Enhancing Student Psychological Well-Being in Secondary Outdoor Education

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Abstract: This article reports on an examination of the perceptions of New Brunswick Outdoor Education (OE) teachers regarding the role and impact of various concepts of self and well-being in their high school OE classes. The researcher sought to analyze OE instructors' observations and identify the pedagogy employed to enhance student well-being. A participatory action research (appreciate inquiry) approach was utilized. Data underwent narrative analysis and theme coding. While the emergent themes echoed the concepts in Deci & Ryan's (2008) Self-Determination Theory (SDT), more significantly they demonstrated the importance of prioritizing certain SDT components over others throughout progression of the course. Findings also indicated that control over certain aspects of the course were necessary to manage to meet these prioritized needs, including relationships, selecting activities, creating a challenging environment, and the use of time within the course structure. Steps have already been untaken to actualize results within NB high schools.

Keywords: participatory action research, appreciative inquiry, well-being, self-determination theory, outdoor education, high school, pedagogy

Introduction

This study has diverse roots. Born out of personal interest and professional observations as an Outdoor Education instructor, the research is also timely as it ties to current trends in both the decrease in overall student well-being and the call for children to spend more time outside (CBC/Radio Canada, 2014; McCarthy, 2018; Cohen, 2020) and the uptick in interest and options for New Brunswick students to engage with outdoor learning opportunities (CBC/Radio Canada, 2020; Jacobson, 2020; Letterick, 2020).

In New Brunswick, Outdoor Education (OE) is an elective high school course designed to engage students with outdoor learning opportunities including sports, the natural environment, wilderness/survival skills and an overall appreciation for an outdoor lifestyle. As an OE teacher for most of a decade, my personal observations and collegial discussions about the differences in pedagogical approach required in OE as compared to more traditional classroom-based courses, in addition to perceived and shared student responses to the course, culminated in a desire to examine whether OE was different and matching the claims that learning out of doors was psychologically beneficial to students. I leveraged this interest into my MEd thesis seeking to answer the following fundamental research question, "by what process is Outdoor Education in NB enhancing student psychological well-being?" The results of which are condensed into this article.

The literature review I conducted was broad, and certainly too vast to appropriately summarize here. Outdoor learning exists in many forms across the globe (Robbins, 2015) and theories of well-being and concepts of self are also quite diverse (Leather, 2013), and so there was a need to clarify the context of outdoor learning in New Brunswick as it pertains to secondary education. Specifically, Outdoor Education 110 "can be described as experiential learning in, for, or about the outdoors and typically involves wilderness-based experiences in which students learn how to participate in a safe manner in a variety of outdoor activities" (Gibbs et al., 2017, p.12). In all the models explored, a common theme was the connection between the learning content – in this case the NB curriculum – the instructor/teacher and those enrolled in the learning opportunity (the students). This review allowed me to establish a foundation for the research while identifying a gap in literature further motivating the study and the importance of answering the fundamental question of how a public system outdoor-focused course can work to enhance the well-being of its students.

While the pandemic did pose certain challenges and continues to highlight the need for continued examination of student well-being needs, the main struggle to be overcome in completing this research was coordinating with practicing educators during an intense time for education and a particularly busy time in the school calendar. Fortunately, all involved were able to make time, seeing the value in the discussion this research engages with, and its potential to enhance both their professional practice and more importantly, as a result, the well-being of their future students.

Methodology - Participatory Action Research & Appreciative Inquiry

My decision to employ a participatory action research (PAR) approach to this research was a natural fit. By design, PAR allowed me to work within my professional context - an area of familiarity - but with a mind to discovering "new knowledge . . . that may be applied to improve experience" (Johnston, 2008, p.76). Likewise, my rationale for utilizing PAR specifically stemmed from my desire to not only study this method of pedagogical improvement, but to also be an active player in the process as it would inform my own professional practice.

Even though PAR and its operational processes may not be well known to many educators by name, nor is it an entirely a new framework either. Designed as a mechanism for social intervention (Boyd & Bright, 2007) that according to Jacobs (2016) uses an approach whereby "participants work collaboratively in the co-generation of new knowledge to address a specific issue or problem" (p. 48), as a conceptual framework, PAR fits perfectly into the established practices of teachers. The means by which PAR operates closely parallels how professional reflection and formative assessment is used by educators in the classroom. Baum et al. (2006) describe the PAR action cycle as a process "whereby participants collect and analyze data, then determine what action should follow" (p. 854), while James et al. (2007) specifically diagrams this process as a feedback loop wherein there is a diagnosis, action taken, a measurement of that action followed by a reflection, and further diagnosis of the system. This concept of a feedback loop is fundamental to the assessment practices of public educators, and so choosing to employ a familiar feeling research methodology was a straightforward decision.

Despite PAR fitting structurally, one of the key limitations of this traditional PAR model is that is begins with the diagnosis of a problem and so is often labelled as a "problem centric" (Boyd & Bright, 2007, p.1022). Consequently, PAR typically focuses on fixing a specific area of concern as opposed to elevating the entire system being explored. To this end, I chose to adopt appreciate inquiry (AI). This opportunity-centric model of PAR encourages the examination of new approaches and for the "extension and elevation of community strengths" (Boyd & Bright, p. 1025). Identified strengths therefore become the focus of the work, acting as a positive mechanism employed to leverage the entire system forward, while doing so without being constrained to addressing a specific issue. In this way, participants are empowered to construct a new system by finding ideas that are not "predefined, meaning that there is room to collaboratively discover common answers" by exploring "successful examples of desired images within communities" (p.1026).

Appreciative inquiry, developed by Cooperrider (Cooperrider & Srivastra, 2017), responds directly to the fundamental criticism of traditional PAR's problem-centric approach by rejecting the fundamental assumption that a system has a problem to be fixed, in favour of the stance that each organization has strengths that can be utilized to inspire system-wide enhancement. As Preston (2017) outlines, "appreciative inquiry is about documenting the best characteristics and traits of people and their organizations and then using that constructive data as a springboard to elect positive change" (p.236).

Research Design - Application of Appreciate Inquiry

Initially, this study had aimed at including student participants. After all, students are the key component of any educational endeavour. However, due to the developing potential scope of this study and the timing of my work coinciding with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the design for this research shifted in nature to focus solely on the curriculum document and the Outdoor Education 110 instructors available to participate. The pandemic guidelines for public spaces such as schools also meant that all conversations with participants were conducted digitally. In this case, as an active teacher in the public system, I was able to connect with participants who were essentially my colleagues from around the Province of New Brunswick via our professional access to the Microsoft Teams platform.

To conduct this research, participants were purposefully selected from around the province and invited to participate. Criteria was set in line with what Patton (2015) refers to as group characteristic sampling to allow for the selection of participants that would "create a specific information-rich group that can reveal and illuminate important group patterns" (p. 267). I felt this process was significant due to the limited number of potential participants from which to draw both because of the province's size and the ever-shifting nature of school staffing in education. With these factors in mind, Butina's reflections encouraged me to continue in this approach despite the potential limitations

of the participant pool, stating that even a smaller group chosen based on specific information-rich criteria means that "results include a wealth of detailed information about a small number of people; therefore, leading to an increase in the depth of understanding of these select individuals" (2015, p.190). Quite simply, in this manner quality was favourable over quantity.

Five educators were selected from across New Brunswick who had taught OE 110 for a minimum of five years, ranging up to 20 years of experience. Three of the participants were from larger urban centres with significant cultural and social diversity. The remaining two participants taught in smaller, more rural communities, and while both were anglophone high schools, one of which was in a predominantly francophone community and the other served a majority population of indigenous students.

All participants received letters outlining the purpose of the study and the preferred expectations and intended approach. All were able to read the questions directing the study directed at answering the main focal question of; *what pedagogical practices (instructional/learning approaches) within outdoor education are essential for enhancing the psychological well-being of students, both those with and without specific learning needs?*

I began this endeavour at the 'Discovery' phase of the AI model by conducting individual interviews with each participant. These interviews were conducted via video Teams meetings and were recorded with the permission of each participant so that the dialogue could later be transcribed for analysis. Participants were asked open-ended questions to, as Preston (2017) put it, "elicit experiential narratives from participants and honor the unique life stories of participants (p. 238). In this sense, teachers' stories are crucial to identifying key elements in teacher experience which according to Johnson (2008) can lead to "finding an interpretive construction of reality or of the ideal reality" (p. 77) which would become the central focus of the proceeding 'Dream' stage of AI.

Once all interviews were complete, they were transcribed and thematically coded via narrative analysis. Emergent themes and codes were then shared with all participants for feedback and member-checking to ensure accuracy and thoroughness of their contribution (Chowdhury, 2015; Shenton, 2004). Once verified by participants, those themes informed the discussions in the subsequent stages of the research.

The next phase of data collection fulfilled the 'Dream' stage of the 4-D AI model. Again, Teams video chat was used, but this time participants were invited to engage in a focus group discussion to work toward identifying the ideal delivery model for OE. Due to the timing of this process of the research in the public-school year, only three of the original five participants were able to take part in the focus group. Year-end activities such a sporting championships, academic assessments and graduation preparations meant that coordinating a time for all to partake prior to the commencement of summer break was nigh on impossible. The three individuals that were able to meet for this focus group discussion were the most experienced of the five, collectively totalling over 50 years of Outdoor Education 110 experience.

What had originally been intended to be a one-hour group chat on the 'Dream' phase, followed by another one-hour focus group discussion to fulfill the 'Design' phase, quickly shifted as the participants opened up about their thoughts and experiences pertaining to the purpose of the focus group. What ensued was a much less structured, more organic conversation about OE. The original plan was quickly abandoned as the group dialogued evolved into a collaborative session addressing both the 'Dream' phase and 'Design' phase simultaneously. The participants at one point opted to forgo the intended break between focus groups in favour of continuing the conversation to maintain momentum and fluidity of emerging ideas and perspectives. The conversation still lasted close to two hours, but the organic nature of the conversation conducted in this manner as opposed to the more mechanical structure of the intended focus groups allowed for natural processing by the group - sharing and thinking out loud seemed to lead to better dialogue and greater spontaneity and idea development.

At the end of this discussion emerged a clear vision and framework for action, as well as sufficient data to assemble a plan that could eventually to move into the 'Destiny' phase of the AI model. This was discerned again by transcribing the recorded video chat and conducting narrative analysis to identify and code emergent themes from the perspectives and ideas shared by the group. It is important to note that this final phase is absent from this discussion as it pertains to actualizing the results and reflecting upon them and their impact/effectiveness. This was not within the scope of the research.

Results & Discussion

Upon completing the narrative analysis of the transcripts, thirteen significant themes emerged across the stages of the data gathering process, and each core concept and 4-D model phase of the appreciative inquiry method was addressed.

Discovery Phase - Individual Interviews

The 'Discovery' phase emphasized the importance of the contributions that the curriculum, the instructor and the student(s) each bring to the dynamic of the course in practice and therefore the development of student well-being. What was revealed was that student well-being is at the nexus of these three factors as represented in Figure 1 below.

Key emergent themes addressed in this phase:

- OE curricular & operational contributions
- OE instructor contributions
- OE student contributions

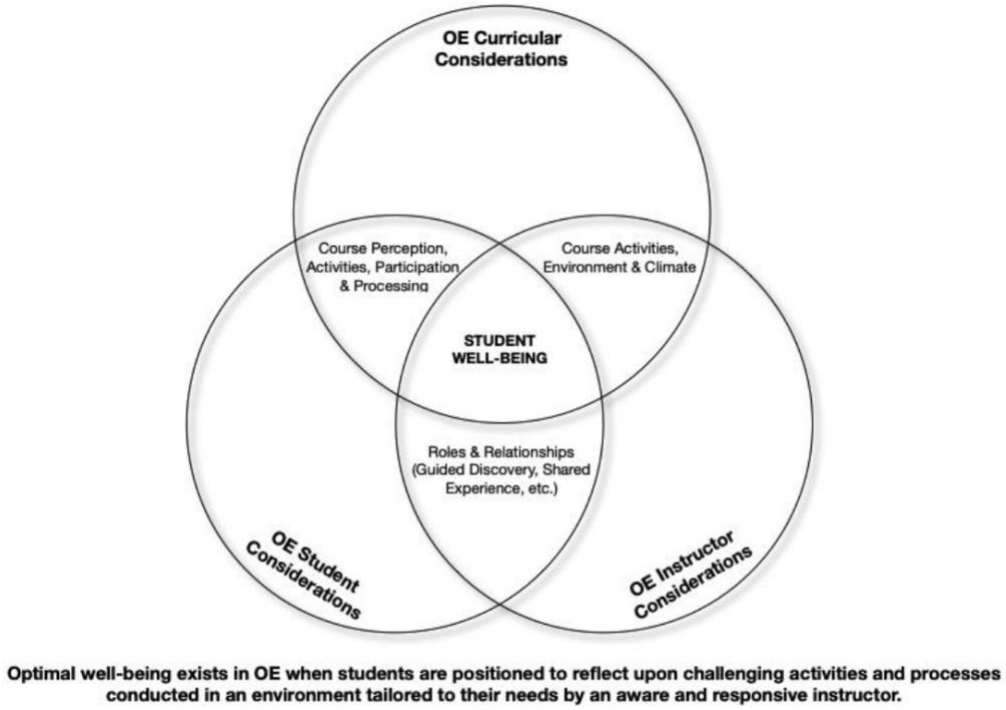

Figure 1: Tri-factor contributions to well-being in outdoor education

OE Curricular Contributions. The first key theme from the 'Discovery' phase interviews was the significance of the Outdoor Education 110 curricular and operational contributions to well-being. Even though individual school climates and demographic needs demanded differences in implementation of the OE curriculum, participants consistently expressed how the flexibility of the course and its non-traditional aspects contribute to the focus on psychological well-being. One participant put it this way; "It's not your 'sit down in a class, be quiet, put your phone away . . . 'It's not these rigid rules . . . Outdoor Ed pretty much can follow right into any pedagogy" almost immediately sharing how OE is flexible by design *and* implementation.

A fundamental way the course was identified as flexible and non-traditional are the suggested activities. Unlike more traditional, classroom based or even gymnasium-based courses, the OE curriculum does not follow an explicitly prescribed sequence of units or assignments. Participant instructors sited many used activities taken both directly from the curriculum document and those not mentioned in the text but selected because they meet the same outcomes but

align with both locally available resources and student interest. These two factors are of note because they demonstrate how the teacher can manipulate the intent of the curriculum without necessarily doing or not doing what is specifically included in the document. When considering OE's link to student well-being, another participant linked it back to the curriculum this way; "Outdoor Ed is the avenue to deal and work on those things . . . team building . . . problem solving . . . you get the most gains doing those things." Further to this, being able to have the flexibility in choosing curricular options to explore was observed to be important to the concept of well-being as it tied to student enjoyment. This was also identified as a significant consideration during the midst of the pandemic, when focus on student well-being was particularly heightened.

It was readily apparent in the interviews that the opportunities provided to students via the OE curriculum was an incredibly important aspect of the course and the overall experience for the students. Attached to these activities and experiences is the physical environment and context in which they take place, the outdoors. It may seem simple, and in one sense it very much is, but consistently each instructor shared how by moving the learning from inside to outside and changing the concept of 'classroom', students' mentalities shifted. This idea of newness and difference permeated the conversations generally, but the teachers specifically expressed the benefit of being with students in a new environment. Outdoor Education facilitates the opportunity for shared experience, for relationship building through collaboration and going through something together, and this ties to the activities as well as the non-traditional classroom-based environment for learning.

OE Instructor Contributions. The instructors further explained how their role was much more than the planning and execution of activities. Naturally, if the curriculum and course are flexible, the instructor needs to be as well; they need to be able to respond to the environment and the needs and interests of their students. Nothing highlighted this more than the limitations placed on education during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it was apparent that OE instructors felt that they somehow are a little unique in comparison to their classroom-based colleagues; "I find outdoor educators more understanding. I find them more patient . . . and I'm like 'it's no big deal at the end of the day'. Shit happens, right? . . . and I love transferring that to the kids." In an activity-based course, embedded with potentially brand-new experiences and challenges, modelling healthy responses and debriefing with students about those experiences is fundamental to learning, to building relationships and to student motivation. The most experienced participant explained their rationale and approach to debriefing with their students explaining that, "to go through the soft stuff is the biggest challenge for them. It's also where they grow the most."

How the instructors introduce the concepts and activities therefore was also significant to the type of environment and climate created in the course. Simply put, one participant said his focus to start off was like this, "I tend to try and develop the atmosphere and the mood at the beginning of the semester by doing a bunch of challenges and that sort of thing and have them build on each other." In this manner, all the instructors shared how their relationships with students have changed. These shifts and realizations crossed all demographics, but most notably had the power to shift social and academic class dynamics by humbling both the typically dominant athletic students and academic 'highflyers' who may struggle with a new skill. Instructors care about building the culture and relationships within their OE classes. They love the content and activities and want to impart that love to their students. As such, debriefing on how students are processing these new barriers and how they can work through them is key.

OE Student Contributions. The students themselves bring certain influences upon the course as well. It is relatively common knowledge, and a consistent reflection of the participants, that each student will bring a different element to the course; different personality, different needs, different skills and even different versions of themselves from day to day. The flexibility of the course, the instructors and the willingness of the instructors to lean into that flexibility and to build the course environment and activities around the developing relationships with the students as individual and as a class group is key to getting to the core of where psychological well-being is fostered in OE.

Participants shared both explicitly and via what was pulled through narrative analysis that students typically evolve throughout three stages in the interaction with the course. Firstly, students arrive with preconceived notions of OE or no other prior knowledge of the course other than it gets them out of the classroom, "these students, they're looking for an outdoor option. They want to come out, get out and have some fun and make the most of time spent away from the building." The students that enrol in OE are almost exclusively opting to do so and so "they chose the course for a reason" said one OE teacher. That being said, students arrive with vastly diverse skills sets. As shared above, some students that are strong athletically and those that excel academically struggle with the course that they

perceived to be a bird-course upon enrolment, "most of the kids these days, you know, resiliency is not their thing … It's like if I don't know how to do it in the first 5 seconds, I'm out!" Consequently, the structure and newness of the course also present a shift in student power dynamics wherein those that normally succeed quite easily must adjust their expectations and approach. For others, the shift in approach in OE is not so much a challenge as it is an escape; "I've had kids say, 'this is the reason I come to school'" shared one instructor, "'This is the one hour of my day where I'm not sitting in a desk, falling asleep . . . the one course where my teacher holds me accountable . . . where I'm having fun . . . where I get to really interact with my peers'." It is during the activities and processing that the physical action connects to the mental work that connects to the psychological.

Outdoor Education instructors push for the transformative process in their students, and even though it is an individual process, it is one made easier because it is undertaken with a team. The teachers that take time to build their relationships and the relationships between students find their classes get to a point where they will choose to battle through together and celebrate each other's successes. One instructor put it this way in discussing trust-falls, "We're built to protect ourselves . . . so you have to deprogram yourself to say 'I trust these people enough that I'm going to cross my arms, fold them, and just go . . . I've had kids cry. I've had kids laugh - they're processing that stuff and it, yeah, it's, that's a big moment." This same teacher reflected as well on how this connection translates outside of the OE class, "I still talk with a lot of those students who were involved in those trips . . . [it's] certainly fun to hear as they get older, and they are out of high school, and they've moved on and continue to live that active lifestyle."

Tri-Factor Model & Well-Being. What became apparent throughout this investigation and analysis was that the OE instructors were employing Deci & Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of psychological needs to their pedagogy (2000). Although none of the participants identified this mechanism by name, it was clear that the emphasis being placed on relationships tied to the SDT concept of connectedness, the focus on skill development linked with the concept of competence, and leading the students to a place of increased independence and resiliency aligns with Deci & Ryan's representation of autonomy.

Drilling down into the area of convergence of the three key factors outlined in Figure 1 above, it became apparent that there was in fact a particular sequencing of the SDT components operating within a distinct pedagogical mechanism within the course. It is here that one key aspect of an answer to the fundamental research question begins to take shape. Consistently, the participant OE teachers shared how they prioritize connectedness first, then transition into a competence-based focus, ultimately striving to arrive at a place of student autonomy toward the last stages of the course. It is important to note here that 'prioritize' does not mean *sole* priority. Rather, teachers were gradually building each component from the beginning as well as reinforcing previously emphasized components as students and classes progressed. It is this process of building forward toward autonomy while continuing to reinforce the key aspects of that growth pathway that instructors shared truly leads to the enhancement of student well-being and empowerment.

Tying these concepts together, Figure 2 below illustrates the action-mechanism for well-being in Outdoor Education 110. Synthesizing the curriculum, instructor and student factors in the course, the establishment of a challenging environment is key as is the necessary consideration of time and how it utilized within each group context to allow for the carefully chosen activities to work toward developing each of the SDT components in sequence.

In contemplating the concept of challenge, many participants shared some version of building challenge into all activities and in different ways. Challenge can be scaffolded, and just as the generic example above demonstrated how an activity's purpose and emphasis could be adjusted throughout the course, the way an activity challenges the students can also be adjusted. This mainly occurred by the instructor manipulating the activity and the environment in which that activity is conducted.

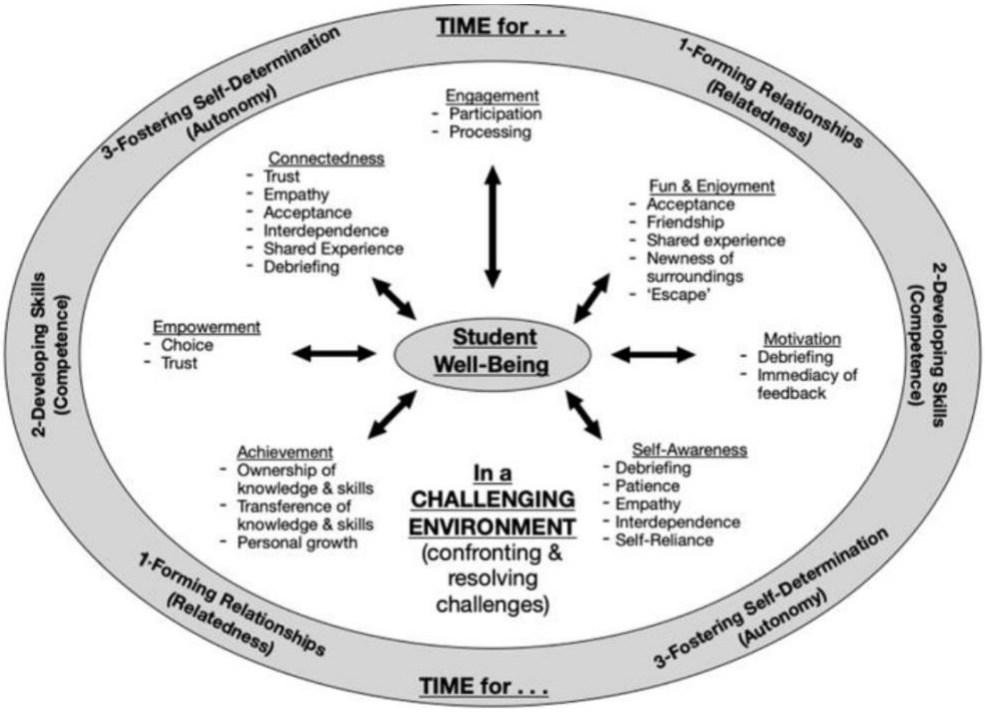

Figure 2: The action-mechanism for well-being in outdoor education

Dream & Design Phases - Focus Group

The final phase of the data gathering process involved a focus group discussion. Initially intended to be two distinct discussions, as mentioned earlier, at one point in the first discussion, a participant asked if the conversation could simply be opened to discuss all the pertinent aspects of this phase of the process as a whole. Seeing value in allowing the organic development of ideas and in keeping with participants ownership inherent to the AI model, the decision was quickly made to proceed in such a manner. What unfolded was both a process of 'Dream' and 'Design' simultaneously emerging. Both phases were addressed, and the emergence of an ideal OE model was a natural progression of the action mechanism described above.

Dream Phase – Curricular Implementation Themes. Key emergent themes:

- Outdoor natural settings that facilitate the learning process
- Year-round OE benefiting from seasonal learning options
- Dynamic OE learning processes with evidence of student outcomes
- Structured progressive learning options in OE
- Established partnerships in OR – across & beyond schools

The participant instructors all agreed that time was an essential factor; both limiting and empowering based on one's approach. Not surprisingly, the discussion turned to an attempt to find more time for building relationships and practicing skills, emphasizing the importance of these two components of developing students within the curricular framework and enhancing their well-being. Two recommendations were offered.

Firstly, several teachers shared how they had experience teaching courses that curricularly complimented OE, and so, if OE could be partnered with such a course so that time would be spent with the same group of students, working on those complimentary outcomes, that would then provide enhancement across both curricular endeavours.

The second was by finding a way to operate the course year-round. Currently a semester course, OE is delivered Over a 5-month term before students move on the other courses. As the conversation developed, the idea evolved from connecting OE to another course in a two-period block method wherein students would remain as one class cohort over two simultaneous periods in the same day, running back-to-back, to employing the operational model brought into larger New Brunswick high schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this alternate model, students were divided alphabetically so that only approximately half of the student population were physically in the building at a time. Students alternated daily between physical attendance and remote attendance; what was referred to as a Day A and Day B pattern. Applied to the focus group's context, participants turned this model into a plan to operate OE and a partner course full year by offering the courses by alternating them each day within the same period slot. In this manner, students would enrol in this option and obtain both credits by the end of the year, thus allowing students and instructors a more expansive use of time to build relationships and skills toward the ultimate goal of autonomy via two curricular areas.

Once this operational epiphany happened, the group was off and running with their 'Dream' for OE instruction. Below, in Table 1, are the details of that ideal structure as identified by the focus group participants and is where the emergent themes are most clearly visible in a structured form.

Design Phase – Operational & Valuative Themes. Key emergent themes:

- Promote the value of OE
- Extend curriculum relevance and linkages with OE
- Attend to student readiness, group formation and individual support considerations
- Foster school team support and collaboration
- Prepare and foster well-being of OE instructors

Lastly, the group spent time examining the 'Design' phase requirements. Here, the discussion did ultimately revert to some problem-centric issues of concern. This is likely due to the need in this stage of AI to identify where to begin in implementing the Dream phase, and so naturally there are some logistical hurdles to be addressed. Once the focus group participants were able to identify some key obstacles, the tone of the conversation quickly reverted to being proactive in seeking solutions and positive ways to frame and present their ideal structure to others who could help facilitate it.

After analyzing the transcript of the focus group conversation, the ideas shared by the instructors were readily distinguishable into two distinct categories for moving toward the OE ideal. These focused on two easily discernible mechanisms within professional groups such as education; formal channels and chains of command, and informal approaches. Each of the emergent themes could be explored in both ways.

The easiest method for immediate action identified was to promote the value of OE and the potential of the OE blended course within their schools. This struck to heart of the belief that simply promoting an understanding of the course and what it has to offer was a significant step in leveraging its potential toward the proposed ideal structure. Focusing on positive exposure for the course could deepen an appreciation for its potential but was also deemed important for demonstrating and justifying the need for resource and funding support, all of which could be enhanced by connections fostered with adults and professionals tied to the school community.

On the other hand, the group also noted the need for formal supports to be obtained to solidify the plan, give it legitimacy and greater potential for sustainability. Essentially, these initiatives took the informal action and documented them into forms such as course development proposals, funding grants and requests for resources and teacher training opportunities from the appropriate union and employer governing bodies.

By the end of the focus group, the teachers had agreed that, at the very least, a formal proposal should be developed so that a pilot of the structure they developed could be run.

Table 1: The ideal Outdoor Education 110 course structure

Components	Structure	
Location	- OE will meet in an OE designated space, an outdoor classroom or class space with outdoor access - Outdoor space on school grounds will be suitable to OE instruction - wooded area, open field-like space, appropriate space for fire building, etc.	
Instruction	**Option A** - OE instructor partners with collaboratively-minded colleague from complimentary subject course (Environmental Science, Journalism, etc.)	**Option B** - OE instructor is assigned to teach OE *and* complimentary subject course
Student Enrolment	- Students enroll in both OE and complimentary subject course - Enrolment based on application and instructor approval process - Class size is limited to 20 or fewer	
	Option A - 2 separate class rosters are established	**Option B** - 1 single class roster is established
Scheduling	- All classes take place during the same period in the daily bell schedule	
	Option A - Students follow an alternating schedule, with different instructors; *Monday*: Group 1 goes to OE & Group 2 goes to partner course *Tuesday*: Group 2 goes to OE & Group 1 goes to partner course *Wednesday*: Group 1 goes to OE & Group 2 goes to partner course, etc.	**Option B** - Students and instructor follow an alternating schedule; *Monday*: class participates in an OE lesson/activity *Tuesday*: class participates in a partner course lesson/activity *Wednesday*: class participates in an OE lesson/activity, etc.
Special Situations	- Instructors work to coordinate coursework, cross-curricular alignment, and exceptions to alternating schedule based on course needs. For example:	
(projects, trips, etc.)	**Option A** - Group 1 participates in OE for 2 days in a row, then makes up the missed partner course time by attending that other course for 2 days in a row, while Group 2 follows a mirrored scheduled, participating in the partner course for 2 days first, then OE for 2 days second.	**Option B** - The single class focuses on OE outcomes for 2 days, then spends the next 2 days focusing on the partner course content to maintain balance and restore the alternating schedule.
Daily OE Curriculum Planning	- Activities will continue to be planned based on the instructor's relationship with the students and the opportunities available in the nearby community. - Community partnerships and collaborations will be explored and engaged when feasible. - The course will begin with a focus on team-building and low-stakes problem solving activities in order to foster growth of trust and group dynamics. - The following curriculum content will be targeted toward increasing collaboration, higher stakes, and building into each successive out-trip or excursion. - Time will be included in planning for repetition and skills practice as well as individual, group and class debriefing, discussion and reflection. - Time will also be used in the alternating format to allow for processing and recovery.	
Out-trips & Excursions	- Students will participate in a minimum of 3 incremental out-trips or excursions. - Trips will be planned to allow students to gradually improve their skills and respond to increasing demands of excursions. For example: - Outing #1 - A half-day trip canoeing, or similar activity - Outing #2 - A full-day trip to a nearby park, woodlot or nature preserve - Outing #3 - A two-day, overnight camping trip to a park, woodlot, or appropriate nature preserve at potentially a further distance away - When and where possible, outing options will be offered.	
	- An opportunity for an enriched, inter-scholastic, excursion to a more demanding setting will be explored for a small number of students based on trust, growth and merit.	
Funding	- Course is fully funded to allow for travel (OE dedicated bus/passenger van), replacement of resources, instructor training, and OE opportunities. - Extended timeframe will allow for student fees to be spread over 10 months and/or for fundraising to be conducted.	

Implications for Future Research

Since completion, the results of this study have been shared with the NB Department of Education and Early Childhood development and have recently been incorporated into the rewritten OE curriculum document. The participant-derived ideal OE model was also molded into a pilot course, and after working through the formal processes described above, is presently working through the informal processes of garnering student interest and administrative support.

It is to student voice that future research should turn. I have made plans to continue this work as I am set to begin my doctoral program in the fall of 2024 and will seek to add this last of the three identified factors to the conversation of well-being in OE. After all, a curriculum can indicate what *should* happen, and an instructor can use better practices and strategies to *attempt* to bring that curricular goal to life, but ultimately it falls to the students as to whether those other two factors are creating the opportunity for enhance well-being that the students need and feel the results from. With the current shift in New Brunswick high school graduation pathways, and the data obtained in the study that students continue to actively seek OE and other alternative and non-traditional courses, that there will be plenty of opportunity to engage in conversations with students about such information.

Conclusion

Outdoor Education teachers are seeking to build relationships – both with and between their students – based on trust and shared experiences through challenging learning opportunities in order to develop applicable hard and soft skills. The ultimate goal here is to leverage these skills and the developed relationships to empower OE students to be autonomous participants in an outdoor lifestyle. All three of these SDT-based processes are on-going throughout their delivery of the OE curriculum as the instructor carefully creates situations for students to embrace their ability to problem-solve in different and increasingly more challenging circumstances. In this manner, New Brunswick OE teachers are working to meet student needs and enhance their well-being.

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