

**THESIS**

**Using Adventure Education as a Means of Marking  
Transition Into Adulthood:  
Leadership Training with Graduating Steiner School Students**

*Benjamin A. Hammond*

Bachelor's Degree in Adventure & Outdoor Education, Community Educator  
(210 ECTS)

30/07/2023

# ABSTRACT

Humak University of Applied Sciences  
Adventure & Outdoor Education, Community Educator

---

Authors: Benjamin Andrew Hammond

Title of thesis: Using Adventure Education as a Means of Marking Transition Into Adulthood

Number of pages: 47, plus 5 pages of appendices

Supervisor of the thesis: Tero Lämsä, Humak

Commissioned by: Helena Thorström of Mikaeliskolan Steiner School, Ekenäs

---

This is a functional research paper on the development of an adventure education-based programme for graduating elementary school students in southern Finland during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2021. The Steiner-Waldorf school commissioned a course that used leadership training modalities to enhance students' wellbeing and meta-skills. The course culminated in a small camping expedition where the course skills were put to the test.

After a process of community-based ideation sessions, the following objectives of the school were identified: the need to mark the transition out of childhood and towards adulthood; to re-connect with nature; and to enhance social skills. In particular, students' competencies in teamworking, self-confidence and communication skills were targeted as key learning objectives. These issues were researched and framed within a wider context of societal issues, namely: alienation; nature deficit; and a lack of rites of passage to mark life transitions.

Adventure pedagogy and how reflecting and learning take place were research topics. Qualitative data collection methods were employed, including: observation; semi-structured interviews; feedback and a survey. The design and implementation of the entire programme are evaluated, and the results indicate at least partial success: some students did learn in the targeted areas; whilst others benefitted less so. Reasons for this are discussed with a focus on the conditions surrounding the course, as well as improvements to the programme suggested.

Finally, the transferability of the programme into the wider field is argued, with the need for young men to have more guidance and support highlighted.

---

Keywords: adventure education, leadership training, life transitions, nature, communication, confidence, teamwork, rites of passage, meta-skills, connection, Steiner.



# CONTENTS

## ABSTRACT

1	INTRODUCTION .....	5
	1.1 The Commissioner – Mikaeliskolan, Ekenäs.....	7
	1.2 Developmental Needs – The Case .....	11
	1.3 Developmental Needs – The Context .....	15
	1.4 Objectives .....	20
2	KNOWLEDGE BASE .....	23
	2.1 Adventure Pedagogy .....	23
	2.2 Learning and Reflecting.....	26
3	DEVELOPMENT METHODOLOGY .....	29
	3.1 Qualitative Data .....	29
	3.2 Ethical Considerations .....	32
	3.3 Programme Description .....	33
4	RESULTS AND ANALYSIS .....	39
	4.1 Results.....	39
	4.2 Analysis .....	41
5	CONCLUSION .....	44
	5.1 Discussion.....	45
	5.2 Looking Ahead .....	46
	REFERENCES .....	48
	APPENDICES .....	51

# 1 INTRODUCTION

*There is no certainty, there is only adventure ~ Roberto Assagioli*



Photo 1 – Set for success? The group setting off on the expedition

In this chapter I will outline this applied research, explaining the developmental needs of the project, the objectives, and the final product. I will also briefly outline the methods by which I planned, implemented, and evaluated my adventure education programme.

As a functional research project, I developed an adventure pedagogy programme to meet the needs of my commissioning organisation – the Steiner Waldorf school Mikaeliskolan, located in south-western Finland. This service was designed to enhance graduating students' self-responsibility and confidence, thereby supporting their transition towards adulthood. A small class of 16-year-old Grade 9 students would soon be graduating from their local elementary school and dispersing into the wider adult world of further education and work. In preliminary

ideation sessions with their teachers it was explained to me that many of the students lacked mature communication and team-working skills. The teachers were concerned about their readiness to integrate into larger high schools and work-place environments.

Like many other modern developed countries, Finnish society is concerned about their youth. The evidence is that urbanized teenagers are increasingly feeling alienated from their environment and from each other, resulting in a deterioration of their mental and physical wellbeing (Louv 2010).

Using inclusive participatory pedagogy methods, I developed for the school a tailor-made, nature-based leadership training programme, culminating in a small expedition. Implementation was mostly conducted at the school and in nearby woodlands. I instructed alone, but often under the supervision of their own teachers. Training began in deep, sub-arctic winter conditions and continued - haltingly and partially online - to the early summer.

The process began in January 2021 and needed to be completed before their school graduation that June. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the process throughout and caused repeated interruptions and delays. This all had to be adapted to, incorporated into the programme, and utilised as part of the learning process of how to face uncertainty and meet new challenges. Thus, the final Lapland winter week-long expedition was transformed and simplified into a summery over-night hike in the local woodlands.

As this was a developmental project, qualitative data was gathered for the evaluation process. I recorded my observations with field notes and triangulated these with interviews with the teachers and continual feedback from the students. An integral component of adventure pedagogy is self-reflection which facilitates learning (Elliot 2005, 24). Therefore, throughout the process, the students were invited to reflect in a variety of ways and share their experiences.

In my analysis of the programme I discuss why the project was only partially successful in meeting the objectives of the commissioner. With reference to shortcomings of my own creation, and those of the institution and surrounding culture, I highlight what was achieved and what could not be changed.

Additionally, I have chosen to illustrate this thesis with the use of photos and quotations. The somewhat philosophical aphorisms are relevant to the chapter only in a generalised way and hopefully inspire reflection in the reader, rather than any prescribed ideas. The photos were

taken by me during the implementation of this programme. Whilst they depict specific activities that we did together, more than that, they perhaps convey an atmosphere that I feel can easily be missing from discursive text. Again, they are also meant to only figuratively illustrate the chapter they are associated with. All permissions from students and teachers were received for the use of these photos.

### **1.1 The Commissioner – Mikaeliskolan, Ekenäs**

*Education is not filling a pail, but the lighting of a fire ~ W.B. Yeats*



Photo 2 – Mikaeliskolan: the oldest and main school building during spring

The commissioning organisation with whom I partnered with was Mikaeliskolan, located in the coastal town of Ekenäs (known as Tammissaari in Finnish) in south-western Finland. Ekenäs belongs to the municipality of Raseborg, which is an historic and relatively affluent farming area, interspersed with small, picturesque sea-side towns (Visit Raseborg 2021). Protruding into the Baltic Sea, the climate is somewhat warmer than the rest of Finland, but this is still a sub-arctic region with 4 distinct seasons. Interlaced with coastal peninsulas, post-glacial lakes, and small boreal bogs, this environment is part of the largest land biome on Earth – the circumpolar

taiga forest (International Boreal Forest Research Association 2021). Although the taiga is predominantly a coniferous ecozone, this particular corner is herb-rich due to its milder climate and less acidic type of soil (Vaasa 2021). This results in an unusually diverse environment of deciduous trees and wildlife. Nature, although far from untouched here, is easily accessible and has historically been highly valued within Finnish culture and identity.

For historical reasons (Sweden occupied these lands over a period of 5-7 centuries) south-western Finland is predominantly Swedish speaking (This Is Finland 2021). As an independent school, Mikaeliskolan chose Swedish as their primary language of instruction and operation. Being new to the area - and with only a rudimentary knowledge of Swedish - we agreed that I would communicate with the students in English. This was seen as an opportunity for them to improve their language skills. For most of the students, English was already their third language (after Swedish and Finnish), but some were fluent, whilst others found it very intimidating to express themselves in English. As will be explained in sub-chapter 1.4, the use of English was an integral part of the process: both for challenge and for achievement. For the purposes of this text, I shall be using only the Swedish, rather than Finnish, names and terminology unless otherwise stated.

Situated just 2km outside of Ekenäs town and bordering a recreational nature area, Mikaeliskolan is a small, friendly and beautiful elementary school (known as a '*grundskola*' in Swedish), educating about 100 students at any one time (Mikaeliskolan 2021a). Each grade can have between about 8-18 students in it. They have classes for grades 1-9, which means children study there from age 6 or 7 until they are 16 years old. In 2021 the laws changed and, for the first time, students were compelled to continue their education at a high school or vocational college until they turn 18 (Ministry of Education and Culture 2021). Additionally, there is also a kindergarten on site, which means that toddlers and children up to the age of 6 are also being educated in a neighbouring building, before transitioning to the *grundskola* (I will use the Swedish word to avoid confusion with the terminology of different educational systems around the world). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, for the duration of my programme the lower (grades 1-5) and upper (grades 6-9) parts of the school were segregated.

In January 2021 I was invited to pitch my possible collaboration and project ideas to the whole teaching faculty. There and then the school generously assigned to me a senior teacher (ST) of the upper school to be my liaison, supervisor and advisor. With more than 30 years' experience



teaching biology at the school, as well as leading many camps and sailing trips, she was perfectly placed to support me in delivering a programme that was most likely to meet the school's needs. She had an intuitive and experiential understanding of adventure pedagogy and was supportive of its intentions of developing the students' meta-skills. With this ST I was able to explore project ideas, locate suitable training locations for different activities, co-ordinate student availability and borrow equipment, amongst many other crucial steps. Her help was indispensable. Indeed, this was tested when, for a period towards the end, she was too busy to be available to me and then I found my project hitting a difficult impasse.

Steiner Waldorf schools are known in Finland simply as Steiner schools, which is how I shall refer to them henceforward. Steiner schools like Mikaeliskolan have a single Class Teacher (CT) that they aim to keep the same throughout their time in either the lower or upper grades. This means that they can have the same teacher steering them through grades 6-9. Whilst not responsible for teaching them every subject, the upper grades CT will see them every day and be fully responsible for their pastoral care and overall education, amongst other things (Mikaeliskolan 2021b). This ensures that the CT knows their students very well indeed - and vice versa. I was lucky enough to work quite closely not only with the senior teacher, but also my target group's CT, and together we 3 tried to create an effective feedback loop of the school's needs - my activities - student observations - and how to improve next time (see Kolb's experiential learning model, 1984, on page 27 of this thesis).

Although technically independent, all Finnish Steiner schools are part of the national school system, incorporate the national core curricula, and are funded up to 94% by the local municipality (Steiner Pedagogy 2021). The rest of the funding is made up of contributions and fundraising by the parents. Despite having had to adapt to the national education system, Mikaeliskolan still retains its distinct identity as a Steiner school and provides a clear alternative education option to the local community. It was founded almost 40 years ago with just 2 students and since then has gone through many iterations (Mikaeliskolan 2021c). By now it is well-established, with a good reputation for delivering holistic education.

In order to help me gain a better overview of the history, culture, and pedagogy of Mikaeliskolan, I arranged an in-depth interview with a co-founder of the school. Having just retired, he had taught there for 35 years. He described the essence of Steiner education as being quite simply, "experience first; analyse after" (FI 2021). The congruence here with adventure education (and many alternative education philosophies), based as it is on John Dewey's pragmatism

(1944), is clear to see. However, the co-founder noted that, “from classes 7-9 the Waldorf approach has to compromise to fit with national standards and becomes more theoretical, less practical” (FI 2021). This already leads us to the commissioner’s needs which will be further explained in the following sub-chapter.

Much could (and has been) said about Steiner pedagogy, founded 100 years ago by the German philosopher and mystic, Rudolph Steiner. However, the purpose of this text is not to theoretically compare adventure education with Steiner philosophy (interesting as that is). My focus in this functional research has been how to apply achievable objectives to meet the specific, concrete needs of my commissioner. Therefore, I hope that the following quotations and description are sufficient to give the reader the briefest tastes of both the intentions and culture of Mikaelsskolan’s Steiner education.

According to the co-founder, the starting point for the pedagogy is that “each human individual is unique. Their task is to discover [the student’s] unique gift to the world” (FI 2021). This means that, within the educational environment: individual expression is emphasized over conformity; learning is student-led; and every student has a distinct creative potential that should be cultivated. An international association for Steiner education encapsulated it this way:

“Steiner Waldorf education emphasizes the role of imagination in learning and integrates the intellectual, practical, and artistic development of pupils holistically. The Steiner Waldorf curriculum is non-prescriptive, in accord with developmental needs of the child and avoids an undue early specialisation or inappropriate academic pressure. The Steiner core curriculum is taught in bloc lessons.” (European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education Factsheet 2018).

Finally, another distinctive characteristic of Mikaelsskolan - clearly noticeable on the first encounter - is the friendly, open and relaxed atmosphere that pervades the community (and this was despite my arrival coming at the peak of the pandemic when they had effectively closed the school to outside visitors). However, it could be said that this less hierarchical and punishment-averse culture, is one in which ill-discipline can proliferate. That is: a school where consequences and responsibilities can be avoided by some misbehaving students. Teaching self-responsibility within these circumstances was not always easy for me. I found that this was to affect my project throughout its implementation in a variety of ways and almost – but not quite - derail the final camp.

## 1.2 Developmental Needs – The Case

*If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together ~ African proverb*

In order to ascertain the developmental needs of my commissioning organisation, I undertook a series of informal interviews and ideation sessions: first with the teaching staff, and then with the target group of students themselves. From these conversations the as yet undefined project would emerge.

In January 2021, when I first pitched the possibility of this collaboration to the teaching faculty, it soon became clear that there was a multitude of different needs from the school and possible project directions that we could go in. Aware that it would take several sessions to narrow down where we could most usefully go together, the first question was with which part of the school should I work – lower, or upper? Due to the working language needing to be English, it was quickly decided that I should focus my efforts on the upper school: grades 6-9. At this point the senior teacher (ST) was assigned as my liaison and supervisor and together we explored possible project directions, including a collaboration with an ecological conservation project. During our conversations, it emerged that the upper school had many students with general communication and confidence issues, and it was felt that this need was a priority and best met by my adventure education methodologies.

At this early ideation stage, we formed a small focus group with 4 full-time teaching staff of the upper school. I conducted 2 brainstorming sessions with them and together we were able to further clarify the needs of the school, identify the target group, estimate the timeline, and give a general direction to the project. Over the next 2 months, I was to create a programme of adventure education activities for the grade 9 class, culminating in – if possible - a winter wilderness camp. Yet, this all depended on the active participation of the target group. If they were not interested and committed then it could never work, particularly as the school was not a place where extra-curricular activities were treated as compulsory.

In order to gauge the level of the students' engagement, and also to create a sense of active 'buy-in' from them which would be crucial to the project's success, I informally interviewed the grade 9 students as a whole class. The result of that discussion was the confirmation of some of the teachers' stated needs, identification of some additional needs (see below), and a unanimous decision that they would all actively participate. They confirmed that they understood the programme would be increasingly challenging (an adventure education methodology).

I wanted to create an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust and self-responsibility from the very start of the programme, even whilst it was being designed. In keeping with both Steiner and adventure pedagogies, the aim was for the students to be invited to opt in, rather than be compelled by an outside authority (me, the school, or their parents, for example). In order to increase their authentic, self-directed motivation, it was important for them to feel involved in all stages of the programme (Zimmerman 2008, 168). These strategies are all central to participatory pedagogy, which will be further elaborated on in sub-chapter 1.4. Put simply: to teach the students about taking responsibility for oneself and others, I needed to start with their informed consent, which is both an ethical, and educational, imperative.

Using community-based research methods such as those outlined above has the advantage of inviting a diversity of voices into the planning of a project. However, more viewpoints mean more ideas, and this can result in a messier and prolonged process of ideation and design. In retrospect, I feel now that I should have reduced a little the amount of consultation that I did, and should have been faster to decide the options. This was more what the time-pressed school wanted and what the students were expecting, which keeps them engaged. Fundamentally, though, this functional research is predicated on me not imposing my ideas upon the commissioner, but rather listening to their needs and seeing how best I can meet them. Therefore, I still think that the overall approach was correct.

The key points of the interviews and ideation sessions were recorded by my note-taking on paper, but this was not ideal. It was challenging and distracting to conduct a discussion, whilst at the same time taking accurate, quotable notes. My papers easily got jumbled. In retrospect, I would encourage the use of digital audio, or even video, recording of such sessions and then playing them back to extract the relevant information. For me, this was not possible at the time for technical and time pressure reasons.

Harnessing all those discussions, the following needs were identified by staff and students. I have grouped them together under 3 inclusive banners, highlighted below. As can be seen in the following sub-chapter, they reflect well the wider issues at play in society.

### *1. Marking the transition -*

Chosen by the school staff, the primary target group were the Grade 9 graduating students. They were a class of 13 students, half identifying as male and half as female, aged between 15-16 years old. They had been studying together for the last decade, which was most of their lives.

Soon they would graduate and disperse into the wider world of higher education and work. The students wanted to mark and celebrate this turning point in their lives (SIS 2021). They wanted to celebrate what had been and also to look ahead a little to the future (ibid.). Whilst this was generally exciting, they also had some fear and trepidation about being “ready enough” for the next step (ibid.). The teachers also reiterated the concern that, for some of them having studied together since they were 3 years old, they needed some “preparation to leave this bubble” (TIS 2021, T1). The other side of the protection that this ‘bubble’ afforded them was a correlating lack of safety felt beyond the school’s familiar boundaries. According to the co-founder, Steiner education does have various ways in which it prepares the older students for graduation and the adult world, through a process of individuation with solo self-created projects, for example. However, in Steiner’s system this traditionally comes more during grades 10 and 11. “So, the problem here is that Mikaeliskolan’s education is sending them out into the world a couple of years too early!” (FI 2021).

## 2. *Social skills* -

According to the co-founder, the compromises Mikaeliskolan has had to make in recent years to accommodate the national curriculum has meant that the education during grades 7-9 has “now become too theoretical and not lived enough” (FI 2021). I confirmed that by this he meant, as Dewey (1963) outlined, that it was perhaps too much head and not enough hands or heart. Their teachers expressed that the students had “much to adapt to modern life” (TIS 2021, T1). This class, in particular, needed to develop their social skills in order to be better able to successfully navigate the adult world (ibid., T3). As independent young adults they needed to “think for themselves” (ibid., T2), “take better responsibility and show more initiative” (ibid., T3). They found it difficult to “work co-operatively outside of their friendship groups” (ibid., T2) and had some blockages when it came to “expressing their needs; communicating clearly” (ibid.). All of these, of course, are key skills for their future life and work as adults. I was a little surprised that, at the end of their long Steiner education, many of them still lacked such crucial social meta-skills, but I also came to learn that this class had exceptional challenges. I also observed that the very fact that they had been together for so long can actually harden the internal politics of a group and create quite fixed friendship sub-groups, dynamics and mindsets.

Additionally, I was informed that they needed help managing their emotions and developing their resilience (ibid., T4). Indeed, as I was to discover, there were sadly some very serious

issues within the class that some of the students faced such as: neglect at home, selective mutism, clinical depression, chronic psychosomatic disorders, and truancy. These were to impact the cohesion and functionality of the group from the very start, and I could have been better informed about these by the school. My mini project of a few months was never going to be able to adequately meet such severe needs. More difficult still was the range of abilities - some of the students were secure, engaged, self-assured, independent and high functioning. Catering to this spectrum was to be one of my greatest challenges.

### 3. *Disconnect from nature* -

As an holistic education school, Mikaeliskolan's curriculum is exceptionally nature-based. Nonetheless, both students and staff felt that this Grade 9 class would benefit from more immersion in nature - particularly into wilderness, or for longer periods of time (TIS 2021, T1; SIS 2021). For the students, they envisaged marking this important life transition by spending some quality time together as a whole class, away from school, and in scenic nature (SIS 2021). For the teachers, it was felt that this group could benefit from more time spent in nature because, as they have grown up, they (like many modern teens) "chose to be inside more, playing computer games or on social media" (TIS 2021, T4).

Compared to many students around the world, though, it can be considered that these students have a privileged access to nature. As the co-founder explained, the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of their Steiner education begins with every Monday being spent entirely outdoors in the nearby woods, ski tracks, or school yard with its great oak trees (FI 2021). In grades 2 and 3 they study farming and practice gardening; in grades 6 or 7 they usually take a trip to Finnish Lapland for a week (ibid.). In the past, there have been hiking trips to Jotenheim in Norway where they cohabit a mountain cabin, local ski trips, kayaking in the neighbouring national park, sailing, and other kinds of day excursions (TIS 2021, T1). They would soon have an Ecology class in the Spring and always plenty of outdoor play time each day (ibid.). Therefore, the question can be asked: what has their education been missing when it comes to nature?

Whilst I am not alone in arguing that one cannot have *too* much time in nature – it is always beneficial (Institute of Outdoor learning, 2019). Yet, what else? Upon further discussions with their senior teacher and class teacher, they felt that many students had not yet developed a personal, intimate *relationship with* nature. Nature was merely, usually, an arena for performing sports or activities in, a place to pass through; not so much a resource for nourishment and inspiration, valued and respected in its own right. As will be seen in the next sub-chapter, in the

modern age this is a common objectification of nature, perceived only for its utility, and not *felt* (or loved) for its inherent worth.

### 1.3 Developmental Needs – The Context



Photo 3 – Meet a tree: students enjoying a paired, blindfolded nature connection game

Having identified the needs of the micro and particular – Mikaeliskolan’s Grade 9 leaving students - I will now outline the needs of the macro and general. Panning out to the widest lens, the broadest issues of modern, western, capitalist society at large can be seen; and then, honing in, that of teenagers growing up in contemporary southern Finland. In this way, it is hoped that the relevance of this topic area will be appreciated and that the methodologies may be successfully utilised in the wider field of international outdoor education. Furthermore, I wish to highlight the clear overlap between the specific needs of my target group and those of modern societies in general. For my group it was: marking the transition towards adulthood; developing their social and emotional skills; and disconnection from nature. For wider western society, I will argue, it is: a profound alienation; nature deficit; and an absence of marking important transitions in life.

### 1. *Alienation* –

Recognition of the problem of alienation can be traced back at least to the German existentialist philosophers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, central as it was to such thinkers as Nietzsche, Hegel, and Marx. In the modern post-World War 2 era, American R.A. Nisbet has perhaps been highly influential in describing the political and sociological impacts of this disconnect. His 1962 edition of ‘Community and Power’ is a manifesto about the loneliness and alienation of modern life:

By alienation I mean the state of mind that can find a social order remote, incomprehensible, or fraudulent; beyond real hope or desire, inviting apathy, boredom, or even hostility. The individual not only does not feel a part of the social order; he has lost interest in being a part of it... For a constantly enlarging number of persons, including, significantly, young persons of high school and college age... this state of alienation has become profoundly influential in both behavior and thought (Nisbet 1962, 2).

Nisbet believed that alienation manifested itself in three ways. First, it appeared as an alienation from the past: one’s ancestors, history and traditions. Second, alienation came from losing contact with place and nature. Third, he claimed, modern man had become alienated from things, using the abstract notion of credit money as an example (Nisbet 1962). In particular it is the second aspect of alienation that concerns us here.

Nisbet argued that modern technology has allowed man to dominate or ignore nature, creating a dislocating detachment from place, and having neither loyalty nor respect for the land that once nourished him (ibid.). This explains how we have reached our current situation with the climate in crisis and the rapid desecration of biodiversity. Also, note here the echoed concerns of the teachers about the students’ smart phone use isolating them from life outside (as in, always being: plugged in, eyes down, headphones on). Furthermore, Nisbet stressed that each of these forms of alienation hit young men and women the hardest. Alienation “so obviously affects youth, and helps make the problem of coming to adulthood so widely painful and baffling” (ibid.). No society should excuse itself from the rituals that accompany adulthood, he concluded.

To find a salve to this malady, we can look to contemporary Korean-German philosopher Byung-Chul Han (Bunting 2022). He argues that ritual and ceremony are essential parts of how human beings make themselves feel at home in the world. By engendering a deep sense of



*belonging*, they combat the “problem of our age” - alienation (ibid., 8). Belonging, homecoming, is the antidote to alienation and disconnect. In my own words, I would contend that many people today are suffering from a triple-disconnect: disconnection from self; from each other; and from nature (and, some would argue, from the Divine, too). The evidence for this can be seen (in the same order) in: the rise of the wellbeing and self-improvement cultures; increased loneliness despite digital connectivity; and the intentional vandalism of our only home - Earth. Therefore, any pedagogy or practice that can foster meaningful reconnection in those relationships will bring great benefits to individuals and to society.

## 2. *Nature deficit* –

Compared to much of the western world, Finland is still a young nation. It gained statehood only a hundred years ago (1918), industrialised and converted to Christianity relatively late, but also digitised early (This Is Finland 2021). Its peoples (including, especially, the indigenous Sámi Laplanders), languages, pagan religion, and cultures are very closely connected to nature. Most families will spend their month-long summer holiday together in the summer cabin, swim in its famed ‘1,000’ lakes (in actuality there are more than 188,000!), ski, chop firewood and do many other nature-based activities. This is the tradition. And, to some extent, it still holds true in rural, agricultural, and affluent Raseborg. However, as with everywhere, times are changing.

Traced in numerous ways, most of the figures point in the same direction – a decline in connection to nature. For example, Finland may be Europe’s most forested nation (comprising 76% of its landmass), but only 3-5% of it is classified as old-growth forest (which means it is at least only 120 years old). Most of the damage done to the ecosystems has taken place in the last 100 years only (see the obvious parallel with the birth of the modern nation). Nowadays, only 10% of Sámi people in Finland are still directly connected to reindeer herding, their traditional (originally nomadic) way of life. According to the Scouts Association, wilderness skills have never been more lacking. Pre-pandemic, summer cabin use was on a long-term decline and foreign holidays up. Urbanization has increased since the 1990s, resulting in about 85% of the population now living in towns and cities (Finland in Statistics, 2020).

How well we protect and take care of something also illustrates where our values and priorities lie. Nowadays, like much of the modern world, profit and convenience have replaced nature as the gods to be adored (in pre-Christian times, Finland was populated by many nature gods and spirits, including one even called Nature – *Luonto* - himself). The decline in the reciprocal

relationship of care and stewardship with nature is most startingly illustrated with the following contemporary statistics, provided by the national environment agency, SYKE:

All of Finland's semi-natural grasslands and grazed woodlands are threatened. 76% of forest habitats in Finland are now threatened. Most streams and rivers outside of northern fell regions were found to be threatened or near threatened... Eutrophication continues to be the most important threat to underwater marine habitats in the Baltic Sea and coastal areas. 38% of all fell habitats were estimated to be threatened... 54% of [swamps and bogs were] assessed threatened in the entire country, while a further 20% are 'near threatened' (SYKE 2018).

The decline in the relationship children have with nature can be seen not only in Finland, but also across the whole modern world. Richard Louv has perhaps been the most cogent in his labelling of this decline as “nature deficit disorder” (Louv 2010, 6). In his seminal work, ‘Last Child in The Woods’, Louv documents in detail the decline over recent decades of children’s time spent in nature and their freedom to play and explore unsupervised. Year after year, the average distance roamed without adult supervision has shrunk (ibid.). Instead, the youth of today are, on average, spending rapidly increasing amounts of time indoors and on technological devices, alone in their rooms and often only meeting online (ibid.). Of course, the consequences of the current COVID-19 pandemic with its frequent lockdowns, have only exacerbated these issues for all teenagers by closing schools, quarantining students indoors, and forcing them to be online for all their learning and social needs. Many scientific studies are currently in the process of ascertaining the level of mental, social and physical stress that this has placed upon an entire generation. The deleterious effects of lockdowns also directly affected my project mid-way through, and my students very nearly lost all their motivation to continue. How it was addressed and incorporated into the programme is explained further in chapter 3.3.

### *3. Transitioning from adolescence to adulthood -*

The loneliness and isolation of adolescence – the yearning for belonging - is, commonly, the period in a person’s life when a sense of alienation can be most keenly felt. Likewise, the awkward period between the carefree days of childhood and the surety of adulthood can be when we most lose touch with nature. In such ways, these contextual needs interweave with and influence each other. So, how do societies ease the inevitable transition from childhood to adulthood?

It is commonly understood in our culture that adolescence is the frequently challenging time between childhood and adulthood. What is less commonly known is that the developmental

demarcation of adolescence is actually a recent phenomenon (Peterson 1988, 7). For many indigenous tribal cultures there was no period of adolescence: the transition from childhood to adulthood being sharply demarcated by an initiatory period serving as the passage rite into adulthood (van Gennep 1960, 12). In contemporary cultures, the transition into adulthood is more protracted and there is far more ambiguity as to when the social role of adulthood is actually attained (Davis 2011, 102). This has important ramifications for wider society as a whole. As Meade asserts, “what modern society tries to dismiss as a stage out of which youth will grow automatically, is actually a crucible in which the future of the culture gets forged” (1996, 60). Garrison argues convincingly that the innate need in youth to belong to a group, if not channelled in a healthy direction, can easily become “replaced with antisocial variations such as participation in bullying, cults, gangs, and substance abuse” (1988, 10). Legitimately then, it can be asked would there still be so much teenage rebellion and rejection if there was an authentic sense of agency, purpose and inclusion in their lives?

What, then, is being done in contemporary Finnish society to mark this important transition into adulthood? It is my contention that not enough is – at least, not *meaningfully* enough. Schools like Mikaeliskolan may have a graduation ceremony (although, even that was cancelled during the pandemic), yet this can be experienced as an impersonal, even boring, formality. Celebrations with friends and family are likely more fun, but may lack the depth of a weighty ceremony. There is Confirmation camp for Christians at about age 14, but fewer families feel this is either relevant or appropriate for them. A non-denominational camp called Prometheus has been successful at filling some of the niche, but, nonetheless, these camps can lack the reflective self-inquiry that adventure education would (or should) promote. The same applies to the various camps of Scouts and local nature associations (of which there are many in Finland), which do not even attempt to be anything other than, at best, an educational holiday. Within youth work, there has been a push towards active citizenship, promoted by the EU’s Erasmus Plus scheme. However, such interventions can feel like a drop in the ocean to counter-balance the pervasive narrative of the dominant culture. That narrative is, perhaps, less concerned about each individual’s special relationship with nature and their unique gift to society; and more to do with convincing them how they too can become insatiable, conformist consumers within an extractive economy.

With adventure education’s focus on personal growth, responsibility and community (Priest & Gass 2017), this leaves much room to explore how it can play an important role in adding

meaning and healing to this fractured society. I believe that adventure education can be an accessible, inclusive means for doing so. I shall attempt to clearly explain how I approached this in the following sub-chapter.

## **1.4 Objectives**

*Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far they can go ~ T.S. Eliot*

As has already been described in detail above, the key development needs of the commissioner and project can be simplified and grouped together as follows –

1. Helping transition towards adulthood
2. Developing social skills
3. Re-connecting to nature

In order to meet these needs, my ambition was to co-create with the students a leadership training programme that would hone their meta-skills of good team-working, communication and confidence building. Most of our time would be spent in nature and the final expedition would allow space for marking their leaving of school in a meaningful way. It should be noted, however, that due to the vagaries of the pandemic, weather, and some school issues, there was a significant difference between what I had planned and what actually happened. All education, I would say, is a process of continual adjustment, but never before have I had to continually re-plan and reconfigure so much, so frequently. Therefore, in the sub-chapter 3.3 I will explain what actually happened, but here I will elucidate further the original intentions and strategy.

The timeframe and logistics initially provided some helpful parameters: my project would need to be completed within the Spring term before the students graduate. In order for it to fit within their other obligations, it would mostly be conducted on-site, at their school, and during school hours. The project would need to be of minimal or no cost for the students, with most equipment and outdoor clothing to be borrowed. It should, of course, be compliant with the current (and ever-changing) COVID-19 restrictions and regulations. Finally, the adventure education meta-skills learning goals would ensure that this course and camp could be both complimentary to, but also demonstrably different from, the school curriculum.

Indeed, throughout the development of the project I was grateful to feel a kindred support from the entire Mikaelskolan community. I believe that this was because (apart from being friendly

folks, of course), there is a shared field of understanding between Steiner pedagogy and adventure education. Within both there is a holistic view of the *equal* value of developing the head, hand and the heart (unlike in the conventional education system, which usually prioritises head knowledge above all else). Both pedagogies prioritise developing holistic meta-skills, as well as technical knowledge. They both believe in immersing learning in nature. Like Steiner education, my use of participatory pedagogy was non-prescriptive. Furthermore, Steiner pedagogy runs in 7-year cycles. That means that Grade 9 is, according to Steiner, the “start of the last cycle to adulthood” (Steiner 1986, 28). All this compatibility meant that my approach and intentions fitted very harmoniously within the school’s.

The use of English throughout the project was advantageous because, as the international language of business – and of the hegemonic youth culture (also a second or third language for my students) - it could serve as a medium by which they could already gain a sense of achievement and of further entering into the adult world. For many it provided a within-reach challenge to overcome shyness, make mistakes publicly and yet not let it deter oneself. It was also somewhat seen as ‘cool’ and ‘grown up’. Furthermore, the opportunity to practise English more intensively with a native speaker, was a tangible incentive for the school and parents to get on-board with the programme. However, for those students less willing to engage, it was also used as an easy excuse to avoid and minimise participation by claiming ignorance of the language.

After the ideation sessions with both staff and students, I began to develop - and simultaneously implement – an ever-evolving, tailor-made, step-by-step adventure education leadership programme. A common theme of adventure education programming, I felt leadership training was well suited to the learning goals of this project. Good leadership requires self-awareness, adaptive communication skills, confidence and self-reliance, as well as effective team-working and collaborative skills (Graham 2002). Using adventure education methodologies, I could help the students to better understand themselves (through reflection, for example), their own communications styles (using the NOLS leadership quadrant: Gookin & Leach 2009), and their stress boundaries (Mortlock’s zones: 1984). By focussing on group dynamics in the sessions, the aim was to develop better functioning and cooperative relationships with other group members (Prouty, et al. 2007). Team-building games, group project work, group and self-reflection, peer support and evaluation - would all contribute to achieving these learning goals (Ewert & Sibthorp 2014).

Development of confidence and sense of responsibility were to be drawn from the various leadership roles that they undertook (Graham, 2002). I would try to promote independence, leadership and empowerment by gradually divesting control and responsibility from myself and the other adult staff members, to the students themselves (Beames & Brown 2016). As Mortlock (1984) has demonstrated, growth, learning, and self-control can be encouraged by incrementally increasing challenge and carefully managing risk. As shall be explained further in chapter 2.1, this is a fundamental component of adventure education. Facing risks and overcoming challenges were to be provided by the Arctic winter camping conditions that the course would culminate in.

In order to promote inclusion and authenticity, I would be utilising experiential learning (Dewey's 'hand' part of the trilogy), participatory pedagogy, low-threshold accessibility of all activities (voluntary, easy, welcoming) and a step-by-step pedagogical method (Gilbertson, et al. 2006). Participatory pedagogy not only creates agency and ownership for the participants in their own learning path, but it also allows for more informed choices. This improves the ethical standards of the research and increases their own engagement and self-directed motivation. Drawing on my earlier training in 'Spiritual Ecology,' a variety of nature connection activities would be utilised throughout the programme to encourage a renewed sense of re-connection with nature for the participants (Cornell 2015).

Mythologist Joseph Campbell famously explained (1993) that, integral to the 'Hero's Journey,' after the separation and the initiatory experience, the 'hero' must return to their community and their possible transformation should be witnessed and celebrated (preferably by their elders, in particular). As an imperfect approximation of this, I would organise for the Grade 9 class to relay some of their experiences during this training programme and camp to the younger class 7 upon their return. If possible, their parents and families could also be there and there could even be a little ceremony to distribute some simple achievement awards (perhaps self-crafted) to all who participated. Not only would this be an opportunity for the younger age group to be inspired by their own possibilities, but more pertinently, it would allow for the older class to have their own achievements reflected back to them.

## 2 KNOWLEDGE BASE

In this chapter I will attempt to briefly outline some of the knowledge base of adventure education which underpins the pedagogical intentions and grounding of the entire programme that I created. Whilst elements of other modalities, such as nature connection and rites of passage work, were included in the project, essentially it was experiential outdoor adventure education that provided the guiding principles and majority of the activities that comprised the programme, so that is what I have focussed on here. Reflections, integral to adventure pedagogy, and how they relate to the learning process are also explored in chapter 2.2.

### 2.1 Adventure Pedagogy

*You are free to do whatever you like. You need only face the consequences ~ Sheldon B. Kopp*



Photo 4 – Triumphant moment: a participant bravely overcoming a challenge to retrieve the next clue

Adventure pedagogy is an approach to education that integrates experiential outdoor adventure activities and challenges as a means of promoting personal, social, and educational development. Rooted in Dewey's experiential learning theory (Dewey 1963), adventure education seeks to create meaningful learning experiences through direct engagement in real-life situations and problem-solving activities. It integrates experiential education - learning by doing - with outdoor education (Ewert & Davidson 2017, 13). As Priest and Gass explain (2017), experiential education itself contains 3 overlapping, but distinct, elements as in a Venn diagram: ecological relationships, physical skills and interpersonal growth. Experiential education necessitates authentic decision-making with real outcomes which propel a learner's sense of intrinsic, self-directed motivation (Berry 2011, 68-69). Outdoor education is necessarily multi-sensory, interdisciplinary, experiential and, of course, happens in nature. It is an umbrella term that connects environmental education with adventure education (Ewert & Davidson 2017, 13). Thus, adventure education clearly incorporates the learning within the body, not just the head, with a focus on training the 'heart', as in social, emotional and communication skills.

A sense of achievement can be fostered by encountering challenges that are just beyond the current level of competency (Bunyan 2011, 11). They must be within reach, but not too easy or else the aspect of challenge – and therefore the parallel sense of achievement - is missing. Tackling realistic challenges can sometimes provide experiences of 'flow', that is the deeply satisfying experience of intense presence and focus described by psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (Solly 2015, 12-13).

Managing risk is an essential element of adventure pedagogy and linked to challenge. Risk can be defined as the potential or threat of losing something of value (Beames & Brown 2016, 66). Risk is all around us, an essential aspect of our reality. As long as phenomena change, then there is risk (of losing/breaking/hurting, for example). So, we cannot escape risk, but what is important is how we meet the threat of it (this is why it is scary/exciting). Risk can be physical, social, or psychological in nature (Lehtonen & Saaranen-Kauppinen 2020, 248) and what is experienced as an appropriate level of risk or challenge is not the same for everybody, nor the same for anybody at all times (Beames & Brown 2016). It is variable and subjective. For example, I may feel that a climbing route is more scary – and therefore more *risky* – the first time that I attempt it, than the 5<sup>th</sup> time. Whilst I may find the physical geography of the climb the riskiest aspect for me; my associate might find the social nature of the group the riskiest, most threatening, aspect of the experience. It is the instructor's responsibility to assess well the risks



and create – as far as possible (for risks can only be mitigated, not completely eliminated) - a safe learning environment for the participants to have a genuine sense of autonomy and engagement (Beames & Brown 2016, 110 - 115). In their seminal leadership programming textbook, Priest & Gass caution the effective leader to:

Adapt adventure experiences to suit the varying levels and needs of all members in a group. Leaders should recognize that adventures are a state of mind that often fluctuates according to a participant's perception of situational risks and personal competence. A range of challenges should be made available in the same activity, or at the same site, so that participants can select a level of risk that suits their level of competence (Priest and Gass 2017, 109).

Another key aspect of the distinctive conditions that adventure education is situated within, and is in dialogue with, is the dynamic learning environment of the great outdoors. Unlike the traditional learning environment of the indoor classroom, the outdoors has potentially continually changing weather conditions and therefore has a greater degree of uncertainty inherent within it. Due to the vagaries of the weather, terrain and group dynamics a trip outdoors can never be fully predictable and controllable. When facilitated properly, these inevitable uncertainties and changes can help learners to confront their own anxieties and grow in self-awareness and confidence (Ewert 2014). Importantly, the actions of learners have real, actual, visible consequences (Prouty 2007). For example, if you forget to pack your lunches, as happened in our group with 1 unhappy student, then you will be faced with the consequence of that action. It does not necessarily mean that you will have to go without lunch, but you will have to find a way around this obstacle (we shared from the whole group). This is resilience-building.

In today's world, children can often be shielded from uncertainty and the direct impact of consequences. Whether it is something as existential as facing the inevitability of mortality, or seemingly inconsequential as avoiding ever feeling lost by always having your GPS on, we have cushioned ourselves from many fundamental facts of life. If we are not familiar with encountering them - and how we ourselves react to the challenges they pose - then we are unprepared and inexperienced when they do, inevitably, intrude upon our lives. Adventure pedagogy aims to resource valuable life skills like self-awareness and resilience in these matters through step-by-step exposure and reflection.

Furthermore, outdoor education provides discernible and cogent opportunities to learn from direct, authentic experiences. The learner is not sitting in a classroom, passively receiving conceptual knowledge, or discoursing about another's experience. Instead, the learner goes outside

into the real, natural world to have real-life, first-person experiences which engages them in a holistic way – physically, emotionally *and* mentally. Authentic experiences are valuable because they hold more meaning than theoretical ones. So, for example, the teaching of map and compass orienteering has less of an impact on the students in the training period beforehand, safe in the school’s backyard, than when we are out in the forest together and it is down to their skills whether we will reach our designated camp spot or instead have to improvise. This active form of learning makes it easier for learners to transfer what they learnt to other aspects of their lives. This is called the transfer effect, which is crucial for the experience to go beyond being a one-off, and to percolate into the participant’s actual life that demonstrates real growth (Prouty 2007).

## 2.2 Learning and Reflecting

*For the sake of comfort, you forego knowing the world ~ Anon traveler*



Photo 5 – A useful tool for reflection: Comfort, Growth and Danger zones (Mortlock 1984)

In adventure education learning goals are typically related to problem solving, communication skills and self-esteem. In order for this learning (growth) to take place, the learner is engaged in a process of actively reflecting upon their experience. Through a variety of practices, they

are encouraged by the instructor to do at least some of the following: to identify, conceptualise, verbalise, demonstrate, share, discuss, unpack, question, and process their experiences. This includes both the *external* events (I led my peer group successfully to the campsite today); and, crucially, the *internal* ones (whilst I was doing it, I felt at different times: worried, frustrated, proud and tired). Through growing awareness of the internal experiences, patterns of personal reaction, and shifting boundaries of comfort/discomfort (which manifests as the absence/presence of stress), the learner is able to grow in self-awareness. Furthermore, the learner should experiment (I prefer the word ‘play’) with their understandings in new environments and contexts. This process is elucidated in Kolb’s famous experiential learning model (1984; see below):

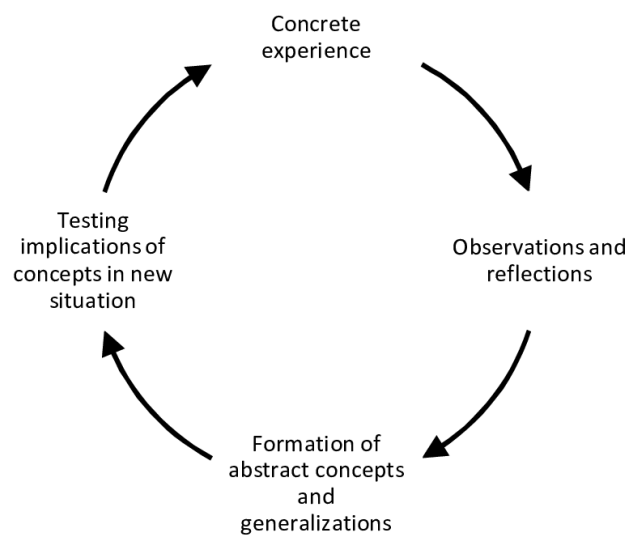


Figure 1: Kolb's 4-stage Experiential Learning Model

Although there are many different models to explain experiential learning, in Kolb’s model it is presented as a 4-stage continuous cycle (when done successfully). Kolb defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb 1984, 38). It should be noted that his model has been criticised for dividing phases of learning into clear, separate sections, whereas in reality they occur simultaneously. However, as a model, it is necessarily a *simplification* and *symbolic representation* of lived experience, so I do not think that this is strong argument against it. Instead, the model highlights the learner’s central role in constructing their own new skills and knowledge (Berry 2011, 66-67) and is a useful model to discuss experiencing and learning with.

In the model, Concrete Experience relates to the lived experience itself (for example, the challenging adventurous activity performed). After the experience, this should be followed up by Reflective Observation so that the learner can seek meaning within it. This reflecting allows the assimilation of thoughts to turn into general principles, which is labelled as the Abstract Conceptualisation stage. Next, in the Active Experimentation stage, the learner brings together thoughts and learnings from other similar lived experiences and applies them in a new setting. And thus a new cycle begins (Hodgson & Berry 2011, 6-67).

Reflection is a key part of identity formation and underlies the values and beliefs that support the views individuals hold and the behaviours that they express (Cornu 2009). Without reflection, one cannot: identify, question, nor reframe underlying values and beliefs; acknowledge or challenge assumptions; recognize biases or identify fears; and understand one's own strengths and weaknesses (ERIC, 1992). Inward contemplation precedes outward change.

Although this meta-cognitive function is something we all do to some extent and, as has been shown above, is essential to learning, it is not something that we are usually taught how to do. Nor, crucially, is it something that educators are usually encouraged and trained to facilitate. At worst, some practitioners may not see the value of reflection if they themselves are not 'naturally' very self-reflective; others may assume that students are reflecting on their own and do not need their interference. Adventure education, however, considers group and individual reflection to be an essential component of the experiential learning cycle and a key role of the instructor (Kolb 1984). Here, reflection often occurs through interaction with others - the learners process their experience with place through expressing with others their shared experience (Dewey 1944). It is often through recounting our lived experiences to others that we can see ourselves more clearly.

As social beings, in order for humans to process the feelings and emotions that they have experienced, they need to feel seen and heard by others, even strangers. This is the central tenet underlying all talking therapies. Therefore, in order for one to express any tender or private vulnerabilities, the reflection circumstances need to be held in a socially safe environment. This is a major responsibility of the facilitator. Of course, reflections can and should also be quick, fun, frequent and light weight, too, but the same rule applies. If the reflection is to have any chance of touching upon truthful, authentic lived experience; or to unpack anything not immediately self-evident to the learner, the reflector must feel safe to explore and express themselves.

### 3 DEVELOPMENT METHODOLOGY

*To study a child, one has to be alert, watchful, self-aware, and this demands far greater intelligence and affection than to encourage him to follow an ideal ~ J. Krishnamurti*

In this chapter I will outline the measurement methods used for this development work. However, note that as this was not a research-focussed study, but rather a functional project design, therefore evaluation and feedback data was all that was really needed. In sub-chapter 3.2, I highlight some of the ethical practices that I employed throughout the planning and implementation of this project. Finally, in 3.3, I outline a necessarily simplified explanation of the stages and structure of this 6-month programme.

#### 3.1 Qualitative Data



Photo 6 – In their own words: students were encouraged to use creative ways to share and reflect on their experiences with the rest of the group

Measuring and evaluating my programme was conducted by focussing on qualitative data collection methods. Subjective meta-skills, like growing confidence for example, were best identified and discussed qualitatively, not quantitatively. Primarily, I utilised observation with field notes – mine, and sometimes the students’ or fellow teachers’. I also incorporated continual personal reflection and feedback throughout the programme. This created a feedback loop

through which I could better adjust the activities and pace to meet the evolving needs of the students, thus improving the design and effectiveness of the project. Furthermore, I created a Padlet questionnaire for the students at the end of their planning stage and semi-structured interviews for the teachers to review the programme as a whole. Triangulating all of these sources of data has allowed me to have a more rounded, varied and penetrative view of the diversity of experiences. It has promoted validity and reliability of my analysis of the results.

### 1. *Observation -*

Observations (which can also be designed in advance) were the natural choice for my data collection whilst busy teaching and in the field. Of course, observations face a risk of personal bias, preferences, and inter-cultural misunderstandings (I am British; they Finnish), but I tried to mitigate this by, not only by applying professional rigour and self-awareness to the observations, but also by employing triangulation to cross-check the results to improve their credibility. For example, I could ask the student about their experience and learnings, and corroborate/contrast this with my own observations and that of their teacher or parent. These primary sources could also be interpreted and contextualised with secondary sources that already exist within the field, making up my knowledge base.

Observation material came in the form of field notes, primarily my own. Flick describes some of the reasons to use observation as a method that “takes the researcher into the fields and processes under study, beyond hearing reports about them by one or more participants. The data will be richer in their dimensions and more comprehensive” (2018).

### 2. *Interviews -*

As has already been explained, the whole project began with an informal ideation phase of brainstorming and co-creating. Employing community-based participatory development methods, I wanted this project to be inclusive and actively invested in by the participants. These ideation sessions were recorded by my simple paper and pen note-taking.

I formally interviewed my colleagues only 2 other times during this project. Once, as has been mentioned before (see: chapter 1.1), to gather research into the history and pedagogy of Mikaeliskolan from the co-founder (FI 2021). The other time was to interview my 2 teacher colleagues and one parent at the very end of the programme in order to gather relevant data for my results. Both interviews followed a semi-structured technique. The following descriptions refer to only these 2 interviews.

The semi-structured interview includes some pre-determined questions, but remains open and flexible under a defined theme. This gives structure to keep the conversation on topic (and therefore provide relevant data), but also allows the interviewees to reply in their own words, explaining their views, and also provides some room for open discussion (Bradford & Cullen, 2011, 92). As Flick points out (2018), this method offers an important clarifying potential, allowing the interviewer to check at times if they have correctly understood what the interviewee was saying. Following Flick's guidelines (2018) for semi-structured interviews, I tried to employ questions that were: specific; well-formed; but open-ended and not leading, thus improving the data's credibility. The questions were progressively structured so as to probe deeper as the interview went on (ibid.).

The interview methodology followed this chronological process: research of the knowledge base; devising of questions; ethical considerations; selection of interviewees following Flick's guidelines (2018) of key informants; conducting the interviews; and finally analysing the data. For design quality, the interviews themselves were held at conducive times and places to encourage the interviewees to feel more able to express themselves honestly and fully (for the teachers, a convenient lunchbreak at the end of the week, over coffee). They included stimuli material of a select few photos and anecdotes to help set the scene.

### 3. *Survey -*

Additionally, I also created one Padlet survey for the students, pre-camp. The original intention with this was to boost my qualitative data with some quantitative research, which was then to be codified and analysed, thus improving the credibility and validity of all the data gathered. However, this survey came at the end of the difficult lockdown online experience and the students mostly just did not take it seriously enough to provide statistically relevant data. The questions I focussed on in the questionnaire were about their decision-making processes; sense of independence and autonomy; and how they met challenges or risks. I chose these subjects because I had wanted to compare the results both before and after the camp. However, this idea had to be abandoned once I had seen their mischievous responses.

### 3.2 Ethical Considerations



Photo 7 – Walking blind: students faced challenges supporting their communication skills, teamwork and trust

Following the Responsible Conduct of Research principles (RCR), I tried to include all possible ethical considerations throughout the process of this programme. From the start, participatory pedagogy methods were used which increased informed consent: the participants had more agency, awareness of the contents of the programme and involvement in deciding the directions it would follow. All activities were explicitly voluntary and started from a low threshold of accessibility, making them inclusive without being pressured. All activities and trips outside were assessed beforehand by the instructor and teachers for their safety and risks.

Participation in the data gathering was voluntary and anonymous. Informed consent (as the students were at least 15 years old) was requested, but their parents were also informed as a courtesy and to foster wider inclusion. No personal data extraneous to the research was gathered. All identifying data and materials were held physically (on paper) by me alone and then destroyed as soon as it has been interpreted and converted into the results. As much as I could, the interviewees' possible concerns were taken into account and averted in the interview planning stage. During the conducting of the interviews, the participants were encouraged to express themselves as truthfully as they could. Permission for the taking and sharing of photos was requested.



### 3.3 Programme Description

*A journey is best measured in friends, rather than miles ~ Tim Cahill*



Photo 8 – Leading the way: students took turns to navigate and lead the group, as well as other roles of leadership and responsibility

The entire programme that I created lasted for about 6-months, on and off. As was mentioned before, it was interrupted and delayed by a pandemic lockdown, as well as the usual school holidays. During this time it had to evolve, not only to accommodate the wishes of students and staff, but also to transition online during the lockdown. This crucial delay meant the final expedition had to go from being directed towards a winter ski trek in Arctic Lapland, to an early-summer local hike in the woods. We adapted well, despite the testing circumstances.

#### *1. The Training Course -*

As has already been explained in chapter 1.2, the programme began with much consulting of students and staff as to what they were hoping to do, and what they would like to get out of this course with me. Simultaneously, I began conducting a variety of ice-breaker games. This was to ensure that we got off to a fun start and, as they and I did not know each other beforehand, it could allow for a gradual building-up of trust, as well as resourcing me with a picture of their

particular issues, group dynamics, group politics, and so on. This was soon accompanied by a selection of team-building activities to help me further ascertain how they operated together and to start unpacking *for them* some of the dynamics and communication issues involved. Of course, throughout all the stages and activities, feedback and reflection were incorporated into it. I explain more about this on page 39, but for now it is relevant only to mention that this process of reflecting on their own experiences, sharing in the group their feelings about it, and discussing together different perspectives of those experiences, was something entirely strange and, at first, difficult for the group.

In order to create a sense of inclusivity and accessibility, all the activities that we did together were deliberately ordered so as to begin with the easiest versions, and only gradually became more difficult. For example, as it was the coldest month of the year when we began, we did not immediately go outside into the snow, we built up to that (surprisingly, you might think, most of them did not know how to dress adequately to be outside in Winter for any significant duration of time). Instead, we began in their familiar classrooms. Also, we did not begin with any activities that would require much in the way of strength, fitness, experience, or bravery (these are common fears for those about to embark on their first outdoor education programme). Instead, we began with vocal, mime, and simple action games that anyone could do without background knowledge and would make them laugh, relax and get to know me.

Once this was fairly established within the group, we soon transitioned more towards winter wilderness skills training. As a wilderness guide who trained in Finland, there were many skills that I was aware they needed to familiarize themselves with in a short time. Some of these important wilderness skills included: winter clothing and gear, compass orienteering, fire-making, skiing, and so on. All of these would be utilised in the final camp with each of them taking turns in leadership roles and task responsibilities, thus promoting self-reliance and confidence. Nonetheless, in order to provide variety - and to keep up the all-important teamwork meta-skills – some ice-breaking and team-building games were still included in most sessions. At this point in the programme, we were meeting during spare class times twice a week, for a total of about 2-3 hours per week.

The next stage of the programme was less successful. I had intended for them to grow in responsibility and have a greater sense of agency by having them take responsibility - in small groups - for each of the key parts of the expedition planning. I split the class of 13 students into 4 groups of about 3 people per group (there were always absences). The 4 groups were: the

Food Team; Gear & Clothing; Safety Management; and Location & Logistics. In theory this is a valid approach, but in practice it only partially succeeded. Those disinclined to participate had others to do the work for them. Some of those who did take the responsibility found the pressures of providing for the whole group a little too much. Also, some of the key tasks that we needed in order to have a successful trip were still not performed and had to be provided by me, which was disempowering for them. Doing it again, I would have needed more time to explain more clearly and slowly the roles of each group and they would have had more direct supervision from me.

## 2. *Lockdown and Plan B –*

However, this process was further complicated by the sudden imposition of a national lockdown that meant we were no longer able to meet in person, even outside. For approximately 1 month the course had to transition online and be entirely re-planned by me. I did my best to highlight to the students how this, too, was a learning opportunity and how here we were also facing the challenges of uncertainty together and building resilience. Yet, it was hard for my message to get through (the computer screens). Understandably, this time came as a big disappointment and challenge to many in the class, not only for the frustrations it incurred on our project, but also for the total stoppage - yet again - that it had imposed on their entire lives for the foreseeable future...

Once the lockdown had ended, and after another of their holidays, all the snow had swiftly melted and our possibilities of a ski trek together were forgone. Due to a busy end-of-year programme for the graduating students, we had far less time available to us to meet (about once every 2 weeks), and it was clear to me that a lot of the momentum, team-spirit, and enthusiasm for the trip that I had been carefully cultivating all these months, had gone. Nonetheless, I could do nothing else but try to practice what I teach and attempt to embody the principals of adaptability, resilience, hopefulness. We focused on the presentations that they had been working on in their small groups and many of them admirably stepped-up into their leadership roles: distributing gear lists; peer teaching camp food cooking; giving presentations about the ecology and history of our location to their classmates, and so on.

After yet another period of tremendous uncertainty where the camp had to be once more cancelled due to the imposition of new COVID-19 regulations, suddenly, finally, it was now time at the start of June – just a couple of days before their last day of school – to go on our overnight expedition together.

### 3. *The Camping Trip* -

I and the 2 teachers, ST and CT, had already recently done a few reconnaissance trips to investigate our location: a nearby nature recreation area (common in Finland), called ‘Tre Tresk’ (Three Lakes). They had needed to familiarise themselves with the camping and parking spots. I had needed time to check the terrain, facilities and, all-importantly, to secretly stash clues, items and challenges, as well as check the co-ordinates along our likely paths, in order for the students to discover them.

I had recognised that, after the lockdown and subsequent compromises to our plans, I urgently needed to bring back a sense of authentic adventure, surprise and even playfulness into the experience. It would not do for them to be dragging their feet reluctantly into the forest (which was quite likely at this stage). So, I devised a deliberately silly and playful story about how the FBI were looking for aliens in this forest and needed our specialist help to find them. The students were surprised, but immediately began laughing and smiling again. This new narrative added an important dimension of *purpose* to our hiking, even if that purpose was obviously fantasy. At a stroke, I was able to circumvent all the usual complaints of why are we hiking with heavy backpacks - especially in a non-linear direction! - to our camping spot when it would be so much easier to drop the bags off/take shot-cuts, etc.

In order to make the best use of our limited terrain, time and skills, I had come up with a complicated series of scenarios that basically involved a treasure hunt for the students who would need to take turns to orienteer the rest of the group to each new station. There, following clues written in silly (but interpretable) rhyming riddles, they would have to search for the item needed for the completion of the next challenge. With each clue was also a set of actual compass co-ordinates that they would need to follow quite accurately to make it to the next station. Of course, if they should go too far off route, I was there besides them to steer them back again. All of this ensured that we did more hiking than they would otherwise have been willing to do, that they practised their orienteering skills with real zeal as the consequences were tangible (e.g.: if they do not make it to the next station, they cannot collect the firewood that they will need later that evening to cook their pancakes on!). As well as good fun, furthermore, it added challenge and achievement (e.g.: carrying heavier packs further than they had thought they could; or using team-work to plunge into a bog to retrieve the next clue); and authenticity (e.g.: we were not just randomly deciding to walk blindly down a slope, holding a rope – it was a *necessary* part of the scenario). Of course, the use of stories, scenarios and narratives require a

certain willingness on the side of the participants to suspend disbelief and not all of them were willing (the usual suspects were sceptical and reluctant). However, if enough of the group do go along with it - and enjoy it – that is enough to make it work.

Once we had reached our camp for the night, the alien narrative could easily be put aside as the many tasks for making camp take over. The students all knew the roles that they had and were now motivated to begin work on them. The camp itself was a beautiful pair of log lean-to shelters ('*laavu*' in Finnish) with a grill-place between them, and beside a small, still lake (what Finns would call a pond). Like many such locations (available for free all over Finland) it was equipped with a composting outhouse toilet, and even a wood-burning sauna - perfect for our intentions and which I had reserved through local channels.

Under our supervision, the students took lead responsibility providing for the cooking, eating, cleaning, chopping firewood, fetching water, and so on. Of course, this is not only more time and resource efficient, but, as explained earlier, it is actually part of their meta- and hard-skills training, too. If they have everything done for them, how can they learn self-reliance? Not all the tasks went smoothly with an equal contribution from all, but these group challenges - if handled well - provide more opportunities for reflection and learning from those very consequences.

It was a key request of the students to also have 'time off from the programme', so this was provided in the evening, where they could sauna, swim and chat together in a relaxed and spontaneous manner. Actually, this is also an important and deliberate part of the programming, because without 'downtime' it is usually difficult for any reflection and processing of experiences to arise. It keeps them happy, gives everyone a rest and break (needed for the instructors, too), lowers any stress levels, *and* facilitates learning.

After the (inevitably) bonding experience of eating (well), sleeping (poorly) and waking up (reluctantly) together, the next morning was devoted to self-care and wellbeing time. I facilitated a silly 'gorilla yoga' stretch – good for waking up and easing sore muscles, followed by a nature-based meditation to bring the attention back into oneself and aid the coming self-reflections. We were based at the camp the whole day and could enjoyably explore our surroundings without the burden of our backpacks. We played some fun last games, based on nature connection and teamwork. Finally, we focussed on the closing of this course, camp, programme, year

and school career that they had shared together, with a structured and tailored series of reflections. This was their chance to mark what was ending and look ahead to what was coming.

#### *4. Reflecting and Marking -*

Smaller reflections had been incorporated throughout the trip, but now, at the end, I wanted them to have some unhurried, structured time where they could really focus on what they were feeling and share it if they chose to. We began with whole-group review and feedback: taking turns to highlight their memorable experiences during this whole half-year programme. Whilst they shared, I was able to get valuable information about what had worked well and what hadn't. Then we took it a stage deeper. In small groups, they were provided with a few questions and tasked with finding creative, visible (as in, not just verbal), artistic even, ways to tell the story of their own individual journey through this programme: their highs, lows and learnings. This worked better than I had hoped for, with even some of the rebellious boys participating and sharing some honest insights. I could hear from what some confided that they had learnt significant life lessons, or had noticeably grown in their own emotional intelligence or self-confidence.

Finally, a lengthy solo time was facilitated, without any guiding questions, which they could interpret and use in their own chosen way. They were encouraged to reflect on either the past or the future, but not on both, as this would perhaps lead an emotional topic to greater depth and focus. Afterwards, everyone returned to the whole group to either voluntarily share some final reflections; or to share their presence with active listening. With minimal fuss (otherwise some would have mocked and undermined it), we closed our time together with a shared, simple, but beautiful ceremony, reverently casting into the lake a symbolic offering of any natural object that we had found during this trip, accompanied by a wish or prayer. By this, I was attempting to offer them an approachable liminal space – perhaps for the first time in their lives – where they could perform a reverential act, witnessed by their peers, that would serve as a ritual to mark their transition away from childhood and into adulthood.

## 4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter I will illustrate with examples some of the positive results of my programme, gathered through the aforementioned qualitative methods. I will focus solely on the meta-skills, leaving aside the hard or technical skills that were also evidently learnt, such as orienteering, etc. I will also go into further analysis and discussion of the challenges, obstacles and achievements of the programme in chapter 4.2.



Photo 9 – Finding your way: students were taught wilderness skills, such as orienteering with map and compass

### 4.1 Results

*To thine own self be true. Thou canst not then be false to any man ~ William Shakespeare*

Evidence for the positive effect this programme had on the students came in a variety of forms. The Padlet survey highlighted that, for 10 out of 13 students, speaking out loud - in English,

furthermore - had been a significant achievement that they were proud of themselves for. As one student put it, “opening my mouth in front of the class was the bravest thing I’ve done so far.” She, I learnt, did not usually do this in *any* language. It is important to note here, though, that this survey was pre-camp and I know that she, like many others, would have had many more reasons to be proud of themselves if I had been able give them the same survey then.

In the interview at the end (SI 2021), the teachers and parent highlighted some observations that they had made of what were - for that context - extraordinary acts of courage or independence. There was the example of a very shy girl standing up to a dominant guy and telling him off *in front of others*, in order to protect another shy boy that could easily get picked on. Then there was the example of one of the boys drawing a clear boundary between himself and the rest of the boys so that, for a change, he could do what he felt was right, instead of just following the crowd. These gains may sound modest, but in the context of that class and those relationships, the teachers had never witnessed those students acting so independently and bravely before.

My own observations showed a clear progression of growing confidence and corresponding self-worth for a few of the students. I watched some exceptionally shy students at the start of the programme behave self-consciously and awkwardly. They were introverted, contracted and self-limiting. However, by the time of the camp, they were relaxed in the face of uncertainty, confident in voicing their own opinions, and willingly volunteering for tasks of responsibility and leadership that previously they would have avoided.

I watched teamwork evolve – not for the whole group, unfortunately – but for the core group who fully participated in the whole programme. It began as a competitive, domineering and macho space, characterised by a lack of listening and too much teasing. By the time of the camp, it had transformed into a female-dominant, cooperative, collaborative, and enjoyable space that was characterised by the sound of shared laughter.

One of the clearest ways to identify progress in subjective experiences is to compare before and after an experience – the expectations of what is possible beforehand; and the actual achievements (and sense of pride that follows) afterwards. In this case, asking students for feedback from the first sessions through to the end of the camp, we could all hear how they had been able to accomplish so much more than what they had presumed. In areas from communication and teamwork to leadership and confidence, many of them reported discernible growth.



## 4.2 Analysis

*An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered ~ G.K. Chesterton*

As can be seen above, there is some evidence that this adventure education programme was successful in improving the meta-skills of some of the students. For those that gave themselves fully to the programme, they grew in confidence, teamwork, and communication skills. Some improved their leadership and followership skills. They enjoyed the nature experience and bonded at least in their sub-groups. However, it was also evident that for several of those that were actually in the most severe need in the class (those with more behavioural or emotional problems), this programme provided little, if anything, to help them (as far as we know). I would say that it is not that they were unreachable or the methods unsuitable, but rather that the circumstances were not conducive enough for this course to benefit them adequately.

Let us now look at the original developmental objectives, grouped and outlined in chapter 1.4:

1. Helping transition towards adulthood
2. Developing social skills
3. Re-connecting to nature

Did the course successfully meet those developmental needs of the commissioner, Mikaelso-lan? The answer is: partially, but not significantly; adequately, under the circumstances, but not thoroughly.

The transition towards adulthood was helped by the practice and discussion around ‘adult’ meta-skills, such as leadership, confidence, and independence. As shown in the previous section, some of the students demonstrated progress in these areas. The marking of the transition itself during the camp closing ceremony, although still effective, was rather minor and not as meaning-full as I had originally planned. This was because the camp and training plans had had to be changed so many times that this intention got rather neglected, unfortunately. I had intended to layer other elements over it, such as being welcomed back by their families after the expedition (echoing the ‘Return’ of Joseph Campbell’s ‘Hero’s Journey,’ 1984), but, in the end, there was simply not time enough to organise this, along with their self-carved awards or talis-mans. However, I think another important factor in why this ceremonial aspect of the pro-gramme was downplayed (by me) in the end was because I could foresee that the ‘rebel boys’ would only ridicule and further undermine it for everyone else. It would not be a safe space for authentic acts of reverence and offering. With the persistent issues we faced around discipline,

I could not see another way around this. Perhaps I should not be too hard on myself, however? As Pretchel (1990), an indigenous medicine man, has argued the rite of passage was not what transformed you into an adult, as if by magic. This first initiation only made you ripe enough to continue on in a *lifelong* pursuit of guiding yourself towards adulthood.

Developmental objective 2 has similarly already been answered in the previous paragraph and several of the same reasons also explain why objective 3 was also only partially realised. I lacked confidence to push any so-called ‘hippy or spiritual’ agenda to connect with nature in the context of those contrary lads. Nonetheless, I did consistently and subtly include elements of nature connection and perspective into the programme throughout. I think that although it may not have been self-evident to the students, just the immersion in nature alone did itself subtly help re-orientate their relationships back closer to nature. Yet, as we know, old habits and perspectives do not usually change quickly or radically.

Despite all this, when I asked the teachers outright in the final interview if, from what they have witnessed, they believe that adventure education is effective at empowering youth, they both answered emphatically that they were “very sure it can” (SI 2021). They stated that, despite the unfavourable circumstances brought about by the pandemic, the “camp [had] succeeded in making half of the boys more independent” (ibid. T2). Their recommendations for future improvements to the programme amounted to more of the same, but for longer, such as a 2-week camp (ibid.)!

When discussing the many obstacles faced by this programme, the teachers highlighted that there were some issues that were too significant for my temporary course to ever be able to adequately tackle (ibid, T1). As this (abbreviated) extract from my interview with them explains:

Me: If you’re saying that there was only little change seen in them [the students], then why is that?

T2: Even a class teacher, knowing them for all these years, can’t get some of those boys to speak or participate.

T1: The code and culture of a class is very hard to break. The students are too afraid to show their real selves. It’s all group think and herd mentality. The hierarchy of boys gets in the way. They are all frightened of ... [name redacted of rebel boy leader].

T2: It’s a nationwide problem, you know. They’re developmentally immature and countryside boys are especially macho. We have this problem everywhere!

Furthermore, in my interview with the co-founder, without knowing the specifics of my group or my experience teaching them, he said this:

A common issue can be that these small classes that grow up together from the earliest days, get kind of stuck in a certain power hierarchy and dynamic. They all copy each other, especially the same gender. Like sheep. With fewer people in each class, there's less options to shift or balance the relationships (FI 2021).

This was certainly my sense of the matter, too. The school structure and culture itself, whilst beneficial in many ways, was also creating ingrained issues in class after class that were very hard to mould or break by any outside influence.

When I asked him what he thought the advantages of bringing adventure education to the school could be, he replied insightfully:

It's a chance for those who don't normally to shine. They have other paths than the usual ones to reveal themselves. Responsibility is only words to them; it's not authentic. We can talk and talk about it, but they have to see it – feel it! (ibid.)

Furthermore, during feedback moments both students and staff separately agreed that it was the lockdown and online classes that really damaged the motivation, group cohesion and sense of purpose of the project as a whole. As this has already been elucidated upon earlier, it will not be repeated again here, but it was certainly one of the most significant factors affecting the project throughout.

However, if we also look at the possible wider impact that this project had on the rest of the school, it can help to gain some perspective. Clearly the school saw some merit and value in it because, since then, they have repeatedly hired me to deliver more adventure education programmes to subsequent Grade 9's and younger year groups. Immediately upon my return from the camp I was booked to work with the Grade 7's specifically to address an antagonistic and entrenched gender divide between the boys and the girls (that project was also demonstrably more effective than this one). Some other students were inspired by what they had heard from each other to seek me out and request to have me take their classes. Some parents, too, requested that I do some projects with their companies or associations. So, it must be that there is a real need in Mikaeliskolan that is being met by adventure education programming.

## 5 CONCLUSION

*I went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in ~ John Muir*

In this chapter I shall state simply my final conclusion about this project. In chapter 5.1 I touch upon the transferability of this work with some more suggested improvements. In the final sub-chapter, 5.2, I look beyond this project to see what the future might bring...



Photo 10 – Peace of nature: having some time to relax and free-play was also an important aspect of the expedition

Despite the significant challenges posed to the project by COVID-19 and its regulations, the school's issues with lax discipline, and the severity of some of the participant's psychological problems, I am confident that this project was positively beneficial – at least for all those who participated. As I said to the whole group in our very last circle together at the end of the camp:

There are some of us who have been on a journey – not just the physical one of this camp, but a learning journey for personal growth. But, there some who never really left home. They stayed in their comfort zones and haven't been anywhere new. These were choices that you all made, and these are the consequences.

I take heart from my commissioner's final comment in my feedback form, "Ben's programme is needed for years to come." Even more, though, it was the parent confiding in me that her son had had the "time of his life" on the camp that sticks with me most.

## 5.1 Discussion

At this point, we must ask: to what extent is this programme transferable beyond this specific school with its specific issues, to the wider world? Could it be utilised in other Finnish schools or contexts? Could it travel beyond to the wider world?

My answer is a resounding, yes! The issues that the school faces are hardly unique, whether it be teenage depression, rebellion, loneliness, or lack of confidence. The problems of alienation and disconnection, as well as the foolish destruction of our home planet are the issues of our age. Indeed, in many ways, they have only been exacerbated since the pandemic. As I have tried to outline, in the modern world there is a significant lack of meaning-making, ritual and marking life transitions (not just to adulthood, but also parenthood, eldership, and beyond). Even in an alternative education school, located next to a forest, which is part of an affluent town, in a country that has deep cultural ties to its natural environment – still there seems to be a disconnection from nature and a longing to learn meta-skills together (or else they would not keep asking me to provide more services). Although this kind of work has already taken off decades ago in countries like America (see 'The School of Lost Borders,' or Bill Plotkin's work, 2008, for example), and is currently flowering in others like the U.K. (where I did my Spiritual Ecology training in nature connection), as far as I am aware, here in Finland there are few opportunities to blend group work in nature with any kind of self-development, or what could be called, soul-searching.

So, if the project is to be replicated, how else could it be improved?

For a start, it would help to have a greater focus on community-building. I would have liked to have brought the parents and families on-board more. Not just so that they could fund-raise for more elaborate trips, but also so that they could understand and support the pedagogical intentions of the ongoing course from home. The families (siblings, too) serve as the community to which the participants immediately return to after their immersive experiences, whether they be profound or mundane. The more that the families can help the participant to integrate their

learnings, the better it is for everyone. Therefore, the families also have to, to some extent at least, witness the transition in order to see them in their new role.

To this same end, further follow-up reflection sessions would be desirable to help integrate, deepen and support the learnings. In this way, the instructor would also be better placed to monitor to what extent the transfer effect was happening.

As the Senior Teacher pointed out, perhaps it could help to actually start the whole programme with something immersive, challenging and fun (SI 2021, T1)? She meant something short like a day trip, but I actually wonder if an overnight camp at the very beginning might not be a better way of diving deep and not wasting time ambling in the plateaus and foothills of their shyness and doubts. Of course, this turns the step-by-step approach on its head, but if it could still be very low-threshold, but in nature, I think it might fast-track the group to some of the relevant issues sooner and speed up bonding without all the tricks and games.

## 5.2 Looking Ahead

*Unless the male was led on journeys of powerlessness, he would always abuse power ~ Father Richard Rohr*

The experience of not quite reaching the rebellious boys lingers with me still. They were, after all, some of the participants who had most to gain from a course like this. But, as I have explained earlier, the attitude of staff perhaps enabled their worst tendencies (like truancy, for example), because of the lack of boundaries. It highlights to me the urgent need for more positive male role models for these young men. So many are lost boys. As Fr. Rohr paints it, “we are not a healthy culture for boys or men” (Rohr 2004, 12). In the West, we have a society where all too often the children are raised by single mothers, prison populations bursting with men who only know trauma and violence, high suicide rates, toxic masculinity... There is a real need for mentoring (which apprenticeships used to partly serve the function of). Even Steiner, one hundred years ago, said, “one really ought to throw away all school textbooks, because only the direct and personal relationship of teacher to pupil should work upon the child” (Steiner 1986, 237). He went on to highlight the intrinsic differences between men and women (which may be more controversial to state nowadays, but perhaps nonetheless carries some weight), “at this new stage [15 years old and what he described as the onset of sexual maturity], the polarity between man and woman becomes very marked” (ibid. 232). So, perhaps it is not

a good idea to mix the genders during work like this at their age? Could it be even more powerful and effective to work with a group of exclusively these ‘rebel boys;’ mentoring them on a one-to-one, regular basis; channelling their talents and energies into creative, constructive endeavours for a change; and not allowing them to avoid the consequences of their actions?

I intend to find out by offering some boys-to-men rites of passage programmes.



Photo 11 – Manpower: finding ways to encourage the boys to engage was successful some of the time

## REFERENCES

- Beames, S. & Brown, M. 2016. *Adventurous Learning: A pedagogy for a changing world*. New York: Routledge.
- Bradford, S. & Cullen, F. 2011. *Research and Research Methods for Youth Practitioners*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Bunting, M. The Essay: The end of ritual? Retrieved 21/01/2022. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0012r02>
- Campbell, J. 1993. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. London: Fontana Press.
- Davis, J. 2011. *Wilderness Rites of Passage: Healing, growth and initiation*. Retrieved 10/04/2021. <http://schooloflostborders.org/content/wilderness-ritespassage-healing-growth-and-initiation-john-davis-phd>
- Dewey, John. 1944. *Democracy and Education*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education Factsheet 2018. Educational approach. Retrieved 15/01/2021. <https://www.ecswe.net/>
- Elliot, J. 2005. *Using Narrative in Social Research*. Retrieved 10/03/2021. [http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/9770\\_036613ch02.pdf](http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/9770_036613ch02.pdf)
- ERIC Development Team, 1992. *Reflective practice in adult education*. ERIC digest No. 122. Retrieved 19/03/2021. [www.eric.ed.gov](http://www.eric.ed.gov)
- Ewert, A. W. & Sibthorp, J. 2014. *Outdoor Adventure Education: Foundations, theory and research*. Champaign: Human Kinetics.
- Finland Statistics. 2020. Retrieved 12/03/21. [https://www.stat.fi/static/media/uploads/tup\\_en/suoluk/yyti\\_fif\\_202000\\_2020\\_23214\\_net.pdf](https://www.stat.fi/static/media/uploads/tup_en/suoluk/yyti_fif_202000_2020_23214_net.pdf)
- Flick, U. 2018. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. Sage.
- Garrison, R. 1988. *Educated Rites of Passage*. *School Safety*. Winter: 10-11.
- Gilbertson, K. et al. 2006. *Outdoor Education: Methods and strategies*. Champaign: Human Kinetics.
- Gookin, J. & Leach, S. (eds) 2009. *NOLS Leadership Educator Notebook: A toolbox for leadership educators*. Lander, WY: NOLS.
- Graham, J. 2002. *Outdoor Leadership: Technique, common sense & self-confidence* (4th ed.). Seattle: The Mountaineers.
- Han, Byung-Chul. Trans: Steuer, D. 2020. *The Disappearance of Rituals: A topology of the present*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hodgson, C. & Berry, M. 2011. *Adventure Education: An introduction*. London: Taylor & Francis Group.



- International Boreal Forest Research Association 2021. About boreal forests. Retrieved 28/09/2021. <http://ibfra.org/about-boreal-forests/>
- Kolb, D. A. 1984. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Louv, R. 2010. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our children from Nature-deficit Disorder*. London: Atlantic Books.
- Meade, M. 1996. Rites of Passage at the End of the Millennium. In L. Mahdi, N. Christopher and M. Meade (eds) *Crossroads: The quest for contemporary rites of passage*. Illinois: Open Court.
- Mikaelskolan 2021a. About Mikaelskolan. Retrieved 15/01/2021. [https://www.mikaelskolan.fi/om\\_mikaelskolan/](https://www.mikaelskolan.fi/om_mikaelskolan/)
- Mikaelskolan 2021b. Mikaelskolan pedagogy. Retrieved 15/01/2021. <https://www.mikaelskolan.fi/pedagogiken/>
- Mikaelskolan 2021c. Mikaelskolan history. Retrieved 15/01/2021. [https://www.mikaelskolan.fi/om\\_mikaelskolan/historik/](https://www.mikaelskolan.fi/om_mikaelskolan/historik/)
- Ministry of Education and Culture 2021. Extension of compulsory education. Retrieved 08/06/2021. <https://okm.fi/en/extension-of-compulsory-education>
- Mortlock, C. 1984. *The Adventure Alternative*. Cumbria: Cicerone Press.
- Nisbet, R. A. 1962. *Community and Power*. Oxford University Press.
- Plotkin, B. 2008. *Nature and the Human Soul: Cultivating wholeness and community in a fragmented World*. California: New World Library.
- Prechtel, M. 1990. *Secrets of the Talking Jaguar: Memoirs from the living heart of a Mayan village*. New York: Penguin Putnam.
- Priest, S., & Gass, M. 2017. *Effective leadership in adventure programming*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Champaign: Human Kinetics.
- Prouty, D., Panicucci, J., & Collinson, R. (eds) 2007. *Project Adventure: Adventure education – theory and applications*. Champaign: Human Kinetics.
- Rohr, R. 2004. *Adam's Return: The five promises of male initiation*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Steiner, R. 1986. *Soul Economy and Waldorf Education: Dornach Lectures, 1921-'22*. London: Anthroposophic Press.
- Steiner Pedagogy 2021. Educational approach. Retrieved 18/01/2021. <https://peda.net/steinerkasvatus/in-english>
- SYKE 2018. Finnish habitat assessment. Retrieved 12/03/2021. [https://www.syke.fi/en-US/Current/Assessment\\_of\\_threatened\\_habitat\\_types\\_i\(48849\)](https://www.syke.fi/en-US/Current/Assessment_of_threatened_habitat_types_i(48849))
- This Is Finland 2021. Finnish history. Retrieved 28/09/21. <https://finland.fi/life-society/main-outlines-of-finnish-history/>

- Vaasa 2021. Herb-rich forests. Retrieved 28/09/2021. <https://www.vaasa.fi/en/living/freetime/naturevaasa/nature/vaasa-nature-types/herb-rich-forests/>
- Van Gennep, A. 1960. *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Visit Raseborg 2021. Tourist information. Retrieved 28/09/2021. <https://www.visitraseborg.com/en/>
- Zimmerman, B. J. 2008. Investigating Self-regulation and Motivation: Historical background, methodological developments, and future prospects. *American Education Research Journal*, 45, 166-183.

## INTERVIEWS

### Teachers' Ideation Sessions (TIS):

Teacher 1-4 (T1/2/3/4). Programme brainstorming. 5-6.01.2021. Mikaeliskolan, Ekenäs.

### Students' Ideation Sessions (SIS):

Student 1-13 (S1/2/3/etc). Programme brainstorming. 7.01.2021. Mikaeliskolan, Ekenäs.

### Staff Interview (SI):

Teacher 1 (T1). Programme review. 28.05.2021. Mikaeliskolan, Ekenäs.

Teacher 2 (T2). Programme review. 28.05.2021. Mikaeliskolan, Ekenäs.

Parent 1 (P1). Programme review. 28.05.2021. Mikaeliskolan, Ekenäs.

### Co-founder Interview (FI) with Göran Kurtén:

Steiner education research. 26.05.2021. Tenala, Raseborg.

*All interviews were conducted by Benjamin Hammond*

## APPENDICES

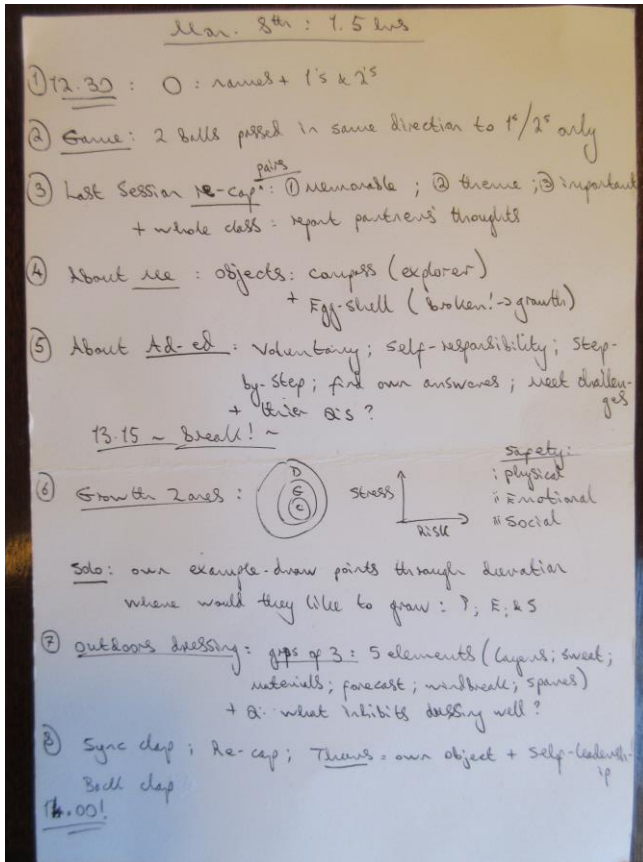


Photo 12 – Example of a lesson plan: 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop.

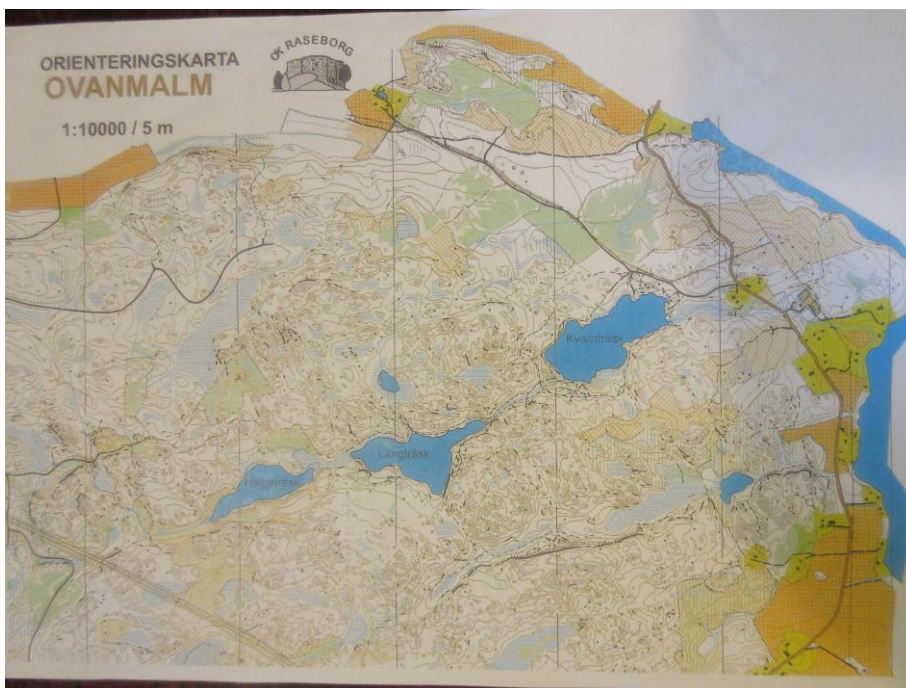


Photo 13 – Map of the hiking area and camp (on the eastern shore of Långträsk).

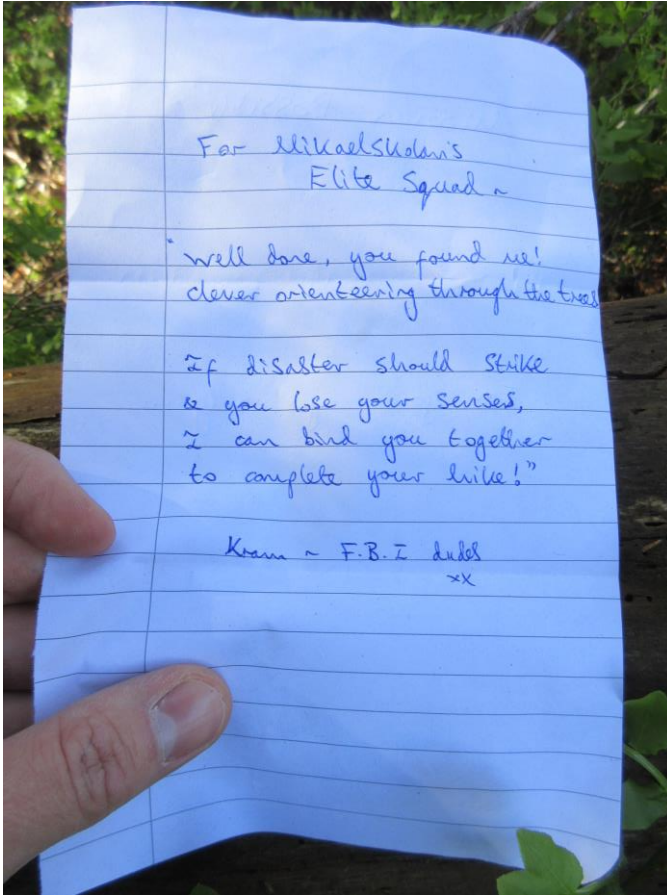


Photo 14 – Example of a riddle clue: found at each orientation location, leading to the next stage in their journey and providing equipment for a future challenge (in this case – rope).