



Affordances of Outdoor Education in Iceland

How nature contributes to place-based experience, reflection
and friendship

Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor

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Supervisors

Dr. Jón Torfi Jónasson Professor emeritus, School of Education

Dr. Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson Professor, Faculty of Life and Environmental
Sciences

Doctoral committee

Dr. Jón Torfi Jónasson, Dr. Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson, Dr. Beth Christie

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Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson

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Leiðbeinendur

Dr. Jón Torfi Jónasson

Dr. Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson

Doktorsnefnd

Dr. Jón Torfi Jónasson, Dr. Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson, Dr. Beth Christie

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Ágrip

Rannsóknin miðar að því að kanna ólíka þætti útivistar á Íslandi og draga fram þá lykilþætti sem gera hana að útimenntun og setja þá í samhengi við útiveru barna. Færð eru rök fyrir því að sú umgjörð sem náttúran skapar og samneyti við hana sé í forgrunni, en vinátta og félagsleg tengsl, upplifun og reynsla, staður og ígrundun geri útivist að mikilvægri útimenntun sem eigi heima í litrófi góðrar almennrar menntunar. Doktorsverkefnið í heild varpar ljósi á breitt svið útimenntunar, t.d. í frístundastarfi, ferðaþjónustu og skólum. Þrjár spurningum eru lagðar fram sem fjalla um hvað einkennir orðræðu um útimenntun á Íslandi, hvernig möguleika felur reynslumiðuð útimenntun í náttúrunni á Íslandi í sér til að virkja staði, ígrundun og vináttu og hvernig útivera og ferðahegðun barna er undir áhrifum frá félagslegum og heilsufarslegum þáttum. Gildi rannsóknarinnar fyrir útimenntun og menntun almennt er að kanna þá möguleika sem felast í útimenntun í samhengi við útivist barna og upplifun af náttúru. Mikilvægið felst í því að vekja máls á stöðu útimenntunar í skólum, frístundastarfi og ferðaþjónustu og gildi þess að styrkja stöðu hennar svo að fólk, sérstaklega börn, geti notið möguleika reynslubundinnar útimenntunar í náttúrunni.

Fjallað er um rannsóknina í fimm fræðigreinum. Grein 1 opnar rannsóknarverkefnið með fræðilegri umfjöllun um staðarkennd og tengdar áskoranir. Í grein 2 er kafað nánar í umræðuna um hagnýtan grunn og samhengi kennslufræði staðar og skilning á staðarkennd. Í 3. grein gefst tækifæri til að setja náttúruna og ófyrirsjáanleika hennar í menntunarlegt samhengi og skoða hvernig hægt er að nota ígrundaða starfshætti til að læra af reynslunni. Grein 4 fjallar um hve miklum tíma börn verja úti, gildi þess og hvaða félags- og efnahagslegu þættir hafa áhrif á útivist og útivera barna. Grein 5 þjónar sem brú frá menntun til ferðamála með því að varpa ljósi á þáttöku unglinga í ferðamennsku m.t.t. félagslegra og efnahagslegra þátta og til að ræða í samhengi við ferðahegðun innanlands, félagslega ferðamennsku og menntun. Í rannsókninni er skoðuð upplifun nærri þéttbýli með sjó og strendur sem umhverfi, og einnig fjær með fjöll og hálendi sem umhverfi. Þessar ólíku upplifanir bjóða upp á mismunandi menntunarlega virknikosti.

Meginniðurstöður rannsóknarinnar eru að möguleikar eða virknikostir útimenntunar byggja á þremur meginþáttum: (1) orðræðunni um útimenntun og innan hennar (tengist m.a. því orðfæri sem fagfólk skilur og hefur yfir að ráða), (2) hvernig skapaður er farvegur fyrir útimenntun, sem nær til fólks (félagslegt umhverfi), og aðferðanna sem er beitt á borð við upplifunar- og ígrundandi aðferðir (menntunarlegt umhverfi), sem og þeirra staða og svæða sem er vettvangur starfsins (náttúrulegt eða manngert umhverfi), og (3) afstöðu til gildi þess, sérstaklega fyrir börn, að verja tíma utandyra og taka þátt í

útvíst. Þegar við áttum okkar á og viðurkennum þessa áhrifaþætti útímenntunar eru möguleikar hennar ríkulegir og hlutverk hennar í nútímamenntun stórt.

Lagðar eru fram í lokakafla tillögur um stefnu og mögulegar aðgerðir sem eru grundaðar á rannsókninni og reynslu höfundar. Þær endurspeglar það sjónarmið, sem var hvatinn að baki rannsókninni, að hafa áhrif á fagvettvang útímenntunar með það að leiðarljósi að skapa fleiri og ríkulegri tækifæri fyrir börn að vera úti.

Lykilorð:

Náttúra – Staður – Tímstundir – Upplifun – Útímenntun

Abstract

The study reported here is essentially in two parts. The principal part is five published papers, framed by a kappa that shows how they connect within the context of Outdoor Education.

The research aims to explore different aspects of outdoor activities in Iceland and highlight some key factors that contribute to its educational value (thus making it Outdoor Education) and simultaneously place it in the context of children's outdoor life. I argue that nature itself takes precedence, but social interaction, personal experiences, place, and reflection are all key components that ensure that the outdoor activities become significant as Outdoor Education, which thus undoubtedly belongs in the realm of good education. The doctoral project as a whole sheds light on a range of Outdoor Education activities that can be found as vital components in leisure and schools, but notably also in tourism.

The overarching concern of this study is to connect and answer three fundamental questions. The study starts from the question of what characterises the discourse about and within Outdoor Education in Iceland, in order to set the stage for an in-depth probing of the field, seen both in the Icelandic and international context. This led to two principal questions, which in turn gave rise to the specific research questions in the five research papers that underpin my study. The second question defines the principal focus of the study and thus the foci of three papers: How does Outdoor Experiential Education in Iceland value and explore issues of place, reflection and friendship in the context of nature? This emphasises that nature is a principal characteristic of the outdoor settings being studied and identifies the three principal dimensions emerging from the studies. The third question brings attention to the children themselves, by asking: How are the outdoor and travel behaviours of children impacted by social and health factors? Thus, the three questions ask and lead to exploration how some of these fundamental values of Outdoor Education relate to the lives of Icelandic children. By doing this the study contributes to the field of Outdoor Education and education more generally by examining the affordances of Outdoor Education in relation to children's outdoor life and their experience of nature. Importantly, it raises questions about the position of Outdoor Education in schools, leisure, and tourism and identifies a need to strengthen its status so that people, especially children, can better enjoy the affordances of Outdoor Experiential Education in nature.

The study is principally comprised of papers published in five academic publications. Paper I, opens the research project by providing theoretical discussion of "sense of place" and associated challenges. Paper II delves further into the discussion about the

contextual and practical foundation of pedagogy of place and the understanding of sense of place. Paper III provides an opportunity to place nature and its unpredictability in an educational context and to examine how reflective practice can be used to learn from it. Paper IV analyses the amount of time children spent outside, emphasizing the importance and benefits of outdoor activities, as well as exploring the influential social and economic factors that affect children's outdoor behaviour. Paper V sheds light on young people's participation in tourism with respect to socioeconomic factors and addresses these factors in the context of domestic travel behaviour, social tourism, and education. The research examines experience in the environs of Reykjavik with the sea and shores as context, and also further away in the mountains and highlands. These different outdoor educational experiences offer different affordances that are valuable in different ways.

The main findings of the research are that the affordances of Outdoor Education relies on three main factors: (1) the discourse about and within Outdoor Education in Iceland; (2) how Outdoor Education activities are facilitated, which includes the companionship (the social environment); the methods applied, such as experiential and reflective approaches (the educational environment), as well as the places and spaces of the educational activities (the natural or physical environment); and (3) the stance taken towards appreciating values or significance of spending time outdoors and participating in outdoor activities and education, especially for children. When these factors are recognized and acknowledged, the affordances of Outdoor Education are significant, and its role in modern education holds high relevance.

A significant concluding chapter presents advice concerning both policy and practice that is inspired by my research work, reflects my pragmatic stance, and is perhaps the motivation for this research journey.

Keywords:

Nature – Place – Leisure – Experience – Outdoor Education

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This has been a joyful journey of about a decade, filled with a few twists and turns that I have thoroughly enjoyed. This is my work, but it was co-created with many people whom I now consider friends. They have made a significant contribution to the research project as a whole and have supported me in becoming a reflective educator and researcher. They include Jón Torfi Jónasson, Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson, Beth Christie on the doctoral committee and Pat Maher, who acted as an external examiner, with Beth Christie, during my interim evaluation. As well as my co-authors Ársæll Már Arnarsson, Fiona Nicholls, Hervör Alma Árnadóttir, Karen Rut Gísladóttir, Mark Leather, and Ólafur Páll Jónsson.

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The research is about Outdoor Education and therefore extends to experiences and perceptions that go beyond the formal framework of schoolwork. What has had a significant impact on my understanding is conversations and thought-provoking questions from travel companions in recent decades. I have travelled extensively with my family and childhood friends in “Garparnir”, who have had a strong influence on me. I am grateful to my siblings – Haraldur, Bjarni, and Unnur – who are my role models and who have encouraged me. Extended family and friends have also been generous with their support and shown understanding when needed; thanks to “Matarklúbburinn”, “TOG” and the KVAN team. Finally, I want to mention three women who have been especially thoughtful: Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir, who has often helped me; Steinunn Ása, who has been particularly supportive with her warmth and understanding; and Alma, my dear friend and colleague who has helped me throughout the research process, encouraged me and laughed with me.

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I would like to dedicate this piece of work to my mom and dad, Ásgerður Bjarnadóttir og Þorsteinn M. Jakobsson. My mom encouraged me to learn and to strive for excellence. My dad shaped my love for and connection with the sea. They both showed how to make time for people and to value a good conversation.

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List of Original Papers

This thesis is based on the following original publications, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals:

- I. Leather, M. & Thorsteinsson, J.F. (2021). Developing a Sense of Place. In Thomas, G., Dymont, J., Prince, H. (eds.) *Outdoor Environmental Education in Higher Education. International Explorations in Outdoor and Environmental Education* (Vol. 9). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-75980-3_5
- II. Thorsteinsson, J. F., Leather, M., Nicholls, F., & Jóhannesson, G. P. (2024). Exploring a pedagogy of place in Iceland: Students understanding of a sense of place and emerging meanings. *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42322-023-00150-4>
- III. Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson, Hervör Alma Árnadóttir, Karen Rut Gísladóttir og Ólafur Páll Jónsson (2022). Undir berum himni. Ígrundun og áskoranir háskólanema. [Under an open sky: Reflections and challenges of university students]. *Netla*. [In Icelandic] <https://doi.org/10.24270/netla.2022/20>
- IV. Thorsteinsson, J. F., Arnarsson, Á. M. & Jónasson, J. T. (2023). How 'Outdoors Time' Transforms the Social Relationships of Children in Iceland. *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42322-023-00123-7>
- V. Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson, Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson og Jón Torfi Jónasson. (2021). Kynni unglunga af vinsælum ferðamannastöðum: Frístundir, ferðalög og menntun. [Youth's encounter with popular destinations. Leisure, tourism, and education]. *Special edition of Netla 2021 – HBSC and ESPAD research*. [In Icelandic] <https://doi.org/10.24270/serritnetla.2021.11>

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Declaration of Contribution

I, Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson declare that this PhD dissertation titled „Affordances of Outdoor Education in Iceland“ is my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged. Each paper describes the process and ethical issues, and also this kappa in chapter regarding Methodology and methods and also in Appendix B. In papers I-III, I was the main contributor of the design, analysis and writing, with active discussion with my co-authors. In papers IV and V the analysis was based on my ideas, also with fruitful discussion with my co-authors. In writing the kappa I also had useful discussions with my doctoral committee who reflected critically as my writing progressed.

1 Prologue

There are two very personal points of departure for this research programme: *nature*, with all its different aspects and connotations, and which has fascinated me from my early youth; and *education*, to which I have devoted much of my professional life. From the beginning, my ambition was to explore the essence of this combination of nature and education. I knew this might be an impossible task, as both terms are broad and complex; however, I wanted to extract some of the important elements of this combination and chose to do it through the lens of Outdoor Education. Therefore, I embark on this journey under the heading of Outdoor Education.

Outdoor Education is a key concept in the study, and the meaning of the word will be further developed, especially in relation to national or local meaning of the Icelandic word *útimenntun* (i.e., Outdoor Education). To begin with, let us broadly conceive of **Outdoor Education** as education that takes place outside and is for and about the outdoors and our relationship to nature and to one another. I understand **nature** as the physical world and everything that exists within it, including all living and non-living things. It encompasses the natural environment, such as oceans, woodlands, fields, mountains and moors and the various ecosystems and habitats they contain, as well as the change and influence of weather and seasons. Additionally, it includes urban nature, which can take various forms, such as parks, green roofs, community gardens, street trees, and even small pockets of vegetation amidst concrete structures. My experience of nature is often through **place** – specific locations or areas. A place can be as small as a backyard garden or as vast as a national park. Each place has unique characteristics such as stories, culture, geographical features, climate, flora, and fauna, which contribute to its distinctiveness. I understand nature in a broad sense and believe that the affordances provided by different types of nature are diverse. I have been curious to understand that better. I learned about the concepts of place and affordances on this journey, and they have provided me with an opportunity to understand - and hopefully clarify - important aspects of Outdoor Education. The concept of place provides an opportunity to talk about nature and the environment in a social context. The term '**affordances**' is challenging to translate to Icelandic, as its meaning is uncertain¹. The value of this concept for my study is significant, as it gave me the

¹ I was uncertain for a long time about whether it would be sensible to use the term 'affordances.' Despite Icelanders generally having a good understanding of English, very few people I discussed this concept with seemed to grasp its meaning and often confused it with 'to afford.' Norðdahl (2016) uses the term '*virknikostir*,' which can be directly translated as 'functional advantages.' It may be that a part of the study I undertook is to open our eyes to the possibilities

chance to describe different opportunities presented by our environment (more on this core concept in chapter 2.1.2).

Putting to rest terminology discussions, let us get back to the journey I embarked on. When you walk through snow and look back, it is easy to retrace your steps. I have often paused for a moment and tried to look back reflectively. Whilst the path that I have travelled sometimes zigzags, it clearly leads towards a deeper knowledge of this force that is out there and impacts my perception, understanding and relationship with the world. It feels like I am trying somehow to understand how to be in the world and how to be with the world. This path, this search for knowledge and meaning, has made me curious about a few key things: how professionals and participants in the field of Outdoor Education in Iceland define and discuss this reality, what international academics have written and studied on the topic, and what understanding I am forming inside myself as I interpret my experiences and knowledge holistically.

I begin this study by sharing four stories, which I believe are relevant in three different ways. First, they provide insight into my personal experiences and the origins of my curiosity and research ambitions. Second, they reveal elements that form the foundation of my research, which comprises **Place, Discourse, Experience, Reflection and Friendship**, with both **Nature** and **Education** framing the basis of the study. And third, these elements help unite the five research papers included in this study by supporting my investigation into the essence of Outdoor Education in Iceland, as I feel the term might be understood and promoted.

1.1 Þórsmörk and Hornstrandir – the value of wilderness

My parents, Ásgerður and Þorsteinn, took me on two journeys that made a particularly strong impression on me and shaped the feeling that awakens inside me when I am out in nature. My father had just returned from sea – he was “back on shore or back on dry land” (i. kominn í land) as the saying went – after his stint with the coasters Esja and Hekla distributing goods around the country. For some reason, my parents choose to go on a week-long vacation with the Icelandic Touring Association to Þórsmörk and later to Hornstrandir. The nature of these two places had a strong impact on me. I can still feel the emotions I experienced in Langadal in Þórsmörk and during hikes in the surrounding valleys. I can smell the birch, the satisfaction of carving something outside with the precious knife I had recently acquired, the care and companionship of my mom and dad, and a sense of freedom.

that exist in nature, the environment, and places - near and far - and therefore using it is apropos to use vocabulary that is new in the minds of many.

In Þórsmörk summer of 1978 – On top of Mount Valahnjúkur with my mother Ásgerður, my father Þorsteinn, and fellow travellers



Figure 1. Moments in Þórsmörk with my parents.

The next summer we travelled by boat to Hornstrandir. It is a nature reserve in the northernmost Westfjords with striking landscapes, untouched wilderness, coastlines, mountains, cliffs teeming with birds, and a sense of tranquillity. I still have a vivid memory of hiking with a group of people through the rough terrain and admiring the views from the top of the magnificent cliffs. I remember the weather was unpredictable, as it often is, and when the heaviest rain and strong winds blew in, we had to pitch our tents quickly and seek refuge in an emergency shelter. I had sailed on dad's cargo ship around Iceland, and we had travelled the country together in the family car, but those two places, Þórsmörk and Hornstrandir, really shaped me.

At Hornstrandir with mom and dad in the summer of 1979



Figure 2. Moments at Hornstrandir with my parents.

1.2 Hreysi – The value of sheltered social relationships

I am fortunate enough to have been a part of the Scouts and formed a group of friends with whom I have had countless outdoor experiences. These experiences have shaped and matured me. Additionally, I have a wife and three children who love to travel and spend time in nature. Our journeys have taken us far and wide, as well as to places nearby. One of my favourite places in Iceland is the Hengill area, a volcanic mountain range located just outside the capital. There, we have a little mountain house called Hreysi that I helped rebuild around the turn of the century. Hreysi means “shack,” but for us, it is a palace. It is situated in a rather isolated valley, and I enjoy hiking there with my friends and spending one or two days, especially in winter. We like doing activities such as skiing, hiking, and maintaining the shack. We also love being outdoors in nature, with limited contact with the online world, sauntering, having discussions about life, enjoying delicious meals that we cook together, and relaxing in a hot sauna. The influence of this very special experience is, I feel, powerful, unique, and very important. It is of great value to travel with friends and have a chance to nurture our social relationship sheltered away from daily responsibilities and the online world.

As a child and in my adult life I have felt most like myself when I am outdoors. This does not mean that I am much into great mountaineering challenges, like climbing the highest or the most hard-to-reach summit. It is probably achievements like making a good meal on the camping stove, experiencing the scenery, or discovering a cosy place to rest that I find captivating. What I enjoy the most is the journey itself, surrounded by nature and my travelling companions.

1.3 Siglunes – The value of sailing and the seashore

Back in the 1990s, while I was studying to become a teacher I worked as a sailing instructor for children at a local sailing club in Reykjavik. Our goal was to give children a positive experience with the seashore and the ocean and allow them to enjoy the diverse nature found there. Even though I had just started to learn about teaching and pedagogy at the University, I immediately recognized the value of this kind of experience for the children, as well as for myself as a young man. Through this experience, I witnessed the strong bonds developing between children and nature and among the children themselves, as well as how they enjoyed the experience and how much their confidence and self-esteem grew.

During the winter, while discussing my experience at the Teachers College, I felt that almost no one understood the value of this kind of work in the same way I did. Although I was convinced that something very valuable was taking place, I struggled to describe and analyse my experience in the right words. I felt that this world was foreign to my professors and fellow students. As I gained more experience at work, I saw how the sailing club's work and its affordances were marginalized at school, even within the field of leisure. Its recreational and entertainment value was evident to me, but its significance as education was not understood at all by those who led the academic environment. I also often asked myself where this kind of activity or institution did belong – was it education, recreation, or sport? As with many marginalized institutions, it had difficulty getting enough funding and support. During the summers, the staff members would have heated discussions about this issue. We asked ourselves why people did not value this work. Icelanders are seafarers – we survived in the North Atlantic because we learned to live with and from the sea. The sea took, but it also gave, and in the twentieth century, Iceland's rapid development was built on our skills and understanding of the ocean. Why was this work that connects children with the sea and nurtures their understanding of nature undervalued by people in general, and by educators and policymakers in particular? Why was it not more prominent in national policy or curriculum?

It's been almost thirty years since I first confronted these questions. Over time, I have continued to follow the sailing club's work and have seen the quality and professionalism increase. To me it has all the characteristics of an educational activity that enables many ways of connecting to nature. However, it still barely survives on tight

finances and only operates for about eight weeks each year. In December 2022, the sailing club faced potential closure due to cost-cutting measures, but strong opposition from supporters led to its preservation and sparked discussions on innovative ways to promote its educational impact.

I share this story to emphasise the questions I asked myself thirty years ago and which have followed me ever since. They relate to the value of connecting to nature and to what counts as being educational. These questions and more² sparked my curiosity and led me to a few specific projects related to Outdoor Education research and development. However, I still feel I have not found a satisfactory way to address some of the fundamental questions and problems I have been thinking about. In some ways, these questions are too wide and complex to tackle, but at the same time, they demand attention. The challenge they present must not continue to marginalise them. These questions revolve around nature and educational values, and as a point of connection the place and affordances of Outdoor Education within the wide Icelandic educational arena – and probably in other contexts too.

1.4 When words take control - the value of national and international discourse

Having control over the words we use to express thoughts and feelings involves having power. We borrow words from the culture we grew up in, and by using them we gradually gain ownership of them. Here is a short story about the pain of not having control over professional discourse because others dictated it.

I slowly entered the field of higher education between 2005 and 2011 when I started working full time in the Leisure study programme at the School of Education. Having recently obtained a master's degree in Outdoor Education, I published a book for university students about "Playing, learning, and developing outside" (Þorsteinsson, 2011) pertaining to outdoor and adventure education. I felt I had something valuable to offer for education in school and leisure.

Somewhat later, a new book was published in Icelandic: "Outdoor Teaching and Outdoor Learning in Elementary Schools" (Andreassen & Pálsdóttir, 2014). The term "outdoor teaching" was capitalized, and the discourse revolved almost exclusively around the premise of elementary school. I started reading the book with great anticipation but was met with disappointment. I found the connection to international terminology regarding Outdoor Education that I was used to and valued, to be unclear

² I find it, for example, nearly incomprehensible that here in Iceland direct experience of glaciers, active volcanoes, the ocean, or the seashore are very seldom utilized in formal education. All of these elements are magnificent and are among the main attractions for visitors to Iceland.

or left outside the discourse. The understanding I was gaining on terminology related to Outdoor Education was not present. I also felt that what I understood to be the representatives of the school system defined everything from the school's perspective. Looking back, I believe that I was disappointed because I came to the realization that the professional conversation surrounding Outdoor Education was mostly influenced by the viewpoint of schools and adopted a fairly narrow perspective. This meant that it was defined as an activity that belonged to traditional schoolwork even when it took place beyond the walls of school buildings. A perspective that saw education in a much broader context was not represented.

I have now distanced myself from the emotions that once troubled me, and now accept the contribution of outdoor teaching (i. útikennsla) as seen by the more traditional school perspective to our language. It gave me a perspective to discuss and reflect on – to contextualize the discussion and understand that there is a critical need to broaden and enrich the conversation regarding Outdoor Education. This I found I could not do in isolation, and I sought to connect effectively with international discourse and practices in the field of Outdoor Education. I have been an active member in two international organizations the European Institute for Outdoor Adventure Education and Experiential Learning (EOE), and a network that is responsible for the International Outdoor Education Research Conference, held biannually. Through these organizations I have met what I consider are some of the world's leading thinkers and researchers in the field of Outdoor Education and I have participated in professional discussions on Outdoor Education topics, as well as gaining research experience and great and lifelong friendships. The most recent product of these endeavours is a post as External Examiner on Outdoor Programmes at the School of Health and Social Science in the Munster Technological University, Ireland. To be a part of the international discourse has slowly helped me to understand the language in this field, but also to appreciate the crucial importance of language and perspectives when discussing any educational issue. To be involved in a creative research and teaching collaboration at home is something I find very valuable. As a member of the Terminology committee for leisure studies I have used my knowledge in collaboration with committee members to define a few of the concepts commonly used in Outdoor Education (see in appendix H). I have been teaching and conducting research with inspiring experts from the University of Iceland and elsewhere, who have contributed to the creation of research products related to this study in indirect ways – for instance, the paper I co-authored "On being in nature: Aldo Leopold as an educator for the 21st century," (Jónsson et al., 2020) which sharpened my thinking (see appendix J for the other relevant publications).

1.5 Where does this take us?

The stories above are about places – Siglunes, Hreysi and Þórsmörk. To those places I have developed a personal and emotional tie, something that can be called a sense of place; they are spaces to which I have cultivated authentic human attachment and

belonging. By experiencing them in a broad sense – smelling, touching, seeing and admiring them aesthetically – they have made me feel humbled and inspired, happy and sad. They are significant as they are storied spaces with family and friends as the main actors. They have a social presence that is felt.

In the stories above, nature plays a fundamental role, always present in some way, not just as a backdrop but as a lead player when it shows its power and makes one afraid. My senses are the means through which I perceive the world and are my tools for recording my experiences. Throughout the years, I have attempted to articulate these experiences through language and academic discourse whilst reflecting upon them with the intention of learning from them and hopefully gaining wisdom. I believe that this wisdom will assist me in living well in and with the world.

Taken as a whole, these stories from my lived experience lift out five critical elements that relate to the overarching terms of Nature and Education. They are: The Discourse (i. orðræðan), The Place (i. staðurinn), The Experience (i. upplifunin), The Reflection – (i. ígrundunin) and The Friendship – (i. félagsskapurinn). I will return to these critical elements in chapter 5, the research papers.

I have attempted to clarify my motivation to understand what it is about Outdoor Education that has inspired and encouraged me to extract some of the components that make it valuable as an educational endeavour. Additionally, I have tried to emphasise the importance of discussing its value within the realms of education and policy. Thus, when showing how the scientific side of this projects unfolds, I will attempt to highlight some policy implications. Identifying these implications has played a significant role in motivating my current effort.

2 Introduction

This introduction is divided into five chapters. I will start by discussing the scope and relevance of my study, arguing why nature and Outdoor Education are at the core of it and exploring the value and meaning of the concept of affordances. Then I will describe the three connected areas of the study: Background, Core, and Context. After that, I will introduce the aim and the overarching questions of each part. To place the study in an educational context in Iceland, there is a special chapter on Education in Iceland. Before explaining the structure of the study further, I will also discuss the contribution and value of the project as a whole.

The purpose of the kappa is to bring together the key insights of the following papers and clarify their contribution not only to education, but as will be argued, also to the fields of leisure and tourism. I thus endeavour to present an integrated perspective of these fields.

In this kappa I am visible and often use “I” to identify the perspective from which the text is written. “We” is also used often to indicate and acknowledge that the papers are written by more than one author and are therefore co-created. It also has to be taken into consideration that my “thinking” in this research project is done mostly in Icelandic; English is my second language³.

This kappa is divided into nine main chapters. In chapter one, the prologue, and the first part of the Introduction I discuss why this research is important. In chapter two, the introduction, I also discuss what the research is about. Chapter three, method, focuses on how the research was conducted. In chapter four, the research landscape, I discuss two key concepts that form the backbone of all my papers. Chapter five is a brief

³ One of the questions that haunts me is whether the meaning I have in my head and body gets lost in translation. I have had some very “enjoyable struggles” in the attempt to write this text. For me it is a challenge in Icelandic to figure out how to express my thoughts and even a greater challenge in English. I would like to take examples to shed a narrow light on this struggle. “Outdoor,” what is that in Icelandic? The direct translation is “utandyra eða utanhúss” and those words are not very common and rather formal. We use just the word *úti*. We are out and we learn out. It could be argued that “outside” captures better what we mean, but then outside education is not part of the international literature (I must admit that I still after all this time studying Outdoor Education – I still wonder why the “door” is included in the word). So, in many cases there has to be some kind of compromise – and some meanings are most likely lost in that translation process.

account of the each of the five research papers which form the substantive research input into the study. Chapters six, seven, and eight respectively, provide discussion, conclusion, and recommendations for policy and practice to thoroughly discuss the relevance of the research findings and answer the question “so what?”. I finish with chapter nine, an epilogue, to add closure and final reflection to my research journey.

2.1 The aim, scope and relevance

The research is about the affordances of Outdoor Education in Iceland. The aim was to investigate different aspects of outdoor activities in Iceland and identify key factors that make something Outdoor Education.

The scope of the research has, on the one hand, evolved to encompass a deeper understanding of the factors that make outdoor activities educational. This is achieved by examining the experiences of individuals who participate in educational processes within Icelandic nature. On the other hand, the research led me to examine the outdoor life of children and some important aspects of being outdoors for them.

Arguments have been made that nature itself takes precedence, but strong connections need to be made to factors that emerge as crucial components of Outdoor Education. These include social interaction, personal experiences or engagement, the place where the activities take place, and reflection. These are all important elements that make outdoor activities a significant form of Outdoor Education that undoubtedly belongs in the realm of good and proper education. The study emphasises a broad notion of outdoor by focussing on three different overarching questions:

What characterises the discourse about and within Outdoor Education in Iceland?

How does Outdoor Experiential Education⁴ in Iceland value and explore issues of place, reflection, and friendship in the context of nature?

How are the outdoor and travel behaviours of children impacted by social and health factors?

The relevance and the contribution of the research presented here is that it sheds light on the diverse sector of Outdoor Education, e.g., in schools, leisure and tourism. The overall study addresses three areas: schools, or the formal education system; leisure as it has developed for a long time, both related to and outside the system of education;

⁴ Outdoor Education and Outdoor Experiential Education involve learning in outdoor environments. The reason for specifically highlighting the “experiential” aspect is that the latter concept emphasizes the experiential learning process as a way to achieve educational goals. Outdoor Experiential Education is understood here as emphasizing hands-on or direct experiences and reflection within the outdoor context.

and important aspects of tourism, from the perspective of Outdoor Education. "Schools," refers to all levels of formal education. Leisure is referring to activities in free time organized by associations or institutions that cater to all ages (see also chapter 2.4). "Tourism" mainly focuses on activities that operate in nature. These core phenomena – leisure, tourism, and schools – encompass different aspects of society, but the reasoning behind combining all of them within this study is that educational experiences are present in all these areas.

This study examines, through examples, how Outdoor Education can enrich children's outdoor life and their experience of nature, and thus the affordances of Outdoor Education for them. It seeks to draw attention to the contribution of Outdoor Experiential Education and chart a course for Outdoor Education in Iceland within the education system today and in the future.

A very important part of the research project raises questions about the place – or position – of Outdoor Education in relation to schools, leisure, and tourism, as well as about the need to strengthen the status of this particular perspective so that people, especially children, can better enjoy the affordances of experiential Outdoor Education in nature.

2.1.1 Why Nature and Outdoor Education?

The world is becoming increasingly urban, with indoor or city lifestyles on the rise. In 2018, 55% of the world's population lived in urban areas; according to the UN's world urbanization prospect (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019), this is expected to increase to 68% by 2050. That means that two out of three people in the world will be living in urban areas. In Iceland, the development has been rapidly increasing, and in 2018, 94% of the population lived in urban areas (ibid.). Concurrently, seen in the long-term perspective, education has expanded substantially and most often takes place inside schools and leisure work. Together, these trends have moved children inside (Mannion et al., 2006). Several scholars have expressed concerns about this development. Chawla (2022) writes about "eroding opportunities for people to experience nature and feel kinship with the larger community of life" (p. 97). Sobel (2008), in a similar vein, notes that children are now less connected to nature. Schools are placing great emphasis on academics, structured activities, and technology, but much less emphasis on incorporating more nature-based experiences into education to address the weak connections between children and the natural world. Three decades ago, Pyle (1993) described this less direct contact of children with nature in their everyday as "extinction of experience" (p. 130). This is worrying, because according to Soga and Gaston (2016), a feedback loop is established when people's experiences of nature decline, leading to a diminishing interest in nature. As a result, the motivation to actively seek out natural areas decreases. Furthermore, as individuals become parents, they are likely to pass on their disconnection from nature

to their children. Over time, this can result in a generational shift, where the public's understanding and appreciation of the natural world and its important contributions to life diminished, and their investment in its protection declines.

In recent decades, an interest has grown in working against this trend of 'moving children inside' by utilizing nature and the environment in educational settings and recognizing the personal and educational benefits that come with experiencing the outdoors. Outdoor Education is diverse field of study that has been developing internationally for more than a century both academically and in practical settings, and which has received increased attention both within and outside the purview of education. Outdoor Education has been introduced as a way to bring back experiential, affective, and relational aspects of learning (Humberstone et al., 2016). In this study, Outdoor Education is used as an umbrella term that encompasses various other concepts within a specific field. I am conscious of not becoming a captive of these concepts in a way that limits thinking, rather ensuring that they provide opportunities to broaden and deepen our thinking, while also aiming to sharpen their meaning in Icelandic.

In this research, the spectrum of contexts in which Outdoor Education takes place in Iceland is explored, ranging from traditional school settings and leisure study settings to unstructured pastime outdoor activities and recreation. This research project explores work in schools, leisure homes, youth and outdoor centres and associations. It also reaches education in the context of family-based unstructured outdoor pastimes and recreation. To capture a broad understanding of education, we will need to involve words other than just education and learning, and be aware of language difference – e.g., between Icelandic and English⁵.

I have narrowed the focus to the broad area of Outdoor Education, and I explore its affordances and value by concentrating on three internally connected areas (see chapter 2.2), each of which invites understanding of the different aspects of Outdoor Education.

⁵ Although some may argue that there is a broad range of education being discussed here, there is a historical context hidden within. The meaning of both the Greek and Latin words for "school" (schola and ludus) is "what men do in their leisure time" (Hamilton, 1993, p. 18). The relationship between what we do in our free time and education is therefore ancient. The relationship sheds light on the fact that in our leisure time, when we are free from our duties, we have space to think about the world and search for meaning and understanding. Etymology can sometimes unveil the meaning of words. And some languages have words which capture the meaning of a concept better than other languages can; for example, the Icelandic concept for leisure is "tómstundir", which can be roughly translated as "time for space".

2.1.2 Affordances

The concept of "affordances" was proposed by the ecologist James J. Gibson (Giesecking et al., 2014) and has commonly been associated with ecological psychology (Gibson, 1979), technology, and virtual environments (see e.g. Dalgarno & Lee, 2009), but has also been explored in the context of Outdoor Education. The focus of affordances in Outdoor Education scholarly writings is ranging from mobile digital technology (Beames et al., 2024), the design of outdoor play spaces (Dyment & O'Connell, 2013; Khan et al., 2023), to outdoor learning (Beames et al., 2012; Beames et al., 2024; Clark, 2023), to the natural environment (Mawson, 2014), to adventure education (Hattie et al., 1997) and wild pedagogies (Jickling, 2018). This concept has been particularly used in scholarly discussions in early childhood education (see e.g., Sando & Sandseter, 2020; Sandseter & Hagen, 2016; Waite, 2016), to understand better how engagement with nature affects well-being (Rantala & Puhakka, 2020) and also in Icelandic research regarding the role of outdoor environment in children's learning (Norðdahl, 2015). They offer insights into how outdoor environments can afford unique opportunities for learning, development, and well-being. In a broad sense, affordances refer to a property or possibility offered by an object, environment, or phenomenon, that allows the user to know how it can be utilized. Clark (2023) links it to outdoor learning and writes that "The concept of affordances, which describes the possibilities and opportunities for behavior that objects in the environment offer, is an important theoretical foundation for outdoor learning" (p. ii). Christie and Higgins (2020) describe affordances as "the particular relationships that can arise through the bringing together of the learner, the learning opportunity and the environment or contextual condition in which an educational experience takes place" (p. 3). It is vital to understand that "affordances" refers to how the user interprets the qualities of something and its relationship to their interaction with it. How the user perceives affordances can differ depending on their background, experience, and goals. Affordances can also be dynamic and subject to change, much like weather and environment. Visiting the same place in different seasons can offer various educational possibilities, highlighting affordances are not a permanent feature. I found it thus critical to have a broad perspective when researching the affordances of Outdoor Education.

The study's context encompasses various settings, ranging from traditional school environments to leisure studies and unstructured free time spent engaging in outdoor activities and recreation. Beames and colleagues (2024) discuss the concept of affordance in relation to the physical development of young people, "as an aspect of both the formal and informal curriculum throughout a student's school life" (p. 35). They also emphasize the importance of green spaces in children's lives, highlighting their role "in providing informal opportunities for physical and social development, and personal reflection" (p. 35).

2.2 Study overview

This study has three distinct yet connected areas: background, core and context. Mapping these areas in Figure 3 helps to show the ways in which the studies are organised in relation to one another while combining to meet the research aims.

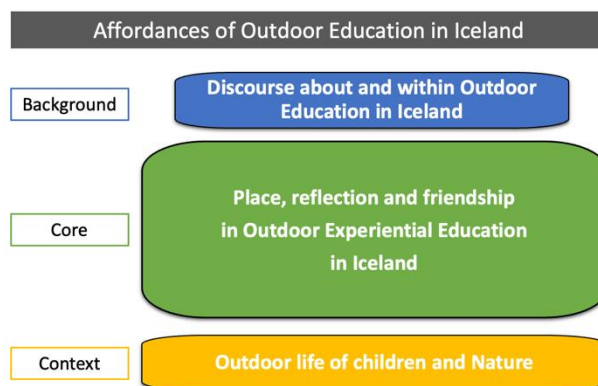


Figure 3. The three areas of the research project.

The first area (blue) is termed *background* and concerns the discourse about and within Outdoor Education in Iceland that I explored based on focus group research with experienced professional outdoor educators in Iceland. That study concluded that the quality of the work the educators were describing was, in an educational sense, based on what kind of experiences were afforded or the nature of these experiences. As a working teacher in higher education responsible for developing Outdoor Education, I wanted to use these results to investigate the experiences of the participants in my courses, so I could gain a deeper understanding of the outdoor experience and, in turn, plan and develop my teaching.

The desire to better understand the nature of the experience discussed in the focus groups laid the groundwork for the second area (green), which relates to the *core aspects* of the research project, which was labelled *place, reflection, and friendship in Outdoor Experiential Education in Iceland*. When analysing the focus group interviews, the importance of a variety of outdoor activities for children was repeatedly emphasised. The participants noted that the time allotted to children's outdoor activities was diminishing, which was also confirmed by international research.

When I reviewed the academic literature about this, it became clear that little research has been done in this field in Iceland. Knowing that the argument to justify supporting a child's Outdoor Education would need to discuss the changes in their outdoor behaviour, I decided to examine this further by developing a third area (yellow), which relates to the *context* of the research: Outdoor life of children and Nature. Taken together, the results from the focus groups in the background area inspired the research in the core area, each of which sought answers to particular questions.

However, it became evident as the research progressed that the 'context' area provided an opportunity to consider the affordance of Outdoor Education in a more applied social context.

2.3 The overarching questions and the papers

Whilst the three connected areas must be considered as a whole, each of the two major areas refer to different papers and related questions and aims, as described in Figure 4.

The central question is: What are the affordances of Outdoor Education in Iceland? (i. Hvaða möguleikar (virknikostir) felast í útimenntun á Íslandi?). The three overarching questions related to each of the areas are:

- A. What characterises the discourse about and within Outdoor Education in Iceland?
- B. How does Outdoor Experiential Education in Iceland value and explore issues of place, reflection, and friendship in the context of nature?
- C. How are the outdoor and travel behaviours of children impacted by social and health factors?

These overarching questions relate specifically to the three connected areas (see Figure 4). Question A has evolved into a background question because I have not developed a finished and published paper from this part of the research. A draft of a paper for this background study is presented in appendix A. Now I will introduce each of the connected areas in the relation with the overarching questions and explain which papers are associated to each area of the study.

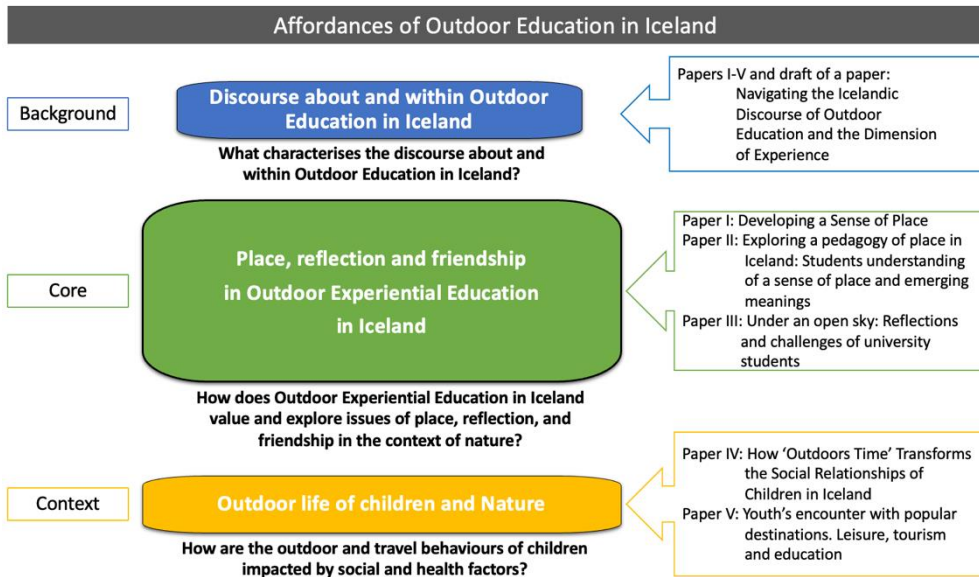


Figure 4. The three areas of the research project, the overarching questions and the five papers.

2.3.1 Discourse about and within Outdoor Education in Iceland

This area of the study is the background. It consists of the unpublished study - Navigating the Icelandic Discourse of Outdoor Education and the Dimension of Experience (see draft of this paper in Appendix A). The issues related the discourse about Outdoor Education in Iceland also appears in paper I-V, because each paper, an attempt is made to reflect and shape relevant discourse regarding Outdoor Education.

Overarching background question (A) *What characterises the discourse about and within Outdoor Education in Iceland? (i. Hvað einkennir orðræðu um útímenntun á Íslandi?)*

The aim with this initial research effort was to gain insight into professionals' discourse and understanding of Outdoor Education and related fields like outdoor recreation and friluftsliv; in short, to shed light on how Outdoor Education is understood and articulated by professionals, or in more pragmatic terms, what content I was dealing with in the Icelandic context. Thus, I was framing my research within the Icelandic context and aiming to keep a clear Icelandic lens throughout the papers, while at the same time being aware of the international discourse and dilemmas in the field of Outdoor Education, which also, to some extent, shape the domestic discourse. This part of the research is dealt with in appendix A. This particular section has been with me throughout the entire research process, but I have not expanded it into a

comprehensive paper⁶. The analytical investigations were carried out in 2017 and have served as the foundation for our subsequent research. In the analysis, the focus was directed toward educational deliberation, context, and arrangement. The educational discussion is about conceptual and educational reflection, in that it explores where the emphasis of the discourse is placed – i.e., what type of educational or pedagogical values drives or informs the rationale of Outdoor Education. The arrangement mainly deals with where opportunities for outdoor experiences for people (especially children) are created and what institutions should foster or be responsible for these kinds of experiences and learning. The discourse on Outdoor Education in Iceland is the underlying issue addressed by all the papers (see Figure 4).

2.3.2 Place, reflection, and friendship in Outdoor Experiential Education in Iceland

P I chapter: *Developing a Sense of Place.*

P II: *Exploring a pedagogy of place in Iceland: Students understanding of a sense of place and emerging meanings.*

P III: *Under an open sky: Reflections and challenges of university students*

Overarching question (B) *How does Outdoor Experiential Education in Iceland afford valuing and explorations of place, reflection, and friendship in the context of nature? (i. Hvernig möguleika býður reynslumiðuð útímenntun í náttúrunni á Íslandi til að virkja staði, ígrundun og vináttu?)*

P I, P II and P III form the core aspects of the research project and are built on action research projects that aim to support development of Outdoor Education as a field of study and research at university level. P3 is written in Icelandic, which gave authors the opportunity to explore a new (in some respects) discourse in their mother tongue.

A book chapter (P I) examines the theoretical foundations of sense of place and the challenges and opportunities it presents in Outdoor Education. Two papers explore the experiential aspects of Outdoor Education courses, aiming to enhance understanding of sense of place and critically analyse pedagogical and recreational processes. The second paper (P II) focuses on students' understanding of sense of place and its valued

⁶ When now, at the end of the research process, I reflect on why this part was not developed into a completed paper, I believe there are three reasons. First, at that time of the research, I was not ready to write a complete paper. Second, after a detailed analysis of the data, I got what I wanted out of this part of the research (I knew what I wanted to investigate further); third, the premise of writing a paper in English about Icelandic discourse turned out to be more complicated and challenging than I initially realised.

aspects, while the third paper (P III) explores nature as a learning environment and co-teacher, addressing contemporary educational demands. I emphasise how reflection can unlock learning and development potential in nature.

2.3.3 Outdoor life of children and Nature

P IV: *How 'Outdoors Time' Transforms the Social Relationships of Children in Iceland*

P V: *Youth's encounter with popular destinations. Leisure, tourism, and education*

Overarching question (C) *How are the outdoor and travel behaviours of children impacted by social and health factors? (i. Hvernig er útivera og ferðahegðun barna undir áhrifum frá félags- og heilsufarslegum þáttum?)*

This area forms the context of the study by examining a specific field of the outdoor life of children. This provides an opportunity to place the affordances of Outdoor Education in a broader social context.

The main goal of this area was to highlight the inherent value of children participating in outdoor and nature-based activities. Paper four (P4) sought to deepen understanding of the social and health factors that influence the outdoor behaviour of children aged 12-15 (grades 6, 8, and 10) in Iceland. Special attention was paid to the diverse characteristics of this particular social cohort and the intricate interplay between these factors and their outdoor behaviours. Paper five (P V) aimed to depict the principal patterns exhibited by young individuals when visiting popular destinations within Iceland, while concurrently examining the socio-economic factors that underlie these outdoor activities, thereby delineating their connection to tourism. These factors were critically analysed within the broader framework of Icelanders' domestic travel behaviour, social tourism practices, and educational contexts.

The overall content of this study includes experiences in nature, the outdoor lives of children, and the practice and discourse about Outdoor Education. While it may be tempting to focus solely on one specific area, such as Outdoor Educational processes in schools, that approach may overlook critical issues related to the knowledge, understanding, meaning, and methods of Outdoor Education – resulting in a narrower understanding of the potential affordances of Outdoor Education in Iceland.

Thus, the stage was set for me to explore in my academic work and in particular in my research what nature can offer – what is the potential for integrating nature into education – to open the window to the affordances of nature for education.

2.4 Education in Iceland

The perspective on education in this kappa is broad – as it should be, but broader than is normally expected in system discourse. In official information on national education, it is more common to only focus on the school system, and thus the “system of education” and the “school system” become synonyms. However, in this section, the goal is to present a wider perspective, and thus perhaps systems in the plural, by including various leisure structures to which education is directly connected. This section starts with describing the school system, then the leisure system, and finally where the affordances of Outdoor Education are located within “a” system.

2.4.1 The Icelandic school system

The Icelandic school system has four principal levels: playschool (for ages 1-6), compulsory school (for ages 6-16), upper secondary from 16 onwards, and tertiary education (which is essentially only university education). The structure of the Icelandic Education System is shown in Figure 5 (Eurydice, 2024).

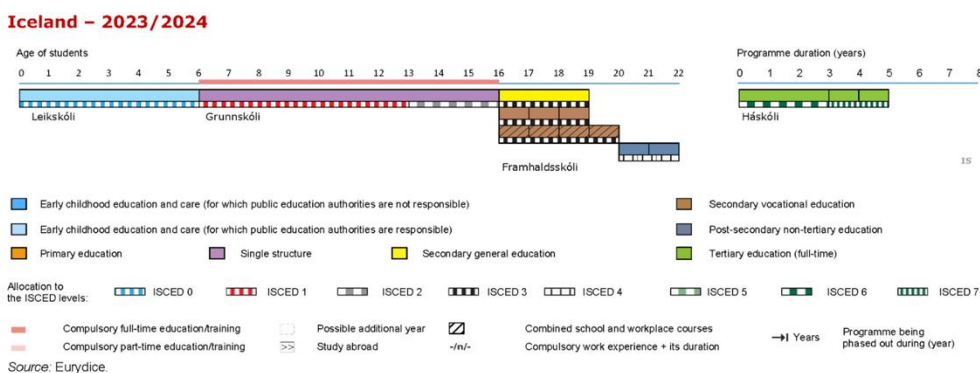


Figure 5. Structure of the Icelandic school system.

The playschool (i. leikskóli, early childhood education and care) is the first official stage of the school system. Then six-year-olds enter compulsory schools (i. grunnskóli). Playschools and compulsory schools are run by the municipalities, but on the basis of a national curriculum set by the government. It is important to note that the general part of the curriculum is the same for playschool, compulsory school, and upper secondary school, but then there are more specific parts for each level. The extensive general preamble discusses the fundamental pillars of education that should have an influence throughout all schoolwork. These are Literacy, Sustainability, Democracy and Human rights, Equality, Health and Welfare, and Creativity (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2011).

The terms used in the study are represented in the curriculum guide⁷. The term “leisure” (occurring 8 times) is used in connection with language learning, as language is also important in leisure time. The term ‘outdoor’ is used several times.⁸ Once it is used as a part of the fundamental pillars of education, but otherwise apparently as related to the subjects in the curriculum, where it is noted that

[a]dditionally, nature and the environment should, as far as possible, be used as a forum for learning and teaching, for example, in outdoor classes but also through the human resources of the local community, for example, the experience of parents and family (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014 p. 37).

In the Subject Areas part of the Icelandic national curriculum guide for compulsory schools, “outdoor” is used 20 times. It appears in connection with educational materials (1), foreign languages (1), natural science (4) and physical education (13) but the affordances emphasised in the current study are not part of the guidelines. The justification for being outdoors is clearly rationalised by how well it serves the subjects in question:

Concurrently with mobility training, outdoor teaching offers possibilities for using all the sense organs by linking tasks to various aspects of subject areas and subjects. Therefore, outdoor teaching is an effective addition to regular physical education and, at the same time, through integration with other subject areas. A variety of mobility training is involved in outdoor activities, especially in natural surroundings. Outdoor teaching is a feasible link between health education and sustainability in everyday life. Pupils should know, understand and respect nature and their immediate surroundings, man-made or natural. Pupils learn to dress according to the weather and bring food and safety equipment on their trips. Sense of direction and management are important factors and relevant in outdoor tours (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014 p. 188).

This long quote is meant to show that even if “outdoor” is often emphasised, it is practically always meant to serve a particular subject. Affordances that might have independent educational value are not present.

⁷ Here the reference is to the English translation of the curriculum guide.

⁸ The Icelandic terms *útinám* (outdoor learning) and *útimenntun* (Outdoor Education) are not found in the curriculum guide for compulsory schools, but the term *útikennsla* (outdoor teaching) appears six times. But the term ‘teaching in nature,’ when it appears is related mainly to the natural sciences.

It is important to note that Iceland has no national final examinations any school level, and when this is added to the relatively open framing of the curriculum guide, the freedom the municipalities and even individual schools have considerable freedom in implementing the guide at both playschool and compulsory school level. Thus, they would be relatively free to emphasise Outdoor Education, e.g. with a reference to affordances such as those being exemplified in this study, and even mould it according to circumstance and pedagogical interest – or to do the opposite and neglect it.

2.4.2 Leisure in Iceland

This field of education is vast and includes e.g. sports clubs (i. íþróttafélög), youth organizations (i. ungmenna- og æskulýðsfélög), youth centres (i. félagsmiðstöðvar) and leisure “homes” (i. frístundaheimili). It is not clear if music schools (i. Tónlistarskólar, which are a part of the school system) should be included. Here, emphasis is placed on describing open youth work (i. frístundastarf) that is organized and supported by the local municipalities. Leisure homes (named “after-school centres” in the laws) are operated for children aged 6-9 (Kristjánisdóttir & Pálsdóttir, 2017), and youth centres for children aged 10-16, with a focus on teenagers aged 13-16. (Rúnarsdóttir & Valdimarsdóttir, 2017). The provision of after-school centres is defined in the Compulsory School Act No. 91 (2008), article 33a:

All children in the younger cohorts of compulsory school must have the opportunity to enjoy the services of an after-school centre. After-school centres are facilities where children can engage in after-school activities and which emphasise children’s own choice, free play, and diversity in the activities pursued and the environment provided. The organisation of the services provided by after-school centres must take into account the needs, level of maturity and interests of each child.

Each local authority is responsible for guaranteeing the professionalism of after-school centres, and for deciding on the organisation of their activities and the legal form chosen, using the integration of school and after-school activities and the needs of children as guiding principles.

The demand for the provision is clear, even if the content of the service provided is quite open. The Ministry of Education and Children issues quality criteria for after-school activities (Stjórnarráð Íslands, 2018) which are discussed in the Theme booklet (Sturludóttir, 2021) about after-school centres and in a self-assessment tool (Stjórnarráð Íslands, 2021). The theme booklet discusses play and learning based on children’s circumstances, including social and communication skills, play and democracy, children’s voices, diversity and multiculturalism, language and literacy, outdoor activities and adventures, creative work, integration and cooperation, leadership and

development work, and the environment of after-school centres. The quality criteria defined concerning children's outdoor activities are quite open:

[O]utdoor work and events are a regular featured [...] The housing and the outdoor area are safe and organized according to the criteria of the leisure activities, equitable opportunities and the different needs of children [...] and children are encouraged to be curious and to take part in diverse and demanding activities in which nature and the nearest environment are used as a platform. (Stjórnarráð Íslands, 2018, p. 1)

Despite the fact that the history of youth centres for adolescents in Iceland reaches back to 1957 (Guðmundsson, 2006), today, there are no laws or regulations regarding this form of institution. Thus, even though the structures are in place, these are not clearly established within a legislated system. The Youth Act (2007) sets a general framework for youth issues in Iceland, but the aim of the act is to support the involvement of young people in youth activities. The emphasis is that, in organized youth work, one should consider its social, preventive, pedagogical, and educational value. The objective is to enhance the participants' human qualities and promote their democratic consciousness. Provisions on the financial liabilities of the state in this matter primarily focus on the support provided by local authorities for youth activities. There are general guidelines for the work environment in youth activities, where individuals in charge of children and young people should be legally of age and have the required training, education, knowledge, or experience for the job. At the time of this writing the Youth Act is under review, and there have been some debates in the Alþingi parliament about the need to prepare legislation on youth centres and their statutes, and a proposal for a parliamentary resolution has been submitted (Þingskjal nr. 269/2013–2014).

It is important to keep in mind that the concept of leisure is extensive and defined by different approaches, such as time, activity, quality, attitude, and function (Sigurgeirsdóttir, 2010). As a result, various systems or leisure services covering sports, recreation, and health are related to Outdoor Education or activities such as outdoor recreation areas, ski resorts, sailing clubs, and swimming facilities. Therefore, the picture of outdoor activities becomes quite complex from the perspective of leisure, as it is difficult to define the boundaries of this professional field. This has to be kept in mind when discussing important issues like quality, access, roles and responsibilities.

2.4.3 The place of the affordances of Outdoor Education within the system

With reference to Outdoor Education within the system(s) there are a number of challenges, even if it can be shown that what it affords is valuable and that there are possibly equity arguments for bringing Outdoor Education, adopting a wide

perspective, into schools, or another system (assuming it could be outside the school system).

If Outdoor Education is to be brought **within** the school system perhaps the most formidable of these challenges is the traditional curriculum (e.g., Jónasson, 2016). The most recent curriculum guide noted above does in fact give considerable leeway for harnessing the affordances of Outdoor Education for general educational purposes. But then possible affordances have to be clarified and established as valuable educational contenders for the place within the system. The challenge of establishing Outdoor Education **outside** the school system, if that would be the path taken, is that the organisational structures that are in place (e.g. the youth clubs or other leisure services), lack both institutional backing, in terms of aims supporting Outdoor Education, and financial support (both requiring governmental legislation) that would enable the development of Outdoor Education outside the school system.

Thus, it is difficult to find a place for the potentially important contribution of Outdoor Education to good education within or outside the school system as these systems currently stand. My current task is to examine the educational and social arguments for including Outdoor Education. Having research-informed position statements may support future discussion within policy development both within and outside the school system to encourage a broader understanding of quality education incorporating a range of educational spaces, including outdoor environments (Higgins, 2019).

2.5 Important perspectives for the study

The research process is discussed in general terms within this kappa but here I will highlight three important perspectives relevant to the framing of this kappa and the direction this research took.

The notion of *place* as an important theoretical guide came only gradually into the study but became a major theoretical factor. First, the theoretical basis of the research project draws on ideas about place-based and place-responsive education or pedagogy (see for example Mannion et al., 2012; Mannion & Lynch, 2016; Seamon 2014; Smith & Sobel, 2010; Tuan, 1977; Wattachow & Brown, 2011). However, in the beginning, I understood the meaning of place in educational purposes rather narrowly in relation to geographic location or in a physical sense: where something exists or occurs. I would choose places to visit or teach within for practical reasons such as knowing them well or having a contact person there who could be helpful. The importance of place gradually became clear to me as the research process unfolded, and the concept of place became central. In the end, three papers were written involving place or destination as a key concept (papers I, II, and IV).

Second, discourse and *language* – first derived from the focus groups with professionals in the field of Outdoor Education – shaped my thinking, and subsequently

my research approach. Two Icelandic terms about experience (i. *upplifun* and *reynsla*) became important issue to consider regarding Outdoor Education (see appendix A). Therefore, the issue of professional discourse within Iceland became crucial. The power of discourse is significant, as it was defined by Foucault (1978) and shapes practice and worldviews. Part of the work involved defining and explaining key concepts (see definitions in appendix H) and attempting to express various concepts in English while still being faithful to Icelandic terminology regarding learning outside. This struggle persisted throughout the entire writing process.

Third, the issue of “friendship” in a broad sense gradually appeared as an important element. In relation to Outdoor Education and nature, friendship can be defined as a deep connection and bond that forms between individuals who engage in outdoor activities and share experiences in nature. In theoretical discussion of Outdoor Education, this social element could be referred to by names such as social development (Higgins & Loynes, 1997), communication skills and relations towards ourselves and others (Gilbertson et al., 2006) and group values (Humberstone et al., 2016). Kuo et al. (2019) associates greener settings with the development of meaningful and trusting friendships between peers. In this kappa, we also identify friendship with nature or places where people form attachments (Seamon, 2014). It can be described as a deep emotional connection and sense of kinship with the natural world. For the most part, researchers portray place attachment as a multifaceted concept that characterizes the bonds between individuals and their important places (Giuliani, 2003). This goes beyond simply appreciating and enjoying nature; it involves developing a bond with and feeling a sense of belonging to specific natural environments or landscapes. Scannell and Gifford (2010) synthesized various definitions of place attachment concept into a three-dimensional framework that includes person, process, and place. Further scholarly discussion about the importance of these concepts in the context of Outdoor Education can be gleaned from the papers.

These very different key issues or perspectives are core to the overarching research aims and questions which will be introduced later. In summary, this study focusses on the discourse on Outdoor Education, the affordances of Outdoor Education, and how outdoor behaviour of children is impacted. It also transpires, e.g., in my ideas about future studies and my policy and practical recommendation that I continue to explore new ideas that make me see things in a new light, gain a new perspective – and yes, experience new doubts. Everything is constantly evolving.

3 The study: Methodology and methods

My research strategy is based on my general belief that cooperation and interdisciplinary research are imperative, as well as on studies that seek to broaden the scope of education beyond a narrow focus on formal school education. This can also be supported by Sparkes and Smith (2014) when they write about the importance of multi- and inter-disciplinary research that draws on quantitative and qualitative approaches from various traditions.

3.1 A frame set by phenomenology and pragmatism

The epistemology of the core area of the study is grounded in both phenomenology and pragmatism. For me as researcher in the field of Outdoor Education, phenomenology is attractive as it offers potential to gain an understanding of what participants experience and the meanings that they create by interpreting from those experiences (Telford, 2019). Phenomenology focuses on the subjective experiences and conscious phenomena of individuals, aiming to describe and understand their lived experiences. As the foundation of educational qualitative research design (Creswell, 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2016), it offers a philosophical underpinning for understanding human experiences within educational contexts. In Telford's (2019) discussion of phenomenology from the perspective of research in outdoor studies, he points out that phenomenology is literally the study "of that which appears" (p.49). Rooted in phenomenology as a philosophy, qualitative research within education is inherently embedded within various philosophical paradigms. These paradigms offer diverse perspectives on reality, emphasizing the contextual nature of educational phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Husserl (1970) is often considered as the founder of phenomenology as a philosophy (Telford, 2019) and emphasizes that understanding the substance of experience could only be accomplished via the process of description, not explanation. Any attempt at explanation without description would involve assumptions and speculation. Phenomenology has provided me a framework for exploring the essence of educational phenomena as they are perceived and understood by individuals within their unique contexts. This approach fed into the aims and research questions in my study, with emphasis on the lived experiences of the study participants and their reflection. This is clearly found in the papers that constitute the core area of the study.

Pragmatism, on the other hand, emphasizes the practical consequences and utility of ideas and beliefs. As an epistemological position in educational research, pragmatism offers a flexible and inclusive approach that can accommodate a variety of

methodologies (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). In line with the phenomenological approach, it encourages the use of mixed research methods and emphasises the provisional nature of knowledge and the importance of reflection and analysis in generating it (Gibson & Leather, 2019). Furthermore, it provides a way to acknowledge values in research, which is particularly relevant in the field of education (Greenbank, 2003). Pragmatists believe that the value of an idea is determined by its practical outcomes and the results it produces in real-world contexts. It focuses on the application and effectiveness of knowledge in practical situations. These characteristics make pragmatism a valuable perspective in an educational study like this, as it allows for a more comprehensive and contextually sensitive understanding of educational phenomena such as Outdoor Education.

The phenomenological and pragmatic strands share an emphasis on human experience and the importance of context and situatedness of knowledge. Quay (2013) underscores the importance of these two experiential approaches and notes how pragmatism (after Dewey) and phenomenology (after Heidegger) offer a nuanced view of the relationship between the self, the other, and nature.

A number of different research methods are used in the study, reflecting how this endeavour focusses in some cases on the expression of experiences as determined by the participants rather than the researcher, even though he moulded the overall plan. It is constantly emphasised in the kappa that the many methods used do not necessarily reflect one coherent philosophical approach (as discussed in chapter 3). The analysis of the information obtained involved bracketing or distancing the interpretation from one's own strong views (Wilson, 2015). This also refers to bracketing details specific to an experience (Telford, 2019), rich interpretation of the data, attempting to construct a holistic picture of the results, and being sensitive to the context, in which place and nature play a big part. Further discussion in this section will address the process of collecting and analyzing data, but mainly in each paper. In line with the culture of the phenomenological approach, I endeavour – as far as the different journals allow – to present rich available data in order to clarify the basis for my conclusions.

3.2 Researcher position – being a reflexive practitioner

Advice from Braun and Clarke (2013) about subjectivity has stuck with me. When enjoying academic freedom and having chosen a field of interest, researchers often (as in my case) study the reality they know and ask questions that excite them. They call this a subjective process and argue that researchers' personal histories, values, assumptions, perspectives, politics, and mannerisms inevitably shape their research. Consequently, any knowledge produced will reflect these factors. As an experienced practitioner and advocate in the field of Outdoor Education in Iceland, I grappled with the ethical dilemma of my personal involvement. I feel I have, during my professional life, significantly contributed to the field through my work, policymaking, teaching, and

research, and certainly I recognized the potential bias and selectivity that could arise from my deep engagement. Initially, I aimed for an unbiased and autonomous perspective, but I soon realized this was impossible. I acknowledge that a completely value-neutral stance is unattainable, but I adhere to the advice of Braun and Clarke (2013) to reflect and consider it carefully. This process of being reflexive is at the heart of the phenomenological approach, and reflexivity is a crucial aspect of conducting good research. Within a research context, reflexivity involves the critical examination of the knowledge we produce and our role in producing that knowledge. Wilkinson (1988) differentiates between two forms of reflexivity: functional and personal. Functional reflexivity entails giving critical attention to the manner in which our research tools and processes may have influenced the research outcome. Personal reflexivity in research, on the other hand, involves incorporating the researcher into the research process, making their presence visible, and allowing them to be part of the research experience (see, e.g., the initial prologue above).

There is a strong tradition of reflective practice in Outdoor Education (Asfeldt & Stonehouse, 2021), and it has gradually become part of all my practice. I feel like I am standing on a solid foundation in this tradition, where I strive to reflect on what has happened and share it with others. I am also willing to make an effort to understand other perspectives and be receptive to the idea of having my practice reviewed by others. Prince (2021) aptly describes being a reflexive practitioner:

The term 'reflexive practitioner' is used to question self-attitudes, thinking, values, assumptions, prejudices and habitual actions to understand an individual's role in relation to others. Reflexive practitioners operate at a deeper, more critical level, have an openness to multiple perspectives and create innovative non-dichotomous solutions, which can be informed by research. The key focus is on beliefs, values, professional identities and consciousness of wider social, cultural, historical, linguistic and political dimensions. (p. 351)

One could say that this is a difficult task to live up to, but each day I have tried to accomplish it. This is not an issue that is "done with" by writing a chapter about it in a research proposal. It involves each word I write and the whole process, to the end (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Prince (2021) describes the differences between reflection and reflexivity through a visual image. As one gains more experience, "reflection deepens and becomes more critical leading to reflexivity" (p. 352). She claims that the end goal is that "research studies (empirical, theoretical and conceptual) will initiate reflection at the individual level that may in turn effect changes in practice" (p. 353).

This has, I hope, characterised my research and thus solidified the connection between the phenomenological and pragmatic approaches I have adopted.

3.3 Mixed Methods Design

In line with both the phenomenological stance adopted, which is in turn in line with the pragmatic stance taken, I opted for embedded mixed method design, which involves using a variety of different methods (Gibson & Leather, 2019; Peacock & Brymer, 2019). The discussion of both approaches above makes this choice obvious. There is no hiding the fact that including the questionnaire method which forms the basis of papers IV and 5 is determined by the HBSC⁹ approach, which provided particularly relevant data for this study and on that basis contributes to the mixed methods design. But this approach does not otherwise fit well into the phenomenological stance adopted.

Mixed methods design (Braun & Clarke, 2013) has gained popularity, not only within the social sciences, but also in other disciplines (Creswell, 2014; Flick, 2018). In general terms the design is advantageous because it combines various types of data, enabling researchers to use the strengths of different research approaches. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study compared to using just one method (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This approach is particularly prevalent within educational endeavours outside the school system, where it has been employed in various contexts, including outdoor centres and leisure (Stuart et al., 2015) and Outdoor Education (Gibson & Leather, 2019; Peacock & Brymer, 2019). But more specifically, it fits the phenomenological approach (Telford, 2019), especially the various methods used in papers I-III. Thus, by adopting mixed methods research design, my aim was to produce research that is nuanced, contextually grounded, and ultimately useful to the communities and stakeholders involved in our study. Although mixed methods research has many strengths, there are several challenges associated with it. According to Teye (2012), mixed methods require a significant amount of time and energy, which indeed fits with my experience. Additionally, integrating findings during the final stages of research can be challenging (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003).

There two specific reasons that have some importance in my choice of the survey (quantitative) method in my study. Soon after I entered the programme it was emphasised that a doctoral degree should attest to mastering a variety of methods and I looked for reasons to use the quantitative approach strengthen my competence. But soon I realised that working with the HBSC data allowed me to include a social dimension that I felt was missing from the qualitative studies I was doing. In my teaching and my policy roles this perspective has always been particularly important to

⁹ Stands for Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) and is a questionnaire for children in the 6th, 8th, and 10th grades. The HBSC study is based on a research collaboration dating back to 1983 and is in cooperation with the WHO Regional Office for Europe (Inchley et al., 2020).

me. Thus, even though it might be argued that I was sacrificing depth for breadth, I would argue that the opposite was being attained, i.e. serving the depth of the Outdoor Education discussion by keeping the perspective open. A point I was attempting to make in my prologue.

Five methods were used to gather rich and broad data: focus groups interviews, photo-elicitation, students' written academic assessments (documents as data), observations, and a questionnaire. Table 2 provides an overview of the methods and the papers where they are used, and Table 3 gives an overview of the research methods, papers, data collection and analysis.

Table 1. A list of the five principal research methods in the study and a reference to the papers where they are used.

Five principal research methods				
Focus groups	Photo-elicitation	Written academic assessments	HBSC questionnaires	Observations
*Paper I Developing a Sense of Place	Paper II Students understanding of a sense of place and emerging meanings	*Paper I Developing a Sense of Place	Paper IV How 'Outdoors Time' transforms the social relationships of children in Iceland	Paper II Exploring a pedagogy of place in Iceland
Paper II Exploring a pedagogy of place in Iceland		Paper II Exploring a pedagogy of place in Iceland:	Paper V Youth's encounter with popular destinations. Leisure, tourism, and education	Paper III Under an open sky: Reflections and challenges of university students
Background study		Paper III Under an open sky: Reflections and challenges of university students		

* Paper I explores the theoretical foundations of what is meant by a sense of place, and the challenges and opportunities that developing a sense of place brings to Outdoor Education now and in the future. Our research data was utilized to identify these challenges and opportunities

Table 2. Overview of the research methods, papers, data collection, and analysis.

Research methods, papers, data collection and analysis			
What	Paper	Collection	Analysis
Focus groups			
Focus group (groups numbers 1-3) with experienced outdoor educators	Background study	December 2016	Feb - June 2017
Focus group (group number 4) with students and professionals	Paper I and II	August 2018	Dec 2018 - Jan 2019
Written academic assessments			
Students written academic assessments (summaries from reflection journals)	Paper III	59 from 2014, 2015 and 2017	Sept 2017 - March 2019 and in March 2021
Students written academic assessments (research project and reflective journal)	Paper II	August 2018	October - December 2018
Questionnaires			
HBSC questionnaire. Four questions about children and the outdoors	Paper IV and V	January to March 2018	August 2018 - Jan 2021

Each paper has a section that describes its methods, but in appendix B, I have added more thorough descriptions of action research, focus groups, photo-elicitation, complementary data (educators' observations, photos, and a researcher journal) and a questionnaire that I was not able to incorporate in as much detail as I wanted in any of the papers, for reasons of length. A part of the research evolved as action research. Two courses were examined and reported on in papers I, II and III. Action research provided valuable opportunities for the authors to reflect on our teaching practice, engage in problem-solving, and make informed decisions. I found that it supported my theoretical knowledge fostered collaboration and promoted continuous improvement and innovation in my teaching.

3.4 Ethical issues

Ethical issues are discussed in each paper. Here, I want to emphasise how the phenomenological approach I adopted directed me towards the combination of flexibility and respect for the views of the participants when this was possible, but at the same time ensuring rigour in the treatment and interpretation of the data.

The ethical issues that arose relate primarily to anonymity, respect for the views of the participants, and ensuring that they were informed about how the material that was gathered in various projects would be used for research purposes. This mainly concerned the reports included in papers I-III, as the research reported in papers IV and V was a part of the HBSC study.

When conducting focus group interviews in the initial stage of the research, I personally adopted a more of a formal stance and had an assistant who supported me in that role. I followed a rigorous procedure in the preparation of the data collection. Introductory letters were provided (see example in appendix C) and signed consent requested from all participants in the qualitative part of the research (see example in appendix D); this was followed by well-prepared discussion guides (see appendix E). In order to ensure the quality of the research, the participants were carefully chosen. The aim was to gather a diverse and heterogeneous group representing a variety of fields within Outdoor Education and Recreation (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Measures were taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. When working with the HBSC data, the procedure of the HBSC research team was followed.

In analysing the interviews in the research, notably papers II and III, I was very aware of my preconceptions. To overcome the potential limitations arising from my possible “blindness,” I collaborated with experienced researchers when analysing the data and writing all the papers. This approach made the analysis process more focused and improved its quality, as well as ensuring that the presentation of results and discussions considered multiple perspectives. External experts were also involved in the data analysis to provide additional insights, such as asking critical questions and engaging in dialogue about our assumptions. The purpose of the research was not to generalize or prove a theory, but to examine the affordances of Outdoor Education in Iceland from more than one perspective. We used the research to better understand the educational experience, both to be able to put it in an academic context and to strengthen ourselves as teachers and develop the courses further.

3.5 Working in two languages

It was certainly a methodological challenge to work in two languages, especially in a relatively new field without a terminological tradition, meaning that different terms are used to refer to essentially the same phenomena and often mutually agreed-upon terms in Icelandic are simply lacking. I found this to be particularly challenging in performing

the analysis for the unpublished background study, but also in writing up all the published papers. I take this up in the discussion chapter. In this connection I note that as a collateral benefit of this research project, two products have been developed. One is a chapter in Icelandic: Leisure and education (i. Tómsundur og menntun, see Þorsteinsson, 2017) about formal, informal, and non-formal education. The other is a glossary of leisure studies¹⁰ with definitions and explanations in Icelandic of key terms in the field of Outdoor Education.

¹⁰ I was a member of the terminology committee of leisure studies and participated in writing definitions and explanations in Icelandic of key terms in the field of Outdoor Education.

4 The research landscape: framework

The research as a whole spans a broad field, and its theoretical context is presented in each paper. In this chapter I choose to address two aspects that concern the basis of the study, namely Outdoor Education and Nature. A thorough conceptual analysis of the major terms underpinning this study such as education, Outdoor Education, and Nature is beyond the scope of this work, but a brief discussion of the latter two attempts to clarify the breadth and complexity of the issues addressed in my research.

4.1 Outdoor Education

First, I will establish an understanding of what Outdoor Education entails and how it can be defined. This leads to the introduction of models of Outdoor Education and the introduction of three different approaches evident in the literature: Place-based Education, Friluftsliv, and Adventure Education. This is followed by a discussion of the benefits, challenges and opportunities of Outdoor Education, after which I bring the focus back to Iceland and discuss various issues related to this field of education, such as the discourse. The second half of the chapter is about Nature and is divided into three subsections: Nature and Environment as a Fundamental Component in Outdoor Education, Children's Connection to Nature, and Changes in Children's Outdoor Life.

4.1.1 Defining Outdoor Education

The origins of modern Outdoor Education are diverse and include organized camping in Europe, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The development of the Scout movement also played a role. Quay and Seaman (2013) argue that throughout the 20th century, Outdoor Education had periods of both success and struggle. The six "waves" of historical developments in Outdoor Education that Allison (2016) has identified can be seen as a description of "success and struggle." The waves include Exploration, Personal and Social Development, Environmental Education, Curriculum Connections, Sustainability and Climate Change, and Inter-Cultural Education. With each wave the definition developed and changed.

Higgins and Nicol (2002) explain that Outdoor Education is a concept shaped by culture, and that different countries may have different approaches and applications. Even within the same country, different groups may have varying definitions. Definitions of Outdoor Education and explanations of its content have evolved over time and are widely debated internationally. Quay and Seaman (2013) state that over the past century, close to hundred different terms have been used to define the essence or

'thing' that is Outdoor Education¹¹. Indeed, some academics, including Nicol (2002) and Wattchow and Brown (2011) argue that no universal definition exists and that attempting to build one is fruitless endeavour. It can be therefore quite challenging to navigate through different definitions, but it is necessary when trying to understand the affordances of Outdoor Education to sharpen one's understanding of the concept.

Donaldson and Donaldson defined Outdoor Education in the fifties as "education in, about, and for the outdoors" (1958, p. 63). Mortlock (1984) later stated that Outdoor Education should endeavour to educate students about love and awareness of self, others, and the environment. Gilbertson et al. (2006) wrote that Outdoor Education is divided into three categories: (1) understanding the ecological relations of the environment, (2) developing physical skills, and (3) developing communication skills and relations toward ourselves and others. According to Carpenter and Harper (2016), it has been a long-standing aim of Outdoor Experiential Education to facilitate meaningful and healthy human-nature relationships. Quay (2013) argues that Outdoor Education goes beyond the connection between oneself, others, and nature, and should rather recognise the aesthetic experience as an important factor.

From the above examples, the term "Outdoor Education" is experiential and refers to the study of the outdoors, environment, and nature. It also encompasses the inclusion of ourselves and others as part of this learning domain. According to Rickinson et al. (2004), it needs to be kept in mind that Outdoor Education is as complicated and wide-ranging a phenomenon in content as it is in context.

A significant subject of debate regarding Outdoor Education is whether it is primarily a method, a form of pedagogy, or an approach to teaching and learning; or if it is a separate subject with its own theories, concepts, and content (or even a discipline – see e.g., Dymont and Potter (2015); Potter and Dymont (2016)). Outdoor Studies has been employed in recent decades as an alternative because some academics and practitioners viewed the concept of Outdoor Education as overly limited. They considered that Outdoor Education did not cover the whole range of study and practise, which led to the perception that it was not educational. In some countries, this increased concern coincided with the marginalisation of the outdoors in school curricula. At the same time, knowledge of the importance of outdoor activities was increasing worldwide, along with the number of potential opportunities to engage in various types of outdoor activities. Many professionals wanted to capture an understanding of outdoor environments through environmental education and human-nature interactions using interpretative and reflexive methods (Humberstone et al.,

¹¹ To name a few nature education, camping education, conservation education, environmental education, adventure education, experiential education, earth education, bioregional education, ecological education, place-based education (p. xiii)

2016). The Routledge Handbook of Outdoor Studies¹² defines outdoor studies as a

discipline which includes the study of perceptions and responses to the natural environment, personal and environmental philosophy, environmental knowledge and outdoor skills. Using direct experience, it seeks to raise environmental awareness and encourage personal development within a framework of individual and group values and safety. (Humberstone et al., 2016, p. 2)

Humberstone et al. (2016) further argues that outdoor studies “fruitfully encompasses a broad range of approaches, foci and methods such as, but not limited to, experiential learning, adventure education, organised camps, environmental education, outdoor leadership, nature-based sport and wilderness therapy” (Humberstone et al., 2016, p. 2). In this research project I use Outdoor Education as a core concept because it centres on education, and I argue that education (i. menntun) has broad meaning. I refer to Skúlason’s (2009, p. 41-42) explanation on the nature of education:

Proper education involves learning to navigate ambiguous situations, shaping one’s relationships with others in both personal and societal contexts, and developing one’s understanding of life and existence, oneself, other people, and discerning what is important and what is not.¹³

We do not acquire such an education only in formal institutions like school, (at least not while accepting the current operational modes), but importantly through various active engagements in society. There is no sufficient definition and explanation of Outdoor Education in Icelandic. The purpose of this project is not to define Outdoor Education, but rather to highlight aspects that are important to consider when defining and describing Outdoor Education from Icelandic perspective.

4.1.2 Models of Outdoor Education

Models, diagrams, or schematic representation are used by academics and in policy to describe the field of Outdoor Education which can provide practical and visual descriptions of the phenomenon (Higgins, 2019). Five models (see Figure 11 – 14 in appendix F) provide examples of issues related to how Outdoor Education has been explained. These issues manifest in different experiments that describe Outdoor

¹² The intention was to be the first book to define and analyse the multi-disciplinary set of approaches that constitute the broad field of outdoor studies, involving outdoor recreation, Outdoor Education, adventure education, environmental studies, physical culture studies and leisure studies.

¹³ In Icelandic: Eiginleg menntun felst í því að læra að sjá sér farborða, móta samlíf sitt með öðrum í einkalífi og þjóðlífi og þroska hugsun sína um lífið og tilveruna, sjálfan sig, annað fólk og átta sig á því hvað skiptir máli og hvað ekki.

Education and the important factors it includes, such as which educational areas are in focus, where it takes place, and what the key concepts are. In this way, different models shed light on what is emphasized when Outdoor Education is explained. This is important to consider when examining the affordances of Outdoor Education and when linguistic or cultural differences are considered. These are more thoroughly described in appendix F.

According to Gair (1997), Outdoor Education encompasses a wide range of subjects taught in outdoor settings, including human-made or natural environments. Gair's continuum places school tasks and academic subjects like geology, geography, and natural sciences on one end, suitable for field trips and studies in both wilderness and urban areas. On the other end are adventure education tasks like hiking, mountaineering, sailing, cave exploration, rafting, skiing, and climbing – activities involving physical activities in untouched natural environments. The UK's National Association for Outdoor Education presented a model (see Figure 10 in appendix F) with three overlapping circles describing Outdoor Studies, outdoor pursuits, and the residential experience. Higgins and Loynes (1997) introduced a similar model in Scotland (see Figure 11 in appendix F) emphasizing integrating outdoor activities, environmental education, and personal and social growth. This reflects a growing emphasis on environmental concerns in Outdoor Education. Simon Priest's (1986) earlier model portrayed Outdoor Education as a tree with adventure and environmental branches, emphasizing six key aspects (see Figure 12 in appendix F). In the UK, particularly in Scotland, there has been a shift towards integrating outdoor learning into the formal curriculum (Christie et al., 2016), emphasizing local environments and accessibility. "The four zones of outdoor learning" model (see Figure 13 in appendix F) places the school at the centre, categorizing outdoor learning into different zones and recognizing the grounds of the institution are not just a playground but also an educational space. The shift toward outside educational spaces is an important one and is still evolving, and it requires us to pay attention to the place we are in (Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

4.1.3 Place-based education, friluftsliv and adventure education

Apart from the aforementioned models I seek to grasp the breadth of Outdoor Education through three approaches that are relevant to the published papers and are therefore important to clearly understand in this research project: Place-based education, Friluftsliv, and Adventure Education. These approaches provide insight into the development in this field of education. A more detailed description of the three approaches can be found in appendix G, and a formal definition of the concepts in English and Icelandic are in appendix H.

Place-based Education is well established (see e.g., Gruenewald, 2003; Somerville et al., 2012; Wattchow & Brown, 2011) and builds on the value of connecting learning to where you live. People, locale, and activity all interact to create place experiences

(Wattchow, 2021). This challenges simplistic notions of experience, is critical, and highlights the connections to places and the cultural and ecological politics that shape educational practices (Gruenewald, 2003). Place-based Outdoor Education attends to the subjective experience of place, integrates skill development and activities, and engages with the more-than-human aspects of the environment (Mannion & Lynch, 2016). In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the importance of responsiveness, with Mannion et al. (2012) proposing place-responsive pedagogy. The term 'responsive' carries the expectation to take action and respond (Wattchow, 2021). This stems from a critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003) and the need to 'transform' the places in which we live in terms of being responsive to a sustainable future: for people, place, planet; for the human and more-than-human world. This responsiveness can be seen when Loynes (2018) advocates reconsidering a well-known phrase 'leave no trace' and argues in favour of an ethic of 'leave more trace' in a positive sense. He proposes that this way of thinking could facilitate connections between people and nature, prompting them to 'consider their trace' and take action 'for' the environment.

Friluftsliv, a philosophy of education and recreation deeply rooted in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, refers to a specific field of outdoor activities and outdoor learning (Bentsen, Andkjær & Ejbye-Ernst, 2009). It is about dwelling and physical activity outdoors during the free time, with the aim of entering a new environment and experiencing nature. Gelter (2000) writes that "deep experience of the landscape is the essence and reward of a lifestyle we call "friluftsliv" (p.78) adding that it is a "philosophical lifestyle based on experiences of the freedom in nature and the spiritual connectedness with the landscape" (p. 78). Its meaning is influenced by cultural and historical contexts, with three waves of development identified in Denmark (Bentsen, Andkjær & Ejbye-Ernst, 2009).

Adventure education takes place in natural environments and aims to enhance students' physical abilities and social skills through outdoor projects (Prouty et al., 2007). It involves direct, active, and engaging learning experiences with real or perceived risk, focusing on individual and group development. The concept of adventure encompasses the unknown, challenges, and increased awareness and respect for oneself, others, and nature (Brendtro & Strother, 2007; Hopkins & Putnam, 1993; Weber, 2001).

Place-based education, *friluftsliv*, and adventure education shed light on the various perspective of Outdoor Education in Iceland. For example, various fields of adventure education have been used in leisure and therapeutic work in Iceland, such as adventure therapy for children and adolescents (Árnadóttir & Hafbergsdóttir, 2015). Icelandic outdoor culture has its roots in Scandinavia, where *friluftsliv* is a defining force. In recent years, there has been increasing emphasis on place and place-based education, which became one of the main focuses of the research.

4.1.4 Benefits, Challenges and Opportunities for Outdoor Education

Substantial international literature addresses the possible benefits of outdoor learning experiences, as well as the unexploited potential of Outdoor Education and its connection to health and wellbeing (Barfod et al., 2016; Bentsen, Mygind & Randrup, 2009; Christie et al., 2016; Fägerstam, 2014; Waite, 2011). Much of the literature focuses on largely positive outcomes and suggests that Outdoor Education offers educational opportunities based on authenticity, pupil agency, and interdisciplinary teaching/learning approaches. The strength of Outdoor Education lies in its multifaceted and interdisciplinary nature, the way it extends within and between primary and secondary school contexts, and how it can include both formal and non-formal educational experiences.

Scholars and researchers around the world have observed a range of positive effects of outdoor learning and education as it relates to, amongst other things, the potential to increase ecological awareness, improve memory, improve one's views toward one's abilities, increase solidarity, the strengthening of bonds in groups, along with strengthening the self-image of individuals (Carpenter & Harper, 2016; Gurholt, 2016; Higgins & Nicol, 2002; Leather, 2018; Mygind, 2005; Rickinson et al., 2004; Þorsteinsson, 2011). Outdoor Education offers a host of possibilities for diverse subjects and methods (Beames et al., 2024). In a research summary, *Reconnecting Children Through Outdoor Education* (Foster & Linney, 2007), the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario noted four key values of outdoor and experiential education: community, wellbeing, character, and environment. Also, numerous studies show that teachers agree on the educational importance of children taking time to play outside (Norðdahl, 2015; Norðdahl & Jóhannesson, 2016). In the Nordic countries, many preschools emphasize that children's games should take place outdoors or in a natural environment, and outdoor activities are usually inscribed into the schools' curriculums. Therefore, the curriculum at preschool is organized in such a way that children devote a certain amount of time outside each day to play (Norðdahl, 2015).

Warren and Breunig (2019) discuss the challenges of inclusion and social justice in Outdoor Education, highlighting how these struggles reflect broader societal issues of equity. They argue that historical, structural, and institutional barriers continue to hinder equal access and opportunity within outdoor and environmental education programmes. The field's early history, characterised by its association with white, male, and class-privileged demographics, still shapes the administration and practices of such programmes. This historical context has perpetuated a singular worldview in Outdoor Education, which often excludes the voices and participation of marginalised communities. Despite progress in increasing the involvement of women and people of colour in outdoor programmes, leadership positions within outdoor and educational organisations remain predominantly held by white males (Jordan, 2018; Rogers & Rose, 2019). Gray and Mitten (2018) have criticised traditional Outdoor Education models for

perpetuating patriarchal norms and gendered divisions of labour. Gray (2018) calls for a long-overdue conversation within the profession to commit to sustainable structural and cultural reform to advance gender equality. In Gray et al.'s (2020) paper, they highlight some efforts underway to address gender inequities and promote institutional and cultural adjustments.

Crosbie (2016) reminds us that all participants, disabled people and non-disabled people, seek to experience outdoor adventures because they can find enjoyment, appreciate nature, achieve personal goals, and have the opportunity to overcome obstacles. The discourse surrounding the inclusion of disabled people in outdoor activities encompasses various models and philosophical perspectives, aiming to address both the practical challenges and the ideological underpinnings of such inclusion. Loeffler (2021) emphasises the need for a paradigm shift towards embracing new practices, pedagogies, and policies to foster diversity and inclusion. She especially highlights the importance, in professional education, that students receive instruction in programmatic contexts where inclusive practice is both discussed and demonstrated. By doing so, they will be better equipped to welcome and support all participants in their programmes.

Additionally, issues such as land colonisation and the disproportionate placement of environmentally harmful infrastructure in marginalised communities underscore the need for social justice in environmental education (Thomas, 2022). Indigenous scholars advocate for decolonizing Outdoor Education curricula in order to recognise and integrate diverse ways of knowing, respect Indigenous sovereignty, and encourage cross-cultural understanding (Battiste, 2013).

I have discussed challenges that are very important to consider when discussing benefits and opportunities for Outdoor Education. These factors include access, inclusion, indigenous perspectives, and feminism. This field of education is complex, and it is crucial to have a critical eye in order to understand the diversity of perspectives within Outdoor Education.

The School of Education offers a programme called "Vocational Studies for people with disabilities." The program is inclusive, and students have the opportunity to take courses in various areas. It has been quite popular to take courses that I supervise in the field of Outdoor Education. This experience has been very positive for me, but also challenging. My own attitudes (sometimes prejudices), e.g., regarding the type of outdoor experiences I value most for the students. I have had to reconsider and change what I do, where I go, and how the sessions are organised. Another issue is: How do I work with different perspectives and expectations within the student group and provide everyone with the opportunity to challenge themselves physically, mentally, or socially? The emphases reflected in the writings of Loeffler (2021) and Aylward (2020) have been motivation and guidance for me – especially those related to the role of an outdoor educator to model in real life what we are discussing and reading about. But I

am also aware that I am still learning, and various ideas and approaches that I have in mind need to be reviewed. I find it crucial to better understand the social and cultural landscape of the places where Outdoor Education takes place, which can be inspiring and inclusive. This landscape significantly influences individuals' experiences, the entire group, and the larger communities we reside in.

4.1.5 Outdoor Education in Iceland

I have discussed Outdoor Education from an international perspective. Now we set sail to Iceland. The main emphasis is on the discourse and how Outdoor Education is understood by professionals and reflected in official documents. The discussion is divided into two sections about concepts and meanings, as well as the challenges of translating concepts.

Outdoor Education is a growing topic within Icelandic schools and leisure, with a variety of interesting developments and initiatives implemented over the recent years. The interest in Iceland, as in other countries, begs several questions about the features and value of Outdoor Education and how it should or might fit into the overarching system of youth work and education.

Whilst professional practice has progressed, the discourse of the educational sector and its role within school and leisure is less clear. This uncertainty and lack of identity and cohesion could hinder further development and policy making, given that the value and opportunities that such a practice affords may not be visible, and might therefore go unrecognized.

The problem we see in Iceland (which could be the case in other countries as well) is that Outdoor Education is "on the borderline" of schools, leisure, and youth work. However, the contention here is that each of these 'wrestling matches' must be undertaken in relation to each particular context – that is, in each country with respect to culture, language, traditions, educational system, etc. So, the case is not simply a matter of looking at how other countries have conceptualized the field, what they have done, and how to draw on and learn from their experience. Rather, we need to examine Icelandic Outdoor Education, outdoor recreation, and the outdoor life of children in action and extract data that can be used to for further investigation in order to better identify the challenges and affordances of Outdoor Education in Iceland. The process of exploring the local discourse and mirroring it in international literature, coupled with practical examples from the Icelandic field, makes us better prepared to arrive at a comprehensive and shared understanding of key concepts that also encompass the varying forms and values that characterize the Outdoor Education field. This process provides a firmer ground on which to stand with regard to further research, development, and policy making processes in Iceland.

4.1.5.1 A very brief history of Outdoor Education in Iceland

The international developments discussed above are not established in the same degree in Iceland as elsewhere, and it is consequently important to bear in mind that core concepts and the language around Outdoor Education is fundamentally different.

Friðriksdóttir and Guðmundsson (2015) have examined how ideas on utilization of local studies¹⁴ appeared in selected newspapers and journals around 1900, when the foundations of the present Icelandic educational system for children and teenagers were debated and established. Their study reveals that a century ago Icelandic educators had a clear picture of using local studies (i. grenndarfræði) for teaching purposes. These ideas came from four primary sources: romanticism, the folk school movement in Denmark, the youth associations that initially rested on Grundtvigian foundations, and international ideas that educators brought from USA to Iceland.

When taking a broad look at the development in this field during the 20th century, we can see during the first part of the century emphasis on the local and “átthagafraði” (s. hembygdkunnskap, g. Heimatkunde) (Friðriksdóttir & Guðmundsson, 2015), or what is related to place-based education (i. staðartengt nám) or grenndarnám (e. local learning). Later we see emphasis on interesting initiatives like Vorskólar (e. Spring schools) and also on skólagarða (e. vegetable gardens) (Guttormsson, 2008). Around 1970, environmental education was gaining a foothold in Iceland and later, sustainability became a fundamental pillar of the curriculum (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2011).

The development of outdoor activities and recreation in Iceland during the 20th century is part of a significant societal change. Leisure time and travel opportunities became more widespread during this time. Aðalsteinsson (2020) discusses the growth of travel and outdoor activities in Iceland, linking it to three green waves (from Bentsen, Andkjær & Ejbye-Ernst, 2009, as described in Appendix G). Iceland underwent significant changes in the early part of the 20th century with the establishment of various organisations that have had a major impact on travel and recreation, such as the Icelandic Youth Association, equestrian clubs, the Scout Movement, the Iceland Tourist Association, and the Icelandic Association for Search and Rescue. The introduction of powerful cars and jeeps in the mid-20th century also played a significant role in providing access to the Highlands. There was a noticeable increase in outdoor activities in the early 1990s, which still continues today. According to Aðalsteinsson (2020), the rapid growth of consumer culture in recent years has also influenced outdoor activities, resulting in an increase in equipment and participation, making various forms of outdoor recreation popular.

¹⁴ The use of local environment for teaching and learning.

4.1.5.2 The discourse about Outdoor Education in Iceland

The fact that approaches and applications of Outdoor Education vary across countries, and even within the same country, means that the language and translation of the field's concepts and ideas become an interesting process to navigate. In the literature and educational discourses surrounding Outdoor Education, three central concepts are most common in Icelandic: *útikennsla* (e. outdoor teaching), *útinám* (e. outdoor learning) and *útvist* (e. outdoor recreation). In the context of this research, three additional concepts are also important: Place Based Outdoor Education (i. *staðartengd menntun*, closely related to the concept *grenndarmenntun*), also known as place-responsive education; *friluftsliv* (i. *útilíf*); and adventure education (i. *ævintýranám*).

Óskarsdóttir (2014) describes outdoor learning as “learning which occurs outside of school buildings” (p. 218). Similarly, in the book *Outdoor Teaching and Outdoor Learning in Elementary Schools* (i. *Útikennsla og útinám í grunnskóla*), Andreassen and Pálsdóttir (2014) describe *útinám* (outdoor learning) as education where the student learns outside the school walls (p. 15). However, this definition that uses the school as the reference point can be criticized for being overly limited. It lacks a more comprehensive understanding, which suggests that it does not encompass various disciplines.

Two other concepts, *staðartengd menntun* and *grenndarmenntun*, are known within the Icelandic literature to cover community or place-based education. Andreassen and Pálsdóttir (2014) also discuss place-based education in their book, framing it as learning where students explore and analyse their environment and the processes of nature or human activities that shape the environment. In place-based education, feelings and experiences become more specific, and the place is clearly stated as both the subject matter and the site where the learning takes place (p. 16). Óskarsdóttir (2014) states that in place or community-based education, the local environment provides learning that is systematically utilised to promote local identity, a sense of place (i. *grenndarvitund* or *staðarkennd*), which creates understanding of, and caring for, the local environment.

Three of those concepts have been defined by the terminology committees of leisure studies (see translation of the concepts in appendix H). One concept that is not defined in appendix H is ‘outdoor recreation’, which is related to *friluftsliv* but has different cultural roots. Translating outdoor recreation into Icelandic is challenging because a number of words or concepts in Icelandic encompass this phenomenon (e.g., *útvist*, *útivera*, *afþreying úti* and *útilíf*). In their *Handbook of Leisure Studies*, Jenkins and Pigram (2006, p. 364) discuss the definition of outdoor recreation:

“outdoor recreation is just what the category ‘outdoor recreation’ portrays – recreation that occurs outdoors in, for example, urban and rural environments or terrestrial and marine environments. It includes

recreational activities such as hiking/rambling, fishing, hunting, swimming in the outdoors, surfing, scuba-diving and snorkelling, climbing and abseiling, hang-gliding, orienteering, golf and tennis.”

They further emphasize that a crucial aspect of outdoor recreation is the interaction between participants and elements of nature. Recreation has its roots in Latin and typically refers to the revitalization of a person’s body and mind. However, some purists suggest that ‘re-creation’ is the ultimate goal of recreational activities, emphasizing that the activities themselves serve as a means to an end rather than the end result itself (Jenkins & Pigram, 2006).

4.2 Nature

4.2.1 Nature and environment as fundamental components of Outdoor Education

As stated in the definition of Outdoor Education, the focus is on the connection between humans and nature and its educational implications. Over time, this understanding of the relationship has evolved, as has the way humans perceive their role in relation to nature.

This chapter aims to examine some of the factors that shed light on the complicated interdependence of humans and nature and the philosophical shift that underpins this changing relationship. A helpful approach to analysing the complex connection between humans and nature is to examine the concepts of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. Ecocentrism emphasizes that nature should be appreciated and preserved for its intrinsic value, whereas anthropocentrism suggests that nature’s worth lies solely in the practical advantages it offers to humans.

Theorists and researchers who focus on the relationship between humans and nature claim that this relationship is particularly important today (Louv, 2005), given the increase of environmental problems such as global warming and the accumulation of waste. Studies have pointed out that many individuals who actively participate in environmental activism spent a considerable amount of time in the outdoors as children (Chawla, 2007; Garst, 2018). Children who spend a lot of time in nature learn to appreciate the environment and care for it, which leads to increased respect and a sense of responsibility for the environment (Sandell & Öhman, 2010) or are more likely to adopt ecocentric values. As adults, they are thus more likely to engage in environmental activism (Chawla, 2007). It is therefore important today to develop environmental education so that children and adolescents are given an opportunity to acquire a caring attitude toward nature. We have to care for the planet if we are to save it, which is tantamount to saving ourselves and the coming generations (Sobel, 2008, 1996). Leopold (1949) asks us to think broadly; it is not only about being outdoors but also our reaction to that experience. The quality of the experience depends not on the

quality of what is seen, but on the quality of the eye with which it is seen. This indicates that it is essential to pay more attention to how and what we sense in the outdoors, and what kind of meaning we make of the things we experience. Research also indicates that the timing of nature-based experiences plays a significant role. Studies point out that it is particularly important that children between 6 and 12 years old have the opportunity to be in nature. In this context, James et al. (2010) write about a specific “crystalizing event” (p. 243) that many participants in their study experienced during this age period. Furthermore, Kellert (2002) emphasises that important moments like these can create an “imprint” that creates a lifelong impression in relation to how young people perceive nature.

To be in and experience nature is not only important for children. Adults also seek out nature, and as the research is intended to have a broad perspective, it is relevant to draw attention to the significance of nature in tourism. Nature is one of the main attractions of the Icelandic tourism industry. It is why people come to Iceland from all over the world, and why we Icelanders travel the country. Ólafsdóttir writes in her paper on relating to nature in Icelandic tourism (2008):

The study identified that the therapeutic affect seems to be rooted in positive egocentric relations with nature when either celebrating personal abilities and situations, or having the freedom for unhindered movement and expression of feelings. Yet the most moving moments were based on relations with nature from an ecocentric ethical stance. Indeed there are indications that suggest deep connections between ethical mindfulness and human flourishing. (p. 51)

Her later research identifies the health benefits of walking in nature (Ólafsdóttir et al., 2018) and the buffering effects of green exercise, suggesting on the importance of the context in which the exercise takes place (Ólafsdóttir et al., 2017). It offers the compelling question for us as educators whether the positive effects of being in (Icelandic) nature should be sold only to visitors, or whether children should also enjoy the affordances of outdoor experiences in nature.

The environment and nature are concepts that are challenging to define. In Iceland the concepts are often used interchangeably, but the philosopher Skúlason (1998) draws a distinction between them. Skúlason writes that “nature is the part of reality that exists irrespective of our consciousness or will, whereas the environment is the part of reality that we shape through our behaviour and actions” (p. 40). What is more, Skúlason argues that “nature is [...] everything at once: the nature that adheres to all existing phenomena, forces that constitute the structure of all things, and the whole which shows the nature and force of all phenomena” (p. 34). Skúlason then delimits the environment by defining it as “external nature altered through the technological power of man. One could say that the material, that constitutes the environment, is extracted from nature,

but its form is made by man" (p. 35). In a broader sense, the word 'nature' refers to the material world and the laws that dictate its structure, the Latin word *natura* means both an innate quality, character, and birth (Louv, 2005). It is interesting to note that Skúlason's definition of the environment as "external nature" also implies that nature is the internal nature or forces that govern all phenomena, including what they bring into being.

David Abram (1997) coined the phrase "the more-than-human world" as a way of referring to nature and it has progressively been adopted by other scholars from a variety of fields. For example, it is a central concept in Place Based Outdoor Education. By using the new phrase, Abram argues against the tendency to divide the world into separate units and instead offers a view that holds that all things are interlinked, and humans are part of nature. Jónsson (2007) argues that if we fail to view ourselves as being part of nature, we might lose sight of what belongs to our own nature as a species. In this way, we must "learn to view ourselves as inhabitants of the natural environment" (p. 62). Jónsson's contention that we are part of nature and that nature dwells in us are a common perception, which also appears in the writings of Skúlason (1998) as well as Pálsson (2016).

Human activities over the past few centuries have changed the world so much that we now talk about a new geological era, 'the Anthropocene', proposed by Nobel prize winner Paul Crutzen (2016) as the geological epoch that we now reside within. According to Oldfield et al. (2014), at the heart of the notion of the Anthropocene is the fact that "human activities now play a major, integral and ever-increasing role in the functioning of the Earth System" (p. 3), and that our role in "documenting, understanding and responding to the present and future challenges posed by the recent, dramatic changes in the relationship between humans and their environment thus becomes an imperative for human society" (p. 3). This perspective is sometimes called egocentrism – that we humans are egocentric in how we behave and live on Earth. Nature is the foundation of all life, communities, and economies. Population growth, continued burning of fossil fuels, and ecosystem disruption are among the factors that have influenced global warming. The ecosystem is losing a large number of species; the Living Planet Index shows that since 1972, wild animal species have declined by 52% (World Wildlife Fund, 2014). This development is frightening because we humans are much more dependent on nature than the other way around.

The wellbeing of individuals, culture and the planet lies in our ability to connect to nature (Chawla, 2007). The speed of modern society is great, and time spent in nature is far from a priority for most people. City dwellers are sold the idea that in order to appreciate nature, one must travel to specific places and possess certain equipment (Brown & Beames, 2016). In order to emphasise the importance of this connection some dramatic statements have been put forward like the "disconnection from the natural world may be contributing to our planet's destruction" (Nisbet et al., 2009, p. 715).

As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the attitudes that anthropocentrism reflects are the belief that nature is primarily valuable for us because it provides us with resources that benefit human beings in the short term. Leopold (1949) introduced the concept of land ethics, encouraging ethicists to expand their idea of ethics to include the needs and well-being of the entire natural community of a place. Ecocentrism has been developed as a philosophical extension of environmental ethics, that is, the philosophical study of the value of the environment and the relationship of humans to that environment. Let's now look closer at issues related to children connection to nature.

4.2.2 Children connection to nature

It is relevant to keep in mind Kellert's (2002) three different kinds of contacts with nature: direct, indirect, and vicarious. Direct experiences provide real physical contact with nature. Indirect experiences also involve real physical contact with nature, but in ways that are structured, managed or programmed. Vicarious contact, in relation to which scholars have noted a nature-based experience, involves no real contact with nature and is described as artificial (Kellert, 2012) or mediated nature (Chawla, 2009).

Our contact with nature differs between people and across age groups, taking many forms. Nisbet and Zelenski (2013) claim that the ways in which young people experience and perceive nature are unique across individuals and may even differ from the ways adults interact with and perceive nature. Some researchers suggest that adults, for example, pay more attention to the broader landscape, while children focus on smaller places within nature (Nabhan & Trimble, 1995).

In their review of research on how to promote active care for the environment, Chawla and Cushing (2007) note that there is a comparability within the answers that highlights similar childhood experiences amongst those adults who are environmentally active. They state that "half to more than 80% of respondents identify childhood experiences of nature as significant experiences, such as free play, hiking, camping, fishing and berry picking" (p. 440). They further state that "influential family members and other role models" were mentioned and 'experiences in organisation such as scouts or other environmental groups' where they have "witnessed the destruction or pollution of a valued place" (p. 440).

I would also mention that it matters what kind of "being in nature" we are advocating for. In a review by O'Brien et al. (2011), they articulate the ways in which the benefits of learning and being outdoors are transferred through education by a combination of two processes: firstly, through general exposure to nature, and secondly, through active hands on intensive/extensive contact with nature. Here they reflect on the 'added value' gained from being outdoors rather than being indoors. We are seeing explicit links between health and wellbeing, physical activity, greenspace, and education. But as mentioned earlier, opportunities for young people to experience nature in this way appear to be limited (e.g., Gill, 2007; Louv, 2005).

4.2.3 Changes in children's outdoor life

In recent years, international research has strongly suggested that children's outdoor life is changing. It is important to keep in mind that these studies focus almost exclusively on this issue in the Western world. Children now spend much more time indoors than before and free play has decreased (Burdette & Whitaker, 2005; Hofferth, 2009; Kellert, 2012; Louv, 2005). As a result, children spend considerably less time playing outside than their parents did (Clements, 2004). Researchers, practitioners and philosophers in Canada, Australia, Europe, and America have lamented that children spend more time indoors using "screens" (e.g., computers, smart phones, television) instead of being out of doors (Foster & Linney, 2007). Recent studies on the effects of COVID in Canada have shown that outdoor activities for children have decreased significantly, at least temporarily (de Lannoy et al., 2020; Moore et al., 2020). Over a 20-year period (1981-2002), children's play decreased in US by 25%, with a 50% decline in outdoor activities like hiking and travelling outdoors (Hofferth, 2009).

After reviewing a variety of studies on children's outdoor activities, Mannion et al. (2006, p. 15) arrive at the conclusion that this migration to the indoors is due to four 'moves':

1. The move indoors. Children are playing indoors more now than ever before, and they are cycling and walking less than in the 1970s.
2. The move away from unsupervised and non-formal activity in the outdoors.
3. The move towards commercialized and supervised access to outdoor activity.
4. The move towards informal learning and the blurring of leisure and learning domains.

The journalist and author Louv (2005) criticise that "our society is teaching young people to avoid direct experience in nature" (p. 2) and writes that it is incorporated into the legal and regulatory frameworks of many of our communities. Perhaps this statement by Louv is exaggerated, but examples can be seen of communities imposing formal restrictions on children's outdoor activities, such as decreasing the number of unstructured and unmonitored leisure time hours outside as a preventive measure (Child Protection Act, No. 80, 2002; Kristjansson et al., 2020). Larson and colleagues (2011) argue for the opposite and highlighted the significance of outdoor recreational settings that encourage interaction and social networking among peers. They propose approaches that motivate teenagers to spend more time outdoors instead of taking actions that hinder direct experiences outside.

These changes in children's outdoor life have caused concern for many reasons, including decreased mental and physical health (Coon et al., 2011; Gopinath et al., 2012; Song et al., 2016). Research shows that activities in nature and the natural

environment have a considerable positive impact on the wellbeing of both adults and children, leading to increased mental wellbeing, increased physical abilities, improved cognitive development, fewer physical ailments, and even improved recovery following illness (Kuo et al., 2019; Louv, 2005; Olafsdottir et al., 2018; Wells & Evans, 2003). Broad positive effects have been associated with the amount of time children spend outdoors. To name a few:

- Stronger connections with nature and people (Humberstone et al., 2016; Louv, 2005).
- Improved health benefits, e.g., increasing physical activity (Barfod et al., 2016) and preventing obesity and myopia (Muñoz, 2009; Wells & Evans, 2003).
- Children aged 5-19 years old who cycled or walked to school did better on tasks requiring concentration than children who arrived at school by car or public transportation (Sturludóttir, 2014 et al.).

Little is known, however, about how much time modern Icelandic youth spend outdoors, whether the patterns in children's outdoor life differ from youth in other countries, the factors that influence their outdoor life, and the benefits children derive from being outdoors.

Nevertheless, there are worrisome indications. The Icelandic Centre for Social Research & Analysis (Planet Youth) asked how often teenagers in 9th and 10th grade (14-15-year-olds) engaged in outdoor recreation (e.g., hiking and camping)¹⁵. In a comparison report on research between 2000 and 2016 a 16-year timeframe shows a very significant and alarming change: the percentage of those who almost never engage in outdoor recreation increased from 55% to 97%. At the same time, the percentage of those who engaged in outdoor activities once a week or more decreased from 4,5% to 0,8% (Guðmundsdóttir et al., 2016).

Furthermore, due to the unique Icelandic context, which is characterized by two relatively large urban areas with the remaining population residing in quite dispersed rural areas, little is known about the extent to which children in urban or rural areas differ with regard to the amount of time they spend outside.

¹⁵ Proportion of boys and girls in 9th and 10th grade according to how often they participate in outdoor recreation (mountaineering or camping). (i. Hlutfall stráka og stelpna í 9. og 10. bekk eftir því hversu oft þau stunda útivist (fjallgöngur eða útilegur)).

5 The research papers - summary of the individual papers

The summary is organized under the heading of each paper. First the aim (purpose or goals) of each paper is presented in italics, and then the main conclusions are drawn, with emphasis on the aspects that connect the papers. The focus is on how the critical elements place, discourse, experience, reflection, and friendship are dealt with. I have made these concepts the foundation of my research and the papers. My understanding of them was evolving despite them being consistently present in some form throughout the research papers. In the early stages it was more implicit, but during each individual research process my interpretation was refined and grew.

Table 3 below demonstrates the status of these elements within the five research papers that comprise this kappa. Experience and discourse are discussed in all the papers. Place, reflection, and the social relation of friendship is addressed in three papers. The contribution of the discourse on Outdoor Education and related fields is usually integrated into the text of each paper but does not appear in an explicit way – e.g., as a direct discussion about discourse.

Table 3. Status of the five elements within the research papers.

Status of the five elements within the research papers*					
Papers	Discourse	Experience	Reflection	Friendship	Place
I) Developing a sense of place	X	X	X		X
II) Exploring a pedagogy of place in Iceland: Students understanding of a sense of place and emerging meanings	X	X	X	X	X
III) Under an open sky: Reflections and challenges of university students (Icelandic)	X	X	X	x	
IV) How 'Outdoors Time' transforms the social relationships of children in Iceland	x	x		X	
V) Youth's encounter with popular destinations. Leisure, tourism, and education (Icelandic)	X	X			X

* The table shows a subjective indication of the status of these elements, and capital X indicates a major and small x a minor contribution.

It is important to keep in mind that the papers' comprehensive outlook is meant to allow understanding of the affordances of Outdoor Education. These include but are not limited to leisure, schoolwork, tourism, and children's outdoor life.

5.1.1 Paper I: Developing a Sense of Place

The chapter explores the theoretical foundations of what is meant by a sense of place, and the challenges and opportunities that developing a sense of place brings to Outdoor Education now and in the future.

The research project as a whole begins with a narrow focus on the place-based approach in education and expands to a broader perspective. The place-based approach in Outdoor Education can be understood as a critical response to the work of environmental philosophers, educationalist and human geographers (e.g., Freire, 1970; Gruenewald, 2003; Massey, 2005), which has prompted some outdoor educators to reconsider their practice and theoretical ground.

This first paper opens the research project by providing theoretical discussion on the concept of "sense of place" and the challenges associated with it. The authors base their discussion on their shared experiences teaching in Plymouth, England and Reykjavik, Iceland, approaching the topic from diverse perspectives. The paper outlines three key challenges related to human relationships with culture, time, and nature. Additionally, the paper highlights tensions within the profession stemming from a shift towards a place-based pedagogy, which involves issues such as risk, "fast and furious" Outdoor Education, reflection, and slowness.

Developing a sense of place requires experiential, aesthetic, and embodied fieldwork experiences. Using a place responsive pedagogy opens connections for students and the meanings they develop through the acceptance of knowledge emerging through their on-going entanglement of people and place, and the-more-than-human becomes evident. Our students research stories about people, places and events that resonate with them, the places that have meaning for them, whether in Reykjavik, Plymouth, or closer to their home. A sense of place is developed in multiple ways and expressed in different forms. Some of these we capture through our formal teaching, in student assessments and during in-class discussion, while others remain personal and private within the individual. We recommend harnessing the power of the informal parts of education outdoors. This is done by designing experiences that include people from that specific place, giving students an aesthetic and embodied experience, and teachers who advocate and facilitate to take time – to be a human-being as well as a human-doing; to slow down, notice themselves and the place, while reflecting before, in, and on the experiences.

5.1.2 Paper II: Exploring a pedagogy of place in Iceland: Students' understanding of a sense of place and emerging meanings

The aim was to explore what gave students an understanding of a sense of place and to find out what meanings emerged for the students.

This paper delves further into the discussion about the contextual and practical foundation of Pedagogy of Place and the understanding of Sense of Place. The setting of the seashore and ocean are crucial sources of the experiences that are analysed in this paper. All the dimensions of the research project such as discourse, place, experience, reflection, and friendship are clearly presented. The challenge around the discourse is very clear, and it revolves around what words we use, core concepts, and translations to Icelandic.

A critical pedagogy of place challenges educators to consider the relationship between the education they provide, and the places people inhabit. Evidence from students suggests that engaging with PBOE (Place-based Outdoor Education) broadens and deepens our understanding of a place, making it a powerful educational tool. Students recognize the importance of fostering an environment that promotes learning, which involves building trust, helping each other, and creating a space for all to learn. They also appreciate the time given to immerse themselves in an experience, particularly the sailing experience, which generated deeper meaning and a greater sense of place. Two aspects of emergent meanings are identified: the use of language that revolves around the words, terms, and translations we used; and the connection made with place, people, and nature through embodied, aesthetic, emotional, and authentic experiences.

Three contributions to education are highlighted: (1) acknowledging the cultural, social, and political history of a place to translate the terminology of PBOE, exploring existing ideas of nature, and its value in education and recreation; (2) engaging in experiential learning to foster authentic, aesthetic, and embodied experiences that generate chat, conversation and dialogue, creating a space for group learning; (3) embedding opportunities for reflection in the program to develop a more place-responsive approach. This involves reflecting on the relationship between personal experience and the complex cultural-ecological processes that shape the places where we live, sharing experiences, and raising awareness of global political issues.

The discourse around Outdoor Education is a relevant issue throughout the research project, and this chapter sets the tone for continued discussion. The following paper addresses challenges surrounding discourse in a paper written in Icelandic.

5.1.3 Paper III: Under an open sky: reflections and challenges of university students

The goal was to shed light on the role of reflection in bringing out the possibilities for learning and development that are inherent in spending time in nature.

This paper places nature and its unpredictability in an educational context and explore how we can use reflective practice to learn from it. The setting of a mountainous area and wild nature is the source of experiences analysed in this paper. The main challenges are not just related to nature, but also include social interactions, slowness, and the reflective process. Analysing the text-based data in Icelandic and writing about it in Icelandic opened up new ways for us to express core issues related to Outdoor Education.

The findings indicate that, when working with students, nature is a strong co-teacher for strengthening personal and professional growth. In their writings, students describe experiences of physical challenges associated with walking in untouched nature as well as challenges where they deal with their own thoughts and feelings. The participants' challenges were diverse, but the most prominent were struggles with slowness, social interactions, and mental and physical emotions when dealing with hardship. We identified five themes in the data: Physical and Mental Challenges, Impatience, Meaninglessness, Exhaustion, Emotions, Elation, and Solidarity with the group.

What creates these challenges is primarily uncertainty, nature, and deliberate slowness, but the pausing – to stop and wonder – sharpens the attention and lays the foundation for thoughtful conversation and dialogue. What makes this experience explicit to the students and the researchers is the reflective practice that was woven into the learning process in formal and informal ways. The conceptual frame of wild pedagogies could be beneficial for the authors to further develop the journey, use nature as a co-teacher and give the wild an extended role. Evidence can be found in students' writings indicating that the journey brought them opportunities for meaningful learning that affects them personally and professionally. Structured reflective practice was an important part of the process, as it provided students with the opportunity to practice pausing, noticing and dealing with uncertainty and natural challenges.

5.1.4 Paper IV: How 'Outdoors Time' Transforms the Social Relationships of Children in Iceland

The purpose of this paper is to better understand the social and health factors that impact children in Iceland, paying attention to the diversity of this social group, and how these factors relate to their outdoor behaviour.

This paper presents a broad overview of children's outdoor activities, emphasising the importance and benefits of spending time outside and exploring the influential social

and economic factors affecting children's outdoor behaviour. Additionally, it emphasises the value of friendship as a crucial element in the outdoor lives of children.

In Iceland, children spend a significant amount of time outdoors, but their outdoor activities are complex. A study reported in the paper, conducted in 2017-2018, found that 20% of children spent 30 minutes or less outside on weekdays, and 8.9% of them didn't go outside at all during the day, which is cause for concern. The study found a clear relationship between outdoor activities and general health, individual sports, and involvement in youth centres and club activities, which is consistent with research on experiences outdoors showing that spending time outdoors has positive effects on overall well-being and healthy development among both adults and children. Parental influence is a significant factor in the outdoor activities of children, and their financial status affects how much time they spend outside. The study also found a clear association between time spent outdoors and friendship, indicating that children's relationships with other children, both in-person and on social networks, should be taken into consideration.

We interpret the results as supporting the idea that children's life outdoors should be seen as a social activity and an opportunity to interact with other children, as it helps develop relationships with the environment. Based on this viewpoint, efforts to increase children's time spent outdoors could focus on children as a group, encouraging them to play and socialize together outside. Sometimes the societal message is the other way around, and the aim is to decrease the number of unstructured and unmonitored leisure time hours outside as a preventative measure. A more thorough investigation is needed of where children go outside, what they are doing there, and their relationships with their peers. Thus, we conclude by calling for a much better understanding of the complex social aspect of the outdoor experience.

5.1.5 Paper V: Youth's encounter with popular destinations. Leisure, tourism, and education

The aim of this paper is to shed light on children's participation in domestic tourism with respect to socioeconomic factors and discuss, in the context of the travel behaviour of Icelanders within the country, social tourism, place, and education.

This paper is a bridge from education to the world of travel and tourism. It gives us the opportunity to discuss the outdoor experiences of children from a broad perspective. This includes exploring visits to highly regarded destinations and socio-economic factors. We recognise that individuals from low-income and rural areas are less likely to travel. Therefore, we introduce the concept of social tourism and encourage collaboration between tourism, schools, and leisure.

On the whole, the findings show considerable variation in children's travel habits with regard to age and residence. These differences are manifested in various ways. For

instance, a greater number of children living in the Southwest region have visited selected places, while older children have visited more locations. Although the trend is consistent across places, approximately 10-20% of 12-15-year-olds may not have visited some destinations. In terms of specific places, 70-90% of 12-15-year-olds from both the Southwest and rural areas have visited Gullfoss, Geysir, and Mývatn, with a larger difference observed for Þingvellir and Þórsmörk. The socioeconomic status of parents also affects their children's travel habits; children from families with bad or very bad economic conditions are more likely not to have visited some places. Additionally, children with immigrant parents are less likely to have visited specific places compared to those with Icelandic-born parents.

These findings raise questions about the accessibility of leisure activities, especially those related to tourism for children of different backgrounds. It also highlights a potential need for increased collaboration between tourism industry specialists, schools, and leisure centres to create empowering and educational experiences. In essence, the study's main conclusion is that factors such as place of residence, socioeconomic conditions, and parents' backgrounds play a role in determining whether children aged 12-15 have visited highly regarded selected travel destinations in Iceland, which aligns with data on the travel habits of Icelanders, indicating that low-income and rural individuals are less likely to travel.

The five papers stem from different studies using different approaches. Even though they emerge from a fairly clear and predefined vision and research aim, it is still important to see that the elements of place, discourse, experience, reflection and friendship emerge recurrently. This is certainly important for the field of Outdoor Education, and, I suggest, education in general as well.

6 Discussion

The study aims to investigate different aspects of outdoor activities in Iceland and identify key factors that characterise Outdoor Education. As presented in Figure 4 (chapter 2.3), the study is based on three connected areas, each of which reflects one overarching question. The purpose was that these questions would provide valuable information to address the central question: What are the affordances of Outdoor Education in Iceland? Below, I draw together key insights from each area that respond to this central question. Scholarly references are generally not in the text because it primarily relies on the academic foundations and research discussed in the five papers.

6.1 Discourse about and within Outdoor Education in Iceland

The research journey started with an exploration centring around the question: What characterises the discourse about and within Outdoor Education in Iceland?

The discussion in the papers and in section 4.1 – more specifically, in section 4.1.5 – about the discourse (concepts and language) around Outdoor Education in Icelandic shows that concept definitions and general understanding of Outdoor Education are often vague and lead in different directions, as well as sometimes being contradictory or inconsistent. This current state has both strengths and weaknesses. The apparent messiness could be manifestation of strong independent fields. If I try to identify advantages to diverse (or “messy”) discourse around a phenomenon, then some kind of independence of each area could be positive. In my case, with my strong connection to both leisure services and schools and an increasingly strong link to tourism, each profession can develop more nuanced concepts in the outdoor field linked to the overall culture of the profession. Likely the main argument for a shared language is when professionals from different fields engage in collaboration or discussions. With a shared language, they can more easily access and make sense of relevant research, theories, and practices. A professional discussion should be based on general understanding of Outdoor Education and shared discourse, and a clear theoretical framework or practice. But what does this confusion and messiness mean in the context of this research?

Quay and Seaman (2013, p. 61) can be of help here. They argue:

... that Outdoor Education’s ‘basic problem’ is underlying confusion which manifests itself in ongoing debates about the centrality of method versus subject matter, a problem that is especially apparent once one recognizes cyclic patterns of reform over more than a century. Notably,

this problem situates Outdoor Education within debates and discourses relevant to education more broadly.

This confusion between method and subject has been debated for a long time within both Outdoor Education and other educational fields. In my research I see this as a core issue that has hindered development and has limited the status of Outdoor Education. There are good grounds to argue that if Outdoor Education is considered principally as a method of teaching, its significance is diminished, especially in terms of its inclusion in the curriculum, the organization of different forms of education, or in the school's timetable. In order to enhance the importance of Outdoor Education and firmly establish it within the school system, there are compelling arguments to classify it as a subject.

However, Quay and Seaman (2013) urge us to think beyond this dualism and look towards Dewey (1938) and his firm belief "that the fundamental issue is not of new versus old education nor of progressive against traditional education but a question of what anything whatever must be to be worthy of the name education." (p. 90). Dewey argues about what we want, and need is pure and simple education, and we will make progress when "we devote ourselves to finding out just what education is and what conditions have to be satisfied in order that education may be a reality and not a name or a slogan" (p. 90–91). It is in the light of this understanding that advocating for Outdoor Education being defined as subject rather than a method is not a core issue. The affordances of Outdoor Education should be a core issue when scrutinizing its position as subject or method, and it is crucial to be able to describe that importance using a nuanced vocabulary.

I have delved into the discourse surrounding Outdoor Education in the Icelandic context by shedding a light on both the external discussions about this field and the internal conversations that take place within the discipline. All the papers deal at least partly with the challenge of what words would be appropriate to capture my meaning.

The papers "Exploring a Pedagogy of Place in Iceland" (P II) and "Under an Open Sky: Reflections and Challenges of University Students" (P III) strongly emphasize the importance of language and understanding within the context of Outdoor Education. Participants needed to examine their own experiences from an educational perspective and became aware of the words, terms, and translations used, and how vital it is to recognize and acknowledge the relevant cultural, social, and political angles. It became important to be familiar with the international discourse on Outdoor Education, as well as to develop a domestic discourse on Outdoor Education in Icelandic. It was very beneficial for me to write the paper "Under an Open Sky: Reflections and Challenges of University Students" in Icelandic in collaboration with co-authors from different fields such as philosophy, social work, and educational science. In fact, writing each of the papers has called for a thoughtful vocabulary about Outdoor Education and at the same time sharpened my understanding of key concepts.

6.1.1 Mapping concepts – foundation for discourse

Throughout the research process, I have gradually developed a map of important concepts in the discourse, their translations (often my suggestion), and their connection to the broad field of Outdoor Education (see Figure 6).

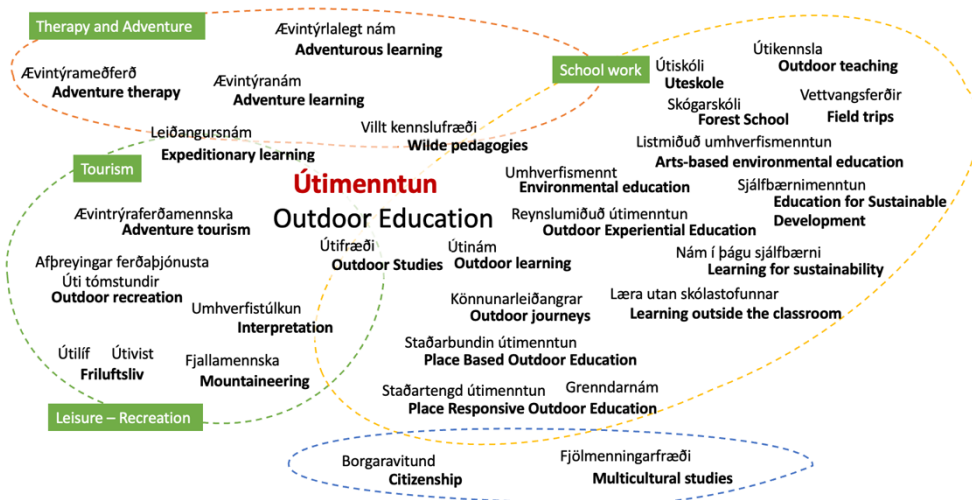


Figure 6. Mapping of main concepts about the Outdoor Education with relevant translation.

More than twenty concepts are presented, mostly in English with an Icelandic translation. The circles marked by dotted lines show which areas the concepts are closely linked to, although many concepts are used in a wide range of contexts. The yellow dotted circle contains concepts associated with schools or formal education. Inside the green dotted circle are concepts connected with the tourism industry and leisure work, a configuration which I use to emphasise the connection between leisure and tourism. The orange dotted circle lists mixed concepts linked with therapy and adventures. Finally, the two concepts in the blue dotted circle refer to more recent approaches within Outdoor Education, but again the configuration may be used to emphasise a new intersection between Outdoor Education and schools.

Understanding key terms, translating them, and using them creates the basis for describing how they are used and how to analyse them. In fact, here appears the classic human struggle with how "to capture the world with concepts" (i. að taka heiminn hugartökum), as the philosopher Skúlason (1995, p. 55) phrases it: this embodied feeling that you want to put into words to help convey complicated meaning and discuss in detail certain issues with others. Each profession has to be able to conceptualize their thinking and doing.

The findings highlight the importance of outdoor professionals using rich language to convey the meaning of their thoughts, goals, and actions. The concepts and their mapping in Figure 6 is useful in that regard. The broad perspective of the research as a

whole, which includes leisure, education, and tourism, strongly suggests more coordinated discourse that recognizes the unique position and significant contribution of each profession. Greater breadth in terminology also allows professionals to better understand the benefits of different approaches; for example, the various possibilities inherent in adventurous learning, place-responsive education, wild pedagogies, and mountaineering, to name a few.

To elaborate on my point and provide an example to clarify my message, outdoor teaching, or "úttíkenning" in Icelandic, has been prominent in Icelandic discourse surrounding schools. However, I believe that this concept is quite limited. For instance, teachers do not often discuss "indoor teaching" when talking about teaching and learning within schools. But does the language we use really matter? Is it acceptable to continue using the term "outdoor teaching" as a core concept simply because it has become a common phrase in school discussions? I don't think so. Our choice of words carries significant weight, influencing our thoughts and actions in both teaching and achieving our goals. When venturing into Outdoor Education, we must not overlook the necessity of adapting our approach to this unique setting. The language we employ holds meaning and profoundly affects our outdoor teaching practices. To ensure a robust alignment between our thoughts and expressions, we must employ a diverse and appropriate vocabulary. Beyond the classroom's confines, the role of educators in Outdoor Education diverges in many aspects. Notably, they must collaborate with the environment and nature, considering it as a co-teacher in the learning process. Moreover, peer learning assumes a pivotal role in Outdoor Education, granting students a greater level of empowerment and autonomy in their learning journey.

I am promoting a diverse discourse about Outdoor Education, while also advocating a clear definition or standardization of core concepts. As an example of this, it would be useful to distinguish between Outdoor Education and Outdoor Experiential Education. This study draws attention to the value of experience and reflective process, so it is useful to make certain distinctions between these concepts (see, e.g., examples of actions with proposal 1 in chapter 8.1.1). This can ensure that professionals, regardless of their field of practice, understand the intended meanings of the key terms used. The main rationale behind this is that the language we use does influence the educator's role, the learning processes, and the changing relationships between place, nature, environment, and the participants involved in the educational process.

6.2 Place, reflection, and friendship in Outdoor Experiential Education in Iceland

Moving on from the crucial terminological and conceptual issues, I now introduce my published papers with the overarching question: How does Outdoor Experiential Education in Iceland value and explore issues of place, reflection and friendship in the context of nature?

I posed this question in order to analyse the core elements of experience-based Outdoor Education, which covers a wide range of issues spanning personal experience, reflection, and place. By going out, especially into nature, important factors crystallise. I discuss this question under the headings of Places in nature – creating connections; Experiences – uncertainty, aesthetic and embodied; and Reflection and friendship.

6.2.1 Places in nature – creating connections

Three papers emphasise the significance of places in nature and the experiential, aesthetic, and embodied experiences they offer. The papers highlight the challenges related to human relationships with culture, time, and nature. A critical pedagogy of place encourages educators to consider the connection between education and the places we inhabit. The findings indicate that nature plays a vital role in personal and professional growth, presenting a variety of physical, social, and emotional challenges for students to overcome.

The students' writings reported in Paper III (Under an open sky: Reflections and challenges of university students) demonstrate that the experiences offered significant learning opportunities that impacted them personally and professionally, facilitated by structured reflective practice. Cooperation, collaboration, and overall joy were also clearly highlighted in the students' accounts. This is enabled by factors such as the natural environment, uncertainty, slowness, and being a part of a group that entails various forms of social interaction.

For a long time, the phrase "everything starts with making a connection" has been echoing in my mind when I reflect about my teaching. I believe it's important to connect with students and understand their ideas, as well as how they can contribute to the learning process. The same principle applies to the natural world. In exploring "sense of place," I have discovered new and creative ways to incorporate outdoor learning into my practices. Initially, my understanding of the meaning of "place" was limited (as discussed in the introduction). Through the research (see papers I, II, and III) I developed a sense of place with experiential, aesthetic, and embodied fieldwork experiences, and found that including people related to specific places affords valuing and explorations of place.

Teachers play a vital role in advocating for the integration of personal time and fostering a holistic approach to learning (Mannion et al., 2012). This approach emphasises the importance of connecting with the environment and local culture, enhancing the overall learning process. The place attachment (Wattchow, 2021) that is created lays the groundwork for understanding places and nature in more depth and can establish a caring relationship. That relationship — that we could also identify as friendship — is imperative foundation of responsive knowledge, attitude, and action towards living well with the world. A critical pedagogy of place challenged me as an

educator. It underlined that I have a responsibility regarding the connections between the education I provide and the places I inhabit, and I have deepened my understanding of the educational affordances of being outdoors.

6.2.2 Experiences – uncertainty, aesthetic and embodied

Taken as a whole, the papers emphasize the value of experiences (or specific modes of experience) marked by uncertainty, aesthetic elements, and embodied engagement. I explore in the papers the significance of outdoor experiences in Outdoor Education and in the life of children. This exploration is limited by focusing on developing a sense of place with planned experiences that involve the local community, providing students with aesthetic and embodied encounters.

Papers II and III reveal reflections and challenges faced by university students in outdoor settings and emphasises that they are shaped by experiential factors such as uncertainty, the natural environment, and intentionally adopting a slower pace. For me as a teacher, nature provides abundant opportunities to stimulate the senses and create experiences that resonate with students. In particular, I am fascinated by those aesthetic and embodied experiences that I believe can greatly enhance the stories associated with places. The stories can be shared by teachers or by anyone who, in some sense, feels at home in a certain place. In that sense, they are experts from the community who can be the key to creating relationships between students and places – and when successful, contribute to their education.

6.2.3 Reflection

The research findings bring forth the crucial significance of reflection in Outdoor Education. Reflection contributes to the development of a sense of place, enhances learning experiences, and assists individuals in addressing challenges encountered in outdoor settings.

The significance of reflection in Outdoor Education is vivid across three papers, highlighting its role in developing a sense of place (P I), enhancing learning experiences (P II), and addressing challenges (P III). The study brings forth how teachers are encouraged to advocate for and facilitate opportunities for students to slow down, observe themselves and their surroundings, and engage in reflective practices. Reflection is viewed as a means to deepen the understanding and connection to the environment, enabling individuals to engage with it in a more meaningful and authentic way. The multifaceted nature of developing a sense of place is acknowledged, with some aspects being captured through formal teaching and assessment, while others remain personal and private.

Tensions and challenges within the profession regarding time, risk, and aesthetic experiences are highlighted by the shift towards a place-based pedagogy, which

includes different considerations of risk, the pace of Outdoor Education, and the combination of reflection and slowness. There is movement away from emphasizing challenge, risk, and speed, and towards giving more time and fully including the place you are in. This confirms the knowledge found in studies such as Brown and Beames (2016).

By reflecting on personal experiences and the complex cultural-ecological processes shaping the places they inhabit, participants develop a more place-responsive approach. Reflection can serve as a means of raising awareness of global political issues and fostering a deeper understanding of the relationship between self and surroundings. The integration of structured reflective practice becomes crucial, providing students with the opportunity to pause, notice, and effectively navigate uncertainties and natural challenges.

The research reported in papers I and II reveal challenges related to human relationships with culture, time, and nature. As educators, we face various challenges, but by discussing and reflecting on these challenges and by mirroring them in literature and reflective practices (Prince, 2021), we can identify key issues regarding teaching practice.

6.2.4 Friendship – from connection to relationships

Overall, the papers collectively underscore the significance of friendship within the context of Outdoor Education. In this context, "friendship" refers to relationships that are based on trust and established through connections, mutual understanding, and shared experiences. Papers II and III reveal the teacher's role in creating a supportive learning environment, fostering meaningful interactions, and recognizing the social benefits derived from outdoor experiences. The study makes evident the importance of these relationships, which I refer to as friendship. By acknowledging the impact of friendship, Outdoor Education can effectively promote personal growth, social connectivity, and a sense of belonging among participants.

Friendship is a significant aspect of Outdoor Education, as highlighted in three papers. In Paper II, which explores a pedagogy of place in Iceland, it is observed that students recognize the importance of creating an inclusive learning environment that fosters trust, mutual assistance, and group learning. Engaging in experiential learning further enhances this process by generating meaningful conversations and dialogue among participants. In Paper III, focusing on reflections and challenges faced by university students, various aspects of friendship are explored. The experiences encountered include physical and mental challenges, impatience, feelings of meaninglessness, exhaustion, and a range of emotions. However, these challenges are balanced by moments of pride (elation) and a sense of solidarity with the group. Additionally, research reported in Paper IV that shows how outdoor experiences impact the social relationships of children in Iceland aligns with previous studies indicating the beneficial

effects of outdoor experiences on overall well-being and healthy development for both children and adults. The study emphasizes the connection between time spent outdoors and the development of friendships, both through in-person interactions and online social networks. Furthermore, the results support the notion that children's outdoor experiences should be viewed as social activities that facilitate interactions with peers and foster a connection with the environment.

6.3 Outdoor life of children and nature

Here I discuss the overarching question addressed in some detail in papers IV and V: How are the outdoor and travel behaviours of children impacted by social and health factors?

Our research highlights the positive impact of outdoor activities on children's social relationships and wellbeing in Iceland. It also sheds light on disparities in travel opportunities and advocates for social tourism initiatives to create inclusive outdoor experiences for all children. The findings are important because international studies strongly indicate that children are playing and spending less time outside, while outdoor experiences are also changing and becoming more managed, supervised, and commercialized. Icelandic research indicates a worrying trend that the number of teenagers who almost never engage in outdoor activities is continuing to increase. Our research shows that children spend a significant amount of time outdoors, but their outdoor activities are complex. Critical perspectives reveal that on average, one of five children reported that they spent half an hour or less outdoors on weekdays, and close to one of ten children reported not going outside at all throughout the entire day. The findings reveal variations in children's travel habits, influenced by factors such as age, residence, and socioeconomic status of families.

The papers provide a broader perspective on children's outdoor experiences, serving as a bridge between education in school and leisure, the daily life of children, and the world of travel and tourism. The concept of social tourism is introduced, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between tourism industry, schools, and leisure centres to ensure equitable access to outdoor experiences for children from all backgrounds.

In this discussion I focus on two socio-economic factors: family and friendship, and economics. This topic is further explored in terms of the educational value derived from experiences that can be a part of the outdoor life of children.

6.3.1 Family and friendship – societal constraints

The findings reveal variations in children's outdoor time and travel habits, influenced by factors such as age, residence, and socioeconomic status. Children from lower-income households tend to spend less time outdoors and are less likely to have visited certain destinations. Our findings also indicate that friendship is related to how much time

children spend outdoors. When considering various types of relationships, friendship has the strongest correlation to time spent outdoors. Nearly 40% of the group of children who rarely meet their friends after school never go outside, in contrast to the 14% of the group who meet their friends almost daily or more. The results suggest that we should give more recognition to children's relationships with other children. We do not know how much time Icelandic children spent outside in nature, but natural settings have shown to foster more cooperative and amiable relations between people. Therefore, I say in Paper IV that time spent outdoors has the potential to „transform the social relationships of children“ and can act as a training ground for peer-to-peer relationships. Our findings might indicate that children with weaker social connections spend a lesser amount of time outdoors. From this standpoint, interventions aimed at extending the amount of time children spend outdoors should thus concentrate on children as a group and inspire them to engage in outdoor play and social interaction.

Paper IV reveals that sometimes the message from the society aims to decrease the number of unstructured and unmonitored leisure time hours outside as a preventative measure. I discuss whether it is not more important nowadays to promote messages that encourage outdoor activities rather than imposing restrictions on them.

6.3.2 Economics

The role of parents is clearly important in that they are largely responsible for how much time children spend outside. An alarming issue is that almost half of the young people who perceive their parents' financial situation as very poor either do not spend any time or spend less than 30 minutes outside on weekdays. Although this is a small group in Iceland, this strongly indicates that we need to investigate this further and address it through formal actions. In Paper V we report that how widely children have travelled around the country is dependent on external factors such as residence and the socio-economic status of their families. It is important to bear in mind that it is difficult to differentiate the effects of origin from economy, so these may be interacting factors that affect the accessibility of travel. Nonetheless, this is an issue that responsible parties in schools, leisure and tourism need to consider carefully.

6.3.3 Educational value and collective responsibility

Spending time outside in nature and engaging in outdoor activities can have a significant positive influence on wellbeing and enable holistic and healthy development in both adults and children. In our research we clearly identify a significant relationship between time spent outdoors and general health. I have discussed various social and economic factors that have an impact, and I would like to concentrate on the collective responsibility we have to create these opportunities, particularly for children. Additionally, I will discuss the role of key actors, such as schools, leisure centres, and parents.

According to the national curriculum, health promotion is an important aspect of schooling at all educational levels. The Compulsory School Act (2008), article 24 (The National Curriculum Guide), states clearly that formal education should include an emphasis on “physical and mental well-being, a healthy lifestyle, and a responsible attitude to living beings and the environment” (p. 9). How this is implemented is of course one of the dilemmas. In Iceland, there is interest among educators in utilizing both outdoor activities and nature in education, and they are aware of the reasons for its importance. However, the specific ways in which these priorities enhance learning opportunities and meaningful education for students are unclear (see example in Andreassen & Pálsdóttir, 2014; Óskarsdóttir, 2014).

It can be beneficial for children’s education and development to have visited or experienced popular destinations that are local, historical, personal, and storied. The educational and developmental value of a place can be used in schools, as well as in leisure and daily family life. Many of the popular destinations that we asked if the children had visited could create what is called place attachment – that is, the emotional bond between person and place. The opportunities for connection available in these places both embody some of their educational value and reveal a point of intersection between tourism, leisure, and schools, which prompted the study reported in Paper V and influenced the whole study.

Our research indicates that a significant number of children have visited the popular destinations defined, most likely outside of regular schools or extracurricular activities. The educational system, on the other hand, might still incorporate this experience into its work, particularly in regard to nature and environmental awareness. Our research also reveals some of the connection between important social background variables that need to be considered when directing attention to how school and leisure activities can contribute to equal opportunities for children, particularly in regard to outdoor activities and nature, and in the discussion of building social tourism. Our relationship with nature is very important because the biggest challenges of our time concern how we live with nature in a sustainable way.

7 Conclusion and future studies

The overall study highlights a comprehensive understanding of Outdoor Education by exploring three distinct questions: a) What characterises the discourse about and within Outdoor Education in Iceland, b) How does Outdoor Experiential Education in Iceland value and explore issues of place, reflection and friendship in the context of nature and c) How are the outdoor and travel behaviours of children impacted by social and health factors. The study therefore set out to investigate different aspects of outdoor activities in Iceland and identify key factors that make these fit within an umbrella of Outdoor Education. I have discussed the different aspects and identified key factors that clarify the affordances of Outdoor Education. In this chapter, I draw together the main conclusions and suggest future studies.

7.1 Conclusion

The current research breaks somewhat from the mould of acknowledged research practice which narrows the researcher's focus and invites deep dives into a particular area. By contrast, as someone who has the task of developing academic and practical policy for this field, I explore the field from a wider perspective, focussing on what are the affordances or value of Outdoor Education. My research journey began with thorough preparations, including focus group discussions with professionals in various Outdoor Education fields. The findings¹⁶ from a focus group discussion indicated that Outdoor Education is an approach that emphasises experience, or "upplifun" as a crucial issue with multiple dimensions (including the importance of aesthetic experiences) and that children's outdoor life in general had to be taken into consideration. Therefore, it is advisable to place more emphasis on the concept of Outdoor Experiential Education to highlight the importance of hands-on experiences and reflection. These findings influenced the direction of my further research in two ways. I came to realise that the definition and description of Outdoor Education needed to be grounded in actual practices and take into account the diverse discussions in the field and in international academic literature. I also became convinced that I would be forced to take a wide view of Outdoor Education that sometimes channelled me into an eclectic approach, leading to difficulties in focussing. I gained with this a sense of the various perspectives on Outdoor Education, but then shifted my attention to different

¹⁶ These unpublished findings are based on preliminary focus groups (see further explanation in appendix A).

aspects of the actual experience. This exploration is conducted from the children's perspective, examining how much time they spend outside (Paper IV) and their encounters with popular destinations (Paper V). But most importantly, it explores some of the manifold experiences participating in outdoor activities (papers I, II, and III).

The central question is: What are the affordances of Outdoor Education in the Icelandic context? The affordances of Outdoor Education relies on three main factors: (1) the discourse about and within Outdoor Education in Iceland; (2) how Outdoor Education activities are facilitated, which includes the companionship (the social environment); the methods applied, such as experiential and reflective approaches (the educational environment), as well as the places and spaces of the educational activities (the natural or physical environment); and (3) the stance taken towards appreciating values or significance of spending time outdoors and participating in outdoor activities and education, especially for children. It is important to recognize that these outdoor activities are "more than activities." They go beyond just being about, e.g., camping, hiking, skiing, sailing, and mountaineering. When these factors are recognized and acknowledged, the affordances of Outdoor Education are significant, and its role in modern education holds high relevance.

In this concluding chapter I endeavour to integrate the findings reported in the papers and highlight key insights and challenges, aiming to bring forth the synergies stemming from my broad approach that are about the affordances of Outdoor Education and its impact on students of various ages within the context of Iceland. The synergies about the affordances of Outdoor Education in the context of Iceland are Discourse, Experience and Reflection, Place and Pedagogy, Friendship and Social aspects, and Accessibility and Socioeconomic Factors.

The Discourse: The discourse surrounding Outdoor Education is a central theme throughout the research project. Emergent meanings in Outdoor Education are shaped by the language used and the connection established with the environment e.g., to place, people, and nature through embodied, aesthetic, emotional, and authentic experiences. These aspects contribute to acknowledging the cultural, social, and political history of a place, translating terminology related to Place-based Outdoor Education, and exploring the value of nature in education and recreation.

Experience and Reflection: The importance of informal Outdoor Education is highlighted, emphasising the need to design experiences that involve local people, provide aesthetic and embodied experiences, and encourage educators to facilitate reflective learning. Experiential learning can foster authentic experiences; the informal approach in teaching can encourage chat, conversation, and dialogue; and structured reflective practice can help students pause and notice, deal with uncertainty, and tackle natural challenges.

Place and Pedagogy: The research outlines challenges related to human relationships with culture, time, and nature within the context of Place-based Education. Engaging

with place-responsive pedagogy broadens and deepens understanding of a place, fostering an environment that promotes learning, trust-building, a greater sense of place and encourages the readiness to respond. The concept of wild pedagogies is suggested as a way to further develop Outdoor Education by involving nature as a co-teacher.

Friendship and Social Aspects: The study reveals a strong connection between time spent outdoors and health and friendships among children. Concurrently, it emphasizes that outdoor activities could and should be viewed as social opportunities, enabling interactions with peers and the environment. However, concerns arise from data showing that a significant portion of Icelandic children spend limited time outdoors and, and that this is related to social and economic factors.

Accessibility and Socioeconomic Factors: The study also highlights disparities in children's travel habits based on factors such as socioeconomic status and parents' backgrounds. Collaboration in Iceland between the tourism industry, schools, and leisure centres is encouraged to create empowering and educational experiences for all children, but particularly for children from low-income or rural areas and those with immigrant parents.

I have to some extent supported the movement of the field of Outdoor Education in an important direction by showing the complexity of the situation and by indicating how manifold the ideas are that we have about Outdoor Education. Additionally, I have emphasized the numerous ideas surrounding Outdoor Education that we must consider, including its complex educational, social, and physical aspects, which encompass elements such as nature and place. This, I argue, is an important preparation for taking the next step, which is to fit or incorporate Outdoor Education within the more traditional core of educational practice, seen as the responsibility of any socially conscious government. It should also guide policy makers and professionals when discussing what should be included in an ambitious modern academic outdoor educational programme.

In the future studies and recommendations presented in the following sections, the underlying aim is to strengthen children's connection to nature, empower stakeholders¹⁷, and drive the field forward through policy making, action, and continuous exploration and research. This is based on the papers underpinning the study and the documentation that connects them and is referred to in the text above. In line with the wide scope adopted in the study work, I continue to connect to the wide world of Outdoor Education, a perspective that I feel is seriously lacking in the current

¹⁷ The principal stakeholders are the children, but other stakeholders include parents, teachers, administrators, policymakers, and politicians.

discourse on education. I also utilize my own experience of having worked extensively in the field of Outdoor Education and participating in teaching, research, and development projects, as well as collaborating across institutions and organizations. Therefore, I allow myself to base these recommendations on a broad foundation.

7.2 Future studies

This research deepened my understanding of Outdoor Education, while also revealing knowledge gaps and inspiring new questions and topics for further exploration. Each paper presented mentioned aspects that need to be examined more closely. Here I have chosen to specifically discuss five key future studies that specifically follow on from the research I have conducted and published so far. I argue that these clearly defined future research directions will meet the needs of the field in Iceland while also providing a broader contribution internationally. The first area of study relates to children's outdoor life; the second focuses on educational practice; the third identifies outdoor projects and collaborations in Iceland that we can learn from, the fourth looks critically into the relationship between accessibility, socioeconomic factors, and Outdoor Education; and the fifth asks whether there is a distinctive Icelandic contribution to place responsiveness.

- I. **Children's outdoor life.** The HBSC data¹⁸ raised many new questions. We have a better understanding now about children's time outdoors and influential factors, but much is still unclear. A more thorough investigation is needed on where children go outside, what they are doing there, and their relationship with their peers and experience of nature. Given the multiple educational values of Outdoor Education emerging from this and related projects, this needs to be better understood. Regarding adolescent travel behaviour, how do they perceive places? How well does the service provided in popular destination meet the needs and interests of children? It would be recommended to collaborate with several schools in different locations and thus obtain more detailed information than when the whole country is studied as one, as in the HBSC research.
- II. **Outdoor projects and collaboration in Iceland.** To learn more about Outdoor Education, it is helpful to highlight and make visible quality projects in the field of Outdoor Education in schools, leisure programmes, within voluntary associations and tourism and identify collaborative practices across different fields. We should ask questions about how educational entities utilize places in their work, the affordances of Outdoor Education, the nature of

¹⁸ Reviewed in Paper IV "How 'Outdoors Time' Transforms the Social Relationships of Children in Iceland" and Paper V "Leisure, tourism, and education"

collaboration between professionals, and how can we support these collaborations. It is useful to mix field work recordings with research and to deliver findings through various media, from educational videos to scientific papers.

- III. **Action research on educational practice.** The action research reported in papers 1, 2 and 3¹⁹ has enriched my role as a university teacher, motivating me to continue this kind of research. There is no doubt it would similarly benefit others. The pressing questions now are about time and nature. Lack of time brings in speed and I argue for the value of slowing down in education. In our contemporary society – including universities – we are always connected, and the pace is fast. It seems to be harder to concentrate and think deeply about difficult issues. But at the same time, there is a growing call in society for mindfulness, living at a slower pace, and involving nature in our daily life. Questions about integrating traditional academic teaching with outdoor experiential learning, fostering collaboration with the local community, experts, and nature, and bridging gaps with colleagues in indoor education are intriguing. How can we develop our teaching practices so that they are more in line with my research findings and others' (e.g., Berg & Seeber, 2018; Payne & Wattchow, 2008)? How can Outdoor Experiential Education be intergraded in education more generally, both in Iceland and abroad?
- IV. **Accessibility, socioeconomic factors and Outdoor Education.** I find it particularly important to develop further research into the relationship between accessibility, socioeconomic factors and Outdoor Education. In chapter 4.1.4 I discussed access, inclusion, indigenous perspectives, and the perspective of feminism. I believe it is relevant to use Critical Theory intentionally when researching this topic. Critical Theory aims to analyse and transform society as a whole by uncovering the underlying assumptions in social life that prevent individuals from fully comprehending how the world operates. The concept of Critical Pedagogy of Place (see Thorsteinsson et al., 2024), helped me reflect on the connection between the type of education I desired to pursue and the impact I intended to make. These issues are complex, dynamic, and often specific to the context in which Outdoor Education is taking place as well as the demographics of those who are participating and leading the experience. Multiple levels and factors work in close relationships and exert varying

¹⁹ Paper I „Developing a Sense of Place“, delves into certain issues regarding time, nature, and culture - Papers II and III, "Exploring a pedagogy of place in Iceland" and "Under an open sky," explore different experiences of nature - "green and blue" - like wilderness, mountains, sea, and shores.

degrees and forms of power, which will also impact the ways in which those teaching and learning may come to understand and internalise the experience. Therefore, I am eager to embark on a research journey with relevant Critical Theory as a companion to gain a better understanding of the socioeconomic factors that may enable, constrain, and influence the ways in which people come to and experience Outdoor Education.

V. **Is there a distinctive Icelandic contribution to place responsiveness?**

Place is one of the concepts that has fascinated me throughout this research, as it is far more complex than simply being 'where' Outdoor Education happens. However, during my international research collaborations, I have been asked the thought-provoking question, "Is there a distinctive Icelandic contribution to place responsiveness?" I am still unsure if such a contribution exists, but it is possible. Important starting points revolve around the understanding of the term "place" and what defines something as "Icelandic." However, there are many unique characteristics of Iceland's nature, such as glaciers, geothermal activity, highlands, and the ocean – and when this is combined with close contact with the country's inhabitants, a certain kind of responsiveness develops that is worth exploring further. To do that, I believe I need to return to the 'where' Outdoor Education takes place with a critical lens and consider the landscape, the socio-cultural history, and the evolution of the communities' relationship with place.

8 Recommendations for policy and practice

These recommendations, inspired by the research discussed above, are presented under two headings: policy and practice. I present seven proposals and provide examples of suitable actions. Both policy and practice are essential when considering development of Outdoor Education. The affordances or nature of Outdoor Education is such that responsibility for this type of education can be unclear, so we must begin to reflect on where we can find a home for Outdoor Education, and who should be responsible for it.

Where is the home of Outdoor Education? Who is responsible?

In this study, I have discussed the affordances of Outdoor Education and present arguments as to why Outdoor Education undoubtedly belongs in the realm of good education. The question remains of whether it should be a part of the education system or even compulsory and thus the responsibility of the state. Outdoor Education is an ideal approach in creating educational processes in leisure time, tourism, and schools. A shared understanding and collaboration among professionals in these areas is essential for making the most of the affordances of Outdoor Education. We must expand the possibilities for individuals to connect with the natural world and each other.

This can be achieved by offering increased support and opportunities that encompass all aspects of our lives, including school, leisure, and family. Public entities should ensure substantial support for Outdoor Education in all areas, whether during leisure time, tourism, or school. This support can extend to regulation, collaborative enhancement, and identifying people's rights to social tourism.

The answer to the question "Where is the home of Outdoor Education?" is that it has multiple homes, as has been noted in chapter 2.4, and we need to value the importance of each party's contribution and, above all, work together. The other question, "Who is responsible?" is clearer, as I see it. Our educational systems should ensure that all children have some outdoor experiences, and adults are responsible for themselves and their children. It is essential to value the rights of people, especially children, to outdoor life, and the right to experience nature and their local places in all their diversity with their friends as a part of their school, leisure and family lives. To realise this, we have to clarify the duties that are placed on the shoulders of adults (e.g., parents) and us as society, and thus the authorities, to give children and people in general opportunities to experience and engage with nature. This responsibility extends to finding Outdoor Education a place in our educational systems (perhaps not

only the school system) and providing time and financial resources for these learning experiences.

It is crucial to have a comprehensive perspective on Outdoor Education, since focusing solely on schools might neglect essential concerns that are addressed using different interpretations, terminologies, and approaches of Outdoor Education across various settings and industries. Additionally, gaining an understanding of different facets of individuals' lives, particularly those of children, whose world primarily encompasses family, school, and leisure, is also essential when actions are organized, and the responsibilities of different parties explained.

8.1.1 Policy

In the following, I will present policy suggestions inspired by my findings and also keep in mind the relevant institutional context. Outdoor Education is not strongly positioned in policy documents or laws (see discussion in chapter 2.4). In the introduction on proposals for policy and practice, the emphasis is first on clarifying the content of Outdoor Education, then proposals are presented, and finally examples of action are given.

8.1.1.1 The two sides of Outdoor Education in Iceland

The purpose of this research project was not to define Outdoor Education. Instead, the emphasis is on presenting an overarching view of some key affordances of Outdoor Education and providing arguments that Outdoor Education reaches a wide range of educational fields. Defining and explaining Outdoor Education is not the task of one person or one research study. It needs to be the result of collective work by experts from different fields, with consideration of empirical knowledge.

In educational contexts, models or schematic representations can be useful for describing the main content of something or analysing the context of important factors. In appendix F, a few models of Outdoor Education are introduced. In the research process, I tried to better understand the context and key concepts in Icelandic within the field of Outdoor Education and their connection to important factors in the research, such as nature, environment, and place. I found it practical for the sake of incorporating core concepts in relation to Outdoor Education in Iceland to create a schematic representation.

The schematic representation is intended to present the connection between the key concepts and the meaning that the researcher makes of these concepts within the context of the Icelandic field. The schematic representation considers Icelandic outdoor traditions, language, and the educational system's structure. The position of Outdoor Education (i. útímenntun) presented here differs from the historical anglophone understanding of the term. In Icelandic, there is an opportunity to discuss and define a concept that has not come up so often in Icelandic discourse, namely útímenntun. The

source and origin of this educational experience is nature and environment.

Outdoor Education is an umbrella term that refers on the one hand to the learning processes that take place during leisure time or in tourism, named in Icelandic either “útvist” (e. outdoor recreation, outdoor activities) or “útilíf” (e. outdoor life/friluftsliv). On the other hand, the term refers to learning that takes place on school grounds, alternatively called “útikennsla” (e. outdoor teaching) or “útinám” (e. outdoor learning) – (see discussion chapter 2.4). The bottom part of the image indicates that education could be significantly enriched by bringing the two poles of Outdoor Education closer together and harnessing place as a common, enriching factor. The green area in the background refers to the value of experience (i. upplifun) in Outdoor Education.

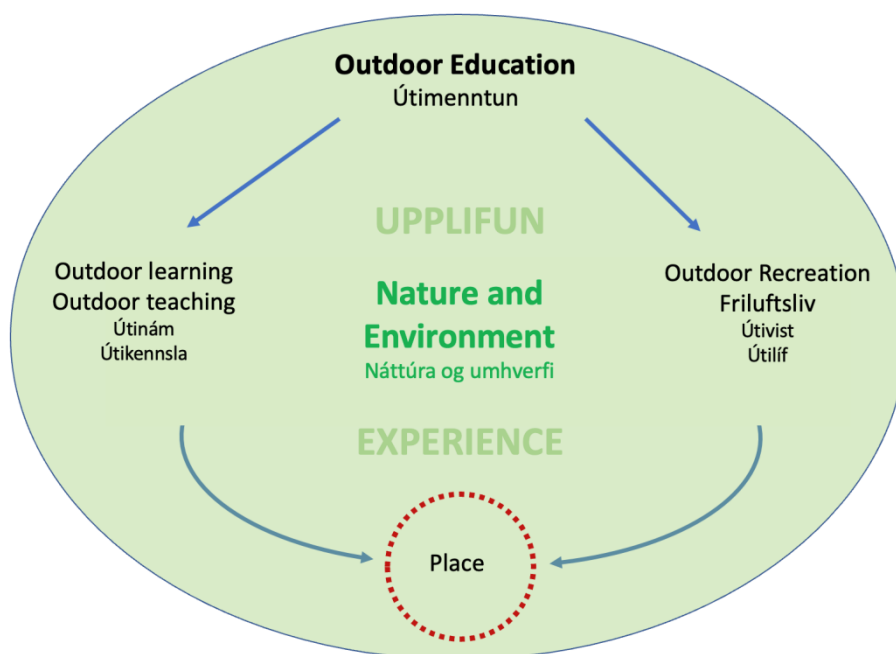


Figure 7. Schematic representation for Outdoor Education in Iceland

Proposals

First, I call on us, the academic community, and then on the government.

- 1) **Define Outdoor Education in relation to the Icelandic context and continue to define and clarify important terms in this expansive field of education, encompassing leisure, school activities, and tourism. It is crucial that this discourse is beneficial for both practical field work, policy development and for further research.**

Examples of actions:

- a) Academics and specialists within universities in the fields of education, leisure, and tourism undertake to define Outdoor Education, Outdoor Experiential Education and other key concepts in this field in cooperation with policymakers, relevant ministries, professional associations, and interest groups.

2) *Compose policy publications on Outdoor Education similar to publications on the fundamental pillars of education (i. grunnþættir menntunar) in which Outdoor Education is the main topic.*

Examples of actions:

- b) The Ministry of Education and Children ensures that special material is written about Outdoor Education that lays the foundation for outdoor practice in schools at all levels as well as in work with children in the field of leisure. In this context, it would be viable to discuss Outdoor Education as a subject, a pedagogy, and a method that can be applied in all disciplines. I should also provide guidelines regarding safety and health concerns, offer educational examples, and discuss its educational benefits and critical perspectives.

8.1.1.2 *Collaborative actions are needed: parents, leisure, tourism and schools*

The positive effects of being outdoors for children and teenagers, especially those related to nature, have been discussed in this study and my papers in detail (see also in Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Gill, 2007; Kuo et al., 2019). There are strong indications of a negative trend in this field in Iceland, where the percentage of those who almost never engage in outdoor recreation (e.g., hiking and camping) has increased from 55% in 2000 to 97% in 2016 (Guðmundsdóttir et al., 2016). This development should be a matter of great concern.

Parents and guardians have a crucial role in introducing children to nature. It has been emphasized that it is important for children to have chances for outdoor activities and leisure, as well as positive role models and encouragement. We should view playing outside as a platform for forming relationships between peers and reduce heavy constraints placed on parents and society that could possibly hinder positive social development and opportunities to be outside.

International studies (e.g., Rickinson et al., 2004; Waite, 2016) suggest that the main obstacles to Outdoor Education are related to teacher education and how confident professionals are in working outside and linking outdoor activities to the curriculum. Barfod et al. (2016) have shown that policy support can increase education outside the classroom and promote outdoor learning in schools. They argue that teacher training

and in-service teacher training should include mandatory courses in education outside the classroom, with a focus on utilizing nearby environments as learning resources. The emphasis should be on preparing and certifying teachers to deal with the challenges of teaching outdoor. Other obstacle factors identified in international studies are lack of funding, concerns about safety, and a lack of equipment and support are also significant. It is worth noting that the Icelandic school system has expertise and experience in Outdoor Education, but it may be less known that the tourism industry and NGOs like the Scouts and Landsbjörg (ICE-SAR rescue teams) also possesses significant knowledge and experience that can be utilized to enhance children's learning and development. One of the aims of the research project is to recognize these key stakeholders. Figure 8 highlights some of the main players and shows the complexity of the topic.



Figure 8. The diverse sectors of Outdoor Education in Iceland.²⁰

²⁰ The three orange sections are: municipality, tourism, and national and governmental bodies. Each section represents operations or activities that involve working outdoors or outside. For example, municipalities in Iceland run preschools, compulsory schools, youth centers, leisure homes, and parks, museums and outdoor recreational areas. National or governmental bodies run, e.g., secondary schools and universities, whereas national NGOs run outdoor centers or camps (e.g., School camp Reykir in Hrótafjörður run by The Icelandic Youth Association,

Often there is not enough knowledge, skills, and equipment in school and leisure activities to offer exciting and educational opportunities for experiencing nature and outdoor activities, such as visits to popular destinations. Collaborations between tourism, schools, and leisure programmes (e.g., open youth work) are beneficial for both these stakeholders and children. Collaborative efforts between these parties in outdoor activities are very limited²¹. Collaboration between tourism, schools, and leisure involves the potential to seize joint opportunities that these parties do not have the means to do create individually, but that they can create together. There is a need for a broader, formal interdisciplinary collaboration between schools, leisure activities, and tourism that should reach knowledge and methods, equipment and facilities, and the opportunities that different fields of study offer.

Proposals

It is somewhat unclear who should implement the actions proposed, but the initiative would presumably mainly rest with officialdom (proposal 3 and 4), even though there is an explicit reference to collaboration and thus a multifaceted initiative (proposal 3 and 4).

3) *Increase public engagement with parents regarding the value of outdoor experiences in nature and reduce restrictions on children's outdoor activities.*

Vatnaskógur run by YMCA/YWCA Iceland and Úlfjótuvatn summer and school camp run by the Icelandic Boy and Girl Scout Association) and then the Environment Agency of Iceland and National Parks. The third section illustrates tourism, which has grown from about 0.5 to more than 2.0 million visitors in the last decade; Icelandic nature or particular natural features are the central reasons why tourists visit the country. Tourism provides important support services for the other sectors and development in each sector, and should influence the whole. In the centre is Outdoor Education. Each sector uses a slightly different language in their profession, such as in schools, youth work, and tourism. Therefore, Outdoor Learning, Outdoor Teaching, Outdoor Recreation, and Friluftsliv (i. útinám, útikennsla, afþreying, útivist og útilíf) are included to accommodate these differences.

²¹ Signal of collaborations can be seen, for example, in Reykjavík City where the Centre for Outdoor Activities and Outdoor Learning (MÚÚ) serves as a central knowledge centre for schools and leisure activities in Reykjavík. The centre focuses its efforts on all schools and leisure centres in the city. It appears that formal collaboration between schools, leisure, and tourism is not found, although significant development is taking place in Höfn in Hornafjörður, where these parties are collaborating.

Examples of actions

- a) Encourage parents and guardians to introduce children to local natural places, giving them opportunities for outdoor activities. Parents and guardians should also act as positive role models and make a regular effort to go outside and enjoy nature themselves.
- b) Take into serious consideration to amend the Child Protection Act, No. 80, regarding children's curfew (Article 92²²) and consideration of alternatives to the current requirement for children and teenagers to remain indoors between specified hours.

4) Take measures to ensure children's rights in compulsory education to Outdoor Education and experiences in nature. Highlight the rights of all children and specifically seek ways to enhance opportunities for children who are marginalised.

Examples of actions:

- a) Propose regulations (local government) or laws (state) guaranteeing children's rights to minimum outdoor time and nature experiences in compulsory education. Establish local or national collaboration between leisure, tourism, and schools.
- b) Establish professional education at the university level in the field of Outdoor Education that can support teachers, guides, and youth workers who want to specialise in this field.
- c) The Icelandic Tourist Board and the Directorate of Education take the initiative to promote social tourism and establish formal collaborations between the tourism sector schools and leisure programmes in the field of social tourism.
- d) Administrators of national parks collaborate with schools and leisure programmes to develop resources and services with the goal of providing opportunities for children who face limitations in visiting parks due to financial, residential, or social factors. Examples of such services include regular free guided tours of the national parks targeted at a broad group of children and young people with diverse backgrounds and statuses. Arrange school visits to introduce national parks, and cooperate with schools in planning park visits.

²² Article 92 - Children's curfew. Children aged 12 and under may not be out of doors after 20:00 unless accompanied by an adult. Children aged 13 to 16 may not be out of doors after 22:00, unless on their way home from a recognised event organised by a school, sports organisation or youth centres. During the period 1 May to 1 September, children may be out of doors for two hours longer. The age limits stated here shall be based upon year of birth, not date of birth.

- e) Travel associations in Iceland, such as FÍ (Iceland Touring Association) and Útivist, join forces with representatives of marginalised groups, and together they seek ways to reduce barriers and ensure their opportunities to travel around the country and take advantage of the diverse options that travel associations offer.

8.1.2 Practice

In the research I examined experience close by in the urban area of Reykjavik with the sea and shores as context, but of course also further away in the context of the mountains and highlands. Above, I have shown that these different Outdoor Educational environments afford valuable experiences. My recommendation for practice is that education that takes place outside should be experiential in nature. The Icelandic setting allows advocates to practice urban nature education close to home, but also allows the possibility of creating equal access for all children to remote landscapes further away. I elaborate in the following.

8.1.2.1 Closer to home and further away

Closer to home

As mentioned in chapter 4.1, a shift has taken place in the international discourse towards pedagogy of place and place-based education, with focus on the more-than-human world and responsiveness. Experience of nature is increasingly becoming an “urban experience” of nature, given that urban areas characterize the near environment of most humans on the planet. I advocate for providing children with opportunities to connect with nature and engage in outdoor activities, emphasizing the importance of selecting the “right” places for such experiences in the neighbourhood when possible. One way is to focus on “nature-based environments and experiences” (Garst, 2018), which encompasses experiences of nature in a broad sense. As an example, Ives et al. (2017) write that nature refers to “places, landscapes, and ecosystems that are not completely dominated by people, but also included non-human organisms, species, and habitats” (p. 106). This definition is helpful in separating nature-based experience from other activities that take place in the outdoors, such as playing a sport in an outdoor field.

In Iceland, it is important for Outdoor Education to take into account the features of the country and its culture. The setting of all towns or villages allows this. The seaside and the ocean possess qualities that our research has shown to have significant benefits and are well connected to Icelandic culture and heritage. Therefore, I strongly advocate for the utilisation of these natural areas, which are located near most urban areas in Iceland. Exciting studies such as those in the field of oceanic learning (Loynes, 2010) and blue mind (see, for example, Britton et al., 2020; Conrad et al., 2021; Nichols, 2014), further emphasize the benefits of being near, on, or in water.

Further away

My research suggests that visits to popular tourist destinations are connected to people's financial status and other social factors. Our educational systems can balance this situation by defining visits and experiences in these national pearls as part of a good education.

I argue that we should look more locally, but that this should not hinder us from venturing further away and designing outdoor experiential processes in school and leisure work where we are immersed in nature. Loynes (2017) argues that young people can learn to deal with new situations by visiting unfamiliar spaces and wild places, thereby gaining knowledge, finding allies, and acquiring tools and coping skills. These lessons can be brought back home and support further development. I argue that we would not be doing anything new, only combining the culture of "útivist" and "útilíf" or friluftsliv into the pedagogical processes of schools and leisure. In essence, outdoor educators are harnessing activities like camping, hiking, skiing, sailing, and climbing, but with an educational purpose. It is important to involve dwelling within such journeys and giving participants time and opportunity to connect to places through aesthetic and embodied engagement in activities.

Here we are utilising Iceland's unique nature-rich position, which attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists every year. Many people seek natural experiences in national parks, on glaciers, and among the active volcanoes constantly shaping the country. Some of these stunning natural wonders are located in the highlands and off the beaten path. It is important that access to these places is provided to children through school and leisure activities. Are these areas perhaps only for those who have the money and means to get there?

It is important to remember that Icelandic nature is diverse and therefore, for a child growing up in the Westfjords, travel to the South involves experiencing very different nature. And vice versa.

Proposals

These proposals are directed to educational authorities, mainly at the national level.

5) Support the development of infrastructure and facilities for outdoor learning and outdoor activities in and near urban areas.

Example of actions

- a) Continue to construct outdoor areas (e.g. outdoor classrooms) close to schools and leisure activities. Additionally, there should be greater emphasis on developing facilities near the sea and lakes. This could involve improving existing operations such as sailing clubs, or creating new facilities that would enable the affordances of coastal areas for educational and recreational purposes.

6) Collaboration across different fields of expertise is a successful way to increase children's opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities in nature. In doing so, opportunities arise to utilize facilities, knowledge, equipment, and manpower in a successful manner. It is recommended to create collaboration between local non-profit organizations, businesses, and institutions.

Example of actions:

- a) Through grants and awards state and local authorities should encourage collaboration across schools, leisure and tourism.

7) Putting provisions in regulations or laws requiring that children be provided the opportunity to explore Icelandic nature and culture – both locally and through travel across the country, as well as through residential experiences.

Example of actions:

- a) To support children's right to residential experiences, it is very important that the state guarantees this right in law. It is proposed that the Youth Act (2007, No 70), which is currently being revised, include an article on the right of children to a certain number of days of residential experience during their childhood. With this, the state would support the operation of school camps in many parts of the country and create equal opportunity for all children to participate.

The above recommendations and future research are related to various aspects, including systemic aspects such as the home of Outdoor Education and who is responsible for it. I find it important to push for further discussion on these important questions and guide them towards a conclusion so that we can better ensure the opportunities for all people, especially children, to enjoy the affordances of Outdoor Education.

9 Epilogue

In the prologue, I shared stories to emphasize some questions I asked myself thirty years ago, and my research has been an exploration inspired by these questions. I have felt as a settler in the land of Outdoor Education. One could say that settling a land, or colonising it, takes place by naming land with words. Names can help you to navigate the land and to communicate with others about your experiences and support them to learn about the land. Some would say that we gain control over the mountain, lakes, or heath by naming the land. Gaining power over something is also our attempt to put down roots – to belong, feel home, in a new place. In Iceland, we sometimes refer to lines in the poem "Mountain walk" (i. Fjallganga) by Tómas Guðmundsson, where it says: „Landscape would be of little value if it had no name.“ Surely, landscape has a value, even those which have no names. In my exploration of Outdoor Education, I followed a similar path. I sought to define foreign concepts in Icelandic, aiming to grasp the essence of Outdoor Education and distinguish it from other educational fields. I was also trying to gain control over this field and make myself at home. However, I have now adopted a more critical viewpoint regarding my exploration and have come to recognize the constraints of this approach – the negative aspects of colonization. The outdoor educator Raffan (1993) warns against dividing education into "Outdoor" and "Indoor" categories. He writes that teachers have placed their education outside because "going outdoors was just one element in GOOD TEACHING" (p. 10) and emphasizes that effective teaching encompasses engagement, community involvement, problem-solving, group-building, achieving results, going places, being able, and celebrating achievements.



Figure 9. Hiking in Hellið in with university students towards the gateway of the Mountains.

In my research journey I have come to grasp the fundamental importance of language, the importance played by the terms we use and how they reflect our thinking. But I have also realized how different terms have different meanings for different people and even different contexts. Reflecting on my teenage travels across Hellisheiði, landmarks such as „Bakarísbrekkan“ (The Bakery) and „Kötturinn“ (The Cat) served as navigation aids and later, sources of understanding. Other example are two large wooden poles known as "Negrarnir" ("The Negroes"), which once marked a gateway into the mountains. Crossing them was believed to bring you safe travel. Although I used this name casually in the past, it currently evokes hostility and animosity in me. It is time to rename such landmarks – but more important is to be positive towards such changes and understand the broader implications involved. The same can be said for necessary changes regarding education. We need to be critical and reconsider some of our approaches to education. In that process it is essential not to lose sight of what lies behind good education: good teaching, good youth work, and simultaneously good experiences, friendship, and multiplicitous interactions with nature. Raffan (1993) warns outdoor educators to distinguish themselves from other fields of education because by not doing so they do themselves a disservice. A good approach for schools is to appreciate that experiencing outdoors affords so many different valuable educational values, far beyond just teaching outdoors.

I will gladly continue wrestling with the discourse regarding this field of education. Perhaps Outdoor Education is of such a nature that it is more suitable to draw an analogy from the ocean than the land. Many factors are at play in the sea at the same time, such as currents, tides, the ecosystem, and the seabed. And certainly, the weather and the life in the water. The ocean has unexplored depths. We can discover uncharted waters, learn to navigate them and inspire others to do the same.



Figure 10. Sailing towards uncharted waters on our way to Bessastaðir.

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Paper I

Paper I

Chapter 5

Developing a Sense of Place



Mark Leather and Jakob F. Thorsteinsson

In this chapter we consider what is meant by a sense of place, and what challenges and opportunities this brings to outdoor education. We address the challenges and the tensions within the profession and conclude this chapter with a consideration of the future. We use our shared understanding of the concepts of place and our shared teaching experiences at universities in Plymouth, England and Reykjavik, Iceland. The comparison between countries is helpful for our understanding because, as Nicol (2020a) highlights, the affordances of one place can differ immensely from another and we need to understand them theoretically as well as experientially. Our practice has evolved to recognise that a place-responsive approach to outdoor education allows us to develop a sense of place; to connect with our cultural pasts, to understand our present and to imagine and engage in our communities now and in the future.

5.1 What Is a Sense of Place?

A sense of place has many contested potential explanations, and what we present here needs to be read through the lens of practicing outdoor educators in higher education. There are multiple key influences (e.g., see Butler & Sinclair, 2020; Hubbard & Kitchin, 2011) and what we present here reflects our journey of understanding that has influenced our teaching. Firstly, we consider the difference between outdoor *spaces* and outdoor *places* before exploring the three challenges facing the profession: culture, nature, and time.

M. Leather (✉) · J. F. Thorsteinsson
Plymouth Marjon University, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland
e-mail: mleather@marjon.ac.uk; jakobf@hi.is

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5.2 When Space Becomes Place

The eminent geographer Tuan (1977) discussed how human experience is affected by dwelling in places and spaces. He made a distinction between *spaces*, which are unspecific and applicable to a range of locations (e.g. a town, a forest, a river delta, a mountain range etc.), and *places*, which are more local, personal and storied (e.g. Dartmoor in Devon, England as the place where Arthur Conan Doyle set *The Hound of the Baskervilles* featuring the detective Sherlock Holmes; or Mount Snæfellsjökull in Iceland as the place where Jules Verne set the *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*). These places are spaces where attachment and belonging are cultivated, by experiencing the space aesthetically – seeing, smelling, touching and being outside in nature – and experiencing it cognitively, by connecting with the culture – either fictional stories, folklore or historical accounts. As such the concept of a *sense of place* may be felt, experienced, understood and then used in different ways by different people. These two aspects of understanding a *sense of place* can be, a) an objective, naturalistic conception, and b) a subjective existential sense of place. The naturalistic view is a descriptive approach to place. The existential notion has a humanistic approach where personal experience and meaning are more emphasised. This has given life to a range of related concepts that are helpful such as: ‘place identity’, ‘personality of place’, and ‘place attachment’.

A *sense of place* is a multidimensional and complex construct used by anthropologists, cultural geographers, sociologists and urban planners to characterise relationships between people and spaces. Attachment is a characteristic that some geographic places have, and some do not. A *sense of place* is often used to describe those characteristics that make a place special or unique, as well as those that foster a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging. *Place attachment* describes “the emotional bonds between people and a particular place or environment” (Seamon, 2014, p. 11). In *Landscapes of Fear*, Tuan (1980) highlighted how not all *senses of place* are necessarily associated with positive emotions; not everyone lives in an aesthetically pleasing or safe place. Places said to have a strong *sense of place* have a strong identity that is deeply felt by inhabitants and visitors and as such a *sense of place* is a social phenomenon. Place identity can be formed by its inhabitants or constructed (or arguably imposed) by formalised external agency designations. These designations and codes attributed to specific places are aimed at protecting, preserving and enhancing places felt (by some organisation or group of people) to be of value, for example, The Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks are a UNESCO *World Heritage Site*. Importantly, we argue that a *sense of place* can be a much more personal, intimate and locally specific feeling, either at, or near, home, or when visiting a location for the first time. A place does not need to be iconic, famous or aesthetically outstanding, the effects of a place can be much more subtle and finely nuanced.

5.3 Challenges with a *sense of place*

A critical approach to our teaching is essential, and while we advocate for developing a *sense of place*, we have also questioned this alternative pedagogy for outdoor education. There are three key problems which we have wrangled with so far. That is not to say they are the only ones to be considered, but they have been most significant for us. They are based on human relationships with culture, time, and nature.

5.3.1 *Sense of Place and our Relationship with Culture*

A *sense of place* can be used in relation to place-making and place-attachment of communities to their environment or homeland. The utility of a *sense of place*, the discussion of culture and history, involves grounding ideas and experiences in the local and personal. This becomes problematic when place-attachment to a homeland becomes dominated by localism and nationalism, where the primary emphasis is on promotion of local or national culture and interests as superior over and above that of other peoples, regions or nations. We suggest that place-based educators need to be mindful, reflexive and sensitive to these possibilities when developing a sense of place. It is important to have a balance and to understand the difference between having a sense of pride and the feeling of love, devotion and an attachment to a community, grounded in respect for others who share the same sentiment, and *localism* and *nationalism* which is based on exclusion or detriment of the interests of others (groups, peoples, nations), arguably an excessive, aggressive patriotism. This is not a new critique of outdoor education practice, nor one solely aimed at place-based outdoor education. For example, Brookes (2016) highlighted Baden-Powell's Scouting Movement and the themes of militarism, imperialism, nationalism, masculinity, homophobia and racism that were present during its formation and early years of operation. Scouting developed at the beginning of the twentieth century in the context of British imperial struggles in Africa and not unsurprisingly its origins reflect the beliefs and values of the time.

The places where we teach have a history. There are more-than-human histories, as well as human stories of romantic encounters, ancient horse roads or infamous battles of settler colonialism. Outdoor education is often conducted in places with difficult histories of colonialism, particularly in countries of the British Empire. Henderson (2005) provided a good argument that our heritage stories should not be lost, rather they should be listened to and retold, thereby woven into the narrative allowing this rich history to live in the contemporary world of adventure travel. When we journey in the present, this is shaped, determined and influenced by the past. Place-based outdoor education challenges the dominant discourse of colonial ways of conquering nature – the ‘blank canvas’ discussed below and allows us to engage with the narratives of others. As Riley (2020) argues, understanding that there are no distinct and unconnected worldviews existing in which individuals act

through autonomous agency, but “worlding emerges through relational agency, teaching, and learning in outdoor experiential education and can generate an intrinsic sense of responsibility to attend to more equitable relationships with Other(s) for/with/in these Anthropocene times” (p. 88).

5.3.2 *Sense of Place and our Relationship with Time*

Time(s) reveals itself in a place. Through place we can experience where people lived, and we can put ourselves in their footsteps. We live in the present moment and can think, imagine and speculate about the future. We can be place responsive and act to influence the future of the place. Payne and Wattchow (2008) state: “there are worrying silences in outdoor education about the question of time in the conceptualisation of place and its pedagogies” (p. 27). This phenomenon is not a simple one. They argue that time(s) has different layers; *cyclical* – like the tides and seasons, *linear* – like hours and minutes and *dot* time – instantaneous, like a digital blip, as found in traditional “fast outdoor education” (p. 28). The pedagogical heart of place based outdoor education is the slowing down of the times during which we introduce our learners to the concept and practices of place. This approach is challenging because an overcrowded school curriculum squeezes outdoor education to the margins. We can see this ‘time(table) famine’ where school-based outdoor education is a reflection of the faster cultural and technological phenomena, and as such the possibility of a sense of place, engagement in nature’s spaces, or some attachment to them, is compromised (Payne & Wattchow, 2008). Given that attachment is important to us when developing a *sense of place*, then *fast outdoor education* proves problematic and so we must acknowledge the potential power of the proximal, the spatiality and geographies of movement in the outdoors, which are compromised by the absence of the consideration and examination of time. Slow pedagogy is a serious response to Dewey’s unheeded call in education for a philosophy of experience.

When on an adventurous journey, places may possibly be passed through and treated as spaces, as a blank canvas upon which to create our own story and place, without the other meanings that are already connected to them. In outdoor recreation for some, the aim is *hunting for trophies* – climb the rock face, conquer the mountain top, ski the black run, and so on. Trophy hunting shows that the owner has been somewhere and done something. For example, in the UK The National Three Peaks Challenge involves climbing the three highest peaks of Scotland, England and Wales, often within 24 hours. Participants may then display their achievements on social media; Instagram has #3peaks for this trophy. These social media posts add to the discourse and social constructs of how to be outdoors. They can shape people’s ideas about what constitutes climbing mountains and being physically active in nature. Our approach in place responsive outdoor education is to harness outdoor recreation activities whilst being mindful of the negative consequences that trophy hunting can have if it is the sole focus of an outdoor education programme.

As an antidote to this approach, our teaching practice is informed by a couple of ideas. Firstly, we use three chapters of the book *Philosophy of Walking* (Gros, 2014) with students: *Walking is not a sport*, *Solitude*, and *Slowness*. The concept of *slowness* is not the opposite of speed, but of *haste*. By slowing down, in silence and solitude, people become more self-aware of their senses, emotions and the places they move through. Leopold (1949/2020) has a powerful message when he describes, “recreation is not the outdoors but our reaction to it” (p. 173). The essential issue is about an embodied sensing of the place – seeing, feeling, touching, smelling, tasting – so that the place can be mentally understood. Secondly, from the book *Psychogeography* (Coverley, 2018) we use the concept of *dérive* – or the drift – as a way of moving through and across the land to help develop our more-than-human connections. The *dérive* can be considered the specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals. Similarly, the famous naturalist John Muir disliked both the word hike and the activity hiking. He argued that people ought to *saunter* in the mountains – not hike! He took the meaning from religious pilgrimages and argued how the mountains are our Holy Land, and we ought to saunter through them reverently, rather than hike (Delphi Classics, 2017). Drifting can be carried slowly, by a current of air or water, or other useful synonyms such as stroll, amble, float, linger, wander, meander, stray, and hover. Nicol (2020b) suggests a straightforward “Walking and talking like Socrates once did” (p. 182), which is simply to go for a walk and encourage students to pay attention to something along the way and be ready to talk about it. We all lead busy lives with endless noise and connection to others. There are times with our students that we create opportunities to become more of a *human-being*, rather than a *human-doing*.

5.3.3 *Sense of Place and our Relationship with Nature*

The *place* in which we locate our teaching has a more-than-human past. There are ecosystems, inanimate rocks and mountains as well as the highly active volcanoes, tectonic plates, rivers and waterfalls. While many of these places have had human settlement, there are places in the world that have not, for example the Vatnajökull National Park in the interior of Iceland. These places may have been given names (and arguably been settled in that respect) but the point we highlight is that our relationship with *place* is multi-layered with both human and more-than-human influences. It is vital that we learn to see ourselves as part of, and in relationship with, the wider ecology and not maintain anthropocentric lines of thought that seek to artificially separate humans. In doing so Derby et al. (2015) caution that:

we also need to be thoughtful in the process that we do not conflate everything, including wild(er)ness, under the archaic and potentially dangerous umbrella of ‘nature.’ ... We maintain that in our efforts to tackle the divide between nature and culture, we are ignoring the important differences that do exist among the range of human influenced spaces and also those which are still mostly beyond our reach. (p. 8)

As educators, we need to acknowledge the radical differences in the *knowing* and *being* that take place across different settings, from the local urban park to the distant arctic tundra and everything else in-between. For us, the forces and beauty of nature (however conceived) are fundamental to our *sense of place*, for we experience it directly, in all types of weather. Sometimes we are teaching, at others we are doing things for our own enjoyment. Not only because of the fresh outdoor life, or Nordic *friluftsliv*, but also because we love the magnificent natural structures, from the vast mountain ranges to the smallest wildflower, the pebbles on a beach, and the ripples on the ocean.

5.4 Tensions in the Profession

Place-based education has been embraced by some outdoor educators (see Henderson, 2005; Mannion and Lynch, 2016; Nicol, 2020b; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). In doing so it shifts the pedagogical approach. This inevitably leads to tensions within as to what really constitutes outdoor education. In a sense, it is a move from a focus on risk and adventure to understanding our adventure spaces as places, and in doing so we need at times to adopt a slow pedagogy, as discussed above. For us it is a reaction and antidote to the traditional *fast and furious* adrenaline-charged ways of consuming and conquering outdoor spaces. That is not to say that this is a simplistic binary either/or choice. We love climbing mountains, running river rapids and biking downhill as fast as we can! However, our understanding and practice of outdoor education is that it is always more than just the activities. It is also about meaning making and the sharing of ideas and conversations in the spaces in-between the activities.

Wattchow and Brown (2011) provide thorough arguments for adopting a *pedagogy of place*. They challenge the traditional Hahnian view of risk and adventure. This is where nature is to be conquered and the great outdoors provides spaces – blue (oceans and rivers), green (mountains and forests), yellow (sandy deserts and beaches) and white (high mountains and polar regions) – as blank canvases in which to prove yourself as a man/woman, developing your character, resilience and leadership. Wattchow and Brown (2011) also critique the commonly held Romantic notions of nature, adventure and the pedagogy of risk, the paradoxical aspects of adventure, the assumptions concerning the benefits of risk and the flawed use of the comfort zone model to enhance learning. When discussing the rise of individualism and the focus of personal development in outdoor education programmes, they challenge the traditional approach to outdoor education that has become a simplistic binary of ‘doing or reflecting on experience’ highlighting how this overlooks the nuanced, highly contextualised and interconnected webs of people, places and contested meanings of experience.

Early definitions of outdoor education included that it was *in*, *about*, and *for* the out of doors and that outdoor educators should strive to educate for an increased love and awareness of self, others and the environment. More recently, Quay (2013)

argued how the cognitive aspect of outdoor education (the thinking and reflecting on the experience), has dominated the aesthetic domain, and that all experience is first sensed before we respond to these emotionally and cognitively, both in the moment or at the conclusion of the experience. He argued that outdoor education is *more than* relations between self, others and nature. Outdoor education as aesthetic experience, and cognitive experience, must be understood on equal terms (Quay, 2013). This supports Tuan's (1977) perspective on experience in order to develop a *sense of place*, when he stated that "a place achieves concrete reality when our experience of it is total, that is, through all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind" (p. 18). Outdoor education is known for its visceral and embodied experiences, employing all the senses. Tuan (1977) highlights how a sense of place is not a concept determined by time alone stating that "while it takes time to form an attachment to place, the quality and intensity of experience matters more than simple duration" (p. 198). Outdoor education provides for intense experiences, from adrenaline filled activities in groups to silent solo reflections, whether on a mountain summit, a favourite beach or a special place in a local park.

We have considered *why* we may want or need to develop a *sense of place* in our outdoor education practice: to develop an ethic of care for people and the planet, to educate outdoors with a post-colonial regard for the people who have gone before us, and to acknowledge the influences of our more-than-human relationships. But what does the future hold?

5.5 The Future of a Sense of Place in a Pandemic/ Post-Pandemic World

Where will we go, what will we do and how will we do *outdoor education* in the post-pandemic world? Place based outdoor education asks us to consider and engage in the present and future. Writing this chapter during the middle of the covid-19 coronavirus pandemic it appears that the world has changed. The encouragement to exercise outdoors on a daily basis for our physical and mental wellbeing, the slower pace of life allowing us to notice the spring flowers and trees (in the Global north) and the abundant, loud birdsong in a time of dramatically reduced travel, traffic and air pollution are noticeable. It's given us an insight of how things could be if we change the way we do things and think and act differently.

As educators, we wish to spend plenty of time under the sky in nature. The perception of authentic or real nature is useful to challenge. Nature as a mediated and groomed experience, utilising Baudrillard's concept of nature as hyperreal (Leather & Gibson, 2019) can help. National Parks around the world are nature as hyperreality. They are managed, policed and have carefully groomed trails, tailored to the needs of humans. For example, the mountains of the Lake District National Park (UK) are often perceived as wild adventurous spaces. However, this is a fiction. Aside from the human management and farming of the land, it has been portrayed

as a primal setting and healing force that is good for us since the time of the Romantic poets and artists, with constructions of nature as sites of sublime experience. As such, hyperreal nature is not a new phenomenon and it does continue to affect our *sense of place*. In the age of mobile technologies, Leather and Gibson (2019) argue how image circulation of outdoor experiences through social media, provide *greater* affordances with nature. For example, you the reader can easily visit us where we teach together; just #reykjavik on Instagram.

Images for meaning making have long been used, however the age of the selfie and live streaming suggest that students are meaning making and reflecting in the moment in ways that are different and new. With the rapidly changing technological world the future is an uncertain and exciting adventure. However, we must exercise caution and ask critical questions. The collective repetition of images and messages distorts and overpowers our perception of reality. Digital reality replaces actual lived sensorial reality, with the narrative becoming mediated by human actors with an agenda. For example, the BBC's Blue Planet series creates an emotive connection between the viewer, plastic waste (and microplastics) in the ocean and its impact on marine life. Without criticality, these curated visions of nature, with a collective repetition of images and messages, could lead to a distortion and overpower our perception of reality. Nonetheless, this may be of use to help develop our *sense of place* if we travel less. We could use place-responsiveness at a distance to do this. Place-responsive education moves to a deeper recognition of an interwoven way of living and learning. It aligns with a postdigital pedagogical perspective, recognising what Fawns (2019) refers to as "an integrated totality" (p. 142); the complex entanglement of learners, embedded in the wider culture. As such, we argue, that there are new, different and exciting ways of developing a *sense of place*.

5.6 Conclusion

From our teaching, developing a *sense of place* requires experiential, aesthetic and embodied fieldwork experiences. Using a *place responsive* pedagogy opens connections for students and the meanings they develop through the acceptance of knowledge emerging through their on-going entanglement of people, place, and the-more-than-human becomes evident. Our students research stories about people, places and events that resonate with them, the places that have meaning for them, in Reykjavik, Plymouth or closer to their home. A *sense of place* is developed in multiple ways and expressed in different forms. Some of these we capture through our formal teaching, in student assessments and during in-class discussion. Others, we suggest, remain personal, private and within the individual. As Tuan (1977) describes how "eventually what was strange ... and unknown space becomes familiar place. Abstract space, lacking significance other than strangeness, becomes concrete place, filled with meaning. Much is learned but not through formal instruction" (p. 199).

We recommend the importance of harnessing the power of the informal parts of education outdoors. This is done by designing experiences that include people from that specific place, giving students an aesthetic and embodied experience, and teachers who advocate and facilitate to take time – to be a *human-being* as well as a *human-doing*; to slow down, notice themselves and the place, while reflecting before, in and on the experiences. In the future, in a post-pandemic and digital world, there will continue to be new and different ways of developing a *sense of place*.

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Reflective Questions

1. What abstract spaces do you enjoy participating in outdoor adventurous sports?
2. What specific *places* do you know and why do you like them?
3. What is your personal cultural heritage?
4. What problems for you are there in developing a *sense of place*?
5. How could you use adventures to focus on nature and the more-than-human?

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Paper II

Paper II



Exploring a pedagogy of place in Iceland: Students understanding of a sense of place and emerging meanings

Jakob Frímánn Thorsteinsson¹ · Mark Leather² · Fiona Nicholls² · Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson³

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Abstract

This paper explores the educational opportunities of a pedagogy of place based on an action research project, investigating a course at the University of Iceland in the field of leisure studies. The aim was to identify what gave students an understanding of a sense of place and to find out what meanings emerged for them. Following the fieldwork course, qualitative data was collected from participants using photo-elicitation, a focus group, and a documentary analysis of student writing. The findings highlighted the need of acknowledging the location's cultural, social, historical, and political past. Additionally, effectively translating the language used in this educational approach was found to be essential. An experiential pedagogy was valued by students when exploring and developing their sense of place. However, educators need to be aware that it takes extended, immersive experiences in nature to create opportunities for authentic, aesthetic, embodied experiences to generate deep conversations and dialogue between tutors and students. The study suggests that greater emphasis is needed on the place-responsive process, involving more opportunities for reflection, empowering students to actively apply place-responsive activities themselves, and raising, and addressing, global issues such as the climate crisis, and environmental and social justice. This action research study provided the authors continued opportunities to develop their pedagogy of place.

Keywords Place based · Education · Experiential pedagogy · Sense of place · Nature · Action research

Introduction

This paper reports an action research investigation focused on a university course that applied place-based pedagogy, titled *An Introduction to Place Based Outdoor Education*. The course was offered at the University of Iceland as a six-day

✉ Jakob Frímánn Thorsteinsson
jakobf@hi.is

Extended author information available on the last page of the article

programme by Thorsteinsson, in collaboration with Leather and Nicholls, academics from Plymouth Marjon University in the UK. We, the authors of this paper and co-designers of the programme, share a passion for the sea, teaching, and experiential pedagogies. Following thorough discussion and detailed planning, the course was taught in Reykjavik, Iceland, with fieldtrips to the sea and shoreline of Fossvogur, Island of Viðey, the harbour, and to Gróttá, a lighthouse and nature reserve. The emphasis was on what makes a place unique: its history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art.

Teaching this course inspired us to further explore the theoretical foundations of a sense of place, and the challenges and opportunities that developing a sense of place brings to outdoor education (Leather & Thorsteinsson, 2021). Leather and Thorsteinsson, (2021) define sense of place as "characteristics that make a place special or unique, as well as those that foster a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging" (p. 51). To help others to develop a sense of place, we argue here that our students need to develop an understanding of pedagogy of place, that is rooted in the literature in this field of education and leisure, for them to work with others.

The research project was inspired by Leather and Nicholls, (2016), whose research resonated with Thorsteinsson, where sailing activities allowed for a cultural engagement with a nation's maritime heritage and a "new" and critical approach to outdoor education that places its emphasis on developing a sense of place. The aim of the research was to investigate the meanings that emerged from student experiences and the aspects of the course they identified in connection with developing a sense of place, articulated via the following questions:

- What gave the students an understanding of a sense of place?
- What meanings emerged for participants?

Our investigation evolved as a response to Wattchow and Brown's, (2011) call for more practitioner-authored accounts in the field of outdoor education, especially those illuminating the crucial role of place, as place based outdoor education (PBOE). According to Wattchow and Brown there is a scarcity of practitioner-authored accounts in outdoor education research literature, which predominantly leans towards theoretical perspectives.

Attempting to define outdoor education

Higgins and Nicol (2002) explain how outdoor education is a culturally-shaped concept, and that approaches and applications may vary across countries and between groups within countries. Even though there are indicators of increased emphasis on outdoor learning in Icelandic kindergartens, primary schools, and leisure centres, along with a growing public interest in outdoor activities (Aðalsteinsson & Þorsteinsson, 2015), outdoor education (útimenntun in Icelandic) as a subject and a discipline is young in Iceland.

A classic definition of outdoor education describes it as education in, about, and for the out-of-doors (Donaldson & Donaldson, 1958). Mortlock, (1984) argued that

in the role of outdoor education we should endeavour to educate for an increased love and awareness of self, others, and the environment. More recently, Quay, (2013) extended the concept of outdoor education arguing for the importance of aesthetic experience and its nexus with cognitive reflection upon those experiences. Outdoor education continues to be debated and remains a contested and wide-ranging phenomenon in both content and context (Quay & Seaman, 2013; Rickinson et al., 2004).

Scholars have questioned the philosophical and pedagogical underpinnings of outdoor education. Loynes, (2002) criticized adventure education, one branch of outdoor education (Priest, 1986), for its emphasis on masculinity, long expeditions, and the militarism that accompanied it. Loynes defined outdoor education as a radical practice, an experiential journey of discovery, where a personal ontology and epistemology are developed.

Other critiques – Wattchow and Brown, (2011) and Beames and Brown, (2016) – question the comfort zone as a pedagogical model. This model assumes that when people are placed in a stressful situation, they will respond by overcoming their fear and consequently grow as individuals (Brown, 2008). Beames and Brown, (2016) highlight that there is no research evidence to support this and argue for an approach based on positive psychology which suggests the opposite; namely that security, feeling safe, and personal support promotes learning. This opposing critique is important because, for some outdoor educators, the comfort zone model is seen as fundamental to their outdoor education practice, and as such the authors saw this as a critical issue to investigate.

Loynes, (2002) critiques long expeditions far from home, a critique supported by Wattchow and Brown, (2011), who emphasize the use of the local environment, slower methods, and the importance and educational value of place, advocating that place has the potential to provide a renewed philosophical and pedagogical basis for outdoor education. Valuing place in these ways highlights the need to investigate how outdoor education could offer a means to engaging with place, and thus for further developing pedagogy of place.

Developing pedagogy of place

Gruenewald's, (2003) *Critical Pedagogy of Place* was a useful starting point for us because it contributes to the development of educational discourses and practices that explicitly “examine the place-specific nexus between environment, culture, and education” (p. 10). This means that we must rethink outdoor education and see it as more than just activities, and set the focus on relationships between self, people, and the more-than-human world. In practice it is about slowing down and moving away from activities that are fast and adrenaline fuelled and instead give time to activities that are mindful, aesthetic, and embodied (Leather & Thorsteinsson, 2021).

A critical pedagogy of place challenges educators to reflect on the relationship between the kind of education they pursue and the kind of places we inhabit and leave behind for future generations. It is a pedagogy linked to cultural and ecological politics that is influenced “by an ethic of eco-justice and other socio-ecological

traditions that interrogate the intersection between cultures and ecosystems” (Grue-newald, 2003, p. 10).

Our research collaboration evolved as Thorsteinsson became inspired by the work of Leather and Nicholls, (2016) in the UK, who were themselves heavily influenced by Wattchow and Brown, (2011). Additionally, and more recently, the discussion by Deringer et al., (2020) of mindfulness as a tool for place-based educators strongly resonated with our own place-based practice.

A major inspiration for us was to see and feel places as educational synergies, where environment, nature, culture, past, present, and potential futures created fertile educational ground for the course (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). We aimed at ‘reading the landscape,’ in specific places and communities, so it could assist us to “probe and reflect on the relationships between personal experience and the complex cultural-ecological processes that have shaped the places in which we live and work” (Stewart, 2008, p. 79).

We argue that it is critical to take time to read the landscape, not just through formal teaching, but also by providing the time and space for embodied experience of the landscape and informal learning. In practice, this is how we structure the teaching, with time for informal conversations and dialogue, and activities that are in general described as “mindfulness.” As Deringer, (2017) suggested, outdoor educators should use mindful place-based education to help deepen student and teacher experiences of place to aim for deeper and critical learning experiences. This is important because, as Tuan, (1977) highlighted, “eventually what was strange ... and unknown space becomes familiar place. Abstract space, lacking significance other than strangeness, becomes concrete place, filled with meaning. Much is learned but not through formal instruction” (p. 199).

Wattchow and Brown, (2011) emphasised that people and places exist in a mutual bond of interdependence, which resonated with our teaching. We found that whilst people and places have a physical reality, it is the identities of both that continually emerge as an unfolding interdependent phenomenon. When teaching PBOE we are not interested in passing on a fixed body of knowledge, but in developing ways of knowing that are emergent in, and responsive to, particular places, especially ones influenced by and associated with our seafaring heritage. We are interested in ways of knowing that change the knower; that generate a critique of existing knowledge and practices in such a way that they open the possibility of transformation and change. In this study we explore how students may come to know themselves differently by focussing on their individualised self in relation to those others, including human, more-than-human, who make up the places we inhabit (Somerville et al., 2011).

Place-responsive outdoor education, which we interpret as developing students’ understanding of the processes of PBOE to use in their own contexts, is conceptualised by Mannion and Lynch, (2016). They highlight three aspects: (a) attending to the subjective, personal development and ‘inner world’ of experience of place, (b) without losing sight of the need to learn an activity itself, we need to attend to the aesthetic practice-oriented ways of being (or Dewey’s ‘occupations’), yet (c) all the while, attending to the need to attune to the place-based, more-than-human, living and inanimate materials that are also active as agencies in curriculum making.

Our holistic view of outdoor education is supported by Mannion and Lynch, (2016) with a renewed attention to embodied and aesthetic experiences of place as well as reflective practice. This is designed to help students respond to place in ways that are embodied, cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, and ethical. This is about an on-going entanglement of people, place, and the-more-than-human. Mannion and Lynch, (2016) argue that these entanglements are present whether we are experiencing a place, reflecting on it, or transforming it on our own or with others.

In summary, place “is best understood as a meeting of learners’ experiences, the ideas and ideals of their group and culture, and the geophysical reality of the site of learning itself” (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p.77). Hence our working definition of PBOE is that it refers to those educational processes based in local and natural environments, where learning has its origins in explorations of issues concerning the characteristics of the place, including culture, art, history, scenery, wildlife, literature.

Above, we highlighted the many significant influencing factors for us and our approach to PBOE. We now consider the way the student experiences were investigated in this action research project.

Materials and methods

The study was designed as an action research project, with the aim being to evaluate the implementation of a new course, *An Introduction to Place Based Outdoor Education* at the University of Iceland. This action research project also provided each author with opportunities to further develop their pedagogical practice and their own sense of place.

Participants

Participants included students and tutors from Iceland and England. Authors Thorsteinsson, Leather and Nicholls were all with the group throughout and extra tutors contributed when sailing, and during fieldwork to Videy island, museums, and lighthouses. Nineteen students (5 males and 14 females) participated in the course. Mean age was 40.3 years, with a range from 22 to 53 years. Students who selected this course were recruited from Tourism Studies, Computer Science, Leisure Studies, Education Studies, and Primary Teaching. Six students took the course as continuing education, five as a part of an undergraduate degree, and eight as part of a Masters programme. The students lived in various locations in Iceland; nine of them in small villages on or close to the seashore.

Informed consent was obtained from the participants, both written and verbally at the start of the focus group. This was in line with processes for research ethics at the University of Iceland.

Action research

The action research project presented here is firmly located in our professional practice and is associated with the concept of reflective practice that permeates education and adventure sports coaching. Action research has a long tradition, most widely attributed to Kurt Lewin in the 1930s. It is nevertheless a valuable contemporary practice in education (Mertler, 2019), with the practice/inquiry combination at the centre of the activity. Carr and Kemmis, (1986) characterise action research as “simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken in order to improve the rationality of our practice, and understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out” (p. 162). Our approach places us firmly in the British tradition of action research, as confirmed by Smith, (2017), rather than the American understanding of action research.

As outdoor educators we planned the programme to provide aesthetic, emotional, and embodied experiences, from the water as well as the land. We wanted to evaluate the educational processes and their impact on the student experience. We used action research to improve our practice, and suggest that our findings may be of value to others, including policy makers.

Our evaluative research position is supported by McNiff, (1993), who argued that in action research, educational knowledge is created by individual teachers as they attempt to express their own values in their professional lives. As such, we were clear that our values as outdoor educators had directly influenced both the content and pedagogy associated with this university course. We consider outdoor sport and practical activities as fundamental to the educational process, and that these are always ‘more than activities’ (Leather & Nicholls, 2016). The idea of living our values in our professional practice is, according to McNiff, (2016), “at the heart of debates about demonstrating and judging quality and validity in action research” (p. 26).

Action research is a cyclical process and involves a cycle or spiral of planning, action, monitoring and reflection (see e.g., Elliott, 1991; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982; McNiff, 2016; Mertler, 2019). It is a research approach that seeks to both take action and generate knowledge or theory regarding that action as it happens (Coghlan, 2019). The action research cycle for this project was as follows:

- (1). Design a new course on PBOE at the University of Iceland in Reykjavik, influenced by a *Pedagogy of Place* (Wattchow & Brown, 2011) and “More Than Activities: Using a ‘Sense Of Place’ to Enrich Student Experience in Adventure Sport” which offers a UK approach to PBOE (Leather & Nicholls, 2016).
- (2). Plan, develop and implement a pedagogic approach, as detailed above.
- (3). Evaluate the impact of the teaching and content of this course on the student experience and reflect on the nature of that experience, which will be explored below.
- (4). Reflect upon these findings and analyse the implications of these for our practice (both in research and for teaching) for other educators and policy makers, which will be discussed below.

- (5). Teach this course in subsequent years in light of these findings. The data collected for this action research project has fed into subsequent iterations of the course. For example, students now conduct their own teaching episodes in order for them to directly develop and experience their own pedagogy of place.

Data collection

At the start of the course, the students were informed that we planned to conduct research, including its goals and how we would collect data. We also allowed time for discussion during our teaching to ensure that students understood the research. The students were clearly informed that participation was voluntary, and all decided to be involved. All provided written informed consent that we could use images, voice recording of the focus group discussion, and analyse their submitted coursework.

We used two methods to gather the students' experiences of their PBOE course and these were applied in two phases. Firstly, at the end of the course, we ran a focus group session that utilised photo-elicitation. We had been persuaded of photo-elicitation's efficacy by Harper, (2002), Loeffler, (2005) and Porr et al., (2011). Images have been used in a range of diverse qualitative studies (Flick, 2018; Silverman, 2013) in various ways to help participants share their experiences.

Students were asked to choose three images of their own that they thought would have a long-lasting meaning to them, related to their experience on the course, and share these during the group discussions. They were encouraged to bring images from any source, be it images found online or their own or friend's photographs, or those shared on social media. This data collection method had already been used successfully in a previous PBOE study (Leather & Nicholls, 2016). Students contributed these images to a visual timeline and annotated this with words and drawings.

The timeline formed a basis of discussion in the focus group that followed. There we heard the students describe, express, and make sense of their experiences. Loeffler (2005) found that her participants "exhibited a strong desire to capture every nuance of the excitement, intensity, and learning of the new activity or environment" (p. 346) when telling the stories associated with particular images, and we believed these students would respond similarly. Focus groups are an acknowledged method for eliciting a wide range of views or understanding of an issue (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As Morgan (2019) highlights, "the interaction makes focus groups unique as a research method [and] the use of the participants' discussion to produce data" (p. 5). The interaction and discussion between participants often reveal hidden areas or blind spots (Braun & Clarke, 2013) that may not be immediately visible to the individuals involved, and this can lead to rich, detailed outcomes.

The second phase was conducted a few weeks later where students' written assessments were collected for documentary analysis. These consisted of a research project and a reflective journal. The research project could be based on Reykjavik, or other location of interest influenced by seafaring (sailing, cultural heritage on and near the coasts of Iceland). The reflective journal facilitated the students' meaning making of their experiences of the course in relation to its theoretical foundations.

Data analysis

As a group we discussed the focus group conversations immediately after they were concluded, and made notes on the main issues that emerged. Most of this discussion and analysis, including the note-taking, was conducted in English, so we could all access and understand it. Later, the recordings were transcribed, and frequently re-read, for the researchers “to become intimately familiar” with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013 p. 204). This allowed us to undertake a selective coding process, identifying “a corpus of instances of the phenomenon” (Braun & Clarke, 2013 p. 206). The codes selected and used for the subsequent analysis are listed in Table 1.

The written assessments (a total of 14 research projects and 16 reflective journals) were analysed using the selected codes. Stake (1995, 2006) described this method as involving “two strategic ways that researchers reach new meanings ... categorical aggregation and direct interpretation” (Stake, 1995, p. 74). Sometimes we drew meanings from interpretation of an individual or singular instance (Stake, 1995) without looking for multiple instances (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and we considered this useful due to the small size of our group. These singular instances were chosen because they resonated with how the teaching of the course had been designed, our shared experiences; and as this was action research, we were of course both researchers and teachers.

All the text was in Icelandic and the analysing process included translation of parts of the text to English. This gave the other English researchers access to the text for analysing and discussion. Furthermore, when these data (focus group, photographs, results from group work and assessment) were thematized, we sought peer review as verification, which involved discussing with critical colleagues (Merriam, 1988, as cited in Beames & Ross, 2010) the meaning of the text (i.e., to minimize what could have been lost in translation) and our findings. The perspectives of critical colleagues, each involved in the teaching and research of outdoor education within the European Outdoor Education network, provided additional insights. The participation of these critical colleagues was included in the ethics processes. The resulting themes are listed in Table 2.

Table 1 Codes selected via analysis of the focus group conversations

Sailing
The Group
Places – such as Bessastaðir and Viðey
Pedagogical processes
• Experiential learning
• Playfulness
• Slow pedagogy – time to experience new things
Authenticity

Table 2 The themes

A) Experiences, activities and pedagogical processes
1. Create conditions where education can take place
2. We were given all the time we needed
3. I was so captivated by the sailing experience
4. It helped me realize the importance of history
B) Emerging meanings from a place-based education course based
5. Our language
6. Connections: Embodiment, emotions, people and nature

Findings and discussion

The findings from the data are organised into two main sections built around our two research questions. Firstly, “experiences, activities and pedagogical processes in a place-based education course,” and secondly, “emerging meanings from a place-based education course.” Together these two sections include six themes: (1) create conditions where education can take place, (2) we were given all the time we needed, (3) I was so captivated by the sailing experience, (4) it helped me realise the importance of history, (5) our language, and (6) connections: embodiment, emotions, people and nature. This thematising provided insight into the meanings that emerged and the experiences that contributed to the participants’ sense of place.

Experiences, activities and pedagogical processes in a place-based education course

Here we discuss which experiences, activities, and pedagogical processes contributed significantly to students’ understanding of a sense of place.

Theme 1: Create conditions where education can take place

This theme explores how our teaching developed the idea of education as a transaction, shaped group identity, and empowered professional development. Education revolves around the transactions (Dewey, 1938/1997) amongst all involved: students, teachers and, no less importantly, the environment in which learning happens (Leather, 2018; Vanderstraeten, 2002). The students noticed this element of the course: to share the role of being educators and to be open to learn from each other and the environment, including the human, and more-than-human, that make up the places we inhabit. One student in their journal reflected that:

The role of the teacher is to create conditions where education can take place, through guidance, instruction and encouragement. The experience of everyone involved matters as well as the communication between all the individuals that participate in the education process. All of us have something that we can offer

to others and likewise we can learn from them. Cooperation enriches education and awards us increased abilities to engage with the everyday projects of life.

There was much discussion around the sense of group identity, and how this was felt more strongly than a regular university course. When engaging in the photo-elicitation process (Harper, 2002; Loeffler, 2005; Porr et. al., 2011), many chose a picture of the group when asked to select an image that would have long-lasting meaning (Fig. 1).

In the focus group, there was discussion about how a meaningful learning community was developed where students felt that they were in a safe, supportive learning environment. The intensive social experience – from long hours spent together, talking, sharing stories, cooking and eating together as part of the programme – combined with being away from their usual home, work, and university environments, enabled students to form what Smith et al. (2010) describe as a “temporary community” (p.148). As one student stated, “it came as a bit of a surprise given that it is usually hard for me to let people in, and vice versa. We stirred up magic in Nauthólsvík [the sailing area].”

Tuan (1977) has explained how “intimacy between persons does not require knowing the details of each other’s life; it glows in moments of true awareness and exchange” (p. 141). This was evident when traditional Icelandic games were introduced and played (Fig. 2).

Several of the students were mature, experienced, teaching professionals. From their reflective journals they valued PBOE and how to develop a sense of place as a new resource for their teaching, and commented on the implications this had for changing their professional practice. As one student shared:

I have started to reflect more about the place. For example, rather than simply teaching people how to travel (compass, map, GPS), they should be encouraged to stop and focus on taking in the place itself, which has also required me to prepare in different ways than I am used to. Instead of viewing the site as a random place where you can teach the methods, I try to determine to what extent I can include the site and its features in my teaching and thereby merge the experience of being at the site with the methods and topics I want to teach.

This seems to indicate a growing awareness of place and support for Wattchow and Brown’s (2011) observation that place has long been overlooked in outdoor education; in their terms a ‘denial of place.’

Theme 2: We were given all the time we needed

The second theme concerns time, progressive experiences, and outdoor education as a process. The students valued the time they got to experience. As one student declared, “we had time, we were given all the time we needed to just go, sail, go to the place, enjoy, experience, and go back. ... we got enough time to try, to experience and to do things.”



Fig. 1 Sense of group identity. “And it is a picture of the group. And I have the same feeling – that our heartbeat has the same rhythm” (student comment)

Time(s) reveals itself in a place. Payne and Wattchow, (2008) discuss a “time(table) famine” in school-based education. The focus is on teaching and to cover the essential curriculum. The resultant ‘fast’ outdoor education proves problematic when time is not given to engage in and develop a sense of place. The journey to Bessastaðir was significant for the meaning making process. It



Fig. 2 Having fun. “This picture is a symbol of the whole day, especially the part with Ása Helga [tutor]. I really like playing all kinds of games and stuff so that part was really fun, and I enjoyed myself very well. And you can see their faces, they are having so much fun” (student comment)

took half a day on sea which is a relatively short time regarding to the duration of the whole course, but still many things were learned, as one student argued:

It is about perception, sound, emotion, human nature and more. Information comes from every direction while learning outdoors, not only from the eyes and ears. And in that way people can acquire vast knowledge in a short amount of time.

What this student seems to be suggesting is that when we adopt a slow pedagogy, a large amount can be sensed through all the senses, and experienced, in a relatively short amount of time. In other words, this slowness and attentiveness produces a rich return for the student.

Thus, our pedagogy acknowledges the potential power of the proximal, the spatial, and geographies of movement outdoors, which can be compromised by the absence of a consideration, and examination, of time. Our slow pedagogy is a serious response to Dewey's call for a philosophy of experience in education, and we argue that place-attachment takes time. This is important to us when developing a sense of place with students (see Leather & Thorsteinsson, 2021, for a detailed discussion).

Theme 3: I was so captivated by the sailing experience

This third theme is about the value of engaging in embodied activities in our chosen place. It was apparent that students developed and identified a real connection to sailing, as one student alluded:

I was so captivated by the sailing experience, especially when I got to steer. I was filled with a sense of freedom. I also experienced a bit of tension but mostly I felt confident and felt safe with this group of people around me.

Wattchow and Brown, (2011) highlight that successful learning is based on trust between students, and between tutors and students. This trust was made explicit by going sailing, and the feelings of confidence and safety experienced were due to the climate that was co-created. Through this theme we confront how unhelpful the concept of being 'outside your comfort zone' can be. The idea of sailing had activated strong negative feelings which upon reflection were unwarranted – the idea of going to sea was more uncomfortable than the actual sailing. The experience of 'doing it' created emotional, embodied and aesthetic experiences where the sounds, smells and sights of seascapes all contributed to the students making a connection to this place. One student expressed it in this way:

The wind subsided so we could focus less on balancing the boat which gave us time to just experience and enjoy. Sunlight shimmered on the ocean surface, I breathed in the fresh air, and countless moments at sea appeared in my mind's eye, memories swirled into my mind, and I floated away into daydreams.

In evaluating our teaching, it was important to consider if sailing was popular as just an activity and thus somewhat disassociated from developing a sense of place.

Students clearly gained something, either through the activity itself or on reflection, as a result of challenging preconceptions and fears. How much this contributed to their curiosity and the significance of place remains unclear. Nonetheless, this student was 'guided' into becoming interested in stories relating to his seafaring heritage, which was made visible in commentary:

Then, when we went to Bessastaðir, it was pretty cool, I think. I've never been to Bessastaðir before so this will always be the image I have. I'm never going to go there again unless I'd be elected. So it's pretty cool. That's why I chose this picture here. And also that day I got to sail, and that got me interested more in everything. And you kind of tricked me into being interested in fisheries and that stuff by doing this.

However, not all were convinced when the course was first outlined. There were questions about the value of sailing, with concerns that the engagement in such a potentially expensive activity would be inaccessible to teachers returning to their own professional practice.

Yet the students came to appreciate that PBOE is much more than just activities (e.g., sailing) or the methods and structure of any particular fieldwork activity, and that it can be applied as a process in their own educational contexts (Leather & Nicholls, 2016). They were encouraged to consider the process as place-responsive outdoor education, so that these teaching methods could be taken into their own settings. One student experienced it in this way:

The teachers allowed us to experience, enjoy and reflect without drowning us in theory and lectures. This is the teaching method which I believe is the most appropriate one in order to structure the place in question as a point of departure. ... What stands out is getting the chance to experience, enjoy and learn from the teachers and my fellow students and that is the spark we want to pass on to our students.

According to Dewey (1938/1997) experience is a concept crucial to understanding the goals, nature and content of education. Dewey subscribed to pragmatism, which emphasises that students are not only passive receivers but also participants in the shaping of knowledge and in that way, students are offered an opportunity to learn from experience through active engagement (Andreassen & Pálsdóttir, 2014; Dewey 1938/1997).

The sailing was an example of aesthetic, embodied experience that students had in the course and as Quay (2013) has emphasized, in outdoor education, aesthetic experience and cognitive experience must be understood on equal terms. Many students found sailing surprising, describing how it involved bodily balancing (on the moving boat), cooperation and communication, and they valued it as something natural and sensate, and not learned from books. One student shared such experience in this way:

The experience on the boat was much different from what I expected. ... I was surprised by how the body automatically learns to balance itself, which is

something you could never learn from books. Our senses are activated, and it is a process that is natural to the body.

Theme 4: It helped me realise the importance of history

This fourth theme is about the importance of involving the past and recognizing history. The sailing helped students to have some kind of baseline experience of the place that later helped them to appreciate the history lessons and place in general. However, the experience was more than sailing, and many stories from students supported this. One student shared this happening during the programme:

When Friðþór [external expert] told us about the aviation history in Fossvogur, the place became more meaningful than it had been in the previous three days when we were sailing across the bay. It was perfectly clear at that point, when we were on the boat we were just sailing and the place itself was only an undefined background ... I really enjoyed that story.

This is supported by Mannion and Lynch, (2016), when they highlight that teaching does not solely revolve around the educator and individual; rather, the student and the whole group are involved. PBOE is a holistic approach to education, and the past, as well as the present, can provide greater contact with the community (Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

Emerging meanings from a place-based education course

We present two main themes as findings related to our research question that asked about the meaning emerging for participants via the programme.

Theme 5: Our language

Words and concepts are vital in the meaning making process. When designing this course for an Icelandic university, students and places, we were aware of the terminology used. However, it transpired when teaching that there were additional considerations linked to translating and understanding the core concepts of outdoor education and its different historical development when the UK and Iceland are contrasted.

The translation of outdoor education, PBOE and a place-responsive pedagogy into Icelandic, including the Icelandic educational culture, required considerable wrangling of the language used. During the course, students and tutors discussed the meaning of these core concepts and terms such as more-than-human, aesthetic, and embodied. One student used the Icelandic concept “staðnæmast” in a new meaning. Literally it means to stop or stand still but it could also mean to become more sensitive (næmast) to a place (stað).

The students were not familiar with the history and development of outdoor education from the UK perspective, or the use of concepts such as adventure and risk, and how the outdoors can be used pedagogically. An exception to this was the comfort zone, which is widely used in the UK and Iceland. This was thoroughly discussed when considering the use of adventure in PBOE. The authors presented alternative arguments that challenge this widely held notion. Specifically, Davis-Berman and Berman, (2002) have argued that discomfort leads to higher levels of anxiety and that most people are more likely to learn from being inside their comfort zone and within familiar circumstances (Berman and Davies-Berman, 2005). Additionally, Davis-Berman and Berman, (2002) suggested “an alternate paradigm” based “not on moving outside of comfort zones but on reinforcing safety, security and challenge” (p. 305).

Therefore, as outdoor educators we aimed to keep our students challenged while in a place of emotional safety to maximise their learning, rather than incorporate what Wattachow and Brown, (2011) described as a “pedagogy of risk” (p. 9). We encouraged and supported students to embrace new ideas and new environments, where the senses are completely engaged in novel activity, and where students feel emotionally safe, in control and part of the decision making and risk management process. Students found this useful but challenging, as one student recounted:

The talk made me think, especially because I did not agree with everything said about how one should avoid taking students outside of their comfort zone. The good part is that it encourages you to think, to look at what you are doing and thinking in terms of what can or must be changed in the way you approach things. And it encourages you to learn more about different methods and the theoretical background.

Another student insightfully added that he thought “the model is not dead, instead I see it as having been redesigned.” Even though the theoretical argument was made, students still held onto their language – the comfort zone – as a way to express their experiences.

Theme 6: Connections: Embodiment, emotions, people and nature

Meaning emerged from the physical, active, embodied experiences that were designed into the course. Here the student focus is embodiment, a concept in the outdoors explored by Humberstone (2015). Many students found sailing surprising and emotional, as outlined above. Nature is described by many participants as the source of their experiences and some descriptions we suggest are spiritual. As one student shared:

Nature is nourishment for body and soul. Her power can be tremendous if you allow yourself to be in the here and now, listen to the sounds, focus on the smells, and use your eyes in a way that activates all the senses – as if turning on a switch inside the body. The course on place-based outdoor education managed to activate these qualities which have always resided within me ever since I was a child.

Vivid in this description is the fundamental value of sensing the world using all senses, and the embodied nature of these experiences.

The relationship between humans and nature, and the implied intimacy, suggests that there may be a more harmonious relationship between humankind and nature than is commonly assumed, and “an alternative understanding of education may thus arise” (Hung, 2008, p.355). As Hung (2008) discussed, experiences in nature can be understood as “lively corporeality rather than in an inert material; the corporeality of the body is embodied, in the terms of Merleau-Ponty, (1962), in the flesh as well that of the Nature in the earth” (p. 361). One student framed embodied perception in terms of their relevant working context (as a glacier guide). That student noted how the awareness of embodied perception sparked motivation to acquire more knowledge:

You could say that my interest in these topics was awakened after drifting on a sailboat over the days before. I formed a connection with the ocean which I have never before experienced.

Connecting emotionally to place in education is about the importance of creating emotional bonds with people, place, and the-more-than-human world that surrounds and involves. Noddings (2002) supported this emotional connection in her account of an ethic of care; she considered care for self, care for intimate others, care for distant others, for animals, plants and the Earth, for human made environments and care for objects and ideas. Essential in this ethic of care is the emotional factor and the reciprocity that is needed. As a result, Nodding’s work has become a key reference point for those wanting to reaffirm the ethical and moral foundations of teaching, schooling and education more broadly (Smith, 2020).

The further question revolves around the role that sailing, or any of the activities we included in the programme, plays in developing a sense of place. We all arrive individually at this place in time in our own lives with our own past experiences and agendas. These examples give insight into how our past experiences impact our new experiences. One student described their situation in this way:

Life was not easy for me when I lived at home in [name of a village]. I remember that when I felt bad, I went outside and sat on the grass where I had a view over the ocean. I do not know why, I just did. I have always sought the outdoors, even though I am not hugely into outdoor activities.

Students and staff therefore take away from these experiences their own meanings, as we did. The connections are responsive, reflexive, meaning they work in two directions: we engage with the place and the place engages with us.

The importance of games was of high value for students. They are the main practice they take home, and the playfulness and creativity that games involve gave them an opportunity to connect. A game could be as simple as our companion teddy bear that was perceived by students as “a fantastic idea” for children to connect in a playful way. Another involved “dressing up” in the Maritime Museum, because, as one student said: “it’s fun because it is, you can be whoever you want to be.” By participating in traditional games (Vermannaleikir in Icelandic) and forum theatre inspired by Augusto Boal (1995), the students had to put themselves in the footsteps of the locals that lived on



Fig. 3 The settler. “When we landed at Bessastaðir [residence of the president] my feeling was like I was a settler there” (student comment)

Viðey. Students connected with the island’s past through games, such as performing a short play about the island’s Augustinian cloister, which existed centuries ago.

Vivid descriptions of authentic experience were evident, and the sailing experience was often the focal point. The sailing journey to Bessastaðir, residence of the president of Iceland provided opportunities for students to further develop their sense of place (Fig. 3).

Students suggested that these embodied and adventurous outdoor education experiences deepened their appreciation and sense of place. One student summarised it thus:

Outdoor teaching does not just teach methods, it involves many more aspects. And not just knowledge, but also skills, e.g., how to focus abilities, social skills, technical skills and much more. ... I would never get this ‘wow’ feeling from a textbook. ... There is an old Chinese expression which holds that reading a thousand books can never compare to visiting a thousand places. Which means that learning from our environment is more important than just reading about it in a book.

Summary of findings and conclusion

Our aim was to explore what, in the programme, gave students an understanding of a sense of place, and to find out what meanings emerged for the students through the programme.

A critical pedagogy of place challenges all educators to reflect on the relationship between the kind of education they pursue and the kind of places we inhabit (Grue-newald, 2003). Our analysis of the comments provided by the students as research data indicated that, by engaging with PBOE, this place, these places: the city of Reykjavík, the blue and green spaces and the maritime culture, had a broader and often deeper meaning. The place was rich in significance and meaning and consequently it became a powerful pedagogic phenomenon.

The students appreciated the importance of creating conditions where such education can take place, and that involved building trust, helping each other, and making space for all to learn. Time is highly valued, and the students acknowledged that they were given the time they needed to be immersed in the experience of place. They were captivated by the sailing experience, which may be perceived as just having fun; but sailing generated deeper meaning and developed a greater sense of place.

There were two themes addressing emergent meanings. The first is our language, and revolves around the words, terms, and translations we used and the importance of developing the vocabulary of teachers and outdoor education professionals. This was highly valued as it could influence shared understandings when developing outdoor education in school and leisure contexts. The second theme was about the connection made with place, people, and nature through embodied, aesthetic, emotional, and authentic experiences; and this was the source of meaningful learning.

There are four main implications for our practice as university educators and researchers when exploring a pedagogy of place in Iceland, and the potential value and contribution of PBOE to contemporary education.

- (1). The cultural, social, and political history of the host needs to be acknowledged to culturally, as well as literally, translate the terminology of PBOE.
- (2). An experiential engagement with PBOE is an essential way to explore these different understandings. It takes considerable time to have authentic, aesthetic, embodied experiences that generate deep conversations and dialogue, for both tutors and students. It is important to have faith in the time-consuming journey that this requires.
- (3). Teachers can develop a more place-responsive approach by embedding more opportunities for reflection into their programmes and sharing of experiences. For example, this could focus on the place-responsive process of relating their experiences to other places and in doing so raise an awareness of more global political issues. The relationship with the more-than-human world, looking at nature as a friend (Seddon, 1997), involves students and educators “responding” to the places that are used and visited.
- (4). Action research as a methodology is hugely practical when wanting to improve one’s teaching and educational practice. It goes beyond mere reflection at the end of the day and course, with a purposeful seeking out of the students’ experiences. As such, we gain greater insight into the students’ understanding of the course and its concepts, and we are impelled to consider our evolving pedagogy of place. The limitation of this approach is that our findings are not generalizable. However, there may be nuggets of insight that resonate with others,

hence our motivation to publish our findings here. Additionally, the subjective interpretations of students' experiences resonate with our ideas despite the awareness and reflexivity with which we may conduct the research.

These four implications further highlight three issues explored by Leather and Thorsteinnsson, (2021). The first issue concerns exploring the existing ideas of *nature* and the affordance of this in education and recreation. PBOE is an approach that has seen increasing attention and can be applied in contemporary recreation and education. The second issue draws our attention to creating conditions for learning that nurture the group and be aware that it takes *time*. There is a high value in informal “chat, conversation and dialogue” between tutors and students (Leather, 2018). This was part of a deliberate pedagogical approach, as this time gave tutors and students the chance to communicate informally during the fieldwork experiences. The third issue is *culturally* based and in line with what Stewart (2008) encourages us to do, that is “to properly reflect on the relationships between personal experience and the complex cultural-ecological processes that have shaped the places in which we live and work” (p. 79).

Leather and Nicholls, (2016) stated that “we trust that our experiences may have some resonance with the reader’s own contexts, places and professional practice” (p. 461). Thorsteinnsson read that paper, felt this resonance, and the action research project discussed in this paper emerged as a new iteration and evolution of Leather and Nicholls original PBOE action research. As action researchers and reflective practitioners this research continues to influence the teaching of PBOE, in Plymouth Marjon University in the UK, in Reykjavik, and we hope in other spaces and places too.

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Declarations

Disclosure The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Conflict of Interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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Jakob Frimann Thorsteinsson an adjunct lecturer and in Leisure Studies and PhD student at the University of Iceland, School of Education. He received a B.Ed. degree from the Iceland College of Education in 1993, and a master's degree in curriculum studies and pedagogy from the University of Iceland in 2011. Þorsteinsson has worked extensively in schools and leisure centres, for example in youth clubs, and worked with professional leadership in compulsory schools, as well as actively participating in various social and civil work. His research interests include outdoor education, leisure studies and pedagogy, the development of teaching methods at tertiary level, and the structure of education.

Mark Leather is an associate professor of education at ‘Marjon’ and has been educating people outdoors, formally, and informally, for most of his adult life. He currently leads the Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning team and teaches on a range of post-graduate and under-graduate programmes that utilise outdoor and experiential pedagogies. Mark is fortunate to work with some excellent, experienced, and passionate colleagues in Plymouth, as well as those involved in National, European, and International outdoor educational networks. Given the chance you will find him playfully being outside, connecting with others, the more-than-human world, and the planet, under open skies in blue and/or green places.

Fiona Nicholls is a senior lecturer in Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning at Plymouth Marjon University. Before joining the team at ‘Marjon’, she taught and managed outdoor adventure education for over 20 years in the Southwest of England as part of the Local Education Authorities Education and Youth Work provision. Fiona’s research and publications reflect her curiosity and passion for learning and teaching outdoors. When not exploring in the mountains or on the sea, she is completing her Doctorate investigating the widely accepted metaphor that we must be out of our ‘comfort zone’ to grow or learn.

Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson is a professor in tourism at the University of Iceland, Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences. He has an MA degree in anthropology from University of Iceland from 2003 and graduated with a PhD in social sciences from Roskilde University in 2007. His research has involved studies on place making and destination development, innovation and entrepreneurship in tourism as well as tourism policy and employment. He has published his research in journals and books both in Iceland and abroad.

Authors and Affiliations

Jakob Frímánn Thorsteinsson¹  · **Mark Leather**²  · **Fiona Nicholls**² · **Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson**³ 

Mark Leather
mleather@marjon.ac.uk

Fiona Nicholls
fnicholls@marjon.ac.uk

Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson
gtj@hi.is

¹ Leisure Studies at School of Education, University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland

² Education and Outdoor Learning, Marjon University, Plymouth, England

³ Professor Life- and Environmental Sciences, University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland

Paper III

Paper III



Undir berum himni. Ígrundun og áskoranir háskólanema

Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson, Hervör Alma Árnadóttir,
Karen Rut Gísladóttir og Ólafur Páll Jónsson

► Abstract ► Um höfunda ► About the authors ► Heimildir

Innan menntakerfa hefur sjónum verið beint að mikilvægi þess að skapa umhverfi og aðstæður til að auka hæfni nemenda til að takast á við óvissu og krefjandi áskoranir samtímans – hvort sem það er á sviði umhverfismála, heimsfaraldurs eða annarra þátta.

Alþjóðlegar rannsóknir benda til þess að útilíf og útímenntun undir leiðsögn geti verið gagnleg og öflug leið til að vinna með slíka hæfni. Reynslu sem verður til við að færa nám út í náttúruna, má rekja til krefjandi samskipta nemenda þegar tekist er á við óöruggt umhverfi og veðurfar. Til þess að reynslan verði að lærdómi og geti stuðlað að aukinni hæfni nemenda er nauðsynlegt að hún sé ígrunduð með skipulögðum hætti.

Tilgangur þessarar greinar er að benda á mikilvægi námsumhverfis og skapandi leiða til þess að mæta samtímaþrófum við menntun háskólanemenda. Markmiðið er að varpa ljósi á hlutverk ígrundunar við að draga fram möguleika til náms og þroska sem felast í að dvelja úti í náttúrunni. Skoðaðar eru ígrundanir nemenda fyrir, í og eftir fjögurra daga námsferð um óbyggðir Íslands. Greinin byggir á gögnum frá 58 nemendum sem tóku þátt í námskeiðinu Ferðalög og útilíf við Háskóla Íslands. Gögnin voru þemagreind og sameiginleg þemu dregin fram. Niðurstöður benda til að náttúran sé sterkur meðleiðbeinandi þegar unnið er með nemendum við að styrkja persónulegan og faglegan vöxt. Nemendur lýsa upplifun af líkamlegum áskorunum sem tengdust því að ganga í ósnortnu landslagi sem og áskorunum þar sem þau tókust á við hugsanir og tilfinningar. Vísbendingar er að finna í skrifunum um að ferðalagið hafi fært nemendum tækifæri til merkingarbærs náms sem gæti haft áhrif á þau persónulega og faglega. Skipulögð ígrundandi iðja var mikilvægur þáttur í ferlinu, sem þau fengu tækifæri til að þjálfa með því að staldra við, taka eftir og að glíma við óvissu og náttúrulegar áskoranir.

Efnisorð: Hæglæti, ígrundun, náttúra, óvissa, útímenntun, útilíf, útivist

Inngangur

*Ég vissi ekkert út í hvað ég var að fara
vá hvað þetta er bratt
það kom upp í mér pirringur
hvað er ég að gera?
þetta er mitt skjól
eftir allan þennan tilfinningarússibana
ég fokking massaði þetta
ótrúlega stoltur af öllum hópnum.*

Á vormánuðum 2011 kviknaði hugmynd um að nota sumarið og íslenska útivistarhefð sem vettvang fyrir námskeið þvert á fræðasvið Háskóla Íslands. Öðrum þræði var þetta viðbragð við efnahagskreppunni sem samfélagið var að ganga í gegnum og hafði leitt til aukins atvinnuleysis en líka meiri aðsóknar í háskóla. Kennarar við Háskóla Íslands höfðu verið hvattir til nýsköpunar og að nýta skapandi leiðir í kennslu (Háskóli Íslands, e.d.) og okkur langaði að styðja við merkingarbært nám þar sem nemendur væru studdir við að tengja saman eigin reynslu, nýja þekkingu og viðfangsefni samtímans (Garte, 2017; Ingvar Sigurgeirsson, 2022). Úr varð að skipuleggja námskeið með stuttu ferðalagi út í náttúruna¹ sem myndi skapa fjölbætta og oft á tíðum tilfinningaríka reynslu. Námskeiðið yrði byggt á þverfaglegri nálgun og samvinnu nemenda og kennara af ólíkum fræðasviðum og unnið yrði með viðfangsefni eins og ferðamennsku, rötun, útilíf og ígrundun. Námskeiðið sem varð til var nefnt Ferðalög og útilíf. Heitið vísar í hina norrænu útilífshefð sem um margt svipar til hinnar íslensku útivistarhefðar.

Skandinavíska hugtakið *friluftsliv* er menningar- og lagalega skilgreint og hefur lengi verið viðfangsefni rannsókna m.a. á sviði menntamála (sjá m.a. Bentsen o.fl., 2009; Gurholt, 2008; Hofmann o.fl., 2018; Lyngstad og Sæther, 2021). Þar er lögð áhersla á að ferðast um náttúruna og í náttúrunni með eigin afli og í takt við hana. Við horfðum einnig til enskrar hefðar sem oftast er tengd við *útimentun* (e. outdoor education) og *ævintýranám* (e. adventure education). Eitt af því sem gerir útilíf gagnlegt í þessu samhengi er áherslan á einfaldleika, að vera í náttúrunni og finna samhljóm með henni. Í þessar hefðir sóttum við bæði aðferðir og hugtök, sem við gerðum að leiðarstjörnum í okkar vinnu – bæði í skipulagsvinnunni og þegar við vorum komin af stað í ferðalagið. Með tilvísun í fræði sem benda á fjölbætt jákvæð áhrif þess að dvelja í náttúrunni sem leið til almenns þroska (Kuo o.fl., 2019) höfðu kennararnir sterka sannfæringu um að á nokkurra daga ferðalagi í náttúru Íslands gæfust fjölmörg tækifæri til að læra ýmislegt um sjálfan sig, annað fólk og náttúruna. Þau trúðu því að með því að flytja nám og kennslu úr hefðbundnu kennslurými og út í náttúruna sköpuðust tækifæri til að efla þátttakendur sem einstaklinga og verðandi fagfólk. Einnig fannst kennurum þetta skemmtileg áskorun til að efla sjálfa sig, kenna saman og finna leiðir til að virkja nemendur í öllu námsferlinu. Hlutverk kennara í námskeiðinu yrði að leiðbeina með reynslumiðuðum hætti (e. experiential learning) (Kolb, 1984; Kolb o.fl., 2014) við margvísleg hagnýt viðfangsefni sem fælust m.a. í að læra að búa sig vel, tjalda og elda á prímusi (Jón Gauti Jónsson, 2013). Þótt skipulag ferðarinnar myndi markast af viðfangsefnum eins og þessum (tjalda, elda o.s.frv.) var meiningin að kennararnir myndu beina athyglinni að því sem gerdist í kringum þessar athafnir; samskiptum á milli einstaklinga og tengslum þeirra við náttúruna. Stefnit var að því að virkni þátttakenda yrði á sviðum sem sneru að því að dvelja í náttúrunni og ferðast um hana, taka áskorunum, vinna saman og yfirstíga hindranir. Kennarar í þessum aðstæðum þurfa að skapa rými, hlusta, spyrja spurninga og beina athyglinni að atvikum sem eiga sér stað innan hópsins (Jakube o.fl., 2016). Með aðferðum skipulagðrar og óskipulagðrar ígrundunar eru nemendur studdir við að auka meðvitund sína, yrða upplifanir og draga af reynslunni merkingarbært nám (Korthagen, 2013; Scharmer og Kaufer, 2013).

¹ Greinin er öðrum þræði tilraun höfunda til að skilja betur gildi náttúrunnar í námi og liður í því er að draga fram hvernig við ræðum um hana. Við notum ýmist *um*, *í* eða *með* náttúrunni. Á ferðalagi okkar fjöllum við um náttúruna, við dveljum og hugsum í henni og við ferðumst og ígrundum *með* náttúrunni. Að hafa náttúruna með-ferðis er tilraun til að enduróma skilning okkar á viðtakara hlutverki hennar í menntun okkar.

Í samtímanum er lögð rík áhersla á hvers kyns þverfaglega teymisvinnu fagfólks, sem krefur fólk um hæfni í samskiptum og góðan sjálfsskilning (Lencioni, 2016; Thompson, 2013). Við þróun námskeiðsins fyrstu árin var lögð rík áhersla á faglegan og persónulegan þroska nemenda, á náttúruna og markvissa ígrundun sem leið til að efla þátttakendur (Dewey, 1910/2000a; Korthagen, 2013; Schön, 1983). Þegar fram liðu stundir komu fleiri kennarar að námskeiðinu, reynslan jókst og fræðagrunnurinn þéttist.

Tilgangur þessarar greinar er að draga fram gildi námsumhverfis og skapandi leiða í menntun háskólanemenda. Markmiðið er að varpa ljósi á hlutverk ígrundunar í að draga fram möguleika til náms og þroska sem felast í að dvelja úti í náttúrunni. Við setjum fram tvær rannsóknarspurningar:

- (1) Hvernig lýsa nemendur áskorunum sínum í ígrundandi skrifum fyrir, í og eftir fjögurra daga námsferð um óbyggðir Íslands?
- (2) Hvaða vísbendingar má finna í skrifum nemenda sem benda til þess að ferðalagið hafi fært þeim tækifæri til merkingarbærs náms sem gæti haft áhrif á þau persónulega og faglega til framtíðar?

Að læra úti – útilíf, útímenntun og náttúra

Ólíkar hefðir útilífs og útímenntunar hafa orðið til í samhengi við menningu, sögu og landslag ólíkra þjóða (Bentsen o.fl., 2009). Í þessari grein nýtum við hugmyndafræðilegan grunn sem á rætur að rekja til skandinavísku útilífshefðarinnar, enskra hugmynda um útímenntun og áherslna sem tengjast ævintýramenntun.

Skandinavíska útilífshefðin einkennist af einfaldleika og sterkum tengslum við náttúru og landslag (Bentsen o.fl., 2009; Henderson og Vikander, 2007). Hún gegnir enn fremur mikilvægu samfélagslegu hlutverki og birtist sem stefnumál í stjórnámum og viðfangsefni menntunar á öllum skólastigum. Á liðnum áratugum hafa rannsakendur beint athygli að persónulegu og uppeldisfræðilegu gildi útilífs (Gelter, 2010; Gurholt, 2016). Edinger (1997) dregur fram ólík hlutverk náttúrunnar þar sem einstaklingar ýmist keppa við náttúruna, sækja afþreyingu í hana eða samsama sig með henni. Skandinavíska útilífshefðin leggur meiri áherslu á ígrundun í náttúrunni en keppni og að hreyfing í náttúrulegu umhverfi hafi merkingu og afleiðingar (Bentsen o.fl., 2009). Mygind (2005) talar á svipuðum nótum og segir hið einfalda útilíf vera dvöl úti í náttúrunni sem er í samræmi við náttúruna með lágmarks búnaði, á forsendum náttúrunnar og með virðingu fyrir henni.

Hugtakið *útímenntun* á sér rætur í enskri menningu. Dymont og Potter (2015) ræða um útímenntun sem grein eða fagsvið (e. discipline) og færa rök fyrir því að hana megi nota sem fræðilega stöð, kenningarlegan grunn og viðmið um gæði, starfshætti og fagmennsku. Allt frá Dartington-ráðstefnunni um útímenntun árið 1975 hefur verið vinsælt að líta svo á að markmið útímenntunar sé *að auka meðvitund um og efla virðingu fyrir sjálfum sér, öðrum og náttúrunni* (Nicol, 2002). Í tímans rás hafa komið fram ýmsar skilgreiningar á útímenntun og ein sú lífseigasta er rakin til Fords (1981, bls. 12) sem segir að útímenntun sé menntun „í, fyrir og um náttúru“. Síðar hafa verið settar fram lýsingar sem skilgreina útímenntun sem reynslubundið ferli sem eigi sér stað úti og beinist að tengslum einstaklinga við sjálfa sig eða aðra eða milli manneskju og náttúru (Wattchow og Brown, 2011). Segja má að ýmsar hefðir í námi sem fram fer úti hafi vaxið sem ólíkar greinar á meginstofni útímenntunar (Quay og Seaman, 2013). Ein slík grein er ævintýramenntun (e. adventure education) sem hefur haft þónokkur áhrif hér á landi (Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson o.fl., 2021). Einkenni hennar er að glímt er við viðfangsefni í náttúrunni sem geta falið í sér áhættu, þátttakendur upplifa sem áskorun og útkoman er undirorpin óvissu (Ewert, 1989; Prouty o.fl., 2007). Í ævintýramenntun er sérstök áhersla lögð á að efla einstaklinga og hópa og rannsóknir benda til áhrifa m.a. á sjálfsmynd og persónuleika (Carpenter og Harper, 2015; Hattie o.fl., 1997; Leather, 2013).

Í gegnum tíðina hafa fræðimenn dregið í efa undirliggjandi heimspekilegar og kennslufræðilegar forsendur sem ýmis svið útímenntunar byggjast á. Hér má meðal annars nefna skrif Chris Loynes (2002) sem gagnrýnir ævintýramenntun fyrir áherslu á karlmennsku, langa leiðangra og ákveðna hernaðarhyggju sem henni fylgir. Loynes (2002) taldi að fremur ætti að líta til skandinavískrar útilífshefðar og að skilgreina reynslumiðaða útinám sem leiðangur þar sem þátttakandinn öðlast nýja verufræðilega og þekkingarfræðilega sýn. Beames og Brown (2016) hafa gagnrýnt áherslu á gildi áhættu í ævintýramenntun og talað fyrir ævintýrlegu námi (e. adventurous learning). Þeir segja að líta þurfi nýjum augum á ævintýrin sem „fjósaman jarðveg fyrir fólk til að uppgötva heiminn sem það býr í og eigin getu til að lifa vel í honum“ (bls. 100). Í ævintýrlegu námi er lögð áhersla á nám í nærumhverfinu og að unnið sé með fjórar víddir þess; raunveruleika (e. authenticity), óvissu (e. uncertainty), atbeina/virka þátttöku og ábyrgð (e. agency and responsibility) og hæfni í gegnum áskoronu (e. mastery through challenge).

Annað róttækt dæmi frá Morse o.fl. (2021) um kennslufræðilega þróun útímenntunar er villt kennslufræði (e. wild pedagogies) sem sett er fram sem viðbragð við vistfræðilegum vanda samtímans. Markmiðið er að endurskoða margvísleg tengsl okkar; við stað, landslag, náttúru, það sem nær út fyrir hið mennska (e. more than human) og villta náttúru (e. wilderness) og gera þessa þætti að samkennara (e. co-teacher). Með því að nota hugtakið villt er leitast við að ögra ríkjandi menningarhugmyndum, einkum þeim sem vísa til þess að geta stjórnað náttúrunni og því hvað nemendur læra og viðurkenna að það sem nemendur læra er tengt sveimandi áhrifum margra þátta – svo sem kennara og náttúru.

Að hugsa með náttúrunni – ígrundun og nám

Ígrundun er samofin flestum greinum útímenntunar og hefur þróast mjög á liðnum áratugum (Dyment og Potter, 2015). Hún er í raun kjarnaþáttur faglegra vinnubragða. Dyment og Potter (2015, bls. 153) lýsa þessum tengslum á eftirfarandi hátt:

Fræðilegar forsendur útímenntunar hafa styrkst með betri skilningi á gildi og hlutverki ígrundandi náms, aukinni samfelli leiðbeinandi aðferða, mótun leiða til ígrundunar, þróun siðferðilegra starfshátta ...

Ígrundunarhugtakið er gjarnan sótt í smiðju Johns Dewey sem lýsir því sem fimm þrepa ferli (1910/2000a, bls. 148–156) þar sem hugsun fer frá hugmynd að skilgreiningu vandamáls, þaðan að tilgátugerð og svo rökleiðslu sem endar á prófun tilgátu í verki. Rodgers (2002) rýnir í hugtak Deweys um ígrundun og dregur fram fjögur viðmið um ígrundun sem hjálpa við að móta og skilgreina þetta margþætta hugtak. Í fyrsta lagi er ígrundun merkingarferli sem stuðlar að samfelldri reynslu og djúpum skilningi. Í öðru lagi er ígrundun „kerfisbundinn, strangur, agaður hugsunarháttur“ (bls. 845). Í þriðja lagi verður ígrundun best í samfélagi þar sem mikil samskipti eru. Í fjórða lagi krefst ígrundun „viðhorfa sem meta persónulegan og vitsmunalegan vöxt sjálfs sín og annarra“ (bls. 845). Hún bendir einnig á að ígrundun sé flókið og tilfinningalegt ferli sem krefst nákvæmni og vitsmunalegrar ögunar. Boud o.fl. (1985/2013) lýsa ígrundun sem „mikilvægri mannlegri iðju þar sem fólk veitir reynslu sinni athygli, hugsar um hana, veltir henni fyrir sér og metur hana“ (bls. 19). Asfeldt o.fl. (2018) draga þá ályktun að ígrundun sé ferli til að öðlast skilning á allri reynslu úr lífi og námi, hún nái til samskipta við sjálfan sig, aðra og umhverfið, sem og til nýrra hugmynda og efnis sem kemur með lestri, fyrirlestrum og eftir öðrum leiðum.

Þegar titið er til Íslands skilgreinir Orðasafn í tómtundafræði (Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, e.d.) ígrundun sem „það að velta fyrir sér upplifun eða viðfangsefni með markvissum, gagnrýnum og uppbyggilegum hætti“. Í skýringu er tekið fram að ígrundun sé notuð í reynslunámi og að um sé að ræða ferli sem „tekur til innri og ytri veruleika þar sem búnar eru til tengingar“. Einstaklingur öðlist skilning og innsæi á ólíkum atvikum og að ferlið leiði til aukinnar vitundar um tengsl við sjálfan sig og/eða hinn ytri heim. Þannig feli ígrundun í sér örvandi leið til persónulegs og faglegs þroska.

Þegar kennari stuðlar að ígrundun í námi er verkefni hans að skapa nemandanum aðstæður og rými fyrir upplifanir sem fela í sér raunveruleg námstækifæri, og forðast upplifanir sem geta stöðvað frekari þroska og hafa þar með „neikvætt menntunargildi“ (Dewey 1910/2000a). Schön (1983) fjallar um ígrundandi iðju (e. reflective practice) og tengir þá nálgun fagmennsku og nýsköpun í starfi. Hann greinir á milli ákveðinna vídda ígrundunar. Annars vegar er ígrundun í athöfninni sjálfri (e. reflection in action). Þar ígrundar fagmaðurinn ákvarðanir sem teknar eru frá augnabliki til augnabliks. Hins vegar er ígrundun á athöfnina (e. reflection on action) þegar fagmaðurinn ígrundar það sem hann gerði og tengir það öðrum hugmyndum og fræðum. Síðar hafa fræðimenn bætt við þriðju víddinni; ígrundun fyrir athöfn (e. reflection before action) þar sem fagmaður ígrundar undirliggjandi ástæður þess sem liggur fyrir að gera, og þeirri fjórðu sem snýr að því að setja athöfnina í víðara samhengi (e. reflection beyond action) (Edwards, 2017).

Ýmsar leiðir er hægt að fara til að styðja nemendur við ígrundun. Oft eru nemendur beðnir um að skrifa leiðarbækur (e. journal writing) (O’Connell og Dymont, 2013) til að halda utan um eigin reynslu og gera hana sýnilega og þar með mögulegt viðfang ígrundunar. Boud (2001) og Ragnhildur Bjarnadóttir (2011) telja að félagslegt umhverfi styðji við ígrundandi ferli og gagnlegt sé að ástunda umræður og skrif í hópi frekar en í einrúmi. Moon (2006) notar hugtakið ígrundandi iðja (e. reflective practice) og tilgreinir sex einkenni sem skapa hagstæð skilyrði til náms: (1) að hægja á hraðanum við að læra, (2) að auka tilfinningu fyrir því að námið sé manns eigin, (3) að viðurkenna þátt tilfinninga í námi, (4) að gefa þátttakendum reynslu af að takast á við vandasamt efni, (5) að ígrunda sjálft námsferlið sem ígrundandi iðju (e. meta reflection) og (6) að efla nám í gegnum ritun. Rannsóknir Dymonts og O’Connells (2010) benda til þess að hreinskilin ígrundun eigi sér stað þegar góður tími er gefinn fyrir slík skrif og samskipti kennara og nemenda byggja á trausti. Ýmsar rannsóknir sýna einnig að ígrundandi skrif geta auðveldað námsárangur, dýpkað skilning, skapað sterkari tengsl milli kenninga og iðkunar, aukið færni og betri skilning á nýju efni (Dymont og O’Connell, 2010; Vivekananda-Schmidt o.fl., 2011). Ígrundandi skrifum fylgja ýmsar áskoranir, svo sem glíma við ritstíflu, óljósar væntingar um til hvers sé ætlast, að skrifað sé fyrir kennarann, að ferlið sé bæði pirrandi og erfitt, og að slík skrif henti ekki ólíkum námsstílum nemenda og fari í bága við hugmyndir sumra um hvað nám sé (Mills, 2008; Moon, 2006; O’Connell og Dymont, 2013). Til þess að styðja við ígrundun tala Payne og Wattchow (2008) fyrir mikilvægi þess að hægja á námsferlinu og Leopold (1949) leggur áherslu á aukna næmni fólks og eftirtekt fyrir umhverfi sínu. Í bók sinni *The Slow Professor* setja Berg og Seeber (2018) hæglæti í forgrunn sem forsendu fyrir vitsmunalegri iðju og lýsa því hvernig draga má úr streitu á sama tíma og kennsla, rannsóknir og samstarf í háskóla er bætt til muna.

Aðferð

Rannsóknin er eigindleg og koma gögnin úr verkefnum nemenda sem þau unnu upp úr leiðarbókum sínum í námskeiðinu Ferðalög og útilíf í Háskóla Íslands. Markmiðið er að varpa ljósi á hlutverk ígrundunar við að draga fram möguleika til náms og þroska sem felast í að dvelja úti í náttúrunni. Við gerum það með því að skoða hvernig nemendur skrá hugsanir og líðan sína með reglulegum skrifum í ígrundandi leiðarbók.

Þátttakendur

Verkefnið sem lágu til grundvallar rannsókninni koma frá 59 nemendum sem tóku þátt í námskeiðinu árin 2014, 2015 og 2017. Námskeiðið er þverfaglegt og er því opið öllum nemendum háskólans sem leiðir til þess að bakgrunnur nemenda er ólíkur og litar sjónarhorn þeirra á gildi náttúrunnar og einnig leiðir til menntunar. Á þessum þremur árum komu nemendur úr ferðamálafræði, félagsráðgjöf, landfræði, mannfræði, sálfræði, tómstundafræði, umhverfisfræði og þroskaþjálfarafræði. Þótt yfirleitt þurfi ekki að keyra lengur en í 30 mínútur frá heimili sínu til þess að komast út í óspillta náttúru Íslands höfðu fæstir nemendanna mikla reynslu af að dvelja út

í náttúrunni og fáir höfðu sofði í tjaldi utan skipulagðs tjaldstæðis. Fjöldi nemenda í námskeiðinu var mismikill milli ára. Tuttugu og fjórir luku námskeiðinu árið 2014, þrettán árið 2015 og tuttugu og tveir árið 2017.

Þátttakendur sem skilgreindu sig sem kvenkyns voru í meirihluta eða 47 en karlkyns voru 12. Aldursbil var breitt, sá yngsti var 22 ára og elsti 52 ára þegar ferðin var farin. Flestir voru búsettir á höfuðborgarsvæðinu.

Gagnaöflun

Á námskeiðinu héldu nemendur leiðarbók í tengslum við ferðalagið. Í upphafi námskeiðs skráðu nemendur væntingar sínar til ferðalagsins framundan. Meðan á ferðalaginu stóð gáfum við nemendum reglulega tóm til að staldra við og skrá upplifanir sínar. Í lok námskeiðs skiluðu nemendur lokaverkefni sem unnið var upp úr leiðarþóknunum þar sem þau ígrunduðu ferðalagið í heild sinni. Í þessari rannsókn eru lokaverkefni nemenda þau gögn sem notuð voru.

Gagnagreining

Greiningin byggði á fræðilegum áherslum útináms og skilningi Deweys (1938/2000b) á ígrundun í tengslum við nám og hugmyndum Moon (2006) um ígrundandi iðju. Verkefni voru þemagreind (e. thematic analysis) með aðferð lyklnar (e. coding) til að finna sameiginlega þætti, varpa ljósi á reynslu og merkingu sem þátttakendur lögðu í líf sitt og aðstæður (Braun og Clarke, 2013) fyrir ferðina, meðan á ferðinni stóð og svo að ferðinni lokinni. Eftir að rannsakendur höfðu hvert í sínu lagi marglesið yfir lokaverkefnið var ákveðið að beita opinni lykln (e. open coding). Með niðurstöðum þeirra lyklnar að leiðarljósi var lokaðri lykln beitt (e. close coding) og gögnin greind aftur með hjálp Atlas tölfræðiforrits. Lyklarnir innihéldu bæði augljósa (e. semantic) og dulda (e. latent) lykla (Braun og Clarke, 2013). Þá hittust rannsakendur á tveggja daga vinnustofu þar sem lyklnin var skoðuð og textinn síðan klipptur niður og flokkaður eftir því hvernig lyklarnir tengdust innbyrðis. Að því loknu voru fundin mynstur sem svo mynduðu sögu sem átta þemu spruttu út frá, sem kynnt verða hér á eftir. Ferlið var ekki línulegt, farið var fram og til baka í ferlinu sem að endingu leiddi okkur að niðurstöðu.

Siðfræðileg álitamál

Rannsóknin var kynnt þátttakendum fyrir námskeiðið og þeim gerð grein fyrir því hvernig gögnin yrðu notuð. Þátttakendum var kynnt hvað væri gert til að auka trúnað og til að gæta að nafnleynd í rannsókninni. Allir nemendur samþykktu skriflega að lokaverkefni þeirra mætti nota í rannsóknina.

Rannsóknin er ekki gerð til að alhæfa eða sanna kenningu heldur til þess að skoða hvernig raddir nemenda birtast í ígrundandi skrifum í verkefnum þeirra yfir námskeiðstímabilið. Við notum hér rannsóknina til að skilja betur þá menntandi reynslu sem námskeið sem þetta skapar, bæði til að geta sett það í fræðilegt samhengi og til að efla okkur sem kennara og þróa námskeiðið áfram.

Þegar niðurstöður eru kynntar þá veljum við að „búa til“ eina ferðasögu úr þeim þremur ferðum sem gögnin ná til. Það var aðeins mismunandi taktur í ferðunum, þ.e. göngudagar og viðfangsefni hvers dags voru ólík, en við greinum svipað ferli í öllum ferðunum og því eru „ferðasögurnar“ sem birtast keimlíkar. Að skapa eina sögu úr ferðunum þremur var líka gert til að minnka líkur á að hægt yrði að rekja einstaka upplifun til tiltekinna nemenda.

Niðurstöður

Sólskinið bjarta
það þýðir ekki að kvarta.
Enda einhver gaur
að teikna einhvern staur.
- Nemandi

Í fjögurra daga ferðalagi út í óvissuna glímdu nemendur við ólíkar tilfinningar og hugsanir. Hvað þeim reyndist auðvelt og hvað síður gat tengst þeirra fyrri upplifun og reynslu af útivist, veðri og fyrri tengslum við samferðafólk. Það sem þessar þrjár námsferðir áttu sameiginlegt er að þátttakendur voru nemendur Háskóla Íslands, farið var á sömu slóðir í öllum ferðunum, gíst í tjaldi og ferðin farin um miðjan ágúst. Talsvert votviðri, rok og kuldi einkenndi allar ferðirnar (*Mynd 1*).



Mynd 1. Gengið af stað í roki og rigningu.

Á Íslandi er allra veðra von allan ársins hring og þótt dagatalið segi að enn sé sumar er veðurlag yfirleitt óstöðugt. Hitastigið í ferðunum var yfirleitt í kringum 8–10 gráður en talsvert kaldara yfir nóttina. Í einni ferðinni fór hitinn niður undir frostmark með örlítilli snjókomu fyrstu nóttina (*Mynd 2*).



Mynd 2. Fyrsti morgunninn á tjaldstæði við Úlfljótuvatn. Snjór á tjöldunum eftir kalda nótt.

Vegna þessa hafa kennarar búið svo um hnútana að skipulagi ferðarinnar sé hægt að breyta með skömmum fyrirvara, t.d. að hefja ferðina frá öðrum stað en til stóð svo hægt yrði að ganga með veðrinu frekar en að fá það í fangið, að halda kyrru fyrir á tjaldstæði fyrstu dagana á meðan versta veðrið gengur yfir, o.s.frv.

Við leitumst við að draga upp eina samsetta ferðalýsingu sem byggir á þremur köflum sem nefndir eru: „Undirbúningur og væntingar“, „Undir berum himni“ og „Endurlit við námskeiðslok“. Í fyrsta kaflanum er fjallað um undirbúning og væntingar í aðdraganda ferðarinnar. Þar greindum við þema sem við köllum Spennu og óöryggi: Ég vissi ekkert út í hvað ég var að fara. Kafli tvö fjallar um að vera undir berum himni. Þar eru fimm þemu sem við köllum: 1) Líkamlegar og andlegar áskoranir: Vá hvað þetta er bratt, 2) Óþolinmæði: Kom upp í mér pirringur, 3) Tilgangsleysi: Hvað er ég að gera? 4) Bugun: Þetta er mitt skjól, og 5) Geðshræringar: Eftir allan þennan tilfinningarússíðana. Í síðasta kaflanum er fjallað um endurlit en þar eru tvö þemu sem tengjast stolti og samstöðu nemenda þegar heim var komið og við köllum: 1) Stolt: Ég fokking massaði þetta og 2) Samstaða: Ótrúlega stoltur af öllum hópnum.

Undirbúningur og væntingar

Innra ferðalag flestra nemenda hófst við skráningu á vordögum og „ferðin“ var því ekki aðeins fjórir dagar heldur nokkrar vikur. Því teljum við rétt að tala um ytra og innra ferðalag. Ytra ferðalagið birtist í sýnilegum athöfnum en hið innra í innra ferli hugsana, tilfinninga og geðshræringa sem þátttakendur tókust á við allt ferlið, frá skráningu til loka námskeiðsins.

Spenna og óöryggi: Ég vissi ekkert út í hvað ég var að fara

Í aðstæðum sem einkennast af óvissu vilja tilfinningar á borð við spennu, eftirvæntingu, stress, kvíða, forðun og auðmýkt banka upp á. Ástæður þess að nemendur völdu þetta námskeið voru af ýmsum toga. Mörg nefndu að þau hefðu áhuga á að ferðast úti í náttúrunni, voru „spennt að

komast út í okkar íslensku náttúru og fá að njóta hennar“. Sumum fannst ótrúlega spennandi að ferðast um með „tjaldið á bakinu“ og langaði að fá „að upplifa að vera uppi á fjalli með allt á bakinu“. Innra með sumum blundaði sú löngun að geta seinna meir tekið vinahópið í slíka ferð. Að lokum voru nokkrir nemendur sem töluðu um að þá vantaði einingar til að ljúka námi eða töldu sig vera að skrá sig í áfanga þar sem þau gætu nælt sér í „óðýrar einingar“ fyrir litla vinnu:

Ég skráði mig í kúrsinn vegna þess að ég taldi þetta verða góða leið til að ná mér í fimm einingar ... góð leið til að ná mér í óðýrar einingar.

Ég leit á þetta sem auðveldi leið til þess að ná í einingar. Ég vissi ekkert út í hvað ég var að fara.

Nemendur skynjuðu að námskeiðið væri ólíkt öðrum námskeiðum háskólans og að kennararnir nálguðust kennsluna með nýjum hætti sem þeim fannst að gæti verið spennandi.

Þegar nær dró fjögurra daga útiverunni fóru að renna á nemendur tvær grímur, „oft kom upp löngun um að hætta við þennan áfanga í gegnum sumarið“. Nemendur lýstu í skrifum sínum blendnum tilfinningum, sem einkenndust af spennu, óöryggi, ótta og kvíða yfir að vita ekki hvað væri í vandum, en líka tilhlökkun vegna verkefnanna sem biðu þeirra. Margir töldu sig vera að fara út í algera óvissu og „ekkert vitað út í hvað var verið að fara“ en vonuðust til að kynnast nýju fólki, ná að slaka á og njóta náttúrunnar, fá „smá breik“ frá daglegu amstri. Þessar tilfinningar og hugsanir virðast hafa komið nemendum í opna skjöldu. Einn fann kvíða læðast að sér og sagði það væri „sérstök tilfinning að fara svona út í algjöra óvissu“:

Ég veit ekkert út í hvað ég er að fara. Ég vona bara að ég kynnist nýju fólki, nái að slaka á og njóta náttúrunnar. Ég vona að ég nái að slaka á þó staðan sé eins og hún er hérna heima ... ég verð að fá breik ... verð að fá að vera bara ég ... kannski er það sjálfelskulegt

...

Hluti af námskeiðinu var undirbúningsdagur fyrir útiveruna þar sem nemendur fengu tækifæri til að fara yfir nauðsynlegan búnað og spyrja spurninga, æfa sig að elda á prímusi, tjalda og setja sig í ígrundandi stellingar með leiðarbækurnar sínar. Þessi dagur var einnig notaður til að skipta nemendum upp í tjaldhópa. Auk þess að deila tjaldi meðan á göngunni stæði var þessum hópum ætlað að skipuleggja sameiginlegar máltíðir. Að þau myndu vera með fólki sem þau þekktu lítið eða ekkert vakti blendnar tilfinningar með nemendum. Á meðan öðrum fannst tilhugsun óþægileg þá kveikti hún líka ákveðna spennu:

Á undirbúningsdeginum fannst mér ég strax fá blauta tusku í andlitið þegar okkur var hent saman í tjaldhópa, sérstaklega vegna þess að ég lenti með fólki sem ég hafði aldrei séð áður.

Okkur var skipt í tjaldhópa og var ég mjög spennst að kynnast nýju fólki en einnig smá stressuð um að lenda með fólki sem væri neikvætt.

Mörg nefndu í þessu sambandi að þau hefði kvíðið fyrir „að gista í tjaldi með fólki sem maður hefur aldrei hitt áður og eyða hverri stund í fjóra daga með fólki sem maður hefur aldrei hitt“ og að þau hefðu jafnvel miklað þetta fyrir sér:

Ég ætla ekki að ljúga því að kvöldið fyrir var ég orðin ansi stressuð. Ganga frá miðvikudegi til laugardags með bakpoka með öllum þeim nauðsynjum sem ég þurfti á að halda á meðan á ferðinni myndi standa, auk þess að gista í tjaldi með tveim bláókunnugum manneskjum.

Þó það hafi staðið í sumum að vera sett í tjaldhópa með fólki sem það þekkti ekki þá fannst öðrum gott að vera í hópi með ókunnugum: „Mér fannst flott að skipta í hópa og hefði þetta ekki verið eins upplifun ef við hefðum verið með okkar vinum.“

Þegar ögurstundin rann upp og lagt var af stað í sjálfa gönguna virtust spennan og kvíðinn vera í hámarki, „ég var bæði spenntur og stressaður“ sagði einn nemandi og annar lýsti miklu stressi á þessum tímamarki: „Þegar ég var að ganga út í bíl með allan farangurinn þá fann ég fyrir ólgu í maganum og ólgan jókst þegar ég keyrði nær ... mér fannst eins og ég væri að fara að æla úr stressi.“

Undir berum himni

Upphafsdagurinn var tilfinningaþrunginn, að þurfa að skilja allt eftir heima og setja sig í hugarástandið að vera í núinu var togstreita. Ég er með mikla ábyrgð í mínu daglega lífi gagnvart mörgum og mér finnst erfitt að sleppa takinu.

Í þessum kafla er fjallað um ferðalagið sjálft og þar birtust fyrrgreind fimm þemu. Þátttakendur söfnuðust saman á bílplaninu, klyfjaðir farangri og biðu rúttunnar sem myndi keyra með hópinn um það bil 30 mínútna leið þangað sem útiveran hæfist. Rútan kom og nemendur gengu um borð. Nú var ekki aftur snúið. Við vorum formlega lögð af stað. Rútuferðin virðist hafa skipt sköpum fyrir líðan nemenda og óöryggi vék fyrir „spennu sem lá í loftinu“ og stundum óþolinmæði.

Líkamlegar og andlegar áskoranir: Vá, hvað þetta er bratt

Á ferðalaginu upplifðu þátttakendur áskoranir eins og brattar brekkur, ausandi rigningu og þungan bakpoka (*Mynd 3*), auk félagslegra áskorana, en um þær er fjallað í næsta kafla. Þau voru samt tilbúin til að takast á við upplifanir sínar með jákvæðum hætti, jafnvel þótt innra með þeim bærðust fjölbreyttar tilfinningar og áskoranir því að við venjulegar aðstæður hefðu þau „sjálf aldrei farið í göngu eða útilegu í þessu veðri“.

Jafnvel þau sem höfðu efasemdir um eigin getu, fannst brekkurnar ógnvænlega brattar, tókust á við þær með jákvæðu hugarfari:

Í upphafi dagsins var ég með mjög blendnar tilfinningar, bæði kvíðin og spennt að hefja gönguna og takast á við þetta ferðalag. Það fyrsta sem kom upp í hugann minn var bara „vá hvað þetta er bratt“.

Ég skellti pokanum á bakið og fann að ég var ekki alveg eins spræk og ég var búin að ímynda mér. Hér áður fyrr var ég í betra formi og minningin um mig að skokka upp fjöll var ljóslifandi. Raunveruleikinn var allt annar.

Þegar á leið gönguna og fyrstu hindranirnar höfðu verið yfirstignar þá virtist nemendum vaxa ásmegin og fundu fyrir miklum létti við að finna að þau gætu þetta, „skrefin urðu léttari og bakpokinn ekki eins þungur og lá ekki eins skringilega á líkamanum“. Áskoranirnar sem þau upplifðu tengdust ekki aðeins líkamlegu erfíði heldur einnig félagslegum kringumstæðum.



Mynd 3. Hópurinn leggur af stað með allt á bakinu.

Óþolinmæði: Kom upp í mér pirringur

Þegar veruleikinn reynist annar en fólk hefur væntingar um gera tilfinningar á borð við óþolinmæði, uppgjöf og eftirsjá gjarnan vart við sig. Þótt flest hafi lagt upp í ferðina jákvæð gagnvart þeim áskorunum sem voru framundan, voru líka mörg sem fundu fyrir pirringi. Þessi pirringur gat beinst að þeim sjálfum, lélegu formi eða búnaðinum, t.d. þungum bakpoka. Hann beindist einnig að því að ferðast í hóp og geta ekki haft stjórn á hversu hratt var farið. Oft var stoppað og það truflaði þau sem vildu fara hraðar yfir:

Gangan gekk frekar hægt, við stoppuðum oft og lengi og löbbuðum afar hægt miðað við það sem ég er vön. Það tók á þolinmæðina hjá mér og fleirum í hópnum.

Ég var orðin svolítið pirruð og nennti ekki að stoppa enn eina ferðina.

Það kom í ljós að ég er mjög óþolinmód í svona stórum hóp og mér fannst mjög erfitt að taka alltaf svona langar pásur á göngunni. Ég hugsaði alltaf innra með mér að ég vildi bara fara af stað.

Þegar hópurinn stoppaði voru þátttakendur ekki einungis hvattir til að beina athyglinni að eigin skynjunum heldur einnig að setjast niður, virða fyrir sér umhverfið, hugleiða eigin tilfinningar (*Mynd 4*) og færa þær í orð:

Ég var orðin svolítið pirruð og nennti ekki að stoppa enn eina ferðina. Ég fann svo hvað ég hafði gott af þessu stoppi, þarna fór ég að skoða náttúruna og virða hluti fyrir mér sem ég hafði ekki gert áður í ferðinni. Þetta róaði mig niður og horfði ég á fallegu náttúruna okkar og virti fyrir mér sjónspillinguna þar sem rafmagnsflinur lágu upp fjöllin. Ég teiknaði myndina eftir bestu getu, eins og augað greip og er það neðri myndin á forsiðunni.

Í fyrri hluta ferðarinnar fundu nokkuð margir til þirrings yfir því hvernig gangan var skipulögð; hversu rík áhersla var lögð á að fara hægt yfir, gefa umhverfinu gaum, og deila eigin upplifun með ferðafélögum. Einnig voru þátttakendur hvattir til að skrá hjá sér það sem þau upplifðu, bæði með því að lýsa eigin skynjun og tilfinningum með orðum og með því að teikna myndir af því sem þau sáu. Þótt mörgum reyndist glíman við hæglætið erfið, beinlínis þirrandi, þá voru aðrir sem nutu þess:

Ég heyri, ég sé, ég finn. Ég heyri í bíl, stórum bíl, vinnubíl. Ég heyri í flugu, heitu vatni þrýstast út úr röri. Á vinstri hönd sé ég ... FJÖLLIN! Ég finn frið og ró færast yfir mig. Hér og nú augnablikið. Ég hugsa um hvað öðrum finnst og flæðið stoppar. Flæði – sleppa tókunum – leyfa lífinu.



Mynd 4. Stoppað til að hvílast og gefa gaum að umhverfinu, náttúrunni og eigin tilfinningum.

Þótt þirringurinn sem þátttakendur fundu til í upphafi ferðar hafi stafað af ólíkum atriðum – þeirra eigin formi, bakpokanum eða því að vera að ferðast í hópi sem fór hægt yfir – þá stafaði hann einnig af einhvers konar misræmi á milli eigin væntinga og þess raunveruleika sem þau stóðu frammi fyrir. Rysjótt veður hafði þar mikil áhrif, sú blíða sem þau höfðu kannski gert ráð fyrir var víðs fjarri:

En undir lokin er mér orðið mjög kalt og þá er ég orðin verulega þirruð. Þirruð á að hafa ekki farið strax í peysu, hrædd við að slá niður, þirruð yfir að fá ekki að vita hvað er að gerast, hvort þetta er nokkurra mínútna pása eða þrjú korter eins og hún varð.

Tilgangsleysi: Hvað er ég að gera?

Þegar aðstæður verða yfirþyrmandi getur tilfinningalegt og vitsmunalegt álag orðið það mikið að einstaklingar eiga í erfiðleikum með að takast á við það sem að höndum ber. Þegar bleytan og þreytan fóru að segja meira til sín, hættu þátttakendur að lýsa eigin tilfinningum sem „þirringi“ og fóru að lýsa erfiðleikum og vanlíðan. Rætt var um að erfitt hefði verið á ákveðnum tímapunkti að halda áfram og vera þarna. Tónninn varð sífellt þyngrí í nemendum og þau lýstu tilfinningum

sínum við að vera í þeim aðstæðum sem þau upplifðu á þessum tímamarki sem bæði erfiðum og tilgangslausum (*Mynd 5*). Þau upplifðu óöryggi og það sem olli neikvæðum hugsunum og tilfinningum var ekki eitthvað tiltekið, eins og bakpöki eða að hópurinn hafði stoppað enn eina ferðina, heldur virtist allt vera ómögulegt og eina leiðin myndi vera að komast heim eins og einn sagði: „Hvað er ég að gera hérna? ... Ég vildi að ég væri heima, höldum áfram.“

Einnig fór að bera á efasemdum um eigin getu, efasemdum um að geta hreinlega klárað ferðina. Upp komu hugsanir eins og „verður þetta svona, ég alltaf aftast,“ „á ég ekki eftir að geta þetta,“ og fleiri neikvæðar hugsanir.



Mynd 5. Eftir langa daga er þreytan farin að segja til sín, bæði á líkama og sál.

Þegar kuldinn fór að bíta varð glíman frekar andleg en líkamleg, erfiðleikarnir sem tengdust því að ganga breyttust jafnvel í örvæntingu:

Gærdagurinn reyndi virkilega á taugarnar í mér, öll bleytan, áttavillan og útiveran almennt var óþolandi þar sem maður vissi að ekkert nema tjaldið beið manns þegar við komum til baka köld og blaut.

Aldrei erfitt að ganga þetta, það var eiginlega andlega. Að verða kalt þá fór þetta að verða erfitt.

Bugun: Þetta er mitt skjól

Erfiðleikarnir og vanlíðan vegna veðurofsans jukust þegar á leið og birtust í að ferðalangar áttu erfitt með að stjórna skapi sínu og hugsuðu um sína velferð frekar en annarra. Rigningin jókst og hópmeðlimir byrjuðu að tína regnfatnað upp úr töskunum. Fólk var misvel undirbúið. Sum í hópnum urðu blaut og þegar kuldinn sagði til sín fór ferðin að snúast um það eitt að ganga frekar en að vera úti í náttúrunni:

Ég hætti smám saman að virða fyrir mér náttúruna í kringum mig og fór að horfa niður í jörðina og feta í fótspor manneskjunnar sem gekk á undan mér. Jákvæðnin fór á sama tíma dvínandi enda varð ég mjög fljótlega blaut í gegn.

Súldin varð sífellt þéttari og gangan um leið erfiðari. Drifkrafturinn og gleðin sem hafði drifið hópinn áfram dvínadi og með því breyttust tilfinningarnar. Fólk fór á milli þess að hvetja sig áfram og að finna fyrir vonleysi, vera að gefast upp:

Náttúran tók stjórnina af okkur. Við stjórnudum okkur ekki lengur sjálf. Hópurinn þurfti að fara að taka ákvarðanir út frá veðrinu. Við vorum hluti af náttúrunni og þurftum að vinna með henni. Það var klárt að við vorum ekki undir þetta búin.

Flest fóru að hugsa um sjálf sig en ekki heildina. Þau voru ekki búin undir þetta vonða veður og það kom sundrung í hópinn. Ákveðin gremja gerði vart við sig í garð ferðafélaga sem þóttu ekki „átta sig nægilega vel á aðstæðum annarra í hópnum né taka tillit til þeirra sem hægar fóru“. Margir veltu fyrir sér hvað væri „eiginlega í gangi“ og spenna og vonleysi hlóðst upp.

Sjálfsásakanir, efasemdir og samviskubít leiddu til hugsana á borð við „er ég aumingi“ eða „finnst hópnum ég vera aumingi“. Einn nemandi lýsir ástandinu á þessa leið: „Tárin byrjuðu að streyma niður kinnarnar á mér. Ég vildi ganga ein ... trúði því ekki að ég væri í alvörunni að gráta yfir þessu, týpan sem grætur yfirleitt ekki.“ Annar skrifar að það myndna hafi verið að hann var með lagið „Viltu ekki bara fara að grenja?“ á heilanum.

Þegar tekið var matarhlé voru nokkur komin í „survival mode“, kepptust við að finna gott skjól. Á meðan sum borðuðu nesti og reyndu að stappa í sig stálinu voru önnur sem nenntu ekki að fá sér að borða þótt þau myndu fyrir orkuleysi. Einstaka vildu ekki hreyfa sig, sátu bara og gláptu þegjandi út í loftið. Nemandi sem hafði farið afsíðis en kom svo til baka og fann annan nemanda kominn í skjólið sem hann hafði verið í skrifaði: „Þetta er mitt skjól!“

Vonleysi hafði náð tókum á hópnum sem lýsti sér í almennri vanlíðan eins og einn skrifaði: „Ég er að frika út“. Tilhugsunin um að fara aftur af stað var yfirþyrmandi. Fólk gekk einsamalt og bugunin jókst eftir því sem vonbrigðin urðu meiri. Vegurinn virtist endalaus og hópurinn missti sjónar á tilgangi ferðarinnar.

Geðshræring: Eftir allan þennan tilfinningarússíbana

Þegar leið á ferðina – kannski eftir tvo til þrjú daga af „þrammi“ – virtust nemendur átta sig á að hægt og bítandi, í gegnum allar þessar áskoranir, væru þau að ná takmarki sínu. Þá varð ákveðinn umsnúningur. Einn skrifaði: „Ég fann fyrir bakinu á mér en lét það ekki stoppa mig“ og annar fór að hugsa um „hvað get ég gefið?“ í stað „hvað hef ég fengið?“

Áfram hélt gangan og viss umbreyting átti sér stað með nýjum hugsunum og tilfinningum. Eftir allan þennan „tilfinningarússíbana“ varð einhver kátína sem fyllti hópinn (*Mynd 6*). Súkkulaðiflís sem hafði hreinlega gleymst að innbyrða gægdist upp úr bakpoka, „þvílík hamingja“. Í hópnum var að myndast einhver kraftur og velferð allra skipti jafn miklu máli. Hópurinn var staðráðinn í að klára þetta saman:

Við hlógum að öllum þeim tilfinningarússíbana sem við fórum í gegnum og hugsuðum til þess ef við hefðum vitað að veðrið ætti að verða eins og það varð og að ferðinni hefði verið aflýst, þá hefðum við ekki fengið tækifæri til að upplifa það sem við upplifðum. Að mörgu leyti er þetta besta og versta ferð sem ég hef farið í. Hún var að mun meira leyti erfið andlega heldur en líkamlega. Þó svo að manni væri kannski eitthvað illt í líkamanum þá var það ekki neitt samanborið við hvað maður var að ganga í gegnum andlega.

Undir lok ferðar virtist sigurtilfinning og sjálfstraust fylla hópinn og við tók þakklæti fyrir tækifærið til að upplifa og fara í gegnum þennan tilfinningarússíbana sem gangan virtist hafa leitt til og þá tilfinningu að þurfa að takast á við sjálfan sig:

Ég fann fyrir mikilli sigurtilfinningu að hafa getað þetta, ég fylltist sjálfstrausti og fannst þetta gera það að verkum að ég ætti auðveldara með að takast á við mín persónulegu vandamál.

Nýjar tilfinningar kviknuðu, einhvers konar sigurtilfinningar yfir því að hafa getað þetta. Þakklæti fyrir að hafa fengið tækifæri til að upplifa það sem við upplifðum.



Mynd 6. Seinasta kvöldið, eftir langan dag, er búið að tjalda og tími til að setjast niður og slappa af. Það er ekki lengur rok þótt rigningin hafi ekki yfirgefið hópinn.

Hinar miklu öldur upplifana sem um tíma virtust ætla að sökkva göngugörpunum ofan í djúp vonleysis höfðu í raun skolað upp í fjöru dýrmætri reynslu sem birtist m.a. í að nemendurnir lýstu ferðinni sem því versta en líka því besta sem þau höfðu reynt í háskólanámi sínu.

Endurlit við námskeiðslok

Við lok námskeiðs litu þátttakendur um öxl, flestir ánægðir með það að hafa skráð sig í þetta óljósa námskeið nokkrum mánuðum áður. Í gegnum erfiðið, að lifa með tilfinningum sínum, var sem nemendur öðluðust ný sjónarhorn á eigin getu, styrkleika og takmarkanir.

Stolt: Ég fokking massaði þetta

Vá ég gat þetta, það var eitthvað svo stór tímunktur hjá manni, það var bara eitthvað svona, ég fokking massaði þetta.

... námskeið sem ég mun ávallt skilgreina sem hámarks upplifun á háskólagöngu minni.

Rætt var um lærdóma ferðarinnar og var fólki tíðrætt um sigur, stolt og hugrekki. Reynslan var þó líka erfið og þar lék veðrið stórt hlutverk:

Ég átti bæði jákvæða og neikvæða reynslu sem er svo dýrmætt. Ég hef meiri trú á mér og veit að ég get mikið. Ég þekki kosti mína og galla betur, andlega, félagslega og líkamlega.

... hvernig maður lærði á sjálfan sig, hvar mörkin mín voru í raun miðað við hvar maður hélt að þau væru, hvernig veðrið náði taki á tilfinningum manns.

Þátttakendum hafði verið ýtt „rækilega út fyrir þægindarammann“ sinn. Nokkur sögðust ekki hafa gert neitt sem var líkt þessu og fannst þau hafa sýnt kjark og þor.

Sum höfðu oft farið yfir þá hugsun í ferðinni af hverju þau hefðu verið að koma sér í þessar ömurlegu aðstæður að þurfa að ganga upp brekku með þungan pokann: „Ég hefði getað verið heima að gera eitthvað allt annað sem reyndi ekki á mig, en tilfinningin þegar ég kom að lokum upp var stórfengleg.“ Fleiri lýstu svipaðri reynslu:

Á tímavarki var maður bókstaflega að bugast en svo náði maður að klára þetta og maður var í svo mikilli sigurvínu. Maður er svo ógeðslega stoltur og ánægður með sjálfan sig að hafa gert þetta.

Samstaða: Ótrúlega stoltur af öllum hópnum

Smám saman þróaðist hópurinn frá því að vera skipaður einstaklingnum yfir í að mynda eina heild. Fólk fór að deila líðan og tilfinningum, velta meira fyrir sér líðan annarra og hugsa um að styðja hvert annað frekar en að einblína á eigin ástand. Nemendur fundu orku og kraft frá öðrum sem var valdeflandi, „nú var komin samheldni í hópinn“ og skrifaði einn:

Það kom á óvart hvað fólk deildi miklu af sér og samtölin voru oft mjög persónuleg og tilfinningarík þrátt fyrir að þekkjast lítið. Þetta var ólíkt því sem maður þekkir í daglegu lífi þar sem fólk er oft feimið við að tjá tilfinningar sínar og væntingar.

Orkan og stemmingin í hópnum var alveg mögnuð, umhyggja og hjálpssemi, traust og virðing, vinátta og samheldni, við gátum þetta, við gáfumst ekki upp, við komumst í gegnum þetta saman.

Þátttakendur voru flest „mjög sátt við þetta afrek“ og margir nefndu hversu stolt þau væru af sjálfum sér og ekki síður af hópnum sem heild að hafa sigrast á þessu saman:

Það sem situr mest eftir er þakkætið yfir allri þeirri vinsemd og tengingu sem ég fann fyrir frá fólki sem var mér að öllu ókunnugt áður en ferlið hófst. Mér finnst frábært að hugsa til þess hvernig sú lífsreynsla sem við deildum bindur okkur saman og hversu gott það er að eiga þessa upplifun saman ... ég er þeirrar skoðunar að ég hafi lært meira af [þessum áfangum] en í mörgum öðrum áföngum sem ég hef sinnt yfir heila skólaönn.

Umræða

Tilgangur þessarar rannsóknar var að draga fram gildi námsumhverfis og skapandi leiða í menntun háskólanemenda með sérstöku tilliti til útiveru í ósnortinni náttúru og ígrundunar um þá reynslu. Markmiðið er að varpa ljósi á hlutverk ígrundunar í að draga fram möguleika til náms og þroska sem felast í að dvelja úti í náttúrunni. Rannsóknarspurningarnar voru tvær og lutu að því hvernig nemendur lýstu áskornunum sínum í ígrundandi skrifum fyrir, í og eftir ferð (spurning 1) og hvaða vísbendingar mætti finna í skrifum þeirra sem bentu til merkingarbærs náms sem gæti haft persónuleg og fagleg áhrif til framtíðar (spurning 2).

Áskoranir þátttakenda voru fjölbreyttar en mest áberandi voru glímur við hæglæti, félagsleg samskipti og svo andleg og líkamleg líðan þegar á móti blés. Þær eru samhljóma niðurstöðum fræðafólks um gildi hæglætis (Berg og Seeber, 2018; Gelter, 2010; Payne og Wattchow, 2008), útímenntunar (t.d. Beames og Brown, 2016; Quay og Seaman, 2013; Wattchow og Brown,

2011) og útlífs (t.d. Bentsen o.fl., 2009; Gurholt, 2016; Hofmann o.fl., 2018). Það sem skapar þessar áskoranir eru fyrst og fremst óvissa, náttúra og meðvitað hæglæti, en að staldra við skerpir á athyglinni og leggur grunn að ígrundandi samtali. Það sem gerir þessa reynslu sýnilega, bæði fyrir nemendurna sjálfa og okkur kennarana sem einnig erum í hlutverki rannsakenda, er sú ígrundandi iðja sem ofin var inn í námsferli með formlegum og óformlegum hætti.

Menntunarferlið í námskeiðinu Ferðalög og útlíf var skipulagt með ígrundun sem lykilaðferð frá upphafi til enda. Ígrundunarferlinu má skipta í þrennt í anda þess sem Schön segir um ólíkar víddir ígrundunar (1983); ígrundun sem tengdist undirbúningi fyrir ferð og væntingum nemenda, ígrundun meðan á ferðalagi undir berum himni stóð, og loks endurlit við námskeiðslok. Hér ræðum við þessa þrískiptu reynslu út frá þáttunum óvissa, náttúra og að staldra við, sem við teljum varða – eða vísa okkur á – þau meginámstækifæri sem felast í ferðalagi undir berum himni.

Óvissa

„Menntun: Leiðin frá kokhraustri fáfræði til ömurlegrar óvissu“ – Mark Twain

Sagt er að við lífum á óvissutímum, að óvissa sé sífellt að aukast, en samt erum við full af óþoli gagnvart óvissu og reynum eftir fremsta megni að draga úr henni – hversu óraunhæft sem það þó er (Harari, 2018; Tauritz, 2012). Í ævintýrlegu námi er einmitt tekist á við þá staðreynd að líf okkar er ofurselt óvissu og leitast er við að taka hana í sátt sem eðlilegt hlutskipti. Eitt af lykiltríðum í slíku námi er að í óvissu, þegar tekist er á við ófyrirséðar áskoranir í raunverulegum kringumstæðum, liggi beinlínis námstækifæri sem geti eflt fólk og byggt upp mikilvæga hæfni (Beames og Brown, 2016). Í þessu sambandi má nefna að Evrópuráðið hefur nefnt að umburðarlyndi gagnvart óvissu (e. tolerance for uncertainty) sé eitt af grundvallaratriðum lýðræðislegrar hæfni (Council of Europe, 2016).

Í aðdraganda gönguferðarinnar læddust að nemendum margvíslegar hugsanir og tilfinningar sem komu þeim í opna skjöldu. Þau upplifðu kvíða fyrir því að takast á við ferðalagið og ferðast með fólki sem þau þekktu ekki en líka tilhlökkun.

Beames og Brown (2016) segja að í samhengi menntunar sé mátuleg óvissa og ófyrirsjáanleiki æskileg og geti vakið forvitni nemenda, hvatt þá til að læra og að vera skapandi, þegar þeir leita lausna eða úrlausna á viðfangsefni. Hins vegar geti of mikil óvissa haft þveröfug áhrif og komið í veg fyrir nám.

Nemendur þurftu að lifa með óvissunni og hlutverk okkar kennaranna var að vera til staðar, ganga með nemendum og skapa aðstæður þar sem hópurinn í heild gat fundið jafnvægi á milli óvissu og öryggis. Óvissan sem nemendur stóðu frammi fyrir var af ólíku tagi. Fyrst stóðu þau frammi fyrir því að mæta í ferðina og taka þátt í námskeiði sem var einhvern veginn allt öðruvísi en önnur námskeið sem þau höfðu tekið við Háskóla Íslands. Þegar sjálf ferðin hófst færði náttúran okkur margvíslegar ytri áskoranir, eins og kulda og bleytu, sem umbreyttust í innri áskoranir þar sem nemendur neyddust til að horfast í augu við eigin tilfinningar, „tárin byrjuðu að streyma niður kinnarnar á mér...“, og í félagslegar áskoranir þar sem þau þurftu að berskjalda sig til að geta unnið saman og stutt hvert annað til að komast á leiðarenda: „Hvað get ég gefið?“

Í verkefnum nemenda kom skýrt fram hvornig náttúran bæði skapaði áþreifanlega óvissu sem krafðist þess að þau tækjust á við eigin tilfinningar og sjálfsmynd og einnig að þau nálgudust samferðafólkið með nýjum hætti. Þetta er í takt við það sem t.a.m. Tauritz (2012) og Beames og Brown (2016) segja um ávinning þess að takast á við óvissu og um mikilvægi þess að vinna með atbeina þátttakanda. Að mati Morse o.fl. (2021) og Jickling (2018) er náttúran kjörinn vettvangur til að mæta óvissu og hinu óskipulagða. Þetta er enn fremur nátengt þekktum ávinningi af úti- og ævintýramenntun, svo sem myndun sterkra tengsla á milli fólks, aukinni trú á eigin getu (sjá t.d. Beames og Brown, 2016; Nicol, 2002) og bættri sjálfsmynd (Carpenter og Harper, 2015; Hattie o.fl., 1997; Leather, 2013).

Náttúra

„Í náttúrunni er ekkert til eitt og sér“ – Rachel Carson

Villt eða óbeislud náttúra hefur reynst góður staður til að vinna með persónulegan og faglegan þroska, og þjálfá ígrundandi starfshætti (Hervör Alma Árnadóttir og Sóley Dögg Hafbergsdóttir, 2015). Eigi að síður spyrja margir sig hvers vegna ferðalag um íslenska náttúru sé valið sem vettvangur fyrir nám sem miðar öðrum þræði að persónulegum og faglegum þroska. Okkar svar er að slíkt ferðalag gefi bæði ný og óvænt tækifæri til að spyrja hver við séum og kryfja þær tilfinningar sem kvikna innra með okkur í ólíkum aðstæðum án þess að dæma eða ákvarða. Í röddum nemenda birtist sterk upplifun um að tekist sé á við náttúruna í víðu samhengi þar sem hreyfing um náttúrulegt umhverfi, glíma við náttúruöflin og ígrundun í náttúrunni hafa merkingu og afleiðingar. Fyrir ferðina lýstu raddirnar von um að fá „smá breik“ frá daglegu amstri og spenningi, „að komast út í okkar íslensku náttúru og fá að njóta hennar“. Þegar erfiðid jókst kom þó „þirringur“ og síðar, þegar glíma þurfti við bleytu, kulda, brekkur og þungar byrðar, birtist vonleysi og fólk spurði sig áleitinna spurninga eins og „hvað er ég að gera hérna“. Við að ná að sigrast saman á krefjandi áskoronum sem náttúran veitti, upplifði fólk sigurtilfinningu að hafa getað þetta eins og einn þátttakandinn sagði: „Fylltist sjálfstrausti og fannst þetta gera það að verkum að ég ætti auðveldara með að takast á við mín persónulegu vandamál.“ Landið sem við ferðuðumst um og veðrið sem við ferðuðumst í varð samkennari okkar (Ford og Blenkinsop, 2018; Raffan, 1993) og krafði nemendur um að spyrja sig spurninga með hætti sem við hefðum aldrei getað leitað eftir í öryggi og skjóli kennslustofunnar.

Þessi kraftur náttúrunnar á ekki að koma okkur á óvart því að fjölmargar rannsóknir benda til þess að upplifanir af náttúrunni hafi fjölþætt áhrif. Þær efla meðal annars persónulegan þroska og ábyrgð gagnvart umhverfinu, styðja við námsárangur og styrkja félagsleg tengsl (Kuo o.fl., 2019).

Ef við viljum þjálfá fólk í mikilvægri persónulegri og faglegri hæfni, eins og að bregðast við óvæntum atburðum, styðja hvert annað, takast á við áskoranir sem varða bæði tilfinningalega og líkamlega getu, þá er kennslustofan kannski ekki besti staðurinn. Þar er allt í röð og reglu, hlutverkin skýr, tíminn niðurnjörvaður, fátt sem kemur á óvart, fátt sem ögrar skynferunum á jafn róttækan hátt og hægt er að gera úti í náttúrunni. Þessi menntun úti stuðlar þannig að aukinni meðvitund um og eflir virðingu fyrir sjálfum sér, öðrum og náttúrunni (Nicol, 2002).

Í bók sinni *Earth in Mind* segir David Orr (2004) að þótt sum þekking aukist þá verði ekki fram hjá því horft að önnur þekking sé að glatast (bls. 9) og að þrátt fyrir miklar framfarir í náttúruvísindum eigum við ekki vísindi um heilsu landsins (e. science of land health) eins og Aldo Leopold hafði kallað eftir um miðja 20. öldina. Að mati Orr hefur beinni reynslu og staðbundinni þekkingu nemanda og vísindafólks í háskólum af náttúru hnignað. Það er því rík þörf á að veita nemendum í háskóla beina reynslu af að ferðast um, með og í náttúrunni. Í slíkri útivist þarf að vera vakandi fyrir því að gæði upplifunar ráðast ekki af gæðum þess sem er skynjað heldur gæðum þess „hugræna auga“ sem skynjar, eins og Aldo Leopold dregur svo sterkt fram (Leopold, 1949) og Guðmundur Finnbogason (1903/1994) hafði raunar gert að einu af kennimörkum menntunar í bók sinni *Lýðmenntun*.

Að staldra við

„Taktu eftir því sem þú tekur eftir“ – Þorvaldur Þorsteinsson

Hæglæti, einveru og þögn má telja til grundvallarþátta í menntun sem tekst á við persónulegan þroska. Segja má að þessi atriði hjálpi okkur að þjálfá „hugræna augað“ (e. mental eye) sem Leopold (1949) talar um. Sá þroski beinist bæði inn á við, að mótaðri sjálfsmynd, fegurðarskyni og persónulegri hæfni eins og þolinmæði, og út á við, í átt að ríkara og merkingabærara sambandi við umhverfið, hvort sem það er mennskt eða nær út fyrir hið mennska (Ólafur Páll Jónsson o.fl., 2020). Að mati Moon (2006) eru ákveðin skilyrði mikilvæg fyrir ígrundandi iðju sem m.a. fela í sér að hægja á, auka tilfinningu fyrir eignarhaldi, að viðurkenna þátt tilfinninga í námi, að gefa

Þátttakendum reynslu af að takast á vandasamt efni, að hvetja til dýpri ígrundunar og að efla nám í gegnum ritun.

Ferðalagið um og með náttúrunni var í raun hið stóra vandasama verkefni námskeiðsins sem við öll, bæði nemendur og kennarar, stóðum frammi fyrir. Tilfinningaríkt og krefjandi ferðalag skapaði margvíslegar upplifanir og leitandi spurningar og samræður um mann sjálfan, aðra í hópnum og náttúruna allt í kring, sem stuðlaði að því að hinar stundlegu upplifanir umbreyttust í ríkulega reynslu (Dewey 1938/2000b) sem nemendur tóku með sér í námskeiðslok. Til að hægja á í námsferlinu beittum við þekktum reynslumiðaðum aðferðum eins og að ganga í þögn eða einveru. Reynsla verður ekki skilin frá umhverfi sínu og skynjun okkar á því. Þess vegna var lögð áhersla á að skapa hópnum rými til að taka eftir því sem fyrir bar; þ.e. sjá, heyra, snerta og lykta – og þannig finna fyrir því sem umlukti okkur, bæði hinu mennska og því sem var handan hins mannlega.

Verkefni nemenda höfðu að geyma ólíkar raddir sem lýstu fjölbreyttri reynslu. Hún stuðlaði að persónulegu og tilfinningaríku námi sem skapaðist meðal annars þegar hægt var á námsferlinu: Hæglætið gat skapað pirring („Ég var orðin svolítið pirruð og nennti ekki að stoppa enn eina ferðina“) en með því að hægja á ferlinu skapaðist spenna sem var ekki aðeins afleiðing af innri óþolinmæði þátttakenda heldur líka þeirri menningu sem við búum við í (há)skólum þar sem stundaskrá er þétt, tími knappur og kröfur um afköst oft yfirþyrmandi (Berg og Seeber, 2018; Leather og Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson, 2021; Payne og Wattchow, 2008).

Smám saman uppgötvuðu nemendur ávinninginn („Ég fann svo hvað ég hafði gott af þessu stoppi, þarna fór ég að skoða náttúruna og virða hluti fyrir mér sem ég hafði ekki gert áður í ferðinni“) og fóru að gefa sér tíma til að taka eftir og jafnvel taka eftir að þau voru að gefa sér tíma til að skynja umhverfið (Leopold, 1949; Ólafur Páll Jónsson o.fl., 2020).

Jakube o.fl. (2016) leggja ríka áherslu á að styðja nemendur við ígrundandi iðju og ritun en jafnframt að vera meðvituð um að stýra ekki skrifunum og ítreka að allt sem þau skrifa er fyrir þau sjálf. Hér er glímt við stýriþversögn eigin náms þar sem kennarinn þarf að stýra nemandanum til að hann stýri sér sjálfur. Það sem virðist styðja þau við ígrundun er að vera í samfélagi þar sem eru mikil formleg og óformleg samskipti. Það að lifa saman í tjaldi, elda saman og búa saman skapar umgjörð sem virðist fóstura samtöl og kveikja innri hugsanir sem styðja við vöxt. Það er í takt við það sem Rodgers (2002) segir um samfélag samskipta sem styður við ígrundun einstaklingsins.

Við sækjum einkum hugmyndafræðilegan grunn í útilífshæðina, úti- og ævintýramenntun. Rannsóknin leiðir fram áhrifamátt náttúrunnar sem samkennara þar sem hið villta og óvænta í náttúrunni ræður ríkjum. Margt í hugtakaheimi *villtrar kennslufræði* ætti að geta gagnast okkur til að nýta náttúruna enn betur sem samkennara og gefa tíma til virkja meira hið villta og óþekkta (Jickling, 2018).

Óvíst náttúrulegt hæglæti – samantekt

Margar vísbendingar má greina í skrifum þátttakenda um minnisstæða reynslu og við endurlit lýsa þau stolti af sjálfum sér og hópnum. Vísbendingar eru að finna í skrifum nemenda sem benda til þess að ferðalagið hafi fært þeim tækifæri til merkingarbærs náms sem gæti haft áhrif á þá persónulega og faglega til framtíðar. Mikilvægir þættir eru hin ígrundandi iðja sem þau fengu mörg tækifæri til að þjálfa með því að staldra við og taka eftir og að glíma við óvissu og náttúrulegar áskoranir. Skref fyrir skref bauðst þeim að hugsa um hagnýtar spurningar sem beindust að skynjun þeirra, tilfinningum og hópnum sem þau voru hluti af.

Niðurstöður benda til að náttúran hafi verið í hlutverki samkennara okkar, haft sterk áhrif og skapað reynslu sem styrkti persónulegan og faglegan vöxt. Áhugi okkar stendur nú til þess að rannsaka nánar með hvaða hætti hægt sé að gefa henni viðameira hlutverk þannig að við getum betur lært af móður náttúru.

Under an open sky: Reflections and challenges of university students

Within the educational systems, attention has been directed to the importance of creating an environment and conditions to cultivate students' ability to deal with the uncertainty and challenges of our time – whether in the field of environmental issues, pandemics or other factors.

International research suggests that friluftsliv and guided outdoor education can be a useful and powerful way to work with such skills. The Scandinavian term 'friluftsliv' is culturally and legally defined and has for a long time been the subject of research in various academic fields, including education. Within this tradition, strong emphasis is laid on traveling through nature and in nature by one's own power and in harmony with nature. The paper also draws on the English traditions of outdoor education and adventure education.

The strong experiences gained from taking learning out into nature can be attributed to the challenging interactions of students when dealing with unpredictable environment and weather conditions. In order for such experiences to be learning experiences, contributing to the increased competences of the students, it is necessary that students reflect on their experiences in an organized way. Reflection is integrated into most subjects of outdoor education and has developed greatly over the past decades and is in fact a core component of professional practice.

The purpose of this article is to draw out the possibilities of nature as both a learning environment and a co-teacher, and develop creative ways to meet contemporary demands in the education of university students. The goal is to shed light on the role of reflection in bringing out the possibilities for learning and development that are inherent in spending time in nature. We therefore raise two research questions to guide our work: (1) How do students describe their challenges before, during and after a four-day journey through the wilderness of Iceland? (2) What evidence can be found in students' writings that indicate that reflecting on the journey has brought them opportunities for meaningful learning? The paper is based on data from assignments obtained from 58 students who participated in the course Outdoor Journeys and Friluftsliv at the University of Iceland in 2014, 2015 and 2017. The data was thematically analysed and common themes were found.

Data was based on students' final assignments where they reflected back on the journey based on earlier reflections written in a log-book from both before the journey and during the journey.

The findings indicate that nature is a strong co-teacher when working with students to strengthen personal and professional growth. In their writings, students describe experiences of physical challenges associated with walking in the untouched nature as well as challenges where they deal with their own thoughts and feelings. The participants' challenges were diverse, but the most prominent were struggles with slowness, social interactions, and mental and physical emotions when dealing with hardship.

We identified five themes in the data: 1) Physical and mental challenges: Wow, that's steep, 2) Impatience: I got irritated, 3) Meaningless: What am I doing? 4) Exhaustion: This is my shelter, and 5) Emotions: After all this emotional roller coaster. The last two themes are about reviewing and are related to students' pride or elation and solidarity when they got home, and we call them: 1) Elation: I fucking made it and 2) Solidarity: Incredibly proud of the whole group.

What creates these challenges are primarily uncertainty, nature and deliberate slowness, but the pausing – to stop and wonder – sharpens the attention and lays the foundation for thoughtful conversation and dialogue. What makes this experience visible, both to the students themselves and to us as educators who are also in the role of researchers, is the reflective practice that was woven into the learning process in formal and informal ways. The conceptual frame of wild pedagogies could be beneficial for the authors to further develop the journey and use nature as a co-teacher and give the wild and extended role.

Evidence can be found in the students' writings that indicate that the journey brought them opportunities for meaningful learning that affects them personally and professionally. Structured reflective practice was an important part of the process, where students had the opportunity to practice pausing and noticing and dealing with uncertainty and natural challenges.

Key words: Outdoor Education, Friluftsliv, Outdoor Recreation, Nature, Uncertainty, Reflection, Slowness.

Um höfunda

Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson (jakobf@hi.is) er aðjúnt og doktorsnemi við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands. Hann lauk B.Ed.-gráðu frá Kennaraháskóla Íslands árið 1993 og MA-prófi í náms- og kennslufræðum frá Háskóla Íslands árið 2011. Hann hefur unnið lengi við tólmstunda- og skólustarf, m.a. í félagsmiðstöðvum, við faglega stjórnun, í grunnskóla og verið virkur í ýmsum félagsamtökum. Helstu rannsóknarviðfangsefni hans eru á sviði útímenntunar, tólmstunda- og menntunarfræða, þróunar kennsluhátta í háskóla og formgerða náms. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0172-0881>

Hervör Alma Árnadóttir (hervora@hi.is) er dósent við Félagsráðgjafardeild HÍ og doktorsnemi við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands. Hún starfaði um árabíl sem félagsráðgjafi með unglingum og var m.a. leiðbeinandi í félagslegu úrræði fyrir unglinga þar sem aðferðum náttúruferðar var beitt. Helstu rannsóknarviðfangsefni hennar eru á sviði bernskufræða, þátttöku og réttinda barna og náttúrunálgana í vinnu með hópum.

Karen Rut Gísladóttir (karenrut@hi.is) er prófessor í kennslufræði á Menntavísindasviði Háskóla Íslands. Hún lauk BA-prófi í íslensku með táknmál sem aukagrein árið 1998, prófi í uppeldis- og kennslufræðum árið 2000, M.Paed. í íslensku og kennslufræði árið 2001, meistaraþrófi í læsisfræðum frá Wisconsin-háskóla í Bandaríkjunum 2005 og doktorsþrófi frá Háskóla Íslands árið 2011. Rannsóknir hennar beinast að félagsmenningarlegum skilningi á tungumáli og læsi, fjölmeningu og þróun kennara í starfi. Rannsóknaraðferðir eru starfendarannsóknir, starfstengd sjálfsrýni og eigindlegar aðferðir.

Ólafur Páll Jónsson (opj@hi.is) er prófessor í heimspeki við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands. Auk greina um heimspeki menntunar, stjórn málaheimspeki, náttúruheimspeki, réttarheimspeki, fornaldarheimspeki og gagnrýna hugsun hefur hann gefið út nokkrar bækur, m.a. Lýðræði, réttlæti og menntun (2011), barnabókina Fjár sjóðsleit í Granada (2014) og bókina Annáll um líf í annasömum heimi (2020). ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2782-1306>

About the authors

Jakob Frímanna Þorsteinsson (jakobf@hi.is) is an adjunct lecturer and doctoral student at the School of Education, University of Iceland. He received a B.Ed. degree from the Iceland College of Education in 1993, and a master's degree in curriculum studies and pedagogy from the University of Iceland in 2011. He has worked extensively in schools and leisure centres, for example in youth clubs, and worked with professional leadership in compulsory schools, as well as actively participating in various social and civil work. His research interests include outdoor education, leisure studies and pedagogy, the development of teaching methods at tertiary level, and the structure of education. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0172-0881>

Hervör Alma Árnadóttir (hervora@hi.is) is an associate professor at the faculty of Social Work, University of Iceland and a doctoral student at School of Education. She has worked for and been responsible for outdoor therapy and group work with youth. She teaches about participation, community work and group dynamics. Her main research topics are in the field of childhood studies, children's participation and rights, and natural approaches in working with groups.

Karen Rut Gísladóttir (karenrut@hi.is) is a professor at the School of Education, University of Iceland. Her research interests are in sociocultural understanding of language and literacy teaching and learning, multicultural education and teachers' professional development. She completed her BA in Icelandic with a minor in Sign Language Studies in 1998 and a postgraduate teaching certificate diploma in 2000, M.Paed. in Icelandic and pedagogy in 2001, MS in literacy studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2005, and a PhD in educational studies with a special focus on literacy education from the University of Iceland in 2011. Her research methodology is teacher research, self-study and qualitative research methods.

Ólafur Páll Jónsson (opj@hi.is) is a professor of philosophy at the School of Education, University of Iceland. His published works include papers and books on the philosophy of education, political philosophy, philosophy of nature, legal philosophy and critical thinking. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2782-1306>

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Paper IV

Paper IV



How 'outdoors time' transforms the social relationships of children in Iceland

Jakob Frimann Thorsteinsson¹ · Ársaell Arnarsson² · Jón Torfi Jónasson²

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between the time children spend outdoors with critical social and health factors. We use questionnaire data from the 2017–2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study in Iceland, focused on children in the 6th, 8th, and 10th grades. All Icelandic schools with pupils in these classes were invited to participate. The HBSC study is based on a research collaboration dating back to 1983 and is in cooperation with the WHO Regional Office for Europe (Inchley et al., 2020). Every four years the study is conducted in more than 50 countries and regions across Europe and North America. Data is collected on children's health and well-being, social environments and health behaviours. The purpose of this paper is to better understand the social and health factors that impact children in Iceland, paying attention to the diversity of this social group, and how these factors relate to their outdoor behaviour. Our analysis focuses on children's time spent outdoors on weekdays in relation to their parents, general health, leisure, and friendship. The findings reveal a complex picture of children's outdoor lives. The results show that a great majority of children spend time outside mostly with friends and that children with poor relationships with other children spend considerably less time outside. Children's outdoor lives emerge as a social activity that strongly relates to physical and mental health. Interventions to increase time spent outside might focus on this social dimension rather than simply on the extent of outside time.

Keywords Time spent outdoors · Health and leisure · Friendship · Outdoor education · Outdoor recreations

✉ Jakob Frimann Thorsteinsson
jakobf@hi.is

¹ Adjunct in Leisure Studies at School of Education, University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland

² School of Education, University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland

Introduction

In this paper we explore the social and health factors that influence the time children spend outside during a weekday, both during school-hours as well as in their leisure time after school. A broad range of positive effects have been associated with spending more time outdoors, such as improved physical and mental health (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2002; Kuo et al., 2018) as well as an opportunity of deeper connections with nature and the local environment/neighbourhoods (Chawla, 2007). And yet several international studies suggest that the time children spend outdoors and what they do when outdoors, is changing and not for the better. Studying the status of children's outdoor life in the UK more than a decade ago, Mannion, et al. (2007) reported that "the picture emerging about children and young people's experience of and in outdoor and natural environments is concerning" (p. 14). If anything, this concern has deepened. Children are spending more time indoors, on their digital devices, and this development has raised awareness of the implications of reduced outdoor activity, including decreased mental and physical health (Coon et al., 2011; Gopinath et al., 2012). Little is known, however, about how much time contemporary Icelandic youth spend outdoors and factors that influence their outdoor activities.

The study reported on in this paper aimed to generate a better understanding of the social and health factors that impact children in Iceland as a diverse social group, and how these factors could influence their outdoor behaviour. The findings offer important insights for those working with children and concerned with issues of inclusion by raising awareness about those who are socially excluded and therefore have less access to the benefits of being outdoors.

Benefits of being outdoors

This section will clarify some advantages of being outdoors according to the literature. We look at the time that children spend outside, the value it confers, and why it is changing. Special emphasis is placed on social relationships and outdoor experiences, and we conclude the review by summarizing the main threads and highlight important questions that are discussed in the paper.

Spending time outdoors in nature and participating in activities in the natural environment can have a considerable positive impact on well-being and facilitate holistic and healthy development in both adults and children (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2002; Kuo et al., 2018), such as lower stress levels (Thompson et al., 2012), improved cognitive development of young children (Ulset et al., 2017), reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety (Beyer et al., 2014), and there is significant evidence of an inverse relationship between children's and adolescents' greenspace exposure and emotional and behavioural problems (Vanaken & Danckaerts, 2018). Studies have also shown that outdoor activities can improve physical health and lead to fewer physical ailments, and the acceleration of recovery time following illness (Maller et al., 2006; Sallis et al., 2000). What is more, the experience of the outdoors can also shape children's attitudes toward ecological conservation (Chawla, 2007; Lekies et al., 2015) and support their academic achievements (Kuo et al., 2018).

Specifically for Iceland, a recent randomized controlled study (Olafsdottir et al., 2020) looked at how recreational exposure to the natural environment impacted mood and psychophysiological responses to stress. This study found that walking in nature resulted in lower cortisol levels when compared with nature viewing, and that walking in nature also improved mood more than watching nature scenes on TV or physical exercise alone.

Time spent outdoors and why it is changing

Despite the aforementioned benefits children are spending an increasing amount of time indoors. Outdoor experiences are also changing; they are more managed, supervised, and commercialized (e.g., Gill, 2007; Louv, 2005) and in Iceland preventive measures have consciously been put into place to limit unstructured and unmonitored outside hours in leisure time (Child Protection Act, No. 80, 2002; Kristjansson et al., 2020). This trend goes back a number of decades. Between 1981 and 2002, children's play decreased by 25% in the USA, with a 50% decline in outdoor activities such as hiking and travelling in the outdoors (Hofferth, 2009). The current generation of children also plays outside less frequently and for shorter duration than their parent's generation did (Bassett et al., 2015; Sahlberg & Doyle, 2019; Veitch et al., 2006). A longitudinal study conducted by Cleland et al. (2010) of children aged 5–6 and 10–12 revealed that time spent outdoors declined significantly among both age groups of boys and the older group of girls. Studies also show differences in time spent outdoors among different racial and ethnic groups. For example, African American children spending not as much time outdoors as Hispanic or white children (Larson et al., 2019) and minority groups not participating as often in outdoor recreation activities in national forests as white users (Parker & Green, 2016).

Academic discourses concerned with children's outdoor lives often focus on nature, play, and recently also children's use of screens. Researchers and practitioners (e.g., Foster & Linney, 2007; Larson et al., 2019; Rideout et al., 2010) have lamented that children spend more time indoors, particularly due to the rise of entertainment and communications media and the use of screens instead of being outdoors. Louv (2005) has claimed, "Our society is teaching young people to avoid direct experience in nature," highlighting how this "lesson is delivered in schools, families, [...] and codified into the legal and regulatory structure of many of our communities" (p. 2). Larson et al. (2011) pointed out that the most common reason for children not spending time outside was their interest in other activities such as listening to music or reading, watching TV, DVDs, or playing video games and using electronic media. The rapid increase in electronic media has been recognized as a significant contributor to the decline in nature-based outdoor time for young people (Loebach et al., 2021). Excessive screen time during adolescence has been linked to decreased time spent outdoors and a weaker connection to nature (Larson et al., 2019). Additionally, recreational computer use has been negatively associated with children's outdoor time after school (Wilkie et al., 2018). According to Larson et al. (2011) less common reasons, but still important, were participation in indoor sports, limited access

to outdoor recreation locations, lack of transportation and safety concerns. Other reasons for children not being outside included weather-related issues and a lack of time because of homework or school/other commitments. Related research by Cleland et al. (2010) examined the patterns that predict children's time outdoors via a five-year longitudinal study. Their findings indicated that individual indoor and outdoor tendencies and social factors such as social opportunities, parental encouragement, and parental supervision predicted children's time outdoors. Restrictions due to COVID-19 have most likely influenced how much time people of all ages spent outside, what they did and the social interactions between them. Restrictions in Iceland during COVID-19 took notice of the broad positive health benefits of being outside and allowed people to enjoy outdoor recreation but encourage people to keep physical distancing.

Social relationships and outdoor experiences

In a literature review Kuo et al. (2018) sought to answer the question of whether experiences with nature promoted learning. One of their key findings was that "natural settings seem to foster warmer, more cooperative relations between people" (p. 5). These settings have also been shown to give children more freedom to connect with one another and form ties that would typically not be the case in the traditional classroom (Maynard et al., 2013). Indeed, "research suggests that outdoor activities enable people to engage physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually with other people within outdoor environments" (Carpenter & Harper, 2015, p. 59).

Learning in greener settings has been shown to facilitate the development of meaningful and trusting friendships between peers, bridging both socio-cultural differences and interpersonal barriers (Chawla et al., 2014; Warber et al., 2015; White, 2012). This can affect how the group functions indoors in the classroom (White, 2012; Murphy, 2004) refers to a "socio-ecological approach to health" which acknowledges the complex interactions between people and their physical and social environments, and the effects that "infrastructure and systems can exert on these interactions, particularly with respect to social and health outcomes" (p. 165).

Fraser (2004) simplifies Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological model and highlights key outdoor activities and protective factors for overall health. The domains are individual context, community and natural environmental context and social context that includes significant others, family, or friends. Regardless of whether we refer to organized or guided outdoor activities or free play, these experiences all involve relational factors, both social and ecological. School playtime has been connected with children's opportunity to develop friendships which are in turn relevant to their well-being and sense of social identity (Gibson et al., 2011; Cleland et al., 2010) have shown that younger boys who have had more social opportunities, such as playing outside with friends, siblings or pets, spent significantly greater time outdoors than those who did not have these opportunities.

In summary, research clearly indicates that spending time outdoor, especially in nature, has many positive impacts on a broad a spectrum of well-being. Research, cited above, has also shown that children are spending less time outside than before. This change is complex and manifests differently for different groups and the factors driving it are diverse, e.g., increased indoor activities and facilities, technological- and social changes, young people's social relationships and new hobbies. The purpose of this paper is to better understand the social and health factors that impact children in Iceland, paying attention to the diversity of this social group, and how these factors relate to their outdoor behaviour. We do this by asking questions about how much time children in grades 6, 8 and 10 spent outside on weekdays and weekends and with whom they were. The HBCS data gives us unique opportunity to analyse this outdoor behaviour with a broad spectrum of social and health-related issues and discern patterns that can enhance our understanding of this development and perhaps suggest relevant interventions.

Method

Participants

The study was based on self-reported data extracted from the Icelandic part of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study (Inchley et al., 2020), a World Health Organization collaborative cross-national survey, which was conducted in 2018 by the Educational Research Institute in Iceland. All pupils in schools with grades 6, 8 and 10 (ages 12, 14 and 16) in Iceland were invited to participate and answer standardized questionnaires, between January and May 2018. Not all schools in Iceland took part, but the responses received were evenly distributed around the country and covered a wide range of schools. Of around 13,200 children in all schools in Iceland, 6,717 children answered the questions on outdoor life, yielding a response of 51% of the Icelandic cohort. Answers from 3,369 girls (50.2%) and 3,348 boys (49.8%) were analysed. A similar number of children answered in each grade, with an equal distribution of gender and habitation.

Procedure and materials

The 2017–2018 Icelandic online questionnaire contained four questions about children's outdoor life; three of which are analysed in the current paper. We aimed to ask simple questions about how much time children spent outside. The questions were: (1) When you recall the last two weekdays, how much time did you spend outside? (Yesterday and Two days ago), (2) When you recall last weekend, how much time did you spend outside? (Saturday and Sunday), (3) When I am outside, I am mostly with ... (It was possible to mark one to three items on a list of the seven options: On my own - With parents - With someone else from our family (siblings, grandparents, etc.) - With friends - With a sport club, scouts or other association - With my dog - I spent little time outside).

Independent and background variables

In our analysis of the time the children who responded spent outside, we primarily focused on children's outdoor time during weekdays, which in the context of this survey were likely school days. Gender and age were tested as effect modifiers because previous work has suggested that there is a difference between males and females regarding their active hours outside (Klinker et al., 2014). We examined the following variables: parents' financial status, country of birth, children and parents' relationship, general health, physical exercise, participation in sport and leisure, loneliness, sadness and anxiety, friendship, social media and bullying.

Statistical analysis

We used IBM SPSS statistics software in the descriptive analyses, using correlation to profile the full samples and cross tables. Many of the variables analysed used Likert-type questions, and sometimes, these were combined to construct Likert scales. Given the large number of data points, we used Pearson correlation (Boone & Boone, 2012) but ensured that Spearman's rho or Kendall's tau would also reach the same significance level (Murray, 2013), as it is debatable which is the most appropriate test to analyse this type of data (Carifio & Perla, 2008; Sullivan & Artino, 2013). To obtain a better grasp of the distributions, we present some of the data using the violin plots (Hintze and Nelson, 1998) to describe the connection between time spent outdoors and relationships with friends. Violin plots are good for presenting density (the width of the violin plot signifies higher density) and compare groups (Marmolejo-Ramos & Matsunaga, 2009). Given the high number of data points, we observe that the relations may be evident and highly significant, even though the correlation coefficients are not high.

The Icelandic HBSC study has been formally approved and fulfils ethical standards. The data were collected anonymously, and the data collection was reported to the Icelandic Data Protection Authority (No. S6463).

Findings and discussion

Our aim was to provide a better understanding of children as a diverse group with varying interests, feelings and participatory activities and explore how these might relate to their outdoor behaviour. Even if we sometimes might speculate about causal relationships, we emphasize that all we currently have are the simple correlations between variables. Nevertheless, we are sure that the factors we have identified are of importance and the discussion raises awareness about their significance and calls specifically for more research that will help us to appreciate and enhance the children's outdoor life. The HBSC questionnaire covered a broad spectrum of social and health-related issues. In this paper we categorised factors related to Icelandic youths' outdoor behaviour under four headings: *general information, parents, health and leisure, and friendship*.

General information

On average, 20% of children reported being outside 30 min or less on weekdays as the three columns to the far left in Fig. 1 shows. Of those who spend less than 30 min outdoors on weekdays close to half, or 8.9% of the overall total, of children in grades 6, 8 and 10 report not being outside at all. Time spent outside on weekdays is similar in grades 6, 8 and 10 (see Fig. 1).

The HBSC data, from the 2013/2014 study in Canada (Piccininni et al., 2018) showed exactly the same percentage of children reporting spending all of their time indoors: “A small portion (8.9%) of participants reported no outdoor play” (p. 107). Although the percentage is the same in both countries it is important to keep in mind that the Canadian study looks at outdoors after-school play and thus has a narrower focus than the Icelandic study which examines outdoor activities over a whole day. However, we disagree with our Canadian colleagues in seeing this as “a small portion” (p. 179). On the contrary, we think this figure is high, considering the wealth of research on the positive aspects of spending time outside. Given the various benefits of spending time outside we reported earlier in the paper (Kuo et al., 2018; Vanaken & Danckaerts, 2018) this number is of serious concern.

The picture of children’s outdoor life is significantly more complex than these categories indicate. We report and discuss three issues related to time spent outdoors, *parents, health and leisure, and friendship*.

Parents’ financial status, country of birth and connections

In Table 1, we describe the relationship between being outdoors on weekdays with three variables that indicate the financial status of the children’s parents, the closeness of the connection the children had with their parents and parent’s country of birth.

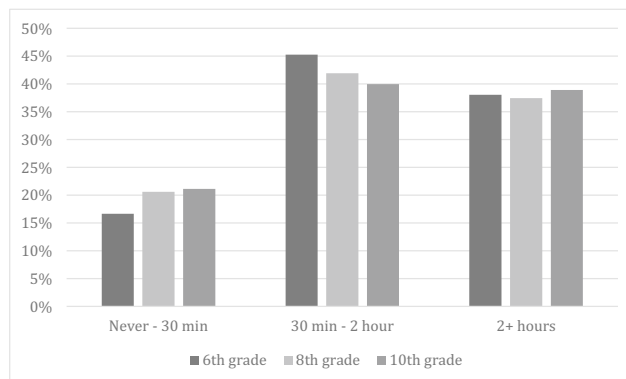
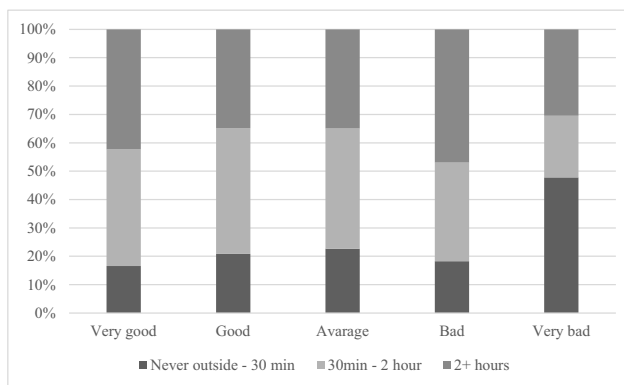


Fig. 1 Time children in grades 6, 8 and 10 spent outdoors on weekdays

Table 1 Correlation matrix between parents related variables and time children spend outside on weekdays

Question	Correlation: Pearson r Being outdoors on weekdays
How well off do you think your family is?	0.080**
Young adolescents perceived connection with their parents - composite variable	0.085**
One or both parents born in Iceland vs. abroad - composite variable	-0.030*

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Fig. 2** Children's time spent outside and five categories showing how well off they think their family is

The relationship between being outdoors and the three variables shows that some parts of the family environment is important but being of Icelandic descent is only marginally so. The financial aspect is highlighted in Fig. 2.

Figure 2 reveals different outdoor profiles between the group of children that thinks their family does *very badly financially* ($n=23$) and the other groups. There is an alarming rate of 48% report being outside for 30 min or less.

Our parents have without a doubt, a major influence in most aspects of our lives, also apparently on the time children spent outside. This finding is in line with Cleland et al. (2010) findings that parental encouragement and parental supervision predicted children's time outdoors. That, on the other hand, does not seem to be the case with respect to children's relationships with school (mainly with teachers). We find it worrying that close to half of the group of children that spend no time or less than 30 min outside on weekdays, think their parent's financial status is very bad. While this group is a small sample, we are compelled to find out more about the situation. Especially if they likely not to enjoy the benefits of being outdoors that Kuo, Barnes and Jordan (2019) and many other researchers have addressed (e.g. Kuo et al., 2018; Lekies et al., 2015; Ulset et al., 2017; Vanaken & Danckaerts,

2018). Schools and organized leisure activities have, among other things, the role of contributing to social equity. It is certainly worth probing if this group would benefit from encouragement or some strategic effort that might draw them outside. Expenses, such as for warm clothes or equipment, should not exclude children from outdoor recreation, outdoor learning, going to camps, or participating in whatever activity that takes children outdoors. A parent's country of birth is not a strong factor in how much time children spend outdoors but needs to be considered. Porsteinson (2018) showed in a study on children attending an outdoor camp in Iceland, that children of foreign origin were less likely to participate than those of Icelandic descent. The study emphasized that cost and cultural barriers must not prevent students from having the opportunity to participate in such an experience.

Health and leisure

In Table 2, variables are presented that have something to do with health and activities such as general health, exercise, leisure activities, loneliness, sadness, and nervousness.

The top item shows a clear relationship with physical health. This relationship is further clarified in Fig. 3, where the pattern indicates a linear relationship between

Table 2 Correlation (Pearson r) between chosen health variables and time children spend outside on weekdays

Question	Correlation: Pearson r Being outdoors on weekdays
Would you say your health is good?	0.158**
Over the past 7 days, on how many days were you physically active for a total of at least 60 min per day?	0.290**
In your leisure time, do you do any of these organized activities? Organized activities refer to those activities that are done in a sport or another club or organization. <i>Organized team sports (e.g. football, handball, basketball)</i>	0.164**
In your leisure time, do you do any of these organized activities? Organized activities refer to those activities that are done in a sport or another club or organization. <i>Organized individual sports (e.g. skiing, swimming, badminton, gymnastic, golf, horse-riding, martial arts)</i>	0.093**
In your leisure time, do you do any of these organized activities? Organized activities refer to those activities that are done in a sport or another club or organization. <i>Youth centres or after-school clubs</i>	0.094**
In the last 6 months: how often have you had the following...? <i>Feeling low</i>	-0.086**
In the last 6 months: how often have you had the following...? <i>Feeling nervous</i>	-0.060**
Do you ever feel lonely?	-0.107**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

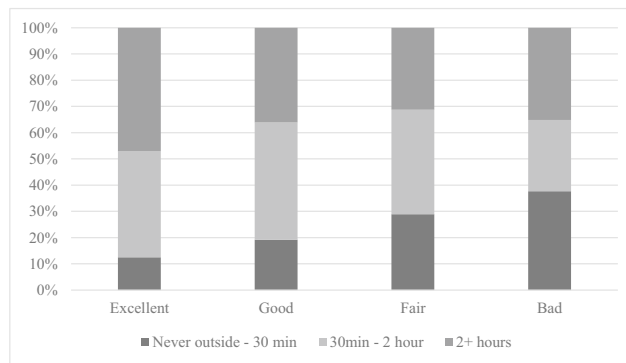


Fig. 3 Children's time spent outside and estimation of general health

regularity in the relationship between going outside and their general health. It also implies that physical activity is involved; specifically, the relationship to specific group sports activities is clear, even though it does not tell the whole story. There is a positive correlation between time spent outside on weekdays and leisure activities such as involvement in youth centres and club activities. Psychological health variables such as feeling low and lonely shows a negative correlation with time spent outside and as does being nervous, though it is less robust.

Our findings of the relationship between time spent outdoors and health are well in line with prior research (see e.g., Beyer et al., 2014; Kaplan & Kaplan, 2002; Kuo et al., 2018; Maller et al., 2006; Sallis et al., 2000; Thompson et al., 2012). In our research, we identify a strong relationship between time spent outdoors and with general health ($r=0,158$, $p<0.01$), daily exercise ($r=0,290$, $p<0.01$), and group sports ($r=0.164$, $p<0.01$). There is a similar relationship between individual sports ($r=0.093$, $p<0.01$) and involvement in youth centres activities ($r=0.094$, $p<0.01$) that could indicate that being active is important (and not just the physical part). Our finding indicates that there is a negative correlation between time spent outside on weekdays and loneliness ($r=0.107$, $p<0.01$), feeling low ($r=0.086$, $p<0.01$), and being nervous ($r=0.06$, $p<0.01$). This finding is important in light of self-reported symptoms of anxiety, sadness and depressed moods, which have increased significantly over time among Icelandic adolescents (Arnarsson, 2019; Ólafsdóttir et al., 2018). This robust relationship between being outdoors and the various health and leisure variables, which is also in line with previous international research, calls for a further exploration of what ingredients of the outdoor experience give rise to the harmony observed.

Friendship

We asked the children who they were with when they were outside. They could choose between the following answers: *with parents, someone else from the family, friends, clubs, dog or on their own*. In Fig. 4 we see how the answers are distributed by gender. For anecdotal reasons, gender difference might be expected, but the figure indicates that this does not transpire.

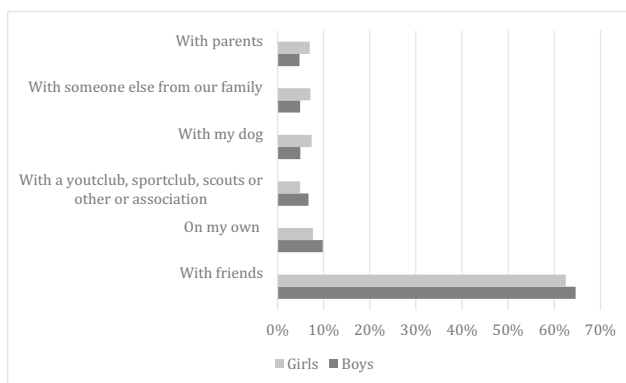


Fig. 4 Who children say they are with when they are outside, by gender

A majority, or 63%, of children report being outside with their friends, roughly equal for both girls and boys. It was perhaps expected that being outside with friends would be the overwhelming responses, but interestingly, all the alternatives indicated how many other reasons are significant for being outdoors. In Table 3, there are seven variables that we link to positive or negative relationships between children.

How often children meet friends after school, and how many friends they have has a strong positive correlation with time spent outside on weekdays. Figure 5 further clarifies this, where the pattern indicates a linear relationship between how often you meet your friends after school and how much you are outside on weekdays. Close to 40% of the group of children that rarely meet their friends after school are never outside, compared to 14% of the group that meets their friends almost daily or more.

Table 3 Correlation matrix between chosen friendship variables and time children spend outside on weekdays

Question	Correlation: Pearson r Being outdoors on weekdays
How often do you meet your friends after school (excluding communication online or by phone)?	0.245**
How many friends do you have now? (born in Iceland or abroad) - composite variable	0.178**
Adolescents perceived connection with their friends - composite variable	0.109**
How often do you have online contact <i>with friends from a larger group</i> ?	0.160**
How often have you taken part in bullying another student in school in the last few months?	-0.034**
How often have you been bullied in school in the last few months?	-0.01

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

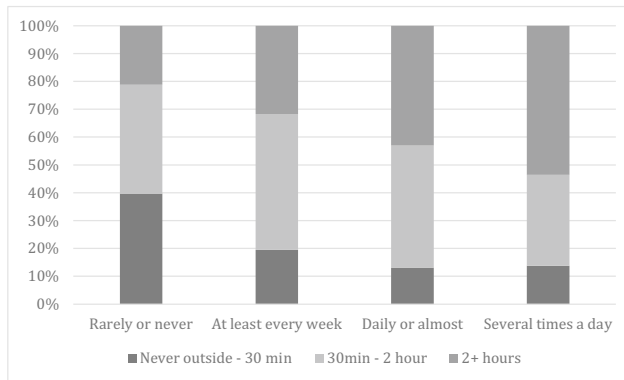


Fig. 5 How often do you meet your friends after school and how much you are outside on weekdays?

There was no question covering how much time children spent on screens or online, but one question identified children that tried over the last year to spend less time on social media, without succeeding. This question was designed to identify those who have problems with social media and can be an indicator of high screen time. There was no indication of a significant relationship between time spent on social media and time spent outdoors.

Relationships with others seem to play an important role in how much time children spend outside on weekdays. We therefore took a closer look at the variables indicating different types of relationships using violin plots to display the data. Such plots simultaneously show the typical box-plot data (based on the time spent outdoors) and the detailed density of the data along the same axis. This method of showing the data allows a visual inspection of the details of the distributions for each variable shown. The data pool enables inspection of three categories of relationships: With parents, school (mostly teachers) and friends. The strongest relationship to time spent outside is the one referring to friends and is clear significant both for boys ($r=0.176$, $p<0.01$) and girls ($r=0.107$, $p<0.01$). If a boy's relationship with other boys was very good, they spent more time outside. Figure 6 represents the findings using a violin plot for boys and girls, each representing bad, good and very good relationships with friends, as well as the deviation from the weekly average time outdoors shown on the vertical axis in all cases. The difference in the forms is especially pronounced for boys where the means visibly increases as the friendship category improve.

The average weekly time outside is the 0 line in the figure (the mean weekly time spent outside for boys was 16.2 h and for girls it was 14.6 h) and the thick lines in the boxes in the "violins" are the median values. The bulbs show the data density at each value for the deviation from the mean time spent outside.

Deviation for the children with a very good relationship with other children is towards more time outside, and the deviation of the group with bad relationships is towards less time outside. The mean differences are also well reflected in the different distributions with the pronounced low bulb for the boys furthest to the left.

When we turn the focus to troubled relationships, like bullying, the picture is not as clear. How often have you *been bullied* in school in the last few months has

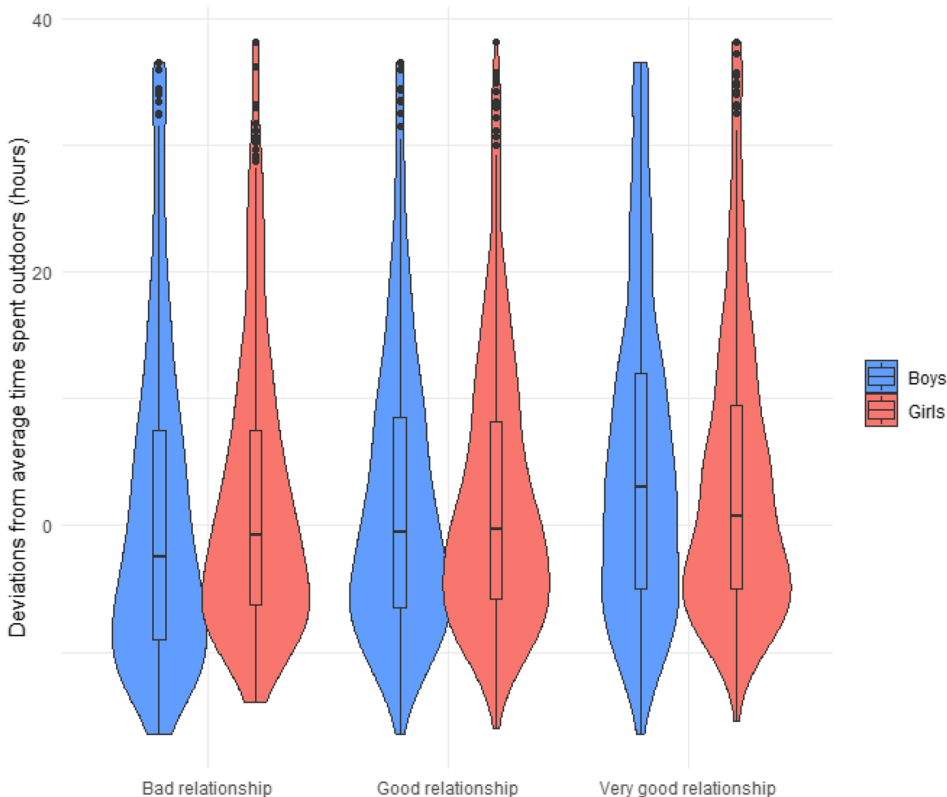


Fig. 6 Violin plot for boys (left) and girls (right) representing bad, good and very good relationships with friends, and deviation from weekly average time outdoors

no significant correlation with how much time children spend outside ($r=0.01$). But there is a significant negative correlation between how often you have *taken part in bullying* another student in school in the last few months and time spent outside ($r = -0.034$, $p < 0.01$). Figure 7 illustrates incremental increases of fewer than 30 min spent outside with more bully behaviour. Close to half (46%) of the group of children that bully a few times a week ($n=37$) are outside less than 30 min during the weekdays.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of children report being outside with their friends, with no noticeable gender differences (see Fig. 4). This finding led us to investigate further the relationship between children and time spent outside, from a different perspective. We identified significant correlation between how *often you meet your friends after school* ($r=0.245$, $p < 0.01$) and *how many friends you have* ($r=0.178$, $p < 0.01$) with *time spent outside on weekdays*. Figure 5 shows close to 40% of the group of children that rarely meet friends after school are never outside. This finding can be compared to 14% of the group that meets their friends almost daily or more. The factor that shows the strongest relationship to time spent outside is the one concerning friends, especially for boys. This may be inferred from the violin plot in Fig. 6.

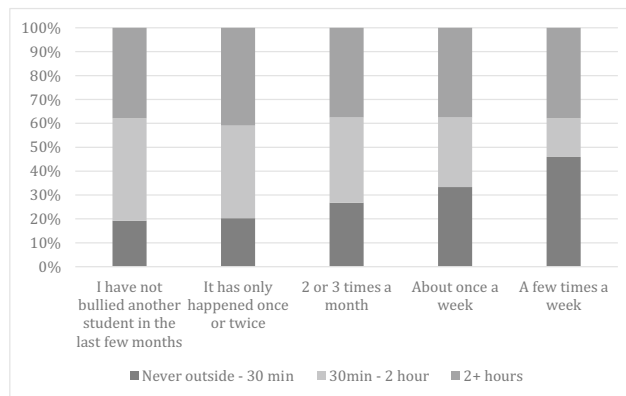


Fig. 7 How often you have taken part in bullying another student in school in the last few months and time spent outside?

In modern times, online relationships matter. A variable that is an indicator of children’s social networks showed that children who *often-contacted online friends* were significantly more outside on weekdays ($r=0.160$, $p<0,01$). Answers to the question that was designed to identify those who have problems with social media (“Have you tried to spend less time on social media in the last year without success?”) could not be shown to relate to time spent outside on weekdays. Larson et al. (2011) and Larson et al. (2019) noted that the most common reasons for children not spending time outside was, among other things, their general interest in using electronic media. With social media becoming even more mobile and not hindering going out, it may even support outdoor behaviour, especially if one has a robust social network.

Our analysis sheds light on a social relationship as being a factor that seems to play an influential role in how much time children spend outside. This finding has not been widely reported in research, but we found it is in line with findings by Cleland et al. (2010), namely, that boys who have social opportunities to go outdoors with someone may spend more time outdoors. Children with no friends, or who are socially isolated, have no one to accompany them outside to their parents’ dismay. A recent study in Iceland based on interviews with parents about the outdoor life of the family (Sigurjónsdóttir, 2020) concludes that “the social factor is more important than the conditions for outdoor life in the local area” (p. 8). As a result, it is possible to argue that time spent outside has a meaningful social impact. This finding is in line with Carpenter and Harper’s (2015, p. 59) writings about the “health and well-being benefits of activities in the outdoors”. Fraser’s (2004) model of socio-ecological health and well-being domains highlights the social context of activities in the outdoors. From an educational standpoint this reflects in Wattchow et al. (2016) writings that advocates for adapting a socio-ecological philosophy and practice to education. The emphasis is on approaches rooted in the contexts of our community involving personal and social dimensions.

Could it be characteristic for many of the children who choose to spend time *indoors* that their relationships with others are limited or even broken and

problematic? When looking at children who reported being bullied, we thought we would find that the group tended not to be outdoors. That was not the case but, interestingly, we found a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.034$, $p < 0.01$) between time spent outside and *having taken part in bullying* another child in school. Figure 7 illustrates an incremental increase and that 46% of the group of children that bully others a few times a week ($n=37$) spend less than 30 min outside on weekdays. We do not know *why* this is, but this should be studied further because research shows many other adverse effects on those who bully, e.g., substance use, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts (Gower & Borowsky, 2013). Bullies have more depression and anxiety (Weng et al., 2017). This is troubling, because greener settings are tied to the development of meaningful and trusting friendships between peers (Chawla et al., 2014; Warber et al., 2015; White, 2012). Moreover, learning in greener settings has been regularly linked to the bridging of both socio-cultural differences and interpersonal barriers (Cooley et al., 2014; Warber et al., 2015). Playing outdoors is a good training ground for peer-to-peer relationships and serves to prevent bullying perpetration.

Conclusion

Children in Iceland devote on average significant time outside, but the nature of children's outdoor life is complex. We identify that on average 20% of children reported in 2017–2018 being outside for 30 min or less on weekdays and close to half of that group (8.9%) reports being not outside at all during the whole day. These are high numbers. The parental factor is clearly influential and children's health and active behaviour in leisure life are variables associated with outdoor life. Marginal groups are of interest to us. We find it worrying that close to half of the group of children that estimate their parent's financial status is very bad spend no time or less than 30 min outside on weekdays. This group is small in Iceland, but we are compelled to learn more about the situation here.

We clearly identify a significant relationship between time spent outdoors and general health. A similar relationship is between individual sports and involvement in youth centres and club activities and that could indicate that being active is important and not just the physical part. After analysing three categories of relationships (with parents, teachers, and friends) the strongest association to time spent outdoors is the one referring to friends, and this aspect applies more frequently to boys. Close to 40% of the group of children that rarely meet their friends after school are never outside, compared to 14% of the group that meets their friends almost daily or more. Having a strong social network on social media is associated with outdoor behaviour. The results indicate that children's relationships with other children, their social connections, should be better recognized.

We interpret the results as supporting the view that children's outdoor life should be viewed as a social activity and as a relationship with other children as it fosters relationships with the environment. This finding is in line with the view that natural settings appear to foster more cooperative and warmer relations between people, and our findings indicate that friendship is related to how much time children spend

outdoors. Time spent outdoors has, therefore, the potential to *transform the social relationships of children* and act as a training ground for peer-to-peer relationship. This finding possibly also highlights the opposite, that those children that have weaker social connections spend less time outdoors. From this perspective, intervention to increase the time children spend outside might, therefore, focus on children as a group, or a part of a group, and encourage them to go out to play and socialize. Sometimes the message from the society is the other way around and the aim is to decrease the number of unstructured and unmonitored leisure time hours outside as a prevention (Child Protection Act, No. 80, 2002; Kristjansson et al., 2020). Groups of children outside are seen as indicating an “undesirable group formation” or even “bad company”. Larson et al. (2011) suggested ways to encourage more teenagers to spend time outside with outdoor activity settings that promote peer interaction and social networking. To play outside can be seen as a training ground for formation of peer-to-peer relationship and heavy constraints from parents and society could possibly hinder positive social development.

This study throws a light on the pre-COVID situation and offers a platform for a further study when a new data set is available post-COVID. A more thorough investigation of where children go outside, what they are doing there, and their relationship with their peers, is needed. Thus, we conclude by calling for a much better understanding of the complex social aspect of the outdoors experience. In particular, we need to know more about what children are doing, what is the essence of their outdoor experience, in which company they spend their time, and how this company develops and indeed much more, from several perspectives, about where and how they spend their precious time.

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Data Availability The data is available from the authors.

Declarations

Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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Jakob Frimann Thorsteinsson is an adjunct in Leisure Studies and PhD student at the School of Education. He completed a B.Ed. degree in Teaching in 1993 and a MA in Teaching and Learning Studies with an emphasis on Outdoor Education in 2011. His research is in the field of outdoor education, outdoor recreation and leisure pedagogy (corresponding author).

Ársæll Arnarsson is a professor of leisure studies at the University of Iceland School of Education. He completed a BA degree in psychology in 1993, an MSc degree in Health Sciences in 1997 and a PhD in Biomedical Sciences in 2009 from the University of Iceland. For the past decade, his research has focused on the health and well-being of adolescents.

Jón Torfi Jónasson is a professor emeritus of the School of Education, University of Iceland. He has written on all levels of education in Iceland (i.e. pre-primary, compulsory, and upper secondary, with emphasis on both the vocational and academic sectors, on tertiary education and adult education). His emphasis has been on the development of the educational system, both in qualitative and quantitative terms, recently with increased focus on the future of education. See: <http://uni.hi.is/jtj/en/>.

Paper V

Paper V



Kynni unglinga af vinsælum ferðamannastöðum Frístundir, ferðalög og menntun

Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson, Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson og Jón Torfi Jónasson

► Abstract ► Um höfunda ► About the authors ► Heimildir

Ferðamennska og tómstundir hafa fengið æ meira vægi í daglegu lífi fólks síðustu áratugi í kjölfar vaxandi velmegunar og breytinga á vinnumarkaði. Aðgengi að ferðamennsku og margs konar tómstundum er ólíkt og fer meðal annars eftir efnahagslegri stöðu fólks. Hérlandis er lítið vitað um samspil félagslegrar stöðu, ferðamennsku og tómstundaiðkunar. Markmið þessarar greinar er að varpa ljósi á þátttöku unglinga í ferðamennsku m.t.t. félagslegra og efnahagslegra þátta og ræða í samhengi við ferðahegðun Íslendinga innanlands, félagslega ferðamennsku og menntun. Notuð eru gögn úr HBSC-rannsókninni Heilsa og lífskjör skólabarna frá árinu 2017–2018 þar sem 6717 börn og unglingar svöruðu spurningum varðandi útveru. Hér er gerð grein fyrir niðurstöðum spurninga um heimsóknir 12–15 ára barna og unglinga á þekktu áfangastaði á Íslandi. Niðurstöður benda til þess að eftir því sem börn eldast hafi þau komið á fleiri áfangastaði. Algengast er að svarendur segist hafa komið að Gullfossi, Geysi, á Þingvelli, í Heiðmörk og til Mývatns. Efnahagsleg staða, uppruni foreldra og búseta tengist heimsóknum á suma áfangastaði en þau áhrif eru ekki einhlít. Niðurstöður vekja upp spurningar um ólíka stöðu unglinga til að njóta ferðamennsku og tómstunda, um grundvöll fyrir frekari uppbyggingu félagslegrar ferðamennsku hérlandis og tengsl hennar við menntun og hlutverk skólakerfisins í því sambandi. Reifuð eru álitamál þessu tengd og vörðuð verðug rannsóknarefni á þessu sviði.

Efnisorð: Börn og unglingar, áfangastaðir, félagsleg ferðamennska, tómstundir, menntun

Inngangur

Ferðamennska (e. tourism) og tómstundir¹ (e. leisure) hafa á síðustu áratugum orðið miðlægur þáttur í hversdagslífi fólks hérlandis. Meiri frítími og aukin velmegun hafa aukið vægi tómstunda og gert þær að mikilvægum þætti í nútímasamfélögum sem skýrir stóran hluta útgjalda heimila (Hagstofa Íslands, 2018; Rose og Carr, 2018). Ferðalög eru orðin hversdagsleg hjá stórum hópi fólks og þykja sjálf-sagður hluti af lífi margra einstaklinga og fjölskyldna þeirra (Larsen, 2005; Larsen o.fl., 2006). Ein afleiðing þessa er að skilin milli ferðamennsku og tómstunda eru orðin óskýrari en áður (Lengkeek, 2001). Tómstundafræðin er gagnleg til að skilja betur gildi og mikilvægi tómstunda en hún greinir „tómstundir sem persónulegan og félagslegan farveg menntunar, menningar, velferðar, afþreyingar, uppeldis og lýðræðislegrar þátttöku einstaklinga“ (Ágústa Þorbergsdóttir, e.d.). Tómstundir byggja á frjálsu vali fólks, þar sem þátttakendur öðlast reynslu sem hefur áhrif á velferð og lífsgæði. Þannig ná tómstundir yfir vítt svið, t.d. daglega útivist í nærumhverfi fólks. Hefðbundin aðgreining tómstunda og ferðamennsku liggur í að ferðamennska vísar til ferðalaga fólks til áfangastaða sem liggja utan venjubundins umhverfis þess. Kerfi ferðabjónustu er jafnframt að stærstum hluta markaðsdrifið og

¹ Í þessari grein eru hugtökin tómstundir og frístundir samheiti sbr. skilgreiningu í orðabanka í tómstundafræði, sjá <https://idordabanki.arnastofnun.is/faersla/776554>

í meiri mæli en tómsundur (Britton, 1991). Stór hluti ferðamennsku er hins vegar einnig til kominn vegna tómsundaíðkunar og á almennt margt sameiginlegt með ofangreindri lýsingu á tómsundum þar sem fólk leitast eftir gefandi og þroskandi reynslu. Aðgreining þessara sviða er því ekki klippt og skorin og við nýtum okkur sjónarhorn ferðamála- og tómsundafræða í umfjöllun okkar.

Aðgengi fólks að ferðamennsku og tómsundum er augljóslega ójafnt. Efnahagsleg staða fólks hefur mikil áhrif á tíðni og gerð ferðalaga en aðrir þættir hafa einnig áhrif, svo sem heilsa, aldur og félagslegur bakgrunnur (McCabe, 2009). Í mörgum löndum er löng saga félagslegrar ferðabjónustu (e. social tourism) sem vísar til þess að leitast er við að jafna aðgang ólíkra samfélagsþópa að ferðamennsku með ýmiss konar stuðningi (McCabe, 2009; Minnaert o.fl., 2009, 2011). Ástæða þess er að ferðamennska er talin hafa jákvæð áhrif á einstaklinga og samfélög. Þau gæði sem einstaklingar fá út úr ferðalögum eru til að mynda hvíld og endurnæring, tækifæri til þekkingaröflunar og lærdóms, heilsuefning og aukin vellíðan auk þess að tilfinning fyrir félagslegri einangrun minnkar (Gunnþóra Ólafsdóttir, 2008; McCabe, 2009). Þetta kallast á við rannsóknir á útiveru en margvísleg jákvæð áhrif hafa verið tengd þeim tíma sem börn verja úti undir beru lofti. Þar má nefna bætt líkamlega og andlega heilsu (Kaplan og Kaplan, 2002; Kuo o.fl., 2019) og tækifæri til að öðlast dýpri tengsl við náttúru og nærumhverfi (Chawla, 2007). Rannsóknir hafa einnig sýnt að útivist, svo sem náttúrugöngur, veiti umtalsverðan ágóða í formi streitulosunar og auki andlega og líkamlega vellíðan (Gunnþóra Ólafsdóttir, 2008; Gunnþóra Ólafsdóttir o.fl., 2017, 2020). Þetta undirstrikar að ferðamennska og tómsundur eru mikilvægir þættir fyrir lýðheilsu og velferð einstaklinga og hópa.

Ferðahegðun og tómsundaíðkun landsmanna er enn sem komið er tiltölulega lítt rannsakað svið. Athygli hefur frekar verið beint að ferðamennsku erlendra ferðamanna hérlendis og þeim áhrifum sem hún hefur á náttúru, efnahag og menningu ásamt ferðalögum Íslendinga erlendis (Edward Huijbens og Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson, 2013; Kristín Loftsdóttir o.fl., 2021). Markmið þessarar greinar er að varpa ljósi á þátttöku barna í ferðamennsku innanlands m.t.t. félagslegra og efnahagslegra þátta og ræða í samhengi við ferðahegðun Íslendinga innanlands, félagslegra ferðamennsku og menntun. Niðurstöðurnar byggja á gögnum úr HBSC-rannsókninni Heilsa og lífskjör skólabarna frá árinu 2017–2018 þar sem 6717 börn og unglingar í 6., 8. og 10. bekk svöruðu spurningum um útiveru. Gerð er grein fyrir niðurstöðum spurningar um heimsóknir til tíu þekktra áfangastaða á Íslandi sem eru Landmannalaugar, Þingvellir, Hveravellir, Heiðmörk, Gullfoss, Geysir, Mývatn, Skaftafell, Þórsmörk og Jökulsárlón. Greint er eftir búsetu, mati svarenda á fjárhagslegri stöðu fjölskyldu sinnar og uppruna foreldra. Greinin vekur máls á álitamálum og spurningum um ferðamennsku og tómsundur barna í tengslum við félagslega stöðu þeirra og er sem slík fyrsta skrefið til að ná utan um og lýsa viðfangsefninu í íslensku samhengi.

Leitað er svara við eftirfarandi spurningum:

- Hvert er hlutfall og tíðni heimsókna 12–15 ára barna á tíu þekkta áfangastaði á Íslandi?
- Finnast tengsl þessara heimsókna við þrjá bakgrunnþætti, þ.e. búsetu, fjárhagslega stöðu fjölskyldunnar og uppruna foreldra?

Greinin er ætlað að vekja máls á samþættu sviði ferðamennsku, tómsunda og menntunar með von um að auka vitund um mikilvægi þess að börn og unglingar hafi tækifæri til að kynna landinu og athuga í því samhengi tiltekna þætti sem kunna að skipta máli.

Ferðahegðun fullorðinna og barna

Rannsóknir á ferðabjónustu hérlendis hafa að meirihluta beinst að ferðum erlendra ferðamanna og þeim áhrifum sem mikill fjöldi þeirra hefur á náttúru, efnahag og samfélag. Íslendingar sjálfir eru hins vegar líka mjög virkir ferðamenn, bæði þegar kemur að ferðalögum innanlands og erlendis. Í gögnum um ferðalög Íslendinga 2020 og ferðaáform 2021 kemur fram að tæp 86% svarenda ferðuðust innanlands á árinu 2020. 64% ferðuðust eingöngu innanlands árið 2020 og 12% svarenda ferðuðust ekki neitt það ár. Árið 2020 var mjög sérstakt ár í ferðabjónustunni vegna áhrifa kórónu-

veirufaraldursins. Sömu hlutföll fyrir árið 2019 voru 14% sem ferðuðust eingöngu innanlands og 6% sem ferðuðust ekkert það ár. Hlutfall þeirra sem ferðast innanlands hefur lækkað frá árinu 2010 en haldist stöðugt í kringum 85% frá árinu 2015 (Ferðamálastofa, 2021).

Þegar ferðalög Íslendinga eru greind eftir bakgrunni má þó sjá töluverðan mun milli fólks. Meðalfjöldi ferða innanlands árið 2020 er 5,7 (6,7 árið 2019). Fólk í tekjulægsta hópnum, með heimilistekjur undir 400 þúsund, ferðaðist minnst en 29% þeirra ferðuðust ekkert árið 2021. Þeir sem voru með heimilistekjur milli 1299 og 1499 þúsund voru líklegastir til að ferðast en alls ferðuðust 97% í þeim hópi eitthvað árið 2020. Árið 2019 ferðaðist tekjuhæsti hópurinn helst bæði innanlands og utan (84%) en það átti við 49% fólks með heimilistekjur undir 400 þúsund krónum á mánuði (Ferðamálastofa, 2020). Fólk í tekjulægsta hópnum var enn fremur langlíklegast til að hafa ekki ferðast neitt en það átti við 19% þeirra. Elsti aldurshópurinn er ólíklegastur til að ferðast innanlands og utan og fólk á landsbyggðinni er ólíklegra til að hafa ferðast en íbúar höfuðborgarsvæðisins (16% á móti 11% ferðuðust ekkert).

Mikill meirihluti ferða flokkaðist til skemmtiferða. Rúm 77% svarenda fóru í einhverjar dagsferðir á árinu 2020 sem er aukning um 4% frá árinu 2019. Slíkar ferðir eru helst farnar í nærumhverfi fólks og teljast dagsdaglega til tómsunda. Athyglisvert er að 76% svarenda í tekjulægsta hópnum höfðu farið í einhverjar dagsferðir 2020 en hlutfallið var 65% 2019. Hlutfall annarra tekjuhópa var 72–81%, hæsta hlutfallið hjá þeim tekjuhæstu og breyttist ekki mikið milli ára. Ef litið er nánar á upplýsingar um útivist þá stunduðu 72% Íslendinga útiveru einu sinni í viku eða oftar árið 2020 á móti um 50% árið 2019 (Ferðamálastofa, 2021). Um 13% stunduðu skokk eða hlaup einu sinni eða oftar í viku og um 7% fóru einu sinni í mánuði eða oftar í náttúruskoðun.

Það skortir upplýsingar um tilgang og tilhögun ferðalaga og útivistar í náttúruperlum. Þó má slá því föstu að ferðamennska er stór hluti af tómsundum meiri hluta almennings en jafnframt að þeim gæðum sem felast í ferðamennsku er misskipt eftir félagslegri stöðu. Kórónuveirufaraldurinn hafði augljós áhrif á ferðahegðun Íslendinga. Tvö atriði koma sérstaklega fram; mun herra hlutfall fólks ferðaðist eingöngu innanlands (64% á móti 14%) og mun herra hlutfall stundaði útivist einu sinni í viku eða oftar á árinu 2020 en árið áður. Kórónuveirufaraldurinn virðist ekki hafa breytt afstöðu einstakra þjóðfélags hópa innbyrðis að undanskildu því að svipað hlutfall tekjulægsta hópsins fór í dagsferðir árið 2020 og aðrir tekjuhópar. Aðgengi að tómsundaiðju hefur áhrif á hvernig íbúar verja tíma sínum og víða um land hafa ríki og sveitarfélög til að mynda unnið markvisst að aukinni útivist með bættu aðgengi að ferðamannastöðum og vitundarvakningu, t.d. með heilsueflandi skólum og samfélögum (Sigríður Kristín Hrafnkelsdóttir og Steingerður Ólafsdóttir, 2017). Einnig hafa sveitarfélög um allt land lagt ríka áherslu á í sínu kynningar- og markaðsstarfi að hvetja ferðafólk til að koma í heimsókn.

Hvað varðar ferðalög barna á Íslandi þá er minna vitað um þau. Líklegt er að tíðni ferðalaga sé minni þar sem börn hafa ekki sama sjálfstæði til ferðalaga og fullorðnir. Búast má við sama mynstri þar sem börn ferðast oftast með foreldrum eða nánum aðstandendum sínum. Þó er það svo að börn njóta einnig ferðalaga í gegnum skólastarf og frístundastarf. Lágur tekjur tengjast fjölskyldugerð og til að mynda eiga einstæðir foreldrar og fjölskyldur sem tilheyrja etniskum minnihlutahópum fjárhagslega erfiðara með taka þátt í ferðamennsku (McCabe og Qiao, 2020; Such og Kay, 2011). Erlendar rannsóknir benda einnig til þess að fólk úr tekjulágum samfélagshópum heimsæki síður þjóðgarða (Parker og Green, 2016) og að etniskur uppruni tengist því hverjir kjósa að dvelja í þjóðgördum (Byrne og Wolch, 2009). Áhugi landsmanna á útivist sem tómsundaiðkun hefur aukist á síðustu árum en rannsóknir benda til þess að það eigi síður við börn og unglunga. Á tímabilinu 2000–2014 fjölgaði til að mynda unglungum í 9. og 10. bekk sem stunda nær aldrei útivist úr 55% í 72% og á sama tímabili fækkaði þeim sem stunda útivist einu sinni í viku eða oftar úr 5% í 1,6% (Margrét Lilja Guðmundsdóttir o.fl., 2016).

Félagsleg ferðamennska og ferðþjónusta

Félagsleg ferðamennska er vítt hugtak sem kom fyrst fram um miðja 20. öld (Hunzicker, 1957). ISTO (The International Social Tourism Organisation) skilgreina félagslega ferðþjónustu með þessum hætti:

Áhrif og fyrirbæri sem hljóta af þátttöku í ferðamennsku, sérstaklega þátttöku lágtekjuhópa. Þessi þátttaka er gerð möguleg eða auðvelduð með verkefnum sem eru skilgreind á félagslegum forsendum (ISTO, 2003)²

Minnaert o.fl. (2011, bls. 407) einfalda skilgreininguna:

[Félagsleg] ferðþjónusta leggur áherslu á siðferðisleg gildi þar sem aðalmarkmiðið er að ferðamennskan gagnast annaðhvort gestgjafanum eða gestinum.³

Þessi skilgreining er víðari og vísar til þess ágóða sem félagsleg ferðþjónusta hefur jafnt fyrir þá hópa sem hennar njóta beint og samfélagsins alls. Áherslan færir því að nokkru leyti frá „þiggjendum“ ferðþjónustunnar og á samfélagslegan ábata sem hlýst af því að jafna aðgengi að ferðamennsku. Þetta er í takt við niðurstöður rannsókna á sviðinu (Kakoudakis o.fl., 2017; McCabe og Qiao, 2020). Þannig nær hugtakið félagsleg ferðamennska/þjónusta til fjölbreyttra aðgerða. Sem dæmi er fjárhagsstuðningur til ákveðinna jaðarhópa til að geta ferðast og efnahagslegur stuðningur við t.d. byggðir, landsvæði, stofnanir eða fyrirtæki til að veita þjónustu og halda úti starfsemi. Vera má að þetta þýði að hugtakið sé útpynt en það er ekki til umræðu hér í sjálfu sér heldur viljum við lýsa víðtækri merkingu þess.

Ávinningur félagslegrar ferðþjónustu er allt frá auknu sjálfsáliti, bættum samskiptum innan fjölskyldna, meiri virkni og víðari sjóndeildarhrings til jákvæðara viðhorfs til lífsins, menntunar og atvinnu (Kakoudakis o.fl., 2017; McCabe, 2009; McCabe og Qiao, 2020; Minnaert o.fl., 2009). Veigamestu efnahagslegu áhrifin eru að félagsleg ferðamennska skapar atvinnu og vöxt á áfangastöðum, hún getur dregið úr árstíðasveiflum og þannig nýtast fjárfestingar og innviðir betur, hún getur hjálpað til við að viðhalda störfum á lágönn (sá tími ársins þegar umsvif í ferðþjónustu eru í lágmarki) og afla tekna fyrir það samfélag sem ferðamenn heimsækja (Minnaert o.fl., 2011). Félagslegri ferðþjónustu er m.a. ætla að ná til eldri borgara, fjölskyldna í erfiðri félagslegri eða efnahagslegri stöðu, langveikra barna, barna með fötlun eða námsörðugleika og ungs fólks. Áhersluatriði í félagslegri ferðþjónustu eru t.d. persónulegur þroski, vellíðan, borgaravitund og menntun. Rannsóknir Qiao og fleiri (2019) hafa leitt í ljós jákvæð áhrif félagslegrar ferðamennsku á hamingju, lífsánægju og velferð barna.

Áleitin spurning vaknar hvort fólk eigi rétt á að ferðast og hvort samfélagið eigi að styðja fólk til þess. Samkvæmt lögum um samning Sameinuðu þjóðanna um réttindi barnsins (nr. 19/2013) á það rétt „til hvíldar og tómstunda, til að stunda leiki og skemmtanir sem hæfa aldri þess.“ Efnahags- og félagsmálanefnd Evrópu (The European Economic and Social Committee) hefur í þessu samhengi ályktað um félagslega ferðamennsku og lítur á hana sem rétt á þeirri forsendu að henni fylgir ávinningur fyrir samfélagið og einstaklinginn. Lítið er á að félagsleg ferðamennska stuðli að félagslegri samþættingu (e. social integration), og styrki sjálfbæra ferðþjónustu (European Economic and Social Committee, 2006).

Þó að félagsleg ferðþjónusta sé á margan hátt framandi hugtak í umræðu um ferðamál á Íslandi eru ýmis dæmi um starfsemi á þeim nótum þó svo að hugtakið sé ekki notað um starfsemina. Dæmi eru *lög um orlof húsmæðra* (nr. 53/1972) sem er ætlað að styðja konur til að taka orlof sem hafa án launagreiðslu veitt heimili forstöðu og hafa á til hliðsjónar félagslegar aðstæður kvenna eins og barnafjölda, aldur barna og fleira. Þá hafa hafa stéttar-, fagfélög og ýmis fyrirtæki lengi rekið orlofsþjónustu þar sem félagsmenn eða starfsmenn geta leigt orlofshús gegn vægu gjaldi (Eyrún J. Bjarnadóttir og Edward H. Huijbens, 2010). Einnig má nefna að undir merkjum Reykjadalssjónar er í boði

² The effects and phenomena resulting from the participation in tourism, more specifically the participation of low-income groups. This participation is made possible or is facilitated by initiatives of a well-defined social nature.

³ Tourism with an added moral value, of which the primary aim is to benefit either the host or the visitor in the tourism exchange.

fjölbreytt þjónusta. Kjarni eru sumarbúðir í Mosfellsdal fyrir fötluð börn og ungmenni en sumarið 2021 var með sérstökum stuðningi félagsmálaráðuneytisins boðið upp á ævintýrabúðir fyrir börn og ungmenni með ADHD og/eða einhverfu í Háholti í Skagafirði, ævintýranámskeið á höfuðborgarsvæðinu og sumarfrí fyrir fullorðin fólk með fötlun (Reykjadalur, e.d.). Að síðustu má nefna að á liðnum áratugum má finna fjölmörg örvandi verkefni ríkis og sveitarfélaga sem miða að því að fjölga ferðamönnum og er nýjasta dæmið Ferðagjöf stjórnvalda sem komið var á til að styðja við bakið á íslenskrri ferðþjónustu í kjölfar kórónuveirufaraldurs. Ferðagjöfin hafði það markmið að efla íslenska ferðþjónustu og hvetja landsmenn til að eiga góðar stundir á ferðalagi víðs vegar um landið og má flokka sem félagslega ferðþjónustu (Minnaert o.fl., 2011).

Í umfjöllun um ferðalög og gildi þess að heimsækja áfangastaði er mikilvægt að setja hana í samhengi við menntun, skóla- og frístundastarf.

Menntun og ferðamenska

Nám barna í grunnskóla fer ekki aðeins fram í skólum heldur einnig „úti í náttúrunni og í grenndar-samfélagi skólans – sem jafnframt teygir sig inn í skólann“ (Gerður G. Óskarsdóttir 2014, bls. 217). Almennt hefur verið lögð áhersla er að nýta grenndarsamfélagið í námi nemenda og hún byggir á ævagömlum grunni þegar þekking færðist á milli kynslóða með beinni þátttöku þeirra yngri í starfi með þeim eldri. Þessi áhersla hefur verið kölluð samfélagshverf eða samfélagsmiðuð menntun (Ruth Margrét Friðriksdóttir og Bragi Guðmundsson, 2015). Bragi Guðmundsson (2000, 2009) telur að styrkja megi sjálfsvitund einstaklinga og samábyrgð gagnvart öðrum mönnum og umhverfi með áherslu á söguvitund, umhverfisvitund og grenndarvitund. Grenndarvitund „vísar aðallega til þess hvaða vitneskju og tilfinningu fólk hefur um og fyrir nánasta umhverfi sínu, landafræði þess sem menningu“ (Bragi Guðmundsson, 2009, bls. 11). Bragi (2009) setur þetta í samhengi við hugtakið svæðisvitund þar sem rými (e. space) og tími gegna lykilhlutverki. Náskylt þessu er vaxandi áhersla á liðnum árum á stað (e. place) sem uppsprettu tengsla og náms. Wattchow og Brown (2011) lögðu fram rök fyrir því að virkja menntunargildi eða uppeldisgildi staða (e. pedagogy of place) í skólastarfi og tómsundum. Verið er að vísa til þeirra fjölþættu eiginleika sem staðir hafa og mótandi áhrif þeirra á uppvöxt og skilning fólks. Lögð er áhersla á að skynja staðinn af eigin raun með fjölþættum hætti til að skapa skilning er tengist þáttum eins og t.d. náttúru, sögu, umhverfismálum og loftslagsbreytingunum. Þeir stórbrotnu staðir sem athyglinni er hér beint að búa yfir margþættum eiginleikum sem auðvelt er að tengja við alla þessa þætti. Með því að skapa staðarkennd (e. sense of place), sem vísar til þeirra tilfinningalegu tengsla sem fólk myndar við staði, má ætla að stuðla megi að dýpri skilningi en auðvelt er að ná fram með öðru móti.

Hvort sem vísað er til *grenndar*, *svæðis* eða *staðar* má í skrifum Braga (2000, 2009), Gerðar (2014) og Wattchow og Brown (2011) greina ákall eftir beinni upplifun af því sem er umhverfis okkur – hvort sem það er nálægt (í grenndinni eða á svæðinu okkar) eða fjær, t.d. merkir áfangastaðir. Að efla umhverfisvitund fangar þetta vel en í *Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla, samfélagsgreinar* (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 2007) var hún sögð „felast í að þekkja umhverfi sitt, bera umhyggju fyrir því og hæfileika til að greina samhengi mannlegra athafna og náttúru“ (bls. 9).

Aukin áhersla er á útmenntun í frístunda- og skólastarfi á Íslandi og vaxandi áhugi er meðal almennings á útivist (Ævar Aðalsteinsson og Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson, 2015). Rannsóknir á Íslandi hafa beinst að fjölbreyttu gildi úti umhverfis í lífi ungra barna (Kristín Norðdahl og Jóhanna Einarsdóttir, 2015). Útmenntun nær yfir mjög fjölbreytta starfsemi, t.d. kennslu námsgreina úti (oft kallað útikennsla), dvöl að heiman, t.d. í skólábúðum, sumarþúðum eða ungmennabúðum, sumarnámskeið sem nýta sér markvisst útivist, t.d. siglinga- og fjallahjólánámskeið og lengri leidangra í meðferðartilgangi um óbyggðir, kallaða ævintýra- eða öræfameðferð. Ævintýrameðferð hefur verið nýtt sem meðferðarúrræði fyrir börn og unglínga á Íslandi (Hervör Alma Árnadóttir og Sóley Dögg Hafbergsdóttir, 2015). Markvert dæmi um slíkt starf er Hálandishópurinn, framsækið úrræði á vegum Íþrótt- og tómsundaráðs Reykjavíkur og Félagsþjónustunnar í Reykjavík sem byggði á að nota leidangra og ævintýri í óbyggðum Íslands sem grundvöll meðferðar (Björn Vilhjálmsson, 2020).

Sigrún Júlíusdóttir (2002) vann rannsókn á forsendum þess starfs og reynslu þátttakenda sem leiddi í ljós margþættan og merkilegan árangur.

Þessi fjölbreytta lýsing á útímenntun er í takt við umfjöllun Gair (1997) sem segir að menntun sem á sér stað undir berum himni (e. education in the outdoors) taki til kennslu námsgreina eins og jarðfræði, landafræði og náttúrufræði og líka til tómstunda- eða ævintýratengdra viðfangsefna eins og t.d. gönguferða, fjallamennsku og siglinga sem krefjast ferðalaga og hreyfingar í náttúrulegu umhverfi. Donaldson og Donaldson (1958) settu fram klassíska skilgreiningu á útímenntun og sögðu hugtakið vísa til menntunar í, um og fyrir náttúruna (e. education in, about, and for the out of doors). Markmið útímenntunar í víðum skilningi er að auka meðvitund um og hlúa að virðingu fyrir sjálfum sér, öðrum og náttúrunni (Nicol, 2002).

Markmið þessarar greinar er að varpa ljósi á aðgengi og þátttöku barna í ferðamennsku með því að greina heimsóknir 12–15 ára barna og unglinga (í 6., 8. og 10. bekk) á þekktu áfangastaði á Íslandi. Við vitum að vísu ekki með hverjum þau fóru í heimsóknir á þessa áfangastaði en líklegt má telja að þessi aldurshópur ferðist með fjölskyldu, vinum, skólanum eða í skipulögðu íþrótt- og tómstundastarfi. Þessi ferðalög eru því í mörgum tilvikum liður í tómstundum fjölskyldunnar eða hluti af skipulögðu frístunda- og skólastarfi. Í ljósi þessa er leitast við að svara þeim spurningum sem nefndar voru í inngangskaflanum.

Aðferð

Heilsa og lífskjör skólanema

Fjölbjóðlega rannsóknarverkefnið Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) nær aftur til 1983 og er stutt af Alþjóðaheilbrigðismálastofnuninni (WHO). Börn og unglingar eru spurðir um ýmsa þætti varðandi heilsu, líðan og félagslegar aðstæður (Inchley o.fl., 2016). Rannsóknin hefur verið lögð fyrir fjórða hvert ár og frá árinu 2006 hefur hún einnig verið lögð fyrir á Íslandi og nefnist rannsóknin hér á landi Heilsa og lífskjör skólanema. Síðast var hún lögð fyrir veturinn 2017–2018 og þá voru nokkrar spurningar er tengdust útiveru barna og heimsóknum á valda áfangastaði. Meginmarkmið með rannsókninni er að auka þekkingu og skilning á heilsu og lífskjörum ungs fólks. Efni þessarar greinar byggist á úrvinnslu tíu spurninga um áfangastaði sem voru aðeins í íslenska hluta rannsóknarinnar.

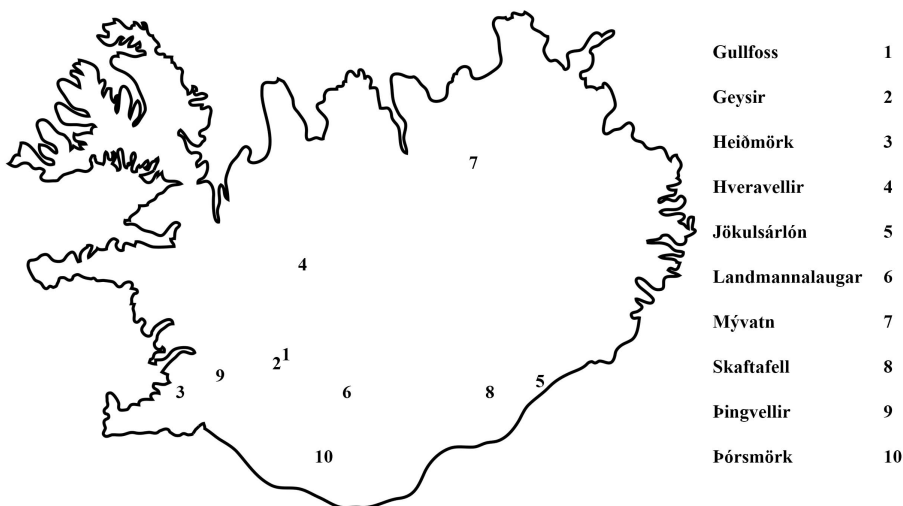
Framkvæmd og þátttakendur

Spurningalistinn, ásamt rannsóknaráætlun, var sendur til Persónuverndar og Vísindasiðanefndar Háskóla Íslands áður en gagnasöfnun hófst veturinn 2017–2018. Ekki voru gerðar athugasemdir varðandi framkvæmd rannsóknarinnar. Í framhaldi af því voru sömu upplýsingar sendar til allra skólastjóra á Íslandi í þeim skólum þar 6., 8. og 10. bekkur voru og óskað eftir þátttöku. Síðan var sent kynningarbréf til allra foreldra og forráðamanna í þeim skólum sem ætluðu að taka þátt og þeim gefinn sá kostur að hafna þátttöku sinna barna. Að þessu sinni tóku ekki allir skólar á Íslandi þátt í rannsókninni en svörin dreifast vel um landið og ná yfir mismunandi tegundir skóla. Alls svöruðu 6717 spurningum um útiveru; 3348 strákar (49,8%) og 3369 (50,2%) stúlkur. Af um 13200 börnum í þessum aldurshópi svöruðu 6717 börn spurningalistunum og er svarhlutfallið því 51% af öllum börnum á þessum aldri á Íslandi. Fjöldi svara frá Suðvesturhorninu er 5585, Landsbyggðunum 1106 og 26 svör er ekki hægt að flokka.

Áfangastaðirnir

Spurt var um heimsóknir á tíu staði (í sumum tilfellum eru þetta svæði) sem flestir eru vinsælir áfangastaðir innlendra og erlendra ferðamanna (Sjá *Mynd 1*). Við val á stöðum var leitað óformlega

hugmynda hjá aðilum víða af landinu innan ferðapjónustu, frístunda- og skólastarfs. Þessir staðir voru þeir sem oftast voru nefndir. Heiðmörk, sem liggur í og við öfuðborgarsvæðið sker sig að vísu úr, m.a. vegna nálægðar við stórt þéttbýlissvæði og er almennt ekki áfangastaður erlendra ferðamanna. Flestir staðirnir eru á Suðurlandi; Þingvellir, Gullfoss, Geysir, Þórsmörk, Skaftafell og Jökulsárlón. Þrjá staði má telja til hálendisins; Landmannalaugar, Hveravelli og Þórsmörk og er aðgengi að þeim ekki eins gott og hinna (þarf helst jeppa til að komast á þá). Mývatn er eini staðurinn á Norðurlandi.



Mynd 1. Staðsetning áfangastaðanna merkt á kort af Íslandi.

Spurningarnar voru allar eins og buðu upp á fjóra svarmöguleika:

Hefur þú komið á eftirtalda staði? [nafn staðar] Nei, aldrei (1). Já, einu sinni (2). Já, nokkrum sinnum (3). Já, mörgum sinnum (4).

Fylgibreytan er heimsókn barna á skilgreinda áfangastaði og bakgrunnsbreyturnar þrjár, frumbreyturnar, eru bekkur (aldur), búseta, fjárhagur og fæðingarland foreldra. Hvað varðar búsetu, þá mátti vera líklegt að fjarlægð til áfangastaða hefði áhrif á heimsóknir og voru svarendur flokkaðir í tvo hópa. Annars vegar „Suðvesturhornið“ sem er höfuðborgarsvæðið, Reykjanes, Vesturland og Suðurland (N=5585). Til Suðvesturhornins telst í þessari flokkun nokkuð stærra svæði en almennt er. Þegar rýnt er í samsetningu þessa hóps búa nær allir svarendur á svæðinu frá Selfossi að Borgarnesi sem telja má sem upptökusvæði höfuðborgarinnar í samfélagslegu tilliti. Hins vegar „Landsbyggðirnar“ sem eru Vestfirðir, Norðurland vestra, Akureyri, Norðurland eystra og Austurland (N=1106). Tilgangur þessarar flokkunar er að geta betur greint meginlínur er tengjast búsetu án þess þó að draga upp of flókna og óskýra mynd. Viðurkennt er að þessi flokkun hefur sína annmarka en af mörgum kostum sem voru prófaðir reyndist hún best.

Hvað varðar fjárhag þá var byggt á þremur flokkum svara við spurningunni: Hversu vel telur þú foreldra þína standa fjárhagslega? Mjög vel eða vel (1), Miðlungs (2), Illa eða mjög illa (3). Þessir þrjú flokkar eru fengnir með umskráningu fimm flokka sem voru í spurningunni upphaflega.

Hvað varðar fæðingarland foreldra þá voru flokkarnir hér líka þrjú, en byggðir á spurningum þar sem gefin voru upp tiltekin lönd fyrir báða foreldra og síðan beðið um heiti landsins ef listinn innihélt ekki viðkomandi land. Flokkarnir eru: Báðir foreldrar fæddir á Íslandi (1), Annað foreldri fætt á Íslandi (2) og Hvorugt foreldri fætt á Íslandi (3).

Tölfræðileg greining

Tölfræðileg lýsing er sýnd í töflum og súluritum og athugun á sambandi þátta styðst við Pearson-Kí-kvaðrat þar sem notast er við útreikningsreglu SPSS.

Niðurstöður

Bakgrunnsbreytur

Af heildarfjöldanum sem útreikningar byggjast á þá eru gild svör nálægt 6900. Vandí við þá útreikninga sem kanna tengslin við bakgrunnsbreyturnar er hve tiltölulega fámennir þeir hópar eru, einkum sá sem telur foreldra búa við bága fjárhagsstöðu, sem veikir tölfræðilega greiningu. *Tafla 1* sýnir hve stórir ólíkir hópar bakgrunnsbreytanna eru. Með því að leggja saman niðurstöður allra tíu spurninganna sem vísa til tiltekinna staða má finna hve margir segjast ekki hafa heimsótt neinn þeirra. Aðeins 4,2% töldu sig ekki hafa heimsótt neinn þessara staða, en 2% töldu sig hafa heimsótt þá alla.

Tafla 1. Hlutföll svarenda eftir búsetu, fæðingarlandi foreldra og fjárhagsstöðu foreldra og hve margir höfðu ekki heimsótt neinn umræddra staða.

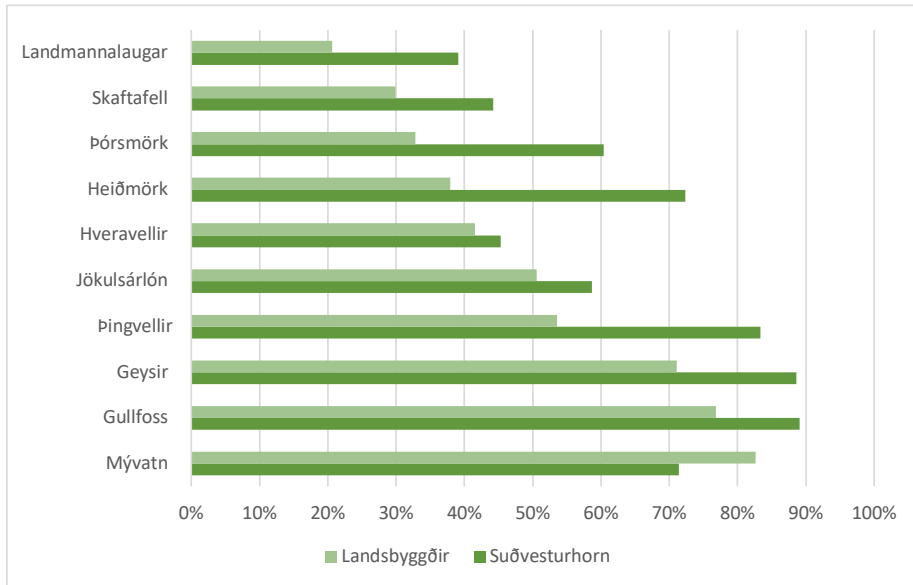
	Búseta		Fæðingarland foreldra			Fjárhagsstaða foreldra		
<i>Svarendur alls</i>	7021		7021			7021		
<i>Gild svör</i>	6973		6872			6849		
	Suðvesturhorn	Landsbyggð	Ísland	Annað fætt á Íslandi	Hvorugt fætt á Íslandi	Góð	Miðlungs	Slæm
	83,5	16,5	81,6	11,4	7,1	80,8	16,8	2,4
<i>Hlutfall þeirra sem aldrei hafa komið á neinn þessara staða</i>	3,7	6,6	3,5	5,3	9,1	3,9	3,9	14,7

Tafla 1 sýnir hlutföll svarenda í bakgrunnsbreytunum þremur og hve margir höfðu ekki heimsótt neinn umræddra staða.

Búseta og heimsóknir

Á *Mynd 2* er yfirlit sem sýnir hvort 12–15 ára börn⁴ frá *Suðvesturhorninu* og *Landsbyggðinni* segist hafi komið til valdra staða (neðst á myndinni er sá staður sem er með hæsta hlutfall heimsóknna barna af Landsbyggðunum og fer svo stig lækkandi). Þegar bæði heimsóknir frá Suðvesturhorninu og Landsbyggðunum eru skoðaðar hafa flest börn komið að Gullfossi, Geysi og til Mývatns eða 70–90%. Nokkur munur er á heimsóknum þessara tveggja hópa til valdra áfangastaða. Mestur er munurinn á heimsóknum í Heiðmörk (34%), á Þingvelli (30%) og í Þórsmörk (28%). Fæst börn hafa komið í Landmannalaugar, Skaftafell, á Hveravelli og í Þórsmörk.

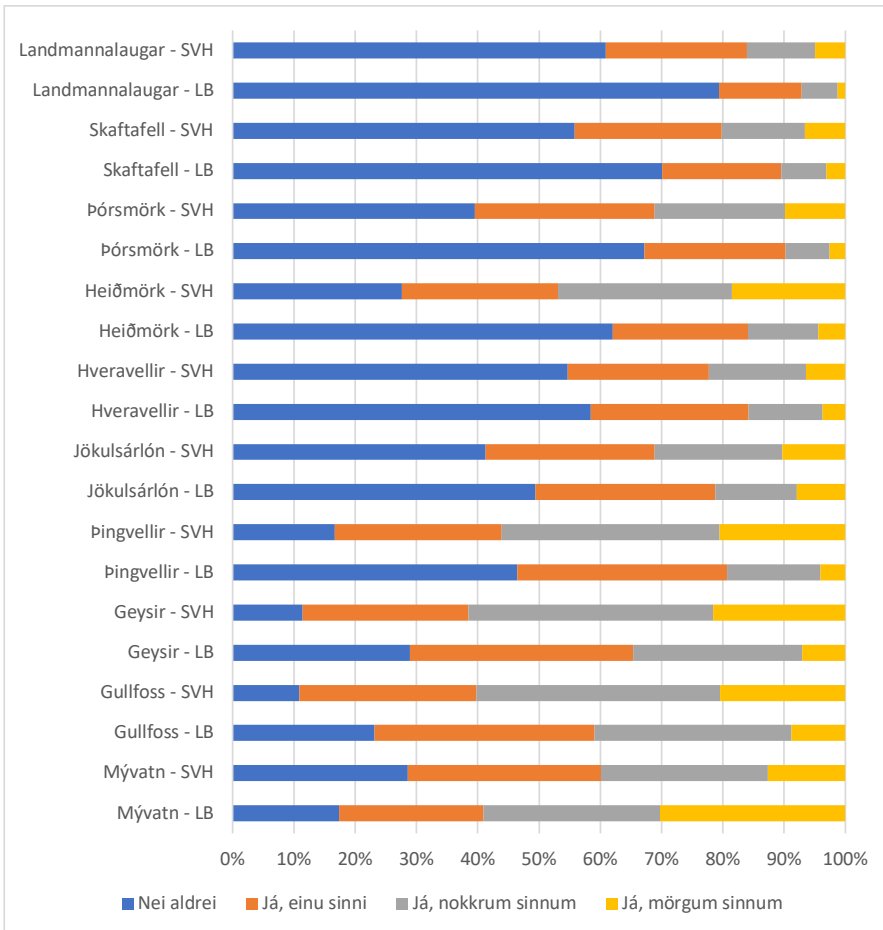
⁴ Í kynningu á niðurstöðum og víða í greininni er orðið *barn* notað í stað *unglingur* þó svo að einkum sé fjallað um unglunga á aldrinum 12–15 ára. Það er gert til einföldunar og vegna þess að *barn* er hvorugkyns sem gerir umræðuna ekki eins kynjaða og væri notað orðið *unglingur* og fornöfnin *hann* og *þeir*. Í skilningi laga eru þau sem eru yngri en 18 ára talin til barna.



Mynd 2. Hlutfall 12–15 ára barna frá Suðvesturhorninu og Landsbyggðunum sem segist hafa komið til valdra staða. *Samkvæmt kí-kvaðrat greiningu er marktækur munur á hlutfallslegum fjölda heimsókna eftir búsetu fyrir alla staðina ($p < ,000$). Hlutfallslega fleiri börn af Suðvesturhorninu hafi komið á alla staði nema Mývatn, en þar hafa hlutfallslega fleiri börn af Landsbyggðunum komið.

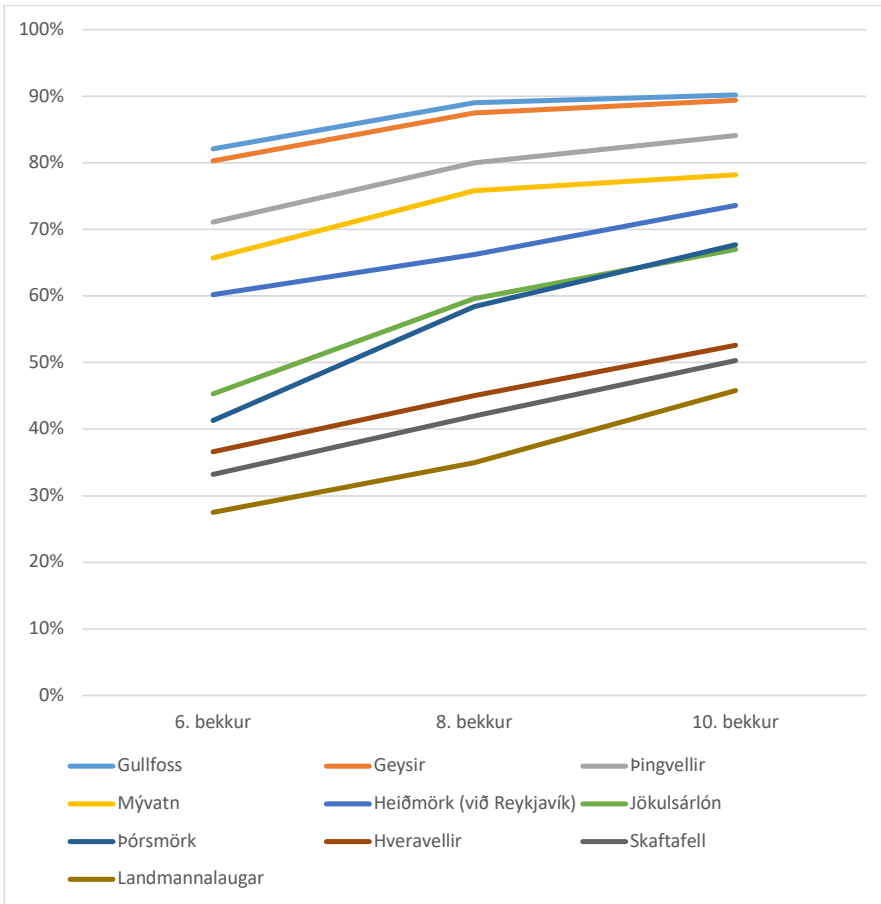
Nokkur munur er á hlutfalli og tíðni heimsókna á Þingvelli eftir því hvar á landinu nemendur eru búsettir, sjá *Mynd 2*. Þannig segjast 46% barna á Landsbyggðunum ekki hafa komið á Þingvelli meðan hlutfallið er 17% fyrir börn frá Suðvesturhorninu.

Á *Mynd 3* er tíðni heimsókna 12–15 ára barna frá Suðvesturhorninu (SVH) og Landsbyggðunum (LB) á valda staði skoðuð nánar (sama röðun notuð og á *Mynd 2*). Algengast er að 12–15 ára börn af Suðvesturhorninu segist hafa komið að Gullfossi (89%), Geysi (88%), á Þingvelli (83%) og í Heiðmörk (83%) og á þessa staði segjast um 20% svarenda hafa komið mörgum sinnum. Algengast er að börn frá Landsbyggðunum á aldrinum 12–15 ára hafi komið til Mývatns (83%), að Gullfossi (77%), Geysi (71%) á Þingvelli (54%) og Jökulsárlón (51%). Nokkuð áberandi er að 30% svarenda af Landsbyggðunum hafa komið mörgum sinnum til Mývatns.



Mynd 3. Tíðni heimsóknna 1215 ára barna frá Suðvesturhorninu (SVH) og Landsbyggðunum (LB) til valdra staða.

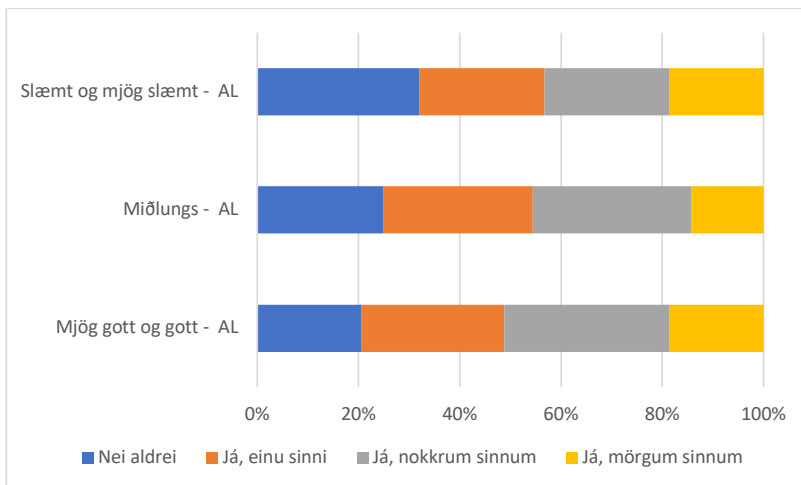
Eins og gera má ráð fyrir hækkar jafnt og þétt, með hærri aldri, hlutfall þeirra sem hafa komið til áfangastaðanna. *Mynd 4* sýnir að ferillinn er svipaður fyrir alla staðina. Útreikningur sýnir að heimsóknnum barna fjölgar að meðaltali frá 12 til 15 ára um 16%. Minnsta fjölgun heimsóknna á þessu aldursbili er að Gullfossi (8%) og Geysi (9%) en mesta aukning er að Jökulsárlóni (22%) og í Þórsmörk (26%).



Mynd 4. Hlutfall barna í 6., 8. og 10. bekk sem segist hafa komið á valda áfangastaði.

Fjórthagur fjölskyldu og heimsóknir

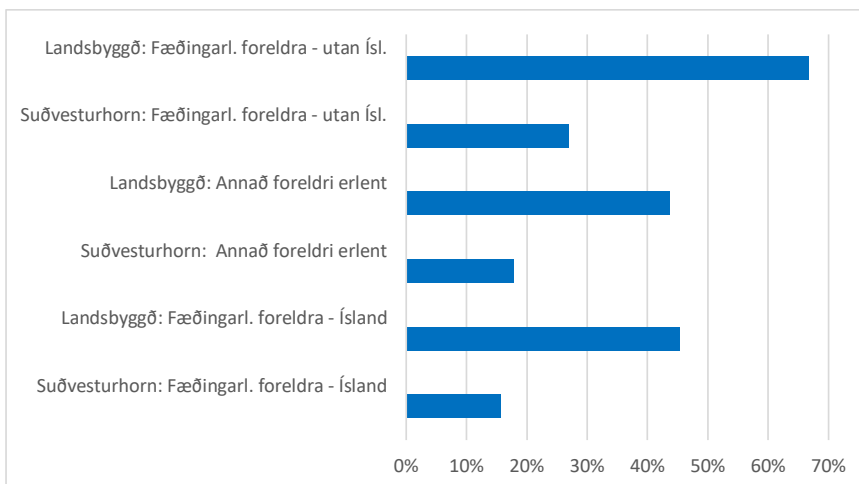
Marktækt færri börn, hlutfallslega, sem telja fjórthagsstöðu heimilis slaka hafi komið í Landmannalaugar, Þingvelli, Heiðmörk, Gullfoss, Geysi og Skaftafell samanborið við þau sem telja fjórthagsstöðu góða. Í öllum þessum tilvikum var kí-kvaðrat marktækt, $p < .01$. Enginn marktækur munur er til staðar á milli hópanna þegar spurt var um komur á Hveravelli, Mývatn, í Þórsmörk og Jökulsárlón. Svo dæmi sé tekið má greina á *Mynd 5* samband á milli fjórthags foreldra að mati barnanna og hve oft þau hafa komið á Þingvelli. Af öllum þeim börnum á landinu ($N=134$) sem meta fjórthag foreldra sinna slæman eða mjög slæman segjast 32% ($N=43$) ekki hafa komið á Þingvelli, samanborið við 21% þeirra sem meta fjórthag foreldra sinna mjög góðan eða góðan.



Mynd 5. Fjárhagsleg staða foreldra (slæm, miðlungs, góð) og tíðni heimsóknna 12–15 ára barna af öllum landinu á Þingvelli, ($\chi^2(3, 6849) = 29,1, p < ,000$).

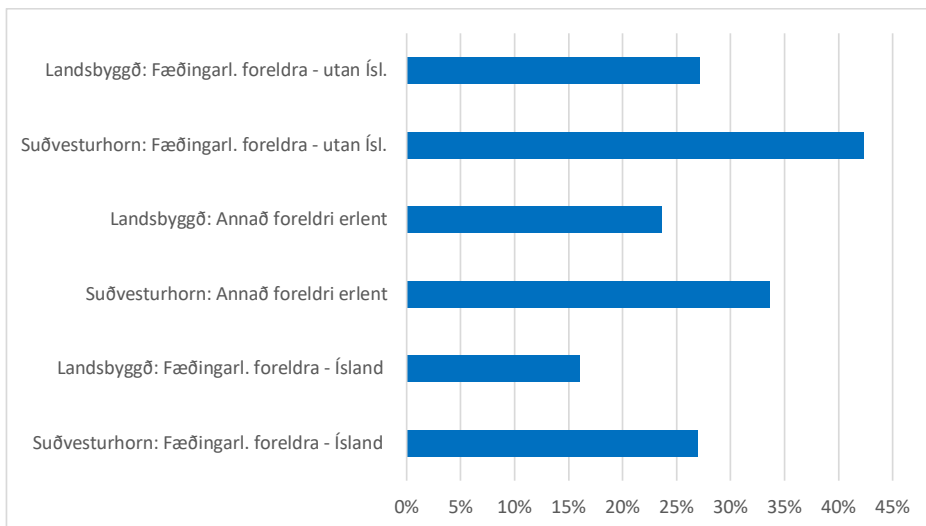
Fæðingarland foreldra og heimsóknir

Þegar á heildina er litið er marktækt samband milli uppruna foreldra og heimsóknna á alla staðina nema Heiðmörk. Þrátt fyrir marktækt samband þá sýnir skoðun á mynstrinu hvorki einsleitun né stöðugan mun, sbr. *Myndir 6* og *7*. Skoðum nánar tvo ólíka staði, Þingvelli og Mývatn, sem eru meðal þeirra staða sem flestir hafa heimsótt en eru í ólíkum landshlutum. *Mynd 6* sýnir hlutfall 12–15 ára barna frá Landsbyggðunum og Suðvesturhorninu sem segjast ekki hafa komið á Þingvelli. Þegar litið er til uppruna foreldra kemur í ljós að nokkuð hátt hlutfall þeirra barna sem eiga foreldra sem hafa báðir annað fæðingarland en Ísland og koma af Landsbyggðunum hafa ekki komið á Þingvelli.



Mynd 6. Uppruni foreldra og hlutfall 12–15 ára barna af Landsbyggðunum og Suðvesturhorninu sem segjast ekki hafa komið á Þingvelli, ($\chi^2(2, 6872) = 36,9, p < ,000$).

Víkur nú sögunni til Mývatns. Á *Mynd 3* má sjá að nokkuð hærra hlutfall svarenda af Landsbyggðunum (83%) en af Suðvesturhorninu (71%) segist hafa komið til Mývatns og mun algengara er að börn frá Landsbyggðunum á þessum aldri segist hafi komið mörgum sinnum (30% á móti 13%). *Mynd 7* sýnir hlutfall þeirra nemenda sem segjast ekki hafa komið til Mývatns. Lægst hlutfall er hjá þeim svarendum sem eru frá Landsbyggðunum með foreldra fædda á Íslandi en hæst hlutfall er frá Suðvesturhorninu sem eiga foreldra fædda utan Íslands.



Mynd 7. Uppruni foreldra og hlutfall nemenda í 6., 8. og 10. bekk frá Landsbyggðunum og Suðvesturhorninu sem segjast ekki hafa komið til Mývatns, ($\chi^2(2, 6872) = 60,7, p < ,000$).

Umræða

Þegar á heildina er litið lýsa niðurstöðurnar ákveðnu mynstri í ferðamennsku barna og unglinga á aldrinum 12–15 ára. Mjög margir hafa heimsótt einhvern þeirra staða sem val var um og búseta og aldur barnanna skiptir máli, þó sá munur sé ekki verulegur. Vert er að hafa í huga að ekki þarf mikinn mun til að framkalla marktækt samband þegar mörg þúsund svarendur liggja til grundvallar greiningunni. Munur eftir búsetu birtist með ólíkum hætti en almennt er hærra hlutfall barna á Suðvesturhorninu sem segist hafa komið til þeirra áfangastaða sem spurt var um og með hækkanði aldri hafa börn komið á fleiri áfangastaði. Hafa ber í huga að flestir þessir áfangastaðir eru á Suðurlandi. Líklegt má telja að búseta barnanna skýri að miklu leyti mun á heimsóknum á áfangastaði.

Mynd 4 sýnir stigvaxandi fjölgun þeirra sem segjast hafa komið á áfangastaðina eftir aldri. Ferillinn er líkur milli allra staðanna og að jafnaði fækkar börnum sem segjast aldrei hafa komið á valda staði á bilinu 10–20% frá 12 til 15 ára aldurs. Svipað hlutfall 12–15 ára barna frá Suðvesturhorninu og Landsbyggðunum segist hafa komið á Gullfoss, Geysi og Mývatn eða 70–90%. Mun meiri munur er á hlutfalli barna á þessum aldri sem segjast hafa komið í Heiðmörk (34%), á Þingvelli (30%) og í Þórsmörk (28%). Heiðmörk sker sig úr þeim áfangastaðum sem spurt var um því hún liggur við jadar höfuðborgarsvæðisins og því eðlilegt að börn þaðan hafi í mun meiri mæli komið þangað. Einnig hafa börn á þessum aldri kost á að fara af sjálfsdáðum í Heiðmörk en það er ólíklegt með hina staðina.

Í rannsóknnum á ferðamennsku barna er mikilvægt að hafa í huga að í langflestum tilfellum ferðast börnin með öðrum, líklega oftast með fjölskyldu eða í skóla-, frístunda- eða félagsstarfi. Því má ætla að hve víða börn hafa ferðast um landið sé frekar háð ytri þáttum en þeirra eigin áhuga eða stöðu. Við greiningu gagnanna var því fyrst og fremst rýnt í þætti í umhverfi þeirra sem líklega

hafa áhrif, eins og fjárhagsstaða og uppruni foreldra og búseta (sjá Töflu 1). Fjárhagsstaða foreldra hefur nokkur áhrif en til að mynda hafa 32% (N=43) þeirra sem meta fjárhag foreldra sinna slæman eða mjög slæman ekki komið á Þingvelli samborið við 21% sem meta fjárhag foreldra sinna mjög góðan eða góðan. Þetta staðfestir það sem aðrar rannsóknir sýna (McCabe, 2009; McCabe og Qiao, 2020; Parker og Green, 2016; Such og Kay, 2011) um áhrif fjárhags á ferðamennsku. Þessi munur er þó kannski minni en gera mátti ráð fyrir. Niðurstöður benda einnig sterklega til þess að börn sem eiga foreldra sem báðir eru fæddir erlendis heimsæki mun síður Þingvelli, Mývatn, Þórsmörk og Jökulsárlón en börn sem eiga foreldra sem eru fæddir á Íslandi. Ýmsar skýringar geta verið á því. Ætla má að Þingvellir skipi sterkari sess meðal foreldra sem alist hafa upp hérlandis en þó verður að hafa í huga að Þingvellir, sem hluti af Gullna hringnum (Þingvellir, Gullfoss og Geysir), eru einn fjölsóttasti og best þekkt ferðamannastaður landsins. Ekki er ólíklegt að foreldrar af erlendu bergi brotnu verji frekar fríum í heimalandi sínu til að halda tengslum við fjölskyldu og þá heimahaga sem getur fækkað tækifærum þeirra til að ferðast um Ísland. Vert er að hafa í huga að erfitt er aðgreina áhrif uppruna frá fjárhag og því kunna þetta að vera samverkandi þættir sem hafa áhrif á hversu aðgengileg ferðalög eru. Þetta er eigi að síður atriði sem t.d. rekstraraðilar þjóðgarða á Íslandi ættu að rannsaka betur því að erlendar rannsóknir benda til þess að fólk úr tekjulágum samfélagsþópum sæki þá síður (Parker og Green, 2016) og eins tengist etniskur uppruni því hverjir kjósa að heimsækja þá (Byrne og Wolch, 2009).

Eðlilegt er að velta fyrir sér hvort til sé það sem kalla mætti viðunandi tíðni heimsóknar barna á vinsæla áfangastaði á Íslandi. Þetta ræðst auðvitað af því hvert sé talið uppeldisgildi þessara staða, sem tengist útivist, náttúru og menningu. Það liggur fyrir að mikill meirihluti Íslendinga ferðast innanlands og útivist hefur aukist á undanföllum árum og misserum. Ljóst er að börn á Íslandi hafa komið nokkuð víða og meginþorri barna hefur komið t.d. að Gullfossi, Geysi og Mývatni. Það er engu að síður umhugsunarefni að svo virðist sem börn af Landsbyggðunum hafi síður komið til þeirra áfangastaða sem um var spurt og enn fremur er ljóst að ýmsir félagslegir þættir í umhverfi barna tengjast ferðamennsku þeirra.

Það getur haft gildi fyrir menntun og þroska barna að hafa komið á eða upplifa þessa ríkulegu áfangastaði eða aðra ámóta. Wattchow og Brown (2011) tala um menntunarlegt eða uppeldislegt gildi staða sem nýta má í skólastarfi sem og í tómstundum og daglegu lífi fjölskyldna. Seamon (2014) lýsir því að staðir geti búið yfir mismiklum möguleikum til tengslamyndunar eða það sem nefnt er staðartengsl. Við getum ekki fullyrt að þeir staðir sem heyra undir í þessari rannsókn séu mjög frábrugðnir öðrum stöðum hvað þetta varðar. Við vitum þó að þeir eru margir meðal fjölsóttustu áfangastaða ferðafólks og hafa mikið aðdráttarafl. Allir eru þeir sterk náttúrufyrirbrigði og sumir leika stórt hlutverk í þjóðarímynd Íslendinga eins og í tilfelli Þingvalla. Við áttum okkur á gildi áfangastaða með líkamnaðri skynjun, með veru okkar á staðnum. Margir skynja magnaðan Gullfoss í návígi við hann, sjá fegurðina, finna afl vatnselgsins og drunurnar. Við skynjum friðsæld í gjá á Þingvöllum og kannski verða örlög kvenna fyrr á öldum raunverulegrí þegar við horfum niður í Drekkingsarhyl. Í þeim möguleikum til tengslamyndunar sem felast í þessum stöðum býr m.a. menntunarlegt gildi þeirra og þar birtist einnig skurðpunktur ferðamennsku, tómstunda og menntunar, sem kallaði á þessa rannsókn.

Rannsóknir á sviði félagslegrar ferðamennsku hafa ítrekað dregið fram margvísleg jákvæð áhrif fyrir einstaklinga og samfélög sem ættu að vera hvarning til að jafna aðgengi þjóðfélagsþópa að ferðamennsku (Minnaert o.fl., 2011; Qiao o.fl., 2019). Hér á landi getum við litið til reynslu af þeim lögum eða verkefnum sem byggja á félagslegri ferðamennsku og hafa gefið fólk úr öllum stéttum samfélagsins kost á að ferðast, eins og *lög um orlof húsmæðra* (nr. 53/1972) *orlofsþjónusta stéttarfélag*a og starfsemi *Reykjadals* en enn fremur má leita að fyrirmyndum erlendis um leiðir til að byggja upp og efla ferðamennsku og tómstundir óháð þjóðfélagsstöðu.

Þegar litið er til hlutverks opinberra aðila (s.s. skóla- og frístundastarfs) eða félagasamtaka við að veita börnum beina upplifun af Íslandi er eðlilegt að líta til vægis eða tíðni vettvangsferða í þeirra starfi. Vettvangsferðir og heimsóknir (e. fieldwork and outdoor visits) eru eitt af þremur sviðum útimentunar samkvæmt Rickinson o.fl. (2004). Í rannsókn Waite (2020), sem náði til 19 landa,

eru heimsóknir til náttúruverndarsvæða og þjóðgarða taldar snar þáttur í útinámi víða og hvati slíkra heimsókna er að styrkja umhyggju fyrir öðrum og umhverfinu. Með slíkum heimsóknum er hægt að öðlast annars konar upplifun en náttúra í nærumhverfinu gefur kost á (Carson, 1965). Maller (2009) telur að það geti stutt við að börn myndi tengsl við náttúruna og þroski með sér jákvæð viðhorf til umhverfis að þau þekki vel til staða í sínu nærumhverfi og með stigvaxandi hætti kynnist afskekktari mikilsmetnum náttúrulegum svæðum.

Þau atriði sem skipta hvað mestu máli til að auka útiveru barna eru að þau fái tækifæri til útiveru og útivistar, eigi sér jákvæðar fyrirmyndir og fái hvatningu (Garst, 2018). Það er þó ekki nóg því að ýmsir félags- og efnahagslegir þættir hafa áhrif á aðgengi barna að útiveru (Wattchow o.fl., 2013) og því þurfa aðilar í menntakerfunum að bregðast við. Alþjóðlegar rannsóknir (t.d. Dillon o.fl., 2006; Waite, 2020) benda til þess að helstu hindranir fyrir útimenntun ýmiss konar tengist menntun kennara og hversu öruggt fagfólk er í að vinna úti og tengja viðfangsefni úti við námskrá. Aðrir þættir eins og lítið fjármagn, áhyggjur af öryggismálum og skortur á tækjum og stuðningi skiptir einnig verulegu máli. Oft er því ekki til staðar þekking, hæfni og búnaður í skóla- og frístundastarfi til að bjóða upp á spennandi menntandi tækifæri til náttúruupplifunar og útivistar eins og heimsóknir á þá áfangastaði sem hér eru til rannsóknar gefa kost á.

Á Íslandi er víða verulegur áhugi hjá stjórnendum á að nýta bæði útivist og útinám í skólasterfi og þau eru meðvituð um rökin fyrir mikilvægi þess en hugmyndir öllu óljósari með hvaða hætti þessar áherslur auki við námskosti og merkingarbært nám nemenda (Gerður G. Óskarsdóttir 2014; Inga Lovísa Andreassen og Auður Pálsdóttir, 2014). Þegar grenndarsamfélagið er virkjað í námi er það gagnkvæmt eða það „teygir sig inn í skólann“ svo notað séu orð Gerðar (2014, bls. 217). Rannsóknir Gerðar (2014) benda aftur á móti til þess að samskiptin við nærsamfélagið séu yfirleitt ekki formleg, heldur frekar óformleg, og skólar hafi ekki nýtt sér sjóði þekkingar sem eru í samfélaginu. Þegar litíð er til þróunar skólasterfs á 21. öldinni telja ýmsir fræðimenn (t.d. Hargreaves, 2000) að fleiri eigi að koma að námi nemenda og það sé betur samþætt inn í samfélagið.

Það hníga því margvísleg rök að því að markviss nýting útináms og vettvangsferða í skóla- og frístundastarfi og efling félagslegrar ferðamennsku sé vænleg leið til að gefa börnum úr öllum hópum samfélagsins kost á að kynnast íslenskri náttúru og öllu því sem hún hefur upp á að bjóða.

Þessi grein byggir á greiningu á svörum meira en helmingis allra barna í 6., 8. og 10. bekk á Íslandi en á aðeins einni spurningu um hvort þau hafi komið á ákveðinn stað og hve oft. Þetta eru því takmarkaðar upplýsingar og segja okkur t.d. ekkert um hve lengi börnin dvöldu, hvað þau gerðu eða um gæði þeirrar upplifunar. Sá grunur læðist að höfundum að líkur séu á að sumir svarendur þekki ekki alla staðina (jafnvel rugli saman stöðum eins og Heiðmörk og Þórsmörk) og það hefði átt að vera möguleiki á að geta merkt við „Ég veit ekki“. Mikilvægt er að bæta úr því, m.a. þegar þetta efni er rannsakað frekar, bæta við áfangastöðum víðar af landinu, nýta jafnvel kort eða myndir til að hjálpa svarendum að átta sig á hvaða stað er átt við og spyrja frekar út í veru svarenda á staðnum.

Það er mat höfunda að nokkrir þættir styrki áreiðanleika þessarar rannsóknar. Athygli vekur að það er mjög svipað hlutfall barna sem hefur komið á Gullfoss og Geysi og marktæk fylgni t.d. við fjárhag og uppruna foreldra greinist ekki þar. Hin jafna hækkun á hlutfalli barna frá sjötta til tíunda bekkjar sem segjast hafa komið á valda staði (sjá *Mynd 4*) styrkir rannsakendur einnig í þeirri trú að gögnin segi rétta sögu.

Lokaorð

Í þessari grein er fjallað um ferðamennsku og tómstundir og vakin athygli á miðlægu vægi þeirra í lífi fólks hér á landi. Ætlunin er að vekja máls á samþættu sviði ferðamennsku, tómstunda og menntunar með því að rannsaka hlutfall og tíðni heimsókna 12–15 ára barna og unglinga á tíu þekktu áfangastaði á Íslandi. Niðurstöður eru að mestu kynntar með lýsandi tölfraði sem er mikilvægt fyrsta skref til að átta sig á þessu viðfangsefni.

Með þessu drögum við athygli að fjórum hliðum þessa viðfangsefnis. Í fyrsta lagi eru dregnir fram, sem dæmi, staðir sem verulegur hluti barna hefur heimsótt, sennilega mest utan venjubundins skóla- eða frístundastarfs. Menntakerfin gætu samt sem áður fléttað þá reynslu inn í sitt starf, m.a. það sem felst í tengslum við náttúru og umhverfisvitund. Í öðru lagi sýna tölurnar beint hve mörg börn hafa komið á suma þessa staði, sem skipta miklu máli í náttúru Íslands og í þriðja lagi hve mörg hafa ekki komið þangað. Þetta eru tvær mikilvægar hliðar þessa máls. Í fjórða lagi sjáum við tengsl við mikilvægar félagslegar bakgrunnsbreytur sem þarf að hafa í huga þegar athyglinni er beint að því hvernig skóla- og frístundastarf getur lagt sitt af mörkum til að jafna aðstöðu barna, m.a. í tengslum við útivist og náttúru og í umræðu um uppbyggingu félagslegrar ferðabjónustu.

Foreldrar og aðstandendur barna gegna lykilhlutverki að kynna börnum náttúru Íslands og nefnt hefur verið að mikilvægt er að börn fái tækifæri til útiveru og útivistar, eigi sér jákvæðar fyrirmyndir og fái hvatningu. Eigi að síður eru ýmsar félags-, menningar- og efnahagslegar hindranir sem tengjast möguleikum barna til ferðalaga og útiveru og fjallað hefur verið um hér að framan. Það kann að vera vænleg leið til að yfirstíga fyrrgreindar hindranir að ríki og sveitarfélög styðji við félagslega ferðamennsku og komið verði á markvissu og formlegu samstarfi fagfólks úr ferðabjónustu og skóla- og frístundastarfi. Með því er hægt að skapa upplifun og reynslu sem er eflandi og menntandi. Vitað er að innan íslenska menntakerfisins er til staðar þekking og reynsla á sviði útímenntunar, en það kann að vera á færra vitorði að innan ferðabjónustunnar er einnig mikil þekking og reynsla sem er kjörrið að virkja og nýta til þess að gefa börnum kost á að læra og þroskast.

Þó svo að þessi rannsókn veiti afmarkaða innsýn í ferðamennsku barna er hér athyglisverð lýsing á stöðu mála og sem fær okkur til að hugsa og greina hvað sé þörf á að rannsaka frekar varðandi ferðahegðun barna, m.a. með það í huga að virkja þessa ferðamennsku betur í menntun og almennu uppeldi barnanna. Verðug viðfangsefni rannsókna og nýsköpunar á sviði ferðamálafræði, tólmstundafræði og menntunar sem blasa við á þessari stundu eru m.a.:

- Rannsókn á upplifun og sjónarmiðum barna. Skortur er á rannsóknum sem leggja áherslu á að fanga upplifun og reynslu barna sem taka þátt í ferðamennsku. Innan tólmstunda- og menntunarfræða er hefð fyrir rannsóknum þar sem raddir barna eru í öndvegi og varpa ljósi á þeirra upplifanir t.d. varðandi sitt útiúhverfi (sjá t.d. í Jóhanna Einarsdóttir, 2007; Kolbrún Þ. Pálsdóttir, 2012; Kristín Norðdahl og Jóhanna Einarsdóttir, 2015) og því gæti rannsóknasamstarf ferðamála-, tólmstunda- og menntunarfræða verið einkar gagnlegt.
- Greining á ferðamynstri og ferðahegðun landsmanna, væntingum, ákvörðunartöku og gildismati. Nánari greining á tölfræðilegum gögnum um ferðahegðun landsmanna gæti veitt gagnlegar vísbendingar fyrir skipulag og stefnumótun ferðabjónustu, þ.m.t. félagslegrar ferðabjónustu.
- Nánari greining á ferðalögum landsmanna með tilliti til félagslegrar stöðu og upplifunar fólks af mikilvægi ferðamennsku til tólmstunda. Tölfræðilegt yfirlit um ferðahegðun er mikilvægt til að fylgjast með breytingum en það skortir tilfinnanlega dýpt sem lýst getur skilningi og upplifun fólks í viðkvæmri stöðu af mikilvægi ferðamennsku og tólmstunda.
- Kortlagning á félagslegri ferðabjónustu hérlendis. Mikilvægt er að kanna hvaða úrræði eru til staðar, hvernig þau eru nýtt og af hverjum. Ekkert yfirlit er til um félagslega ferðabjónustu hérlendis. Í ljósi þess að ferðamennska og tengdar tólmstundir eins og útivist fela í sér umtalsverðan samfélagslegan ágóða í formi betri heilsu og meiri virkni, auk hagrænna áhrifa, er mikilvægt að stjórnvöld og aðrir hagaðilar hafi upplýsingar um umfang og gerð þeirrar félagslegu ferðabjónustu sem nú er í boði.
- Nýsköpun í félagslegri ferðabjónustu í samstarfi við menntakerfið. Ástæða er til að hvetja til umræðu um samspil félagslegrar ferðabjónustu og menntakerfisins. Flestir þeirra áfangastaða sem spurt var um geta haft í senn víðtækt menningarlegt, sögulegt, náttúrufræðilegt og jarðfræðilegt gildi. Svo dæmi sé tekið má gefa heimsókn og dvöl á Þingvöllum fjölþætt menntunarlegt gildi fyrir börn og mikilvægt að við sem samfélag gefum börnum almennt kost á að hafa aðgengi að því.

Þær ályktanir sem draga má af þessari rannsókn eru að börn ferðast mikið um landið og hafa komið á fjölmarga þeirra ferðamannastaða sem tilteknir eru í rannsókninni. Jafnframt er ljóst að búseta, fjárhagur og uppruni foreldra tengjast því hvort 12–15 ára börn hafa komið á valda áfangastaði. Þetta er í takt við gögn um ferðahegðun landsmanna sem sýna að tekjulægri hópar og fólk sem býr á landsbyggðunum ferðast síður (Ferðamálastofa, 2020). Rannsóknin er gerð út frá sjónarhóli tómstunda- og ferðamálafræða en þær fræðigreinar eiga margt sammerkt. Vonandi markar þessi rannsókn upphaf samþættari rannsókna á þessum sviðum. Óhætt er að hvetja til frekari rannsókna er beina sjónum að félagslegum þáttum og ferðamennsku og sem unnar eru með fjölbreyttum aðferðum.

Youth's encounter with popular destinations. Leisure, tourism, and education

In recent decades, tourism and leisure have become a central aspect in the daily life of Icelanders. Increased leisure time and disposable income, along with changes on the job market, have contributed to a growing emphasis on recreation and leisure, making these activities one of the cornerstones of modern society. Accessibility to tourism and leisure activities varies and depends on the individual's socioeconomic situation, among other things. In Iceland, little is known about the relationship between socioeconomic factors and tourism and leisure opportunities. Many nations have a long history of social tourism, which refers to subsidized tourism and leisure activities in order to facilitate more equal access to travel for different social groups. The aim of this paper is to shed light on young people's participation in tourism, with respect to socioeconomic factors. The paper will then address these factors in the context of Icelanders' domestic travel behaviour, social tourism, and education. The analysis builds on survey data from a 2017–2018 study, titled Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children, in which 6717 children and adolescents responded to a questionnaire regarding their outdoor activities. The paper will focus on the part of the study that looked at travel habits of children aged between 12 and 15 to popular destinations in Iceland.

On the whole, the findings show considerable variation in children's travel habits with regard to age and residence. These differences are manifested in various ways, but in general a higher number of children in the Southwest (metropolitan areas and vicinity of the capital region) have visited selected destinations and the older the children are the more destinations they will have visited. It is worth keeping in mind that most of these destinations are located in the Southern part of the country. The trajectory is similar for each place, but on average the number of children aged 12 to 15 who claim to have never visited the selected destination ranges from 10–20%. A similar proportion of 12–15-year-olds from the Southwest and from rural areas say they have visited Gullfoss, Geysir and Mývatn, or 70–90%. A much greater difference appears among children in this age group who claim they have been to Þingvellir (30%) and to Þórsörk (28%). The parents' socioeconomic situation plays a role in their children's travel habits. For example, 34% (N=43) of those children who rate their family's economic position as bad or very bad have never visited Þingvellir, compared to the 21% who rated their family's economic position as very good or good. The findings also strongly suggest that children whose parents are both immigrants, are much less likely to have visited Þingvellir, Mývatn, Þórsörk and Jökulsárlón, than children whose parents were both born in Iceland. The findings give rise to questions regarding the different opportunities children have to enjoy tourism and leisure activities and the need to further bolster social tourism in Iceland, as well as its connection to education and the role of the education system. A promising way to surmount the obstacles preventing children from enjoying equal access to tourism and leisure would be for the state to directly support social tourism and to encourage comprehensive collaboration between specialists in the tourism industry and in the schools and leisure centres. In this way, it would be possible to foster empowering

and educative experiences, especially since there is a vast reservoir of experience and knowledge within the tourism industry which could be harnessed and utilized to create opportunities for children to learn and develop.

The central findings of the study are that location, economic factors and parents' background play a role in determining whether children aged between 12 and 15 have visited selected travel destinations in Iceland. These findings correspond to data concerning the travel habits of Icelanders, which show that low-income groups and people who live in rural areas are less likely to travel. The findings point toward needed research and innovation projects in the field of tourism studies, leisure studies and education, such as the following: (1) children's experiences and views of travel and recreation (2) Icelanders' travel habits with respect to socioeconomic situation, (3) people's experience of the importance of tourism for leisure purposes, (4) mapping of social tourism in Iceland and (5) innovation in social tourism in collaboration with the education system.

Key words: children and adolescents, destinations, social tourism, leisure, education.

Um höfundana

Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson (jakobf@hi.is) er aðjúkt og doktorsnemi við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands. Hann lauk B.Ed.-gráðu frá Kennaraháskóla Íslands árið 1993 og MA-prófi í náms- og kennslufræðum frá Háskóla Íslands árið 2011. Hann hefur unnið lengi við tómtunda- og skólustarf, m.a. í félagsmiðstöðvum, við faglega stjórnun, í grunnskóla og verið virkur í ýmsum félagsamtökum. Helstu rannsóknarviðfangsefni hans eru á sviði útmenntunar og tómtunda- og menntunarfræða, þróunar kennsluhátta í háskóla og formgerða náms. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0172-0881>

Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson (gtj@hi.is) er prófessor í ferðamálafræði við Líf- og umhverfisvísindadeild Háskóla Íslands. Hann er með meistaraþróf í mannfræði frá HÍ 2003 og doktorsþróf í land- og ferðamálafræði frá Hróarskelduháskóla 2007. Meginrannsóknaráherslur Gunnars eru mótun áfangastaða, skipulag og stefnumótun í ferðaþjónustu og nýsköpun og frumkvöðlastarf í ferðaþjónustu. Hann hefur birt rannsóknir sínar í fræðitímaritum og bókum innanlands og erlendis. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0098-3265>

Jón Torfi Jónasson (jtj@hi.is) var prófessor við Menntavísindasvið HÍ. Helstu viðfangsefni hans auk stjórnunarstarfa voru kennsla og rannsóknir sem lutu að menntun, sögu hennar og þróun. Hann hefur beint athygli að flestum þáttum skólakerfisins, allt frá leikskóla til fræðslu fullorðinna og á seinni árum hvernig skólakerfið lítur til framtíðar. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7580-3033>

About the authors

Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson (jakobf@hi.is) an adjunct lecturer and doctoral student at the University of Iceland, School of Education. He received a B.Ed. degree from the Iceland College of Education in 1993, and a master's degree in curriculum studies and pedagogy from the University of Iceland in 2011. Þorsteinsson has worked extensively in schools and leisure centres, for example in youth clubs, and worked with professional leadership in compulsory schools, as well as actively participating in various social and civil work. His research interests include outdoor education, leisure studies and pedagogy, the development of teaching methods at tertiary level, and the structure of education. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0172-0881>

Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson (gtj@hi.is) is a professor in tourism at the University of Iceland, Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences. He has an MA degree in anthropology from University of Iceland from 2003 and graduated with a PhD in social sciences from Roskilde University in 2007. His research has involved studies on place making and destination development, innovation and entrepreneurship in tourism as well as tourism policy and employment. He has published his research in journals and books both in Iceland and abroad. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0098-3265>

Jón Torfi Jónasson (jtj@hi.is) was professor at the School of Education, at the University of Iceland. His main tasks, apart from leadership responsibilities, were teaching and research focusing on education, its history and development. He has directed his attention to most aspects of the educational system, from preschool to adult education and, in later years, exploring how the education system turns its gaze to the future. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7580-3033>

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Appendix A - Reporting the background study underpinning the published studies

Navigating the Icelandic Discourse of Outdoor Education and the Dimension of Experience (draft of a paper)

Throughout the doctoral research process, I have been dealing with issues related to the structure of Outdoor Education in Iceland, as both an academic subject and practical field. At the start of the research project, we conducted focus groups with outdoor educators to gain better insight into their experiences and attitudes, particularly regarding the value of Outdoor Education for upbringing and education. Through this process, I aimed to study their discourse and define the aspects of their jobs that they considered most important. The analysis of these focus groups would then guide the next stage of the research project. The purpose was to gain insight into how professionals comprehend their field of work and its educational significance. Our assumption was that this approach would lend itself to an exploration of the existing ideas about the affordances of Outdoor Education, as perceived by experienced outdoor educators in Iceland. Furthermore, we aimed to comprehend how Outdoor Education is justified in Iceland, and which terminologies and concepts are commonly employed in the field.

This part of the research has not yet been developed into a paper, but it seems a crucial step when attempting to match the findings reported by the published studies with the existing ideas and culture of Outdoor Education in Iceland. In this appendix chapter, I will describe the method and discuss our main findings. This initial phase of my research journey definitely had a significant impact on later phases, directing me towards obtaining a glimpse of children's outdoor activities and then several aspects of the nature of the experiences reported from Outdoor Education.

Abstract

Education outside in Iceland is a growing topic within schools and leisure (sometimes called formal and non-formal education) (Aðalsteinsson & Þorsteinsson, 2015). An increasing interest and support and variety of initiatives has developed over recent years. However, whilst professional practice has progressed, the discourse of the sector and its role within education and leisure is less clear. This uncertainty and lack of identity could hinder further development as the value and opportunity such practice affords may not be visible, therefore duly recognised.

This paper presents the initial findings from a study that investigates the discourse of experienced Icelandic education and leisure professionals that work outside. The aim was to gain insight into how professionals comprehend their field of work and its educational significance. Three focus group interviews were conducted with teachers in pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education as well as educators and pedagogues in youth centres, after school clubs, urban and rural outdoor and leisure centres.

The resultant professional narrative provides an insight into the range and impact of outdoor practice within educational and leisure contexts and across non-formal and formal settings. It sheds a light on the existing ideas about the affordances of Outdoor Education in Iceland, how it is justified, and which terminologies and concepts are commonly employed in the field.

The findings reveal a certain professional tension when describing practice which varies dependent on audience e.g., children, parents and professionals. The origin of the semantic difference was unclear; however, it does appear related to professional standpoint and ideology. Moreover, current thematic analysis suggests that core themes related to Icelandic word “upplifun” (subjective experience, aesthetic experience) and professionalism are evident within the narratives of all those working outside. This paper explores these narratives and considers the implications of these different voices in relation to upplifun but grounded within the context of Outdoor Education in Iceland.

Introduction

What people understand by Outdoor Education varies substantially among those that use the term. This can be exemplified by the colossal difference between interpreting it as referring to teaching of subjects or concepts outside of the traditional classroom on the one hand and the education gained by experiencing the freedom and beauty of nature through an excursion in the wild on the other. It is easy to see how such different meanings attached to a term invites different opinions about where such experiences belong, in particular if they fit within the more traditional school operation or if they belong somewhere else. The problem we see in Iceland (and that could be in other countries as well) is that Outdoor Education is “on the borderline” in schools (formal education) and leisure and youth work (non-formal education) and the “home” of Outdoor Education is unclear. The issue we address in this paper may be an issue that other countries have wrestled with previously, but we think each of these ‘wrestles’ need to be undertaken in relation to each context - that is each country: In respect of each culture, each educational system, etc. So, it isn't just a case of looking at what other countries have done and drawing on their experience. We need to look at “Outdoor Education in action in Iceland” and draw from that some learning that can be of use in further research and development. We believe that it has to be developed through a collaborative process that encourages different groups, may it be formal, informal and non-formal, to work together.

To gain insight into the Icelandic discourse we use three focus group interviews with experienced outdoor educators (n15). Many common themes were identified as core value of Outdoor Education. The discourse is influenced among other by the formality of the educational processes, where Outdoor Education took place and the occupation of the professionals. The conflict between Outdoor Education being a method or subject was visible. The exploring of local discourse and mirroring it in international literature with local examples makes us better prepared to come to a more common understanding of key concepts and also appreciate varieties forms and values of Outdoor Education. Outdoor Education is in a forming stage in Iceland and the challenges, development and action there can be an example for other nations.

If we believe that Outdoor Education has an important role and value in education, then we have to be able to define what we mean by Outdoor Education and what the main affordances that Outdoor Education brings to us as humans and for nature in general. Mirroring it with international literature with local examples makes us better prepared to come to a more common understanding of key concepts and also appreciate varieties forms and values of Outdoor Education.

In this paper we explore of the discourse about Outdoor Education in Iceland by analyzing three focus groups. Our aim is to gives us in Iceland a firmer ground to stand on in further research, development and policy making. We in Iceland need to develop a policy structure, a framework for development that is specific to Iceland context, country, landscape, culture, history etc. That is developed through a collaborative process that encourages all groups (e.g., leisure, school and tourism) to work together and to value Outdoor Education.

This study aimed to explore learning outside in Iceland and investigate how outdoor educators from different sectors experience and describe their work, learnings and value it infolds for upbringing and education. The aim is also to examine learning outside in Iceland from an international perspective.

The study is guided by the following research questions: What is the understanding of experienced Icelandic outdoor teachers and leisure professionals about the essence, value and role of learning outside for upbringing and education in Iceland?

The experience in Outdoor Education

The significance of experience has been at the core of Outdoor Education almost since its inception and is strongly influenced by Dewey's (1938) theory of experience and education (Quay & Seaman, 2013). The phrase "outdoor experiential education" is often used to frame the field as a whole in theoretical and professional journals (see e.g., Jirásek & Turcova 2017; Martin & Franc 2017; Whittington, 2018; Wurdinger, 2005;). In the paper, we intend to dive into the historical meaning of the phenomenon of experience in Outdoor Education (Quay & Seaman, 2013) and look "beyond

learning by doing,” as Roberts (2008) encourages us to do, with the focus directed on the lived experience (Ord & Leather, 2011).

Despite the centrality of the concept of experience in Outdoor Education, it is often forgotten. An example of this is a published teaching guide for teachers and university students in Outdoor Education and outdoor learning (Andreassen & Pálsdóttir, 2014), which only briefly refers to the ways in which experience figures into outdoor learning.

We use concepts to understand reality, and they are necessary when it comes to understanding things that we cannot directly perceive. The experience concept is complex. In Icelandic, there are two words over experience, *reynsla* and *upplifun*, and they function as an adjective, noun and a verb. Gunnar Ragnarsson reviews the concept in his preface of *Experience and Education* (Dewey 2000, p. 17). Ragnarsson uses ‘*reynsla*’ as the translation of “experience”, but in plural *upplifanir* and even *upplifanir* and actions for the active meaning that Dewey puts in the term. The functional meaning of Dewey’s experience is an act.

If we try to clarify the difference between *upplifun* and *reynsla*,²³ then we would say *upplifun* is an extraordinary event that we perceive with multiple senses, and that creates (mainly positive) emotions and lasting memories. *Upplifanir* (plur.) are highlights or special moments or events in our lives. *Reynsla* is the sum of *upplifanir* and insights that we gather throughout our life. It is a neutral term and does not have to be exciting or necessarily positive. *Reynsla* is not used in the plural. In Icelandic, we have a word that describes someone who is rich of experience, or *reynsluríkur*, used to describe someone that has gathered experiences over a long period of time in a certain field and built up competences and character. For the sake of simplicity, it may be possible to look at the relationship between “*upplifun*” and “*reynsla*” in such a way that *reynsla* is an *upplifun* that has been digested and learned, and which has shaped you as a person and in your professional life.

The Icelandic words about experience is here intended to describe and “go behind” or transcend the meaning of the ruling English discourse, given that experience is, as said before, a core issue in Outdoor Education. Could it be that there is something that another language, in this case Icelandic, can convey and conceptualize that is missing in the English discourse, and we could subsequently learn from?

Kirsti Pedersen Gurholt (2016) has discussed the meaning of the verb Norwegian word “*å erfare*” (i. *að reyna* – e. to experience) and the noun *erfaringer* (i. *reynsla* - experience). In German there are similar words, “*erfahren* and *erfahrungen*”. The root of the words is in the German word “*fahren*”, which means to “venture out and

²³ In this I sought support in the definitions of *erlebens* and *erfarung* in German.

experience" (p. 293). Gurholt says that "the noun ending ung/-ing refers to processes and is associated with ideas of going somewhere and through something, exploring, and getting to know by getting out, and also with enduring, suffering and becoming well travelled/experienced." She continues and writes that "erfaringer implies the kind of knowledge, skills and wisdom about individuals and their natural and cultural surroundings that can be gained only through participation in life situations and contexts." (p. 293). This analysis of the root of words can help us to understand the meaning. Reynsla in Icelandic and to be reynsluríkur (e. rich of experience) can then refer to something you have gained over a long time on your path of life. This she links to education by using the concept "dannelse" (i. menntun), adding that "dannelse may thus be understood as the embodied sum of our lifelong personal and immediate experiences of interacting with the world, even though we may no longer remember what we were struggling to learn or were initially affected by." (p. 293).

The vocabulary we use to describe and analyse our life changes over time. According to Gadamer (1960/2004), "erlebnis" (i. upplifun) became a common term in Germany in the early years of the 20th century, as Romantic biographical writers searched for a new vocabulary to express the emotional landscape of the human. In Norway, Gurholt (2016) claims that the word "opplevelse" has become a catchphrase in modern times and it often refers to first-person experiences and "to moments of intense feeling, e.g. for nature" (p. 293). It commonly replaces efarin (i. reynsla) and this could, according to Gurholt, indicate "a potential cultural shift from an emphasis on formative experiences of nature, and nature literacy, towards placing a premium on vivid moments when nature adventurers feel fully alive." (p. 293).

Some say that experiential learning is all at once a method, way of life and philosophy. Experience, in Dewey's spirit of *Experiencing and Education*, is education that is truly real and authentic. According to Dewey, education requires a lot of preparation, planning and development by the teacher or educator. The education is not only a matter of experiencing something outside, but rather dealing with challenges and experiences in situations that have been carefully organized for educational purposes. The teacher's task is to ensure the student acquires experiences that possess genuine learning opportunities, rather than experiences that do not create learning or attract non-learning or even "wrong" learning (Dewey, 2000).

On the whole, the study openly and tacitly focuses on the value of outdoor experiential education for children and adolescents as active participants. Working with experience also entails methods applied by professionals and it is therefore possible to claim that a study on experience at the least offers the professional's perspective and the perspective of the participant. This study analyses experience using mixed methods, through interviews with professionals and adult participants, with the aim of extracting their experiences of Outdoor Education.

Method and data

The data was acquired from three focus group interviews with experienced outdoor educators from Iceland.

Sample Participation - Experienced Outdoor Educators

The target groups in this study were outdoor educators working on various programmes and in diverse places. Outdoor Education is understood to take place within the arenas of school and leisure. The participants in the focus groups were selected by purposeful sampling and that requires the researcher to think critically about the data and select a sample which fits with the aims and research questions of the project (Silverman, 2013). The criteria used to select promising participants were gender, age, field of work in the outdoor sector (e.g. school, leisure, tourism) and they were all experienced. Three focus group interviews were conducted with teachers in preschools, primary, secondary and tertiary education, as well as educators and pedagogues in youth centres, after school clubs, and urban and rural outdoor and leisure centres. The focus group interviews were held over a one-week period (December 2016) to examine the issue in more detail and to ground the discussion in professional practice.

A purposive sampling technique (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Silverman, 2013) was used and together I with the help of colleagues made a list of experienced professionals that work in the outdoors. For the first focus group, I selected experienced outdoor educators from school and leisure work (formal and non-formal fields). A snowball sampling technique (Creswell, 2014) was used to gain additional participants by asking those in the first focus group if they knew others who could be interested in participating in the research. This technique allowed professionals within the field to bring others into the study without the researcher being involved in the selection process. In total, we made a list that comprised 35 people: 13 males, 22 females. From that we chose 17 people: 9 females and 8 males to participate in the three focus groups. The average age was 46 years old. The youngest was aged 29 and the oldest 66. All participants in the focus groups received a letter containing information relevant to the interviews, and then signed a consent form. The files are in stored researcher computer (password required).

Thematic and discourse analysis

In January 2019 the analysing process of the research was completed. The analysing procedures involved transcription, carefully listen to and read many times. Issues were underlined, coded and categorized and then the thematic analysis was applied. To strengthen the liability of the process of analysing the data, three researchers were invited to participate. One researcher was Icelandic, who observed the focus group interviews and read the documents created in the analysing process, to give feedback on coding, categorization and the main themes. The other researcher, an experienced

English-speaking researcher, acted as a critical reflective partner who asked questions, read documents and gave feedback in different phases of the analysing process and writing process. In the final stage, an experienced outdoor educator from Iceland (that did not participate in the focus groups) read all the transcripts and offered critical feedback on the overall process.

Discourse analysis has been used in a variety of ways but in general focuses on the interplay of language and the expressions of social reality. It is a convenient way of looking at the interaction between individuals and communities, etc. by examining how language formulates ideas and how we express them (Björnsdóttir, 2013). It examines how delimited discourse, the way of discussing or conceptualizing a phenomenon, appears and how it shapes professional activities. Discourse analysis was used on parts of the focus group interviews, with special emphasis on the way discourse relates to the meaning of core concepts.

Findings

The interview was analysed in four categories:

1. Different forms of wording depending on the audience that is children, parents and professionals (theoretical). Growing awareness, interest and experimentations of negotiating the meaning of core theoretical concepts about working outside with people.
2. Variety of learnings were identified of working outside and many subjects and issues were involved. That include a broad scope of issues associated with e.g., skills, knowledge and attitude and also sustainability, climate change and community.
3. The value was identified as extensive, ranging from teaching practise and ways of learning, sensing and strong associations to fundamental pillars of the curriculum.
4. Different organizational structure was described as being active that included both school and leisure sector of education. Appeal is for more collaboration and at the same time recognition of the different contribution and emphasis.

Two themes were identified in all of the categories:

- A. "Upplifun" – (subjective experience), experiencing here and now. To experience – upplifa is a very common word use by educators of all sectors to describe the importance of being and experiencing. Fundamental element in Outdoor Education.
- B. Professionalism. The role of professional standpoint and ideology and how that 'colors' the structure, aims, content, methods, and foreseen / expected learnings.
- C. Role of power in many aspects, perspective of Outdoor Education.

Many obstacles and solutions were recognised to strengthen the field of working outside in a pedagogical and educational purposes.

Four Categories	
Themes: Professionalism "Uplifun" Power	Different forms of wording depending on the audience that is children, parents and professionals. Growing awareness, interest and experimentations of negotiating the meaning of core theoretical concepts about working outside with people.
	Variety of learnings identified of working outside and many subjects and issues where involved. That include a broad scope of issues associated with e.g. skills, knowledge and attitude <u>and also</u> sustainability, climate change and community.
	The value (worth, merit, affordance) was identified as extensive; ranging from teaching practise and ways of learning, sensing and strong associations to fundamental pillars of the curriculum.
	Different organizational structure described as being active that included both school and leisure sector of education. Appeal is for more collaboration and at the same time recognition of different contribution and emphasis of different forms of education.

Obstacle and solutions to strengthen the field of working outside in a pedagogical and educational purposes

Figure 1: Categories and Themes

I will in this paper focus on one theme uplifun and explore different voices from the focus groups. Experience is essential in Outdoor Education. When we look in more depth at the concept uplifun and listen to the voices of experienced outdoor educators we hear that it has many dimensions. The English language has just this one "dimension" one this word. In Icelandic we have two – reynsla (experience) and uplifun. That is the case in many other languages, take for example Germany: Erlebnis = An extraordinary event that we perceive with multiple senses, and that creates (mainly positive) emotions and lasting memories. Erlebnisse (Plur.) are highlights or special moments / events in our lives (ref). Erfahrung = The sum of experiences and insights that we gather throughout our life. They don't have to be exciting or necessarily positive. Erfahrungen (Plur.) increasingly form our character, build up our competences, etc. over a long period of time (ref).

The outdoor educator used the word "reynsla" 9 times but the word "uplifun" 52 times. So uplifun was much more used to describe this vital issue in Outdoor Education. It is therefore important to ask What do they mean by "uplifun" and to

“upplifa”? What does that include? What kind of “experience/es” are they describing?

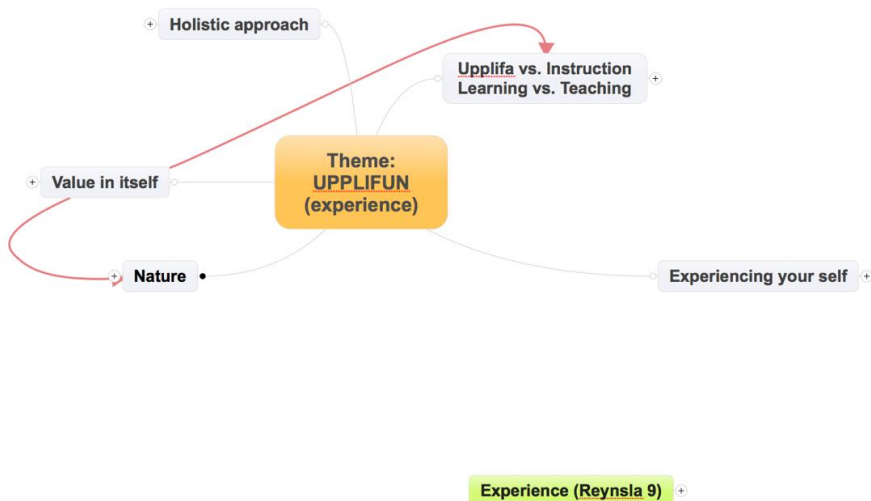
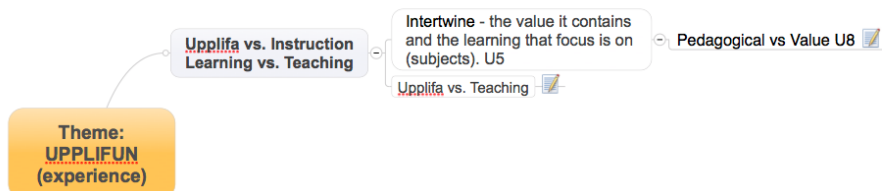


Figure 2: The main dimension of upplifun – The main threads of upplifun

Figure 2 is mapping of the meaning of “upplifun” and we will describe in more detail three elements that helps us to identify the individual components that make up the meaning of the word: Conflict – Nature – Value in it self

Conflict: Learning vs. Teaching / Upplifun vs. Instruction

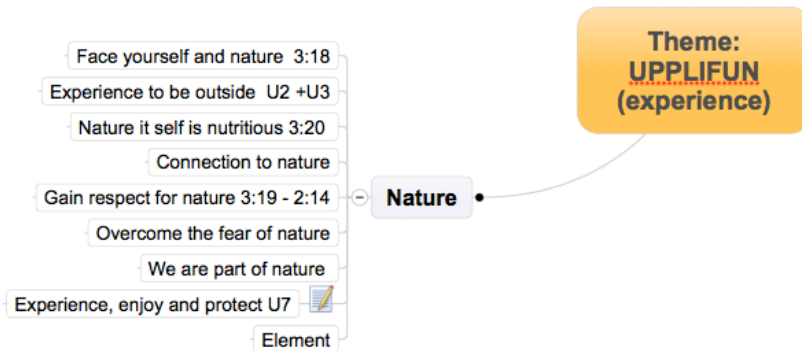


Vivid in the discussion in the focus groups was the tension or conflict between “enjoy and formal teaching”. Outdoor learning is these three phased processes: Prepare inside, go out and experience and go in and finish (Andreassen & Pálsdóttir, 2014). Claire teacher in a kindergarten describes it:

I think maybe it's just the debate, the previous discussion [about definition], you know. I did my study on outdoor learning, and all that I wanted to know about it was always the elementary school went out for some time; prepared inside, went out for a while, finishing the project inside. ... this was exactly the definition of this. ... so we went on this project ... and it was doing something outside, ... we have just come from it, just allowing them to experience (upplifa) and enjoy and to learn to respect the nature and, just being their self, ... in their area and how they respond to it. Instead of having some formal teaching.

I went to Slovenia on behalf of Prisma and it was absolutely this focus that the child can enjoy, it's not this direct instruction that, ... it needs to be defined.

Nature



The fundamental element of the meaning behind the word 'upplifun' is a unique type of experience with nature that involves connection with nature, respect for it, enjoyment, introspection, and embracing oneself as a part of nature.

Rose, head teacher in a primary school describes this foundation:

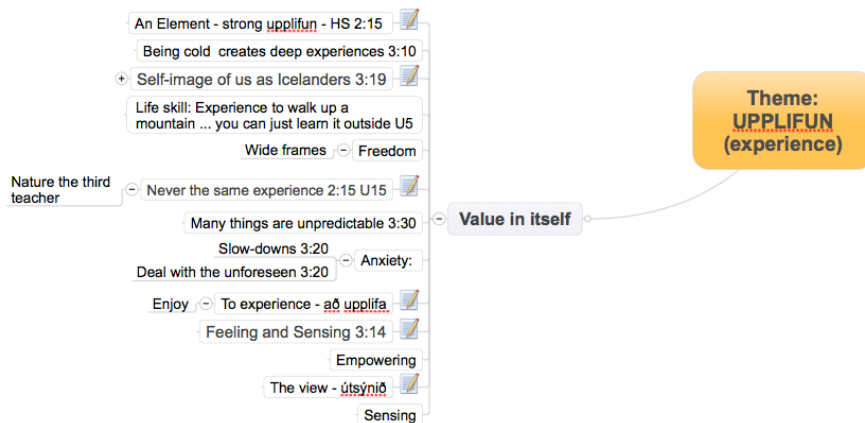
What, of course, of course, maybe the foundation in our work, in our minds, that if you do not know your environment, you do not know how the interaction is in nature, you may not be interested in exactly protecting. ... because of our ideology is that you have to experience [upplifa] so this is something that matters to you and that's perhaps the

main thread of what we are trying to do, there is always the thought behind it that because you said yes, we are hoping to raise children who have this mindset that matter, their ecological footprint is important, that's what it's like this foundation.

Henry, a pedagogue who is employed in youth work, describes the following:

The experience will be so strong, it's like it's turned on a bunch of others, something, senses and all kinds of things. Like what we've been walking about thirteen days. You know, it's up to the mountains that it's such a great experience [upplifun] for them, and there's so much that's starts to move in them, yet I can not quite say, that's because ...

but it's some element their that I've always felt a bit interesting and I do not know how to investigate it, but it's all the way, with this group out there, and they are both scared, but they are still excited and you know, it's something totally new, and also to deal with nature, yourself, the group, anything. It would not be a bus ride on any highway or anyone sports hall ... it's only when you're out in nature, there's some element that I'm hard at putting words on it but there's something there ...



Value in itself

Often in Outdoor Education we have a set goal to reach. We want to teach a topic or visit a special place. Some outdoor educators have what we simple view. Amalia, pedagogue and a youth worker says “we are just always outdoors, and there we are just experiencing [upplifa]” and Jose pedagogue, university teacher and private counsellor ads:

Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson

Yes, I think it's a little like he talked about earlier, teaching them to use their own senses outside, that's to say, one learns to read in his own senses and find himself through the experience [upplifun], I think that's like that, maybe the purpose of these trips, to meet the storm ...

Rose, head teacher in a primary school:

It's definitely also effects on the self-image of kids, as Icelanders I also think. If Iceland is this natural paradise, as it is. I have traveled widely [in Iceland] and there is always something that is completely unique and unfortunately precisely. With maybe the financial cuts in recent years, and that kids have not gone beyond Rauðavatn, that's just, it's dangerous for Iceland's nature

Susanne teacher in kindergarten:

This is just to go out and experience [upplifa] something, because you can see one little bird somewhere in a tree and then, it just becomes, all the journey is spend on that

Discussion (draft)

Those professionals and practitioners that are working with educational or pedagogical process outside school use different words and concept about their practice. In the field of youth and community working outside has been a big topic. When discussing with professional in the field about this part of their work we would hear concept like youth work, community work, leisure work, preventive work, outreach work (i. leitarstarf), outdoor stay (i. útivera), outdoor learning, outdoor teaching (i. útikennsla), informal education and non-formal education. Depending on what would be the focus of the work.

Outdoor Education is a holistic approach where "upplifun" (experience) is an essential or a core issue that has many dimensions. When we listen to the voices of experienced outdoor educators, we hear that it has many dimensions, and this is in line with model from Quay and Seaman (2016, p. 44) "each way of being-in-the-world has its associated ways of doing and ways of knowing, which are then discernible through reflective experience."

The field of Outdoor Education in Iceland is still emerging, and some people's views are still quite narrow; seeing e.g., Outdoor Education as just outdoor activities (which it can be) or a teaching method outside schools.

As the field is emerging and developing there are great opportunity to add a more richness and diversity in the description and defining of it within the Icelandic discourses about education, leisure and recreation. Here we argue for that that

discourse includes issues like aesthetic, spiritual, adventure and just being outdoors. This can be seen as a call for more awareness of the importance of aesthetic experience rather than of just “fun” experience, or to “structured and controlled” experiences.

When students venture into the real world, they gain first-hand experience, which often allows them to connect theory, concepts, and personal experiences into an integrated learning experience that puts the individual’s learning at the forefront. Outdoor learning activates all of our senses and forms so-called silent knowledge that cannot be fully explained in words (Burriss & Boyd, 2005; Wattachow & Brown, 2011).

Outdoor Education in Iceland is a part of a larger world that includes discourse, thinking, acting and being outside. In Iceland, we have our own discourse about this, in our own language, and we aim for it to be rich, describing and helping us to think and act in a professional and playful manner. Let’s play with our Icelandic language and together develop our language about teaching, learning, playing and being outside. But at the same time be aware that we are part of an international discussion about this and that “their” thinking and doing will support us, and “we” have a story to tell “them”

Conclusion

Outdoor Education is a holistic approach where “upplifun” (experience) is an essential or a core issue that has many dimensions. A call for more awareness of the importance of aesthetic experience rather than of just “fun” experience, or to “structured and controlled” experiences. Aesthetic experience as “hrifnæm reynsla – hrifnæm upplifun”

1. These tentative findings and discussion can support the development of Outdoor Education in Iceland and provide a foundation and act as a point of departure for further research.
2. Definition and description of Outdoor Education has to be drawn from common practice and take into account discourse diversity of the field.
3. Deeper understanding of Outdoor Education can allow the field to progress in a way that unifies the movement, increases visibility and highlights its affordances across different fields such as leisure and schools.

The exploring of local discourse and mirroring it in international literature with local examples makes us better prepared to come to a more common understanding of key concepts and also appreciate varieties of forms and affordances of Outdoor Education. That gives us in Iceland a firmer ground to stand on in further research, development and policy making. This suggests that a clearer definition of the outside in Icelandic outdoor pedagogy drawn from practice, regardless of professional standpoint, may allow the field to progress in a way that unifies the movement, increases visibility and highlights its affordances across leisure and schools. As such these tentative findings and discussion support development in the field of Outdoor Education in Iceland and provide a foundation for further research.

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Appendix B - Methods

Action research

One part of the research project entails action research focusing on two university courses (Outdoor Journeys and Friluftsliv / Place-based Outdoor Education). Paper two and three are both designed as action research.

Action research is effectively defined by Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 162) when they state it as “simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken in order to improve the rationality of our practice, and understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out”. That action research is a cyclical process and involves a cycle, or spiral, of planning, action, monitoring and reflection. The basic structure of action research has been elaborated in different accounts of the same process, for example in Elliott (1991), Kemmis and McTaggart (1982) and McNiff (2016), who all promote the same cyclical or spiral approach to action and reflection. Stake (1995) notes that action research projects could also be considered an exploratory case study.

This part of the PhD research project gave us better understanding of the part played by the outdoor courses at the university, which supports the development of the courses as well as contributing to build a proper foundation for developing the field of Outdoor Education at the University of Iceland. The research reported in Paper II employed three main methods to gather the students’ experiences. We conducted a focus group in order to hear the students describe, express and make sense of their experience. We also used the methods of photo-elicitation to stimulate discussion. Following the focus group and photo-elicitation we analysed the students’ written academic assessments. The research reported in Paper II the data was based on students’ final assignments where they reflected back on the journey based on earlier reflections written in a logbook from both before the journey and during the journey. The researchers also use complementary data such as educators’ observations, photos and a researcher journal.

Focus groups

We used focus group at the beginning of the research project (see chapter 2.2) and in Paper II. Using focus group interviews as a starting point allow me to gather rich qualitative data from experienced outdoor educators in Iceland. That provide a valuable insight into their attitudes, beliefs, and experiences related the aim of that part of the research that was to get insight into professionals’ discourse and understanding of Outdoor Education and recreation. A focus group is an effective method to collect data

from a number of participants at the same time, with semi-structured discussions about a specific topic during one meeting. They involve an unstructured, but guided, discussion, focused on a topic. Focus groups can provide an open and supportive environment in which participants interact and talk in depth on issues. The interaction and discussion between participants can often reveal hidden areas or blind spots that may not be immediately visible to the individuals involved, and this can lead to rich, detailed outcomes. Focus groups are an acknowledged method for eliciting a wide range of views or understanding of an issue (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As Morgan (2019, p. 5) highlights “the hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group”. This structure was used in order to allow students the opportunity to freely engage in the research process, in their friendship groups and to interact. The participants get to hear each other’s responses and to make additional comment beyond their own initial responses as they hear what other people have to say, thus providing a richer set of data.

Photo-elicitation

Paper II also uses the methods of photo-elicitation to stimulate discussion, having been persuaded of its efficacy by Harper (2002), Loeffler (2005) and Porr et al., (2011). Images have been used in a range of diverse qualitative studies and can be used in research in various ways to get interviewees to share their experiences (Flick, 2018; Silverman, 2017). Loeffler (2005, p. 346) found that her participants “exhibited a strong desire to capture every nuance of the excitement, intensity, and learning of the new activity or environment” when telling the stories associated with particular images, and we had suspected that our students would be similar. Images have been used in diverse qualitative studies, e.g., in education, psychology, sociology and also in research on adventure education (Loeffler, 2004). Loeffler (2004) cites Carlsson who claims that images can give the researcher a better understanding of the participant’s experience than the spoken or written word alone.

Complementary data

Educators’ observations and photos

In Paper III use educators’ observations and photos. In one of the cohorts, we got support from the University of Iceland Academic Affairs Fund (i. Kennslumálasjóður HÍ). We used the grant to get an observer to join us on one journey. It was - a participatory observation because the main observer was also involved in the teacher team, though she at times withdrew to take notes and see to the recording. We wanted to have an observer because it gave us valuable opportunities to dig into certain issues, ask questions and obtain a different perspective on the process. It is in line with the advantages of observation as a data collection method because it includes direct access

to research phenomena, high levels of flexibility in terms of application as well as generating a permanent record of phenomena to be worked with later (Dudovskiy, 2016). The data that were collected consisted of photos, recordings of instructions and reflective discussion (both with students and also between the educators) and the educators' reflective journals (notes). We took numerous photos during the two courses we studied, and we utilized them in our papers to offer the reader a glimpse into the context of our research.

Researcher journal

I began writing a personal research journal in January 2017, when I moved to Edinburgh. I had been using reflective journals on and off and found it helped me in keeping track of my ideas, feelings and progress. My research journal contained my ideas about the project, notes from meetings, reflections and questions I was struggling with.

Questionnaire

Questionnaire is used in Paper IV and V and it is from the 2017/2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study in Iceland. The HBSC collects data every four years over 50 countries on well-being, social environments and health behaviours of children aged between 11 and 15. The online questionnaire entailed four questions about children's outdoor life, e.g., how much time they spent outside on weekdays and weekends, with whom and what natural sights they have visited. All Icelandic compulsory school children in grades 6, 8 and 10 were asked to participate, which led to about 7000 participants. We also explored international data from Canada that available allow some comparison with our own findings.

In the process of making the questions and have a better understanding of the topic I did two preliminary inquiries on children's outdoor activities with a group of undergraduate students at the School of Education at the University of Iceland. On the one hand, basic questions about outdoor activities were asked in three compulsory schools in Iceland (in a rural area, centre of Reykjavik and in a suburb). On the other hand, a larger questionnaire was designed used in two compulsory school in Reykjavik and the findings used in bachelor's paper of my student. See here: <http://hdl.handle.net/1946/31567>

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Appendix C - Introductory letter

To the participants in the focus group interviews

Outdoor learning in formal and non-formal education.

Content: Invitation to participate in focus group interviews.

Who am I/researcher and what is the purpose of the study?

My name is Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson and I am a doctoral student at the University of Iceland School of Education. I am gathering data for my study that revolves around outdoor learning in both formal and informal education. The data will be used to shed light on the experiences of professionals in the field of Outdoor Education, both in formal educational settings, such as schools, as well as in informal educational settings, such as leisure work or in outdoor centres. My supervisor is Dr. Jón Torfi Jónasson. I will oversee the interviews along with an assistant who will e.g. control the recordings. The assistant is permitted to enter the discussions with questions or comments if the need arises.

What are focus groups?

An interest in the use of focus groups interviews with the aim of gathering research data has been growing over recent years. Focus groups are considered useful for extracting diverse perspectives or experiences of a specific phenomenon. The method seeks to facilitate discussion amongst individuals who e.g. share a particular experience. In the discussions, a specific theme or topic is emphasized. The purpose of focus groups is, among other things, to compare and discuss perspectives and opinions on a certain topic. This means that you are invited to participate in discussions, to initiate conversation regarding a particular topic and analyze the subject matter of the discussions. We are interested in your perspective and experience concerning access, and I hope that we can spark a lively discussion on the topic. It is important to remember that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions that participants are asked to review.

What does participation in a focus group entail?

There will be four to six participants in the focus group, one leader and one assistant. The discussions will be recorded. The interview will take around one hour. The goal is to frame the experiences and perspectives of professionals who work either in schools or in leisure centres. The questions are set to extract a clear image of the emphases, methods, goals and structure of Outdoor Education both in formal and informal educational contexts. You are welcome to offer personal opinions or perspectives on the topic.

When will the focus group interviews take place?

Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson

One of the main difficulties of the focus group method is gathering participants. If for some reason you are unable to attend at the designated time, please contact me, Jakob Frímann, at 8602096 or via email at: jakobf@hi.is.

What will transpire during the interviews?

You will be introduced to the other participants as soon as you arrive. You will then be asked to sign a consent form regarding the study participation. You will receive a copy of the document. We will describe the intended trajectory at which point you can ask questions if something is unclear to you. We will then introduce basic rules, such as making sure that everybody gets chance to express themselves, and that differing opinions and emotions are respected. When everyone is ready, we will turn on the recording device and commence the discussions. You will get an opportunity to ask further questions at the end of the discussions if something is unclear to you.

What is the benefit of participating in a focus group study?

You will receive the opportunity to participate in a research project which allows you to familiarize yourself with the research process and gain the experience of having taken part in research. Moreover, you hopefully will be given the chance to participate in a lively discussion about a topic that interests you and that is important in a broader societal context.

Will participation pose any risks?

There is no specific risk associated with participation in this study. In general, it is worth keeping in mind that some questions might cause discomfort or elicit uncomfortable comments or behaviour from other participants. If you have any doubts after the discussions are over, feel free to contact the researcher, Jakob Frímann, at 8602006, or via email at: jakobf@hi.is.

Are participants' answers traceable to them personally?

No, the interviews are anonymous and we ensure that all answers will remain untraceable. Full confidentiality is guaranteed with regard to copying and processing of all information/data.

Can a participant cancel his/her participation?

Despite your consent to participate in the study you are permitted to cancel your participation without explanation for upwards of 30 days after the interview. After this time period, the processing of data will have reached a stage where it is difficult to identify individual voices of participants within the discussion. If you want to cancel your participation, please contact the researcher, Jakob Frímann, via email at: jakobf@hi.is. If you have any further questions please contact: Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson, University of Iceland School of Education. Email: jakobf@hi.is .

Sincerely, Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson.

Appendix D - Letter of consent

Focus groups 1-3

Example

Reykjavík 12 December 2016

Participant consent,

I consent to take part in the research project Outdoor Education in Formal and Non-formal Education [Later on in the research project the name of it was changed]. I have been informed about the purpose of the study and what my participation entails. I am free to decline answering question and withdraw from the focus group if such a situation presents itself without having to provide reasoning in any shape or form.

I have been informed that I am free to withdraw my participation for up to 30 days after interview completed.

I have been informed that full confidentiality is ensured and that participants' comments during the interviews will remain untraceable. All personal information that might identify me will be deleted or altered. I will not discuss the contents of the groups' conversations publicly or in any other place.

I have been informed that the interviews are recorded and transcribed. I am aware of the how the data will be used and that the data will be used for the research project Outdoor Education in Formal and Informal Education.

Name:

Signature:

Place/Date

Uses of student's reflective journals

Example

28th August 2017

Informed consent

Research title: Learning environment and personal development

I, the undersigned, hereby confirm that I have familiarized myself with the above-mentioned research and its content. I understand that the aim of this research is to investigate the experiences and learning of students who participated in the course "Outdoor Journeys and friluftsliv" in August 2017.

I am giving permission to use my final project that I submitted for evaluation. The focus will be on analyzing personal experiences and the learning you gained from my participation in the course. In accordance with the requirements of Data Protection, full confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained, and names of students and other personal information will be changed. After the data processing is completed, the data will be stored and then destroyed according to the University's rules on preserving examination records. I can withdraw from the research at any stage without any explanation.

Document analysis is a prerequisite for conducting this research, and its results will shed light on the value of outdoor life and reflection in education.

By signing below, I consent to participate in the aforementioned research.

Date: _____

Participant's signature

Hervör Alma Árnadóttir, lecturer
and Jakob F. Þorsteinsson, adjunct professor

Appendix E - Discussion guides

Discussion guides were used as a research method in relation to two papers. Three focus groups interviews (no. 1-3) were conducted, which laid the foundation for the background study (Navigating the Icelandic Discourse of Outdoor Education and the Dimension of Experience, see appendix A). Additionally, one focus group (no. 4) was conducted for Paper II (Exploring a pedagogy of place in Iceland: Students understanding of a sense of place and emerging meanings).

Question frame for focus group 1-3

Research question: What is Outdoor Education and what is the value for education?

The aim of the discussion is to

- Investigate the discourse of Outdoor Education/learning in Iceland
- Develop a clear picture of the content and form of Outdoor Education/learning in formal and non-formal education.
- Consider and confirm the difference in formality (formal – non-formal) both with reference to the system and operational mode.
- Capture the views of experienced professionals that work outdoors in an educational (or leisure) purposes about what they do and why, what kind of experience or learning it creates and how this field can develop.
- Clarify the difference between different perspectives both in aims and form.

Introduction to the participants:

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the focus group, we ask for your permission to record the discussions so we can work with and analyse your answers.

We promise full confidence – you will never be revealed by name nor position which would reveal your identity.

We are interested in hearing your views and experience about Outdoor Education in your work.

We also ask you to keep our discussions in confidence in order to respect the confidentiality of the views other people express.

You can withdraw from the focus group at any point.

For discussions in the focus group:

I will keep in mind to ask participants to describe and give an example so we will have a view of the spectrum of ideas, i.e. both width and depth. The difference between views is no less important than the general views themselves.

A) Describe what you are doing

1. Each participant fills out an information form ...

a. Name, experience, education and where you work

Describe what are you doing outdoors with children / students / participants

a. Ask what they are doing and where

What terms do you use concerning your work outside?

a. Follow up by asking what meaning they have for different words

b. e.g. what do you mean when you say outdoor learning?

c. Will learning become outdoor learning just when it is moved outdoors?

d. Example used: reading out loud inside or outside / walking in nature or walking in the mall?

B) Learnings and values

What kind of learning (education/development) do you observe taking place (see happen) in your outdoor programmes?

Here I need to be attentive to different fields and ask further questions e.g. about social matter as friendship and self-esteem, nature ...

Be open to more philosophical discussions around the purpose of education more generally and what people believe makes for 'good' education

Is it about educating students on the whole? Academically as well as encouraging personal and social development?

2. Do you work with outdoor learning in relation to a specific subject or issues?

a) If so what subject or issues do you work with?

b) The curriculum have defined six basic pillars of education (i. grunnþættir menntunar) that is Literacy in the widest sense, Education towards sustainability, Health and welfare, Democracy and human rights, Equality and Creativity. Does outdoor learning relate to some of them, - if so, what does it relate to?

3. Sometimes it is said that outdoor learning is the key to education for sustainability.

a) From your experience, what is your assessment of that statement? (how?)

Remember that EfS shall be the guiding light in all education; formal, non-formal and informal (DESD 2005-2014).

b) Of all topics in EfS, climate change is the most urgent. What experience do you have of discussing about climate change in outdoor learning?

- If no answer comes then ask why they think it is so?

4. What do you think is the main purpose/value of outdoor learning/education? Why should outdoor learning be practiced?

a. Ask further - we will not "put words in people's mouth" but generate discussion about

... if it is to "serve" (other) subjects,

... as a part of a subject/discipline,

... to stimulate diversity in activities

... as an outdoor recreation,

... healthy lifestyle, support to physical ability,

... has a value in itself or ...

C) Position – home base

We have discussed different purposes and forms of OE. Now we would like to focus on your view regarding where you think OE should be positioned within education, regarding e.g. written guidelines (curriculum), systematically or in your own workplace.

5. How do you see OE linked e.g. to the curriculum or other official guidelines?

- Where should it be mentioned in these papers?

both the national and the school curriculum?

a. Do you see OE as being part of that – or where could it fit?

b. Do you work closely with the curriculum or ...

6. If we look at OE as a cross-disciplinary subject and also cross- institutional / organisation issue.

a) Where do you think the OE "home base" should be and how could you see it develop?

b) What about other fields in OE than the one you are working with, does that apply to all of the fields of OE?

c) Should OE be a part of school work or should it be placed somewhere else?

Jakob Frímann Þorsteinsson

7. How do you experience the status of OE/OL within the organisation you are working within?
 - a. Regarding respect for the activity?
 - b. Regarding support in form of facilities or finance you think is necessary?
 - c. Regarding the interest of participants?

D Other

8. Is there anything you want to add – any questions or comments on the discussion?

9. Now we are at the end of our discussion, we would like to ask you if our discussion has somehow changed your views or understanding of Outdoor Education?

10. We will conduct two other focus groups in the coming days. We would like to have people with diverse experiences and views. Do you have some suggestions about people we should contact?

(name of the assistance), do you want to add anything?

Question frame for focus group 4

The focus group was in two stages.

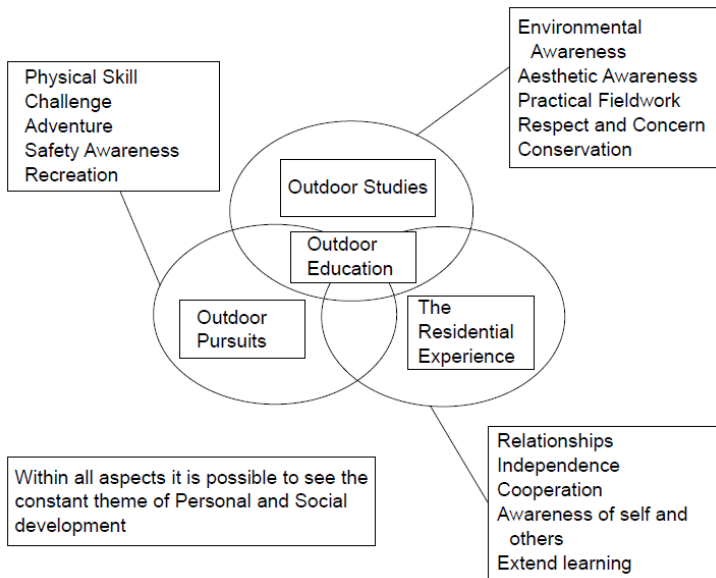
First was a group work (total three groups with about five participants each) and then each student introduced three pictures / drawings that he had chosen.

Reflection question in three groups

- 1 What activities gave you most sense of understanding of place based learning?
- 2 How do we take meaning from this?
- 3 What one thing will you take forward into your professional practice?

Appendix F - Models of Outdoor Education

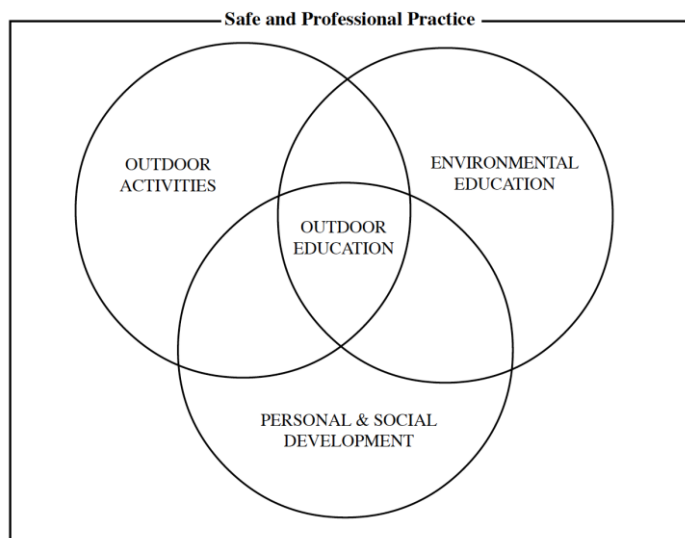
The National Association for Outdoor Education (NAOE) in UK stated in 1970 that Outdoor Education was a “means of approaching educational objectives through guided direct experience in the environment using its resources as learning material” (Leather & Porter, 2006 p. 55) and also presented a three-ring model to define Outdoor Education (Figure 11).



Adapted from NAOE 1980, Cumbria LEA 1984, Devon 1988 in Leather and Porter (2006 p. 56).

Figure 11. A version of the NAOE three ring model to define Outdoor Education.

Higgins and Loynes (1997) introduced a slightly simpler model of Outdoor Education in a guide for outdoor educators in Scotland. Similar to the model above, it shows three interlocking circles: Outdoor activities, environmental education and personal and social development (see Figure 12).

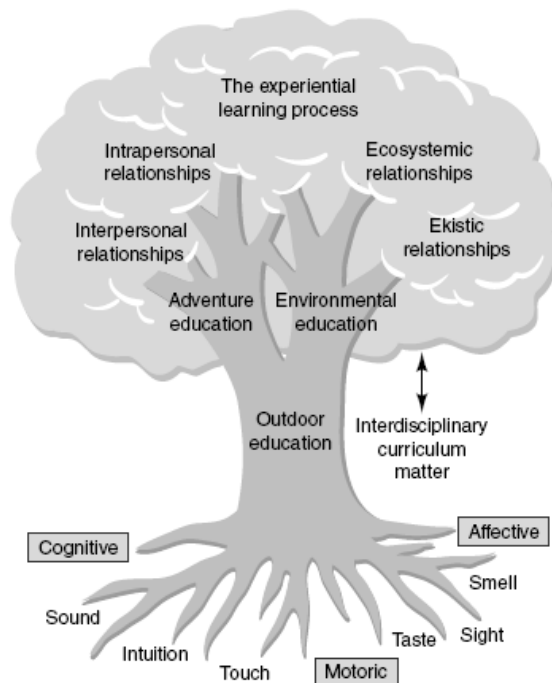


Higgins and Loynes (1997 p. 6)

Figure 12. The range and scope of Outdoor Education.

The model provides a view of the nature of Outdoor Education in the UK. According to Higgins and Loynes (1997) the outdoor educator would work within the whole domain but then shift emphasis from one area to another. Due to the growing focus on global environmental imperatives at that time (e.g., Rio in 1992 and Kyoto in 1997), the circle containing environmental education was in the process of becoming fully integrated into Outdoor Educational practice in the UK.

Simon Priest presents, about a decade earlier, Outdoor Education in different way (see Figure 13), drawing a tree with two main branches, an adventure branch and an environmental branch. The roots show the diverse sensations that Outdoor Education draws its nutrition from, to form wholesome tree with a bold crown that symbolizes the learning outcomes.

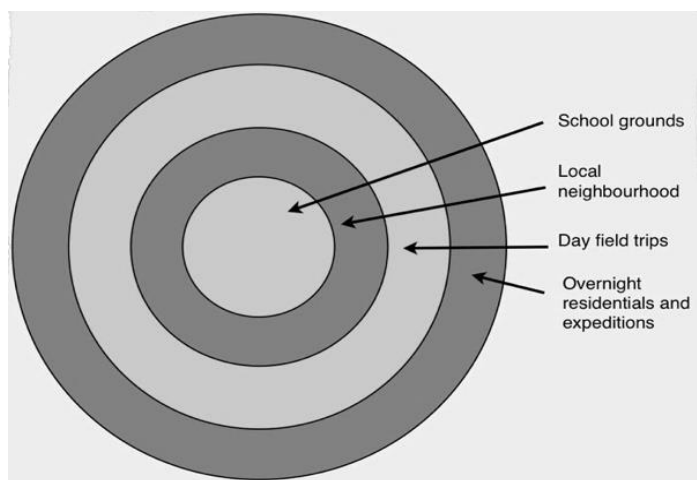


Priest (1988 p. 15).

Figure 13. Priest Model of Outdoor Education.

Priest claims that Outdoor Education involves six fundamental aspects: (1) it is a method for learning, (2) is experiential, (3) takes places primarily in the outdoors, (4) requires use of all senses and domains, (5) is based upon interdisciplinary curriculum matter; and (6) is a matter of relationships involving people and natural resources (Priest 1988). Environmental education concerns man’s communication with the environment and the natural world, described by Roth (1969) as follows: “Environmental education is the education about ecological concepts and their effects on humankind. Its purpose is to increase an understanding and appreciation toward the interaction of man and the natural environment” (p. 195).

A more recent picture of the field is presented in Figure 14 and note that it is Outdoor Learning. There, the school ground (or I would argue the ground of the relevant institution, be it youth centres, leisure home or school), is at the centre.



Beames et al., (2012 p. 6).

Figure 14. The four ‘zones’ of outdoor learning.

The next zone is the local neighbourhood, which includes explorations on foot or by public transport. The third zone is further away, involving day excursions or field trips. Residential outdoor centres that include overnight stay and expeditions are then placed in the fourth zone. The model offers a practical way to categorize the various aspects of the field and helps us to better understand the importance of both the outdoor activities and the place/site where the activities take place. Here, the concept ‘outdoor learning’ is the heading and the focus directed more toward what we can do close by, in the near environment. The difference in wording and focus is part of development in the UK, specifically in Scotland, where Outdoor Education was historically viewed as an ‘add on’ to school, needed specialist equipment, specialist instructors and the focus on the activity (Christie, et al., 2016). In recent years it has become embedded into the formal curriculum and the focus now more commonly directed toward outdoor learning that takes place just outside the classroom, revolves around local and with no specialist equipment needed (Christie, et al., 2016). This marks a philosophical shift too. The grounds of the institution are not just a playground but also an educational space. The shift toward outside educational spaces is an important one and is still evolving, and it requires us to pay attention to the place we are in (Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

Each model of Outdoor Education introduced has a number of strengths and limitations understanding Outdoor Education. As an example, the main limitation of “the four zones of outdoor learning” model (Figure 14) is that it focuses mainly on outdoor learning from the perspective of schools, with primary emphasis on where the learning (or teaching) takes place. The strength is that it highlights the diversity of outdoor learning and the links between the different places of outdoor learning. It also allows for progressive experiences that build upon and link between one another; valuing all aspects to no greater or lesser extent than the other.

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Appendix G - Development and history of Outdoor Education - Place responsive education, friluftsliv and adventure education

The beginnings of modern Outdoor Education practices can be traced to separate roots. Organized camping was practiced in Europe, US, Australia, and New Zealand in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The book *Scouting for Boys and the establishment of the Scout movement* in 1907 by Robert Baden-Powell in England was a milestone. The book became a bestseller around the world, translated into 87 different languages (Jeal, 1989). The Scout movement is today among one of the largest youth movements in the world with over 40 million members from 223 countries. The German Kurt Hahn is one of the pioneers of the movement. Hahn believed that the purpose of education was to develop right-minded and active citizens with strong leadership skills with emphasis on servicing their fellow citizens (Hopkins & Putnam, 1993).

In the paper *Six Waves of Outdoor Education and Still in a State of Confusion: Dominant Thinking and Category Mistakes*, Allison (2016) identifies six 'waves' of Outdoor Education, which can be useful in summarizing the historical developments in the field, especially in the UK. The waves are: (1) *Exploration* (the origins of Outdoor Education can be traced back to the history of explorations of the British Empire), (2) *Personal and Social Development* (undertaking explorations contributed to people's characters, or what later was described as personal and social development (PSD)), (3) *Environmental Education* (an aspect of environmental education is in a way the backdrop of adventure activities and explorations), (4) *Curriculum connections* (In the 1970s and 1980s, residential outdoor experiences were defined in the curriculum to include e.g. outdoor activities, environmental education and PSD), (5) *Sustainability and Climate Change* (In the late 1990s and 2000s, there was growing awareness and emphasis on the importance of sustainable development and climate action in Outdoor Education. In this period, there can be seen changes in terminology, from Outdoor Education to outdoor learning) and (6) *Inter Cultural Education* (in recent years, more focus on inter or cross-cultural education).

Many of the dozens concepts that fall under the Outdoor Education umbrella (Quay & Seaman, 2013) call for further investigations, in order to identify nuances, perspectives and different meanings. We will now look closer at placed responsive/based education, friluftsliv and adventure education because understanding of them are vital for the research project.

Place-based education and Place responsive Pedagogy

In the book *A pedagogy of place*, Wattachow and Brown (2011) argue that the traditional simplistic binary of 'doing or reflecting on experience' (p. 46) overlooks the nuanced, highly contextualised and interconnected web of people, places and ideas that we find in Outdoor Education practice, not to mention the contested meanings of experience. They clearly articulate how romantic notions of nature, experiential learning cycles, adventure and the pedagogy of risk, as the foundations of Outdoor Education, deny our connections to place.

Gruenewald's (2003) *The best of both worlds: Critical pedagogy of place* is useful here since it attempts to contribute to the development of educational discourses and practices that explicitly "examine the place-specific nexus between environment, culture, and education" (p. 10). A critical pedagogy of place challenges educators to reflect on the relationship between the kind of education they pursue and the kind of places we inhabit and leave behind for future generations. In other words, it concerns a pedagogy linked to cultural and ecological politics that is influenced "by an ethic of eco-justice and other socioecological traditions that interrogate the intersection between cultures and ecosystems" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 10).

More recently, Mannion and Lynch (2016) argue that place-responsive Outdoor Education involves three aspects: (a) attending to the subjective, personal development and 'inner world' of the experience of place, (b) without losing sight of the need to learn a skill or engage in an activity, i.e. to attend to the aesthetic practice-oriented ways of being (or Dewey's 'occupations'), yet (c) all the while, seeking to tune into the place-based, more-than-human, living and inanimate materials that are also active agencies in curriculum making, whether these be local or further afield. Mannion and Lynch argue for holistic Outdoor Education, with renewed attention to embodied and aesthetic experiences of place as well as reflective practice. Moreover, they underline the important of encouraging learners to seek responses to place in ways that are embodied, cognitive, emotional, aesthetic and ethical. Mannion and Lynch (2016) suggest that during place-responsive Outdoor Education, meaning arises by means of the acceptance of knowledge emerging through the ongoing entanglement of people, place and the-more-than-human. They argue that these educative entanglements are present whether we are experiencing a place, reflecting on it or transforming it on our own or with others.

Connecting to a place adds a certain richness of meaning to education in the sense that when we work with any group in the outdoors, most importantly, in a time of environmental crisis, we facilitate a connection to the place in which we live and are therefore more likely to be able to act for environmental and social justice.

Friluftsliv

If we are to properly comprehend the development in Iceland, we will have to direct our attention also to non-English-speaking countries. The concept *friluftsliv* (outdoor life) is used in Norwegian, Danish and Swedish to refer to a specific field of outdoor activities and outdoor learning. The concept is a cultural and historical phenomenon which means that its meaning is tied to space and time. *Friluftsliv* has developed in conjunction to societal changes with growing interest in nature and outdoor activities (Bentsen et al., 2009). The history of *friluftsliv* in Denmark has been identified as a development passing through three green waves (*grønne bølger*). The first green wave was inspired by the romantic period and the writings of Rousseau, at the end of the 18th century, where people began to increasingly spend time in the outdoors and enjoying nature and the environment. The second green wave took over at the end of the 19th century, its influence spreading from the US to Denmark. An increased emphasis on nature and health became prominent and arose as a reaction to growing urban areas and the civilization and corruption thought to characterize life in the cities. During this time, large movements are established, such as the boy scouts and various youth organizations, which can be seen as the origins of modern outdoor organizations. The third green wave can be traced to 1970s, as people's interest in nature and outdoor life was reawakened. Environmental issues became part of policy making, an energy crisis swept the globe and people were encouraged to be thrifty. A discussion began which insisted that there should be a distinction between sports and outdoor activities, given that the latter was for a long time equated with sports. In light of the growing interest in outdoor life, the Gerlev sports school established a particular department for outdoor activities and as a result, the field has become a widely popular subject in sports schools. The third green wave gave rise to a so-called 'pedagogization' of *friluftsliv*, with increased professionalism and even institutionalization, where *friluftsliv* was used more consistently in schools and in leisure centres (Bentsen et al., 2009, p. 28-34).

Globalization is the main causal factor in modernization. Culture, commodities and opinion are increasingly shaped by globalization (Giddens, 1994). The traditions and methods that have developed in diverse places are now becoming influential. In this way, the Nordic *friluftsliv* has been inspired by Anglo-Saxon traditions, which appear in the use of terms such as 'outdoor' and 'adventure education' in the Nordic discourse on the matter. The developments here described, today merge more than ever. The professional discourse in journals such as the *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning* are now international and globalized, with various concepts informing one another. The nature, values and role of Outdoor Education in Iceland is and has been under international influences, and now more than ever. Developments in education and recreation in Iceland, as in other parts of society, has been highly influenced by the Nordic countries. For me it is of vital importance to be aware of that, especially given the fact that I am writing in English and the English research literature

is as dominating as it is. The content and development of the friluftsliv traditions is a good example of an influential factor that most likely has had wide impact in Iceland, both explicitly and implicitly.

Adventure education

Adventure education takes place in a natural environment or untouched nature and aims to increase physical abilities of students and bolster their social skills through outdoor projects. Prouty et al. (2007) describe adventure education as:

“Direct, active, and engaging learning experiences that involve the whole person and have real consequences. Educational activities and experiences, usually involving close interaction with the natural environment and within a small group setting that contain elements of real or perceived risk. The outcome, while uncertain, focuses on the intrapersonal and interpersonal development of the individual or group.” (p. 229).

In a way, when participating in organised activities that use “perceived” risk or simulated risk with the aim of impacting and deepening the learning process, the participants are engaged in adventure education. Hopkins and Putnam (1993) write that the adventure entails “experience that involves an unpredictable outcome. The Adventure can include subjective, mental or physical aspects. It generally involves the process of getting to know the unknown and grappling with the challenges of the unforeseen” (p. 6). Hopkins and Putnam add that it is important to increase awareness and respect for “oneself - by facing challenges and adventure. Others - through participation in shared experiences and discussions. Nature - through direct experience” (p. 6). Like Prouty et al. (2007), Hopkins and Putnam place emphasis on “I and we”, but they add increased awareness and respect for nature. Brendtro and Strother (2007) define adventure along similar lines, or as an “unusual, exciting, amazing or meaningful experience where the outcome is unforeseen, sometimes with a dash of danger” (p. 4). From the perspective of tourism, adventure is described as a mix of perceived risk, thirst for knowledge and insight into something unfamiliar (Weber, 2001). Adventure education has many facets, but it can be divided into two categories: narrow adventure education and broad adventure education. Narrow adventure education involves activities which last a short amount of time, with emphasis on exciting experiences, which are undemanding for participants and entail only limited responsibility. For example, adventure games, river rafting and canoeing. Broad adventure education is the reverse of narrow adventure education; what is most important is that the experience is demanding for participants, both in terms of responsibility and physical exertion. Extended hikes can be mentioned as an example of broad adventure education (Higgins & Nicol, 2002).

Development of adventure education was criticised (e.g., by Loynes, 1998) because of marketing and capitalistic factors that where “disassociate people from their experience of community and place” (p. 35). In their book, *Adventurous Learning: A Pedagogy for*

a *Changing World*, Beames and Brown (2014) also level convincing and pointed criticism against adventure education, and introduce ideas relating to 'adventurous learning'. These ideas are presented as antidotes to flaws and, as some claim, outmoded ideas about learning and adventure education. The new ideas are set to meet our 21st century reality and the opportunities and challenges that we face in contemporary times. Brown and Beames (2016) emphasises that we are living in constantly changing times in which more and more children attend schools, with larger classes, increased technology, etc., and the ideology of "one size fits all" is clearly outdated - framing all students in a single category and hoping that this somehow magically works will suffice no longer. Students want to learn about relevant topics that are happening in their daily lives. The emphasis on the unknown in adventure education is overestimated given that "our lives increasingly filled with uncertainty and speed" (p. x). Adventurous learning is based on four central aspects, namely: agency, authenticity, uncertainty and mastery through challenge (Brown & Beames, 2016). The developed thinking and applied practice that appears in adventurous learning is a good example of both the need to critically examine old ideas, theories and practice, and of developing them to better suit modern times. When studying the nature, value and role of Outdoor Education in Iceland it is important to be aware of recent international developments, and critically examine how they reflect the local developments in Iceland.

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Appendix H - Core concept of the research in Icelandic

Here is a summary of three concepts that have been defined by the terminological committees of leisure studies: outdoor learning, adventure education, friluftsliv. All the concepts are in the Icelandic Word Bank (see odrabanki.hi.is).

Outdoor Learning

[Icelandic] útinám

[Def.] Learning method or approach that emphasizes learning in the outdoors (under an open sky), where all senses are activated through participation in direct experiences.

[Expl.] Outdoor learning is an ideological approach grounded in pedagogical and educational theories. The goal of Outdoor Education is to bolster the understanding of ecological connections in the environment, and develop physical abilities, social skills and self-knowledge, and facilitate a relationship with nature. Outdoor learning can take place in both manmade or natural settings. The difference between outdoor learning and other forms of learning revolves first and foremost around the location in which learning takes place and the teaching methods used. Outdoor learning is based on the idea that the individual who serves as guide or teacher only creates the conditions for learning, and the true “teacher” and locus of education is the environment/natural world itself. The teaching method brings to bear experiential learning, which seeks to raise participants’ awareness of the ways in which they perceive themselves, others and the environment around them. Sensory stimulus is the strength of outdoor learning, through which the senses “record” experience to the extent that they can produce deeper and more meaningful learning. Subcategories of outdoor learning are e.g. adventure education, environmental education and place-based education.

[Example] Learn about human impact on the ecosystem, about characteristics of varying trees in a forest, or learn how to navigate an area or dress according to weather.

In Icelandic:

[skilgr.] Námsaðferð og nálgun með áherslu á nám undir berum himni þar sem öll skynfæri eru virkjuð með þátttöku í beinum upplifunum og reynslu.

[skýr.] Útinám er hugmyndafræðileg nálgun sem á sér rætur í kenningum um uppeldi og nám. Markmið útináms eru að efla skilning á vistfræðilegum tengslum í umhverfinu, þroska líkamlega færni, samskiptafærni og tengsl við sjálfan sig, náttúruna og aðra.

Útinám getur átt sér stað hvort sem er í manngerðu eða náttúrulegu umhverfi. Munurinn á útinámi og öðru námi felst fyrst og fremst í því hvar það fer fram og þeirri nálgun sem beitt er. Nálgunin byggist meðal annars á því að sá sem leiðbeinir eða kennir skapar farveg fyrir nám en umhverfið og/eða náttúran er hinn eiginlegi „kennari“ eða uppspretta náms. Unnið er í anda reynslunáms sem felst meðal annars í því að vekja þátttakendur til vitundar um það hvað þeir skynja um sjálfa sig, aðra og umhverfið. Örvun skynfæranna er styrkur útináms en skynfærin eru „upptökutæki“ reynslunnar og geta stuðlað að dýpra og merkingarbærara námi. Undirgreinar útináms eru m.a. ævintýranám, umhverfislám og grenndarnám.

[dæmi] Dæmi: Læra um áhrif manns á vistkerfið, um einkenni ólíkra trjátegunda í skógi eða þjálfun í að rata eða klæða sig eftir veðri.

Adventure Education

[Icelandic] ævintýranám

[Def.] Learning that takes place through active participation, often in small groups, where participants can experience uncertain or dangerous conditions.

[Expl.] Adventure education seeks to create conditions which allows students to grapple with and learn about themselves, communicate with others and the environment, with emphasis on personal development, strengthening social skills and fostering team spirit within a group. Adventure education revolves around adventure-themed topics, in connection with travels, expeditions and physical exertion in the great outdoors. Physical abilities and communication skills are bolstered through these outdoor projects. Adventure education can be divided into narrow adventure and broad adventure education.

[Example] Adventure education can involve e.g. adventure games, river rafting, hiking, biking, mountaineering, cave explorations, canoeing and kayaking, skiing trips, and rock climbing.

In Icelandic:

[íslenska] ævintýranám

[skilgr.] Nám sem á sér stað í gegnum virkni og þátttöku, oft í fámennum hópum, þar sem þátttakendur geta upplifað óvissu eða hættu.

[skýr.] Í ævintýranámi er áhersla lögð á að skapa ákjósanlegar aðstæður og tækifæri til að fást við sjálfan sig, samskipti við aðra og umhverfið með áherslu á persónulegan þroska, félagslegan þroski og að efla hópinn. Í ævintýranámi er tekist á við ævintýratengd viðfangsefni sem geta tengst ferðalögum og hreyfingu í ósnortnu náttúrulegu umhverfi. Líkamleg færni og samskiptafærni er eflað með útiverkefnum.

Ævintýranám má flokka í tvennt afmarkað ævintýranám (e. narrow adventure) og víðtækt ævintýranám (e. broad adventure).

[dæmi] Ævintýranám getur m.a. átt sér stað í ævintýraleikjum, þrautum, sigi, flúðasiglingum, gönguferðum, hjólaferðum, fjallamennsku, hellaferðum, bátsferðum (kanó og kajak), skíðaferðum og ís- og klettaklifri.

Friluftsliv - Outdoor Life

[Danish] Friluftsliv

[Def.] Pastime physical activity in the outdoors with the aim of experiencing and exploring new environment and the natural world.

[Expl.] The concept has strong cultural roots in Scandinavia where rich emphasis is placed on outdoor activities and exploration of nature, for its own sake and without a particular competitive goal. In Denmark, the concept has three connotations: (1) as a societal phenomenon and research subject, (2) as a topic with political and ideological dimensions, and as (3) a personal and pedagogical method. .

[Example] Outdoor life can manifest in e.g. various activity that takes place outdoors, outdoor sports where nature is used as a setting or “stadium” for activities and exercise, and as a simple outdoor stay with minimal equipment, premised on nature and with respect and consideration for it.

In Icelandic:

útilíf

[sh.] útivist

[skilgr.] Dvöl og líkamleg virkni utandyra í frítímanum með það að markmiði að komast í nýtt umhverfi og upplifa náttúruna.

[skýr.] Hugtakið á sér sterkar menningarlegar rætur í Skandinavíu þar sem rík áhersla er lögð á að útilífið feli í sér dvöl úti og náttúruupplifun án kröfu um árangur eða keppni.

Í Danmörku er litið svo á að hugtakið útilíf hafi þrjár nálganir: (1) sem samfélagslegt fyrirbæri og rannsóknarefni, (2) sem viðfangsefni stjórn mála og hugmyndafræðilegrar umræðu og sem (3) sem persónuleg og uppeldisfræðileg aðferð.

[dæmi] Birtingarmynd útilífs geta t.d. verið ýmsar athafnir sem eiga sér stað utandyra, útisport þar sem náttúran er notuð sem vettvangur eða „salur“ fyrir athafnir og einfalt útilíf sem er dvöl úti í náttúrunni með lágmarksbúnað, á forsendum náttúrunnar og með virðingu fyrir henni.

[danska] friluftsliv

Appendix I - Policy and Practice: Proposals and recommendations

Table x Policy and Practice - Proposals and recommendations

Table 4. A list of proposals and recommendations regarding policy and practice.

Proposal	Actionable recommendations
<p>1) <i>Define Outdoor Education in relation to the Icelandic context and continue to define and clarify important terms in this expansive field of education, encompassing leisure, school activities, and tourism. It is crucial that this discourse is beneficial for both practical field work and policy development and for further research.</i></p>	<p>a) Academics and specialists within universities in the field of education, leisure, and tourism undertake to define Outdoor Education, outdoor experiential education and other key concepts in this field in cooperation with policymakers, relevant ministries, professional associations and interest groups.</p>
<p>2) <i>Compose policy publications on Outdoor Education similar to publications on the fundamental pillars of education (i. grunnþættir menntunar) in which Outdoor Education is the main topic.</i></p>	<p>a) The Ministry of Education and Children ensures that special material is written about Outdoor Education that lays the foundation for outdoor practice in schools at all levels, as well as in work with children in the field of leisure. In this context, it would be viable to discuss Outdoor Education as a subject, a pedagogy, and a method that can be applied in all disciplines. I should also provide guidelines regarding safety and health concerns, offer educational examples, and discuss its educational benefits and critical perspectives.</p>
<p>3) <i>Increase public engagement with parents regarding the value of outdoor experiences in nature and reduce restrictions on children's outdoor activities.</i></p>	<p>a) Encourage parents and guardians to introduce children to local natural places, giving them opportunities for outdoor activities. Parents and guardians should also act as positive role models and make a regular effort to go outside and enjoy nature themselves.</p> <p>b) Take into serious consideration to amend the Child Protection Act, No. 80 regarding children's curfew (Article 92²⁴) and consideration of</p>

²⁴ Article 92 - Children's curfew. Children aged 12 and under may not be out of doors after 20:00 unless accompanied by an adult. Children aged 13 to 16 may not be out of doors after

	<p>alternatives to the current requirement for children and teenagers to remain indoors between specified hours.</p>
<p>4) <i>Take measures to ensure children's rights in compulsory education to Outdoor Education and experiences in nature. Highlight the rights of all children and specifically seek ways to enhance opportunities for children who are marginalized.</i></p>	<p>a) Propose regulations (local government) or laws (state) guaranteeing children's rights to minimum outdoor time and nature experiences in compulsory education. Establish local or national collaboration between leisure, tourism, and schools.</p> <p>b) Establish professional education at the university level in the field of Outdoor Education that can support teachers, guides and youth workers who want to specialize in this field.</p> <p>c) The Icelandic Tourist Board and The Directorate of Education take the initiative to promote social tourism and establish formal collaborations between the tourism sector schools and leisure programmes in the field of social tourism.</p> <p>d) Administrators of national parks collaborate with schools and leisure programmes to develop resources and services with the goal of providing opportunities for children who face limitations in visiting parks due to financial, residential, or social factors. Examples of such services include regular free guided tours of the national parks targeted towards a broad group of children and young people with diverse backgrounds and statuses. Arrange school visits to introduce national parks and cooperate with schools in planning park visits.</p> <p>e) Travel associations in Iceland, such as FÍ (Iceland Touring Association) and Útivist, join forces with representatives of marginalized groups, and together they seek ways to reduce barriers and ensure their opportunities to travel around the country and take advantage of the diverse options that travel associations offer.</p>

22:00, unless on their way home from a recognised event organised by a school, sports organisation or youth centres. During the period 1 May to 1 September, children may be out of doors for two hours longer. The age limits stated here shall be based upon year of birth, not date of birth.

<p>5) <i>Support the development of infrastructure and facilities for outdoor learning and outdoor activities in and near urban areas.</i></p>	<p>a) Continue to construct outdoor areas (e.g. outdoor classrooms) close to schools and leisure activities. Additionally, there should be greater emphasis on developing facilities near the sea and lakes. This could involve improving existing operations such as sailing clubs, or creating new facilities that would enable the affordances of coastal areas for educational and recreational purposes.</p>
<p>6) <i>Collaboration across different fields of expertise is a successful way to increase children's opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities in nature. In doing so, opportunities arise to utilize facilities, knowledge, equipment, and manpower in a successful manner. It is recommended to create collaboration between local non-profit organizations, businesses, and institutions.</i></p>	<p>a) Through grants and awards, state and local authorities should encourage collaboration across schools, leisure, and tourism.</p>
<p>7) <i>Putting provisions in regulations or laws requiring that children be provided the opportunity to explore Icelandic nature and culture - both locally and through travel across the country, as well as through residential experiences.</i></p>	<p>a) To support children's right to residential experiences, it is very important that the state guarantees this right in law. It is proposed that the Youth Act (2007, No 70), which is currently being revised, include an article on the right of children to a certain number of days of residential experience during their childhood. With this, the state would support the operation of school camps in many parts of the country and create equal opportunity for all children to participate.</p>

Appendix J - The researcher relevant Publication

What follows is a summary of the author's publications focused on Outdoor Education and related fields (but not the ones that are included in the PhD project). Further information can be found at <https://english.hi.is/staff/jakobf>

Book

2011. Að leika, læra og þroskast úti. *Um útilíf, úti- og ævintýranám í frístundum og skólastarfi*. [To Play, Learn and Mature. About Friluftsliv, Outdoor and Adventure Learning in Leisure and Schools]. Áskorun ehf., Reykjavík. 118 pages.

Book chapters

2017. Tómsundur og menntun [Leisure and Education]. In Alfa Aradóttir, Eygló Rúnarsdóttir og Hulda Valdís Valdimarsdóttir (ed). *Frístundir og fagmennska* [Leisure and Professionalism]. (p. 45 – 61). Reykjavík: Félag fagfólks í frítímaþjónustu, Félag íþróttar-, æskulýðs- og tómsundafulltrúa á Íslandi og Rannsóknarstofa í tómsundafræði við HÍ.

2014. Non-Formal Outdoor Learning in Leisure Centres. Í E. Backman, B. Humberstone og C. Loynes (ed.) *Urban Nature: Inclusive Learning Through Youth Work and School Work* (p.98-121). Borås: Recito Förlag AB.

Papers

Peer-reviewed

2020. (with Jónsson, Ó. P., Árnadóttir, H. A., & Gísladóttir, K. R). On being in nature: Aldo Leopold as an educator for the 21st century. *Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, 27(2), 106-121. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1074041ar>

2014. (with Vanda Sigurgeirsdóttir). Gæði og gagnsemi náms í tómsunda- og félagsmálafræði: Rannsókn meðal brautskráðra nemenda 2005–2012. [Quality and Utility of Educations in Leisure Studies and Social Pedagogy: Research Among Graduates 2005–2012]. *Icelandic Journal of Educational Research*. 11, 89-109.

Other papers

2018. (with Hervör Alma Árnadóttir og Karen Rut Gísladóttir). Walking in Wilderness: Reflection for Personal and Professional Growth. *Pathways. The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education*, 30(2), bls. 16-22.

2015. (with Ævari Aðalsteinsson). Útivist í þéttbýli - Saga, gildi og tækifæri. [Outdoor Recreation in Urban Areas. History, Value and Opportunities]. *Netla*

– *Online Journal of Pedagogy and Education: Special Issue 2015 – On Outdoor Education.*

2014. Ný menntun í takt við kröfur samtímans: Tómtunda- og félagsmálafræði við Háskóla Íslands [New Education in Line With Contemporary Requirements: Leisure and Social Pedagogy at the University of Iceland]. *Uppeldi og menntun.* 23,(1). 99-105.

2014. Care and Adventure Education: Adventure-based Outdoor Journeys Provide Suitable Conditions for Giving and Receiving Care. *Pathways. The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education*, 26(2), 20-28

Reports

2018. Reynsla af þróunarverkefni í skólabúðunum á Úlfjótuvatni árið 2017. *Skýrsla um rannsókn unnin fyrir Skóla- og frístundasvið Reykjavíkurborgar og Útilífsmiðstöð skáta á Úlfjótuvatni.* Rannsóknarstofa í tómtundafræði. [Experience of a development project in the Outdoor Centre at Úlfjótvatn in 2017. Report on a study conducted for the School and Leisure Division of the City of Reykjavik and the Scout Outdoor Centre at Úlfjótvatn. Published by the Research in Leisure Studies]

2016. *Final report in the European project "Under an Open Sky" About the 14th EOE Conference in Iceland.*

2016. Hervör Alma Árnadóttir, Þorsteinsson, J.F. and Gísladóttir, K.R. *Holding the space: Evaluation report on the testing phase of the Project Reflect,* Educational Research Institute, School of Education at the University of Iceland ISBN: 978-9935-468-11-6 See report at

http://menntavisingastofnun.hi.is/sites/menntavisingastofnun.hi.is/files/reflect_report_0.pdf

2016. (with Concetta, T., D'Agostino, M., Vilder, D., Deltuva, A., Fedeli, M., Frison, D., Gísladóttir, K. R., Jackiené, E., Jakube, A., Jasiene, G., Árnadóttir, H. A., Leysen, J., Minnoni, E., Paci, A., Taylor, M., Vandenbussche, B. Vansielegheem, N. and Vilhjálmsón, B.) *Holding the Space. Facilitating Reflection and Inner Readiness for Learning.* E., Jakube, Jasiene, G, Taylor, M. and Vandenbussche, B. (eds). Ghent: Sintjoris Graphius. Skýrslan gefin út sem bók ISBN: 9789082139983 2016 More information at http://www.reflecting.eu/wp_cont/uploads/2016/08/Holding-the-space-website-small.pdf

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