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Master's Thesis

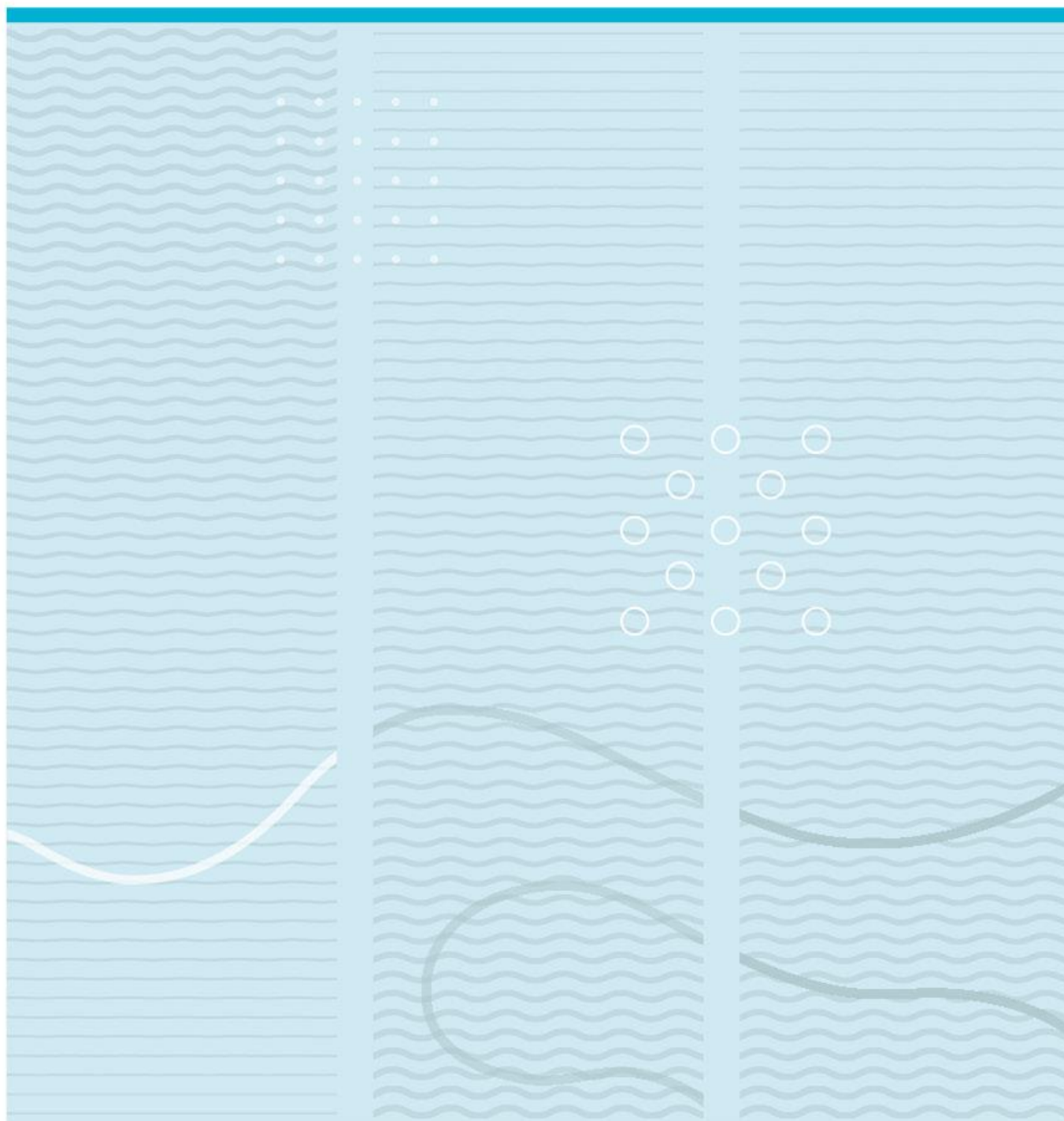
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Teaching Outdoors in Higher Education

A qualitative study of teachers bringing university teaching out-of-doors



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This thesis is worth 30 study points.

Abstract

In many respects, outdoor life is seen as healthy for body and mind, and especially within the teaching of children, education outdoors as a method is gaining ground. Within higher education, outdoor education still plays a marginal role. Outdoor educators must balance teaching skills with the choice of relevant teaching areas very different from the norm of indoor university teaching.

This thesis aims at understanding how four experiential educators create relevant teaching activities in the outdoors, what drives these teachers, and what they look for in nature when looking for a place to teach.

Through four interviews with university teachers and literature on teaching experientially, place-responsiveness and outdoor education, the thesis explores what was said and how literature and experiences from real life matched.

It was found that in education outdoors, the place of teaching plays a significant role in creating authentic teaching, and to some extent, it might promote sustainable behaviour from students. To facilitate the best possible learning outcome, the interviewed educators focused much attention on reflection-in- and -on-action, both when supporting student knowledge transfer and when working towards creating a better practice themselves.

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Foreword

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Another thanks you go to Skovskolen in Denmark, who, with a Facebook post, sent me on this journey of Friluftsliv in the Nordic Countries.

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Martin Drejer Andersen

1 Introduction

Studying a master's degree in friluftsliv has led the author to an interest in combining teaching in higher education and being outdoors, not only in the sense of teaching outdoor activities but also using the outdoors while teaching other subjects such as pedagogy. When working with the education of children teaching outside or *Udeskole* (Bendix, 2005) is utilized to create a more diverse and experiential experience with the subjects taught; along with this, spending time in nature has been proven to promote both physical and mental health (Bosch & Bird, 2018). Although teaching outdoors could promote health and diversify teaching, bringing outdoor teaching activities from math games to adult teaching could pose a challenge. Some might raise the question: *“Are adults dealing with problems so complex they cannot be taught anywhere but in an auditorium and through reading heavy books on academic knowledge?”* This study, therefore, sets out to examine how a small number of teachers in higher education use the outdoors to create relevant education situations through adventure and experience.

All over the world, both stress and cardiovascular diseases are major health issues among children, young people, and adults. Cardiovascular diseases could, in part, be due to the tendency to live a more stationary life than earlier, driving the car to the office or university where we sit down all day working or following classes, before going back home mentally exhausted. Both the stationary life and the stress of work and study can lead to an unhealthy life. In comparison, studies show that spending more time outdoors in nature promotes physical activity and work as a destressing agent (Townsend et al., 2018; van den Berg & Staats, 2018; van den Bosch et al., 2018). Research in the Danish concept of *Udeskole* (Videntjenesten, 2009) shows that children gain better health, experience better possibilities for differentiated teaching and, therefore, better learning opportunities when taught outside. This, along with the benefits to mental health gained through the destressing potentials of the outdoors, leads to the thought that higher education students might also gain good and healthy experiences through outdoor education. Although enjoying the potential gains of nature should be a possibility for all, both students and non-students, teachers in higher education might meet challenges in combining the theoretical knowledge and the move from an indoor classroom to the outdoors.

Among the challenges a teacher could face are how they can create an engaging and relevant teaching environment under circumstances that might be quite different from a classroom setting. By not using a PowerPoint show to list all the most essential concepts of the theme being taught, new demands are put on the teacher to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from what is experienced to how these concepts would belong in other situations.

With indoor teaching, some themes demand certain features in the classroom, like teaching science might be better with a lab. The same might be true when teaching outdoors, and certain features might make one outdoor area more suited for teaching than others. To gain the earlier mentioned benefits, the teacher should maybe aim at finding spaces with unique features to make it a classroom in nature.

1.1.1 Research questions and aims

These thoughts have led to the objective of this research. Therefore, the research question is concerned with how teachers in higher education can create relevant teaching in the outdoors.

- Which qualities should an outdoor area possess if used for quality teaching?
- How do teachers in higher education utilize the outdoors in their teaching?
- How do these teachers link theoretical concepts and what is experienced during outdoor teaching?
- Which skills and abilities do these educators underline as favourable when teaching outdoors?

The researcher hopes to find guiding principles that can support creating the best possible learning outcome during outdoor teaching in higher education by answering these questions.

As sketched out in this introduction, this study believes that being outdoors has several health benefits. Therefore, it is not the aim to prove why a teacher **should** move parts of their teaching outside the traditional classroom for health reasons. Instead, it is the aim to explore **how** teachers move their education outside while maintaining learning outcomes and what inspires them to do so.

2 Literature review

Among the many themes relevant when understanding teaching in the outdoors, this thesis will look at how nature can be described and what the teachers of this study perceive as nature or outdoors when they do their teachings. Another topic of interest is how they create learning situations that support students in bringing their new knowledge from this situation and on to their future life or how they support their students in knowledge transfer (Brown, 2010) through experiential learning.

2.1 What we here define as nature

In this thesis, the emphasis will be on teaching outdoors in nature. How these outdoor areas are defined and what counts as an outdoor enough area can be a tricky question. Lasse Thomas Edlev introduces seven ways to see nature, inspired by Hans Fink: nature as *Untouched*, *Wild*, *Rural*, *Green*, *Physical*, *Earthly* or *Everything* (Edlev, 2008). The span of descriptions ranging from nature as *Untouched*, *Wild*, *Rural* and *Green* will be relevant in this thesis.

Nature as Untouched is described by Edlev as the view that only the uncultivated and never touched or changed by man nature count as “real” nature (Edlev, 2008). In the Nordic countries, large parts of Norway, Sweden and Iceland are untouched or only used for free-range grazing, while Denmark has as low as 2%. The free-range grazing might also be on the verge of not counting as untouched when looking for this type of nature.

Nature as Wild is similar to the untouched nature concept since it still must be uncultivated. However, according to Edlev, the wild nature view also include the re-established nature and other parts that are not controlled, places that could be referred to as wilderness (Edlev, 2008).

Nature as Rural is even more comprehensive. This view of nature describes everything that can be accessed outside, not just forests but also beaches and recreational areas like golf courses, parks, and other places that expose you to the weather and the seasons (Edlev, 2008).

Nature as the Green is the last view that will be described here, and according to Edlev (2008), this is everything organic, so the view ranges from the forest, across the

span of animals, leaves on the dandelion growing on the sidewalk and potted plants in the window sill.

In this thesis, the researcher will let the participants' responses guide how nature is perceived. The researcher himself would, if he was an experiential outdoor teacher, look for a *Rural* piece of nature edging towards *Wild* nature for his teaching, while when working in a kindergarten a few years back, the *Nature as the Green* was his professional view.

2.2 A sense of place or Landfullness

An interesting discussion in the outdoor education realm is what meaning nature brings to the teaching. Is the teacher going to have a place where the teaching is facilitated, and where nature is the background to what is taught, or will the specific place the teaching is performed be of high importance to the teaching? Wattchow and Brown (2015) describe a way of teaching called place-responsive or place-based education. They and others (Leather & Thorsteinsson, 2021; Mannion & Lynch, 2015) see the importance of bringing in the place where teaching is conducted. They argue that teaching in the outdoors should be shifted from risky and context-free pursuits towards a holistic engagement with the place of teaching, adding four guiding principles they feel an outdoor educator should have in mind:

- (i) *The need to be present in and with a place.*
- (ii) *Recognition of the power of place-based stories and narratives.*
- (iii) *The value of apprenticing ourselves to places*
- (iv) *The representation of place experiences. (Brown & Wattchow, 2015, p. 440).*

These four principles, or signposts, as they are described, are helping educators to be mindful of how place and learning are linked.

This thinking of place-responsiveness follows the same line as what is described as *Landfullness* by Molly Baker (2005). To Baker creating a *Sense of Wonder* (Baker, 2005) in students is an important step in gaining new knowledge in and about a place. The sense

of wonder is a reflective step where the students ask and search for answers to the questions that arise in the outdoors. Baker saw a growing trend to do activities in *Any Wood* and not *This Wood*. Like Brown and Wattchow, she aims to challenge outdoor educators to bring in the place of teaching through four steps; *Being deeply aware*, *Interpreting land history*, *Sensing place in the present*, and *Connecting to home* (Baker, 2005). In these steps, the student goes from (1) immersing themselves in the landscape and becoming aware of what is around them to (2) exploring the cultural and natural history of the area. These steps are followed up by (3) realizing how this place is unique and how it makes meaning to the students and their learning and ends with (4) letting the students relate this place to old knowledge and *home*. The last step is where the newfound knowledge is put into context to create a transfer to the world at home.

The two ways of working towards a more responsible and mindful way of practising outdoor activities are similar in goal. They aim at a deeper connection to the place of teaching. The four signposts of Brown and Wattchow (2015) focus on how a teacher should be aware of their actions and thoughts about the place they work in and with. On the other hand, Baker's (2005) four steps are guidelines for meeting a place in activities and a guide on how to do activities that are *landfull* with students.

2.3 Experiential learning

Outdoor education is a growing trend and is often linked to the experiential area of education. An area that has long been a way of teaching, with ties back to Aristotle (Öhman & Sandell, 2015) and ranging from apprenticeship in crafts like carpentry to hands-on approaches to learning to row a canoe while in the canoe on the water or doing geological fieldwork. With those examples teaching through a hands-on approach is almost self-evident; sitting in the canoe teaches you more about its balance and control than a book in a classroom might ever be able to. In other situations, the experiential approach might be utilized to teach you abstract concepts, like being taught about Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow, through experiences outdoors that might create a feeling of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Outdoor education has long drawn on the principles of pragmatism that thinkers like John Dewey have been a part of: *Dewey argued that inquiry is a method in which working hypotheses are generated through anticipatory imagination of consequences, which may be tested in action* (Elkjaer, 2018, p. 69). Pragmatism could be said to be the practice of reflecting

in and on the action. Dewey argued that knowledge should be gained through experiences with the world and that this way of inquiring knowledge was through a what-if mindset (Elkjaer, 2018); *What happens if I do like this? Is that how it works every time?* This thought on learning has given basis to outdoor education. A teaching method that is also based on experiences in action.

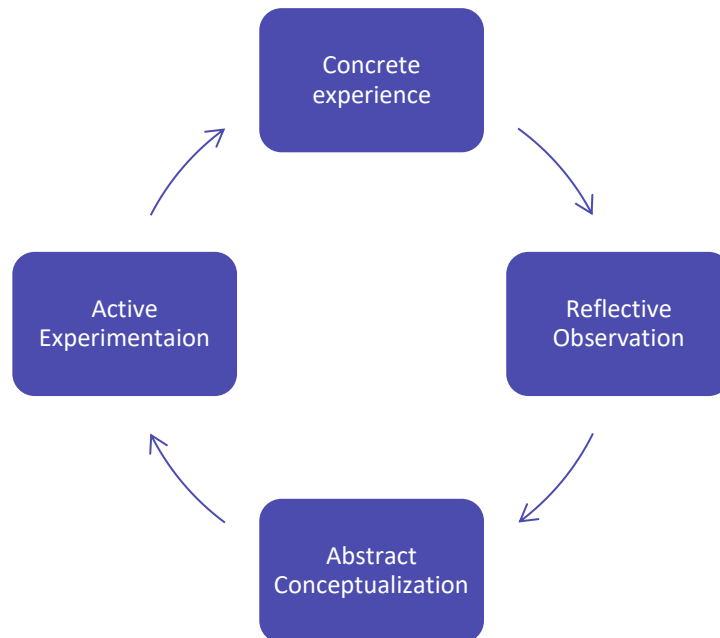


Figure 1: Learning Modes (Kolb et al., 2014)

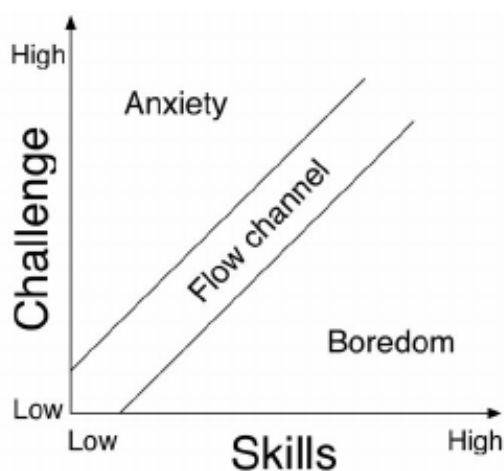
Kolb et al. (2014) describe experiential learning as a process moving through what they call a learning circle with four modes or parts; *Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation*, or Experiencing, Reflecting, Thinking and Acting (Kolb et al., 2014). This learning cycle or process describes how a person at first has an experience; this could be swimming in the ocean and having a taste of the water by accident. This taste leads him to observe that the ocean tastes salty, which prompts the idea that all larger bodies of water taste salt. He is defining a new idea or concept for water in his mind. This is, of course, followed up with further experimentation on if all water is salty, e.g., by visiting a large lake and having a taste. The new experiment on the taste of water leads to a new experience this time that it does not taste salt which leads to further reflection and conceptualization. Like this, it goes on in a circle or a spiral.

2.3.1 Adventurous Learning

Beames and Brown (2016), in *Adventurous Learning – A Pedagogy for a Changing World*, described how experiential or adventurous learning, as they name it, should be practised to create the best basis for knowledge retention. They argue that outdoor or experiential teaching should contain the four concepts: *Authenticity*, *Agency*, *Uncertainty*, and *Mastery* (Beames & Brown, 2016; Brown & Jones, 2021). These concepts describe what outdoor educators should strive to provide their students. Authenticity describes that gaining knowledge about a subject taught should make sense to the student, and the aim is that they can see where this knowledge applies in their future life. Agency describes that the students should feel they can influence the direction of the teaching, so they feel invested in the knowledge gained. To Beames and Brown (2016), uncertainty describes how knowledge is achieved when used in not pre-planned situations. An uncertain situation demands reflection on known knowledge and how to put it into action. In contrast, with predetermined situations, the road to the goal is already paved and therefore easy to walk. The last concept describes how students should gain mastery of a skill or topic through challenges they meet in the teaching. Challenges experienced demand the use of new skills and knowledge from the students, and through the implementation of new skills, students gain mastery (Beames & Brown, 2016).

2.3.2 A state of Flow

An often-used argument in connection to outdoor studies revolves around the *Theory of Flow* (Figure 2), as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Flow describes a situation where one feels that a task challenges enough to demand investment but not so much that it is unconquerable, neither too tough nor too easy for one's abilities. A task that is too tough



would create anxiety in the student, while the opposite will lead to boredom and the student losing interest in the task. In this state of flow, one can lose the feeling of time and gain a feeling of enjoyment. Csikszentmihalyi argues that these optimal experiences create a sense of mastery, a sense that Beames and Brown (2016), as mentioned, argue is an essential part of

Figure 2: Theory of Flow (Pearce, 2005)

adventure or experiential learning. Csikszentmihalyi describes how a task must create immediate feedback, must be possible to complete, fit our abilities and have clear goals to promote the experience of flow. Something that often can apply to outdoor education where the results of one's actions often are clear, e.g., when one feels the movement of a boat at the stroke of the paddle while attempting to move from A to B.

2.4 Creating transfer from experience to new knowledge

One can argue that for education outdoors to have any relevance in higher education; knowledge gained out in the wild must be transferable to other situations in life. Some believe that it would automatically happen but doing an activity might not always produce the expected outcome. For transfer to happen, a person must recognize common elements or patterns in different tasks, reusing knowledge gained in one situation in another situation. A typical example could be that through a challenging activity that forces a group to cooperate, this group learn to solve different tasks in cooperation in other situations (Brown, 2010). Brown sees evidence showing that to transfer knowledge from one situation to another, cues or prompts guiding the reuse of existing knowledge are often very important. Learning or knowledge is gained in one context, and reapplication can be done in similar contexts, meaning different ways of knowing are necessary for different situations. Therefore Brown asks the question *[H]ow do we equip students to recognise resources, social configurations and interactions that might aid or hinder participation in future activities* (Brown, 2010, p. 18). With this question, Brown suggests a shift from the focus on what students can transfer from one situation to another to a focus on how we can support their ability to recognize patterns in situations and thereby easier recognize the possibility of transfer.

Michael Gass (1985) describes three types of transfer that one can experience in the experiential or outdoor education realm (or, in fact, any realm). The first transfer type is described as *specific transfer*; this is when students are taught knowledge that is directly applicable in another situation, e.g., being taught how to light a fire in a wood-fired stove will follow the same principles as lighting a fire at a campground. Likewise, a bowline tied for sailing would work the same way when using the knot while climbing. The second type of transfer he names *non-specific transfer*. This form of transfer

describes transfer where the skill learned is not used in the same manner (opposite the case with fire starting), but instead, it describes transfer of general principles between different situations. Gass describes trust as something that can be built in one activity and brought on to another activity, e.g., a student who finds it challenging to trust others, experiences how fellow classmates are trustworthy through being belayed at a climbing wall and then brings this on to other situations where they now trust other people with secrets. So, specific transfer is gaining a directly transferable skill, and non-specific transfer is gaining a new approach that leaves a lasting change in one's attitude. The last transfer type described by Gass is *metaphoric transfer* (Gass, 1985). This form of transfer has similarities to the non-specific transfer. The metaphoric transfer describes how one can draw on metaphors to create learning for new situations. This could be seen through committing to taking the scary jump from the tallest springboard at the pool, which could translate to committing to quitting a job to start a new education despite the scare of financial insecurity that might follow. By outdoor educators, the metaphor can either be carefully structured around which situation it is supposed to be transferable to, or the educator can allow the activity to "speak for itself" and potentially create spontaneous transfer (Priest & Gass, 1993). This spontaneous transfer can rarely be the main focus of teaching since there will be no aim of the class, and no one knows what the student might gain.

Brown (2010) argues that despite every outdoor educator's dreams of creating experiences that, through both specific and non-specific transfer, translate learning to other situations, the transfer, except for between very similar situations, has yet to be proven. This means rope courses do not give the learning it in cases has been believed to provide, especially the spontaneous, non-specific or metaphoric transfer, according to Brown. Both Brown (2010) and Priest and Gass (1993) argue that metaphoric and non-specific transfer demands strong support from the educator both in presenting and post-processing of the learning scenarios.

To illustrate these ideas of transfer, the researcher has created a flow chart (Figure 3: Transfer Flow Chart) based on Gass(1985) and Brown (2010). The chart gives an overview of the three main types of transfer attainable Metaphoric, Specific, and Non-specific transfer and what process they cover. The metaphoric transfer is in the chart divided into two boxes. Box one describes the transfer processes here named *planned*,

where the teacher or facilitator, through activity description and storytelling, makes clear to the participants how they should translate a situation into their own life. Box 2 describes the *spontaneous* transfer, where participants realize a connection between the activity and their own lives without aid from the teacher.

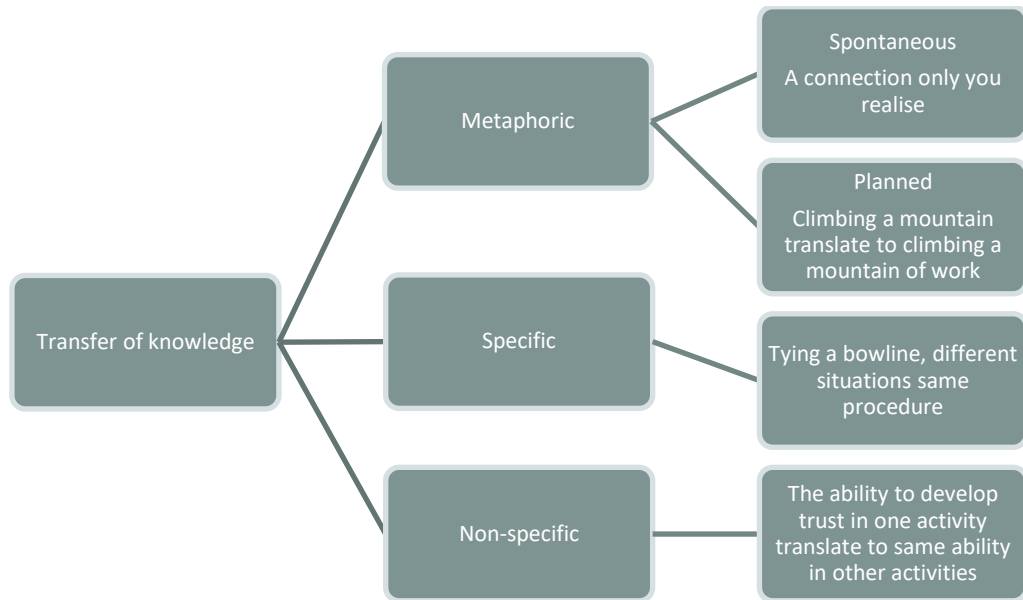


Figure 3: Transfer Flow Chart

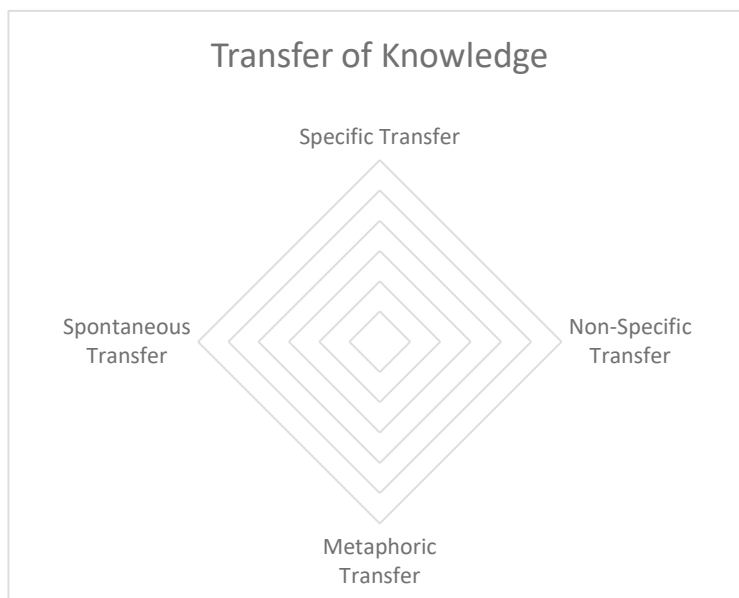


Figure 4: Transfer Measurement Tool

A second model or measurement tool (Figure 4: Transfer Measurement Tool) was also created. This radar chart the facilitator can use to plan which modes of transfer an activity will focus on or have the opportunity to evaluate how the students experienced transfer after an activity. The wider an area the radar

covers, the more knowledge can be adopted and brought on to new situations by the students.

2.5 Skills of an outdoor educator

Blenkinsop et al.(2016) spent five years studying the Canadian Maple Ridge Environmental School Project; this study led to a discovery of what they saw as five essential skills necessary for an outdoor educator. They describe these skills as abilities to create a day of teaching that lived up to its full potential. Despite Maple Ridge being a primary school, these skills are not only relevant to teachers of kids but also translatable to teachers of adults.

The first realization underlined is that teachers in their project came with a background in traditional indoor teaching and therefore brought restrictions and support systems of this classroom with them outside. Blenkinsop et al.(2016) found that outdoor educators needed to be more aware of their surrounding nature, being aware that some places encouraged movement while others instigated quiet activities and reflection. Educators must create new rhythm, shape and structure that fit the outdoors, one that is not based on the indoor power relations and class structure created by the set up of walls and desks indoors.

Secondly, Blenkinsop et al. (2016) found that what they call lateral thinking was also an important skill. Lateral thinking is described as using what is at hand to fill out curriculum goals. With the ability to think laterally, the teacher does not need to bring everything out but can explore what is at hand to teach their students. According to Blenkinsop et al., another part of lateral thinking is the ability to utilize student interest and commitment to engage in the students' curiosity and the questions they ask.

The third skill found to be useful in the Maple Ridge project follows in the footsteps of the second; they named this risky learning. In this case, the ability to do risky learning is not in the form of dangerous activity that often has been associated with outdoor or especially adventure education, but in the form of teachers trusting in spontaneous learning opportunities. By being prepared and knowing the chosen environment for the day's lesson, the teacher must be prepared for some amount of uncertainty and be ready to follow the leads that guide the students' interests and are offered by the environment. This is a crucial skill in practising place-conscious learning, and the teacher must recognise the outdoors as a co-educator (Blenkinsop et al., 2016).

The apparent spontaneity of good teaching and learning outdoors is about neither creating lessons that target particular objectives nor sitting back and waiting for something to happen, but about preparing to build on pedagogically fecund moments as and when they arise. (Blenkinsop et al., 2016, p. 353)

Fourth an ability to plan and prepare for potential risks is seen as very important by Blenkinsop et al. (2016) and something they realise teachers might need training to do as intuitively as an experienced outdoor teacher. This again goes back to being conscious about the places of teaching. By knowing the arenas, a teacher can also take the necessary safety considerations and have a plan ready if an accident strikes.

Last but not least and not exclusive to teachers outdoors, Blenkinsop et al. (2016) underline the importance of reflecting on teaching and on how to constantly create better teaching. The reflection is by them divided into five subthemes: Self-reflection or self-examination, reflection on student-learning, co-reflection with others involved, eco-reflection in the sense of realising if and how the more-than-human was a player and can be so in a more sustainable way, while the fifth theme they describe as a meta-reflection on how the teachings have supported a better cultural change in the community (Blenkinsop et al., 2016).

2.6 Reflecting on and in practice

With an approach to teaching not following the norm, such as the experience-based outdoor teaching, adapting the teaching approach is a constant necessity, as Blenkinsop et al. (2016) described, and teachers must adapt their teaching to the situation, students, and themes of relevance. Therefore, teachers must make new decisions constantly to help their students gain as much as possible from the teaching situations, even when situations suddenly change, students act unexpectedly, or something unplanned happens. Asfeldt and Stonehouse (2021) argue that educators should examine their practice and reflect-for-, -in-, and -on-practice to create the best possible learning opportunities. They argue that just as reflecting on experiences to make connections between theory and knowledge is necessary to the students, educators must reflect in and on their actions to adapt them to new situations or students.

Asfeldt and Stonehouse (2021) introduce a reflection circle model (Figure 5) with the areas of reflection they see as necessary; *reflection-in-action*, *reflection-on-action* and *reflection-for-action*. *Reflection-in-action* is when educators, at any point during practice, evaluate and adapt their approach or thinking while doing. *Reflection-on-action* is the post-activity reflection; how did the recently completed teaching activity work and what might need to be changed. The last reflection they present is *Reflection-for-action* which is part of the planning process and reflection prior to teaching activities. They add the underlying *Knowing-in-action* that describes the knowledge teachers use in everyday teaching without thought. This knowing-in-action is often actions that are difficult to argue why is done because it is not actions that are a thought-through response but tacit knowledge done without much thought (Asfeldt & Stonehouse, 2021).

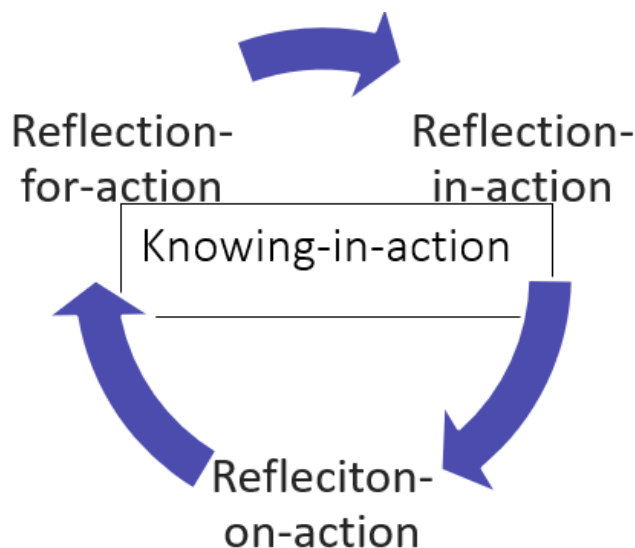


Figure 5: Reflection on, in, and for action (Asfeldt and Stonehouse, 2021)

To be a practitioner reflecting on own actions also calls for a practitioner who is ready to grow, learn and accept that their practice might need to change to accommodate students in the best way possible. Asfeldt and Stonehouse(2021) write out several steps that can support an educator in becoming a reflective practitioner; among these, they underline that a reflective practitioner must be ready to embrace risk or move into new and untested territory since this can be a rich source of learning for a practitioner. They also advocate the importance of working with either a colleague or a mentor that can help challenge your practice.

Asfeldt and Stonehouse (2021) describe four lenses through which teachers can examine their teaching.

- *The lens of Autobiography*. Through this lens, the teacher explores why they have made it to where they are and why they are committed to certain practices. Asfeldt and Stonehouse (2021) see this as a lens that can help a teacher become more intentional in practice by being aware of why they do as they do.
- *The lens of Our Learners' Eye*. This lens utilized is when practice is seen through the students' eyes, e.g., reflecting-in-action on students' responses to situations or reflection-on-action on evaluation questioners administered to students after modules or lectures.
- *The lens of Our Colleagues' Experience*. This lens is described as reflection-on-action with colleagues, either by having them be a critical eye or being a critical eye on their practice.
- And finally, *The lens of Theoretical Literature*. This lens is when reflection-for-action or on-action is done with the support from theoretical literature that can help solve challenges a teacher faces.

By looking at one's action through all four lenses, an educator can create a more thought-through and intentional practice, with potential gain for both students and educators (Asfeldt & Stonehouse, 2021).

3 Methods

3.1 Data collection and processing

To gather data for this exploration of outdoor education, it was decided to contact and interview educators applying outdoor teaching in their work in European universities. Through qualitative semi-structured interviews, the aim was to gain a detailed description of how and why educators in higher education should and could do their teaching outside. The choice to do a qualitative instead of a quantitative study was twofold. First, asking simple questions with predetermined yes/no answers would have created a less filling and descriptive answer to the research questions. Secondly, since doing outdoor education in higher education could be described as a niche, getting a wide array of answers that answered whether educators did outdoor education and a large quantity of answers describing how they did could be difficult. The author believed that the possibility of getting a deeper description was increased with the qualitative approach.

3.1.1 Sampling process

The interviewees have been found through this researcher's former contacts from universities in Denmark and Iceland not involved in the Nordic Friluftsliv Master Program. One of the teachers the author met through a practicum at the University of Iceland in Reykjavik, and one was involved in the researcher's former studies at both a bachelor's in the pedagogical field and a diploma in friluftsliv. The last two respondents were contacted through a mix of snowball sampling (Creswell, 2008) and purposive sampling. Snowball sampling is described as getting new contacts through former contacts. In quantitative surveys, existing contacts would have passed the survey on to contacts they have that fit the criteria for this exploration, and in this case, the first-mentioned contacts were asked for suggestions on other educators that do parts of their teaching outdoors.

The purposive sampling came into play through the criteria the educators had to fulfil to be invited to the study. First, they had to be working in a university, teaching at either BA/BS or MA/MS level. Secondly, the aim was to find educators who did university teaching outdoors, but not educators who only taught hands-on practical skills like paddling a canoe or how to light a campfire, since these skills in the researcher's mind

need to be taught outdoors in the wild. In the researcher's eyes, these skills are a subject that demands a practical approach; dry paddling does not have the same ring to it. Instead, the educators of interest also utilize the outdoors to pass on knowledge about theoretical concepts that other educators might have been teaching their students in an indoor setting.

After gaining access to relevant teachers, the researcher had, as mentioned, a list of four educators working within higher education who also did some of their teachings outdoors. These four teachers were:

- Dr Mark Leather of Plymouth Marjon University, Plymouth, England
- Dr Christopher Loynes of the University of Cumbria, the Ambleside Campus, England
- Jakob Frímánn Thorsteinsson of University of Iceland, School of Education, Reykjavik, Iceland
- Martin Ladefoged Johnsen of VIA University College, Viborg, Denmark

3.1.2 Ethical considerations on gathering and using data

Because this master's project was done in connection with the Universities of South-Eastern Norway, an application to the Norwegian Centre of Research Data was filled out and sent in describing the details of the study and how the collected data was to be treated, both how it was collected, how it was used in the writing of this thesis and that it will be deleted when the project is over by the summer of 2022. A letter of consent¹ was passed on to the participants detailing how their data was used, the purpose of the study and offering them the possibility to withdraw their data at any point. With this consent form, three ethical guidelines for human research described by Steiner Kvale (1996) were met. The letter of consent described the project and gave the participants a possibility to consent to participate on an informed background, *Informed Consent*. Secondly, securing *Confidentiality*, though the participants were asked if they wanted to volunteer their names to be stated in this thesis, they were at the same time given the opportunity to be described in a non-recognizable way instead. The data will exclusively be accessible to the researcher, a supervisor and be offered to the interviewees

¹ See annex 1: NDS – Information letter and consent form

themselves. They were also promised that the interview data would be deleted by the end of the project. The last guideline by Kvale, *Consequences*, should hopefully be only of benefit to the participants. With the thesis goal of creating knowledge about how to facilitate higher education outdoors, reflection during the interviews might help them in their practice as well as articulate knowledge that can be accessible to potential new colleagues.

3.1.3 Conducting the interviews

The participants of these interviews originate from several Northern European countries. Because of that, data gathering was not possible through live face-to-face interviews, both due to time constraints and travel costs. Instead, it was decided to utilize the growing potential of video conference platforms. Microsoft Teams offer great potential for interviewing participants on a distance, and with the ability to both have video and sound, it outweighs the outdated telephone interview method. The screen sharing option on top of video and sound gives a good opportunity to mimic a face-to-face interview with both facial expressions and the possibility to share pictures that can enhance the interviewees' answers (Gray et al., 2020). Grey et al. highlight that participants often feel more comfortable speaking with an interviewer, they can see. On top of this, had emails been used to ask and answer questions, the process could have been long and tedious. In contrast, the online conference tools allow the interviewer to ask elaborating questions and gain instant feedback.

To gain the best possible result from the interviews, participants were encouraged by the researcher to find a space where they were free of disturbances, such as family, co-workers, or students. This could, though, pose a challenge compared to a face-to-face interview since the researcher had no control over the space chosen by the interviewees. This can also influence the privacy of the interview if there can be found no such space.

The software was tested more than once leading up to the interviews to gain proficiency in using the conference tool of choice. This was done to learn the ins and outs of the software, how the recording would work and make sure potential stumbles had been cleared out beforehand. Though the first interview was counted as part of the research, it was also treated as a pilot interview to test how the order of questions would flow, meaning that after this interview, the order and questions were evaluated, and

there was an opportunity to adjust. In one instance, the interviewer had the opportunity to meet the interviewee face-to-face, an opportunity that was seized. In this case, the interview was recorded on a video camera to provide data as close as possible to the data gained through the online conference tools. This one face-to-face interview was conducted in Danish, the native language of both the interviewer and interviewee, while the online interviews were all conducted in English.

3.1.4 Transcription process

Following the interviews, a transcription process began. The interviews with M. Leather, J. F. Thorsteinsson and C. Loynes were transcribed with the support of Microsoft Streams transcription tools. This was followed up with a process of firstly reading the interview transcripts and then reading while listening to the recordings to remove potential errors and add words the transcription application had not recognized. The interview with M. L. Johnsen was transcribed by hand since the transcription program did not support the Danish language. Every interview was created as a verbatim draft that included everything, such as word repetitions and midsentence breaks. The second transcript was mainly focused on parts relevant for the later analysis. This transcript was transformed into a readable text for easier understanding when quoted in the thesis (Kvale, 1996). Following the principles of member checking (Birt et al., 2016) each participant was, if interested, emailed a copy of their transcribed interview, so they had the opportunity to comment on and validate the transcription, also giving them a possibility to add or remove parts to support their view on the topic and clarify what they thought was important. Only one participant wished to receive the transcript, while the others offered to read through parts that needed clarification if such situations occurred.

3.1.5 Analysing the interviews

Following the transcription, the transcribed texts were thematically analysed (Braun et al., 2016) to identify themes emerging across the interview population and themes describing how their teaching is related to the theory of experiential learning and what challenges they meet as outdoor educators. Especially the theme of knowledge transfer between teaching situations and real-life was of interest to this thesis, along with the shared experience among interviewees of being reflective or intuitive practitioners.

3.2 Limitations of the methods

The researcher is aware that some critical questions might be posed to the choice of methods. One potential limitation to the final result is the choice of teachers invited to the interviews. With the limited connections, the researcher chose to mix snowball sampling with contacting former colleagues and contacts he knows utilise the outdoors in their teachings. Since they all teach within the field of pedagogy and learning, this might only supply a picture of a small field. Nevertheless, since the research does not aim to find one final truth but explore methods of teaching outdoors, the researcher believes that an assortment of teaching approaches could still surface in the interviews. By following the snowball sampling method to find interviewees within the field of teaching outdoors, the researcher did not get access to a female teacher with a Nordic background who was not part of the NOFRI program. This of course creates a gender bias in the project.

Another challenge has already been discussed earlier in this thesis, namely the fact that the interviews, for the most part, could not be done in face-to-face settings. To minimize the losses of potential details in the interview, the Microsoft Teams video conference tool was chosen to mimic the face-to-face setting in the best way possible with the limited time and economy allocated to this project.

The researcher realised that the conversation flow is different when done online. If an interviewee was talking, it posed a challenge to ask follow-up questions without really breaking the streak of talking and before a break, the talk could have moved a long way from an interesting word or concept mentioned by the interviewee. In contrast, the interview in the live setting had more similarities to a dialogue.

4 Results

The four interviews were transcribed, and a thematic analysing of their data was conducted. This resulted in several interesting themes emerging. Some themes were expected to be of interest to the researcher and themes that had not been anticipated but emerged from the interviews and were described by several of the interviewees. Prior to the interviews, a set of guiding questions had been developed², guiding questions that, to the researcher, seemed relevant. The topics of this interview guide were focused on questions concerning:

- *Transfer of knowledge*
- *Teaching with a sustainable goal*
- *Characteristics of an outdoor teaching area*
- *Uncertainty*
- *Student agency in teaching.*

These five themes guided the later analysis when the interview records were listened to, and the transcripts were read several times to find opinions either confirming or rejecting them as important themes and how it was part of the outdoor teaching process. During the interviews and later analysing process, four new themes surfaced:

- *The reflective practice of the educator*
- *Responsibility to the place of teaching*
- *Student-teacher relation*
- *The future of teaching outdoors*

These were all themes that were of importance to the interviewed educators.

The interviews were planned with 12 questions and were planned to last between 60 and 90 minutes, and this turned out to be a good estimate, with the shortest interview lasting 50 minutes and the longest 80 minutes.

The following themes are what stood out to the researcher as important.

Characteristic of an outdoor teaching area

A theme turned out to be of interest to all the teachers in some form. During the discussions on characteristics of a great outdoor area for teaching, the discussion did not

² Can be found in Chapter 8.2 Annex 2: Interview Guide

move as strongly towards the type of nature present in an area as the researcher had expected. Instead, the teachers turned the conversation towards their connection to a place, the stories a place told and the connection the students could get to the places through their explorations during lectures. To the educators, it was important that in much of their teaching, the place in nature chosen was not chosen by coincidence but instead because their own relation to the place and stories of the place played a role in the teaching. They all connected to their places from different angles based on their outdoor and friluftsliv-background. So, both meaningful friluftsliv, sense of place, place-based learning and Udeskole came up as similar topics during the interviews. Therefore, the theme of places in teaching will be treated in this thesis in relation to what nature has to offer and what a special place offers in teaching.

Transfer and reflection

Leading up to the four interviews, the question concerning how a teacher in higher education could promote transfer from a teaching situation outdoors to both the students' academic life and future field of work was of much interest to the researcher. Something that also was of great importance to the interviewed teachers.

There are also reflections on what we worked with today and how it would look when they might use it in their practicum later in the study.

(M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

This theme will be of utmost importance to this research, and the questions concerning how interviewed teachers facilitated learning and supported the students in bringing this new knowledge with them into their future life will be treated.

Reflective practice

Not only was the ability to create reflection on topics among the students important to several of the teachers, but they too described how they always were finetuning their teaching. Even though they always went in with a plan, both Leather and Johnsen underlined their openness to follow new leads or pulling in new topics on a field trip where students might have lost interest in the first intended themes or something that had not been anticipated suddenly happened. Leather describes a situation where he

paddled down a river, and a car by accident drove into it, a situation that prompted a conversation and reflection on risk assessment and management. This in situ reflection on their own practice they saw as a significant part of successful teaching. The willingness to learn themselves and move into unknown territory and explore new answers along with their students was also part of both their practice and the practice of Thorsteinsson.

Sustainability

The theme of sustainability and how to work with nature and for a better future was on the mind of the teachers but not as a central theme. Instead, they worked with sustainability through thought-provoking questions during teaching and the thought that students would connect to nature by being in it; this connection would then hopefully create respect and care for nature. Something that is supported by the Danish author Lars Bergholt:

You will not understand things you do not know. You will not show respect for things you do not understand. What you do not respect, you will not care for. (Bergholt, 2011, p. 78).

The interviewed teachers intertwined the theme in their practice and wanted to create a practice where the question on sustainable practice was a natural part,

It [sustainability] is a part of our courses; it is integrated into all our courses rather than separated as a special topic so that it is a non-depending value, an orientation, and we believe that the holistic approach that occurs in the outdoors, which affects the body, its feelings and the mind, is a more integrated response to both nature and culture. (C. Loynes, personal communication, 21 March 2022)

Due to the timeframe and size of this thesis, along with this approach to sustainability in teaching across several of the interviews, the theme will not be treated on its own in this thesis.

Dialogue and informal bonds

Several interviewees talked about their relation to and knowledge about their students; they knew more than just their students' names and felt a stronger bond with the

students they taught outdoors compared to the students they only had in classes indoors. This was something Johnsen attributed to the room he created for informal dialogue:

Because when we sit around the campfire at night on a friluftstrip, you get those talks. Where are you from, where do you live? Wow, have you experienced that in your life? And I think it makes our teaching richer on the social plan because we do it like this. (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

Promoted by the informal way of teaching, the interviewees all experienced what they saw as a more equal relationship with their students. When outdoors, they did not try to distance themselves and spending time walking or eating lunch together gave the opportunity for informal conversations on both study-related themes and the life of students outside of school. Unfortunately, this theme is not treated in depth in this thesis but would need a whole other thesis to dive into.

Dreams and future

The interviews often ended with a talk about what the future might hold or what direction these educators would love teaching in higher education to move. This was a mix of frustrations and dreams about what they saw as a better way to practice teaching. To Johnsen and Thorsteinsson, it was frustrating that universities were *forgetting* the outdoor area on newly built campus areas. Creating either, what they call, boring areas or maybe not even having outdoor areas on campus.

Loynes points at the interesting aspects of university degrees combining culture and outdoors, mentioning both the Nordic Friluftsliv Master and an American degree where students travelled across the states for the duration of the degree.

5 Discussion

5.1 What is friluftsliv, and can it be part of teaching?

As this research focuses on outdoor teaching and the subject of friluftsliv, a reflection on what friluftsliv is and how it relates to teaching outdoors might be relevant. Friluftsliv translates directly to *free-air-life* or life in a non-confined space, so it can be argued that in this sense, it covers any and all things that are done under an open sky or in all different types of nature described by Edlev (2008). In the early days, it was a move away from urbanization (Bentsen et al., 2009). Following this thought, practising friluftsliv and being outdoors are the same. However, in the Nordic friluftsliv school the *Free* (or Nordic *Fri*) can be seen as twofold, both in the meaning of not confined and in the meaning that you must be free to practice it, as in following your free will and doing the activities for the sake of leisure. The original school saw friluftsliv as a counterpart to the working life in farming and hunting outdoors for a living. In contrast, friluftsliv was done for pleasure and not out of necessity. A life in excess gave the opportunity to practice friluftsliv. This was not humans battling for survival *against* nature, but humans coexisting with nature (Bentsen et al., 2009), and to this day, some Nordic frilufts enthusiasts see the battle against nature, in the form of things like adventure races, as something different than friluftsliv. Frilufts-practitioners are aware of the place they travel *with* instead of *through*, something this thesis will dive into later when looking into the interviewed teachers' sense of place in their teaching. Of course, friluftsliv has evolved since the early days of Fridtjof Nansen and Henrik Ibsen, and the idea that friluftsliv can be practised as meaningful experiences with and in nature also in teaching situations is now common. Bentsen et al. (2009) describe friluftsliv as placing within the trifecta (Figure 6) of 1) open-air/frilufts-tourism or recreation

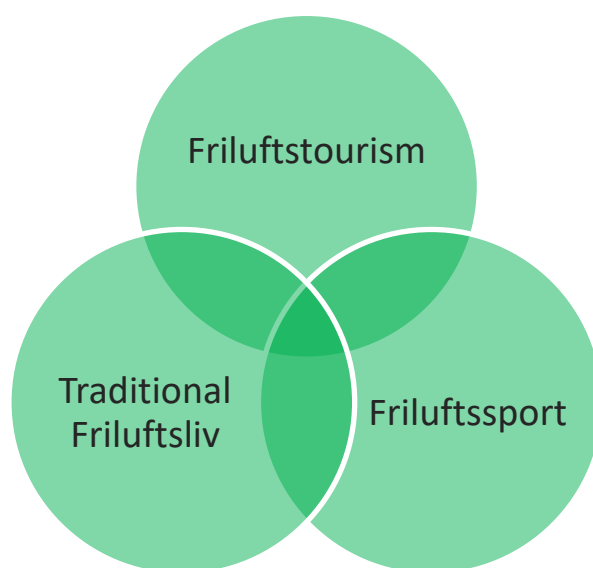


Figure 6: The Friluftsliv Trifecta

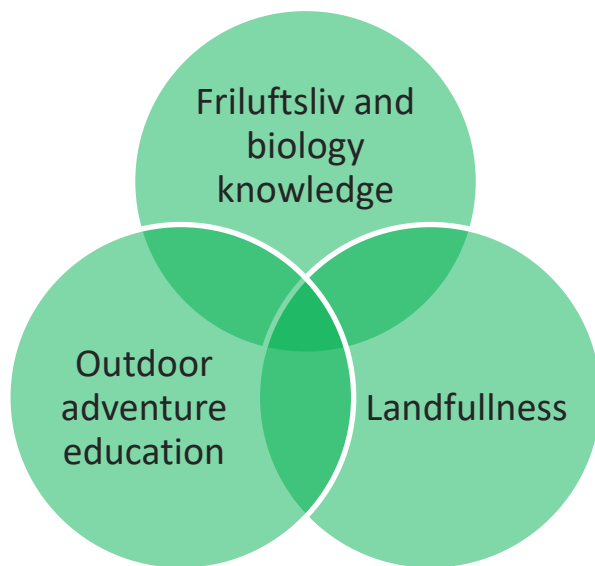


Figure 7: Outdoor Teaching Trifecta

with nature as a background or “fighting” against nature.

In this thesis, the focus is on a friluftsliv concept that can be outdoors in free air. Friluftsliv will here be seen as a helper in achieving new knowledge. However, despite this, the author will use both the words *Outdoors* and *Friluftsliv* to describe the setting of teaching since several of the interviewees are not based in the friluftsliv-school, but their background originates in the similar outdoor education school, causing them to use the words outdoors or *out-of-doors* in the interviews.

The interviewees of this study are all based in the outdoor education realm, meaning they all, to some extent, teach their students how to behave in the nature, how they can work together with nature in their future practice, and in several cases, how to use outdoor activities when working with other people, for example within the pedagogical field, in youth clubs, as guides, or in kindergartens. The double side of teaching outdoors is something Thorsteinsson is attentive to,

So, it [the Icelandic language] is to all of us a method to learn, but at the same time, it is a well-respected discipline of analysing literature [...] and also how the language has developed. [...] It can be both. And I think it is the same with the field that we have been discussing. Whatever we call it Friluftsliv or Outdoor Education. It is both a method to learn other subjects, [...] but it is also a subject in itself, that has many

in nature, 2) open-air/friluftsliv sport or working against nature to succeed, and 3) traditional friluftsliv or identification with nature. This trifecta can also be adapted to a more teaching-related version (Figure 7) 1) teaching about nature (e.g., biology), 2) teaching with nature as a player (Landfullness connection) 3) Outdoor adventure education or teaching in nature

layers. So I think we need to be able to navigate both worlds. (J. F. Thorsteinsson, personal communication, 1 March 2022)

Thorsteinsson underlines that friluftsliv can be a method to pass on knowledge, like when he and students reflect on theory and how it connects with their activities during a lecture. But friluftsliv can also be studied as a subject in its own right when analysing where it originated, how different Nordic countries practice it and how it influences and is influenced by the outdoor life of other countries. All interviewed teachers see that teaching outdoors or through friluftsliv has much more to it than teaching how to paddle a canoe. Johnsen describes it like this

In some way, it is actually very complex if you think about teaching outdoors. Because there is so much unpredictable compared to indoors, both good and bad stuff, mostly good stuff, this is the cool part about working with people in these, you could call them a holistic learning process, it is both head, heart, and feelings and it is both individual, it is social, and it is professional and subject-related. And that is why we like doing it like this because we see a gain or win compared to being more indoors. (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

So doing activity-based teaching outdoors is not only done for the sake of the activity like paddling a canoe but also for everything around, such as group process, learning techniques, and social and personal development, as well as understanding where it originated and how it has been formed.

5.2 Where and why do they teach

The research set out to explore which qualities an outdoor area should possess, according to the four interviewed educators. This is here combined with a wondering on why they decide to do outdoor teaching, although it sometimes might be a more challenging task than doing what could be considered the norm of university teaching; in an indoor classroom.

5.2.1 More complication equals more fun

To an educator that does not practice education through friluftsliv, seeing their colleagues bring students outside can seem like a hassle and be difficult to understand; therefore, it was of great interest to the researcher to understand what drive these teachers to move their teaching out of the safe space of a university classroom and into the nature full of uncertainties. Along with this question, another question arose concerning where an outdoor teaching activity can be organized to gain maximum learning outcome or if there even are special places that are better than others when looking for teaching areas outdoors.

When asked the question, “*What motivates you to bring your teaching outdoors?*” all answers were similar. The consensus was that they just like it better outdoors, so in part, their choice of teaching method is based on their own interest in being outdoors. So, one of the most significant attributes of a teacher utilizing the outdoors might be that they enjoy going outside. Leather's first answer to the question was, “*Why would I teach there [Outdoors]? Because why would I teach indoors?*” and Loynes answers similarly:

I often think you are asking the question the wrong way around. I do not know what would motivate me to take my teaching indoors, so I have always wondered why are we constantly having to defend outdoor teaching? Why is nobody asking the question; Why do we teach indoors? (C. Loynes, personal communication, 21 March 2022)

With these quotes, a common theme among the interviewees of this study stands out; they see the outdoors as the best place and could maybe be seen as extremists within the teaching field, advocating for a teaching method different from the mainstream way of thinking about teaching. Moreover, they might be on to something; why is it necessary to defend a teaching style just because it is uncommon? Plenty of situations show that experiential teaching can be effective and moving it outdoors can be healthy (Bosch & Bird, 2018), so maybe change is needed within the established education methods, i.e. to focus rather on asking the teachers *Why do you not move your teaching outdoors?* Or, as Thorsteinsson suggests letting the first question for both teachers and teacher students be; *Where are you going to teach this?* Instead of having the answer given as, *In*

the auditorium with a PowerPoint, the interviewees feel that the old ways should be challenged:

You know the traditional model of university education; I am going to stand in a lecture and tell 200 people all the stuff that I know. [...] That is not how this works. Students whom we work with do not like that approach. I do not know many who do in any subject in the 21st century. That is a 150- and 200-years old way of doing stuff. (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022)

And in reality, before this *traditional way of thinking about education* was an experiential school of thought by Greek scholars like Aristotle. The experimental school originated from the empiric school advocating that all concepts originate in experiences (Öhman & Sandell, 2015), so learning about concepts should be through experiencing them in practice, for example, during a trip outdoors.

Johnsen also enjoys the teaching of his students outdoors more than teaching them in an auditorium like setting and finds that doing teaching like this is the way to keep his students more interested and engaged in the lecture:

It is because I believe in it [teaching outdoors], really simply put, it is because we believe that this is the way to get the most engaged students. (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

And keeping these students engaged, he also finds it easier outdoors because he has stronger feedback on experiences from his students and can easier get a feeling of them and change direction if they zone out or go on a mental field trip, as he describes it. But it is not only the students who are more engaged outdoors; Thorsteinsson is honest and direct when asked the question; *more complication equals more fun*, he says (J. F. Thorsteinsson, personal communication, 1 March 2022). Thorsteinsson enjoys the complications that the outdoor teaching possesses, though he also underlines that occasionally he wonders:

“Jakob, why are you doing it? It is so much trouble. There is so much uncertainty. Will they show up? Are they prepared? How will their physical state be? So, you have endless questions in your head, and then

you wonder: Why do you not just use PowerPoint like the others? (J. F. Thorsteinsson, personal communication, 1 March 2022)

Following along the line of Thorsteinsson's experience of having more fun outdoors than indoors is Leather, who found the past few years with Covid19 and online teaching *Just more miserable than anything I could ever imagine* (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022). He couples this with the belief that students learn better and more deeply when they have experiences with the theory that are embodied. The embodiment creates richer learning, he argues.

5.2.2 The perfect outdoor classroom

Coupled with the question, "what motivates a teacher to go out?" the researcher was interested in what type of nature a potential new outdoor educator should look for when wishing to start teaching outdoors. Does an excellent outdoor classroom possess any special features one should look for?

Blenkinsop et al.(2016) found that an educator should remember that the indoors and outdoors are not the same, and therefore even though anything that is taught indoors might be possible to teach outdoors as well, the educator must remember that some habits and ways of teaching might not be directly translatable. They point to an example where they saw teachers having the same daily schedule of reading in the morning, both indoors and outdoors. It might be a nice and quiet way to start the day in a classroom, but when moved outdoors, the morning is cold and maybe damp, so a quiet reading session might generate cold students who find it difficult to focus on the reading task. Instead, they argue that the midday sun might offer a better time to read.

Thorsteinsson underlines the same thing about the outdoor classroom. In fact, he answers the question: *What characterizes a great outdoor classroom?*³:

Firstly, I reject the word outdoor classroom. [...] I think if we use this word, some of the classroom teaching methods or pedagogical, educational values, or burdens, it follows us outside. So, we are still with this backpack or burden of what should happen inside the classroom,

³ Annex 2: Interview Guide

and I need to replicate it outside. (J. F. Thorsteinsson, personal communication, 1 March 2022)

This reflection on what not to call the area chosen for teaching outdoors was something Thorsteinsson followed up several times during the interview. What Thorsteinsson advocates are to remember that being outdoors offers different and new opportunities that should be enjoyed instead of bringing what he calls the classroom burden with him outside. A burden he, among other things, describes as walls or confined spaces with limited opportunities and a certain setup. Blackboard in one end with chairs and tables facing the blackboard and teacher. Instead, he wants outdoor educators to be aware of the stimulations and variety an area offers. His terrifying example of bringing the indoor burden outside was a student proud showing him a large tarp:

It is a tarp, four and four meters. [...] And on the outside, it was green, but on the inside, it was white.[...] And she said, well now I just put it on the grass outside, and I say the kids to sit on the green area, and then I can draw on the white part like it is like a blackboard [...] it was very practical, but she just moved the classroom outside, moved the table like that. [...] And you put it on the floor and sit in the green area because she wanted the student to be still. (J. F. Thorsteinsson, personal communication, 1 March 2022)

To him, the tarp was a trap; by using it, the teacher just moved the habits outdoors and recreated a structure that just as well could be created in the confined spaces indoors; these boundaries support the traditional structure of the teacher in a power position passing on knowledge to the students. To him and the other interviewees, it was vital to use what the outdoor area has on offer to enjoy, and that nature offers different spaces to use in different situations, situations that all encourage certain behaviours:

There are areas that lend themselves to the release of energy and others that suggest quietness, some places for reflection and others for wonder. (Blenkinsop et al., 2016, p. 350)

Blenkinsop et al. support the same ideas as Thorsteinsson and the other teachers; they found that the teachers at Maple Ridge were challenged by their indoor teaching

traditions and the attempt to bring these habits outside. Instead, teachers should work with what is offered outside. Johnsen describes how he uses the qualities of a campfire to create a room for reflection or gather the students around when presenting some theory in connection to the lecture of the day:

They should sit and stare into the campfire, they should reflect by the fire, and we will use the fire as a gathering point for many different activities.[...] we talked about bringing theory outside, then I can have a plan; today, we will use at least half an hour around the campfire where I will talk about learning in nature or something. (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

To Johnsen, the campfire creates a quiet place, this is not the place for fast-paced activities, and therefore, it creates a potential place for talks about theoretical concepts or personal reflection. He also explains how he has a place with steep hills for playing running games with his students or a place with great climbing trees when that is on the menu, so he takes advantage of what the environment naturally offers to support his aim in lectures. Just as Blenkinsop et al. (2016) underline that experienced outdoor educators make the most of what nature has on offer.

To find a good place for teaching outdoors, Thorsteinsson introduces something he names a joy assessment that he sees as a measurement outdoor teachers should do along with the risk assessment they might do of an area. What does an area offer of joy and variety, such as water, hideaways, things to climb (e.g., trees and rock faces), and stories to be told⁴? These different joys make one outdoor area more attractive to teach in than another. Johnsen relates to something similar when he describes why the campus ground at VIA UC is not great for outdoor teaching:

We have nothing out here, or yes, we just got a bonfire hut, but if we want something other than this nice lawn with a few wildflowers, we must get away, away to some of the green areas in Viborg. We can easily do a lot of okay things around here, but it would be a shame to

⁴ The idea of stories to be told will be treated further in a later chapter.

call it super wonderful nature around here. (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

He describes the lack of variety in the campus outdoor area as something inhibiting his outdoor teaching, at least at the campus, forcing him to look for other areas when teaching outdoors. The campus ground does not match his view on what good nature is. While the campus ground would match the description of nature as *green* (Edlev, 2008), and though Johnsen does accept it more or less as nature, he might lean more towards the view of nature that Edlev describes as *nature as rural* or *nature as wild* when describing real nature.

Leather follows in the footsteps of Johnsen and points at the variety when looking for an area outdoors for teaching. He describes how if he had to start at a new place would look for trees, textures, and a variety of landscapes so that students can get experiences in different natural environments, e.g., paddling in different river settings will give different experiences with the skill of paddling. Another important factor in the outdoor environment to Leather is aesthetics, or that nature is pleasing to the eye as he words it. He couples it with the question:

If you are quite new to kayaking and you are anxious about falling in. Do you want to do it on a nice beach, or do you want to do it in the centre of a busy shipping port where you might perceive that there is pollution or rubbish? (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022)

Leather might be on to something. Paddling in a stream of rubbish or walking along a highway with more car exhaust fumes and noise than bird song and flower smells, the experience will be very different, and to many, maybe not a nice one. Coupled with research showing that mental health benefits more from nature with various contexts, water, and soft lines opposite to the straight lines in cities (Bosch & Bird, 2018), looking for varied nature with a mix of trees, water, and other facilities should be in the mind when choosing an area for outdoor teaching

Loynes also looks for variety in the landscape but also admits that he does not only teach in pristine nature, despite having a campus located in the Lake District National Park. He also goes to small city parks and *nature* in cities to prepare his students for

different kinds of nature they might encounter after graduation. Because of this, he brings his students on excursions to what he calls rich urban settings since that is lacking on campus ground, unlike the other interviewees who miss nature on campus. He also introduces students to various outdoor teaching areas, preparing them for what they might encounter professionally after their studies (C. Loynes, personal communication, 21 March 2022).

An assessment tool to score a new outdoor area for teaching could look like Figure 8, with a measure of risk or danger on one axis and a measure of joy on the other. Both risk and joy score on a 0-12 scale, with high joy or high risk/danger as 12 and low joy or risk/danger at 0, meaning a potential perfect outdoor teaching area will score low on the danger axis and high on the joy. To Thorsteinsson, things offering joy could be creeks and small boulders to climb; some might suggest the opportunity to light a fire or a place that tells an interesting story also counts as positives in the joy factor. But many of these joyous attributes to a place will also be a risk-creating aspect, such as the potential to fall from the boulder and get hurt or burned by the fire. So, weighing how much joy a place adds compared to the potential risk of something dangerous happening could be necessary.

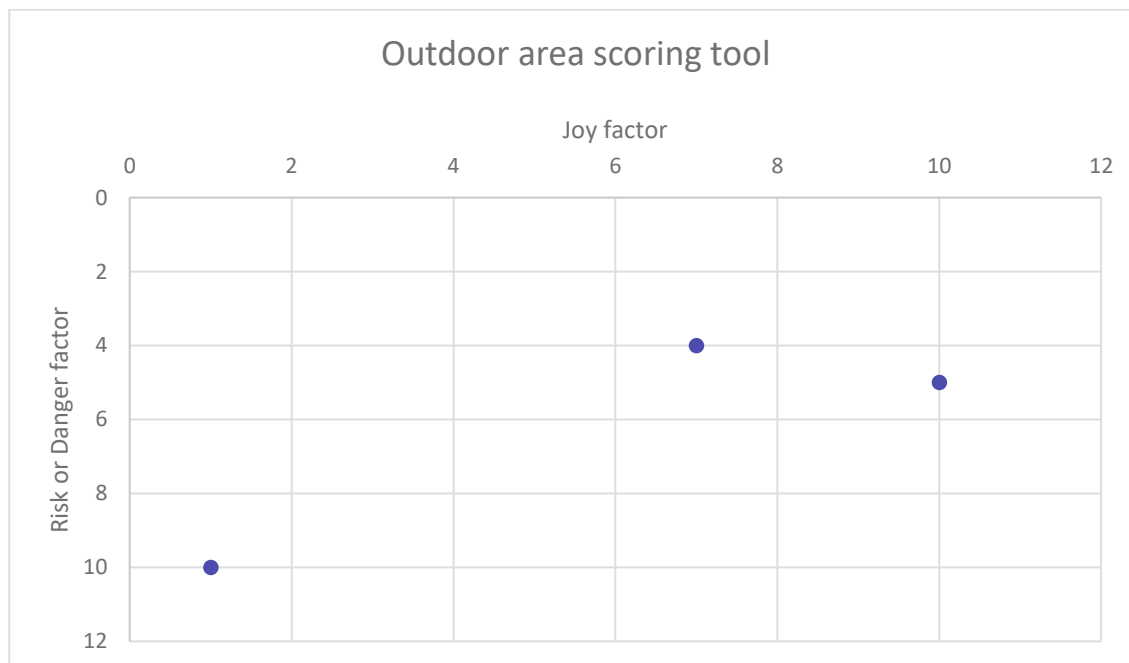


Figure 8: Risk and Joy Scoring Tool

Section conclusion

During the interviews, it was clear to the researcher that the number one reason to bring out students was the teachers' personal drive; they all enjoy spending time with their students in nature more than in a traditional classroom which some see as a remnant of the past. They see the ideas of outdoor and experiential teaching as a new and more modern way of teaching. They do not only base their teaching on personal desire, but all argue in the case of outdoor and experiential teaching that its holistic approach provides the students with a broad scope of experiences and, therefore, a deeper understanding of the concepts they teach.

An aim of this study is to explore what the interviewed outdoor educators look for in an outdoor area to use for teaching. Here the discussions circled the importance of variety in nature and, in some cases, the urban landscape. They went in the direction of the experiences Blenkinsop et al. (2016) had with their study at the Maple Ridge Environmental School Project and stated that to them, it was important to enjoy the possibilities the area of choice had on offer instead of trying to reproduce habits from the indoor classroom.

Thorsteinsson explained how he followed his risk assessments on an area for teaching up with a joy assessment because even though an area needed to be safe or the teacher needs to have measures in state in case of an accident, a flat and very safe newly mowed lawn offers no joy. Therefore, a great outdoor area for teaching must also offer something that can bring joy and variety and maybe play into the teaching.

The interviewees' ideas concerning enjoying and utilizing the variety in nature matched the findings of Blenkinsop et al. (2016) to utilize what the outdoor offered instead of moving the indoor teaching practices outdoors.

5.2.3 Our Place

Merging with the discussions on what was necessary for a great outdoor space for teaching was the theme of those *special places*. Leather and Thorsteinsson describe the difference between a *space* and a *place* as; *spaces, which are unspecific and applicable to a range of locations [...] and places, which are more local, personal, and storied* (Leather & Thorsteinsson, 2021, p. 52). In the newly released *Outdoor Environmental Education In Higher Education* (G. V. Thomas et al., 2021), they advocate that educators teaching in

outdoor areas must bring in both natural and cultural history and be aware of *this* nature instead of moving through *any* nature when teaching. These notions are supported by Wattchow (2021), Baker (2005), and Mikaelis (2018).

Being aware of the surrounding areas chosen for the teaching is named either place responsive, place-based or landfull teaching, and this approach was in some way applied by all four interviewees. To practice this in their teaching, they did not only work with practical skills like lighting a fire and theoretical concepts like the theory of flow but also had the outdoor area of choice impact the teaching. This way of teaching is a critical response to the adventure education tradition that, especially in English speaking countries, has been a large part of education outdoors and that prioritized risk, speed, and challenge, instead of being and immersing in place. As with the Friluftsliv Trifecta (Figure 6) mentioned earlier, the adventure education was based on a colonist worldview, where the aim is to conquer nature or practice action against it:

Colonizers have constructed nature as nothing more than a resource for human use and wildness as a challenge for the rational mind to conquer. [...] In OEE [Outdoor Environmental Education] the most damaging of these [taken-for-granted actions] occurs when we treat the outdoors as little more than an arena in which to test ourselves or an object to be studied. If the work that OEE educators do fails to be inspired by place and to develop connections between people and places, it likely endangers the future possibilities of local ecologies and communities. (Wattchow, 2021, p. 104)

The place-responsive practitioners are moving away from this colonist approach and applying an approach more in tune with the original Friluftsliv thoughts where one would travel in and with an area and not through or against it.

Earlier it was mentioned that the teachers chose places for teaching both based on variety and joy but also based on the stories a place could tell, and these stories become a part of the teaching giving the students a relation to the place and making it theirs by later adding their own story. This might not be the central theme of an educational visit to an area, but it enriches the experience. Leather explains how he wonders along with the students about place names; *Are there stories to tell? What are the stories of this*

particular river estuary? Why is it called the Plim? Why is it called the Tamar? (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022). This interest is what Baker (2005) names a *Sense of Wonder*. While wondering about the place the students learn, they move through Baker's four stages of landfull experiences: *Being deeply aware, interpreting land history, sensing place, and connecting to home*. Students might think *this river is named similarly to the one at home; why?* And through this wondering and experiences, they get to know and maybe respect a place, Bergholt (2011) argues, and this could lead to a more sustainable approach by the students.

To practice this place-based or landfull form of teaching, the educators should, in some sense, have a connection to the land themselves because to make a landfull experience that is still relevant to the teaching goals, you cannot simply go out and think *wonder what will happen today*. Instead, the educators will have certain areas for certain goals in the teaching, and then within this frame, there can be room for wonder and immersion in the area. Wattchow (2021) argues that outdoor educators must apprentice themselves to places; they must keep observing and learning about an already known place. Maybe new stories will surface in an otherwise well-known area. Johnsen explains an experience he had and brings with him to new students:

We were setting up rope courses in this forest we usually do our risky play activities, and an older man walked by and commented that we must take care of his trees. This startles my colleague a bit, but he follows it with a story about how he had grown up on the farm close by and played in the forest when he was a kid. But it was also followed up with a story on why the area is named as it is. A story that also has us change the pronunciation of the place name we thought we knew. (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

This experience in a place that Johnsen and his colleague thought they knew made the future experiences much richer and encouraged both them and students to be interested in the stories of local stakeholders that might add new and interesting stories to places you already thought you knew. This is what Baker encourage you to do through her step: *interpreting land history* (Baker, 2005).

Being a local in the places of teaching and following the knowledge gained through spending time in and engaging with the nature of a particular place also gives the educators an advantage in their teaching. With the knowledge about a place for teaching, they are one step ahead and do not have to rely on the things they brought in their backpack but can also use things they know are placed around them:

Trappers and hunters could be deeply observant and come to know the land in extraordinary detail. Their survival depended on it. By contrast, recreational canoeists, packing in their shelter and supplies, developed the shallowest perception of the region as a place. (Wattchow, 2021, p. 106)

In a way, like the trappers described by Wattchow, the educators depend on knowing their place of teaching or at least it will make their teaching much richer. Indoors the teacher should know how to turn on the PowerPoint that supports their teaching, and outdoors they should also know where the different support systems are.

So, for example, on the River Dart, I know there is a stretch of the tidal estuary where we are likely to see common seal. So, a day out seeing indigenous mammals to the UK, Northern Europe, and they are inquisitive, and they will come over and see you. You know I will go there because I know that it can be a fantastic experience. (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022)

By getting to know different nature areas, you might also know what will happen in these areas beforehand. So, I try to choose areas that can answer what questions we will have today. (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

Both argue that by knowing the areas they use, they also know what learning experiences this might bring to their students, so when questions arise, they can bring their places into play in answering these questions or maybe bring an extra theme into play in case a planned lesson did not fill out the day, because they know what else is relevant in the area.

Following the ideas of Wattchow and Brown(2015), Johnsen plans some of his teachings around a task he names *Our Place*, where students must teach their fellow students activities or knowledge revolving around a particular local place. Meaning the students can pass on any knowledge or do any activity, they find relevant if they connect it to the place and, through this, make it *Their Place*. To do this, the students spend time in the place and engage with local people, history, and nature or as Brown and Wattchow list it; they are present in and with place, they tell place-based stories through their activities, and they apprentice themselves to their area to learn as much as possible before deciding what they wish to teach to their fellow students, and last but not least through their planned activity session they create a representation of their place experience. Johnsen explains that despite knowing the area and having been part of this teaching activity in the same area for seven years, new stories and connections still emerge and enrich the place.

Thorsteinsson explains how he connects with local stakeholders in his teaching to give the students a broad experience with local life and different experiences to reflect upon. This too is utilized by Johnsen:

We ended up at a shooting range and shot at clay pigeons with a group of students. And you might think, why bring pedagogues to a shooting range? But it ended with a talk on hunting in Denmark, animal welfare and hunting ethics. [...] They got an observation task, and afterwards had to put some words and pedagogical concepts on what pedagogic these instructors had on the shooting range and if there was a difference when standing there and when we afterwards sat in the café and talked about the experience and the life of these instructors. (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

Johnsen brought his students to local stakeholders and had them engage with interest in their stories, and afterwards had the student solve a relevant task, though the experience at first might have been a bit untraditional compared to the degree he taught. This experience can provide the students with experiences with concepts in real life.

Leather describes how place-based teaching to him is a way of getting students to care, not only about the teaching because it is authentic, but also care for the environment:

If we can get people to identify with the forest, with the town that they live in, its history, its present, and how that future might be, they might start to care. And if you start to care in a favourable light, in a positive way, then I believe we may well have students who are more likely to take pro-environmental behaviours.

(M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022)

Section conclusion

So why should an educator apprentice themselves to the outdoor areas chosen for teaching? What does this place-based form of teaching offer? First and foremost, Baker argues that:

Striving to actively engage students with places is a sure step towards creating a collective connection to landscapes and a more sustainable future. (Baker, 2005, p. 276)

A more sustainable future can be hard to argue against. Following this, the place-based teaching gives students local and broad-ranged experiences with their concepts and aims to promote a connection to the place, a connection that could lead to respect and willingness to protect this might carry over to an interest in the stories of other areas. Using the stories of a place to guide and inform teaching sessions can engage students in authentic learning situations, putting concepts into a context instead of having one of the lectures happening in *that* place instead of *some* space.

5.3 The link between theory and experiences

To any educator, the goal must be for the students to bring something away from the lectures, no matter if the lecture is an auditorium class on mathematical equations or an experiential teaching activity in the woods teaching group processes. The following subchapters will concentrate on the question: *How do these teachers link theoretical concepts and what is experienced during outdoor teaching?*

5.3.1 Creating transfer of knowledge

The U.S. Department of Justice states that despite having some plausible theoretical or correlational basis, wilderness programs without follow-up [transfer] into clients' home communities "should be rejected on the basis of their repeated failure to demonstrate effectiveness in reducing delinquency after having been tried and evaluated"(Gass, 1985, p. 18)

Although this quote is aimed at wilderness projects and canoe courses outside of teaching institutions, the importance of transferring knowledge from the experiences outdoors and on to the life of clients, or in this case students, are just as important if not more within the higher education realm. If a teacher does activities outdoors just for the sake of being outdoors and the students following the lectures are not presented with new or supported in expanding existing knowledge, the teacher has failed and could just as well have brought students on a nice picnic in the sun.

An important part of this thesis was to explore how teachers in higher education can promote transfer from teaching situations outdoors to other situations in life. To facilitate this learning, a teacher must create as many support systems as possible, promoting a realization within the students of how they can apply what is experienced to their future life.

So how do you build a system around students that is scaffolding them, that is giving them a little bit of support, but they have to do it themselves. It is like building a house, and you need to build some kind of a support network while you are building the house. When you have built it, you can take it down, and it lives on its own. (J. F. Thorsteinsson, personal communication, 1 March 2022)

Thorsteinsson is aware that his most important role is to support the students to gain the knowledge through the experiences, and then he can remove the scaffolding afterwards and let the students move on with this knowledge he presented. Thorsteinsson relates this to the work of Vygotsky and his theory of how students learn through the support of

a more informed individual. Both with the teacher's help and through group work put up to solve tasks.

5.3.2 The three types of transfer

As presented earlier, knowledge can be acquired through the specific, non-specific, and metaphorical transfer processes (Gass, 1985). Gass introduced several steps the teacher can take to promote transfer. Steps that the interviewed teachers utilize in their work.

Design conditions for transfer before the course activity actually begin. (Gass, 1985, p. 22) Gass suggests that both the teacher and the student must be aware of what the teaching is supposed to lead to. In teaching, following a curriculum guides both students and educators in what is expected to be the outcome. To follow up on the curriculum and lecture plan, having the students be aware of what is on the plan is important too. Leather explains how his first question in every lecture is: *Why are we here?* (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022). A question he asks to make the students rethink what they are supposed to leave with after the day. He describes how the students at the beginning of a semester might answer with *"To have fun"* or *"To learn"* but later realize that the question is what the theme of the day is and how does it fit in with the progression of themes they have worked on during the previous lectures (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022). With the very first question of the day, Leather aims to think about the knowledge of the day and, from the beginning, be aware of what they are looking for in today's experiences.

Create elements in the student's learning environment similar to those elements likely to be found in future learning environments (Gass, 1985, p. 22). By creating a learning environment that replicates what the students might encounter in the future, the teacher promotes authenticity in learning. A theme that not only Gass pinpoints as important but also is one of the four main themes of *Adventurous Learning* as described by Beames and Brown (2016). When educating outdoor educators, Loynes (personal communication, 21 March 2022) find a challenge in the fact that many educators utilizing the outdoors, including himself, rather want to spend time in nature when facilitating teaching, while the truth is that some of the students he work with might not end up in a situation where pristine nature is accessible for their practice. Therefore, to create an authentic learning environment, he also brings his students to urban outdoor areas for

classes to have them experience and create learning situations in that environment. One of the often-underlined benefits of teaching outdoors compared to indoors is the variety in learning environments. Going outside and encountering different environments gives students an assortment of experiences with what is taught and, therefore, a wider range of experiences with the concepts taught. It is like getting told several examples of how the theory of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) works in a classroom, but outside a student will have a selection of experiences with the theory on firsthand. With that broader range of experiences, the possibility of a situation being similar to future situations is more prevalent. To aid the students in transferring a theory or experience from a lesson to other situations, Johnsen (personal communication, 25 February 2022) encourages his students to imagine how it would work in other situations in their life. His students have been through a study-related practicum before joining his course so relating their teaching experiences to what they experienced when out there or to part-time jobs they work in their spare time is an important tool in making lessons authentic. By creating these authentic learning situations in environments similar to those students might encounter in the future, the educators promote specific transfer.

Provide the students with opportunities to practice the transfer of learning while still in the program. (Gass, 1985, p. 22) To internalize new knowledge, encountering it in a variety of situations is a strong tool, and when working with theoretical concepts and transferring them from one situation to another having to use them in different situations aids the adoption of a concept, just as Johnsen made the students reflect on former practicum experiences. Both Loynes and Thorsteinsson have their students create small lessons where they teach a concept to fellow students while relating it to experiences the class has had together in the outdoors or on a journey.

Provide the means for students to internalize their own learning(Gass, 1985, p. 22). This idea of Gass could be one of the most important ways to gain knowledge in the outdoors. Having the students reflect on how new knowledge fits in with existing knowledge is crucial in easing the transfer from outdoor teaching to other situations in the future. All interviewed educators utilize reflection on experiences and practice to aid the students in internalizing their knowledge.

You know there will often be those informal ones to ones, but there will also be out in the field, “Everyone gather around you know what is it we

are trying to achieve today? What is it you want to do today? Think about these three things....” And then again during the day, e.g. at lunchtime, same again middle of the afternoon, we will be reviewing the whole day's learning. (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022)

Leather utilizes reflection on learning and experiences several times through the day to let the students put the theory and learning goals of the day into perspective and describes how he often creates situations where students can sit quietly with their reflective diary or where reflective thoughts can be shared.

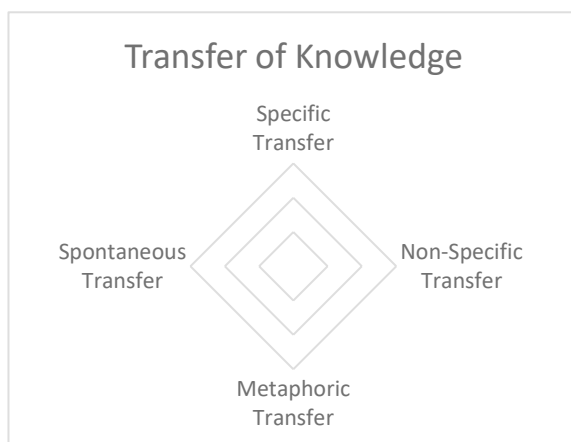
When possible, place more responsibility for learning in the program with the student(Gass, 1985, p. 23). Giving the students agency in their learning is a great way to keep them invested. Johnsen finds it easier and more important to involve students in what is happening when outside, letting them have a say in which way today's lecture moves. If the students are not asking questions on the theme planned but instead about something else, he and the other interviewees often follow their students and let their interests guide the lecture. Another well-used mode of creating student agency is letting students plan lectures or activities for their classmates. This way, they must invest themselves in the concepts to be able to pass on relevant knowledge and activities to their fellow students or to get the plan approved by the educators. Loynes describe how when he brings the students on a three-week journey to Spain; they have an important saying in forming their learning experience:

[O]n the field trip itself, they have to design and carry out their own research projects. It might be a social science or environmental science research project. And they also have to plan and undertake a journey of their own in that very different mountain landscape. With our support, of course, we are within advisory capacity and checking what they are planning is realistic and safe. (C. Loynes, personal communication, 21 March 2022)

Giving the students responsibility for their own learning within a frame demands reflection on and the use of their existing knowledge to solve the task they get; this

agency will then, according to Gass, promote the internalization of the knowledge and concepts they work with to solve the task.

In the literature section, a model for measuring modes of transfer (Figure 4: Transfer Measurement Tool) was presented. If this model is related to the four



interviewees' work, they seldom related to the spontaneous mode of transfer; this mode is something they cannot plan for. In the form of what creates this type of transfer, it is, as described, often a metaphoric transfer that relates to personal development and not academic development. Several of the interviewees

do reflect with the students and discuss how they felt the impact of an experience and what stood out to them as relevant and relatable to their own life and future practice, but they describe these discussions and reflections as a search for concepts and theories that describe the experiences. On the other hand, metaphoric but planned transfer is, in some instances, used by the educators. Loynes uses storytelling in his teaching:

Storytelling is the way in which fictional stories, myths, and fairy tales, for example, can be understood as stories of transformation [...] What going into the outdoors will be in helping young people make their transformations from child to youth or youth to adult? I think there are lots of parallels in the fictional stories with the tasks, the experiences that we design for young people in the outdoors. So, I will use the story as a metaphor for a particular type of transformation. [...]. And then, I will work with the students to deconstruct the story. I also asked them, "where in the story did you feel particularly personally connected" [...]. And then we have got the theory out of the story; now, let us apply that theory to the outdoors and to climbing a mountain or designing a camp for a 12-year-old. So how would that then inform the way you might structure that experience over a period of time? (C. Loynes, personal communication, 21 March 2022)

Loynes use these stories to help his students through metaphoric transfer (Gass, 1985) to create a basis for reflection about how a journey in the outdoors might support a growth either in themselves or in their future clients. With the students, he then might find powerful experiences in nature that led them to a certain point in life and maybe something that can guide the students in realizing that their work might have the potential to be a powerful tool for change. Both he and Leather describe how many of their students are a young audience moving through personal development, while both Thorsteinsson and Johnsen describe their students as a mixed crowd where they are at many different points in life.

In university teaching outdoors, transferring knowledge from one situation to another will revolve around specific transfer. All the interviewees have a large portion of their teaching involving practical skills such as canoeing or setting up camp. When working with these skills, they relate their reactions, group processes or pedagogical concepts to what happens. Their work with practical skills is twofold part learning the skills so they later can bring people outdoors in their professional life and part as a medium to facilitate the theoretical concepts that are relevant to them. Leather describes these outdoor experiences as *hooks* they then can hang their theories on in a metaphoric sense. So, in the case of practical skills, the goal of the students is to be able to transfer the specific ability to, e.g., lighting a fire in nice weather on a study trip to in the field with clients trying to light a fire in the rain. On the other hand, the university teachers also aim to teach their students the ability to plan and facilitate activities through the practice of planning and facilitating, and this once again is a directly transferable skill. The last task of the teachers is to give students the ability to recognize theoretical concepts in action, concepts like the theory of flow or proximal development zone. These concepts might not look exactly similar in each situation and, therefore, must be recognized and practised through non-specific transfer.

5.3.3 Reflection on experiences

As introduced in the former chapter on transfer, reflection plays an important role in the teaching done by the four educators interviewed. They base their teaching on experiences and support students in finding the hooks for theories in these experiences.

None of the teachers had only one way to facilitate learning experiences. For some teaching activities, they had students read literature beforehand that described a new concept relevant to their teaching; at other times, a theoretical lecture was held prior to a trip outdoors or a theory dollop, as Leather (personal communication, 22 February 2022) names it, introducing models or concepts of interest to the teaching. Other times, a bodily experience was the beginning of the work with a new concept. All these different entry points to a learning process could be described as a concrete experience for the student, an experience they can reflect upon and conceptualize before bringing on to new experiments and experiences (Kolb et al., 2014). A concept students read about or get explained during a theory dollop gives them a little understanding. This understanding helps build their conceptualization and is followed by experiences in the *real world*, leading to new data points to inform their understanding and the following adaptation of their concept. Loynes describes how indoor and outdoor lectures are interwoven in a mix that creates knowledge:

Those two [indoors and outdoors] are integrated, so I might teach group dynamics and leadership theory, and I might do that based on practical experiences that we have had together outdoors. Or we might go outdoors afterwards to try and apply the theories into our practice as a way to help us to reflect and develop knowledge and skills. (C. Loynes, personal communication, 21 March 2022)

A mixture of gathering experiences with a theory based on readings, classroom lectures and outdoor activities informs the student-reflection and guides them in moving on to the next point in the learning circle, a point Kolb et al. (2014) describe as conceptualization. Reflecting on experience and readings and connecting it with concepts or putting the flesh on the bones of theories, as Loynes describes it, is an integral part of these outdoor educators' practice, and they use reflection to help students realize what happened and what can help them work with the experience. Loynes describes some of the questions he guides his students' reflection with:

What theory helps you to understand what took place? What helps you to cope? What actually did you not cope with? What went wrong? How can you understand that by using the theories that you know and in a

way that might help you to think about doing it differently another time? (C. Loynes, personal communication, 21 March 2022)

Through guiding questions like these, the students can move from having a standalone experience to reflecting on what happened and creating new connections to the concepts they know. This transfer of underlying principles or concepts is what Gass (1985) connects with non-specific transfer, not the direct or specific transfer of a skill but the transferring of the ideas of a theory from former situations to this new experience.

Both Leather and Thorsteinsson describe how they utilize a student journal as a reflective tool:

They have kept a reflective diary. [...] That I provide kind of a very simplistic structure for them to help them reflect on their experiences that they fill in on all of their fieldwork. So, I asked them to consider what they notice about themselves, what they notice about others in the group, including the staff and the tutors, and what they notice about the more than human world. (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022)

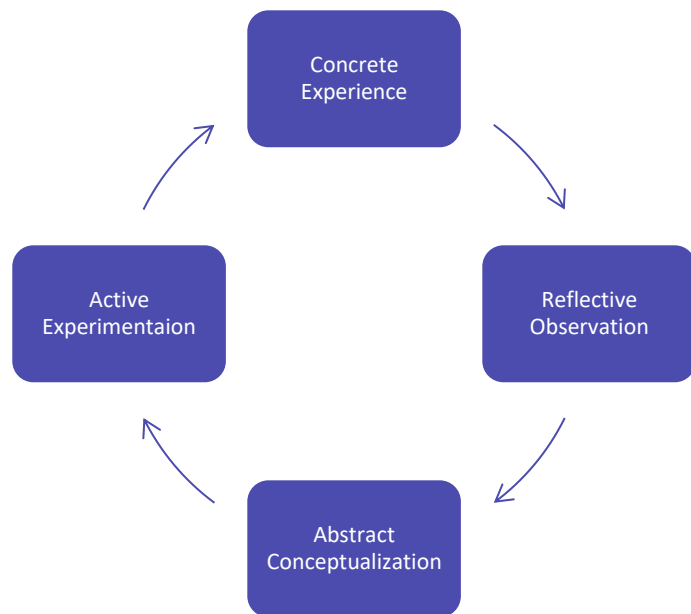
To Leather, this journal is a tool the students can use in their tasks for the course assessments, a tool that he sometimes suggests the students find and use after situations that could provoke new thoughts and maybe need to be reflected on now and not saved for later and forgotten. Turning back to the steps an outdoor educator can take to promote transfer(Gass, 1985), the journal becomes a tool to internalize learning through in the journal instance, writing down thoughts or through verbalization in spoken reflections because the thoughts are not just running through the mind and then forgotten but put into words or paper.

Johnsen explains how he also has an activity aim in some of his teaching activities, so he might make a campfire with students and ask them how this campfire making can create activities in their different target groups, and this way through abstract conceptualization(Kolb et al., 2014) and reflection he helps the students to see the specific transfer of the skill of making campfire with adults to doing it with kids or people with disabilities.

There are also reflections on what we worked with today and how it would look when they might use it in their practicum later in the study. How could they imagine working with this? We create some visualization processes: "Could you see yourself doing this activity with another target group?" (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

Following this reflection on specific transfer, the students have new activities to bring to the next practicum or jobs and can do the active experimentation Kolb et al. (2014) introduce.

Asking the questions that can guide conceptualization is what these educators use to support the students in acquiring their knowledge. Thorsteinsson points to Vygotsky and his proximal development and scaffolding concepts when he explains how he wishes to support the students' learning experiences.



And there, they, through their own experience, understand the elements of this theory or this model. [...] In relation to their own experience of it. I am trying to build scaffolds. [...] So, how do you build a system around students or young people that is scaffolding them. That is giving them a little bit of support, but they have to do it [create connections between theory and experience] themselves. It is like building a house, and you need to build some kind of a support network while you are building a house. When you have built it, you can take it down, and it lives on its own. (J. F. Thorsteinsson, personal communication, 1 March 2022)

He points in the direction that his job is to guide the students to realise their learning so they can keep on building their learning later. He might ask the questions, but the students must reflect on experiences and understand how a theory matches their experience. Kolb et al. (2014) also name this reflection session a debriefing and describe how still stronger importance has been put on this part of the learning process.

In simulation and gaming work, debriefing has become increasingly important to enhance learning for game participants. Crookall emphasizes that “learning comes from the debriefing, not from the game. Debriefing is the processing of the game experience to turn it into learning”. Since Donald Thatcher’s foundational article on debriefing using the experiential learning cycle, gaming educators have structured debriefing to help learners reflect on their experiences and observations in the game, share them with others, crystallize conclusions, and generalize implications for other settings. (Kolb et al., 2014, p. 205)

Through the debriefing and reflection process after an experience, the students should find conclusions and how these conclusions might match other settings or as discussed in a former chapter, create transfer to other situations. This is done supported by the scaffolds of the teacher and often supported by models these educators present through their theory dollops. To help their students visualize and move it into their *backpack*, you might say, the educators apply different methods:

I might take a whiteboard out and have some A3 papers laminated, and it can be with some models about nature or sustainability, [...], then I have some support systems. (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

So, in the second year, I might have a, let us say, a dozen theoretical models that I want students to encounter. And I will set up a series of activities and use each one to teach that particular model [...]. I use models that are very easy to remember. They are the ones that flash into my mind. [...] It is to give them that sort of memorized library of little models to help them. Then to have those at hand whenever they

encounter a situation. (C. Loynes, personal communication, 21 March 2022)

Johnsen and Loynes introduce models in easily digestible ways, either models that have relevance to the teaching of the day or models that can relate to future teaching. Once again, the interviewed educators help the students conceptualize the models through experiences and experimentation in the *real world*. (Kolb et al., 2014)

Section summary

When creating transfer between the educational outdoor activities and the future life and work of the students, these four educators apply three methods to guide the transfer and knowledge gain: Authenticity, Agency, and Reflection.

As presented by Kolb et al. (2014) and the four educators, to connect the dots of experience and theoretical concepts, you go through a process of experiencing and reflecting and meaning-making. These educators explained how spending time on reflection is part of their teaching. Questions like: “*what did you experience? How did that affect you?*” And “*how do you see this in other situations, former or future?*” was used to help the students find connections between the literature and concepts they had met and the experiences they had in their teaching activities, to create what Johnsen (personal communication, 25 February 2022) names *Knowledge in real life*.

Both Gass (1985) and Beames and Brown (2016) name authenticity and agency as important tools to get engaged students who can bring home new knowledge, the four interviewees also bring this up as part of their teaching activities. The students are presented with tasks that could mimic experiences they might meet in their future profession or that are relevant to their life (authenticity) and are given the opportunity to help create learning experiences for themselves and their fellow students (agency).

5.4 Skills of the teacher

A great teacher has tools to create the best learning potential, and an aim of this thesis has been to understand what the interviewed educators see as the skills they use and what they see support them in creating a great learning environment that both make

them better and support the students in familiarizing themselves with the theoretical concepts.

5.4.1 A reflective practice

Just as student reflection is important, the teachers also follow the reflective cycle constantly. Asfeldt and Stonehouse (2021) introduced how a teacher could become a reflective practitioner creating intentional and better learning through a constant process of reflecting. One step to becoming a reflective practitioner is to put yourself on the line and take risks in the teaching practice, and this could come into practice by introducing new themes that a teacher might investigate along with the students. This practice is something Thorsteinsson utilizes: *I talk about myself as a fellow student, and I mean that because usually, I am teaching something that I am still learning* (J. F. Thorsteinsson, personal communication, 1 March 2022). Thorsteinsson is underlining how he joins the students in the quest to put theory and practice together. He is not afraid of putting himself on the line and learning more about subjects along with the students.

Johnsen also describes how he seizes the opportunity when at hand and does something he usually would not have thought of, like the earlier described teaching activity where he, on a student's suggestion, brought the class to a shooting range and analysed the pedagogy of the instructors at the range:

And I was just as bad as the students at shooting, but everything around was suddenly the fantastic part, you know, my colleague and I would never put the shooting range on schedule as an activity, but now it came up because the students had agency in the teaching. (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

Being ready to try new things and preparing a relevant task (looking for pedagogical processes) created new teaching that might help create ideas for Johnsen and his colleague in the future.

Some of the interviewees describe how they, through years of experience in the outdoor field, find some teaching activities that: *I know always are good [...], and if we are out in some context then I have an idea of what students are preoccupied with.* (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022). Through several teaching

experiences with his students outdoors, Johnsen has found some activities that bring a similar outcome every time. These are not activities he does because he *usually does them* but because he has tested the activities and, with reflection on the outcome or *reflection-on-action*, has found that this is a strategy that provides the right learning potential (Asfeldt & Stonehouse, 2021).

Leather describes how *reflection-in-practice* is a large part of his teaching ways, which, like jazz music, changes direction with the flow. Working in a mix of intuition or *knowing-in-action* and *reflection-in-action*, his teaching might change from the original direction but still follows the intended theme of the lecture:

Guy Claxton. He wrote a book called The Intuitive Practitioner, which is about seeing where you are and in the moment. It is a bit like jazz music. You know what the overall beat is. You know what the overall rhythm and sequence is, but at the moment, you know somebody is inspired to go off on this kind of tangent. I think the outdoors allows you to do that. The outdoors has far more variables in its work, and it is working across not just your cognitive but your affective domain as well. (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022)

Where a lecture supported by a PowerPoint show might follow an almost stringent path: *slide 1, then slide 2, and then slide 3*, the reflection and intuition in practice create something else, maybe even, in some instances, a sort of chaos. Something that both Leather and Thorsteinsson embrace:

And having a wealth of where you can go with something. I mean, that also could be a criticism. There are times when my colleagues or I would go off track, and we will just leave some people behind who will not get where we have gone to. "I thought we were out here, canoeing".(M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022)

The Chaotic teacher. There are some theories about the value of chaos or be able to navigate in chaos, and what does the chaos create? So, I try to do that, and I am aware that a part of my students is a bit nervous about what will happen? (J. F. Thorsteinsson, personal communication, 1 March 2022)

Despite that this might be a way of doing reflection-in-action, where the interviewees change direction to accommodate surfacing themes, it also creates situations that could be used in later reflection-on-action. A reflection process Leather and Thorsteinsson both have started with the realization that they sometimes lose students or make them uneasy through the lack of structure in the teaching activities.

Asfeldt and Stonehouse (2021) pointed out that to become a reflective practitioner, one should see practice through four lenses of feedback: *learner of practice, our learners' eyes, our colleagues' experience and theoretical literature.*

Johnsen explains how every module has an oral and a written evaluation that can be used for reflection-for-action in the next module. Leathers explain how student feedback, or the teaching activities as seen through the learners' eyes, is important to practice:

You know they [the students] very much influence my teaching, and they very much influence my research, my writing, and my practice. Like I said earlier, when I read their assessments, and they have made meaning. You kind of gather it all in and go, "oh, OK, I get this. I am going to do this differently next time." (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022)

Several of the interviewees work with colleagues or invite other outdoor educators to co-create teaching sessions; this working with a co-teacher or lens of colleagues' experience is by Asfeldt and Stonehouse (2021) described as a tool that can disrupt old practices and assumptions. Loynes describe what participating in a joint international degree and doing exchanges with other universities have meant to his practice:

I have been very lucky in that I have worked and consulted all around the world, in many different cultures over my career, and that has been so rich for me in terms of giving me ideas about how things can be different and how to work across boundaries. (C. Loynes, personal communication, 21 March 2022)

Having the chance to discuss, co-create and observe other teachers supports the reflection-on-action, a reflection that can have you wonder out loud why something is

done as it is by other teachers and, in turn, can disrupt both your future teaching and their future teaching:

So that cultural dimension that internationalism of a program, and indeed of your program [the NOFRI Master], I think that brings in a really exciting other dimension. [...] And then you have got to be open to the challenges that come your way. "Saying why do you do it like that? That is silly", Which happens a lot. (C. Loynes, personal communication, 21 March 2022)

Leather and Thorsteinsson describe how they plan modules together to learn from each other and teach lectures on each other's courses (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022; J. F. Thorsteinsson, personal communication, 1 March 2022). While Johnsen, as earlier mentioned, has a colleague he plans his modules with (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022), and through these collaborations, they can challenge knowledge-in-action and create more reflection-on-action.

The lens of theory is the final lens described by Asfeldt and Stonehouse (2021), and looking through this lens at one's practice can help solve challenges or create a more informed practice. Leather describes how a conference made him realize a how some theories matched his practice and how this could offer interesting new aspects to his teaching activities:

I saw Brian [Wattchow] and Mike [Brown] at a conference presenting it [pedagogy of place], and I went, "Well, that is what we do. We just do not call it that, and why do we not apply it over here? Well, let us do it! (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022)

By learning about the pedagogy of place, Leather could attach new theories to the practice he already had, creating a more informed practice.

5.4.2 The skills from Maple Ridge

As introduced, Blenkinsop et al. (2016) found five skills they felt an outdoor educator needed. The first skill was treated in earlier chapters concerning what the interviewees found important when choosing places for teaching. Here Thorsteinsson described how he disliked the word outdoor classroom because it brings the restrictions of indoor

teaching outside. He agrees with Blenkinsop et al.(2016) and says that teachers should enjoy the possibilities of the outdoor area instead of holding on to indoor teaching traditions.

This skill is followed up by Blenkinsop et al. (2016) with two connected skills the ability to think lateral and follow the interest of students when situations bring up questions teachers are unprepared for, and the willingness to take risks and trust the spontaneous learning opportunities that might surface when students ask questions. It is underlined that teaching should not be purely based on spontaneous situations, but something might happen that is a great point of learning and can deepen the lecture. Blenkinsop et al. (2016) writes:

Just as Dewey warned that the greatest threat to his philosophy of education was the assumption that it could be an improvised practice, so the spontaneous and immersed educator must not assume that they can educate on an ad hoc basis. There is a great deal of humble, background preparation that goes into this type of teaching. (Blenkinsop et al., 2016, p. 352)

This preparation for the potential spontaneous is something Johnsen also practices:

By starting to get to know the different nature areas, you have an idea of what will happen when we go out to these areas [...]. You know, it might be more open now compared to 10 years ago because I have more teaching experience and feel at home with the material, or I might accept that I am not an expert, but I can facilitate some processes for the students and can be curious with the students. (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

Though he might not know everything and have everything prepared, the more experienced he has gotten through the years, the more he trusts in his ability and risks to facilitate learning experiences he is not carefully prepared for. Now he instead mix *ad hoc* teaching with pre-planned lessons.

The skill of safety management is also part of outdoor teaching, and it is pointed out by Blenkinsop et al. (2016). As presented in the chapter on place of teaching, Thorsteinsson assesses both the risk and the joy of places he teaches, while Loynes

describes how when students plan part of their own learning experiences risk is taken into account:

They also must plan and undertake a journey of their own in that very different mountain landscape [Spain]. So, with our support, of course, we are within advisory capacity and checking that what they are planning is realistic and safe. (C. Loynes, personal communication, 21 March 2022)

All interviewed educators introduced another important thing in their teaching. They all described how they did not meet their students as an “*expert standing up here and passing on knowledge to the students down there*” (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022). Instead, as quoted earlier by Thorsteinsson, they saw themselves as fellow learners, standing in the thick of it with their students, getting wet in the rain and looking silly when playing. To create a more equal relationship between student and teacher, they used dialogue as an important part of teaching, and through dialogue in both formal and informal situations created a bond with their students that created a more fulfilling experience for themselves as well as great learning opportunities to the students:

I think the outdoors lends us to that development of those small relationships where you have dialogue and dialogic learning of an exchange of ideas, and in the talking through of your ideas, you develop your thinking. (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022)

Thorsteinsson underlines how this dialogue, or letting the students talk, is a very important part of his teaching and is used to engage students:

I strongly believe that the one who is talking is the one who is learning. Sometimes I just feel if I create this learning atmosphere in the group where they want to engage, then my task as a teacher is just easier. (J. F. Thorsteinsson, personal communication, 1 March 2022)

Being engaged with the students is also underlined by Kolb et al. as important within the experiential learning:

ELT [Experiential Learning Theory] suggests that educating is not something one does to students through implementation of a set of techniques. Rather, it is something educators do with learners in the context of meaningful relationships and shared experiences. Careful planning and structuring of student experiences is an important element of effective education. However, another important element is active participation in the learning process on the part of the educator.
(Kolb et al., 2014, p. 218)

The last skill here presented must be that an educator utilizing an outdoor or experiential approach should be able to create dialogue with and between students and participate in the teaching on a somewhat equal footing as the students, not as an expert who is better than the students.

Section Summary

A great indoor teacher might not always be able to go outside and become a great outdoor teacher as well. Through this chapter and the former chapters, several abilities that can support a better outdoor teaching practice have been outlined. The most important seems to be the willingness to put oneself on the line. The variety of challenges one can meet outdoors is something the interviewees were all aware of, and they enjoyed them. They were aware that it is not the same as teaching indoors, and to create the best learning outcome, things must be done differently than indoors, something Blenkinsop et al. (2016) also found very important. They also saw how their teaching activities were affected by spontaneity and that they could change direction mid-lecture, depending on the interest of their students and interesting situations that suddenly happened. They needed to reflect-in-action and change direction accordingly. Asfeldt and Stonehouse (2021) described the importance among outdoor educators to reflect in, for, and on action to create the best possible learning outcome. However, this might not be much different from indoor teachers that wish to create the best possible practice, it was still important to the interviewees, and they all worked with colleagues, mentors or co-educators to ask challenging questions on practice.

Lastly, they all described how much of their teaching activities were done through dialogue with the learners because they believe that articulating the new knowledge would help internalise it.

5.5 The future of education outdoors

Several of the interviews ended with a talk about dreams and challenges in the field of friluftsliv and the practice of teaching outdoors. All interviewees had several years of experience teaching outdoors and hoped to inspire their students to bring on the desire to go outdoors with other people.

Then you can say that we would like pedagogues that bring their clients outdoors. We have considerations about how they can mirror themselves in us, not because we always do the right thing, but because we go outside often, and they meet different ways of being outside. So, they can copy something, and they can steal something by meeting different role models. (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

The teachers explained how 50 to 80% of their teaching was done outdoors and that as their courses are designed now 100% outdoor time is not the goal:

So, let us be really clear the fact that I am an outdoor educator does not mean that I would argue that 100% of my time working with students is best outdoors. (M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022)

But even though it might not be right now that all teaching should be done outdoors, Loynes still are fascinated by the idea of a completely experiential outdoor course or degree:

I love the examples that are beginning to appear around the world, people who only run a school outdoors, where there is no indoor, and I would love to run a university degree that way, or at least a semester or a year of it. (C. Loynes, personal communication, 21 March 2022)

All the interviewed teachers except for Thorsteinsson, who teaches a mandatory course, teach outdoor education degrees or self-chosen courses with an outdoor focus, meaning most of these students are interested in the outdoors and spending time outside. This means that to create a better future of teaching outdoors, it is not these students that

need convincing but the public and the university environment. A challenge both Thorsteinsson and Johnsen felt they had battled when their universities had created new campus grounds.

If you look at our campus, we have a lawn, a parking place and a road [...]. You can say that the special thing about this place is that I think they forgot the outdoor area when the campus was established. (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022)

And one way I can see it now is that the university. The School of Education within the University of Iceland is moving to a new building close to the main campus, and now in the process of designing that building or redesigning it, they are just looking inside. The classrooms and the walls and the furniture [...] but there is very little discussion about the outer area or bringing in the knowledge from the community around. (J. F. Thorsteinsson, personal communication, 1 March 2022)

As treated in the chapter, *What is friluftsliv, and can it be part of teaching?* Thorsteinsson compares the duality of Friluftsliv as course content to the duality of other studied subjects like language, and he thinks it is important outdoor educators are aware of this duality, but also that it should help outdoor education be a more respected subject. The authors North and Dymont (2021) are also aware of the challenge that education outdoors face but also believe that it could be the field's own fault:

Outdoor education is challenging to define, and much of the OE literature begins with a discussion of the contested nature of outdoor education. Some authors have gone so far as to state that outdoor education defies definition. (North & Dymont, 2021, p. 174)

Making a case for the importance of a field that cannot be defined poses a great challenge, and to show the rest of the higher education realm that outdoor education is important, North and Dymont (2021) argue that educators must become more precise about their intentions and the gains outdoors provide in teaching. It is not enough that the ones practising education outdoors know that students are more engaged, that teaching is cognitive, affective and emotional, and goes deeper, and is better than

everything else (M. L. Johnsen, personal communication, 25 February 2022; M. Leather, personal communication, 22 February 2022). North and Dymont argue that:

In order to take its place as an accepted educational subject, outdoor educators need to make a compelling case that it is worthy of attention and time in schools. This means outdoor educators need to articulate what it is that OE [Outdoor Education] stands for and what students learn through it. (North & Dymont, 2021, p. 174)

In the end, that might be the one thing that education outdoors is challenged by “*what is it that is done, and why?*” and as more literature like *Outdoor Environmental Education In Higher Education* (G. V. Thomas et al., 2021) and (Humberstone, 2015) are published the field might get a push in what outdoor educators believe is the right direction.

6 Conclusion

This thesis aims to explore outdoor teaching in higher education through interviews with educators practising in universities across Northern Europe. The research questions that have guided this exploration are:

- Which qualities should an outdoor area possess if used for quality teaching?
- How do teachers in higher education utilize the outdoors in their teaching?
- How do these teachers link theoretical concepts and what is experienced during outdoor teaching?
- Which skills and abilities do these educators underline as favourable when teaching outdoors?

To answer this research, four educators working at universities in Denmark, Iceland, and England were invited to participate in interviews on their practice, during the interviews; experiences from the interviewees' practice, their idea of a great area for teaching, the connection between theory and outdoor teaching activities, and how they created better teaching through reflection, was all themes of the discussion.

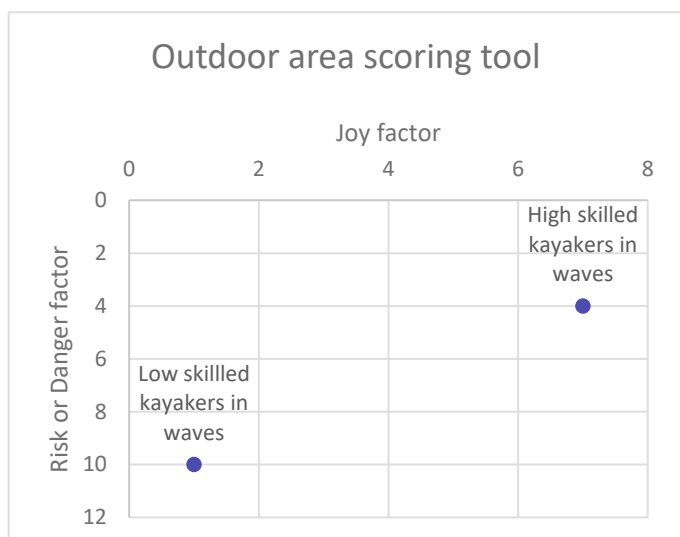
Space and place

The thesis starts with the interviewees wondering why moving teaching outdoors has its right. Thorsteinsson sees friluftsliv and outdoor activities as both a method that can be used in creating engaging lectures and as a subject that can be studied. It is not just an *activity circus*. The thesis ends with a wish among several of the interviewees that friluftsliv in the future also will be seen as something relevant and gain recognition within higher education. North and Dymont (2021) chime in on this and explain that they see the challenge as being a definition problem. To gain recognition, outdoor teaching must find a way to be more clearly defined, and teachers must be able to describe why it should be recognized, an answer that is not just "*we believe it is good for the students*", but more research on why it is good.

The study's first aim was to find the perfect outdoor classroom, a question that, through the discussions, turned out might be imperfectly worded. An important part of choosing an outdoor area for teaching was to realize that:

Educators must create new rhythm, shape and structure that fit the outdoors, one that is not based in the indoor power relations and class structure created by desks, walls, and bells. (Blenkinsop et al., 2016, p. 351)

With this in mind, changing the wording to *place of outdoor teaching* would seem more fitting, according to both interviewees and Blenkinsop et al., to prevent teachers from bringing *the burden of the indoor classroom* (J. F. Thorsteinsson, personal communication, 1 March 2022) outdoors. Educators moving their teaching outdoors should be mindful of what the outdoors offers that can enrich or bring joy to their practice. Therefore, the interviewees did not point to specific attributes of an outdoor area but would themselves look for variety in landscape and wished to have a variety of different places to bring students into depending on what they wanted to teach their students. To choose a location, Thorsteinsson introduced a joy and risk assessment that would weigh the variety or joy of an area against the potential dangers or risks present in the area. E.g., bringing a group of students kayaking joys could be animal life, picturesque views and perhaps waves depending on skill level, but waves could also pose the risk that might give a place a bad assessment depending on the skill level of the students.



An important reflection on the choice of outdoor area to do teaching in was by the interviewees as well as described by Brown and Wattchow (2015) and Baker (2005) to follow the traditions of friluftsliv and not of outdoor adventure. An educator should be mindful of place. It is important to create teaching that is not fighting nature or is moving unconsciously through it; instead, it was described how *place* should play a role in the teaching activities. The interviewees brought their students to places that were chosen to cater to specific teaching activities and told stories of the place, so students got relations to the place, and it went from *Some* space to *Our* place. Leather wanted his

students to get to know or identify with the places they visited and hoped they then would start to care. Something that, in his eyes, as well as Bergholt's (2011), could create a pro-environmental behaviour. This place-responsive teaching had the aim to create more engaged and more environmentally thinking students.

Experience and reflection

The thesis went from the exploration of place of teaching to an exploration of how the interviewees taught, especially transfer of experiences. The interviewees' actions were related to the three types of transfer described by Gass (1985), specific, non-specific, and metaphoric transfer, and the learning cycle described by Kolb et al. (2014). An important part of the teaching practice of the four educators involved different experiences in the outdoors followed up by a debriefing (Kolb et al., 2014) or reflection on these experiences and how theoretical knowledge and models could help the students digest what was experienced. The interviewees mainly practised either specific transfer of outdoor skills like lighting fire or sailing canoes, so the students had the abilities to do these activities in their later professional life, and non-specific transfer through introducing how a theory could inform or decode what happened in practice and reflection on how this theory could be recognized in another situation than the one they first encountered the theory with.

The interviewees describe three ways they engage their students in the learning activities: student agency, authentic activities, and dialogue. To maintain student engagement and, therefore, potentially gain learning outcomes, the interviewees let the students have agency in the lectures and on field trips, student ideas guide the direction of lectures, and students are given the responsibility to plan teaching activities. This way, they are invested and get an opportunity to experiment with knowledge in *real life*. Next is authenticity and the interviewees explained how authenticity was important and that learning environments and activities should be similar to what students might encounter in the future (Gass, 1985). Loynes described how urban friluftsliv was important to his lectures because pristine nature might not be available to all his students' future professional life.

The interviewees all described how they were not the experts stuffing new knowledge into the brains of their students. Instead, their goal was to facilitate learning

opportunities through which experiences and dialogue about these experiences could create new knowledge.

The learning cycle of Kolb et al. (2014) was related to the practice of the interviewees. They facilitated experiences to their students, followed up by the debriefing or reflection sessions where words were used to describe what had happened both between students and inside students. These reflection sessions were used to either create new or match existing theories to the experiences. Something that could be followed up by new experiences or experiments that could inform the knowledge adoption. Through this experiencing, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation, new theories, models and concepts went from potential knowledge to something ready to pull out of the students' backpacks.

What should teachers remember

As an educator in any subject reflection-on-action to create the best possible learning outcome should be a must, but during this exploration, not only did the ability to reflect on action turn up as an important skill but several interviewees, supported by Blenkinsop et al. (2016), pointed to their ability to reflect-in-action (Asfeldt & Stonehouse, 2021). When teaching outdoors, many variables can come into play, and the interviewees described how being able to adapt to new situations, maybe unexpected situations or students having an interest in something else, was important. They described how following new lines mid-lecture and making these relevant to the teaching often was part of their practice. Asfeldt and Stonehouse (2021) described how practice should be seen both with the eyes of the learner and the colleague and through theoretical literature to create the most intentional and reflective practice.

The practice of the interviewees was related to the five skills Blenkinsop et al. (2016) found necessary to outdoor educators; 1) the importance of realizing differences between indoor and outdoor teaching areas, 2) the reflection in action and adaptation of practice, 3) educators should not fear putting themselves on the line and follow spontaneity, 4) the importance of risk preparedness, and 5) the introduced reflection on action to create better learning. These skills were, to a different extent, practised by the interviewees, who especially emphasized reflection in action and the importance of enjoying what the outdoors offered instead of bringing the indoor burden out.

Future

With a short look at the potential future of education outdoors, some of the interviewees felt that there were not given enough credit for their education form, which was backed by North and Dymont (2021). They argued for the need for clearer descriptions of intentions in outdoor teaching and for research that could show why education outdoors could be a relevant way of teaching. Should this thesis be followed up by another, especially the theme of the relationship between the teachers and students outdoors, which by the interviewees was described as more equal compared to what they experienced during indoor courses, and how dialogue work as a method of learning in these outdoor teaching activities, both formal and informal dialogue, could be very interesting in the eyes of the researcher.

This thesis has been revolving around educators teaching within the field of outdoor education, and in future studies, it would be very interesting to test the practice of teaching outdoors in studies that might not lead to a professional life in the outdoors.

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8 Annexes

8.1 Annex 1: NSD

Information letter and consent form

Are you interested in taking part in the research project: *Creating Meaningful Outdoor Teaching in Higher Education*?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to explore how educators in higher education can utilize the outdoors to facilitate relevant teaching. In this letter, I will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

This Master's thesis will revolve around the theme of outdoor education, more specifically in higher education. With the project, I aim to investigate how and why some teachers in higher education utilize the outdoors in their teaching. The project is focusing on teachers who are incorporating “classic classroom knowledge” in their teaching outdoors and not only teaching practical skills like “this is how to light a fire” or how to row a canoe.

The research objectives are

- Which qualities should an outdoor area possess if used for quality teaching?
- How do teachers in higher education utilize the outdoors in their teaching?
- How do these teachers link theoretical concepts and what is experienced during outdoor teaching?
- Which skills and abilities do these educators underline as favourable when teaching outdoors?

Who is responsible for the research project?

The master thesis is written in the study *Joint Nordic Master in Friluftsliv (Outdoor Studies)*, a collaboration between four Nordic universities, the University of South-

Eastern Norway, the Norwegian School of Sport Science, The Swedish School of Sport and Health Science and Holar University (Iceland).

Why are you being asked to participate?

You are one among four teachers asked to participate to elaborate on your practices in outdoor education.

What does participation involve for you?

If you choose to take part in this project, we will do an interview through Microsoft Teams, where we will have a conversation about your teaching in the outdoor education field, how you facilitate learning and why you have chosen to do outdoor education.

The interview is estimated to last around 90 minutes.

The conversation will be recorded with sound and video and later transcribed.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous or deleted. There will be no negative consequences for you if you choose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

I will only use your personal data for the purpose specified in this information letter. I will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

When using quotes from the interview, you will be identified with your name and place of occupation. If you do not wish to be recognisable, a cover name will be used instead, combined with your home country, to identify differences between nationalities.

All data will be stored on a computer locked with a code, only accessible by me, the researcher.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end 10th of June 2022. After this date, all digital recordings will be deleted.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the University of South-Eastern Norway, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- Martin Drejer Andersen through @: drejerandersen@hotmail.com
- Supervisor Kjartan Bollarson through @: kjartan@holar.is
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: personverntjenester@nsd.no or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Drejer Andersen

Master Student Nordic Friluftsliv

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project *Creating Meaningful Outdoor Teaching in Higher Education* and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- To participate in a Microsoft Teams interview
- For my personal data to be processed outside the EU, in collaboration with Norwegian Universities.
- For information about me/myself to be published in a way that I can be recognised, by name and place of work.

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 10th of June 2022

(Signed by participant, date)

8.2 Annex 2: Interview Guide

Interview guide

1. I would like to start with an introduction, who are you, where do you teach and within what field?
2. Please tell me about what you teach and how the outdoors is a player here?
3. What motivates you to do your teaching outdoors?
4. What are the goals of your teaching when utilizing the outdoors? Does this differ from your indoor teaching?
5. Are there themes that are not fit for teaching outdoors?
6. What characterizes a great outdoor classroom? What do you look for when searching for new “classrooms”?
7. How is sustainable thinking part of your teaching?
8. How do you create educational experiences in the outdoors so that your trip is not just a nice picnic? Can you describe a lecture you held outside?
9. How do you promote transfer from the experiences you have outdoors to knowledge applicable in other situations?
10. How is the link between theoretical knowledge and outdoor experiences created?
11. In your teaching, are your students active players in forming the teaching? Do they possess agency in the decisions on what is taught and how it is done?
12. Does the teaching contain strains of uncertainty, like not a decided path to finding the answer, or is everything pre-planned in detail? And why?