Understanding the Facilitator's Role in Outdoor and Environmental Education: An Autoethnographic Study

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Abstract

This research examines the role of the facilitator in achieving environmental sustainability outcomes in outdoor education. The current literature base and the researcher's experiences as a facilitator are analysed to understand how to more effectively educate for the environment. Climate change and the adventure and risk-based nature of outdoor education emphasise the importance of this research in encouraging a shift in the objectives of outdoor education. Applying an autoethnographic lens has allowed the researcher to embody a personal journey of discovery through self-reflection and self-observation. Qualitative data was collected in the form of reflective journal entries kept over the past year which were explored alongside an extensive literature review. This literature covered outdoor education, experiential learning, environmental sustainability, the action competence model, place-responsive learning, programme length, and effective facilitation.

Key findings highlighted the themes of being caught 'on the hop', the importance of consistency and repetitive experiences, the difference between knowing and understanding, and that children should be taught how to think, not what to think. Childhood experiences have been raised as an indicator of pro-environmental behaviours and having a connection to nature is found to be influential in developing a meaningful relationship with nature. The importance of having local knowledge, especially in a place-responsive programme, was brought to attention, alongside being intentional and creative as a facilitator, which can significantly improve the engagement and value of a session. Furthermore, having knowledge of core values and principles allows facilitators to maintain effectiveness in challenging situations.

This study was important for challenging the role outdoor education has in educating for the environment and understanding how this can be achieved. Recommendations have been made to outdoor centres and facilitators to consider how they can demonstrate and effectively facilitate environmental sustainability outcomes. Specifically, recommendations have been made for outdoor centres to support political action focused on positive environmental sustainability changes, and to incorporate more sustainable actions such as riparian planting and community engagement events. Additionally, offering more staff development opportunities as facilitators are critical to the delivery of programmes. For outdoor facilitators, recommendations have been made to engage in self-reflection by keeping a logbook of how each session went and how they could improve next time, as well as seeking resources and workshops that support their personal development.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Name: Hanne Mellsop

Signed:

Date: 2nd May 2022

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

> *Journal Entry 25.04.21*
> *Before I start this journey of self-reflection and discovering who I am as a facilitator, I want to write down who I think I am, why I want to pursue a master's, and what I want to achieve at the end of this programme. I don't often sit down and think about my strengths and weaknesses, but I feel it is appropriate before navigating the next six months.*
>
> *I know I am a perfectionist; I like to please and impress people even at the consequence of my mental health. I always want everyone to like me, so it eats me up when I know someone doesn't. I am often a fence sitter – I would prefer not to make a fuss. Also, I don't particularly like asking for help, I would rather suffer and expend more energy trying to fix the problem or do it myself. I like to think I am confident; I always strive for excellence, and I am all about community. I love to bring people together or be a part of something bigger than just myself. I don't like failing, I know failing is often the best way to learn, but I find it embarrassing, and I feel like it exposes all my flaws. I over-analyse everything; I like being in control which can be positive or negative. I like to lead and delegate, and I think I am pretty good at it. However, I am not good at managing a healthy work-study-life balance. I like having a process and following this from start to finish. I am excellent at productive procrastinating – a term I came up with to define how I procrastinate by doing other "helpful" things, such as cleaning, maintaining the garden, vacuuming, doing the washing, and doing chores.*
>
> *I absolutely love the outdoors; on leaving school I hadn't realised my passion for the outdoors or environmental sustainability, but when I think about it, it has been such a constant part of my upbringing and is likely the reason I am so passionate about it now. This comes with its downfalls, since becoming more aware of the environmental challenges we face, I often feel overwhelmed and helpless. I am really passionate about helping others develop and become better; often with my coaching I prefer to help the younger coaches improve their coaching than coach the athletes myself. I want to transfer this into a professional sense within outdoor education and help the facilitators create effective and environmentally sustainable programmes. I guess this sums up why I want to pursue this master's programme. By the end of it, I hope I have improved how I facilitate outdoor education experiences and have a better understanding of how I can make a positive difference to the environment, especially in my community.*

Outdoor Education (OE) provides opportunities for young people to experience dynamic new activities in the outdoors, spend time in both familiar and unfamiliar environments, and develop practical and theoretical skills (Lugg, 2004; Ronglien, 2016). It encourages students to learn about themselves in relation to the natural environment and their peers through developing meaningful relationships (Povilaitis et al., 2019). It can be a significant contributor to the development of learning and personalities of young people, providing facilitators are equipped with relevant skills and strategies

(Gass & Stevens, 2007; Hattie et al., 1997; Martin et al., 2006). Many outdoor centres offer a range of activities including, but not limited to, mountain biking, caving, climbing, snow sports, water sports, mountaineering, and adventure racing. Regardless of the activity, many outdoor educators aim to encourage the benefits of spending time adventuring and experiencing the outdoors (Ballam & Cosgriff, 2018). OE is often assumed to be synonymous with Environmental Education (EE) as it can occur in outdoor environments, and sessions can be frontloaded with sustainable actions (Gough, 2016; Rickinson et al., 2004). Although it appears to be concerned with sustainability, many aspects of OE negatively impact the environment and thus go against what should theoretically go hand in hand (Martin, 2004). EE is defined by the Ministry of Education (1999) as learning which develops knowledge, awareness, attitudes, values, and skills to maintain and improve the environment. This can be seen through programmes such as Enviroschools which encourage young people to design and lead sustainability projects within their school (Enviroschools, 2022). EE should be a cross-curricular approach applied to all educational contexts and inform every aspect of society, from organisation to community level.

OE is unique because it predominantly occurs outside the classroom, so it has a solid foundation to educate individuals on environmental sustainability (Povilaitis et al., 2019). From my experience, I have often witnessed attempts of environmental sustainability in OE as 'superficial acts', such as picking up rubbish and then going about the outdoor programme as 'business as usual'. The term sustainability can be defined as the ability of a process or action to be sustained at a certain level over a period of time (Ruggerio, 2021). As the world faces environmental problems, a climate crisis and social challenges, sustainability has been increasingly described as the actions people take to avoid the depletion of natural resources and to ensure the protection of global ecosystems (Mensah, 2019). Whilst sustainability is focused more on the present moment, sustainable development focuses on the long term through a commitment to societal progress and the improvement of quality of life (Mensah, 2019). Mensah (2019) sees sustainable development as a principle that meets human development goals whilst sustaining the ecosystems on which the economy, society, and people depend. When considering sustainable development from this perspective, it allows for social progress and an environmental equilibrium without ignoring the need for economic growth.

Whilst the population continues to rise, the availability of natural resources continues to diminish, hence the need for a renewed focus on environmental sustainability, especially in an industry that relies on the natural environment to experience the many benefits of engaging in such activities (Hák et al., 2016). This study is founded upon the belief that OE should educate for the protection of local, natural environments. Hence, the focus is specifically on environmental sustainability and aims to highlight how outdoor educators can encourage positive and sustainable behaviours that benefit the taiao (natural world).

Facilitation, in order to aid learning, is a core component of OE that enables outdoor leaders to adapt sessions appropriately, depending on who the group is and how each person learns best (Gass & Stevens, 2007). This awareness and ability to tailor sessions embraces students' prior knowledge and learning style, thus increasing their engagement. Consequently, students can feel more valued, and the session can move beyond being instructional with a fixed set of learning outcomes that may not suit the students learning style. Facilitation then becomes an essential feature in effectively integrating environmental behaviours within the outcomes of an OE session (Blenkinsop et al., 2016; Grimwood et al., 2018).

This chapter will provide a brief overview of the research area with key terms defined. It will explain the purpose of the study and how the research can inform my practice, assist other facilitators in the industry, and make recommendations to outdoor education centres and facilitators. The research question and aims will be presented, explaining why I have chosen to conduct research in this area, and the background into the methodology. Lastly, the researcher's position and the significance of the study will be discussed.

Key Terms

Facilitation refers to the planning, delivering, and reflecting on an experience to help achieve a specific goal (Bendaly, 2000; Brown, 2002; Stan, 2009). A facilitator can be defined as someone who has an influential role in achieving the goals and outcomes identified (Brown, 2002; Hunter, 2007).

Outdoor Education has been categorised by Priest (1986) into six key points: OE is a learning method; it draws upon experiential learning; it primarily and importantly takes place outdoors; it is holistic in the way it requires the use of all senses; it is based on interdisciplinary curricula, and learning is about the relationships between people and natural resources.

Environmental Sustainability is defined as the protection of natural resources to support the health and wellbeing of the planet and people (United Nations, 2021). It focuses on increasing understanding and appreciation of the relationship between people and the planet.

Place-Responsive Learning is an approach to outdoor education that requires thoughtfulness and empathy for a particular place, combining learning outdoors and reconnecting with nature (Brown, 2012). As described by Boyes (2012), place immersion enables opportunities to build quality connections and deep engagement with local environments.

Experiential learning is based upon a student-led approach where they have more autonomy over their learning and develop soft skills (Jose et al., 2017). Active experimentation, concrete experience, reflective observation, and abstract conceptualisation are all incorporated into this form of learning (Kolb, 1984).

Purpose of Study

I firmly believe that OE can make a significant difference to the health of our natural environment, through educating and effectively facilitating meaningful experiences for our rangatahi (young people), by focusing on environmental sustainability. Whilst OE is compulsory up to Year 10 in the NZ curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999), it should be compulsory for all year levels so all rangatahi have multiple opportunities to experience what OE can offer. The purpose of this study is to understand whether environmental sustainability principles can be educated effectively within outdoor education programmes, and how facilitators can influence this process. Specifically, the facilitators' role is examined to understand how they can incorporate and achieve environmental sustainability outcomes within their programmes so rangatahi can learn to care for and protect the environment.

Informing Practice

One of the reasons I am so passionate about OE is on many occasions, there have been students who are quiet, disruptive, or lack leadership skills within the classroom, who are then the opposite when given the opportunity to express themselves in a different context. Being exposed to the outdoors also creates an opportunity for students to experience and connect to nature, thus providing a platform for facilitators to educate on sustainable living and actions. Hence, this study aims to inform my practice as a facilitator, to improve how I facilitate and better understand how I can be a kaitiaki (guardian) of the environment around me and share this knowledge appropriately.

I often think about how I can improve the quality of my sessions by finding the balance between education, enjoyment, and challenge. It can be easy to get caught up in feeling like it was a good session when you are deemed the 'favourite' or most 'fun' leader, but is this achieving the most out of an OE session? While the demand for outdoor experiences is increasing, a shift is occurring away from traditional extended, expedition-style programmes towards shorter, more accessible courses (Rushford et al., 2020). This puts more pressure on facilitators to create programmes that achieve the school's aims while building trust and positive relationships with students within the available time. Thus, a primary reason for conducting this research is to understand if OE leaders can facilitate environmental sustainability outcomes in a shorter period within OE programmes. I hope to challenge my assumptions around facilitation and inspire environmentally focussed change within the organisations I am associated with.

Research Question and Aims

This study aims to understand, through personal reflection, how intentional facilitation of environmental sustainability outcomes can be incorporated into outdoor education programmes. The following questions were established to better understand the facilitators' role in outdoor education and pro-environmental behaviours.

Overarching question: What role can the facilitator play in fostering environmental sustainability outcomes in outdoor education?

Specifically:

a) What does the current literature base suggest might be best practice in facilitating sustainability outcomes?

b) How does this mirror my experience as a practitioner?

c) What recommendations can be made to outdoor education practitioners and outdoor centres to incorporate effective facilitation for environmental sustainability into their programmes or practice?

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study is autoethnography, a relatively new method of qualitative inquiry compared to most other forms of research, and one that is rapidly gaining implementation (Anderson, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Brooks, 2010; Poulos, 2010). Autoethnography is a journey of discovery, describing personal experience to convey potentially complex feelings or knowledge of a particular field. Grounded within critical theory and postmodern philosophy, autoethnography intends to acknowledge the researcher's bias and the link between personal and cultural aspects as a form of inquiry (Wall, 2006). Autoethnography has been chosen for this study due to its critical and highly personalised nature and its use of self-observation to challenge social constructs.

Autoethnography allows researchers to adopt their take on the methodology, seen through the variety of autoethnographies that have been published, with many that openly contradict each other (Anderson, 2006; Atkinson, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 1996). Many researchers label autoethnography as 'self-indulgent' and biased due to the individuality of the approach (Atkinson, 1997; Allen-Collinson, 2012; Wall, 2006). However, it allows for an in-depth analysis of the researchers' experiences and the intersection with broader discourses embedded in practices. The principles of this methodology challenge new researchers to examine their own beliefs, values, and assumptions within the field of practice (Anderson, 2006; Denzin, 2006).

Applying this methodology consciously embeds the researcher within the research, hence the use of reflective journaling based on my own experiences, accompanied by a review of the relevant literature. This will contribute to my depth of knowledge and understanding of the facilitator's role in achieving environmental sustainability outcomes. As a subjective and emergent piece of research, reflexivity will be involved to uncover deeper meaning and confront choices regarding people and identities during the process (Lincoln et al., 2013).

Researcher Position

Journal Entry 28.01.22
I remember presenting my end of degree cooperative placement presentation and thinking this was the first time I hadn't really struggled with a presentation. I realised it was because I was so passionate about the topic and what outdoor education can do and be for people. That was when I knew I had chosen the right pathway and wanted to make a difference in people's lives through the outdoor education industry.

This research is the culmination of my past six years of study at tertiary-level education in Auckland, NZ. I completed my undergraduate degrees in marketing and outdoor education in 2020, and this dissertation is a component of my master's degree. During this time, I have been working part-time and contracting for various OE programmes and centres, which has continued to develop my passion and knowledge in this area. Through my study, I have observed some inconsistencies between the theory and what is being implemented in the industry. In particular, the theory highlights the importance of students having the opportunity for repetitive engagement in the outdoors over an extended period, yet many outdoor centres still offer short 'taster' sessions focused on the activity rather than the journey. The same goes for schools that often tick the 'OE' box during one week of the school year, also known as EOTC. This undervalues what OE can offer for several reasons, students lack ownership over their learning, the opportunity to embed learning is decreased due to the limited time available to develop skills, and it misses the opportunity to convey how fundamental the outdoors is to our overall health and wellbeing (Cheng & Monroe, 2012; Grimwood et al., 2018; Rushford et al., 2020).

I endeavour to better understand who I am as a facilitator and how the theory can inform my practice. This research is guided by an interpretivist paradigm to help me gain a deeper understanding of social reality through interpreting my beliefs and creating new meaning from situations and actions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In understanding my paradigm, I am acknowledging that this research is guided by the subjective values and worldview I hold (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Thus, I will reflect on any assumptions I have made to improve my facilitation of OE programmes and adopt an environmentally focused approach to work, study, and life. I am aware of the industry's high turnover of outdoor leaders and have observed their development plateauing due to the lack of growth and progression. This lack of focus on personal and professional development in terms of facilitation potentially contributes to shorter OE programmes being categorised into 'fun, taster' activities rather than a meaningful medium of education. Drawing upon my observations, I want to bring a holistic perspective to facilitation and help increase other facilitators' and outdoor centres' knowledge of how to best support the students in their care.

Significance of the Study

Whilst there is a breadth of research identifying that OE should be sympathetic to the environment, there is a lack of research on how to facilitate environmental sustainability outcomes within OE effectively, hence the necessity of this study (Boyes; 2012; Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Grimwood et al., 2018; Martin, 2004; Priest & Gass, 1997). If OE opportunities continue to be important experiences for young people, and the demand for shorter multi-day programmes continues to rise, facilitators will be expected to adapt and intentionally facilitate OE outcomes (Thomas, 2008). This research will help build an understanding of the methods and approaches used to effectively facilitate environmental sustainability outcomes based on my experiences. This research is significant for my development as a facilitator as I combine theory and practice to gain a greater awareness of who I am as an outdoor educator. Although it will be specific to my own experiences, it is hoped the findings may influence other practitioners and inform providers of OE programmes.

Dissertation Structure

Chapter One provides a brief background into the research area, identifies the purpose of the research, and presents the research question and aims. The methodology is explained, followed by the researcher's position and the significance of the study.

Chapter Two presents a broad review of literature relevant to the research. This chapter presents literature under three main headings: Outdoor Education, Environmental Sustainability, and Facilitation. Theories and ideas are analysed and applied to the outdoor education area within each of these headings.

Chapter Three establishes autoethnography as the methodological framework. It describes autoethnography, the rationale for choosing this approach, and considers the philosophical grounding. Ethical considerations are justified, with the reflexive research design methods discussed.

Chapter Four presents the findings based on my observations and reflections on relevant themes to analyse the data. These themes are drawn from a selection of journal entries and applied to the theory.

Chapter Five presents a critical discussion of the key findings and revisits the research questions and aims, including relevant implications. It then summarises my development as a facilitator and identifies the strengths, limitations, and further research suggestions. Lastly, the recommendations and concluding thoughts are outlined.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature and provides a broad introduction to Outdoor Education in New Zealand, Environmental Sustainability, and Facilitation. The review begins with a background into outdoor education, highlighting critical outdoor education and the role of experiential education. Environmental sustainability is then investigated to understand the common ground between environmental education and outdoor education. Two emerging trends are discussed – the relevance of place-responsiveness and the model of action competence. The action competence model is applied as it creates a vision for sustainable action by integrating current knowledge, experience, and reflection, all relevant to this research topic. The impact of programme length on achieving outdoor education outcomes is examined alongside the role of intentionality in facilitation. This leads to a background in facilitation, the role and purpose of a facilitator, and the elements of being an effective facilitator.

Outdoor Education

Defining the term

Outdoor education (OE) is a term used to describe a broad field of education and pedagogy that has developed and evolved significantly over the past 40 years. It has been defined numerous times with a diverse history spanning multiple countries, contributing to the lack of a universal definition (Smith & Walsh, 2019). OE is unique in creating opportunities to learn and develop outside the standard classroom (Povilaitis et al., 2019). OE activities help promote positive relationships, develop inter and intrapersonal skills, and can encourage a deeper understanding of people's relationship to the natural environment (Povilaitis et al., 2019). The 1970s saw the emergence of contemporary OE, where it began its development as a recognised educational practice (Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

In 1975 the Dartington Conference, organised by the United Kingdom Department of Education and Science, aimed to clarify and justify OE by providing a definition that would be accepted by schools and formal education institutions (Nicol, 2002). They defined OE as "education out of doors…including disciplines such as geography, history, art, biology fieldwork, environmental studies, and physical education" (Nicol, 2002, p. 88). The aims discussed at the conference stemmed from Mortlock (1973), which were to heighten awareness and respect for self, others, and nature through challenge, group experiences, decision-making processes, self-awareness, and direct experiences. Nicol (2002) suggests that the inclusion of EE within the Dartington Conference definition could have been to validate OE's place within the school curriculum. A persistent question has been whether outdoor educators, who are considered technical specialists within the field, have sufficient knowledge to deliver effective EE as part of their OE programmes (Keighley, 1997; Guy, 2015).

Often incorporated within the health and physical education curriculum, Boyes (2000) explains how this has placed OE in a narrow field rather than embracing the broader scope of what OE can offer.

Boyes (2000) concurred with the general sense of a lack of a universal definition, highlighting how OE is constantly and rapidly evolving with subtle changes to concepts and words. The same goes for the comprehensive range of terms associated with OE. These terms include OE, adventure education, experiential learning, earth education, EE, education outside the classroom (EOTC), outdoor pursuits, outdoor recreation, and wilderness education (Boyes, 2000; Roberts, 2018). Adventure education, EE, and outdoor pursuits provide the foundation for most OE in NZ (Zink & Boyes, 2006). Quay and Seaman (2013) also believe OE remains a 'confused' field and needs to differentiate between the outdoors as a subject and the outdoors as a teaching pedagogy.

Boyes (2000) identified two perspectives of OE, one being defined as EOTC and the other being the integration of adventure and EE. One of the classic definitions comes from Donaldson and Donaldson (1958), who define OE as "in, for, and about the outdoors" (p. 49). This was supported in 1974 on the National Wallis House OE course and in the review of OE in NZ schools (Clark, 1976; Stothart, 1993). This notion is about education being placed in the outdoors, how to benefit the future of the environment, and learning about nature. Another shift occurred in 1977 during a national NZ in-service course on OE towards three foci: outdoor pursuits, environmental studies, and personal and social development (Boyes, 2000; MacPherson, 1977). Higgins and Loynes (1996) believe people need to acknowledge the overlap between outdoor adventure, EE, and personal and social development. They suggest that OE should lead to an increased awareness of the environment. This was evident in Mortlock's (1984) definition, describing OE as the development of relationships with his or herself, with peers, and with the natural environment.

Importantly, Boyes (2000) discusses critical OE, with researchers suggesting OE adopts the role of developing students' critical perspectives and understanding of relationships with the natural environment (Brookes, 1991; Martin, 1999; Thomas, 1999). This is "based on critical theory where the intention is to examine the person and environmental issues in light of their relationship to the dominant social order" (Boyes, 2000, p. 84). Martin (1999) believes that to educate for environmental sustainability effectively, critical OE needs to have a primary role in educating cultural beliefs and practices and identifying where change needs to occur. Boyes (2000) also strongly believes that critical OE has a vital role in advancing the socio-ecological intentions of OE within the NZ curriculum. Integrating critical perspectives within OE can ensure the physicality and adventure aspects of OE remain where appropriate, whilst opportunities for people to understand their relationship with and in the outdoors are created. Furthermore, Boyes (2000) believes this can contribute to meeting and enhancing the intentions of Health and Physical Education and Outdoor Education within the NZ curriculum.

The most recent comprehensive definition of OE in the NZ curriculum defines OE as providing opportunities for students to "develop personal and social skills, become active, safe, and skilled in the

outdoors, and protect and care for the environment" (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 33). It includes adventure activities and outdoor pursuits, believing that personal, social, and skill development will occur from these activities. The four dimensions of Hauora (health and wellbeing) are identified as being enhanced through OE programmes by students experiencing safe, challenging, and enjoyable outdoor experiences (Ministry of Education, 1999). The curriculum encourages schools to use the local environment where possible, provide relevant and challenging programmes, incorporate reflective learning, follow health and safety guidelines, and ensure appropriate resources are available (Ministry of Education, 1999).

One of the most common representations of OE is proposed by Priest (1986). He recognised that OE also encourages the opportunity to build relationships with the natural world through developing an understanding of people's place in nature. He offered six key points that he believes underpins OE in terms of pedagogy and outcomes. OE is a learning method; it is experiential; it primarily takes place outdoors; it is holistic in the way it requires all senses; it is based on interdisciplinary curricula, and it is about the relationships between people and natural resources (p. 13–14). He imagines OE as a tree with two core components, adventure education and EE (Figure 1). Underpinning this figure are the six key foundations and the idea that adventure and EE are inextricably linked. Adventure education must involve environmental issues to protect the local area, whilst EE needs confident, cooperative, and problem-solving individuals to make an accurate judgement on how to be guardians of the environment. As highlighted by Gilbertson et al. (2006), "a common theme of all the definitions of OE is that through direct, structured experience in the outdoors, people learn about nature, themselves, and their place in their community" (p. 17). For this dissertation, I will adopt Priest's (1986) definition of OE, which is founded upon these six key points.

Experiential Education

The notion of OE has its roots in experiential education, which Boyes (2000) describes as a process where students learn by doing and draw from direct experience through hands-on interaction and task-oriented activities (Kolb,

Figure 1
Priest's (1986) Model of Outdoor Education

Note. This model was produced by Priest (1986) who imagined Outdoor Education as a tree with two core components. From "Redefining Outdoor Education: A Matter of Many Relationships" by S. Priest, 1986, *The Journal of Environmental Education, 17*(3), p. 13–15. In the public domain.

2014; Wenger, 2009). Experiential education places importance on relating prior knowledge to real-life examples, which leads to reflecting on these experiences to inform future situations (Kolb, 1984; Schwartz, 2013). This process provides students with opportunities to engage in active learning, challenge prior ideas and perspectives, and expand their knowledge (Ernst et al., 2015; Kolb, 1984). Deriving from constructivism, experiential education was developed by various scholars, including the likes of Dewey (1938), Lewin (1952), Piaget (1967), and Kolb (1984). The idea of experiential education was first thought of by Aristotle who believed that without applying knowledge to experience, knowledge will not remain (Aristotle & Reeve, 2014). This notion is supported by an ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius who once proclaimed, "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand" (Vaillancourt, 2009).

Kolb has developed a range of experiential learning models for teachers and facilitators to implement, spanning the last few decades (Kolb, 2014). Kolb (1984) established his theory of experiential learning as a four-stage continuous cycle involving concrete experience, reflective observation, active experimentation, and abstract conceptualisation, as seen in figure 2. This cycle encourages students to encounter a new experience, reflect on the experience, identify discrepancies between knowledge and understanding, investigate and form abstract concepts, and generalise and apply the ideas to future situations (Kolb, 2014).

Figure 2 Kolb's experiential learning cycle

Note. This model was produced by Dummer et al. (2008) to explain Kolb's experiential learning cycle. Adapted from *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development.* D. A. Kolb, 1984, Prentice-Hall. In the public domain.

Experiential education is a method of learning which has been adopted by OE as it encourages learning with the use of all senses (Priest, 1990). This enables a more meaningful connection with the local environment by being able to touch, see, smell, hear, and taste whilst being self-aware (Ronglien, 2016). Primarily taking place in the natural environment, it focuses on the relationships between people and

their local environment through hands-on experience (Priest, 1990). The likes of Outward Bound and the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) both identify and focus on experiential education (Sternberg & Zhang, 2014; Wagstaff & Cashel, 2002). The process itself is a vehicle for critical thinking and decision-making skills; it promotes physical activity which activates the body and brain functions; it encourages social interaction with peers and facilitators; students can develop a sense of oneself through the exploration of how they fit within the context, their abilities, and their weaknesses; and lastly, it inspires new perspectives, spiritual growth, and a sense of mastery (Brown, 2008; Passarelli, 2010; Priest, 1986; Wattchow, 2005). Thomas (2019a) argues that OE leaders must demonstrate intentionality during experiential learning activities to ensure these experiences are thoughtfully facilitated. He suggests that emerging OE leaders need to understand the literature associated with values and principles of experiential learning (Itin, 1999; Roberts, 2012; Simpson, 2003, 2011). In doing so, OE leaders can facilitate engaging experiences that foster growth and encourages students to take responsibility for their learning (Thomas, 2019a).

Environmental Sustainability

Understanding the Context

Priest and Gass (1997) described that whilst researchers claim OE is the combination of adventure and EE, there is concern that EE is the 'poor cousin' of the two (Martin, 1999). The Ministry of Education (1999) define EE as "a multi-disciplinary approach to learning that develops knowledge, awareness, attitudes, values and skills that will enable individuals and the community to contribute towards maintaining and improving the quality of the environment" (P. 9). On the other hand, environmental sustainability is defined as the protection of natural resources to support the health and well-being of the planet and people (United Nations, 2021). This ensures that future generations have the resources to live the same or better lives than current generations. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (2021) identifies that environmental sustainability should be focused on stabilising the disruptive relationship between people and the planet. It is clear the impact humans have on the earth with the depletion of many natural resources. Sea-level rise is accelerating, ocean heat storage and acidification are increasing, with widespread flooding and extreme weather events across the planet, and the last decade being the warmest ever recorded (World Meteorological Organization, 2021). Several studies have investigated the relationship with place and the importance of protecting the environment around us (Ardoin, 2006; Cumming & Nash, 2015; Wattchow & Brown, 2011, Restall & Conrad, 2015). Connecting and caring for the environment has been shown to decrease anxiety and depression by reducing stress levels (Louv, 2005), and providing restorative environments for youth (Field et al., 2016; Mannion et al., 2013). Evidence proves the value of green-space connection, from as little as having a view of nature through a window to being surrounded by nature during exercise (Barton & Pretty, 2010).

Achieving Environmental Sustainability within Outdoor Education

Boyes (2012) questions the role OE and facilitators can play in achieving environmental sustainability. With the current climate stability, productivity, and diversity of ecological systems, Boyes (2012) believes this underpins the need to educate for sustainability within OE as it is one of the few subjects which educates in the natural environment. In some cases, the nature of OE can encourage unsustainable action hence why educators have called for the primary focus of OE to be shifted to a focus on sustainability (see examples in Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Nicol (2013) encourages the importance of OE in achieving environmental outcomes through developing curiosity, relationships with the natural world, critical thinking, and positive experiences.

Knowledge of the natural environment and environmental issues is known not to be enough to change pro-environmental behaviours (Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Hungerford & Volk, 1990; Key, 2003), however, having an emotional connection and relationship with the environment can create the opportunity to increase certain behaviours (Pritchard et al., 2019; Siegal et al., 2018). This is supported by Lumber et al. (2017), who encourage outdoor activities which are founded upon "contact, meaning, emotion, compassion and beauty" (p. 21) and create more opportunities for nature connectedness (Richardson & McEwan, 2018). With many outdoor programmes achieving these aspects, this suggests outdoor educators can contribute to pro-environmental behaviours through how they facilitate outcomes. Outdoor educators are responsible for co-creating engaging, environmentally, and educationally valuable experiences (Blenkinsop et al., 2016). OE can build emotional connections by developing students' appreciation and relationship with the natural world through direct experiences, repeated engagement, and positive role modelling (Boyes, 2012; Lumber et al., 2017; Prince, 2017). Grimwood et al. (2018) identified three narratives for outdoor educators to help foster nature connectedness in OE. These narratives include creating the space for students to explore, learn, and develop relationships; encouraging nature connection by providing appropriate activities and time in nature, and lastly; broadening the space of nature connection through providing challenge and uncertainty within nature.

Environmental Education

EE has often been classroom-based, focused on current issues, and relies upon group discussion to achieve curriculum objectives. Contemporary approaches to EE in certain programmes are based upon the idea that knowledge alone can lead to pro-environmental action and behaviours (Key, 2003). A dominant assumption of environmental issues is that they arise mainly from ignorance and EE often only engages the learner "no further than their intellectual response" (Key, 2003, p. 52; Sterling, 2001). Key (2003) explains that the *method* in which education is provided is just as important as the *content* itself. Those who learn to be environmentally aware within a classroom setting that does not expose them to the elements are taught about these systems without significantly changing their own lives (Key, 2003).

Chawla and Cushing (2007) question 'what kinds of actions most effectively address environmental problems?'. Their research confirms that knowledge of environmental issues alone does not guarantee pro-environmental action and discuss Stern's (2000) differentiation between public and private environmentalism. Typically, environmental behaviour has been linked with private actions like recycling, composting, conscious buying, and energy-efficient appliances. They suggest that these environmental behaviours have their place when done collectively within wider communities, specifically when pressure is put on government and businesses to change their systems. People's ability to purchase energy-efficient cars and use public transport or bikes depends on government and businesses to make these options available and affordable. Hence why Chawla and Cushing (2007) support young people's involvement in political action and value EE that facilitates this.

In answering their initial question, they believe programmes that take place over an extended duration of time, have multiple opportunities to learn and practice environmental action effectively and achieve success with goal setting are among the most effective for continued pro-environmental behaviour (Chawla & Cushing, 2007). Actions such as writing letters, creating bird hotels, and engaging in community projects concerned with local environmental issues – all of which can take place over an extended programme – are more likely to lead to behaviour change and political action (Chawla & Cushing, 2007). Young people can become easily overwhelmed with environmental issues, a term often referred to as eco-anxiety (Blair, 2019). Therefore, Chawla and Cushing (2007) place great importance on environmental educators and facilitators in understanding the groups they are with and what time and resources they have, to ensure their learners can be successful rather than feeling overwhelmed.

Being exposed to nature can be a strong enough motivator for students in OE programmes to transfer or continue environmentally friendly behaviours (Hattie et al., 1997; Marsh, 2008; McKenzie, 2000). These behaviours can include leave no trace principles, using solar panels or composting toilets, bulk buying food, composting, and so on (D'Amato & Krasny, 2011). Programmes such as Outward Bound, NOLS, and wilderness OAE centres focus on outcomes associated with personal growth; this includes self-reliance, decision-making, problem-solving, and empathy. From these programmes, students often highlight experiences as motivators for participation that seek adventure, are in unique settings that differ from their day-to-day lives and develop them as individuals (D'Amato & Krasny, 2011). These outcomes are consistent with many outdoor adventure programmes that focus on leadership and personal challenge (McGowan, 2016). Although these programmes may not change pro-environmental behaviours, they often increase interest, whether that be students' desire to learn about nature or their commitment to conservation (D'Amato & Krasny, 2011).

Chawla and Cushing (2007) draw upon Hungerford and Volk's (1990) review of factors that describe what people need to action pro-environmental behaviour, identifying entry-level variables, ownership variables, and empowerment variables. These variables provide an outline and identify that people need

to value the environment and understand how it benefits society; they need to understand environmental issues and how it affects them; and lastly, they need to be empowered to believe they can make a difference and act against social norms or pressures. OE often helps students become good moral citizens, which Jordan and Kristiánsson (2017) identify is linked to sustainability education. Being a 'good' citizen stems from sustainability, where virtue ethics can be used as a framework to educate. Brown (2008) and Hales (2006) encourage OE to be more community-based and relevant to students rather than within an eco-system of another place. Students develop stronger connections to their community, thus developing understanding and care for the land and local people (Brown, 2008, 2012).

A criticism of traditional OE is its individualistic nature, fuelled by the pursuit of adventure and risk (Boyes, 2012; Martin, 2004). OE could shift the focus and demonstrate the interconnectedness between people and nature by modelling nature's ecosystems. As Capra (2005) describes, society comprises networks and relationships that co-depend on each other; the same goes for all of nature's ecosystems. People rely on their support networks to succeed and their relationship with the environment to survive. The facilitator can help engage and create positive relationships with the environment to develop pro-environmental behaviour. Another aspect Capra (2005) raises is the diversity of nature, which builds resilience, allowing for constant adaptation to the surrounding environment. For people, ethical and cultural diversity helps develop a holistic understanding of the community and encourages diverse thinking, which helps construct a creative, ideas-rich environment (Holoien, 2013).

Common Ground Between Outdoor Education and Environmental Education

OE has had a growing impact on the environment as the industry adopts societal and technological trends. Rickinson et al. (2004) describe how OE is a popular tool within EE with its ability to promote environmental behaviour and attitudes within students. However, programmes often lack the opportunity for students to carry on pro-environmental behaviours, with limited time spent planning for post-course environmental action (Chawla & Cushing, 2007). Contrastingly, Van Matre (1990) believes that because OE focuses on recreation skills and pursuits, it is too 'shallow' and should be oriented toward the environment. He believes the focus should be on developing an understanding of how people are tied into their local settings individually. Wattchow and Brown (2011) suggest programmes should move from being focused on adventurous activities and shift to place-based education where environmental behaviours can be encouraged and are more appropriate (contextual).

Gough (2016) identifies numerous signposts on how OE can effectively incorporate EE, as Brookes (1989) described. These signposts do not exclude adventure within programmes; instead, they place value on these experiences being outside the classroom. Group learning, natural scenery, and the holistic nature of OE help create an effective environment to learn about environmental sustainability. Programmes that are time abundant seem to have a more significant effect on pro-environmental behaviours and increase the likelihood that these will be transferred into their lives. Gough (2016)

concludes that OE can educate EE uniquely and effectively with appropriate facilitation from outdoor educators. However, without a critical understanding or an ability to challenge conceptions of learning, OE will be side-lined as another "exploitative use of dwindling natural areas" and a duplication of the EE already occurring (Brookes, 1989, p. 22). Asking questions, learning from experience, and applying that experience across various situations over a significant period are critical for education that involves sustainability. Transformative learning helps to challenge people and organisations to change the social conditions and norms responsible for environmental damage (Räthzel & Uzzell, 2009). Two emerging trends stemming from OE and EE are place-responsiveness and action competence which complement each other and will be discussed in the following section.

Place-Responsive Learning

A place-responsive education is an approach many outdoor educators are paying more attention to (Brown, 2012; Dolan, 2015; Quay & Seaman, 2013). It carries the incentive to act and respond to the local environment, culture, history, and ecology (Cameron, 2003; Mikaels, 2018). As Brown (2012) highlights, a place-responsive approach redirects "the focus from viewing OE as a set of activities to OE as a way to view relationships; both with people and place(s)." (p. 5). The purpose of this approach is to give learners meaningful interactions and experiences within their local community and environment, to understand the connection between themselves and nature (Hales, 2006). As argued by Wattchow and Brown (2011), the outdoor environment is a source of people's identity hence why OE should be viewed as more than a set of skills. Facilitators and teachers need to understand the significance of connection to place, personal identity, and the holistic learning process (Brown, 2012).

A benefit of adopting a place-responsive approach is that it removes significant barriers to involvement, such as cost, time, parent help, health and safety regulations, and travel (Hill et al., 2020). These barriers are some of the underlying reasons why schools do not offer or engage in OE experiences (Hill et al., 2020). Removing them creates opportunities for more people to learn about their local area, understand their place within it, and benefit from learning outdoors (Brown, 2012). Educating within the learners' local environment also increases the likelihood of retaining and understanding knowledge as they are constantly reminded of their experiences every day (Lloyd et al., 2018; Mikaels, 2018). Furthermore, they can pass on this knowledge to friends and family and feel more comfortable within their local community (Mikaels, 2018). This helps build communities, strengthen appreciation, and increase care for a place (Jose et al., 2017).

This encouragement to reduce the emphasis on 'risky' and 'adventurous' activities can help shift the focus towards EE and develop meaningful connections to the environment (Lugg, 2004; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). In a study done by Hill et al. (2020), they found that an increased focus on place, sustainability and environment has enhanced EOTC, signalling this could be the direction of EOTC in the future. Facilitators need to consider the programme they are offering and how it is appropriate and

relevant to their learners. They need to be aware of the type of learners they have, the group's aims, and the locations of significance for that specific group (Brown, 2012). This encourages a unique offering for each OE context, rather than applying the same activity in different, remote locations. Thus, enhancing knowledge and understanding of local history and culture, which is relevant to the learners (Brown, 2012; Roberts, 2018). As supported by Payne and Wattchow (2008), a slow pedagogy allows for immersion, more time, and diverse notions of learning which all support a place-responsive approach.

Action Competence Model

Eames (2018) is concerned with how human behaviour has led to unsustainable practices and what processes and actions are responsible. Eames (2018) attempts to integrate knowledge and experience with reflection and vision for future sustainable action by applying an action competence model. This provides a platform for how EE and OE can inform each other. The action competence model was first presented by Jensen and Schnack (1997), who argued that "the aim of environmental education is to make students capable of acting on a societal as well as a personal level" (p. 164). This supports the notion that education is more than behaviour modification as regulation achieves this in the short term; instead, it has an important place in achieving long-lasting, sustainable change through understanding and awareness (Jensen & Schnack, 1997). Action competence requires both *critique* and *will* to act in a certain way, and during this process, learners can adapt and cope with future environmental problems (Ballantyne & Packer, 2011; Breiting & Mogensen, 1999). Action competence aims to avoid a values-driven or moral approach which often makes up EE. Rather, it engages learners in an authentic experience instead of a 'what if' situation.

Ballantyne and Packer (2011) explain the potential issues with EE within outdoor programmes, stating that sustainable action often lacks follow-through post-course. They suggest that meaningful learning experiences are products of the facilitator's ability to understand their learners' preconceptions and whether this supports or interferes with environmental sustainability outcomes. Jensen and Schnack (1997) claim that students are often only provided with scientific information, which inadequately prepares them to undertake their own societal analysis or gain a holistic and in-depth understanding of the issue. Jensen (2002) draws upon four dimensions that inform environmental knowledge: problem identification and understanding, strategy and commitment to change, a vision for the future, and experiences to draw upon during lifelong learning, all of which OE can offer. Student confidence is crucial in determining their ability to make sustainable changes and influence environmental outcomes. Eames et al. (2009) take this further and suggest including decision-making abilities through knowledge and understanding, critical and reflective thinking, and connectedness through the development of students' values and attitudes. Eames (2018) also emphasises that action competence should continually evolve rather than being viewed as an end state and needs to be applied uniquely to each context.

Informal learning environments such as OE programmes allow learners to engage both with and in the environment, enabling them to explore their own knowledge and construct new knowledge in a supportive environment (Eames, 2018). As mentioned earlier, a shortfall in these learning environments is the lack of preparatory and post experiences (Ballantyne & Uzzell, 1994). Environmental educators need to create opportunities during programmes for direct experience in nature and then extend this into school and community-level projects. This progression helps build a relationship between students and nature and empowers students to understand how they can make a change (Ballantyne & Uzzell, 1994). These opportunities need to involve discussion, examining local issues collectively, and creating group goals and strategies to overcome barriers to success. If an action is decided upon, the teacher plays a vital role in providing the support and knowledge required for students to succeed in their endeavours (Jensen, 2002).

Bonnett (2004) criticises the action competence model for requiring a level of rationality from learners that can be easily swayed by the powerful influences present in society, such as consumerism, individualism, and the desire to control everything. Hence, critical reflection is needed to ensure the assumptions embedded within society are constantly being challenged and alternatives are being found (Jensen, 2002). Behaviour change is undeniably necessary to live sustainably and reduce humans' impact on the surrounding environment, yet tension may arise in achieving this behavioural change. As identified earlier, education can change behaviour in the long term and will often be longer-lasting, but regulation will bring about the quickest change with the biggest impact on how people live. Applying the action competence model in conjunction with regulations made by the government and educating through schools, outdoor centres, and communities will help bring about durable change both in the short and long term (Jensen, 2002). The value of the action competence model is that environmental issues can be analysed within the broader context, allowing for the connection between social, political, and environmental contexts (Jordan & Kristiánsson, 2017; Räthzel & Uzzell, 2009). As Orr (2004) explains, "sustainability entails reweaving the local ecology into the fabric of the economy and life patterns… restoring local culture and our ties to local places" (p. 147). This idea supports those that suggest more community-based and place-responsive education to help balance the urban environment with dedicated time to reflect within nature and understand people's connection to the natural environment (Cheng & Monroe, 2012; Schein, 2014).

Programme Length and Relationship with Nature

The duration of a programme is a significant indicator as to whether OE outcomes can be achieved and how effective they are (Cason & Gillis, 1994; Hattie et al., 1997). Traditionally, OE programmes are between 21 and 30 days, with longer courses being more popular due to their perceived effectiveness (Holland et al., 2018; Rushford et al., 2020; Sibthorp & Morgan, 2011). Long duration programmes are often more expensive and are in remote, hard to access locations. These barriers reduce accessibility and limit how many people are exposed to the experience and benefits of OE (Hill et al., 2020; Roberts,

2018). Whilst contemporary OE is trending towards shorter, more affordable, and more accessible courses, the focus of these programmes has not changed drastically (Rushford et al., 2020). Ewert and Sibthorp (2014) describe that longer, expedition-based programmes aim to provide challenge and problem-solving activities through experiential learning opportunities whilst developing students' personal, social, and technical skills. In the United Kingdom (UK), the average course length is five days, with NOLS reporting courses being three and a half days shorter on average than in 2013 (Williams, 2016). This presents various challenges, especially in achieving certain outcomes such as goal setting, relationship-building, environmental behaviour changes, and teamwork (Rushford et al., 2020).

OE programme outcomes are well-acknowledged within the literature (Furman & Sibthorp, 2014; Overholt & Ewert, 2015, Sibthorp et al., 2015), with Hattie et al. (1997) identifying over 40 outcomes. However, with programme length decreasing, achieving these outcomes may require a different approach (Sibthorp & Jostad, 2014; Sibthorp et al., 2007). The outcomes Hattie et al. (1997) identified were categorised into leadership, self-concept, academic, personality, interpersonal, and adventuresomeness (p. 47). Rickinson et al. (2004) provided an overview of outcomes which included independence, self-esteem, social skills, attitudes, values and feelings, and group or personal behaviours. As discovered in a study by Rushford et al. (2020), programme quality and outcomes were exposed to deterioration depending on the time available. Outcomes such as self-concept, leadership, and interpersonal skills were found to be achievable in some form on any length of programme. However, a higher effect was noted by Cason and Gillis (1994) for self-esteem, self-perception, behaviour, and anxiety on longer duration programmes. The instructors who took part in this study identified that whilst course length does not affect outcomes being achieved in an OE programme, it does affect the processes by which the outcomes are achieved. For example, extended programmes allow more opportunities to make mistakes, learn from them, and adapt them to the next challenge (Sibthorp et al., 2007). On the other hand, short programmes do not have this opportunity, so the focus is more toward a success-oriented approach. Despite having less time to make mistakes, this success-oriented approach emphasises the need for a progression of learning to match the progression of skills (Beames & Brown, 2016).

Priest (1986) recognised how OE seeks interpersonal growth and the development of social relationships. This notion of relationship building is a crucial element of OE as it allows for trust and familiarity to be developed between students and facilitators, students and the environment, and students themselves (Meichtry & Smith, 2007; Rushford et al., 2020). Through developing these relationships and a closer connection to the local environment, students may start to care more about the environment (Brown, 2012). It is important to note that longer courses allow more time to foster positive relationships, develop leadership and communication skills, plan and set goals, and learn from mistakes (Sibthorp et al., 2007). Martin (2004) identified a shift in OE from personal and group

development to understanding this relationship between humans and the natural world. From his research, he found that the process of OE helped shape students' relationship with nature by increasing their sense of connectedness and caring for nature. This was founded upon students having the space to discuss and form emotional responses towards the environment and develop appropriate knowledge and skills to feel comfortable and connected to the environment (Martin, 2004).

A key aim of EE is fostering relationships with nature and increasing pro-environmental behaviour which needs to be achieved in shorter programmes (Otto & Pensini, 2017). Lumber et al. (2017), define a connection to nature as "a construct that refers to an individual's subjective sense of their relationship with the natural world" (p.8). It is often regarded as the mix of feelings and attitudes one has towards nature and is achieved through affective, cognitive, and physical engagement (use of all the senses), as discussed earlier by Lumber et al. (2017) and Priest (1990). The literature has supported the notion of developing connections with nature from a young age through significant life experiences (Chawla, 1998; Chawla, 2001; Chawla, 2007; Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Cheng & Monroe, 2012; Leather, 2018). Chawla (1998) believes the most critical factor for developing concern for the environment is childhood experiences. These formative experiences can lead to respect for the environment and pro-environmental actions through a repetitive development of learning and interest in nature. Developing relationships with nature through positive experiences can inspire people to take more action to protect the environment, especially as people want to protect places that hold meaning to them – culturally, socially, and ecologically. (Harris, 2021; Kudryaytsey et al., 2016). Hence the need to understand how to effectively educate and foster these relationships on shorter OE programmes.

Programme length clearly plays a vital role in achieving OE outcomes, developing positive relationships, and providing engaging experiences in nature. Programmes are being shortened due to cost, changing demographics, and time availability, thus changing how sessions need to be facilitated (Hill et al., 2020; Rushford et al., 2020). The role of intentionality in facilitation becomes a critical element of shorter programmes as the facilitator needs to be deliberate with their actions to ensure outcomes can be achieved (Thomas, 2008). This concept, alongside facilitation methods and effective facilitation, will be discussed in the following section to understand how outdoor educators may facilitate environmental sustainability outcomes on shorter programmes.

Facilitation

Defining the Term

Facilitation of outdoor learning is essential as it gives meaning to the activity and helps to frame the experience. Facilitation refers to the planning, delivering, and reflecting on an experience to help achieve a specific goal (Bendaly, 2000; Brown, 2002; Stan, 2009). It aims to create opportunities for students to experience change (Martin et al., 2017). In Latin – the origin of the word facilitation – 'to facilitate' translates 'to make easy, promote, help forward' hence, Bee and Bee (1998) define facilitation

as "holding out a helping hand, removing obstacles and generally creating a smooth pathway for the delegates to pursue their learning journey" (p. 1). Various researchers describe facilitation in similar terms, stating the facilitator as a neutral person who manages the group process to help achieve the goals and purposes identified (Hunter, 2007; Schwarz & Davidson, 2005; Thomas, 2010). This neutrality implies that the facilitators' own opinions and ideas do not influence the group's decision-making process (Schwarz & Davidson, 2005). Brown (2001, 2002) and Stan (2009) have contested this, as they found that the facilitator has an influential role in shaping the learning outcomes and thus cannot be classed as a bystander. Facilitators should provide opportunities and allow students to be agents of their learning and experiences (Brown, 2002). This is supported by Richmond et al. (2017), who found instructors who balanced instruction with opportunities for student autonomy were perceived by students as mentors and facilitators as opposed to authority figures. Students often rely on facilitators' support and influence to achieve outcomes such as collaboration, communication, independence, and active participation (Cooley et al., 2015; Harper & Webster, 2017; Jostad, 2015; Paisley et al., 2008; Povilaitis, 2019; Stan, 2009).

To take advantage of learning opportunities throughout a session, facilitators should be able to combine cultural and natural history knowledge whilst having an awareness of group processes and an understanding of when to intervene appropriately (Brown, 2002; Brown & Heaton, 2015). Dewey (1938) strongly believes the role of an educator is to provide experiences where students can engage in new experiences, reflect, build upon these experiences, and challenge prior knowledge and assumptions. He argues the need for these experiences to be enjoyable and interesting, which is supported by Martin et al. (2017), who explains the importance of maintaining engagement and listening with both the ears and eyes. Martin et al. (2017) also highlight the importance of effective communication as a facilitator. They identify that whilst people can listen to 650 words per minute, they can only speak between 125 to 155 words, hence how boredom can creep in. Dewey (1938) explains the importance of planning and developing extensive knowledge on a range of topics to be able to teach in any circumstance. Although teaching and facilitating have similarities, Greenaway (2004) describes a facilitator as someone who is on the learning journey with students and doesn't always know what will be learnt, whilst a teacher is in control of the learning and often has all the knowledge. Simpson (2011) ensures that being student centred does not remove the authority of the facilitator or their responsibility to guide and suggest ideas. Thus, facilitators need to understand the dimensions and roles of facilitators to help establish a well-balanced facilitation style (Martin et al., 2017).

Theoretical Underpinning

Numerous texts, models, and theories have been developed and researched within the field of facilitation literature to help conceptualise and understand the process of facilitation (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014; Gass et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2017; Priest & Gass, 2017; Thomas, 2008). Emerging facilitators need to understand and use the available resources, strategies, tools, and ideas to enhance their

facilitation style and processes (Martin et al., 2017; Thomas, 2019a). Whilst many have not been explicitly developed for OE, they offer a guide for those wanting to improve their facilitation. Traditional facilitation has often focussed on personal and social development, with minimal focus on facilitating pro-environmental behaviours (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014). Hunter's (2007) pyramid of facilitation model describes how a group achieves its overall purpose through the interrelationship between the facilitator, the group, each individual, and how they interact with the internal and external environment. This pyramid encourages using a social contract and culture within the group, which can be established at the start (see Figure 3). Thomas (2005; 2008) categorised facilitation training and education into four dimensions to integrate the various approaches identified within the literature and create an easy-to-understand framework. Technical facilitator education is heavily skills-based; intentional facilitator education is grounded in theory; person-centred facilitator education focuses on the facilitator's intentional attitudes, personalities, and behaviour; and lastly, critical facilitator education aims to increase political awareness of the nature of facilitation (Thomas, 2008).

Figure 3 Pyramid of Facilitation Model.

Note. This model was produced by Hunter (2007) to describe how a group achieves the overall purpose. From *The Art of Facilitation: The Essentials for Leading Great Meetings and Creating Group Synergy* (p. 37), by D. Hunter, 2007, Random House.

Priest and Gass (2005) categorised facilitation into six generations of techniques. Firstly, letting the experience or mountains speak for itself which requires very little from the facilitator and assumes the students have learnt something during the outdoor experience. Speaking for the experience is where a facilitator interprets the learning that may have occurred and identifies this within the group; this approach is learning by telling. Debriefing the experience is used by a facilitator to ask questions following the experience, guided through reflection. Several methods of debriefing the experience

include discussion, storytelling, drawing, acting, singing, and sculpting (Jordan & Kristiánsson, 2017). Directly frontloading the experience uses questioning from the facilitator before an activity to focus the group on the desired outcome or learning; it provides direction through reflection on prior activities. Framing the experience uses metaphors and analogies to place the experience into a real-world context and maintain excitement throughout the activity. Indirectly frontloading the experience is used as a last resort and is the least used debriefing technique. Sometimes it is used to fire up or motivate students; other times, it ensures a win-win situation by providing two options for the group to approach the activity (Priest & Gass, 2005).

Schwarz (2002) proposed two models to guide facilitation processes effectively: the Mutual Learning Model and the Unilateral Controlling Model. The Mutual Learning Model encourages a positive focus on assumptions, strategies, and core values to achieve understanding, trust, and effectiveness within the group. This model aims to enhance facilitators' efficacy and ability to facilitate well in challenging situations. A core value that guides this model is that the facilitator must share all relevant information appropriately with their group. This includes the assumptions that the facilitator does not know everything that may happen, that group members may pick up on things the facilitator does not, and that the facilitator may be contributing to the problem without being aware. The focus should explain the intent and reasoning behind the facilitators' decisions and use examples. If a facilitator effectively applies this model to their practice, Schwarz (2002) believes it can lead to productive group processes and outcomes. The Unilateral Controlling model is a model that facilitators tend to revert to when in challenging or threatening situations as the core values and assumptions are underpinned by defensiveness. This model often represents facilitators who have their own purpose they want to achieve within a session and do not ask for questions or reasoning behind decisions. Consequently, features of misunderstanding, conflict, and mistrust can be experienced within the group (Schwarz, 2002).

Role and Purpose

As discussed earlier, the literature suggests the importance of intentionality and intuition when facilitating groups (Jostad, 2015; Shooter et al., 2010; Sibthorp et al., 2018, Thomas, 2008). Thomas (2008) describes this as having discursive consciousness where the facilitator can give a coherent explanation for their reasoning. On the other hand, intuition is equally as important to act effectively and efficiently in diverse situations (Thomas, 2008). Intentional facilitation is when a facilitator is deliberate about their actions and can provide reasoning behind their decisions (Thomas, 2008). If a facilitator cannot offer clear reasoning but can effectively facilitate, they are considered to be intuitively facilitating. It is important to note that having a quick decision-making process does not inhibit effective facilitation, as supported by Gladwell (2005). He identifies the fast-decision-making part of the human brain as the "adaptive unconscious" and believes this process can be as effective and controlled when making decisions as being cautious and deliberate is (p. 11). Some researchers criticise intuition and think it should not be an excuse for undisciplined behaviour, highlighting the need for intuitive practices

to be tried and tested in a controlled environment (Claxton, 2000; Eraut, 2000). Gladwell (2005) does not deny this, stating there are certain situations where rapid thought can lead to poor decision-making.

Being a facilitator in the outdoors is largely unpredictable and requires constant adaptability and understanding of the broader context (Thomas, 2019b). Some sessions can go exactly as planned and require little effort from the facilitator, but on the flip side, many variables can significantly alter the approach a facilitator must take to keep the session on track. Conflict in the group, environmental conditions, lack of connection between facilitator and students, and feelings of self-doubt or insecurity for facilitators are all variables that could provide challenging scenarios that still need to be dealt with and managed effectively (Thomas, 2019b). As there are not any textbooks providing a step-by-step guide on facilitating every situation, emerging facilitators need to develop judgement based on experience. The overall goal is to help these facilitators connect their learning, insights, and behaviours to inform their facilitation style (Martin et al., 2017). Hence the significance of understanding personal belief systems as a facilitator which has been emphasised by Heron (1999) and Priest et al. (2000).

Community is an important aspect of OE experiences and for facilitators. Everyone has an inner community of selves that informs decision-making and interactions with the world (Thomas, 2019b). Learning how to control these thoughts, listening to the wisdom, and making educated decisions without dominating the space are all important roles of a facilitator. Bornais (2019) labelled this sense of community as one of the strongest shared outcomes for students and facilitators, even on a single-day experience. Whilst facilitators have traditionally been viewed as separate from the group, Stan (2009) has identified that facilitators can have a dual position. They can either be in a position of control and power where they decide what the students learning experience will be like, or they are passive witnesses who share the power between students and the facilitator. However, Brown (2001) believes the nature of the facilitator's role is collaborative and interactive, so they cannot be classified as a 'bystander' or 'passive witness'. In support of this concept is Bornais (2019), who identifies teamwork, collaboration, and planning as important aspects of facilitators. Brown (2002) does identify the facilitator as having the role of 'gatekeeper' where they control and limit opportunities for discussion as necessary and evaluate student contributions (p. 111). This is contested by Thomas (2019a), who believes critical practice is not evident with the facilitator in this role, and it does not concur with intentional facilitation.

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, facilitators need to adapt and adjust to the changing conditions of OE experiences. This requires facilitators to adjust their style depending on the age and maturity of the group, the length of the programme, the goals of the programme and the readiness of the group (Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Gass & Stevens, 2007). Younger groups need more direct leadership and guidance throughout the programme, as do short courses, as they lack time to develop skills and relationships between students and facilitators. The programme's goals determine whether the session is fun and

based on relationship building or educational and challenging, for example. Finally, some groups can better manage safety and conflict as a group if they have had prior time together, indicating they may be ready for more challenging activities (Thomas, 2010). To optimise the effectiveness of facilitation, it is important to have role clarity and an understanding of personal facilitation styles, skills, and theoretical underpinnings (Gass and Stevens, 2007; Martin et al., 2006).

Effective Facilitation

Effective facilitation can be the difference between a group achieving outcomes and maintaining engagement or not. Ringer (2002) places emphasis on facilitator development by always being aware of what they are feeling, thinking, actioning, and deciding upon. This often requires awareness of facilitators' weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Having awareness is encouraged by Hunter (2007), who strongly believe effective facilitation stems from understanding the facilitator and developing a relationship with the group. Effective facilitators need to bring "authenticity, confidence, presence, trustworthiness, and calm into the room" (Ghais, 2005, p. 14). As these are harder to teach than practical skills, facilitators need to develop their own unique facilitation style by engaging in development opportunities and building their own philosophy and core values (Schwarz, 2002). Being reliant on the facilitator's presence and personal qualities to drive an effective OE session can prove difficult when self-awareness needs to be maintained throughout, on top of the various roles a facilitator adopts (Ringer, 2002). This includes keeping each student safe, developing activities based on experiential education, sustaining engagement, processing and reflecting upon each experience, and monitoring conflict between group members (Thomas, 2019b).

Effective facilitation encourages an environment where students have the time and support to think about what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how they can help each other. Instead of the facilitator telling the students what to think and do, they should encourage communication and embed themselves within the group (Thomas, 2019b). This helps develop trust within the group and build critical thinking skills (Stan, 2009). Moreover, Thomas (2019b) emphasises the importance of facilitators being authentic and in the moment with their students. Facilitators in his study described being in the moment as not knowing exactly what to say before the session, believing facilitators should be present and have knowledge on how to respond to the group's needs (Thomas, 2019b)

Beames and Brown (2014) encourage opportunities for students to experience situations that are not predictable nor measurable and help them discover the value of learning outdoors. Experiences that "capture their imagination, require their agency and involvement, and call for initiative, resilience and active citizenship" contribute to critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective facilitation (p. 129). Schwarz (2002) identified two areas of learning that facilitators should engage in, the first is understanding how to encourage productive conversation that limits defensiveness, and the second is learning how to adapt core values and assumptions after reflecting on the experience. This will reduce

the gap between the knowledgeable theory facilitators have and what they put to use through practice. A strong critique within OE literature is the over-reliance on group debriefing to process and make sense of students' experiences (Brown, 2002, 2003; Seaman, 2008). If not facilitated effectively, students can answer with what they believe to be the 'right' answer rather than how they felt during the activity. This can disengage students and reduce the scope of learning from the session, hence the need for a varied approach to debriefing, as explained earlier (Jordan & Kristiánsson, 2017).

Conclusion

In defining and discussing key terms, gaps in the literature have been identified regarding facilitating environmental sustainability outcomes within OE. As Chawla and Cushing (2007) highlighted, knowledge of environmental issues is not sufficient to enact change; hence, the question lies in how this knowledge can be effectively combined with experience to achieve pro-environmental action? There is a broad field of literature critiquing and acknowledging the presence of environmental sustainability within OE and whether it can be achieved (Brookes, 1989; Chawla, 1998; D'Amato & Krasny, 2011; Gough, 2016; Hales, 2006; Harris, 2021; Jose et al., 2017; Lloyd et al., 2018). Academics have called for a strengthening of environmental sustainability and a shift away from the focus on personal and social development, which comes at the expense of the environment. Some facilitation models reinforce this concept hence why this dissertation will look at ways of incorporating action competence to ensure effective facilitation is achieved. The use of action competence can help bridge the gap toward place-responsive learning and educate for sustainability. This is especially important with programmes trending towards shorter course lengths, highlighting the limited literature on how environmental sustainability outcomes can still be achieved. Chapter Three will provide an overview of the chosen research methodology and its relevance to the research.

Chapter Three: Project Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview and understanding of autoethnography, how and why it has been used with specific examples and critiques, and how it embodies a personal journey of discovery. This methodology's philosophical grounding, strengths, weaknesses, and limitations are then examined. Following this, it explores the rationale for choosing autoethnography and the suitability of such an approach. Lastly, ethical considerations concerned with the research are discussed, alongside an overview of the reflexive research design to ensure transparency is maintained throughout the process.

What is Autoethnography

Autoethnography has been defined as a qualitative research approach, integrating self-reflection and observation with active participation to better understand the context being studied (Anderson & Austin, 2011). Autoethnography "invokes the self (auto), culture (ethno), and writing (graphy)"; it does so by looking inward at the researcher's own identity and experiences, combined with also looking outward at how these are shaped and influenced within communities, personal relationships, and the broader culture (Adams et al., 2015, p.46). Autoethnography arose in the 1970s and has since found a credible and legitimate place within qualitative research, stemming from ethnography and anthropology (Macphail, 2004; Muncey, 2010; Nicol, 2013). Anthropology critically investigates the conditions and symbolic order of human life by focusing on studying *with* people rather than *of* them (Ingold, 2017). Anthropology has been applied to examine the role of identity, religions, and behaviour within certain cultures. Using participant observation and seeking ways to continue life, anthropology is open-ended as it is committed to a sense of sustainable living (Ingold, 2017). Ethnography on the other hand, aims to represent someone's life as it is lived and experienced by them, remaining culturally sensitive, nuanced, and authentic (Ingold, 2017). It uses immersion to learn about people and is implemented through in-depth observations allowing for complexities and cultural norms to be understood and interpreted (Jones & Smith, 2017). Similarly, autoethnography shares many aspects of critical ethnography, particularly in using research to help facilitate change within society and improve social consciousness (Calafell, 2013).

Autoethnography as a methodology allows the researcher to embody a personal journey of discovery, uncovering potentially complex feelings or knowledge of a particular field. It is a provocative way to raise questions and issues of being that challenge the dominant narratives within a certain culture or topic (Bochner, 2013; Brown, 2016; Townsend, 2014). Founded upon the researcher's lived experience, the journey moves beyond the self through introspection and cultural analysis, differentiating itself from the 'self-indulgent' narrative, which it has often been criticised for (Hokkanen, 2017; Porter & Couper, 2021). There has been scepticism and suspicion over this focus on self as it has gained popularity within

qualitative research (Allen-Collinson, 2013; Delamont., 2007). Yet the strength of autoethnography lies in how this methodology acknowledges the highly personalised narratives of self in combination with the culture and research process itself (Anderson & Austin, 2011; Kennedy et al., 2018). It is now supported and adopted by various researchers and academics as a legitimate and popular methodology (for examples see; Anderson & Austin, 2011; Brown, 2016; Nicol, 2013; Sparkes & Smith, 2012). The autoethnographic process helps to weave together personal experiences with broader social conditions, critiquing and reflecting upon history to better understand the context (Townsend, 2014). Furthermore, autoethnography provides the opportunity to connect and mediate the mind, body, and soul with the world by reconstructing the narrative of lived experience whilst valuing personal memory (Muncey, 2010; Nicol, 2013). It allows the researcher to undergo identity construction through this lived experience by being an active and engaged student (Anderson & Austin, 2011).

The How and Why

Some researchers have largely criticised autoethnography as being an experiential – rather than analytic – form of research, 'self-indulgent', and beneficial only to the researcher themselves (Anderson, 2006; Allen-Collinson & Hockey, 2005; Delamont, 2007; Ellis, 2007; Ellis & Bochner, 2009). Delamont (2007) strongly believes autoethnography cannot be published ethically and opposes it due to the lack of sociological foundation, specifically her belief that researchers are "not interesting enough to write about" (p. 2). Kennedy et al. (2018) contest this as they believe dismissing autoethnography as 'self-indulgent' removes the opportunity it creates for a broader audience to relate to and understand cultural experiences. This also enables reflective practice within teaching and learning and equips researchers with a powerful tool for developing relationships within socio-cultural settings (Nicol, 2013; Porter & Couper, 2021). To ensure this accessibility is maintained, autoethnographers adopt two identities as researcher and participant to better understand others (Chang, 2008). This can provide insight and an understanding of the connection between embodied experiences, culture, and nature (Townsend, 2014). The rise of autoethnographic accounts highlights this as researchers are authentically capturing the lived experiences of themselves and those around them (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

As explained by Adams et al. (2015), the autoethnographic process begins with expressing personal experience through key messages and undergoing a sense-making process. It is an exploration of epiphanies or pivotal moments which constantly arise throughout the inquiry process. Following this, reflexivity is implemented to analyse the personal experience, offering insider knowledge which then forms the basis for critiquing and challenging cultural norms, before seeking responses to the research. As Anderson and Austin (2011) explain, the fieldwork can take on various dimensions and complexities from the researcher being a part of the research. Offering a valuable and unique lens to research, autoethnography helps facilitate engaging writing and gathers fascinating insights (Allen-Collinson, 2013; Anderson & Austin, 2011). It allows the researcher to confront complex topics through reflexive awareness and understanding of the data (Anderson & Austin. 2011). Such an approach creates an

insightful, meaningful, and engaging piece of research hence the growing popularity of autoethnography (Adams et al., 2015).

Reflexivity involves linking personal experience to theory and questioning whether the theory is reflected in practice, which is discussed below. The purpose of this form of research is to provide new knowledge to enhance understanding and uncover a deeper meaning of the chosen area (Lee, 2020). It is a personally meaningful approach whilst remaining socially, culturally, or academically significant (Lee, 2020). In sharing an autoethnographic piece, researchers strive to improve the lives of themselves and those around them by extending existing theories and critically reflecting on power differentials. The journey itself allows the researcher to understand what to do, how to live, and the meaning of what they are trying to improve (Bochner and Ellis, 2006). This approach may help develop a new perspective and critical awareness of the researcher's authentic self (Lee, 2020). Furthermore, it allows researchers to express why an experience is challenging, important, or momentous and how others can make sense of similar experiences (Adams et al., 2015). Autoethnography creates an environment where researchers can question and challenge the world around them, particularly their place within the world (Le Roux, 2017). This draws upon both their professional and personal experiences through self-exploration. Being able to interrogate and reflect upon the cultural, historical, and biographical aspects that make up the researcher's story as Denzin (2014) describes, makes autoethnography an appealing research method.

Autoethnography in Use

Personal narratives lay at the heart of autoethnography, yet it is apparent there are a range of approaches that have been applied to autoethnographies. Brown (2016) uses autoethnography to understand his experiences on the water, and the connection between a sense of identity as an offshore sailor and being attuned to the natural environment. He uses personal accounts to understand how embodied experiences help reinhabit a certain identity. This gives the reader a glimpse into what life is like for Brown on the sailing boat and how he relates that to his identity as an offshore sailor. Porter and Couper (2021) use autoethnography as a framework for students' engagement with nature to develop understanding and question the "multiple, complex, nuanced ways outdoor activities can engage people with nature" (p. 9). Through collecting autoethnographic accounts from outdoor leaders, Porter and Couper (2021) aimed to understand how outdoor leaders can effectively connect others to nature to increase pro-environmental behaviours. Townsend (2014) uses autoethnography to share her experiences, revelations and tensions as an outdoor educator with the aim to enrich the experiences of Māori students; Laurendeau (2011) discusses his experiences BASE jumping as a way to access the hegemonic masculinity in his life; Morgan (2019) uses autoethnography to explore ageing and adventure in the context of the outdoor and marine environment, and Wall (2006) uses it to understand and regard autoethnography as a credible research method.

Whilst autoethnography has often been labelled as navel-gazing and self-indulgent, Nicol (2016) uses it to understand how people treat society and approach environmental sustainability. He does this through the use of metaphors, drawing upon personal accounts with close friends, and sharing his experiences of sea kayaking. Despite their similarities, these autoethnographic accounts emphasise the various approaches a researcher can take, and how autoethnography can be used to portray different messages. The foundations of autoethnography allow the researcher to embody a topic they are passionate about, embracing the vulnerability and personal experience that comes with it. The findings arising from an autoethnographic account can challenge social constructs by stimulating conversations and encouraging readers to consider or do things differently than how they may have been taught to do so (Chang, 2008). Readers can engage with the narrative through personal connection and draw their own meaning from the research, increasing relevance and adaptability (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Philosophical grounding

Autoethnography is grounded within the postmodern and critical theory paradigm of qualitative research as it embraces different perspectives and challenges social constructs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). This approach aims to expand the reader's depth of knowledge and help to improve the lives of the readers, people in the community, and the researcher themselves. Autoethnographers do not aim to predict or control the future; more often, it is to positively impact inequities (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Ellis et al., 2011). There are challenges when applying such an approach, as described by Muncey (2010), it is a research approach that privileges the individual and places the researcher as an observer of their own journey, whilst encouraging the reader's imagination. Presenting a variety of perspectives and approaches can increase engagement as readers are given more opportunities to understand the experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Likewise, readers can draw their own meanings from the research, making it a more personal journey. This postmodern process acknowledges that the researcher will never assume the position of observer or of neutrality. Hence the situatedness of the researcher and the influence of their understanding or interpretations of the context (Roth, 2005). Seeing the researcher as a whole person rather than one without bias allows their privileges and vulnerabilities to be recognised and better understood within the research (Parkes, 2015).

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Limitations

Autoethnography allows stories to be told from both an artistic and analytical lens, highlighting how personal and cultural experiences are interpreted (Adams et al., 2015). Its strength lies in applying the researcher's experience to engage themselves within the culture they are placed in, confronting any tensions or politics along the way, and embracing bias. Acknowledging the bias is becoming more widely known and accepted with many autoethnographers highlighting this change, seeing the necessity of recognising the researchers' active part in the study rather than denying involvement (Allen-Collinson, 2013; Anderson & Austin, 2011; Atkinson et al., 2003). Acknowledging this relationship,

autoethnography uses in-depth self-reflection and balances academic rigour with emotion and creativity to represent a social context and improve lives (Adams et al., 2015). Autoethnography challenges researchers to reconsider how research is conducted, how they think and live, and maintain relationships. It is a powerful way of undertaking research in an area of interest and passion, encouraging researchers to live their research rather than observe from a distance (Lee, 2020). It creates a more personal approach and represents how invested researchers are within their research, offering access to complex inner thoughts (Lee, 2020). This contributes to a deeper understanding of cultural practices embedded within these narratives of self (Chang, 2008). However, this method can put researchers into a vulnerable position as their personal values and experiences are exposed during every step of the research, hence why many researchers take more responsibility and care when considering adopting an autoethnographic approach (Adams et al., 2015).

Highlighting the influential role social identities have on the research process provides a foundation for autoethnographers to interpret and fairly represent their observations (Adams et al., 2015). Drawing from, through, and with personal experience, autoethnographers can link experiences of self and others to understand the social context better. This is where "proximity, not objectivity, becomes an epistemological point of departure and return" (Adams et al., 2015, p. 23). The lack of objectivity can make researchers uncomfortable, especially since a large portion of credible research excludes personality, beliefs, and values (Lee, 2020). There is a certain level of exposure to feelings and thoughts a researcher is subject to, which can be a limiting factor due to the honesty and willingness needed to reveal these details. These feelings can be unpleasant for the reader since each person will connect differently to the narratives discussed by the researcher (Bochner & Ellis, 1996). This limitation also raises many ethical questions which can pose difficulty for the researcher to answer. Furthermore, autoethnography can be challenging to draw generalisations from due to its highly personalised nature. The quality of autoethnographic research has been criticised as a limitation of the method; however, Bochner and Ellis (1996) believe that "if culture circulates through all of us, how can autoethnography be free of connection to a world beyond the self" (p. 24).

Ethics of Autoethnography

Although autoethnography is often a self-reflection, other people will always be present within the narrative. Whether they are active students or in the background, the significance lies in paying attention to ethical considerations and caring for those involved (Porter & Couper, 2021; Sikes, 2015; Tolich, 2010). Published work can feel like permanent damage for someone, depending on the topic and how the person has been portrayed in the research. This means autoethnographers need to have conversations throughout the data collection and analysis, to ensure the memories are accurate and consent is gained at each stage of the research, also known as process consent (Ellis, 2007). Although this can become an arduous task, it ensures the study has a range of appropriate and damage-free perspectives. Adams et al. (2015) summarise autoethnography into four key points. It is a method of critique or contribution

to existing research; it embraces vulnerability to progress a culture; it gives a voice to the oppressed; and lastly, it increases accessibility through its personal nature.

Rationale

For this dissertation, I will be adopting Anderson and Austin's (2011) understanding and definition of autoethnography. This research and autoethnographic approach is being used to challenge the scope of what an outdoor educator can facilitate during an OE session and question whether the theory is evident in my own practice. I have chosen autoethnography because it aligns with my research question and my interest in understanding how facilitators can achieve environmental sustainability outcomes in OE. Autoethnography will allow me to gain an intimate and informed understanding of my role as a facilitator and how I can subtly incorporate environmental sustainability into outdoor sessions (Berry, 2013; Parkes; 2015). I believe my research will bring value to readers – specifically outdoor educators – by inspiring them to reflect on the way they facilitate and challenge how they can be better kaitiaki (guardians) and custodians of their local, natural environment. This approach allows me to understand how my past experiences have shaped my identity as an outdoor educator and how I can positively change the way I facilitate in the future (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008). This also creates an opportunity to understand the layers of facilitation, which can often be missed when facilitating subconsciously (Berry, 2013). As an insider-researcher, my experience allows me to critique the culture of outdoor educators in facilitating environmental sustainability outcomes (Holman Jones et al., 2013).

The opportunities gained through exploring a personal and professional role can help me when facilitating groups in the outdoors and situating myself to ensure I consider and offer a range of perspectives on environmental sustainability within OE (Townsend, 2014). Focusing on pro-environmental behaviour and increasing environmental awareness has gained popularity within the context of the climate crisis which the world is facing (Davis et al., 2018; Marcos et al., 2016). Nicol (2013) has determined that autoethnography is an effective approach for encouraging pro-environmental behaviour in the outdoors, highlighting the potential difficulty of validity when drawing meaning from certain experiences. He concluded with the hypothesis that such experiences can stimulate environmental awareness through embodiment and carefully contextualised theories that encourage connectedness to the surrounding environment.

Autoethnography is a challenging form of qualitative research as it forces the researcher to embrace vulnerability and be open to criticism (Porter & Couper, 2021). As Townsend (2014) identifies, autoethnography fosters a personal connection between knowledge and pedagogy through places, stories, relationships, and events. By being immersed in the study, autoethnography can help facilitate engaging writing whilst still maintaining transparency through journal writing and seeking feedback or consulting others during the process. My aim is for readers to take my experience and learnings to

critically reflect on their own facilitation, thus readers may consider how they can incorporate this knowledge and adapt it into their own contexts.

Method

Journal or diary writing is often used when undertaking an autoethnographic approach as it allows the researcher to undergo a meaning-making process (Wyatt & Gale, 2013). It encourages the researcher to be creative and draw upon moments that may have sparked emotion or an unexpected response (Wyatt & Gale, 2013). Journal writing is used in my research as a way to reflect and question how successful I was in implementing various facilitation styles and environmental sustainability outcomes. It is a familiar concept to me as I have often used it when I find myself in challenging situations or when I need to process events. For this study, once I had finalised my research question and conducted a literature review, I planned what theory I would implement each week. During a session, I would engage in memo-writing to ensure I was capturing my immediate thoughts, ideas, and questions. Each evening I would revisit and reflect on these notes, expanding on the points I had identified to draw deeper meaning and understanding. At the end of a programme, I would then look at my notes and bring everything together in a journal entry.

These journal entries were written between July 2021 and February 2022. Whilst I did not plan exactly how many I would write, after each programme I had written at least one journal entry to ensure I had a range to choose from when analysing and discussing the data. In total, I had 25 journal entries ranging between 150 to 400 words each, excluding the daily notes I had from memo-writing. Each journal entry took me between an hour to a week to write and finalise. The approach I took to analyse and interpret the data included rigorous self-questioning on how I facilitated each session and what I had drawn from the events. By continuously rereading my notes and journal entries I could unpack the layers and make more connections between theory and practice (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008). Secondly, I applied a theoretical thematic analysis which is useful for focusing on the key themes that are relevant to my research questions and link with the literature. As described by Braun & Clarke (2006), this is an alternative approach to coding every piece of data and reporting repeated patterns that may not specifically relate to the research question.

Initially, I chose journal entries that had several elements which could be discussed and linked back to the literature. From these journal entries, I identified the key learnings from each which informed the overall themes of the study. These themes were then reframed as a phrase, as suggested by my supervisor, to summarise the feelings associated with each journal entry and to link in with the key message. Once the themes had been finalised, my supervisor and I discussed adding one or two journal entries to each theme to add depth and evidence to the overall message. In total, we arrived at nine journal entries across four themes: being caught out on the hop, trust is built with consistency, any fool can know the point is to understand, and children must be taught *how* to think not *what* to think. I believe

this process would be easy for someone to replicate who wants to improve their facilitation style, understands environmental sustainability principles, has appropriate knowledge of the foundational literature, and has opportunities to run OE sessions.

Rigour and trustworthiness are both indicators of the quality of research. Rigour is concerned with the reliability and validity of the study, trustworthiness refers to the authenticity and truthfulness of the findings, both involve credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Nowell et al., 2017). As highlighted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), having credibility ensures the findings accurately represent what was studied. To ensure credibility in this study, prolonged engagement with the data and persistent observation were applied (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore, transferability provides context and generalizability to the research and ensures rigour and trustworthiness, which has been applied by interpreting the themes and findings into recommendations for outdoor centres and facilitators to consider in their own practice. Dependability indicates the level of logic and documentation of the research process which can be seen through the method and reflexive journal entries. Confirmability ensures the findings are based upon and derived from the journal entry data gathered (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Ethics and ethical considerations

The ethical considerations highlighted below will be addressed within the research, however, ethical approval was not required for this study. As it is an autoethnographic piece, the research was gained through personal experience, a review of existing publicly available literature, and reflective journaling as an outdoor facilitator.

→ Informed and voluntary consent

→ Respect for rights of privacy and confidentiality

→ Minimisation of risk

→ Truthfulness, including limitation of deception

→ Social and cultural sensitivity, including a commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi

→ Research adequacy

→ Avoidance of conflict of interest

→ Respect for the vulnerability of some participants

→ Respect for property (including University property and intellectual property rights)

(AUT, 2022)

Tolich (2010) identified ten foundational guidelines for this method of qualitative research, acknowledging the vulnerability and objective nature of autoethnography (see Appendix A). These

guidelines can help protect the researcher when revealing intimate information and navigating through various challenges. These guidelines all relate to consent, consultation, and vulnerability. Key aspects include upholding respect for students, undergoing process consent, recognising any conflict of interest, and assuming that all those written into the research will read it one day. Allen-Collinson (2013) emphasises how autoethnography challenges the orthodox methods of research and how researchers should be open and personalised with their writing style. Self-disclosure and vulnerability need to be considered appropriately because once a piece of research has been published, it cannot be retracted or controlled. If others are involved in the research, care needs to be taken to ensure these people are represented accordingly and no harm is done.

Despite research ethics not being required for this study, the nature of autoethnography and the process of studying oneself still needs care, responsibility, and ethics to be applied. This ensures that people's best interests and well-being within the community are maintained (Denzin, 2014). All stories will remain anonymous to ensure students or staff cannot be identified or linked to the experience. This research is shaped by the knowledge I have gained in recent times and the context in which I am researching. I will keep in mind my own well-being during this research as the process of reflecting and challenging the way I facilitate OE sessions can be quite confronting and leaves me open for scrutiny (Tullis, 2013).

Reflexive Research Design

Reflexivity is about looking back and recreating details of lived experiences and relationships to see how they influence the present (Adams et al., 2015). This use of personal experience is intentional, helping to create nuanced and comprehensive accounts of taken-for-granted cultural norms or practices. As a subjective and emergent piece of research, reflexivity will be involved throughout the process. Using reflective journaling, reviewing the literature, and drawing upon observations from my own experiences, this research will help connect personal and cultural practices. It will contribute to my depth of knowledge and understanding of the role of the facilitator in achieving environmental sustainability outcomes. As an educator in the outdoor industry, a recent bachelor's graduate, and a master's student, my own worldview and beliefs will influence this research paper (Townsend, 2014). I aim to not only reflect upon past experiences to improve how I facilitate my sessions but also to use these experiences and reflections to determine whether environmental sustainability can be effectively achieved to raise awareness of the climate crisis we are facing.

Although journal writing is a familiar concept, it is not something I engage with frequently. Instead, it is a spontaneous endeavour that weaves together my contemplations and feelings (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008). When I do write, I find it beneficial to process my thoughts and feelings over a significant moment or event. The physicality of handwriting connects my brain and body to the paper, so I find I can keep up with my thoughts rather than typing too fast and not being able to get into the flow of

writing. It is also a way of being present with my thoughts and finding deeper meaning and understanding from challenging moments. Transparency plays a vital role in autoethnography, so to increase the trustworthiness and rigour of this research, journal writing from field notes has been used as my main form of data collection and analysis. Personal observations have been included as well as how my past experiences and subjectivity influence the data process (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). This was part of an ongoing process through the data collection, analysis, and interpretation. After drawing the key themes from the journal entries, my supervisor has reviewed these to ensure the themes encompass what I have found or learned. I have drawn upon material from the literature review to inform the highly personalised primary data and create the opportunity to cross-examine the two sources, further enhancing the research (Nicol, 2013).

Chapter Four: Findings and Reflection on Practice

This chapter provides an analysis of the findings from this research which are presented as journal entries (seen in *italics*) from the reflective journal kept over the past year whilst facilitating outdoor education programmes. These programmes all occurred at the same outdoor centre with students often ranging from eight years old to 16 years old, with two groups who were aged 20 years or older. Prior to each programme, facilitators are provided with the group's aims for the week, the age range, and what activities we are leading from the senior leaders. The entries which have been chosen are grouped into significant themes that are then analysed and linked with relevant literature. These journal entries were selected for their relevance to the research topic and questions.

Being Caught out on the Hop

Journal entry #1

Today was challenging and exhausting. I went in with the aim of frontloading each session but soon realised we hadn't met their needs with disappointment written all over their faces. We did ponder what activities would be appropriate for a year 12 group in the morning, yet I could sense that the teachers were being judgemental of the activities we had chosen and the level of engagement the students were showing. After being pulled aside at lunchtime by the head teacher who conveniently had been an outdoor instructor in the past, and being told that I needed to turn the afternoon around and make it more exciting and fun I felt an immense amount of pressure. One of my biggest fears is letting people down, and here I was with 15 minutes to race back to the centre and come up with a new plan. I struggled with this group as they constantly said how much they hated physical activity, and some even said they would rather be at school doing maths than this. I took the insult and tried to frame it into a positive experience, but it felt like a losing battle! My frustration and stubbornness meant the entire day I was thinking about how to make the day better for next time and ensuring we kept this school interested. I wanted to make it more stimulating for the students, so I discussed with the teachers doing a place-responsive journey from their school to our centre. They were far more responsive to this idea and suggested I run this for their end of year 'fun' day to practice for next year's group. I was relieved to know they intended on coming back.

There were so many elements of this day - including the planning beforehand – that contributed to it being so challenging. The biggest challenge was being put on the spot and having such a short amount of time to adapt to the group's needs. Being located off-site, away from the main centre, added to this difficulty, so whilst this session may not sound exhausting, I can assure you it was! As a people pleaser, I found myself caught in the middle, I had both my manager and the teacher in my ear complaining about each respective party. I could sense the annoyance from my manager, who had given the school many opportunities to change or question the programme, yet it was apparent the head teacher was not thrilled with the day. The time we had in the morning was not enough to plan for an appropriate schedule of activities for this group of students, nor were the sessions long enough to foster any kind of meaningful relationship. Rather than facilitating, I felt as though I was just providing instructions

around activities and trying to hype them up, which did not increase their motivation at all. I felt disappointed in my lack of ability to adapt the session to meet the students' needs. Having to resort to an 'instructional mode' meant I could not adopt Gass and Stevens (2007) approach, which helps participants feel more valued and enhances the quality of the session.

From their lack of interest and enthusiasm, I did not feel as though the students were feeling engaged. I could see that they did not see the value in actively participating in each activity, seeing it instead as a compulsory team-building day. Despite this, I felt a deep responsibility to make sure the school left with a quality experience, one that would ensure their return at the end of the year. My intuition encouraged me to discuss a place-responsive journey with the head teacher as an alternative option for the future. As supported by Wattchow and Brown (2011), place-based education can encourage environmental behaviours and is often more appropriate or relevant for students. This idea was received extremely well, the teacher liked that it remained at a low cost, was a different challenge than what we were offering on this day and that the approach sounded more in-depth and planned. Before approaching the head teacher, I did ask my group what they would prefer to do in the future but received no constructive responses. If the students had indicated an activity of interest this may have increased their level of engagement by taking ownership of their learning. As supported by Richmond et al. (2018), students who are part of the decision-making process in their learning journey have a higher sense of self-efficacy and tend to engage on a deeper level with the learning material or activities.

When I consider how I would have approached this day differently, I come back to the literature around being prepared and communicating better with management who correspond with each school. By being more prepared, we could have tailored the programme to the needs of this academic group, such as offering activities that demand a higher level of cognitive input. It is evident in the literature that facilitators need to consider if the programme is appropriate and relevant to their learners (Brown, 2012; Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Hill et al., 2020). While Gladwell (2004) states that intuitive practices need to be tried and tested in a controlled environment, I feel as though being put on the spot has given me the belief and confidence that if I find myself in a similar situation, I do have the knowledge to resolve issues. This does emphasise how being a facilitator can be unpredictable as each group is unique, hence the need for constant adaptability and growth as an individual (Thomas, 2019b).

> *Journal entry #2*
> *Today was another programme with adults which was a nice change! I took a group canoeing along the coast which was exciting as we could go further than we usually do on the younger programmes. The aims for today were for the group to have fun and try new activities so I went in with the intention of letting the environment speak for itself and help answer any questions they might have. I was quickly caught out when many of them started asking questions about the area - local history, geology, environmental health, and I*

couldn't really answer them more than the basic knowledge I had. I felt very uncomfortable and embarrassed that I could not answer these questions despite working in this area for nearly 3 years and feeling as though I had a good understanding. The group did not seem too bothered but my own standards made me feel a bit useless, so I am going to make sure I learn more about the area before I take another group out!

This session was a mixed bag of emotions. I was unknowingly ill-prepared for how the session panned out. I went in with the attitude of not needing to do much facilitating due to the nature of the group's aims. In hindsight, letting the environment speak for itself may not have been the most appropriate way to facilitate the session, especially with it being set in the group's local environment and the laid-back approach I was taking. Although "the group did not seem too bothered", I could see I had lost the opportunity for them to be engaged with the session due to my lack of knowledge, so they ended up keeping to themselves. I am somewhat disappointed in myself for outwardly discussing the benefits of a place-responsive approach, yet I was unable to educate or share detailed stories about the area I work in. Dewey (1938) even highlights the importance of having knowledge across a range of topics in order to adapt to any circumstance. With more knowledge of the area, I could have improved this session by speaking for the environment and drawing out key learnings (Priest and Gass, 2005). I now understand that shorter courses lack time to develop skills and relationships, so I need direct leadership and a plan for achieving and being prepared for different outcomes. What I also noticed was how adults ask more specific questions and seem to expect a more comprehensive answer. I believe this stems from adults being able to identify what they don't know, having the confidence to raise questions, and can remain engaged whilst learning. Upon reflection, it seems that it is better to have a more in-depth understanding across fewer topics rather than a basic understanding of multiple topics which is more suited to younger groups. As the aims of the group are discussed and decided upon between the operations manager and the group lead and are usually only communicated on the day of the programme, this restricts the ability to prepare adequately if a facilitator does not already have the depth of knowledge or have not been a part of the planning process.

Trust is built with Consistency

Journal entry #3

A few weeks ago, I sat down for the morning meeting, I looked around the room and realised how many new staff we had, this made me briefly reflect on how much time I have spent in this room and at this centre. We got told our groups and the plan for the following 3 days and for the first time I was going to have my group the entire 3 days. I couldn't quite contain my excitement! I haven't been able to have my own group for various reasons in the past, I've either not been there for the entire programme or had to jump groups because of who is signed off on each activity. I've found there is a noticeable difference in groups who keep the same leader, they tend to develop a stronger bond and can get more out of each session. So, at the end of this programme, I wanted to do a big debrief and reflection with my group. I quickly reminded them about all the activities we had done then sent them

off on a scavenger hunt to find something that represented their camp. Each student then had a talking point when they came back and could take it home with them or take a photo. I have tried this before, but it has never worked that well, so I thought I'd try it seeing as I had been with the group the whole time, and I was super stoked with how it went!

It is common knowledge in the centre that it is a rarity to have the same group for the entire time, but when you do, it is far better than swapping groups every session. Even if you have a difficult group, it is still preferable because you learn how to manage the group and certain individuals. After the three days, I noticed that having this consistency meant I could build stronger relationships with each individual, shift my focus toward the environment, and develop their confidence in the outdoors. I knew I wanted to reflect effectively at the end of the programme, so I set out to make a group contract that gave the students autonomy over the values they deemed important to follow (Brown, 2012). Being with the same group gave me time each evening to plan for the following day, this meant I was able to incorporate other facilitation methods. I applied the action competence model during the shelter building session by encouraging the group to consider what issues we are facing, the role of simple living, what a sustainable future looks like for them, and how they can spend more time in nature. This helped encourage critical thinking and reflection, which arose during the final debrief, with many talking about their excitement of going home and exploring their local areas and linking sustainable actions with their experiences over the past few days (Priest, 1986).

When I consider the theme of intentional facilitation and think back to this session, it feels like everything fell into place. Having the consistency of the same group meant I could apply multiple facilitation methods and make progress on encouraging environmental sustainability throughout all my sessions. Having time and a relationship with my group meant I could use the available resources, strategies, and tools to enhance my facilitation style and positively influence my group (Martin et al., 2017; Thomas, 2019a). Understanding my belief systems and values as a facilitator was also an important contributor to developing judgement based on experience (Heron, 1999; Martin et al., 2017; Priest et al., 2000). Helping people analyse their relationship with the natural environment is one of my core values as a facilitator. I could see that my group had a good foundation of knowledge about protecting the environment, but I wanted to draw out deeper meaning so I implemented the debriefing reflection activity. This allowed my group to analyse and connect their experiences with environmental sustainability actions and then allowed us to plan for post-programme action. By implementing a range of facilitation methods, I am connecting my prior learning and insights with my behaviour to enhance learning for the group and help them achieve their outcomes. The session also confirmed my understanding of the significance of having a connection to a place and being able to assist students with developing this relationship (Brown, 2012).

Following this programme, my view on facilitator consistency has been confirmed, with the research being clear that facilitators need to be intentional in their practice (Thomas, 2008; 2019a). If there is a different instructor on each session, they spend most of the session reintroducing themselves and getting to know the group rather than fostering these relationships and understanding each participant. Whilst facilitators have often been seen as separate from the group, there are benefits from being on the same level (Stan 2009). This contributed to the relationship I developed with my group, as I felt they could trust me as a relatable figure instead of an authoritarian figure. I could also see how incorporating my own unique facilitation style made the students more engaged. In sessions where I have followed the general structure, I have often struggled to engage the entire group, whereas in this session, I mixed it up and found I received a much higher level of engagement. Hunter (2007) and Schwarz (2002) both believe in understanding your own facilitation style and developing a relationship with participants to increase this engagement. Furthermore, Thomas (2019a) places importance on understanding the values and principles of effective facilitation as another way to maintain engagement. It was encouraging to see my group take responsibility for their learning, suggesting ways to solve challenges and drawing out key points from each activity at the end of the week.

> *Journal entry #4*
> *Last week's programme (journal entry #3) was very different to this week's programme. We were meant to have the same programme for the entire 3 days, so I went in with the intention of doing a group contract again and trying various debriefing methods. This quickly went down the drain as I had to move groups EVERY single session and I had to double up on certain sessions because there were too many instructors not signed off on the activities we were offering. I was annoyed because the students were quite a wild bunch, very hard to manage and keep on task, so if I had been with the same group I felt as though I could have had a positive influence and gained more out of the sessions and learnings. I did get some feedback from the instructors who took the group I was initially with saying the group contract was helpful when the students weren't listening or working together so that made me feel like it wasn't a complete waste of time.*

My annoyance was an understatement, the previous group I had were definitely part of a more well-behaved school group, so I would have liked to see the comparison between the two groups in response to a similar approach. As the plan was to be with the same group, I decided to make a slightly more in-depth group contract as I noticed that the kids seemed quite reckless in the morning brief. The first two–hour session was meant to be adventure-based learning (ABL) games which can be quite long for this age group, so I decided to spend around 20 minutes discussing the programme and getting them to draw up a group contract. Initially, no one wanted to write or say anything, so it required some gentle encouragement and a reminder that they could draw, write, or act out whatever they wanted before combining them all.

I felt really good after doing this activity, I felt as though we had set the tone well for the next few days as I raised elements of the group contract during the ABLs to ensure the group were constantly reminded of them. Following our morning break, we had to shuffle everyone around and to be honest, I was gutted; I tried to stay with my group, but it became too difficult, so I settled with moving groups. My annoyance carried through, and for the next few days, I could not stop thinking about what might have happened if I had stayed with my group. As I kept moving around groups and with limited time for our activities, I chose not to make a group contract for each group, although this added to the difficulty of managing the students. Upon reflection, I could have changed my mindset and implemented different facilitation and debriefing methods, but my stubbornness got the better of me.

Rereading this journal entry has made me realise how much these students need the outdoors. They had so much energy, and it was difficult to get them to sit down and listen to what we were going to do in the session; they were just so excited to get out there. So, despite not having the same group, there were still common themes across the whole school. What I could have done was match this energy at the start of each session to then be able to gain some learning in the second half of each session. One of the most important reminders I have drawn from this is that children are giving us signals every day on how they are reacting to the world around them. Whilst it may be beneficial to have the same group, I can still pick up on the external cues and get a pretty good gauge on how they are responding to the activities. This relates back to Thomas's (2019b) idea that facilitators need to be present in the moment. As Wattchow and Brown (2011) argue, the outdoors is a source of people's identity, so we should be using it to help children navigate the world, figure out who they are, where their strengths lie, and how to create a positive relationship with nature. This can be done by having the underlying focus of a session as fostering a positive relationship with nature, then helping students realise their strengths and areas of improvement in an outdoor context. Following this, facilitators can engage students in mindful activities which connect and ground them to their surroundings, enabling them with the tools to come back to this practice within their own context.

Drawing upon Capra's (2005) idea that people rely on the support networks around them to be successful – just as nature does to survive – is the importance of relationships. Priest (1986) recognised this notion of relationship building as a crucial element of OE, allowing for trust to be developed between the facilitator and participant. This too can be seen as a key aim of EE by fostering relationships with nature. Hunter (2007) expresses these two points in his pyramid of facilitation model through the relationship between facilitator, group, individual and the external environment. Many of my own outdoor experiences are memorable because of the people I have shared the experience with and the fact that you are in nature with the bare necessities.

Any fool can know, the point is to understand

Journal entry #5

What an epic 3-day programme! I had my group again for the entire time and what an enthusiastic bunch they were! There was a big focus on kaitiakitanga within this school which was fitting with our programme as we had two afternoons with coastal and whenua kaitiakitanga. When I was leading coastal kaitiakitanga the students were super excited to answer the questions because they already had prior knowledge and an understanding of the importance of what I was talking about. Initially I felt surprised because we don't usually get this response for rocky shore, but I leapt at the opportunity to go into more detail on what we might find out there, why it is there, how we can protect it and why it is important to have a connection to certain places. After we came back from rocky shore I sat down with my group on the beach and got them to create sand sculptures of their favourite moment or creature and explain why. By the end of the programme, I could see that the students had a much better understanding of the marine environment and had each 'connected' to something out there.

As kaitiakitanga (guardianship) had been set as a value within their class at school and with the teacher constantly reminding the students about it throughout the programme, it remained front of mind for the entire week. The students were extremely responsive to this concept of guardianship but also to what we were learning on the rocky shore and about sustainability. Schools that do not have this background knowledge before arriving have vastly different levels of engagement and interest in the topic, highlighting the value schools such as this one offers their students. Children get really excited when they know an answer to a question, so having this prior knowledge improves their experience at our outdoor centre and allows us as facilitators to go into more depth and incorporate more environmental sustainability elements. This notion is evident in experiential learning as it relies on past knowledge to draw upon, make sense, and inform future experiences (Kolb, 1984; Schwartz, 2013). This session also allowed me to provide opportunities for my group to be agents of their own learning and experiences (Brown, 2012; Richmond et al., 2017). I was there as a mentor to support their learning on the rocky shore and as a facilitator when encouraging them to think about certain aspects, including kaitiakitanga. Richmond et al. (2017) found that participants rely on facilitators to achieve outcomes which was evident in my session as there were times when the kids got too excited and were screaming and yelling, so I needed to intervene and positively influence the group to ensure we were being mindful of the marine life around us and our peers.

This journal entry is consistent with Chawla's (1998) belief that childhood and formative experiences play an influential role in developing concern for the environment. The willingness of my group to link their learnings to the broader environmental context and consider how they can improve their own pro-environmental behaviours emphasised how these formative experiences, both within the school and potentially at home have shaped their attitudes on this programme. Applying various debriefing methods has also shown me how well students can link their own experiences with key learnings –

hence the belief that our role as facilitators is to allow them to be creative. I think too often we revert to a written medium of reflection when we could be expanding students' perspectives on being creative and expressing themselves.

> *Journal entry #6*
> *This week we had school holiday programme which means only a small group of the same kids come every single day. I ended up having around 5 kids that chose to be in my group for the entire week which was awesome! As the school holiday kids already know how to do each activity it means I can use the activities as the medium through which we learn about the local area and how to protect it. The best day was on Thursday when 5 of my group came up to me in the morning and asked to go on a full day mission picking up rubbish and coming up with a plan on how we can remove this rubbish from our lives. I was blown away; throughout the week I had made environmental sustainability the theme of the week and based my activities on using the least amount of man-made material possible, whilst discussing how to reduce what I did use, but I did not think they would ever come up to me and ask for the entire day to be focused on it.*

As a facilitator on school holiday programme, one of my favourite moments is the first morning back when I get to see some of the kids from prior holiday programmes. It's nice to be recognised and greeted with such positive energy! For me, it's the relationship building and sharing experiences over a more extended period, in comparison to the schools we get once a year. We only see some of the kids every few months, but they always seem to remember us, and it feels like can we always pick up from where we left off. This is the beauty of OE, right? Creating memorable, shared experiences in a natural setting (Gough, 2016). The holistic nature of the outdoors really does help create an engaging environment to learn about environmental sustainability and ourselves. Louv (2005) has been a stalwart supporter of reconnecting with the natural environment and highlights the benefits of connecting with nature to decrease anxiety and depression. So, whilst the work we do outdoors can help encourage pro-environmental behaviours, it also has significant mental health benefits that are becoming increasingly important.

As I had made the focus on environmental sustainability for the week, this gave my group repetitive experiences across the five days where they had contact with nature, could draw meaning from what we were learning, and developed an emotional connection with the local area, all aspects Richardson and McEwen (2018) encourage. I am pleased I planned this as the underlying focus, as it helped enrich the sessions I ran by being intentional and transparent in what I wanted to achieve. The message of environmental sustainability was delivered effectively to my group as they knew the week's aims, had trust in me and showed their understanding of the importance of the message by asking for a day solely focused on environmental sustainability. The literature clarifies that the facilitator needs to be deliberate with their actions on shorter programmes (Thomas, 2008). In a sense, this session reflects the notion of

needing an emotional connection and relationship with the natural environment to influence and alter pro-environmental behaviours, as knowledge is known not to be enough (Pritchard et al., 2019; Siegal et al., 2018). I recall encouraging and challenging the group to be curious about their surroundings and to ask as many questions as possible, rather than telling them what to think and do, an approach supported by Thomas (2019b).

> *Journal entry #7*
> *Today was bittersweet, because of the recent storm we had to swap all our water activities to land-based activities due to being advised of a very high risk of illness from sewage overflow. The students were really sad when we told them this, so was I because I love the water! I used this opportunity to incorporate action competence into the session to help the kids understand the reasoning behind not being able to go into the water. There were so many moments where there was a huge downpour of rain, or we were near a stream, so I used these opportunities for us to huddle under a tree to discuss and question the students on the issue of water quality, how it has come about, what is more important – the health of our waterways or giving people housing, and then asking for their ideas on finding balance for both critical issues. I played a game where half the group sat under a tree with dirty water in their cups and the other half ran around in the rain to try and help them understand in a different way. Lots of the comments from those out in the rain were 'it's really fun until I got cold'. I then linked it back to what changes they could make in their own homes and in the future to help the water quality issue. Although I couldn't do every aspect of action competence, I felt the students left with a better understanding of how they can make an environmental change in their lives.*

As Key (2003) proposed, *how* education is provided is as important as the content itself. Jensen and Schnack (1997) claimed that students are often only provided scientific information, limiting their ability to develop an in-depth understanding of the issue at hand. Action competence contributes to the *how,* allowing for knowledge to be integrated with critical reflection and vision for sustainable behaviours, which I witnessed on this programme. Implementing action competence as described in my journal entry, gave me confidence as a facilitator where despite a potentially negative experience of not being able to go in the water occurring, I was able to turn it into an effective and positive learning experience. While I believe my group left with a better understanding of the consequences of intense housing developments and the impact on our waterways, I still think that it will be a fleeting memory once they return home. Ballantyne and Packer (2011) explore these potential issues with EE – which can be linked with OE – on the lack of follow-through post-course. Without the opportunity for students to carry on environmental behaviours or plan for post-course action, the work done during a programme can become almost pointless.

Key (2003) expressed his opinion that people who learn to be environmentally aware within a classroom setting are not exposed to the elements nor significant change to their lives. This resonates with me because of how passionate I am about real-world learning and being able to see the consequences of

our actions. I believe the level of engagement I had with my group and their excitement to be out in the rain despite being told by their teachers that they would be swimming, represents their understanding of why we could not go into the ocean. I found it interesting how reluctant some of the parents were for their kids to be in the rain. We were experiencing scattered showers with the odd downpour and every time it rained, the kids would scream and run straight into it! I observed as some of the parents would consistently pull their kids back under the shelter and tell them to get changed, something I tried to discourage as they would just get wet in the next session.

While this session was far more critical and environmentally aware than others I have facilitated, there still needs to be more repetitive engagement for this group of students to increase the likelihood that their awareness is long-lasting. From this session, I could see the value in how much depth action competence can provide. I have often briefly incorporated Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning with elements of concrete experience, reflective observation, active experimentation, and abstract conceptualisation, but this has been at a superficial level and has only touched on each element. As I reflect on action competence, I am reminded of Jensen's (2002) dimensions which inform environmental knowledge: problem identification and understanding; strategy and commitment to change, a vision for the future; and experiences to draw upon lifelong learning, which are all elements OE can offer. Aspects of this were applied unintentionally as it has similarities with the action competence model, both models allowing for a connection between social, political, and environmental contexts (Jordan & Kristiansson, 2017; Rathzel & Uzzell, 2009).

Children must be taught *how* to think, not *what* to think

Journal entry #8

Today I was put on river kayaking for all three sessions, I was an extra so I didn't have my own group for this programme. Instead, I helped on sessions that needed 2 leaders. It was an interesting day as I was able to pick up and learn different elements of the activity and each leader's spin on them. A common theme I noticed which is something I do myself is trying to weave environmental actions within this session. The main point we discuss is how the riparian planting makes the water clearer near the top and link this with what the students could be doing at home to protect our waterways and oceans. I couldn't stop thinking about how we could make this session far more engaging and move away from what I think is a shallow level of environmental sustainability that doesn't challenge or change the students' pro-environmental behaviour at all. I 100% know I am guilty of this, with such a short amount of time on each session there really isn't enough time to go into depth with learning both kayaking skills and environmental aspects. I tried to frame the session with metaphors to help the students understand but again it wasn't received with much enthusiasm. It did make me question how much we can talk to year 5's about the environment with the time we have available but I'm still up for the challenge of improving the session.

With the emphasis being put on programmes to shift away from adventurous activities towards a place-responsive approach, this creates an opportunity to refocus toward environmental sustainability (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Priest and Gass (1997) did raise their concerns that EE remained the 'poor cousin' of OE. However, with pressing environmental issues that are starting to have direct impacts, such as the water quality issue in journal entry #7, this could be the change we need to see within the industry. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (2021) has recognised this shift, identifying the disruptive relationship between people and the planet, and believes EE should aim to stabilise this. Reconfiguring this session so it is focused on developing a meaningful relationship with the natural environment can help increase students' environmental awareness and achieve the intended aims.

The current session is really just kayaking up a river with a short spiel about the environment and then kayaking back. So rather than seeing it as a skills-based activity, we could adopt Brown's (2012) perspective of OE as a way to view relationships with people and place. I strongly believe this session has the opportunity, resources, and space to offer an effective and exciting place-responsive journey that can be achieved on a half or full-day programme. As it has been identified, programmes often lack opportunities for students to carry on environmental behaviours. By incorporating nature-connecting activities such as weaving, shelter building with natural materials, and traditional games within this session, the kayaking then becomes the medium for reaching the destination and activities are taught that can easily be replicated at home. The more we can educate students on activities they can do outside of our outdoor centre, the more likely they will be to do the activities again. Removing barriers not only for students and schools to come to our outdoor centre but also in engaging with nature and similar activities is paramount for long-lasting change and impact (Hill et al., 2020). Along with this, too often today do children lack the time and solitude to think, reflect and slow down to embrace their surroundings. As outdoor facilitators, I believe we have the responsibility to give students the opportunity to practice this and educate ways in which students can continue this in their own lives, an approach alluded to in the prior journal entry. This 'solo' time can be offered during this session through a guided reflection within the surroundings of the bush.

Journal entry #9
I went into this programme with the intention of frontloading and framing the experience for my group to think about environmental sustainability. As my previous session where I tried to frontload didn't really work, I decided to try it again today. I began by asking everyone to introduce themselves and name a place that means a lot to them. Once we had been around the circle, I then got them to suggest one or two things they do or could do to keep that place safe and healthy. Naturally, some were more confident in this task whilst others didn't really know what to say so it required more questioning and prompts from me to jog their memory. Throughout the following three days some of my group would proudly come up to me with rubbish and in some instances, I would question how it got

there and what we can do to stop it reaching the ocean. Most responses were to make sure it goes into the bin, but I continued to question to get them thinking about preventing it even coming into their homes in the first place. I do wonder if those that were proactive in picking up rubbish and asking about the ecosystem and animals have had experiences or influences (parents for example) that led to this behaviour, and whether how I frontloaded the session reminded them of this influence or actually instigated it.

What I wonder the most about this session is that last question, which is quite hard to answer as there are so many variables that influence how we as people think. This session prompted me to think about nature vs nurture and how dependent we as facilitators are on students to deliver effective environmental sustainability outcomes. As I raised in journal #5, childhood experiences are influential in the continued development of pro-environmental behaviours (Chawla, 1998). My group today may have had experiences in their childhood that have connected them to the ocean and helped them understand how to protect it, but it is unknown whether they would have displayed the same behaviours if I had not frontloaded the session. What I think did help was the continuous framing throughout the session, using metaphors and analogies that I knew the students could relate to, so they were constantly reminded of the importance of looking after the natural environment.

Following on from this idea of childhood experiences is another question of whether coming to our outdoor centre can be considered a formative experience, specifically when we get seven- to eight-year-olds. Formative experiences, through developing relationships with nature and positive experiences, can inspire more environmental action, so it is how we tap into this whilst we have students at our outdoor centre. We need to draw upon Chawla and Cushing's (2007) variables required to action pro-environmental behaviour; creating an environment where our students value the environment, understand environmental issues – importantly, how it affects them – and empower them so they feel as though they can make a difference to these issues.

Although this reflection has led to more questions than answers, I think it has uncovered an important aspect, to consider that each school and student are different. We need to acknowledge where they come from and what their local area is so we can approach and adapt the sessions to best benefit each programme (Chawla & Cushing, 2007). For local schools that may already have a relationship with the area, more focus can be put on strengthening this relationship for the students and identifying ways to continue this relationship in the future. For schools that may travel further or students who do not spend much time in nature, the focus can be on ensuring these students feel safe in the environment and learn how they can pursue these activities in their own local area (Green, 2018). There are many occasions when I have had students come up to me when we are out paddleboarding who do not want to go into the water and are petrified of it, but with gentle encouragement and support by the end of the session, they were jumping off and absolutely loving it. At the core of this notion is the belief that facilitators

should provide opportunities for students to be autonomous and agents of their own learning (Brown, 2012). The more sensory the experience and hands-on the students are, the more memorable and meaningful the experience becomes (Brown, 2002; Ronglien, 2016).

Chapter Summary

This chapter represents my involvement and reflections as an outdoor facilitator. These journal entries were written over the past year, each adopting a different facilitation method or approach. They revealed my honest thoughts, emotions, thought processes, and reasoning behind why I felt the way I did. In linking these experiences and reflections with the literature, I have developed an understanding and awareness of the multifaceted approaches to facilitation. From these four themes and the literature review, I have drawn out four key findings that I can apply to my own facilitation process and help inform my recommendations, as discussed in Chapter 5. The findings I have gathered include having local knowledge; being intentional and creative; having core values and principles as a facilitator; and lastly, the importance of consistency in instructors/facilitators. These narratives and themes have emerged from the reflective process and have been presented to my supervisor for comment to ensure they are fair and reasonable.

Being caught out on the hop has informed the importance of having local knowledge, being intentional and creative when facilitating, and understanding my own core values and principles. Journal entry one saw the need for improved processes, both in the planning of the day and the communication with management on who the group was and how we could better meet their needs. Being intentional and creative would have improved this session as the experience would have felt more unique and challenged the group intellectually rather than just physically. Being put on the spot highlighted the need for these challenging experiences as a facilitator. I trusted my intuition and came back to my core values and principles, which enabled me to plan for future programmes with this school. Journal entry two saw a laid-back approach that caught me out and consequently impacted the group's engagement. This highlighted the importance of having local knowledge that is at a level appropriate for the group and their aims.

Trust is built with consistency has informed the importance of having consistency as an instructor /facilitator, understanding my core values and principles, and having a connection to the environment through local knowledge. The benefits of having the same group became well identified following my first three-day programme with the same group. Being able to develop a stronger relationship with the students allowed for trust to be built between us. This increased their engagement during each session and meant I could shift my focus from gaining their trust to developing their relationship with the natural environment. I was staying true to my core values and principles as I was able to help build the students' relationship with the natural environment. Whilst the session in journal entry four did not result in having the same group, it did highlight how setting the standards at the beginning of a session through

a group contract can positively impact group behaviour. A benchmark also increases students' trust in the facilitator as they understand how the facilitator will respond to negative behaviour. Although having a connection to the environment mainly stemmed from the literature review, this session highlighted how the students needed the outdoors with their level of excitement and energy. Giving them the space to expend this energy outdoors and help develop a relationship with the environment through enhancing local knowledge can encourage them to spend more time outside and look after the natural environment.

Any fool can know, the point is to understand has informed the importance of local knowledge and being intentional and creative. In journal entry five, understanding the group's prior knowledge enabled us as facilitators to build upon the concept of kaitiakitanga and impart our knowledge of the local area effectively. Going into depth meant the students had a better understanding of what they had been learning in the classroom by being able to see the environment first-hand. This could be seen in journal entry six by being intentional and having an underlying focus. This helped link the experiences throughout the week and developed the students' understanding of how and why they should keep the environment safe and healthy. Combining local knowledge and intention in journal entry seven enabled me to deliver an effective environmental sustainability session. The students were able to understand why they could not go in the water – not just *because* the water quality was poor but thinking of the reasons as to *why* it was poor.

Children must be taught how to think, not what to think informs the importance of being intentional and creative as well as having local knowledge by developing a positive relationship with nature. Adopting a place-responsive approach to the session in journal entry eight and role modelling appropriate environmental outcomes can show students how to look after the environment and engage in these activities in their local areas to develop a stronger relationship with nature. It can help foster a connection to the environment during the session through positive experiences and enhancing local knowledge, shifting the focus from being a side conversation in the middle of our kayaking session to the underlying theme of the session itself. Furthermore, students would be more engaged as they are being shown how to be environmentally aware instead of being told. This was evident in journal entry nine, where continuously encouraging and role modelling a relationship with the natural environment positively impacted how the students responded to the aims of the session. This justifies facilitators being intentional in the planning and execution of a session, as it can significantly impact the way students respond and transfer these learnings into their lives.

Chapter Five will present a critical discussion of these key findings, linking back to the themes and research questions, including their influence on my development as a facilitator. Following this, recommendations will be made from the findings to outdoor centres and facilitators.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Concluding Thoughts

Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the key findings drawn from my reflective journal entries in Chapter Four and of the research project. This reflexive account has helped me realise and understand the complexity of facilitating environmental sustainability outcomes within outdoor education programmes, specifically of short duration. The primary aim of this study was to understand, through personal reflection, how intentional facilitation of environmental sustainability outcomes can be incorporated into outdoor education programmes. It is clear there needs to be more emphasis on the shift from viewing outdoor education as instructional, adventurous activities to viewing it as a way to create meaningful relationships with the natural environment. In this chapter, I will offer a summary of key findings from the research and discuss how these have contributed to my original research aim and questions. Following this, I will discuss my development as a facilitator, expressing my understanding of facilitation and environmental sustainability within outdoor education and the impact of the autoethnographic process. The strengths and limitations of the study will be discussed including the implications of this research. The chapter will then conclude with recommendations before further research areas are suggested and a summary of my final thoughts.

Summary of key findings

When considering and summarising the review of literature and research that has been undertaken in this process, four key findings can be drawn out which integrate the various epiphanies and learnings I have attained. These include the importance of local knowledge, being intentional and creative, having core values and principles – including the notion of being challenged, and consistency of instructor/facilitators. It has been well communicated that there is limited research on facilitating environmental sustainability outcomes over short programmes effectively. While it is apparent there needs to be a significant shift in focus toward environmental sustainability, some areas of OE lack this urgency. This discussion provides insight into how to effectively facilitate environmental sustainability outcomes within a short OE programme.

Over the past few decades, there has been a push toward focusing on the health of our environment, especially among young people, as the environment continues to experience rapid degradation, largely due to human impact (Britton et al., 2018; Chawla, 2015; Hill, 2012). Simultaneously, particularly in the western world, we are becoming more and more disconnected from the natural environment as technology and work dominate our priorities (Louv, 2005). As OE takes place outdoors and benefits from the natural environment, it has a unique opportunity and a social responsibility to educate and influence positive change. Hence, this dissertation sought to understand what role the facilitator can play in fostering environmental sustainability outcomes in OE.

Importance of Local Knowledge and Connecting to the Environment

This study has raised the need for facilitators to have sufficient knowledge of the area and adapt this for a range of ages and group needs (Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Gass & Stevens, 2007). We know from the literature that having a connection with nature is beneficial for the health of the environment and the mental well-being of people. Developing pro-environmental behaviours begins with an emotional connection and relationship with the environment, which can be achieved through consistent, meaningful experiences in nature (Pritchard et al., 2019; Siegal et al., 2018). As identified in the literature, having a strong connection and understanding of the environment increases the likelihood that people will care for it, provided this relationship is looked after and positively encouraged. Unsurprisingly, people need to value the environment and understand how it benefits society, have knowledge of local environmental issues, and be empowered to believe they can make a difference (Hungerford & Volk, 1990). This is where outdoor educators can encourage meaningful relationships with nature and develop students' foundational knowledge of the local environment through various experiences and practice of facilitation methods.

Increasing local knowledge and fostering a connection to the environment can be achieved through a place-responsive approach and is a way of developing a meaningful relationship with the environment. This approach is becoming increasingly recognised and implemented for its ability to encourage students to learn and care for their local area (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). However, this is dependent on facilitators' depth of knowledge in culture, history, environment, and ecology, and their ability to impart this knowledge to students effectively. As seen in the findings, not having this depth of knowledge for an older group hindered the overall experience and left me feeling embarrassed. The feeling of embarrassment and lack of preparation has ensured that I will not be making this mistake again anytime soon. Rather than relying heavily on instructor qualifications, it offers a more sympathetic approach to experiencing the outdoors, which is more accessible for students once they return to their home environments. Whilst not all schools are local, these foundational principles can still be taught so that students are equipped and empowered with the experience of exploring their wider backyard.

Being Intentional and Creative

This study showed that whilst students may initially feel let down without the presence of any water or 'traditional' activities, it does not take long to shift this focus and create an engaging experience that arguably the kids will learn more from. Being able to adapt and adjust to the conditions stems from having intentionality in the first place and a broad knowledge surrounding the area and local environmental issues. This concept of having intentionality and encouraging creativity as a facilitator was a key finding and is an element that has underpinned many of my journal entries. I have seen the greatest development and growth within my own practice through the process of planning and considering what I want to achieve with each school/group, all whilst being transparent about the

process. The school/group usually determine what the overall theme is for the week, often prompted by our operations manager who offers suggestions. This is then communicated to staff at the start of a programme so we can incorporate and adapt our sessions accordingly. As someone who prides herself on being organised and prepared, this has revealed that preparing does not just mean being packed the night before and on time to work. There are many more layers of meaning to being prepared, especially when facilitating specific outcomes such as environmental sustainability. Whether the session's intention is followed or not, the process of having an intent at all I have found brings more confidence in my ability to adapt and change according to the variables and group on the day. With this knowledge, I have made sure to find out a school's aims before their first day, so I am able to prepare appropriate sessions that have been well thought out. Whilst it is important to have an open mind and acknowledge that things can always change - and sometimes not in your favour – it is important to make the most out of each session regardless of whether you have the same group or not, as discussed in journal entry nine. Time is of the essence on a short programme, so having a closed mindset will not benefit anyone. This also provides reason to be intentional and deliberate with facilitation, there is not the freedom to simply let the environment speak for itself, for example (Thomas, 2008).

Being intentional with facilitation shares similar attributes when applying an action competence model. The action competence model in this study highlighted the depth and breadth of knowledge you can achieve when integrating critical reflection and future vision. Intentionality underpins the action competence model as you must go in as a facilitator to understand what you want to achieve and how to engage the students in critical and creative thinking. Whilst the entire model was unable to be implemented, there were still significant benefits seen in the student's engagement and enthusiasm to learn about the environmental issues. This raised the importance on the themes of adaptability, challenge, and growth, through having a foundational set of values, principles, and beliefs as a facilitator.

Core Values and Principles

The literature clearly suggests that emerging outdoor leaders must understand the values and principles of OE and be aware of their own core values (Itin, 1999; Roberts, 2012; Simpson, 2011). Not having given much thought before this research about the significance of knowing my own belief systems and values, this process has uncovered the realisation that understanding your beliefs, who you are as a facilitator, and why you facilitate enables you to fall back on these values when in challenging situations. Often, we rely on intuition to guide our decision making in certain circumstances, which has been criticised; however, where challenge arises, so too does growth when appropriately reflected upon (Gladwell, 2005). This was evident in journal entry one where I came back to the purpose of OE and to some of my core values which include supporting and encouraging positive experiences in the outdoors for the benefit of the environment. Although it put me on the spot with a short amount of time to adapt, this challenging circumstance has led me to be more prepared and ask more questions before future

programmes. This also acknowledges how I have awareness of my vulnerabilities; I find I can become stressed and emotional when put on the spot but knowing I will respond in this way helps me deal with these emotions and make a plan forward, rather than dwelling on the past (Ringer, 2002). Furthermore, it is essential to have these foundational values as each school and student are different, so adopting the same method each time will not work. This also justifies the need for constant adaptability and understanding the various facilitation methods such as action competence, frontloading, framing, debriefing, and critical thinking.

Consistency with instructor/facilitator

The theme of outdoor programme design and preparation encompassed the final key realisation of this study. The influence of consistency in instructor/facilitator engagement has shown to be significantly beneficial for short OE programmes, helping to build stronger relationships between students and facilitators to then be able to shift and build upon that relationship and develop a meaningful connection with the environment. Whilst there is limited literature focusing specifically on the benefit of having consistency in instructors or facilitators, Schwarz (2005) does see value in having consistency when adopting his five different facilitation roles. These include the facilitator, the facilitative trainer, the facilitative leader, the facilitative consultant, and the facilitative coach. Consistency allows you as a facilitator to understand each student's needs better, efficiently manage differing personalities, and effectively pursue an underlying theme across the programme. Akin to this is the communication and planning transparency needed between management and staff, which is extremely important for consistency to ensure the same message is being conveyed, as experienced in journal entry one.

Facilitators also need to consider if the programme is appropriate and relevant to their learners and how much prior knowledge of the underlying aim students have. It became apparent that schools with previous knowledge on a certain topic enabled us as facilitators to build upon that knowledge more effectively. The programme design and content need to enable opportunities for long-lasting change in environmental behaviour. For shorter programmes, the focus needs to be on either developing, progressing or showing opportunities to maintain contact with nature, rather than the focus being on providing repetitive experiences to change pro-environmental behaviours. Creating opportunities within these short programmes to plan for post-course environmental action and maintain accountability appears to be the way to find a balance between overloading students with information and enabling them with long-lasting change. The findings from this research contribute and develop the understanding of how having the same facilitator is beneficial in building trust and rapport between students and facilitators. Having trust in a leader can promote positive interpersonal relationships, reduce anxiety in students and can positively influence the success of course outcomes (Frisby, 2018; Shooter et al., 2010). Rapport is founded upon personal connection and is an important skill to develop to help create a safe and enjoyable environment. It represents a mutual, trusting, respective and positive relationship between two people. Having these values as the foundation for an outdoor session can

encourage deeper learning with participants who then feel safer exploring and challenging themselves (Frisby, 2018). Building rapport does not simply come from the consistency of facilitators, but it can lay the groundwork for solid relationships with students. As a facilitator, embodying the native culture and local environment through encouraging meaningful relationships and gaining trust can help develop this rapport.

Revisiting the Research Questions and Aims

This is a summary of the key points which contribute to the research questions and aims identified at the start of this study. The overarching question, what role can the facilitator play in fostering environmental sustainability outcomes in OE, was broken down into three specific questions to understand the elements contributing to this research.

What does the current literature base suggest is best practice in facilitating sustainability outcomes?

To have a significant influence on pro-environmental behaviours, the current literature base emphasises repetitive experiences in nature that are undertaken over a long period. Whilst this is not always possible on short programmes, allocating time and creating opportunities to plan for post-course action are ways to facilitate sustainability outcomes effectively. Aspects that support this include being intentional in the facilitation style as this increases the depth of the session; adapting to the age and nature of the group; being put into challenging situations often to enhance the quality of facilitation; fostering an emotional connection and relationship between students and nature; and lastly, encouraging young people to engage in political, environmental action.

How does this mirror my experience as a practitioner?

Some elements have been prominent in my own experience and others have arisen due to my knowledge of the literature when reflecting on my sessions. Before undertaking this research, I never really went in with much of a plan, I just used my intuition and the structure we were provided at work. Hence why being intentional in my facilitation and embracing challenging experiences as a way to learn has arguably seen the most growth in my practice. It has opened my eyes to how much you can get out of a session if you are intentional, prepared for various circumstances, and willing to learn from challenging situations. I could see aspects of shallow environmental sustainability constantly arise and times where I reverted to the 'cookie cutter' experience but quickly reminded myself of what the literature emphasises is best practice in facilitating environmental outcomes. What was not explicitly raised in the literature base, but I found crucial in effectively delivering environmental sustainability outcomes, was having consistency in the same group/facilitator. In both sessions where I had this consistency, I came away feeling far more accomplished. It enabled me to focus on the environmental sustainability aspects rather than having to build a relationship with each student every session.

I firmly believe environmental sustainability should be a key focus for both practitioners and centres in the outdoor education industry. Creating multiple opportunities to practice environmental sustainability and developing others' understanding of the negative impact humankind has on the earth is imperative to encouraging pro-environmental action. For practitioners, it is about learning how to apply, analyse, and implement various facilitation methods for integrating environmental sustainability outcomes to understand the adaptability needed. These ideas will be discussed in detail in the recommendations section, where I can link my experiences in the field to a university setting.

My development as a facilitator

Implications

This study was necessary for challenging the role OE has in educating for environmental sustainability. It has shown that OE, with appropriate facilitation and planning for post-course action, can engage and inform students of the importance of pro-environmental behaviours and actions. This journey has exposed how effective facilitation requires trial and error, a willingness to embrace challenges, and the ability to reflect and grow from mistakes. Through intentional facilitation, students receive a higher quality programme, and facilitators can become more confident in their ability to deliver effective sessions.

I have been leading OE sessions at the same outdoor centre for the past three years and as a facilitator, I feel more confident in my ability and understanding of core concepts. The growth I have experienced by reflecting on my facilitation in the past six months is more than I have in the past three years. This has highlighted the importance of self-development and self-reflection, especially when learning from mistakes or sessions that did not go to plan. In the past, I would never have a real plan, to some degree I would just wing it and do the same as the previous session. Now I make sure to learn and understand the aims of each group so I can plan appropriately and integrate different activities. Below are two journal entries prompted by questions from my supervisor, which bring me back to my core values and intentions.

> *Journal Entry 30.04.21*
> *My supervisor did ask me the following questions which threw me off initially as I guess I haven't really thought much about why I am passionate about being in the outdoors nor what my intention is when I facilitate. I was asked 'what is my intention when I facilitate a group' and 'what is my why for being in the outdoors'. I suppose my intention when I facilitate is for the group to develop strong relationships with each other and the environment, to challenge themselves, and enjoy spending time in the outdoors. When I consider my 'why', I come back to my love for being outdoors, from the simplicity it offers to the restorative feeling I get. I love that it can bring people together from all backgrounds, it reminds me of a quote I have in my personal journal, "He pukenga wai, he nohoanga*

tangata. He nohoanga tangata, he putanga kōrero – where waters converge, people gather. Where people gather, conversation flows". I am very passionate about living sustainability but haven't really incorporated it into my facilitation as I have never known how to do so effectively.

Journal Entry 12.03.22
As I sit here writing one of my final journal entries, I ponder what my why is for being in the outdoors, following my experiences in the past six or so months. The desire to continue living sustainably and closer to the land is still very present. I can see the value in how the outdoors can contribute to this idea and promote pro-environmental behaviours. To sum up my why in one sentence would be 'supporting positive experiences in the outdoors for the benefit of the environment and the wellbeing of people, through bringing people together and strengthening communities'. When I consider what my intention is now when I facilitate, it is to develop strong relationships with the students I encounter so I can inspire them to analyse their relationship with the natural environment. I also intend to facilitate the development and success of short outdoor education programmes achieving environmental sustainability outcomes with students in the long term.

My understanding of facilitation and its place within OE

Initially, my idea of facilitation was comprised of briefing and debriefing a group and using questioning when needed during a session. I simply thought it was about leading from behind, supporting a group's development, and only intervening when necessary. I knew it was more than giving instructions and creating a positive and safe environment as my main goal was to keep the students engaged and maintain a neutral position within the group. Although I had access to the literature, I did not put much effort into learning different techniques and facilitation methods. Now, my thoughts on facilitation are far more specific and complex. I understand that facilitation in the context of environmental sustainability and OE is about connecting students to the natural environment and each other to achieve certain outcomes and create meaningful relationships. As a facilitator, I am there to support and nurture these relationships and should adopt a variety of methods to maintain effectiveness. It is not a linear step by step process as some of the literature suggests. Instead, it is a holistic process that involves planning, preparation, communication, adaptability, intention, and reflection.

My understanding of environmental sustainability and its place within OE

This research has developed my understanding of how OE and the influence of a facilitator can contribute to people actioning environmental sustainability. I have become very aware that knowledge of environmental issues is not enough to change pro-environmental behaviours. The literature has enhanced my understanding that for people to care for nature they need to have an emotional connection and repetitive opportunities to develop a strong relationship with the environment. It is not something that can be done effectively inside a classroom through telling – students need to be exposed to the elements and in a setting where positive relationships with the environment and peers are being facilitated. Although I have seen attempts at incorporating environmental actions within outdoor

sessions, the need for depth in educating for environmental sustainability has become even more apparent, rather than the 'superficial acts' occurring presently. This aligns with Chawla and Cushing's (2007) findings to their question of 'what kinds of actions most effectively address environmental problems?' which include community action, political pressure, multiple opportunities to practice environmental action, and planning for post-course action. The environment is a source of people's identity and reaps many well-being benefits, hence how OE can help reconnect people and enhance their sense of belonging through being set outside.

The autoethnographic process

The autoethnographic process has been beneficial for analysing my own facilitation and how well I integrate environmental sustainability within my sessions. Before this research, my attempts at doing so were shallow at the best of times and more oriented towards encouraging staff. At times, journaling has been challenging, especially when it has been an exhausting day, but for the most part, it has been a comforting way of self-reflecting. The benefit of a process like this is that it allows the reader to interpret and understand the concepts in a way relevant to them. Scott-Hoy and Ellis (2008) explain how "the researcher sees parts of herself that we the viewers, cannot; yet we see parts of her that she cannot" (p. 134). By maintaining transparency in sharing my stories and experiences, readers can draw their own meanings and apply it to their own practice if desired. Autoethnography has also taught me the extent to which you can learn from a session through reflection and critical analysis.

Strengths, Limitations, and Further Research

Strengths

As an observer of my own journey, I have developed a new perspective on how I facilitate and have challenged the 'usual' parameters of an outdoor leader. The reflective approach has allowed me to better understand why I do certain things and how I can approach them better. It has also provided me with a different understanding of how to facilitate environmental sustainability outcomes to a greater extent than conducting interviews with staff and students may have offered. Its strength lies in the fact that it is a confronting form of research which embraces personal bias and a method of storytelling, offering a broad range of journal entries that cover multiple facilitation methods and experiences (Adams et al., 2015). The storytelling element also encourages engagement from the reader as it is relatable and unique. Furthermore, this study has shown me how my passion for the environment and wanting to make positive change can link with the OE industry.

Limitations and Further Research

A fundamental limitation of this study was the time available to implement each model of facilitation and the ability to apply these across varying situations. The former was most prevalent with the action competence model, as in both circumstances, I was only able to integrate a few aspects rather than the entire process. Whilst the action competence model still proved effective, the full potential of applying

this model to environmental sustainability outcomes is unknown. Further research could study the impact of completing the action competence model within a programme and its influence on achieving specific outcomes. Also included in this limitation is the time available to try these facilitation models multiple times across various situations. I only had the opportunity to implement the chosen models a few times, which meant that each model's success was dependent on the situation it was applied to. This contributes to the lack of generalisation due to the highly personalised and specific nature of the research, but on the other hand, as discussed earlier, it allows readers to interpret and resonate with the information in their own way.

Another limitation of the study was my availability as an outdoor leader, meaning that I could not have consistency where there may have been an opportunity. As the notion of consistency was a significant finding in the success of my sessions, further research should incorporate this as a constant variable to provide a basis for judging the efficacy surrounding other models of facilitation. Additionally, due to the nature of covid-19 guidelines, some location constraints were out of my control but did contribute to the last-minute changing of programmes. Hence, I was unable to proceed with my original intention for the session.

Other areas for future research include understanding the impact childhood experiences and children from environmentally aware families have on pro-environmental behaviours. As well as this, more research could link nature connection in children to how this can be fostered within OE programmes. This study indicated that having prior knowledge before coming to an outdoor centre improved the overall experience, so more research could be done on understanding what elements are needed to offer a programme that effectively develops meaningful connections to the environment. Further research areas could investigate how to reinstate the explorative nature of kids and encourage extensive neighbourhood use as suggested by Chawla (2020). With concerns that opportunities for adventure in nature have eroded, the question should be asked on how OE can reverse this and educate for pro-environmental behaviours.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations have been made so outdoor centres and outdoor facilitators can improve their practice. For environmental change to happen this needs to begin with adequately preparing outdoor facilitators and outdoor centres and encouraging the incorporation of environmental sustainability outcomes.

Outdoor Facilitators

As outdoor leaders/instructors/facilitators are the providers of an outdoor experience at an outdoor centre, I recommend appropriate staff development opportunities to learn about various facilitation methods and how to educate for environmental sustainability. These should incorporate scenarios and modules to develop a holistic understanding of each facilitation method and provide opportunities to

review challenging situations. For new staff, I recommend a series of workshops upon recruitment to understand the basics of facilitation and to convey the importance of environmental sustainability, including how to educate these outcomes effectively. This is also an excellent opportunity to welcome fresh ideas on both facilitation and environmental sustainability. In addition to this, I recommend having a mentor programme where new staff are buddied up with experienced staff to guide them through self-reflection and to develop their core values and principles as a facilitator.

Through regularly engaging in training and self-reflection, this can encourage professional development for outdoor leaders and can increase a facilitator's tool kit of facilitation styles and knowledge of environmental sustainability. Self-reflection in my research has identified and emphasized how important it is to be intentional and creative when planning programmes, highlighting its value for outdoor facilitators, especially after programmes that may not have gone to plan. Self-reflection also allows facilitators to examine whether their core values and principles align with how they are facilitating a session and the message they are sending their group. As many facilitators keep a logbook of hard skills (e.g. kayaking), a simple way of self-reflecting is adding an 'extra notes' section to determine areas of improvement and areas of success. From here, facilitators can look over their previous sessions and adapt appropriately for future sessions. Furthermore, I encourage facilitators to ask for resources that support their development to ensure they do not get trapped in offering a cookie-cutter approach every session. Change comes from the people, so my final recommendation is for outdoor facilitators to challenge the way they approach each programme, push for opportunities to engage in professional development, and consider how they can lower the impact their organisation has on the environment. In doing so, facilitators can learn what works best for them and increase their progression, all whilst respecting the taiao (natural world).

Outdoor Centres

Outdoor centres should engage in, and support political action related to environmental sustainability and integrate these into sessions to educate students on what they can do to support. This could be supporting actions such as banning more single-use plastic items, allocating more coastline into marine reserves, enforcing more fishing limits, applying rāhui (a means of restricting access or use of an area or resource) more often to preserve and protect marine life, and implementing better alternative transport options such as cycle and walkways. On a more local level, leading planting schemes to improve waterways and increase flora and fauna, offering outdoor community events, pushing for more recycling and composting facilities, and encouraging better bus routes to regional parks to discourage private vehicle use. Take the kayaking example in Journal Entry eight, if the discussion around the environmental impact on the river is kept, then at the end of the programme there could be allocated time for the group to plant by the riverbank to improve the quality of the water through riparian planting. If the school is not local, then this can be adapted to engaging in a community project in their own area.

As highlighted prior, outdoor centres should offer their staff regular training in effective facilitation methods and lead by example by aligning daily operations with environmental sustainability. Offering comprehensive staff training will contribute to the development of a facilitator and their ability to be consistent not only in staying with the same group but also in ensuring a consistent message is being delivered by all staff across a programme. Facilitation training should also include local knowledge and history of the area to ensure facilitators have a deeper connection and can effectively communicate the importance of looking after environments that students are personally connected with. If outdoor centres role model these sustainable behaviours and invest in their facilitators, this communicates to both staff and clients/students that they value their staff and are committed to protecting the environment as best as they can. To further encourage this, there should be an environmental focus for each programme that incorporates the aims of the school, recognises students' prior knowledge so it can be built upon during their time there, and offers opportunities for self-reflection so students can plan for post-course sustainable behaviour in their local environments. Aligning daily operations with environmental sustainability for outdoor centres can include employing sustainable standards, working to lower the centre's carbon footprint in areas such as power, cleaning products, gear, equipment, and uniform, and adopting a circular pattern where upcycling and fixing before throwing is upheld.

Concluding Thoughts

This dissertation has covered an introduction and background to the research, a comprehensive literature review, an explanation of the chosen methodology, analysis and reflection on the findings, and a discussion summarising the key findings and relevant considerations. This study has shown that with intentional facilitation and an underlying focus, you can achieve better engagement and an openness to learn about environmental sustainability from students. Along with this, the literature has strongly suggested that learning in the natural environment, with repetitive contact and effective facilitation from an outdoor educator, can positively contribute to the development of pro-environmental behaviour. From my experience, OE has failed to engage in deeply meaningful environmental sustainability actions, yet it does have the foundations and potential to instigate significant change. This is where outdoor centres can lead this change and educate both students and their staff about the health of our environment. I would like to close with a final reflection to summarise my journey through this dissertation and leave you with a concluding thought.

> *Journal Entry 10.04.22*
> *Every day the world around me is changing, I used to dread change, even mum moving the couches around at home resulted in a tantrum from me. Now I look for and embrace change, seeing it as a positive especially for the fresh perspective it offers. If there's anything this research journey has taught me, it is how we need to change our processes and behaviour towards the environment if we want any chance of preserving what we have left. After many conversations and analyses of in-depth research, I think environmental sustainability encompasses a much broader concept. I recently came across a post from an*

ethical influencer who expresses "the more I think about it, the more I am utterly convinced that sustainable living isn't about your reusable cup or your plastic-free rubbish bin. Sustainable living describes the moments you connect deeply with others, activities that grow your resilience, slowing down, kindness, re-imagining a life filled with moments that fuel you, being outdoors, escaping the 'rat race'. The waste-free stuff you think of when I say, 'sustainable living' comes next" (Ethically Kate, 2022). I think this encapsulates what should underpin the goal of environmental sustainability, people need to connect with each other, support each other, and slow down the day-to-day hustle. Being waste-free comes from living a slower lifestyle so we don't consume as much, draws upon the strengths of a community, and connects you with like-minded people rather than being dragged into the consumerist society we live in. I think this quote also provides an alternative perspective to Chawla and Cushing's (2007) question of what kinds of actions most effectively address environmental problems. My concluding thoughts? – He tangata, he tangata, he tangata. It is the people, the people, the people.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Ten Foundational Guidelines (Tolich, 2010).

Consent
1. Respect participants' autonomy and the voluntary nature of participation, and document the informed consent processes that are foundational to qualitative inquiry.
2. Practice "process consent," checking at each stage to make sure participants still want to be part of the project.
3. Recognize the conflict of interest or coercive influence when seeking informed consent after writing the manuscript.

Consultation
4. Consult with others, like an IRB.
5. Autoethnographers should not publish anything they would not show the persons mentioned in the text.

Vulnerability
6. Beware of internal confidentiality: the relationship at risk is not with the researcher exposing confidences to outsiders, but confidences exposed among the participants or family members them- selves.
7. Treat any autoethnography as an inked tattoo by anticipating the author's future vulnerability.
8. Photovoice anticipatory ethics claims that no photo is worth harming others. In a similar way, no story should harm others, and if harm is unavoidable, take steps to minimize harm.
9. Those unable to minimize risk to self or others should use a nom de plume (Morse, 2002) as the default.
10. Assume all people mentioned in the text will read it one day.