

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCES

Students' meaningful learning experiences during an outdoor course in Chile

Teemu Yliportimo

,

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Department of Sport Sciences

University of Jyväskylä

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Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää ja kuvata opiskelijoiden merkityksellisiä kokemuksia yliopiston seikkailu ja luontoliikuntakurssin Chilen Valdíviassa. Tavoitteena oli aiempaa tutkimustietoa hyödyntäen kuvata opiskelijoiden kokemuksia ja oppimista kokemuksellisen oppimisen lähtökohdista. Tutkimukseen osallistui yhteensä 44 opiskelijaa, joista 22 opiskelijan tekstejä käytettiin tässä tutkimuksessa. Kurssi ”Deportes y Actividades en la Naturaleza” oli osa liikuntakasvatuksen opintoja, joita suoritin vaihto-opintojeni aikana syksyllä 2014 Chilessä. Kurssin alussa opiskelijat jakaantuivat 4-5 hengen ryhmiin. Kurssin kirjallisiin tehtäviin kuului ryhmäpäiväkirjan laatiminen ja kirjallinen itsearviointi kurssin jälkeen. Oppilaat kirjasivat ryhmäpäiväkirjoihin henkilökohtaiset oppimistavoitteensa kurssin alussa.

Tutkimuksessa käytettiin laadullisia tutkimusmenetelmiä. Otin tarkasteluuni viiden ryhmän päiväkirjat, sekä neljän opiskelijan itsearvioinnit. Opiskelijoiden tekstejä tarkastelin heidän itselle asettamiensa oppimistavoitteiden lähtökohdista. Käsinkirjoitettua ryhmäpäiväkirja-aineistoa kertyi 92 sivua sekä 6 sivua itsearviointi-aineistoa. Tutkimusaineiston analysoinnissa käytettiin laadullista sisällönanalyysia.

Opiskelijoiden teksteistä käy ilmi, että opiskelijat kokivat vahvoja elämyksellisiä hetkiä luontokurssin aikana. Ryhmäpäiväkirjoissa ja itsearvioinneissa korostui se, että uudet kokemukset koettiin elämyksellisiksi ja motivoiviksi. Opiskelijat kokivat pääsääntöisesti päässeensä asettamiinsa oppimistavoitteisiinsa. Opiskelijat painottivat, miten teorian välitön siirtäminen käytäntöön koettiin oppimisen kannalta merkitykselliseksi. Opiskelijat kokivat pienryhmän organisoiman retken kurssin ulkopuolisille henkilöille erityisen merkitykselliseksi oppimiskokemukseksi etenkin ammatillisen kasvun kannalta. Aineistossa nousi esille, miten yhteistoiminnallisuus koettiin tärkeäksi osaksi kurssia. Kirjoitusten mukaan koko ryhmän ja etenkin pienryhmän koheesio oli edellytys yhteistoiminnan onnistumiselle. Tämän tutkimuksen tulokset tukevat aiempien tutkimusten tuloksia siten, että seikkailu ja luontoliikunta tarjoavat osallistujille moninaisia oppimiskokemuksia

Avainsanat: seikkailukasvatus, luonto, kokemuksellinen oppiminen, elämyksellisyys

ABSTRACT

Yliportimo, Teemu (2016) Learning from experiences; students' meaningful learning experiences during an outdoor course in Chile. The Faculty of Sport Sciences, University of Jyväskylä, 72 pages, 3 pages of attachments.

The aim of this study was to investigate and describe students' meaningful experiences during the adventure and outdoor course in Valdivia in Chile. The intentions in this study was to describe students' experiences from view point of experiential learning Theoretical framework of this study relate to previous studies about experiential learning and adventure education. Students (N44) of the course "Deportes y Actividades en la Naturaleza participated this study and finally texts of 14 students were analyzed qualitatively in this study. In the beginning of the course the students divided in to groups of 4-5 persons. The course included two written assignments; group diaries and individual self-evaluation after the course. The students wrote personal learning expectations for the course in the beginning of the course.

In this study qualitative research methods were used. I took in to closer examination five groups' diaries and four self-evaluations from of one group. The students' learning expectations were the framework for my study analysis. The research data consisted of 92 pages of hand written group diaries and 6 pages of students' self-evaluations.

The study results indicated that students experienced strong and meaningful experiences during the adventure and outdoor course. In the texts in group diaries and self-evaluations highlighted how new unfamiliar situations were rich in experiences and motivating. In general, the students met their learning expectations. Students emphasized how beneficial and meaningful it was for their learning, when the theory was concretely put in to practice. Students reported that course assignment where they organized an outdoor excursion to persons outside of the course, was meaningful experience especially for their professional growth. Also topics of collaboration and group cohesion emerged from students' text. According to text of students' group cohesion increased within all students of the course and especially within smaller groups of 4-5 persons. The results of this study supports the results of previous studies, that outdoor adventure education can provide diverse opportunities for learning and personal development.

Keywords: adventure education, nature, experiential learning, experience

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1 INTRODUCTION

If you had asked someone from the 18th century how people would live in the year 2016, I think they would not imagine the world as it is today. In the 21st century the modern western lifestyle is getting more and more away from outdoors and we are more dependable on technological innovations. The development of the human civilization from the primitive tribes to the modern day lifestyle has been remarkable and it has affected our knowledge and ability to utilize nature. All the continents have been found and we can say living everyday life in the modern welfare states does not require fighting for survival; people are expected to succeed and pursue a successful job career. Do we still have a need to adventure?

Today many people seek adventure for fun. Thrilling activities are more easily accessible than ever before. Increased leisure time and new sports and activities have created a trend for adventurous activities (Drăgoi 2014). Some people can get obsessed about doing more and more dangerous activities and stunts. Usually these extreme adventures are done in challenging conditions and remote areas. But however engaging to adventure does not necessarily require lots of time or resources. Adventure is an individual experience. Camping and outdoor activities can be experienced as thrilling activity, but qualitative learning from experience requires reflective thinking. Natural environment can offer opportunities for educational purposes. Adventure education is usually put in to practice at outdoor setting, and it is a process through which participant can develop affective, cognitive and physical skills (Gilbertson 2006, 8).

In this study I will study learning outcomes of the students participating the course "Deportes y Actividades en la Naturaleza" (Nature activities). The course was organized during my exchange program at La Universidad Austral de Chile. Major part of the course consisted of practical classes and in this study I will study the learning outcomes of the participants of the course from the viewpoint of experiential learning. Adventure education methods are based on the experiential learning philosophy so I thought it was necessary to bring out the different theories and models of the experiential learning and education.

2 ADVENTURE AND ADVENTURE BASED LEARNING

2.1 Definition of adventure

How is an adventure defined? When we can say we are attending to an adventure and when we are not? Is an adventure the opposite for normal foreseeable routine life, or can routine life be adventurous? Having a sense of adventure is a personal emotion and therefore it is quite useless to try generalize which situations are adventurous and which are not. According to Toivio and Pollari (2010) it is impossible to define the term adventure. If you could define adventure it would lose the unknown factor which is the key factor for the adventure. In the other hand Simon Priest sees that adventure is whatever experience which leads to uncertain outcome. Telemäki (1998, 19.) refers to Priest, that adventure is more a state of mind and person attends in adventure always voluntarily. From Toivio's and Pollari's (2010) viewpoint adventure is always a safe event and not event where someone's own or others life is at stake.

When we are experiencing something where we are not sure if we succeed or fail, we are also outside from our comfort zone. This can cause anxiety but it can also lead to personal growth. Adventurous activities also include risks, real or perceived. (Fenton 2006,10-13.) Individuals have they own personal expectations and reactions to changing events, therefore some people seek more challenging and dangerous careers or hobbies and some people enjoy more serene lifestyle (Haapasalo 1998, 9).

There are different reasons why people are seeking adventures. According to Lehtonen (1998,105) seeking adventures can become a way to escape reality. When person wants to alienate oneself from the surrounding world, person is extremely focused to finding top experiences. This can lead to top expertise and professionalism or at worst to nihilism. Other viewpoint of Lehtonen is that adventure can be seen as way to investigate everyday life in the other perspective. Instead of travelling far away destinations person can search adventure in his routine life. Also Kiiski (1998, 109) sees that adventure can be a part of normal everyday life. Kiiski describes that, the person with adventurous mind can find inspiration and new perspectives, which may lead to personal growth. The person can become more open to new challenges and live his life to the fullest.

2.2 Experiential learning and education

Terms and concepts used in adventure based education are complex and sometimes equivocal. This can cause confusion and especially translating terms from language to another is problematic because there is variance how different terms are related to each other. (Karppinen 2005). Next I open the concepts which I see most fundamental for my thesis.

Experiential learning is the major concept for experiential education and adventure based learning and pedagogy. As Beard & Wilson (2002, 13) underlines that learning from direct and authentic experience is one of the most natural way of learning to everyone. In order to learn from experience, the learner must have active reflection upon the activity, which leads changing understanding or behavior (Luckner & Nadler 1992, 3). Gilbertson (2006, 9) notes that the experiential education can be seen from different perspectives. It can appear as a method, a profession and a philosophy. According to Dewey (1938) in order to reach positive learning outcomes, experiential education program requires rigorous planning by the teacher. While in experiential learning the person can learn independently from random or planned experiences, the experiential education is carefully organized and aims to encourage individuals or groups learn through experiences (Berry 2011.)

2.3 Adventure based learning and education

Even though the term adventure education is not relatively old, adventurous upbringing methods has been used in different cultures from early civilizations (Lehtonen 1998, 12). New era of adventure education begun during the 20th century when different educationists like Kobey and Hahn constructed their theories about experiential and adventure education. Era of modern adventure programs saw the light of the day in North America in 1962 when Outward Bound brought the ideas of Kurt Hahn to the United States. Outward Bound was soon followed by other associations; first by National Leadership School in 1965 and later on Wilderness Education Association in 1977 (A Attarian 2001). In 1971 adventure education was introduced to tenth grade physical education curriculum by school principal Jerry Pieh. Experiential learning approach was emphasized into all areas of P.E curriculum. Main learning goals were related to increase students' personal confidence

and skills, but also physical attributes like increasing agility and coordination were important aspects (Hammersley 1992).

Adventure based learning and adventure education share the same relation as experiential learning and experiential education. Adventure education is form of experiential education where adventurous activities are used in purpose to achieve educational goals (Berry 2011). According to Berry (2011) whereas the experiential education aims to specific learning outcomes on each particular subject, adventure education focuses on encouraging the learner's development of personal growth and social relationships

In the United States outdoor education is a major concept for adventure based learning and education. Priest's (1986) model of outdoor education is most accepted model relating to the topic. Priest's model emphasizes environmental relationship and experiences acquired outdoors (Priest 1986). The model divides outdoor education in to adventure education and environmental education. When the participant is training specific skills, for example rock climbing, he is participating in adventure education, while environmental education goals are raising awareness and appreciation towards nature and its ecosystems (Gilbertson 2006, 5-14). Perspectives on nature are related to one's cultural tradition and previous experiences. Modern materialistic society is urbanizing more and more which also leads to fact that new generations are becoming more estranged from nature (Mortlock 1984, 98-99).

3 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND EDUCATION

3.1 Short history

Experiential learning philosophy is based on learning by doing ideology, simply put experiential learning is learning from experience. It's not by any means a new way to approach learning and education. Many of the Ancient philosophers considered that the best way to promote children's courage and development towards adulthood was practical activities. (Telemäki 1998,11.) According to Kolb (1984, 20-21) the contemporary theories of experiential learning are mostly based on the works of Dewey, Piaget and Lewin. Learning models vary from theorist to theorist but the basic principles are the same. Learning from experience isn't possible if the learner does not have an active role not only during but also before and after the experience. In experiential learning the learner is more in the role of the participant rather than passive a learner who receives new information from the teacher, which might be the case in traditional class room teaching (Luckner & Nadler 1992, 4).

3.2 Learning process

Meaningful experiences can be experienced together but learning from experience is an individual process. Theorists share the thought (Beard & Wilson 2002,18) that although the activity is the same for all learners, previous experiences influence the impressions how the learning situation is felt. Past experiences are the main factor for what we expect of and how we interact in different situations. Every one of us possesses one's unique experiences and background so there is not either two identical learners. According to Beard & Wilson (2002, 28) individual experiences determinates attitudes and behavior towards learning, which explicates the reasons why two people of similar intelligence are not similarly motivated on the same subjects which results in different learning outcomes

3.3 Kolb's experiential learning model

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle (figure 1) illustrates how learning is a continuous process. Experiential learning cycle consists of four different phases where the experience is processed. Although the model has been criticized being too simplistic, it has been used in many settings and particularly in experiential education literature. (see e.g Luckenr & Nadler & 1992,6 & Berry & Hodgson 2010, 66). According to Kolb (1984,22) the cycle can begin in any phase of the cycle and the cycle can be seen more as a spiral shape

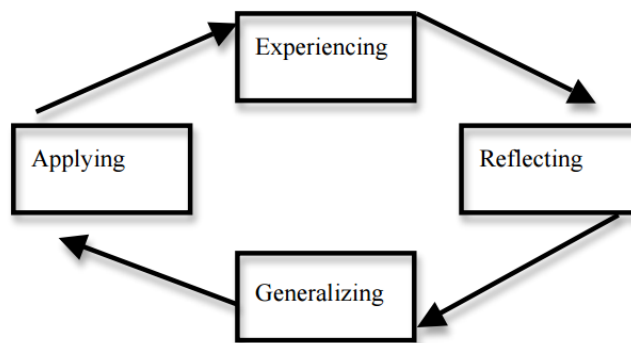


FIGURE 1. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle

Concrete experience refers to engaging activity which can be individual or tasks completed in the group. In the adventure education activities usually involves both cognitive and physical challenges, which is good basis for multiform experiences. Problem solving which offers good opportunities for the learner to proceed from one to another phase in the learning cycle. If we want to learn from experience, we have to stop and look back to our previous experiences. Reflecting is the moment when the learner develops meaning for the new experience (Kolb 1984, 39-45).

In order to achieve purposeful learning outcomes, structured experiences should contain elements which are possible to generalize to everyday life. Experience is hardly advantageous, if the learning outcome is suitable only in some isolated and structured setting. However, an active learner should seek patterns from experiences which can be for example emotions, thoughts or certain type of behavior. When these patterns are understood in one particular situation, it may be possible for the

learner to generalize these principles in different contexts and even in everyday life. In the last phase of the learning cycle the learner puts, generalizations made before, in to action in different settings. Experiential education aims to achieve long term learning outcomes and applying is the final phase of the learning cycle which makes learning meaningful for the learner (Kolb 1984, 39-40).

In the two axis learning model by Kolb, two opposite dimensions are staged; concrete versus abstract and active versus reflective. According to Kolb the high quality learning requires dialogue between these modes. In the figure the arrows represent the channels in learning process. The vertical dimension includes two cognitive learning modes. Learning by thinking refers to abstract comprehension when understanding an experience relies on comprehension of concepts which are related to the experience. Learning is therefore abstract and involves more reflection. In the other end of this dimension is learning is directly bond with apprehension of the experience. Learning by feeling involves immediate feelings and emotions caused by the experience. Horizontal dimension represents reflective observation and active participation. According to Kolb experiential learning process requires inner reflection, an intention to learn. In the figure this learning by observation stages is the learning mode where the learner reflects and gives personal meanings of the experiences. Learning by doing includes active participation and testing the environment (Kolb 1984, 41-43).

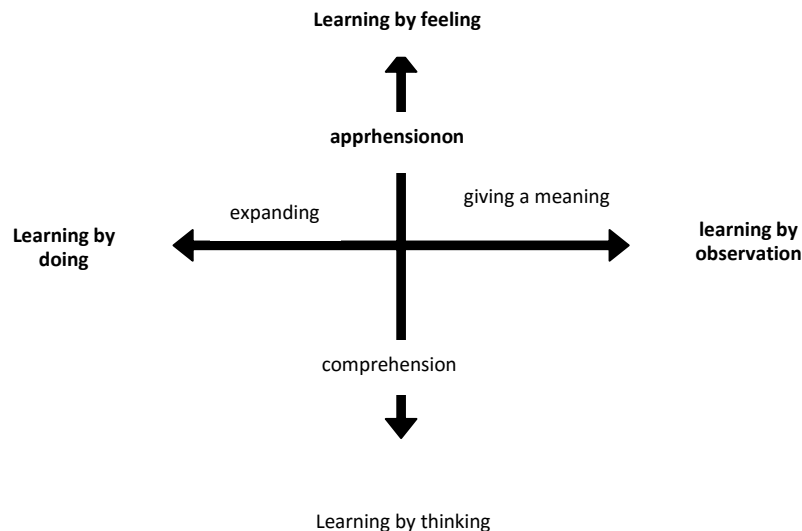


FIGURE 2. Kolb's learning dimensions (Kolb 1984; Yildirim 2010)

3.4 Emotions in learning

The tendency of doing certain things is related to the person's mood at that particular moment (Thayer 1996,5). People's situations in life undergo endless changes during the whole lifetime (Beard & Wilson 2002,124). Also moods and emotions are in transition which can be seen as reflections of the person's current state of life. As Perttula points out that phenomenal experiences can not appear out of nothing. Experiences are always bounded to person's situation in life. Perttula sums up that there is no experience without prevailing situation in life (Perttula 2007,54-55).

Defining which emotions are the most fundamental and primary types has generated debate among researchers (see e.g. Beard & Wilson 2002, 123; Luckner & Nadler 1992, 24). Luckner & Nadler (1992,23) refer to the model of Wegscheider (1979) how our core emotions are protected by the wall of defence (figure 3). These defences are used in situations when the person's balance of mind is threatened and the person is starting to feel anxious. Defences protect against deeper negative emotions such as fear, hurt and loneliness.

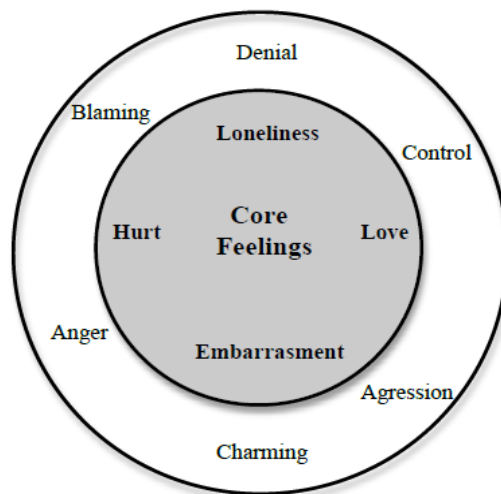


FIGURE 3. Wall of defenses

People seek enjoyment through activities which are pleasing and enjoyable to them. Our individual emotions determine how we approach different tasks and situations. In order to achieve change in behavior and improvement in self-esteem, the person should actively try to become aware of one's own defenses and try to find better understanding of the core feelings. As result this internal soul-

searching can increase the emotional intensity, but in the other hand facing deeper emotions without the defenses the person can experience unbalanced state of mind (Luckner & Nadler 1992, 23).

Adventure and outdoor sports are usually associated with high risk activities and are seen potentially dangerous to health. Risk is a central component for adventure education. As described earlier in this text key element of adventure is the uncertainty of the outcome. The main goal of adventure education is not always overcome a fear, but perceived risk is often described to be a necessary part of the adventure program. Adventurous activities include both physical and social risk. Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory states that optimal experience occurs when mind reaches the state of deep concentration and time passes without notice. Csikszentmihalyi sees that the optimal experience is state where we feel control of our actions. Optimal experience is something we make happen, instead of fate or luck (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, 3).

Robinson (1992) defines all sport which includes real or perceived physical risk to the category of risk sports. Participants of the risk sports are likely to undergo strong emotional arousal when attending these activities. Emotional arousal can be positive or negative depending how competent the participant is for the task in question. If the risk and the competence of the participant are perfectly matched, participant can experience so called peak adventure (figure 3). Peak adventure is

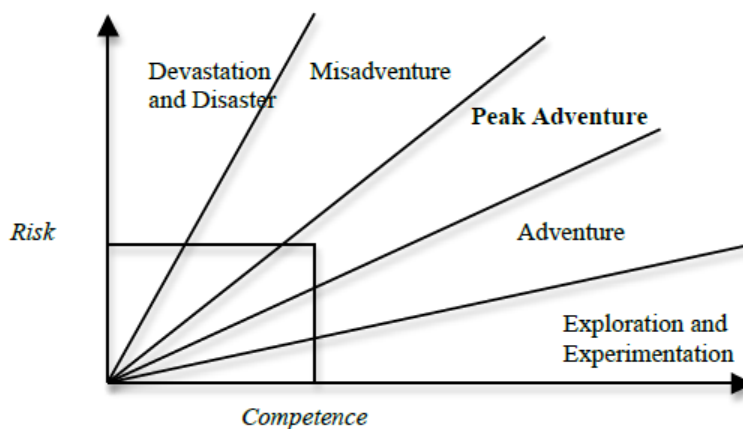


FIGURE 4. Priest's and Martin's (1986) model of the adventure experience paradigm (Bunyan 2011)

Sensing adventure is individual and same activities will lead participants into different levels of the adventure model paradigm. For example, in climbing top roping for experienced climbers does not make an appearance of adventurous activity, but more ordinary physical training. First time climbers can feel thrilled just when they see the climbing wall for the first time. Experienced climbers have high competence so they are at the level of exploration and experimentation of the model, their gains of the activity are mainly physical but increased physical condition probably helps at more demanding challenges. Persons who are climbing for first time, their competence for climbing is lower and they sense more emotional arousal while they are top roping. If participant has a severe fear of heights, climbing can be an activity, which leads this person to the state of misadventure. Peak adventure can be seen as a desired state of the adventure and according to Priest and Baillie (1995) adventure educator's main goal is to place participants into peak adventure. Luckner's and Nadlers (1992, 28) edgework theory emphasizes that important change condition is disequilibrium.

In adventure literature (see e.g. Fenton 2006, 10-13 & Robinson 1992) raising participants stress levels is seen as a powerful tool for development and growth. In other words, in order to develop and grow, participants should experience negative emotions such as anxiety and fear. (Mortlock 1984, 41.) If we transfer these ideas to the model of adventure education paradigm, it would mean that participants should experience also misadventure during the adventure

4 ADVENTURE BASED LEARNING AND EDUCATION

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4.1 Adventure education activities

Adventure education methods are based on developing physical and psychological skills through adventurous activities. There is wide range of different activities which adventure educator can choose from. Examples of adventure activities include rock climbing, kayaking, mountain walking, expeditions (Berry 2011, 33). Primarily stage for these activities is outdoors (Gilbertson 2006, 8). Location is an important factor for function of the program therefore organizers must put sufficient emphasis on choosing appropriate location for the course program. (Beard & Wilson 2002, 90). Unfamiliar location creates sense of uncertainty and the participants need work hard to overcome the environmental demands placed upon them. Outdoor setting gives more possibilities for experiencing and individual emotions and it is believed that the advances for students learning are more 11 manifold if the learning setting is outdoors or wilderness-type environment (Berry 2011, 32). In my opinion adventurous feeling is harder to find if experiential learning is conducted in a class room.

Sharing experiences in the group is essential part of adventure based learning and education theory. Adventure programs are usually sequenced so that activities support the formation of interpersonal relationship within the group. According to Sibthorp (2007) group dynamics and functioning has proved to be an essential course-level predictor of group productivity and learning.

Adventure education activities are categorized under four headings by Telemäki (1998, 21).

1. *socializing games*
2. *group games*
3. *individual challenges*
4. *outdoor activities*

Socializing games are commonly used to familiarize unknown group members to each other. Ice breakers usually include physical activity in the beginning of the program, when the participant group is new and the participants don't know each other's well. Ice breakers are meant to encourage participation by fun and playful games which reduces individual's self-consciousness when participant can throw himself easier to new situations. (Hammersley 1992.) *Group games* are usually different tasks and problems which the adventure educator sets for the group. These tasks require cooperation and communication within the group (Telemäki 1998, 21). It is important that all the group members are committed to tasks and they are aware of the goals of the tasks. If there is not sufficient time to discuss and think about the goals properly the learning potential of the adventure activity is most likely reduced. (Hammersley 1992.) People who are attending adventure education programs may be seeking an opportunity to learn more from themselves (Gilbertson 2006, 6). *Individual challenges* can be conducted by for example in different types of challenge courses which test participant's commitment and ability to function under stress (Fenton 2006, 55).

4.3 Adventure educator's role

Adventure educator's role is to foster participant empowerment by creating appropriate challenges through different adventurous activities which enable variable learning outcomes. Adventure educators are expected to be multiply skilled persons. Adventure educators have to concentrate on

course preparation and they have to try foresee possible problems which might occur for example because of the changing conditions and group dynamics. Common objectives of adventure education include skill and social development. When an adventure educator chooses activities for the course program the educator should primarily take into consideration the suitability of method for the participants and their needs (Watson & Clocksin 2013, 40). Adventure educators are expected to construct challenging and fun learning opportunities but they are also fully responsible for participants' physical and mental safety through the course. In other words, they need to provide safe but adventurous environment which also facilitates learning (Hodgson & Bailie 2011, 46). In order to adventure programs can be safe and functional for the participants, it is essential that adventure educator is very accomplished and experienced in activities which he plans to instruct. Novice participants do not see all the risks which are involved with the activities, but when the program advances their knowledge increases and they can become more self-directive in the activities (Lehtonen, Mäkinen & Pulli 2007, 127-129).

Adventure education has received advocacy among professional educators and growing number of new research evidence speaks for the usefulness of the method (e.g. Karppinen 2005 & Marttila 2016). Studies about learning outcomes through adventure education have indicated that a key component for successful participant development is good rapport between participants and an educator (Sibthorp, Paisley & Gookin 2007). Although adventure education is executed with high quality, we cannot draw a conclusion that all the people can benefit from adventure education. Barry continues that key for the effectiveness of the method is largely dependent on adventure educators' critical reflection on his own practices. The educators should constantly strive for professional development and challenge conceptions of their own. Thus demand for the professional development is critical reflection on one's own practices. (Barry (2011, 73.)

4.3 Participant development

The aim of adventure based learning activities is to offer multidimensional learning opportunities for the learner. Activities should offer both physically and psychologically demanding challenges, which foster holistic intrapersonal and interpersonal growth and development (Luckner & Nadler 1992, 254). In other words, in adventure education the participants should encounter conflicts where

they doubt their abilities to complete the tasks successfully. According to Berry (2011) Where experiential education aims to specific learning outcomes on each particular school subject, adventure education focuses on encouraging the student's development in personal growth and social relationships. It is difficult to quantify the benefits of the adventure education (Collins & Collins 2013). Adventurous activities give us a chance to break out from our comfort zones and challenge ourselves to find new ways of thinking and changes in our behavior (Kiiski 2009, 14).

According to Berry (2011) adventurous activities can have positive learning outcomes on cognitive, psychomotor and affective areas of learning. As mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, adventurous activities like rock climbing can be physically demanding and compared to working out in the gym. The cognitive is emphasized in the safety of the activity and in environmental education, when for example climbing is conducted outdoors and environmental subjects are included in the activity. Adventure education is mainly conducted in groups and many activities require trust within the peer group. An adventure educator should share the responsibility of planning with the participants. This increases the affective side of learning, when participants feel they can affect more to the chosen activities (Sibthorb et al. 2007).

4.4 Previous studies

The common debate on adventure education relates to the questions like how beneficial the method is and to whom? Learning outcomes of the adventure education has been under investigation in many studies, but major part of studies have been carried out outside of Europe. Main contributors of adventure education theories come from United States. Era of modern adventure programs saw the light of the day in North America in 1962 when Outward Bound brought the ideas of Kurt Hahn to the United States. Outward Bound was soon followed by other associations; first by National Leadership School in 1965 and later on Wilderness Education Association in 1977 (Attarian 2001).

In Finland there are previous studies about adventure education and experiential learning trough outdoor activities, but the studies are mainly focused on small area. viewpoint of the studies ar. Studies about adventure education and learning in Finland are mainly master's thesis works and diploma works of universities of applied sciences. There are two doctoral theses (Marttila 2016;

Karppinen 2005) related adventure education. These doctoral theses have focused on examination of suitability and usefulness of experiential adventure education for students with special needs

Karppinen studied adventure education in his ethnographical action research and the aim of the study was to explain and describe and develop outdoor adventure education in the study Karppinen was in role of teacher – researcher and he observed and analyzed the students’ experiences during one academic year. Six students, aged 10-12 had been classified as students with special educational needs. Karppinen pondered how methods of adventure education can reach educational goals in primary school. The result of the study revealed that students’ experiences of adventure education and pedagogics were positive for their own social and personal development. Karppinen suggests that these results can indicate that adventure education can be one method to increase school motivation for diverse students. He presented that outdoor adventure education could be added to primary school curriculum as alternative teaching and learning method. These results are supported by findings of another doctoral thesis about the subject (Marttila 2016). Marttila (2016) studied in her qualitative action-based ethnographic case study suitability of experiential adventure education for diverse learners in vocational school. Her findings suggest that adventure education supported communality and peer relationships and increased school enjoyment.

Studies of master’s degree level in Finland are mainly written by students of teachers’ education programs. Pullola & Ukkola studied adventure education’s impact on group cohesion within competitive swimmers (N=12). Study results indicated that there was statistically significant ($p < .01$) difference in measured means between initial and final measurement. The study analyzed task oriented cohesion and social cohesion within the control group. Study results indicated increase in task oriented cohesion was statistically significant, when there was no significant change in social cohesion. Muittari and Santala (2009) studied in their master’s thesis group dynamics in adventure education. The study participants were primary school students aged 11-12 and part of the students were classified as maladjusted for regular education. Students participated in organize adventure day where they worked in groups of five students various adventure education activities. The students with problems in behavior and learning were integrated in the groups. According to students’ writings and study results, students experienced group work positively. Students expressed that adventurous activities and group work was exiting and pleasant. The students who were integrated

to normal class might have disturbed the activities with their behavior but the students did not report that the behavior weakened group work.

Linjama (2014) and Ollila (2012) have studied in their masters' thesis students' meaningful experiences during outdoor courses with participatory visual study methods. In both studies the participants wrote reflective texts about photographs they have taken during the course. The participants chose the pictures so, that they would present the most meaningful moments during the course. Linjama analyzed and interpreted of students' (N = 45) of Norwegian school of sport sciences photographs. The photos presented students' meaningful hiking moments during university outdoor course the 7-day hiking excursion. Linjama discretionally chose 7 different moments and also her own moment to closer analyzation. The aim of this study was to understand and describe students' meaningful moments. The results of the study indicated that outdoor education can be used as a method to create moments with intensive emotions and embowering. Ollila studied used as well participatory visual method in her master's thesis where she studied students' of degree program of Sport and Leisure in University of Applied sciences experiences during two paddling curses. The courses where 5 days and 7 days in length and there were 12 participants. The students were students of sport tourism and outdoor sports. Ollila analyzed experiences of six students with qualitative methods and her study results suggested that outdoor adventure education can offer participatory and communal learning experiences which are also equivalent to general learning goals of University of Applied Sciences in Finland.

International studies as well are mainly focused on studying possible effects on participant development. Sibthorp, Paisley, and Gookin (2007) studied participant development through adventure-based programming. In the study they compared different variables potentially important to participant development. Development of the 29 items were observed leadership, judgment in the outdoors, outdoor skills and environmental awareness just to mention a few. According to the study results common participant-level predictors are age, gender, previous similar experiences, perceptions of empowerment, challenge level, group cohesion, instructor rapport and course duration. The Study's main results indicated that the most important participant-level predictor variable was group functioning, as a significant predictor for gains in targeted outcomes. Also age and gender Cognitive Psychomotor Affective 15 were important variables for the participant

development. For gains in communication the significant predictor was a good rapport with the instructors.

Ellis, Louw, Meyer, Nickotze & Strydom (2012) studied the impacts of adventure based experiential learning program on black high school learners. They studied short and long term changes in life effectiveness after adventure based experiential learning program. In their study total 80 high school learners (aged 12 - 14 years) participated the study. Study results compared experimental (n=40) and control (n=40) groups answers of “The Life Effectiveness Questionnaire” before and after the course. Study findings suggested in moderate degree positive changes in participants of the experimental group.

Weilbac, Meyer and Monyeki (2010) studied effectiveness of Adventure based Experiential learning in developing life effectiveness of adolescents (N=23). In the study The Review of Personal Effectiveness with Locus Control instrument was used to measure 14 constructs of personal life effectiveness. The participants (N=23) were divided in two groups, experimental (n=12) and control group (n=11). Experimental group participated in low risk adventure education program in urban setting. The results of indicated that experimental group experienced high significant in four areas and medium development in nine areas. In comparison the control group experienced one medium size change in one construct of life effectiveness.

The studies about adventure education are focused in development of psychological self-concept. In addition to the studies presented above there are more study results, which indicates that adventure education can have positive learning outcomes on self-esteem, self-efficacy and life effectiveness (Gatzemann, Schweizer & Hummel 2008). Nevertheless, considerations should be kept in mind when we interpret study results. As Gatzemann, Schwizer & Hummel 2008 states in their conclusion of their study, that it is uncertain how their study results can be generalized in different settings. Also it is uncertain what are the long term gains of adventure based programs. The experiments should be repeated and more testing be made over a period of a time to find answers to these questions.

5 AIMS

5.1 The study aims

The aim of this study is to investigate and explain students learning experiences during the outdoor activity course “Deportes y Actividades en la Naturaleza” (Sport and Activities in the Nature) from the viewpoint of experiential learning. The major part of the course program followed principles of the Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning, and in this study I try to explain and understand students’ experiences during the course. I analyzed students’ texts and self-evaluations to find out what skills and attitudes they learnt from different activities put in to practice during course’s practical classes and overnight outdoor excursions. I also intended to explain students’ experiences and how they analyzed their learning after the course. My intentions in this study are describe the students’ experiences during the course as precisely as possible, and find out which experiences were meaningful for them.

5.2 The study participants

The participants of this study were the physical education students of “La Universidad de Austral de Chile” who participated the course “Sports and Activities in the Nature” in Valdivia of Chile. In autumn 2014, 54 students signed into the course, but eight of them dropped out during the course. So total number who completed the course was 46 students including myself. There were six students from the natural engineering program and three students in their fourth year of physical education studies and the rest were third year students of physical education.

5.3 The course description and aims of the course

Course “Deportes y Actividades en la Naturaleza” (Sports and Activities in the Nature) is a part of physical education studies at the University of Valdivia, and it is programmed for the third year students. The course is also open for other university students and also for exchange students. The program was programmed taking account following three main principles; 1) Safety: Risk

management and prevention, also influencing on attitudes 2) Ecology: Learning appropriate methods and practices conserving the nature and understand how human activities have effect on the nature. 3) Comfort: Methods to be and travel in the nature environments comfortably; dry, with good nutrition and sufficient rest.

The main teacher of the course was Otto Luhrs, who possess over 15 year of experience teaching similar courses in different universities and organizations. The second teacher was Carlos Mulsow, who has background from competitive kayaking and teaches kayaking courses at the university. Also there were three assistants, who were students of the fourth year physical education and had participated to the same course last year. At University of Austral it is part of curriculum of physical education that the fourth year students are assisting the teachers during the courses. The course consisted of both theoretical and practical classes and also overnight camps. Theoretical and practical classes were preparation for overnight camps where the theoretical knowledge would be put in to practice. The course consisted of total 22 hours of theoretical class room classes, 18 hours of practical outdoor classes and 8-10 nights of overnight excursion. Also every team organized activities and camping for group of people outside of the course. Participants of the groups' autonomous excursions were mostly students' friends and members of their families etc. Theoretical classes were put on the practice every Wednesday from 8.10 am to 9.50 am.

Theoretical classes were designed to give new information of each theme and this theoretical knowledge was tested by an exam after 10 hours of studies. Major part of theoretical classes consisted planning and evaluate following practical class and overnight camps. The Students had occasionally possibility to vote where the overnight camps would be but in to practice. Also there were four ex-students of the physical education, who had found work in the field of outdoor education and activities. Most of them worked as a tourist guide in one of the national parks of Chile.

The practical classes and overnight excursion had different themes and activities including; building and usage of the hiking poles, outdoor and indoor climbing, camping and trekking in cold conditions and snow, bicycle mechanics, bicycle handling skills, bicycle touring and kayaking. Course outdoor classes and overnight excursion included certain themes and activities. The course program was

planned so that students acquired and learned basic skills which they would use later on in different activities. The course started with class of building hiking stick from basic and affordable material. The second part of the same class was practicing Nordic walking, using teacher and group orientated teaching. Also climbing was first put in to practice in indoor setting and later we climbed outdoors. The basic knowledge and experience in climbing indoors made the transfer to outdoors easier and also in my opinion it increased the safety, because students were climbing outdoors partly without supervision of the course teachers. Mountain biking and bicycle touring was also divided in to classes of basic mechanics, bicycle handling classes in varying terrain, how to load the bicycle for bicycle touring and finally to overnight bicycle touring excursion.

The first theoretical class of the course was an introduction to the theme and to the aims of the course. Teacher Otto Luhrs demonstrated the preliminary course program, course assignments, expected learning expectations and evaluation standards. The course working methods and assignments based on group work and the teacher emphasized its role in the course. During the course teacher of the course used a term “ la cordada” which refers to team of mountaineers who are tied together with a rope. In the end of the first theoretical class we formed groups of 3-6 students, and all group named their group. All together 10 group were formed which contained 3-5 students. The students invented names to their teams and the names were following; “Añejado en Roble”, “Care Papa”, “Full House”, “Intrin Traburn”, “Los 3 Elementos”, “Los Vertebrados”, “Six Pack”, “Tapaculos”, “The Nameless” and “Hiton Hyvä”.

One of the most important assignments of the course was writing of the group diaries. Every group were supposed to write a diary, about all the experiences during the course. Diaries main purpose was, that the students would reflect their experiences and learning. First assignment was that the students wrote their learning expectations for the course and what they expected to learn. All the students set their individual learning goals for the course and in the end of the course they did self-evaluation and evaluated if they met they expectations for the learning.

In the official description of the course “Sports and Activities in the Nature” the individual learning expectations for the course were divided in to general and individual learning expectations (attachment 1.). Individual learning expectations were divided in to three subcategories; theoretical

and conceptual skills, procedural skills and attitudinal skills. Individual learning expectations covered theoretical and procedural knowledge about general and specific course related topics. This list was introduced to the students by the main teacher of the course Otto Luhrs in the first theoretical class of the course. General learning theoretical and conceptual learning expectations consisted of three aspects which were: acquiring the procedural and conceptual knowledge about how to create meaningful and safe learning opportunities for the participants in the natural environments, student learns to reflect and analyze his/her learning and the students learn to emphasis environmental issues in the role of physical education teacher.

There were seven attitudinal learning expectation listed in the course description. Majority of the expectations concerned attitudes towards the nature and conservation of the nature. There were also attitudinal learning expectations which related to the role of the instructor and teacher of activities in the natural settings. One attitudinal learning expectation listed in the course description was that the student understands the physical educators' responsible role organizing and leading outdoor activities. Respecting and taking account all possible risks is essential part of being outdoor activity instructor or educator. Also the empowerment of one's own and others' mental and social reserves, reflection of ones' own actions in collaborative work and achieving set goals were essential learning expectations of the course.

Individual learning expectations covered theoretical and procedural knowledge about general and specific course related topics. Total list can be seen in attachments, but the following learning expectations themes can be highlighted for theoretical knowledge: human development history and relation with the nature, outdoor education's role in physical education, Outdoor education role in plans and programs of the Ministry of Education, and curriculums in the region of Los Rios. Procedural learning expectations related to planning and applying outdoor education for different target groups and in different locations. The student was expected for example to be able to use different leadership methods and recognize special needs of different target groups. For formal education the students were expected to be familiar with different pedagogical methods and be able to establish thematic connections between nature activities and different school subjects. There were also learning expectations for skill relating to group handling, skills relating to one's own and others' wellbeing and safety, skills related to the outdoor activities for example in mountain biking.

After the teacher had introduced the preliminary course program, assignments and learning expectations, we had about 15 minutes to think and write down our own learning expectations. In the next week during the reflection conversation and summary of our first practical class, the teacher said aloud all the individual learning expectations and also told who's each learning expectation was. The teacher advised to write down all the learning expectations to the group diary.

5.4 Study design and methodical choices

Purpose of this study was to analyze students' learning during the outdoor activities and education course. The study period lasted 20 weeks including 22 hours of theoretical class room classes, 18 hours of practical outdoor classes and 8-10 nights of overnight excursion. I participated the course in the role of student. In the end of the course I collected the group diaries and students' individual self- evaluations for my closer examination from which I choose the final research data for my study

Nature of this study is qualitative and it follows the characteristics of qualitative research by trying to gather more understating and underlying reasons of experiential learning. In the study I try find about how the students feel and reflect about their learning during the outdoor activities and education course. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009,68) the qualitative research is a totality consisting collection of the research data and analyzation of the data. Tuomi and Sarajärvi continue that it is important to consider the analyzation methods before the research data is collected. It will help later analyzation tremendously because it is easier for the researcher to approach and analyze the research data. As Tuomi and Sarajärvi states (2009, 150) the research questions in qualitative research can take shape during the research process. The research based on contents of individual documents the qualitative content analysis is the most commonly used research method (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 91).

5.5 Data gathering and selection

In the beginning of the semester I asked permission from the course teacher Otto Luhrs, if I could collect research data for my master's thesis from the course material. My idea was to use group diaries and students' self-evaluations in my study. Otto Luhrs did not see any problems for that, and

later I introduced my thesis to the students and asked their permissions to use their diaries and self-evaluations for my thesis. In the introduction I demonstrated my PowerPoint presentation of my bachelor thesis about experiential learning translated in Spanish. I also asked if the students were familiar about topics of adventure education. I described my study aims and methods and in the end of presentation. I handed out the forms to students so they could give me a written consent, (attachment 2.) if they wanted to participate in my thesis. All the students agreed to take part to my study and gave their written consent to use their writing.

After the introduction class of the course students were formed 10 groups of 3-5 persons. In the end of first theoretical class all the students set and wrote down their individual learning expectations for the course. These expectations were also written down in to the group diaries. Group diaries were the most important documents of the course. All the students were supposed to report their experiences they had experienced in to group diary. After the course all the students wrote self-evaluations, where they evaluated how their attitudes and behavior during the course and also their abilities on specific areas of the course. After the course I documented the group diaries and obtained students' self-evaluations. Then I read all the material carefully and I did preliminary election which material I would use in my thesis. The selection of the research material based on my own consideration about how thoroughly each group and student had reported their experiences during the course in the diaries and in the personal self-evaluations. There was lot of variety in quantitatively and qualitatively how the students and groups reported about their experiences and learning expectations for the course. Some groups for example did not list learning expectations in their diaries and not all groups had written about all the excursions of the course, even though the instructions were clear to do so. Also there were really little reflective text in some diaries, and text more about story-telling rather than texts about learning. Therefore, I selected the works of the students which described most the actual learning process.

The final research data consisted of texts from 14 students. The texts were written by; Mauro, Daniela, Valentina and Javiera from "Full House", Fernando, Lorenzo, Samuel, Robinson from "Care Papa", Carolina from "Añejando en Roble", Danilo and Alvaro from "Los 3elementos" and Alejandro and Sandra from "Intrin Taburn". In the diaries Group members wrote together and

individually about their learning expectations and learning process before and after the course. The group diary material consisted of 92 pages of handwritten text.

In the second part of the study results I analyzed students' self-evaluations. Students' self-evaluations consisted of numeric self-evaluation and free written description about their learning. Some of the students did not analyze and reflect their learning in the group diaries or in their personal self-evaluations. Individual self-evaluations analyzed in the were written by members of "Full House". These students were Mauro, Daniela, Javiera and Valentina. They all had not participated similar courses and were quite inexperienced in outdoor activities. Their self-evaluations contained 6 pages of text. Also there were variety in the lengths of the students' self-evaluations; the shortest self-evaluation consisted of 68 words and the longest 1483 words.

5.6 Analyzation of the research data

For my research the deductive qualitative content analysis was appropriate methodical choice. Deductive qualitative content analysis is cases when there are previous studies and knowledge about the phenomenon (Elo & Kyngäs 2007). The purpose of the qualitative content analysis is to identify core consistencies and meanings and the challenge lies in how to find them (Patton 2002, 452). In the deductive content analysis aims to build a model to test the previous theory and create a model to describe the phenomenon in conceptual form (Elo & Kyngäs 2007)

In the first preparation phase of the analyzation of research data I read all the research data carefully and I tabulated the students' individual learning expectations according to different themes. The purpose of this tabulation was to find connections between students' expressions and discover preliminary framework and themes for the study. After the tabulation of the students' learning expectations I formed four major preliminary themes. The themes were, ¹⁾ professional growth ²⁾ learning from experiences, ³⁾ environmental awareness and ⁴⁾ social skills and group cohesion. These themes guided thematic analyzation and structuration of the research data, so that I was able to recognize affiliations between different expressions. The preparation phase of choosing suitable units for the analysis is important and should be assessed in relation to research questions (Elo, Kanste, Kääräinen, Kanste, Kyngäs, Pölkki, & Utriainen, 2014.)

In the Chapter 7 the sources of analyzation are the group diaries. This chapter focuses on description of the course activities and students' reported experiences during the course activities and overnight camps. When I participated the course activities in a role of student and researcher I was in direct personal contact with the study setting and participants. Being in student-researcher role I was able to describe the study setting accurately according to my participatory-observation. In the analyzation process of the group diaries the first phase was hand coding the text with different colors. The first coding included all expressions which related to learning. In the second phase the more precise content analyses was done by structuring expressions to different categories. Different subcategories were later linked to the four main themes; ¹⁾ Professional growth and group leadership skills, ²⁾ experiences, ³⁾ environmental awareness and ⁴⁾ team work and solidarity. The categories and themes are partially overlapping and in the text sentences could contain expressions which could be categorized in to more than one of the themes. For example, Javiera wrote: "We did not only learn how to use the walking sticks, we had some much fun together that we forgot the rain and the fact how wet we were". This sentence contained expressions about, outdoor skills, group cohesion and environmental condition. Similar qualitative content analysis was proceeded also for students' self-evaluations.

In the Chapter 8 all citations and sources for analyzation are from individual self-evaluations of Mauro, Daniela, Javiera and Valentina. Similar qualitative content analysis was proceeded also for students' self-evaluations. In this part of study results I introduced students' learning expectations for every category mentioned above. Then I introduced how the students described their experiences and learning in this category. Finally, I did a conclusion of every category and analyzed students' experiences and learning in each category.

TABLE 1. Example of qualitative content analysis

Preliminary themes	Expression	Subcategory		Theme
Professional skills	I learned how to use a compass, trekking poles and how to handle larger groups in these weather conditions (Robinson)	Individual skills	Outdoor skills	Professional growth
	We learned a lot about safety and how to camp in snowy conditions (Danilo)	Safety	Leadership skills	
Experiences	The route to the mountain top was the most extreme in my life” (Lorenzo)	Physical challenge	Exceeding over yourself	Meaningful experience
	I am afraid of heights, but nevertheless each climbed meter, I was able to slowly overcome this fear).	Fear		
	I never had been in the mountains before... (Mauricio)	New experience	Peak experience	
Nature	After the course I feel that I have become more attached to the nature. (Alejandro)	Personal relation to the nature	Desire to promote conservation of the nature	Environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior
	It is always important to learn more about different ways to conserve the nature (Valentina)	Personal opinion about nature	Increasing awareness of conservation of the nature	
Group work	We were helping and cheering each other during the whole class at Jardin Botanico (Mauricio)	Helping others	Supportive social relations	Group cohesion
	But in the end our group was united, organized and above all we were all good friends” (Danilo)	Organization Friendship	Team bond	

5.7 Trustworthiness

My personal background in outdoor activities and education affected my selection of the topic of my thesis. Also I had my own assumptions about the course activities and possible emotions and experiences what the course would most likely to offer to me and to other students as well. In focal part of my thesis were the experiences experienced by the other students. My intention was to be as objective as possible when I described and analyzed students' experiences. In the beginning my vision was that I would keep my personal opinions and experiences more in background and keep the study focus more on students' experiences. However, after I had read all the research material I changed my study approach, so that my personal thoughts were more presented in the study. My active participation to the course eased my analyzation of others students' diaries trough my own thoughts.

The most important question is, does my interpretation and conceptualization about students' experiences and learning during the course coincide with the students' impressions? As Heikkinen, Rovio & Syrjälä (2008, 36) states that the researcher needs to express the story and study results as truthfully than possible. Also the fact that the students' writings were part of course evaluation might have affected how they reported their experiences. The students reported about their learning outcomes generally in positive manner. There was really little text about negative experiences or comments that some activity would have been useless etc. Also there it is possible that knowing that their writing would be used as study material might have effect on how students wrote about their experiences.

5.8 Ethical choices of this study

The ethical questions were not problematic for my study. The aims of this study were only academics. For this study observation of the participants did not include public places. I observed the participants during the course activities which I was equally participating. All the students who participated to this study were volunteers. When I presented my thesis all the students gave me their written consent to use their texts for my thesis (attachment 2). No one requested that I would use pseudonyms instead of their real name. However, I kept the autonomy of the students by using only

their first names in this study. The research data consisted of students' text about their authentic and personal experiences during the course. I was careful that I did not accidentally share publically the research material and endanger the students' anonymity. The students knew that I would use their writings for my thesis and they seemed interested and willing to help to complete my thesis.

6 STUDY RESULTS

6.1 Categorization of the learning expectations

Students had listed similar learning expectations in the group diaries and these expectations were categorized in different themes. The themes were; ¹⁾ Professional growth; ²⁾ leadership and group handling skills, experiences, ³⁾ Environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior and ⁴⁾ Team work and group cohesion. These categories guided my content analysis of the students' texts.

6.2 Professional growth

All the students highlighted various learning expectations which would be directly useful for their future career as a physical educator. Mauro wrote: *“Tener la capacidad en futuro laboral, para programar, organizar y ejecutar actividades en la naturaleza”* (To be able to program, organize and execute activities in my future profession). This involves direct group management skills and all the safety aspects for example take in to account of changing conditions in the nature. The most common learning goal related to group leading skills at outdoor settings. Like earlier mentioned in the text, group handling and leader skills consist of various different components. Many of the students learning expectations related to these components. For many students outdoor setting was unfamiliar and they wanted to adapt to the changing conditions. For appropriate group handling and leadership skills, it is essential that the leader has the situation under his/her control under every condition.

6.3 Experiences

In this category I describe and analyze how the students experienced the course activities and how they described them in their texts. Students expected to experience meaningful experiences during the course. Students listed expectations for the course which suggested they expected positive experiences, Mauro wrote: *“Disfutar cada actividad al máximo e no pasar malos momentos”* (I try to enjoy each activity as much as possible and I try not to experience bad moments). Also expectations for adventurous moments were mentioned; Mauricio wrote: *“Tener una experiencia de Aventura”*

(Experience an adventure). Many of the students also expressed in their expectations being in nature as one expectation for the course, Lorenzo wrote: “*Estar en contacto con la naturaleza y poder convivir en ella*” (To stay outdoors in harmony with the nature).

6.4 Environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior

Environmental category included all the learning expectations which related to environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior and attitudes. Mostly students wrote how they wanted to gain more knowledge and practical skills how to conserve the nature; Samuel wrote: “*Aprender tecnicas para cuidar el medio ambiente y hacer el menor daño posible*” (To learn good practices to take care of natural environment and not to cause harm to the nature). Students’ also impressed their desire to pass on environmental knowledge in his or her teaching. Promotion of environmental awareness is often described as one essential learning goal for outdoor programs. However, it is not clear does only being outdoors promote beneficial environmental friendly behavior among the people who participate in outdoor programs. There have been studies which did not find correlation between participation in outdoor programs and pro-environmental behavior. However close connection with to the environment is a significant of responsible and pro-environmental behavior (Andre 2011). Increasing students’ environmental awareness and attitudes was undoubtedly one of the most important learning objectives for the whole course. Environmental awareness can be also referred as environmental sensitivity which can be defined as person’s empathetic perspective towards the environment. An experience in natural settings supports the development of the environmental sensitiveness. The environmental sensitiveness is one essential predictive factor for person’s environmental friendly behavior. (Hungerford, & Volk 1990, 8-21).

6.5 Solidarity and team work

As Bunyan (2011) notes that interaction between group members have influence on program outcomes. This category includes all the expectations in which underlines solidarity among the other students. Majority of the students had listed these aspects in their learning exectations for example Daniela wrote: “*Obtener más union y nuevas experiencias como generación*” (To increase group cohesion within our year and experience new experiences together). Also expectations for good

team work are included in to this category. Group work and interaction between students and with the teachers, were in focal point of the whole course. Student had two groups where they belonged during the course. The larger group consisted of all the students and teachers of the course and the smaller groups of 3-5 students. The members of the same small group, spent practically whole time of the course together and the bond between members of the smaller group was strong. During theory and practical classes students tend to automatically be close to other students from his/her smaller group, for example, during the theory classes all students were organized to the class room so that the members of the smaller groups were sitting side by side.

7 COURSE ACTIVITIES AND EXCURSION

Next I will introduce the course activities which received more attention in group diaries. These activities were the first practical class at botanic garden (chapter 7.1), overnight excursion to volcano at national park Casablanca (chapter 7.2), overnight bicycle touring excursion to Loncoyen (chapter 7.3), final excursion (chapter 7.4) and groups' autonomous excursions (chapter 7.5). First, I briefly introduce each activity and then students' reported experiences, and finally in conclusion I summarize student's experiences and provide also my own opinion about the activity.

7.1 Jardin Botanico

First practical class was a class about Nordic walking and was put in to practice at the botanic garden of University Austral of Chile. The campus area of the university is approximately 1,5 sq km broad area, including 5 hectares broad botanic garden. The terrain at the botanic garden is variable with partly steeply ascending and descending trails. The first task of the class was to construct the trekking sticks. In the previous class the teacher Otto had given the list of needed materials which included 50-80 cm wooden stick screws, wine bottle cork exc. The teacher brought all the tools needed to construct the walking sticks. All the groups constructed the walking sticks partly separated from the other groups but also made some co-operation with the other groups. After the walking sticks were constructed we moved to the park to train Nordic walking. The teacher explained the basic technique; how to use the sticks correctly and taking account the safety of other students. It seemed to me that it was obvious that the other students did not have used hiking sticks before, and I was very likely the only one who had previous experience. In my opinion variable terrain made the botanic garden good place to practice use of the hiking sticks.

During the class it rained heavily. The probability of the rain was really likely during that period in Valdivia, and the teacher Otto had recommended take waterproof clothes and boots to the class. However, not everyone possessed appropriate clothing, so it was clear that some of the students would get really wet during the class. One essential part of the class was a team and trust building activity. One member of the group was blindfolded and other participants of the group guided the blindfolded first hands-on and later only with voice.

The members of group Full House described their experiences during this activity extensively in their group diary. For all members of Full House this was first time to practice Nordic walking. Mauricio tried thought it was good and meaningful class experience which will probably come in handy later on the course. After the class Mauricio was expecting more from upcoming activities of the course. He felt more affined to he's team, because they were all the time helping and cheering each other during the class. Valentina wrote: *“Me pareció super intresteting la experiencia vivida, ya fue nunca había hecho algo similar”* (I think that the experience was super intresteting. I had not never tried anything similar). First it seemed that building the walking sticks would be complicated for Valentina, but she was satisfied that she learned how to build essential equipment for trekking. She also thought that the techniques of Nordic walking will turn out useful in future. Also the construction phase of walking sticks received attention in students' texts. Javiera wrote: *“La actividad de la confección de las bastones me pareció muy entretenida intresante y de mucha utilidad ya fue aprendí que con materiales simples se puede fabricar basetones que facilitan la caminata”* (I think the activity was very fun, interesting and very useful, I also learned that it is possible to construct useful walking sticks using low cost materials). Valentina also wrote that she learned the correct technique to use the walking sticks, nevertheless it was complicated to adapt in the beginning. Javiera wrote that although the weather was really miserable she enjoyed the class a lot.

Group work and sharing the experience with others students highlighted in texts. Daniela wrote: *“Aunque llovió mucho eso no fue impedimento para realizar las actividades, al contrario se obtuvieron nuevos aprendizajes y lo disfrutamos como la cordad y grupo complejo, ya qe no solo aprendimos, tambien nos divertirmos y olvidamos del frío y de lo mojados que estábamos”* (Eventough it rained a lot, it did not prevent the activities, in contrary it gave us more learning oppoturnities. We did not only learn we enjoyed the activity together as group, we had fun and we forgot how cold and wet we felt). When Mauro heard for the first time about this activity, he thought that this class is not very interesting and will not very useful for him. Even though Mauro wrote a lot about the trust-building activity where one person was blindfolded and others were guiding him. This was first time Mauro did this kind activity and he was sure that this activity built the trust between the members of the group. Mauro thought that it was a really good way to start the course.

Summarizing the experience this activity was a new experience for all students of this group. This activity was first practical class of the course and according their group diary members of Full House the experience was positive. According the students, the experience was interesting, educational, beneficial for the team spirit, and applicable later on the course. As mentioned earlier in this study, previous experiences influence the impressions how the learning situation is felt (Beard & Wilson 2002,18). From the writings of the students we can assume that the students had really little or not at all experience in hiking and using walking sticks. If they had had previous experiences, they would likely have had written about it. The students were more in the same learning process and can be seen in the students' texts. Students reported their experiences quite similarly and they brought up similar topics about the experience.

Other topic which all the members referred was the how they experienced the activity together and how the solidarity amongst the group grew during the activity. The construction of the trekking sticks in my opinion served as good icebreaker activity and worked well to build the teamwork and also get the members of the groups know each other's better. Also it had emotional attitudinal and purpose. Mauro had a positive emotional experience when he built something with his own hands, which this achievement surprised him because according to his text is not common to him. Javiera and Daniela wrote about how satisfied they were about constructing their own trekking sticks. I think this activity was good example for all, that it is not always necessary to buy commercially manufactured products. Possibly this activity made the students think about ecological aspects even though they did no mention that in the group diary.

7.2 Volcano Casablanca

7.2.1 Description of the excursion

Casablanca is an inactive Holocene stratovolcano situated in the Andes of Los Lagos Region of Chile. It is situated 150 km south west from Valdivia and 90 km east from city of Osorno. The volcano is part of national park "Parque Nacional de Puyehue. The excursion to volcano Casablanca was the first of the four overnight excursions during the course. The planning and preparation was naturally in important role before the excursion. The most important learning themes for this

excursion were; camping in cold climate and eco-friendly practices in camping. The excursion to the Casablanca was originally planned to take place before indoor climbing, but it had to be postponed due to the too challenging weather conditions. All the groups obtained a list of equipment for the excursion. The list was divided necessary and recommended equipment.

When we arrived to the location after, the groups could choose their campsite freely within the camping area, which was about 4 hectares broad. The terrain was fine grained volcanic rock. After the tents were set the next activity was teacher orientated mini classes. Teacher Otto Luhrs explained and showed the basic camping techniques. He started with general safety aspects of camping and next how to choose good place for the tent, and how to set up the tent correctly. In the end of the class Otto explained and demonstrated how to cook in camping conditions; how to use the gas cooker safely and how to take care of hygiene. After the classes the groups had time to cook and get ready for the next class. Every group had a task to teach one principle of the NOLS's "Leave no trace" program to the other students. Before the presentations the teacher taught how to set up fire. Some of the groups had already made fire before the class. After the classes we had free time and we played various group games such as capture the flag. It was advised to go to bed at 10.00 pm due to early wake up in the next day.

The following day was dedicated for the trek to the top of the volcano Casablanca. After the breakfast we voted if the students thought that it would be necessary to leave someone of the assistants in the camp to take look of our tents and belongings. All voted that it would not be necessary to leave anyone behind. Just before the departure there was a class about how to take care of abrasions in the feed. The students were advised to take enough water and packed lunch. The plan was to keep the bag light and the teacher advised that it is not necessary to bring cooker and gas bottle. The walking sticks were compulsories and the teacher also checked the students' boots. Those who did not have 100% waterproof boots walked more behind in the line, so that the snow was more packed for them in the trail. When we had hiked approximately two hours we were at hillside of the Casablanca. The teacher zigzagged in the front of the line his way upwards the slope and the students followed him. At the first plateau we had a class how to stop the slide using the trekking sticks in the case of falling down. Later we were about 100 meters vertical ascent from the where we had a break of 15 minutes. The visibility was very poor due to thickening fog and this

point the teacher explained that at he will make the decision that we would not continue to the top. We followed the same trail back down and on our way down we had another mini class how to make a snow shelter. When we got back to the camp around 4.00 pm every group had time to prepare the meal and do a personal care. After the meal we gathered to the campfire to discuss about the feelings and emotions during the day. For the next day it was only scheduled the packing of the camp and returning to Valdivia.

7.2.2 Students' reported impressions about the experiences

The uppermost expressions which stood out from the diaries were strong experiential sensations. No one wrote that they had visited this particular location or other similar mountain or volcano. According to Nicholls & Fiona (2016) the sense of place and sociocultural history where the learning take place can enrich the learning experience. Many wrote that they were overwhelmed by the campsite and scenery. The phsysical challenge, unfamiliar location and conditions spiced up the experience and for example Lorenzo wrote: *“Está salida de nieve quedará en mi cerebro como la ruta más extrema que he realizado hasta el momento. Nunca olvidare esa gran ultima cuesta done demoramos una hora y demoramos un minute en bajarla con las tecnicas aprendidas”* (This excursion will remain in my mind as the toughest route of my life so far. I will never forget the last peak where spend on hour going to the top and one minute do come using the techniques which we had learnt). Also Danilo wrote about the experience exceeded his expectations completely: *“Al momento de salida nunca imagine tal experiencia, ir paso a paso subiendo la montaña alejándome de todo, viendo todo muy pequeño,* (When we arrived, I never imagined such experience, going step by step up the mountain, leaving everything behind and seeing everything below so small).

Students wrote that they were really inexperienced and also being contact with snow was a new experience for many. Also majority of the students wrote that they learned the basic skills like how to set the tent and use the cookers during the excursion. Coldness of the night and difficulties to get sleep was pretty common topic of the conversations after the first night. Despite the tired faces of the students overall the mood amongst the student was good and the students were anxious to start the trek towards the volcano. Many of the students wrote that they were really motivated to reach the top of the volcano, but all understood the risk and reasons why we could not continue to the top.

Samuel wrote that he is really looking forward to this kind of activity again, and when the time comes, he really wants to ascend to the top of the mountain. Alejandro wrote that the mountains in the moonlight were really special and unforgettable sight and experience. In the end of his paragraph Alejandro wrote:” *Hicé con la tranquilidad de uno anciano, lo soporté con la fuerza de un adulto y lo disfruté como un niño*” (*I did it with the tranquility of the elderly person*” (I endured it like an adult and I enjoyed it like a child).

The excursion to Casablana was also a possibility to exceed own expectations. Sandra a member of “Intrin Traburn” reflected in the group diary: “*Subir el volcan Casablana significa un desafío personal y grupal. Lo primero porque tengo pánico a las alturas sin embargo cada metro de subida se alejó poco a poco este temor*” (Climbing the volcan Casablana was personal and groupal challenge. Personal because I am afraid of heights, but nevertheless each climbed meter, I was able to slowly overcome this fear). In my opinion the difficulty level of the trek to the top of the volcano matched perfectly the overall competence of the students. The location was ideal because ascend had elements of mountaineering and we used and practiced the techniques which are used in bigger mountains. I am sure that this spiced up the experience and made the adventurous experience even more present. Before the departure to volcano Casablana I had had lots of conversations with the Chilean students participating in the course, about their previous experiences in outdoor activities and camping outdoors. I expected as Otto Luhrs had said to me, that Chilean people are not that accustomed to spend time in the nature, or go camping as much as for example the Europeans are. Still it surprised me that there were quite many people who had not spent a single night in the tent in any conditions.

Considering the fact, how inexperienced most of the students were, I thought before the excursion, that this excursion can point out to be an astonishing new experience for many. My concerns related to the fact, that many students did not have proper sleeping bag for low temperatures. Alvaro wrote: “*Esa noche se veía que sería muy fría, pero nunca imagine que tanto, me abrigue, lo mas que pude pero fue inutil, no pude dormir todo la noche por el frio. Sin lugar a duda ha sido la noche más fría que he vivido*”(We saw that the night will be very cold, but I never imagined that it would be that cold. I wore all my cloths but it was useless I could not sleep during the whole night because the coldness. Without doubt it was the coldest night in my life) Sleeping a night in -5 Celsius degree

temperature in a summer sleeping bag, would perhaps be a significant learning experience, but most probably it would be situated as misadventure in Priest's and Martin's (1986) model of the adventure experience paradigm (Bunyan 2011) I think this experience was meaningful and added solidarity amongst the group and I am sure they will remember this shared experience forever. In the other hand some of the students might have thought that they will not go camping voluntarily in their life

7.2.3 Students' impressions about solidarity and teamwork

Common theme in the diaries was expressions related to the solidarity and team work amongst the members of the groups and with other students. Many students wrote that they were a little bit concerned about how they will manage in the conditions which were unfamiliar to them. In the diaries sense of good teamwork and friendliness amongst the students were seen as one of the major and important experiences during the excursion. The members of Los 3elementos wrote in their diary that their friendship was an important factor for how well they succeeded the experience "*La alegría, Amistad y sobre todo la unión fue for factores para fue esta cordada pasara unos dias magicos e innovadores* (Happiness, friendship and above all the team spirit were the key factors for our group so that we could spend some magical and innovative days).

Group functioning and group dynamics are in important role for group productivity and learning. (Sibthorpe et al. 2007) The program of this excursion was planned so that all activities included teamwork. The classes and decision taking were led by the teacher, but all the time the activity was planned so that the group members needed to cooperate with each other. Also there was sufficiently free time in the program, so that the members of groups could spend relaxed time together and converse and share experiences. The groups also had liberty in certain things, for example the groups chose their place for tent freely. All the groups ended to spread out widely in the camping area. In my opinion this created illusion that all the groups were camping as if they were on their own, and I think that was also one aim the excursion and affected on how the activities were sequenced.

7.3.4 Students' Impressions of the leadership styles and organization

Even though the students had most learning expectation related to the group handling skills and career in the diaries, this category did not get that much attention as categories “experiences and teamwork” in the writings of the groups. Some of the studies related the experience more directly to their professional growth; Javiera wrote: “*De salida al volcan Casablanca recalco que lo pase muy, fue muy provechos y enriquecedor para mi crecimiento personal y para mi formación profesional*” (The excursion to Casablanca was very beneficial and enriching for my professional growth). In general, the students wrote more about the learned concrete skills than skills and attitudes related to the group handling skills: Robinson wrote; “*Aprendí a utilizar la brujula, bastones y como se mueve en grupo grandee n esas condiciones climaticas*” (I learned how to use a compass, trekking poles and how to handle larger groups in these weather conditions). Also Danilo wrote that he learned a lot about the safety aspects about travelling and camping in snowy and cold conditions during the excursion, but did not associate this learning experience to his future career in his text. In the diaries majority of the group members wrote that the her/his group was well organized during this excursion and minor problems they had would be solved before next excursion.

In the theory classes we had discussed about different leadership styles commonly used in outdoor activities and education. The leadership styles vary from leader-centered to group-centered leadership as explained earlier in this study. During this excursion the teachers favored more leader-centered leadership style than group centered leadership style. I think this was well justified because the experience level in the group was low. Also low experience level compelled us to stay in one big group, when it is easier and faster than the decisions are made by the teacher. As Sibthorp, Paisley & Gookin (2007) states, that in adventure education one key component for successful participant development is good rapport between participants and an educator. Even though the students did not mention in diaries their opinion about the teaching style, students like the teaching style of Otto Luhrs. His leadership style was not authoritative and he did not in any point the just announce his decisions, but always explained the situation and why the decision had to be made arguments from the students.

The risk level was in my opinion low, and well matched to the experience level of the participants. Students without previous experience cannot see all the risks involved to the activities, (Lehtonen, Mäkinen & Pulli 2007, 127) and I think it was a really good lesson for the students about responsibility of the group leader, when we had to turn back before reaching the top of the volcano due to poor visibility. I and how to respect the changing conditions. In my opinion this was more relevant learning experience for students, than reaching the top which was only maybe five minutes' hike from our location. While we were at the volcano Casablanca we did not discuss much about different leadership styles. Students also mentioned this fact in group diaries for example, Valentinta wrote: "*Quizas me hubiese gustado aprender un poco más sobre el manejo de grupos grandes*" (Perhaps I would have liked to learn more about group handling skills with larger groups). In my opinion, it was a good decision from the teachers, that we did not over analyze the experience while we were at the location; Students could focus more on experiencing. Next theoretical class in Valdivia was used to discuss about the topic and identify the moments where the teacher used certain leadership styles. The students were active in this discussion, and identified all different situations well.

7.2.5 Impressions about environmental issues

One major aim of the whole course was to increase students' environmental awareness. The environmental issues were central role during the excursion at volcano Casablanca and it was also the first time the students put in to practice what they had learnt during the course related to this topic. In the group diaries majority of the students had listed learning expectations related to gaining more knowledge how to conserve the nature. According to the students these topics do not get much attention in formal education in Chile. Also the teacher Otto Luhrs told me that general knowledge about conserving the nature in Chile is not very good.

The principles of NOL's program "Leave no trace" had been the framework for environmental issues during the course, and we had studied and discussed the topic during the theoretical classes. Major part of the theoretical exam which we had done before the excursion to volcano Casablanca, concerned the principles of NOLS' program. The program consists of seven principles;

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
3. Dispose of waste Properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize camping impacts
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of other visitors

The groups did presentations about each of these topics. In the presentations each group introduced one principle in their own comic manner. The presentations were brief, which were followed by group conversation. After the presentation the theme was not highlighted during following activities. In the finishing conversation of the excursion every group was assigned to reflect their actions in relation to these principles. However, the members of the groups did not analyze much this topic in their group diaries. However there some of the students mentioned that they learnt lot about the appropriate courses of action in natural settings. Most of all the groups, members of the “Full House” wrote about this topic. Javiera wrote that after the excursion she respects more the beauty of the nature, and she learned new ways to conserve the nature: *“Me sirvió para sumar experiencias al estar el contacto en la naturaleza, llevar a lo practica muchos contenido la teoría”* (I think it was advantageous, that we put in the theory in to practice in natural environment). Also there were comments in the diaries how the whole excursion made more sense to the principles when they were put in to practice: Also Daniela wrote: *“La experiencia en campamento fue muy buena, sobre todo aplicando las principios de NDR, lo que significio que no fuera la típica salida al entorno natuarl con toda la comodidad del hogar* (I really liked the camping experiences, above all that we applied the Do Not Leave a Trace program’s principles, it was not just a typical excursion to natural envimoremnt with all conveniences of home).

In my opinion it is obvious that there are certain courses of actions which you follow when you are staying outdoors; for example, you always make sure you do not leave your thrashes behind or you never intentionally disrupt the wild life. I think this is pretty clear for most of people without any formal classes of outdoor education. However, knowing something is not enough; usually the case is that it is the attitudes which need to be changed in order to bring all the knowledge in to action. In

my opinion NOLS' program "Leave no trace" is a good framework to teach eco-friendly course of actions in the nature. All the principles are logic and easy to follow.

7.3 Loncoyen Bicycle trip

7.3.1 Description of the excursion

One of the excursions of the course was overnight bicycle trip. The plan was to pack all the necessary equipment and food on the bicycle and pedal from Valdivia to Loncoyen. The destination was a beach with rock formations 35 kilometers from Valdivía. The overnight biking trip was preceded a class of bike maintenance and basic techniques of mountain biking. The bike maintenance class was so executed so that there were four different mini classes; how to maintain the transmission, how to repair flat tire, how to maintain disc brakes and how maintain V-brakes. The idea was that one member of the group participated one of the classes and taught what he/she had learned to the other members of his/her group. After the bicycle maintenance class, we discussed about the safety aspects of bicycling in the traffic with group. Then we pedaled to the nearby park called Parque Santa Ines to practice basic bicycle handling in more challenging terrain. We also practiced riding the bicycles in changing terrain in our own groups. One group member was on his/her turn the leader and rest followed. Also the activity included different group tasks for examples, riding bicycles holding each other's hand in hand and a competition which group can ride a bicycle with most people on it at the same time.

The overnight trip to the Loncoyen included 30km pedaling on roadways and easy trails to the camping site, overnight camping, rock climbing and bouldering and pedaling back to Valdivía. The camp site was spectacular beach with rock formations. Even though we were not very far away from road the scenery and the sound of the ocean made me personally feel that we were more remote and adventurous location. At the camp site groups had possibility to choose freely their place for the tent. In the evening only organized program was Otto Luhr's campsite cooking class. Otto taught us how to prepare pizza in frying pan. There were no other instructions than that wake up time would at 6.30 and the rock climbing and bouldering would start at 8.00 am.

For the climbing we divided to two groups. One group did rock climbing with rope and other group went a bit further to do bouldering in smaller rocks. The teachers Otto and Carlos stayed at the rope climbing cliff and belayed the students. Otto taught also how to belay top rope climber and some students practiced belaying. After each student had tried rope climbing, we went to do bouldering. Otto had earlier explained the safety instruction for bouldering. These instructions included knowing your limits, and also how one can spot the climber from the ground. The idea is trying soften the wall and direct the climber to fall on his feet. After the climbing we had lunch and preparation for pedaling back to Valdivía

7.3.2 Students' Impressions of the excursion

In addition to general course aims, the aims of bicycle excursion were to provide an introduction to bicycle touring and also provide an opportunity to try rock climbing. The main themes for the bicycle touring excursion were theoretical and practical knowledge about bicycle mechanics and maintenance, necessary equipment and how to load your bicycle and bicycle handling skills in changing terrains. Quite many students could not participate this excursion because they did not have appropriate bicycle for this excursion. This resulted some changes in group compositions; there were for example, only two persons from “Añejado en Roble” and two persons from “Tapaculos” who could participate in the excursion. The absences might have had influence on that this excursion with bicycles was not reported as extensively as the previous overnight excursion to Volcano Casablanca. The majority of the texts in the group diaries concerning excursion to Loncoyen were mostly straightforward storytelling about the excursion.

7.3.3 Impressions about the experiences

Also this time the experiences got the most attention in the students' writings. Students' expectations about this excursion varied. Some of the students did not expect this excursion to prove out to be that exiting and meaningful than the first excursion to the Volcan Casablanca. Some students had more experience than others; Samuel wrote: *“Desde un momento pense en que el viaje hasta allá iba a ser más complicado, esto por mi inexpreiencia en viajes en bicicleta con alforjas y mohilla de ataque”* (First I thought that the excursion will be very complicated, because I did not

have much experience in bicycle excursions with bike bags and back bags). Danilo wrote that the excursion to Loncoyen was not that important to him. He wrote that he had done some bicycle touring before and he did not encounter any problems during the excursion to Loncoyen. In contrary, Alvaro wrote that this was the excursion of the course which he waited the most, and he was really excited to test his new bike which he had bought for bicycle touring.

Natural setting and scenery received also attention in group diaries; Carolina wrote: *“El lugar era ideal para descansar y relajar, el paisaje acompañando del atardecer nos hizo disfrutar aun más la salida, viendo la naturaleza”* (The place was perfect to rest and relax, the view with sunset made us enjoy the excursion even more). Samuel considered preparation of pizza with frying pan as fun and possibly applicable activity later in his work as a teacher: *“La actividad de la pizza me pareció buena, una alternativa para realizar posteriormente con nuestros alumnos* (I liked the preparation of pizza, one possibility to put in to practice later with our students).

In my opinion the one possible explanation why the students did not have that much expectations for this excursion was that the bicycling can be seen as casual activity and not nearly that exciting than ascending to the volcano. The route and destination were also familiar to most of the students. Also some students were doubting if their physical condition was up to pedal to the destination. However, many reported that the experience was as a successful and gave motivation to try the activities again.

7.3.4 Impressions about environmental aspects

The environmental issues were taken in to account in planning of every outdoor class and excursion. For each excursion a Leave not trace plan was created, which followed the seven guidelines of the Leave No Trace program. The plan focused on how every group can minimize how much they create waste, and also how the created waste is disposed. I was personally expecting that we would continue the discussion and observation about environmental issues during the excursion to Loncoyen, but quite surprisingly these themes were not taken in to closer examination during this excursion. This is one possibly one explanation, why there were not any mentions about environmental issues in the group diaries. However, the environmental aspects were essential part of

this excursion as well and present whole time. The groups and students were expected to autonomously follow and keep in mind all the seven principles of “Leave No Trace” program. Also in my opinion the excursion in itself presented valuation of nature and ways to be contact with the nature with low impact. I think the excursion encouraged the students to find ecological and healthy way of transportation to move and enjoy in the nature. The excursion was also a source of motivation to some participants of the course who later on did longer bicycle touring excursions.

7.3.5 Impressions about teamwork

All the four groups who wrote about the excursion in their group diary referred to importance of the teamwork and sharing experiences. Absences of some students had influence on the preparation and organization for this excursion. However, it did not seem to cause too much annoyance; Carolina wrote: *“Estar con nuevos compañeros de cordada no fue molesto ni tampoco difícil, nos separamos las tareas y nos resultó agradable compartir entre nuestro y la carpa de vecinas”* (Being with new members of our group was not a problem nor difficult, we divided the tasks, and in the end it was very pleasant to share the experiences with other students). There were also expressions in group diaries which staged that teams had learnt from last excursions’ mistakes; Robinson wrote; *“Las cosas anduvieron muy bien ya no nos pasó lo de la vez anterior con el gas, aprendimos la lección, incluso a otros les pasó, por lo que ahora fuimos nosotros quienes, prestamos ayuda ahíá”* (The things went very well, and this time the same thing did not happen with the gas, we had learned the lesson, and when it happened to others, we were the ones to help them). Also Ricardo mentioned how well they divided the tasks when they arrived at the campsite, even though this was only their second excursion together as a team. Also Alejandro emphasized that the excursion was a demonstration of solid teamwork. There were similar expressions in the diaries of the other groups.

7.3.6 Impressions about leadership and organization

For this excursion the leadership style was not that teacher orientated than at the last excursion. This excursion was more straightforward and did not include that much decision making than at volcano Casablanca. The excursion proceeded pretty much according to teacher’s preliminary plan and there were no unexpected events. The pedaling to Loncoyen proceeded as discussed in earlier practical

class where we did a short city tour to Parque Santa Ines. We organized the line so that each member of each group were one after another keeping a safe distance to each other. Every sixth student in line had a whistle and they gave signals for every passing bus or bigger vehicle. Alejandro wrote that the learning process was more informal, and not so structured than at the earlier excursion “*Siento que esta salida no fue igual en aprendizaje formación que Casablanca. Sí bien es cierto escalamos y aprendimos hacer pizza, No fue lo mismo* (I feel that this excursion did not offer so much learning possibilities than Casablanca, Yes, we climbed and learned how to prepare pizza, but it was not the same thing).

7.4 Final excursion

7.4.1 Description of the activity

The last overnight excursion was planned to be realized in second week of December and it supposed last five days. The excursion was meant to put together all the learned skills and attitudes learned during the course. The preliminary planning of the final trip was started relatively early two months before the excursion. The excursion was supposed to include hiking, mountain biking, sailing and kayaking. We already had managed negotiate all the additional kayaks and sailing boats for the excursion, when the excursion was cancelled two days prior the planned departure. The reason for the cancellation was that all the teachers of La Universidad Austral de Chile who were part of the teachers’ union had started a strike. It was uncertain how long the strike would continue. The head teacher of the course Nature activities Otto Luhrs was part of the union but the teachers of course kayak Carlos Muslow and Jorge Muller were not in the union. Under these circumstances we had very little time to change the original plan. However, the alternative plan was introduced by the teachers Carlos Muslow and Jorge Muller. We made a new plan to do a overnight kayaking trip starting from river Rio Pichoy to Valdivia. The total distance was 35 kilometers of rowing and we would camp one night on the way.

In the first day of excursion we took a local bus ride (35km) to the bridge crossing the river Pichoy. The teachers brought the kayaks with the trailer and with collaboration we disembarked all the kayaks from the trailer. We chose rowing partners and it looked like everyone chose his/her partner

from the same group they belonged. After we had loaded the kayaks we started our journey. One of the teacher was on the lead and other was following behind the students. The main safety principle was that there would not be situation where one kayak would be out of the sight. That day we rowed approximately 25km and majority of the time against the wind and current. In the following day the conditions were lot easier and we could row the rest 10 kilometers relatively easy back to Valdivía. When we reached our destination the main teacher of the course Otto Luhrs had arrived to give final conversation of the course.

7.4.2 Students reported impressions about the excursion

However, of all the uncertainty and rapid change of plans, the experience was reported in positive manner in the group diaries. Three groups wrote about their experiences during the final excursion. Each member from the groups “CarePapa” and “Los 3lementos” wrote their expressions in the group diary. All the students’ texts covered thoughts and sensations what the cancellation of preliminary final trip caused; for example, Danilo took the cancellation heavily: *“Esto fue la decepción más grande del semestre, yo me había entusiasmado luego de cada practico realiado, veía esto como la prueba final en donde la convivencia, técnicas, estrategias, amor por lo que hacemos sería un fruto, un recuerdo para mí futuro* (This was the biggest disappointment of the whole semester, I have been so excited after each activity, I saw this as final test where the coexistence, techniques, strategies, all the hard work would be rewarded and I would have a long lasting memory to be remembered in future).

Also members of “Full House” wrote that there was lot of frustration and disappointment amongst the students, and that they were not really motivated about the alternative plan to do two days kayaking excursion. I was also very disappointed about the news that the final excursion was cancelled for that time. I think that I was feeling sorry on behalf of the other students, because I think the final excursion would have been unique possibility for many. According to conversations with other students well planned, organized, safe and educative experience shared with friends would have been a highlight of the whole university studies for many students. Also for general learning expectations for the course and especially for students’ personal learning expectations the preliminary plan would have

It seemed that physical challenge of the excursion and importance of the team work and encouraging others had all the attention in group diaries. The groups did not mention professional growth and leadership skills in their description about the final excursion. Neither did the students refer to topics related to environmental awareness in the group diaries. The environmental issues were not actively brought up in collective discussion during this excursion. Only comment in group diaries was Lorenzo's statement that he enjoyed the scenery and the birds while rowing in the first day of excursion.

In the initial the excursion's leadership style was supposed to be more group centered than in the earlier excursions. All the groups would have had one area of responsibility during the final excursion. All the groups had prepared presentations about their role. To mention few of them areas included; route planning, prevention of risk and accidents, socializing games. Reported experiences during this excursion related a lot about exceeding oneself and own expectations of one's own capabilities. Majority of the students expressed, that this excursion was physically very demanding. Especially the first day of the excursion was reported more physically demanding. Many students had doubts if they have sufficiently strength to reach the destination. Ricardo who was rowing in single kayak wrote that he was almost ready to throw in the towel and quit but when we reached the point where the waves and wind eased he felt rush of euphoria and this gave motivation to row until the island where we were supposed to camp. Also Ricardo's group friend Lorenzo doubted if he can overcome the strong current and waves.

Members of CarePapa highlighted the teamwork during this excursion and they also described the how their teamwork and solidarity grew during the semester. Robinson wrote *"Ir a la actividad con una lesión es un extra, y el cuidado de mis compañeros me dejó claro que escogí bien a mi cordada* (Participate in an activity with an injury is something extra, but how my group members took care of me made me clear the point that, I had chosen my group members well). Also he praised his rowing partner that they together succeeded in their goal. Also Danilo wrote that encouragements and good atmosphere were in important role that he had motivation to carry on.

Final kayaking excursion was the closure of the courses' excursions and activities. Students reported that group cohesion grew, especially in their groups for example Danilo wrote: *"Al fin y al cabo*

termine la asignatura con es inncertidumbre de no haber realizado la travesía final en su totalidad, las cosas pasan por algo, pero el resumen fuimos una cordada unida, organizada y por sobre todo buenos amigos, algo que será difícil de sacar en nuestro memoria a largo paso (All the uncertainty in the end of course because we could not do the final excursion as planned, you can not control all what happens, but in the end our group was united, organized and above all we were all good friends, and this memory is hard to take away from us in long term).

7.6 Autonomous excursions

One assignment during the course was that every group had to organize an outdoor event for people outside the course. The participants of the excursions could not be students of the course. Every group could choose the activities what they wanted to realize. It was recommended that the event would include overnight camping, but it was not compulsory. The size of group was defined so that there had to be at least two participants per every student but there was no maximum number of the participants. Every group had to write an accurate plan for the event which the teacher reviewed before the event.

7.6.1 Full House

“Full House” did a day trekking excursion to a small Island Mancera. The island is 22 kilometers from Valdivia. The group had invited eight people to participate their excursion. According to their text the participants did not have much experience in activities in the nature. The uppermost experience of the members of the Full House that they saw this autonomous excursion very useful for their personal and professional growth. Valentina wrote that she was a bit anxious before the excursion because her lack of experience in activities in the nature, but during and after the excursion she felt her self-confident to teach the activities in the nature.

Javiera wrote” *En este salida me di cuenta que se necesita de tiempo para poder planificar para considerar toto lo que hay que hacer y tener previsto*” (This excursion I realized how much time is needed to plan to an outdoor excursion accordingly, considering all necessary aspects and see things beforehand). She mentioned also that she had to put in to practice all she had learned during the

course. Mauro and Mauricio both write that they were really happy that they carried out all the activities they had planned and all went really well and the participants were really happy about the excursion.

7.6.2 Los 3lementos

Los 3lementos organized a kayaking day for a small class of school kids from Valdivia. Their plan was to teach the necessary theory and safety aspects to do kayaking in a class room and then embark the kayaks, play group games with the kayaks and do a mini excursion from the yacht club to the bridge and back. The group faced difficulties, because after the theoretical class the weather conditions changed dramatically and they had to postpone the kayaking to the next day. In the following day they were able to carry out the remaining activities.

According to the writings in their diary, Danilo and Alvaro had experienced quite similar experiences during the day. Danilo wrote that he was nervous in the beginning because he had not taught kayaking before and he mentioned that when you are teaching kids you always have to be more careful about the safety. Both Danilo and Alvaro were really disappointed that they could not embark the kayaks in the first day. They could see the excitement from the kids face and how disappointed they were after they had said that they cannot go kayaking that day. Danilo and Alvaro both wrote how satisfied they were after the day; Danilo wrote: *“Sinceramente me sentí satisfecho por lo entregado a ese grupo de estudiantens, cada vez me voy asimilando a lo que es un profesor, el poder enseñar y aprender recíprocamente de los niños es algo vital en esta profesión (I felt really satisfied about what we taught to these students, each time I understand more about the profession, mutual learning is very important when teaching kids).*

7.6.3 Care´ Papa

Care´ Papa had the same destination as the Full House and went to the Isla of Mancera. They had planned to camp one night and do a trek around the island in the following day. They encountered in the beginning some problems, because the person who were supposed to participate had to cancel the trip. Later they managed to find more persons to participate the excursion, but they were not sure

about the exact numbers of the participants but just before their departure. The members of the Care Papa wrote positive experiences in their diary. All members wrote that they were really excited to test their teaching abilities in practice. Robinson wrote: *“Los juegos nocturnos y la actividad de trekking son un éxito. Los invitados nos entregan muchas buenas opiniones con respecto todo lo que les entregamos, porque para ellos es algo que no están acostumbrados, y no pensaban que involucrara tantos aspectos, lo que nos deja muy conforme como cordada y a mí en lo personal por mis invitados”* (The games played during the night time and trekking were very successful activities. Our guests gave us very good opinions about the topics we taught to them. They were not accustomed to be outdoors and had not thought that it would involve that much aspects to know. After the excursion we felt content). Fernando wrote that this excursion was his favorite from all the excursions. Fernando liked especially the freedom they had to plan their own excursion and he felt really confident to teach the learned to the participants Samuel felt more concerned about the safety and emphasized the responsibility of the leaders in the activities in the nature. He felt proud and confident after the positive feedback what they had after the excursion. Lorenzo wrote quite expressively how they were captivated by the nature and beauty of the island. Lorenzo felt that the participation and the atmosphere in the group was really present during their excursion

7.6.4 Summary of the autonomous excursion

The autonomous excursions were seen in group conversations and also in group diaries and personal self-evaluations one of the most significant learning experiences during the course. Some students wrote that it was most meaningful learning experiences for their professional growth. All the groups could choose their own location, target group and activity for their autonomous excursion. From the students' writings emerged how the students concretely realized how much time and effort is needed to plan and organize even short lasting outdoor excursion. All groups except Full House reported that they had had some difficulties in the organization of the excursion. Difficulties related with sudden change of plans or some aspects that they had not taking in to account in their planning. All the groups managed to adapt to the situation and reported that they were satisfied in their excursion.

Some students wrote about their nervousness and anxiousness to be in a role of the teacher and leader. Especially the group which was teaching school children had more doubts about their

competence to teach kayaking. The students did not mention about their previous teaching experience, but especially teaching activity which requires lots of safety aspects is certainly stressful for inexperienced teacher. After the autonomous excursion most of the students reported that gained more confidence and got more adapted in the role of the leader during their excursion, even though the target groups were mainly familiar people to the students.

In conclusion my opinion is that autonomous excursion was focal part of the course assignments for the students learning. Autonomous excursion was safe opportunity for the students to change their role from the student to role of the leader. Because there were depending on the group 4-5 students the role of the leader was shared between the students. Also the responsibility of the organization and safety aspects were shared which reduced the possible stress.

8 LEARNING EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING RESULTS FOR THE COURSE

8.1 Professional growth and Leadership & Group handling skills

All but one member of the group reported in the group's diary that they expected to learn leadership and group handling skills during the course. Valentina mentioned that she wanted to learn new teaching methods and how to work in different outdoor settings with groups consisting of different age groups. Daniela and Javiera both wanted to learn how to manage large groups in outdoor activities. Mauro had clear opinion, that the course would be practical in his future career. Mauro wrote that he wants to obtain knowledge how to manage groups in different activities in the nature. He also wanted to be able to program, organize and execute different excursions in the natural settings. He also wants to pass on environmental care in his role as a physical educator. Only Mauricio did not mention group leadership and handling skills as his personal learning expectations. Instead, he set more expectations for overall good organization during the course. He emphasized how important role good planning has for these activities and he hoped that his group would devote time for planning and for good organization during the course.

After the course Mauro and Javiera expressed, that the course was very beneficial for their future career in field of physical education. Javiera wrote that the planning of outdoor excursion was the most meaningful learning experience for her. Even though she expected to learn leadership and group handling skills, she does not mention them in her learning outcomes and also how she wrote that she succeeded in some of her learning expectations for the course, possibly implicates that she did not reach all the learning expectations which she set for herself in this category.

Mauro had high expectations for the course. He believed that the course will be beneficial for him and his self-evaluation reflects that the course full filled his overall expectations. He wrote that after he has finished his current studies, he wants to professionally specialize in outdoor activities. However, Mauro's expressions about learning leadership skills during the course are moderate. He refers that he acquired knowledge about outdoor activities which he can apply with different groups in formal and informal education. Mauro emphasizes his motivation to gain more experience and specialize in to outdoor activities later on in his career.

Mauricio did not write directly about the learned group handling skills. Mauricio brought up the autonomous excursion as a good experience: *“La salida autónoma también fue buena, porque logramos traspasar los conocimientos que adquirimos en la salida anterior de una manera muy clara”* (The autonomous excursion was very good experience, we managed to share what we had learnt during the previous excursion) Valentina described her uncertain feelings in this category as follows: *“Desde afuera quizás no me siento muy preparada para tratar temas sobre los que aprendí en AMCN. sin embargo, para la salida autónoma por ejemplo, pude darme cuenta que sí aprendí mucho, que sí tengo hartos conocimientos para entregar* (I feel that I am not ready to take in to practice all what I learnt during the course, nevertheless during the autonomous excursion I noticed how much I had learnt and how much knowledge to share with others). Valentina also wrote, that because she was surrounded by familiar persons it was easier to be in a role of a leader. She was worried about how nervous she would be if she has to teach unknown persons.

During the course students’ individual leadership skills were not put in to true test. As mentioned before majority of the students wanted to learn how to lead a bigger group in outdoor activities. However, we were 44 students participating the course, and considering the number of practical classes and excursions, it would have been practically impossible to offer such learning experience for all. According to students’ self-evaluations, the students felt that they had learnt a lot about how to plan outdoor excursions taking account various aspects. In my opinion the students had realistic view about their leadership and group handling skills. None of the students thought that they would be able to repeat all the course activities with real students before they had gained more experience in the outdoor activities and also more experience in leading bigger groups that they learnt. According to the students’ self-evaluations and descriptions about autonomous excursions in group diaries Lack of possibilities to lead and be in responsible of the activity supposedly explains that Javiera did not mention leadership skills in her learning outcomes. Neither does she mention the implementation of the autonomous excursion, where their group were in charge of group.

I share the opinion with Lehtonen, Mäkinen and Pulli (2007, 127-129) that the person who is leading outdoor activities needs to be accomplished and experienced so that the activities are safe and meaningful for the participants. I think that the correct path to become an outdoor instructor and educator is that the person possesses advanced skills in the activity. Consequently, the person has a

holistic view about the activity and can prevent the physical, psychological and social risks related to the activity. According to students' self-evaluations and comments most of the students were motivated to do similar activities again and gain more experience. I think that this was an important aim of the whole course, even though it was not included in course aims.

8.2 Experiences

All the students expected new experiences during the course. Some of the students were very inexperienced in activities in the nature and most of the activities were totally unfamiliar to them. Two members wrote that they had done some of the activities but the level of knowledge was in very basic level. Four of the five students brought up in the diary that they anticipated the course would offer lot of experiences and they expressed that they expected to have a good time during the course. Only Valentina did not mention any experiential expectation for the course. The students' group diaries contained most text about different experiences students had experienced during the course. The experiences were also in the focal point in students' self-evaluations. Some of the students described specific events and some wrote that the course was one whole experience. Some descriptions about experiences suggest that the students reached state of mind which resembled Csikszentmihalyi's description of flow experience. Mauricio wrote: "*Llegué a la asignatura con disposición, ganas e intención de adquirir nuevas experiencias a mi vida, llegué ansioso ya que sabía que íbamos a salir a terrenos desconocidos para mí, por lo tanto quería aprender lo que más pudiese sobre cómo puedo estar en un lugar desconocido sin pasar grandes necesidades*" (I started the course with desire and intention to have new experiences to my life, I was very excited because I knew that we will go to the places that were unfamiliar to me, and I wanted to learn as much I could about how to stay in these places without big necessities).

The practical implementation of theory and being outdoor were in important role for students learning. Mauricio wrote that during the course's outdoor activities he learnt more specifically about the familiar themes he already knew before the course.: "*Acampando es donde realmente aprendí de manera más específica sobre los conocimientos que ya tenía desde antes de llegar a la asignatura*" (During the camps I deepened my previous knowledge). Mauricio also described his experience at the volcano Casablanca using strong expressions: "Luego la salida a Volcán Casa Blanca fue

espectacular para mí, lo pase muy bien, además de que viví momentos que recordaré siempre (The excursion to the Casablanca was spectacular for me, it went very well and I experienced moments which I will always remember).

Mauro was also content with the course: "*Con respecto a la asignatura puedo decir sin duda que fue una de las mejores experiencias que he tenido en la universidad*" (I can without doubt say that this was one of the bests experiences I have had in university. In his self-evaluation Mauro also highlighted the 100 kilometers long bicycle trip which he and members of the other group did around Lake Ranco, as very meaningful experience to him which consisted of pedaling. He mentioned that this experience and traveling by bicycle helped him to appreciate the nature and what it can offer.

Valentina did not write about specific experiences she had experienced during the course, but she wrote about her overall experience of the course in direct and honest manner. In the beginning Valentina was not so excited about the upcoming course and did not think that the course would be very important for her. In her self-evaluation she wrote that her perception was changing during the course. She wrote: "*La verdad es que siempre estoy abierta a adquirir nuevos conocimientos, sin embargo, esta área definitivamente no es para mí. "No me agradan las salidas a terrenos donde tengo que estar sin las comodidades que una casa da. Pero a pesar de todo lo que viví en la salida a terreno, donde me pude dar cuenta que en verdad no es tan terrible como parece"* (The truth is that even though I am always open to learn something new, these activities are not for me. I do not like be outdoors without compliances of home, but after all the outdoor experiences during the course made me realize, that in fact, it is not that bad as it first seemed). Valentina continued that she would rather choose some other area of physical education, but no one knows, if she will fall in love outdoor activities later in her life. Javiera wrote more about what she had learnt during the course and did not describe her experiences but stating that the course was an enriching experience.

According to Perttula (2010,53) experiences can be divided in subconscious events in daily life and meaningful experiences depending how the person becomes aware of her/his role in life. Meaningful experiences increase the person's self-assertion and support mental growth. After the course many students expressed, that the course offered experiences which they will never forget. As mentioned

earlier in the text experiences change our self-assertion. We tend to have strong image of our own abilities and specific skills which we are good at. We tend to choose our actions and activities so that we stay within our own comfort zone and enjoy the activity without complications. As promoting experiences which promote the persons' individual change there are two conditions which are sense of safety and security and sense of disequilibrium. State of disequilibrium is reference to the state where the participants' old ways of thinking and new information are in state of conflict. (Luckner and Nadler 1992,19.) Valentina's experiences during the course suggested, that the course offered experiences, which Valentina according her own words, would not have experienced without participating the course. These experiences forced Valentina to leave her own territory where she feels comfortable and safe.

According theory of constructivism the in the learning process the learner creates new meanings within the context of their current knowledge (Luckner & Nadeler 1992, 13-14). Mauricio wrote metaphorically that the situation at the volcano Casablanca had turned in to something magical. According to Luckner and Nadeler (1992,44) we use methaporphs in situations where we are trying to make sense of our own experiences. Possibly Mauricio was not entirely sure about all the components which made the that particular situation so meaningful for him.

8.3 Environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior

The NOLS's "Do not leave a trace" had a major part in the course curriculum. Two members of Full house had learning expectations related to conservation of the nature. Javiera wrote that she wants learn methods to promote the conservation of the nature. She wanted to learn how to take care of the nature and she also wanted to learn to understand the program "Leave no trace". Mauro also had two expectations in this category. He wanted to learn course of actions in the activities in the nature which would not have negative effects on the nature He also wanted to emphasize environmental care in his future teaching career.

Mauricio and Valentina did not mention direct learning expectations related to environmental friendly behavior. They had more global learning expectations. Mauricio wrote that he wants to learn a lot about nature. Valentina's learning expectations were that she wanted to learn about

different conditions that the nature present us. Valentina wrote in her self-evaluation that during the course she learnt new aspects how to conserve the nature. She mentioned also how she appreciates this new knowledge and emphasized how it is always good to learn more about how to protect the natural environment. She wrote that how we applied the theory and skills which were taught by others in practice had significant meaning for her learning

As mentioned earlier in the category of experiences Mauro wrote that the activities and especially bicycling affected his valuation of the nature. Mauro did not bring up nature conservation in his self-evaluation, but he pointed out that he is happy about all the knowledge which relates to the nature and he thinks he can apply the learnt later when he is working with different groups. Mauricio mentions that one part of his learning during the course were the principles of the NOLS' program "Do Not Leave a Trace". He writes in his self-evaluation that he learned the principles because all the other groups did the playful and fun presentations about each theme of the program. Mauricio was also satisfied about their autonomous excursion. According Mauricio their participants learned well how to camp and stay appropriately in the nature.

In their self-evaluations students did not describe directly, if they met their learning expectations related to pro-environmental aspects. Students reflected little about their own attitudes. In their texts you cannot see directly was there attitudinal change in the students and how they will apply what they learnt during the course. However, the student's writings give positive impression that students increased their environmental awareness and supposition that their valuation of the nature increased as well. Javiera begins her self-evaluation as follows: "When I knew I will participate the course, I decided that I want learn about natural environments, conservation of the nature and how to perform activities in natural environment in pro-environmental manner". She writes that the environmental themes were carried on during the course well and that all the taught was put in to practice helped her learning significantly. She also brings up the "Do Not Leave a Trace" program: "Getting knowing the principles of the program, and taking part to the planning how to follow the principles during the excursion were really good for her learning about the theme.

Valentina wrote in her self-evaluation how she learned things which she was not expecting: "*Por otro lado, esta asignatura me enseñó muchísimas cosas de las cuales yo no estaba al tanto, con*

respecto al cuidado del medio ambiente, no deje rastro, cuidado de los suelos, flora y fauna, etc. en general la gran mayoría de las cosas que se nos enseñaron y aplicamos durante la asignatura (In the other I learned lots of things I did not expect, how to take care of natural environment, pro-environmental behaviour etc, during the course we applied major part of what was taught to us)

There were learning expectations which points out that some of the students considered pro-environmental aspects important. For example, Mauro demonstrated his motivation to increase his environmental awareness in his learning expectations. He also sees that the theme will be important for him in his future career. Also Javiera's reflection about her learning environmental themes indicates that she thought that this theme was important and meaningful for her and most importantly she was motivated to learn.

As mentioned earlier that only being outdoors does not guarantee that the participants will add their pro-environmental behavior, but as during our course these aspects were in focal point during our activities. In think that event thought pro-environmental aspects were not brought up in every excursion they still students consciously or subconsciously processed these aspects. For example, Mauro did not in did not reflect his learning in relation to these aspects in his learning in expectations. However, his statement about how the and his recreational bicycle excursions had influence on him and how after the course he values the nature more. His self-evaluation gives impression that he was satisfied and met his learning goals even though he does not express it directly in his text.

Teacher's attitudes and behavior can have influence on students' attitudes and values (Niemi 2006) think that this concerns especially outdoor educators. In my opinion teachers of the course were good examples for increasing students' environmental awareness. I think that teachers were brimming with respect of the nature which showed in their habitus and behavior. The teachers received appreciation in the students' writings. Knowledge about good practices and principles does not mean anything, if these are not applied in real life. The NOLS' program "Do Not Leave a trace" was the frame for learning process. I share the opinion most of the students that the learning process proceeded from theory to practice well. In the beginning of the course the theory of the program was introduced and later on theoretical knowledge was tested in exam. Theoretical exam of the

course was so early on the course that all students could put their knowledge straight in to practice in the field excursions.

8.4 Teamwork and solidarity

As Bunyan (2011) notes that interaction between group members have influence on program outcomes. Group work and interaction between students was from the first class to the closure in focal point of the whole course. Every student had two groups where they belonged. Bigger group which consisted of all students of and smaller more intimate group which consisted of 3-5 students. The bond especially between members of the smaller group was strong. When we worked in the theory and practical classes so that all the students were as part of the bigger group, the smaller groups always existed for example, in the theory classes students always organized so that the members of the same group were sitting side by side. Small group sizes have been seen to have a positive correlation in learning outcomes Berry (2011). Solidarity, sharing experiences and learning with other students also were brought up in learning expectations. Mauricio and Javiera from the Full House mentioned these aspects. Mauricio wrote that he does not want to be a leader of the group, but he wants that the group will pay attention to organization and planning in order to maximize the benefits. Javiera wrote that she wanted to experience and share moments that she would never forget with other students.

In the beginning of the course the students wrote down less expectations related to teamwork and solidarity than in categories of experiences and professional growth. Nevertheless, after the course this theme was one of the most referred in their self-evaluations of the students. Students underlined the importance of good teamwork and solidarity for these activities and in general. Almost all the course's assignments of were done in groups. In the beginning of the course our teacher Otto Luhrs had emphasized the importance of the unity of the groups which were formed in the beginning of the course. This theme crystallized in the self-evaluations of the students. Sharing experiences and group orientated work was one of the focal themes in the self-evaluations of the students. All but Javiera emphasized the role of teamwork for their learning in their self-evaluation. Valentina wrote a paragraph about the teamwork and solidarity amongst her group and with other students of the course. In this paragraph Valentina wrote: *Me enseñó a conocer más a mis compañeros, a los que*

yo llamaba amigos y que finalmente sólo son compañeros, a quienes están con uno en las buenas y en las malas, y también sobre decepciones y a cómo salir adelante“ (During the course I got know my classmates which I call my friends, who are there in the good and bad times and also moments of disappointments and times when you need to move on). She continues that her own group was a great learning experience about coexistence, empathy and social relations. She writes that she is thankful for her group members for what she learnt about solidarity and other people.

In Mauro's opinion the teamwork in the groups was what he liked the most. Mauro highlights the need to be organized and that all the members of the group carry their individual own and responsibilities related to the group in order to achieve the goal sets for the activities. He continues that during the planning and execution their autonomous excursion he realized that how important it is that all the members of the group are committed in order to organize the excursion taking account the prevention of the risks and the participants can enjoy the activity. Mauricio writes in his self-evaluation about his learning experience which occurred when did Nordic walking in the Botanic garden close to the university. In that day the conditions were challenging with pouring rain and muddy terrain. Mauricio thought that they worked as a team really well in these challenging conditions and felt relaxed that they could succeed the “worst case scenario”. Mauricio brings up how he saw the role of team work in his group: “From the first experience at the Botanic garden, I saw that all members were really taking account everybody's and helped with all possible ways, if someone was hungry or if someone could be helped in some way”.

9 CONCLUSION

In this study I examined students' reported experiences and learning during the course "Sports and Activities in the Nature". I took advantage of my previous recreational experiences, and previous studies when I analyzed the texts of the students. The students' writings suggested that students experienced experiences which could be categorized as peak adventure in Priest's and Martin's model of the adventure experience paradigm. This study Students reported about experiences which they will remember rest of their lives. Kolb's learning model (1984) can be utilized to explain how students' learning process proceeded during and after the course. proceeded. Kolb staged that the learner is in key element of learning. Kolb's stages that learner must be actively involved in the activity, and the learner need analytical skills to be able to reflect on the experiences. According to students' texts, students were motivated and had a real intention to learn. Students also reflected their learning in group diaries and self-evaluations. Research data

My own experiences during the course "Sports and Activities in the Nature" were partly similar as other students' reported experiences. In my opinion the most focal themes for the whole course were collaborative learning and sharing experiences with other people. My appreciation of nature has always been high and I think this course made me more consciousness of how the conservation of nature can be take in to account in our actions. When I talked with the students who participated about their experiences during the course and read their writings I think that the course possibly offered something permanent in their way of thinking about environmental matters. I personally hope that the course offered empowering experiences for the students. Some of the students mentioned that they experienced situations which were challenging physically and psychologically. These situations required exceeding one's own expectations and going out from their own comfort zones. Possibly these experiences can help students to be more open to challenge themselves later on their life.

Adventure education's suitability for school teaching has been discussed for long time. The Major part of the studies has been done outside Europe. There is a good deal of prejudice against adventure education. A School teacher who puts the adventure education into practice at school, needs broadmindedness and daring to transfer teaching from classroom to nature. Adventure education

gives possibilities to integrate different school subjects (Toivio 2009). Doris, Watson & Brian (2011) considers that adventure activities are suitable for physical education curricula, if *activities* are chosen so that they fulfil curriculum objectives, and are appropriate for the age group and the challenge is sufficient for the students.

Adventure education can diversify students' way of exercise and offer variety in physical education classes. Gehris, Kress, & Swalm (2010) studied 27 tenth grade students' views on physical exercising and physical self-conception in adventure-physical education. The Main findings of this study supported the argument that adventure-physical education provides different ways to exercise and some students considered adventure-physical education more fun compared to traditional fitness activities. Adventure based teaching experiments carried out in Finland have shown positive influence on general atmosphere in school. Unauthorized absences from classes decreased in experimental groups and also there was less bullying in these groups. (Toivio 2009 I personally hope that outdoor and adventure education methods could be used in formal education more often. Like the findings of this study and previous studies suggests, adventure education can offer physically, socially and cognitively challenging learning opportunities. Upcoming national curriculum emphasizes how physical education should offer positive experiences and collaborative teaching methods (Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014), thus use of adventure education methods are well justified.

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ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT 1

General learning expectations

- Acquire procedural and conceptual knowledge which will enable the student to generate meaningful learning opportunities in the nature setting taking in to account safety and conservation of the nature aspects
- The student learns to reflect and analyze his/her experience
- Put emphasis on environmental issues in the role of the teacher of physical education

Individual

- Know the historical evolution of human, and the bond between human and nature environment
- The etymology of the field physical activities in contact with nature
- Be aware of the role nature activities has in the plans and programs of the Ministry of Education and its´ actual application in the region of Los Rios
- Recognize and establish thematic connections between different school subjects and other teaching activities
- Be able to plan and prepare activities correctly, in various contexts, environments and sports-activities in the natural environments.
- Be able to recognize the different needs in planning the activities in the nature
- recognize the physical and social benefits of the activities in the nature
- Know the different leadership methods in the activities in the nature environment
- Be familiar of different pedagogical methods for the outdoor settings
- Be able to identify elements of the local nature and its´ social heritage
- Be acquainted with the field of profession for example; projects linked to ecotourism and rural tourism etc.

Skills

- Be able to take care of one's own and others' health and safety in the natural settings taking in to account the basic principles of risk prevention and first aid
- Follow the ethical and technical principles of the NOLS' Do Not Leave a Trace program in the natural settings
- Be able to apply different outdoor skills in different outdoor settings
- Know the meaning of appropriate clothing for health conservation and be able to choose appropriate clothing for different outdoor settings
- Obtain experience being in the role of participant and assistant in the activities with rope, rappelling and climbing.
- Obtain experience in mountain biking, and participating organization and execution of overnight bicycle excursion
- Organize and lead recreational activities in the nature
- Plan and lead an excursion for third party participants

Attitudes

- Valuation and understating benefits for human development which the harmonic interaction with the nature can bring about
- Development of skills and attitudes for good collaboration to achieve the goals and task set for activities during the course
- Know how to prevent the risks in the activities in the natural environment and understand the physical educators' responsible role organizing and leading these activities
- Internalize the attitude to respecting and conserving the nature
- Taking account, the social and emotional implications of the activities in the nature
- Strengthening the ones' own and others' reserves of personality, self-esteem, self-efficacy
- Reflection of ones' own actions and attitudes affecting on collaboration and achieving the goals which have been set

ATTACHMENT 2 – Consent form



Formulario de Consentimiento Informado

Con mi permiso Teemu Yliportimo puede utilizar nuestro diario del curso Actividades en contacto con la naturaleza para su tesis de maestría.

El objetivo del presente estudio consiste en analizar el aprendizaje de los estudiantes durante el curso Actividades en la Naturaleza. Las experiencias anteriores siempre afectan al aprendizaje. En la investigación se introducirán los miembros de cortada, pero sólo desde el punto de vista significativo para estudio

Nombre de cortada:

Nombre del estudiante:

Quiero que en el estudio no se utilice mi nombre verdadero, sino un seudónimo _____

El investigador: Teemu Yliportimo

Supervisora de la investigación: Mirja Hirvensalo

temaylip@student.jyu.fi

Universidad de Jyväskylä

