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# The Influence of Higher Education Study on Practitioners in the Field of Outdoor and Adventure Education

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University of Plymouth

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# UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

## THE INFLUENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDY ON PRACTITIONERS IN THE FIELD OF OUTDOOR AND ADVENTURE EDUCATION

by

**KATY LOUISE HENSBY**

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**

School of Society and Culture

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## Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Education has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

This thesis has been proofread by a third party; no factual changes or additions or amendments to the argument were made as a result of this process. A copy of the thesis prior to proofreading will be made available to the examiners upon request.

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This research has been conducted under a formal agreement with name of other higher education institution(s), for which a joint award will be awarded.

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Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Date 21.02.2024

**Katy Louise Hensby**

**The Influence of Higher Education Study on Practitioners in the Field of Outdoor and Adventure Education**

This thesis sets out to answer whether higher education (HE) study specific to outdoor and adventure education (OAE) influences the practice of OAE practitioners in the field of OAE. From my own experience in the field of OAE and the field of HE, the reasons why a practitioner should study an OAE degree were under-researched. The current work is set in the context of the current body of knowledge surrounding the field of OAE. It recognises the limited evidence base that acknowledges the impact of OAE HE on practitioners in the field. The theoretical framework used in this research is that of Wenger's 1998 communities of practice (CoP) theory. The research focuses on two distinct CoP's, the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP. It includes participants from a local OAE centre, a local HE institute and participants from the wider field of OAE. The theoretical framework has been developed into a heuristic device, which also encompasses the term 'personal knowledge capital' developed from the work of Young (2012) as a term for this research. The heuristic device is used as an analytical tool to provide specific entry points to analyse the data generated through four stages of research. Through the entry point of 'identity', the data was analysed, and three themes were discussed: what an OAE expert is, the role of multi membership, and the role of personal knowledge capital. Personal knowledge capital is discussed as a boundary artifact that can be exchanged between the two CoP's and has the potential to influence the identity construction of the practitioners. It was found that brokers have a role to play in negotiating the meaning of experiences for the OAE practitioners and can, in turn, influence the identity construction of the OAE practitioners. This thesis explores what an OAE HE programme can offer to OAE practitioners in the field and contributes to a new body of knowledge in two ways. First and foremost, in the originality of the outcomes of the data, the influence of HE study on OAE practitioners in the field of OAE is an area that has not yet been explored. Secondly, originality lies in the unique use of the heuristic device created and the underpinning CoP theory. The limitations of this research undertaken throughout the Covid-19 global pandemic have been recognised.

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## Acronyms

<b>AE</b>	Adventure education
<b>CoP</b>	Community of practice
<b>FE</b>	Further Education
<b>HA</b>	Higher Apprenticeship
<b>HD</b>	Heuristic device
<b>HE</b>	Higher education
<b>IOL</b>	Institute for Outdoor Learning
<b>NGB</b>	National governing body
<b>NGB's</b>	National governing body awards
<b>OAA</b>	Outdoor and adventurous activities
<b>OAE</b>	Outdoor adventure education
<b>PE</b>	Physical Education
<b>PGCE</b>	Postgraduate certificate in education
<b>PKC</b>	Personal knowledge capital
<b>UCAS</b>	University and Colleges Admission System

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

This research focuses on higher education (HE) and outdoor and adventure education (OAE), emphasising the influence subject specific HE can have on the practice of OAE practitioners in their role. In my practice as a course manager for an OAE HE foundation degree, I had the opportunity to re-write the HE programme and, in turn, create a new foundation degree. Soon after this programme was implemented, it was re-structured with the support of an OAE centre in the Southwest of England. The program was designed to sit alongside their instructor training program and offered as an optional, additional element of their program.

The content of the HE programme was amended to embed work-based practice modules. However, the critical change was the delivery model to support releasing individuals working in the industry to attend university. The idea of releasing staff from their work time to study for a degree proved contentious during prior discussions. The reason behind the tension was that the OAE centre would ultimately pay for the staff to be employed at the centre, releasing them to attend their studies once a week. This means they lost the ability to rota those staff on the programme without the remuneration of costs. It also meant there was the potential for additional costs to employ freelance staff to cover the rota not staffed due to the attendance of those at the HE programme. Ultimately, this led to the contentious decision of the OAE centre to support their staff in undertaking the OAE HE programme whilst incurring additional costs to ensure the centre's running could be maintained. The OAE HE programme was developed, with successful applicants from the OAE centre being enrolled on it in 2017. This programme has continued to run in the same format until the Covid-19 pandemic forced changes to the OAE centre.

My experience of working in the OAE field has led me to numerous conversations about why someone who wants to work in the OAE industry should spend money on a university degree versus spending it on industry-specific National Governing Body awards (NGB's). From experience, these awards can come from Mountain Training England, who focus on land-based OAE activities; British Canoeing, who focus on paddlesport activities; and The Royal Yachting Association, who focus on sailing and yachting qualifications, as examples. When tuition fees increased in 2012 (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2010), tension became much more evident. Finding little to no published evidence to support my reasoning

for why someone would benefit from studying an OAE foundation degree. Any arguments I had were unfounded and difficult to quantify. Consequently, this thesis explores why someone should study an OAE degree and what they could get out of it. In order to answer that question, this current work explores what influence OAE-specific degree-level study can have on the practice of OAE practitioners in the OAE field. At the outset of this research, there are no pre-conceived ideas that any influence exists, but the thesis will explore if it does, then, if so, what that might be and how that looks for the practitioner and organisation they are employed with. At this stage, it is essential to acknowledge that there must be some perceived gains from studying an OAE HE programme for some practitioners in the field. If there were not, then there would be no reason for OAE-related degrees to exist, there would be no student intake, and there would be no reason for the local OAE centre to support their staff to attend despite the potential financial burden.

In order to understand more about the reasons why individuals should study an OAE HE degree, the following research questions will be asked:

1. Can an OAE-specific HE study influence the practice of an OAE practitioner in the OAE field?
  - a. How does an OAE-specific HE study influence personal knowledge capital?
  - b. If it does influence personal knowledge capital, does this then influence their membership to an OAE practitioner community of practice (CoP)?
  - c. What influence does the OAE organisation feel the OAE-specific HE study has on employees' practice?

This research will predominantly focus on the multi membership of the OAE practitioners at the local OAE centre to both the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP. These CoP's will be discussed and outlined in chapter three.

## 1.1 Outlining the chapters

Chapter two will set the scene with the current research in the field of OAE and the ways in which theoretical underpinning can be helpful to support the progression of research in this field. Chapter three will introduce and analyse the theoretical underpinning of the research.

The theory being used to underpin this work is Wenger's 1998 theory on CoP (Wenger, 1998). Chapter four will outline the methodological approach, ethical considerations, and how the Covid-19 pandemic has influenced the research undertaken. Chapter four will also draw together the theoretical underpinning to demonstrate how a heuristic device was conceived to create a practical tool that can be used to analyse the data generated from the research. Chapter five provides an analysis and discussion of the key findings from the data analysis and explores the critical themes generated as part of the discussion. Finally, chapter six draws all of the critical findings together to conclude the outcomes of this work and will answer the research questions. The final chapter acknowledges some of the critical limitations of this research and suggests what can come next after this current work.

Overall, this thesis will contribute to new knowledge in two ways. First and foremost is the originality in the outcomes of the data, as the potential influence of OAE HE studies on practitioners in the field of OAE is an area that has yet to be explored in the way this thesis has (expanded on in chapter two). Secondly, it will contribute to new knowledge in the originality of the use of the heuristic device created and the underpinning theory (outlined in chapter three).

## 1.2 Clarifying terms

As an introduction to this thesis, it is helpful to define some of the terms used throughout and explore some of the nuances around these terms. Firstly, the focus will be on what is meant by the term OAE used in this current work. Secondly, the focus will be on the term practitioners.

### 1.2.1 Defining the term OAE from current literature

There is an eminent challenge in this thesis in exploring the field of OAE in a broad enough way that it can capture all the types of practice that could constitute OAE. However, this is a complex task as the field of OAE is somewhat expansive in its use of the terms 'outdoor' and 'adventure'. This section aims to explore some of this current language to inform how I will use specific terms moving forward.

Figure 1.1 below shows an example of what I have discovered in my literature review to map some of the key terms used in the literature. Figure 1.1 helps exemplify the breadth of terms used in the field at this current time. While additional terms may be used, I have attempted to pull together the most relevant ones to this current work. Figure 1.1 does not demonstrate any hierarchy of terms nor any type of order, but rather a simple graphic that depicts the range of terms used in the literature. The following discussion will explore these terms in the context of the author's use of them.



**Figure 1.1** Key terms used in the field of OAE (Allinson, 2020, Beames and Pike, 2013b, Beames and Brown, 2016, Berry and Hodgson, 2011, Collins and Collins, 2012, Department for Education and Skills, 2006, Ford, 1989, Humberstone et al., 2018b, Institute for Outdoor Learning, 2023a, Jeffs, 2018, Pike and Beames, 2013, Routledge, 2022, Wattchow and Brown, 2011, Webber and Hardwell, 2019)

In reviewing the current literature, there appeared to be two common points in many defined terms: learning and being outside. Therefore, the term 'outdoor learning' will be explored first. The Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto states that learning outside the

classroom is "the use of places other than the classroom for teaching and learning", which can encompass the use of residential centres and outdoor activity centres (Department for Education and Skills, 2006, p. 1). Routledge recently published their top five books about outdoor learning and defined the term as:

Outdoor learning does not define a specific type of lesson plan or experience. Instead, it is a broad term that covers any activities that take place in nature and help children learn. Many educators who use outdoor learning highlight its benefits for physical, emotional, social, behavioral [sic] and intellectual development. (Routledge, 2022, p. 1)

Each book focussed on primary education settings, so it could be assumed that this definition is applied explicitly to that age group. However, there is some merit in the broader application of this. Replace the word 'children' with something more generic, like 'individuals', and then the definition could be applied to all age ranges.

The Institute for Outdoor Learning (2023a) (IOL) offers insight into the complexity of defining outdoor learning.

Rather than defining sports or the arts, describing outdoor learning concisely and inclusively offers challenges. Being too generalised does not highlight the unique qualities of outdoor learning as distinct from outdoor recreation, leisure, community or competitive sport, countryside or farming. Excessive detail can narrow the focus and exclude various approaches, participants, activities, locations, and outcomes in the field. (Institute for Outdoor Learning, 2023a, p. 1)

Alongside recognising the complexity of being too broad and too restrictive, the IOL also recognises that it is not a static term and will continue to develop over time, further adding to the complexity of pinning down a definition (Institute for Outdoor Learning, 2023a). They do, however, offer their current description of outdoor learning:

Outdoor learning is an umbrella term for actively inclusive facilitated approaches that predominately use activities and experiences in the outdoors, which lead to learning, increased health and wellbeing, and environmental awareness. (Institute for Outdoor Learning, 2023a, p. 1)

This description offers similarities to that provided by Routledge (2022) in that it is experiences outdoors, has an element of learning, and has a potential impact on health and wellbeing. Anderson et al. (2021) use the definition from IOL but also state that its use has some flexibility and suggest that it can be customised to fit purpose and audience.

A recent term used alongside outdoor learning is 'outdoor studies'. Humberstone et al. (2018b) suggest that:

Outdoor studies...is the term that fruitfully encompasses a broad range of approaches, foci and methods such as, but not limited to, experiential learning, adventure education, organised camps, environmental education, outdoor leadership, nature-based sport and wilderness therapy. (Humberstone et al., 2018b, p. 2)

Similarly to the description from IOL of outdoor learning, Humberstone et al. (2018b) approach the term 'outdoor studies' as an umbrella term. Instead of offering an exploration of what sits under the umbrella term concerning environments, activities and outcomes, Humberstone et al. (2018b) offer outdoor studies as an umbrella term for other terms that have been used to describe practice in the outdoors, each of which would need some exploration. Therefore, outdoor studies could be used as the umbrella term for outdoor learning. In some respect, this notion of 'outdoor studies' needs to be narrower for this current work as it reflects more the broad-ranging terminology that can be used rather than the practice that it could define.

Alongside the terms 'outdoor learning' and 'outdoor studies', Allinson (2020) uses the term 'outdoor education'. Allinson (2020) recognises the philosophical contributions that Jack Longland, Kurt Hahn, and Surgeon George Murray Levick made in informing what outdoor education is in current practice. The point that Allison (2020) brings to the forefront of the discussion about what OAE means is that whatever the choice of language we use now is shrouded in a historical context underpinned by philosophical approaches to practice. This history is also acknowledged by Wattchow and Brown (2011), who discuss the common themes of outdoor education in previous literature. They identified three common themes: outdoor education for the self, others, and nature (Wattchow and Brown, 2011). They also note that these themes are raised in the historical literature and the focal point in many outdoor education curricula (Wattchow and Brown, 2011).

Authors such as Ford (1989, pp. 31,32) discussed 'outdoor education' alongside the term 'adventure education' stating that "outdoor education is education in, about and for the out of doors" whereas "adventure education refers to activities which are purposely built elements perceived by the participants as being dangerous". Berry and Hodgson (2011) more recently explored the notion of adventure education, stating that:



Adventure education is a form of experiential learning and typically associated with activities involving risk, from cooperative games such as raft building to high-adventure activities such as rock climbing. (Berry and Hodgson, 2011, p. i)

There are similarities and differences between the above definitions of adventure education and the descriptions of outdoor learning discussed already. Both concepts suggest experience and learning as being integral in practice. In contrast, adventure education differs in the type of activity being undertaken, with the concept of risk becoming important.

Beames and Brown (2016) recognise that the term 'adventure' inherently suggests some perception of risk, where risk can simply mean an unknown outcome. They also accept that the perception of risk is relative to each individual, based on their previous experience and context (Beames and Brown, 2016). Others have also included the notion of risk in defining the terms used in their work, such as Collins and Collins (2012), who defined their use of adventure sports:

Adventure sports are considered to be physical activities with a degree of risk that are non-competitive in origin and guided by their own ethics, such as rock climbing, mountaineering, sea kayaking, white water kayaking, canoeing and caving. (Collins and Collins, 2012)

This definition is prescriptive regarding the type of activity that constitutes adventure sports; however, it needs to be more concise for what this current work requires. For this work, the valuable point to carry forward is the notion of risk mentioned here and in the previous definitions of adventure education. It appears to be the idea of risk that differentiates the term 'adventure' from the term 'outdoor' as it is not mentioned in the earlier discussion on the terms used for 'outdoor'.

Focussing more broadly than specific forms of 'adventure sports', Webber and Hardwell (2019) referred to the term outdoor and adventurous activities (OAA), which is used as the umbrella term in the English National Curriculum as an activity in the Physical Education (PE) curriculum. They note that OAA refers to activities typically occurring outdoors in natural environments, which include components of challenge and adventure (Webber and Hardwell, 2019). Similarly to Webber and Hardwell (2019), Beames and Pike (2013b) also unite the terms 'outdoor' and 'adventure' in their text on outdoor adventure and social theory and one of their chapters states:

Outdoor adventure refers to lifestyle sports that have a certain degree of perceived excitement on behalf of the participant, exist as alternatives to mainstream sports, and take place outdoors. (Beames and Pike, 2013b, p. 3)

Similarity is seen here between this statement and that of Berry and Hodgson (2011) and (Collins and Collins, 2012) in that they suggest there is participation in activities that are outdoors. A key difference noted through the use of the term experiential learning exists in the adventure education definition by Berry and Hodgson (2011). Whilst Beames and Pike (2013) and Collins and Collins (2012) can support the exploration of the term adventure and which types of activities it includes, it is the inclusion of 'education' and 'learning' from Berry and Hodgson (2011) that creates a more holistic idea for me.

Picking up on the point about experiential learning, it is a term that comes with philosophical underpinnings, much like the idea of Allinson (2020) noted earlier. Ord and Leather (2017) argue the importance of John Dewey's role in the philosophical foundations of experiential learning alongside the work of others such as Kolb. Their discussion of experiential learning is about the term 'outdoor and adventure education', again uniting the terms 'outdoor' and 'adventure'. They also relate other terms in their work, such as experiential education and outdoor education, as examples (Ord and Leather, 2017). They state that:

Outdoor and adventure education provides an excellent means to explore the 'social', for it comprises a rich array of activities requiring an almost limitless supply of opportunities for exercising cooperation, negotiation and the skills of associational living. (Ord and Leather, 2017, p. 48)

I have taken this extract from their work as the 'social' aspect brings something new. This is also inferred in others' work, such as Wattchow and Brown (2011), when they noted that outdoor education is for the self, others and nature. The position of this current work is in social science; therefore, considering the social aspects of the meaning of OAE is important.

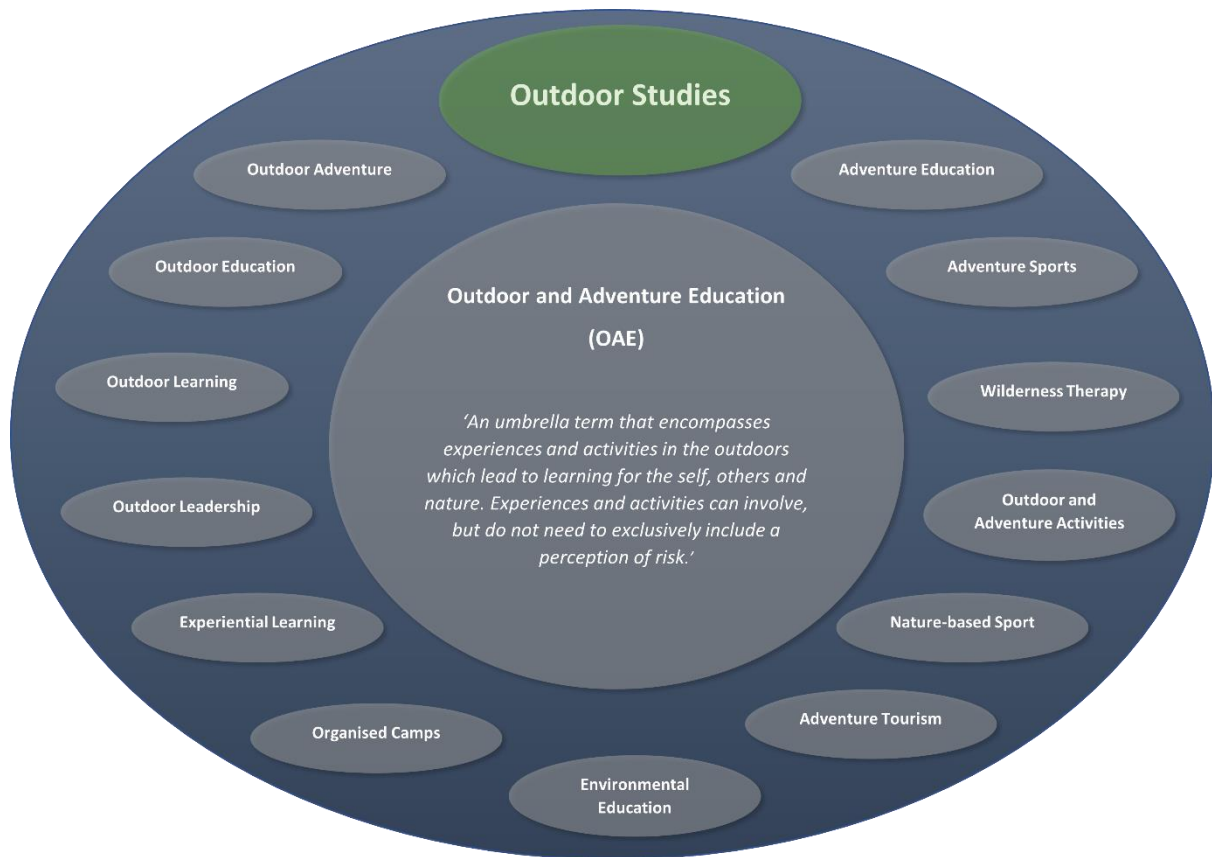
Jefferies (2018) also uses the term 'outdoor and adventure education' in their work to identify the ever-changing practice of OAE and argues that there is constant remodelling and renewing that is shaped by praxis. For this reason, how OAE is used in this current work must acknowledge the capacity for an ever-changing practice. Wattchow and Brown (2011) noted that some may see it as futile to create a universal definition of outdoor education, and their attempt was not to create the 'Holy Grail'. This is a sentiment that I hold very much true for this current work as well, as it is not my intent to provide something that is a single definitive

statement. Instead, I am reifying this thing known as OAE to exemplify how I understand the term in my work. This is in no way an attempt to simplify the complexity of the breadth of terms already noted in this chapter. Instead, it is an attempt to briefly summarise some of the key points made to create a workable, broad idea that can be used as a way to think about OAE. With this in mind, the statement that best describes my understanding of OAE is:

*'An umbrella term that encompasses experiences and activities in the outdoors which lead to learning for the self, others and nature. Experiences and activities can involve, but do not need to include a perception of risk exclusively.'*

For me, it is essential to maintain breadth in the definition of OAE, as it is possible to engage with several practitioners from different settings in this research. Consequently, it is essential to use both the words 'outdoor' and 'adventure' in my work as these are the standard terms used in much of the literature discussed. I want to avoid creating an either/or approach but include both to consider how the terms discussed in this section can be used holistically. OAE is not unique to this work; as already noted, it is also used by others, such as Jeffs (2018) and Ord and Leather (2017).

I think identifying where the term OAE sits for me is essential for the other terms noted in this section. This section noted earlier that Humberstone et al. (2018b, p. 2) stated, "outdoor studies...is the term that fruitfully encompasses a broad range of approaches, foci and methods". Whilst I remarked that this may be too broad for this current work, I feel the term OAE will sit under 'outdoor studies' as the umbrella term. Figure 1.2 represents the idea of outdoor studies being the umbrella term.



**Figure 1.2** Outdoor Studies as the umbrella term over OAE

Figure 1.2 shows many terms that could sit under 'outdoor studies' and expand on the list provided by Humberstone et al. (2018). For me, the term 'outdoor studies' also links nicely to education because it could also imply the study of the outdoors. Therefore, OAE sitting under this as a potential area of study is well situated in this work as the research will focus on the influence OAE HE study can have on practitioners in the field of OAE.

### 1.2.2 Clarifying the term practitioner

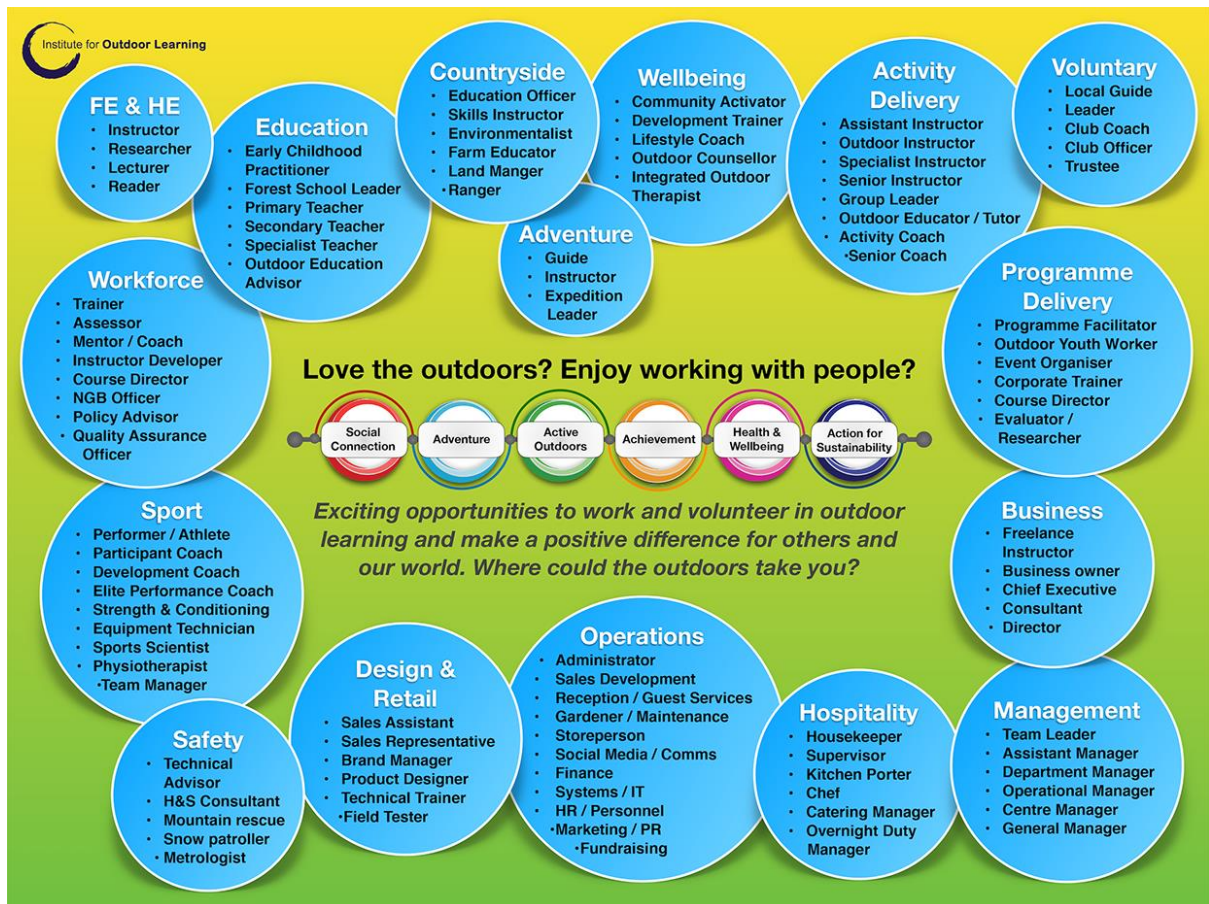
Alongside outlining what OAE means, clarifying the terms used to describe the practitioners themselves is essential. Hodgson and Berry (2011) note that some individuals can be concerned over the label provided to them. Multiple terms can be attributed to an individual working in the OAE environment; from my experience, these include instructor, coach, tutor, leader, teacher, practitioner, educator, lecturer and assistant. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) who enforce The Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004, identify the concept of someone working in the field as an instructor, which they state "means a person

giving instruction or leadership in the course of the provision of facilities for adventure activities" (Health and Safety Executive, 2004, p. 2). The HSE provide information about their inspectors to state that they are experienced working in the field for many years, actively participating in OAE activities and are highly qualified (Health and Safety Executive, n.d.). A point to note is that they have yet to identify the type of experience and the required qualifications explicitly. Therefore, it is not easy to quantify what they mean by experienced and highly qualified.

The term practitioner is used in many sectors, and the simple dictionary definitions of it are "someone involved in a skilled job or activity" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023) and "a person who practices a profession or art" (Collins Dictionary, 2023). Brown et al. (2018) use the term practitioner in their discussion on professional accreditation in the UK outdoor field to identify someone working in the field of OAE. Anderson et al. (2021) also use the term practitioner in their article on defining outdoor learning, and the Institute for outdoor Learning (2023b) uses the term in their accreditation scheme. They state the following:

Accredited Practitioners of the Institute for Outdoor Learning (APIOL) have a passion for outdoor learning and experience planning, leading, and evaluating programmes for individuals and groups. (Institute for outdoor Learning, 2023b, p. 1)

They also state that accreditation recognises different roles, such as leaders, teachers, and instructors (Institute for outdoor Learning, 2023b). The IOL also recognise a vast number of roles that can exist in the outdoor workforce:



**Figure 1.3** IOL workforce map (Institute for Outdoor Learning, 2023c)

Practitioner encompasses a variety of roles and individual cases, thus is an umbrella term analogous to "outdoor studies", meaning that it can be considered a broad umbrella term for this study.

### 1.2.3 Clarifying the term field

I have chosen to use the term 'field' rather than 'sector' or 'industry'. This is because 'field' represents an area of interest or branch of study, which in this situation is that of OAE. In comparison, my perceptions of 'sector' and 'industry' represent something more economically focussed and relatable to certain types of employment or vocations. If this research examined how the OAE HE study influences employment types, the terms sector or industry may be more appropriate. However, this work looks at the influence that OAE HE studies can have on practice in the OAE field, which is much more of a generic area of interest. Consequently, the use of the term 'field' is more relatable to the focus of this work.

### 1.3 My position as the researcher

It is essential at this early stage to acknowledge my positionality as the researcher as it may reflect some unconscious bias toward the research. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) identified two key positions: insider and outsider. An insider is someone who is a member of the group being researched, and an outsider is someone with no connection to the group. In relation to my position, it is challenging to position myself as one or the other and their recognition of the space in between is better suited. They note that:

There are complexities inherent in occupying the space between. Perhaps, as researchers, we can only ever occupy the space between. We may be closer to the insider position or closer to the outsider position. However, because our perspective is shaped by our position as a researcher (which includes having read much literature on the research topic), we cannot fully occupy one or the other of those positions. (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p. 61)

The quote above from Dwyer and Buckle resonates with my position as a researcher, as my position has changed somewhat throughout my journey in this research.

Three key elements could position me as an insider: (1) being employed at the HE organisation that runs the OAE HE programme; (2) being involved in the writing, development and management of the OAE HE programme; (3) being an active practitioner in the field of OAE myself. At the start of this work, my position was more toward the insider perspective. This was because I was full-time in all three of the elements above. I was employed at the HE organisation whilst having written, worked on development, and managed the OAE HE programme. I also actively practised in the OAE field recreationally and through my employment. Due to this involvement, I was inherently invested in the outcomes of the OAE HE programme. I would have suggested at that time that I had a significant bias toward the outcome of this research, showing a very positive influence on the OAE practitioners' practice. If the findings of this research identified no influence or a negative influence, then I was potentially putting years of work and my job at risk. However, my position has changed since completing this thesis, and my role no longer involves this OAE HE programme or the OAE department. My practice in the OAE field has also lessened considerably as my role has changed. However, I remain employed at the HE organisation and still participate

recreationally in the OAE field. Therefore, my position has transitioned along the scale more towards an outsider.

Referring to the notions from Dwyer and Buckle (2009), it would position me within the space between. Recognising my history in all three elements that made me an insider means that I could never position myself fully as an outsider. Instead, I occupy the space in between, accepting the potential unconscious bias that my history may bring to this research.

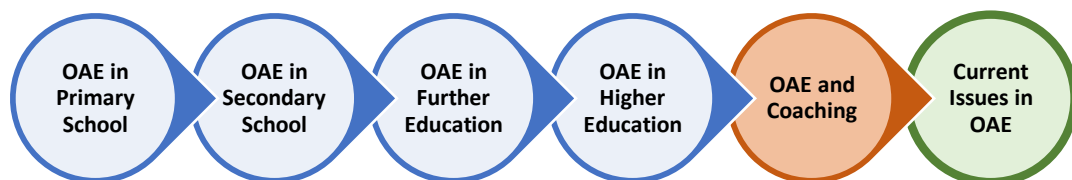


## Chapter 2 - Contextualisation of the Research in the OAE field

This chapter explores existing research about OAE and HE in the current UK-based OAE literature. It outlines the prevalent debates, contextualising my research's position in the current body of knowledge in the OAE field.

### 2.1 Current body of knowledge in the OAE field

This section sets out to explore some of the current issues discussed in the OAE field. The literature in this field is extensive, and I have brought together some key literature that is important to position this current work in it. The review will predominantly focus on the current UK-based research associated with OAE and different areas of education. It will also highlight some of the current issues outside of the education field that are apparent in the OAE field at this time. The format of section 2.1 is demonstrated in Figure 2.1, where the blue stages represent phases of education, and the green and orange stages represent broader discussion points in the field of OAE associated with education.



**Figure 2.1** Phases of section 2.1

As Figure 2.1 shows, this review will start with literature focussed on OAE in primary school and then continue to cover literature associated with the phases of education as they increase in age ranges and levels.

#### 2.1.1 OAE and schools

While OAE in primary, secondary, or FE settings is not the focus of this current work, it is essential to provide the context of what OAE looks like at all phases of the UK education system. Firstly, it will help set out the journey a student may have in accessing OAE as part of

their compulsory education. Secondly, it will explore some of the reasons that individuals may access OAE HE study, for example, as part of a training and development opportunity for those providing the OAE for students throughout the phases of education.

Section 1.2.1 explored some of the terms used in the field of OAE, and whilst reviewing the literature in the UK for OAE and schools, I had an interesting observation that the majority of the language used to describe the activity of OAE in schools was termed 'outdoor learning'. This point is evident in the following discussion and also from the work of Prince (2019), who reported on the changes in outdoor learning in primary schools between 1995 and 2017. Prince (2019) uses outdoor learning as a broad term that includes planned and purposeful experiences in the outdoors that include elements of discovery, experimentation, engaging in outdoor sports and adventure activities and learning about connecting the natural world. Fiennes et al. (2015) also used the term outdoor learning and reported on the existing evidence base about the effectiveness of outdoor learning. In their review in 2015, they found that a large proportion of studies in outdoor learning focused on adventure or residential activities, individuals, groups and 11–14-year-olds (Fiennes et al., 2015). It was again suggested that outdoor learning is the term most commonly used to represent OAE in school-based/school-aged education settings. This is an interesting observation as this is not the term used in the National Curriculum, which currently uses outdoor and adventurous activities (OAA) (Department for Education, 2013a, Department for Education, 2013b).

Webber and Hardwell (2019) focussed their research on the term OAA and the perceptions of teachers on what it entails in the English primary National Curriculum. Through an interpretivist approach and semi-structured interviews, they found that teachers had multiple perceptions of what OAA entailed in their curriculum, but also that senior staff had a high regard for OAA and its purpose in the curriculum. Their recommendations suggested a need for a more robust OAA framework in the National Curriculum documentation to provide guidance to teachers and additional training for trainee teachers in OAA, which could also be impactful.

In a recent article about their top five books on outdoor learning, Routledge (2022) provided five books, all focussed on primary education. Their definition of outdoor learning is discussed in chapter one and recapped below:

Outdoor learning doesn't define a specific type of lesson plan or experience. Instead, it's a broad term that covers any activities that take place in nature and help children learn. Many educators who use outdoor learning highlight its benefits for physical, emotional, social, behavioral [sic] and intellectual development. (Routledge, 2022, p. 1)

Their top five books included the following titles and authors, all from UK locations; 'The Essential Guide to Forest School and Nature Pedagogy' by Cree and Robb (2021), 'The Outdoor Classroom in Practice, Ages 3–7: A Month-By-Month Guide to Forest School Provision' by Constable (2019), 'Playing and Learning Outdoors: The Practical Guide and Sourcebook for Excellence in Outdoor Provision and Practice with Young Children' by White (2019), 'Developing Creativity and Curiosity Outdoors: How to Extend Creative Learning in the Early Years' by Johnson and Watts (2018), and 'Outdoor Play for Healthy Little Minds: Practical Ideas to Promote Children's Wellbeing in the Early Years' by Watkins (2021). Each of the above publications focuses the reader's attention on a pragmatic approach to educating young people in outdoor environments and provides literature about a common pedagogical approach of Forest School.

The approach of Forest School has been an emerging agenda in UK primary schools due to the increasing concern about the lack of relationship that children have with the natural environment (Kemp, 2020). According to the Forest School Association (2022):

Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process, that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting. (Forest School Association, 2022, p. 1)

The Forest School approach is well documented in the literature, with many texts that provide pragmatic ways to deliver it and offer pedagogical support for educators. Kemp (2020) reviewed three prevailing discourses in the current literature on Forest Schools, identified as 'critical stakeholders', 'unenlightened' and 'consumers'. The 'critical stakeholders' discourse suggests that schools use Forest School as a form of enrichment for the curriculum and offer something outside of the mainstream curriculum (Kemp, 2020). The 'unenlightened' discourse suggests a tension between ideologies of Forest School values of challenging using risk versus the current challenges where educators are becoming increasingly risk-averse (Kemp, 2020). The 'consumers' discourse suggests that the commodification of Forest School

is occurring and, therefore, provided as a product to schools and teachers (Kemp, 2020). The research by Kemp (2020) through semi-structured interviews offered a fourth discourse in that teaching staff are 'agentic', meaning that they adapted the concepts of Forest School to varying degrees in their implementation in their schools. The concluding point of this research suggested tensions in how the traditional concept of Forest School, as identified by Forest School Association (2022), is being enacted in schools. This challenges the fundamental concept of Forest Schools and suggests "a mutually transformational relationship between Forest School and schools" that can only occur if teaching professionals are given autonomy to adapt the approach according to local needs (Kemp, 2020, p. 378).

A recent study by Harris (2021) explored outdoor learning across various primary and secondary urban school settings. The 12-month qualitative study using observation notes, interviews and focus groups saw nine schools engaged in various interventions to measure whether the different interventions affected the students and staff. While several barriers to accessing the interventions were acknowledged, such as staff training requirements and resource locality, they found them insurmountable. Through upskilling the workforce and delivering local interventions and support from senior leaders, they found that outdoor learning could be embedded in the curriculum (Harris, 2021).

Related to the role of the teacher, Humberstone and Stan (2011) presented findings about the impact of teacher behaviour on the experience of primary school students in outdoor learning experiences. Through an ethnographic approach using observation and interviews, they presented evidence of the benefits of the outdoor learning experiences for primary school students, but that the behaviours of their teachers impacted students' experiences. Much like Webber and Hardwell (2019), Humberstone and Stan (2011) concluded that teachers would benefit from additional professional development in outdoor learning and residential experiences. The discussion of professional development opportunities also extends into the literature on teacher education.

While initial teacher education is not the specific focus of HE study in this current work, several initial teacher education programmes, such as the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), require an applicant to have already obtained an undergraduate degree. This provides the possibility for candidates to have studied and achieved an OAE-related undergraduate degree programme before starting their initial teacher education course. Wolf

et al. (2022) reviewed worldwide literature to explore some of the emerging themes of research in initial teacher education and outdoor teaching. They explained the complex nature of defining outdoor education. They noted that their research focussed 'on studies that specifically used the outdoor environment as a learning setting for pre-service teachers' (Wolf et al., 2022, p. 200). They found three common themes of skills development: curricula content (including environment education, sustainability and adventure activities) and pedagogical strategies for delivery. They concluded that in almost all of the studies they reviewed, it was found that continued practice during initial teacher education training increased self-efficacy and self-confidence in outdoor teaching. This further emphasises the argument about continual professional development for teachers.

In my review of the current UK literature on OAE and schools, there is a growing body of knowledge in the primary sector with aspects such as Forest Schools. However, what I have discovered, and is evident in the discussion in this section, is that there is limited focus on the secondary/post-16 sector and the role of OAE in this arena. There are examples of research in this area but from the US and Canada, with reports from Harper and Webster (2017), who found that there was a promotion in student growth and learning through the use of a high altitude adventure-based field school and (Richmond et al., 2018) who looked at the impact of OAE out of school experiences on adolescent girls and found that there was greater social connectedness and self-efficacy in leadership competencies. The common themes evident in the reviewed literature are that there are benefits of OAE and an appetite for delivering it in schools, not least as it is part of the National Curriculum in England. However, there are also barriers to delivering this, and whilst not insurmountable, they are an apparent consideration of the varied ways that outdoor learning is delivered. This variation, therefore, emphasises the need for continual professional development of teachers in order to deliver effective outdoor learning. The literature insinuates that the type of training teachers receive will impact their practice when delivering OAE; however, it does not provide evidence of how OAE-specific HE studies can influence practitioners in the field of OAE.

### 2.1.3 OAE and HE

Section 2.1.3 of this chapter will focus on the current body of knowledge in the UK related to OAE in HE settings and is particularly pertinent to this research. The following section will explore what already exists to highlight the position of this current work and how it can contribute to a relatively small body of knowledge of OAE and HE in the UK. In 2014, Stott (2018) reviewed the HE courses offered in the UK HE with the terms 'outdoor' or 'adventure' in the title to explore types of outdoor education pedagogical practice. In 2014, they found that a search on the University and Colleges Admission System (UCAS) for the terms of outdoor or adventure provided 27 providers of HE courses. I also searched the same terms in 2023 and discovered 35 providers of HE courses using the same terms (UCAS, 2023a, UCAS, 2023b). Similarly, Peart (2006, p. 7) reviewed the number of UK HE courses with 'outdoor' in the title and noted it was "rapidly approaching one hundred". My search in 2023 identified exactly one hundred UK HE courses with 'outdoor' in the title (UCAS, 2023b). This could demonstrate how OAE in HE is not growing rapidly, with less than one new provider per year offering courses, and the range of courses offered is no more now than in 2006. In 2014, Stott (2018) found a wide range of pedagogic approaches to outdoor education delivery, noting this could be due to the diverse range of courses on offer. Similarly, my search on the UCAS site found various courses, from adventure filmmaking to outdoor and adventure education courses.

Humberstone and Brown (2006) published their edited text 'Shaping the Outdoor Profession through Higher Education: Creative Diversity in Outdoor Studies Courses in Higher Education in the UK' with 16 chapters from various authors. Each chapter had a different focus on OAE-based topics in HE in the UK, and the predominant focus in each chapter was on the pedagogy of programmes and what should or should not be included in the curriculum. What appeared to be missing in the chapters was the direct influence of the OAE-based HE curriculum on student practice outcomes in the field of OAE. Other examples of research conducted specifically related to OAE in HE comes from published journal articles. Stott (2007, p. 144) undertook a study of 188 students who were "studying for the BSc (Hons) Outdoor and Environmental Education at Liverpool John Moores University" to focus on the value that NGB's could have on degrees. Reviewing students' professional development profiles and

supplementing them with a questionnaire found that the inclusion of NGB's did not influence academic achievement. They did find that there was an appetite for NGB's in HE courses to support learner progression. Again, this study was focused on the content of the curriculum and pedagogical approach and not on the outcomes that impact the student's practice in the field of OAE. Other journal articles on pedagogy and curriculum content include work from Wurdinger and Paxton (2003), who looked at students' experience with OAE HE programmes and promoting student autonomy. Wigglesworth and Heintzman (2017) also looked at the experience of those on a university winter outdoor education course and their perceived life significance from attending the course. Group work was another area researched by Cooley et al. (2015), who investigated the use of OAE in developing group work skills that could be transferred to HE.

There are two examples in the current body of knowledge that research the impact of OAE study on the practice of OAE practitioners in the OAE field. Firstly, Stott (2007) undertook a four-year mixed methods longitudinal study that utilised data collected from four Outdoor Education (OE) student cohorts. They compared the 'fresher' and 'graduate' identities to explore the impact of identity on graduate employment (Stott, 2007). They found:

that the high proportion of OE graduates gaining jobs achieved them by a combination of both a self-conscious effort to maintain connections with their community of practice through part-time work, along with a range of enhanced skills, knowledge and professional vocabulary developed as a result of doing the degree. We assume that these factors combined made OE graduates more competitive in the job market, but our data does not allow us to assess their actual employability...The graduate identity itself is, of course, a transitional identity and the graduate, once embedded into employment, must then embark on a further learning process as the identity of a graduate is left behind, to be replaced by another employment or professional-oriented identity. (Stott, 2007, pp. 730-731)

Three points could be pertinent to this research in the above findings. Firstly, there was a positive impact on graduate outcomes for those who maintained membership to the OAE practitioner CoP. Secondly, there is an indication that skills, knowledge, and professional vocabulary are developed as part of completing the degree, which can positively impact graduate outcomes. Lastly, there is an identity that the graduates will have that is fluid, and as they continue to practice in the OAE CoP, they will then continue to develop it.

In line with the findings from Stott (2007), the second article from Towers and Lynch (2017) also focussed on the identity of practitioners. They sought to explore how to respond to formal and outdoor education tensions in UK HE through an action research approach. They concluded two points that are relevant to this current work:

Our concluding thoughts are that we should be mindful of the types/forms of outdoor educator that our teaching (in higher education) allow or facilitate to emerge in the early stages of people setting out to imagine the outdoor educator they want to become...Finally, there is great worth in thinking of the 'becoming person' as something in flux and allowing the idea that the becoming will be open and emergent and about change. (Towers and Lynch, 2017, p. 121)

These concluding thoughts demonstrate that an element of OAE HE can influence the practitioners' identity by imagining who they wish to become. This idea of becoming (in turn identifying as something) is also fluid and changeable. Therefore, recognising who one person is now may not be who they wish to be, and therefore become, in the future.

It is evident from my review of the literature in the UK focussing on OAE and HE that a limited body of knowledge exists. While more extensive texts and reviews of recent research are discussed in this section, a number of these focus on the content and pedagogical approaches to the delivery of OAE in HE. Little attention has been placed on the outcomes of OAE HE studies on practitioners when practising in the field of OAE. The closest association found, thus far, has been on the influence of the OAE HE study on the formation of an identity for those studying the course.

#### 2.1.4 OAE and coaching

In recent years, a theme in OAE research and literature discussing coaching has emerged. Whilst not directly associated with OAE and HE, it is of interest to this current work for two reasons. Firstly, it may be a potential role that an OAE practitioner may undertake, both in formal and informal education settings. Secondly, due to the emergence of this theme in recent literature in the OAE field, it may be a subject of interest to inform curriculum content in OAE HE programmes.



Specific focus has been given to coaching in adventure sports, where Collins and Collins (2012) were one of the first to conceptualise what adventure sports coaching is (their definition of adventure sports is outlined in chapter one):

Adventure-sports coaching is a broad-ranging, complex field, which utilizes concepts and skills associated with leadership and teaching in the outdoors. These professionals also have a unique need to combine risk exploitation and personal performance, aspects drawn from the teaching and guiding domains. This interaction creates the complexity which reflects a diverse range of client aspirations and motivations. Contextualizing the position of coaching in adventure sports highlights the cross-domain nature of the skills required. Adventure-sports coaches need to be leaders, teachers and coaches to fulfil their role. (Collins and Collins, 2012, p. 91)

Collins and Collins (2012) acknowledge the complex nature of coaching in adventure sports and note that it is not as simple as just being one thing or another but rather that multiple roles are encompassed in that of a coach. Collins et al. (2015) further developed their work researching adventure sports coaching. They considered the 'personal epistemology of adventure sports coaches, the existence of the epistemological chain and its impact on professional judgement and decision-making' (Collins et al., 2015, p. 224). Grecic and Collins (2013, p. 153) defined the epistemological chain 'as the interrelated/connected decisions made that are derived from high-level personal beliefs about knowledge and learning'. A continued focus was given to adventure sports coaching, decision making and the epistemological chain with additional publications from Collins and Collins (2016), Collins and Collins (2017), Christian et al. (2017) and Christian et al. (2019).

Further emphasis has been placed on adventure sports coaching in an edited text by Berry and Hodgson (2011), where Lomax (2011) set out to discuss whether adventure educators undertake coaching in their practice. In conclusion, they stated:

It is clear that knowledge of coaching practices and research relating to coaching will make us all better at what we do in adventure education. However, when utilising coaching-related research, it is important to remember that adventure education is experiential education. As such, it is important to retain a broader educational perspective beyond individual technical performance and knowledge. (Lomax, 2011, p. 103)

In their chapter, Lomax (2011, p. 84) stated that "experiential education has loose boundaries but tends to be 'learning by doing' and 'learning by doing with reflection'". This sets out the

increasing focus on the breadth of the role of an educator in adventure and outdoor environments and the role that coaching can play.

A further text from Berry et al. (2015) called 'Adventure Sports Coaching' emphasises the growing focus on the role and practicalities of being an adventure sports coach. This edited text sets out a range of chapters from different authors, some of whom have already been mentioned in this chapter, to explore what it is to be an adventure sports coach. The last chapter in this text focuses on professionalism in adventure sports coaching and is one of the first mentions of the OAE HE study in the textbook (Taylor and McEwan, 2015). There is a brief mention of several options to study undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in various outdoor sub-disciplines (Taylor and McEwan, 2015). This point was raised in discussing professional futures for adventure sports coaches. However, this is as far as the discussion went. This is important to this current work as some individuals who may participate in this research could be in the role of an adventure sports coach. Opening a question about how much an undergraduate or postgraduate OAE programme can support practitioners with their professionalism and becoming a professional in the OAE field.

Collins and Collins (2019) explored the link between academia and being a professional in their paper 'The role of 'pracademics' in education and development of adventure sport professionals'. This paper states that 'within the education of outdoor professionals, the linkage of academia and practice is attempted via formal programmes of training in which research and practice are juxtaposed' (Collins and Collins, 2019, p. 2). They do not specifically mention the term degrees or HE but refer to the idea of academia and argue the role of the space between an academic and a practitioner with the role of a pracademic. Collins and Collins (2019, p. 6) define a pracademic as 'someone who is both an academic and an active practitioner in their subject area'. This term could also be used to describe those who are studying OAE HE and active in the field of OAE as a practitioner. What Collins and Collins (2019) do recognise is the potential for a dysfunctional connection between academia and practice and that the role of the pracademic may not be the solution to resolving the potential disconnect between the two areas. This suggests that the role of academia in adventure sports is still not synonymous with the needs of the practitioners.

Whilst it is evident in the literature reviewed in this section that there is a role for academia to play in adventure sports, it is not evident how this information could be disseminated to practitioners through academic study. Therefore, this further supports the argument that the influence of OAE HE studies on the practice of OAE practitioners in the field still needs to be explored in the UK literature.

#### 2.1.5 Current issues in OAE – Environmental education and gender

Two current issues that have recently become apparent in the field of OAE are environmental education and gender. Environmental education has become more of a focal point in recent years, focusing on sustainability and reducing global warming. The subject of environmental education extends far beyond the discussion of OAE and is present in literature in most fields in some way. Prince (2018, p. 82) surmised that 'outdoor studies has an important part to play in environmental education, not least in the teaching of sustainability and sustainable development' in their introduction to part two (formal education in outdoor studies) in the 'Routledge International Handbook of Outdoor Studies' (Humberstone et al., 2018a). Also, in this textbook, Ohman and Sandell (2018) discuss how outdoor studies can expand perspectives on the environment. Through the experiences that individuals have when being educated in the outdoor environment, they can broaden their perspective on nature and build relationships with it (Ohman and Sandell, 2018). This sentiment aligns with the first part of my earlier outline of how OAE is being used in this work, where I noted that OAE is an umbrella term that encompasses experiences and activities in the outdoors which lead to learning for the self, others and nature.

Like environmental education, gender is a widely discussed topic in several disciplines, such as sports. The discussion of gender in OAE is a relatively recent topic and was brought to the forefront in the edited text from Gray and Mitten (2018), 'The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Outdoor Learning'. With 62 chapters, the text covers a vast array of topics related to women in outdoor learning. The landscape for females in the OAE field has sometimes been troubled and is noted by Gray (2018, pp. 48-49), who states that:

Unfortunately, in the past 30 years, inequalities, subtle prejudice, and gender invisibilities still linger, and a closer scan of the field reveals a stark contrast to the egalitarian values to which is espouses. Women need the position statement for

their indiscernible presence to self-correct the implicit bias being inflicted through gender laundering and unconscious bias.

As a female in the OAE field myself, the above points are something I have inherently experienced both on a professional and personal level. One experience that will stick with me was being told I was needed on the expedition, not because of the skill set I could bring to the team, but precisely because I was a female (the actual wording is somewhat cruder in nature). Other less explicit examples included the types of equipment and clothing available to females, certainly early on in my career, where cuts and designs did not take account of the differences in the male and female anatomy.

Gray (2018) suggests there are still inequalities between genders in the OAE field, which may continue. Warren (2018) also acknowledges this point and argues that there is still some way to go in scholarly work in this subject area to answer some of the questions surrounding gender in outdoor studies. It is important to note that this discussion is not unique to OAE, though, and the broadening discussion of gender in sports is ever-growing. Discussions such as gender identity and gender reassignment will influence the discussions in the OAE field. Consequently, the topic of gender remains a current issue in OAE, and there are still ways to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in this subject area.

Gender and environmental education are not the direct focus of this current work; however, it is still important to recognise their position in the current body of knowledge. The reason for this importance is that in my experience writing degree programmes, current issues such as these inform the content of OAE HE programmes. Therefore, these topics will likely be covered in the HE programmes being studied by participants in this current work and for future practitioners studying OAE-related HE. The types of curriculum content are likely to arise as a point for discussion in this research, and topics such as those discussed across section 2.1 of this chapter may be identified during the analysis of data generated.

## 2.2 OAE HE and the OAE practitioner as a professional

This work will contribute to a broader base of literature that focuses on individuals studying HE whilst working in the field of OAE. Examples of existing research include aspects such as teacher training in vocational education, focusing on areas such as identity changes for those moving from their vocational sector into teaching vocational subjects (Köpsén, 2014,

Bathmaker and Avis, 2006). Other areas include the role that HE plays in supporting the professional learning of those working in industry (Daniels, 2017, Colley and Guery, 2015); the relationship between FE and HE and the impact this has on HE programmes (Colley et al., 2014); and research into postgraduate programmes such as a professional doctorate, where individuals on the programme are focussing on their professional practice (Pratt et al., 2015). This current work has the opportunity to contribute to the growing body of knowledge in the area of professional learning and HE. However, it will have the most significant contribution to how this is happening in the field of OAE.

### 2.2.1 OAE academic qualifications

The recognition of formal education and academic qualifications in the current body of knowledge was evident in the edited publication 'Routledge International Handbook of Outdoor Studies' (Humberstone et al., 2018a). This text includes seven chapters dedicated to formal education in outdoor studies, with several of these chapters already being referred to in this work. The field of OAE has various academic qualifications at various levels. However, there is some disparity in what is offered across the different education sectors.

This chapter has already explored some of the current work in OAE and schools but has yet to discuss the role of academic qualifications in schools. The English school system has no recognised stand-alone OAE qualifications within GCSE and A-Level syllabuses (Department for Education, 2014). It presently forms part of England's physical education (PE) syllabus, both in primary and secondary phases. It has only been since 2013 that OAE was a mandatory aspect of the National Curriculum, placed within the PE syllabus (Department for Education, 2013a, Department for Education, 2013b). Before 2013, it was always an optional element of the PE syllabus (Department for Education, 1999, Department for Education, 2004). Outside these options, OAE-specific qualifications predominantly reside in the FE and HE sectors with various vocational qualifications.

One area that sees collaboration between the FE and HE sectors and the OAE field is apprenticeships. A Government agenda released in 2015 set out the apprenticeship vision until 2020, which identified the plan to increase apprenticeship quality and quantity to

achieve 3 million by 2020 (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2015). This current work is poignant as the development of the OAE Higher Apprenticeship (HA) programme has recently been occurring (Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education, 2022c). The HA development is important to this research as it fundamentally researches the model that the HA is founded on. An individual on a HA could be undertaking working practice in the subject field whilst studying a HE programme. This study could support their progression towards demonstrating competency against the knowledge, skills and behaviour criteria that make up the HA. Therefore, this research can contribute to new knowledge on this specific subject area, which could inform the relevance of this type of model in the field of OAE. The potential findings of this current work, if positive towards showing an influence of the OAE HE study, could promote the HA model for future use in the field.

There are currently two apprenticeships that exist for the OAE field. A Level 3 Outdoor Activity Instructor was approved for delivery in 2018 (Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education, 2022b). As previously discussed, there is also the HA programme, the Level 5 Outdoor Learning Specialist, which was recently approved for delivery in 2022 (Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education, 2022c). According to UCAS (2022), HA's are beneficial in three ways: apprentices are employed and paid wages whilst studying; apprentices are given a head start in their chosen profession; the cost of training is co-funded by their employer and the government. It could be for these reasons that a number of sectors have developed an apprenticeship type of provision. For example, training in the healthcare sector in the role of a nurse can now be undertaken through an apprenticeship pathway and a direct degree route (NHS, 2022). It is also evident in teacher training in the FE sector with the Level 5 Learning and Skills Teacher (Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education, 2022a).

According to the Education and Training Foundation (2022), over 10% of Higher Education in England is delivered in the FE sector, representing providers such as FE colleges, who are approved to run HE programmes. This is the reason that the Education and Training Foundation (2022) recognises the requirement to provide suitable training for FE teachers, including those who may teach HE, which is of interest as a recent government campaign to gain more FE teachers clearly states that you do not need a degree to become an FE teacher (Government, 2022). Instead, the campaign identifies the importance of vocational experience over a degree-level qualification. Therefore, the recognition of experience could

undermine the role of OAE degrees for those actively working in the field. The message is that experience could be more important to becoming a teacher in the FE sector; experience could be perceived as more important to OAE practitioners than gaining an academic degree.

The importance of experience versus qualifications opens a dialogue about what it means to be a professional in the field of OAE. It is evident in some professions, such as nursing, that you can only qualify to work in that profession with a degree or degree-level apprenticeship (which will usually include the degree programme inside of the apprenticeship delivery). Consequently, this leads to the HE qualification forming part of the professional recognition of this sector and its specific role. In comparison, this level of recognition is less rigorous in the field of OAE, where you can practice OAE without the requirement of any qualification at any level.

### 2.2.2 The OAE professional

There has been some movement to recognise what constitutes an outdoor professional, with the Institute for Outdoor Learning (2021, p. 1) stating:

Outdoor learning professionals provide safe activities and effective learning in the outdoors for the benefit of individuals, communities, society and the economy. They are trained, experienced and uphold the values and behaviours that help others adventure in their environment, gain skills and make a positive difference for our world. (Institute for Outdoor Learning, 2021, p. 1)

Alongside the above overarching statement, the Institute also recognises two levels of professionalism with 'associate professionals in outdoor learning' and 'professionals in outdoor learning' (Institute for Outdoor Learning, 2021). The Institute for Outdoor Learning are clear to acknowledge the level of experience and study for each, where the associate role must " have a minimum of one year's outdoor learning work experience plus relevant qualifications" equivalent to A-Level/Level 3 and the other role must "have a minimum of at least five years' experience in outdoor learning (including at least two years in a position of responsibility) plus degree level learning" (Institute for Outdoor Learning, 2021, p. 1). What is not apparent is whether the 'degree level learning' equates to a qualification or whether attendance at degree level study is sufficient.

Brown et al. (2018) explored the concept of professionalism in the UK outdoor field through professional accreditation. Brown et al. (2018) identify changes over the past 25 years, arguing that:

In the UK there has also been a drive to remove risk from the outdoor practice, and to use qualifications and accreditations as one of the main indicators of good professional practice in the desire to offer certainty and a method to quantify and measure a professional's practice. (Brown et al., 2018, p. 186)

Their argument suggests there may be greater alignment in recent years with qualifications forming the recognition of a professional in the outdoor field. However, what is not apparent is the type of qualification they are referring to, in that is it as simple as NGB qualifications, or does it encompass academic qualifications also. Brown et al. (2018) extend their argument for changes in professional accreditation when they put forward that the recognition of professional competence used to be a social construction from practitioners in the field. The construction comes from external rules that the practitioners are turning to (Brown et al., 2018).

The argument from Brown et al. (2018) suggests that the outdoor field aligns with other fields, such as sports, education and medicine, where professional formation is underpinned by qualifications, as set out by rules established by governing and regulatory bodies. The shift in the outdoor field opens the discussion as to the purpose of OAE HE programmes and whether they have the potential to form part of the professional accreditation of practitioners. This current work may go some way to answer the question as to whether academic qualifications, such as HE degrees, may have a place in the OAE field in informing the construct of a professional.

### 2.3 OAE and social theory

Pleasant and Stewart (2019) explored some of the issues with theorisation in 'Research Methods in Outdoor Studies'. They note the complexity of research and the use of theory and go some way to pick apart some of the issues that researchers in the field of OAE face. The key issue they address is the messiness of theorisation and how we see the world will influence how we theorise it. Ultimately, how we view the world can lead to some complexity as a researcher in applying theory and aligning ontological and epistemological positions to research.



Swedberg (2016) argues that there are two aspects to theory. Firstly, in how researchers present their final work as their theory, and secondly, in how theorisation has occurred to present that final theory. Before the presented final theory, which can sometimes appear neat and compact, there is the process of theorisation, which is the more complex process of coming to the final output of the theory (Swedberg, 2016). For Swedberg (2016), it is the process of discovery akin to theorisation, where the researcher has grappled with the underpinning issues of their research to present their final theory. Only through this phase can the researcher explain their final theory with any certainty. It is recognised that the researcher does not always present this process of grappling with underpinning issues; instead, a brief summary is offered that does not always reflect the complexity of this phase (Swedberg, 2016). Therefore, this work must consider how the theorisation process has occurred throughout each phase of grappling with the research.

Beames and Pike (2013, p. 5) suggest in their edited text 'Outdoor Adventure and Social Theory' (Pike and Beames, 2013) that "there is no one best social theory". Instead, they recommend that for a particular circumstance, there will be a social theory that may be useful to analyse it. Beames and Pike (2013b) ask the intriguing question of what social theory has to do with outdoor adventure and argue that, for them, it has everything to do with it.

The mere 'practice' of outdoor adventure is only one part of its social element. Countless other related features that are social and exert great influence on participants. Some examples of these influences include the media, equipment and clothing manufacturers, official sport governing bodies, family and friends, and customs/traditions. (Beames and Pike, 2013b, p. 3)

From this point, they then argue that social theory enables us to 'find deeper meaning in all kinds of ideas and practices' (Beames and Pike, 2013b, p. 4). They have made this point clear throughout their edited text, where authors have used various social theories to understand particular phenomena in their chosen research agendas in outdoor adventure.

Chijioke et al. (2021) explain that:

The role theory plays in research work cannot be over-emphasized. A theory that is apt gives direction to research work in explaining, organizing [sic], and predicting phenomenon and showing their relationships in order to enhance understanding. (Chijioke et al., 2021, p. 156)

They have made it apparent here that it is not just the use of any theory but rather one that is appropriate for the research agenda and can be supportive. This notion has been demonstrated by researchers in the field of OAE in the aforementioned text by Pike and Beames (2013). One such example is how Allin and West (2013) use the concept of outdoor leadership as a vehicle to understand feminist theory and, in turn, use feminist theory to understand the use of gendered language in outdoor leadership. Varley (2013) also used social theory similar to Allin and West (2013), using elements of Weber's social theory on rationality, bureaucratisation and control to explore the commodification of adventure sports such as sea kayaking. Alongside these examples, authors such as Beames and Telford (2013) have used other social theories from Bourdieu to provide a way for them to look at specific research agendas in rock climbing. They noted that they found Bourdieu's work helpful in understanding social behaviour and outdoor adventure-specific situations. What is apparent from these three examples is that the authors have chosen to work with a social theory that provides them with a way of looking at and understanding specific social phenomena in their respective areas of focus in outdoor adventure.

Beames and Pike (2013a) set a precedent for how social theory can be used to look at social phenomena in OAE and neatly conclude their text by summarising how social theory provides us with a way of understanding aspects of outdoor adventure. In doing so, they recognise the importance of how social theory can provide a theoretical framework from which OAE phenomena can be researched. Hence, the importance of this work needs to be underpinned by a theoretical framework. The theoretical framework used in this work is Wenger 1998 (discussed in the following chapter). It serves to provide two contributions: firstly, in supporting the discovery phase of the research and helping me to explore some of the 'grappling' that will happen in this current work; secondly, in providing a framework that will help me as the researcher to find deeper meaning in the experiences of the OAE practitioners. Whilst other theories might have been possible, the choice of CoP allows me to examine how practitioners manage the movement between different groups and how they use what each 'community' offers them. For this reason, I have chosen it in the hope that it will, as Chijioke et al (2021) suggest, allow me to explain phenomena and show their relationships to understand them more fully.

## 2.4 The place of this thesis in the current literature

This chapter has explored a range of topics and current issues in the current body of OAE literature, which has allowed me to locate where my work will be positioned. What has become apparent is that there is no clear answer as to why someone should study an OAE HE degree and what impact that study may have on their practice in the OAE field. There is a suggestion that the OAE HE studies could have some relevance in the discussion about professional recognition, but nothing more concrete than an inference. There is evidently a place for OAE in academia as it appears in various educational phases and sectors. Therefore, there needs to be more evidence in the literature as to what influence the OAE HE study has on practitioners when they are out practising in the OAE field. It is also evident in this chapter that the use of social theory can provide a framework to explore such an issue as that just noted. Consequently, this work will explore what role the OAE HE study has in influencing the practice of OAE practitioners in the field of OAE. It will do this through the use of social theory and the precedent that Pike and Beames (2013) set by using an established theory as a framework.

## Chapter 3 – Theoretical Framework

The use and development of theory are integral to social science research (Farnsworth et al., 2016) and will form a significant part of this thesis, as called for in Chapter 2. In an interview, Etienne Wenger stated, "a social theory is not a narrative in itself; it is a conceptual framework. It is a tool for constructing a certain type of narrative" (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 160). It is Wenger's idea of social theory that will be used in this current work, where his theory of CoP will be used as a conceptual framework to provide a way to construct the narrative about the influence that OAE HE studies can have on practitioners in the field of OAE.

### 3.1 CoP as a theoretical framework

The question to answer at the start of this section is, 'Why is CoP suitable for this work?'. To start to answer that, the statement below from Wenger in an interview about CoP sets the tone nicely for the following discussion. For Wenger, the purpose of CoP:

is to give an account of learning as a socially constituted experience of meaning making. The stance is to locate this experience in the relation between the person and the social world as they constitute each other. The technical terms of the theory include negotiation of meaning, practice, community, identity, and competence, among others. (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 161)

These technical terms will be discussed throughout this chapter. What is important here is that Wenger states that CoP theory is a theory about learning and how learning happens in and through social relations. It provides us with a way of talking about and thinking about how learning is happening through engagement with people's social work. This is why it is a suitable theory for this current project. It will provide a theoretical framework for exploring the situation with the OAE practitioners. Because this research is focused on HE, it is sensible to look at the learning occurring as part of the experience of OAE HE.

This work is not unique in its use of CoP as a theoretical framework, and other researchers, such as Tight (2015), have used it to research other social phenomena, such as CoP in HE. Tight (2015) uses CoP as a theory through their approach to understanding, describing and explaining the data related to HE, which mirrors the approach that I am using in this current

work. Other researchers, such as Abedini et al. (2020), have used CoP as a theory to research mentoring in teacher training. Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) also used CoP to research new cohorts in teacher training. These are just three examples of researchers who have used CoP as a theory to research aspects of education, and there are many more examples to be found as well. The importance of this for this work is in the foundation for the theory to be used to research education-based social phenomena, for which the situation with the OAE practitioners could be viewed in the same, if not similar, arena.

The discussion that follows in this chapter will set out just how CoP can be applied in this work and how the theoretical framework may support me in analysing the situation with the OAE practitioners. The theory of CoP was not just developed by Wenger, though, and it has developed in specific ways since its inception. The following section will explore these developments but will pay particular attention to the theory development in 1998 by Wenger.

### 3.1.1 CoP theory – the developments and defining CoP

The theory of CoP was first identified by Lave and Wenger (1991) in their text titled 'Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation'. This theory stemmed from their work on analysing the learning of those in apprenticeship-style settings where individuals were learning on the job, which aligns well with this research. Like an apprenticeship, the OAE practitioners at the focus of this research are studying an education programme associated with their field of work whilst actively working in it. Lave and Wenger (1991) founded CoP as a social theory of learning to recognise that learning must be considered in the social context of culture and historical background. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 98) stated that:

A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage. Thus, participation in the cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning. The social structure of this practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 98)

The key point is that learning is situated in a CoP and occurs due to the individual's experience with the persons, activity and world in which the CoP exists.

A fundamental premise of Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory is that there is a concept of roles in a CoP, in that there are newcomers/novices (for them, this was the apprentice) and the masters/old-timers whose role in supporting learning experiences is to support the development of the newcomers through opportunities. They argue that the newcomer has a form of legitimacy to their practice on the periphery of a CoP as a newcomer:

To begin with, newcomers' legitimate peripherality provides them with more than an "observational" lookout post: It crucially involves participation as a way of learning – of both absorbing and being absorbed in – the "culture of practice." An extended period of legitimate peripherality provides learners with opportunities to make the culture of practice theirs. From a broadly peripheral perspective, apprentices gradually assemble a general idea of what constitutes the practice of the community. (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 95)

Their argument suggests that through the legitimate peripheral participation of the newcomer, there is somewhere else for them to go in the CoP. Later in this chapter, I will explore this development in the idea of differing trajectories from Wenger (1998) and how these help us understand the different pathways for membership to a CoP.

The terms newcomer/novice and master/old-timer were also used in Wenger's 1998 work, but this has been scrutinised. Fuller (2007) and Hughes et al. (2007) highlight some limitations over using the terms in that if one of these is applied, it infers that the individual is either-or. However, not everyone determined that a 'master' or 'novice' will have the exact attributes, nor might they be at the same point in their trajectory. The notions of 'novice' and 'master' are related to the competency of participation in the practice of the community. A lack of competency will lead to the identification of a novice, compared to someone very competent, who would be identified as a 'master'. For example, a novice in white water kayaking will be someone who shows limited competency in the practice, such as being unable to use their equipment effectively to navigate a section of white water and who may fall out and require rescuing.

In comparison, a 'master' would be able to use their equipment effectively to negotiate the challenges of that stretch of water and successfully navigate their way to the end. It is important for this research that recognising a 'novice' or 'master' may not infer the same thing in every application of their use. It is not as clean-cut as having a sliding scale of membership; instead, the terms applied are convoluted in their nature. What one person may identify as a

'master' may not be the same perspective as another. Therefore, this research must take note of the complexities of reifying an identity that may be coined a 'novice' or a 'master' and the negotiated meaning of these for each practitioner. Though I agree with the critique from Fuller (2007) and Hughes et al. (2007), it is not the role of this current work to re-develop these terms. For want of better language, it seems sensible to maintain the use of the original terms provided by Lave and Wenger (1991).

No matter the choice of terms used, between 'novice' and 'master' and 'newcomer' and 'old-timer', the challenge of reifying the terms remains the same. The use of the terms 'novice' and 'master' in this work is not suggestive that one set of terms is better than the other for any reason. Either set of terms would provide me with a way to talk about the position of an OAE practitioner in the OAE practitioner CoP and the OAE HE CoP. The choice of terms for this work is purely personal in that I can better relate the terms 'novice' and 'master' to the concept of competency. As previously noted, the term 'novice' could suggest someone less competent than someone who is a 'master' in the CoP. In comparison, someone who is a 'newcomer' may or may not be a novice in the CoP as they may enter the CoP with competency in the practice already. Therefore, the term 'newcomer' does not clearly articulate the potential level of competency like the term 'novice' would for me. I am not alone in my use of these terms, despite using Wenger's 1998 CoP theory and Zheng and Chai (2019) also acknowledge that changes in CoP theory but use the terms 'novice' and 'master' to support their analysis of identity construction as a way of participation in peer feedback activity.

There have been further critiques of Lave and Wenger's work from 1991. Not least, Hughes (2007, p. 38) stated that "Lave and Wenger fluctuate between developing an approach to understanding learning as it actually is and positing a model of how learning ought to be". When Wenger was asked about this critique, he responded:

"For me it is unambiguously a theory of what learning is...Hughes is right that in our writings we have not always been very clear about this distinction and we may have misled some people. In my 1998 book, I tried to address this by separating the learning theory, in the first two parts of the book, from the design principles in the epilogue." (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 163)

This is one key indication of how Wenger took CoP theory forward from his original work with Lave in 1991. The development of the work in 1998 saw Wenger become more explicit about the makeup of a CoP with a key focus on the individual in the CoP. The premise of CoP, as first given by Lave and Wenger (1991), did not change in the work that Wenger put forward in 1998. It remained a social theory of learning but with greater explanatory material on what the theory entailed.

In his 1998 work, Wenger explains that CoP's are all around us, and although we may not be aware of them in the first instance when we think about what CoP's we may belong to, they can easily come to mind (Wenger, 1998). A fundamental premise of Wenger's 1998 work was that "communities of practice can arise in any domains of human endeavour...in other words learning takes place through our participation in multiple social practices" (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p.140). So, through membership in a CoP and through participation in the social practices that form the CoP, learning occurs. The previous point is aligned with the original work from Lave and Wenger in that they argue that a CoP is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The fundamental developments in Wenger's 1998 work were structuring what can create a CoP. Wenger provided three key aspects of what forms a CoP: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). The next section of this chapter will explore these concepts and exemplify how they may relate to the field of OAE and this work.

#### *3.1.1.1 Mutual engagement*

For Wenger (1998), mutual engagement defines a CoP, where it is not aspects such as geographical location but the engagement in a mutual activity that defines it. For example, those working in outdoor centres are members of an OAE working CoP, and they could also be part of a more refined CoP based on their mutual engagement in particular OAE activities, for example, a kayaking CoP. This previous point could be broken down further in the disciplines; for example, they could also be part of a more specific CoP, such as a sea kayaking or white-water kayaking CoP.



Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) provided a constructive critique in which they discuss the difficulties with defining what constitutes a CoP. In summary, they identify two concepts of CoP: a broad concept and a more focused one, where the broad definition is focussed more toward the idea of learning through participation and the narrower concept is focussed on the tight CoP that may exist somewhere like a hair salon (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004, Fuller, 2007). This critique aligns with my previous point about how an OAE practitioner could be part of a broad CoP, such as working in an OAE centre and being part of more refined CoP's that are tighter and linked to specific practices, such as the aforementioned examples. This critique can also provide a way of looking at how an individual's memberships to CoP can impact one another. What is important from this critique is to recognise that there are multiple CoP's to consider, and focussing attention on experience in one CoP will not exclude the experience of membership in other CoP's for an individual. It will be important in this work to explicitly identify what I am constituting as a CoP.

Fuller (2007, p. 23) also argued that due to the ambiguity in the definition of a CoP from Wenger, "the researcher is always left with making decisions about what is inside or outside the container as well as how large it should be". Whilst this previous point represents a negative from Fuller's perspective, it is also essential to consider the benefits it can have. For me, as a researcher, the flexibility would allow me to consider multiple elements of what may form a CoP for the OAE practitioners and provide flexibility to set the boundaries of CoP's that are specific to this research. If it were just mutual engagement in an activity that set the boundary of the CoP, the ambiguity around what is and is not part of a CoP could cause some concern. However, there are other points of joint enterprise and shared repertoire.

#### *3.1.1.2. Joint enterprise*

According to Wenger (1998), joint enterprise is another consideration and refers to the common purpose of the CoP through negotiated enterprise, indigenous enterprise and mutual accountability. A negotiated enterprise is where the CoP works toward common goals that are not necessarily agreed upon but negotiated through mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998). For Wenger (2009, p. 79), indigenous enterprise refers to a similar notion to Bourdieu's habitus, where CoP's are formed with "historical, social, cultural, institutional" contexts that

have certain resources and constraints. Mutual accountability for Wenger is the concept that includes a negotiation of:

what matters and what does not, what is important and why it is important, what to do and what not to do, what to pay attention to and what to ignore, what to talk about and what to leave unsaid, what to justify and what to take for granted, what to display and what to withhold, when actions and artifacts are good enough and what they need improvement or refinement. (Wenger, 1998, p. 81)

In this sense, mutual accountability forms some of the boundaries of the CoP. The decisions of what should or should not be involved in the CoP set the boundaries for that community. The idea that these are negotiated through mutual engagement suggests some flexibility. It would allow the opportunity for CoP's to develop and change over time, where the negotiation of members and non-members sets the boundaries.

The members of a CoP will negotiate the boundaries, especially where there may be new developments, techniques, research, equipment, and concepts that may challenge the status quo of the CoP. It could be this where the OAE practitioners who are studying OAE HE play a role, as they may bring some of those new aspects from their studies into the CoP and negotiate their meaning and their role in the development. The ongoing transformation of a CoP is reliant on the negotiation of what is relevant and what is not relevant to it. A good example is health and safety, where the OAE practitioner CoP continually transforms. The development of new equipment, procedures, and research is continually negotiated to explore its relevance to the CoP and develop what the CoP is mutually accountable for. For example, where new research may suggest something important to consider in rescue practices, this has to be negotiated between the members of that CoP. If they decide it is of importance, then they will become mutually accountable for it.

It is also important to understand that non-members of a CoP also play a role in defining the boundaries. The input of others is happening in some respect in this research, as my role as the researcher is to define the boundaries of the CoP that are relevant to this research. The purpose of the research is not to set the boundaries of the CoP through the participants' perspective but rather to see how the membership of one may influence the other. Therefore, the boundaries have been outlined from my perspective as a researcher of the membership of the OAE practitioners.

### 3.1.1.3. Shared repertoire

The shared repertoire of the CoP refers to the following:

routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice. The repertoire combines both reification and participative aspect, it includes the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world, as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members. (Wenger, 1998, p. 83)

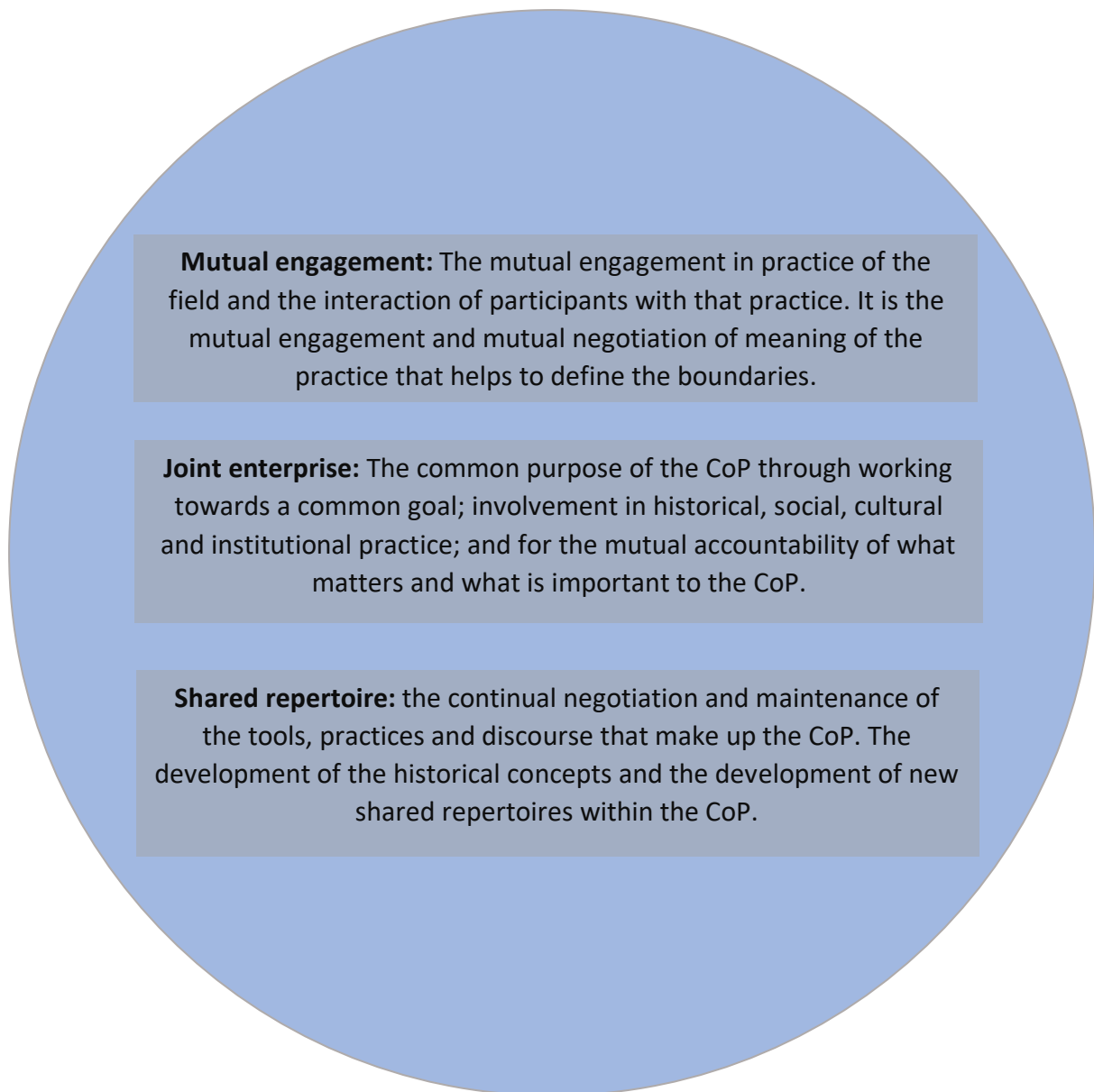
These aspects provide further boundaries to the CoP, allowing us to understand what is and is not part of the members' repertoire. In a simple sense, it could almost identify what is expected of the behaviours of the members of a CoP. For example, a member of the OAE practitioner CoP may be required to display certain behaviours, be involved in specific discourse, and understand particular coded language that would enable them to be a member. A specific example could be hand signals in kayaking, where practitioners, such as coaches, may use specific hand signals with particular meanings and currency in the kayaking CoP. A coach may give a specific hand signal for those who understand it and would infer some form of meaning that will provide instruction to ensure they are working safely together. Someone not a member of that CoP would not understand the specific meanings of the signals, hence limiting their membership to it. Similarly to how behaviours and interactions are negotiated to form the boundaries, they also negotiate the level of membership. For example, the OAE practitioner may display certain behaviours expected of someone to be a member of the OAE practitioner CoP. However, they may also be limited in these behaviours, which would then infer that their membership status is not that of a 'master' but maybe more of a 'novice'.

Wenger has since moved away from the terminology of joint enterprise, stating:

One of the reasons I have not used the term 'joint enterprise' lately is precisely because when consulting with businesses, people always ask me: 'What's the difference between a community of practice and a team?' And the notion of joint enterprise does not really clarify the distinction. So 'domain' is the term that I use now to define the area in which a community claims to have legitimacy to define competence. (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 143)

This language change was seen in his 2002 text, 'Cultivating Communities of Practice', where he collaborated with two other authors (Wenger et al., 2002). This text also saw a shift in focus from the individual to the group. Where Wenger's work in 1998 focussed mainly on the individual in the CoP, the work from 2002 focussed more on applying CoP to an organisation. This current work focuses more on the individual, not the organisation. For this reason, Wenger's idea of joint enterprise will be used in this work moving forward to support the formation of the boundaries of the CoP's.

Figure 3.1 summarises the mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire used in this work moving forward.



**Figure 3.1:** Exemplification of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire used in this work (Wenger, 1998).

#### *3.1.1.4 CoP's in this work*

In this work, there are two distinct yet broad CoP's that are being used to analyse the situations with the OAE practitioners:

1. The CoP encompassing the experiences of the OAE practitioner as a student in HE – the OAE HE CoP.

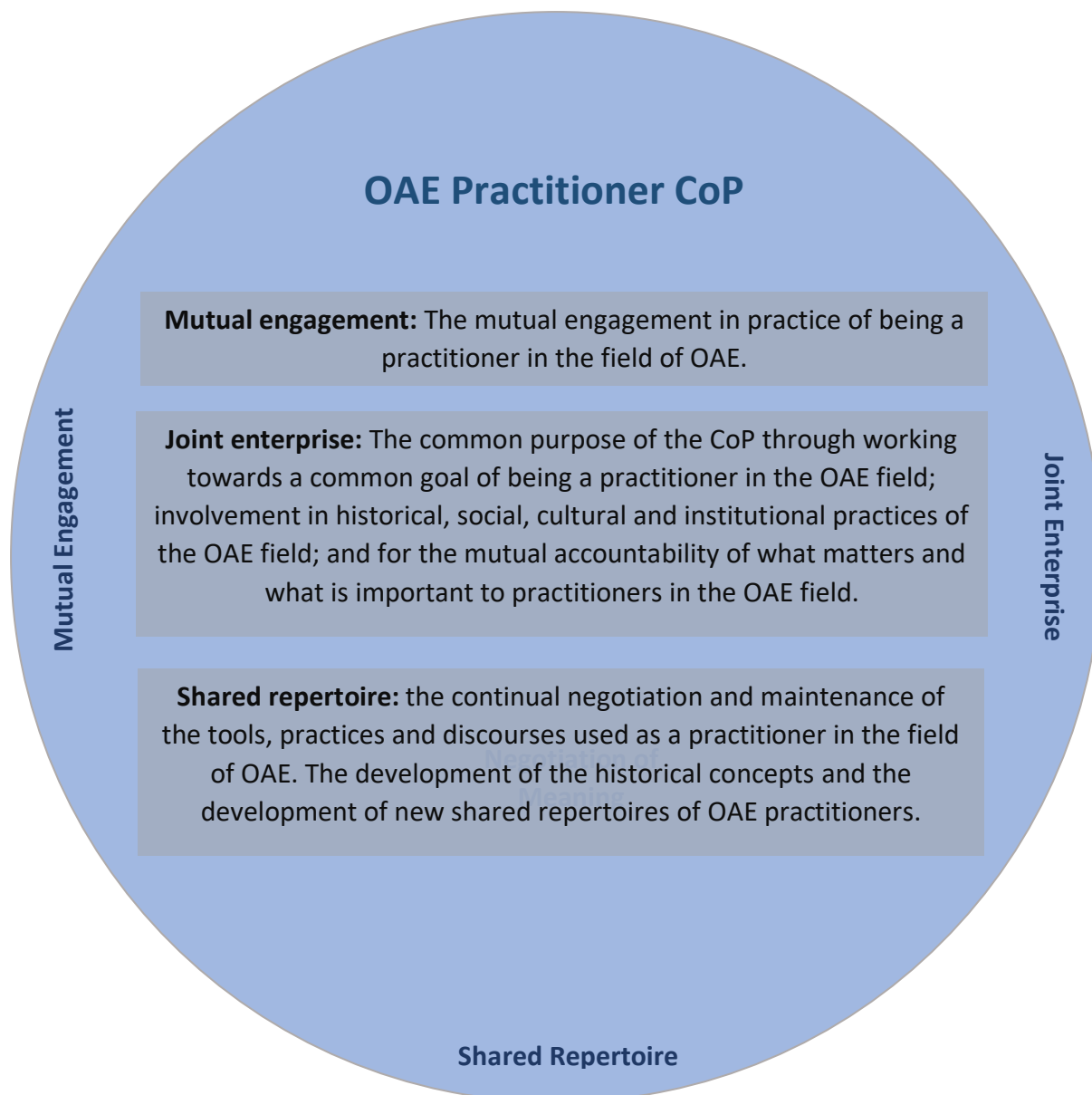
2. The CoP encompassing the experiences of the OAE practitioner in their role in the OAE field – the OAE practitioner CoP.

The broadness of these CoP's is intentional, as I feel that defining them too succinctly and too focused on specific forms of practice would create challenges in this research. These would arise from the potential to exclude certain practitioners from participating in the research due to them not aligning with the CoP's. The broad focus and setting of boundaries allow many different OAE practitioners to participate in the research without excluding them because they do not participate in one form of practice, e.g., they are land-based practitioners and do not practise water-based activities. I also acknowledge that the broadness has potential limitations in that there is the possibility that the range of practice from the participants could be too broad, limiting the depth of the analysis that is possible from my data.

To clarify the boundaries of each of the CoP's being focussed on in this research, Figures 3.2 and 3.3 exemplify the mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire of each of the CoP's.



**Figure 3.2:** Exemplification of the mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire of the OAE HE CoP.



**Figure 3.3:** Exemplification of the mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire of the OAE practitioner CoP.

For the purpose of this research, it is important to realise that whilst the OAE practitioners are members of both CoP's in Figures 3.2 and 3.3, the focus of this research. It does not exclude their membership to the OAE HE CoP; rather, the focus is predominantly on the influence the OAE HE CoP has on practice in the OAE practitioner CoP.

The theory of CoP is not just about what forms the CoP, though; for Wenger (1998), multiple other aspects need to be considered. The remainder of this chapter will now focus on these elements. Firstly, it is important to explore what Wenger means by the terms community and practice, which brings in additional terms he uses: meaning and reification. These terms are



important to understand prior to discussing the types of trajectories that the OAE practitioners may have in both the OAE HE CoP and OAE practitioner CoP.

### 3.1.3 Practice, Community, Meaning and Reification

Wenger (1998, p. 6) defined practice as “a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action”, and community is defined as “a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognisable as competence” (Wenger, 1998, p. 6). Wenger (1998) places practice and community with two other elements of meaning and identity, which form an interconnected and mutually defining model of learning. Wenger states meaning to be “a way of talking about our (changing) ability – individually and collectively – to experience our life and the world as meaningful”, and identity is “a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities” (Wenger, 2009, p. 211).

In short, the social theory of CoP is based on a web of connections and relations that a community member must encounter, interpret and develop from to learn. For example, the OAE practitioner may encounter a number of experiences that involve different people, histories, cultures, environments, power relations and more. They will negotiate their way through these experiences, forming their own meaning to them and, in turn, learning and developing from them.

Wenger (1998) continues to use three elements, meaning, community and learning, alongside boundary to discuss the concept of practice. This is of interest to this specific area of OAE research as practice will be an integral part of exploring the influence of the OAE HE. For Wenger, practice incorporates each of these elements, and he starts with meaning, where practice is not just a simple case of how we experience our world but where experiences are meaningful (Wenger, 1998). He argues that there is negotiation of meaning that involves “interaction of two constituent processes,...participation and reification”, which “form a duality that is fundamental to the human experience of meaning and thus to the nature of practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 52). Reification is also used generally “to refer to the process of

giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’” (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). He further notes that “any community of practice produces abstractions, tools, symbols, stories, terms, and concepts that reify something of that practice in a congealed form” (Wenger, 1998, p. 59).

It is important to note that whilst the power of reification is in its ability to signify something as concrete, this is also a pitfall of it. Where something complex has been reified into something concrete, it can lose that situation's complexity and nuanced aspects. For example, the reification of an OAE CoP could suggest that we may identify that it has clear boundaries that either allow someone to be a member or not. This reification may make it easier to analyse that community, but it does lose the nuances of what could make someone a member. We may say that if a practitioner meets a particular set of criteria, then they are in the community. However, questions remain: What about the other criteria they do not meet? Why should that exclude them? Could there not be elements that mean they could partially be a member? Why do they have to be in or out? Reification can lead to the simplification of something quite complex; therefore, questions such as these may remain unanswered. However, Wenger argues that reification is not a static process, and through continual negotiation, the meaning attributed by persons to the reified entity can potentially change (Wenger, 1998). Whilst there is some complexity to this, the notion of trajectories, previously discussed, may hold the answers to some of these questions. If we assume CoPs exist all around us, then it would also be appropriate to assume that we have forms of membership to many of these. These memberships will differ between each CoP, where we may have differing trajectories. In some, we may only require peripheral participation; in others, we may be on inbound or outbound trajectories. Thus, whilst reification cements the forms of practice of each community, we can also see how an individual may be a member of multiple CoPs and cross multiple boundaries.

The negotiation of meaning, referred to earlier by Wenger, is used “very generally to characterise the process by which we experience the world and our engagement as meaningful” (Wenger, 1998, p. 53). By this, he means that as we engage with our world, we consistently experience different situations and have to negotiate the meaning of our interaction. For example, each time an OAE practitioner goes to work, they will experience elements of familiarity and new aspects and negotiate these new elements. The meaning

which is negotiated is not just the outcome of the experience, but it is also part of the human endeavour to seek meaning from our experiences (Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998, p. 70) states that “through the negotiation of meaning, it is the interplay of participation and reification that makes people and things what they are”. Therefore, it is the interplay between the OAE practitioner in the CoP and reification that makes that OAE practitioner who they are and what they are in that CoP.

A number of different things can form the interplay: the way they participate in OAE, their position in OAE, the role they undertake, the way they see themselves, and how others see them. For example, suppose someone participates in kayaking in their own time. In that case, they also instruct kayaking in a club and run professional courses for the awarding body; then, they could be seen as a professional kayaking instructor. This recognition can only happen through the reification of what kayaking is, what a professional is, how the individual sees themselves and how others see them. A kayak instructor is reified into a certain thing, with a set of criteria that mean someone is or is not this. Similarly, a kayak is reified into a thing, with certain criteria distinguishing it from a canoe. Yet reification is also specific to the interaction in the community, as someone outside of the community may not attribute the same criteria to reify a kayak and canoe as different things, and often, they are referred to as a canoe in my experience. Yet, for those participating in the community, it is clear that they are two different things based on the reified set of criteria that make them distinct. Through this same process, meaning is negotiated within OAE activities and mutual understandings of what is developed, for example, of what climbing is or is not and the categories that may differentiate different climbing elements.

Wenger claims that the idea of community is associated with practice and community, causing it to do two things:

- 1) it yields a more tractable characterisation of the concept of practice – in particular, by distinguishing it from less tractable terms like culture, activity or structure.
- 2) it defines a special type of community – a community of practice. (Wenger, 1998, p. 72)

The first point suggests that by aligning community with practice, we can form a more workable concept of practice that recognises the nuances of practice associated with

competency and positioning in a CoP. The second point notes that the community is not just a recognition of a joint enterprise where everyone in the community is working toward the same goal or outcome; rather, the attribution of practice identifies it as a unique community with respect to the practice and competency of that practice that they participate in (Farnsworth et al., 2016). In relation to CoP, Wenger argues that three ideas have already been discussed in this chapter to consider: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). These three aspects include the notion that practice and community do not exist as abstract concepts; rather, they exist because of and in these mutually agreed practices, meaning, negotiation, complex interactions and history. For Wenger, community is integrally tied to practice and the negotiated meaning that is tied in this, suggesting that the concept of community is far more than just the geographical version of community, for instance, linked to people living in a specific area code.

### 3.1.2 Trajectories and multi membership

Wenger (1998) argued that multiple trajectories could exist when understanding membership to CoP's. Firstly, there is a peripheral trajectory that recognises that by choice or necessity, some trajectories will only allow for peripheral participation in a CoP. This trajectory affords enough participation to form access to a CoP but may not represent full competency in the practice of that community. Secondly, inbound trajectories show that a newcomer will have the prospect of becoming a full member, potentially embodying the identity of a master in that CoP. Thirdly, there are insider trajectories which acknowledge that identity is not static. Therefore, continued membership, experiences and negotiation of meaning will lead to a continually negotiated identity. Fourthly, boundary trajectories acknowledge that some individuals will sustain their identity across multiple boundaries of CoPs. Finally, outbound trajectories demonstrate that some trajectories will lead out of a CoP or reposition one's membership away from being a full member and master (Wenger, 1998).

Each of these trajectories is not a standalone position, and it is possible for an individual to be on multiple trajectories in different CoP's. For example, it could be quite possible for an individual to be on an inbound trajectory in the OAE practitioner CoP; however, to do this, they may also have membership to another CoP. As an example, they may be a member of

another CoP as a way to engage in practice that will further support their inbound trajectory in the OAE practitioner CoP. Out of choice, they may not wish to immerse themselves in the other CoP fully, and consequently, out of choice, they remain on a peripheral trajectory. It is also possible that trajectories may change over time. For example, the practitioner may only be choosing a peripheral trajectory in one CoP at one moment in time, as that may be sufficient to meet their needs. However, as time progresses, they may need to develop their membership of that CoP and, therefore, may shift towards an inbound trajectory. It could also be that someone changes from an inbound to an outbound trajectory; for example, when someone retires from a working CoP, they will begin an outbound trajectory as they are minimising their engagement in practice and currency in the CoP. What is important to realise here is that much like a CoP itself, the trajectories that members can take are not static and will develop and change over time.

Wenger (1998) argues that membership to a CoP is not a standalone endeavour and that an individual will be a member of multiple CoP's at any time. This is recognised in his point about an individual having a boundary trajectory. For Wenger (1998), participation and reification can form connections across different boundaries, certainly where “products of reification can cross boundaries and enter different practices” (Wenger, 1998, p. 105). For example, the outdoor environment can be reified in different ways in different practices. For some practitioners, it is reified as something to study and know more about, whereas for other practitioners, it is reified as a tool for them to be able to undertake their practice.

Wenger (1998) notes two key types of connections can be made across boundaries of CoP's, firstly that of boundary objects and secondly that of brokering:

- 1) boundary objects – artifacts, documents, terms, concepts, and other forms of reification around which communities of practice can organize their interconnections.
- 2) brokering – connections provided by people who can introduce elements of one practice into another (Wenger, 1998, p. 105).

An example of a boundary object in this work is the artifact of the OAE degree certificate. Whilst it is a standalone artifact, it has different meanings for different constituents. For those in the OAE HE CoP, it could signify the successful completion of a set programme of study,

demonstrating competency against those criteria set out in that programme that form the practice of being an HE student (e.g., academic writing skills). Meanwhile, in the OAE practitioner CoP, it could signify competency against a set of standards required for a specific job role (e.g., required as part of essential elements in a job description). The concept of brokering is of particular interest in this research. Wenger (1998) argues:

Brokers are able to make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination and alignment between perspectives... It requires enough legitimacy to influence the development of a practice, mobilize attention, and address conflicting interests. It also requires the ability to link practices by facilitating transactions between them, and to cause learning by introducing into a practice elements of another. (Wenger, 1998, p. 109)

It is not inconceivable to think that the OAE practitioners in this research could act as a broker between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP. The point Wenger (1998) makes regarding the linking of practices and causing learning by introducing into practice elements of one another forms this point. This focus is inherently what this research is trying to find out with respect to how the OAE HE studies influence practice in the OAE practitioner field.

#### 3.1.4 Learning, experience and identity

For Wenger (1998), the idea of practice is intertwined with the i

dea of learning. However, Wenger does not explicitly define learning. Illeris (2009, p. 1) argues that there is no "generally accepted definition" of what learning is, and it is a "complex matter". In an effort to define what learning could be, Wenger states that "learning is not just the acquiring of skills and information; it is becoming a certain person" (Wenger, 2010, p. 2), therefore essentially arguing that learning is inextricably linked to the notion of identity. Alongside identity, learning is also linked to the idea of experience where "for learning in practice to be possible, an experience of meaning must be in interaction with a regime of competence" (Wenger, 1998, p. 138) (regimes of competence will be discussed in the next section of this chapter). Wenger (1998) argues that competence may drive experience, and experience may also drive competence. In the first instance, our experience may need to align with a regime of competence. However, we may also have experiences that fall outside the regime of competence where its meaning must be negotiated with the CoP (Wenger, 1998).

The latter could then inform the regime of competence if the experience has legitimacy with the members of the CoP (Wenger, 1998).

Identity is a fundamental part of Wenger's work, to which he dedicates a significant proportion of his 1998 text 'Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity' (Wenger, 1998). The idea of identity follows from learning as, in the simplest sense of the term, Wenger means identity as "a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities" (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). In this respect, it is very applicable to the situation with the OAE practitioner, where their experience on the OAE HE programme could influence their identity through the learning that occurs.

Wenger (1998, p. 149) outlines clear parallels between practice and identity and characterises identity as negotiated experience, where identity is defined by the "ways we experience our selves through participation as well as by the ways we and others reify our selves"; community membership, where "we define who we are by the familiar and unfamiliar"; learning trajectory, which defines "who we are by where we have been and where we are going"; nexus of multi membership, where we reconcile our one identity from the various forms of memberships; and relation between the local and the global, where "we define who we are by negotiating local ways of belonging to broader constellations and manifesting broader styles and discourses".

These characteristics are important for this research when analysing the situation with the OAE practitioner, as each resembles a specific aspect of identity that can be explored. For example, the OAE practitioners will perceive themselves in a certain way through their experiences and memberships of different CoP's, as well as others reifying their identity through their own experiences and negotiations. The notion that identity can be a learning trajectory is of particular interest for this research; as for the OAE practitioners, their study on the OAE HE programme may influence their identity, which informs their perception of where they have been and where they are going. Consequently, this may influence how they perceive their memberships to the OAE practitioner CoP and the OAE HE CoP; as their journey develops, so may their perception of their membership.

Wenger (2010, p. 3) notes:

The focus on identity creates a tension between competence and experience. It adds a dimension of dynamism and unpredictability to the production of practice as each member struggles to find a place in the community.

Three key points from this statement are pertinent to this research. Firstly, the notion that there is tension in the dynamic between competency and experience. It suggests that whilst an OAE practitioner may not be overly experienced, they could be competent, which could cause conflict both for themselves in their trajectory and with other members in the OAE practitioner CoP. The second point to note is the idea of dynamism and unpredictability, which has to be considered in this research. As previously mentioned in this chapter, identity construction is not static, and therefore, the dynamic nature of it can cause unpredictability to the trajectory of the practitioners. The final point is regarding the concept of struggle, and each of the OAE practitioners will struggle to find their place in both the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP. Each of these key points denotes that the OAE practitioners will be continuously grappling with the construction of their identity and that the complexities of their current construction are only observable in this research. Indication can be given to future identity, yet the snapshot of this research can only observe the past and the present and how those experiences in practice have informed the struggle of the OAE practitioners to find their place in the OAE practitioner CoP and construct their current identity.

Identity also needs to be considered when discussing multi membership, and Wenger (1998) states:

a nexus does not merge the specific trajectories we form in our various communities of practice into one, but neither does it decompose our identity into distinct trajectories in each community. In a nexus, multiple trajectories become part of each other, whether they clash or reinforce each other. They are, at the same time one and multiple. (Wenger, 1998, p. 159)

What is argued here is that one's identity is not solely attributed to our trajectory in a CoP; rather, our practices in different CoP's form part of the puzzle that makes up our identity. Our trajectories and identities are not merged into one thing; rather, they stay a complex puzzle of differing pathways and different pieces of our identity in CoPs (Wenger, 1998). It is the process of reconciliation that individuals must go through to construct their identity across multiple CoP's understanding the meanings and forms of competence in each CoP (Wenger, 1998). This is fundamentally the process that the OAE practitioners will be going through as



they negotiate their identity across the boundaries of CoP's that they are members of, not just the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner, but also all of the other CoP's (e.g., family).

### 3.1.5 Competence and negotiability

Wenger (1998) argues that there is an idea of competency in a CoP, meaning that one may be competent in a form of practice. For example, a kayaking CoP would suggest some form of competency in the shared practice of kayaking. This competency could include the ability to perform specific skills, paddling in different environments and being engaged in current discourse. Consequently, participation in a social practice, which includes forms of competency, can dictate our membership to a CoP. For instance, through participation in the practice of kayaking, which holds a form of competency, there would be an automatic membership to the CoP of kayaking. The notion of participation and conditions for learning helps to explore the membership of the OAE practitioners to different CoP's.

Competency was raised by Wenger (1998) in multiple aspects of his theory, but most notably for this research in his idea of a 'regime of competence'. This idea acknowledges that competency is not just in the abstract ability to perform a skill. Instead, it is in the "mutuality of engagement" with other members of the community, in the "accountability to the enterprise" taking responsibility for its pursuit and in the "negotiability of the repertoire" (Wenger, 1998, p. 137). The last of three aspects considers that individual competency can come from the ability of the person to actively engage with the practice, including the history of it, in a way that they can negotiate this experience to be meaningful. Wenger continues to state:

It is by its very practice – not by other criteria – that a community establishes what it is to be a competent participant, an outsider, or somewhere between. In this regard, a community of practice acts as a locally negotiated regime of competence. (Wenger, 1998, p. 137)

The above idea then means that the OAE practitioner CoP and the OAE HE CoP will locally agree amongst its members what constitutes competency in the practice and, therefore, who is competent, who is an outsider (not competent) or somewhere in between these two positions. One aspect that Wenger is clear on is that a regime of competence is not static, as

it is not the case that "one can only know what is already known" (Wenger, 1998, p. 137). What he suggests is that the discovery of something new can lead to acts of competency in the participation of practice.

For Wenger (1998), negotiation forms part of how competence in practice is established, suggesting that it is formed by the way experiences in practice are negotiated amongst the members of the community. Wenger (1998, p. 197) states that:

Negotiability refers to the ability, facility, and legitimacy to contribute to, take responsibility for, and shape the meanings that matter within a social configuration. Negotiability allows us to make meanings applicable to new circumstances, to enlist collaboration of others, to make sense of events or to assert our membership. (Wenger, 1998, p. 197)

The above idea suggests that members negotiate their experiences themselves and with other members, which can contribute to the regime of competence. If they were to experience something new and enlist the collaboration of others, this could legitimise the competency of the practice, influencing the regime of competence. It is, therefore, possible to envisage a localised power imbalance in the CoP, where the negotiated power is aligned with those who are dictating the regime of competence at that point in time, recognising then that this is not a static point and as the regime of competence shifts, so does the distribution of power.

There have been a number of critiques of CoP theory, especially that put forward by Lave and Wenger (1991), stating that there is a lack of recognition of the role of power (Roberts, 2006). The argument for regimes of competence from Wenger (1998) goes somewhat to explaining where power is identified in the theory. However, Roberts (2006) still argues that when looking at CoP, the negotiation of meaning is mostly applied in a top-down approach in the sense that only those who have the power can influence the negotiated aspects of what is important/not important to a CoP. As discussed in this thesis, this work predominantly focuses on the individual rather than the organisation. Therefore, the notions of a regime of competence and negotiability in a CoP are sufficient to understand the potential for power dynamics in the situation with the OAE practitioners. Nonetheless, it is also important to acknowledge that this may also be a potential limitation of this research.

### 3.2 Personal Knowledge Capital

This chapter section will explain how the concept of knowledge capital, and more explicitly personal knowledge capital, can help provide a way of thinking about what is being exchanged between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP. The concept of knowledge capital is not new to this thesis, and it has traditionally been used in relation to business and often refers to the knowledge capital of an organisation. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) suggests that “knowledge-based capital comprises a variety of assets. These assets create future benefits for firms but, unlike machines, equipment, vehicles and structures, they are not physical” (OECD, 2013, p. 22). The OECD's understanding of knowledge-based capital recognises that it is intangible and utilises the idea of tacit knowledge in its explanations. In the simplest sense, they refer to tacit knowledge as the knowledge an individual possesses but can be difficult to transfer into language as it is not codified (OECD, 2013).

In later publications, the OECD further suggested that knowledge-based capital can "relate to investment in human capital and pertain to the way knowledge is generated, codified and used" (OECD, 2017, p. 110). In this respect, it is about how knowledge is acquired and operationalised by each person in the business context. For example, this could be a form of intellectual property or organisational know-how (OECD, 2013). Much like the OECD, Hanushek and Woessmann (2015) explain knowledge capital as the aggregate of cognitive skills of a population. This refers to the idea that it is a collective and not related singularly to an individual. Others have also discussed the concept of knowledge capital associated with the individual. However, the concepts are often linked back to the organisation and how the organisation can use this to improve work performance (Chatzkel, 2003, Owen, 2001). While the notion of collective knowledge capital, or knowledge-based capital, can hold some value to this current research, there will be greater worth for this research in applying this concept to an individual rather than the collective.

Knowledge capital has also been used in relation to digital technology, where Young (2012, p. XVI) applies the concept of personal knowledge capital:

“‘knowledge capital’ brings a fresh and new perspective with its focus on valuing ideas and know-how. It is a journey that leads into a world of personal awareness

as the search for 'know-how' unfolds into the realms of personal knowledge.”  
(Young, 2012, p. XVI)

This offers a slightly different perspective from the concept of knowledge capital identified by the OECD, where Young's concept is much more individualistic. Young's theory of personal knowledge capital applies to both the individual and the collective. Young suggests that we have a dual relationship with personal knowledge capital, where we have the tacit knowledge, or 'inner' knowledge, that we hold in each individual. However, then we use this knowledge to interact with the collective (Young, 2012).

According to Young (2012)

Personal knowledge capital as a concept highlights the value of tacitness in the shape of know-how, insight, ideas and emotion so they can be shared between individual knowledge workers in organisations. (Young, 2012, pp. 11-12)

The point that Young is making here is pertinent to this research through its ability to provide a way to talk about what the OAE practitioners can exchange within and between CoP's. The concept of personal knowledge capital allows us to understand that the OAE practitioners may be developing know-how, insight, ideas and emotions associated with their practice through their OAE HE studies, therefore affording them the use of this acquired personal knowledge capital in the negotiation (and potential re-negotiation) of the meaning of experiences. Using Wenger's term allows us to talk in a reified way about what the OAE practitioners are acquiring from their OAE HE studies, in turn, providing me as a researcher with terminology to use to help analyse the experiences of the OAE practitioners and their multi membership in this current work.

The 'tacitness' referred to by Young (2012) alludes to the idea that individuals are required to constantly renew and rebuild their knowledge to create new knowledge (Young, 2012). An interesting point that Young (2012) makes is that the renewing and building of knowledge is not just done by the individual but also in the collective of the organisation as well. This aligns with Wenger's CoP in that individual members participate in the CoP and collectively participate through mutual engagement, shared repertoire and joint enterprise of the CoP. Aligning what Wenger's (1998) theory outlines and what Young (2012) suggests, it is through the individual and collective renewing and rebuilding of knowledge that participants can develop the CoP. For example, through the acceptance of changes in mutual engagement,

shared repertoire and joint enterprise, such as developments in new practices and new language.

In summary, using the concept of personal knowledge capital aligned with Wenger's (1998) CoP theory provides a reified way to talk about the experiences of the OAE practitioners. It allows me, as a researcher, a language for discussing what the OAE practitioners may be acquiring in one CoP and exchanging within and between other CoPs. Therefore, for this work, I am using the concept of personal knowledge capital in a very similar way to that of Young (2012) as a way to talk about the know-how, insight, ideas and emotions that the OAE practitioners may be renewing and building throughout their experiences in the OAE HE CoP and OAE practitioner CoP.

## Chapter 4 – Approach to the research

This chapter outlines the approach I used to conduct the research for this thesis. I will discuss my position as a researcher, the paradigmatic approach taken, and how the data will be analysed. In the following sections, I will also discuss the role that the Covid-19 pandemic played in altering my chosen methods. In order to help the overall structure of this chapter, I will use a model by Waring (2012) that involves four stages posed as questions: question one asks about our ontological position; question two asks about our epistemological position; question three asks what the methodology is; finally, question four asks us what are the methods that we are going to use. The structure of this chapter will also depict the timeline of events that occurred in my approach to the research.

### 4.1 Ontological and epistemological positions

Hammond and Wellington (2013) argue the importance of outlining one's ontology and epistemology and note that they are interwoven. They also argue that if one's ontological position is not clearly expressed, it can lead to incoherent research (Hammond and Wellington, 2013). Blaikie (2009) argues that whilst some researchers may be in a fixed position about their ontological and epistemological position, there can also be a choice for some researchers to use these as a tool to be able to approach research in differing ways to see phenomena from different perspectives. For me, it is the latter that is applied in this work, and my paradigmatic approach (where a paradigm is my combined ontological and epistemological position) is one of choice to apply a particular perspective to the research. For me, my choice of paradigm is solely influenced by the theoretical underpinning of using CoP, and therefore, this section will outline how my paradigmatic position aligns with CoP theory.

One's ontological and epistemological position can be complex to understand one's approach, which is valid for me. The complexity for me stems from the lack of clarity in the literature, where I have often found positions phrased as an ontological position by one author yet depicted as an epistemological position by another (Crotty, 2005). Therefore, this becomes an area of messiness when outlining my position. The second area of complexity comes from the notion of 'truth' in the discussions of reality and whether or not there are 'truths' that

exist outside the construction of the human mind or whether they are entirely dependent on the relationship between humans and the social world.

For example, critical realists retain a realist ontological position, recognising that a world exists outside of theories and constructions. For Buch-Hansen and Nielsen (2020, p. 13), "realism is the notion that an external, mind-independent reality exists, meaning that objects exist and are in particular ways independent of how they are perceived". An objectivist stance distinguishes that research can display outcomes that may not have any influence from social factors (Collins, 2010). However, there are limitations to an objectivist ontological position in that it objectifies complex social issues; for example, it would argue that identity is fixed and immutable. Therefore, it does not acknowledge the complexity of how that identity has been constructed, changed and influenced by social structures. Objectivism is often aligned with a positivist framework, which identifies that social structures are fixed entities that are measurable outside any human construction (Sarantakos, 2013). Bryman (2012) notes that positivism is viewed by many in differing ways, from those who view it as a derogatory term used to outline unrefined and often shallow data collection to those who see it as a fundamental research position. Therefore, positivism falls into the same critique of realism for this research in that it objectifies complex social issues.

Another position that would potentially offer a more holistic approach and include consideration of these social factors would be that of a subjectivist ontology. A subjectivist ontology assumes that social phenomena are only created from the actions of individuals and their perceptions of what they are experiencing in that social space (Saunders et al., 2009). Subjectivism is often aligned with having an interpretivist epistemology, where Collins (2010, p. 39) states that "interpretivism does not aim to report on an objective reality, but rather to understand the world as it is experienced and made meaningful by human beings". Crotty (2005, p. 67) also states that interpretivism "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world". A subjectivist ontology can be aligned with a constructivist or a constructionist epistemological position; where a constructivist position concerns the researcher with individual experiences of actors in the social space; and a constructionist position concerns the researcher with the social structures that influence the social space (Burr, 2003, Sarantakos, 2013).

Seel (2011) identifies that there are multiple types of constructivism; however, three key perspectives are acknowledged by Given (2008), namely, psychological constructivism, social constructivism, and radical constructivism. Psychological constructivism uses the theories of Dewey, Piaget and Bruner to understand that an individual is an active participant in the construction of knowledge (Given, 2008). Social constructivism is based on Vygotsky's theory. It acknowledges that there is no objective reality but rather that social constructs and human history are influential in the development of knowledge (Given, 2008). Lastly, radical constructivism is an "extreme form of psychological constructivism" (Given, 2008, p. 118) and is based on Glaserfeld's understanding that "there is no absolute external learning environment; there is only the perceived learning environment built on each student's mind" (Given, 2008, p. 119).

Each paradigm previously outlined could provide a specific perspective to this research. However, one's paradigm must align with the theoretical underpinning of the work. Therefore, a subjectivist ontological position aligned with a social constructivist paradigm will be adopted. Section 4.1.1 will outline why this is the most appropriate paradigm for this research and CoP.

#### 4.1.1 Subjectivism and social constructivism in this research

Subjectivism is an appropriate ontological position for this research as its key assumption that social phenomena are only created from individual experiences and perceptions in a social space (Saunders et al., 2009) aligns with one of the key premises of Wenger's (1998) CoP theory. CoP acknowledges that each individual will experience differing trajectories of memberships based on their negotiation of meaning in each CoP. The social structure of a CoP can only exist because of the practice, experience and negotiation of each of its members. So, whilst there is a collective endeavour in the creation of the boundaries of a CoP, it is negotiated by the individuals inside of it. The social space of a CoP can be seen through the perceptions of its members and their experience in that social space. As a researcher in this work, I accept that there is not one objective reality of a CoP. For example, the OAE HE CoP is not a social space constructed outside of the individual members. Instead, I perceive the OAE



HE CoP as a construct of both myself as a researcher and the members. The only way I am able to research that CoP is through understanding the experience of each individual in that social space.

Social constructivism aligns with this approach as it sees "the person as having an active role in the creation of their experience; each person perceives the world differently and creates their own meaning from events" (Burr, 2003, p. 201). In this respect, the way in which I am able to research each of the CoP's is through the individual constructions of each practitioner. One key point here is in the mention of generating meaning, which is a focal point in the CoP theory used in this work. Each practitioner will negotiate the meaning of their experiences in the social space and, therefore, negotiate their identity and membership as part of that experience. Therefore, social constructivism allows me to explore the social structures by interpreting the experiences and meaning making of the OAE practitioners.

It is also noted that social constructivism assumes "the construction of understanding is a combination of prior knowledge and new information. Individuals can accept new ideas or fit them into their established views of the world" (Seel, 2011, p. 783). This supports my understanding of personal knowledge capital, as discussed in the previous chapter, in that it is a way to talk about the know-how, insight, ideas and emotions that the OAE practitioners may be renewing and building throughout their experiences in the OAE HE CoP and OAE practitioner CoP. This idea of personal knowledge capital accepts the constructivist perspective that knowledge generated from the OAE HE CoP can be exchanged in the OAE practitioner CoP so that practitioners accept it into their already established views or accept it as a new idea. Therefore, they can assimilate the knowledge generated into their existing practice without challenge or accept it as something new that they can use to challenge and adapt existing practice.

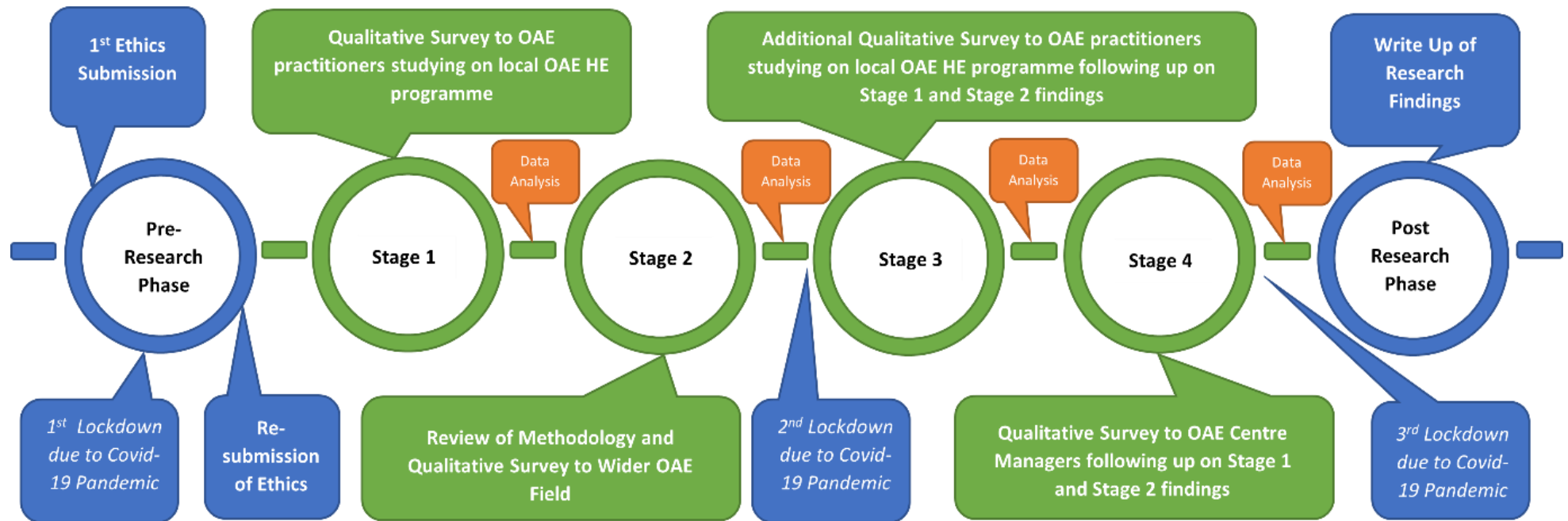
## 4.2 Methodology and methods

The methodological approach for this research was that of hermeneutics. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that a hermeneutical methodology aligns with a constructivist epistemology. Cohen et al. (2018, p. 69) state that "in a hermeneutic world we need theory to understand and interpret experiences, social behaviour, societies, texts and discourses". In this respect, a

hermeneutical methodological approach allows for the use of CoP to interpret the experiences of the OAE practitioners in this research. With respect to informing the methods used in this research, Bryman (2012) states that a hermeneutic approach means that the researcher must analyse the data generated with an understanding of the context in which the participants are situated. Therefore, the chosen methods must be appropriate to understand this. In order to articulate the methods used in this research, it is important to understand the changes that occurred throughout the research due to the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

#### 4.2.1 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on chosen methods

A significant proportion of this research was undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic; for that reason, this section of the chapter will consider the original choice of methods and the changes made due to the challenges faced. This chapter will also identify that the final write-up of this work was about two years after the pandemic, and therefore, there have been lessons learnt in that time. Figure 4.1 sets out the research timeline from the pre-research phase of ethical submission to the write-up phase. It depicts the timings of the lockdowns, which inevitably affected the methods used to generate the data.

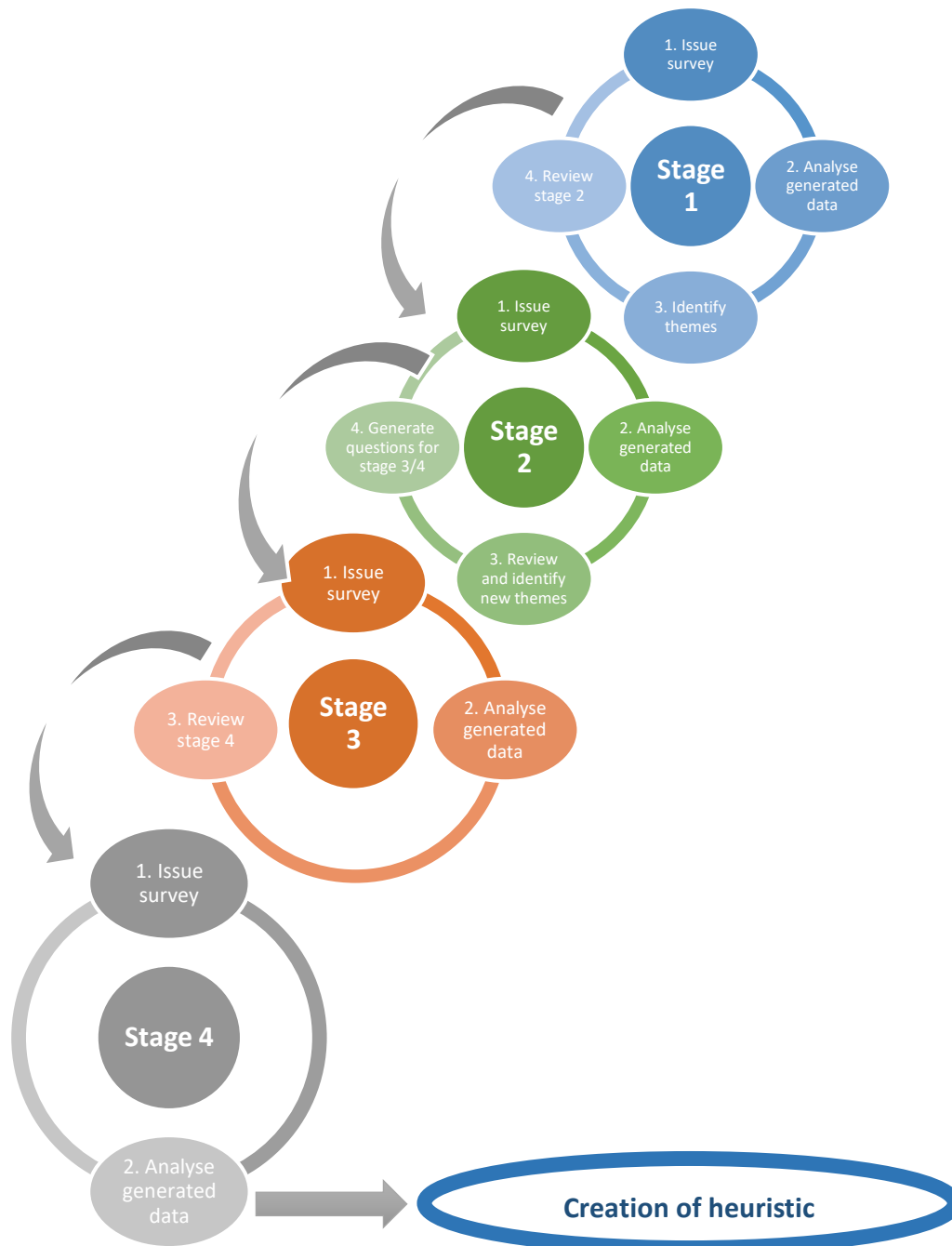


**Figure 4.1:** Research timeline, including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

The generation of data occurred through four stages of research. The following sections of this chapter will briefly outline the intent of the phase, the chosen methods, and any changes that occurred due to the pandemic. The responses and data analysis will also be discussed.

#### 4.3 The research journey

Figure 4.2 demonstrates the journey of the research and the iterative process that occurred at each stage.



**Figure 4.2:** A depiction of the research journey.

#### 4.3.1 Stage one

The purpose of stage one was to generate some initial findings that could be developed throughout stages two, three and four. The initial phase targeted the OAE practitioners from the local OAE centre who were actively studying the OAE HE programme. The objective of this

stage was to identify what the concept of practice meant to the OAE practitioners and then explore any common themes in whether they felt their OAE HE study had any influence on their practice in the OAE practitioner CoP.

#### *4.3.1.1 Stage one methods*

The chosen method for stage one of the research was using a qualitative survey, and there were two fundamental reasons for this choice. The first was the timing in which this research phase was undertaken, where most of the OAE practitioners were coming to the end of the academic year and, therefore, were awaiting results and not attending lectures. The timing meant that many of them were working in the OAE centre in the busy summer period, which had potential issues accessing time to undertake other methods, such as interviews or focus groups. The second reason for choosing qualitative surveys was that some OAE practitioners were no longer in the locality of the researcher, HE organisation and OAE centre.

Cohen et al. (2018) state that one of the advantages of using surveys is the ability to observe patterns of responses, which supports their use in this initial phase of research. Cohen et al. (2018) also note that another benefit of surveys is the ability to undertake a pilot to understand if the intent of the questions matches the participants' interpretation. Therefore, critical friends were used to pilot the survey questions before sending them to the OAE practitioners. The pilot outcome led to six questions, identified below and in Appendix A.

- (1) What is the title of the course you are studying?*
- (2) What year of study are you in?*
- (3) How would you define your practice in the OAE field?*
- (4) Do you feel your higher education study of OAE has influenced your practice in the field? if so, in what ways?*
- (5) Have there been any specific subjects/topics in your higher education course that have influenced your practice in the field more than others? If so how?*
- (6) If you would be happy to be contacted with any follow up questions, please leave your email here.*

Questions one and two were included to identify if there were any potential differences in the data generated from different OAE HE programmes and the year of study that the OAE practitioner was in. The purpose of question three was to explore what the OAE practitioners defined as their practice. As practice is an integral part of the OAE practitioner CoP, it requires

some exploration with the practitioners themselves. Questions four and five were explicit in their intent to find out if the OAE practitioners felt there was any influence from the OAE HE study on their practice in the OAE practitioner CoP. Finally, question six was to identify whether the OAE practitioners would consent to be contacted again for any follow-up research.

In order to generate data that was going to contribute to answering the specific research questions, it was decided not to ask personal questions, such as age and gender. At this stage of the research into this subject area, I felt it important to focus on the broader outcomes. Follow-up research and data generation can explore the influence that factors such as age and gender have on the outcomes. However, these are not significant factors to consider in the analysis for this specific work. Therefore, the questions have been averted. This was also to ensure a simple and quick process for participants to complete the survey and not generate unnecessary data that could increase completion time for participants. The survey was created using an online Google form. Braun and Clarke (2013) identify that online surveys can be quick and easy to distribute, provide a high level of anonymity, and, most notably for this research, support completion for geographically dispersed participants. Because I did not have direct contact with the OAE participants, I initially had no means of contact, so using a gatekeeper was key to accessing the OAE practitioners (Cohen et al., 2018). The gatekeeper for this researcher was one of the managers at the OAE centre where the OAE practitioners were employed.

#### *4.3.1.2 Stage one responses and approach to analysis*

At the outset of the research, the intended sample size for stage one was 12 participants, all actively studying the OAE HE programme at the HE organisation whilst simultaneously being employed by the local OAE centre. For unknown reasons, not all 12 practitioners participated in the survey, and the sample size was halved to six participants. This ultimately led to changes to the intended plan for stage two of the research, discussed in the next section. The intention was to analyse the data generated at stage one to inform the questions to be asked at the stage; however, due to the sample size being reduced to six, the ability to identify emergent

themes through thematic analysis became problematic. Cohen et al. (2018) accept that low response rates are one of the challenges of using surveys as a method, and therefore, this issue is not unique to this research. The sample size would have been less problematic had the responses provided by the six practitioners been more substantial in length. The responses consisted of short answers ranging from 2 words to 168 words, with an average of 56 words per answer to each question. Short answers provided some clear insight into the experiences of these six OAE practitioners; however, they did not provide enough rich data to offer reliable codes and themes.

#### 4.3.2 Stage two

The initial intent of stage two was to use the wider field of OAE to quantify if the emergent themes from stage one were agreeable. For example, a theme emerged, and the OAE practitioners in the wider field were then asked if they agreed that this influenced the OAE HE study.

##### 4.3.2.1 Stage two methods

Due to a smaller than anticipated sample size in stage one, the method for this stage shifted from a different survey to stage one to extend the method used at stage one into stage two. A minor amendment was made to question one to make it more applicable to the wider field of OAE, and then the same method was employed to expand the sample size from stage one. The questions used in stage two are identified in Appendix B.

Sarantakos (2013) suggests that internet sampling is part of the armoury of modern researchers and elicits similar tactics to advertising the research through more traditional means, such as newspapers. Using social media and platforms such as Facebook gives access to targeted groups. Therefore, specific OAE-related groups were used to post the link to the survey. It was made clear in the information on the post that this research was available to be completed by anyone studying or who had studied an OAE-related degree. Sarantakos (2013) discusses the issues with internet-based sampling in the sense that there can sometimes be issues with negative responses due to users feeling like they are being spammed with the number of research projects being put onto the site. Using a social media



platform like Facebook means that the participants can choose whether they want to engage with the research or ignore the post. Creating this choice gives OAE practitioners the option in the wider field, limiting the scope for negative responses.

#### *4.3.2.2 Stage two responses and approach to analysis*

As discussed in section 4.2.1.2, the approach to stage two of the research was amended due to the smaller sample size at stage one. Therefore, the intention of stage two was to expand the sample size from the six participants at stage one to a minimum of 20 participants in total. Data was generated from 25 participants, six at stage one and 19 at stage two. The data generated was of a similar depth of information to stage one, with answers consisting of short responses ranging from 1 word when asked about how they would define their practice to 137 words when asked, 'Do you feel your higher education study of OAE has influenced your practice in the field? if so, in what ways?'. The average word count for answers at stage two was less than that achieved at stage one, with an average of 33 words per response. Although the length of the responses was slightly less than that from stage one, it provided more responses to code to identify any commonalities and emerging themes.

Initial data analysis occurred at this stage to understand key themes from the responses at stages one and two. Analysis began from the perspective of broadly trying to answer the research question: Can an OAE-specific HE study influence the practice of an OAE practitioner in the OAE field? I approached the analysis this way as I had no preconceived ideas of what if any, influence would be shown in the responses. Therefore, I chose to use data-driven coding, which allowed me to derive codes from the data, compared to concept-driven coding, where I would have had to approach the data with a preconceived idea of what I was looking for (Gibbs, 2018). The codes then informed the themes generated in the thematic analysis process.

Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 175) note that thematic analysis is "a method for identifying themes and patterns of meaning across a dataset about a research question" and, therefore, provides a way for me to see meaning in the data in relation to whether there was an influence of the OAE HE study on the practice on OAE practitioners in the field. In their early work, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis is a more accessible analytical tool in comparison to other approaches, such as discourse analysis or grounded theory, which

have much stricter boundaries when it comes to undertaking high-quality and rigorous analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that:

Thematic analysis is not wed to any pre-existing theoretical framework, and so it can be used within different theoretical frameworks (although not all), and can be used to do different things within them. Thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society. (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 9)

In this sense, thematic analysis provides me with an accessible way to analyse data within my chosen theoretical framework and explore the experiences of the OAE practitioners. Despite providing a step-by-step guide in their 2006 paper, Braun and Clarke (2021) have discussed more recently the problematic nature of how thematic analysis has been used in recent work.

Braun and Clarke (2021) identify ten key problems in their examination of the way thematic analysis has been used, with their first point being the lack of recognition that thematic analysis is multifaceted and not simply just one approach. The other problems Braun and Clarke (2021) identified broadly relate to how thematic analysis is used, from anecdotally referencing it and not actually reading their work through to assumptions about its relation to the theoretical framework to the confusion of codes and themes. All the problems identified indicate one core premise: high-quality thematic analysis dictates that the author must first understand what type of thematic analysis they are undertaking, clearly present this information, and in relation to their theoretical underpinnings.

For the aforementioned reasons, I will explain how thematic analysis is used as an analytical tool in this research. At the outset, it was evident that I would be using reflexive thematic analysis, as Braun and Clarke (2021) state that it:

“captures approaches that fully embrace qualitative research values and the subjective skills the researcher brings to the process... Analysis, which can be more inductive or more theoretical/deductive, is a situated interpretative reflexive process. Coding is open and organic, with no use of any coding framework. Themes should be the final ‘outcome’ of data coding and iterative theme development.” (Braun and Clarke, 2021, pp. 333-334)

Due to not having pre-determined ideas about what the data might tell me, coding was developed openly and organically, as Braun and Clarke (2021) suggest. The data generated the codes, rather than any pre-determined coding framework used to analyse the data. This

approach maintained my subjectivist ontological position; Braun and Clarke (2021) state that reflexive thematic analysis embraces the subjective skills that the researcher can bring to the process. It recognises that the codes generated are from my interpretation of the data and represent a constructed reality of the phenomena, not an absolute truth.

Three key themes were identified from the thematic analysis: 'knowledge and understanding influences', 'personal influences', and 'negative or no influence'. Codes related to the theme 'knowledge and understanding influences' included academic skill, knowledge, theory and understanding. Overall, the theme included any coded responses that suggested an influence of the OAE HE study on the participant's knowledge and understanding of theory and practice. The theme of 'personal influences' was generated from the responses that suggested an influence from the OAE HE study on the understanding of why the practitioners do things in their practice in the OAE practitioner CoP. It also included other influences that included codes associated with building confidence, beliefs, motivation, aspiration and personal development. There were minimal codes associated with the 'negative or no influences' themes. However, I created it as a theme as it was important to acknowledge the responses that suggest that there was no influence from the practitioner's OAE HE studies, or if there was an influence, it was portrayed as negative. The codes generated and grouped into each theme can be found in Appendix Q.

In order to undertake the data analysis, I used the software package NVivo to support the process. I chose this package because other authors, such as Nowell et al. (2017), also used NVivo and stated that it made their analysis of data sets more efficient and facilitated sophistication in their analysis. Adu (2019) also advocated using NVivo, outlining its flexibility with the analysis of various data files, the ease of importing data for analysis and the system's user-friendliness. Another factor in my decision to use this software was that I could also access it through my doctoral programme. These were key reasons for my choice to use NVivo, but also my recognition that I needed to be able to store my data and subsequent analysis electronically on a password-protected system. This would ensure I did not risk misplacing paper copies of my data analysis and coding. After conducting my initial data analysis phase using this platform, I recognised the simplicity of its use and the ease of completing electronically what I previously would have undertaken using highlighters and paper. It is important to recognise that whilst I, and others, have found benefits of using NVivo

to support analysis, there are also some considerations of the limitations of its use as well. Cohen et al. (2018) argue the benefits of such software packages. However, they also recognise the danger of the researcher becoming too far removed from the analysis. Their argument highlights that using software packages cannot replace the role of the human in the analytical process. It is important for the researcher to remain close to the data, not just the coding, but the bigger picture within which the coding exists. This was something I was conscious of as a researcher, and throughout all of the analysis, my focus remained on how the codes exist in the context of how the participants provided them. This meant not just extracting parts of the text but also using NVivo to support the finding of those parts to explore in the context of the larger text.

#### 4.3.3 Stage three

The purpose of stage three was to build upon the data generated from stages one and two. The changes made to stage two were still applicable to the purpose of this stage, and the intent was to minimise some of the limitations of survey research through the use of focus groups. Braun and Clarke (2013) accept a limitation of using surveys, arguing that they are fixed and the researcher cannot probe the responses from the participants. Whilst this critique is more limiting for quantitative surveys, it is still a valid critique for the qualitative surveys used in stages one and two. Due to the lack of interaction between the researcher and the participant, there is limited scope to probe the responses at the time in which they were given. For example, it could be probing what one of the OAE practitioners meant by a specific term or statement they used. Another pitfall of surveys is the reliance on honest responses from the participants and their ability to remember accounts relevant to the research (Menter et al., 2011).

##### 4.3.3.1 Stage three methods

The initial plan was to conduct focus groups for stages three and four to minimise the impact of the limitations, as mentioned earlier, and build on the responses from stages one and two. The emergent themes identified from the analysis at stages one and two were to provide the

basis to take back to the OAE practitioners to discuss. However, it has been stages three and four that the Covid-19 pandemic has most significantly impacted. The focus groups were planned to be undertaken on the week that England went into a forced lockdown; therefore, they were all cancelled in adherence with guidance from the Government. Therefore, a decision was made to adapt the research methods, seeking additional ethical approval to continue the research.

It was important to consider an approach that supported the ability to probe the responses given but in a way that considered the safety implications of researching in a global pandemic. Reflecting on that time now, it would seem that the use of online platforms may have been an appropriate approach to undertake the focus groups; however, at the time, I (and the participants) did not know what we know now. The use of online platforms to undertake such research is much more commonplace now, but it was not during the phases of my data collection. Even if the participants and I were well versed in technology to support remote focus groups, the pattern of their work, study and operating from multiple locations meant asking them to find a common time to get together would not be appropriate. Therefore, it felt ethically and professionally more reasonable to ask them to complete a qualitative survey in their own time. Rightly or wrongly, this felt like the appropriate action to take, balancing my desire to generate effective data with a professional responsibility towards the participants, all of whom were dealing with very novel and demanding working conditions.

The survey questions were developed from the thematic analysis of the generated data at stages one and two. The emergent themes discussed in stage two were then formed into questions to give back to the OAE practitioners who participated in the research at stage one. In order to maintain consistency in approaching these participants, the same gatekeeper was used to gain participation from all six OAE practitioners who responded at stage one.

Five questions were developed for stage three, outlined below and in Appendix C.

*1) What would you define as an OAE expert in the field?*

*(2) Do you feel that your OAE HE study can support you in becoming an OAE expert, if so how?*

*(3a) Responses from the initial survey suggested that knowledge and understanding about theory and practice gained from their OAE HE study were a*

*common influence on OAE practitioners. Can you please expand why you think this may be?*

*(3b) Do you feel that this has had an influence on your practice? If so how?*

*(4a) Another outcome of the initial survey suggested that OAE HE study could influence practitioners by helping them to know more about the reasons why they do things in their practice. Can you please expand why you think this may be?*

*(4b) Has any of your OAE HE study influenced you in this way, if so how?*

*(5) Is there anything else you would you like to add regarding your OAE HE study and the influence it is/is not having on your practice in the field?*

Question one was developed to identify what the OAE practitioners defined as an expert in the field of OAE. It was important to identify this due to the lack of definition of the 'master' from Wenger (1998) and to explore what the term meant for the OAE practitioners. It was discussed in chapter three that it was important for this research to consider any reified notion of what a 'master' may be. Therefore, it felt important to me to understand the construction of what the practitioners may see a master as. For this research, I chose a slightly different language in the question as the term 'master' is not one I have ever used in my experience in the OAE field and HE field. The term expert was used in replacement as a synonym of the master as it was a term I have both used and heard in my experience in the OAE field and the teaching and designing of the OAE HE curriculum. By understanding how the practitioners viewed an expert, it was then possible to ask question two to determine whether the OAE practitioners felt their OAE HE studies could support them in becoming the expert they previously defined. Without quantifying what the practitioners understood an OAE expert to be, it would be difficult to analyse the characteristics of what they felt the OAE HE study was, or was not, supporting them to become.

Questions three and four were developed from the emergent themes at stages one and two; how these themes were generated will be discussed later in this thesis. The first theme was about how knowledge and understanding of theory and practice gained from the OAE HE study were a common influence on OAE practitioners. Therefore, question three was developed to understand why the OAE practitioners felt this may be the case and whether they felt this directly influenced them. The second key theme that emerged was how the OAE

HE study could influence practitioners by helping them know more about why they do things in their practice. The theme was then developed in question four, which again asked the OAE practitioners from stage one to expand on why they thought this was and whether it directly influenced them. Question five was developed to provide an opportunity for any open comments on the OAE HE study's influence on the OAE practitioner's practice.

#### *4.3.3.2 Stage three responses and approach to analysis*

Five responses were received from participants targeted at this stage, who also participated in stage one of the research. The responses received at stage three were similar in length to those received at stages one and two, ranging from three to 111 words. The average word count was similar to stages one and two, with 41 words per question. The data generated did allow for further analysis and coding against the original themes to understand more about the experiences of the OAE practitioner related explicitly to their OAE HE study influencing their knowledge and understanding and the personal influences as well. Although the responses were limited to five participants, the nature of the questions following up on stages one and two meant that this stage was used more to corroborate the responses from stages one and two, and it was not felt that further exploration with other OAE practitioners was required at this point in the research.

Data analysis for this stage occurred through additional coding in line with that completed at stage two. This was to check whether any new themes that differed from those generated at stage two were emerging. If there were new themes, these would need to be addressed in stage four. However, coding did not identify anything of significance in the new data.

#### 4.3.4 Stage four

This final stage aimed to ask the local OAE centre managers questions to understand their perspective of any influence from the OAE HE study on their staff. It was intended that all six managers at the centre would participate in the research; however, four actively participated during stage four. Another purpose of this stage was to explore why the centre has supported their staff in undertaking the OAE HE study whilst employed with them and any implications that may have occurred.

#### 4.3.4.1 Stage four methods

Much like stage three, this final stage was going to be undertaken through focus groups, which led to an alteration of methods due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the known engagement with the qualitative surveys throughout the previous stages, this method was chosen to generate data from the managers at the local OAE centre. The use of the survey was to ensure the safety of everyone involved and continue to generate qualitative data that could be analysed. The questions devised for this stage were predominantly focussed on the same points as stage three, with the focus altered to how the managers felt the emergent themes influenced their staff.

All of the questions used in this stage are identified in Appendix D, and the new questions developed specifically for the OAE managers are provided below:

*(5) Why have you supported your staff to undertake OAE HE study whilst employed with you?*

*(6) Has there been any barriers/challenges you have faced supporting your staff to undertake their studies?*

*(7) Is there anything else you would you like to add regarding the OAE HE study of your staff and the influence it is/is not having on their practice in the field?*

Question five was developed to identify why the managers at the local OAE centre were prepared to support their staff in undertaking the OAE HE study. Question six was developed to understand the practicalities of the situation with the OAE practitioners and what barriers, if any, the OAE centre has had to overcome to support the opportunity for OAE HE study for their staff. Finally, question seven provided an opportunity for the OAE managers to provide additional thoughts on the influence of the OAE HE study on their staff.

#### 4.3.4.2 Stage four responses and approach to analysis

The data generated from the four OAE managers was individually more detailed than those received from individuals at stages one to three. Responses ranged from 44 to 516 words, with an average response length of 101 words per question. The nature of the questions following stages one, two, and three allowed for sufficient information to be gathered and



added to the data pool generated throughout the earlier stages. Collating all of the data from all of the stages gave a total of 24 individual participants and a total of 29 responses.

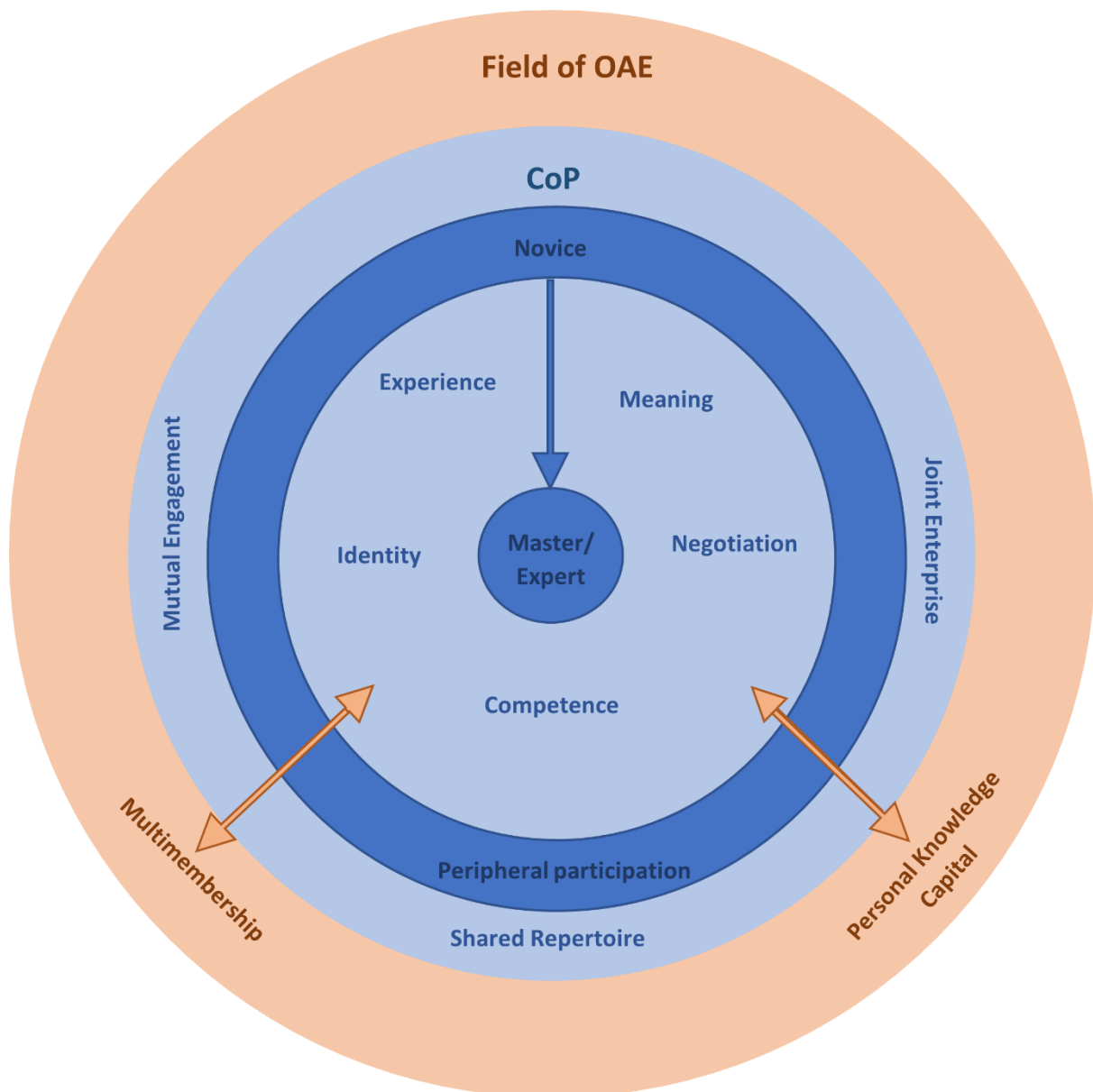
It was after the generation of data at stage four that an in-depth analysis occurred. During this time, the analysis became somewhat messy and complex in terms of making sense of what the data was saying about the theoretical framework of CoP. While the themes generated at stage two served a purpose for informing stages three and four, trying to make sense of what they were saying about CoP became complex. Therefore, it became apparent that my approach needed to change, and it became a theoretical thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013), where my analysis was then guided by the theoretical concepts discussed in chapter three. During this analysis stage, I also realised I needed a way to look at the data and talk about it that would make sense to me and others. For this reason, I decided that a heuristic device would provide both a visual and practical tool for me to use to complete my analysis.

#### 4.4 Conception of heuristic device

The use of a heuristic device is not unique to this research, and researchers have used them for a number of years to help them understand a social phenomenon. Huffman and Tracy (2018, p. 559) argue that heuristic devices provide “modes of thinking in ways to create new forms of thinking” and also “lower cognitive barriers to invention by offering generative frameworks”. This was a key reason for my choice to use a heuristic device, as I wanted a way to focus my thinking and make sense of my findings in the generated data. Curley et al. (2015) outline the risks of using heuristics and state that some research proposes a negative bias for decision-making, which could lead to sub-optimal decisions about the research. However, they also argue that in more recent research, heuristics has been seen as a positive decision-making tool due to the biases they create (Curley et al., 2015). According to Curley et al. (2015), a bias for a researcher can be an effective tool for decision-making as it can support the avoidance of irrelevant information and efficiently focus attention on the most relevant information. For me, the positioning of a bias towards particular elements of CoP theory was key in my decision-making and consequently supported the focus of my analysis. Rather than

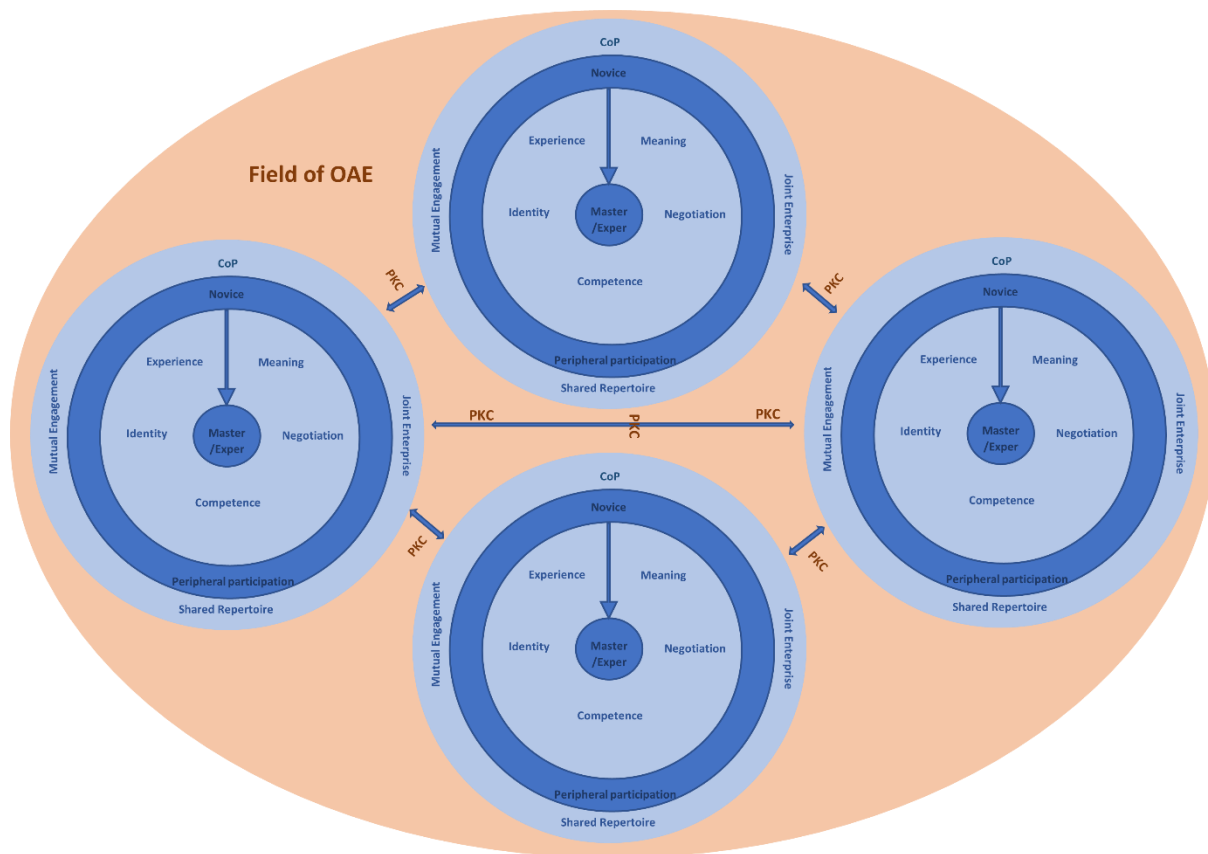
being consumed by the breadth of information presented in my data, the heuristic device provided a framework to make decisions about my data.

The heuristic device created for my research is shown in Figure 4.3. It represents the key discussion points about the theory of CoP, as provided in chapter three.



**Figure 4.3:** Heuristic device used in the research

The inner aspects of the device represent the key discussion points from chapter three regarding the elements of CoP that form the theoretical framework. The outer aspects of the heuristic device represent the field of OAE and how the CoP will reside in this field. It also represents how this only depicts one CoP, whereas in reality, these will be multiple, hence my use of the term multi membership. This term shows the potential for membership to other CoP's to influence the CoP in question, as well as the influence which personal knowledge capital exchanged between CoP's may have. Figure 4.4 represents how the heuristic device can be used to identify multiple CoP's in the OAE field.

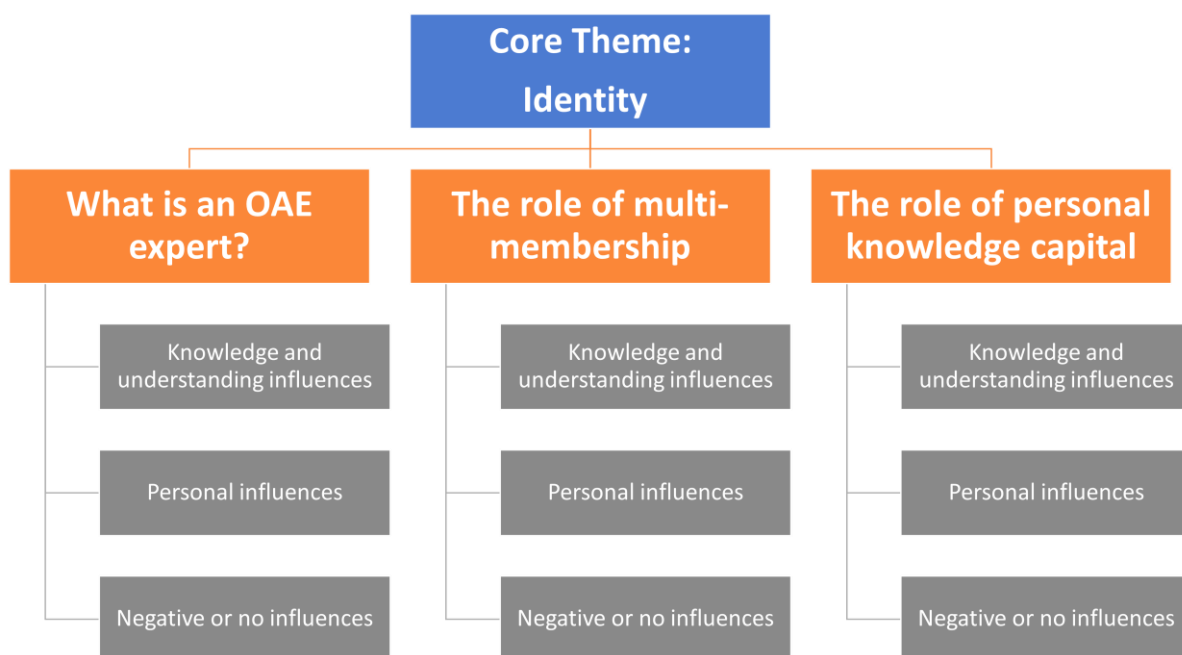


**Figure 4.4:** Heuristic device representing multi membership to four CoP's (PKC represents personal knowledge capital)

#### 4.4.1 How the heuristic device was used

The use of the heuristic device provided a framework to look at the data, and from its use, there was some clarity drawn from the generated initial codes and themes. The intention was

to use all elements of the device; however, very early in its use, it became apparent that there were already dominant codes that linked to the key aspects of the device. Consequently, three additional themes were then generated: 'What is an OAE expert?', 'The role of multi membership', and 'The role of personal knowledge capital'. These then became the main themes, with the previously generated themes at stage two being relegated to sub-themes. Once I began using the heuristic device to frame the data, it became apparent that most of the codes generated at stage two could be attributed to the notion of *identity*. Therefore, this became the core theme. These changes are depicted in Figure 4.5.



**Figure 4.5:** Themes presented from the outcome of heuristic device use

Although the core theme of identity became the focal point, alongside the notion of master/expert, multi membership and personal knowledge capital, this did not exclude the other elements of the device. Fundamentally, they cannot be ignored as they are integral in reifying a CoP. The other elements of the device were used holistically, with attention to the relationships between them to help discuss responses related to the more dominant focal points of the device.

#### 4.5 Recognising the limitations of the methodological approach

I considered multiple aspects in making my choices for methods to use in this research. For example, how my choice of methods could stay in line with my chosen ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches; how easy the methods chosen were for participants to access and complete; what methods would still allow for me to collect data but not break Government guidelines for lockdowns; how the methods could allow me to generate rich enough data to support an analysis. There were no easy answers to any of these, and there were pros and cons to many different approaches. The fundamental limitation was the use of surveys in the latter stages, as this method was only ever intended as an initial data generation tool to help me understand the context of the practitioners to discuss in the latter stages. Whilst this can only be an assumption, using focus groups would likely have opened up an opportunity to generate a richer and more detailed data source.

On reflection, there are things I have learned since the pandemic that may have influenced my decision-making, and if it were to happen again, I would likely make different choices for my methods. The reason for this is the incredible changes we had in using technology throughout the pandemic. I and the participants are situated in a world where the use of technology to interact with one another is a much more established practice than it was when I began my research. Using online platforms to make live calls to others has become an established part of my daily practice. Had I had the knowledge, skills and technology back at the start of my research that I do now, I would likely have continued with my choice of focus groups with the adaptation of using an online platform to conduct them.

With all of that said, I do not feel like the adaptations to my methods and the continued use of surveys impacted my ability to answer my research questions. There are always limitations to research and questions about what would have happened had I chosen a different approach. The recognition of this opens up opportunities to further the research conducted in this thesis.

#### 4.6 Ethical consideration

British Educational Research Association (BERA) outline how ethical considerations in research should be an iterative process throughout all stages (BERA, 2018). Their suggestion has been a consideration in this research with the ever-changing landscape due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Multiple changes were made to the methods used in this research. Therefore, each amendment was required to go through a formal ethics panel to acquire ethical approval from the University of Plymouth to undertake the research. At each stage, ethical approval was acquired, which enforced considerations around acquiring consent from the participants, transparency of information about what the participants are taking part in, providing a right to withdraw and outlining principles of confidentiality of data. All statements about these were provided in the ethics applications approved for use (Appendix E).

Another consideration in this research was gaining consent from the organisations from which participants at stages one, three and four were coming. There is potential for this research to provide outcomes that are not desirable for the organisations participating. For example, for the HE organisation, the research could produce detrimental results to their marketing of the programme if the results outline no influence or negative influence from studying the OAE HE programme. For the OAE centre, it could also cause conflict with respect to allowing their staff time off from their working programme to attend their OAE HE study. Therefore, it was important to include consent from both organisations in the ethics application, which was acquired from the leadership team at the educational organisation and the trustees and management of the OAE organisation.

## Chapter 5 - Analysis and Discussion of Findings

As noted in the previous chapter, the main entry point for the analysis in this thesis is through the notion of identity. The first analytical phase that brought identity to the forefront was when analysing the responses from the OAE practitioners when they were asked, '*How would you define your practice in the OAE field?*'. Their responses were coded into a singular theme of 'practice classification', which contained the following codes: Teacher, Practitioner, Lecturer, Instructor, Facilitator, Educator, Coach and Undefined (examples of specific responses against the codes can be found in Appendix F). The most common classification the participants identified with was an 'Instructor', representing eight participants in the overall responses. It was the only classification coded in both the responses from the OAE practitioners working in the local OAE centre and the OAE practitioners from the wider field. The classifications of roles provided by the OAE practitioners align with Wenger's notion of shared repertoire, which he noted includes the discourse about the way in which members of a CoP create meaningful statements about their world, including their identity as members (Wenger, 1998). In this respect, it is what the OAE practitioners have done in their responses to defining their practice. They have created a meaningful statement about their experience in the field of OAE through a reified identity, which may also relate to their specific role in that field.

Wenger (1998) also identifies roles as a form of identity conception. However, the construction of identity is far more complex than just attributing a role. It involves a complex layering of participation and reification through the negotiation of meaning from a lived experience and not merely a discourse abstract from social participation (Wenger, 1998). Consequently, attributing a role to portray one's identity is only a small part of what the OAE practitioner's identity is constructed of. Identity is constructed through the continual negotiation of self and meaning; therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the identity portrayed by the OAE practitioners in this research is just a snapshot of time. In order to better understand the complexity of the identity construction portrayed by the OAE practitioners, the following chapter will focus on analysing the three themes sitting under an identity (as depicted in Figure 4.5). Therefore, the following chapter will be approached in four phases: (1) An analysis of the concept of what an expert is in the OAE field; (2) An analysis of the role

of multi membership in identity construction; (3) An analysis of the role of personal knowledge capital in identity construction; (4) An analysis of the perspective of the OAE managers from the local OAE centre of supporting their staff to undertake OAE HE studies.

Throughout this chapter, the discussion will use direct quotations from literature, which will be identified in quotation marks ("quote"), and quotations from participants will be identified in quotation marks, with italic text and separated from the main body of the text (*'quote'*). The reference to which participant being quoted will be identified in brackets at the end of the quote with an 'S' and a number (e.g. S1), which means the stage of research, and a 'P' with a number (e.g. P1) means the participant number from that stage. When participants who participated in stages one and three of the research are quoted in the text, they will be identified with the participant number they were at stage one and stage three (e.g. S1P1/S3P1).

### 5.1 What is an expert in the field of OAE?

The notion of an OAE expert was explored with the participants at stages three and four of the research when asked: *'What would you define as an expert in the OAE field?'*. The concept of an expert (or master in Wenger's terms) is central to the heuristic device and suggests that this is a potential trajectory for OAE practitioners. In the simplest sense of the term 'expert', it inherently suggests a form of identity. Wenger (1998) makes it apparent in his discussion about identity that part of how identity is constructed is not just through how we see ourselves but how others reify our identity. By asking the questions mentioned earlier of the participants, they have reified their construct of an expert and the complexities of this. It is important to explore the nuances in the participants' responses about their construct of an expert, taking note of the warnings discussed in chapter three of reification. Then, allow this to be the foundation to move forward as a way to think about what an OAE expert may be. The following segments of 5.1 will discuss the key aspects of the constructed notion of an expert that was analysed from the responses from the OAE practitioners at stage three and the OAE managers at stage four of the research.



### 5.1.1 Facilitation of learning, skill, knowledge and experience

In their constructed identity of an OAE expert, the participants provided some key insights into the types of knowledge, skills, and behaviours that portray an OAE expert. Some key terms were used by multiple participants and put forward the notion of an OAE expert being someone who is knowledgeable, skilful and experienced in the field of OAE. Whilst multiple responses encompassed a similar idea (all responses in appendix G), the following quotation was provided by an OAE practitioner from the local OAE centre from stage three of the research and summarises a number of the points provided by other participants:

*“I would say an OAE expert is someone who facilitates outdoor sessions that are fun, yet incorporate deep and meaningful learning. I would class learning as deep and meaningful when learners acquire skills that are transferable to lots of different contexts in life...personally, I believe that the great range of interpersonal skills that people can take away from outdoor adventure are the most valuable, as this is what leads to transformed personalities and therefore professional, as well as personal development. Someone who takes all these things into account (prioritising the learners’ development) and has a great set of skills and knowledge, as well as experience, is an OAE expert to me” (S1P5/S3P4)*

Four key aspects of the above response are essential for me as a researcher to consider in this constructed identity of an expert: facilitation of learning, being skilful, being knowledgeable, and being experienced. Each of these will now be explored.

The first point that was apparent is the notion that an OAE expert is someone who can facilitate learning with their participants. This idea was further exemplified by one of the OAE managers who responded to the question ‘*What is an OAE expert?*’ with:

*“Someone who is able to provide stimulating and appropriate teaching and learning opportunities for each individual learner that they are working with. The OAE expert will be able to adapt and change and draw on previous knowledge and experiences to meet the ever changing needs of the learners.” (S4P4)*

The interest of these two responses is not in the concept of what learning is or could be, but instead that the facilitation of learning that meets the learner's needs is highlighted in their constructed identity as an OAE expert.

The second point to discuss from the OAE practitioner's response was that they should be skilful. Their response suggests that to be seen as a skilful practitioner, it should be in the form of interpersonal skills. However, other responses from the OAE practitioners and managers suggested that being skilful might be expanded to include interpersonal, intrapersonal and personal practical skills. One OAE practitioner stated the following when they were asked what they felt an OAE expert was:

*“-a person with technical, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills applicable to adventurous and educational activities in the outdoors  
-technical: practical and safety skills to lead activities outside (often involving some risk and deeper educational purpose)  
-interpersonal: soft skills towards other people (participants, other professionals and superiors) e.g. communication, empathy, leadership skills  
-intrapersonal: knowledge about self and ability to evaluate and understand own values, thoughts, behaviours.” (S1P1/S3P5)*

The above response signifies a much more complex version of an expert who is skilful, as it extends to all aspects of their practice. They suggest that their skill should extend to the way in which they facilitate learning through their interaction with others and through to the practical skill of undertaking the OAE activity itself, thus widening the notion of being skilful to include the skilled practice of the OAE activity and the skilled practice of interaction with participants to facilitate learning.

The final two elements of the response from the OAE practitioner about what an OAE expert is were the notions that they should be knowledgeable and experienced. For example, one of the OAE practitioners responded to the same question with:

*“Someone with lots of experience and knowledge but also has the ability to pass that onto others” (S1P4/S3P3)*

Further responses from the OAE managers to the question 'What is an OAE expert?' suggested that they should also be experienced and knowledgeable. One response suggested that it could be complex in the way in which they are experienced and knowledgeable:

*“I think that expertise can be defined in the context of knowledge, understanding and skill. An OAE expert could be someone who is very academically knowledgeable, but have little understanding of application to practice and little skill to deliver OAE. An OAE expert could be very skilful [sic] in either a specific activity or across a range of activities. They could have obtained this skill through*

*experience but they may or may not have the underpinning knowledge as to why what they do works etc... I would say that an OAE expert would be someone who has holistic (knowledge, understanding and skill) attributes. The knowledge would be acquired primarily through academic study and the understanding and skill through a combination of training, assessment and delivery (working - employed or voluntary).” (S4P3)*

The above response suggests that the notion of knowledge can be something that is attributed by itself or alongside participation in the OAE practice. The quote illustrates how the term expert is seen here as a complex mix and balance of academic practice, as well as the practice of OAE practical activities. Therefore, for this OAE manager, the notion of an expert is someone who is both knowledgeable about and competent in the practice. In this sense, the role of multi membership is quite apparent here, and this will be further discussed in section 5.2.

#### 5.1.2 Qualifications

During the data analysis at stages three and four, it became apparent that there was a key difference in the responses between the OAE practitioners and the OAE managers, which was the idea of qualifications. The OAE practitioners did not make any reference to qualifications being a requirement for an expert in the field of OAE, whereas the OAE managers did (Appendix G). The following are two examples of statements that relate to qualifications from the OAE manager's responses to the question, *'What would you define as an expert in the OAE field?'*:

*“I would associate it with someone who is highly qualified and experienced. They would also be a course provider” (S4P1)*

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*“An OAE expert in the field would have the skills, qualification and experience required to run quality sessions in their chosen field” (S4P2)*

While these OAE managers acknowledged holding qualifications, the OAE practitioners did not mention them. The interest in this point is with respect to the fact that the OAE practitioners are essentially studying to gain a qualification at the end of their OAE HE

programme. However, they have not established this idea in their construction of an OAE expert.

Despite the OAE practitioners at stage three of the research not recognising qualifications in their responses to the construction of an OAE expert, they all accepted that their OAE HE studies could support them in becoming an OAE expert. Appendix H identifies each of the five responses from the OAE practitioners to the question, '*Do you feel that your OAE HE studies can support you in becoming an OAE expert? If so, how?*'. One example of a response is:

*"Yes, learning and understanding underpinning theories to then apply them in practice is part of being an expert (e.g. learning and skill-acquisition theories for interpersonal teaching skills). Experiencing and getting to know other experts (such as lecturers and other students) helped learn more and gain experience while connecting within the sector." (S1P1/S3P5)*

There are two key points of interest in this response. The first point of note is the idea that the OAE HE study has provided an opportunity to exchange knowledge. The practitioner has reified this into something that could benefit their progression towards becoming an expert. Proposing that membership to the OAE HE CoP has afforded the opportunity to exchange personal knowledge capital between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP. This indicates that personal knowledge capital could be seen as Wenger's (1998) idea of a boundary artifact where this participant has reified it into something that can cross the boundaries of CoP's.

The second point identifies that there is a locally negotiated regime of competence in which this participant has negotiated their membership to place others in the OAE HE CoP in a position of competence above themselves. It also indicates where Wenger's (1998) idea of brokering may be happening between the CoP's. The response suggests that other members of the HE OAE CoP are introducing them to elements of practice, which they are then introducing into their OAE practitioner CoP. Both points suggest that the personal knowledge capital exchanged in the OAE HE CoP could support the practitioner in becoming their reified notion of an expert in the OAE practitioner CoP through their negotiated experiences.

In support of the responses from the OAE practitioners, the OAE managers also all agreed that the OAE HE study could help them become an OAE expert (Appendix I). One of the OAE managers stated the following in response to being asked, *'Do you feel that the OAE HE study can support your staff in becoming an OAE expert, if so how?'*:

*"Yes it gives them a breadth of experience and knowledge. It certainly gives them an advantage because they should be familiar with the underlying theories."  
(S4P1)*

This response again alludes to the idea that the exchange of personal knowledge capital and the experience they gain through the OAE HE study is an important element of the OAE practitioner becoming an OAE expert. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the acquisition of a qualification, such as the one that the OAE practitioners at stages one and three of this research are studying, has the potential to influence whether or not someone can identify as or be identified as an expert in the field of OAE. The negotiated meaning of the experience in the OAE HE CoP and the physical certificate of the HE programme can act as boundary objects that can influence the trajectory of the OAE practitioners in both the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP.

### 5.1.3 Summarising an OAE expert

It is apparent from the discussion in 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 that membership to the OAE HE CoP has provided an opportunity to influence the OAE practitioners in the OAE practitioner CoP. This has been through their ability to exchange personal knowledge capital as a boundary object, which has influenced their experience and negotiation of the meaning of their reified notion of an expert in the OAE field. Importantly, for this section of the analysis, the OAE HE study has allowed the practitioners to negotiate their reified meaning of an OAE expert. This allows them to identify themselves as experts or not depending on their circumstances and potentially inform their trajectory in the OAE practitioner CoP.

The culmination of the constructed identities portrayed by the OAE practitioners and the OAE managers suggest that an OAE expert is someone who is knowledgeable in the field of OAE, skilful in the practice of OAE activities and the facilitation of learning activities for others,

experienced in the practice of OAE activities and the facilitation of learning activities for others; and potentially qualified with academic and practical activity qualifications. The power of this summation is not in the static reification of what an OAE expert is but in the ability of the OAE practitioners to measure their journey on their trajectory against their reification of an expert. The influence that their OAE HE study has had means that their reified notion of an expert is informed by the personal knowledge capital that has been exchanged. The reification and personal knowledge capital help the practitioner negotiate their experiences to understand their current level of membership in the OAE practitioner CoP. It affords them the opportunity to ascertain whether they are content with their current membership and identity or whether they want to aspire to become their reified version of an OAE expert. Furthermore, it can then provide them with an understanding of what they are required to do, if anything, to identify as and be identified by others in the CoP as someone with all of the aforementioned attributes surmised by the OAE practitioners and managers.

As previously mentioned, the discussion about what an OAE expert is has raised the point that there is a locally negotiated regime of competence. Wenger (1998, p. 137) states, "it is by its very practice – not by other criteria – that a community establishes what it is to be a competent participant, an outsider, or somewhere between". In this sense, through reifying the identity of an expert, the participants have negotiated what they understand to be someone who is competent. The participants have suggested that competency is related to someone who is knowledgeable in the field of OAE, skilful in the practice of OAE activities and the facilitation of learning activities for others, experienced in the practice of OAE activities and the facilitation of learning activities for others; and potentially qualified with academic and practical activity qualifications. The recognition of the locally negotiated regime of competence suggests an imbalance of power between the members of the CoP's. The OAE practitioners who are established as competent in the locally negotiated regime will likely be the ones who control the dominant discourses on what the CoP should be mutually accountable for in the joint enterprise of the CoP.

## 5.2 The role of multi membership

The aforementioned finding that personal knowledge capital can be viewed as a boundary object raises the idea of the multi membership and the ways in which different CoP's can interact with one another through boundary objects and brokering. Throughout the analysis of the responses from the OAE practitioners and the OAE managers at all stages of the research, it became apparent that the role of multi membership to both the OAE practitioner CoP and the OAE HE CoP was influencing the OAE practitioners. For Wenger (1998, p. 161), "multimembership and the work of reconciliation are intrinsic to the very concept of identity", where reconciliation is the process of integrating our various forms of membership into one identity across multiple CoP's. Analysing this theme raised two key points of discussion: the timing of membership to both CoP's, and the nature of the relationship between the CoP's.

### 5.2.1 Timing of multi membership

The responses from the OAE practitioners at stages one and three were all from OAE practitioners who were simultaneously members of the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP. The timing of the multi membership meant that their responses were captured as their experiences in both CoP's were occurring during the same period. However, the responses from practitioners at stage two were unknown in terms of the timing of their membership. Therefore, it is assumed they were likely reflecting on their experiences of their OAE HE membership and were maybe no longer actively participating in the OAE HE CoP or the OAE practitioner CoP. The outcome of the different timings of membership led to findings that indicated there might be some importance to when the data is captured and how integral membership to both CoP's can be to informing the negotiation of meaning of the OAE practitioners and, in turn, their constructed identity.

The conditions set out through multi membership simultaneously would provide immediacy to the influence, in the sense that the practitioner could learn about a topic on one day and then apply that directly in their practice at work the next day. The immediacy of the influence would be compared to multi membership at different times, for example, where the membership to the OAE HE CoP precedes membership to the OAE practitioner CoP. In this circumstance, there may not be the opportunity to provide an immediate response to the

taught material by transferring it into practice, which may limit the perception of the practitioner's influence. However, it could be argued that membership to the OAE HE CoP provides automatic membership to the OAE practitioner CoP. If one were to be a member of the OAE HE CoP, one would be studying the subject area, potentially providing aspects of mutual engagement, shared repertoire and joint enterprise that would afford peripheral membership to the OAE practitioner CoP as well. This could be the situation for those who are actively studying on an OAE HE programme but do not have access to participate any further than the periphery as a member of the OAE practitioner CoP as they are not working in a voluntary or paid capacity.

Two of the OAE practitioners, at stages two and three, advocated the positive influence of the immediacy that came as part of multi membership at the same time:

*“Outdoor learning and teaching practice allowed us to put theory in to practice immediately with real life groups and instant feedback.” (S2P9)*

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*“Doing the practical alongside the theory allows you to realise why you do things and how you can change them for the better.” (S1P4/S3P3)*

Both practitioners suggest that the immediacy of the experiences has afforded them the opportunity to negotiate their experiences together, further supporting their negotiation of self across multiple CoP's. I would consequently argue that there are certain benefits to multi membership to the OAE HE CoP and OAE practitioner CoP occurring simultaneously, where membership is active in both CoP's. These benefits include the immediacy of applying their learning and further exchanging the personal knowledge capital from the OAE HE studies to negotiate the meaning of their experiences in the OAE practitioner CoP.

The positive effects of the immediacy of the multi membership were also suggested by one of the OAE managers when they were asked if they felt that the OAE HE studies could influence their staff by helping them to know more about the reasons why they do things in their practice:

*“By understanding the reasons why or how can aid the students in their confidence of theory they are learning at university. For example, they might hear about Maslows hierarchy of needs, but until they actually see it in practice it is just theory. [local centre] is a safe place for them to try out theory, or question it with*



*others, but also to question staff they are working with to why they do something in a certain way.” (S4P4)*

The suggestion made by this manager is that the multi membership affords the OAE practitioner the opportunity to trial what they have learned in the OAE HE CoP in the OAE practitioner CoP, which is potentially a safe space for the practitioner. It also allows the OAE practitioner to use others in the OAE practitioner CoP to negotiate the meaning of their experience. They can question other practitioners about their discourse and exchange their personal knowledge capital to negotiate the meaning of this capital in a more informed way. This manager suggests that the other staff act as brokers. Where they are able to "make new connections...enable coordination, and alignment of perspectives" (Wenger, 1998, p. 109).

What has not been made clear from the data generated is whether the practitioners at stage two were reflecting on their experiences whilst they were actively participating in the OAE practitioner CoP at the same time as their OAE HE study (like the practitioners at stage one and three of this research), or whether they were a peripheral member of the OAE practitioner CoP because of the active membership to the OAE HE CoP. Regardless of the lack of clarification, there were no responses from the OAE practitioners at stages one, two or three that suggested any negative influence from the OAE HE membership due to the timing of the membership. Therefore, I would argue that whilst there are apparent benefits to the immediacy of the exchange of personal knowledge capital between CoP's to negotiate experiences, there is no evidence to suggest that there is any negative implication of the level of membership to the OAE practitioner CoP. This means that regardless of whether the practitioner has peripheral, partial, or full membership to the OAE practitioner CoP, there will still be an influence from the OAE HE study on their practice.

#### 5.2.2 The nature of the relationship between the CoP's

I would argue that one of the key influences and benefits of the multi membership, demonstrated in the responses from the OAE practitioners and OAE managers (from stages one to four, evidenced in Appendix J), would be where the overlap between the two CoP's demonstrates harmony. The notion of harmony is suggested when experiences in one CoP can be negotiated to promote the positive development of expertise in the other and vice

versa. Wenger (1998, p. 274) states that a "learning community must articulate participation inside with participation outside", and this was familiar in a response by one practitioner who stated:

*"The knowledge and theory taught at university was very interesting and applicable to the outdoor teaching context. This is why I think it had a great influence on how I instruct/educate/facilitate outdoor learning" ... "The study would only influence me if my lecturer would make it very applicable to our responsibilities at work in an outdoor centre." (S1P5/S3P4)*

The above response suggests that the relevancy and harmony of their experiences in both CoP's are an important influence for this practitioner to negotiate their experiences positively to influence their practice.

Appendix J demonstrates a range of statements provided by the OAE practitioners that relate to the influence of their multi membership, predominantly focussing on the influence that their membership to the OAE HE CoP has had on their practice in the OAE practitioner CoP. Outside of these responses, one response from an OAE manager, at stage four, alluded to the positive influence that multi membership can have and how the harmony between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP has a benefit that impacts outside of the immediate influence on the practitioner:

*"I think our students benefit greatly with being able to talk with experienced Outdoor practitioners in a real work situation and to challenge what they are learning in a university setting. This I feel, has allowed them to form their own opinions and ideas and to be able see what is actually applicable in the work place rather than as an academic exercise. As more experienced staff are on hand to help and advise the students their rate of learning is accelerated and are able to see best practice modeled regularly. It has worked both ways in that our full time practitioners are under the microscope from the students who have helped raise the standards of aspects of the outdoor education provision at [the local outdoor centre] as they know the students are observing all the time as well as asking questions about what and why they do what they do. This has helped to create a professional and supportive learning environment at [the outdoor centre]." (S4P4)*

There are two key points I have identified in this response: firstly, how the relationship with other practitioners plays a role in the negotiation of meaning and potential influence on the OAE practitioners; secondly, how the influence from the OAE HE studies spreads out to the

relationships with others in the OAE practitioner CoP, potentially influencing the practice of other practitioners as well.

The first point raises the idea that the potential benefits from the multi membership between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP can be enhanced through the relationship with other OAE practitioners, potentially those identified as experts in the CoP. They were once more raising the idea of brokering becoming an important aspect of the experience of the OAE practitioners. This manager has suggested that the brokering relationship with other members supports the OAE practitioner's ability to exchange personal knowledge capital and negotiate its meaning outside academia in the practitioner CoP, therefore having a more significant positive influence on their development in the OAE practitioner CoP. What can also be seen in this response is that the OAE practitioners are supporting the dominant discourse of the locally negotiated regime of competence. The exchange of personal knowledge capital by the OAE practitioners informs the negotiation of the meaning of experiences through brokering these experiences with what the practitioners perceive as other members who are more competent. The OAE manager is suggesting here that it is likely that they will negotiate the meaning of their experiences to align with the dominant discourse that is being set by the more competent practitioners in that CoP.

The second point they make almost counters the first in that they observe the potential for the OAE practitioners studying the OAE HE programme to influence the locally negotiated regime of competence (in the local OAE centre). The manager states the OAE practitioner is *'asking questions about what and why they do what they do'*, alluding to the idea that there is an opportunity for the 'newcomers' to challenge the 'masters/experts'. The practitioners who are members of the OAE HE CoP are able to question the practitioners (potentially more competent than themselves) about the regime of competence they are setting. Questioning this regime could potentially alter it where the personal knowledge capital exchange of the OAE practitioner instigates changes in the shared repertoire, joint enterprise and mutual engagement set by the more competent practitioners. The idea of questioning the locally negotiated regime of competence can potentially alter the power dynamic where there could be a shift of power in controlling the regime to the OAE practitioner studying on the OAE HE programme (the 'newcomer'). It is possible that the OAE practitioners in this research can

influence the regime of competence of the community by influencing the mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire adopted by the competent practitioners.

Alongside the argument that harmonious membership in multiple CoP's is beneficial, it may also be argued that a contentious relationship could also be advantageous. One practitioner at stage three was not so positive about their negotiated experiences in the OAE HE CoP, established in the theme 'negative or no influences'. This practitioner stated the following in response to 3b and 4b (Appendix C), respectively:

*“The impact was perhaps not as big as it could be as naturally I want to encourage people so I did not need the lecture to behave this way.” (S1P6/S3P2)*

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*“I have learnt more through observations of fellow instructors on professional practice than through the degree I study.” (S1P6/S3P2)*

Although both of these statements do not necessarily portray the positivity that others have in Appendix J, the key point is that they would not have been able to make these statements without their experiences in the OAE HE CoP. So, whilst they are suggesting that their membership to the OAE HE CoP may not have been necessary, it is only through their negotiated experiences and personal knowledge capital exchange that they can make such a statement about what is and what is not important to them.

To summarise, through each experience that the OAE practitioner has, regardless of them being in one or multiple CoP's, they are having to negotiate the meaning of those experiences. Whether there is harmony or tension between the experiences, the practitioners will use them to negotiate their sense of self, further supporting their identity construction. Each experience will involve negotiating what is important to them and what is not, informing who they do or do not want to be. Therefore, whilst it has been argued that there is potentially a more significant benefit from the relationship between CoP's being harmonious, there is still a recognisable influence where the relationship is more contentious. It is evident from all the responses from the OAE practitioners at stages one, two and three that their experience in both the OAE practitioner CoP and the OAE HE CoP provides them with an opportunity to exchange personal knowledge capital as a boundary object to negotiate the meaning of their experiences and their sense of self to construct their identity across the CoP's.

### 5.3 The role of personal knowledge capital

The previous sections of this chapter have discussed that personal knowledge capital as a boundary object is an integral aspect of the experience of the OAE practitioners. Therefore, this next section explores the responses provided by the OAE practitioners and the OAE managers specifically associated with the notion of personal knowledge capital. In order to do this, the three key themes associated with personal knowledge capital generated from the thematic analysis will be covered: 'knowledge and understanding influences', 'personal influences', and 'negative or no influences'. This section will argue that the exchange of personal knowledge capital as a boundary object between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP directly influences the negotiated meaning of experiences of the OAE practitioners and their negotiated sense of self.

#### 5.3.1 Knowledge and understanding

The largest of the generated themes associated with personal knowledge capital was 'knowledge and understanding influences', and the responses are provided in Appendix K. Some of these responses will be discussed, however as Appendix K demonstrates, there are a number of them related to this theme (over 40 comments in total). The most common responses coded in this theme were associated with knowledge, understanding and theory. Each code suggested a type of learning experience that the OAE practitioners had. As Wenger (1998) argues, learning and identity are inherently linked as learning is a process that transforms what we know and what we can do; it is then also an experience of identity. There is a recognition from Wenger that it is through the experience of identity that learning takes on meaning (Wenger, 1998). For the OAE practitioners in this research, this then suggests their experiences of learning in the OAE HE CoP are meaningful as they are contributing to the process of becoming and negotiating self. One practitioner suggested this at stage three, who responded to the question about the influence that knowledge and understanding of theory can have on their practice with:

*“learning theories and backgrounds to the everyday instructing practice has been very valuable for me. It made me challenge the behaviours I had adopted from*

*watching others and helped me to question why I did certain things and did not do others. Consequently, my practice as an instructor improved through the OAE HE study and deepened my understanding of why I instruct how” (S1P1/S3P5)*

For this practitioner, there is not only an evident influence from their membership of the OAE HE CoP on their membership in the OAE practitioner CoP but there is also an acknowledgement that their personal knowledge capital is affording them the ability to negotiate their sense of self and process of becoming in the OAE practitioner CoP. The practitioner has expressly stated the term 'challenge', which indicates that their learning has allowed them to re-negotiate experiences to provide different meaning to ones which they may have previously created. Another practitioner similarly responded to the same question as the previous example with:

*“Very much! ... without knowing about these theories I would still approach sessions differently. E.g. I would tell children what exactly they’d have to do, whereas now I know that this is something to avoid; I would still praise participants for their outcomes and for the person they are, whereas now I understand how much better it is for them to be praised for the process in order to gain a growth mindset and a better attitude towards other things in life; I would still provide all the safety rules, whereas now I know how beneficial it is for participants to assess risk for themselves” (S1P5/S3P4)*

The use of “*whereas now I*” indicates that for this practitioner, their experience on the OAE HE programme influenced their knowledge and understanding of their practice in the OAE practitioner CoP. Therefore, this suggests that without their membership in the OAE HE CoP, their practice would somehow be worse off. It could then be argued that the influence on personal knowledge capital is positive and can potentially be transformative in its influence on practice in the OAE practitioner CoP. It is also evident that this practitioner is suggesting the OAE HE study is helping them to re-negotiate the meaning of previous experiences. The use of 'whereas now' infers that they have changed the meaning they had initially negotiated for that experience to mean something else to them.

It must be acknowledged that not all of the responses about knowledge and understanding influences were positive, and some of these were acknowledged in the theme 'negative or no influences'. When asked, 'Do you feel your HE study of OAE has influenced your practice in the field? If so, in what ways?' two practitioners, at stage two, stated:

*“much of it now feels irrelevant and an exercise in writing essays about being outdoors/leadership rather than actually doing it. The real lessons came afterwards” (S2P16)*

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*“Not, in the short turn [sic].” (S2P14)*

Whilst both suggest a limited influence on their practice from studying the OAE HE programmes, when asked the next question, *‘Have there been any specific subjects/topics in your HE course that have influenced your practice in the field more than others? If so how?’* they responded with:

*“Yes definitely. A module called Multidisciplinary Outdoor Ed which was practical and where we experienced some of the personal developmental aspects of the profession e.g. reflection through natural sculptures, poetry, music making. Lots of reviews that brought the group closer together etc. Also modules where we were able to choose a topic of focus. And the expedition module - again practical.” (S2P16)*

-

*“The outdoor modules that get me NBGs. NBGs equals a job.” [NGB’s: National Governing Body Awards].” (S2P14)*

Both responses somewhat contradict their first response in the sense that at the same time as suggesting a limited influence, they also identify that there has been influence from specific areas of their OAE HE studies. In this case, it could be surmised that elements of their experience were negotiated meaningfully toward influencing their practice in the field of OAE. However, the overall OAE HE experience was negotiated to be not wholly beneficial to these practitioners.

The responses from the practitioners above also recognise that they may have learnt something from the OAE HE study. For example, they suggest they have learnt aspects specific to their practical modules. The previous point links to Wenger's thinking that learning is about the development of our practice and our ability to negotiate, meaning that, in turn, forming an identity as part of that learning (Wenger, 1998). This was acknowledged in different ways by many of the OAE practitioners (all responses are provided in Appendix K). However, one practitioner at stage three was explicit in their recognition of this notion:

*“understanding theories and how they relate to practice gave reasons why certain practices exist. It also helped to critically reflect on personal and others' behaviours as instructors to then adapt habits and improve the way I instruct, lead and educate participants” (S1P1/S3P5)*

Another OAE practitioner at stage two, also suggested a similar notion:

*“Every assignment I undertook required research and thorough analysing all the various studies conducted relevant to OAE, I came away with a far greater idea of what I could accomplish and implement as an outdoor facilitator” (S2P19)*

These practitioners suggest that their experiences in the OAE HE CoP have been negotiated in a way that has influenced their ability to understand the possibilities in the OAE practitioner CoP. Therefore, it has influenced the way that they will engage in practice in the OAE practitioner CoP and their understanding of why they are engaging in it in that way. This enables transformative change in the OAE practitioner CoP in both their practice and their understanding of it, further enhancing their construction of identity of who they are, what they do and why they do it. It is possible for these OAE practitioners because of the personal knowledge capital exchanged through their OAE HE programme.

As Wenger (1998) noted, practice and learning are inherently linked, and from this can come the reasons why we do the things we do in our practice. The point about the reasons why we do things has been evident in several responses from the OAE practitioners in Appendix K. However, two practitioners (from stages one and two) were explicit about this influence. The following are their responses to being asked: *'Do you feel your HE study of OAE has influenced your practice in the field? if so, in what ways?'*:

*“The study has taught me the how and why of my practice”...“the degree has taught me theories and reasoning on how to behave” (S1P4)*

-

*“Some of the theory learnt has helped me to explain the reasons behind what we do, when facilitating clients as well as other facilitators” (S2P12)*

Each of the above responses acknowledges that their study of the OAE HE programme has supported their understanding of what they are doing in the OAE practitioner CoP. Through their understanding of the how and the why, these OAE practitioners will negotiate their experiences and sense of self to reflect the exchange of personal knowledge capital. One practitioner at stage three identified this previous point and responded when asked: *'Another*



*outcome of the initial survey suggested that OAE HE study could influence practitioners by helping them to know more about why they do things in their practice. Can you please expand why you think this may be?':*

*"understanding theories and how they relate to practice gave reasons why certain practices exist. It also helped to critically reflect on personal and others' behaviours as instructors to then adapt habits and improve the way I instruct, lead and educate participants" (S1P1/S3P5)*

Through their personal knowledge capital about the how and the why, the OAE practitioners, including the one above, will potentially be better placed to negotiate who they want to be or do not want to be in the OAE practitioner CoP. For example, they may have understood their practice and identity to be one thing; however, through the exchange of personal knowledge capital from the OAE HE CoP, they are better informed to re-negotiate what their practice and identity is in the OAE practitioner CoP. Consequently, they may re-negotiate their experience to recognise that they do not want to identify with their previous sense of self in the CoP; rather, they wish to adapt, learn and develop their identity in their practice to something else.

### 5.3.2 Personal influences

The discussion above is integrally linked to the second theme generated from the thematic analysis, 'personal influences'. The 'personal influences' theme was generated from the responses that suggested an influence from the OAE HE study on the understanding of why the practitioners do things in their practice in the OAE practitioner CoP. It also included other influences that included codes associated with building confidence, beliefs, motivation, aspiration and personal development. Appendix L demonstrates a selection of the responses coded into this theme; however, it is also important to distinguish the crossover of some of the responses demonstrated in the 'knowledge and understanding' theme (Appendix K) into this theme as well. Whilst approached as two separate themes, they are also integral to one another through their ability to influence the practitioner's negotiation of self, and therefore, the crossover is inevitable. The next part of this discussion will focus on responses yet to be discussed in this chapter and analyse their relationship to identity construction for the OAE practitioners.

In relation to personal influences, the idea of 'purpose' was explicitly identified by one practitioner at stage three. They stated the following when asked if their OAE HE study had influenced them by helping them to know more about the reasons why they do things in their practice:

*“Instructing is basic, instructing with purpose is exciting as you can see how others can learn and development significantly due to the way you have facilitated the session” (S1P3/S3P1)*

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*“the theory gives you a purpose behind instructing, as you are aware of the positives and negatives that you could cause to an individual’s mental and physical development” (S1P3/S3P1)*

These statements suggest that exchanging personal knowledge capital about why they do things in their practice has afforded the practitioners a purpose (or at least a better understanding of the purpose) to the activity that they are practising. Their statements imply that their influence stems from them knowing how they have facilitated their sessions and the impact this has on their participants. Through this knowledge, they are then able to understand their purpose as an instructor, which, as one noted, is exciting for them. In turn, this also suggests that through their OAE HE study, they are better informed in constructing the identity of an instructor through their knowledge of the purpose of the role.

Some responses were explicit about the notion of identity and are linked to much earlier discussions in this chapter about role classification. Three responses identified an influence on identity construction; two were from the same participant at stage one, and one from a participant at stage two:

*“It has provided me with the opportunity to delve deeper into being an outdoor educator and not just an instructor. I can now see the differences between the two and can provide more than just a bog standard activity session” (S1P6)*

-

*“I would say that I am an outdoor instructor - trying to become an outdoor educator who provides high quality introductory activity sessions to groups of schools, young people and adults” (S1P6)*

-

*“I view my role more as a facilitator than as an instructor which was informed by my degree” (S2P13)*

Each of these three responses provides an argument that through the personal knowledge capital exchanged in the OAE HE CoP, these practitioners have been better informed about what their identity is in the OAE practitioner CoP. For example, the first responses stated that they can now see the difference between the role of an educator and an instructor. The last response is explicit about the role of their OAE HE studies in influencing their ability to identify themselves as a facilitator more than an instructor. As Wenger (1998, p. 149) argued, identity can be talked about in the "ways we experience ourselves through participation as well as by the ways we and others reify ourselves". The responses fit into the idea of how the practitioners have reified themselves through their experiences in both the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP. Therefore, I support my argument that the OAE HE study can influence practice in the OAE practitioner CoP through supporting identity construction.

The notion of identity was identified by other practitioners as well, with one practitioner from stage two stating:

*“Yes I believe my study has influenced my practice. Before I began the course, I was fairly naïve to the benefits that OAE has on participants. Every assignment I undertook required research and through analysing all the various studies conducted relevant to OAE, I came away with a far greater idea of what I could accomplish and implement as an outdoor facilitator.” (S2P19)*

The above response is separate from those mentioned before as it does not suggest any identity reconstruction from one role to another. Instead, the influence experienced by this practitioner improved their understanding of what they could do in the role they already identified with. As Wenger (1998, p. 151) stated, an identity is "a layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other". For this practitioner, their participation in the OAE HE CoP has allowed them to reify their experiences into the identity of an outdoor facilitator and the interpretation of what characteristics and possibilities accompany that identity. Their experiences have allowed them to understand better their identity and what they can accomplish in that constructed identity.

Another aspect linked to personal influences was the notion of belief. Two practitioners at stage two explicitly referred to the term belief in their response to being asked, *'Do you feel your HE study of OAE has influenced your practice in the field? if so, in what ways?'*:

*"More confident [sic] to stand up for my own professional beliefs."... "My course offered a broad range of outdoor modules which all likely influenced my professional beliefs." (S2P8)*

*"I have attempted (and continuing to) change what my beliefs of knowledge are in order to provide opportunities for the learner to develop this when they are with me." (S2P10)*

The notion of beliefs identified by each of the above practitioners is about their professional practice and, therefore, their professional identity. Each suggests that their OAE HE study afforded them the opportunity to understand or change their beliefs about their practice, which ultimately influenced what they were doing in the OAE practitioner CoP. The first response suggests that there is a relationship between the OAE HE study and the confidence that the practitioner has in their professional beliefs. The practitioner's beliefs will also be established in their constructed identity, alluding to the idea that it could have also led to the practitioner having greater confidence in their identity construction.

### 5.3.3 Summarising the role of personal knowledge capital

To summarise this section, there is an apparent argument that the exchange of personal knowledge capital, as a boundary object between CoP's, has the ability to influence the way in which the OAE practitioners are experiencing their world in the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP. Chapter three explained that I am using the idea of personal knowledge capital in a very similar way to that of Young (2012) as a way to talk about the know-how, insight, ideas and emotions that the OAE practitioners may be renewing and building throughout their experiences in the OAE HE CoP and OAE practitioner CoP.

What this section has exemplified is that there is the ability to exchange personal knowledge capital as a boundary object between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP. This exchange can potentially alter the experience, negotiation of meaning and trajectory of membership for the OAE practitioners. Through their experiences in the OAE HE CoP, it is

apparent that they have exchanged capital that has provided them with a greater capacity for mobility in the OAE practitioner CoP. This may be an outcome where the practitioner wants to change their position, or it could also be in their better understanding of their position, and others surrounding them. The personal knowledge capital that influences the OAE practitioner is specifically linked to the knowledge and understanding of their practice and the knowledge of the personal influences that their experiences in the OAE HE study have on them. Through this capital, the practitioner is better informed to make meaningful experiences and understand how this impacts their trajectory, which in turn better informs their constructed identity in the OAE practitioner CoP.

#### 5.4 From the perspective of the OAE managers

Before starting the research, there was always an interest in why the OAE managers at the local OAE centre wanted to support their staff on the OAE HE programme, even though it took them off their delivery programme for one day a week. This section will explore why the OAE managers wanted to support their staff to undertake the OAE HE study whilst examining responses that followed up on stages one and two outcomes. Overall, the responses from the managers at the local OAE centre strengthen the arguments made throughout this chapter so far.

##### 5.4.1 Why support staff to undertake OAE HE study?

The four managers who participated in this research provided a range of reasons why they supported their staff in studying the OAE HE program. All of the responses provided by the OAE managers to the question, 'Why have you supported your staff to undertake OAE HE study whilst employed with you?' are provided in Appendix N.

One response particularly drew upon some of the points discussed in this chapter:

*"It helps them accelerate their professionalism and reflective practice skills. it gives them confidence to ask the key question of why do they do what they do. and it helps them view their occupation in a more professional light." (S4P2)*

Three key elements are noted in this response: 'acceleration', 'why they do what they do', and 'professionalism'. The first point realises the potential for the OAE HE study to accelerate the progression of the OAE practitioners through their professionalism and specific skills. Suppose it is assumed that this manager is comparing to those who have not done any OAE HE study. In that case, there is a potential argument to say that the OAE HE studies can accelerate the inward trajectory of an OAE practitioner in the OAE practitioner CoP. This point strengthens the argument that the capital exchanged between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP supports the practitioner's mobility in the CoP. The second point about 'why they do what they do' further supports the responses from the OAE practitioners about why the practitioners do things in their practice being an influence of the OAE HE.

Finally, the notion of professionalism established in this response implies that the OAE HE study allows the OAE practitioners to see the OAE practitioner CoP in a more professional capacity. This is an interesting idea as it would suggest that without the exchange of personal knowledge capital between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP, there would be a limited capacity for the practitioners to see it as one which is professional. It could be assumed that this response suggests that the personal knowledge capital exchanged in the OAE HE CoP gives the practitioners a better understanding of the complexity of the OAE practitioner CoP and also the field of OAE. Through this exchange, they are better informed as to what the construction of a 'professional' identity could be, according to their reification. They may better understand the nuances of the capital they may need to have to identify as a professional (who could also be deemed a master/expert) in the OAE practitioner CoP.

There is also a suggestion in the response from the OAE manager that this issue might be wider than the individual construction of an identity and could very well extend to the recognition of OAE practitioners as professionals from outside of the CoP. This was also suggested by another of the managers, who stated the following to the question, 'Why have you supported your staff to undertake OAE HE study whilst employed with you?':

*“Often the general preconception of outdoor education is that is either a young mans [sic] game or someone who loves trees. We want to change this image and start the process towards parity of esteem between the 'traditional' teacher and outdoor teacher” (S4P4)*

This response suggests that the notion of an 'outdoor teacher' is not as esteemed as the 'traditional teacher'. In this sense, it could be assumed that the outdoor teacher represents the OAE practitioners in this research and the 'traditional teacher' refers to the concept of a school teacher. If this were to be the case, then this OAE manager suggests that a 'traditional teacher' is recognised as more of a professional than an 'outdoor teacher'. There is a suggestion from this OAE manager that the OAE HE study can afford OAE practitioners the opportunity to acquire the capital to be held in the same esteem as a school teacher.

Chapter two outlined some of the current arguments around professionalism in the OAE field, and the argument from Brown et al. (2018) suggested a shift from a social construction of competence to an external rule setting the standards. This argument proposes that the regime of competence in the OAE practitioner CoP is shifting from being socially constructed by its members to being controlled by boundary artifacts such as policy and regulation. What the OAE managers are suggesting in the aforementioned responses, is that this may have some accuracy, but the two entities are not separated. Whilst the OAE HE studies and the potential of the qualification can act as boundary objects between the OAE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP, the regime of competence is still negotiated by the members of the CoP. The members of the CoP are the ones who will negotiate whether the personal knowledge capital being exchanged between the CoP's and the currency of the qualifications hold any value in defining what the regime of competence may be. Therefore, the OAE managers suggest that membership in the OAE CoP could have value in setting the standards of the locally negotiated regime of competence and potentially influencing the position of the OAE practitioners in that regime.

#### 5.4.2 Knowledge and understanding influences on the staff

In the questioning of the OAE managers the idea of capital in the form of knowledge and understanding was followed up from the responses provided in the earlier stages of the research. Specifically in relation to the theme of knowledge and understanding all managers were optimistic in their responses identified in Appendix K. One of the OAE managers responded positively to the question '*Do you feel the knowledge and understanding your staff*

have gained from studying on the OAE degree has had an influence on their practice, if so, how?':

*"it has helped them to think more critical about each session they run this was especially noted against other staff who were not doing HE who as a generalisation once 'signed off' to run an activity are generally slower to develop their delivery as they do not have the same level of reflective practice skills." (S4P2)*

This response has been specifically drawn upon as it explicitly compares the OAE practitioners at the centre who are studying the OAE HE programme, with those who are not. From this manager's perspective, there is an obvious advantage to the development speed for those studying the OAE HE programme. Their response suggests that the personal knowledge capital that the OAE practitioners are exchanging from their OAE HE studies can accelerate their development in the OAE practitioner CoP compared to those who are not members of the OAE HE CoP. This observation acknowledges that the OAE HE study has the potential to influence the trajectory of the OAE practitioner and the speed at which they can alter their membership level to the OAE practitioner CoP if that is their desired path.

Alongside the positive responses, one of the OAE managers also recognised the complexity of supporting staff to study when they responded with the following to the question, *'Do you feel the knowledge and understanding your staff have gained from studying on the OAE degree has had an influence on their practice, if so, how?'*:

*"I believe it does, however I often find myself in conversation with the students where they feel that what they are learning at university is not benefiting them all the time at [local centre] ...As our students are with us for 2 to 3 years I get to see them develop and grow over time. I see the role of myself and other senior team members is to ensure we provide appropriate and well timed feedback to the students to aid them in their development but also to help them to reflect and look back on how they have developed as individuals. I also have to remind some of the students that the outdoor education world is far bigger than [local centre] and that what they are learning at university may not all seem relevant to them at present but who knows for the future and when they will need to draw upon it." (S4P4)*

The key point portrayed by this manager is the senior staff team's role in the OAE practitioners' experiences. This response suggests that whilst the OAE HE studies influence the knowledge and understanding of the OAE practitioners through the exchange of personal



knowledge capital, it has the potential for further influence in the OAE practitioner CoP through the relationship with others. The managers have played a role in how the OAE practitioners negotiate their experiences and understand what is important to them and what is not. Ultimately, the OAE managers act as brokers in the CoP, supporting introducing elements of the OAE HE CoP into the OAE practitioner CoP and forming part of the experiences that the OAE practitioners have to inform their identity construction.

In chapter three it was noted that Wenger (1998) argues:

Brokers are able to make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination, and alignment between perspectives... It requires enough legitimacy to influence the development of a practice, mobilize attention, and address conflicting interests. It also requires the ability to link practices by facilitating transactions between them, and to cause learning by introducing into a practice elements of another. (Wenger, 1998, p. 109)

The OAE manager in the above response is suggesting that their role in the OAE practitioner CoP is to act in the role of a broker in the ways given by Wenger. The OAE managers have enough legitimacy in the OAE practitioner to CoP that they can act in a way that can broker the experiences of the OAE practitioners. The OAE manager specifically suggests that they can support the enabling of alignment between perspectives between what the OAE practitioners are experiencing and making meaning of in their OAE HE CoP and bringing that into the OAE practitioner CoP. This suggests that others in the CoP who are deemed as having legitimacy (potentially seen as a master/expert) are important in supporting the negotiation of experiences and meaning of the OAE practitioners, supporting them to link practices and causing learning to occur.

Further to these points, the OAE managers were also asked if they felt that the OAE HE study could influence their staff by helping them know more about the reasons why they do things in their practice. The responses are demonstrated in Appendix O, and all demonstrate a positive response to the influence on the OAE practitioners in their centre. One manager noted the following in their response:

*“Many practitioners have become skilful [sic] by learning from their experiences of what does and doesn’t work. These experiences will have created a certain level of knowledge and understanding most of which has been constructed (constructionism and constructivism). If the practitioner then develops their knowledge through HE study they can further construct meaning and*

*understanding that can reinforce and develop their skill. What I find really interesting is the role of confidence or efficacy in this relationship. If you compare the practice of two people one who has learnt through experience versus one who has learnt through experience and also knows that their practice is in alignment with theory and best practice of others then I believe that even just the confidence alone that this inspires in the latter person means that they will be more proficient.” (S4P3)*

The suggestion from this OAE manager is that they would anticipate that an OAE practitioner with the knowledge and understanding of theory will be more proficient than one without. This chapter has already established that this knowledge and understanding can be achieved through the personal knowledge capital exchange from the OAE HE studies. Therefore, this suggests that the OAE HE study has the potential to influence the proficiency of OAE practitioners. The manager's middle point: *"If the practitioner then develops their knowledge through HE study they can further construct meaning and understanding that can reinforce and develop their skill"*, alludes to the notion of identity. Further suggesting that the OAE HE study has the ability to influence the way in which the OAE practitioners are negotiating the meaning of their experiences in the OAE practitioner CoP. Through these experiences and negotiations, OAE practitioners will be better informed to construct their own identity and provide insight as to whether this is something they are content with or would like to develop this identity to identify as something else.

#### 5.4.3 The wider influence

Some of the responses from the participants suggested that there were benefits to the OAE practitioners studying the OAE HE programme that extended beyond the immediate impact on the practitioner. For example, one OAE manager responded to being asked if they felt that the OAE HE study could influence their staff by helping them to know more about the reasons why they do things in their practice:

*“This has particularly benefited those staff who are not on OAE HE as those who have be [sic] doing the HE course have bought those theories into their sessions and into their conversations at lunch and reflection time after the sessions. this [sic] had led to the rest of the team having an increased awareness of theories and their use in practice.” (S4P2)*

The key point portrayed by this response is that the OAE practitioners who are members of the OAE HE CoP can positively influence those who are not through the exchange of personal knowledge capital. This has the potential to influence the identity construction of others in the OAE practitioner CoP.

This response alludes to the idea that the OAE practitioners who are members of the OAE HE CoP are influencing the locally negotiated regime of competence. Through the personal knowledge exchange of the OAE practitioners between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP, then further exchanged with others in the OAE CoP, there have been changes in the regime of competence. This manager suggests that the increased awareness of theories and their use of them in practice is forming part of the locally negotiated regime of competence. This suggests a power dynamic that is less hierarchical and not held predominantly by the masters/experts. As the OAE practitioners in the OAE HE programme are relative newcomers to the OAE practitioner CoP, it could be assumed that their membership is positioned more on the periphery. However, even with this level of membership they can influence the regime of competence by exchanging their personal knowledge capital. They have provided new information to the CoP, which is being negotiated by the other members and is being seen as something important to the CoP, therefore placing it in the regime of competence.

#### 5.4.4 Barriers faced in supporting the OAE practitioners

The OAE managers have provided clear and positive reasoning as to why they have supported their staff to study the OAE HE programme and acknowledged its positive influence on their practice. However, these experiences are not without their challenges and this research must recognise those raised by the participants. The OAE managers were asked, *'Has there been any barriers/challenges you have faced supporting your staff to undertake their studies?'* and their responses are provided in Appendix P. The summary of the key barriers include academic study and learning preferences; other people's perspectives on the study; work/study balance and clashes between priorities of HE study and the OAE centre requirements; financial barriers for the practitioner and the centre for staff cover; and previous experiences of

learning. These barriers outline things personal to the individuals and specific to the OAE centre's operational context.

One of the OAE managers provided a responses which summarised several points from the other managers:

*“The holistic approach creates at the end of the HE course an individual that has a huge advantage over other individuals who have either just done the HE course or just done a practical course, however the demanding nature of trying to do both at the same time especially with the clash of calendars can take this course beyond the reach of some students, who would be capable of doing one or the other not both at the same time.” (S4P2)*

The key barrier noted in the above response is the timing of the multi membership between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP. Previously, this point has been discussed where there was some evidence to suggest that the timing of the multi membership between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP may prove beneficial if it were done simultaneously. However, this manager has stated that this may be a potential barrier for some practitioners as some may find the experience too much. I think this opens a discussion to continue outside of this research in trying to answer whether being on an inbound trajectory in both the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP at the same time or at different times may impact the experience of the practitioners.

This response from the OAE manager mentioned above summarises all of the responses from the OAE managers in the sense that there may be challenges. However, there is a clear and positive influence on the OAE practitioners if they study the OAE HE programme. The positive influence is evident to this manager in comparing an OAE practitioner at the local OAE centre who is a member of the OAE HE CoP as a student versus the practitioners at the local OAE centre who are not.

## 5.5 Using the Heuristic Device

As discussed in chapter four, Huffman and Tracy (2018, p. 559) argue that heuristic devices provide "modes of thinking in ways to create new forms of thinking" and also "lower cognitive barriers to invention by offering generative frameworks". For these reasons, I chose to use a

heuristic device in this research. The use of the heuristic device provided a framework to look at the data, and the intention was to use all elements of the device; however, very early in its use, it became apparent that there were already dominant codes from the thematic analysis that linked to the key aspects of the device. Therefore, the noticeable finding of using the heuristic device was that it was a functional tool to support the analysis, but not necessarily in the way I had initially intended. That is not to say that it is a negative output. Instead, I feel this is a positive outcome of this research.

The flexibility in how the heuristic device can be used allows for it to be implemented in a way that suits the researcher's requirements. The flexibility comes in two forms. Firstly, whether it is used to inform the research and structure of the analysis, and secondly, whether the data organically informs the way in which the heuristic device is used. In this respect, it is about the research phase in which the heuristic device is used. In the first instance, it could be used at the forefront of the research to inform the focus of the research and inform the research questions, for example, through using identity as a key focal point for analysing the influence of OAE HE on OAE practitioners in the field. It could then be used to set parameters of the analysis, for example, using elements as a map to identify themes and discussion points. The second flexible way in which it can be used is more organic, in that the data and the use of the device inform one another, much like the way it has worked in this current research. The use of the device came after the initial data analysis phases and provided a way to look at the data in a specific way to help me make sense of what it was saying.

Through my data analysis, I could map key codes and themes against aspects of the heuristic device, which then informed the focal points for my analysis. Had I used the device at the beginning of the analysis at stages one and two and chosen specific entry points for the analysis, it is likely my discussion points would have been different. For example, if I were to use joint enterprise as my entry point for analysis, my discussion would then focus on this aspect. I think what is important, though, is that whilst there may be one or more focal points in the heuristic device, they provide a way to look at those whilst maintaining the perspective of the whole. One element can become the core focus of the analysis, but this would not mean that the other elements are ignored; instead, their importance is in the way they inform

the element(s) of focus. For example, you cannot look at experience without understanding the mutual engagement, shared repertoire and joint enterprise of the CoP.

As a researcher, I have three key takeaways from creating and using this particular heuristic device in this research: firstly, it provides a clear framework to focus attention as the researcher. In chapter four, it was noted that Curley et al. (2015) outlined the risks of using heuristics and stated some research proposes a negative bias for decision-making, which could lead to sub-optimal decisions about the research. However, their second argument is much more how I felt about using one in that in more recent research, the use of heuristics has been seen as a positive decision-making tool due to the biases that they create (Curley et al., 2015). I would say it is not necessarily a bias with respect to swaying my decision-making as a researcher; rather, the bias is in the attention and focus given to specific areas of the analysis. Therefore, the heuristic device provided a way to talk about and make sense of my data in a way that I was unlikely to achieve without using it. Secondly, I would like to use the heuristic device I developed for this research in other research, but I will use it right from the beginning to frame research questions and entry points for analysis. Thirdly, I would like others to use the device, develop it, and challenge it, if appropriate, to understand if they had the same experience I have had in this research.

## Chapter 6 – Conclusion

This chapter will conclude the findings of this research, answer the research questions and explore what may come next after the conclusion of this current work.

### 6.1 Concluding the findings of this research

As discussed in Chapter One, at the start of this research, I set out to understand more about the place of OAE HE in the field of OAE. My experience working in the field led me to numerous conversations about why someone wanting to work in the OAE industry should spend money on a university degree versus spending it on industry-specific NGB's. When tuition fees increased in 2012 (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2010), tension became much more evident. At this point, I could not find published evidence to support any reasons for why someone would benefit from studying an OAE foundation degree. Consequently, this thesis set out to explore the reasons why someone should study an OAE degree and, fundamentally, what they could get out of it. In order to answer that question, this research set out to explore what influence OAE-specific degree-level study can have on the practice of OAE practitioners in the OAE field. The following research questions were asked:

1. Can an OAE-specific HE study influence the practice of an OAE practitioner in the OAE field?
  - a. How does an OAE-specific HE study influence personal knowledge capital?
  - b. If it does influence personal knowledge capital, does this then influence their membership to an OAE practitioner community of practice (CoP)?
  - c. What influence does the OAE organisation feel the OAE-specific HE study has on employees' practice?

By using Wenger's 1998 CoP theory as a theoretical framework to analyse the experience of OAE practitioners studying at the local HE provider and concurrently being employed at the local OAE centre, I have been able to answer these questions (Wenger, 1998). Ultimately, this has provided me with a way to talk about OAE HE and the influence it may have that I was unable to articulate prior to this research.

### 6.1.1 Influence of OAE-specific HE studies on personal knowledge capital?

The first point to conclude here is the way in which the term 'personal knowledge capital', which I developed for this research, provided me with a way to talk about the complex experience of the OAE practitioners and what they were able to acquire and exchange between CoP's. The duality of reification and participation is evident in Wenger's 1998 CoP theory and played a particularly key part in this research (Wenger, 1998). Is it through the practitioner's participation in the OAE HE CoP that they were able to acquire something from their experience and learning, but be able to communicate this clearly in relation to the multi membership of the OAE practitioners, the process of reification had to occur. Therefore, as a researcher, I reified the outcome of the experiences of the OAE practitioner in the OAE HE CoP to be something I coined as 'personal knowledge capital'. Wenger (1998, p. 105) stated that boundary objects could be things such as "artifacts, documents, terms, concepts, and other forms of reification around which communities of practice can organize their interconnections". In this research, it was through the reification of personal knowledge capital that became a form of boundary object between the CoP's.

In chapter three I outlined the way in which I was using the concept of personal knowledge capital in that it was in a very similar way to that of Young (2012). I used it as a way to talk about the know-how, insight, ideas and emotions that the OAE practitioners may be renewing and building throughout their experiences in the OAE HE CoP and OAE practitioner CoP. What became evident in the analysis of the generated data was that the personal knowledge capital the OAE practitioners were acquiring in the OAE HE CoP was being reproduced in the OAE practitioner CoP. In some cases, the practitioners were expanding on it in the OAE practitioner CoP through their continual experiences and ongoing negotiation of the meaning of those experiences. For example, in chapter five, it was noted that one of the managers stated that the local OAE centre was a safe place for the practitioners to try out theory or question it with others, but also to question staff they are working with as to why they do something in a certain way. One practitioner also stated that their OAE HE study helped them critically reflect on their personal and other practitioners' behaviours to help them improve how they instruct, lead and educate their participants.



The second point to conclude is that by reifying the outcome of the experience of the OAE practitioners in the OAE HE CoP, I was then able to use this as an analysis point in chapter five to explore the influence this had on the OAE practitioners. Chapter Five provided evidence to suggest that the OAE HE study influences personal knowledge capital. The practitioner's responses suggested that through their membership to the OAE HE CoP, they were afforded the opportunity to generate and exchange personal knowledge capital, specifically on the theory surrounding OAE practice and the understanding of why they do things in their practice. Through an enhanced understanding of why they do what they do and the theory behind their practice, the OAE practitioners could negotiate their experiences more informedly compared to someone without this personal knowledge capital in this research.

The negotiation of their experiences occurs in both the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP, and the relationship between the CoP's is not mutually exclusive. It was evident from the analysis of the practitioners' and managers' responses that the role multi membership has is important to identify, in that the practitioner's experience in one CoP will be used in their experience in the other and vice versa. It was shown that personal knowledge capital could help the practitioners to negotiate the meaning of their new experiences in each CoP and also support them to re-negotiate the meaning of prior experiences as well. Through this negotiation of meaning, it became evident that the practitioners could also negotiate their constructed identity. Their personal knowledge capital informed their negotiated meaning of what specific identities are, predominantly associated with job roles in the field of OAE, but also in terms of what it means to be an expert in the field. Through some of the responses about the way in which one identity can become another (linked to job roles) and the development of the practitioner's understanding of their work, it became evident that the practitioners did not see their identity and personal knowledge capital as static. This finding entirely aligned with Wenger (1998, p. 151), who stated that identity is "a layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other". This finding also mirrored that of Stott (2007) and Towers and Lynch (2017), who concluded that the OAE HE study influenced the identity of students and how this was recognised as a fluid entity and ever-changing. Therefore, the continual cycle of experiences, exchange of personal knowledge capital and negotiated meaning means that the practitioners will never stop constructing their identity and the meaning of that identity, with

my research illustrating how important the experience of OAE HE was as part of this ongoing process.

#### 6.1.2 Influence on membership to the OAE practitioner CoP

The key finding, which was a unique outcome of this research, was that the OAE HE study has the potential to influence the membership of the OAE practitioners and the membership of others in the OAE practitioner CoP as well. This occurred in two specific ways: firstly, through the construction of the practitioner's and other members' identities and secondly, through controlling the regime of competence. In defining what Wenger (1998, p.5) meant by identity, he stated it was "a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities". As already concluded, the exchange of personal knowledge capital between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP provided the OAE practitioners with the opportunity to make a more informed construction of their own identity, aligning completely with Wenger's (1998) theorisation that their learning in the OAE HE CoP had the potential to change who the OAE practitioners saw themselves as. This was undoubtedly suggested in responses where the practitioners used language such as 'whereas now' to discuss what their OAE HE experiences had shown them about who they are in the OAE practitioner CoP.

Through their learning experiences in the OAE HE CoP, the practitioners were also more informed to construct the identity of others in the CoP, including (for those working in the local OAE centre) their colleagues. Wenger (1998, p. 149) argued that identity is defined by the "ways we experience our selves through participation as well as by the ways we and others reify our selves". The findings of this research concur with this point in that the experiences of the OAE practitioners in the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP led them to reify themselves into an identity, also in comparison to how they reified others in the CoP. Through their interactions and experiences with other members, they were able to negotiate the meaning of those experiences in a way that constructed different versions of identities for them to reify their position somewhere between being a novice and master/expert. Therefore, brokering played a role in the experience of the OAE practitioners, much in the way that Wenger's theory suggested it would. Wenger (1998) identified brokering as the "connections provided by people who can introduce elements of one practice into

another" (Wenger, 1998, p. 105). The members of the OAE HE CoP (such as other students and staff) and the members of the OAE practitioner CoP (such as other practitioners, colleagues and managers) could broker the reified experiences of the practitioners from one CoP to the other.

The second important point is the influence on the regime of competence. Wenger (1998) argues that competence may drive experience, and experience may also drive competence. It was evident from the analysis findings that in some cases, the practitioners were finding that those they regarded as being experts were the ones that controlled the regime of competence. However, it was also suggested that there was potential for the OAE practitioners who were studying the OAE HE programme to influence what was determined as the regime of competence. Where the OAE practitioners were exchanging personal knowledge capital between the OAE HE CoP and the OAE practitioner CoP, they were able to challenge those members who were perceived to have controlled the regime of competence. Specifically, they were able to challenge aspects of the theory and practice of those practitioners who were not studying the OAE HE programme. In turn, the OAE managers suggested that this had the potential to change the practice of others in the CoP, indicating that the regime of competence was then being influenced as well. The transfer of power of members controlling the joint enterprise of the CoP was then shifted to those who were members of the OAE HE CoP.

### 6.1.3 Influence on employees' practice, from the manager's perspectives

An important finding of this research was that the OAE managers corroborated the responses of the OAE practitioners and, therefore, provided validity to the practitioner's responses. The managers confirmed that the influences of the OAE HE studies were on personal knowledge capital related to theory and understanding of why they practice in the way they do. The additional element that the OAE managers portrayed was the comparative nature of their employees who were studying the OAE HE programme versus those who were not. Through this perspective, I discovered how membership in the OAE HE CoP has the potential to influence the regime of competence in the OAE practitioner CoP. The managers

acknowledged some potential benefits of the OAE HE studies, such as the speed of progression and increased understanding of their practice compared to those not undertaking the degree.

While the OAE managers' responses helped to provide validity to the responses of the OAE practitioners, they also provided unique insight into some of the practical challenges of supporting their staff to undertake the OAE HE study. There was a cost implication that they needed to consider in releasing their staff to undertake the OAE HE programme while needing to cover their rota. There was also the issue of meeting the individual needs of the staff and the potential challenge of learning on the job and learning on the OAE HE programme being too much for some practitioners. Consequently, it can be surmised that the OAE managers recognised potential direct benefits to the staff on the OAE HE programme and those who were not. However, practical barriers impact the accessibility of this type of programme for some practitioners.

## 6.2 Implications for practice

A key question from all of the findings is 'So what?' and the simple answer to this is that this research has been able to contribute to a body of knowledge that is somewhat limited to provide two implications for practice. Firstly, what does this research mean for the place of OAE HE in the field of OAE? Secondly, it shows how using theory can provide insight into social phenomena in the field of OAE.

### 6.2.1 Implications for practice in the field of OAE

In order to conclude the first point, it is important to answer the overarching research question of 'Can specific HE study influence the practice of an OAE practitioner in the OAE field?'. This research has provided three areas of influence that the OAE HE study has on practice.

- (1) Firstly, the research has concluded that there is an influence on the personal knowledge capital of practitioners, their knowledge and understanding of their

practice, and their knowledge of the personal influences that their experiences in the OAE HE studies have on them.

- (2) Secondly, influence was shown through identity construction. Through the exchange of personal knowledge capital from the OAE HE studies, practitioners are better informed when negotiating the meaning of their experiences and understanding how this impacts their trajectory, which better informs their constructed identity.
- (3) Thirdly, influence was shown through potential changes in the regime of competence. The research findings suggest that the practitioners who have studied the OAE HE programme have the potential to influence the regime of competence and the joint enterprise of the CoP through their exchange of personal knowledge capital.

In answering the overarching research question, the above conclusions have also provided evidence to support the place of OAE HE studies in the field of OAE. At the start of this research, this was a question I was unable to answer, and this research has provided an insight into what OAE study might provide for practitioners, in turn, supporting the place of OAE HE study in the field of OAE.

#### 6.2.2 Implications for research in the field of OAE

Implications for practice about research in OAE link directly to the use of social theory and align specifically with Beames and Pike (2013b, p. 4) in their argument that social theory enables us to 'find deeper meaning in all kinds of ideas and practices'. Using the CoP theory proposed by Wenger (1998) provided a theoretical framework to explore the situation with the OAE practitioners. Through developing the heuristic device, I found entry points to analyse the data and provide discussion points to answer my research questions. I am confident that the use of CoP theory from Wenger (1998) supported me as a researcher to find deeper meaning in the experiences of the OAE practitioners and explore the key finding of the OAE HE programme supporting the construction of identity for the OAE practitioners.

The use of a heuristic device is not unique to this research. However, the specific device used in this research is. As discussed in Chapter Five, there was a definite place for it in this research. I was able to use it to navigate the messiness of the data analysis and provide me

with a way to discuss my findings coherently. For me, this is a positive outcome of this research and provides a basis for the use of CoP theory in OAE research in the future, the use of heuristic devices in general in OAE research, and also the use of the specific heuristic device I developed in this current work in future research where CoP theory could be applied. In a sense, the heuristic device I developed provided an overlay over the data to give me specific entry points to look at what the data was telling me. Therefore, just because I used it in one particular way does not mean this is the only way. There is flexibility in the way that the heuristic device can be used in two forms. In the first instance, it could be used at the forefront of the research to inform the focus of the research and inform the research questions. In the second way, the use of the device can come after the data collection and provide a way to look at the data in a specific way, much like it was used in this research.

### 6.3 Limitations of the research

Particular challenges were faced during the research, especially in conducting the research during a global pandemic. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the inherent limitations of adjusting the research methods used away from focus groups to qualitative surveys. The data generated through the surveys is trustworthy, and it cannot be said that if I had undertaken the focus groups, I would have come out with any different outcomes. The additional rigour that focus groups at stages three and four would have provided would have come through the ability of the researcher to ask the participants immediate follow-up questions. The transcript from focus groups could have been lengthier than the responses provided by the survey participants, potentially providing additional data to analyse the construction of the responses and themes generated in stages one and two. Had the technology and skillset that we have now (some years after the pandemic) existed then, I would have been able to undertake the focus groups as initially planned. However, whilst this may be a limitation of this research, it did not hinder the ability to analyse a set of data to understand the experiences of the OAE practitioners better.

There were some limitations in the purposeful choice not to collect data that would allow for comparisons between differing groups of participants. For example, the role that gender and age had was not able to be evidenced as this data was not collected at any stage of the

research. While this was not a specific focal point for me, there is potential to develop this current work to explore the role that age and gender may have on the outcomes. Also, there was no direct comparison of the outcomes of the OAE HE study compared to data generated from those who have not studied OAE HE programmes. This research was specific in generating data from those who were or had studied OAE HE programmes; therefore, a limitation of the current work is in the understanding of whether or not the OAE HE study has any benefits that exist in comparison to those that have had different pathways in the OAE practitioner CoP. Alongside the comparison of those not studying on an OAE HE programme, there was no comparison to practitioners who may have undertaken academic studies in other subject areas. Therefore, it cannot be concluded whether the OAE HE study provides the influence argued in this current research, or whether practitioners would find a similar influence from other studies.

#### 6.4 What next

This work has gone some way to positioning the purpose of the OAE HE studies in the field of OAE. However, there are still some questions about the role of the OAE HE study in positioning an OAE practitioner as a professional. Following this research, there is an opportunity to explore this gap and better understand the role OAE HE can have in creating an OAE professional and the construction of the identity surrounding this idea. Alongside this additional work, there is also the opportunity to compare specific OAE HE studies and other subject disciplines in HE, such as sport, psychology and education. It is not apparent in this current work whether the influence on the OAE practitioners is specifically from their OAE HE Study or whether they would have had similar influence from other subjects. The final point to add to 'What Next' is to encourage other researchers to use the heuristic device in their areas of research, where CoP theory could be applied, and support its development as a tool to support future research.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Survey questions for stage one

Online survey questions for stage one of research:

- (1) What is the title of the course you are studying?
- (2) What year of study are you in?
- (3) How would you define your practice in the OAE field?
- (4) Do you feel your higher education study of OAE has influenced your practice in the field?  
if so, in what ways?
- (5) Have there been any specific subjects/topics in your higher education course that have influenced your practice in the field more than others? If so how?
- (6) If you would be happy to be contacted with any follow up questions, please leave your email here.

Appendix B  
Survey questions for stage two

Online survey questions for stage two of research:

- (1) What is the title of the course you are studying or have studied?
- (2) What year of study are you in?
- (3) How would you define your practice in the OAE field?
- (4) Do you feel your higher education study of OAE has influenced your practice in the field?  
if so, in what ways?
- (5) Have there been any specific subjects/topics in your higher education course that have influenced your practice in the field more than others? If so how?
- (6) If you would be happy to be contacted with any follow up questions, please leave your email here.



Appendix C  
Survey questions for stage three

Online survey questions for stage three of research:

1) What would you define as an OAE expert in the field?

(2) Do you feel that your OAE HE study can support you in becoming an OAE expert, if so how?

(3a) Responses from the initial survey suggested that knowledge and understanding about theory and practice gained from their OAE HE study were a common influence on OAE practitioners. Can you please expand why you think this may be?

(3b) Do you feel that this has had an influence on your practice? If so how?

(4a) Another outcome of the initial survey suggested that OAE HE study could influence practitioners by helping them to know more about the reasons why they do things in their practice. Can you please expand why you think this may be?

(4b) Has any of your OAE HE study influenced you in this way, if so how?

(5) Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your OAE HE study and the influence it is/is not having on your practice in the field?

The OAE and HE acronyms were outlined in the title of the survey 'Outdoor and Adventure Education (OAE) and Higher Education (HE) - Part 2'.


Appendix D  
Survey questions for stage four

Online survey questions for stage four of research:

- (1) What would you define as an OAE expert in the field?
- (2) Do you feel that the OAE HE study can support your staff in becoming an OAE expert, if so how?
- (3a) Responses from the initial survey suggested that knowledge and understanding about theory and practice gained from their OAE HE study were a common influence on OAE practitioners. Can you please expand why you think this may be?
- (3b) Do you feel the knowledge and understanding your staff have gained from studying on the OAE degree has had an influence on their practice, if so how?
- (4a) Another outcome of the initial survey suggested that OAE HE study could influence practitioners by helping them to know more about the reasons why they do things in their practice. Can you please expand why you think this may be?
- (4b) Do you feel this had had an influence on your staff, if so how?
- (5) Why have you supported your staff to undertake OAE HE study whilst employed with you?
- (6) Has there been any barriers/challenges you have faced supporting your staff to undertake their studies?
- (7) Is there anything else you would you like to add regarding the OAE HE study of your staff and the influence it is/is not having on their practice in the field?

As with the previous stages the acronyms were outlined in the title of the survey 'Outdoor and Adventure Education (OAE) and Higher Education (HE) – Managers'.

Appendix E  
Ethics approval documentation

  FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES  Education Research Ethics Sub-committee  APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL OF RESEARCH		(For EdRESC use only)	
		Application No:	
		Chairs action (expedited)	Yes/ No
		Risk level -if high refer to UREC chair immediately  Cont. Review Date	High/ low  / /
		Outcome (delete as necessary)	Approved/  Declined/ Amend/ Withdrawn
ALL PARTS OF THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETED IN FULL IN ORDER TO GAIN APPROVAL. Please refer to the guidance notes.			
Part A: PROJECT INFORMATION			
1.	Investigator  <i>Katy Joy</i>	If Student, please name your Director of Studies or Project Advisor: Alun Morgan  Course/programme: EdD  School/directorate (if not PloE):	
2.	Title of research:  <i>What influence can outdoor and adventure higher education study have on practitioners in this field?</i>		
3.	Nature of approval sought (Please tick relevant boxes) *Note 2 a) PROJECT: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> b) TAUGHT PROGRAMME (max. 3 years): <input type="checkbox"/> If a,) please indicate which category: Funded/unfunded Research (staff) <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MPhil/PhD, ResM, BClin Sci, EdD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Or Other (please state) <input type="checkbox"/> Taught Masters <input type="checkbox"/>		
4.	a) Funding body (if any): None  b) If funded, please state any ethical implications of the source of funding, including any reputational risks for the university and how they have been addressed. *Note 3		
5.	a) Duration of project/programme: 3 years		b) Dates: 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2019 – 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2022
6.	Has this project received ethical approval from another Ethics Committee?    Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  Committee name:  Are you therefore only applying for Chair's action now?    Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		

7.	<p>Attachments (if required):</p> <p>Application/Clearance (if you answered Yes to question 6) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Information sheets for participants Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consent forms Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Sample questionnaire(s) Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Sample set(s) of interview questions Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Continuing review approval (if requested) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other, please state:</p>
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	<p>If you are staff, are there any other researchers involved in your project? Please list who they are, their roles on the project and if/how they are associated with the University. Please include their email addresses. <i>(Please indicate School of each named individual, including collaborators external to the Faculty/University):</i></p>
	<p>If you are a student, who are your other supervisors?</p> <p>Rowena Passy</p> <p>Have you discussed all ethical aspects of your research with your Director of Studies prior to submitting this application? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
9	<p>Type of application:</p> <p>Initial application <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Resubmission with amendments <input type="checkbox"/> Version Number:</p> <p>Amendment to approved application * <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Renewal <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>* For full details of the amendments procedure, please see the guidance notes</i></p>
10	<p>Summary of aims, objectives and methods (max 250 words)</p> <p>What influence can OA higher education have on OAE personal knowledge capital?</p> <p>What influence can OAE knowledge capital from higher education have on the practice of OAE practitioners?</p> <p>What influence can (2) have on the practitioners' organisation?</p> <p>Stage 1: open-ended qualitative questionnaire provided to the OAE practitioners studying on the OAE higher education degree. This will focus on identifying some common themes for what influence OA higher education have on OAE knowledge capital (question 1). Participants at this stage will be those students who have studied for at least one year on the OAE higher education programme and are also part of an instructor training programme with a local OAE centre.</p> <p>Stage 2: pre-coded quantitative questionnaire in online format to be provided on online platforms to a wider OAE practitioner base (question 1). Questions will be based on common themes identified from stage 1. This will open the themes up to a wider OAE audience, through routes such as specific social media groups. This can then confirm, or offer new themes to inform stage 3 of the methodology. Participants at this stage will be a wider audience of anyone that has studied on a higher education programme and is also an OAE practitioner.</p> <p>Stage 3: after analysis of stage 2, information gained will then be taken back to participants from stage 1 using a focus group to discuss key themes from stage 1 and 2. This focus group will also be used as a method to ask</p>

	<p>questions, related to common themes from stage 1 and 2 (question 2). Participants at this stage are those students that were used to complete stage 1, as long as they have provided consent to partake in this stage of the research.</p> <p>Stage 4: will take information from stages 1-3 to the management of the OAE centre through the method of a focus group. The purpose of this will be to discuss how anything discovered through earlier stages has influenced the organisation. It will also be an opportunity to ask questions that explore wider considerations for the organisations (question 3). Participants at this stage will be those in a management position at the local OAE centre that have released their staff who are the participants at stage 1 and stage 3.</p> <p>Knowledge capital can be defined in the field of OAE as: <i>'the acquisition of objectified personal knowledge, that has the potential to produce profit and be reproducible, through the study of, or participation in a form of learning that involves the outdoor environment and can be associated with activities than can, but not exclusively, involve a perception of risk'</i>.</p> <p>When I started my journey on this thesis, I was far more an insider than outsider. This is because I had invested the time in creating the OAE higher education programme and working with the local OAE centre to further develop it to suit the needs of their instructor training programme. Yet as time has passed, I have moved further away from this position, to my current position, where I no longer have any involvement in either the OAE higher education programme, nor with the outdoor centre, predominantly due to a change in my job role. Therefore, my position is somewhere in the space between insider and outsider. It is important that I recognise the bias that I may have as a researcher from my change of position.</p> <p>Due to the current pandemic situation I am suggesting a change to my research methods and where originally I had recommended to undertake focus groups, which were due to take place between the 19<sup>th</sup> March and the 1<sup>st</sup> April, all of which have been indefinitely postponed. I am suggesting that I amend my methods from focus groups to an extension of phase one and using follow up open-ended questionnaires to support the building of case-studies of the participants in the research. Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the research has already been conducted, therefore amends are only required for phase 3 and 4. With the current situation with COVID-19 outdoor centres have closed, including the one which is a focus in my research. A number of staff are also being told they no longer have jobs at these centres, therefore in order to capture the most current information this research is time sensitive.</p> <p>The themes collected from phase one can be posed as questions for written or verbal response submitted through electronic sources. It cannot be guaranteed that everyone had access to IT facilities, therefore undertaking focus groups via internet sources, may disadvantage the level of data that can be collated.</p> <p>It may be that I pose the follow up questions in a written format and then if the pandemic does not affect the closure of establishments for a significant amount of time I can follow up with the planned focus groups if required.</p>
11.	<p>When do you need/expect to begin the research methods for which ethical approval is sought?</p> <p>July 2019</p> <p>Immediately for the amended methods</p> <hr/> <p>How long will this research take and/or for how long are you applying for this ethical approval?</p> <p>2 years</p>
12	<p>What will be the outcomes of this project?</p> <p>Completion of thesis for EdD</p>

13	Is the project subject to an external funding bid? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (please complete questions 14- 18) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (please go to Part B)
14	Bid amount:
15	Bid status: <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet submitted      Submission deadline: <input type="checkbox"/> Submitted, decision pending <input type="checkbox"/> Bid granted
16	University Project Finance Team costing approved with Dean's signature? Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> .      No: <input type="checkbox"/> (Please contact the University Project Finance Team as soon as possible)
17	Has the funding bid undergone peer review? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
18	Partners & Institutions:
	Name (including title)      School:      Institute / Organisation:

## Part B: ETHICAL REVIEW STATEMENT

The purpose of this statement is to clarify whether the proposed research requires ethical clearance through an Ethics Protocol. Please read the relevant section of the guidance notes before you complete your statement.

Please indicate all the categories into which your proposed research fits:

	Data collection / analysis involved:	Action required:	
1	This study does not involve data collection from or about human participants.	Complete this Ethical Review Statement and add a brief (one page) description of your research and intended data collection methods. Part C not required.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	This study involves the analysis or synthesis of data obtained from/about human subjects where such data are in the public domain (i.e. available in public archives and/or previously published)	Complete this Ethical Review Statement and add a brief (one page) description of your research, the nature of the data and intended data collection methods. Part C not required.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	This study involves the analysis of data obtained from/about human participants where the data has been previously collected but is not in the public domain	Complete this Ethical Review Statement Please complete Part C – Ethical Protocol	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	This study draws upon data already collected under a previous ethical review but involves utilising the data in ways not cleared with the research participants	Complete this Ethical Review Statement Please complete Part C – Ethical Protocol	<input type="checkbox"/>

		<i>Submit copy of original ethics protocol and additional consent materials (if relevant) attached.</i>	
5	This study involves new data collection from/about human participants	<p><i>Complete this Ethical Review Statement</i></p> <p><i>Please complete Part C – Ethical Protocol</i></p> <p><i>Submit copies of all information for participants AND consent forms in style and format appropriate to the participants together with your research instruments.</i></p>	☒

Please Note: Should the applicant wish to alter in any significant regard the nature of their research following ethical approval, an application for amendment should be submitted to the committee together with a covering letter setting out the reasons for the amendment. The application should be made with reference to one or more of the categories laid out in this document. ‘Significant’ should be interpreted as meaning changing in some fundamental way the research purposes and processes in whole or part.

#### Part C: ETHICS PROTOCOL

Please indicate how you will ensure that this research conforms to Plymouth University’s Research Ethics Policy - *The Integrity of Research involving Human Participants*. Please complete each section with a statement that addresses each of the ethical principles set out below. Please note that you should provide the degree of detail suggested. Each section will expand to accommodate this information.


*Please refer to Guidance Notes when completing this section.*

1	<p>Informed consent</p> <p><i>Please attach copies of all draft information / documents, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules, etc intended for the participants, and list below. When it is not possible to submit research instruments (e.g. use of action research methods) the instruments should be listed together with the reason for the non-submission. Please also indicate the attachments in Question A7.</i></p>
	Attached copies of – questionnaire and consent for stage 1, consent and ideas of questions for stage 2, consent and ideas of questions for stage 3 and 4.
2	<p>Openness and honesty</p> <p><i>It is generally accepted that research with human participants would not involve deception. However if this is not the case, deception is permissible only where it can be shown that all three of the following conditions have been met in full.</i></p> <p><i>Deception is completely unavoidable if the purpose of the research is to be achieved.</i></p> <p><i>The research objective has strong scientific merit.</i></p> <p><i>Any potential harm arising from the proposed deception can be effectively neutralised or reversed by the proposed debriefing procedures.</i></p> <p><i>If deception is involved, applicants are required to provide a detailed justification and to supply the names of two independent assessors whom the Committee can approach for advice. Please attach relevant documentation and list below.</i></p>
	No involvement of deception involved in this research
3	Right to withdraw

	<i>Please provide a clear statement regarding what information has been provided to participants regarding their right to withdraw from the research.</i>																
	As a voluntary participant in this study, you reserve the right to fully withdraw from the study without consequence at any point up to one month after your final involvement in data collection, at which time I will assume you are happy for your data to be used. (in the questionnaires they will be asked for their email address to make further contact for next stages and/or a memorable piece of information that can be later used to identify their data if they wish to withdraw)																
4	<p>Protection from Harm</p> <p><i>Indicate here any vulnerability that may be present because of the:</i></p> <p><i>participants e.g. children or vulnerable adults.</i></p> <p><i>nature of the research process.</i></p> <p><i>If you tick any box below, please indicate in "further information" how you will ensure protection from harm.</i></p> <p><i>Does this research involve:</i></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><i>Children</i></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Vulnerable adults</i></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Sensitive topics</i></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Permission of a gatekeeper in place of consent from individuals</i></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Subjects being academically assessed by the researcher</i></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Research that is conducted without full and informed consent</i></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Research that could induce psychological stress and anxiety</i></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Intrusive intervention (eg, vigorous physical exercise)</i></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>	<i>Children</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Vulnerable adults</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Sensitive topics</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Permission of a gatekeeper in place of consent from individuals</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Subjects being academically assessed by the researcher</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Research that is conducted without full and informed consent</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Research that could induce psychological stress and anxiety</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Intrusive intervention (eg, vigorous physical exercise)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<i>Intrusive intervention (eg, vigorous physical exercise)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>																
	<p>Further information:</p> <p><i>Do ALL researchers in contact with children and vulnerable adults have current DBS clearance?</i> Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>. No: <input type="checkbox"/> N/A: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>If Yes, Please give disclosure number(s)</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>Name</i></th> <th><i>Number</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>If No, please explain:</p>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Number</i>														
<i>Name</i>	<i>Number</i>																
5	<p>External Clearance</p> <p><i>I undertake to obtain written permission from the Head of any external institutions (school, social service, prison, etc) in which research will be conducted. (please check box) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></i></p>																
6	<p>Participant/Subject Involvement</p> <p><i>Has this group of participants/subjects already been the subject of research in the current academic year?</i></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>																
7	<p>Payment</p>																



	<i>Please provide details of any payments, either financial or in kind, made to participants for participation, compensation for time given, etc.</i>			
	None			
8	<p>Debriefing</p> <p><i>Please provide a clear statement regarding debriefing of participants following their involvement in the study. This should include:</i></p> <p><i>when debriefing will take place,</i></p> <p><i>who will debrief the participants,</i></p> <p><i>how the debriefing will take place, and</i></p> <p><i>what information has been provided to participants regarding debriefing.</i></p>			
	Participants are informed of the stages of the research There will be opportunity to debrief the participants of stage 1 at stage 3 if required. During the focus groups the participants will be informed that they have the option to request a final copy of the research through contacting me.			
9	<p>Dissemination of Research</p> <p><i>Please provide a clear statement regarding what information has been provided to participants regarding dissemination of this research.</i></p>			
	Participants are made aware that the research forms my thesis and are also invited to request the final research. Other dissemination of the research may involve the writing of an academic journal publication and conferences.			
10	<p>Confidentiality</p> <p><i>Please provide a clear statement regarding what information has been provided to participants regarding confidentiality issues.</i></p>			
	All data collected is for the sole purpose of this research. Participation in this study is voluntary and all data collected will be treated with sensitivity and confidentiality of individual data will be maintained throughout the conduct of the research and thereafter by not disclosing identifiable information about participants. All data will be stored securely on a password protected laptop to ensure confidentiality.			
11	<p>Ethical principles of professional bodies</p> <p><i>Where relevant professional bodies have published their own guidelines and principles, these must be followed and the current University principles interpreted and extended as necessary in this context. Please state which (if any) professional bodies' guidelines are being utilised.</i></p>			
	BERA			
12	<p>Declarations:</p> <p>For all applicants, your signature below indicates that, to the best of your knowledge and belief, this research conforms to the ethical principles laid down by Plymouth University and by the professional body specified in C.11 above.</p> <p>For supervisors of PGR students:</p> <p>As Director of Studies, your signature confirms that you believe this project is methodologically sound and conforms to university ethical procedures.</p>			
		Name(s)	Signature (electronic is acceptable)	Date
	Applicant	Katy Joy	K.Joy	19.05.19

				24.03.20
	Other staff investigators:			
	Director of Studies (if applicant is a postgraduate research student):	Dr Alun Morgan		13.07.19 24.03.20

Appendix F  
Responses related to classification of roles

**Instructor**

- S1P2 - "I am a [sic] outdoor adventurer [sic] instructor"*
- S1P4 - "I am an outdoor instructor",*
- S1P1 - "I, as an instructor am responsible to facilitate this learning and personal development as much as possible while running safe and engaging sessions"*
- S1P6 - "I would say that I am an outdoor instructor - trying to become an outdoor educator who provides high quality introductory activity sessions to groups of schools, young people and adults".*
- S2P1 - "sea kayak instructor/outdoor education instructor"*
- S2P5 - "freelance multiactivity instructor"*
- S2P18 - "instructor in an SEN school"*
- S2P19 - "centre based activity instructor"*

**Coach and Teacher:**

- S2P13 - "development coach"*
- S2P10 - "climbing and paddlesports coach/PE teacher"*
- S2P2 - "I am employed as an Unqualified Teacher of Outdoor Education in a special needs provision"*

**Educator:**

- S1P3 - "outdoor educator"*
- S1P5 - "I'm an outdoor educator"*

**Facilitator:**

- S2P12 - "professional outdoor facilitator"*
- S2P13 - "I view my role more as a facilitator than an instructor which is informed by my degree"*

**Lecturer:**

- S2P4 - "lecturer (manager) is outdoor adventure"*

**Practitioner:**

- S2P14 - "outdoor practitioner"*

**Undefined role:**

- S2P6 - "fulfilling"*
- S2P17 - "very committed"*
- S2016 - "personal development through adventure"*
- S2P3 - "Broadening horizons, supporting people towards being independent, free thinking individuals and team players through adventure and meaningful experiences outdoors"*

Appendix G  
Responses defining an OAE expert

S1P3/S3P1 - *“Educator not instructor”*

S1P6/S3P2 - *“An individual who doesn't take themselves too seriously, but is aware of the mystery of the outdoors”*

S1P4/S3P3 - *“Someone with lots of experience and knowledge but also has the ability to pass that onto others”*

S1P5/S3P4 *“I would say an OAE expert is someone who facilitates outdoor sessions that are fun, yet incorporate deep and meaningful learning. I would class learning as deep and meaningful when learners acquire skills that are transferable to lots of different contexts in life...personally, I believe that the great range of interpersonal skills that people can take away from outdoor adventure are the most valuable, as this is what leads to transformed personalities and therefore professional, as well as personal development. Someone who takes all these things into account (prioritising the learners' development) and has a great set of skills and knowledge, as well as experience, is an OAE expert to me.”*

S1P1/S3P5 - *“-a person with technical, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills applicable to adventurous and educational activities in the outdoors*

*-technical: practical and safety skills to lead activities outside (often involving some risk and deeper educational purpose)*

*-interpersonal: soft skills towards other people (participants, other professionals and superiors) e.g. communication, empathy, leadership skills*

*-intrapersonal: knowledge about self and ability to evaluate and understand own values, thoughts, behaviours*

*-an expert should be able to apply all of that knowledge and skills in different contexts (e.g. different activities (adventurous, educational, historical, skill-acquisition,...), group, weather, risk-level,...)”*

**Responses from the OAE managers defining an expert:**

S4P1 - *“That is a difficult question to answer. I don't feel that the industry uses the term expert all that often. If I had to use the term I would associate it with someone who is highly qualified and experienced. They would also be a course provider.”*

S4P2 - *“An OAE expert in the field would have the skills, qualification and experience required to run quality sessions in their chose field. They would be able to reflect on and adapt their practice. they should also have the ability to manage individual learning goals and have different techniques to adjust their approach depending on their groups needs. They should also have some theoretical knowledge and be able to adapt it to practice.”*

S4P3 - *“I think that expertise can be defined in the context of knowledge, understanding and skill. An OAE expert could be someone who is very academically*

*knowledgeable, but have little understanding of application to practice and little skill to deliver OAE. An OAE expert could be very skilful [sic] in either a specific activity or across a range of activities. They could have obtained this skill through experience but they may or may not have the underpinning knowledge as to why what they do works etc. You could also seek to define what an OAE expert is by looking at the Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL) or activity specific National Governing Bodies (NGB) definitions. The IOL are in the process of redefining a series of professional occupational standards (<https://www.outdoor-learning.org/Jobs/The-Outdoor-Professional/Occupational-Standards>). One of their guiding principles is the concept of a holistic approach which encompasses the more skills focused NGB's. Therefore, I would say that an OAE expert would be someone who has holistic (knowledge, understanding and skill) attributes. The knowledge would be acquired primarily through academic study and the understanding and skill through a combination of training, assessment and delivery (working - employed or voluntary). However, I think that you can have different areas/levels of OAE expertise, but I would still expect each area/level to be defined from an holistic perspective."*

*S4P4 - "Someone who is able to provide stimulating and appropriate teaching and learning opportunities for each individual learner that they are working with. The OAE expert will be able to adapt and change and draw on previous knowledge and experiences to meet the ever changing needs of the learners."*

Appendix H

Responses to 'do you feel that your OAE HE study can support you in becoming an OAE expert, if so how?'

Responses from OAE practitioners to 'do you feel that your OAE HE study can support you in becoming an OAE expert, if so how?'

S1P3/S3P1 - *"By providing the theory behind practice especially the psychology so that you can learn how best to teach and coach in a way that the education system fails."*

S1P6/S3P2 - *"Yes, by meeting fellow adventures and being inspired by their stories. Or seeing a mass of young people stuck studying inside with no desire to escape and thus your adventures are for them too."*

S1P4/S3P3 - *"It's the building block to begin the journey, yes"*

S1P4/S3P4 - *"Yes, I think it can. Before I started studying, I had no idea about the effectiveness of different leadership styles, the importance of delivering appropriate praise and the idea of growth vs. fixed mindsets...and there is so much more good theory that shaped my practice! It is important that lecturers at university make the link to practice when talking about these theories. Not everything was directly related to outdoor practice within my degree, but it was very much in the third year, which was great and helped me so much in trying new approaches on session."*

S1P1/S3P5 - *"Yes, learning and understanding underpinning theories to then apply them in practice is part of being an expert (e.g. learning and skill-acquisition theories for interpersonal teaching skills). Experiencing and getting to know other experts (such as lecturers and other students) helped learn more and gain experience while connecting within the sector."*

## Appendix I

### Responses to 'do you feel that the OAE HE study can support your staff in becoming an OAE expert, if so how?'

Responses from OAE managers to 'do you feel that the OAE HE study can support your staff in becoming an OAE expert, if so how?'

S4P1 - *"Yes it gives them a breadth of experience and knowledge. It certainly gives them an advantage because the [sic] should be familiar with the underlying theories. Ultimately the main advantage is that will understand that OAE is about development not achievement, I have met too many OAE 'experts' that don't appear to understand the difference."*

S4P2 - *"OAE HE study can help staff gain a better understanding of the theories underpinning OAE and can provide some of the reflective tools required to be an expert. it can also help them to gain a wider understanding of the industry as a whole."*

S4P3 - *"100% Yes. I believe that HE study provides the opportunity to develop, primarily cognitive knowledge and thinking skills. In it's current format of HE structure (whole different question and discourse), it can also develop a level of technical skill, intra and inter personal skill. However, because of the limitations of HE's current structure, it's ability to develop these things is severely restricted. The cognitive knowledge acquired during an HE Outdoor Education degree programme underpins the outdoor sector. This helps create an individual who begins to develop into a holistic outdoor professional."*

S4P4 - *"The OAE HE study helps to bridge the gap between theory and the practical real life work as an Outdoor practitioner. It has helped he [sic] students understand some of the key principles of outdoor learning as well as the planning, delivering and reviewing or sessions as it has been part of their assignments. I think our students benefit greatly with being able to talk with experienced Outdoor practitioners in a real work situation and to challenge what they are learning in a university setting. This I feel, has allowed them to form their own opinions and ideas and to be able see what is actually applicable in the work place rather than as an academic exercise. As more experienced staff are on hand to help and advise the students their rate of learning is accelerated and are able to see best practice modeled regularly. It has worked both ways in that our full time practitioners are under the microscope from the students who have helped raise the standards of aspects of the outdoor education provision at [the local outdoor centre] as they know the students are observing all the time as well as asking questions about what and why they do what they do. This has helped to create a professional and supportive learning environment at [the outdoor centre]."*

Appendix J  
Responses related to multi membership

Responses provided by the OAE practitioners related to multi membership and influence of one field on another:

*S1P1 - "theories could be applied to session (challenge by choice, adventure experience paradigm, etc.)"*

*S1P3 - "As well as this, learning how the brain processes the information that I am teaching, therefore understanding how children may feel. It is great to be able to instruct and teach in lots of different ways to suit different people's need."*

*S1P5 - "Applied adventure sports... (applying leadership theories in practice)."*

*S1P3 - "It is understanding how to get the most from a particular session for the people you are presented with, adding appropriate detail to the design of programmes, the ability to react to situations that develop, and aim for inspirational reviewing."*

*S2P13 - "Firstly the pedagogy modules allowed me to understand learning and how to select the most appropriate teaching styles/ environments which I use everyday."*

*S2P15 - "For example, identifying and understanding rocks in climbing sessions, numeracy skills in navigation training or water catchments and river formations or hydraulics on moving water when kayaking."*

*S2P13 - "The course educated me on learning styles and feedback as well as understanding the psychological and physiological challenges that adventure sports athletes face. I now integrate this into my coaching to underpin both decision making and transfer of information to clients"*

*S1P3 - "Doing the practical alongside the theory allows you to realise why you do things and how you can change them for the better"*

*S1P4/S3P3 - "outdoor learning and teaching practice allowed us to put theory in to practice immediately with real life groups and instant feedback"*



Appendix K

Responses coded in the theme 'knowledge and understanding influences'

**From the OAE practitioners at stage 1:**

S1P1 - *"insight into how people learn -> sessions and practice adapted"*

S1P1 - *"theories underpinning the OAE practice and giving reason for good practice"*

S1P1 - *"-theories could be applied to session (challenge by choice, adventure experience paradigm, etc.)"*

S1P3 - *"As well as this, learning how the brain processes the information that I am teaching, therefore understanding how children may feel."*

S1P3 - *"It is great to be able to instruct and teach in lots of different ways to suit different people's needs."*

S1P4 - *"the degree has taught me theories and reasoning on how to behave."*

S1P5 - *"Yes! The leadership styles that we looked at within our second year made me think about my practice as an educator lots. I experimented with different approaches and kind of found my own personal approach (energetic, enthusiastic, servant leader mixed with transformational leadership). We're also looking at how much risk we should facilitate and how much we should wrap children „in cotton wool“. It's interesting, I tried a different approach to a low adventure session last week (not saying all the safety rules but letting the children come up with their own safety rules) - it was magical! However, would depend on the group very much."*

S1P5 - *"Yes. Applied adventure sports in year two (applying leadership theories in practice),"*

S1P2 - *"yes pricipulles [sic] of adventer [sic] as it gave me an understaning [sic] of the wider industry allowing me to operate more profeshanaliy [sic]"*

S1P3 - *"As well as this, learning how the brain processes the information that I am teaching, therefore understanding how children may feel."*

S1P3 - *"It is great to be able to instruct and teach in lots of different ways to suit different people's needs."*

S1P4 - *"The study has taught me the how and why of my practice"*

S1P4 - *"However i did not know why i was using different tones of voice or hand gestures."*

**From the OAE practitioners at stage 2:**

S2P10 - *"I now realise that I need to be aware of how I view knowledge and it's conception within a learner"*

S2P11 - *"Therefore, I have attempted (and continuing to) change what my beliefs of knowledge are in order to provide opportunities for the learner to develop this when they are with me."*

S2P13 - *"The course educated me on learning styles and feedback as well as understanding the psychological and physiological challenges that adventure sports athletes face. I now integrate this into my coaching to underpin both decision making and transfer of information to clients."*

S2P18 - *"Has given me the ability to be able to champion the subject and the knowledge need to do so in any environment."*

S2P19 - *"By working at a residential activity centre catering for youth offenders, special needs and behavioural needs, I have referred back to some of the knowledge I gained from completing course assignments"*

S2P5 - *"Theory of team building and theory of outdoor education. Both give a strong understanding of basic psychological principles related to individual and team development"*

S2P12 - *"Some of the theory learnt has helped me to explain the reasons behind what we do, when facilitating clients as well as other facilitators"*

S2P15 - *"Much of the OE underpinning theory is transferable from youth work and served to compliment my existing skills and knowledge"*

S2P19 - *"In addition, when training centre staff, I refer back to other theory learnt such as 1) the Adventure Experience Paradigm model 2) Comfort, stretch and panic zones model 3) Health and safety case studies such as Lime Bay 4) PPE health and safety theory."*

S2P19 - *"2) Theoretical Approaches to Adventure Therapy: Demonstrated the positive outcomes that OAE can have that I strive towards in my role."*

S2P1 - *"The studies helped me to understand history of outdoor education and it also helped me to understand the unlocked potential of adventure tourism."*

S2P3 - *"It is understanding how to get the most from a particular session for the people you are presented with, adding appropriate detail to the design of programmes, the ability to react to situations that develop, and aim for inspirational reviewing. In short, it is nurturing learning through the adventurous session, rather than simply running a set session."*

S2P5 - *"Yes, basic understanding of educational, psychological and developmental*

*principles which can be built on through experience”*

S2P6 - *“Yes, great understanding of experiential learning application [sic] and environmental elements.”*

S2P10 - *“It has helped me to understand more about learning and how my own beliefs have an influence on how I teach”*

S2P13 - *“Firstly the pedagogy modules allowed me to understand learning and how to select the most appropriate teaching styles/ environments which I use everyday”*

S2P15 - *“For example, identifying and understanding rocks in climbing sessions, numeracy skills in navigation training or water catchments and river formations or hydraulics on moving water when kayaking.”*

**From the OAE practitioners at stage 3 in response to (3a) Responses from the initial survey suggested that knowledge and understanding about theory and practice gained from their OAE HE study were a common influence on OAE practitioners. Can you please expand why you think this may be? And (3b) Do you feel that this has had an influence on your practice? If so how? :**

S1P3/S3P1 - **3a** - *“The theory gives you a purpose behind instructing, as you are aware of the positives and negative’s that you could cause to an individual’s mental and physical development”*

**3b** - *“Massively, an awareness of the impact you are causing for the greater good of the individual is very rewarding. Eg. Helping those to achieve who struggle in a classroom environment.”*

S1P6/S3P2 - **3a** - *“So the degree teaches theory, perhaps on self efficacy and the impact peoples words have. Whilst instructing I can then be positive and get large numbers of children to be yelling comforting and encouraging words”*

**3b** - *“The impact was perhaps not as big as it could be as naturally I want to encourage people so I did not need the lecture to behave this way.”*

S1P4/S3P3 - **3a** - *“Doing the practical alongside the theory allows you to realise why you do things and how you can change them for the better”*

**3b** - *“Yes, I learn about theories and like the way they work so try to implement them into my work”*

S1P5/S3P4 - **3a** - *“The knowledge and theory taught at university was very interesting and applicable to the outdoor teaching context. This is why I think it had a great influence on how I instruct/educate/facilitate outdoor learning”*

**3b** - *“Very much! As mentioned earlier, without knowing about these theories I would still approach sessions differently. E.g. I would tell children what exactly they’d have to*

*do, whereas now I know that this is something to avoid; I would still praise participants for their outcomes and for the person they are, whereas now I understand how much better it is for them to be praised for the process in order to gain a growth mindset and a better attitude towards other things in life; I would still provide all the safety rules, whereas now I know how beneficial it is for participants to assess risk for themselves.”*

*S1P1/S3P5 - 3a - “theories regarding skill-acquisition, teaching, learning, reflection and character development help to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge and skills, which then makes instructors practice better, as they understand themselves and the participants better and know how to successfully teach skills, understand and engage with learners and continually develop themselves. Without knowing such theories, instructors will only learn from watching other professionals and experimenting, which definitely has value, but can also lead into heuristic traps of not questioning own behaviour and learning strategies and approaches that seem to be useful while actually impair the experience pr learners' development (e.g. Mindset-theory and 'good' praise)”*

*3b – “Like the examples before show, learning theories and backgrounds to the everyday instructing practice has been very valuable for me. It made me challenge the behaviours I had adopted from watching others and helped me to question why I did certain things and did not do others. Consequently, my practice as an instructor improved through the OAE HE study and deepened my understanding of why I instruct how.”*

**From the OAE managers at stage 4 in response to (3a) Responses from the initial survey suggested that knowledge and understanding about theory and practice gained from their OAE HE study were a common influence on OAE practitioners. Can you please expand why you think this may be? And (3b) Do you feel the knowledge and understanding your staff have gained from studying on the OAE degree has had an influence on their practice, if so how?**

*S4P1 - 3a – “It is influential because it provides the context of why they do their job. If you understand the purpose you will continue to develop your skills in alignment with the purpose.”*

*3b – “Yes - they educate their groups. They promote values through the activities. They are well prepared and look for opportunities of promoting values.”*

*S4P2 - 3a – “Having done HE after gaining the experience and qualifications there were many things that I did that I knew worked but didn't know why they worked. Being able to put a theory to them helped me rapidly develop my professionalism. OAE HE provides students with these theories as a starting point and this helps the individuals develop that part of their practice at an earlier point.”*

*3b – “it has helped them to think more critical about each session the run this was especially noted against other staff who were not doing HE who as a generalisation*

once 'signed off' to run an activity are generally slower to develop their delivery as they do not have the same level of reflective practice skills.”

**S4P3 - 3a and 3b** – *“I think that OAE HE study in its' current format is well equipped to develop knowledge around theory. I think that for a student who is not actively working (employed or voluntary) in or has significant prior experience of the outdoor sector, then the concept of a student having understanding of application of theory to practice is somewhat misguided and misleading. I think that they can have a level of understanding. However, this level of understanding does/is unlikely to give them the competence that is required for them to be a safe and expert practitioner. However, if a student is at the same time as attending HE study is in an environment where they have the opportunity to develop and apply knowledge and thus develop understanding then this will have a causality effect on both their studies and practice. Whilst students may be guided to believe that knowledge underpins/precedes practice. I think that it is more complex than this. I believe that theory can and does influence practice. However, I also believe very strongly that practice does and should influence theory. Therefore for the HE student who is at the same time as studying, also practicing, will be in a much stronger position. IE: they will perform better in both their academic assessments and in their employed/volunteer context.”*

**S4P4 - 3a and 3b** – *“I believe it does, however I often find myself in conversation with the students where they feel that what they are learning at university is not benefiting them all the time at [The local OAE centre]. This often falls in our busy times with groups and the students are balancing university time and [The local OAE centre] work time. This increases as deadlines for assignments draw closer! As our students are with us for 2 to 3 years I get to see them develop and grow over time. I see the role of myself and other senior team members is to ensure we provide appropriate and well timed feedback to the students to aid them in their development but also to help them to reflect and look back on how they have developed as individuals. I also have to remind some of the students that the outdoor education world is far bigger than [The local OAE centre] and that what they are learning at university may not all seem relevant to them at present but who knows for the future and when they will need to draw upon it.”*

Appendix L  
Responses coded in the theme 'personal influences'

**From OAE practitioners at all stages:**

S2P16 - *"Yes definitely. A module called Multidisciplinary Outdoor Ed which was practical and where we experienced some of the personal developmental aspects of the profession e.g. reflection through natural sculptures, poetry, music making. Lots of reviews that brought the group closer together etc"*

S2P19 - *"Every assignment I undertook required research and through analysing all the various studies conducted relevant to OAE, I came away with a far greater idea of what I could accomplish and implement as an outdoor facilitator"*

S1P2 - *"yes pricipulles [sic] of advenater [sic] as it gave me an understanding [sic] of the wider industry allowing me to operate more profeshanaliy [sic]"*

S2P9 - *"Motivated me to follow my interest to post graduate research."*

S2P16 - *"Some of it yes. It gave me a chance to study broadly and get a sense of which parts of OAE felt important to me."*

S1P6 - *"It has provided me with the opportunity to delve deeper into being an outdoor educator and not just an instructor. I can now see the differences between the two and can provide more than just a bog standard activity session."*

S2P8 - *"More confidant to stand up for my own professional beliefs and push back against the qualification and skills focus within the industry"*

S2P8 - *"My course offered a broad range of outdoor modules which all likely influenced my professional beliefs."*

S2P10 - *"Therefore, I have attempted (and continuing to) change what my beliefs of knowledge are in order to provide opportunities for the learner to develop this when they are with me."*

S2P8 - *"Aspiring to work in more of a training capacity (teachers, practitioners) than before"*

S1P1/S3P5 - *"The theories learnt in the OAE HE study worked as a template to investigate personal practice and then develop my behaviours and strategies in becoming an outdoor expert."*

S1P6/S3P2 - *"Exactly. Instructing is basic, instructing with purpose is exciting as you can see how others can learn and development significantly due to the way you have facilitated the session"*

S2P10 - *“It has helped me to understand more about learning and how my own beliefs have an influence on how I teach”*

S2P11 - *“I have attempted (and continuing to) change what my beliefs of knowledge are in order to provide opportunities for the learner to develop this when they are with me”.*

Appendix M  
Responses linked to subject areas or modules

S2P16 - *“A module called Multidisciplinary Outdoor Ed which was practical and where we experienced some of the personal developmental aspects of the profession”*

S1P5 - *“Applied adventure sports in year two (applying leadership theories in practice), work based learning (made me think about why I did what I did...REFLECTION)”*

S1P1 - *“Principles of Adventure: theories underpinning the OAE practice and giving reason for good practice, theories could be applied to session (challenge by choice, adventure experience paradigm, etc.)”*

S1P6 - *“Environmental module - Looking at how the weather effects us and our industry. It gave me a further understanding of how to read weather forecasts- something that is very handy to be able to do in this industry”*

S1P3 - *“I loved learning about multiple intelligences so that in my sessions I try and teach, using every element of multiple intelligences so that all the children can benefit from the experience and gain confidence”*

S2P13 - *“the sport psychology modules influenced me specifically as I am now undertaking a sport psychology masters course which influences my approach during applied sport psychology settings”*

S1P1 - *“the importance of a good relationship between instructor and participants stood out during studies (coach-athlete relationships). That encouraged me to try harder to build a good trust relationship with my participants, to enable them to achieve more and develop further”.*

S2P1 - *“ecotourism was a module that opened my eyes to how we need to properly manage the footfall of people in ecological delicate areas”*

S1P5 - *“Applied adventure sports... (applying leadership theories in practice)”*



Appendix N

Responses about why the OAE managers have supported their staff to undertake the OAE  
HE programme

S4P1 - *“I believe that the many jobs in OAE are complex and diverse and therefore HE study is warranted.”*

S4P2 - *“It helps them accelerate their professionalism and reflective practice skills. it gives them confidence to ask the key question of why do they do what they do. and it helps them view their occupation in a more professional light.”*

S4P3 - *“I believe that CPD or learning is an essential process for any person, essential for motivation. Therefore, supporting staff to complete any learning will have an impact on the quality of the product or service of an organisation. For [the local OAE centre], which is an outdoor education centre it’s purpose is learning outdoors. Therefore, any HE study that is specifically supporting this purpose will have an impact on its product or service.”*

S4P4 - *“Often the general preconception of outdoor education is that is either a young mans game or someone who loves trees. We want to change this image and start the process towards parity of esteem between the 'traditional' teacher and outdoor teacher. By having our staff both well qualified with industry recognized qualifications and a formal academic qualification helps to ensure this process is starting. The students also benefit greatly with practical work experience which puts them in good step for future employment rather than just going to university and gaining an academic qualification but limited practical experience”.*

Appendix O

Responses to question four from stage four

Responses from the OAE managers at stage 4 in response to:

**(4a) Another outcome of the initial survey suggested that OAE HE study could influence practitioners by helping them to know more about the reasons why they do things in their practice. Can you please expand why you think this may be?**

**(4b) Do you feel this had had an influence on your staff, if so how?**

S4P1 - **4a** – *“In some of the HE modules they look at the principals of adventure - this gives a basis and reference point. The students are also experiencing frontier adventure at the same time.”*

**4b** – *“Yes - they are highly motivated and skilled and can act independently as masters of their trade.”*

S4P2 - **4a** – *“This has been true of my own experience the more theories I study against practice the better I get at understanding their merits and pitfalls. it has influenced me to critically think about the theories and not to necessarily take them at face value. This has also helped me to have the confidence to try out different theories in sessions and weigh up their effectiveness.”*

**4b** – *“This has particularly benefited those staff who are not on OAE HE as those who have be doing the HE course have bought those theories into their sessions and into their conversations at lunch and reflection time after the sessions. this had led to the rest of the team having an increased awareness of theories and their use in practice.”*

S4P3 - **4a & 4b-** *“I think that this is about the relationship between skill, knowledge, understanding and confidence. Many practitioners have become skilful by learning from their experiences of what does and doesn't work. These experiences will have created a certain level of knowledge and understanding most of which has been constructed (constructionism and constructivism). If the practitioner then develops their knowledge through HE study they can further construct meaning and understanding that can reinforce and develop their skill. What I find really interesting is the role of confidence or efficacy in this relationship. If you compare the practice of two people one who has learnt through experience versus one who has learnt through experience and also knows that heir practice is in alignment with theory and best practice of others then I believe that even just the confidence alone that this inspires in the latter person means that they will be more proficient. I believe that psychology theory supports this viewpoint.*

*The issue of confidence is then used to build more confidence. For staff at [local centre] who completed their CET, DET and PGCE, when they realise that what they had been doing for so many years was good teaching and learning practice it added to their sense of being a professional. What then happened is that they then had greater confidence at implementing some of the new methods and strategies that they had been taught. Staff started sharing new ideas and resources with each other. Over a*

*period of a few years the quality of the outdoor activity provision for visiting groups took a massive leap forward. Those same staff were also involved in training the volunteer team. One member of staff commented that because they were now using best practice teaching and learning techniques with the volunteers, the time that it took them to train volunteers to the standard required was taking less than half the amount of time than before.”*

**S4P4 - 4a** – *“By understanding the reasons why or how can aid the students in their confidence of theory they are learning at university. For example, they might hear about Maslows hierarchy of needs, but until they actually see it in practice it is just theory. [local centre] is a safe place for them to try out theory, or question it with others, but also to question staff they are working with to why they do something in a certain way.”*

**4b** – *“It has helped to allow space for the students to think about why they do something, and to be bold and try something new”*

Appendix P  
Responses to question six from stage four

**Responses from the OAE managers at stage 4 in response to:**

**Has there been any barriers/challenges you have faced supporting your staff to undertake their studies?**

S4P1 - *“Sometimes students have been deterred and undermined as doing a lesser degree by parents and friends. Occasionally some students have struggled with the academic studies.”*

S4P2 - *“There have been many challenges but mostly based on each individual needs rather than overall barriers. The main one common to all is the conflict between gaining the experience in a practical setting against the academic year. Often the academic deadlines clash with the busiest times in the seasonal nature of the work that the students are doing. The holistic approach creates at the end of the HE course an individual that has a huge advantage over other individuals who have either just done the HE course or just done a practical course, however the demanding nature of trying to do both at the same time especially with the clash of calendars can take this course beyond the reach of some students, who would be capable of doing one or the other not both at the same time.”*

S4P3 - *“There are always financial barriers and challenges in funding the direct costs of training and the indirect costs of covering staff while they are completing training. You can argue that these costs will be recouped, through a better quality service or product. However, from a purely financial perspective that argument is very difficult to actually quantify.*

*Many of the staff at [local centre] and in the outdoors generally often did not thrive in previous academic institutions due to needs, especially those associated with dyslexia. Therefore, many staff and volunteers were extremely anxious about returning to academic study. Because they now what good quality teaching and learning should look like, they were very frustrated when much of the HE teaching was not at a particularly high standard or didn't meet their individual needs. It would be worth exploring how much of this also fell into the “self fulfilling prophecy” concept of that is what they, based on previous educational experiences expected. Many of the staff found the methods of assessment (primarily written assignments) to be very restrictive. Whilst other forms of assessment, are in principle permissible, factors such as on-line submission, teacher/learner guide directives etc make it very difficult for a HE learner to push for an alternative form of assessment.”*

S4P4 - *“The operational needs of the centre verses the needs of the students, ensuring that each student has enough study time to complete assignments but equally ensuring that I am able to ensure we are able to facilitate the activities for the centre clients.”*

## Appendix Q NVivo coding

Screen shot of NVivo Coding from stage 1 and 2 of the research:

Name	Files	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
K & U		0	06/03/2020 10:49	KJ	06/03/2020 10:49	KJ
Academic Skill		1	06/03/2020 10:09	KJ	06/03/2020 10:18	KJ
Knowledge		1	06/03/2020 10:12	KJ	13/08/2020 15:07	KJ
Theory		2	06/03/2020 10:10	KJ	06/03/2020 10:44	KJ
Understanding		2	06/03/2020 10:07	KJ	06/03/2020 10:44	KJ
Negative impact		1	06/03/2020 10:09	KJ	06/03/2020 10:45	KJ
Personal Influences		0	06/03/2020 10:48	KJ	06/03/2020 10:48	KJ
Aspirations		1	06/03/2020 10:11	KJ	06/03/2020 10:13	KJ
Beliefs		1	06/03/2020 10:26	KJ	06/03/2020 10:27	KJ
Confidence		1	06/03/2020 10:11	KJ	06/03/2020 10:11	KJ
Identity		2	06/03/2020 10:28	KJ	06/03/2020 10:44	KJ
Motivation		1	06/03/2020 10:11	KJ	06/03/2020 10:12	KJ
Personal Development		2	06/03/2020 10:17	KJ	06/03/2020 10:34	KJ
Practical Classification		0	06/03/2020 10:22	KJ	06/03/2020 10:22	KJ
Coach		1	06/03/2020 10:51	KJ	06/03/2020 10:52	KJ
Educator		1	06/03/2020 10:35	KJ	06/03/2020 10:40	KJ
Facilitator		1	06/03/2020 10:13	KJ	06/03/2020 10:44	KJ
Instructor		2	06/03/2020 10:08	KJ	06/03/2020 10:41	KJ
Lecturer		1	06/03/2020 10:09	KJ	06/03/2020 10:09	KJ
Practitioner		1	06/03/2020 10:15	KJ	06/03/2020 10:15	KJ
Teacher		1	06/03/2020 10:13	KJ	12/08/2020 12:32	KJ
Undefined role		1	06/03/2020 10:22	KJ	06/03/2020 10:52	KJ
Subject Modules		0	06/03/2020 10:21	KJ	06/03/2020 10:21	KJ

Screen shot of NVivo coding from stage 3 and 4 of the research:

Name	Files	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
EXPERT - Q1 and 2		0	10/08/2020 09:45	KJ	10/08/2020 10:11	KJ
Community		2	10/08/2020 10:11	KJ	26/09/2020 15:31	KJ
Education and Learning		2	10/08/2020 09:21	KJ	13/09/2020 10:20	KJ
Experience		2	10/08/2020 09:30	KJ	13/09/2020 10:18	KJ
Journey		1	10/08/2020 10:12	KJ	10/08/2020 10:12	KJ
Knowledge		2	10/08/2020 09:32	KJ	13/09/2020 10:20	KJ
Leadership		2	10/08/2020 09:35	KJ	13/09/2020 10:19	KJ
qualified		1	13/09/2020 10:17	KJ	13/09/2020 10:18	KJ
reflection		2	13/09/2020 10:18	KJ	13/09/2020 10:21	KJ
Skills		2	10/08/2020 09:28	KJ	13/09/2020 10:20	KJ
Theory K & U		2	10/08/2020 10:11	KJ	13/09/2020 10:20	KJ
Understanding of field		2	10/08/2020 09:33	KJ	13/09/2020 10:19	KJ
negative influence		1	13/08/2020 09:30	KJ	13/08/2020 09:31	KJ
Stage 1 and 2 linkage with stage 4		0	12/09/2020 10:02	KJ	12/09/2020 10:02	KJ
Expert and community influence		1	12/09/2020 11:46	KJ	12/09/2020 11:46	KJ
Identity		1	12/09/2020 10:05	KJ	12/09/2020 10:06	KJ
practice		1	12/09/2020 10:07	KJ	12/09/2020 10:07	KJ
Theories		1	12/09/2020 10:03	KJ	12/09/2020 11:17	KJ
understanding why		1	12/09/2020 10:02	KJ	12/09/2020 11:59	KJ