primary school, with a non-denominational religious character. The gender of the pupils is mixed and they are aged between 3 and 11 years. It is a large school with 436 pupils in 2004. According to the 2004, Ofsted inspection report there is a wide spread of attainment among children when they start in the nursery and overall attainment is similar to that usually found. A quarter of pupils at the school are from ethnic minority backgrounds and many ethnic groups are represented. Few pupils are at the very early stage of acquiring English, with Paeshto, Arabic and French being their first languages. The proportion of pupils on the special needs register is well below the national average, but the proportion that have a Statement of Special Educational Need is average. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is in line with the national average. The social and

economic backgrounds of the pupils are favourable when compared to those usually found. Staff and pupil mobility is fairly low. The report describes the school as good with a very warm, welcoming family ethos that pupils, parents, governors and staff value highly. With its good leadership and management, well-planned curriculum and good teaching, the school enables its pupils to achieve high academic and personal standards and provides good value for money.

6.3.2. Being There

At the beginning of my research, I adopted the role of Schutz's (1964) stranger, as I found myself in an unfamiliar setting, within a new culture. As I have mentioned earlier, I come from a former communist country, where outdoor education is not developed to the extent that it is in other European countries. In fact Romania has its own version of outdoor education, which is mostly based on a close relation with nature. There are very few outdoor centres in the sense of the outdoor centres in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and North America, and there is very little research in this area, and the little research that does exist has been conducted in the last decade or so. I had come to the UK a few months before conducting my fieldwork, and this was my first contact with British culture on British soil. I do not see this as a disadvantage as being a foreigner, I believed I was able to notice aspects that somebody grown up in this culture might take for granted (Vogt, 2002).

My fieldwork started with a survey period, a period in which I started to get acquainted with the setting and the people (Fetterman, 1989). At first everything seemed important, and I would try and record as much as I could. I recorded what was going on, at the time that it was going on. Following my pilot experience, I realised the limitations that becoming too involved in the activities had on my data collection.

Therefore I decided that it was better for me to observe more and participate less. This is not to say that I did not get involved at all in the activities, but I did that when and if I thought it was appropriate to do so. I was always walking around with my pen and notepad, trying to record as much as I could. It was quite difficult at times to keep up with the children, as they were running and talking, while I was trying to

record what they were saying and doing. It was a juggling act, trying to observe, listen and write at the same time. There were countless times when I tripped over things in my way or got stung by nettles or hit by branches. But these are the 'risks' that such research entails. This proved to be a very simple, cost-effective and unobtrusive means of gathering data. Participants soon got used to me taking notes all the time and they did not seem to mind it, most of the times they completely forgot about it, as they were too involved in the activity.

There was only one school group staying at the centre at any one time. I observed each school group when they were involved in activities, however, when I thought it was relevant or important, I recorded incidents or discussions I had with participants during break times, or in between activities. Each school group was divided into smaller sub-groups of 10 to 12 pupils when participating in the activities at the centre. I usually followed the same sub-group throughout their visit at the centre, as this helped with building rapport with the participants, and also allowed me to observe how the group progressed during their stay. Thus I would arrive each day at the centre at 9 o'clock, before the first activity of the day started, and would usually leave at approximately 6 o'clock, when it was dinnertime. I decided not to spend the nights at the outdoor centre, as I was interested in how the group interacted while taking part in the outdoor activities, and not in finding out about group formation in the traditional sense (see section 3.2), as these groups had already become established in the indoor classroom. Moreover, spending the evenings away from the centre allowed me to reflect on my observations of the day, and to start analysing the data collected.

However, I did spend four nights in Week 5 of my fieldwork (11.07 – 15.07.2005) with Group 8 from School B (see section 6.3.1 for a description of the school). This group spent five days at the centre, and I thought it would be a good opportunity to observe the group for its entire stay. I discovered that although the residential experience was important for the pupils, as some of the staff and teachers pointed out to me, my observations in the evenings did not reveal much rich data with regard to group interaction. Although there were some activities conducted in the evenings, they were mostly not team building, and less structured. Nevertheless, I did build a stronger rapport with all of the participants, particularly the staff at the centre.

Pupils, teachers and facilitators alike manifested an interest in what I was writing at times, the question I was asked more often than not was: “What are you writing?” My answer was invariably: “What you are doing!” This seemed to satisfy most of them, although some would ask further questions, “Why?” being the most popular, to which I would respond: “Because I am interested in groups [of children]”. Most of the pupils thought I was a writer or a reporter, and were very excited about being part of a book. Some asked me if I was famous yet, they seemed a little disappointed to find out that the sort of book I was writing was not intended for fame, and that I would not be using their real names.

When there were incidents or conflicts however, there was some concern on the part of the pupils as well as the teachers about me writing everything down. Pupils sometimes asked me if they could read my notes, I always allowed them to have a look. Most of them were disappointed by my messy writing and would lose interest quickly. I even surprised some teachers trying to take a peek at my notes. I always reassured them that they had complete anonymity and that I was not making any evaluations or judgements.

All in all, I found this method of gathering and recording data very effective for my research, as it resulted in an abundant amount of data. To make the data easily retrievable, I made a chronological record of the events. Also, I described the context of the situations and I specified the sex of the participants, their ethnicity and social background where possible, whether they were a pupil, a teacher or a facilitator, e.g. I used Pg for a female pupil, and Pb for a male pupil, and Pg1 and Pg2, if there were two girls talking, Pgs if there were more girls saying the same thing in unison, or Ps if there were pupils of both sexes saying the same thing at the same time. In the beginning I used F for facilitators, but once I learned their names I started to use their initials, as in the example below where T stands for Tom, which is the pseudonym name for one of the male facilitators:

“T: What do I need to swing?

Pgs: Space!

T: Or?

Pg: Push you! (she shows how she would push)

T: That's right!" (Field notes I, p. 76, 6.07.2005)

However, in the thick description (see chapters 8 to 11) I tend not to use the initials of the names of the participants, but rather use the whole pseudonym where possible, when conveying the dialogue between participants, in order to allow the reader to have a more natural feel of the conversation. This is also the reason why, when I refer to a particular pupil who plays a significant part in a specific example, I tend to use a pseudonym, rather than Pg or Pb.

At the advice of my supervisor, I made two sets of copies, to make sure that I did not lose any of the notes and also to be able to manage the data in a way that I needed for my analysis, keeping the original chronological record intact. In order to be able to retrieve data more easily, I also numbered the pages of each fieldwork notebook, and numbered each notebook, writing the period in which the data was recorded on the cover, e.g. Field notes V, 23.05 – 06.06.2006.

Any interpretations I made about what was going on at the time, I put in square brackets ([]), as it is illustrated in the example below:

“Pb: I don't want to do it!

Tf: If you don't do it, then the team won't do it, we will have to stop the activity. Do you want that?

Pb: I don't want to go on! [very upset] (head down)” (Field notes I, pp. 229-230, 28.06.2005)

Therefore I considered that when I described the boy as 'very upset', I was aware that this was an interpretation on my part and not what could be considered a fact. Somebody could have interpreted the same situation in a different way, that is why I do not see my interpretation as final, but rather an informed one based on my knowledge of the context.

I used regular brackets to add any description of the participants' behaviour accompanying the dialogue, since I considered this information to be a significant piece of data that allowed for a better understanding of what was going on, as it can be seen in the example below:

“Jimmy: So what can you do about that?”

Pg5: Uh, uh, uh! (Jumping up and down) [excited]

Jimmy: Ok. (Laughing)

Pg5: We could like tell them what to do.

Jimmy: Maybe encourage them to get involved. I think, and the boys will probably agree with me on that, that the girls took over this activity. Isn't that right boys?

Pbs: Yeah. (Head down) [...]”(Field work IV, pp. 55-59, 22.05.2006).

I have used ‘[...]’ in order to mark that there was something missing, i.e. some parts of the conversation have been left out.

Even though I tried to write my field notes in as much detail as possible, at the end of each day and sometimes even during the breaks, I would write in my fieldwork diary. This was very important as it allowed me to describe in even more detail the happenings of the day, comment on any incidents, record any informal discussions I had with teachers, pupils or facilitators, and reflect upon what I had seen and heard that day. I found that this requires a great deal of self-discipline and self-motivation, because by the end of most days I was so exhausted that I sometimes simply wanted to go to bed or just relax. But conducting ethnographic research requires rigorous effort (Denzin, 1989), which gives it its scientific quality.

6.3.3. Researcher's Roles

When researching children it is usually impossible to adopt a fully participative role, because physical size and perceived power prevent the researcher from taking on such a role (Fine and Glassner, 1979). Thus, Fine and Glassner (1979) suggest that the researcher should adopt the role of friend with children, however they do give a warning as to possible dilemmas regarding the choice to interfere or not in certain situations, such as deviant behaviour. I chose to adopt the role of least-adult (Mandell, 1988), which enabled me to build rapport with the pupils and thus gain access to their group as well.

I found that by being open with them, answering their questions as best as I could and allowing them to approach me first, rather than me being the one who always

initiated conversations, helped me build rapport in quite a short period of time. I do not think that my sex influenced the way I was perceived by the pupils, because it was sometimes the boys that would approach me first and sometimes the girls, I think it depended more on their individual curiosity and how willing they were to find out things about me. Respecting the children and acknowledging that they are holders of knowledge themselves were key principles that guided my research. Boyle (1999: 98) stresses the importance of such principles when she says:

“Allowing the children their own space shows respect, and providing opportunities for children to initiate conversations is in line with the concept of acting as a least-teacher or least-adult, in that adults and teachers need not be the main initiators of talk with children. Taking a genuine interest in what children want to say reverses the traditional role, particularly in the classroom of the teacher (or adult) as the main holder of knowledge.”

Tammivaara and Enright (1986) are strong believers in the idea that ethnographers studying children should abandon their rigid perspective of adulthood in order to be able to understand the children’s world. Moreover, they argue that this willingness to suspend adult judgements and perspectives, as well as having respect for the children and their knowledge are key components of ‘successful’ ethnographic research.

However, it is not easy to remain in one particular role. More often than not researchers do not freely choose their roles, but rather fulfil the roles that others expect them to (Walford, 2001). Therefore with teachers I was often cast in the role of expert, especially towards the end of my fieldwork, as most assumed that I had the expertise when it came to outdoor activities.

Sometimes I fell in the role of ‘good listener’ (Walford, 2001), as teachers, pupils and the staff at the centre would feel the need to confide in me, sometimes assuming that I was sharing their views. I am a very outspoken person, but quite often I had to keep my thoughts to myself and simply listen to what the participants wanted to share with me, because I did not want to jeopardise my field relations.

6.3.4. Field Relations

Ethnographers have to give a lot of thought to 'impression management', thus impressions that may constitute an obstacle to access must be avoided, while those that facilitate it must be encouraged, but within ethical limits (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Personal appearance is of great importance; sometimes it may be necessary for the researcher to dress in a similar manner to the people studied (Fetterman, 1989; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). It would not have been appropriate for me to wear elegant clothes and high-heeled shoes, I would not have fitted in the environment and I would have stood out like a sore thumb. Therefore, I wore the same kinds of clothes as all of the other participants, i.e. T-shirt, comfortable trousers, trainers. Not only was I trying to fit in, and be sensitive to the setting and the people within it, but I also needed to be comfortable myself in an outdoor environment. I believe that in this respect I managed to blend in.

Sometimes, I was asked for assistance either by pupils, teachers or facilitators. In most cases I was more than happy to help, not only to improve rapport, but also because I felt that it was appropriate to give something in return (Fetterman, 1989). For instance, I would often help the facilitators prepare the refreshments for the pupils and teachers, I even helped to clean the pond once. Pupils would sometimes ask for my help during the activities and I would sometimes give them little clues. Some activities were supposed to be run by the visiting teachers, and some of them felt out of their depth. This was probably the case, because they had not received any formal training, but had simply been given a short verbal explanation by one of the facilitators regarding the activity and some written instructions. Teachers would often turn to me for assistance. In these situations I was cast in the role of expert, a role which I did not deserve. However due to my acquired familiarity of the setting and programmes, I knew more about the activities than some of the teachers. In these cases I did try to avoid being too involved in the activity, and I would only give them some general information.

There was one instance in which I was put in the situation of conducting an activity myself, but this was without my intention and happened in the first week of my fieldwork. The teacher was not English, nor were the children (some of them were

German and some of them were French), the German children were fluent in English, however the French children were not. Because the instructions were in English, and as I could speak both English and French, I was asked to act as interpreter for this activity. I agreed, although a little reluctantly. My fear was confirmed, when the teacher stepped back, and let me run the activity by myself with very little involvement on her part. I believe that this had serious implications on how I was perceived by the pupils in that group, and it seriously affected my role as least-adult or least-teacher. I became a teacher in their eyes and an expert in the eyes of the teachers, as they would send the pupils to me when they had any questions about the activities. This was not a role I wanted to be in, because I did not have the expertise and I felt that this affected my research. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 89) put it: “one must take care not to offer too much, to the detriment of the research.” Following this incident I made sure that I was not going to be involved in conducting any other activities, I tried to do this diplomatically, without offending anybody or giving the impression of being uncooperative or unhelpful.

During my fieldwork, I tried to find ways of establishing ‘normal’ social interactions by finding a neutral ground with participants where informal conversations could take place (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). With every new group I tried to find ways of building rapport, as I did not want to be a cold distant observer. However, I did not want to push my way within the group by trying to get too close too soon. I allowed the participants to have their private space (Boyle, 1999), during breaks I would sit a little further from them. Gradually, I was approached by teachers or by pupils, or by the facilitators.

I did not constantly try to get information out of the participants, because that would have been too threatening (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). I engaged in informal discussions about ordinary topics, but these discussions proved to be very informative at times, and I gathered valuable data this way. However, I refrained from taking notes during these discussions, because I felt that this would have been disruptive, but I wrote down in my diary or notebooks as much as I could remember as soon as it was possible. However, I always took into consideration the context in which these discussions took place, keeping in mind that what people say does not always reflect what they think (Denzin, 1997).

Most of the times, the participants manifested more interest in myself than in my research. I sometimes found myself in the role of confidant. I always tried to be honest and frank, but I chose to be careful and not have my personal beliefs and values clash with those of the participants'. By not expressing my views at times, I was not trying to deceive but merely avoid a conflict, just as anybody would in everyday life. When a teacher complained to me about the staff and the programmes at the centre, I advised her to talk to the management, and refrained from making any comments. Also, I sometimes felt that teachers were interfering too much in the pupils' activity, and when I say too much I mean, that they would get involved in the activity and actually become absorbed by the group. They would physically help the pupils over the obstacles, instead of encouraging them to help each other, they would sometimes take over leadership of the groups and tell the pupils where to go and what to do, taking away their independence. Sometimes they even encouraged cheating or cheated themselves. Although I did not agree with this behaviour, as I thought that the pupils should be allowed to experience the activity in their own way, on most occasions, I chose not to comment on this, and did not share my beliefs with the teachers, or the pupils. However pupils would often protest to their teachers' cheating:

“One of the teachers plays as well, she doesn't follow the rules. One of the boys protests in front of Tom.

Tom: That's alright!

The teacher catches the mouse very quickly.” (Field notes I, p. 210, 28.06.2005)

Pupils' cheating and teachers encouraging cheating were not accepted by the pupils. I often shared the sentiments of the pupils, and on one occasion found myself protesting together with the pupils²⁹:

“They are pushing the ropes to get nearer to the middle.

I: That's cheating!

Pb1: Yeah, but that's clever!

I: It's still cheating, I've never seen a group cheat so much!

Pb1: Yeah, but we're clever.

²⁹ I stands for Ina, which is the researcher's name, Tf1 and Tf2 stands for female teachers, and Pb1 and Pb2 stand for male pupils.

Tf1: That's clever!

Pb2: It's still cheating!

[All the ideas they have involve cheating].

Tf1: That's a brilliant idea, John! That's very clever!

[It involved cheating and only two people].

Tf2: It involved a little bit of cheating!

Tf1: Yeah, but that's brilliant!" (Field notes II, p. 229-230, 18.07.2005)

At that particular time, I refrained from making any other oral comments, but after this incident I wrote in the field notes:

“[I got very frustrated observing the toxic waste³⁰. I believe that the teachers have spoiled it for the children, but this happens all too often, when teachers focus too much on the tasks and too little on the process and on teamwork. Encouraging them to cheat, letting them get away with spoiling the other groups' device, not encouraging them to work as a team at all, not getting all of them involved, this is what I believe was responsible for the failure of the group to work together.]” (Field notes II, p. 230-231, 18.07.2005)

The square brackets in the field notes mark a personal comment or an interpretation of what was going on at the time. This was part of the reflexive and analytical process.

So far I have explained what participant observation means and what the process entails. I have also described some of the issues that I was confronted with when carrying out fieldwork. I will next discuss my second method of collecting data, which was conducting interviews.

6.4. Interviews

I decided to also use interviews as a data gathering method in order to gain a different perspective on what was going on. Delamont (2002) and Walford (2001) warn researchers that data from interviews should not replace data gathered from participant observation. Interviews are seen as a 'quick fix' and should only provide

³⁰ See appendix 1(I) for a description of the activity.

further insight into a problem (Delamont, 2002) rather than become the only type of data used. Moreover, talk is produced in a context and researchers have to always be aware of the context (Delamont, 2002).

Walford (2001) points out the irony in using interviews in ethnographic research, which started with the idea of studying the world in its natural state, and is now using interviews, which are “very strange and artificial situations” (Walford, 2001: 89). Indeed, interviews are quite artificial because they are not like any typical conversation between two people, as one person controls the questions asked and the topics to be covered in varying degree, while the other is prepared for his/her views to be continuously questioned without the usual ability to be able to return the question. More importantly, what the interviewee says is recorded for future analyses and therefore is of great significance.

Another aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is that the interviewer has a great influence on the interviewee, and therefore his/her appearance, sex, ethnicity, clothing accent, tone, etc. have an effect on what the interviewee says and also the researcher needs to be aware of the fact that interviewees may not always say the truth (Walford, 2001).

Therefore, although interviews proved to be important sources of data, most of the information I gathered during my fieldwork came from observations. The interviews were taken toward the end of my fieldwork periods, when I had built a strong rapport with the staff at the centre (Walford, 2001). I chose not to interview pupils or teachers because of their limited time at the centre, and therefore I did not want to be too intrusive and take away from their time. Moreover, I found that my rapport with them was not as strong as it was with the staff, due to the limited time spent at the centre. Also, I felt awkward, especially when it came to the children, to ask them to sit down with me and have a ‘serious’ conversation. I did however engage in many informal discussions, which I recorded in my field notes and my fieldwork diary, and which revealed valuable information for my research. These would be what Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) call ‘interviews as participant observation’.

Some teachers and pupils approached me, supplying unsolicited information, which I also recorded either in my field notes or in my fieldwork diary as soon as I got the chance. In the case of informal discussions and unsolicited accounts, I always took into consideration the context and the effect I may have had on the participant. For instance, on many occasions teachers would approach me and volunteer information about how the children interact in their school environment, sometimes they would make comments on how well they work in a team and that the school encourages them to work together and help each other. In such situations I had to consider why the teachers would volunteer such information. Was it because they wanted to impress me by showing me what ‘good team players’ their pupils were, knowing that I was actually looking at how they were interacting in a group, or was it really that the pupils behaved that way in schools?

Therefore, I solicited interviews only from the staff at the centre. In doing so, I tried to accommodate their schedule and even their mood. It happened more than once that I had made an appointment to interview a member of staff, only to be told: “Can we make this another time?” I would agree to postpone the interview, but I made sure that I did get another appointment at a later time or date.

The interviews I conducted were semi-structured as they were rather informal, but were based on a list of issues I wished to cover. The questions were open ended and non-directive (see Appendix 8), and I encouraged the interviewee to speak freely, and let the conversation develop on its own. I used a tape recorder, because I did not want to miss out on valuable data and also I thought that taking notes during the interview may prove to be distracting (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). During my pilot earlier in the year, I conducted two interviews which I did not tape record, but took notes of. This proved to be a very difficult task, and it produced very little data. Nevertheless, transcribing the interview is as strenuous and even more time consuming (Walford, 2001).

Because I wanted the participants to feel comfortable and at ease, I always allowed them to choose the location of the interview. Sometimes the facilitators chose to be interviewed in their little office. This proved quite challenging at times, because there were interruptions and sometimes others would want to stay and listen.

However, I did manage to achieve some sort of privacy, by closing the door during interviews, which stopped people from coming in, although not always.

In one particular case, the participant became quite embarrassed during the interview, partly because of the interview situation itself, partly because of the presence of others. After the interview, I felt that it could have gone better, and listening to it I realised that I needed to conduct another interview with that particular member of staff, because it seemed to me that he had been robbed of the opportunity to have his voice heard. I did manage to interview him again during my second period of fieldwork, and I am glad that I did, because the second interview was much richer in data and gave me the opportunity to gain an insight into his perspectives on the work he was carrying out at the centre, which would have been more difficult based only on the data from the first interview. Before beginning each interview, I explained why I wanted to interview the participant, and I reassured confidentiality and the right of the interviewee to refuse to answer any question (Fetterman, 1989; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

6.5. *Issues Surrounding the Credibility of the Research*

In this research I have not made use of quantitative data, nor have I used triangulation to validate my research. However, I have attempted to achieve credibility by conducting a rigorous study through collecting varied data and having a strong theoretical framework.

I have often encountered the terms triangulation and validity in my reading on research methodology (Delamont, 1992; Evans, 1984; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Massey and Walford, 1999; Robinson, 1994). In the beginning, I did not understand the full implications of these concepts on research in general and on my own in particular. However, these implications became clearer as my research progressed and I was faced with the struggle to have to 'justify' my research to others. Humberstone (1997) sets out the case against using quantitative data in order to validate qualitative research and to use triangulation to identify 'objective' reality, arguing for other ways of assessing credibility in ethnography.

Humberstone (1997) does not suggest that triangulation is an inappropriate research methodology, but rather asks for care and understanding in its use, and a greater awareness of epistemological issues. She argues that 'valid' knowledge is produced from research through a process of legitimation by various dominant ideologies, and thus, knowledge produced through research becomes acceptable or unacceptable, valid or invalid based on whether it is situated within the values, assumptions and ideologies of those in a position to legitimate its credibility. However, the quality of research can only be determined by criteria that belong to the paradigm in which the research situates itself (Humberstone, 1997; Sparkes, 1992), and therefore there is no need for quantitative data to be used, by imposing the positivistic criteria, in order to 'validate' the interpretive research project as a whole (Humberstone, 1997; Sparkes, 1992; Stanley, 1990).

According to Denzin (1997), postpositivists established the text's authority by using a set of rules that refer to an outside reality, which referenced knowledge, its production and representation. Thus, as long as these rules are followed adequately, validity can be achieved (Scheurich (1992) cited by Denzin, 1997). Validity gives power (Cherryholmes, 1988) and, for poststructuralists, it separates good research from bad research, acceptable from unacceptable, determining what is to be included or excluded (Scheurich (1992) cited by Denzin, 1997). Denzin (1997) sees the discussions on logical, construct, internal, ethnographic and external validity, text-based data, triangulation, trustworthiness, credibility, grounding, naturalistic indicators, fit, coherence, comprehensiveness, plausibility, truth and relevance as "attempts to reauthorise a text's authority in the postpositivist moment" (Denzin, 1997: 6), which adhere to the concept of a "world-out-there" that can be captured in a truthful and accurate manner by the researcher's methods.

Thus, a text becomes valid as long as it is appropriately grounded and triangulated, it makes use of naturalistic indicators and respondent validation, it is fitted to a theory, has a comprehensive scope, is credible in terms of member checks, and so forth (see Silverman, 1993). The author of the text makes these claims to validity, which guarantee the text's authoritative representation of the experience and social world under study (Denzin, 1997). Denzin (1997) argues that the ethnographer can only produce texts that reproduce multiple versions of reality, showing the manner in

which each version influences the phenomenon studied. Any claim to presenting the 'real' world as it is, comes back to the question: "Whose reality is this?" Denzin (1997: 268) also asserts that truth is always personal and subjective, it is fragile, "a coproduction and an interactional experience lodged in the moment that connects the reader-as-audience-member and coproducer to a performance text".

Denzin (1997) raises more questions, than he gives answers. He deconstructs the concepts that interpretative ethnographic research has relied upon, without offering anything consistent in place. When I first read Denzin I felt lost, with nothing to rely upon. However, I now view ethnographic research as translating a text from one language to another. I will never be able to capture exactly what the original author of the text wanted to express through it, I will only be able to render an interpretation of that text in the new language based on my knowledge of the two languages and of the two cultures in which those languages are spoken. Thus I became acutely aware that through my ethnographic text, I did not aspire or claim to depict the 'real world', but rather to describe in as much detail as possible the cultural situation I was observing, and to interpret it, based on the theoretical background I had acquired during this research, i.e. to create an integrated synthesis of experience and theory (Denzin, 1989). I would argue that this is what gives credibility to my ethnographic endeavour, and thus, the use of triangulation becomes unnecessary.

Furthermore, Massey (1999) argues that methodological triangulation itself, although it still has a significant amount of influence, has certain inherent errors when applied to qualitative research. Massey (1999) emphasises that trust in this form of triangulation is misplaced and illustrates why this is so. Massey (1999) argues that there is a mistaken assumption that the ontological and epistemological bases of certain sociological activities are the same as those underpinning triangulation in surveying. Consequently, he suggests that many studies using multiple methods make misleading and invalid claims in the name of triangulation, which has significant implications on ethnography, as the use of multiple methods is one of its defining characteristics (Massey and Walford, 1998).

Therefore I have not adopted the term triangulation in order to validate my research, nor was I in search of the 'truth'. Instead I consider that my research is credible as I

have made any interpretations on my part explicit and I have used varied data, which I presented in a detailed description. This resulted in a thick description or the ethnographic tale.

6.6. *Thick Description or the Ethnographic Tale*

Above I have discussed why triangulation is not always or necessarily an appropriate concept for an ethnographic study. Therefore, I used a different approach, one that was not concerned with finding ‘the truth’, but one that presents a version of the world I have studied. Therefore, I do not make any claims of my interpretations being final, the reader may have a different view than mine of the world I represented in this thesis. However, I chose to use the technique of rich or thick description (Geertz, 1973) in my research because it involves a description of the data in sufficient detail in order to allow the reader to visualise the situation being described, which may contribute to the credibility of the research. According to Delamont (1992: 150) thick description ‘aims to make the familiar strange and the exotic familiar, via the analytic categories or themes.’

Thick descriptions attempt to capture and record ‘lived’ experience by going beyond mere fact and surface appearances, presenting details, contexts, emotions and the webs of social relationships that join people together (Denzin, 1989). Van Maanen (1988) uses the term ‘tales’ to refer to ethnographic writing in order to highlight the representational qualities of all fieldwork writing and to point out the inherent story-like character of such writing. What Van Maanen (1988) wants to emphasise is not that ethnography is mere fiction, but that there is no direct correspondence between the world as experienced and the world portrayed in a text. Sparkes (2002) also uses the term tales when referring to writing in social science, encouraging researchers to develop their own voices in their writing and to use writing as a process of discovery, understanding, and analysis.

Van Maanen (1988:138) highlights that there is ‘no sovereign method for establishing fieldwork truths’ and that fieldwork alone cannot provide a balanced representation of a culture. There is a need for additional reading from diverse sources, reflection and use of other research techniques. My own research is not only

based on the fieldwork I have conducted, but also on building a theoretical framework for the research (see chapters 1 to 4) and drawing on existing theories in order to explain my interpretations of the data (see chapters 11 and 12). I would argue that credibility is achieved by doing a rigorous study through collecting varied data and having a strong theoretical framework. The interpretation is an informed one based on the observations, the reflexive account and the interviews, and integrated within the relevant theory.

In order to achieve credibility, I attempted not only to show my own perspectives on the educational setting and the learning experience, but also to give the opportunity to the participants to share their values and opinions. Therefore, I provided extracts from the interviews I carried out with the staff at the centre in order to illustrate their perspectives on the outdoor educational process (see chapter 9). These interviews had been conducted after building a strong rapport with the staff, which is essential in ethnographic research (Walford, 2001).

I provided some general information about the visiting schools (see section 6.3.1), in order to locate them in the larger social setting, which may contribute to the readers' understanding of the group interaction in the outdoor classroom. I also considered the ethos of the outdoor centre and the organisational values, which I believed, would help the reader gain a better understanding of the aims and objectives of the outdoor centre, and the work that it does (see chapter 8). Collecting documents such as brochures, activity sheets, school programmes, Ofsted inspection reports, making notes of the mottos used, and a careful examination of the outdoor centre website helped toward painting a picture of the ideology of the centre.

Through examples of group interactions in the outdoor classroom, I aimed to show the reader how the participants constructed learning, and how their actions influenced each other's outdoor learning experience. In order to be able to do this, I had to make sure that I collected rich observational data, which I analysed rigorously and systematically (see chapter 7). Moreover, during the data collection process and throughout the analysis of the data, I engaged in reflexive thinking and indwelling, in order to make my own opinions and pre-conceived ideas explicit, and be aware of how they might influence my interpretation of the data.

In this chapter I have presented the methodological framework of my research and have introduced the reader to the issues I was faced with before and during the fieldwork. I have also explored the concepts that have guided me through this experience and have illustrated the roles I took while conducting the fieldwork. Furthermore I discussed some of the problems I was faced with and how I tried to resolve them. In addition I examined the ethical issues involved in an ethnographic study. In addition I have shown why I have not considered triangulation as an appropriate concept to validate my research, and have discussed different perspectives on issues of validity and the 'truth' in ethnographic research. I have explained how I have attempted to achieve credibility, by introducing the reader to the social world I have studied through an ethnographic tale and informed interpretations.

7. Data Analysis Procedures

In this chapter I illustrate how I have conducted the data analysis, by explaining the procedures I have undertaken and by giving examples of how they have been applied to the data. References are made to Spradley (1980), in order to support the steps taken as part of the data analysis process.

I found this stage of my research the most difficult one. Most of the literature on ethnographic research gives ample advice to the novice ethnographer with regard to the data collection process (Delamont, 2002; Fetterman, 1989; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Walford, 2002), but is quite vague when it comes to data analysis. Thus, after my first stage of fieldwork, I needed to find a way of analysing all the data I had collected. Spradley (1980) points out that there is an ethnographic research cycle, which involves asking questions, followed by collecting data, making an ethnographic record and then analysing the data. He argues that only when this cycle is completed is the researcher ready to return to the first step of asking questions and then collecting data. Therefore, data analysis is not a final stage within ethnographic research, but it is rather an ongoing process.

While conducting my fieldwork, I would reflect on the data collected each day by writing down my thoughts, opinions and feelings in my fieldwork diary. Sometimes I would do this immediately after an event that had a particular effect on me. This is an early stage of data analysis (Fetterman, 1989; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). The early analysis informed and guided the next stage of data collection, as I began to formulate interpretations and propositions with regard to the phenomena observed. These were always made explicit, and recorded either in the fieldwork diary or in the field notes. However this was not enough, I needed to make sense of the data, to structure it, to make a comprehensive and complete analysis of it.

I could have used qualitative data analysis software packages, which have become more and more accepted by qualitative researchers. The software may help with the coding process, it may allow for a more complex way of looking at the relationships in the data, possibly even provide a formal structure for writing and storing memos in order to develop the analysis; and, to some extent, enable more conceptual and

theoretical thinking about the data (Barry, 1998). However using such packages can also have negative impacts on the research, as it can lead to distancing the researcher from the data (Seidel, 1991; Weaver and Atkinson, 1994), it can cause qualitative data to be analysed quantitatively (Mason, 1996), it can result in increasing homogeneity in methods of data analysis (Coffey et al, 1996), and that it might be a monster and hi-jack the analysis (see Barry, 1998). I did not resort to using qualitative data analysis software packages, because I felt I was the human instrument (see section 5.4), and I considered that such software packages could not be as sensitive to analysing the data, as I was able to.

Discussing this issue with my supervisor, she recommended a ‘little book’ by Spradley, which she thought I might find useful. And indeed I did³¹. Spradley (1980) guides the novice ethnographer through the whole process of conducting ethnographic research, including data analysis. According to Spradley (1980: 85), analysis involves a search for patterns, it is a “systematic examination of something to determine its parts, the relationships among parts, and their relationship to the whole.” Ethnographies are descriptive studies of cultures (see Fetterman, 1989; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Spradley (1980: 86) defines culture as:

“... the *patterns* of behaviour, artefacts, and knowledge that people have learned or created. Culture is an organization of things, the meaning given by people to objects, places and activities. *Every human society is culturally constituted.*”³²

In order to be able to describe the cultural behaviour, the cultural artefacts, and the cultural knowledge, an ethnographer has to discover the patterns within the data collected. Spradley (1980) points out that ethnographic analysis in general involves a search through the field notes to discover cultural patterns, this entails that the ethnographer must undertake an intensive analysis of the data before proceeding further.

³¹ I have looked at several other texts that discussed qualitative research and ethnography, including data analysis, such as Delamont (2002); Fetterman (1989); Hammersley and Atkinson (1995); Maykut and Morehouse (1994) and Walford (2002). However, I found Spradley (1980) to be the most useful one.

³² Original italics.

I conducted fieldwork over two periods. The first was conducted in the summer of 2005, from the beginning of June and the end of July. The second was conducted in 2006, and it started in May and ended in June. Before going back into the field, after the first data collection stage, I was aware that it was very important to analyse the data I had already gathered. Initially, I familiarised myself with the data, reading and re-reading the notes and the fieldwork diary, and listening to the interviews I had conducted. This helped me relive the whole experience, however, as Bhatti (2002) pointed out, this can be quite emotional and draining.

Analysing the field notes is the first step toward the discovery of the cultural meaning of a social situation. For this reason, I believe that a systematic analysis of the data is an appropriate approach for ethnographic research, as it goes beyond merely observing and recording a social situation, into discovering a cultural scene. These are two related concepts, but they are, as Spradley (1980) points out, significantly different from one another, since “you first have to discover the *parts* or elements of cultural meaning and then find out how they are organised” (1980: 87)³³.

I knew I had to look for patterns that existed in the data (Spradley, 1980), and as Bhatti (2002) emphasised, this examination involves a systematic and rigorous process. I started by going through the data, which entailed carefully reading all the field notes, the fieldwork diary and the transcribed interviews, while identifying patterns of behaviour of the participants, repetitions in the way the activities unfolded, and comparing and contrasting the different kinds of interaction between the participants. As a result, I identified several cultural domains. According to Spradley (1980) a cultural domain is an important basic unit in every culture and domain analysis is a type of ethnographic analysis. In later steps, I undertook taxonomic analysis that involved looking into how cultural domains were organised, and then I carried out a componential analysis, involving a search for the attributes of terms in each domain. In the end, I conducted a theme analysis, which entailed “a search for the relationships among domains and for how they are linked to the cultural scene as a whole” (Spradley, 1980: 87-88). The analysis process is illustrated below.

³³ Original italics.

7.1. Identifying Cultural Domains

Following a systematic examination of the data, I have identified several cultural domains (see Appendix 9). Cultural domains are categories of meaning that are made up of a cover term, included terms and a semantic relationship (Spradley, 1980). The cover term is the name of a cultural domain. For instance I identified the cover term 'teachers'. The included terms are the names of the smaller categories within the cover term. The included terms for 'teachers' are: the safety conscious, the nanny, the detached, the adviser, the indifferent, the controller, the helper, the authoritarian, the toughen-upper, etc. The semantic relationship defines included terms by placing them inside the cultural domain. Thus 'a controller is a kind of teacher' would be one semantic relationship. I focused on one cultural domain and a single semantic relationship at a time.

After identifying the cultural domains, I was able to carry out more focused observations when going back in the field, but I still attempted to gain a surface understanding of the cultural scene as a whole. Choosing an ethnographic focus meant that I would have to conduct an in-depth investigation of particular cultural domains, as Spradley (1980) suggested.

My main focus was now looking at the participants and how they interacted during 'team building' activities. Thus, whereas in the beginning of my fieldwork, I carried out a surface investigation and observed all the activities facilitated at the centre, in the second part of my work in the field, I focused specifically on the activities that the centre labelled to be 'team building' activities, such as the blind string trail, the low ropes course, toxic waste, orienteering³⁴ etc. However, I would occasionally observe other activities that were more individualistic, but which I thought may allow me to get to know the participants better, such as archery or climbing. I also decided to look more closely at the approaches of the participants during the activities, as I considered that these had a great impact on group interaction. The following step in the data analysis was organising the cultural domains, which I will explore next.

³⁴ See Appendix 1 for a description of these activities.

7.2. *Constructing Taxonomies*

Another important step in my data analysis was to organise the terms of the cultural domains into a structure that would allow me to identify their characteristics more easily and to establish the relationship between them. This involved constructing taxonomies, which are sets of categories organised on the basis of a single semantic relationship (see Appendices 10, 11, 12, 13, 14). Taxonomies show the relationship among all the included terms in a domain and reveal subsets and the way they are related to the whole (Spradley, 1980). For instance, let us consider the cultural domain 'kinds of teachers'. Initially, I identified 22 kinds of teachers:

the safety conscious	the safety obsessed	the nanny
the part-of-the-team	the detached	the adviser
the indifferent	the sympathiser	the controller
the discussion leader	the helper	the authoritarian
the interferer	the demander	the watch dog
the lecturer	the question asker	the toughen-upper
the rule-breaker	the team spirit builder	the chatter
the peace maker		

These terms are included in the domain by a single semantic relationship: x is a kind of y. Moreover, these are actually approaches that a teacher may take at one particular time in the activity. It was evident however that a single teacher would not go through all these approaches, rather a teacher may go through three or four approaches, from the indifferent to the question asker, to the helper and to the interferer and then back to the indifferent. Chapter 10 illustrates with examples what each set of participant approaches entails, the practices used by participants adopting a particular approach and how participants may shift from one approach to another. The terms used to describe the approaches are analytic, which means that I inferred their cultural meanings through my observations (Spradley, 1980).

In the case of the cultural domain ‘kinds of activities’, I used folk terms, which are terms that “come from the language used by people in the social situation” (Spradley, 1980: 90). Thus I was able to identify 30 kinds of activities:

orienteering	parachute games	low ropes course
blind string trail	environmental senses	art
creepi crawl	campfire activities	sports hall games
swimming	spider’s web	krypton puzzles
scavenger hunt	eggs can fly	disco
toxic waste	studio recording	connect force
ghost story	poisoned ground	shelter building
archery	diary writing	forest walk
pond dipping	video watching	tuck shop
climbing	raft building	Astroturf games

Just like a cultural domain, a taxonomy is a set of categories which are organised based on a single semantic relationship. The difference between a taxonomy and a cultural domain is that the former is more explicit with regard to the relationships among the terms inside the cultural domain (Spradley, 1980).

In considering the taxonomy on teachers, each term represents a kind of teacher, however the relationship between the kinds of teachers needs to be established, thus the safety conscious includes the safety obsessed and the nanny; the controller includes the authoritarian, the interferer, the lecturer and the toughen-upper (see Appendix 10). Moreover, taxonomies have different levels, in this case the taxonomy has three levels, as does the taxonomy on activities (see Appendix 11). In chapter 10, I discuss the taxonomies of the participant approaches (see Appendices 10, 12, 13 and 14) and I explain the meaning behind the main included terms, which represent the first level of the taxonomy and include the most significant approaches. I have only given examples of the approaches in the second and third level, in instances when such approaches appeared to play an important part in the group interaction.

Thus, in the case of the teachers as a participant group, I discussed in more detail the approaches on the first level of the taxonomy, i.e. the safety conscious, the detached, the sympathisers and the controllers, and have given some examples of several second and third level approaches, such as the watchdog, the toughen-upper, the adviser, the demander and the chatterer. This was due to the great impact that they had on the learning experience of the pupils (see also Appendix 10).

Taxonomies can be represented in several ways; I chose a set of lines and nodes for the one on teachers, and an outline for the one on activities. I decided that an outline was more appropriate for showing the kinds of activities due to the larger number of terms and the complexity of the taxonomy. The next step in the data analysis process was to carry out a componential analysis of the cultural domains.

7.3. Componential Analysis of the Cultural Domains

This is a systematic search for the attributes associated with cultural categories. Attributes or components of meaning are contrasts among the members of a domain. Thus a componential analysis looks for the components of meaning that people have assigned to their cultural categories (Spradley, 1980).

I have represented the attributes in a chart, which Spradley (1980: 132) calls a 'paradigm'³⁵, and which made the work of componential analysis easier and more systematic. Through this paradigm, I have shown some of the attributes of these cultural categories, initially by identifying dimensions of contrast that had binary values. For instance in the case of the cultural domain 'teachers', I looked at whether the teachers got involved in the activity or not, whether they took part in the decision-making process, whether they gave physical assistance to the pupils or not etc. (see Table 3, p. 344). With regard to the cultural domain 'activities', I also looked at several dimensions of contrast, such as whether the activity was group orientated or not, whether it was facilitated by the staff at the centre or by the teachers, etc. (see Table 4, p. 345). Each column of attributes is a dimension of

³⁵ Spradley's (1980) use of the term 'paradigm' in this instance does not refer to the more conventional meaning of the term, i.e. 'a world view underlying the theories and methodology of a particular scientific subject' (Oxford Dictionary of English), but rather, it refers to the chart or the worksheet used to analyse the data.

contrast. I have then combined the closely related dimensions of contrast into ones that have multiple values. I was then able to construct a completed paradigm, which allows me to present a large amount of information in a concise and structured way (see Table 5, p. 346).

I have carried out this detailed investigation on the cultural domains, which I considered to be central to my research, and have described other aspects of the cultural scene I have observed in more general terms (Spradley, 1980). Therefore I chose several related domains, i.e. teachers, pupils, facilitators, activities and interaction and analysed them in the intensive manner shown above. The final step in the data analysis process was identifying recurrent themes.

7.4. Identifying Recurrent Themes

After completing the in-depth analysis, I went back to the surface of cultural domains and constructed a more holistic view. Ethnographic research examines the small details of a culture, while at the same time seeking to chart the broader features of the cultural landscape (Spradley, 1980). Consequently, alongside the in-depth analysis of selected domains, I also wanted to include an overview of the cultural scene, thus revealing a sense of the whole. In order to do that, I needed to discover the cultural themes, which were embedded in the life of the participants in my study.

According to Opler (1945) identifying recurrent themes helps to better understand the general pattern of a culture, a theme being “a postulate or position, declared or implied, and usually controlling behaviour or stimulating activity, which is tacitly approved or openly promoted in a society” (1945: 198). This concept is based on the general idea that cultures are not simply bits and pieces of custom, but are rather complex patterns. Hence a culture comprises a system of meaning that is integrated into some kind of larger pattern and a theme is a principle that appears in a number of domains. It is either tacit or explicit, and serves as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning (Spradley, 1980). Cultural themes can be folk sayings, mottos, proverbs or recurrent expressions. For instance during my research at the centre I often heard this motto: “There is no I in team.” However, most cultural

themes remain at the tacit level of knowledge and through my analysis of the data, I have tried to discover such themes and make them known.

‘Team building’ was a recurrent theme that emerged following the analysis of the data. This was an explicit theme, as most of the activities used at the centre were labelled by the staff as ‘team building’ activities. Furthermore, the organisational objectives and aims focused on ‘team building’ and this will be illustrated in chapter 8. In their interviews, the staff at the centre placed great importance on team building as an essential part of the learning experience of the pupils. This will be explored more extensively in chapter 9.

Most of the themes that have emerged have not been so explicit. In my discussion of findings, I have focused particularly on two themes: empowerment and control, as they have contributed the most to the unveiling of the educational process. Empowerment and control seemed to govern most of the interaction within the groups that I observed at the outdoor centre. The empowering and controlling approaches of the participants appeared to have a significant impact on how the learning was constructed in the outdoor classroom. Therefore an exploration of these approaches was seen as an appropriate way of illustrating the group interactions within the outdoor classroom, and of uncovering the educational process (see chapters 10, 11 and 12).

This chapter has explained how the data has been analysed by describing the stages of the process and by providing examples. The methods used are based on Spradley’s (1980) approach, which was considered an appropriate and useful procedure to analyse the data in this study.

8. The Educational Setting: Locating the ‘Classroom’

This chapter introduces the reader to the educational environment where the research was carried out. It not only describes the physical setting, but it also explores the ethos and the intentions of the centre, in an attempt to build a contextual background, which is an important aspect of descriptive studies (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998).

What follows is the tale about a world that was little known to me, and which I came to discover during my ethnographic endeavour. As I have mentioned before, I chose to write up my thesis as a thick description (Geertz, 1973), which involves presenting the data in sufficient detail so as to allow the reader to visualise the cultural situation described. The result is a tale in Van Maanen’s (1988) sense of the word, that is, what I have written is not mere fiction, but a representation of the world I have studied. The reader is free to interpret the tale as he/she feels or thinks, as there is no direct correspondence between the world as I experienced it and the world portrayed in the text (Van Maanen, 1988). I see the writing of this tale as a way of discovering and understanding this particular cultural scene (Sparkes, 2002).

8.1. *Aims and Objectives of the Centre*

I have already mentioned that I am not using the real name of the outdoor centre where the research was carried out in order to preserve the anonymity of the participants and that I will refer to it as simply ‘the centre’. However, it is important to present the aims and objectives of the centre in order to allow for an understanding of the ethos behind its work. The information about the centre was taken from its own website, brochures, interviews with the staff and my own personal observations.

The centre is owned and managed by a federation of youth clubs, a charity that provides support and services for children and young people through its member clubs. The federation states on its website that it is committed to helping young people develop socially and personally and supports youth projects, particularly in the voluntary sector, in order to ensure that young people have access to quality

youth resources with informed and trained staff, management committee members and volunteers.

The centre where the research was carried out states on its website and in its brochures to have almost “60 years of expertise in providing and promoting social educational programmes for young people and adults”³⁶. Its visitors come from youth organisations and school groups who use the centre to run their own personal development/educational programmes. However, the centre affirms that “the staff at [the centre] understand the particular needs of youth groups, primary and secondary schools and work with teachers and group leaders in planning and delivery of their programme in order to ensure a productive and enjoyable event”. The aim of the centre is to facilitate the particular needs of different groups. By providing, what is in the centre’s view, a flexible approach, and comfortable and accessible surroundings, the individuals are encouraged by the centre “to learn new skills, build confidence and share their time in an enjoyable way”.

The centre also aims to ‘give a break’ to young people from the risks and confinements of inner city life, by providing a journey to opportunity and discovery and also by assisting the young people in the passage along the difficult journey from childhood to adulthood. The young people are encouraged to learn about the countryside, and undertake training and activities in order to enhance their personal development.

The centre has also been the venue for activity holidays for chronically and terminally ill young people and has hosted programmes for severely disabled young people. Through these programmes, able-bodied teenagers are given the opportunity to give service to others by acting as caring ‘friends’ to their disabled peers.

³⁶ I am not sourcing the website or any other documents that I have used to provide information about the centre in order to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.

Funding

The centre has a self-financing policy and is therefore dependant on charitable donations as well as the local fundraising initiatives undertaken by a team of volunteers. Also, the centre ensures that the facilities are made available to a wide range of local community organisations and voluntary groups at reasonable charges, or in turn for some service. For instance the local astronomical society holds meetings at the house in return for instructing visiting children in the science of astronomy.

Funding also comes from primary and secondary school groups that occupy and utilise the house and its facilities during midweek periods and when federation members cannot normally attend. The centre also provides swimming lessons for children and adults, it offers camping facilities and the use of its AstroTurf. All in all, the centre caters to youth groups, school groups, disability groups, corporate groups and the community.

8.2. The Staff

During the fieldwork at the centre, I was able to meet all of the staff, including the director, David. The staff were very friendly and appeared to be open to the idea of me being there as a researcher. I spent most of my time with the facilitators, observing the activities, having lunch together, chatting or playing games during breaks and helping them to prepare the refreshments or set up some of the activities.

However, I would often have discussions with Paul, the deputy director, either about my research, the school groups or even casual chats, as he would join the facilitators for lunch most of the times. Paul was responsible for the team of facilitators. During my fieldwork, Paul was never actually involved in conducting any of the activities with the school groups, but he would liaise with the schools and the facilitators regarding the outdoor programmes at the centre. Lynn was the sales coordinator and she was my link with the schools, as she would provide information about the school groups that were going to come to the centre, when they would arrive and for how

long they would stay. She would inform the schools about my presence at the centre and ask for consent prior to their arrival³⁷.

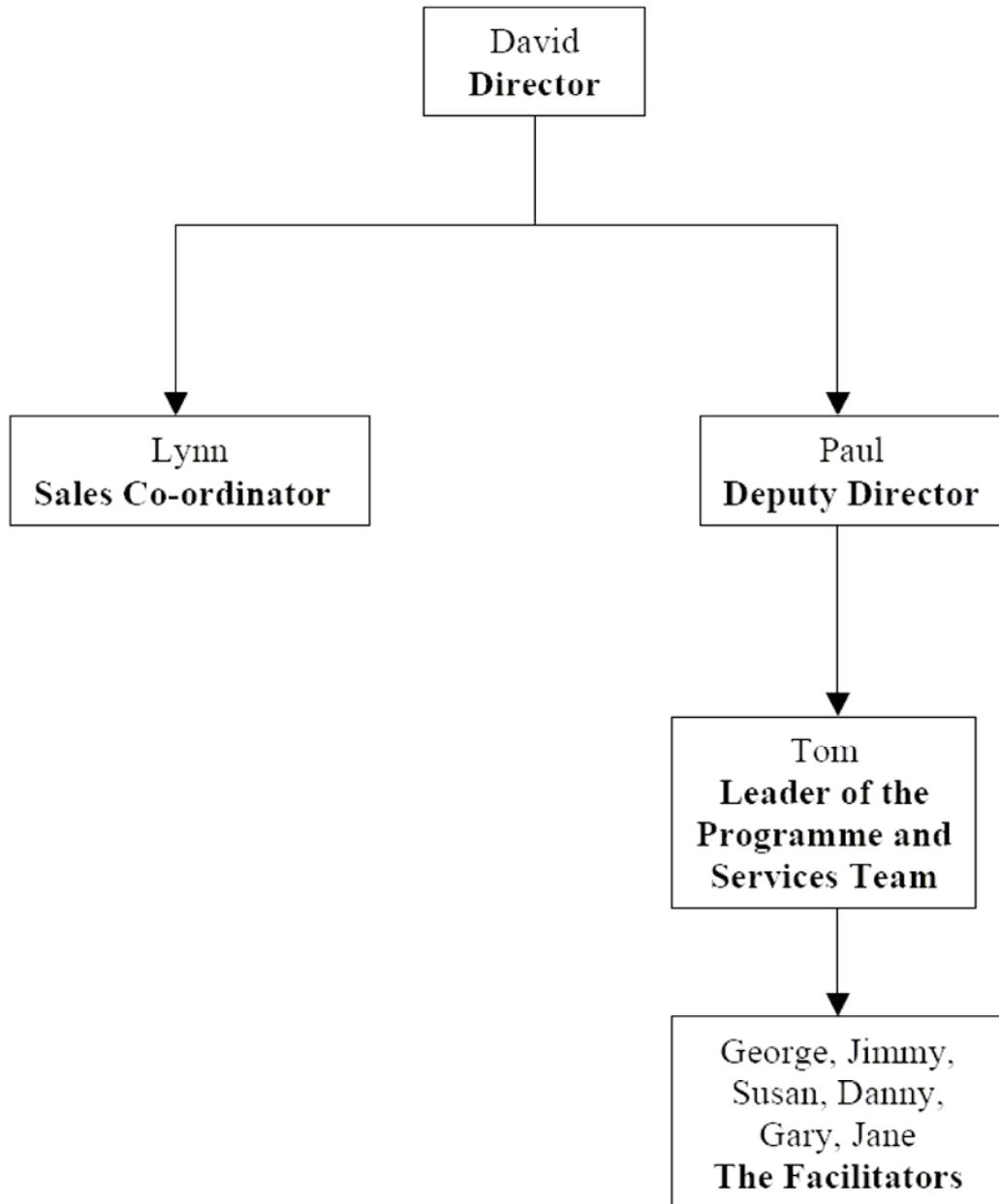
When I first came to the centre, the team of facilitators was made up of George, Jimmy, Susan and Tom. Tom was the 'leader of the programme and services team', which, he stated, meant that he had the responsibility to "coordinate the programme, to make sure that everybody is able to do their job to the best of their abilities and then the group get the best out of our staff" (15.07.2005, Interview 5). Figure 3 (see p. 144) presents the structure of the management of the centre, focusing on the facilitating side. Therefore, not all the staff that worked at the centre are included.

Danny joined the team of facilitators at the end of June 2005, as George was about to leave, having been accepted for another position in a different institution. When I returned to the centre in May 2006, I learned that Susan had also left her position at the centre, and that there were two new additions to the team of facilitators. These were Gary and Jane.

Most of the facilitators did not have any prior experience or training in outdoor education, some of them had BA degrees in coaching or sports, like Susan and Gary. Jane had an HND in coaching, while Jimmy had a BA degree in nutrition. Danny had previous experience in working in an outdoor centre, and Tom had a background in cricket. Both Danny and Tom did not have a degree. All of them were under 25 years of age, and for many, this was their first employment.

³⁷ See section 6.2.2 for a discussion on issues of consent.

Figure 3 The management structure of the centre



8.3. The Setting

Like most outdoor centres, this centre is quite remote from the big towns. It is very much in the country, set within 24 acres of private grounds, neighbouring farms and a few cottages. The local countryside provides interesting walks with plenty of opportunities to take a closer look at the wildlife. Because I do not drive, I would take a bus every day and then walk a good 15 minutes through the woods in order to get to the centre. There were rabbits everywhere, running frightened at my sight, lazy pheasants, and the occasional deer, which I was never quite sure that it was actually there, so quick was it to disappear through the trees. The house itself is out of the history books. Built in the early 17th century, it is an old manor house with its own ghost stories and plots. When a school group arrives at the centre they are gathered in the red room. Two large paintings dominate the wall that the four rows of chairs face. Children often ask about the man and the woman in each painting. This is when they are introduced to the Red Lady who is the ghost of the manor. Children are told a little about the history of the house: it is 400 years old, so there are valuable things inside, therefore no running is allowed inside. The house provides accommodation for 50 to 60 guests. It has large meeting rooms and lounge areas all furnished in a traditional style.

The facilities include a recently built low ropes course, a recreation centre with a heated pool, a campsite, a wildlife pond, nature trails, an observatory and an all-weather floodlit games area that offers scope for training, environmental studies, team building exercises and sports. There is also a fully adaptable sports hall/auditorium with a theatre stage with recording and rehearsal rooms.

Outside there is plenty of room to run around, there are green fields and two wooded areas. The smaller wooded area is close to the house and has some rare trees and quite a lot of small creatures, this is the area where activities such as 'environmental senses' and 'creepi crawls' are carried out. The pupils seem to be happy to discover and eager to explore this area on the centre's grounds. There is even a pond, which has its own imaginary pigmy alligator, and that is why they are always told not to swim in the pond. Not all the pupils are ready to believe the story about the alligator:

“Susan: [...] Don’t swim in the pond! There’s an alligator.

Pg1: Is there?

Pg2: No there isn’t!” (Field notes I, p. 3, 13.06.2005)

The story of the alligator/crocodile was quite a popular one, and some pupils would name it and swear that they saw it. I would often play along and pretend that I had seen it. The staff at the centre were actively encouraging the perpetuation of this myth.

“They find the pond. [They are scared of the crocodile].

Pg1: Does it go on both sides?

I: Yes, it would.

They quietly look for it. They think they see it. Whispering.

Pg2: What should we call it?

They choose a name. [They seem happy]. They tell me about it. They see Jimmy. They run to tell him about the crocodile.

Jimmy: Wow, you are very lucky, it’s a really shy crocodile.” (Field notes IV, p. 33-34, 22.05.2006)

The ghost myth was also perpetuated both by the staff and the visiting pupils. Sometimes I would hear stories about wardrobes moving and children not being able to get a wink of sleep because they were terrified of the Red Lady. Nevertheless, most of the pupils seemed to thrive on the mystery.

8.4. The Activities

Within the grounds of the centre there are several outdoor facilities used as tools for personal development. These facilities illustrate the social nature of the outdoor activities and the importance of group interaction when taking part in them. The staff at the centre labelled these activities as team building exercises and the focus is mainly on teamwork. Thus the idea of group work is used extensively as part of the educational process. Appendix 1 contains formal documents that I was able to obtain from the centre, which describe those activities that were, at times, conducted by visiting teachers. Thus these descriptions are given in order to inform teachers from the visiting schools about the content, aims and objectives of such activities. Some of

the activities that were conducted at the centre are not described in Appendix 1, because they were mostly conducted by the staff at the centre and not by the visiting teachers (e.g. the low ropes course, the parachute games, the sports hall activities, archery etc.). Appendix 2 contains descriptions of these activities based on my observations. All these activities are used by the centre to involve all members of the group, and the importance of working together is constantly emphasised (see chapter 9).

Moreover, the centre's residential nature, shared accommodation and communal meals illustrated the social aspect of the experience, reflecting the focus on group work and group interactions offered by the majority of the activities. The social aspect is considered to be an important facet of the learning experience at the centre, in particular, and generally in outdoor education, where young people are taken out of their day-to-day environments and placed within a "unique social environment" (Barrett and Greenaway, 1995; Hunt, 1989; Walsh and Golins, 1976).

In the following, section I will illustrate how the programmes conducted at the centre are structured and organised, following the story of one school group's stay at the centre over a period of three days.

8.5. *The Structure and Organisation of the Programmes at the Centre*

Above, I have discussed the ethos of the centre, I have given details about the staff working there, I have described the physical setting and the activities, in order to allow the reader to visualise the physical picture and the ideological base of the centre. Next I look at how the programmes provided by the centre for the schools were structured and organised. I do this by describing the stay over three days of one school group. This contributes to the understanding of the kind of work that the centre carries out and offers a glimpse into the experience that the school groups have at the centre. As this is a qualitative piece of research, I provide detailed descriptions that contain direct quotations from my field notes and fieldwork diary, in order to capture the participants' perspectives and the complexity of their experiences (Patton, 1990: 40). I first introduce the thick description (Geertz, 1973)

of the participants' experience, before exploring more rigorously the meaning behind these experiences, which is consistent with an ethnographic approach (see Beard *et al.*, 2007).

Usually each school group would start their programme with activities such as parachute games or sports hall games and orienteering, scavenger hunt, environmental senses or creepi crawl (see Appendix 3 for examples of programme timetables). The parachute games and the sports hall games appeared to provide the opportunity to the facilitators to build a rapport with the visiting pupils, and also with their teachers, learn their names and simply get to know the group. Orienteering, scavenger hunt, environmental senses or the creepi crawl would allow the pupils and the teachers to explore the new environment and get acquainted with the setting. Only after such activities, did the groups take part in activities that involved problem solving and team building exercises, such as the spider's web, the low ropes course, or the blind string trail.

There was thus a progression in the structure of the programmes and the use of activities, as well as a progression of facilitation. This progression would seem to allow for a natural development of team building and communication skills, it also created a safe learning environment. Moreover, the centre gives the visiting schools the liberty to choose the activities they want to do, so the programmes are developed according to the schools' needs. Nevertheless, the programmes of the different schools had a very similar structure, with similar activities at similar times and intervals. There was thus a common structure and organisation of the programmes at the centre and a daily routine was established with each group.

I was able to observe 14 groups during my field work, however due to time and space constraints, I will only describe one of these programmes in order to provide an account of the residential experience of a primary school group. This was the very first group I observed at the centre. They arrived at the centre by coach at around 10 o'clock and were greeted by the staff before entering the house. While the luggage was taken care of by some of the teachers and staff, the pupils were gathered in the red room. Two big pictures of a man and a woman on either side of the fireplace dominated the whole room. They were the Red Lady and her lover, the children were

told when they inquired about them. Four rows of red chairs faced the two pictures. Susan was standing in front of the fireplace as she was explaining the rules: no running inside the house, no outdoor shoes in the house, slippers should be worn at all times, pupils have to make their own beds and so on. Besides being told about the rules of the house, the children were also introduced to the alligator, but some did not appear too credulous:

“They all get quiet when Susan, the facilitator, welcomes them. [And tells them the rules]: 400 years-old house, valuable possessions, so no running, shouting and screaming. Always wear shoes.

[...]

Susan: We use the cellar to go in and out to change the shoes.

[Other rules are communicated] The low ropes and the farm are off limits.

Susan: Don't cross any road! Don't swim in the pond! There's an alligator!

Pg1: Is there?

Pb4: No there isn't!" (Field notes I, p. 3, 13.06.2005)

After the introduction, the children had a packed breakfast on the lawn in front of the house. It was a lovely warm day, so I joined them, but I sat a bit further away from them, as I did not want to intrude. This school group came from School A and had 29 pupils of different nationalities (see section 6.3.1 for a description of the school). There were French, Italian, Irish, English and Dutch pupils aged between 7 and 8. The three female teachers were also of different nationalities: one was French, one was Dutch and one was British. Both the teachers and the pupils would mostly communicate with each other in English and most of the pupils were fluent in English. I have to note that most of the school groups that come to the centre are made up of British, English speaking participants. It was only during the first week of my fieldwork that I was able to observe groups with multi-national participants.

When they finished their breakfast, the pupils started to take pictures, they were frantically clicking away with their cameras, until they had to be reminded by one of the teachers: 'Don't take all photos in one day!' (Field notes I, p. 6, 13.06.2005). Some pupils were given letters from their parents, which raised the curiosity of their mates, who also wanted to see the letters. The rest kept on taking pictures. There was a lot of excitement and joy as the children were jumping up and down and chasing

each other across the lawn. The pupils did not seem to mind my presence, they ignored me for most of the time, as they were too busy playing. None of them asked me who I was, or what I was doing there, however one girl did want to take a picture of me, and I agreed.

Approximately 20 minutes passed by before Susan came to organise them for their first activity. They were divided into two mixed groups, which means that each group was made up of boys and girls. One group was going to take part in orienteering and the other in the parachute games and then they would swap. I stayed with the group that was doing orienteering. They were divided in smaller groups of three and four pupils, each group was given a map, a pen, and a clipboard. Susan explained what the activity was about and answered their questions. Off they went.

I followed a group of four girls and I had the opportunity to observe how they interacted as a group:

“It was interesting to follow this group around. In the beginning they struggled a bit, not really having a strategy. Marie was holding the map, Isabella was holding the clipboard, the other two seemed to follow the lead of these two, one of them did put forward ideas and made suggestions, the other was more quiet. There was some criticism at one point from Isabella towards her:

Isabella: You haven't really been doing anything, you've just been yapping.

Isabella was always the one to say: 'Let's go!' without really knowing where she was going. Marie would always say: 'Stop, let's look at the map properly!' Marie did have more influence on all of them, urging them to discuss and think over what they should be doing. Occasionally, they would meet up with another group and search together. They would exchange information and then split up. There was no discrimination between boys and girls, although boys were less polite.” (Fieldwork diary, 14.06.2005)

It was quite hard to keep up with the four girls, as they were running around all the time. It was not easy to take notes, while trying to catch up with them. They did not seem to mind that I was scribbling away in my notepad. One of them asked me at one point what I was writing, I simply said: “What you are doing.” She nodded her head and did not ask me anything else.

Besides exchanging information with other groups of pupils, there were two occasions when they asked for help from their teachers, but this was only after accidental encounters with them. They did not actively go and seek for their assistance, nor did they ask me to help at any point. The first teacher they met praised them for finding one of the points on the map, and gave them some advice about reading the map. After this she left, and the girls continued on their own.

After a while, I could see that they were getting tired, as they stopped running and had a rest on the ground. They soon picked up, when they saw another teacher, and asked for her assistance. She helped them find the next point, and told me: "You have chosen an interesting group, they are not in the same class, so they don't know each other very well" (Field notes I, p. 17, 13.06.2005). I thought that this could have explained why they struggled a little in the beginning. She continued to help until the bell rang, letting everybody know that the activity was over and that they all had to come back to the house. I asked the girls whether they thought the activity was fun:

"I: How was it? Was it fun?"

Pgs: Yeah! (Smiling)

Pg1: But it was hard. We only had two more left." (Field notes I, p 18, 13.06.2005)

The four girls had lunch together, before taking part in the next activity, which was parachute games. They stayed a little further away from the rest. All of the other pupils tended to stay in the same groups that they were in during orienteering. One of the girls from my group approached me and said 'hello', we talked and we played a little together before the activity started. Susan brought the parachute and explained the rules of the first game, Cat and Mouse: "Susan: The cats have to take their shoes off, the mouse walks under the parachute, the cat has to chase the mouse until it catches it. The others shake the parachute." (Field notes I, p. 20, 13.06.2005)

There was a lot of laughter and screaming as they were playing together. The fun continued with all the other games, which were the Fruit Salad, the Mushroom, Murder, the Shark and Duck, Duck, Goose.

The children were shouting instructions, encouragements and praise: “Pb1: Come on, catch that stupid mouse!”, “Pg1: Good cat!”, “Pg2: I like you as a life saver, you’re really good!” and “Pb2: Go duck, go goose!” (Field notes I, p. 20, 21, 24, 25, 13.06.2005)

There was also some criticism: “Pb3: Life guard, you’re not very good!” (Field notes I, p. 24, 13.06.2005) The laughter and the screaming never stopped.

They all wanted to be part of the game, volunteering for the part, shouting out things like: “Pb4: I’d like to be murdered. I am so dramatic!”, “Pg3: I want to be a detective.” or “Ps: Me, me, me, me!” (Field notes I, p. 23, 25, 13.06.2005)

After the activity two girls were interested in my writing, as they approached me and asked:

“Pgs: How many pages have you written?

I: Oh, these many. (And I show them.)

Pg1: Why?

I: Because I want to write a book about how children play.

Pgs: Aaah!

I: Is that ok?

Pgs: Yes, yes.” (Field notes I, pp. 26-27, 13.06.2005)

As they were talking to me they were always smiling and I had the feeling that they were comfortable around me. This put me a little at ease, because I was worried about how my presence made the children feel. One of the girls from the group I followed in orienteering also came to talk to me before the next activity. She asked me my name, which group I was going with next and showed me her ‘Scooby Do’³⁸. She wanted me to join her group, so I did, because I did not want to disappoint her. I also thought that it would be a good idea to follow the same group for the whole day, and see how they progressed.

³⁸ This was a key chain that the pupils would make themselves from plastic wire. Several of the other pupils in this school group were working on one.

The activities that followed were spider's web and the krypton puzzles (see Appendix 1(G), and (H) respectively). They were conducted by the British teacher. The teacher confided in me that she was not very comfortable doing this, as she was not familiar with the activity and also because she did not know the children very well:

“Tf2: I was a last minute replacement. These children are not in my class, so I don't know them very well. That's why it is hard for me.” (Fieldwork diary, 14.06.2005)

Before the activity started, the teacher tried to explain to the pupils that it was important to work as a team, to discuss the strategy and to help each other, but she had to remind them several times during the activities to help each other, and to allow others to express their opinions: “Tf2: Let's help each other!” (Field notes I, p. 31, 13.06.2005) and “Tf2: But everyone can make suggestions.” (Field notes I, p. 32, 13.06.2005) At times, I had the feeling that she was interfering too much, she told me herself that she should not step in so much and then she explained: “Tf2: It's because I am a teacher, I want to help them too much.” (Fieldwork diary, 14.06.2005) The teacher encouraged them throughout both of the activities and offered them support when they were struggling, telling them that the task was quite difficult and that they were doing very well. When they finished, the pupils told their teacher that solving the puzzle was hard, and they continued to talk about their experience during the break.

After a half an hour break, I went with the same group. They were doing the blind string trail, which was conducted by one of the facilitators at the centre, Susan. Their teacher, the same one that had conducted the previous activities, also accompanied the group. During the activity, there was very little involvement, both on the part of the facilitator and the teacher. There was some encouragement from time to time and reassurance on their part:

“Susan: Keep going, you’re doing really well!
Pb1 (the leader): I’m waiting for the other people.
Pb2: Are we halfway?
Susan: No.
Pb2: How many more minutes ‘till we get halfway?
Susan: 15.
Pb2: You’re joking!” (Field notes I, p. 37, 13.06.2005)

During the activity, the pupils encouraged and supported each other, expressing concern for their peers, with very little intervention from the facilitator or the teacher:

“Pg1 (the leader): Is everybody out?
Ps: Yes!
Pb3: I’m out, I’m Giuseppe.
Pg2: I can’t see anything! Stop! Anna stop! Anna! Anna!
[Marie is a little scared.] She asks for help. She gets it (from another pupil).
The leader warns them of another obstacle.
The leader is changed (It is a boy). One child is mumbling.
[There is] a warning from somebody:
Pg3: There’s a hole!
Pb4: Where? Oh, here!
Pg3: Stop! Where’s the person in front of me?
Everybody stops. The leader asks if everybody is ok. He tries to describe [the obstacle] to the rest. The leader warns them of another obstacle, they are very close to each other. They keep shouting ‘stop!’
[...] The leader is changed again. They change hands, the string is on the other side.
[...]
They’re going down.
Pb5: Be careful!
Pg4: Watch out!
Pb5: We’re going underground.
The facilitator stops them, there is a gap, they are reminded to shout stop!”
(Field notes I, pp. 36-39, 13.06.2005)

This was the last activity I observed that day. I was back at the centre the following morning. The day started with the pupils taking part in a game, outside on the grass. The game was non-stop cricket and it was conducted by one of the facilitators at the centre: Tom. It was another beautiful summer's day. I sat on a bench with the teachers and was watching the game with them. The pupils were excited about the game, clapping and cheering:

“Ps: Go, go, go!

Ps: Run! Run! Run!

Pb1: Ooooh, you're out! [sympathetic]

Pb2: You're really good! (to another boy from the same team)” (Field notes, I, pp. 43-44, 14.06.2005)

One of the girls missed, so Tom lets her have another go. The other pupils were supportive of this and did not protest at all. When somebody was doing well, their team would scream and shout out the score. Even though the pupils kept score, there was a great deal of solidarity between the two teams. Thus, when one of the girls dropped the bat, a boy from an opposing team handed it to her. There was another incident where a girl was not running when she was supposed to, so somebody from the other team showed her where to run. Some girls were so good, that they impressed some of the boys. This was the case with a girl who had a broken arm and was wearing a plaster cast. The boys from the team were talking about her with admiration:

“Pb6: Wow, she's got one arm!

Pb7: Yeah, she's only using one arm!

Pb8: She's really good!

Ps: Yeah.” (Field notes, I, pp. 45-46, 14.06.2005)

After the game, a boy went up to the girl 'with one arm' and told her: “Pb8: With one arm, that was really good! (his eyes wide open)” (Field notes, I, p. 46, 14.06.2005).

This was the first activity of the day, it was an opportunity for the pupils to have fun and enjoy the outdoors. This was followed by a swimming session and then lunch. After a short break, the activity programme was resumed at around half past one,

with one of the facilitators, Susan, conducting the low ropes course (see Appendix 2(B) for a description of the activity).

Before beginning the activity, Susan fitted the helmets on the pupils' heads and then engaged the pupils in a discussion on teamwork. Susan then explained the safety rules, and encouraged the pupils to discuss a strategy before allowing them to get on the equipment. Throughout the whole low ropes course, Susan asked the pupils questions regarding teamwork:

“Susan: Why do you think you worked well in a team?

Pg1: ‘Cause we planned and we listened to each other.” (Field notes I, pp. 48-49, 14.06.2005)

“Somebody falls in the sea, Susan asks them what they should have done to prevent that.

Pg2: We, eeerr ... we should have, like (showing the grabbing gesture).

[They are more careful] They help each other.” (Field notes, I, p. 50, 14.06.2005)

The ‘equilibrium’ and the ‘lifeboats’ were done fairly quickly and Susan urged the pupils to share their thoughts on how they did as a team after each task (see Appendix 2(B) for a description of the activities). Before going onto the next task, Susan told them that they were a good team because they encouraged each other. When they got to the Triangle, one of the pupils pointed out that this was not a team exercise:

“Susan: We’re going to have a competition, we’re going to see who is going the furthest.

Pg3: So this is not a team game.

Susan: No, it’s more individual.” (Field notes I, p. 51, 14.06.2005).

When they got to the Hex, Susan had another talk about what it means to work as a team (see Appendix 2(B) for a description of the activity). They then started the task. This time there was a lot more screaming and laughing. At one point, one of the pupils tried to settle the others by telling them to ‘Stay calm!’ They helped each other

during the activity, by encouraging each other or by physically reaching out to people: “Pb1: Come on, I’m helping you! Grab it!” (Field notes I, p. 52, 14.06.2005).

The activities that followed were creepi crawl (see Appendix 1(B)) and environmental senses (See Appendix 2(B)). During these activities the pupils were allowed to explore nature and the creatures found within the grounds at the centre. The pupils interacted with each other and compared their discoveries, while the teachers and the facilitators taught them about plants and small creatures.

On the last day of their stay, the school group took part in sports hall games, as it was a rainy day. The pupils were divided again into two groups and were involved in competitive games. There was again a great amount of cheering, clapping, and encouragement of team mates. Names were being chanted and praise was given. I could not help but get involved in the game as well, I started cheering and encouraging them. When one of the teams won, they started shouting out the score. One girl from the same team shouted to her mates: “Pg1: It doesn’t matter! It’s just a game!” (Field notes I, p. 57, 15.06.2005) There was an incident where one of the teams cheated, which stirred a lot of protest from the opposing team. This was settled by Susan who was conducting the activity. When the team that was accused of cheating won, the other team protested: “Ps: They cheated! They cheated!” (Field notes I, p. 59, 15.06.2005). The facilitator called it a draw, as the race was very close.

After the activity, I stayed with the group until they left. We were all waiting in the green room in the house. It was a miserable rainy day. Some of the girls were asking the teachers to give them autographs on their hands. They also asked me. I found all this very moving, especially when they all gathered around me, fighting over who was going to sit next to me. I tried to make peace, we started chatting and everything was fine again. The group left at half past ten. They were replaced by another group from the same school that followed the same programme (see Appendix 3, first programme).

By describing this particular programme, I intended to illustrate the experience of a school group at the centre, and to show what the programmes at the centre entailed. This gives the reader a greater insight into the centre’s work and this set of pupils’

experiences. There was a progression of the activities, as the team building exercises took place after lunch and after a short period of free time, when the pupils were allowed to play and run around freely on the grounds. This was the organisation that was common with all of the programmes provided for the school groups. The facilitators seemed to try to build a relationship with the pupils and the teachers, by making an effort to remember their names and, at times, even playing games, making jokes and having chats with them during breaks.

This chapter has explored the macro and micro social and physical environment of the outdoor centre where this research has been carried out. I have described the physical setting of the outdoor centre, and presented the aims and objectives of the organisation.

In the next chapter I explore the perspectives and the values that appear to be perpetuated by the centre and its staff, and how these values seem to revolve around the concept of 'team building' and social and humanistic skills.

9. Perspectives on the Outdoor Educational Process

In this chapter I examine the philosophy of the organisation on the outdoor educational process. I also look at the perspectives of the centre's staff on the learning experience, on facilitation and on the role of the visiting teachers in the outdoor activities.

This is the second of the two description chapters (see also chapter 8), which aim to provide an insight into the ethos and philosophy of the centre and its staff. The findings in these two chapters are presented in the form of thick descriptions, which include extracts from field notes, the fieldwork diary and interviews in an attempt to convey the experiences and the perspectives of the participants (Patton, 1990). These chapters precede the more rigorous analytical discussion of the findings, which are contained in chapters 10, 11 and 12, in order to introduce the reader to the social world explored by this study.

9.1. Organisational Perspectives

As mentioned earlier, the centre is a charity that organises school visits and corporate courses in order to sponsor programmes involving youth at risk and disabled young people. The schools are very much involved in choosing the activities and putting together the programme. Some of the activities are facilitated by the visiting teachers, rather than the centre's staff, and schools are aware of this fact before coming to the centre. Nevertheless, the centre has its own philosophy largely promulgated by the deputy director, Paul, who manages the team of facilitators. For Paul, group work is very important and the centre's service is about teaching children to work together. Furthermore, the phrase "There is no I in TEAM" was often heard and I also saw, on one of the boards, a poster that showed several hands laid on a football with the word TEAM written above that stood for: Together Everyone Achieves More. Paul also mentioned this acronym to me during our second interview, when he was describing what a successful team was in his opinion. He strongly emphasised the fact that for him the process was more important than the task itself and that team development was more important than achieving the task.

I asked the deputy director why he thought that it was important for children to learn to work together as a group. He answered:

“Paul: Um, well, it reflects life and it’s not realistic to expect to move on into further education or into [...] and not work together as a team, not socialise, not um to be able to communicate, to work with ... to be sympathetic to peoples’ opinions and ideas, um, in their future, and that’s one of the reasons why I feel very strongly that the national curriculum is not helping because ... when young people get to that age, i.e. you know, first day of the work, they’re going to have problems, and at the moment, I’m seeing teenagers that have come through the national curriculum that won’t be long before they’re starting to go to the workplace, and I suspect in a few years’ time we’ll be hearing about the problems ... of young people working in a workplace. That’s the future for us //”
(Interview 1, 13.07.2005)

Paul often referred to models of team building and leadership in my conversations with him, and insisted that the group activities at the centre were based on such models, and the theory behind them, and that the staff at the centre are reinforcing those models:

“Paul: Team building and leadership are my two speciality areas.

I: That’s why I’m asking.

Paul: Yeah, the way it always has been, from the very ...um day one for me. And so as such, um when we would run training programmes which would include information um on, you know, different team models, leadership models, and um, we actually run a course every year called R[...] which takes place at Easter ...//

I: Yeah, yeah ...

Paul: and do all about team work and leadership, R[...] is a world wide movement and as such the emphasis is all about leadership and teamwork and so my sort of team will effectively be ... reinforcing delivering those models that I particularly favour.” (Interview 11, 06.06.2006)

Paul emphasised that it is not simply a personal preference that the centre's activities focused mainly on teamwork, but that it was an organisational objective:

“Paul: All of the activities we do are very very cleverly, sorry, clearly orientated towards team, I think probably the only, well the only one that's not for example is archery, um, you know, which is a good activity, 'cause it's all about concentration and coordination //

I: Yeah

Paul: Um, but it's not team orientated as some of the other things we do, however it's something that everybody wants to join in and but everything else is very much ... you know [...] ...orienteering for example is an individual sport //

I: Right

Paul: However the way we use it here ... this is a team activity //

I: Yeah

Paul: And that's just an example of how the organisation has actually made it clear that what we do here is about team work and leadership, not about self-confidence and self-esteem.

I: H'm, so why do you choose teamwork, why?

Paul: Because it's the organisation has this objective, it's the organisation's objective.

I: Ah! Ok, Ok, ok, so it was //

Paul: So we won't build climbing walls or high ropes courses, we will only do things which are team ... which are great for self-confidence, we will only do things which are team orientated, so it's mostly an organisational objective, rather than a personal objective, um, saying that, I'm not in disagreement with that objective, but it's not a personal objective //

I: Right, right.

Paul: It's an organisational objective.” (Interview 1, 14.07.2005)

Below, I explore the facilitators' perspectives on the educational process, and whether group work and group interaction is as important for them as it appears to be for the organisation.

9.2. Facilitator Perspectives

All the facilitators interviewed at the centre seemed to share similar values and perspectives regarding the educational process. They all proclaimed to share the philosophy of the organisation, placing importance on team building, and on the participants learning to work together, as these comments from facilitators Susan, Gary and Jimmy illustrate:

“Susan: The kind of thing that we do here is kind of like team building //
[...] where we get them to work together ... H’m ...from kids to adults, so //
[...] both ... from like younger to old people um what they are doing, they
spend the week or weekend and try and get to learn how to work with other
people [...]” (14.07.2005, Interview 3)

“Gary: I mean the main objective is obviously just to work together to try and
succeed. I mean they might succeed, but if they didn’t work as a team they may
not feel so ... [...] The end result is not as important as how they got there.”
(5.06.2006, Interview 7)

“Jimmy: How to work in teams, you know, experience, and leading teams as
well //” (5.06.2006, Interview 9)

Group interaction and working as a team are perceived as a central part of the educational process from the facilitators’ perspective. Furthermore, the staff placed considerable importance on the pupils having fun, and enjoying what they do:

“I: How would you describe a successful activity?

[...]

Gary: Um ... one that they’ve enjoyed, that it looks like they’ve had fun and
that they’ve achieved what they set out to achieve. So if it was the low ropes
they’ve worked so as to actually succeed in the different activities, um, or if it’s
the blind trail they’ve managed to all get around, everyone’s in one piece, that
they’re all together, or with the other activities that they’ve actually succeeded
in the activity.” (5.06.2006, Interview 7)

To a similar question, Jimmy highlighted the importance for him of the pupils' enjoyment to actually learning from the activity:

“Jimmy: If it’s been fun, if the participants have enjoyed what they’re doing and they’ve learned something out of it as well. So if you ask them, you know: ‘Have you learned anything from that?’, they can give you not just one answer but two or three different answers // [...] Um ... the main thing is if they’ve enjoyed it as well, ‘cause you’re not going to learn anything if you’ve not enjoyed // [...] the activity.” (5.06.2006, Interview 9)

Furthermore, Jane points out the importance of feedback:

“Jane: Um, a successful one [activity] is when the kids won’t shut up about something like, say you’re on the low ropes, and ‘Ah, we really enjoyed that! Really enjoyed it!’ and where they come back to you and say ‘thank you’ and the teachers say ‘thank you’ as well, that’s really good. And it’s just ... when someone says ‘thank you’ to you it makes you think ‘Oh, they thought we were actually quite good!’ and stuff like that //” (5.06.2006, Interview 10)

Learning something through enjoyment is seen as an essential aspect of the experience by all the facilitators, although they have different views about what it is the children can learn from taking part in the activities.

9.2.1. Facilitator Views on Possible Learning Outcomes

Susan, now a facilitator at the centre, draws on her personal experience when she attended the centre more than ten years ago as a 15-year-old pupil visiting with her school. For Susan, the experience had provided her with a number of learning opportunities, which, as highlighted below, included developing confidence, learning new ‘transferable’ skills and also enabling her to make new friends. These opportunities were available, in her opinion, to the current pupils and she also suggested that the skills learned in this context might not necessarily be provided for within the indoor classroom context:

“Susan: When I came to [the centre as a child] and, um, I learned all the activities, perhaps before I came here I was a bit shier, a bit the quieter one in the classroom. Um, and when you go away you’ve got to make new friends, ‘cause not all your friends are here on the trip with you, um, you have to meet new people, so it’s all experience of all those things that you’ve got to do: learning new abilities, talking to people, maybe learn to do a presentation in front of people, things that you might have not necessarily done before and then when you go back to school, um, you can use those things within the school environment. Um, I learned about maybe being a little more confident, not possibly knowing it, but making more friends again, once I got back to school. If I hadn’t gone on that trip, maybe I wouldn’t have done that.” (14.07.2005, Interview 3)

Other facilitators commenting upon what they felt facilitators should provide, emphasised the notion of building confidence in the pupils as well as getting them to work together, through ‘sharing’ communication. In the processes they facilitated, a number of facilitators indicated it was important that they provided opportunities for all pupils to share communication, i.e. to take the lead and for all pupils to experience ‘not being leaders’.

For Gary, Jimmy and Jane, in order for the pupils to achieve the goal of the task, no pupil should dominate the activity:

“Gary: [...] ‘cause you don’t want them to, you know, you don’t want to see it any other way, you don’t want to see one person dominating, um, and working on their own to achieve something, and leave the rest of the team out, and then the rest of the team to sit there quietly. You want everyone to actually talk to each other, communicate with each other [...]” (5.06.2006, Interview 7)

“Jimmy: Um they get experienced at becoming leaders themselves or or not being leaders // [...] you get people that are natural leaders standing back and not being the leader, they have experienced, um, the chance to do that, um, and the physical side of it, a chance of getting outside and // [...]” (5.06.2006, Interview 9)

“Jane: And I always try and make sure that if we do have, you know, a group thing, that everyone has a turn// [...] that everyone gets to say something. Um, it’s not good to see someone left out. And I think that if someone gets left out, the end of that session is not a successful session, because none of them ... not all of them have had their go or had their opinion ...” (5.06.2006, Interview 10)

Consequently, communication between the group members is seen by the facilitators as an essential part of the experience, which, they suggest, contributes to how they work as a team:

“Jimmy: They gain the knowledge of how to work in a team, you know, communication is a big thing, so they need to learn how to communicate properly with each other, um, expressing their ideas // [...] making sure your ideas get brought up and everyone understands them.” (5.06.2006, Interview 9)

Therefore, the facilitators aim toward teaching the pupils how to work as a team, which, as it has been shown above, entails that pupils learn how to communicate with each other, that pupils are given the opportunity to become leaders, by building their confidence and also that the pupils learn not to dominate. These learning outcomes can be achieved, according to the centre and its staff, through the pupils taking part in activities focusing on group work. The importance of groups and group interactions denotes a social aspect of the learning experience at the centre. It is also important to consider how the facilitators believe that the learning outcomes can be achieved, which will be illustrated below.

9.2.2. Perceived Qualities of a 'Good' Facilitator

From the interviews with the facilitators it became evident that there was some consensus regarding the qualities which, they perceived, make up a 'good' facilitator. For all the staff, communication and pre-planning or pre-organisation were significant:

“communication is a big thing, really to know how to, to who you're communicating to and how to communicate. Um ... you need to know what you're doing as well // [...] to plan whatever you're doing, 'cause there's no point in instructing someone if you don't know what you're instructing.”
(Jimmy, 5.06.2006, Interview 9)

Whilst Jane, in addition, mentions confidence: “I think they [facilitators] need to be confident //” (5.06.2006, Interview 10), Gary highlights a sense of humour as important, but only with knowledge of the activities and what they are about:

“They [facilitators] need to have a sense of humour, um, but they also need to have, um, a strong voice, and a good, um, basic knowledge, so, rather than say, just the same with me when I started on the low ropes, with no idea what to do, I might have a sense of humour, and I might be able to talk to them, but if I didn't know what I was doing then, you know, they'd struggle and not understand the concept, [...] So it's obviously important for instructors or teachers to have that basic knowledge //” (5.06.2006, Interview 7).

The emphasis on the importance of communication skills for 'good' facilitating, illustrates again the social aspect of the outdoor learning experience. Therefore social interaction is an essential part of the process and it does not only refer to the interaction between pupils and pupils or pupils and facilitators, but also to the interaction between pupils and teachers, and teacher and facilitators.

The staff shared their perspectives on how teachers could contribute to the learning experience of the pupils and how the teachers' presence affected them when conducting an activity, which is discussed in the following section.

9.2.3. Facilitator Perspectives on Teachers

The facilitators shared similar views on the role that the visiting teachers had or should have during the activities at the centre. Most of the facilitators at the centre considered the visiting teachers to be authority figures, and as George put it:

“The only reason that they’re there is to really control them. If they’re out of order, like they’re a bit rude and unruly and that, then the teacher, I mean obviously, they’ve got the authority figure [...]”(15.07.2005, Interview 4).

All of the facilitators believed that the involvement of the teachers in the activities should be minimal, especially when they were conducted by the staff at the centre. They considered that by intervening too much, the teachers would not allow the pupils to learn and achieve the object of the activity, as Susan pointed out:

“Susan: [...] so really they should take a step back as well [as the facilitators] and watch their pupils, see if they can work as a team, ‘cause again, if they help the team out, then they’re influencing whatever that team do, and being older usually than the group, like with the school groups you’ve got here, the teachers are obviously a lot older than year six pupils, so again, they’ll have more experience and knowledge, and they might know how to do an activity, but it’s not up to the teacher to work out, it’s up to the children to work together, share their ideas, come up with a plan and then maybe using the best plan, trying to work out how to solve the activity.” (14.07.2005, Interview 3)

George also commented on how he believed the teachers should approach the activities and why they should not help the pupils during the activities:

“George: [...] they should be quiet and let the team develop by themselves, really and also like, if it’s on low ropes and that, if they’re working around this challenge as a team, if the teacher then helps them, it kind of defeats the object. So therefore I don’t think they should intervene.” (15.07.2005, Interview 4)

Thus, the facilitators argued that the visiting teachers should allow the pupils to work independently, without much intervention on their part, and believed that by interfering too much in the activities, the teachers would disrupt the learning

experience, as the pupils would not be able to learn to work together, which was considered central to the outdoor educational process (see also sections 9.1 and 9.2.1). The social aspect of learning is emphasised here again, as the facilitators point out that pupils can only learn what it means to be part of a team, by being allowed to express themselves, to put forward their own ideas and make their own decisions during the activity, without being told by the teacher what to do, as this would 'defeat the object' of the task, as George put it.

Most of the facilitators did not mind the presence of the teachers during the staff led activities, as they could 'keep an eye on' the pupils (Jimmy, 5.06.2006, Interview 9) and thus, as Gary said, make the facilitator's job 'easier'. However, Jane felt at times uncomfortable around some teachers and even irritated when they would step in too much during the activity and take control away from her:

"Jane: Um depends on what kind of teacher they are, to be honest, because you get some different types that you can get on with. But then you get ones that are quite, you know, you have to look over your shoulder// [...] every now and then, and think, am I doing this right? So like, a laid back teacher, would stand there, we'd have a chat and then I would let them, I'd be more open to let them talk to the kids and instruct them, and then obviously I'd talk to the kids and instruct them from my point of view as well// [...] Whereas teachers that are more strict with their kids, I find it sometimes quite rude that they jump in ...// [...] to instruct them when actually, we are there to instruct the session anyway// [...] and then, you know, whereas a laid back teacher sort of says to me 'Can I, you know, can I say something?', 'Yeah, of course you can.' [...] But some teachers just jump in and I find that quite irritating. [...] it takes our activity lead, and then, as such, away from us, if you know what I mean// [...] and we are there as a spare part." (05.06.2006, Interview 10)

Nevertheless, Jane agreed with the other facilitators regarding the authoritative role of the teachers, when she said that the teachers provided discipline during the activities, and sometimes even enabled her to discipline the pupils, which she pointed out was not necessarily her role:

“Jane: Like discipline, they’ll be like, they [teachers] just won’t take any nonsense from them. Um, and the role with the younger ones, if they see someone messing around, those teachers will have the role that they take the kids out. We don’t have anything, we can’t, that’s not our role, we just get on and instruct it. If the teacher says to you: ‘Jane, you can take them out.’ I’m like: ‘Ok, we’re going to remove you from the session.’ So in a way, they’re inclined to have more of a role with the younger age groups, but so with the older age groups, you know what I mean, for discipline.” (05.06.2006, Interview 10)

The teachers were thus viewed as a means of controlling the pupils, of ensuring discipline and even a source of power over the pupils, as it appeared in Jane’s case. I will discuss issues of power and control further on in section 11.2, where I will show the important role that control plays within the outdoor classroom, not only on the part of the teachers, but also on the part of the facilitators. However, it has to be pointed out that giving up control over the pupils is also seen by the facilitators as desirable practice, as it has been illustrated above, when facilitators argued that teacher intervention in the activities should be minimal. As I will show in section 11.1, this could result in the empowerment of the pupils.

I have illustrated above that the relationships between the facilitators at the centre, the pupils and the visiting teachers have great importance with regard to the outdoor learning experience. Therefore all the interactions within the outdoor classroom have to be considered, in order to have a holistic view of the process of outdoor learning. The description and findings presented in this chapter suggest that the work of the centre and its staff is focused mainly on groups and teaching social skills. The philosophy of the centre on the educational process highlights the focus on teamwork. This, together with the perspectives and values of the facilitators appear to embrace, in my view, the social aspect of learning and this will be outlined further in chapter 11, where I will explore the educational process and the group interactions. In the following chapter I will examine the different kinds of approaches of all the participants involved in the research, i.e. the teachers, pupils and facilitators, and how this approaches relate to each other within the outdoor classroom.

10. Analysing Participant Approaches

This chapter looks into the various approaches that the participants in this research, i.e. the teachers, pupils and facilitators, adopted during the group interaction at the outdoor centre. It also exemplifies the characteristic practices of these approaches in particular instances, and shows how some participants shifted from one related approach to another. Appendices 10, 12, 13 and 14 illustrate the taxonomies that have been developed for each group of participant approaches, and the relationships between the different kinds of approaches. These relationships are explored further in this chapter, as they appear to influence the interaction within the groups.

Hence, this is an overview of the approaches that the teachers, pupils and facilitators adopted at one point or another, while interacting with each other during outdoor activities at the centre. This includes those that have only been observed on limited occasions, and are not considered to have had a great impact on the group interaction as a whole. However, they are important, because they portray the complexity of the processes that take place within the outdoor classroom. Some of these approaches, i.e. the empowering and the controlling approaches, will be examined even further in the next chapter, because they were viewed as the most significant, having an influence on most of the interactions within the groups observed.

During the fieldwork I observed that each set of participants had a varying impact on how the activity was unfolding. The degree of the impact depended considerably on the kinds of participants and their approaches during the activity. I used the term 'approaches', instead of categories or roles, because I considered that the latter terms were too restrictive and because my research has shown that no one participant stays in one role or adopts one category throughout the whole of an activity, let alone throughout their whole stay at the centre. Therefore, the term 'approach' takes account of the changes through which the participants went while being involved in the group interaction. I have to emphasise the fact that these approaches, and the meanings connected to them, have been uncovered following my own interpretations of the data collected, and are not based on the participants' perspectives. The terms used to refer to each approach are analytic, and they have been developed as a result of my understanding of the cultural scene I was uncovering (Spradley, 1980).

10.1. *Teacher Approaches*

It must be noted that the visiting teachers had no special training in outdoor education. Some of them may have visited the centre in previous years, accompanying other groups of pupils and would have more experience than others in conducting the activities at the centre. The activities that the teachers were expected to conduct themselves had a low to medium perceived risk, which means that they did not involve any safety equipment to be worn by the pupils. Such activities were orienteering, blind string trail, environmental senses, art, creepi crawl, spider's web, poisoned ground etc. (see Appendix 1) Following my analysis of the data, I was able to identify certain approaches that teachers would take while conducting these activities (see Appendix 10). There was however a tendency for certain teachers to go through related approaches. By related approaches I mean approaches that shared some of the characteristics. These will be discussed in more detail below.

10.1.1. The Safety Conscious Teachers

The safety conscious approach included the safety obsessed and the nanny. These kinds of teachers were more concerned with pupils not getting hurt, than with their participation in the activity. They constantly reminded pupils of being careful, warning them of possible 'dangers', not really encouraging the pupils to help each other. This happened frequently during the blind string trail³⁹, as it can be seen from the following example with a group from School I⁴⁰:

Tf1: There's lumpy things under your feet, so be careful!

Pg: There's something under our feet! (girl repeats at the back)

Tf2: Ok, now, you're going to go down a slope and is quite slippery, so you need to let go to the person in front of you and we're going to be there to help you." (Field notes V, p. 37, 23.05.2006)

It often happened that the teachers who showed a tendency to focus on safety, often assumed one of the controller approaches, which will be described below.

³⁹ See Appendix 1(A) for a description of the activity.

⁴⁰ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group

10.1.2. The Controllers

Within the controller approach, there are various controlling approaches, i.e. the authoritarian, the interferer, the lecturer, the toughen-upper and the watchdogs. I will discuss them more extensively in chapter 11 (see section 11.2). Teachers using these approaches would become very much involved with the group and the activity. They tended not to allow pupils to make any decisions, denying them their independence. They used verbal reprimands and punishment on many occasions. This approach tended not to let teachers step back and it maintained them in control, even though the activity was very low risk, such as orienteering. In chapter 11, which examines the controlling approaches to a greater extent, I mention an example where the teachers from School B⁴¹ use order and instruction during orienteering⁴² in order to maintain control over the pupils, taking the approach of watchdogs, which involves the teachers following each and every move of their pupils (see section 11.2.1, pp. 217-218). In that example, the teachers take over the activity from the very beginning, which results in many of the pupils losing interest in the activity.

The teachers taking the controlling approach tended not to be flexible and were against any breaking of the rules or cheating during the activities. This is evident in the example given on page 219 (see section 11.2.1), where the teachers adopt the watchdog approach during the blind string trail (see Appendix 1(A) for a description of the activity). Moreover, some teachers adopting the controlling approach tended not to empathise with their pupils when they would get hurt or had difficulties during the activity. This was the toughen-upper approach, which can be seen in the examples on pp. 219-220 (see section 11.2.1). The toughen-uppers were usually female teachers and they used this approach mostly when interacting with male pupils, as is the case in the example on page 220, where a boy gets scared and thinks he was bitten by an insect, and receives no reassurance or comforting from his teacher, who demand he toughened up.

⁴¹ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

⁴² See Appendix 1(J) for a description of orienteering.

When the controlling teachers were not conducting the activity themselves, and were only accompanying the group and a facilitator, they tended to shift to the safety obsessed approach and/or the interferer approach, sometimes taking control away from the facilitator, by leading the group discussions and giving specific instructions to the pupils, as a teacher from School H⁴³ does in the example on pp. 224-226 (see section 11.2.2). In that example the facilitator conducting the low ropes course⁴⁴ tries to take some of the control back, by giving his own instructions to the pupils, but unsuccessfully. However, it very rarely happened that a teacher would interfere this much in an activity run by the staff at the centre. Usually, it was a case of shouting out instructions from time to time, or giving physical assistance to the pupils.

The controller approaches were characterised by the teacher being in control (see also section 11.2). This control may stem from the teacher's need to contain the situation, to manage the risk, to have discipline, to finish the task. However, not all teachers found themselves adopting the controller approach, some of them had a very different approach, as it will be illustrated below.

10.1.3. The Detached Teachers

The detached approach was one that most of the teachers assumed at one point or another. It includes the indifferent, with the demander and the chatterer; it also includes the adviser, the discussion leader and the question asker. These are varying degrees of detachment. On the one hand, there were the teachers that seemed to have no interest at all in the activity and preferred that somebody else led the activity, e.g. the facilitator or even the researcher. These are the demanders and the chatterers.

The demander approach was adopted by the teachers in the second group I have observed in the first week of my fieldwork, which came from School A⁴⁵. One of the facilitators at the centre asked me to accompany a teacher for one of the activities. There was a language barrier and I was supposed to help with the translation.

⁴³ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

⁴⁴ See Appendix 2(B) for a description of the activity.

⁴⁵ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

Initially, I had intended to observe a different group, as I had decided to focus on one group and observe it during all the activities conducted that day. However I found it difficult to refuse the facilitator's request, as I felt that I should give something back to the participants.

The activity was spider's web (see Appendix 1(G) for a description of the activity). When we got to the activity area, the teacher took a step back and set on one of the logs. I was left standing with all the children watching and listening to me. The female teacher would translate from time to time when I was struggling, but she left it to me to facilitate the whole activity. I did this with another group, but a different teacher. The experience was quite similar. This completely changed the way I was perceived by the pupils:

“I find myself in a position where children come and ask me permission to do something. With this group, because I was involved in leading one of the activities, they perceive me either as a member of staff or as a teacher.

With the other group, I managed to distance myself from both. Children especially girls, wanted to play with me and talk to me. “ (Fieldnotes I, p. 84, 14.06.2005)

The demanders tended to have different expectations from the staff at the centre than other visiting teachers, such as the staff having to carry the children's luggage, when all other groups carried their own luggage and also complaining about having to conduct the activities themselves. The teachers accompanying this second school group that I observed, told me that they did not think that they had to conduct any of the activities, even though the programme clearly stated so. They also said that they found it difficult to conduct at least some of the activities:

“The French teacher told me that it is hard for them to do the creepi crawl alone, having a book in English:

Tf: We are not specialists! If we had done this in class, then it would have been interesting, but like this, it is very difficult.” (Field notes I, p. 87-88, 14.06.2005)

The chatterers were teachers that 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 their teachers' support. Thus, it seemed that when the pupils were struggling with an activity, having the support of their teachers was important for them so that they should not give up on the task all together. In the following example, the pupils from School C⁴⁶ were involved in toxic waste⁴⁷, a low risk problem solving activity. The group was accompanied by a female teacher and a male facilitator, Jimmy. It was a really hot day and there was no shadow in the activity area. The teacher sat herself on the grass, without paying too much attention to the activity. She would shout out some instructions or suggestions from time to time, such as: "Let others have a go!" or "Get together and discuss it!" As pupils were struggling with the task some of them abandoned taking part in the activity and joined the teacher on the grass:

"Now it is just the boys that are involved. The girls are chatting to the teacher.

There is only one girl that is still with the boys.

Pb1: It's not working!

Pb2: Ok, we'll try once more, than we give up!

Pb1: No, never give up! [very determined]

Pb2: No, I mean this idea. [apologetic]

Jimmy: I think you had it before, but maybe you have to use more than one elastic, just to make it stronger.

The teacher is still talking to the girls. [They are not interested in what is going on.] They are not looking, their backs are turned.

Tf: Come on lot, you're not giving up, are you? It seems that only two people are doing something.

She goes on talking to the girls." (Field notes I, pp. 181-182, 23.06.2005)

It appeared that because the teacher continued to urge them to get more involved, more pupils became interested in the activity. Thus with some encouragement from their teacher, pupils seemed more motivated to take part in the activity:

⁴⁶ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

⁴⁷ See Appendix 1(I) for a description of toxic waste.

“As this idea fails, they listen to Jimmy’s advice and try the previous idea again.

Tf: Come on you lot, get together and work as a group!

The girls get up and join the boys.

Pb3: Come on, Jack, let’s get involved!

Pb4: But I don’t know how. [Disconcerted]

Two girls are walking off the enclosed area where the activity takes place. Boys are still in control. Two boys are talking to Jimmy about possible ideas that could work.

Pb5: Can we use these ropes?

Jimmy: No, those are for the other group. You can only use what I’ve given you.

Tf: It seems to me that it is only Ken that is thinking things through. Why don’t the others come up with an idea?

Pb1: I told them my idea, it was the only idea I had!

They try again.” (Field notes I, pp. 182-184, 23.06.2005)

When the teacher stopped interacting with the pupils who were actually taking part in the activity, the children’s interest seemed to fade:

“The two girls come back and they start talking to the teacher and Jimmy about tonight’s activity [...] The others try another idea. Christian has a rest. More join in the rest. Four pupils are working on a plan.

Pb5: Ok, I’m going to need at least four people.

Two girls get up immediately.

Pgs: Ok!

The others continue their rest and chat. One girl (the one that was with the boys before) sits separate from the group, she is not involved in anything, but she watches those working on a plan. [...]

[It is a very hot day, maybe they are not in a mood for thinking.] The boys have another go. Nobody else is interested in what they’re doing.” (Field notes I, pp. 185-187, 23.06.2005)

The facilitator continued to interact with the pupils carrying out the task, by giving them some assistance. Then the girl who had been more involved in the activity joins in again. However, all the others were sitting in a circle chatting to the teacher and

another facilitator who joined later, this was Tom. After a small success in the activity, Jimmy took a step back, telling the pupils that they were on their own. He ended up joining the chat along with the girls, the teacher and Tom. In the end only two boys and two girls were still carrying on with the activity. When they finished, there was little cheering and no clapping:

“Four (2 boys, 2 girls) are still doing the activity. They manage to do them all.

Ken: Yes, we’ve done it all!

Jimmy: Excellent!” (Field notes I, p. 188, 23.06.2005)

As they all walked away from the activity area, most of the discussions that went on regarded the disco that they were going to take part in that evening and what they were going to wear. There was little or no mention of how they had got on with the activity, whether they had enjoyed it or not.

Towards the end of the activity there was no attempt on the part of the teacher or the facilitators to encourage pupils to participate in the activity, but rather the facilitator that had been helping some of the pupils with their plan, stopped giving them the support and joined the chat. These pupils not only lost the support of the adult, but they also gradually lost the support of their peers, who probably perceived that having a chat with the teacher was more important.

However, many teachers remain detached even if they are interested in the activity, because they want to take a step back and let the pupils do the task on their own. These are the advisers, the discussion leaders and the question askers. This lack of involvement does not last and the teacher usually moves to the sympathiser approach, as it will be shown below.

10.1.4. The Sympathisers

Sometimes, the teachers taking this approach become part-of-the-team, being absorbed by the group, but more often than not, they are helpers, team-spirit builders, peacemakers, or sometimes rule-breakers. I have considered such approaches as empowering, and I will analyse them even further in chapter 11 (see section 11.1). The teachers in these approaches like to take part in the activity, to support their pupils. They tend to be more sensitive to their needs, they try to help them when they get stuck. They comfort them when they are frustrated or when they get hurt. For sympathisers, trying to get everybody involved appeared to be more important than accomplishing the task.

Sympathisers encourage the pupils to think about what they are doing, about helping each other and supporting each other, rather than telling them what to think and what to do. Such empowering practices are used by a female teacher from School D⁴⁸ (see example on pp. 198-201, section 11.1.1). In the beginning she adopts a detached approach, acting only as an adviser, encouraging the pupils to talk as a group and share their ideas, without interfering too much in the pupils discussion:

“Tf: Ok, get into a huddle and talk as a team!

Some pupils tell their ideas to the teacher:

Tf: To your team! (pointing to the group of pupils)” (Field notes I, pp. 225-226, 28.06.2005)

Even though the teacher is detached, she still appears to manifest an interest in the activity, by watching the pupils carefully and giving them advise when they were having difficulties. At one point, when the children seem not to get along with each other, the teacher assumes the approach of team-spirit builder, and engages the pupils in a discussion about what it means to be a good leader:

“Tf: I’ve seen a lot of selfishness here, people that have finished wanted to be first and have another go!

⁴⁸ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

Tf asks them if they think they are good leaders. Some of them raise their hands and give their ideas about leadership.

Pb1: Support each other!

Pg: Encourage people that have good ideas to share them!

Pb2: The leader has to stand up and speak up!

[...] A girl shares an idea with the group.

Tf: Ask the team if they agree?

Pb: Yeah, actually that is a good idea!

Pg: Do you agree? [a little embarrassed]

They all agree. [As they start doing the task again, they are more quiet, they listen to each other. There is not just one leader.” (Field notes I, pp. 228-229, 28.06.2005)

When there is a conflict, the teacher assumes the peacemaker approach and tries to negotiate the situation (see pp. 199-200), without being authoritative toward the pupil who refuses to participate in the activity. This approach is very different from the toughen-upper approach adopted by the teacher in the example on pp. 219-220, where another boy does not want to go on with the activity, but is not given any choice in the matter, and he is told to toughen up and get on with the activity.

Above I have described the teacher approaches that I have identified, I will continue to illustrate the various participant approaches by providing a description of the pupil approaches.

10.2. The Pupil Approaches

Following this study, I was able to distinguish between different kinds of pupils and, as with the teachers, what I have identified were various approaches, which the pupils took at one point or another (see Appendix 12). All the names of the pupils in the examples provided below are pseudonyms.

10.2.1. The Strong Characters

This approach includes the authoritarian natural leader⁴⁹, the fighter and the troublemaker. These kinds of pupils tended to be at the centre of attention. They very rarely assumed another approach, although they might sometimes act as peacemakers, however this appears to enforce their approach as strong characters further. I characterise these approaches as being controlling, and I will explore them in greater detail in chapter 11 (see section 11.2). These are controlling approaches, as the strong characters tended to want to be in control and the outcome of the activity seemed to be more important than having fun, or involving the whole group. Some strong characters became frustrated if they did not finish, win or accomplish the task. Thus, they were inclined to be highly competitive. On occasion, the strong characters would be the ones trying to regain independence from the teachers or the facilitators when they took over the control during activities.

An example of such an approach can be seen with a pupil from School I⁵⁰. Thus Andy is a pupil adopting the authoritarian natural leader approach⁵¹, who wants to be independent from the facilitator and also from the group (see example on pp. 227-229, section 11.2.2). Andy attempts to take control from the start, without considering the opinions of the other pupils in the group. However, his leadership is challenged by the facilitator and also by his peers. He continues to adopt the same approach for the whole of the activity, despite criticism from the facilitator and the other pupils in the group. However, there are some pupils who take a very different approach to the one described above. These pupils are the sympathisers.

⁴⁹ See Appendix 13 for a taxonomy of pupil leadership.

⁵⁰ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

⁵¹ The Appendix 13 for a taxonomy of pupil leadership.

10.2.2. The Sympathisers

This includes the encourager, the peacemaker, the carer, the democratic natural leader and the team-spirit builder approaches. I have considered the sympathiser approaches empowering, and will discuss them in greater detail in chapter 11 (see section 11.1). Such approaches are empowering as the pupils adopting them do not actively seek the group's attention, they are concerned with the well being of the others, they are more interested in taking part in the activity, than its outcome. Having fun is more important than winning or finishing. They will sometimes try to gain independence from the control of the teacher/facilitator.

The democratic natural leader may be criticised at times, but this kind of leadership is usually accepted by the others, without being challenged (see also Appendix 13), unlike the authoritarian natural leader who can be under constant scrutiny and disapproval as was the case with Andy, in the example above (see p. 180, see also pp. 227-229). The natural democratic leaders often encourage discussions within the group, allowing for others to express their opinions. Furthermore, even though the task at hand is important for them, they are not solely focused on solving it; they are also interested in getting the others involved in the activity. An example of such an approach can be seen with a group of pupils from School I⁵². The children were taking part in toxic waste (see appendix 1(I) for a description of the activity). Jenny is a pupil who emerges as a natural democratic leader, which is an empowering approach since she appears to be considerate to her peers and wants to include everybody in the activity (see extracts on pp. 211-212, section 11.1.3). Moreover, when the activity is finished successfully, Jenny does not take all the credit, but rather, she is able to recognise everybody's contribution when she says: 'We're geniuses', using the inclusive 'we'.

Sympathisers seem to treat all the others in the group as equals and they will try to get everybody involved in the activity. This is the case with a group of pupils from

⁵² See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

School J⁵³ (see extracts on pp. 207-209, section 11.1.2). The pupils are involved in raft building (see Appendix 1(F) for a description of the activity). One of the pupils, Nigel, acts as an outsider, excluding himself from the group. Acting as a peacemaker, one of the two male teachers intervenes, letting the group know what had happened. Two boys in the group also act as peacemakers, and try to resolve the situation. However when Nigel's idea is rejected by the group, he becomes an outsider again. Alan emerges as the leader in the group, but even though he rejects Nigel's idea, he adopts a democratic leader approach during the activity, as he encourages discussion within the group on several occasions. Mary is the pupil that attempts to resolve the conflict between Nigel and the group, acting as the peacemaker, reinforcing the teacher's and the two other pupils' peacemaker approaches. After Mary's intervention, Alan goes to talk to Nigel. However, Nigel is not persuaded to join in by either the pupils or the teacher and he wonders off. The fact that the group rejected his idea seems to have made him become even more of an outsider. The group is affected by Nigel's self-exclusion, because they constantly try to get him involved, and they never give up on him. In the end, he joins in the race and helps his peers, becoming part of the team (see extract on p. 209).

10.2.3. The Emotionals

This approach includes the sensitive, the clingy and the 'wet blanket' and is characteristic of pupils actively seeking the attention of the adults and their peers. They very often do not enjoy the experience, or are not very interested in the activity and taking part in it. They tend to be rather concerned about their safety, not getting dirty or their physical comfort, being too cold, too hot or too wet. They will sometimes become outsiders, if they cannot find a carer or an encourager to look after them or if they cannot find an adult to take their side and help them during the activity. They may get into conflicts with strong characters as well, which may also take them to the position of outsiders.

⁵³ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

10.2.4. The Outsiders

The pupils taking this approach are rarely outsiders from the outset, intentionally setting themselves apart from the group. Usually, they are rejected self-appointed or want-to-be leaders, or emotionals who have not received the needed support or have entered into conflict with a strong character. The self-appointed leadership tends to be temporary and challenged either by teachers or facilitators or by other pupils. Both self-appointed and authoritarian natural leaders do not encourage group discussion and tend to be task orientated only. The difference between the self-appointed leader and the natural leaders is that the latter kind of leadership is usually not temporary. Although also challenged at times, the natural authoritarian leader will continue to take this approach after the challenge, whereas the self-appointed leadership is usually lost.

The sympathisers will often try to help the outsider, as will some of the teachers or facilitators, however this help may be rejected to begin with. This is what happened with Nigel, referred to earlier (see pp. 181-182, see also section 11.1.2, pp. 207-209), who was an outsider that refused to join the group, despite the repeated efforts from the teacher and the other pupils in his group. Nigel started out as an emotional, taking the approach of the clingy person during blind string trail (see Appendix 1(A) for a description of the activity). This was the same group of pupils that were taking part in raft building: the yellow group (see pp. 181-182, see also section 11.1.2, pp. 207-209). From the beginning, he appeared to be demanding, asking for his goggles to be changed, which delayed the group for a short while and which annoyed some of the pupils, one of whom reprimanded him: ‘Pb: Hurry up Nigel, we’re wasting time!’ (Field notes V, p. 122, 06.06.2006). Throughout the activity, he constantly asked for assistance and reassurance, calling out for help, or asking where he was, for which he was occasionally reprimanded by the teacher:

“Nigel: Hey, where are we?

Pg1: I don’t know.

Tf: Keep following the rope, you’ll be all right.

Pg1: Where am I?

Nigel: Where am I?

Tf: All right, stop! Unless you're the leader you need to use your ears, not your mouths. Some of you are too busy talking. (Looking at Nigel)" (Field notes V, pp. 122-123, 06.06.2006)

Nigel started to express his wish to become a leader, but he was only able to assume the approach of want-to-be leader, as his attempts to establish himself as a leader failed:

"Nigel: We need a new leader, 'cause otherwise, nobody else we'll have a go.

(No response from anybody. He keeps shouting to be a leader. The leader is swapped.)

Pg2: Who's the new leader?

Pg3: Maggie!

Pg2: Oh, wow!" (Field notes V, p. 127, 06.06.2006)

During this activity, each pupil gets a turn to become leader. Nigel, however, appeared more eager than others to lead. His desire to lead seemed to make him act slightly forceful towards another pupil, Elisabeth, who was struggling with one of the obstacles:

"Nigel: Go down! Go down! Oh, we'll be here forever! [Annoyed]

Elisabeth: I can't! [Starting to get upset]

Nigel keeps pushing her head down.

Ina: Stop pushing her!

Victoria starts crying. Tf convinces her to go in. I praise her." (Field notes V, p. 130, 06.06.2006)

I felt the need to intervene there, because Elisabeth was put in a position where she could not move, or do anything, being forced to go through a triangular tunnel and she seemed quite uncomfortable and not willing to do it. Both me and the teacher stepped in. When Nigel finally had his turn to lead the group through the obstacle course, his leadership had to be repeatedly reinforced by the teacher, since the pupils were not listening to his instructions:

“Tf: Shush, listen to Nigel, he’s giving you some really good advice.
(Nigel repeats his instructions) [...]
Tf: Stop! They’re not listening. (Nigel explains the instructions.)” (Field notes V, pp. 130-131, 06.06.2006)

During the next activity, the spider’s web⁵⁴, Nigel took the approach of want-to-be leader again, but he was constantly challenged by one of the accompanying teachers (Tm)⁵⁵:

“Tf tells Nigel to join the activity after going through. [...]
Tm: Nigel, please don’t organise everybody.
Nigel wonders off again. [...]
Nigel wants to get involved again.
Tm: Nigel, it doesn’t take much brains to realise that a leader has emerged. So you all need to listen to him. (Pointing at Alan.)” (Field notes VI, pp. 6-7, 06.06.2006)

After this, Nigel refused to get involved in the activity anymore, even though he was told to do so several time by both teachers. During the next activity, the low ropes course, Nigel challenged Alan’s leadership from the very beginning:

“Nigel: We want a new leader, we don’t want Alan as a leader again.”
(Field notes VI, p. 12, 06.06.2006)

Even though he was trying to suggest that the whole group wanted this, he had no support from the others. Nigel even threatened Alan later on, when he was making fun of other pupils:

“Alan chants to the girls on the wire.
Alan: Wobbly jelly! Wobbly jelly!
Karen: Shut up Alan!
Alan: Yeah! (When a girl falls off.)

⁵⁴ See Appendix 1(G) for a description of Spider’s Web.

⁵⁵ This was a different male teacher from the one in the example on pp. 183-186.

Jake: Shut up Alan.

(Derek starts chanting as well.)

Karen: Shut up! (to the two boys)

Nigel: If you don't shut up, I'm going to knock some sense into you. (to Alan).

Tm takes him aside and reprimands him." (Field notes VI, p. 22-23, 06.06.2006)

Nigel was the only one reprimanded, which probably caused some frustration. This could explain why he took the outsider approach during the next activity of the day, which was raft building and which I have described above (see pp. 181-182, see also section 11.1.2, pp. 207-209). However, he was able to move away from this approach and participate in the second part of the activity, the race (see extract on p. 209). The peacemaker approach of the teacher that stepped in during the raft building activity and encouraged the pupils to include Nigel, seemed to have a positive impact on the rest of the group who started to express concern for Nigel. This was a very different approach from that of the 'interferer' teacher, who constantly challenged Nigel, discouraging him from getting involved and expressing himself.

10.2.5. The Independents

The independent approach includes the teacher's pet, the opportunist and the appointed leader. Such pupils tend not to be really interested in being part of the group, acting in an individualistic manner. They appear to want to satisfy their own goals; therefore they can be very competitive. The teacher's pet seeks the approval of the adult at the expense of the rest of the group and can often become an appointed leader by teachers or facilitators. The teacher's pet could shift to the emotional approach if he/she is challenged as a leader. The opportunist wants to satisfy his/her own needs at the expense of the others, sometimes shifting to troublemaker or authoritarian natural leader, or to clingy or 'wet blanket'.

If the groups are quite large, the independent approach may not have much impact on the group as a whole. However, in small groups, this approach may destroy the unity

of the group, as it happened during scavenger hunt⁵⁶ with a group of four pupils, two boys and two girls, from School H⁵⁷. They were a difficult group to follow because they very rarely stayed together. From the beginning, one of the girls, Kelly, was constantly left behind. She took the emotional approach, shifting from sensitive to clingy and manifested little or no interest in the activity. She appeared worried to be on her own and focused on finding the others from the group, especially Helen, who took the opportunist approach:

“She climbs a hill and starts shouting.

Kelly: Heeeleeeen, wheeere aaare youuuu? I am on this mud piling thing and it is slippery. (She asks a girl if she had seen Helen. The girl tries to help her.)” (Field notes III, p. 10, 15.05.2006)

Helen did not appear to be interested in the activity either, nor did the other two boys. They all disappeared among the trees without a trace. The few times that the group was together, there was no discussion on how to solve the task and I observed a lot of running around, with no apparent focus on the activity. Kelly was the one carrying the pad with all the questions, but she was the one that the groups left behind. Moreover Helen was unsympathetic towards Kelly, when she got stung by nettles and left her behind again:

“Kelly: Helen, I’ve just got stung four times.

Helen: That’s your fault for being stupid. (shouting at her)

[Kelly appears to be in great pain.] Helen runs off. She leaves her alone.

[Kelly seems frustrated.] She carries the pad now.” (Field notes III, p. 9, 15.05.2006)

The other two boys complained as well about Helen ‘going off on her own’, but Helen continued to follow her own goals. When Kelly found Helen again, she was with two girls from another group, trying to find something on the list. The group

⁵⁶ See Appendix 1(D) for a description of orienteering.

⁵⁷ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

reunited for a short while, but they soon split up and this time the boys were left behind, who soon lost interest in the activity and took the emotional approach:

“They split up again after a very short while. The boys are left all by themselves. They complain to me about the girls. One of them complains about his raincoat being too big. [They are walking around aimlessly.]

Jack: I’m quitting. (They are walking with their heads down.)

[...]

Ben: Why don’t we just stay here?

Jack: Yeah, and when the bell rings, we’ll be the nearest. I don’t know where the girls are. (turns to me) Helen said that she was looking all over the woods for us, but I don’t believe it.” (Field notes III, pp. 11-13, 15.05.2006)

The boys stayed with me until the bell rang, with no attempt to find the two girls from the group. They finally met up, while they were waiting to go inside, but the girls hardly acknowledged the boys. The two girls engaged in a conversation, which I initiated:

“I ask the girls how they have done on their scavenger hunt.

Helen: Not too well, we’ve done some, but not too many, because we were just walking around. I seemed to always lose them for some reason.

Kelly: That’s because you were running off all the time.

Helen: I can’t help if I’m fast. That wasn’t even full speed.

Kelly: Well, next time just walk. It’s easier. (They both grin.)

[Helen seems very proud of her speed. Kelly doesn’t look impressed.]

They wait to go in. They don’t talk anymore.” (Field notes III, pp. 14-15, 15.05.2006)

Helen demonstrated the characteristics of an independent, as she followed her own personal goals and appeared to be quite competitive. Her ‘going off on her own’ was seen by her as a positive thing, she was the fastest one in the group and she should not be blamed if the others could not keep up. The four children did not manage to engage in a dialogue and therefore were unable to come together as a group.

However, from the discussion above, it seems that both girls were aware of why they did not do well on the task, i.e. not staying together as a group. The four pupils did not seem to share unique characteristics, nor did they have a unique goal, therefore they did not exhibit group behaviour or group belongingness, which means that, according to the social identity theory, they did not become a group (see Hogg and Abrams, 1988).

Some of the pupils, just as some of the teachers, also manifested a desire to control, to overpower others. However, pupils often show that they are capable to teach each other and to put somebody else's interests before theirs, just as Mary did when she defended Nigel, which probably influenced Alan's decision to go and talk to Nigel (see pp. 181-182, see also section 11.1.2, pp. 207-209). I will next describe the approaches that the facilitators at the centre adopted when taking part in the outdoor activities.

10.3. The Facilitator Approaches

Although it was not as easy for the facilitators to develop such a close relationship with the pupils as their teachers, because of the limited time that the pupils spent at the centre, the facilitators played an important part in the pupils' learning experience. Just as the teachers, the facilitators adopted several approaches⁵⁸ and I will describe them below (see also Appendix 14).

10.3.1. The Detached

All of the facilitators adopted this approach at the beginning of each activity. However this detachment did not usually last for the whole duration of the activity and the facilitator would step in, either taking a controlling approach or becoming approachable, by encouraging, advising or offering guidance to the pupils. Thus, detachment on the part of the controllers is about supervision and they will often intervene to establish order and discipline. On the other hand, detachment on the part of the approachables appears to be a way of expressing trust in the pupils, acting as

⁵⁸ See Appendix 14 for a taxonomy of kinds of facilitators.

advisers for the pupils. They will become more involved in the activity, but only to offer some guidance or support.

10.3.2. The Controllers

The facilitators adopting this approach have a tendency to get very much involved in the activity and often become the 'leader', rather than being the facilitator. This approach includes the impatient, the instructor, the authoritarian and the novice. Such approaches are controlling, as they are characterised by the facilitators giving instructions and having a desire to be in control at all times. These approaches will be discussed more extensively in chapter 11 (see section 11.2).

Gary was one of the facilitators who had only started at the centre six weeks earlier and this was his first job after graduating with a degree in sports coaching. In the beginning of each activity, he would adopt the supervisor approach, but for most of the session, he would act as the novice and he would also take the instructor approach. He would tend not to engage the pupils in reflective thinking about teamwork, telling the pupils what to do and what not to do, as it happened during the low ropes activity⁵⁹ with a group of pupils from School I⁶⁰ (see extracts on pp. 222-224, in section 11.2.1). Moreover as a novice, Gary expressed a greater concern for the pupils' safety, than for the pupils' enjoyment (see extract p. 223).

The impatient approach was not characteristic of the novice facilitator. On occasion, the more experienced facilitators would become frustrated if the activity would not go as planned and if the participants would not behave in the expected way. This happened with George, who had worked at the centre for more than one year (see extracts pp. 220-222, in section 11.2.1). George soon took the instructor approach and appeared more focused on solving the task itself, than on the pupils taking part in the activity. Most of the facilitators at the centre adopted the instructor approach at one point or another, but some were able to be approachable.

⁵⁹ See Appendix 2(B) for a description of the activity.

⁶⁰ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

10.3.3. The Approachables

The approachable facilitators include the joker, the helper and the tutor. These approaches are empowering, and will be explored further in chapter 11 (see section 11.1). These approaches entail that the facilitator empathises with the pupils, focusing less on the outcome of the activity and more on the pupils enjoying it, encouraging involvement of the whole group. The helpers usually only offer clues to the pupils and then become detached, allowing them to work on the task, but at times they tend to offer too much help, assuming the instructor approach. Jimmy usually took the helper approach, assisting the pupils when they appeared to be struggling on the task, as he did in the following example, where a group of pupils from School I⁶¹ was involved in toxic waste (see Appendix 1(I)). Gary was also there to observe:

Pg1: Can you go inside? [the circle]

Jimmy: No! You had a very good idea 30 seconds ago. Something about stretching ...

Pg2: We could tie the four pieces of string to the elastic bands and stretch it and try to put it above and try and hook up the canister.

Jimmy: Do you think that this is a good idea? (to the pupils) I think it's a good idea!" (Field notes V, p. 57, 24.05.2006)

Jimmy then took a step back, taking the detached approach. But as the pupils struggled more and more, he intervened more and assumed the instructor approach:

"Jimmy: You need a controller. One person to say down, right, left.

Ps: Down, down. (They are all shouting at the same time.)

Jimmy: I said just one person.

Gary: I think you need to come to the left.

[...]

Pb: Lower it, lower it!

Jimmy: You need to let the string out.

Pg3: My string's got a knot in it.

⁶¹ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

Jimmy: Hold on! (He goes and unties it.)” (Field notes V, pp. 58-59
24.05.2006)

Here, Jimmy did not encourage the pupils to think, but rather he told them what they ‘needed’ to do. Gary also assumed the instructor approach. However, Jimmy stepped back after a while, but Gary continued to intervene from time to time, even though he was there only as an observer, as it was a learning session for him. Jimmy made sure that all the pupils had a chance to take part in the activity, asking them to swap after short intervals. Thus they were all interested and involved in the activity:

“[They get really excited when they nearly get one in.] Lots of screaming.

Ps: No, no, no! Ooooooooooh! Take it down!” (Field notes V, p. 63, 24.05.2006)

By the end of the activity pupils seemed to have enjoyed themselves as there was a lot of joking around and laughing. However, Jimmy did no reviewing with the pupils after the activity.

Susan was another facilitator at the centre. She usually adopted the tutor approach and encouraged discussions after each activity. She was able to have an open dialogue with the pupils, creating the space to share their opinions, as it can be seen in the examples on pp. 203-206 in section 11.1.1. The pupils came from School D⁶², and were involved in a low ropes session (see Appendix 2(B)). During this activity, Susan took the adviser approach for the most part, and stepped in only a few times. Even though Susan became detached, she was not disinterested in the activity, but rather observed the pupils very closely, only intervening when the pupils appeared to be struggling with the activity, which is characteristic of the empowering tutor approach that she adopted (see section 11.1.1).

⁶² See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

Conclusions

This chapter has analysed the approaches that the participants adopted during the group interaction. It has shown, by using examples, the characteristic practices of these approaches in particular instances, and how some participants, be they teachers, pupils or facilitators, shifted from one approach to another. Appendices 10, 12, 13 and 14 illustrate the relationships between the various kinds of approaches for the three groups of participants. These relationships are significant to consider, since the participants only shifted from one related approach to another, as the chapter above has shown. Thus the safety-obsessed teachers tended to shift to the controlling watch-dog approach, and the advisers will, more often than not, take one of the empowering approaches. Nigel, the emotional pupil, shifted to the outsider approach, and it was only with the help of the sympathiser pupils that he was able to become part of the group again. The terms referring to the various participant approaches are analytic. This entails that I inferred their cultural meanings through my own observations and interpretations, and were not used by the participants in the research at any time.

This chapter provided an overview of all the kinds of approaches, some of which have only been encountered occasionally and, therefore, they have not had such a great impact on the group interaction as a whole and on the educational process. The controlling and the empowering approaches will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 11, as they were considered to be the most significant, influencing most of the interactions within the groups observed. Such approaches had a great impact on the learning experience of the participants involved in the outdoor classroom, and contributed to gaining an insight into the outdoor education process, as it will be shown in the next chapter.

11. The Educational Process in the Outdoor Classroom

In this chapter, I explore the processes occurring in the 'outdoor classroom', by examining how the teachers and the facilitators approached the delivery of the programmes to the pupils. I also examine how pupils themselves approached being part of a group and taking part in the activities at the centre. I will show the ways in which the related concepts of empowerment and control that have emerged as the main themes from the research, emphasised the importance in practice of the impact that the participant approaches had on the learning experience. These concepts are shown to be an intrinsic part of the learning process at the centre.

On the one hand, I will highlight the forms of discourse and practices that can be empowering and that can create a favourable environment for learning to occur. On the other hand, I will call attention to contexts that appear to disempower the participants, which may interfere with the learning process. By looking at how learning is constructed, the chapter uncovers the social aspect of learning at the outdoor centre and the tensions created as a result of the participants adopting different, sometimes diverging, approaches in the outdoor classroom. This chapter, together with chapter 10, presents my own intellectual conclusions with regard to the central issues raised by this study. These conclusions are based on a careful examination and interpretation of the data, following a rigorous data analysis process (see chapter 7).

As I have shown in section 8.5, the organisation of the different programmes is very similar, therefore the activities are constant, what changes are the different school groups that come to the centre. Therefore the various ways in which the group is facilitated contributes to illuminating how the pupils learn within the outdoor classroom. The group aspect is essential, since most of the activities are group orientated and group interaction is the main focus of this research. This study pays particular attention to interaction in terms of classroom interaction, drawing on the theoretical concepts developed by educational research on classroom interaction (see chapter 4), and not on the traditional theories on group formation and group development (see chapter 3). However I used the term 'group interaction', rather

than 'classroom interaction', because pupils normally did not take part in the activities in classroom-size groups, but rather in smaller groups of ten to twelve.

According to the social identity theory, these groups are already formed prior to their coming to the centre, since psychological group formation is achieved through self-categorisation in terms of the relevant category (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). Therefore, the children may view themselves as part of the social category of pupils, and the adults as part of the social category of teachers or facilitators. However, the participants can belong to several social categories, which may result in them having many different identities to draw upon (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). In this case, teachers, facilitators and pupils are all participants in the outdoor educational process, forming an *ad hoc* face-to-face short-lived group, while still identifying with the larger scale social categories of pupils, teachers and facilitators. Thus a collection of individuals is considered a group as long as it exhibits group behaviour, which may be the result of the unique qualities of those present and the unique purposes and goals of the collective, in this case, taking part in team building activities at an outdoor centre.

In chapter 7, I explained how I have analysed the data, which involved developing taxonomies and a componential analysis of these taxonomies. As a result of this, I have identified different forms of discourse and practices, which emerged from the data and which I propose constitute the different kinds of participant approaches. The approaches that the participants adopted were not exclusive to one particular kind of teacher, facilitator or pupil, but rather were characteristic in one specific instance. The participants adopted several kinds of approaches at various times, nevertheless some tended to embrace similar or related ones. Chapter 10 includes a description of all the approaches of the participants accompanied by examples to illustrate the context in which participants took a particular approach.

The most prominent kinds of approaches were characterised by what I have identified as either empowering practices, which led to the empowerment of the participants, or by controlling practices, which resulted in the disempowerment of the participants. At times, there appeared to be a tension between the empowering and the controlling approaches, which tended to lead to conflict within the outdoor

classroom. Empowerment and control permeated most of the interaction within the groups I have observed and appeared to significantly influence how the learning was constructed in the outdoor classroom. Consequently I will illustrate below, by using extracts from my observations, how these empowering and controlling approaches are constructed in practice and how they influenced the outdoor learning experience.

11.1. *Empowering Approaches in the Outdoor Classroom*

In her research on classroom interaction, Robinson (1994) introduces the concept of empowerment and she defines it as follows:

“Empowerment is a personal and social process, a liberating sense of one’s own strengths, competence, creativity and freedom of action; to be empowered is to feel power surging into one from other people and from inside, specifically the power to act and grow, to become ... ‘more fully human’.” (Robinson, 1994: 7)

Robinson (1994) argues that through the reciprocal act, the children and adults become involved in a dialogue, which allows the exploration of paths of knowledge unknown before. Therefore dialogue seems to play a significant role in the education process, since, according to Heaney (1982: 16 cited in Robinson, 1994)), it is “the means by which knowledge leading to critical consciousness is created and shared.” Dialogue is a process that actively involves the participants in liberating learning, it is not simply a method by which content is taught, it is the whole network of interactions and relationships, which comprise learning.

Interaction is a way through which people can relate to each other, care for each other, engage in a dialogue with each other. However, it can also be a way for people to tyrannise each other, to oppress and to suppress. According to Robinson (1994: 123) the only way for the disempowered to become empowered is to humanise interaction, this means embracing caring, sharing and support for each other and allowing everyone to have a voice. Certain forms of interaction as I will show, are, therefore, essential to empowering practices.

Moreover, Smith (1986: 60) argues that ‘Learning is never divorced from feelings – and neither is failing to learn’. This is confirmed by research carried out on the

human brain and learning which shows the importance of providing an atmosphere in the classroom that allows the pupils to feel secure, liked and valued (Hart, 1986; Neve, 1985; Nummela Caine and Caine, 1991). It must also be noted that many educationalists, such as Bloom *et al.* (1964), Habermas (1988), Dewey (1899), Knowles (1980) and others have recognised the influence of emotionality on learning and teaching. Furthermore, within outdoor education, emotions are central to the 'character building' movements of the early 1900s (Beard *et al.*, 2007).

Lindh (1983) states that a positive interaction situation where feelings are shown has a powerful impact on learning as it improves student achievement, increases motivation and self-esteem, and contributes to the development of personality. He concludes that in all situations, including those requiring intellectual and cognitive achievement, the emotional state of the individuals influences the way they function. According to Ingleton (1999) emotions influence the educational process. She argues that learning in the classroom is grounded in social relationships, concluding that:

“by theorising emotion as being formed in social relationship and significant in the development and maintenance of identity, its role in learning is constructed at a much deeper level. As such, emotion is seen to be constitutive of the activity of learning ... Emotions shape learning and teaching experiences for both teachers and students, and the recognition of their significance merits further consideration in both learning theory and pedagogical practice.”
(Ingleton, 1999: 9)

An approach can be considered empowering depending on the practices and the forms of discourse used. Empowering practices recognise that education is not only limited to intellectual and cognitive pursuits, but rather that the whole prism of human experience has to be considered in the classroom: the emotional, the social, the physical, the moral, the creative (Robinson, 1994: 156). Such practices lead to the personal growth of those involved in the interaction, as Robinson points out:

“Empowering practices are meaningful and need-fulfilling for other teachers in the school, for parents and administrators, as well. All participants allow themselves and feel allowed by others to be more of who they are, and to keep growing and eventually becoming more fully human.” (1994: 156)

I will illustrate below what kind of practices characterise an empowering approach and how such practices are used in the group interactions within the outdoor classroom, as part of the learning process.

11.1.1. A Sense of Ownership and Reflective Thinking in the Outdoor Classroom

Some teachers and facilitators supported the pupils during the activity, by offering encouragement and advice when they appeared to need it. They comforted them when they were frustrated or when they got hurt, and they allowed them to work on their own, making their own decisions on how to solve the task. For such teachers/facilitators, trying to get everybody involved appeared to be more important than accomplishing the task. This kind of pupil-teacher interaction is what Robinson (1994) identifies as an empowering practice, which gives the pupils a sense of ownership in the outdoor classroom, by allowing and encouraging them to have a choice, act independently and make their own decisions in the outdoor classroom. Thus the children feel that the classroom is theirs too, and it does not only belong to the teacher/facilitator. Glasser (1990) argues that providing choice in a classroom contributes to satisfying the pupils' need for freedom and power and this adds, according to Robinson (1994), to the pupils' sense that they can meet their needs on their terms, which is, as Robinson states, a feeling that human beings have to satisfy.

As an example of the sense of ownership through choice and independence within the outdoor classroom, I will refer to an extract from my observations where a teacher appeared to be sensitive to the pupils' needs and was able to evaluate the level of intervention during the activity. The group came from School D⁶³ and was taking part in poisoned ground (see Appendix 1(E)), which was a medium risk activity, as the pupils had to wear gloves and lift wooden planks. Usually only one teacher or only one facilitator supervised the activity. The children in this particular group were aged between 10 and 11 years old. Before the activity began, the teacher encouraged a discussion on what a team means, with very little involvement on her part. One of the girls had taken part in the activity before, so she was given the

⁶³ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

responsibility to be the one to explain the purpose of the activity and the rules. When the discussion on how to solve the task started, the teacher urged the pupils to share ideas among themselves, giving them independence. By allowing a pupil to explain the activity and not doing it herself, and by encouraging the pupils to have an independent discussion, the teacher was able to create a sense of ownership of the pupils over the activity. They were given responsibility, and most of all, freedom of choice.

After the initial discussion, the teacher took a step back, and allowed the pupils to get on with the activity. She continued to watch with interest, giving them some suggestions, such as: “If you’ve finished, go and encourage the others!” (Field notes I, p. 227, 28.06.2005). When the pupils appeared to be struggling, and started shouting at each other, the teacher stepped in, and initiated a dialogue with the whole group about what makes a good leader. The pupils put forward several ideas:

“Pb1: Support each other!

Pg: Encourage people that have good ideas to share them!

Pb2: The leader has to stand up and speak up!” (Field notes I, p. 228, 28.06.2005)

As they started working on the task again, they were quieter and they listened to each other more. The teacher intervened again, when the pupils became upset because they had lost their ‘lives’. She tried to encourage them and to keep up their morale and as a result the pupils resumed their work on the task. The teacher stepped in once more when one of the boys refused to take part in the activity any longer. She had a quiet talk with him, trying to negotiate the situation, while the other pupils continued to be involved in the activity:

“Pb: I don’t want to do it!

Tf: If you don’t do it, then the team won’t do it, we will have to stop the activity. Do you want that?

Pb: I don’t want to go on! [very upset] (head down)” (Field notes I, pp. 229-230, 28.06.2005)

In the end he did join in. Instead of dismissing the pupil, and telling him to ‘get over it’, the teacher explained what the consequences of his actions would be and gave him the opportunity to choose what he wanted to do. The pupil was put in a position where the activity would have stopped because of him, however the teacher did not put any more pressure on the pupil and gave him the space to make the decision on his own. None of the other pupils seemed to have noticed the incident and the boy joined the activity with no further protest.

After this incident, the teacher became detached again, but ready to step in when there was an argument:

“Pb1: Don’t argue! [angrily]

Pb2: Go on Shawn!

Pg1: Oh, you’re so strong! [mocking]

Pb2: Shut up!

Pb1: Yeah, shut up! It’s your fault we lost a life!

Pb2: Yeah, it’s your fault!

Pg1: Yeah, it’s my fault! [resigned]

Tf: Ok, we’re not singling people out!” (Field notes I, pp. 230-231, 28.06.2005)

The teacher, although detached until that point, included herself in the group, by using ‘we’, also avoiding singling out the two boys. If she had said: ‘You’re not singling people out!’, she would have been in an accusing position. By using ‘we’, she reminded them that they were part of the same team and that team members should not point the finger at each other. The pupils managed to finish the activity successfully.

After finishing the task, the teacher reviewed the activity by engaging the pupils in a discussion about their experience, encouraging and welcoming the pupils to express their feelings and thoughts:

“Tf: We learned a lot! **I** learned a heck of a lot!

Pb1: We worked as a team, it was good!

Pb2: The teamwork slipped up.

Tf: So what happens when the team splits up?

Pb2: We argue and we cannot concentrate!

Tf: What else happened that we didn't like?

Ps: Mocking, arguing.

Ps: Blaming

Tf: So how does it make us feel when we are blamed?

Pb3: We feel really bad!

Tf: We have to work as a team, we are a team at school, at work, in life!" (Field notes I, pp. 231-233, 28.06.2005)

In this discussion, the teacher allowed each pupil to express his/her opinion. She identified herself as part of the team as she uses 'we' and 'us' throughout the whole discussion. She allowed the pupils to come up with their own ideas about teamwork and built the discussion together with them. I asked some of those pupils, if they were usually encouraged to express their opinions. The pupils said that they were always given the opportunity to choose. After observing the teacher together with the same group of pupils during other activities, I could see that her approach did not change, and I recorded this in my diary:

"Today was a more interesting day, the activities they have done were group orientated and the teacher of the group I observed seemed particularly good at making them think and work as a group. Her style and manner of motivation got most of them involved in the activities, even though at different stages they were willing to give up. This confirmed once again the importance of teachers to group development and group interaction.

Moreover, when it came to activities led by [the centre] staff, she intervened as little as possible and only when it was absolutely necessary (e.g. when one of the pupils got hurt, or when they were out of order)." (Fieldwork diary, 28.06.2005)

The teacher in the example above encouraged the pupils to think about what they were doing, about helping each other, and supporting each other, rather than telling them what to think and what to do. Robinson (1994) characterises this sort of practice as empowering and identifies it as reflective thinking, i.e. 'the process of looking back and carefully considering one's thoughts, actions and decision-making'

(1994: 7). A more classic definition of reflective thinking belongs to Dewey (1933) who describes it as:

“relative, persistent, careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and further conclusions to which it tends.” (Dewey, 1933: 9)

According to Smith (1990: 31) reflective ‘thinking is not an exclusive activity, something we can do without anything else. We do not suspend learning, remembering, or other aspects of mental life in order to engage in thought. Rather, thought permeates everything we do – it is the business of the brain.’ Smith points out the importance of experience and opportunity over instruction in order for one to learn to think:

“Learning to think is less a matter of instruction than of experience and opportunity. Experience must provide familiarity with the topics and subjects that thought should address and also the confidence that underlies the disposition and authority to think on particular matters.” (Smith, 1990: 124)

Even though thinking is something that the brain does naturally and effortlessly, in order to function well, it needs an environment free of threat and anxiety (Nummela Caine and Caine, 1991; Hart, 1986). Consequently, Robinson (1994) argues that in order to encourage children to think, they need to feel that they can freely express their feelings as part of their human experience.

The teacher in the example above appeared to create a learning environment that allowed the pupils to communicate their feelings and thoughts, to make choices about how to solve the task and to make mistakes. A dialogue was thus opened between the pupils and the teacher, through which the pupils were encouraged to think for themselves and were allowed to have a sense of ownership over the outdoor classroom. I suggest that these practices were empowering her pupils, but were also empowering herself by giving some of the responsibility to the pupils, without having to remove herself completely from the activity. It is respect that governed these relationships, and that characterises an empowering approach.

Susan was one of the facilitators at the centre that also used empowering practices in her approach, by focusing less on the outcome of the activity and more on the pupils enjoying it, as well as encouraging involvement of the whole group. She tended to only offer clues to the pupils and then become detached, allowing them to work on the task, thus giving the pupils a sense of ownership over the outdoor classroom. She constantly engaged the pupils in reflective thinking by having discussions with the pupils before and after each activity.

During a low ropes session with a group of pupils from School D⁶⁴, she had an open dialogue with the pupils, creating the space to share their opinions about what it means to work as a team. This led to pupils being empowered to take responsibility for the situation. Pupils put forward ideas such as: ‘listening to each other’, ‘encouraging each other’, ‘looking out for each other’, and ‘sticking together’ (Field notes I, p. 216, 28.06.2005).

Before the group started on their first task, they were given some time to discuss how to solve the task. There was no involvement from either Susan, or the teacher, who was the same one in the example I discussed at the beginning of this section. During the first task (the Equilibrium⁶⁵), it was the pupils, rather than the adults who were giving advice and shouting out instructions: ‘Pb1: Wow, calm down, don’t walk hard!’, ‘Pb2: Don’t jump!’ or ‘Pg1: Stay there, don’t move!’ (Field notes I, pp. 217-218, 28.06.2005) There was a lot of screaming and shouting, disappointment and eventually cheering when they accomplished the task. Susan reviewed the activity with the whole group, before moving on to the next one:

“Susan: How did you manage?

Pb1: We have to listen to each other, ‘cause in the end we became quite angry.

Susan: And also what else?

Pb2: We didn’t move.

Susan: That’s it, when you all stood still, it worked.” (Field notes I, p. 218, 28.06.2005)

⁶⁴ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

⁶⁵ See Appendix 2(B) for a description of the activity.

By engaging the pupils in open dialogue, Susan enables them to look back at what they have done and come to their own conclusions on how they worked as a team. Dialogue is central to empowerment, but also to the concept of dialogic talk, which has been discussed in chapter 4 (see section 4.3), and which can contribute toward elucidating further the educational situation to which I refer above. According to Bakhtin (1980), through dialogue the participants are able to create new meanings and new understandings. By opening a dialogue with the pupils, Susan allows the pupils to not simply reproduce a previously constructed understanding of what a team is, but rather to build on the pupils' prior knowledge, and thus construct knowledge together (Myhill *et al.*, 2006).

Through dialogue and interactive practices, the pupils are encouraged to work together and build upon the answers of others (Alexander, 2004), which suggests that there is a social aspect of learning in the outdoor classroom. This argument is further supported by the underlying principles of dialogic talk (see section 4.3) identified by Alexander (2004), which characterise the dialogic learning experience as collective with the teacher and the pupils working on the tasks together as a group. Reciprocity is essential, as pupils and teachers listen to each other, share ideas and consider various points of view. The process is also cumulative with the teacher and the pupils building on their own and each other's ideas, creating coherent lines of enquiry. The discussions between the pupils and the teacher are purposeful, as they have a specific educational goal. All this is done in a supportive atmosphere, where pupils can freely express themselves and help each other to reach a common understanding.

These principles appear to be at work in the educational situation described above, and the social aspect of learning becomes more evident, as the session unfolds. During the next activity, which was the lifeboats⁶⁶, the pupils encouraged, reassured and physically helped each other more, by grabbing on to those who were swinging on the platform and cheering those who were successful: 'Pb1: Hold on, here he comes! Wow! (and they catch him)', 'Pb4: Come on, you can do it! Yeah, like that, Dave, will catch you!', 'Pg2: Come on Jane!', 'Pg3: Yeah, you did it!' (Field notes I, p. 219, 28.06.2005) The pupils were laughing during the whole of the activity, which

⁶⁶ See Appendix 2(B) for a description of the activity.

showed how much they were enjoying themselves. When they finished the activity, Susan congratulated them: ‘Susan: Well done guys, good team work! You managed it!’ (Field notes I, p. 220, 28.06.2005).

The teacher hardly intervened at all during this session, however she did tell some of the boys in the group to pay attention when they became distracted with another group during the last activity of the low ropes course, the Hex (see Appendix 2(B) for a description of the activity). Her presence was felt even more during this last task, but to a small degree, as she was not giving instructions, but rather cheering and praising her pupils: ‘Tf: Wow, fantastic, look at these guys at the end!’, ‘Tf: You can do it, fantastic!’ or ‘Tf: Well done guys!’ (Field notes I, pp. 221; 222; 223, 28.06.2005). When some pupils fell off the tight ropes, the teacher would help them up and make jokes. The pupils appeared to be reassured by their teacher’s assistance and encouragements, as they went on with the activity following her example by helping each other, expressing concern for their peers, and giving them advice: ‘Pb2: Don’t fall, don’t trip!’, ‘Pg4: Hold on Jake! Side step, side step! Hold on!’, ‘Pb5: Yes, I got you, come on!’, ‘Pg2: Lean on it!’ (Field notes I, pp. 221- 222, 28.06.2005). Learning is illustrated above as a joint process, that involved all the participants, all contributing to the construction of knowledge.

At times, with older groups aged between 10 and 11 years, Susan would use short exercises before starting the low ropes course, in order to introduce the pupils to the concept of teamwork. One of these exercises involved the pupils pairing up, sitting back to back, and trying to stand up together without using their arms. After this, Susan engaged them in a discussion, as it is shown in the example below, which involves pupils from School B⁶⁷:

“Susan: Who can tell me what we’ve learned from that?

Ps: Communication.

Susan: Ok, what else?

Pb: Working together.

⁶⁷ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

Susan: Alright, you've learned to work well as a group." (Field notes II, p. 216, 14.07.2005)

On some occasions, the discussions with the pupils seemed to help them to reflect on how they worked during the activity and be critical about themselves, without having to be told what they did wrong, as it is illustrated in the dialogue below with the same group of pupils as in the example above:

"Susan: Ok guys, how did you think you did as a team?

Ps: Good!

Susan: From 1 to 5.

Ps: 4.

Susan: Ok, you said 4. That means that you feel you could improve something.

What is that?

Ps: Communication.

Susan: What does that entail?

Pbs: Listening, talking more.

Pgs: More planning." (Field notes II, pp. 218-219, 14.07.2005)

During this particular activity, which was the low ropes course, Susan intervened only a few times. Although Susan did take a step back, she seemed to be very much interested in what was going on and my observations suggest that she helped the pupils only when they appeared to be struggling, therefore managing to achieve a balance between stepping back and getting involved.

According to Boyes (2005: 220) teachers working in the outdoors have the important task of providing and facilitating meaningful learning experiences without jeopardising the physical and psychological safety of the participants, which often means that they have to try to find a balance between providing enough cognitive and physical challenge to stimulate the learners and ensure their safety. The examples above have shown that, at times, the visiting teachers and the staff at the centre were able to achieve not only the kind of balance that Boyes (2005) refers to, but also made it possible for the pupils to learn how to work as a team on their own terms, as they allowed them the space they needed, giving them independence and responsibility. A sense of ownership of the outdoor classroom was thus achieved.

Moreover, through the open dialogue that the teachers/facilitators referred to above had with the pupils and by engaging them in reflective thinking, the pupils learned together how to work as a team, and be critical about themselves. Robinson (1994) emphasises the importance of the teacher's role within the group, when she states:

“The *facilitative*⁶⁸ role of the teacher is a recognition that the teacher has something unique to offer the group, but also that he or she does it from within the group, as a member of the group, not from a power position above the group.” (1994: 158)

11.1.2. Co-operation and Collaboration in the Outdoor Classroom

In the indoor classroom, collaboration between pupils has often been seen as cheating (Smith, 1986), however co-operation and collaboration are essential parts of the outdoor experience at the centre, since most of the activities are group orientated and since the philosophy of the centre and its staff, place great importance on the pupils learning to work together (see chapter 9).

According to Smith (1986: 198) ‘true collaboration is like two people carrying a heavy object that neither of them could carry alone.’ The pupil-pupil relationship is crucial within the outdoor classroom, and when pupils treat each other as equals, they are able to empower each other, as Kreisberg (1992) points out:

“Empowerment embodies the idea of self-determination, a process through which individuals and communities increasingly control their own destinies without imposing on others. The link between controlling one's own life and valued resources while simultaneously respecting others' right to do the same is crucial to empowerment theory.” (1992: 191)

When this happens in practice in the educational situation, most of the collective self-determination is done in and by groups of children (Robinson, 1994). I witnessed this with a group of pupils from School J⁶⁹, who were involved in raft

⁶⁸ Original italics

⁶⁹ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

building (see Appendix 1(F) for a description of the activity). One of the pupils, Nigel, excluded himself from the group from the very beginning. When one of the two male teachers brought this to the attention of the group, two boys went to talk to him and convinced him to join in. But when he shared his idea, some of the other pupils protested, arguing that they were already using the idea:

“Ps: That’s what we’re doing. (Shouting.)

Mary: Let him say his idea.

Ps: But that’s what we’re doing!

Alan: I came up with it first.

Nigel leaves again. Tm goes to talk to him. Two boys go and join them.

Mary: We should let Nigel be the leader for half the time.

Alan goes and talks to Nigel as well. Tm encourages Nigel to join the others.

The rest are getting on with the plan.” (Field notes VI, p. 27, 08.06.2006)

Alan emerged as the leader in this particular group, and during this activity I observed him repeatedly encouraging discussions within the group. In the extract above, by protecting his idea, he was protecting his status as a leader. Mary acted as a peacemaker, trying to solve the conflict within the group. The teacher, the two boys and Alan, the pupil leader, tried to do the same, which reflects that in spite of disagreements in the group, the pupils cared for each other. However, neither the pupils nor the teacher were able to convince Nigel to join in and he wandered off, out of the sight of the group. His lack of involvement appeared to have a significant impact on the group, because when they saw Nigel again, they tried to get him involved again. When this failed, they started to discuss as a group how best to resolve the situation:

“Alan: Ok, if we win, we ... we’ll tell Nigel it was his idea and that it was a great idea and this we’ll cheer him up.

Janice: What if we don’t win?

Alan: We will tell him that we should have used his idea.

Mary: We should let him go first.

Alan: He doesn’t want to.” (Field notes VI, pp. 31-32, 08.06.2006)

The pupils quoted above expressed real concern towards their peer. They appeared to care for his feelings, as they wanted to ‘cheer him up’. Nigel did not get involved at all in the construction of the raft, however the group remained concerned about him, as they had another discussion about how to make him feel better. Eventually, Nigel was convinced to be part of the team during the race that took place after all the groups had finished building the raft. He helped the others and was helped by others:

“Nigel helps with the pulling of the rope, Kevin as well.

Ps: Go! Go! (Shouting to the boy on the raft.)

Janice: Get on! (to the next one in line) Pull! (to those pulling the rope.) [...]

Derek: Jump! Jump! (to the next one in line)

Ps: Pull! Pull! (to those pulling the rope.) Jump! (to the next one in line. It’s Nigel.)

Lisa helps Nigel out. He was the last one to go. Cheering. They win.

Ps: Easy! Easy! (Chanting)” (Field notes VI, p. 43, 8.06.2006)

This extract shows that they cooperated and collaborated as a group, physically helping each other, giving advice and cheering each other on. It also shows the importance of emotions as part of the learning experience, which has been recognised by many educationalists (see section 11.1). During the race, there was no fighting about who should go first, second or last. They seemed to work together as a team, including Nigel, who did not appear to be upset anymore and seemed to be enjoying the race. The group went through a process of collective self-determination, by respecting each other and by staying focused on their task, empowering each other and thus themselves.

Praising and encouraging are important parts of the collaborating process, as are reassuring and comforting, which brings into focus again the emotional aspect of the learning experience. This is illustrated in the following extract, where a group of pupils were taking part in the lifeboats⁷⁰, the second task in the low ropes course:

“First boy swings.

Pg1: Ooooooh, skills man, skills man! (Clapping)

⁷⁰ See Appendix 2(B) for a description of the activity

Pg2: Let Betty go.

Pg3: Go Betty, and don't fall.

[...]

A boy helps those that swing. More grab those that swing.

Pb1: We got you! Now let go!

Pg4: Go on Janet!

Pb2: Go on Janet! (She swings.)

Gary⁷¹: Help her! Help her!

Pb3: Stay on! Stay on! [...]

They make it. Only one life lost.” (Field notes VI, pp. 67-68, 08.06.2006)

Throughout the whole activity the pupils continued to encourage and reassure each other, with very little involvement from their teacher or the facilitator:

“[Tf is detached.] They go back to the ship. They continue to help each other.

Pg2: Anna, stand on this.

Pg5: Don't bang into me, 'cause I'll fall.

Pg4: I'm holding you! (with her arms around her)” (Field notes VI, pp. 69-70, 08.06.2006)

Pg4 is not only reassuring her peer verbally, but she is also doing this physically, by actually holding her, acting as a carer. This gesture shows the closeness between the two pupils, physical as well as emotional.

By collaborating and cooperating, the pupils in the examples above were involved in a joint process of learning. Learning becomes a social experience, and as Ingleton (1999) pointed out, emotions are formed in social relationships and are constitutive of the learning experience. The social aspect of learning in these situations is not only present because the activities are group orientated, but also because the teachers/facilitators' approaches allowed the pupils to learn together, through collaboration and co-operation, and to freely express their feelings.

⁷¹ Gary is the male facilitator accompanying the pupils on the activity.

11.1.3. Self-control in the Outdoor Classroom

Robinson (1994) argues that the empowering teacher-pupil relationship cannot be inherently disciplinary as reciprocity and role-interchangeability constantly break down the hierarchical positions (Buber, 1970; Freire, 1970). Thus the teacher can also learn from the pupils, just as the pupils learn from the teacher. According to Robinson (1994: 129) ‘self-control is essential in groups, and in empowering groups everybody learns it from everybody else, including themselves’. In the outdoor classroom there were plenty of opportunities for pupils to learn about self-control. Some pupils who emerged as natural leaders had to learn how not to be leaders, and allow others to also take part in the activity. At times pupils were able to manifest self-control on their own, while taking part in team-building activities. I was able to record this when a pupil named Jenny from School I⁷², although heavily involved in leading the group during the task, was able to stop and think of the other pupils and made sure that they had the chance to also take part in what was going on. The activity was toxic waste⁷³, and the facilitator was Jimmy. Jenny emerged as a strong leader, without being challenged at all, as she constantly expressed concern for her peers, by asking several times whether there were pupils who had not had a chance to take part in the activity:

“Jenny: Ok Tom, down, down, that’s good! Across, across, down!

Cheering (as they manage to put one in.)

Jenny: Ok, has everybody had a go?

[...]

Jenny: Change over, if you’ve only had one go. (Shouting).

[...]

Jenny: Jake, you’ve already had a go.

They drop one.

Pg1: What do we do now? (Jimmy puts it back in position.)

Jenny: Release pressure slowly. (Shouting)

Ps: Yeah! (Cheering) [...]

They put them all in.

⁷² See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

⁷³ See appendix 1(I) for a description of the activity.

Jenny: We're geniuses. (Shouting).

Pg2: Yeah, but you don't need to shout. (Shouting.)

Jimmy: Yeah, you've done great." (Field notes IV, pp. 53-55, 22.05.2006)

Jenny did not take credit for the group's success, she recognised everybody's contribution when she said: 'We're geniuses', using the inclusive 'we'. Although her enthusiasm was criticised by another pupil, she chose not to say anything, and seemed to accept the criticism by quieting down, which suggests a degree of self-control.

Although Jenny seemed concerned with everybody 'having a go', some of the boys did not participate as much as the girls. After the session Jimmy, the facilitator, initiated a discussion about teamwork, in which the boys were reluctant to take part. In this discussion, Jimmy tried to teach the pupils about self-control, he pointed out that the girls had 'taken over' the activity and that it was important for those that lead to allow others to lead as well. A dialogue was opened within the group, in which the tension between empowerment and control becomes evident, especially toward the end of the discussion where Jimmy tries to help the pupils understand that working as a team is not about 'telling people what to do', and that it is also about being able to take a step back, and not be dominant:

"Jimmy: Ok, I want you to get together in groups and discuss the good points and the bad points and how you think you're going to make the bad points good points. [...] Look at the boys (to me), they're not going to do it. Look at the girls, they're doing it! They're great! (He turns towards to the boys.) Boys, come on! Ok. Let's hear the good points.

[...]

Pg3: The good point is that we all worked together and helped. 'Cause we had a good idea and we got together like a team and we did it.

Jimmy: Yeah, that's a very good point.

Pg4: I've got a good point.

Jimmy: Yeak, ok.

Pg4: We've learned a valuable lesson. That you can't do anything on your on.

Jimmy: That's true. Boys, don't wonder off. Come here. Let's hear your good points.

Pb1: The girls have said it all.

Pb2: I've got a bad point.

Jimmy: Ok, let's hear it.

Pb: At the end, we kind off rushed and we dropped!

Jimmy: Yeah, you got a bit excited at the end, didn't you, so you need to watch that next time.

Pg5: I've got a bad point. (hand up in the air)

Jimmy: Ok.

Pg5: There were some people who were mucking about and not getting involved.

Jimmy: So what can you do about that?

Pg5: Uh, uh, uh! (Jumping up and down) [excited]

Jimmy: Ok. (Laughing)

Pg5: We could like tell them what to do.

Jimmy: Maybe encourage them to get involved. I think, and the boys will probably agree with me on that, that the girls took over this activity. Isn't that right boys?

Pbs: Yeah. (Head down)

Jimmy: Next time, maybe the girls should take a step back and let the boys do the leading. It's good for the girls to lead sometimes, but the boys should also do."(Field work IV, pp. 55-59, 22.05.2006).

There appeared to be a degree of competitiveness between boys and girls in this group and a tendency for one sex to take control over the activity and exclude the other sex. Jimmy seemed to be aware of this aspect and attempted to resolve the conflict by suggesting to the girls to control their need to lead and give the opportunity to the boys to lead as well. The interplay between empowerment and control is of great significance, as it appeared to influence many aspects of the group interaction in the outdoor classroom, leading to conflict at times, as it was shown in the example above. In some cases, the conflict between the boys and the girls was resolved amongst the pupils themselves by including the others in the activity, which also shows self-control, and the ability to take a step back and allow others to get involved as well. I witnessed this with another group from School F⁷⁴, who were also

⁷⁴ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

taking part in toxic waste (see Appendix 1(I) for a description of the activity). The activity started with the boys taking charge, ignoring the girls' suggestions, which caused frustration among them:

“Pg1: You're pulling too hard!

Pb1: Girls, girls! (He puts his finger on his mouth.) [He wants them to be quiet.]

Pg1: Yeah, they want the girls out!

[...] They fail and there is disappointment on both parts [the boys and the girls].

[As they fail the third time the girls get more frustrated.]

Pg2: They don't listen, you know. (to a girl) You need to pull more! (to a boy).”

(Field notes II, pp. 31-32, 05.07.2005)

However, when a girl asked if the girls can 'have a go', the boys agreed:

“Pg3: Can the girls have a go? (to the leader.)

Pb2: Yeah, lets let them! (to the boys doing the task.)” (Field notes II, p. 33,

05.07.2005)

The girls were then allowed to participate more, although the boys did not always practice self-control, since there was a tendency for them to be more dominant in this particular group.

Robinson (1994) argues that in groups where empowering practices are used, the children learn to take care about each other in significant ways and this has been shown to some extent in the examples above (see sections 11.1.1 and 11.1.2). According to Glasser (1990) empowering practices bring the pupils together because the needs of belonging, freedom and fun are fulfilled in a meaningful way. Thus the participants allow themselves and feel that they are allowed by others to be more of who they are, they keep on growing, which leads to their becoming more fully human (Robinson, 1994).

In the examples above, pupils learned through group interaction to help each other, to include all the group members in the activity and to allow others to lead (see sections 11.1.2 and 11.1.3). It has also been shown that the teachers/facilitators have a significant role within the outdoor classroom, as their approach has great influence

on the outdoor experience of the pupils (see sections 11.1.1 and 11.1.3). By analysing different interactions and approaches of the participants, I have shown how open dialogue between the participants creates a safe environment where learning is a social experience, which is empowering all the participants. I will next look at how controlling approaches affect the learning of the participants and how it can lead to disempowerment within the outdoor classroom.

11.2. Controlling Approaches in the Outdoor Classroom

Research studies carried out by Delamont (1983) and Pollard (1985) on classroom interaction discuss issues of control and power within the indoor classroom, which are also of great importance and relevance within the ‘outdoor classroom’. Pollard (1985) noted a strong desire on the part of the teachers to control their work situation and to maintain classroom autonomy. Robinson (1994: 128) also pointed out that:

“*Controlling*⁷⁵ is in the vocabulary of most teachers. Some need it there, some want to be rid of it, but it is hard to eradicate, because the society and everything that teachers have been taught to believe goes against even becoming aware of their controlling, let alone making moves to change it.”

Delamont (1983) puts power into the centre of her analysis of the role of teachers in the classroom, stating that: “Teachers and pupils come to the classroom in very different bargaining positions” (1983: 50). Thus Delamont (1983) argues that teachers have control over pupils, as they have the right to monitor and correct the pupils’ talk and behaviour in ways that are very different from the norms of everyday conversation. The teacher’s power over the pupils is also recognised by Pollard (1985) who describes it as a multipurpose tool often taken for granted by the teachers themselves, but which is a potential hazard for the pupils.

The issues of power and control are not limited to teachers in formal education. Dickson (2005) deconstructs Priest and Gass’s (1993) five generations of facilitated learning from adventure experiences⁷⁶, and emphasises and critiques the dominance

⁷⁵ Original emphasis.

⁷⁶ See section 2.3 for a description of Priest and Gass’s (1999) model of the six generations of facilitation, which was built on the earlier model of five generations.

of the instructor and the submissiveness of the participant. She suggests that this stems from the focus on the central role of the facilitator in controlling the experience of the learner. The model of the five generations seems to imply, according to Dickson (2005: 236), that “a well-designed process (the questions) will ensure that the inputs (the people) will achieve the appropriate outputs (their own learning), but it seems that the participant can only achieve ‘their own learning’ through the intervention of the instructor.”

Bernstein (1996) sees power and control as operating at different levels of analysis and suggests that they are analytically distinguished, however they are empirically embedded in each other. In Bernstein’s (1996) view power divides people in society:

“Power relations, in this perspective, create boundaries, legitimise boundaries, reproduce boundaries, between different categories of groups, gender, class, race, different categories of discourse, different categories of agents. Thus, power always operates to produce dislocations, to produce punctuations in social space.” (Bernstein, 1996: 19)

Within the outdoor classroom, where there is a lack of reciprocity and dialogue, the teacher-pupil relationship becomes disempowering, with the pupils being in the disempowered position. The controlling approaches are characterised by the participants using power-over to deprive others of power-with (Kreisberg, 1992), and also adopting practices that stifle the others, without creating the space for dialogue. Below I will explore some of the controlling practices and how they may lead to disempowerment in the outdoor classroom.

11.2.1. Order and Instructions in the Outdoor Classroom

According to Pollard (1986) order and instructions are very important for teachers, and are used to maintain the teacher’s authority and independence; stress is also avoided by keeping order within the classroom. Many aspects of teachers’ disciplinary and instructional goals represent a means of achieving ends, which suit the teachers. This was certainly apparent at times within the outdoor classroom, where teachers/facilitators adopting the controlling approaches would use order and instructions to take control over the activity. They tended not to allow pupils to make

any decisions, denying them their independence and they made use of verbal reprimands and punishment on many occasions.

At times, by using order and instructions in order to achieve their own disciplinary goals, the teachers were unable to take a step back and allow the pupils to work together in order to solve the task. Thus, it happened, on occasion, that the team-building goal could not be achieved, because of too much intervention on the part of the teachers/facilitators. This happened even during very low risk activities such as orienteering. During orienteering⁷⁷, the pupils were usually grouped in twos or threes and allowed to carry on with the activity on their own after being explained the purpose of the activity and where they were allowed or not allowed to go. I observed a group from School B⁷⁸, where the teachers were following each and every move of their pupils. All the teachers in this group accompanied the pupils throughout the whole of the activity:

“I asked two boys if I can follow them, they said it was ok. [They seemed more concerned with their activity.]

The teachers will help them with the first checkpoint.

Pb1: Ok, where is number 1?

Pb2: Number 1? I think it's over there.

The teachers lead them to the first checkpoint. Tm reads the first question. They all agree with the answer, the answer is wrong. They all try to think of the answer. It's the correct one. They are still all together for the next checkpoint. They are not allowed to run off. The teachers are helping them find their way.

[I don't think there's any point in me following just one group. They all do it together. The ones that are holding the map or the checkpoint sheet seem to be more interested in what is going on. The others are distracted, they are not really listening to the questions. They look around the surroundings, they chat, or they just wonder off (not too far, they stay quite close to the group)].

The teachers are helping them with the questions. The teachers think that the questions are too hard for the children. They all run off, leaving the teachers behind. When they think they found the way, they call out to the teachers. They

⁷⁷ See Appendix 1(J) for a description of orienteering.

⁷⁸ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

are waiting for them to proceed. One boy finds it, he calls out pointing to the checkpoint.

Pb3: I found it! I found it! It's over here!

Tm reads out the question. Tfs are keeping an eye on the children, making sure they don't wonder off or misbehave. One of the boys in the group I had chosen is keeping away from the others, he is not listening to the question, he is looking at a little girl's colourful bracelets.

They run off to the next checkpoint. Teachers following them, Jimmy also joined. Jimmy shows two girls a tree, telling them to look around. Others join in the search. Once they found it, they called out.

Pb4: I found it!

Pg1: We found it!

Pb4: No, I found it. [angrily]

They run off to the next point, they find it by themselves. They call out to the others:

Pb1: We found five!

Pg2: Come on!

Pb4: Stop shouting! [angrily]

Pg2: I'm not shouting, I said come on. [apologetic]

Jimmy helps a little girl with the map.

They run off again. They are stopped by a teacher. Others are left behind. [They are more independent now. They start looking by themselves.]

Tf1: Off the road please!

Tf2: Off the road!

They think they need to cross the road. Tf1 stops them telling them to look at the map." (Field notes I, pp. 103-107, 20.06.2005)

Although the group of boys I had planned to observe, seemed quite eager to take part in the activity and explore on their own, they were absorbed by the whole group, with the teachers giving them specific instructions as to what they had to do. It was the teachers that were making the decisions and the pupils were constantly waiting for their approval. There were some attempts to gain independence, especially when encouraged by one of the facilitators, but the teachers soon took this independence away. The result was that many of the pupils lost interest in the activity.

In the extract above there appears to be a lack of dialogue between the participants on how the task should be solved. At no point was there a discussion on what a team is and what it means to work as a team, thus pupils were not engaged in reflective thinking. Furthermore, by not allowing the pupils to make their own decisions, there was no sense of ownership of the outdoor classroom, which may have left the pupils feeling powerless, since they had no choice (see section 11.1.1). Collaboration and co-operation was not encouraged, since the pupils were not given the opportunity to work together on solving the task, they were simply told what to do and where to go at all times, thus failing to create the space to work as a team.

The teachers using order and instructions as controlling practices had a propensity not to tolerate any breaking of the rules of the activity, and they would not be flexible. Quite often during the blind string trail⁷⁹, many of the pupils would complain about the goggles hurting them, some teachers would allow them to take them off from time to time and have a break. This did not happen with the teachers adopting the controlling approach, and trying to lift the goggles off was seen as an attempt to cheat, as it can be seen in the example below with a group from School B⁸⁰:

“They lean on the string and they all fall off on their bums. The teachers help them up.

Tf: Kerry, what are you doing lifting those goggles? I caught you right in the act! [angrily, with a reprimanding voice]” (Field notes I, pp. 118-119, 20.06.2005)

In case a pupil got hurt or was struggling with the activity, there was little or no verbal comforting, only physical assistance from some teachers who appeared to be more concerned with keeping the order, as it is illustrated in the extract below with the same school group as above:

“Pb: I don’t want to do it!

Tf: You big baby!

⁷⁹ See Appendix 1(A) for a description of the activity.

⁸⁰ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

Pb: I don't want to do it!

Tf: Everyone's doing it, otherwise I'm sending you back home." (Field notes I, p. 133, 20.06.2005)

The boy had no choice in the matter, because the order had to be maintained: 'everyone's doing it'. The teacher did not give him the opportunity to express why he did not want to do it, or even attempt to negotiate the situation. Teachers using order and instructions tended to be less comforting when interacting with pupils, than those adopting an empowering approach (see section 11.1.1), as it can be seen in the following example involving a pupil from School B:

"One boy had a fly on his arm, he was very distressed:

Tf: It wasn't a wasp, it doesn't sting.

Pb: It stings! (holding his hand and squeezing his eyes, almost crying)

Tf: Come on, you have to toughen up!" (Field notes I, p. 109, 20.06.2005)

Soon after this incident, the boy lost interest in the activity and started chatting with another female teacher who tried to comfort him. There was no attempt that I could see on the part of either teacher to try to get the pupil more involved in the activity, to motivate him. It appeared that their main concern was to contain the situation, so that the others could get on with the activity undisturbed.

At times, teachers/facilitators would become frustrated when their use of order and instructions did not yield the desired outcomes. This happened with George, one of the facilitators at the centre, who used verbal reprimands, when the pupils from School F⁸¹ were struggling with the task:

"George: You guys are useless, useless, you don't talk to each other, you don't listen. I say lift and you pull. You are not working as a team!

(They try again. George guides them.)

George: Girls, you let down, boys, you pull a little! Girls pull yours in! Boys, let yours out!

(They fail again.)" (Field notes II, pp. 63-64, 06.07.2005)

⁸¹ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

The activity was toxic waste⁸² and George had taken control over the activity from the very beginning, creating only limited opportunities for the pupils to take initiative and to work together on their own terms. He started the activity by telling the pupils that they should work as a team, but he did not discuss with them what a team is. In the beginning, he did allow the pupils to discuss a plan for tackling the task, but this was closely supervised.

George appeared to be more focused on the task itself, rather than the process. By giving the pupils specific instructions, he alienated them from the activity. What followed was that the pupils started to argue with each other. George attempted to solve the conflict by not allowing the pupils to communicate verbally and by appointing a leader:

“Pg1: You need to release yours!

Pb1: No, I don't. (Shouting.)

Pgs: Yes, you do! (Shouting.)

Pb2: Yeah, you do!

He releases it. [...]

They are still fighting. [They don't seem to be able to work together.] George is shaking his head. He shouts at them.

George: OK, everyone shuuuut up! Shut up! From now on you are not allowed to talk.

He chooses a girl to direct them. They all get quiet. They listen to the girl. The boy that wouldn't release the string mumbles. [He doesn't seem to agree with her.]” (Field notes II, pp. 65-66, 06.07.2005)

The appointed leadership was only temporary, as George stepped in again with instructions:

“George takes over again.

George: Ok, girls, get round the bin, round the bin. Well done!” (Field notes II, pp. 66, 06.07.2005)

Praise is used here as a form of control (Bernstein, 1996; Pollard, 1985), and not as an empowering practice. When the activity ends, the facilitator disempowered the pupils, by not allowing them to put across their own thoughts about the experience,

⁸² See Appendix 1(I) for a description of the activity.

but instead he criticised them and told them what he believed they should have done, dismissing their opinions:

“George: Ok, guys, do you think you worked well as a team?”

Ps: Yeah!

George: Really? [He seems surprised]

Ps: Eeerm? (They look at each other) [They seem confused].

George: Did you work well as a team in the beginning?

Ps: No.

George: No. You were shouting at each other, you need to listen to each other and communicate better, alright?” (Field notes II, pp. 67, 06.07.2005)

It seems a ‘lose, lose’ situation, since neither the facilitator, nor the pupils in this example appeared to have enjoyed the activity and they all seemed frustrated and disappointed. Unfortunately, this happened quite often, which supports Dickson (2005) argument that ‘the well-designed process’ does not seem to have the expected ‘outputs’.

During my research, it often happened that the facilitator would direct the participants before starting the activity, telling them what the experience was supposed to be about, e.g.: ‘This is a team building exercise.’ An example of this is when Gary, one of the facilitators at the centre, introduced the low ropes course to the pupils from School I⁸³ by saying:

“Gary: The key to today’s exercise is team work.” (Field notes IV, p. 59, 22.05.2006)

Gary failed to engage the pupils in reflective thinking, and did not create the space for any other opinion to be voiced, except for his. Order and instructions were used, as the pupils were told what to do and what not to do, as it happened during this low ropes session⁸⁴:

⁸³ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

⁸⁴ See Appendix 2(B) for a description of the activity.

“Gary: What you need to work on as a group is to decide where everybody is going to stay on.” (Field notes IV, p. 60, 22.05.2006)

“Gary: You need to work out how to get the rope in the middle. Andy, you cannot reach for it because you might slip. Ben you cannot jump, because you may miss it and fall, and Kevin, you cannot throw sticks at it ‘cause they don’t exist. [...]

Gary: When you swing here like this (he swings), you need to help people and hold them so that they don’t fall in the water.” (Field notes IV, pp 61-62, 22.05.2006)

When the pupils were struggling with the task, Gary also became frustrated:

“Gary: Try and hook it! (to the boy trying to get the rope from the middle) Come on! Oh, this is appalling! Come on, hook it!” (Field notes IV, p. 63, 22.05.2006)

The pupils did not manage to finish the whole course in time. Gary spent a lot of the time giving them instructions and the pupils had few opportunities to work on their own. As a consequence they started to rely on Gary’s instructions, instead of coming up with their own ideas, which meant that they took more time to finish the activity.

Gary expressed a great concern for the pupils’ safety, sometimes putting safety before the pupils’ enjoyment. He would count them several times on the way to the activity area and would shout out warnings to them, even though they were in no apparent danger, since they were simply running on grass, as it was the case in the example below with pupils from School H⁸⁵:

“Gary: Don’t run! It’s wet! (to some pupils running in front of us) ... Don’t run! What did I tell you about running? It’s wet grass, wet grass is slippery” (Field notes III, p. 99, 17.05.2006)

At times the pupils would be told what they should have learned from the activity, which Gary did with another group that had just finished the low ropes course. He

⁸⁵ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

did not allow the pupils to express their own opinions about the activity, and expressed his own instead, which is evident in the extract below involving a group of pupils from School H:

“Gary: Ok guys, what you were supposed to learn about was to work together, help each other, try and have your own initiative. You’ve done that. Unfortunately, we’ve run out of time.” (Field notes III, p. 57, 16.05.2006)

Gary assumed that the pupils learned what they were ‘supposed to learn’, but without an open dialogue, it is unclear whether they did learn anything at all. Order and instructions are powerful tools that teachers/facilitators used on occasion in order to maintain control within the outdoor classroom. However, I have shown that this can have a negative impact on the learning experience of the pupils, as too much control during the activities resulted in pupils losing interest in the activity, or them not enjoying it.

11.2.2. Lack of Self-control

According to Pollard (1985) teachers guard classroom autonomy jealously when head teachers or parents threaten it. Within the outdoor classroom, if the teachers adopting a controlling approach were not formally conducting the activity, but rather accompanying the group and a facilitator, they tended to interfere in the activity, sometimes taking on the role of the facilitator, leading the discussions and giving instructions. By not being able to step back and allow someone else to lead or facilitate their pupils, such teachers showed a lack of self-control, which may cause the facilitator conducting the activity to feel disempowered and try to compete for the pupils’ attention, as it can be seen in the example below, with the teacher coming from School H⁸⁶:

“**The Equilibrium**”⁸⁷

They line up. Gary⁸⁸ explains the objective: to balance it for ten seconds. He gives them a demo. No running, no jumping. Explains the safety rules. Tells

⁸⁶ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

⁸⁷ See Appendix 2(B) for a description of the activity.

them to work out together how they are going to do it. [Tf is part of the group. Gary is detached.] She is running the discussion.

Tf: Is everybody going to move at the same time?

Ps: Noooo!

Tf: How about only one of you moving at a time. What do you think? [...] Ok, now, you all have good ideas.

As they get on, Tf tells them what to do. [...]

Gary: Stand still guys, you need to stop moving, you need to work out who is moving.

Tf: Tom, go that way. Ann, you're too far, move just a little! Too much! Keep still!

Gary: Yeah, that's it, move just an inch at a time!" (Field notes III, p. 45-47, 16.05.2006)

As the activity progressed, the teacher became even more involved in the activity, and the pupils were receiving two sets of instructions, one from the teacher and one from the facilitator:

"Gary tells them to get together as a group and discuss how they are going to do it. Tf runs the discussion again. Gary gives them the clue: use a piece of clothing.

Tf: Jim, try and stand on that one, 'cause Andy is already on this one. (She shows him where he should be). [She is very involved, staying close to them, trying to catch them as they go on the other side].

Gary: If she swings too hard, you've got to try and help her!

Tf: You need to watch out. Don't get knocked over.

[...]

Gary: Hold on to each other, help each other, this is what this exercise is about.

[...]

Tf: Go quickly, other way! (Tf standing behind them.)

[...]

Gary: Help the person get across, you've got to work together." (Field note III, pp. 48-50, 16.05.2006)

⁸⁸ The facilitator conducting the Low Ropes Course. This activity was only conducted by the staff at the centre, it involved using specialised equipment and wearing safety equipment.

Here, Gary is trying to take some of the control back, by giving his own instructions to the pupils, but it often happened that the teacher was talking at the same time as the facilitator and he would sometimes simply give up saying anything. Toward the end of the session he intervenes less and less and it is only the teacher that gives instructions to the pupils. As there were more and more instructions on the part of the teacher, there was less and less cheering and encouraging on the part of the pupils:

Tf: You are not cheering your team.

Pb: Come on! (No other encouragements)

[...]

Tf: My goodness Ann, you are inspired (To a girls who had started to do her own thing as Tf had her back turned, then Tf takes over.)

Tf: Use your elbows. There we go. Well done! Crawl through! Get your knees through!

The girl is stuck.

Tf: Are you stuck?

Pg: Yeah.

Tf: Back you go! Go legs first now! Well done, Ann!" (Field note III, pp. 55-56, 16.05.2006)

When the activity was over, Gary tried to sum up the activity, but the teacher intervened again:

"Gary: Ok guys, what you were supposed to learn about [...] was to work together, help each other, try and have your own initiative. You've done that. Unfortunately, we've run out of time.

Tf: Do you think you've worked well as a team?

Ps: Yeah. (softly)

Tf: I think you did very well as a team, too. Well done!" (Field note III, p. 57, 16.05.2006)

The pupils did not appear to be enthusiastic about finishing the task, as there was no cheering at all. Gary apologised to the pupils for not being able to finish the whole low ropes course and seemed resigned to just tell them what they were supposed to learn. The pupils had no real opportunity to express themselves, and throughout the entire activity the pupils had little or no choice. Gary himself had limited chances to

get involved in conducting the activity. The lack of self-control on the part of the teacher not only disempowered the facilitator, but it also disempowered the pupils, as the teacher and the pupils did not engage in critical, reflective, imaginative and collaborative thinking. Moreover, there was no open dialogue between the pupils and the teacher and there was no joint ownership of the outdoor classroom. These practices, according to Robinson (1994: 157), are central to empowerment.

When pupils fail to practice self-control, teachers/facilitators and even other pupils can teach them self-control as part of a joint experience, as it has been shown in section 11.1.3. However lack of self-control can, at times, lead to conflict within the outdoor classroom, as I will illustrate below.

Andy is an example of a male pupil adopting a controlling approach. He was the leader within a group coming from School I⁸⁹, and he wanted to be independent from the facilitator and also from the other pupils. The activity was toxic waste⁹⁰ and it took place outside on a windy cold day. Without discussing with the others, Andy tried something on his own, attempting to take charge of the activity from the very beginning. However he was challenged by the facilitator, Jane, who told him that his idea was not acceptable:

“Jane: I tell you one thing: Don’t try the lassoing!

Andy: Why?

Jane: Because the string is too light, and it’s too windy. You need to sort it as a group!

[Andy takes the lead.] [...]

Andy: Ok, can I use a stone?

Jane: No! You are only allowed to use what I’ve given you! [She rejects Andy’s idea.]” (Field notes IV, pp. 70-71, 22.05.2006)

Andy did not listen to the suggestion that one of the other pupils made, even when Jane encouraged the girl to explain her idea to the group. He tried his idea again, to which Jane responded by threatening him with punishment:

⁸⁹ See section 6.3.1 for a description of the school, and Table 2 on p. 343 for more information about the group.

⁹⁰ See Appendix 1(I) for description of the activity.

“Jane: Andy, that’s the third time, next time I’ll pull you out of the group. [shouting]” (Field notes IV, p. 71, 22.05.2006)

Jane gave the group a hint as to how they should solve the task, Andy took charge again, but he continued to be challenged by Jane:

“Jane: Guys, the way you’re doing it is the way is supposed to, but you need to stop shouting. Andy, you’re having a go at people and the two girls behind you are shouting too.

[They have another go.]

Jane: You’re pulling it too hard! [shouting angrily]

Andy: Go there, pull it, pull it!” (Field notes IV, p. 72, 22.05.2006)

Andy seemed to take the criticism in his stride and continued to lead. However, it did not take long until he was not only challenged by Jane, but also by the other pupils, some of whom refused to take part in the activity and expressed disapproval with his approach:

“Jane: You need to use more elastic bands!

Andy doesn’t add more elastic bands.

Pg1: Andy won’t listen to us! (to another girl)

Pg2: Yeah, and it’s not going to work! (to Pg1)

Pg1: Andy, you’re not listening to us. Why don’t you change the elastic bands?

[...]

Pg3: I’m not getting involved! (to me) How is it even going to work with just one? It’s not even going to work with two.” (Field notes IV, p. 73, 22.05.2006)

A girl suggested that Anna, another pupil, had a better idea, which undermined Andy’s leadership even further:

“Pg4: Come on, Anna has more sense, Andy just wouldn’t let us talk! (to the girl who refuses to get involved) (Field notes IV, p. 74, 22.05.2006)

Eventually, Jane took Andy out of the activity for a while and started to get even more involved in the activity, by giving them specific instructions. After the other pupils made a few attempts to solve the task, Andy was allowed to take part in the

activity again, but his approach did not change, which caused one pupil to criticise him again:

“Pb: We came to [the centre] to have fun, not to be shouted at, Andy!” (Field notes IV, pp. 77-78, 22.05.2006)

After the activity ended, Jane approached me and explained to me her decision to take Andy out:

“Jane: You know, lately, the smallest things wind me up, like when I see them kicking at each other and blaming each other. I’m like, guys, you’re supposed to be a team! It really does my head in. Like when I saw them now, the way they were shouting at each other. I decided to take Andy out, and I told him: ‘I didn’t take you out because you were naughty, but because I want you to see how they’re doing it’. And after watching them for a while, he said: ‘Yeah, they are working better’. And I told him: ‘You see, that’s because they are working together and not shouting’. And I said that he could go back after a while. I mean, they were working so much better without Andy.” (Field notes IV, pp. 78-79, 22.05.2006)

Through these actions, Andy was protecting his leadership status within the group, however his need to lead was disempowering the other pupils, some of whom did not have the opportunity to take part in the activity at all. The protests of the pupils are an indicator of the frustration within the group and the need for dialogue. Andy lacked self-control. By shouting, using threats, and temporarily removing Andy from the group, Jane also failed to empower and teach self-control, as Andy’s approach did not change throughout the whole of the activity, even after his temporary removal. Without a dialogue between facilitator and pupil, the conflict remained unresolved.

Conclusions

It appears from my research that many teachers/facilitators found it difficult to step back, and not get involved in the activity. On occasion, some teachers/facilitators found it difficult to find a balance between supporting and helping the pupils, and taking over the activity completely. Some teachers/facilitators would verbally encourage the pupils to work as a team, but would act in a manner that undermined their team effort by interfering in the decision making process, or by helping them physically instead of encouraging the pupils to help each other.

However, teacher/facilitator involvement is important, as pupils tend to lose interest in the task, if their teachers show little or no interest themselves in the activity (see section 10.1.3). Some teachers/facilitators seemed more concerned with their pupils' safety at times, than with the way they were carrying out the task (see sections 10.1.1 and 10.3.2). Other times, some teachers appeared more concerned with getting the task done, finishing the activity 'successfully', maintaining the order, rather than looking at how the group was working together. Also, it happened that teachers/facilitators were mostly worried about the pupils not cheating, not breaking the rules, without paying attention to the pupils' needs. Robinson (1994) emphasises how important it is for teachers to be aware of the impact that they have on their pupils' lives:

“Without a sense of responsibility and a strong ethical commitment to becoming fully human, a teacher can choose to destroy lives as well as support them.” (Robinson, 1994: 129)

It has emerged that control governed much of the interaction between the pupils and the teachers. This control may stem from the teacher/facilitator's need to contain the situation, to manage the risk, to have discipline, to finish the task. Some of the pupils also manifested a desire to control, to overpower others. They seemed to be concerned with maintaining their status and self-image in front of the other pupils, even at the expense of somebody else's interests. Pupils manage their self-image in a way, which is advantageous to them, and this presentational problem can become critical within group interaction, when the expectations of the peers and the

teacher/facilitator may clash. Thus, the maintenance of their self-image and sense of identity in this context is a constant concern (Pollard, 1985).

I have shown that when participants adopted controlling approaches, characterised by the absence of dialogue, of choice, a lack of self-control, as well as a power-over, rather than a power-with relationship, there was little enjoyment, enthusiasm and a great deal of frustration within the groups, which, it appeared, could be disempowering. This results in negative learning as the pupils fail to learn to communicate with each other, to help each other and to work together, which are the desired learning outcomes mentioned by the staff in section 9.2.1, and which do not seem to be achieved in these instances.

However, I have illustrated that empowering practices create an environment where learning becomes a beneficial social experience, as pupils are able to share their thoughts, opinions and feelings with the teachers/facilitators and their peers, they are given the opportunity to make their own decisions and are encouraged to reflect on what they have done and learned. I have shown how an open dialogue between the pupils and the teachers/facilitators, and collaborating and cooperating among pupils illustrate the beneficial social aspect of learning within the outdoor classroom. In the next chapter I will briefly look at how the social aspect of learning has been considered in outdoor education, and draw on social constructionism and socio-cultural learning theory in order to offer a better understanding of how learning is constructed in the outdoor classroom.

12. The Social Aspect of Learning within the Outdoor Classroom

Initially, this chapter examines how the social aspect of learning has been considered in outdoor education, pointing out that the social dimension of learning has been largely ignored by the literature. It then draws on social constructionism and socio-cultural learning theory in order to explain how learning is constructed in the outdoor classroom.

12.1. The Social Aspect of Learning: Social Learning – Theoretical Considerations

I suggest that the findings discussed in chapters 8 to 11 show that there is a social aspect of learning, which, at times, characterises the outdoor experience at the centre. The data that emerged from the research clearly highlight the centrality of social interaction and the consequential significance of the social nature of the learning experience.

In chapter two, I explored educational frameworks and perspectives, which underpin much of outdoor education. Kolb's influential model of experiential learning, which is strongly established within outdoor education (see chapter 2, Figure 1, p.26), has been critiqued by many. According to Miettinen (2000), Kolb places experience and reflection in isolation from each other, however, in Miettinen's (2000) view, it is necessary for the individual to interact with others and the environment in order to enhance the reflection process. Thus Miettinen (2000) points out the social nature of learning and the omission of this in Kolb's work. Reynolds (1997) and Holman *et al* (1997) also critiqued the model, by suggesting that the model divorces people from the social, historical and cultural aspects of self, thinking and action and situates itself in the cognitive psychology tradition, as it overlooks important aspects of social life and tries to explain it in a mechanistic manner.

It appears that a four-stage cycle, sharing similarities with Kolb's model, is widely spread within outdoor education when drawing upon experiential education (Itin, 1999; Luckner and Nadler, 1997; Wurdinger and Priest, 1999). According to Tucker (2002: 399) the four-stage cycle is seen to be:

- 1) action that creates experience;
- 2) reflection on that action;
- 3) abstractions drawn from the reflections;
- 4) application of the abstraction to a new experience.

Itin (1999) argues that the social aspect of the learning environment does not appear to be taken into consideration within the definitions of an experiential approach to learning. Itin (1999) also states that such definitions quoting a four-stage cycle, fail to address this social factor or the ‘transactive’ part of learning between teacher and learner. As I have shown in chapter 11, the interactions between the teachers, facilitators and the pupils at the centre are of great importance for the understanding of the educational process, and therefore this supports Itin’s (1999) emphasis on the redefinition of the experiential process within outdoor education, to include a social transactive process.

According to Tucker (2002: 388), it appears that ‘an understanding of the social environment and context, from the interactions that take place, the structuring of a course to the communication and negotiation skills of the trainers’ is not sufficiently explored within the literature of outdoor education. I have also shown in chapter one, that very little attention has been paid to groups and group interactions within the field of outdoor education, which suggests that the social dimension of the educational process is being ignored, thus supporting Tucker’s (2002) statement.

Since the theory underpinning outdoor education appears to have paid little attention to the social aspect of learning, I refer to social constructionism and socio-cultural learning theory for a better understanding of the process of learning, which includes the social dimension.

12.2. *Social Constructionism and Socio-cultural Learning Theory*

According to Gergen (1995: 24) social constructionism and social-cultural learning theory (the latter developed by Vygotsky, 1978) put the community before the individual, considering the individual’s rationality as a ‘by-product’ of the social

sphere. Moreover, dialogic processes are placed at the centre of the educational process. Gergen (1995: 24) emphasises the importance of the rationality being achieved out of community, arguing that without this, the individual self cannot exist.

Wertsch (1995) also sees Vygotsky's theory as rejecting individual psychological reductionism. The Vygotskian approach is unlike Piaget's understanding of learning, to which constructivism theory can be related, and which concentrates on the individual, and fails to consider the social sphere of learning (Rogoff, 1990; Steffe and Gale, 1995). Others also adhere to the Vygotskian view and stress the significance of the social aspect instead of the biological aspect of development emphasised by Piaget (Blanck, 1990; Moll, 1990; Rosa and Montero, 1990). Rosa and Montero (1990) dispute Piaget's argument that the developmental process coincides with learning, and argue that it follows learning.

Therefore, the constructivist approach to education, which is based on Piaget's work and which has influenced to some extent the understanding of learning in outdoor education, appears to be limited, in that it fails to recognise the importance of the social aspect of learning, emphasised by the social constructionist and Vygotskian approaches (Gergen, 1995; Shotter, 1995). The latter approaches may be able to offer a different perspective on knowledge, unlike the traditional forms of empiricist and rationalistic notions (Tucker, 2002). Tucker (2002: 398) argues that 'the critique of the individualistic ideological stance of traditional views of education is particularly relevant I feel to adventure education' and sees Gergen's (1995) critique of this approach as resonating with adventure education philosophy:

"Such beliefs not only favour a narcissistic or 'me-first' disposition toward life, but cast others (along with the physical environment) into a secondary or instrumental role. Persons and environments are viewed primarily in terms of what they can do for oneself." (Gergen: 1995: 23)

According to Tucker (2002), since the main principles found in adventure education philosophy are having respect for 'others', the 'environment' and 'self', then such a philosophy would fit better within an understanding of the social aspect of learning

over the individualistic. To this, I would add that Gergen's statement above also supports my own argument that groups and group interactions have only had an instrumental role in outdoor education, rather than being focused on and considered as significant for the educational process in themselves. As I have shown in the first chapter, research in outdoor education has focused mainly on the individual and on the outcomes of the outdoor education process. This may be partly explained by the fact that the commonly adopted four-stage experiential learning cycle, which is frequently drawn upon in outdoor education, takes insufficient account of the social aspect of learning (Itin, 1999). Therefore, I would argue that the social constructionist framework and the socio-cultural perspective could contribute to an understanding of how learning is constructed within the outdoor classroom in my own research.

When considering the findings of my research, which I have discussed in chapters 8 to 11, it appears that, in some instances, social aspects of learning have emerged which link this study to social constructionism and socio-cultural perspectives. This link will be considered in the following section, where I explore in greater detail the Vygotskian perspective on learning and relate it to the research I have conducted at the centre.

12.3. A Socio-cultural Perspective on Learning within the Outdoor Classroom

Moll (1990: 15) stresses the significance of the socio-cultural theory for education, as it brings to attention the use of social and cultural resources, which human beings use as primary tools for enabling and promoting change. The Vygotskian perspective, as well as social constructionism, view learning as taking place firstly on the social level (inter-psychological) and only later on the individual level (intra-psychological). Furthermore, according to these perspectives on learning, co-operation and dialogue between learners and learners and between learners and teachers occupy a central position within the educational process (Gergen, 1995). In section 11.1, I have identified empowerment as one of the main themes of my research and have discussed the significance that the concept of empowerment places on open dialogue between the participants in the educational process (see Heaney,

1982 cited in Robinson, 1994; Robinson, 1994). The concept of dialogic talk, which I have considered in section 4.3, and on which I draw in the discussion of the findings in section 11.1.1, also sees dialogue between participants as essential for the construction of knowledge as part of the learning experience (see Alexander, 2004; Bakhtin, 1980; Myhill *et al.*, 2006). Furthermore, in section 11.1.2, I suggest that co-operation and collaboration between the participants plays an important role in the way learning is constructed in the outdoor classroom, as the pupils are encouraged to work together to solve the task, without being told what to do by their teachers/facilitators. The arguments I have presented so far appear to be situated in a social constructionist and socio-cultural framework, because of the emphasis on the social aspect of learning, through dialogue and co-operation between the participants in the educational process.

Vygotsky illustrates the importance of the social aspect, rather than the individual aspect for a child's development:

“Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an inter-psychological category, and then within the child as an intra-psychological category. This is equally true with regards to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volition. We may consider this position as a law in the full sense of the word, but it goes without saying that internalisation transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions. Social relations among people genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships.”
(Vygotsky cited in Wertsch, 1995: 61)

Rogoff (1990: 35) argues that Vygotsky considers that the social-historical context becomes accessible to the individual by interacting with others in society who are more competent members of their society, and therefore, such interaction is essential for cognitive development. It becomes evident from this that the Vygotskian perspective on learning places interaction at the heart of the educational process, which is central to this research, since I am exploring how learning is constructed through group interaction in the outdoor classroom. Interaction is significant to the concept of empowerment as well, as it is through interaction that an open dialogue

can be created (see Robinson, 1994). In the light of this, taking a socio-cultural perspective on learning within the outdoor classroom appears to be appropriate and relevant.

Vygotsky's central theory, the Zone of Proximal Development, encapsulates this social aspect of learning. Moll (1990) sees the zone of proximal development as a "connecting" concept on Vygotsky's theory, which consists of the key elements of the theory:

"the emphasis on social activity and cultural practice as sources of thinking, the importance of mediation in human psychological functioning, the centrality of pedagogy in development, and the inseparability of the individual from the social." (Moll, 1990: 15)

Vygotsky himself defined the zone of proximal development as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978: 78 quoted in Tudge, 1990: 156-157). Tudge (1990: 156-157) elucidates this definition in this statement:

"Vygotsky proposed that each child, in any domain, has an "actual developmental level" which can be assessed by testing him or her individually, and an immediate potential for development within that domain. Vygotsky termed this difference between the two levels the zone of proximal development ..."

According to Moll (1990), Vygotsky pointed out the fact that by learning collaboratively or with assistance today, children will be enabled to learn independently and competently in the future. This has significant implications for the educational process in general and for the learning experience in the outdoors in particular, as transferable skills are an important aspect of learning in the outdoor classroom, as indicated by staff at the centre in their interviews (see section 9.2.1).

Therefore, some of the principles of the Vygotskian approach can be seen in practice at the outdoor centre where I conducted my research, particularly when referring to

the empowering approaches that some of the participants adopted during the activities. In section 11.1.1 (pp. 203-206), I have shown how Susan, one of the facilitators at the centre, engaged the pupils in open dialogue after the first activity and how they were able to build on each other's and Susan's knowledge in order to learn how to be a better team, as it is illustrated in their discussion below:

“Susan: How did you manage?

Pb1: We have to listen to each other, 'cause in the end we became quite angry.

Susan: And also what else?

Pb2: We didn't move.

Susan: That's it, when you all stood still, it worked.” (Field notes I, p. 218, 28.06.2005)

During the next activity, the pupils appeared to help each other more and listen to the advice of their peers. The atmosphere was more relaxed and fun, as there was a lot of laughter and cheering, without much anger. Therefore, the pupils in this example used the previous knowledge gained from the first activity in the next activity and were able to work better as a team.

Rosa and Montero (1990: 50) demonstrate the importance of the zone of proximal development for the creation of an optimal learning environment by outlining several significant aspects of it. First of all, they point out that what defines this concept is the difference between the level of the tasks that can be performed with the assistance from adults and the level of the tasks that can be solved with independent activity. In this research, I have highlighted the importance of the teachers/facilitators in finding a balance between getting too involved in the activity and not allowing the pupils to express their views and opinions (i.e. the controlling approaches) and stepping back (see section 11.1.1). Teachers/facilitators adopting the empowering approaches were able to achieve this balance, in my view, and created a learning environment where the pupils could freely express themselves and be supported whenever they needed it. Some activities required more or less intervention from the adults; knowing when to step in and help and when to stop interfering, was essential for the learning experience of the pupils. This was illustrated in the example presented in section 11.1.1 where the female teacher was able to open a dialogue

with the pupils, allowing them to express their opinions and thoughts (see p. 199, pp. 200-201), intervening only when the pupils appeared to be struggling with the task (see pp. 199, 200, 205), when there was a conflict within the group (see p. 200), or when the pupils were upset and needed comforting (see pp. 199, 205).

Rosa and Montero (1990) also stress the importance of the social interaction within the zone of proximal development. I have stressed this myself several times when referring to the outdoor educational process. I have shown that pupils and teachers/facilitators construct learning together, while interacting in the outdoor classroom (see sections 11.1.1, 11.1.2 and 11.1.3). Thus pupils learn by working together and with their teachers/facilitators what it means to work as a team, as it has been shown in the example on pp. 205-206, where Susan after involving the pupils in short 'team-building' exercises (non-verbal interaction), started a discussion with them (verbal interaction) about the concept of team work, in which the pupils contributed with their own ideas and thoughts. This could be described as an interactive learning experience, where knowledge is constructed through interaction.

Another important aspect of the zone of proximal development pointed out by Rosa and Montero (1990: 50) is the importance for teachers to assess the needs of the individuals and their inclinations and incentives. They point out that this can be done better within a cooperative work context, than within an individual one. Assessing the needs, inclinations and incentives of the pupils is also an important aspect of outdoor learning experience, since pupils appeared to respond to teachers/facilitators and their peers when they encouraged and supported them during the activities (see pp. 199; 204; 205, 209-210). Moreover, Rosa and Montero (1990: 80) see communication and co-operation among the participants in the learning process "to be a tremendously effective instructional strategy". The importance of communication as part of the learning experience at the centre was evident in the comments made by the staff (see section 9.2.1). Also, the findings from the analysis of the empowering approaches have also shown that some types of communication and co-operation both among pupils and between pupils and teachers/facilitators can create a supportive and positive learning environment (see section 11.1.3), whilst other forms may not.

In section 11.1.2, I have shown that collaboration and co-operation was encouraged by some of the teachers and was used by some of the pupils as an empowering practice, which enabled them not only to solve the task at hand, but also to deal with conflict within the group. In the example on page 208, the male teacher brought to the attention of the group that one of their peers had excluded himself from the activity, he then took a step back, allowing the pupils to deal with the situation on their own terms. The group expressed concern for the pupil's feelings and collaborated to find a way to 'cheer him up' and to include him in the task (see pp. 208-209). In the end, the group was successful in winning the raft race, through a collaborative effort, which involved all the members of the group, including the boy that had initially refused to take part in the activity.

In section 11.2.1, I have shown that teachers/facilitators using order and instructions denied the pupils any opportunity to have a choice in the outdoor classroom and did not create the space for a dialogue where the pupils could express themselves, their thoughts and feelings (see pp. 217-224). This can lead to disempowerment (see Robinson, 1994), as the teachers failed to provide an atmosphere in the outdoor classroom that allowed the pupils to feel safe, liked and appreciated, which may inhibit their learning (see Hart, 1986; Neve, 1985; Nummela Caine and Caine, 1991).

Moll (1990) sees the mediation process of the experience as central to the Vygotskian perspective, as Vygotsky paid particular attention to the nature of social interactions, especially between adults and children. According to Moll (1990) and Tudge (1990) the zone of proximal development is a process through which children become socialised into the dominant culture, by collaborating with others, be they an adult or a more competent peer and thus one achieves development in "culturally appropriate ways" (Tudge, 1990: 157). Furthermore, Elbers *et al.* (1992: 22-23) suggest that it is important for teachers/trainers to have negotiation and communication skills in facilitating a process of learning, as it allows for culture to not simply be transmitted, but also reproduced and recreated in new ways.

Nevertheless, learning through collaboration with more competent peers does not take into consideration the situation of learning between learners where there is not one member who is more competent. According to Tudge (1990) negative learning

may occur in this type of situations, however it is also suggested that there could also be cases where joint problem solving could contribute to learning, even if there is no one more competent. This point is supported by Rogoff (1990) and Gergen (1995), who also argue that learning is more effective within a joint process, either among pupils or between pupils and teachers. Mercer (1995: 73) points out that such a joint process of learning, between the teacher and the pupils, and between pupils and pupils “draws attention to the construction of knowledge as a joint achievement.”

According to Tucker (2002) dialogue and social action appear to be dominant within the zone of proximal development, which implies that active, rather than passive methods of teaching are seen as important. Therefore it is suggested that the learning experience should be structured in such a way so as to be within the reach of the individual’s zone of proximal development, in order to provide what Vygotsky calls scaffolding (Moll, 1990; Rogoff, 1990). The concept of scaffolding refers to fact that the skills of the teacher/facilitator have to be appropriate in order to match the needs of the individual or the group.

It seems that such pedagogic practices could be found, at times, within the learning environment of the centre where I conducted my research. That is to say, when adopting an empowering approach, the teachers/facilitators supported and encouraged collaboration and co-operation among the participants. On occasion, encouraging pupils to work together and help each other allowed them as a group of individuals to work co-operatively on problem solving activities and to come to joint understandings. At times, the reviewing of the activities also allowed the group to come to joint conclusions, understandings and constructions.

However, the conditions for such learning do not appear to be created when teachers/facilitators adopt a controlling approach (see section 11.2). The lack of dialogue and the lack of encouragement to collaborate and co-operate seem to interfere with the learning process (see section 11.2.1). Although learning may occur at some level, it may be that it is negative learning, i.e. pupils do not work together on the task and do not experience what it means to work as a team. In any case, the pupils are not given the opportunity to express themselves within the group and

therefore it is more difficult for them to achieve the construction of knowledge as a joint process (see sections 11.2.1 and 11.2.2).

I have drawn upon the framework of social constructionism and the socio-cultural perspective to explain and provide an understanding of the social aspect of learning at the centre. These perspectives have been used to explore the learning principles that appear to be underpinning practice at times within the outdoor classroom at the centre and have shown the impact of the teacher/facilitator approaches on the learning experience of the pupils. By looking at the group interactions within the outdoor classroom, I have uncovered a social dimension of the educational process and illustrated how learning is constructed in the outdoors in the context of this centre.

13. Conclusions

13.1. Introduction

The aim of this research was to take a holistic approach to the study of groups in a natural setting in order to describe, discover, analyse and understand the interactions and the learning process involved within groups of primary school children taking part in outdoor activities at a residential outdoor centre.

This research has started with a broad focus of enquiry that has changed as the research progressed, this being characteristic for an ethnographic approach (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The main aim has always been the study of groups in outdoor education, however the perspective has changed from a socio-psychological approach, to a qualitative/interpretative study of groups. Moreover, the focus also shifted to the process of outdoor education itself, since, I believed, that by studying the group interactions of participants involved in outdoor activities would also shed light on the outdoor experience and thus help to better understand the process.

13.2. Theoretical Considerations for a Study of Groups and the Social Aspect of Learning in the Outdoor Classroom

Outdoor education theories and research, which I have explored in the first two chapters of the thesis, can be useful, however they contribute only partially to understanding and describing the significance of the social aspect of the learning experience uncovered within this study. It has been shown in chapter 12 that the theoretical underpinnings of outdoor education seem to ignore, for the most part, the social aspect of learning. Also, it has been argued that research conducted in this field, has focused very little on groups and group interactions (see chapter 1), paying too much attention to the outcomes and not enough to the educational process and the social interactions between the participants (see Beames, 2004; Rickinson *et al.*, 2004).

Extensive research has been done on groups in the field of socio-psychology (see Bales, 1950; Crosbie, 1975; Hare, 1962; Sherif, 1954; Znaniecki, 1939), however I have shown in chapter 3 (see section 3.4) that the traditional socio-psychological

theories on the small group and group development have been critiqued for having empirical limitations and theoretical problems (see Hogg and Abrams, 1988). The reliance of such theories on interpersonal attraction and cohesion in order to explain group formation and group development, has led to findings which were considered 'anomalous' and which could not be explained by the traditional approach. Hogg and Abrams (1998) argue that this was due to the fact that the experiments conducted by traditional socio-psychology often created the conditions for social, rather than personal attraction, which could not be explained by the traditional theories. I would also suggest that the limitations of the traditional socio-psychological approach on the study of groups also stem from the use of the experiment as a research tool, which has been deemed inappropriate by many social researchers (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). I consider that by adopting a qualitative approach on the study of groups and group interactions outside the controlled environment of the laboratory and in a more natural setting, such as the outdoor classroom, allowed for more discovery not only about interaction within groups in this context, but also about the educational process in which the groups I studied were involved.

In this thesis, I drew on educational research on classroom interaction because it explores both the perspectives of teachers and pupils and how their interplay impacts on the learning experiences (see chapter 4), which contributed to the understanding of what goes on when facilitators, teachers and pupils interact within the outdoor classroom. However, such research and the theory that underpins it, although it explains some of the phenomena within the outdoor classroom, does not fully elucidate at times how learning was constructed by the participants in this research and what governed their relationships during group interaction while taking part in 'team-building' activities. My research uncovered a social aspect of learning at the outdoor centre and therefore, I drew upon social constructionism and socio-cultural learning theory for a better understanding of some of the phenomena explored in this research, as these perspectives focus on the idea that learning is a social process, placing interaction at the heart of the educational process (see Rogoff, 1990). By using classroom interaction, social constructionism and the socio-cultural learning theories, I intended to integrate the findings from this research within a theoretical

framework that may more fully explain the phenomena uncovered and I would argue that this could not have been possible if only one perspective had been used.

13.3. *The Social Aspect of Learning at the Outdoor Centre*

The centre where I conducted the research provides and promotes educational programmes for young people and adults, having visitors from youth organisations, schools and corporations. The centre also provides programmes for terminally ill and disabled young people. I chose to focus on the residential programmes provided to primary school groups, due to my experience as a teacher and my particular interest in primary school education. Also, I believed that if I had focused on youth at risk or disabled young people, this could have taken the focus away from what I initially set out to study, i.e. group interactions and the outdoor educational process.

Throughout chapters 8, 9 and 11, I show that the atmosphere at the centre can be interpreted as emphasising a social aspect of learning. Chapter 8 illustrates that the aims and objectives of the centre and the activities used as learning tools, promote, according to the centre, both the social and individual development of the participants. The outdoor programmes for the school groups appeared to have a common organisation for all the groups I was able to observe. This organisation was characterised by a progression of the activities, which allowed the participants to be introduced gradually to the new learning environment and the concept of team building. It also enabled them to develop relationships within the group and gave the opportunity to the staff at the centre to build a relationship with the pupils and the teachers. The participants experienced the centre as a social context since they not only shared accommodation and meals and spent their free time together, but they also worked and learned together, as part of a group.

Chapter 9 brings to light the focus of both the centre, as an institution and of its staff, on the concepts of team building and working together, which underlie the learning as a social experience. The interviews with the staff at the centre, which I have discussed in section 9.2, suggest that the social nature of the experience at the centre is an essential part of the learning process for them. Making friends, learning to

communicate with others and to work together as a team are considered by the staff to be significant learning outcomes.

Therefore, group work is at the basis of the conceptualisation of the outdoor educational process at the centre, which denotes the social dimension of the outdoor residential experience at this particular centre. It has been shown that the social aspect of learning is not only supported by the organisational objectives and philosophy, but also by the perspectives of the staff on the educational process.

13.4. The Impact of the Participant Approaches on the Outdoor Experience – The Social Aspect of Learning in the Outdoor Classroom

This research, unlike the majority of previous studies on classroom interaction, looks at the outdoor classroom. In the outdoor classroom, teachers and facilitators interact with a relatively smaller number of pupils in groups, making it possible to better explore and understand phenomena involved in the learning process. Furthermore, research on classroom interaction has mainly focused on the perspectives of the teachers and pupils (e.g. Pollard, 1985), however this study has uncovered the importance of also considering the various participant approaches in order to gain greater insight into the outdoor learning experience. The findings of this research have revealed that the participants had different approaches within the outdoor classroom. I have considered not only the approaches of the teachers and facilitators, but also the approaches of the pupils, as they all influenced to varying degrees the outdoor experience. Ignoring one or the other would have seriously affected the understanding of the educational process and would not have allowed the reader to have a holistic view of the group interactions that came into play within the outdoor classroom.

There was a variety of approaches, which each group of participants adopted and these are illustrated in Appendices 10, 12, 13, 14. Each pupil, teacher or facilitator was not characterised by just one single approach, but rather went through related kinds of approaches (see Chapter 10). By analysing these approaches two main themes have emerged: empowerment and control. In my discussion, I focused

particularly on these two themes, as they have contributed the most to the understanding and explaining of the educational process. These themes appeared to influence most of the interaction within the groups observed at the centre and the empowering and controlling approaches seemed to impact significantly the way in which learning was constructed in the outdoor classroom. Moreover, conflict within the outdoor classroom was, at times, the result of the tension that became apparent between the empowering and the controlling approaches. Thus, I considered that examining these two kinds of approaches was a suitable and relevant way of illustrating the group interactions within the outdoor classroom and of shedding light on the outdoor educational process (see chapters 10, 11 and 12).

Therefore, due to the different approaches of the teachers, facilitators and pupils, the participants had different experiences within the outdoor classroom. For instance, I have shown that on occasion, the experiences of the participants at the centre seemed to be structured around creating an environment where social interaction was promoted and expected (see section 11.1.2). On such occasions, learning became a joint process that involved the whole group of pupils and was not focused on the individuals and this illustrates a social aspect of learning. Groups are therefore of great consequence within this learning environment and learning is constructed as a social experience and is not seen as a separate, individual practice.

The empowering approaches that some of the participants (i.e. the teachers/facilitators and the pupils) adopted at times, created an environment where the pupils had a voice and a dialogue between the pupils and the teachers/facilitators was opened. Theories concerned with empowerment and dialogic talk view dialogue as an essential part of the educational process (Alexander, 2004; Bakhtin, 1980; Gergen, 1995; Heaney, 1982 cited in Robinson, 1994; Myhill *et al.*, 2006; Robinson, 1994). This open dialogue between the participants is the defining aspect of the empowering approaches and it allows the pupils to build on each other's and the teachers'/facilitators' knowledge in order to learn how to work together and how to communicate, which are the desired learning outcomes mentioned by the centre staff in their interviews (see section 9.2.1). Participants adopting empowering approaches, tend to use empowering practices, which encourage pupils to think, take responsibility over the activity and make their own decisions. This makes it possible

for pupils to work independently and to rely on each other's support, rather than to always rely on the teachers'/facilitators' instructions.

By being able to find a balance between stepping back and getting involved in the activity and by facilitating collaboration and co-operation between the pupils, the teachers/facilitators adopting an empowering approach would allow for learning to be constructed socially, as a joint process (see sections 11.1.1, 11.1.2 and 11.1.3), which, some argue, enables learning to be more effective (see Rogoff, 1990 and Gergen, 1995). In an empowering group, pupils are given the opportunity to learn about self-control, which means allowing others to lead and participate and not always be dominant (see section 11.1.3). These are also desired learning outcomes stated by the facilitators (see section 9.2.1).

The research also highlighted that the lack of dialogue, which is characteristic for the controlling approaches of some of the participants, hinders the learning, thus disempowering the pupils. The participants adopting a controlling approach tend to value order and discipline and give specific instructions, which do not allow for the conditions of collaboration and co-operation to be created within the outdoor educational process and this comes in contradiction with the social nature of the team building activities. Moreover, the controlling approaches are also characterised by a lack of self-control and a tendency to dominate during the activity. This puts the participants adopting such approaches in an overpowering position, which can lead to frustration and lack of enjoyment within the group (see sections 11.2.1 and 11.2.2). Hence, negative learning may occur, for example, the pupils may fail to learn to communicate with each other, to help each other, they may not gain the confidence to lead, or may not understand the need for sometimes having to relinquish leadership and let others lead. In conclusion, the desired learning outcomes mentioned by the staff in section 9.2.1 may not be achieved.

Simply involving pupils in team building activities and simply telling them what they should learn or should have learned, does not ensure that learning will occur effectively. It is important for teachers/facilitators to have negotiation and communication skills (Elbers *et al*, 1992), to be adaptable and flexible (Pollard, 1985) in order to facilitate learning and have a successful working experience

(Pollard, 1985). I would suggest, that teachers/facilitators have to be concerned and aware of the impact that their approach may have on the learning experience of the children and not to rely on the stated objectives of the outdoor activities to ensure the desired learning outcomes, as it was the case in some of the examples presented in sections 11.2.1 and 11.2.2 (see pp. 222, 223, 224). As Dickson (2005: 236) pointed out, having a well-designed process does not result in the participants achieving the 'appropriate outputs'. The role of the teachers/facilitators is important, but, according to a number of analysts, there has to be a dialogue among learners and between learners and teachers for learning to occur effectively (see Gergen, 1995; Moll, 1990; Robinson, 1994; Rogoff, 1990) and the findings from this study of group interactions within the outdoor classroom come to support this notion.

13.5. *Considering the Implications of an Ethnographic Approach*

As this is an ethnographic approach, generalisations of the findings are not the aim of the thesis (see chapter 5), however since such a study seeks to produce 'rich' and 'thick' descriptions of the phenomena (Geertz, 1973), it might allow for "naturalistic generalisations" (Stake, 2000) to be arrived at by the reader. Furthermore, the reference to the theory and empirical studies in the first four chapters and in the data analysis, contributes to the understanding of the processes discovered and have not been used to evaluate or generalise.

Undertaking an ethnographic study involves an interpretation of the data collected, which is partly done during the data collection process and more systematically after a stage of fieldwork has been completed (see chapter 7). I do not consider the interpretations I have made as 'final' and 'true', however I would argue that they are credible as they are based on my knowledge of the social world I observed and framed within a theoretical understanding of the outdoor classroom.

I observed a total number of 14 groups of primary school children, aged between 6 and 12, accompanied by their teachers and the centre staff. Most groups stayed for a period of three days at the centre and therefore there was limited time for me to build a strong rapport with the visiting pupils and teachers. However, I was able to learn about and understand the ethos and the philosophy of the outdoor centre where the

research was conducted. I also developed a close relationship with the facilitators at the centre, which contributed toward my understanding and interpretation of their perspectives on the educational process and the work that they did at the centre. Exploring the various ways in which the groups were facilitated played an important part in revealing how pupils learned in the outdoor classroom.

This ethnography has looked at the educational process in its complexity, by taking into consideration the voices and approaches of all the participants. This was also necessary for the understanding of the group interactions within the outdoor classroom, since this was the main aim of this research. The participants are viewed to be part of the research, they are not 'subjects' on whom research is done and I consider their contribution as invaluable for this study.

13.6. *Suggestions for Further Research*

Further research could be conducted to follow up the experience in the outdoor classroom and how this translates within the indoor classroom, whether the group interactions change within the indoor classroom and whether learning is constructed differently after the outdoor learning experience. This could have serious implications for practice and policy, as it would explore the need for pupils to be involved in learning outside the confines of the school and to further investigate the contributions of non-formal/informal education to learning in general.

More insight could be gained in the perspectives of the visiting teachers and of the pupils, which due to time constraints and issues of rapport, have not been fully explored in this thesis. This would contribute to the understanding of their experience in the outdoors even further, as it would allow for more opportunities for their voices to be heard, which was limited in this research. Some of the teachers in this research expressed concern about conducting outdoor activities themselves, the reasons behind this concern could be examined and the implications that they may have on schools' decisions to take groups of pupils outdoors. Also, some pupils appeared to be less willing to take part in outdoor activities, further research could elucidate the causes of this reticence and the extent to which biographical factors come into play. It is also worth considering the question of if and how the notion of a 'culture of fear'

(see Furedi, 1997) may have an impact on the teachers/facilitators approaches in the outdoor classroom, or whether outdoor education could counteract, as it is being argued, the 'cotton wool' approach (see Waiton and Baird, 2006) to children currently seen in UK society.

Furthermore, the outdoor educational process could be analysed in even greater detail, by starting research from the preparation stages, before entering the outdoor classroom, which would allow for a deeper understanding of how learners and teachers construct learning in and outside the outdoor setting. Also the outdoor and indoor educational process could be compared in order to identify differences and similarities in teaching approaches, perspectives and the learning experience and how they affect the overall process. Taking into consideration the specific features of the outdoor classroom, i.e. smaller numbers of pupils to teachers/facilitators and the non-formal aspect, which means that there is usually no formal evaluation or accreditation of the pupils, it is worth suggesting that the outdoor classroom may provide opportunities for supplementing the learning within the indoor classroom. The findings of this thesis could make a contribution to informing practice in the indoor classroom. This research, however, has only scratched the surface with regard to these aspects. Future studies could explore the potential of the outdoor classroom to enhance the pupils' learning in and outside the formal classroom.

On a larger scale, comparative studies could also be carried out outside the UK, by exploring the outdoor educational process in other European countries and drawing parallels with what goes on within the British outdoor classroom. A research based European project could contribute toward informing practice all over Europe and especially in Eastern European countries, where research in outdoor education is limited and needs to be developed to a greater extent.

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Appendix 1 –Description of Activities at the Outdoor Centre (Formal Documents)

A. 'Blind string trail' activity at the centre

Equipment:

Blindfold for each person

Scenario:

You are a group of scientists and need to find your way to an important observation point on the far side of the forest.

Unfortunately you are late due to transport difficulties, but your colleagues are waiting for you to be present to observe an old NASA space station that has fallen out of orbit and is due to burn up in the earth's atmosphere at any moment.

As you are late, and may not reach the observation point in time, you will have to be blindfolded so that you do not lose your eyesight, as the phenomena will cause radiation and harmful rays of light. A string trail has been constructed by your colleagues to ensure you find your way, and arrive safely.

Notes:

There are plastic balls tied along the route. One ball means there is an obstacle coming up, two balls mean you need to swap sides of the string, the team should go under the string. This should be done at the balls and not before or after.

Extending the activity:

Start the team blindfold on the field, with one hand on the shoulder of the person in front, they should walk slowly towards the start following your instructions to avoid obstructions.

To introduce them to communication give short messages to the leader and get them to pass it back like Chinese whispers

Debrief:

This should focus on process rather than on task. A circle is usually the best medium, this way all have opportunity to participate. Start by asking questions of the team about their performance, concentrating on: Teamwork; Communication; Leadership; Participation.

B. 'Creepi crawl' activity at the centre

BEFORE YOU START.....

All leaders—please read this carefully before setting off to explore the Creepi Crawl.

This pack is intended for use by group leaders, rather than by the students themselves, although you may photocopy any of the sheets for their use before, during or after your visit to [redacted] [the centre]. Although there are plenty of suggestions on the interpretation boards along the route, you may also wish to do some of the activities in this pack, selecting those that would appeal to your group, or concentrating on some particular aspect of the Creepi Crawl. The detailed Trail Notes included in this pack can be used in conjunction with the interpretation boards, enabling you to get more out of your day.

The Route:

The trail is about 1km long and takes about one hour to walk, but more time should be allowed for activities. It can be split into two parts, or you may like to walk it more than once so that you can concentrate on different aspects. There is also a short cut back to the house from the Insect Eye stopping point. There is a map provided, and waymarkers to find your way around the trail. It is possible to take wheelchairs around the whole trail.

Equipment:

No special clothing is required, except for strong shoes if you want to go off the hard surfaces, and waterproofs in wet weather. Any special equipment needed for activities is listed in the trail notes. You may wish to take a camera (flash facility recommended) for the sculpture activity at Feely Forest.

Safety:

Any safety points you need to be aware of are highlighted in the text. Remember to take special care near the pond. All children must be supervised throughout the trail. Please be aware that electric storms or high winds can be a danger in woodland.

Activities:

If you want to follow the trail with the mind of a minibeast, you may wish to make use of the "Who Am I?" minibeast notes (and answers), an example of which is included in this pack. Collect the appropriate number of badges from the house for the size of your group before you set off. Give out the right question sheet to each student, according to which minibeast they are to be. When they have correctly guessed who they are, then give out the badges. If there are more than seven students they may have to work in pairs.

C. 'Eggs can fly' activity at the centre

Equipment:

Large envelope containing

3 Balloons

3 Paper clips

2 Postcards

1 Piece of string

2 Elastic bands

2 Sheets of paper

1 Length of sticky tape

1 Egg

Scenario:

The team must build a construction that will protect your egg from a 3 metre drop. The construction should be designed to keep the egg intact and without any cracks.

Notes:

At the end of the allotted time the team will have to demonstrate in front of a judge.

Debrief:

This should focus on process rather than on task. A circle is usually the best medium, this way all have opportunity to participate. Start by asking questions of the team about their performance, concentrating on:

Teamwork

Communication

Leadership

Participation

D. 'Scavenger hunt' activity at the centre

How many floodlights are on the Astroturf pitch?

What is the speed limit for vehicles approaching the house?

What is the green dome in the field?

When was the Recreation Centre opened?

How many benches surround the campfire circle?

Where is the weather vane?

How many floors high is [the centre's building]?

What date is on the sundial?

How many houses are at the bottom of the Woodrow drive?

In whose memory was the Recreation Centre built?

How many porches does the main house have?

What colour is the Fire Assembly Point sign?

Which building is closest to the Wishing Well?

How many bridges cross the Ha Ha?

Whose name is on the wooden bench in the sunken garden?

Find and bring back the following items:

A Feather

Five different types of leaves

A piece of string

Five different types of litter

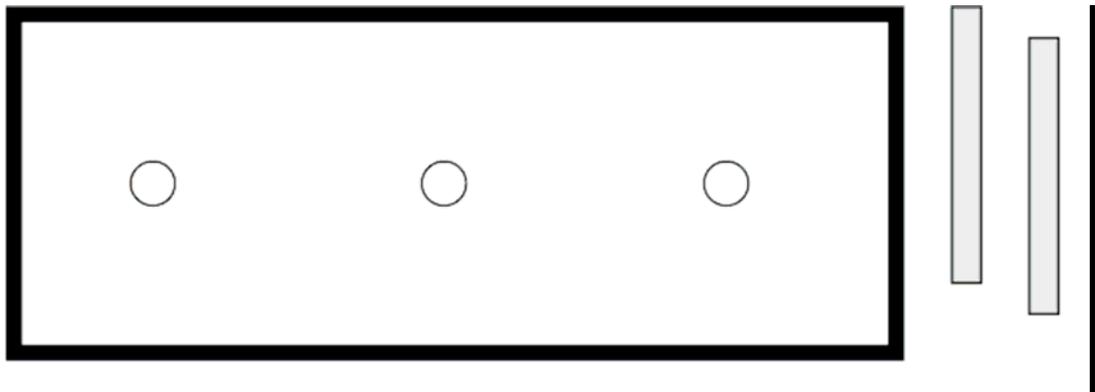
A piece of moss

E. 'Poisoned ground' activity at the centre

Equipment:

2 planks
Poisoned ground
3 Platforms
Gloves

Diagram:



Scenario:

As a team your objective is to cross the area of contaminated ground.

Neither team members or planks may touch the ground within the boundary. Team members are not allowed to jump or step onto the platforms, the planks must be used in order to walk across.

Notes:

The task will involve some lifting. Please ensure the group lift the planks as safely as possible, and are aware of other team members as they do so.

Scoring:

2 points allocated for each team member successfully across.

4 bonus points if all the team get successfully across.

A rating between 1 and 10 for team work (at the discretion of the facilitator).

F. 'Raft building' activity at the centre

Equipment:

Broom handles

Plastic containers

String

Rope

Scenario:

The group have to build a raft to transport the whole team across the pool. The raft should be designed to transport one member of the team at a time. The raft will return empty for the next member. When the whole team are across the task is complete.

Notes:

The raft must not be placed on the ground outside as it is to be used in the pool.

Debrief:

This should focus on process rather than on task. A circle is usually the best medium, this way all have opportunity to participate. Start by asking questions of the team about their performance, concentrating on:

Teamwork

Communication

Leadership

Participation

G. 'Spider's web' activity at the centre

Equipment:

Giant spiders web

At least 6 team members, for lifting purposes.

Scenario:

You are being chased through a large rainforest by a mad tribe of hungry, head shrinking locals, but the web of a very rare, highly poisonous tarantula blocks your path. The only way forward is for you to pass through the web without touching it, which would make the tarantula aware of your presence. If you trigger the web you must quickly exit the web the way you went in before the tarantula sees you. Only those who are successfully through the web can remain in the safe part of the rain forest. You are only permitted to use each of the exit holes in the web a maximum of three times.

Notes:

The group should be given some time prior to the activity to discuss the way in which they propose to tackle the problem, considering weight, height and strength, amongst other factors. The task will involve some lifting. Please ensure the group lift each other as carefully as possible, and provide support until the person is safely on the ground.

Scoring:

2 points allocated for each team member successfully across.

4 bonus points if all the team get successfully across.

A rating between 1 and 10 points for teamwork (at the discretion of the facilitator).

H. 'Krypton puzzles' activity at the centre

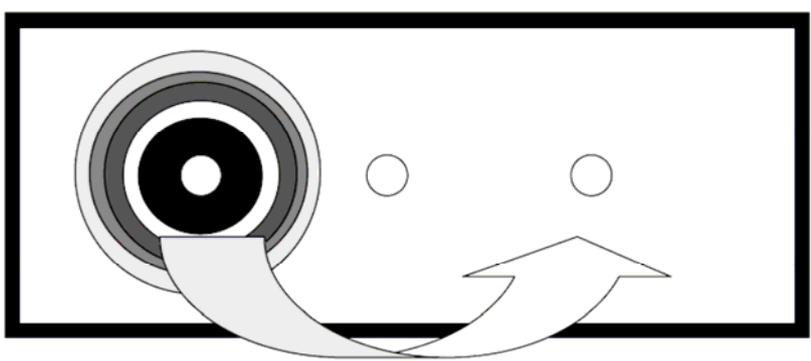
TOWERS OF HANOI

Equipment:

Base with three posts

5 concentric discs of diminishing diameter

Diagram:



Scenario:

The aim is for the team to move the disc from one post at one end to the other post at the other end. They are only allowed to move one at a time and never allowed to place a bigger one on top of a smaller one. They may however jump a post.

Notes:

After their first go, try getting them to count the number of moves it takes and discover the minimum.

Try blindfolding one member of the team, only they are allowed to make the moves. This becomes a very good exercise in communication as undoubtedly the team will use positional language or reference to colour, which will mean nothing to the blindfold person.

Debrief:

This should focus on process rather than on task. A circle is usually the best medium, this way all have opportunity to participate. Start by asking questions of the team about their performance, concentrating on:

Teamwork

Communication

Leadership

Participation

I. 'Toxic waste' activity at the centre

Equipment:

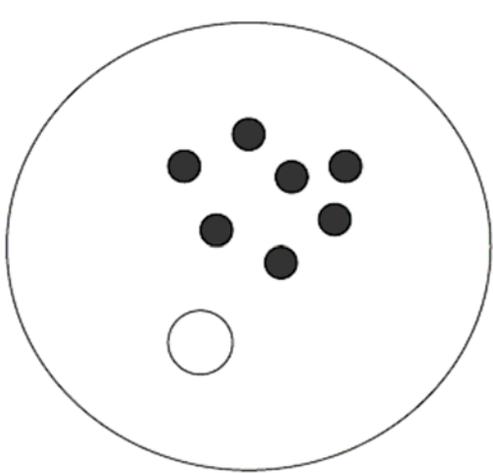
6 piles of toxic waste (tubes)

Roped off area

4 lengths of string in bundles held by 4 elastic bands

1 Safety container (big bucket)

Diagram:

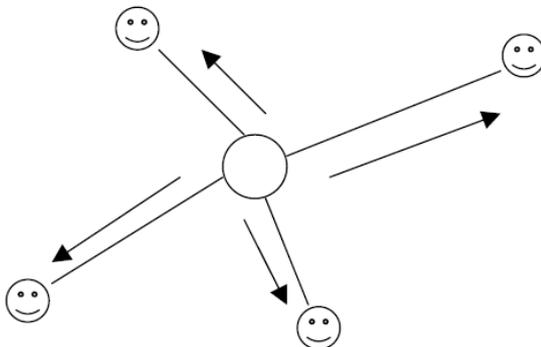


Scenario:

Piles of toxic waste has been dumped which have to be neutralised by placing them into the safety container. Providing no-one gets within 2m (inside the rope circle) they will be safe. Only the equipment provided (string and elastic bands) may be used to complete this task.

Notes:

The solution is to tie the 4 pieces of string to an elastic band (or 2) then with four operators each holding the string manouver the elastic above a pile of toxic waste, lower release the tension to grip the pile lift together and drop into the bucket. Repeat.



J. 'Orienteering' activity at the centre

Task: The overall aim of this activity is to find your way to all 8 of the control view points and identify all 8 of the check points correctly.

You are provided with a laminated map and this facilitator sheet. Using your map you are required to make your way round to all 8 of the check points using the map. ***You will find out that all of the points are accessible via paths; there is no need to cross any of the lawns.***

You will find at each of the check points a large painted white triangle on the ground. You must position yourself directly behind these viewing triangles, looking out in the direction of the point of the arrow. 3 signs displaying the letters A, B and C should be in view. Looking at your map you will find that one of these 3 signs is marked on the map with a star. It is then required for you to decide which of the 3 signs (A, B or C) is the marked sign on the map. Enter the determined letter into the grid below in the relevant box.

<u>Checkpoint</u> No:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<u>Letter</u>								

Appendix 2 – Description of Activity Areas and of Activities Based on Researcher’s Observations

A. Description of Activity Areas

The facilities used for team building exercises are found in enclosed areas, where the pupils are not allowed unless accompanied by an adult. They are situated a fair distance from the main house and in order to get to the activity areas, you have to cross a ditch over a bridge and a small road that leads to the main car park. The first facility that you can see after crossing the road and walking a short while on the grass from the house is to the left, and is called the ‘toxic waste’ (see Appendix 1(I)). It is enclosed by a wire fence and has a small gate that is not locked. Inside the area there is a big circle made out of string tied to small pins in the ground with a big black plastic bucket in the middle. Around the bucket there are six black plastic tubes. The children are given four pieces of string and thick elastic type bands and are instructed to put the plastic tubes into the bucket without entering the circle. This exercise cannot be done unless there are at least four participants and therefore requires group interaction.

Close to this grassy activity area there is the second larger wooded area that hosts several facilities. A wooden fence delimits this area. There are two gates that lead to different parts of the activity area. The first one is to the left, as you come from the house. Here you can find the ‘blind string trail’ (see Appendix 1(A)). This is an obstacle course that consists of a blue string attached to wooden poles with a ball on it before each obstacle. The children are blind folded and are instructed to stay in a line, hold on to the string with one hand and lay their other hand on the shoulder of the person in front of them. The first person in the line has to warn the others of the obstacle ahead. Again, group interaction is key to this exercise.

Straight ahead from the gate, you can find the first activity out of six that constitute the low ropes course. Although it is part of the low ropes course, there are no ropes involved. The activity is called ‘The Equilibrium’ and it is a big see-saw made out of

a large wooden plank balancing on a log. The aim is for the participants to balance the see-saw for ten seconds.

The next activity is called the 'Lifeboats'. It takes place under a big tree, with a thick rope tied to it, hanging down between a large wooden plank, which represents the sinking ship and two or three smaller wooden planks, which represent the lifeboats. The participants have to swing from the ship to the lifeboats without touching the ground. If they do, they lose one life and they only have three lives in total.

After the 'Lifeboats' activity is completed, the participants have to cross the 'Burma Bridge', which is a bridge made of rope that crosses over a big ditch and links the first part of the low ropes course to the second part. Next are the 'Tyres', which also serve as a link unto the next activity. The participants have to go down a slope through four tyres that are connected by two metal rails on each side. At the bottom of the slope, there is the 'Triangle', which is made up of three trees that are in a triangular position, with a rope tightly fixed to them, approximately half a meter from the ground. The rope is tight enough for participants to walk on, maintaining their balance by holding on to a loose rope that is fixed to one of the trees. This activity was often skipped during the low ropes course, although I did have the opportunity to observe it several times. Most of the times it was used as a competition between the participants to test how far they would walk on the line. The others who were watching were usually encouraged to support their peers, either by spotting them or by offering verbal encouragement.

The last activity of the low ropes course is 'The Hex', which looks a lot like a military training course, with balancing on tight ropes, swinging on tyres, hanging ropes and whizzing down on a tyre attached to a chain. The course is structured so that it cannot be completed without the help of other participants. It is made up of six sections and has the form of a hexagon. The first section requires the participants to form a human chain in order to get onto the next section. This section requires the participants to all lean in the same way, while holding on to a loose rope connected at both ends, otherwise they could lose their balance and fall off. After this they have to swing from tyre to tyre, but without the help of the person in front and behind, it is hard to reach the hanging tyres. Then they have to balance on a tight rope by holding

on to hanging ropes, which they have to pass on to each other. The last part is the fun part, they have to stand on a tyre attached to a chain and the facilitator whizzes them down the rope. The whole exercise requires interaction between all the participants, including the facilitator.

Close to the Hex, there is the 'Spider's Web' (Appendix 1(G)), which is made up of two thick wooden poles, with elastic bands connected to each other and pinned to the poles so that they form a spider's web, with holes of different sizes and at different heights. It is also a group activity in which the participants have to go through the various holes of the web without touching it. Participants have to lift each other and physically support each other in order to complete the task.

The last activity in the activity area is the 'Poisoned Ground' (see Appendix 1(E)). It is made up of a rectangular, inside which there are three platforms that are approximately half to one metre away from each other and the wooden ridge of the rectangular. The participants are given two long wooden planks and gloves and they have to cross the length of the rectangular without touching the ground. They can only use the planks and the platforms. The activity cannot be completed by just one person. The participants have to first find the solution to the problem and then have to work together to solve the task.

B. Description of Activities Based on Researcher's observations

Environmental senses

Environmental Senses was conducted by the staff at the centre. I was not provided by the centre with a document describing this activity. During this activity the pupils were asked to find different kinds of plants or insects, and describe them to their team who had to guess what they were. They also had to answer questions about insects and plants.

The Low Ropes Course

The low ropes course is made up of the following activities:

The Equilibrium

The Equilibrium is an activity that is part of the low ropes course. It is an oversized seesaw, made up of a large wooden platform balanced on a log. The participants have to climb on the platform and balance it for 10 seconds.

The Lifeboats

This activity is the second stage in the low ropes course. The pupils have to swing on a rope from one large wooden plank, which represents the sinking ship, to several smaller wooden planks, which represent the lifeboats. They are not allowed to touch the ground, as they will lose one life. The activity has three phases:

- 1) the whole team has to swing from the ship to the lifeboats with no time limit;
- 2) the whole team has to swing back to the ship within a limited time;
- 3) the whole team has to swing to the lifeboats within a limited time. Each phase has three lives.

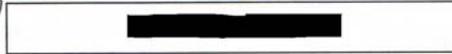
The Hex

The Hex is shaped like a hexagon and has the appearance of a military training course with balancing on tight ropes, swinging on tyres, hanging ropes and whizzing down on a tyre attached to a chain. Each section has to be completed by the whole team.

Appendix 3 – Programme Timetables for Visiting School Groups*

*Names of places and persons have been blotted out to preserve anonymity.

13.06 - 17.06.2005



MON – WED 29
WED – FRI 40

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	7.30 Coffee for staff and discussion	7.30 Coffee for staff and discussion	7.30 Coffee for staff and discussion	7.30 Coffee for staff and discussion
	8.30 Breakfast. Children not To come out until told	8.30 Breakfast. Children not To come out until told 9.30 – 10.30 Postman Game	8.30 Breakfast. Children not To come out until told	8.30 Breakfast. Children not to come out until told
10.30 Arrive at Centre	9.15 – 10.30 Sports Hall Games/Activities	10.30 Group 1 on Coach Group 2 Arrive drink and welcome	9.15 – 10.30 Sports Hall Games/Activities	9.30 Rota 4
11.00 – 12.00 Group A Parachute Group B Orienteering	10.30 – 11.00 Drinks Break	11.00 – 12.00 Group A Parachute Group B Orienteering	10.30 – 11.00 Drinks Break	10.30 Group Depart
12.00 – 12.30 Group 1 Packed Lunch	11.00 – 12.00 Swim	12.00 – 12.30 Group 2 Packed Lunch	11.00 – 12.00 Swim	
12.30 – 13.30 Group A Orienteering Group B Parachute	12.00 – 13.00 Lunch Reading/Social Time	12.30 – 13.30 Group A Orienteering Group B Parachute	12.00 – 13.00 Lunch Reading/Social Time	
13.30 – 1500 Rota 1	13.00 – 14.00 Rota 3	13.30 – 1500 Rota 1	13.00 – 14.00 Rota 3	
15.00 – 15.30 Break	14.30 – 15.00 Break (Water, Juice, Snacks)	15.00 – 15.30 Break	14.30 – 15.00 Break (Water, Juice, Snacks)	
15.30 – 17.00 Rota 2	15.00 – 17.30 1 Environmental Sense 2 2 Art/Creep Trail ↕ 1	15.30 – 17.00 Rota 2	15.00 – 17.30 1 Environmental Sense 2 2 Art/Creep Trail ↕ 1	
17.00 – 18.00 Bedroom – Make bed 17.50 Fire drill 18.00 Supper Write Postcards	18.00 Supper	17.00 – 18.00 Bedroom – Make bed 17.50 Fire drill 18.00 Supper Write Postcards	18.00 Supper	
19.00 – 20.30 Rounders/Video	19.00 – 20.30 Campfire/Activities in the cellar, depending on weather	19.00 – 20.30 Rounders/Video	19.00 – 20.30 Campfire/Activities in the cellar, depending on weather	
20.30 Bedroom	20.30 Bedroom	20.30 Bedroom	20.30 Bedroom	
21.00 Lights Out	21.00 Lights Out	21.00 Lights Out	21.00 Lights Out	

ROTA 1

Low Ropes Course
Blind String Trail

Spiders Web & Tangram
Scavenger Hunt

Green – [redacted] led activity

Notes to P& S Team: Orienteering too difficult can they try Adventure orienteering

cc PFS
FLX
Jawa
H.
1-2

KEY STAGE 1 ORIENTEERING

5 DAY TIMETABLE

DATE: 20th - 22nd JUNE 2005
Age Group: 6-7 yr.

Young People (M)	Young People (F)	Young People (M)	Young People (F)	Young People (M)	Young People (F)	Young People (M)	Young People (F)	Young People (M)	Young People (F)
08:30	08:30	09:30 - 10:30	10:30 - 11:00	11:00 - 12:00	12:00 - 12:30	12:30 - 01:00	01:00 - 02:30	02:30 - 03:30	03:30 - 04:00
MON	TUES	WEDS	THUR	FRI	MON	TUES	WEDS	THUR	FRI
Ready Rooms available from 2.00pm	DIARY + LETTER WRITING	BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST	PACKED LUNCH				
ARRIVE	ARRIVE	ARRIVE	ARRIVE	ARRIVE	ARRIVE	ARRIVE	ARRIVE	ARRIVE	ARRIVE
ORIENTEERING	ORIENTEERING	ORIENTEERING	ORIENTEERING	ORIENTEERING	ORIENTEERING	ORIENTEERING	ORIENTEERING	ORIENTEERING	ORIENTEERING
SWIMMING LESSON	SWIMMING LESSON	SWIMMING LESSON	SWIMMING LESSON	SWIMMING LESSON	SWIMMING LESSON	SWIMMING LESSON	SWIMMING LESSON	SWIMMING LESSON	SWIMMING LESSON
NATURE WALK OR QUIZ	NATURE WALK OR QUIZ	NATURE WALK OR QUIZ	NATURE WALK OR QUIZ	NATURE WALK OR QUIZ	NATURE WALK OR QUIZ	NATURE WALK OR QUIZ	NATURE WALK OR QUIZ	NATURE WALK OR QUIZ	NATURE WALK OR QUIZ
DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS
BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK
STAFF LUNCH	STAFF LUNCH	STAFF LUNCH	STAFF LUNCH	STAFF LUNCH	STAFF LUNCH	STAFF LUNCH	STAFF LUNCH	STAFF LUNCH	STAFF LUNCH
LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
DEPART	DEPART	DEPART	DEPART	DEPART	DEPART	DEPART	DEPART	DEPART	DEPART
DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS	DRINKS
BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK
STAFF SUPPER	STAFF SUPPER	STAFF SUPPER	STAFF SUPPER	STAFF SUPPER	STAFF SUPPER	STAFF SUPPER	STAFF SUPPER	STAFF SUPPER	STAFF SUPPER
SUPPER	SUPPER	SUPPER	SUPPER	SUPPER	SUPPER	SUPPER	SUPPER	SUPPER	SUPPER
TUCK SHOP	TUCK SHOP	TUCK SHOP	TUCK SHOP	TUCK SHOP	TUCK SHOP	TUCK SHOP	TUCK SHOP	TUCK SHOP	TUCK SHOP
DISCO	DISCO	DISCO	DISCO	DISCO	DISCO	DISCO	DISCO	DISCO	DISCO
BEDROOM	BEDROOM	BEDROOM	BEDROOM	BEDROOM	BEDROOM	BEDROOM	BEDROOM	BEDROOM	BEDROOM
SING SONGS	SING SONGS	SING SONGS	SING SONGS	SING SONGS	SING SONGS	SING SONGS	SING SONGS	SING SONGS	SING SONGS
LETTERS	LETTERS	LETTERS	LETTERS	LETTERS	LETTERS	LETTERS	LETTERS	LETTERS	LETTERS
HOME PRESENTATION	HOME PRESENTATION	HOME PRESENTATION	HOME PRESENTATION	HOME PRESENTATION	HOME PRESENTATION	HOME PRESENTATION	HOME PRESENTATION	HOME PRESENTATION	HOME PRESENTATION

Camp Fire
Sun
If possible
One good Thing
Tree List?

11:00-12:00
12:00-12:30
12:30-01:00
01:00-02:30
02:30-03:30
03:30-04:00

Staff are not available for duty at this time.
Packed Lunches can be provided for excursions provided notice is given with programme 3 weeks prior to residential.
Before breakfast, please ensure that 2 white sheets and 1 pillow case per person are folded and left outside rooms for collection.
Reserve the right to change the programme according to operational requirements.
Breaks, Meal Times and Tuck Shop can be rearranged - please discuss this when designing your programme.

CCAS
file

GROUP NAME: [REDACTED] NATURE OF GROUP: PRIMARY. DATE: 22 - 24 JUNE 2005

Nos. Adult (M): 1 Adult (F): 3 Young People (M): 22 Young People (F): 14 Age Group: 10 - 11 yrs.
We recommend that room inspections are carried out and small prizes are offered for the best kept room - please discuss this when des

Day	08:30	9:30 - 10:30	10:30	11:00 - 12:00	12:00 - 12:30	12:30	01:00	2:00 - 3:30	03:30	4:00 - 5:00	5:00 - 6:00	06:00	06:30	7:30 - 8:30	8:30 - 10:00
MON	Rooms available from 2.00pm														
TUES	Breakfast	Active Introduction													
WED	Breakfast														
THUR															
FRI															

changeover duty

DAY VISIT CASTLEFIELD FRIDAY

* PARENT COLLECT 3:15 - 3:30 p.m.
* EXIT ROOMS PRIOR TO BREAKFAST ON FRIDAY.
* SETUP OR INTERVIEWING.

Staff are not available for duty at this time.
Packed Lunches can be provided for excursions provided notice is given with programme 3 weeks prior to residential.
Before breakfast, please ensure that 2 white sheets and 1 pillow case per person are folded and left outside rooms for collection.
Breaks, Meal Times and Tuck Shop can be rearranged - please discuss this when designing your programme.

2 teachers
2 LSAs

FOR MAIN OF (USS) [REDACTED] - 5 DAY TIMETABLE
 GROUP NAME: [REDACTED] NATURE OF GROUP: PRIMARY SCHOOL DATE: 21-23 JUNE 2004
 Nos. Adult (M): [REDACTED] Young People (M): [REDACTED] Young People (F): [REDACTED] Age Group: 10/11 YEAR OLDS

We recommend that room inspections are carried out and small prizes are offered for the best kept room - please discuss this when designing your programme

	08:30	9:30 - 10:30	10:30	11:00 - 12:00	12:00 - 12:30	12:30	01:00	2:00 - 3:00	03:30	4:00 - 5:00	5:00 - 5:30	5:30 - 5:50	06:00	06:30	7:30 - 8:30	8:30 - 10:00
MON	Rooms available from 2:00 PM	Fire Safety Talk	GROUP 114	PARACHUTE GROUP 2/3	ORIENTEERING GROUP 2/3	ORIENTEERING PARACHUTE	PARACHUTE	ARTIFICIAL (DOWN)	RECORDING STUDIO	ARCHERY	ROUNDERS	ARCHERY	SPORTS HALL NOT AVAILABLE	CONNECT FORCE GAME	QUIZ	
TUES	1, 2, 3 & 4 SHELTER BUILDING IN WOODS	DRINKS	ORIENTEERING PARACHUTE	ARCHERY	DRINKS	ARCHERY	LOW ROPES	ARTIFICIAL (DOWN)	STAFF	TALENT COMPETITION	BONFIRE GHOST STORY	Orange Squash				
WED	SCAVENGER	DRINKS	SCAVENGER HUNT	ARCHERY	DRINKS	ARCHERY	LOW ROPES	ARTIFICIAL (DOWN)	STAFF	TALENT COMPETITION	BONFIRE GHOST STORY	Orange Squash				
THUR	BREAKFAST	DRINKS	SCAVENGER HUNT	ARCHERY	DRINKS	ARCHERY	LOW ROPES	ARTIFICIAL (DOWN)	STAFF	TALENT COMPETITION	BONFIRE GHOST STORY	Orange Squash				
FRI	BREAKFAST	DRINKS	SCAVENGER HUNT	ARCHERY	DRINKS	ARCHERY	LOW ROPES	ARTIFICIAL (DOWN)	STAFF	TALENT COMPETITION	BONFIRE GHOST STORY	Orange Squash				

A residential centre which gives you the freedom to develop a tailor made programme to self facilitate. Limited support from the Centre staff can be provided depending upon the availability.

Staff are not available for duty at this time. 09:00 to 05:00
 Packed Lunches can be provided for excursions provided notice is given with programme 3 weeks prior to residential.
 Before breakfast, please ensure that 2 white sheets and 1 pillow case per person are folded and left outside rooms for collection.
 [REDACTED] reserve the right to change the programme according to operational requirements.
 Breaks, Meal Times and Tuck Shop can be rearranged - please discuss this when designing your programme.

(2)

Group Leader: ~~_____~~ 2005 VISIT TIMETABLE 27th-29th June 2005

MONDAY	9-10 am Art & Craft (OWN) 1	10-11 am Gp 1 & 2 Parachutes Gp 3 & 4 Orienteering	11-12:30 Gp 1 & 2 Orienteering Gp 3 & 4 Parachutes	1:30-2:30 1 Recording Studio 2 Art & Craft (OWN) 3 Archery 4 Creepy Crawly walk	2:30-3:30 1 Creepy Crawly walk 2 Recording Studio 3 Art & Craft (OWN) 4 Archery	4-5 pm 1 Archery 2 Creepy Crawly walk 3 Recording Studio 4 Art & Craft (OWN) 4:30-5:30 pm Shelter Building in the woods (Teachers)	6-6:30 pm STAFF SUPPER	6:30-7:30 pm SCHOOL SUPPER	7:30-8:30 Out-side Connect Force Game	8:30-10 Talent Competition Practice Evening		
TUESDAY	8-9 am Breakfast	9-10 am 1 Art & Craft (OWN) 2 Archery 3 Creepy Crawly walk 4 Recording Studio	10-11 am 1 Spiders Web (T) 2 Poison Ground Crossing (T) 3 Low Ropes Course 4 Blind Sling Trail	11-12:30 11-12:30 DRINKS 1 Blind Trail Sling 2 Spiders Web (T) 3 Poisoned Ground Crossing (T) 4 Low Ropes Course	12-1:30 pm SCHOOLS LUNCH 1-1:30 pm SCHOOLS PACKED LUNCH 1-1:30 pm	1:30-2:30 2-3 pm 1 Low Ropes Course 2 Blind Sling Trail 3 Spiders Web (T) 4 Poisoned Ground Crossing (T)	2-3 pm 3-4 pm 1 Poison Ground Crossing (T) 2 Low Ropes Course 3 Blind Sling Trail 4 Spiders Web (T)	3:30-4 pm DRINKS 4-4:30 DRINKS	4:30-5:30 pm STAFF SUPPER	5:30-7:30 TUCK SHOP OPEN 7-7:30	7:30-8:30 Talent Show	8:30-10 Bonfire & Ghost Story Walk
WEDNES	8:30-9:30 Breakfast	9:30-10:30 All - EGGS CAN FLY (T)	10:30-11:30 10:30-11 DRINKS KRYPTON PUZZLES (20 mins each) • Tangram • Towers of Hanoi • Numbers Game	11-12 pm 11-12 pm 12-12:45 pm SCAVENGER HUNT ALL IN GROUPS (T)	12:45-1:30 pm SCHOOLS LUNCH 1-1:30 pm SCHOOLS PACKED LUNCH 1-1:30 pm	1:30-2:30 2-3 pm 1 Finishing off and visiting buck shop. 2 DETART AT 2 pm.	2-3 pm 3-4 pm 1 Poisoned Ground Crossing (T) 2 Spiders Web (T)	3:30-4 pm DRINKS 4-4:30 DRINKS	4:30-5:30 pm STAFF SUPPER	5:30-7:30 TUCK SHOP OPEN 7-7:30	7:30-8:30 Out-side Connect Force Game	8:30-10 Talent Competition Practice Evening

Gp 1 - Mrs ~~_____~~ (14) Gp 2 - MS ~~_____~~ (13) Gp 3 - Mrs ~~_____~~ (13)
 & Mrs ~~_____~~
 Gp 4 - Mrs ~~_____~~ (13)

SEE REVERSE FOR GROUP DETAILS.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

30 June
~~THURSDAY 1ST JULY 2004~~ *2005*

8.30 - breakfast

10.00 - 1.00 groups - 1 swimming (1 hour for each group)
2 environmental studies

10.30 - 11.00 drinks break

1.00 - 2.00 lunch

2.00 - 5.30 group activities

1. archery & ^{isotope} activity
2. low ropes course
3. blind string trail
4. ~~orienteering trail~~

3.30 - 4.00 drinks break

5.30 - 6.30 diary writing/break

6.30 - 7.30 supper

7.30 - disco & tuckshop

9.00 - bed

1 July
~~FRIDAY 2ND JULY 2004~~ *2005*

Empty rooms before breakfast

8.30 - breakfast

9.30 - 10.30 parachute games

10.30 - 11.00 drinks break

11.00 - 1.00 games outside or use sports hall (if wet)

1.00 - 2.00 lunch

2.15 - leave ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

2.45 - arrive back at school Parents - children can go home at this time and their school report can be collected from the school office.

11.07 - 15.07.2005

We are running these activities circled

Day	8.30-9.30-10.30	10.30-11.00-12.30	12.30-1.00	1.00-2.00-3.30	3.30-4.00-5.30	5.30-6.30	6.30-7.30-9.30	10.00
Mon	B R E A	School & Travelling Arrive at Centre & Introduction Group 1 Orienteering	Group 2 Parachute Games	Group 1 Low Ropes Group 2 Archery	D	Group 1 Archery Group 2 Low Ropes	S Sports Hall	Bed
Tues	K F A S T	Group 1 Spiders Web Group 2 Toxic Waste	11.45 Leave for Climb/Abseil Fun pool Sports	Climb/Abseil Fun pool Sports	R	4.30-4.45 Return of Diaries	U Connasc Force	Bed
Wed	B R E A	Walk Environmental Studies	Walk [redacted] Walk	Group 1 Blind String Trail Group 2 Initiative work	I	Diaries Free Time After	Sports Hall	Bed
Thur	K F A S	Group 1 Toxic Waste Group 2 Spiders Web	11.00-1pm Swim Gala	Environmental work at [redacted]	N	Free Time Change & Pack	DISCC with some help	Bed
Fri	T	Group 1 Eggs Can Fly Group 2 Scavenger Hunt	Diaries	Depart	K S	School Stories 5pm	E R	Bed

██████████ SCHOOL
DAY VISIT - MONDAY 18TH JULY 2005
PROPOSED ITINERARY

ETA Please advise ETD Please advise

ARRIVE	ARCHERY	ARCHERY	LRC	LRC	TOXIC WASTE	SPIDERS WEB	POISONED GROUND	ORIENTEERING	BLIND STRING TRAIL
9.15	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9.30am									
10.15AM									
11.15AM									
12.15PM									
1.15PM									
2.15PM									

Fax ██████████ facilitating sheets & Risk Assessments - mailed
 Confirmed 4 P & S team plus ██████████
 Staff teach-in 1 hr max after school nearer the date: 4 July 4.00 pm

Red ██████████ led activity
 Green = School led activity

M.T.S.
file

Bold type indicates involvement of member of centre staff or life guard. (pool)

SCHOOL DAILY PROGRAMME 2006

	9.15 am	10.30 am	11.00 am - 12.30 pm	1.00 pm	2.00 pm	3.30 pm	4.00 pm - 5.30 pm
Mon. 7th	9.15 am for. 9.30 am Leave school		Open Air Museum Group 1 G/R (AR, CW.) Group 2 B/Y (RM, SR, LM)				Arrive. Room allocation Beat Bounds Evening. Orienteering
Tues. 8th	R Archery B Egg challenge/ Parachute G Sketching Y Blind Trail	Drink Break	R. Egg Challenge/Parachute B. Archery G. Blind Trail Y. Sketching	Lunch	R. Astro pitch B. Blind trail G. Rope trail Y. Spider's web	Drink Break	R. Blind Trail B. Astro pitch G. Spider's web Y. Rope trail 8pm. Snake Talk Lecture room.
Wed. 9th	Whole party to Field Study Centre. Morning and afternoon sessions with break for packed lunch Group 1 R/Y (RM, CW) Group 2 G/B. (AR, LM, SR.)						
Thur. 10th	R. Swimming 1hr. B. Swimming 1hr G. Archery Y. Egg challenge	Drink Break	R. Rope Trail B. Spider's web G. Swimming 1hr. Y. Swimming. 1hr.	Lunch	R. Spider's web B. Sketching G. Astro pitch Y. Archery.	Drink Break	R. Sketching B. Rope Trail G. Egg challenge Y. Astro pitch Pack Disco Track Shop.
Fri. 11th	9.00 am Centre story followed by Ghost Walk. Remainder of morning to be arranged. Could we have one of your organised activities/games during the second half of the morning to free some of us to sort out equipment / lost property etc. Lunch at Centre 1pm. Return to school						

5 DAY TIMETABLE

GROUP NAME: [REDACTED] School DATE: 24/26/28ma

NATURE OF GROUP:

Nos. Adult (M): [REDACTED] Adult (F): [REDACTED] Young People (M): [REDACTED] Young People (F): [REDACTED] Age Group: [REDACTED]

We recommend that room inspections are carried out and small prizes are offered for the best kept room - please discuss this when designing your programme

	08:30	9:30 - 10:30	10:30	11:00 - 12:00	12:00 - 12:30	12:30	01:00	2:00 - 3:00	03:30	3:30 - 4:30	4:30 - 5:30	05:30 - 06:30	7:30 - 8:30	
M O N		Rooms available from 5:00pm Please arrive dressed & ready for action - including footwear.	Arrive Welcome Drink 1/2 Orienteering 1/2 parachute games	1/2 orienteering 1/2 parachute ga	PLAUCNCKEHL			Rota 1i Low ropes course Toxic Waste Blind string trail	Rota 1ii Toxic Waste Blind string trail Low ropes course	Rota 1iii Blind String Trail Low ropes course Toxic Waste	Rooms:		SPORTS NOT Tuck Shop Connect Force Krypton Puzzle	
T U E S		Eggs Can Fly		11:15-12:30 (1/2 swim 1/2 sports Hall)	Test Eggs			Rota 2i Poisoned ground & spiders web Archery Scavenger Hunt	Rota 2ii Archery Scavenger Hunt Poisoned ground & spiders web	Rota 2iii Scavenger Hunt Poisoned ground & spiders web Archery			SPORTS HALL AVAILABLE Disco & Tuck Shop	
W E D S		10-11.00am Sheep in a Pen (out of rooms by 10.00am)		11:30 - 12:30 Story & Walk then free time Group 2 arrive and mirrored programme commences	BBQ all LUNCH			Tuck Shop and depart						
T H U R														
F R I														

A residential centre which gives you the fr to develop a tailor made programme to self f Limited support from the Centre staff can be depending upon the availability.

yellow = centre led activity green = school led activity

- * [REDACTED] Staff are not available for duty at this time.
- ** Packed Lunches can be provided for excursions provided notice is given with programme 3 weeks prior to residential.
- *** Before breakfast, please ensure that 2 white sheets and 1 pillow case per person are folded and left outside rooms for collection.
- **** [REDACTED] reserve the right to change the programme according to operational requirements.
- ***** Breaks, Meal Times and Tuck Shop can be rearranged - please discuss this when designing your programme.

APL
 DATE: 15-19 May 2008

- 5 DAY TIMETABLE

GROUP NAME: [REDACTED] NATURE OF GROUP: [REDACTED]

Nos. Adult (M): [REDACTED] Adult (F): [REDACTED] Young People (M): [REDACTED] Young People (F): [REDACTED] Age Group: [REDACTED]
 We recommend that room inspections are carried out and small prizes are offered for the best kept room - please discuss this when designing your programme

	06:30	09:30 - 10:30	10:30	11:00 - 12:00	12:00 - 12:30	12:30	01:00	2:00 - 3:30	03:30	4:00 - 5:00	5:00 - 6:00	06:00	06:30	7:30 - 8:30	8:30 - 10:00*
MON		Rooms available from 5.00pm	welcome tea & arrive	even hunt					Walk 1-4	stringhal	Rooms & unpack			egg's can fly	
TUES		Archery LRC Orien Stringhal		swim	Archery LRC Orien Stringhal			Archery LRC Orien Stringhal	DRINKS		Drama			Disco & tuckshop	
WEDS		Archery LRC Orien Stringhal		Sports hall "connect four" Parachute Play	Sports hall "connect four" Parachute Play			Depart. Arrive welcome Rota 1		Rota 2	Rooms & unpack			egg's can fly	
THUR		Rota 3		Swim sportshall	Swim sportshall			Arrive welcome Rota 1			Drama			Disco tuckshop	
FRI		Arc LRC Orien Stringhal	walk	g-i-e-u ... war games Parachute Play	g-i-e-u ... war games Parachute Play			Depart							
BREAKFAST (06:30-09:30) DRINKS (10:30-11:00) BREAK (11:00-12:00) LUNCH (12:30-01:00) STAFF LUNCH (12:30-01:00) STAFF SUPPER (06:00-06:30) SUPPER (06:30-07:30)															

A residential centre which gives you the freedom to develop a tailor made programme to self facilitate. Limited support from the Centre staff can be provided depending upon the availability.

* Staff are not available for duty at this time.
 ** Packed Lunches can be provided for excursions provided notice is given with programme 3 weeks prior to residential.
 *** Before breakfast, please ensure that 2 white sheets and 1 pillow case per person are folded and left outside rooms for collection.
 **** [REDACTED] reserve the right to change the programme according to operational requirements.
 ***** Breaks, Meal Times and Tuck Shop can be rearranged - please discuss this when designing your programme.

Appendix 4 – Letters to the Outdoor Centre Regarding Consent*

*The name of the centre, the address, other contact information and the name of the person to whom the letter is addressed have been taken out in order to preserve anonymity.



Buckinghamshire Chilterns
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Wellesbourne Campus
Kingshill Rd
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire, HP13 5BB

Faculty of Leisure and
Tourism

Dr Barbara Humberstone
Professor Leisure
Director, Outdoor Learning and
Experiential Education Research
Unit.
Director NFE Pan –Euro project
Co-editor JAEOL

Tel: 00 44 (0)1494 522141
Fax: 00 44 (0)1494 465432

Email: bhumble01@bcuc.ac.uk

14th June 2005

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

I would like to thank you for agreeing to Ina Stan to undertake field work for her PhD research project. I would also like to thank you and your staff for the considerable support and help that you have given her.

As she has explained to you, her research interest is in the development processes in groups of young people undertaking non formal /informal activities and programmes and [REDACTED] is an ideal centre for her study. Her research is qualitative and she will progress the research design as she becomes more familiar with the work of the centre. Broadly speaking her research will be a case study.

As you appreciate we need to ensure that permission is granted for the research by the participants and I understand that teachers/adults accompanying the young people have been asked if they agree to Ina observing and speaking with the young people and staff. I wonder if you feel it would be appropriate for us to provide a consent form for the staff/adults?

Ina has told me how much she is enjoying working with staff at the centre and I think this research could add valuable knowledge to our understanding of the development of groups in particular contexts.

Yours sincerely

Prof. Barbara Humberstone



Buckinghamshire Chilterns
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Wellesbourne Campus
Kingshill Rd
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire, HP13 5BB

Faculty of Leisure and Tourism

Dr Barbara Humberstone
Professor Leisure
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Co-editor JAEOL

Tel: 00 44 (0)1494 522141

Fax: 00 44 (0)1494 465432

Email: bhumbe01@bcuc.ac.uk

14th March 2006



Dear [REDACTED]

I would like to thank you and your staff again for supporting Ina Stan during her stay with you whilst undertaking research for her PhD research project last year. This has proved most useful and she has analysed some of her observations and would like to spend a further period of time observing groups of young people, starting from the 14th May 2006.

As she has explained to you, her research interest is in the development processes in groups of young people undertaking non formal /informal activities and programmes.

Again we need to ensure that permission is granted for the research by the participants. It was very helpful of you to ask the teachers/adults accompanying the young people if they agree to Ina observing and speaking with the young people and themselves. Is it possible for you to do the same again? Do you feel it would be appropriate for us to provide a consent form for the staff/adults to sign?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Humberstone

Appendix 5 – Letter of Consent from the Outdoor Centre*

*The name of the centre, the address, the name of the person that signed the letter, and any contact information has been taken out in order to preserve anonymity.

Name of the centre and Logo	
Name of centre	Centre for Young People
	Contact details

23 June 2005

Dr Barbara Humberstone
Faculty of Leisure and Tourism
Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College
Wellesbourne Campus
Kingshill Road
High Wycombe
Bucks HP13 5BB

Dear Barbara

Thank you for your letter dated 14 June 2005. I am delighted that we are able to help Ina with her PhD research.

With regard to consent forms as mentioned in your letter, and since there is a time element involved in obtaining written consent; I confirm that I am happy to request Teachers' consent on the telephone prior to the school visit. At that time I can also alert them to the fact that Ina may request that they complete the form she has designed after arrival.

I trust this all meets with approval and hope that you will let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely

Signature and name

Sales Co-ordinator

Information about the City Youth Federation

Appendix 6 – Teacher Consent Form

Consent form

My name is Ina Stan, I am a research student at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College and I am undertaking research about group interaction in non-formal education. I have chosen to observe groups working at [REDACTED] [the centre]. As part of this, I need to ask your permission for me to observe your pupils and speak to them.

If you require any further information about this research, please contact Prof. Barbara Humberstone, my supervisor.

Tel. 01494-522141

Email: bhumbe01@bcuc.ac.uk

I give my consent to the observation of my pupils.

Signed

Name

School

Date

Appendix 7 – ‘The Non-formal Education through Outdoor Activities Project’ Article

inspiration

The Non-Formal Education through Outdoor Activities Project

A training experience

The experience I am going to share here is quite recent and therefore very vivid in my memory. A month ago I had the opportunity of taking part in a training course at Brathay Hall Trust, which is an outdoor centre, focusing mostly on work with youth at risk. This was part of a large-scale youth project funded by which involved youth workers and outdoor educators from all over Europe, called the NFE project. The course I participated in brought together people from Eastern Europe, from countries like: the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, and Lithuania, and was aimed at sharing values and practices from different countries within an outdoor context.

In the first part of the course we were introduced to the Brathay Professional Development Programme. More specifically, we were presented the theoretical background of Development Training, but issues such as creating a safe and productive working environment, designing learning experiences, selecting and facilitating activities, giving and receiving feedback, managing group processes and reviewing and transferring were also broadly discussed.



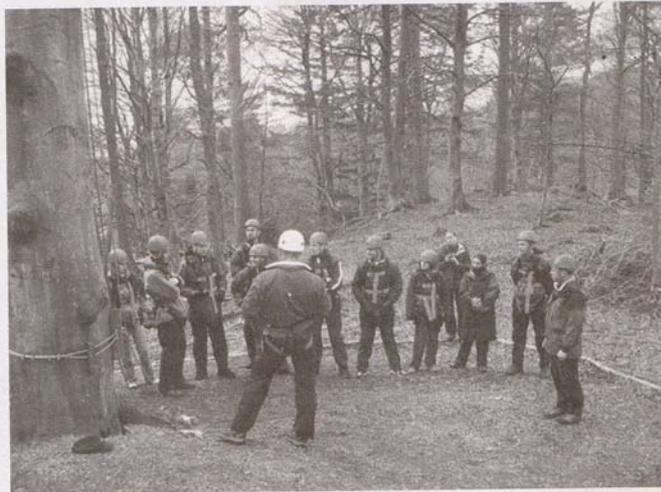
However, we did not stop at just talking about all of the above, the course also had a practical side to it, and it was very interesting to see how theory and practice can come together, and form a coherent and balanced

programme. Each activity had a purpose and each discussion revolved around a practical issue. There was no empty talk and no activity was done just for the sake of it, there was meaning behind every action.

All the participants in this course were encouraged to evaluate each experience as a person, a learner and as a facilitator. This proved to be a little difficult for some of them, as the quote below illustrates:

“Everybody came as a trainer, and they all became learners, and that helped them understand their learners’ position. Especially for me, as I am just a beginner, it was really difficult to separate the experience as a facilitator from that as a learner, because I, myself, was only a learner. In the end, I saw the difference, but during the process I couldn’t really separate my role as a facilitator, learner and person. It was a big challenge. Now I can make a movie of all this and I can share it with others.”

Indeed, in many of the situations I, myself, found that it was hard not to let yourself be overwhelmed by the intensity of the experience and I had to make considerable effort to stop and reflect, and see beyond the immediate emotional experience, to find a way to use this to a much deeper level into to my



work. The idea is that we were all trying to become not just better people, or be good learners, we all had to be able to select what we needed for our own work.

As this course was intended to be a sharing of experience, practice and values, the second part gave a chance to all the participants to exchange ideas and practices. This was without a doubt the point in the course that had the most intensity and most impact on the participants. We discovered how much our countries had in common when it came to youth work and the outdoors, and we all realised that this a great opportunity to start an Eastern European network, and that by collaborating we can improve our existing programmes or create new more effective ones.

When we came to Brathay, each of us had a certain degree of uncertainty. For many, it was a great challenge, because coming from an ex-communist environment was considered a disadvantage in a way. Outdoor education and youth work are seen as in their infancy in Eastern Europe, and lack of funding and lack of experience puts a strain on their development. Therefore, I may be right in saying that many of the participants were not very confident in the beginning of this course. I remember somebody from Poland saying:

The overall aim of the NFE project is to bring together experts in the field of social development and change, educators, social workers, outdoor facilitators, youth from youth organisations and researchers in order to create a Non-Formal Educational Framework (NFEF) (www.nfe-network.org).

Twelve European partner countries are involved: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, United Kingdom.

The Project's office is at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College (BCUC) in High Wycombe, UK. The first meeting of the management group of NFEOA was held at Brathay Hall, UK, 2-4 April 2004. Nineteen people attended this. The next meeting was in Brasov, Romania November 2004 when 36 people attended. The training course which this article describes was the second of two held at Brathay Hall 12-17 March 2005. The first has held 26 February-4 March and representatives from Western Europe attended.



"We don't really have very good equipment and sometimes it is hard to find the money to continue. We also need to learn more, to have more books written in our own language. The theory needs to be developed more. We try to do our best with what we have"

Nevertheless, having the chance to interact and communicate with others in the field, we found out that we are not alone and that working together and sharing our experiences can help us overcome our insecurities. Somebody said:

"At first I didn't believe too much in this project, but when I found myself here, I found that something brought the people together, and we started not to see the problem anymore, we started to see solutions, and this was because of the whole process, maybe we started to see the solution just this morning."

So we stopped seeing the problem, and



we tried to find a solution, by coming together as a group. It was also said that:

"During the games and exercises and reflecting, we could go deeper into our feelings and it helped us come together and talk about our experiences. Sharing the experiences made the group much closer."

But actions speak more than words and at least one other meeting will take place in Poland, just a month away from our meeting in the UK. This was initiated by the Polish organisation Frajda (<http://www.frajda.com.pl/>), and may well be the first step towards forming an Eastern European network in youth work and outdoor education. Most of the participants from Brathay will take part in a training course at Frajda, which is a non-profit organisation that works with youth and unemployed people. This experience could open the door for long standing collaborations and networking between the Eastern European youth work organisations.

Ina Stan ■

istan01@bcuc.ac.uk
Secretary Institute for Outdoor
Adventure Education and
Experiential Learning
(www.eoe-network.org)
Research student at BCUC, UK.
Involved with the NFE project.

Appendix 8 – Questions for Interviews with Staff at the Outdoor Centre

- Could you tell me about your background?
- What sort of training did you receive before starting work at the centre? Does it continue?
- What is your view on non-formal education?
- Do you think that it is important for children to learn to work well as a group? Why?
- Before starting a team building activity, do you think that it is important to ‘tell’ the pupils that it is a team building exercise? How do you do this? What about after the activity?
- When do you think it is appropriate for a facilitator/teacher or both to step in during an activity? How should this be done?
- How do you feel about the presence of the teachers during the activities led by staff at the centre?
- Do you agree with the teachers getting involved in the activities led by staff at the centre? Why?
- How much do you rely on the teacher’s assistance during the activity, if at all?
- How important is the role of the facilitator/teacher in helping the group to work well as a team? What qualities should a facilitator have?
- How important is to have control?
- How would you describe a successful (team building) activity?
- Do you think gender influences team work? How?
- How do you think the teacher/facilitator could influence the enforcement or not of gender differences during a group activity?
- Are there any steps a facilitator could follow for a successful team activity? Do you think they would be effective?
- How do you think group activities should be conducted within outdoor centres? Should they be conducted in schools? How?
- What would children gain from such activities?

Questions for the second interview with the deputy director:

- What sort of criteria do you use when hiring facilitators?
- What sort of training do the facilitators receive before starting work? Does it continue after this?
- What are the qualities of a 'good' facilitators in your opinion?
- How do you think the facilitators should introduce the concept of team building? Should they tell the group that 'this is a team building exercise'? Why?
- Are there any steps a facilitator could follow for a successful team building exercise?
- What can young people/children gain from being part of a team building activity? What about the facilitators or maybe the teachers?

Appendix 9 – Cultural Domains Identified in the Data Analysis Process

1. Strict inclusion: x is a kind of y
 - Kinds of activities
 - Kinds of teachers
 - Kinds of groups
 - Kinds of facilitators
 - Kinds of approaches
 - Kinds of feelings
 - Kinds of goals
 - Kinds of interventions
 - Kinds of interactions
 - Kinds of control
 - Kinds of incidents
 - Kinds of pupil leadership

2. Cause – effect: x is a result of y
 - Result of activities
 - Result of intervention
 - Result of encouraging each other within the group
 - Result of blaming within the group
 - Result of praise
 - Result of gender differences
 - Result of splitting into smaller groups
 - Result of reprimands
 - Results of control

3. Rationale: x is a reason for doing y
 - Reasons for intervention
 - Reasons for pupils losing interest in the activity
 - Reasons for associations among pupils
 - Reasons for blaming within the groups
 - Reasons for encouraging each other within the group
 - Reasons for interaction with the researcher
 - Reasons for praising
 - Reasons for interaction between genders
 - Reasons for interaction between pupils of the same gender
 - Reasons for division into smaller groups
 - Reasons for competing between smaller groups
 - Reasons for interacting between smaller groups
 - Reasons for reprimands
 - Reasons for controlling the situation

4. Location for action: x is a place for doing y
 - Places for interaction with the researcher
 - Places for teacher intervention
 - Places for facilitator intervention
 - Places for group activities
 - Places where pupils and teachers interact
 - Places where pupils, teachers and facilitators interact
 - Places where interaction between genders occurs within the group
 - Places where interaction between pupils of the same gender occur within the group

5. Time: x is a time when y occurs
 - Time when pupils interact with the researcher
 - Time when teachers interact with the researcher
 - Time when facilitators interact with the researcher
 - Time when pupils share their experience
 - Time when teachers interact with pupils
 - Time when facilitators interact with pupils and teachers
 - Times when interaction between genders occurs within the group
 - Times when interaction between pupils of the same gender occurs within the group

6. Function: x is used for y
 - Uses of activities by facilitators
 - Uses of activities by teachers
 - Uses of activities by groups
 - Uses of stereotypes within the group
 - Uses of stereotypes by teachers
 - Uses of stereotypes by facilitators
 - Uses of verbal reprimands by the teachers
 - Uses of verbal reprimands by the facilitators
 - Uses of verbal reprimands by the pupils
 - Uses of control

7. Means – end: x is a way to do y
 - Ways to carry out the blind string trail
 - Ways to carry out toxic waste
 - Ways to carry out low ropes
 - Ways to carry out krypton puzzles
 - Ways to carry out spider's web
 - Ways to carry out poisoned ground
 - Ways to carry out orienteering
 - Ways to carry out parachute games
 - Ways to carry out environmental senses
 - Ways to carry out art activities

- Ways to carry out creepi crawl
- Ways to carry out sports hall games
- Ways to carry out swimming
- Ways to carry out scavenger hunt
- Ways to carry out eggs can fly
- Ways to carry out the disco
- Ways to carry out connect force
- Ways to carry out studio recording
- Ways to carry out shelter building
- Ways to carry out archery
- Ways to carry out diary writing
- Ways to carry out forest walk
- Ways to carry out pond dipping
- Ways of splitting into smaller groups
- Ways of interacting with the researcher
- Ways of encouraging team work
- Ways of working as a group
- Ways of interacting between smaller groups
- Ways of competing between groups
- Ways of controlling the situation

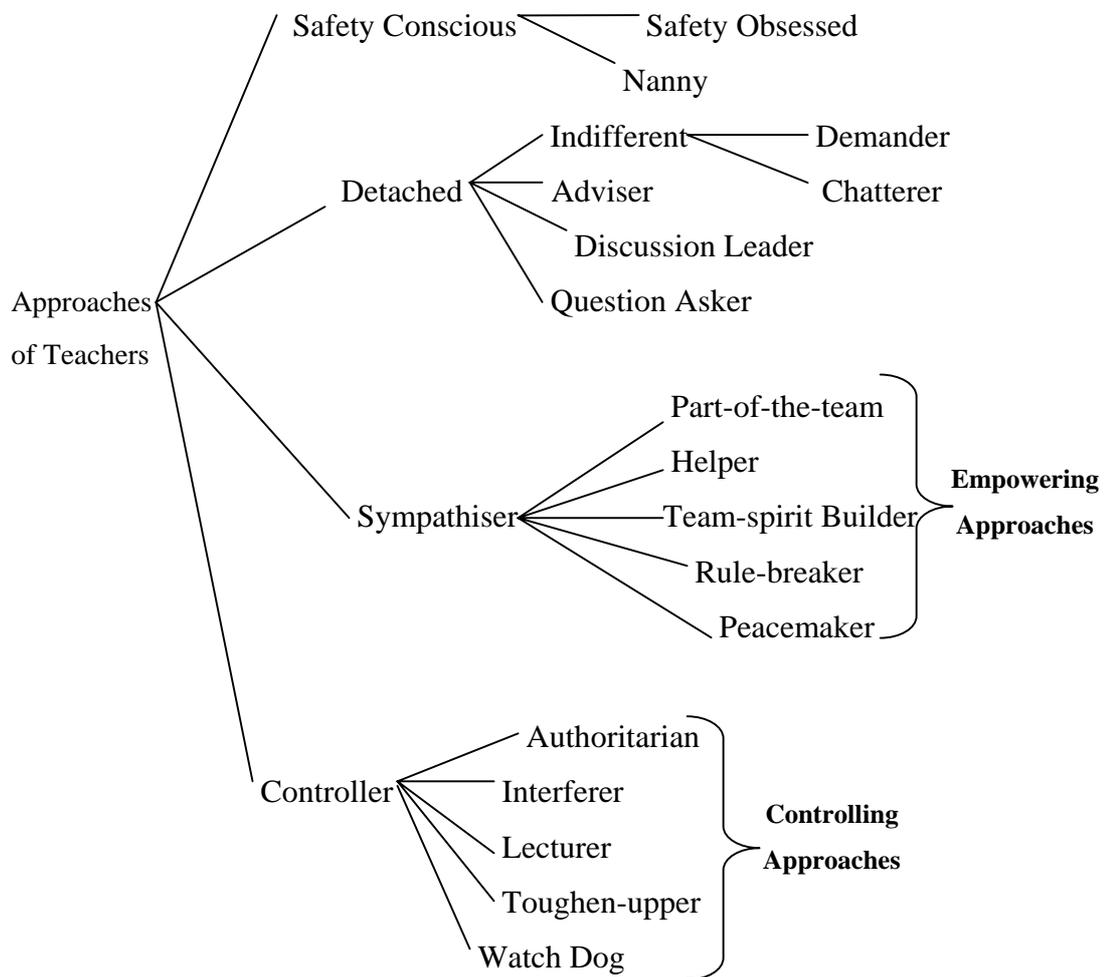
8. Sequence: x is a step in y

- Steps in conducting the low ropes course
- Steps in conducting the blind string trail
- Steps in conducting spider's web
- Steps in conducting toxic waste
- Steps in conducting orienteering
- Steps in conducting parachute games
- Steps in conducting scavenger hunt
- Steps in conducting poisoned ground
- Steps in conducting krypton puzzles
- Steps in conducting eggs can fly
- Steps in taking control over the situation

9. Attribution: x is an attribute of y

- Characteristics of teachers
- Characteristics of pupils
- Characteristics of facilitators
- Characteristics of activities
- Characteristics of pupils' behaviour
- Characteristics of teachers' behaviour
- Characteristics of facilitators' behaviour
- Characteristics of groups

Appendix 10 – Kinds of Teachers Taxonomy Diagram

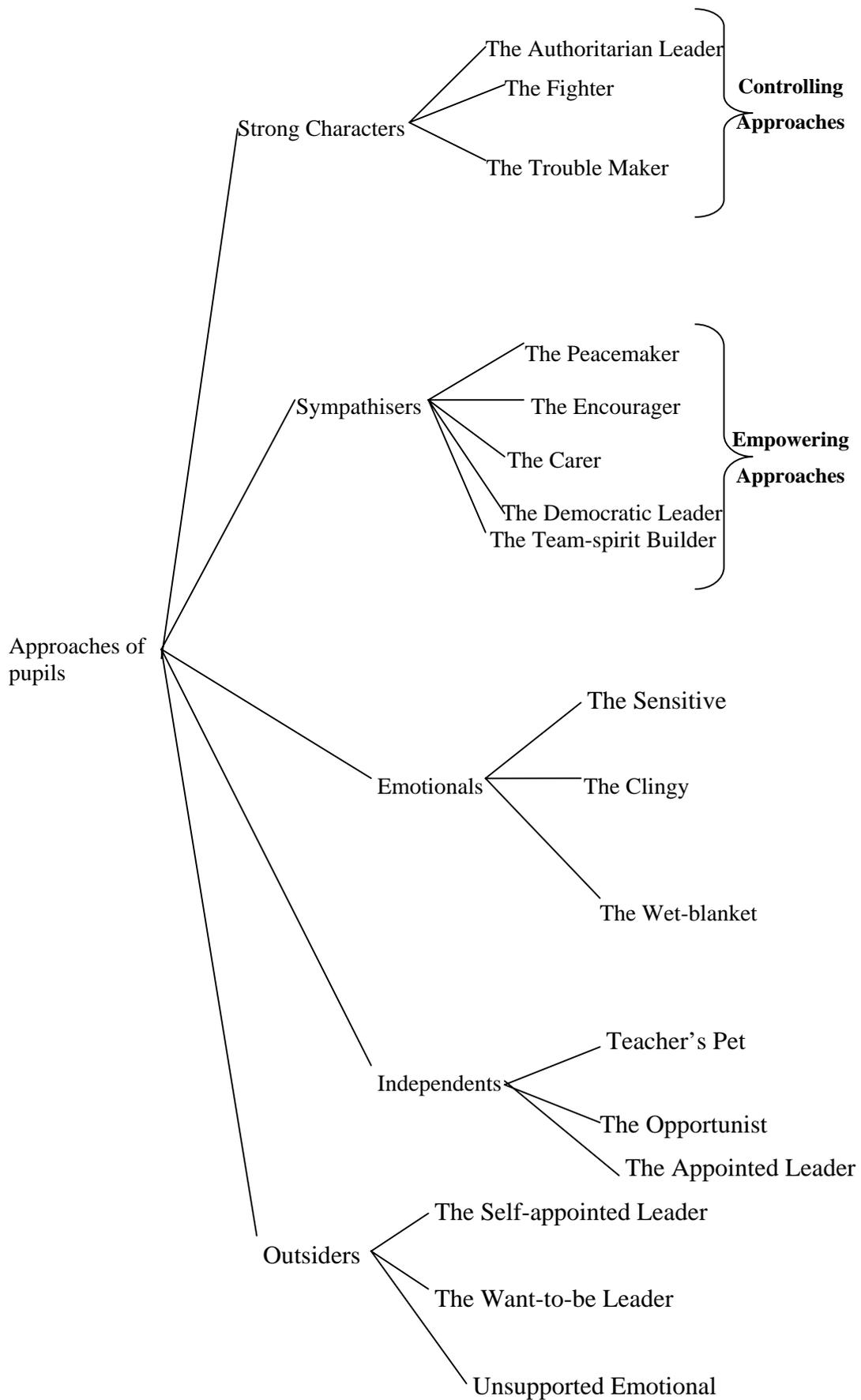


Appendix 11 – Kinds of Activities Taxonomy Diagram

- 1 Centre led only
 - 1.1. Group orientated only
 - 1.1.1. Low ropes
 - 1.1.2. Connect force
 - 1.1.3. Raft building
 - 1.2. Individualistic only
 - 1.2.1. Environmental senses
 - 1.2.2. Disco
 - 1.2.3. Archery
 - 1.2.4. Forest walk
 - 1.2.5. Pond dipping
 - 1.2.6. Tuck shop
 - 1.2.7. Swimming
 - 1.3. Involving groups, but not necessarily team building orientated
 - 1.3.1. Parachute games
 - 1.3.2. Sports Hall games
 - 1.3.3. Recording studio
 - 1.3.4. Forest walk
- 2 School led only
 - 2.1. Group orientated only
 - 2.1.3. Shelter building
 - 2.2. Individualistic only
 - 2.2.1. Diary writing
 - 2.2.2. Video watching
 - 2.3. Involving groups, but not necessarily team building orientated
 - 2.3.1. Art
 - 2.3.2. Creepi crawl
 - 2.3.3. Astroturf games
- 3 Activities led either by the centre or by the visiting teachers
 - 3.1. Group orientated only
 - 3.1.1. Blind string trail
 - 3.1.2. Spider's Web

- 3.1.3. Krypton puzzles
- 3.1.4. Eggs can fly
- 3.1.5. Toxic Waste
- 3.1.6. Orienteering
- 3.1.7. Scavenger Hunt
- 3.1.8. Poisoned Ground
- 4 Activities led by other trained staff than centre staff
 - 4.1. Involving groups, but not necessarily team building
 - 4.1.1. Climbing
 - 4.1.2. Environmental senses
 - 4.1.3. Forest Walk

Appendix 12 – Kinds of Pupils Taxonomy Diagram



Appendix 13 – Kinds of Pupil Leadership Taxonomy Diagram

1. Natural leaders
 - 1.1. Democratic
 - 1.2. Authoritarian
 - 1.3. Shared leadership

2. Appointed leaders
 - 2.1. By teachers
 - 2.2. By facilitators
 - 2.3. By pupils

3. Temporary leaders
 - 3.1. Appointed leaders
 - 3.2. Self-appointed leaders
 - 3.3. Want-to-be leaders
 - 3.4. Shared leadership

4. Challenged leaders
 - 4.1. Authoritarian natural leaders
 - 4.2. Appointed leaders
 - 4.3. Self-appointed leaders
 - 4.4. Want-to-be leaders

5. Accepted leaders
 - 5.1. Democratic natural leaders

6. Criticised leaders
 - 6.1. Democratic natural leaders

Appendix 14 – Kinds of Facilitators Taxonomy Diagram

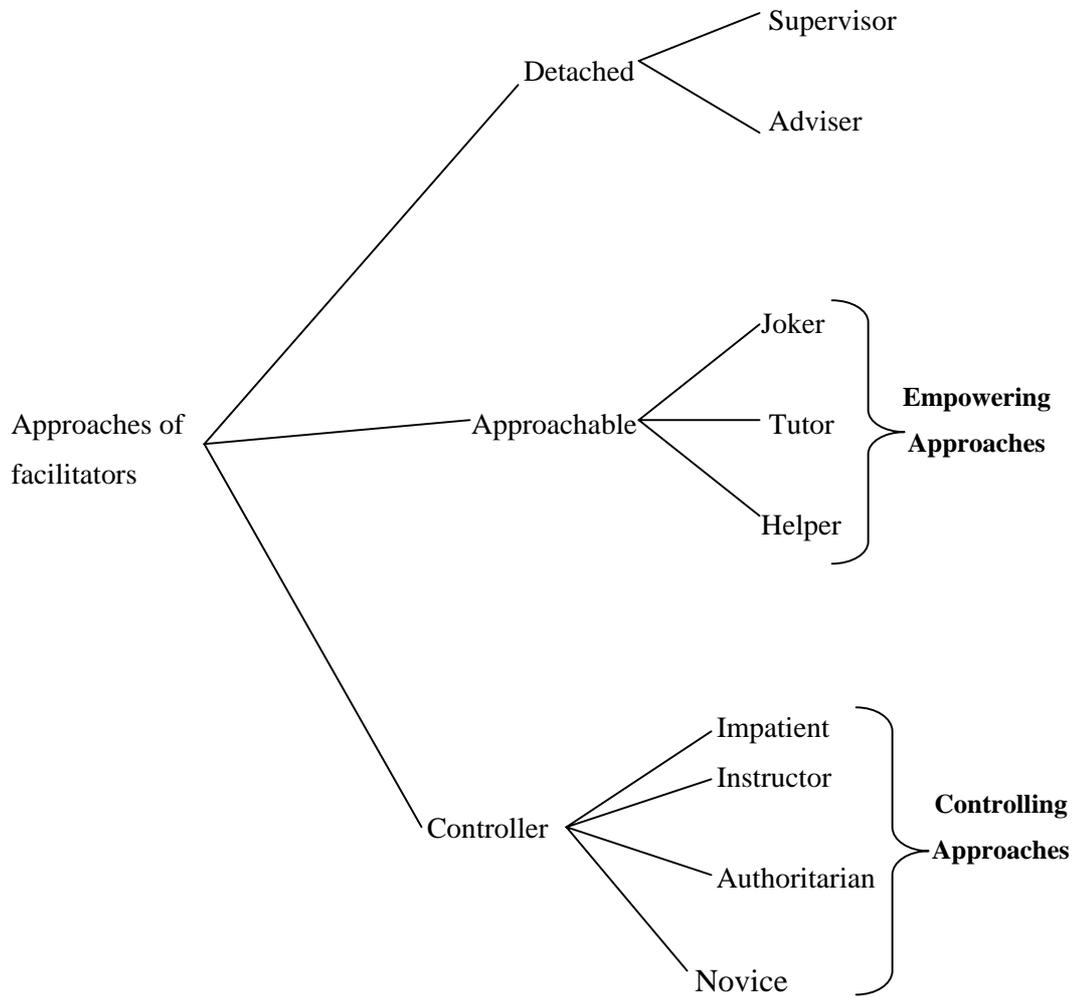


Table 2 An Overview of the Visiting School Groups

Week of fieldwork	School group number	School the group attended*	Period of stay	Age of pupils	Number of pupils in total	Number of female teachers	Number of male teachers
1	1	A	13.06. – 15.06.2005	6-8 years of age	29	3	0
1	2	A	15.06. – 17.06.2005	6-8 years of age	39	3	0
2	3	B	20.06. – 22.06.2005	6-7 years of age	25	3	1
2	4	C	22.06. – 24.06.2005	10-11 years of age	36	3	1
3	5	D	27.06. – 29.06.2005	10-11 years of age	57	3**	1
3	6	E	29.06. – 01.07.2005	8-9 years of age	34	2	1
4	7	F	04.07. – 08.07.2005	10-11 years of age	24	4	0
5	8	B	11.07. – 15.07.2005	10-11 years of age	26	3	1
6	9	G	18.07.2005	11-12 years of age	115	6	2
7	10	H	15.05. – 17.05.2006	9 years of age	24	2	1
7	11	H	17.05. – 19.05.2006	9 years of age	40	2	1
8	12	I	22.05. – 24.05.2006	8-9 years of age	33	3	0
8	13	I	24.05. – 26.05.2006	8-9 years of age	45	2	3
9	14	J	05.06. – 09.06.2006	9-10 years of age	50	2	2

*The names of the schools are not disclosed in order to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, I used capital letters instead to show how many groups came from the same school.

**This group was also accompanied by one of the teachers' mother. Thus there were five visiting adults accompanying this group.

Table 3 Paradigm Worksheet: Componential Analysis of Kinds of Teachers (Binary Values)

Approaches	Taking part in the activity	Making decisions	Encouraging / Praising	Physical assistance	Giving clues, suggestions	Discouraging cheating	Flexible	Interested in the activity itself
Safety obsessed	Yes/No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes/No	No	Yes/No
Nanny	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Yes/No
Adviser	Yes/No	No	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Yes
Indifferent	No	No	No	Yes/No	No	No	Yes	No
Demander	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Chatter	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Discussion leader	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question asker	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Yes
Part-of-the-team	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Yes
Helper	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Team-spirit builder	No/Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Rule breaker	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Peace maker	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Authoritarian	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Interferer	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	Yes
Lecturer	No	Yes	No	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Toughen-upper	No/Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Watch dog	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Table 4 Paradigm Worksheet: Componential Analysis of Kinds of Activities (Binary Values)

Activity	Group orientated	Individualistic	Facilitated by the centre	Facilitated by the teachers	Time	Observed	On centre grounds
Orienteering	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Morning / Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Parachute games	Yes	No	Yes	No	Morning / Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Low ropes course	Yes	No	Yes	No	Morning / Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Blind string trail	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Morning / Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Environmental senses	No	Yes	Yes / No ⁹¹	No	Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Art	No	Yes	No ⁹²	Yes	Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Creepi crawl	No	Yes	No	Yes	Afternoon	yes	Yes
Campfire activities	No	Yes	Yes	No	Evening	No	Yes
Sport hall games	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Afternoon / Evening	Yes	Yes
Swimming	No	Yes	Yes	No	Afternoon	Yes	Yes / No ⁹³
Spider's web	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Morning / Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Krypton puzzles	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Morning / Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Scavenger Hunt	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Morning / Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Eggs can fly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Morning / Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Disco	No	Yes	Yes	No	Evening	Yes	Yes
Toxic waste	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Morning / Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Recording studio	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes	No	Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Connect force	Yes	No	Yes	No	Afternoon / Evening	Yes	Yes
Ghost story / walk	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Evening	Yes	Yes
Poisoned ground	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Morning / Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Shelter building	Yes	No	No	Yes	Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Archery	No	Yes	Yes	No	Morning / Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Diary writing	No	Yes	No	Yes	Morning/Afternoon/Evening	No	Yes
Forest walk	No	Yes	Yes / No ⁹⁴	No	Morning	Yes	Yes / No ⁹⁵
Pond dipping	No	Yes	Yes	No	Morning / Afternoon	Yes	Yes
Video	No	Yes	No	Yes	Evening	Yes	Yes
Raft building	Yes	No	Yes	No	Morning	Yes	Yes
Climbing	No	Yes	No ⁹⁶	No	Morning	Yes	No
Astroturf games	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Afternoon	No	Yes

⁹¹ This activity was sometimes facilitated by staff from a nearby centre.

⁹² Ibid. 91

⁹³ This activity sometimes took place at a nearby centre.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 91

⁹⁵ Ibid. 93

⁹⁶ Ibid. 91

Table 5 Paradigm Worksheet: Complete Componential Analysis for Kinds of Activities

Activity	Type	Conducted by	Degree of adult intervention/ involvement	Place	Perceived Risk
Orienteering	Team building, competitive exercise	Centre staff / visiting teachers	Low – Medium, sometimes high	Large area on centre grounds, outdoors	Low (no safety equipment worn)
Parachute games	Group interaction, fun orientated	Centre staff	High	Small area of centre grounds, indoors or outdoors	Low
Low ropes course	Team building exercise	Centre staff	Medium - High	Enclosed activity area on centre grounds, outdoors	High (safety equipment worn)
Blind string trail	Team building exercise	Centre staff / visiting teachers	Medium - High	Enclosed activity area on centre grounds, outdoors	Medium (no safety equipment worn)
Environmental senses	Individualistic experiential learning activity	Centre staff / visiting teachers	High	Specific wooden area of centre grounds or at a nearby centre, outdoors	Low
Art	Individualistic creative activity	Teachers / staff from a nearby centre	High	Small area of centre grounds or at a nearby centre, indoors or outdoors	Low
Creepi crawl	Individualistic experiential learning activity	Visiting teachers	High	Specific wooden area of centre grounds, outdoors	Low
Campfire activities	Fun oriented activity, involves the whole group	Centre staff	High	Specific barbeque area of centre grounds, outdoors	Low
Sport hall games	Competitive activities	Centre staff	High	The Centre’s sports Hall, indoors	Medium
Swimming	Competitive, fun orientated activities	Centre staff	High	The Centre’s swimming pool, indoors	Medium – High (life guards and teachers supervising)
Spider’s web	Team building exercise	Centre staff / visiting teachers	Medium - High	Enclosed activity area on centre grounds, outdoors	Medium
Krypton puzzles	Team building exercise	Centre staff / visiting teaches	Low - Medium	Small area on centre grounds, indoors or outdoors	Low
Scavenger Hunt	Team building competitive exercise	Visiting teachers / centre staff	Low	Large area on centre grounds, outdoors or inside the centre building	Low
Eggs can fly	Team building competitive exercise	Centre staff / visiting teachers	Low - Medium	Small area on centre grounds indoors or outdoors	Low
Disco	Fun activity, involves the whole group	Centre staff	Low	The cellar of the centre building, indoors	Low
Toxic waste	Team building exercise	Centre staff	Low – Medium – High	Enclosed activity area on centre grounds, outdoors	Low
Recording studio	Fun activity, individualistic, sometimes involves groups	Centre staff	Low - Medium	The centre’s recording studio, indoors	Low
Connect force	Team building, competitive exercise	Centre staff	Low - Medium	Large area of centre grounds, outdoors or in the centre building, indoors	Low
Ghost story / walk	Fun activity, involves the whole group	Centre staff	High	A grotto, outdoors or the centre building, indoors	Low
Poisoned ground	Team building exercise	Centre staff / visiting teachers	Medium - High	Enclosed activity area on centre grounds, outdoors	Medium (some safety equipment worn: gloves)
Shelter building	Team building activity	Visiting teachers	Low	Large wooden area on centre grounds, outdoors	Low
Archery	Individualistic competitive exercise	Centre staff	High	The centre’s Sport Hall, indoors or enclosed area, outdoors	Medium
Diary writing	Individualistic activity	Visiting teachers	Medium	Indoors	Low
Forest walk	Individualistic experiential learning activity	Centre staff / staff from a nearby centre	High	The nearby forest, outdoors	Low
Pond dipping	Individualistic experiential learning activity	Centre staff	High	The centre’s pond, outdoors	Low
Video	Fun, individualistic activity	Visiting teachers	High	The centre building, indoors	Low
Raft building	Team building competitive exercise	Centre staff	Medium	Small area on centre grounds, outdoors and the swimming pool	Medium – High (life guards and teachers supervising)
Climbing	Individualistic activity	Staff from a nearby centre	Medium	Outside the centre’s grounds, indoors	High (safety equipment worn)
Astroturf games	Competitive group interaction activity	Visiting teachers / centre staff	High	Centre’s Astroturf, outdoors	Low

