

Exploring the duration of youth-led expeditions and the outcomes for personal development through a qualitative mixed-methods analysis of itineraries and practitioner perspectives.

By

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AI Acknowledgement

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Abstract

Youth-led expeditions are recognised for fostering personal and social development, yet the impact of program duration is unclear. This study examined the differences in outcomes between short expeditions (lasting up to three weeks) and long expeditions (lasting three to four weeks), while also identifying shared outcomes and sectoral influences. Using a qualitative, multi-method design, six expedition itineraries were analysed alongside six semi-structured interviews with experienced practitioners. Data analysis employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis and Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows framework, categorising outcomes into *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, *global and environmental*, and *civil and practical competencies*.

Findings showed that short expeditions enhanced intrapersonal outcomes, such as confidence and resilience, but required structured facilitation for a lasting impact. In contrast, longer expeditions yielded more substantial outcomes across all Four Arrows domains, particularly through extended reflection, leadership, and teamwork. Common outcomes, such as self-awareness and practical responsibility, were noted in both formats, affirming the applicability of the Four Arrows framework.

Emerging themes highlighted external pressures affecting expedition structure. Factors such as cost and accessibility often lead schools and families to favour shorter options. The COVID-19 pandemic increased demand for flexible trips, while digital dependence threatens immersion. Crucially, the leader's facilitation style significantly influenced whether outcomes transcended surface-level gains.

This study concludes that both expedition durations are valuable, yet their success hinges on intentional design and adept facilitation. Short formats may enhance access and yield meaningful results if well-structured, while longer expeditions offer deeper insights and cultural engagement. Recommendations for practice include adopting blended models for inclusivity and depth, investing in leader training, and addressing challenges related to cost and sustainability. Future research should consider participant perspectives, involve more providers, and utilise longitudinal designs to assess the longevity of outcomes.

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Glossary of Terms

This section clarifies key terms used in this study: Duration, facilitation, personal and social development, and youth-led expedition.

Duration

Duration refers to the length of the expedition, which influences participant outcomes (Mortlock, 1984; Allison et al., 2018). In this study, long expeditions are defined as 3-4 weeks and beyond, typically linked to fostering better team development and environmental connections (Ramírez & Allison, 2023). Short expeditions, which are considered to be up to three weeks, are becoming increasingly common, and research has begun to investigate their potential outcomes (Humphreys, 2014; Ewert & Yoshino, 2011).

Facilitation

Facilitation involves leaders guiding participants through their experiences (Priest & Gass, 2018). Ringer (2002) identifies directive, interpretive, and catalytic styles. This study regards instructor, leader, and practitioner as synonymous, encompassing both formal and informal facilitation (Povilaitis, 2019).

Personal and Social Development

Personal and social development covers qualities such as resilience and leadership, which are important to outdoor education (Nicol, 2003; Priest, 1986; Rickinson et al., 2004). This study aligns with the Four Arrows framework (Figure 1), which articulates personal and social development outcomes involving upward, inward, outward, and downward dimensions (Stott et al., 2015).

Youth-led Expedition

“Youth-led expedition” refers to overseas trips organised by schools or educational providers, where young people actively plan and manage the experience, with adult practitioners providing support (Beames, 2004; Stott et al., 2015).

Key Terms Summary

These definitions clarify essential concepts for analysis. Youth-led expeditions emphasise youth responsibility, while personal and social development incorporates the Four Arrows framework to consider outcomes, allowing consideration of how duration impacts these.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale

Youth-led expeditions are a vital strand in outdoor education, combining adventure with personal and social growth. Traditionally, they are guided by Kurt Hahn's Outward Bound philosophy, which integrates service, challenge, and reflection to foster youth development (James, 1990). In the UK, this model has evolved through residential centres and international expeditions. Mortlock's (1984) framework illustrates how participants progress through comfort, challenge, and misadventure, enhancing resilience and adaptability. This positions expeditions as purposeful educational interventions that promote self-awareness, social responsibility, and teamwork.

Providers often emphasise personal growth outcomes, such as confidence and leadership (Beames, 2004; Stott et al., 2015), highlighting expeditions as a means to extend classroom learning and provide immersive experiences in challenging environments. However, supporting evidence remains inconsistent. Rickinson et al. (2004) noted methodological limitations, with research largely based on small or retrospective samples, primarily focusing on long-duration expeditions (three to six weeks) and underrepresenting the potential of shorter ones (Becker et al., 2018; Ramírez & Allison, 2023).

Current economic pressures are reshaping expedition offerings. Rising costs and increased teacher workloads make long trips challenging to sustain (Department for Education, 2025; The Sutton Trust, 2022; UK Youth, 2023). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a shift toward shorter, flexible formats (Institute of Outdoor Learning, 2021; Education Policy Institute, 2021). Many schools now prioritise expeditions lasting two to three weeks or less.

Supporters of long expeditions argue that extended time enhances group dynamics and identity formation (Mortlock, 1984), while some scholars suggest that well-facilitated shorter expeditions can achieve similar outcomes. Beames et al. (2012) found that structured reflection accelerates development, and Sibthorp et al. (2007) highlighted significant gains in competence and confidence.

This study addresses the gap by comparing short (up to 3 weeks) and long (3–4 weeks) youth-led expeditions, examining duration's impact on participant development. Using a modified version of Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows framework, it evaluates outcomes in *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, *global and environmental*, and *civil and practical competence* domains, considering facilitation and cultural interactions. This research responds to calls for comparative studies on duration (Scrutton &

Beames, 2015) and aims to yield findings that are academically robust and practically relevant for schools and expedition providers amidst ongoing changes.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

This study investigates how the duration of youth-led expeditions affects participant development. It compares outcomes from short expeditions (up to three weeks) with those from longer ones (three to four weeks), while also exploring shared outcomes across all expeditions. This focus addresses a notable gap in current literature; while longer formats have been thoroughly examined, shorter expeditions, which are increasingly prevalent, have received less attention (Becker et al., 2018; Ramírez & Allison, 2023).

The research is guided by Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows model, which categorises outcomes into four domains: Upward (achieving one's full potential), Inward (awareness of self), Outward (make contact with others), and Downward (grounded and connected). This framework allows for a structured comparison of how outcomes vary by duration and facilitates the emergence of additional themes from the data.

1. To identify the developmental outcomes associated with short (up to 3-week) youth-led expeditions.
2. To identify the developmental outcomes associated with long (3–4 week) youth-led expeditions.
3. To compare outcomes across both durations, identifying areas of overlap as well as divergence.
4. To examine how contextual and sectoral factors influence the relationship between duration and participant outcomes.

1.3 Research Questions

To address this aim and meet the stated objectives, the study is guided by four research questions:

1. What developmental outcomes are associated with short youth-led expeditions (up to three weeks)?
2. What developmental outcomes are associated with long youth-led expeditions (three to four weeks)?

3. Which developmental outcomes are shared across both short and long expedition formats?
4. What additional sectoral or contextual factors influence the relationship between expedition duration and participant outcomes?

These questions highlight the study's comparative emphasis and acknowledge that expeditionary learning is influenced not only by duration but also by factors such as facilitation and economic pressures (Brown & Beames, 2017). Collectively, they provide a framework for assessing whether shorter expeditions can achieve similar outcomes to longer programs while considering the challenges currently facing outdoor education.

1.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study utilises Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows model, which synthesises expedition literature into four interconnected domains of developmental outcomes. This framework, initially adapted from Greenaway's (1997) four-circle model, extends beyond psychological measures to encompass intrapersonal, interpersonal, practical, and environmental dimensions. Greenaway's framework has been widely used for analysing outdoor education outcomes, and Stott et al. (2015) have expanded it into the Four Arrows model.

The Four Arrows framework is well-suited for this research as it facilitates structured comparisons across various expedition formats while considering diverse outcomes. Its categories align closely with reported outcomes in both the literature and the sector, providing a consistent structure for coding data from itineraries, leader reports, and interviews.

For this dissertation, the Four Arrows have been slightly adapted to align with the research questions and current literature (Figure 2). In this study:

- The Upward Arrow encompasses *civil and practical competence*, including budgeting, planning, logistics, problem-solving, and project work.
- The Inward Arrow reflects *intrapersonal* development, covering confidence, resilience, independence, emotional insight, and self-awareness.
- The Outward Arrow captures *interpersonal* development, including communication, teamwork, empathy, leadership, and conflict resolution.
- The Downward Arrow represents *global and environmental* engagement, focusing on cultural interaction, environmental awareness, and preparation influences.

This adaptation maintains fidelity to the original model while tailoring it to the research focus. It ensures consistent mapping of developmental outcomes across both short and long expeditions, allowing for the emergence of additional themes. Ultimately, the Four Arrows provide both a theoretical foundation and a practical coding structure, enabling a balanced approach to analysing expedition outcomes.

1.5 Methodological Overview

This dissertation utilises a qualitative, multi-method approach to address the research questions (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Two main types of data were analysed: documentary data from six expedition itineraries over the past nine years, which detailed program structure, activities, and intended outcomes; and semi-structured interviews with six industry professionals, focusing on how duration influences participant development.

The analysis employed the Four Arrows framework (Stott et al., 2015) as a deductive coding template while also incorporating inductive coding to identify emergent themes. This approach allowed for systematic examination across various domains while remaining open to new insights.

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Informed consent was secured from all participants, and data were anonymised using pseudonyms. Details on research design, sampling, and analysis can be found in Chapter 3.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to outdoor and expeditionary learning by addressing a critical gap in the literature by comparing short and long youth-led expeditions. While extensive research has focused on programs lasting three weeks or more, shorter expeditions are on the rise yet remain understudied (Becker et al., 2018; Ramírez & Allison, 2023). By analysing outcomes across both formats, this dissertation attempts to clarify the impact of expedition duration on participant development.

Practically, the study offers valuable insights for schools, providers, and expedition leaders as they adapt to changing conditions. Rising costs, increased teacher workloads, and ongoing effects of COVID-19 have made long expeditions more challenging to sustain, prompting a shift toward shorter formats (Department of Education, 2025; Institute of Outdoor Learning, 2021; The Sutton Trust,

2022; UK Youth, 2023). Understanding how outcomes vary with duration helps educators make more informed choices, ensuring shorter expeditions remain both meaningful and educationally robust.

Theoretically, this research applies and adapts Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows framework, aligning its domains with specific developmental outcomes relevant to expeditions. This adaptation showcases the model's flexibility for comparative studies and highlights its relevance. The use of inductive coding recognises that some outcomes fall outside the framework, adding complexity to existing theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In summary, this study bridges theory and practice, enhances understanding of the relationship between duration and developmental outcomes, and offers guidance for a sector under pressure to adapt.

1.7 Dissertation Structure

This dissertation consists of six chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction sets the stage by outlining the study's background, research aim, and questions, alongside the theoretical framework and research significance.

Chapter 2: Literature Review offers a critical analysis of existing research on outdoor education, youth expeditions, and participant development. It discusses the field's historical and theoretical roots, the impact of programme duration, and the roles of facilitation and context, introducing the Four Arrows framework (Stott et al., 2015) as the primary analytical lens.

Chapter 3: Methodology details the qualitative design, data sources, and analytical strategies, including documentary analysis and practitioner interviews, while addressing coding methods and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis presents the results from both the documentary analysis and interviews, organised through the Four Arrows framework, revealing additional emergent themes and comparisons between short and long expeditions.

Chapter 5: Discussion interprets the findings relative to the research questions and existing literature, examining how duration, facilitation, and sectoral pressures affect participant development.

Chapter 6: Conclusion summarises the study's key contributions, reflects on its significance, recognises limitations, and suggests future research directions.

This structure progresses logically from context and theory to methods, findings, and implications, ensuring clarity in the study's exploration of the impact of expedition duration.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Youth-led Expeditions within the context of Outdoor Education.

The history of outdoor education in the U.K. is closely tied to personal and social development. Its roots trace back to Kurt Hahn's founding of Outward Bound in 1941, which aimed to cultivate resilience, leadership, and service in youth during World War II (James, 1990; Nicol, 2002a). Hahn's principle that character is developed through challenges, service, and reflection has shaped contemporary outdoor education practices (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b). This emphasis on resilience parallels older traditions, such as the Scouting movement and German Bildung philosophy, which view outdoor time as essential for fostering discipline, citizenship, and moral strength (Andkjaer, 2012; Gurholt, 2008). Subsequent initiatives, such as the British Exploring Society, Raleigh International, and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, have positioned extended journeys in unfamiliar settings as transformative experiences for youth development (Allison et al., 2018; Beames, 2004).

Definitions of outdoor education vary and can be contentious. Priest (1986) proposed understanding it as both a process and a subject, blurring boundaries between environmental education, adventure education, and experiential learning. Higgins (2002) identified three interconnected areas: outdoor activities, environmental education, and personal/social development. However, critics point to a lack of a coherent pedagogical framework (Nicol, 2003). While research on the field's impact exists, inconsistent definitions complicate its integration into mainstream education (Rickinson et al., 2004). Youth-led expeditions, merging outdoor activity, environmental and cultural education, and personal development, reflect this definitional challenge. Despite their hybrid nature, they remain attractive to schools for their potential outcomes (Stott et al., 2015).

The shift in outdoor education's focus from educational initiatives to market-driven experiences has been highlighted by Loynes (1998), who described this as “adventure in a bun.” Weber’s (2009) theory illustrates how predictability and efficiency can commodify experiences, shifting educational focus to measurable outcomes. Brown and Beames (2017) cautioned that an overly algorithmic approach prioritises logistics over educational depth, reducing nature to a backdrop. Hopkins and Putnam (2013) observed that outdoor centres adopted a business model, thus pressuring them to deliver justifiable outcomes. Such market-driven practices are evident in the youth expedition sector, where leadership, resilience, and cultural awareness are marketed as pre-determined outcomes

(Brown & Beames, 2017). Loynes (2010) warns that these formulaic expeditions may compromise meaningful educational philosophy.

Risk is a central theme in these discussions. Traditional "character-building" methods often placed young people in challenging situations to foster resilience without clear pedagogical justification (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b). Mortlock (1984) reframed risk as crucial to adventure, arguing that facilitating uncertainty and potential hazards can yield significant educational benefits. His model of adventure, from play to "the edge of risk", continues to influence expedition programs and conceptualisations of risk in outdoor education (Harper, 2017). Stott et al. (2015) note that the opportunity to manage uncertainty while assuming responsibility is key for expedition companies claiming to foster resilience and independence.

The cultural context of the UK has significantly shaped outdoor education. The Lyme Bay tragedy in 1993, which resulted in the drowning of four young people during a sea kayaking trip, prompted public concern about safety and led to the establishment of the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) (Brookes, 2015). This introduced regulations and accountability (McArdle, 2011). Initially, some practitioners resisted this bureaucratisation, but many later saw licensing as a means to reassure schools and parents (Woollven et al., 2007). Nichols (2002a, 2002b) noted that the demand for safety and competence also drove the rise of National Governing Body qualifications and staff professionalisation. This shift marked a moment when external pressures, rather than educational philosophy, influenced the field's direction. The subsequent regulation shaped youth-led expeditions, with providers required to comply with standards like British Standards 8848 and prioritise staff training to instil confidence in safety among schools and families (British Standards Institution, 2014). Thus, the sector reflects the broader trajectory of outdoor education in the UK, where societal demands for accountability often overshadow educational theory (Allison and Telford, 2005; McArdle, 2011; Woolven et al., 2017).

Williams' (1986) theory of cultural struggle serves as a lens for examining outdoor education, including the expedition sector. It identifies dominant, residual, and emergent cultural elements. The dominant culture is manifested in commodified, outcome-driven models linked to sales and accountability (Loynes, 2010). Residual elements are seen in traditional approaches, such as those of Hahn and Mortlock, emphasising challenge and risk. Emergent approaches, like place-based pedagogies and forest schools, resist standardisation and focus on local contexts and sustainability (Beames and Brown, 2016; Garden & Downes, 2023). Youth-led expeditions illustrate this cultural

struggle (Williams, 1986), characterised as structured, outcome-oriented products that contain residual elements of developmental challenge. In contrast, emergent pedagogies introduce cultural and environmental connections, shifting the focus away from traditional adventure, as reflected in a shift towards project-based expeditions (Beames and Brown, 2016; Loynes, 2010).

Recognising outdoor education as part of a broader educational philosophy is crucial. Dewey (1938) advocated for learning through experience and interaction, principles foundational to expeditionary learning. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and application, is applied in programme design, albeit critiqued for omitting emotion and culture (Parry & Allison, 2020). Within youth-led expeditions, Dewey's principles inform the sequencing of itineraries, while Kolb's cycle structures the experiential arc of treks and reflection phases. Critiques of Kolb emphasise the need to integrate emotional and cultural dimensions to achieve more profound outcomes (Parry & Allison, 2020).

The theory and history of outdoor education reveal a field shaped by philosophical ideals, societal pressures, and cultural context. Youth-led expeditions exemplify these tensions, inheriting Hahn's moral vision and Mortlock's (1984) progressive model, while operating within a commodified, regulated context reflecting broader societal pressures (Beames and Brown, 2016). They also increasingly connect learners to their environment, culture, and place (Garden & Downes, 2023). This complex legacy and various theoretical influences on expedition structure provide valuable insights into how duration, facilitation, and context shape developmental outcomes.

2.2 Understanding Youth-led Expeditions Outcomes

Expeditions integrate journey, challenge, and community in unfamiliar contexts, thereby providing a unique outdoor education experience (Allison et al., 2018; Beames, 2004). These extended journeys require young people to live communally, navigate new terrains, and manage risks, often resulting in deeper learning than traditional single-site models (Beames, 2005; Allison et al., 2018). Stott et al. (2015) illustrated these processes using the Four Arrows framework, a multidimensional model of expeditionary learning that organises developmental outcomes into four domains: realising potential, learning about self, interacting with others, and being grounded (Figure 1).

Stott et al. (2015) Four Arrow Framework

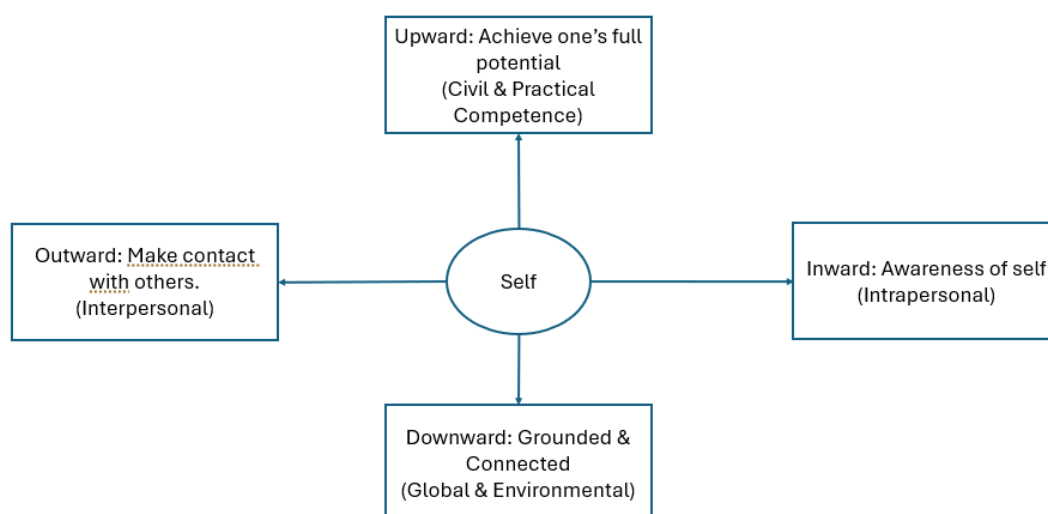


Figure 2. Stott et al. (2015) Four Arrows Framework

The Four Arrows model builds on earlier frameworks, particularly Greenaway's (1997) Four Circles framework, which identified development across self, others, environment, and spirit. While Greenaway's model offered educators a straightforward way to frame participant outcomes, it lacked empirical validation (Stott et al., 2015). Stott et al. (2015) enhanced this understanding by conducting a literature review and a grounded theory analysis of youth expeditions, resulting in the Four Arrows framework, which combines continuity with Greenaway's circles and a shift toward process-oriented developmental insights. The Four Arrows framework serves as the central analytical lens for this study. Each domain relates to established theories of experiential, transformative, and social learning, drawing on Dewey's (1938) principles, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory, and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural perspectives. The researcher has summarised these themes as *Civil and Practical Competence, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Global, and Environmental*, emphasising their relevance to this research.

2.2.1 Achieve One's Full Potential (Upward Arrow)

The upward arrow represents attributes such as resilience, leadership, and independence, significant within youth expeditions (Stott et al., 2015). Mortlock's (1984) progressive adventure model highlights that resilience evolves when individuals confront challenges outside their comfort zones. Youth-led expeditions intentionally design these challenges, particularly during trekking phases where participants take on rotating leadership roles and make group decisions (Beames, 2004).

According to Ungar (2014), resilience is a process shaped by environmental factors rather than a fixed trait. Expeditions exemplify this dynamic as participants must exhibit perseverance and effective strategies to navigate challenges (Beames, 2004). The British Exploring Society's longitudinal study underscores that alumni attribute their persistence and adaptability to their expedition experiences (Allison et al., 2018; Ramírez & Allison, 2023).

Beyond psychological development, expeditions foster civic competencies. Hopkins and Putnam (2013) argue that expeditions serve as platforms for civic responsibility through practical tasks. Priest (1986) identified practical competence as central in outdoor education, while Rickinson et al. (2004) highlighted logistical management and project work as vital skill areas. Beames (2004) found that overseas expeditions emphasise applied competence, like interacting within local markets and engaging in service projects, which participants find transformative. Empirical evidence shows logistical responsibilities lead to long-term skills, with alumni expressing confidence in budgeting and project management (Allison et al., 2018). Sibthorp et al. (2007) noted that problem-solving in outdoor settings necessitates both collective organisation and individual initiative. Two British Exploring Society alumni studies identified service phases as pivotal for assuming meaningful responsibilities (Allison et al., 2018; Ramírez & Allison, 2023).

Moreover, leadership and independence correlate with these practical responsibilities. Rotational leadership roles involve managing tasks such as food logistics and route planning; Lien and Goldenberg (2012) found that these roles foster empathy and responsibility. Sibthorp et al. (2007) demonstrated that autonomy in practical tasks yields significant competence gains, even in shorter expeditions.

Critiques arise; Beames and Brown (2016) caution that leaders retaining ultimate authority may hinder true independence among youth. The concept of “grit,” as defined by Duckworth et al. (2007), connects perseverance to expedition outcomes. Scrutton and Beames (2015) argue that this notion oversimplifies complex learning experiences, urging a focus on transferable skills. This critique resonates with a nuanced understanding of the upward domain, emphasising practical competence and responsibility as key outcomes. While literature often stresses resilience, confidence, and leadership, this dissertation concentrates on civil and practical competencies like budgeting, planning, and problem-solving as metrics of participant potential. Confidence and resilience are viewed as intrapersonal qualities related to identity and emotional growth, aligning with Stott et al.'s (2015) model, while underscoring the practical aspects of expeditionary learning.

2.2.2 Awareness of Self (Inward Arrow)

The inward arrow relates to intrapersonal growth, emphasising confidence, resilience, independence, self-awareness, and emotional insight. Stott et al. (2015) describe this growth as a heightened self-awareness fostered by the reflective nature of expeditions. While Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle provides a useful framework with its components of experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and application, it has faced criticism for neglecting emotional intensity in expedition settings (Zink & Burrows, 2008). Transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1997) offers a deeper understanding by addressing dilemmas, such as cultural shocks and interpersonal conflicts, that challenge existing assumptions. Through structured reflection, these dilemmas can catalyse significant shifts in worldview and self-concept (Beames et al., 2023).

Expeditions serve as liminal spaces (Turner, 1969; Thomassen, 2014), allowing participants to explore new roles and identities. Beames (2005) illustrates this with a Ghana expedition, where participants embraced new responsibilities. Likewise, Allison et al. (2018) found that overseas journeys prompted adolescents to reassess their values related to social justice. Theories of adolescent development support these findings. Erikson (1968) emphasised the struggle between identity and role confusion, while Bandura (1997) noted that mastery experiences, such as navigating discomfort, enhance confidence and self-belief. These dynamics align with expedition experiences, where independence is tested, and resilience emerges in challenging environments. Intrapersonal growth encompasses not just enduring hardship but also recognising one's capacity to adapt and persist (Ungar, 2009; Duckworth et al., 2007).

Alumni studies highlight the enduring impact of these experiences. Ramírez and Allison (2023) reported that former expedition participants credited their confidence and life choices to these formative experiences, even decades later. Similarly, Sibthorp et al. (2007) found that extended wilderness journeys increased resilience and self-efficacy.

However, some critics caution against assuming universal intrapersonal change from expeditions. Brookes (2003a, 2003b) warned that "character-building" narratives often exaggerate identity growth and overlook structural factors like privilege. Zink & Burrows (2008) emphasised that cultural and social contexts, including gender dynamics, shape identity work. Nicol (2003) cautioned against focusing solely on individual change, as it may obscure relational and environmental learning contexts. While expeditions can develop confidence, independence, resilience, and self-awareness,

these outcomes are not guaranteed (Hattie et al., 1997). Longer expeditions tend to provide more opportunities for reflection and identity work (Ramírez & Allison, 2023); however, structured facilitation can enhance these processes even in shorter programs (Ewert & Yoshini, 2011). Thus, intrapersonal development is contingent on duration and facilitation rather than automatic outcomes of participation in expeditions.

2.2.3 Make Contact with Others (Outward Arrow)

The outward arrow emphasises interpersonal development, which includes communication, teamwork, empathy, conflict resolution, and leadership. Expeditions facilitate group dynamics through communal living and shared risks, demanding cooperation under pressure (Allison et al., 2018). Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) model of group development, forming, storming, norming, and performing, applies particularly to expeditions, especially in the storming and norming stages relevant to youth-led experiences (Stott & Hall, 2003). In contrast, Gersick's (1988) punctuated equilibrium model highlights that groups can experience rapid changes during critical moments, as adverse events like storms or illness may accelerate cohesion or exacerbate conflict.

Empirical studies support the efficacy of expeditions for interpersonal learning. Ewert and Yoshino (2011) found that outdoor challenges boost social competence, while Beames (2005) observed the impact of group roles on identity formation. Participants often report lasting benefits such as enhanced cooperation, tolerance, and communication (Ramírez & Allison, 2023). Learning to share responsibilities and negotiate in high-pressure environments fosters communication and empathy. Leadership emerges not from formal authority but from the ability to facilitate group dynamics and mediate differing perspectives (Lien & Goldenberg, 2012).

Conflict is inherent to expeditions and serves as a crucial learning tool (Brown & Beames, 2017). Stott and Hall (2003) highlighted that poorly managed conflict could diminish cohesion, whereas effective facilitation can turn it into a developmental opportunity. This illustrates conflict's role in learning, where participants often cultivate empathy and cooperation not by avoiding disagreements but through resolving them (Beames, 2004). Dweck's (2006) growth mindset frames challenges as learning opportunities.

Not all interpersonal outcomes are positive. Scrutton & Beames (2015) cautioned that close proximity may reinforce cliques or marginalise less confident members, challenging the assumption that communal living promotes inclusivity. Nicol (2003) similarly noted that cultural context, prior

relationships, and power dynamics influence group interactions, resulting in varied outcomes. Youth-led expeditions utilise leader rotations, collaborative tasks, and debriefings for interpersonal learning. However, the depth of teamwork and empathy often hinges on program duration (Allison et al., 2018). Shorter expeditions may not allow groups to fully progress through Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) stages, potentially preventing them from reaching the storming or norming phases, which can limit participant development (Stott et al., 2015). Conversely, longer expeditions provide greater opportunities for teams to achieve the performing stage, where communication, teamwork, and leadership flourish (Ramirez & Allison 2023).

2.2.4 Grounded and Connected (Downward Arrow)

The downward arrow underscores the significance of global and environmental learning through cultural interactions and nature engagement. Stott et al. (2015) describe this as "being grounded," building on Greenaway's (1997) notion of spirit in the Four Circles framework. Dewey (1938) posits that the environment actively influences education, aiding learners in contextualising meaning.

Environmental psychology supports this perspective. Kaplan and Kaplan's (1989) attention restoration theory suggests that nature reduces cognitive fatigue, while Wilson's (1984) biophilia hypothesis indicates a fundamental human affinity for the natural world. Expeditions immerse participants in nature, fostering these crucial connections. For instance, Robson (2020) found that long journeys foster deeper spiritual connections, while Asfeldt and Hvenegaard (2014) noted that Canadian wilderness trips cultivate ecological values and lifestyle changes.

Cultural interactions are equally vital. Many youth expeditions incorporate homestays or community projects that promote global understanding (Loynes, 2010). Beames (2004) reported that these experiences encourage empathy, while Harper (2017) emphasised authentic cultural dialogue in shaping identity. However, Brown and Beames (2017) cautioned that without proper facilitation, these experiences may lead to exposure without understanding. Nicol (2002b) advocated for a relational, place-based approach to global citizenship, urging deeper engagement with cultures and environments.

Preparation significantly impacts outcomes. Rickinson et al. (2004) showed that participants' initial framing of experiences shapes cultural and environmental encounters. Higgins (2002) argued that poor preparation can create misconceptions that hinder learning. Thoughtful expectations cultivate meaningful reflection rather than mere novelty in cultural and environmental engagements.

Critiques highlight equity concerns. Becker et al. (2018) questioned equitable access to cultural and environmental learning, noting that socio-economic factors influence readiness. Scrutton and Beames (2015) asserted that lessons may not transfer to daily life, especially if expeditions lack follow-up. Ramirez and Allison (2023) stressed that ecological and moral growth often requires reflective time, prompting questions about whether shorter trips afford enough opportunity for integration.

In summary, the downward domain emphasises the connections between participants, environment, and culture on expeditions. These connections rely on preparation, framing, and facilitation (Parry & Allison, 2020). While longer immersions enhance engagement, shorter expeditions can still promote global awareness when structured thoughtfully. Being grounded emerges as a dynamic process shaped by expectations, context, and authentic experiences.

2.3 Duration as a Variable

The optimal length of expeditions in outdoor education is contested. Historically, longer experiences have been revered for their substantial developmental outcomes (Hattie et al., 1997; Mortlock, 1984). Mortlock's (1984) progressive model of adventure suggests that development is gradual, with participants transitioning through phases of play, adventure, and misadventure, ultimately reaching a transformative edge of risk. This aligns with Hahn's philosophy, which emphasises that sustained challenges and reflection are central to learning, often occurring in month-long courses (James, 1990). Team development frameworks, like Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) stages, further stress the time necessary for groups to address conflicts and foster collaboration. Research by Allison et al. (2018) and Ramírez and Allison (2023) supports this perspective, showing that alumni from extended expeditions report lasting benefits, including enhanced confidence and identity development.

In contrast, recent trends favour shorter expedition formats and microadventures, often due to structural pressures on educational institutions (Ewert & Yoshimo, 2011; Humphreys 2014). Budget constraints compel schools to opt for shorter, more feasible trips (Department of Education, 2025; Sutton Trust, 2022). Humphreys (2014) popularised the idea of microadventures, arguing that meaningful experiences can emerge in compressed timeframes. However, this shift complicates traditional views on development; not all growth aspects are time-sensitive. Research by Ramirez and Allison (2023) indicates that ecological and moral growth are particularly benefited by cumulative

experiences, which shorter programs struggle to provide. Robson (2020) found that spiritual connections linked to ecological and moral growth also require sustained immersion. In contrast, skills like autonomy and teamwork can develop more quickly with intentional program design (Stott et al., 2015).

The relationship between facilitation and duration deserves attention. Research suggests that quality facilitation may outweigh the length of experiences (Parry & Allison, 2020). Stott et al. (2015) emphasise that experience framing, reflection opportunities, and leadership development significantly affect outcomes, even within shorter formats. Lien & Goldenberg (2012) found that well-structured expeditions lasting as little as 10 days can foster considerable autonomy and social growth when engagement opportunities are deliberately created. Additionally, designed leadership structures can enhance personal development in condensed timeframes (Sibthorp et al., 2007). This raises the critical question of whether emphasis should be placed on duration or the quality of educational design and facilitator skill.

Critics caution against conflating logistical efficiency with educational effectiveness, highlighting that shorter experiences do not inherently diminish educational value (Beames & Brown, 2016). Overall, discussions around expedition duration reveal a complex relationship between time, pedagogy, design, and participant readiness. The key lies in understanding how these elements converge to facilitate meaningful learning experiences rather than simply favouring long or short formats.

2.5 Leaders and Facilitation

The role of leaders and facilitators in youth-led expeditions is essential for participant development. Literature highlights that challenge, independence, and peer leadership are influenced significantly by adult facilitators (Hattie et al., 1997; Polvilaitis et al., 2019). Unlike traditional classroom teachers, expedition leaders serve as safety managers, educators, and mentors, shaping expedition experiences (Ringer, 2002; Sibthorp et al., 2007).

Research consistently finds instructor quality to be a strong predictor of positive outcomes in outdoor education (Povilaitis et al., 2019). Hattie et al. (1997) reviewed numerous studies demonstrating that instructor competence and facilitation style considerably impact participant outcomes. Priest and Gass (2018) emphasise that effective facilitation differentiates adventure education from other activities. Variations in instructor style can lead to distinct participant experiences, underscoring the importance of leader competence (Povilaitis et al., 2019). Facilitation encompasses decision-making

and framing challenges beyond formal debriefs (Parry & Allison, 2020). Lien & Goldenberg (2012) found that instructors who deliver a balance of support and autonomy foster genuine responsibility; overly controlling styles hinder growth. Stott et al. (2015) illustrated that skilled facilitation mediates outcomes, indicating that even well-designed programs may fail without effective facilitators.

Tension exists between student autonomy and adult oversight. Youth-led expeditions often promote participant responsibility, yet leaders must maintain authority for safety and logistical reasons (Woolven et al., 2007). Beames and Brown (2016) describe this balance as controlled autonomy, where participants have responsibility within boundaries. This can create mixed messages; participants may feel independent while shielded from the genuine consequences of their decisions (Higgins, 2002).

Froehly et al. (2023), studying NOLS programs, found that authentic responsibilities enhance leadership skills and autonomy. However, premature facilitator intervention can make participants perceive their autonomy as inauthentic, undermining developmental outcomes (Sibthorp et al., 2007; Walsh & Golins, 1976). Balancing risk management with genuine participant autonomy is crucial. Ringer (2002) identified various facilitation styles, with catalytic approaches fostering deeper reflection. Priest and Gass (2018) advocate for a flexible facilitation approach based on group needs. Conversely, Allison and Telford (2005) note that increased regulation may push instructors toward more directive styles, limiting developmental opportunities.

Reflection practices significantly impact outcomes. Gass et al. (2020) suggest that structured reflections and guided discussions enhance learning transfer. However, Beames et al. (2023) caution against forced debriefs, advocating for authentic, participant-driven approaches.

Since the 1990s, the professional requirements for expedition leaders have increased, particularly post-Lyme Bay tragedy and AALA regulations (Allison & Telford, 2005; Woolven et al., 2007). While qualifications like Mountain Leader awards ensure technical competence, they don't guarantee pedagogical skill (Nicol, 2003). Ringer (2002) and Becker et al. (2018) highlight a gap between safety training and facilitation competence, indicating that many leaders excel in risk management but lack education delivery confidence. The Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres emphasises the need for training that merges technical, educational, and pastoral skills (AHOEC, 2025). Global perspectives reinforce the significance of leader competence in outdoor education (Martin et al., 2024).

2.5 Contemporary Pressures and the UK Context

Broader social, economic, and political contexts significantly shape youth-led expeditions in the UK. Factors such as financial constraints, cultural attitudes, and regulatory frameworks influence both access to and perceptions of these educational experiences (Becker et al., 2018; Rickson et al., 2004).

Economic pressures, including rising living costs, have limited the availability of extended and costlier expedition programmes. Recent policies, like VAT on private school fees (Department of Education, 2025), have compounded these financial challenges, restricting funds for co-curricular activities. State schools face similar issues, with tighter budgets discouraging overseas expeditions (Scrutton & Beames, 2015; Sutton Trust, 2022). Persistent financial and logistical barriers identified by Rickinson et al. (2004) hinder participation in outdoor education. Additionally, Higgins (2002) emphasised that cost efficiency is crucial in providing these experiences. Loynes (1998) noted outdoor centres often feel pressured to justify their offerings economically, shifting focus from educational values to profit-driven rationalisation.

Classroom teachers play a key role in planning and executing expeditions. Increasing concerns over professional burnout cause many educators to hesitate in sacrificing personal holiday time for school trips (UK Youth, 2023). The academic calendar, especially around examination periods, complicates justifying extended absences (Quay and Seaman, 2013). This results in a preference for shorter trips that may compromise meaningful developmental experiences. Parry and Allison (2020) caution that such trends could exacerbate existing inequalities if short expeditions become the norm for most schools.

The UK expedition sector is also influenced by historical events, notably the Lyme Bay tragedy in 1993, which led to the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) and a culture of accountability that remains relevant today (Allison & Telford, 2005; Woollven et al., 2007). Compliance with standards like BS8848 dictates how expeditions are conducted and marketed (British Standards Institution, 2014). While many value the security licensing offers, critics argue that excessive regulation can stifle spontaneity and authentic challenges, adding financial burdens (Ringer, 2002). This reflects Beck's (1992) "risk society," where managing risk fosters a focus on safe, predictable expeditions marketed as enjoyable (Loynes, 1998; Brown & Beames, 2017). Harper (2017) warns that commodifying risk undermines the unpredictability essential for valuable learning experiences, echoing Mortlock's (1984) view that sanitising adventure diminishes its educational potential.

Cultural shifts also affect contemporary expedition experiences. The rise of risk aversion has intensified adult oversight, negatively influencing children's risk-taking (Harper, 2017). Ungar (2009) suggests that children today may be “too safe for their own good,” highlighting the developmental risks of overprotection. Gill (2007) illustrates that surveillance and adult anxiety increasingly shape young people's lives. Expeditions, while marketed as self-discovery opportunities, may inadvertently reinforce risk-averse tendencies if not planned with care (Sandseter & Sando, 2016). This cultural context complicates youth-led expeditions, as they must adapt to evolving safety and accountability standards while striving to offer authentic adventures.

The literature emphasises the intricate relationship between duration, facilitation, and contextual pressures in shaping expedition outcomes. While frameworks like Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows model offer valuable insights, significant gaps persist in understanding the practical differences between short and long expeditions and how sectoral factors influence developmental processes. This study compares expeditions lasting up to three weeks with those extending from three to four weeks, aiming to identify both shared and divergent outcomes. The next chapter details the methodological approach, utilising itinerary analysis and practitioner interviews, to explore these research questions and address the need for greater empirical clarity in this area.

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study operates within an interpretivist paradigm, assuming that knowledge is socially constructed and meaning arises from the perspectives of participants (Cohen et al., 2017). This approach is vital in outdoor education research, where developmental outcomes are contextually shaped by both individual and collective experiences (Allison & Pomeroy, 2000).

Additionally, pragmatic influences inform the research, advocating for methodological flexibility tailored to the research question (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). This orientation justifies the integration of documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews, where itineraries outline intended program design and practitioner reflections reveal practical execution.

The study employs a qualitative, multi-method design (Creswell & Clark, 2017) to explore the design of youth expeditions alongside practitioners' interpretive insights. As Scrutton and Beames (2015) note, understanding the complexity of developmental processes in outdoor education necessitates multiple perspectives regarding how program design and facilitation affect participant outcomes.

By triangulating expedition itineraries with practitioner reflections, the research contrasts shorter expeditions (up to three weeks) with longer ones (three to four weeks), given previous findings that duration affects outcomes (Hattie et al., 1997; Stott et al., 2015). This study builds on that evidence by examining how intended outcomes are embedded in program structures and interpreted by professionals, with duration as a pivotal factor.

3.2 Data Sources

3.2.1 Expedition Itineraries

The first dataset comprised six expedition itineraries from a UK-based youth expedition provider, evenly divided between shorter (up to three weeks) and longer (three to four weeks) programmes. These expeditions, conducted in 2016, 2019, and 2025, were chosen because they were delivered in both formats to the same target age group (15–18 years), and a long and short expedition were taken from each year.

To ensure comparability, the researcher reformatted all itineraries into a consistent structure, retaining only the day descriptions and the total number of days (Appendix 4). No edits were made

to the day descriptions themselves, other than the removal of identifying references to the expedition provider. This standardisation supported systematic coding while preserving the original content.

All itineraries combined trekking with cultural or community engagement phases, a design pattern typical in youth expeditions (Beames, 2004). Including both short and long itineraries enabled differences to be attributed primarily to duration rather than destination, activity type or participant demographics (Hattie et al., 1997; Sibthorp et al., 2007).

Itineraries were treated as indicators of programme intent. While they may not capture lived experience, they reveal how leadership opportunities, group responsibilities, reflection, and cultural immersion were deliberately embedded (Parry & Allison, 2020; Stott et al., 2015). This aligns with the use of qualitative document analysis in outdoor learning (Rickinson et al., 2004).

3.2.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

The second dataset consisted of six semi-structured interviews with professionals who had delivered both short and long expeditions in the past ten years (Appendix 5). Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants with at least five years of sector experience and direct experience in delivering expeditions. This follows Patton's (2014) recommendation for expert sampling and builds on Povilaitis et al. (2019), who emphasise the importance of practitioner longevity in evaluating developmental outcomes.

All interviews were recorded via the built-in Google Recorder App on a Google Pixel device, lasting 15–30 minutes. All recordings were obtained with consent, and transcriptions were produced automatically using the Google Recorder transcription AI tool. These transcriptions were subsequently reviewed and corrected by the researcher to ensure accuracy. Participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet in advance (Appendix 2). The semi-structured interview guide (Appendix 3) mapped questions to Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows framework while allowing flexibility for emergent themes. Prompts encouraged practitioners to reflect on how duration shaped outcomes, as well as broader sectoral influences.

3.3 Analytical Framework

Analysis was structured around the Four Arrows framework (Stott et al., 2015), adapted from Greenaway (1997), which categorises development into four domains (Figure 1). The researcher then

went on to summarise each domain and categorised sub-themes anticipated based on Stott et al. (2015) as seen in Figure 2.

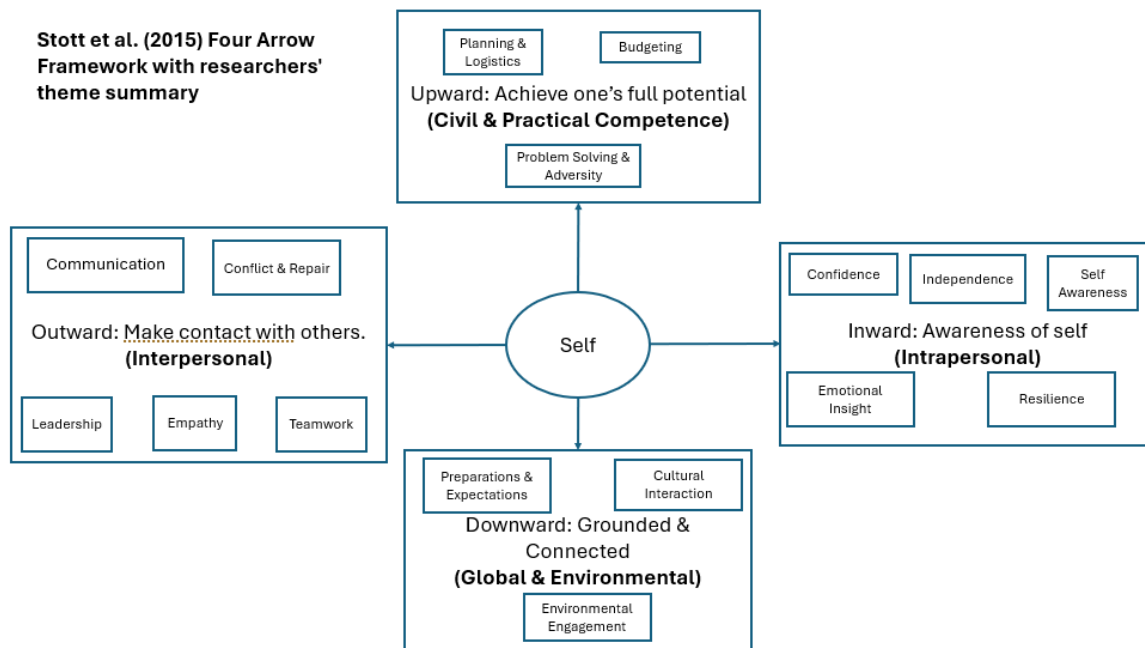


Figure 2. Stott et al. (2015) Four Arrow Framework with researchers' theme summary

This framework has been widely applied in youth expedition research, allowing for deductive categorisation while accommodating inductive insights in the form of emergent themes (Braun & Clark, 2006).

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

All itineraries were anonymised and coded in NVivo 14. Activities and structures were analysed for alignment with the Four Arrows domains.

Interview transcripts were also coded in NVivo 14 using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process. Initial inductive coding captured emergent insights; transcripts were then mapped deductively against the Four Arrows framework. This enabled a structured comparison across both short and long expeditions, as well as across different data sources. Triangulation between itineraries and practitioner reflections enhanced validity, as practitioner perceptions are central in understanding developmental impact (Sibthorp et al., 2007).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David's ethics committee prior to data collection (Appendix 1). All interview participants received a Participant Information Sheet and were informed of their right to withdraw at any time (Appendix 2). Interviews were anonymised during transcription and stored on a password-protected system in compliance with GDPR.

The expedition provider gave formal approval for the use of archival itineraries. Identifying details of participants, staff, and partner organisations were removed to preserve confidentiality.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Findings and Analysis Introduction

This chapter presents findings from six semi-structured interviews with industry professionals and analyses six expedition itineraries, which include three shorter and three longer programs conducted in 2016, 2019, and 2025.

The coding process followed Stott et al.'s (2015) four domains of development: intrapersonal, interpersonal, global, environmental, and civil and practical competence. Each code received a valence of positive, negative, or neutral and was categorised by duration, short, long, or general.

Several themes emerged inductively during the analysis, complementing the deductive framework.

The complete coding tree is illustrated in Figure 3.

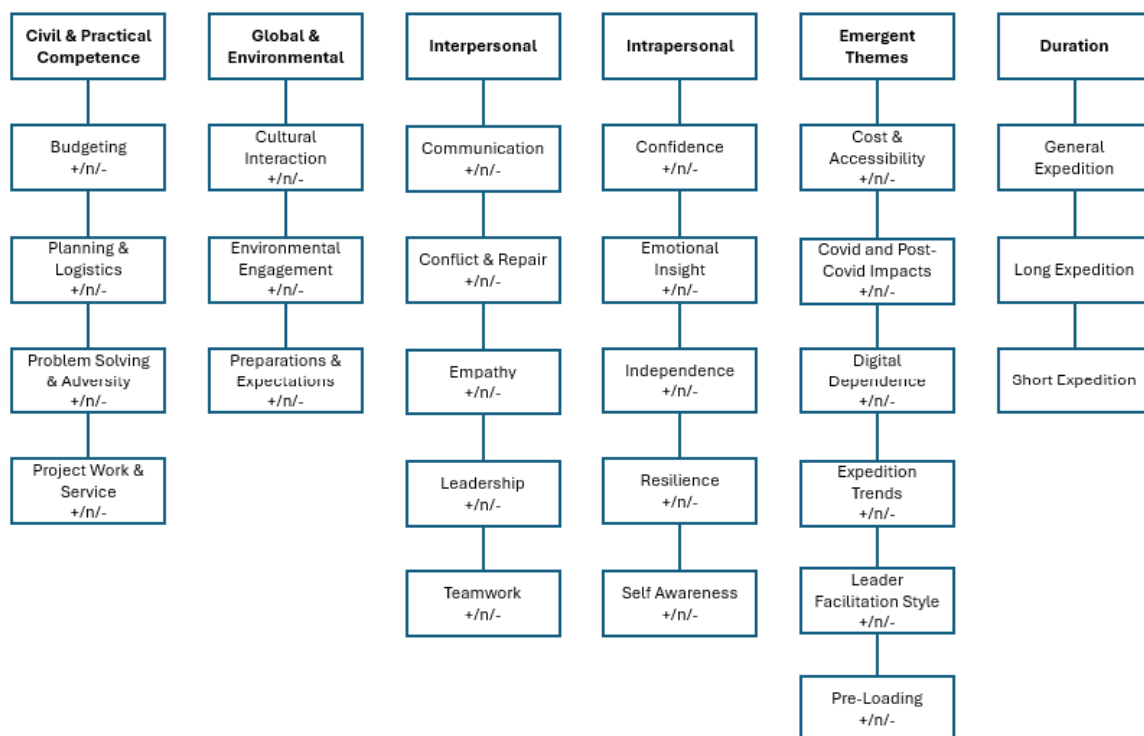


Figure 3. Coding Tree

4.2 Overall Findings

4.2.1 Parent Theme Outcomes by Duration

Developmental outcomes were evident across all themes in both shorter and longer expeditions, facilitating meaningful comparisons between the two formats (Table 1). While the distribution of

outcomes across domains shows where development occurred, it does not assess the quality or direction of these outcomes.

Table 12. Analysis of Parent Themes by Duration Across All Data

Colours indicate relative frequency, ranging from green (least frequent) to red (most frequent)

	A : General Expedition	B : Long Expedition	C : Short Expedition
1 : Civil & Practical Competence	22	13	15
2 : Emergent Themes	40	12	9
3 : Global & Environmental	24	21	24
4 : Interpersonal	33	21	22
5 : Intrapersonal	37	25	31

To deepen this analysis, the following sections evaluate the valence of responses, categorising outcomes as positive, negative, or neutral. They also explore sub-themes within the *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, *global and environmental*, and *civil and practical* domains, along with emergent outcomes identified during coding. This approach clarifies how the duration of the expeditions influenced the character and depth of participant development.

4.3 Interviews vs Itineraries

4.3.1 Practitioner Interviews

The practitioner interviews yielded outcomes linked to all five themes across the duration codes (Table 2). General expedition references (n=156) originated solely from interviews, as itineraries were coded by duration. These references provided broad reflections on expeditions without connecting to specific timeframes.

Table 13. Parent Theme Analysis of Practitioner Interviews

Colours indicate relative frequency, ranging from green (least frequent) to red (most frequent)

	A : General Expedition	B : Long Expedition	C : Short Expedition
1 : Civil & Practical Competence	22	3	5
2 : Emergent Themes	40	11	9
3 : Global & Environmental	24	8	11
4 : Interpersonal	33	10	8
5 : Intrapersonal	37	13	18

The practitioner interviews yielded outcomes linked to all five themes across the duration codes (Table 2). General expedition references (n=156) originated solely from interviews, as itineraries were coded by duration. These references provided broad reflections on expeditions without connecting to specific timeframes.

Short expeditions were primarily associated with *intrapersonal* outcomes (n=18) and *global and environmental* results (n=11). Practitioners described these shorter programmes as fostering confidence and independence while exposing participants to new contexts. In contrast, long expeditions exhibited a more balanced distribution of themes, with *intrapersonal* (n=13) and *interpersonal* outcomes (n=10) predominating. Feedback centred on personal growth and group dynamics development.

Civil and practical competence emerged less frequently overall, contrasting short expedition results (n=5) with those from long expeditions (n=3). Emergent themes appeared in both short (n=9) and long (n=11) expeditions, indicating their relevance across durations. A significant number of codes linked to general expeditions highlighted insights applicable to all formats.

This analysis outlines overarching patterns, while subsequent sections will delve into sub-themes and evaluate the valence of responses as positive, negative, or neutral.

4.3.2 Expedition Itineraries

The analysis of expedition itineraries revealed significant structural differences between short and long programmes, particularly regarding participant outcomes (Table 3). Results were categorised under five themes, with no references coded as general since each itinerary was classified as either short or long.

Table 14. Parent Theme Analysis of Itineraries

Colours indicate relative frequency, ranging from green (least frequent) to red (most frequent)

	A : General Expedition	B : Long Expedition	C : Short Expedition
1 : Civil & Practical Competence	0	10	10
2 : Emergent Themes	0	1	0
3 : Global & Environmental	0	13	13
4 : Interpersonal	0	11	14
5 : Intrapersonal	0	12	13

Both short and long expeditions were linked to *global and environmental* outcomes (n=13 each), demonstrating consistent integration of cultural engagement and environmental immersion. *Interpersonal* outcomes were more prevalent in short itineraries (n=14) compared to long ones (n=11). *Civil and practical competence* appeared equally across both durations (n=10 each), while *intrapersonal* outcomes were marginally higher in short itineraries (n=13 versus n=12). This suggests

that shorter programmes are intentionally designed to foster confidence and personal skill development.

Emergent themes were rare within itineraries (n=1 long; n=0 short), indicating that issues such as digital dependence or pre-loading arose more frequently in practitioner reflections than in explicit programme design.

4.4 Duration Comparisons

This section examines how themes varied between short and long expeditions, emphasising the influence of duration rather than the valence of outcomes.

4.4.1 Short Expeditions

Short expeditions were predominantly linked to *global and environmental* outcomes (n=24). *Cultural interaction* (n=14) and *environmental engagement* (n=10) emerged as the most common sub-themes. Participants consistently encountered new environments and cultures, even within limited timeframes (Table 4).

Table 15. Short Expedition Parent and Sub Theme Analysis

Colours indicate relative frequency, ranging from green (least frequent) to red (most frequent)

	A : Short Expedition
1 : Civil & Practical Competence	15
2 : Budgeting	1
3 : Planning & Logistics	6
4 : Problem-Solving & Adversity	5
5 : Project Work & Service	3
6 : Emergent Themes	9
7 : Cost and Accessibility	0
8 : Covid and Post Covid Impacts	0
9 : Digital Dependence	0
10 : Expedition Trends	6
11 : Leader Facilitation Style	4
12 : Pre Loading	0
13 : Global & Environmental	24
14 : Cultural Interaction	14
15 : Environmental Engagement	10
16 : Preparations & Expectations	3
17 : Interpersonal	22
18 : Communication	3
19 : Conflict & Repair	0
20 : Empathy	3
21 : Leadership	6
22 : Teamwork	17
23 : Intrapersonal	31
24 : Confidence	9
25 : Emotional Insight	9
26 : Independence	5
27 : Resilience	13
28 : Self-awareness	10

Intrapersonal outcomes were also notable (n=23), with *confidence* (n=9), *emotional insight* (n=6), and *independence* (n=5) standing out. Practitioners frequently described short expeditions as “stepping stones,” valuable for initiating personal growth and stimulating interest in future travel (Figure 4). *Interpersonal* outcomes were similarly significant (n=22), highlighting the importance of group processes and teamwork.

Civil and practical competence was less pronounced (n=15), yet sub-themes like *planning and logistics* (n=6) and *problem-solving and adversity* (n=5) indicated opportunities for responsibility and adaptability. *Emergent themes* (n=9) further nuanced these findings, with emphasis on *expedition trends* (n=6) and *leader facilitation style* (n=4), revealing how leadership practices influence outcomes in shorter formats. Notably, concerns such as cost, COVID-19 impacts, and digital dependence were absent, suggesting their relevance to longer expeditions.

Examples from itineraries support these findings (Appendix 4). The Morocco seven-day expedition focused on a mountaineering challenge on Mount Toubkal, fostering confidence, independence, and resilience. The Tanzania 14-day expedition combined trekking on Mount Meru with project work and cultural experiences, promoting practical competence and environmental immersion. In Romania, a nine-day expedition paired project work at a bear sanctuary with trekking in the Carpathians, underscoring cultural interaction and teamwork. Together, these examples illustrate how short expeditions are intentionally structured to enhance intrapersonal growth and cultural exposure.

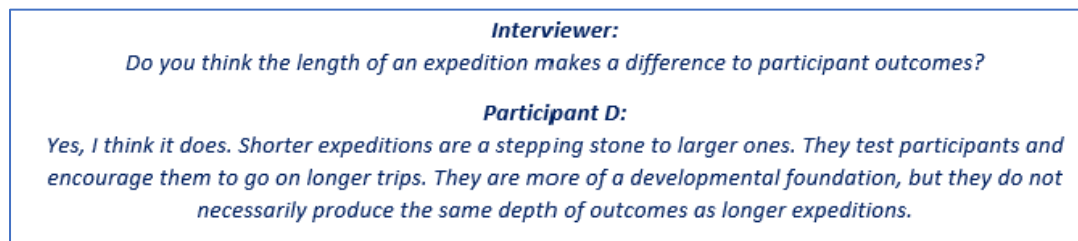


Figure 4. Participant D Quote

4.4.2 Long Expeditions

Long expeditions revealed a broad spread of outcomes, reflecting the diversity of experiences that extended programmes facilitate (Table 5). *Global and environmental* outcomes were prominently noted (n=21), especially *cultural interaction* (n=11) and *environmental engagement* (n=10). Notably, references to *preparation* were rare (n=1), indicating a greater focus on immersion rather than logistics.

Table 16. Long Expedition Parent and Sub Theme Analysis

Colours indicate relative frequency, ranging from green (least frequent) to red (most frequent)

	A : Long Expedition
1 : Civil & Practical Competence	13
2 : Budgeting	1
3 : Planning & Logistics	4
4 : Problem-Solving & Adversity	4
5 : Project Work & Service	4
6 : Emergent Themes	12
7 : Cost and Accessibility	2
8 : Covid and Post Covid Impacts	0
9 : Digital Dependence	0
10 : Expedition Trends	6
11 : Leader Facilitation Style	5
12 : Pre Loading	2
13 : Global & Environmental	21
14 : Cultural Interaction	11
15 : Environmental Engagement	10
16 : Preparations & Expectations	1
17 : Interpersonal	21
18 : Communication	1
19 : Conflict & Repair	0
20 : Empathy	2
21 : Leadership	9
22 : Teamwork	17
23 : Intrapersonal	25
24 : Confidence	6
25 : Emotional Insight	13
26 : Independence	3
27 : Resilience	12
28 : Self-awareness	12

Interpersonal outcomes were also significant (n=21), with *teamwork* (n=17) and *leadership* (n=9) as dominant themes. Occasional mentions of *empathy* (n=2) and *communication* (n=1) were made, suggesting that long expeditions typically enhance group collaboration and allow individuals to assume leadership roles.

Intrapersonal outcomes emerged as the most prominent (n=25), highlighting *emotional insight* (n=13) and *self-awareness* (n=12), along with *confidence* (n=6), *independence* (n=3), and *resilience* (n=12). *Resilience* was particularly noteworthy, as participants faced sustained challenges that required them to adapt and develop new coping strategies over time.

Civil and practical competence emerged, although infrequently (n=13). References spanned *planning and logistics* (n=4), *problem-solving and adversity* (n=4), and *project work and service* (n=4). This distribution illustrates the multiple opportunities for participants to take responsibility and apply practical skills throughout the expeditions.

Emergent themes were present (n=12), including *expedition trends* (n=6), *leader facilitation style* (n=5), and limited references to *cost and accessibility* (n=2). Practitioners noted that longer expeditions typically involve stages of group development from forming to performing (Figure 5), allowing for role rotation and shared responsibility (Figure 6).

Examples from itineraries further illustrate these outcomes (Appendix 4). The Borneo expedition (27 days) combined trekking with cultural immersion, fostering teamwork and resilience. The Cambodia expedition (29 days) melded service projects with exploration, enhancing self-awareness and collaboration. Similarly, the Zambia and Botswana expedition (21 days) integrated trekking and intercultural experiences, supporting interpersonal development and deep personal reflection.

Collectively, these itineraries demonstrate how longer programmes are intentionally structured to promote collaboration, leadership, resilience, and cultural engagement.

Participant A:

The longer you are out, the more the individual will develop. When we used to do a lot longer trips, what we found is after about three weeks that is where the whole forming, norming, storming, etc., comes in, and they are performing after that three-week period.

Figure 5. Participant A Quote

Participant E:

Yes, because there is more opportunity for everyone to take on different roles. On a short trip, with 20 participants and only seven days, not everyone can be leader or cook or organiser. On a 30-day expedition, everyone can rotate through different roles and develop in different ways.

Figure 6. Participant E Quote

4.4.3 General Expeditions

The data coded as General Expedition derived exclusively from practitioner interviews, with itineraries classified as short or long (Table 6). This category is pivotal as it encapsulates themes practitioners identified as prevalent in all expeditions, reflecting foundational elements of participant development.

Table 17. General Expedition Parent and Sub Theme Analysis

Colours indicate relative frequency, ranging from green (least frequent) to red (most frequent)

	A : General Expedition
1 : Civil & Practical Competence	22
2 : Budgeting	3
3 : Planning & Logistics	12
4 : Problem-Solving & Adversity	4
5 : Project Work & Service	10
6 : Emergent Themes	40
7 : Cost and Accessibility	3
8 : Covid and Post Covid Impacts	2
9 : Digital Dependence	2
10 : Expedition Trends	11
11 : Leader Facilitation Style	26
12 : Pre Loading	2
13 : Global & Environmental	24
14 : Cultural Interaction	14
15 : Environmental Engagement	8
16 : Preparations & Expectations	7
17 : Interpersonal	33
18 : Communication	12
19 : Conflict & Repair	1
20 : Empathy	9
21 : Leadership	8
22 : Teamwork	14
23 : Intrapersonal	37
24 : Confidence	10
25 : Emotional Insight	12
26 : Independence	8
27 : Resilience	12
28 : Self-awareness	13

Emergent themes were most prominent (n=40), with *leader facilitation style* (n=26) as the critical sub-theme. Practitioners emphasised that effective leadership significantly influences expedition outcomes (Figure 7).

Participant A:

If the leader is doing their job well, then ultimately the whole team will develop. Team building, the team being more cohesive, general support of each other and understanding of each other.

Figure 7. Participant A Quote

Other themes included *expedition trends* (n=11), *cost and accessibility* (n=3), *digital dependence* (n=2), and *COVID and post-COVID impacts* (n=2), collectively indicating sector-wide pressures relevant across all expeditions.

Intrapersonal outcomes were also notable (n=37), with *confidence* (n=10), *independence* (n=8), *self-awareness* (n=13), and *emotional insight* (n=12) frequently mentioned, underscoring expeditions' role in fostering individual growth. *Interpersonal* outcomes (n=33) followed closely, particularly *communication* (n=12) and *empathy* (n=9), with occasional mentions of *conflict and repair* (n=1).

Global and environmental outcomes (n=24) were evident, highlighting *cultural interaction* (n=14), *environmental engagement* (n=8), and *preparation and expectations* (n=7). These results indicate that expeditions immerse participants in new communities and environments. *Civil and practical competence* was notable (n=22) with *planning and logistics* (n=12) and *project work and service* (n=10) as central themes, alongside *budgeting* (n=3) and *problem-solving and adversity* (n=4). Thus, practical management remains integral to expedition learning, irrespective of duration.

Practitioner insights positioned these themes as foundational to expedition design. Appropriate challenge, skilled facilitation, and clear structure emerged as more critical than program length (Figure 8). Consequently, the General Expedition coding connects findings on both short and long formats, revealing that while duration impacts the depth of outcome, core elements of intrapersonal growth, interpersonal development, practical responsibility, and environmental engagement remain consistent across all expeditions.

Participant C:
To be fair, all of it. I think that is the job of a leader, to make sure that is happening all the time. You put people into leadership roles, into budget roles, into doing the basic stuff like travel, transport, cooking food, organising food. Everybody is thrown into that. You are pressurising them all the time so throughout the expedition that is happening.

Figure 8. Participant C Quote

4.5 Theme Comparisons

This section examines the valence of themes linked to expedition duration (positive, negative, neutral), focusing on their quality and tone rather than just identifying outcomes. By comparing general, long, and short expeditions, the analysis reveals both reported outcomes and their experiential interpretations across different formats.

4.5.1 Intrapersonal

The *intrapersonal* theme was prominent, with (n=37) general references, (n=25) tied to long expeditions, and (n=31) to short ones (Table 7). Most outcomes were coded positively, though a few negative instances emerged, particularly regarding *emotional insight* and *confidence*, where self-doubt was noted. These findings indicate that intrapersonal development was shaped by both individual readiness and the broader group context.

Table 18. Intrapersonal Parent, Sub-Themes and Valence Analysis

Colours indicate relative frequency, ranging from green (least frequent) to red (most frequent)

		A : General Expedition	B : Long Expedition	C : Short Expedition
1 : Intrapersonal	✓	37	25	31
2 : Confidence	✓	10	6	9
3 : Negative	✓	1	0	1
4 : Neutral	✓	0	0	0
5 : Positive	✓	9	6	8
6 : Emotional Insight	✓	12	13	9
7 : Negative	✓	2	1	2
8 : Neutral	✓	0	0	0
9 : Positive	✓	11	12	7
10 : Independence	✓	8	3	5
11 : Negative	✓	0	0	1
12 : Neutral	✓	0	0	0
13 : Positive	✓	8	3	4
14 : Resilience	✓	12	12	13
15 : Negative	✓	2	0	0
16 : Neutral	✓	0	0	0
17 : Positive	✓	10	12	13
18 : Self-awareness	✓	13	12	10
19 : Negative	✓	1	0	2
20 : Neutral	✓	0	0	0
21 : Positive	✓	12	12	8

Confidence was a central outcome. In short expeditions (n=9), it served as a “stepping stone,” highlighting participants' abilities to manage trekking, camping, or project tasks. Longer expeditions bolstered *confidence* (n=6) through sustained challenges requiring ongoing effort and responsibility. General references (n=10) consistently identified *confidence* as essential, with fewer negative codes (n=2) reflecting early doubts about belonging or program demands (Figure 9).

Participant B

If it is too short, maybe by the time the expedition is over you realise they have not quite achieved what they wanted to, or they have not experienced the culture in the way they hoped. Maybe they were too shy, or too focused on themselves, making it more about them than about learning from the culture.

Figure 9. Participant B Quote

Emotional insight varied significantly with expedition duration. Long expeditions (n=13) fostered deeper reflection and emotional awareness due to extended immersion (Figure 10). Shorter expeditions (n=9) produced similar insights, often from intense, brief challenges. General references (n=12) confirmed that *emotional insight* is prevalent across all types. Although most findings were positive, a few negatives (n=3) highlighted struggles with articulating complex emotions.

Participant A:

Very much so. Over a longer period, you get to know the team a lot more, they get to know you a lot more, they get more confident in their approach, and they are more honest in their reflections.

Figure 10. Participant A Quote

Independence appeared more frequently in general references (n=8) and short expeditions (n=5) than in long ones (n=3), indicating that shorter durations encouraged quicker adaptation outside comfort zones (Figure 11). Most results were positive, reflecting successful adjustments, although one case mentioned a participant feeling overwhelmed by sudden demands.

Participant C:

Yes. You are encouraging them, because what we are doing is facilitating these young people so that when they go back from the expedition into university or into working life, they have those skills.

Figure 11. Participant C Quote

Resilience consistently emerged as a strong outcome, found in both long (n=12) and short expeditions (n=13), along with (n=12) general references. Notably, there were no negative codes associated with *resilience*, and persistence was viewed as beneficial (Figure 12). Practitioners noted that *resilience* was often reinforced more deeply in long expeditions, aligning with the “performing” stage of group development.

Participant B:

Yes, I think a lot of the personal outcomes are achievable on both. For example, the feeling of personal achievement from going out and doing something completely out of your comfort zone and experiencing a new culture. The length of the trip does not necessarily determine that. It is still about being resilient enough to go and do it, to see things done differently, and to adapt to it.

Figure 12. Participant B Quote

Self-awareness was evenly distributed, with (n=13) general references, (n=12) in long expeditions, and (n=10) in short ones. Most outcomes were positive, although some (n=3) acknowledged discomfort in recognising hidden limitations (Figure 13).

Participant C:
*Yes, I think people really get to know themselves more. They also get to know what others think of them
— sometimes positive, sometimes negative. That has to be managed, but it is powerful.*
It is like acclimatising to a different world.

Figure 13. Participant C Quote

Itinerary evidence supported these findings. Shorter programmes, like those in Morocco (7 days) and Romania (9 days), enabled participants to build confidence and independence through trekking and project work. In contrast, longer itineraries, including Cambodia (29 days) and Borneo (27 days), fostered resilience and emotional insight through multi-phase expeditions requiring sustained adaptation (Appendix 4).

4.5.2 Interpersonal

The *interpersonal* theme was prominent in the dataset, featuring (n=33) general references, (n=21) related to long expeditions, and (n=22) for short expeditions (Table 8). Most references were positive, highlighting teamwork, leadership, communication, and empathy as central to expedition experiences. Negative comments were rare, primarily found in short expeditions, where uneven teamwork or leadership was occasionally noted. A few neutral codes (n=2) reflected mere observations without evaluative language.

Table 19. Interpersonal Parent, Sub-Themes and Valence Analysis

Colours indicate relative frequency, ranging from green (least frequent) to red (most frequent)

	A : General Expedition	B : Long Expedition	C : Short Expedition
1 : Interpersonal	33	21	22
2 : Communication	12	1	3
3 : Negative	0	0	0
4 : Neutral	0	0	0
5 : Positive	12	1	3
6 : Conflict & Repair	1	0	0
7 : Negative	0	0	0
8 : Neutral	0	0	0
9 : Positive	1	0	0
10 : Empathy	9	2	3
11 : Negative	0	0	0
12 : Neutral	0	0	0
13 : Positive	9	2	3
14 : Leadership	8	9	6
15 : Negative	1	0	2
16 : Neutral	0	0	0
17 : Positive	8	9	4
18 : Teamwork	14	17	17
19 : Negative	2	0	1
20 : Neutral	0	2	2
21 : Positive	13	15	14

Teamwork was the dominant sub-theme across all durations, equally represented in short (n=17) and long (n=17) expeditions, alongside 14 general references. Nearly all described positive collaboration and cohesion, with a few exceptions highlighting breakdowns in teamwork under stress. Neutral mentions occurred in both short (n=2) and long (n=2) expeditions as passing remarks.

Participant F:

For me it was when everyone did everything for each other. Basically, selfless behaviour. When you are living and working with people you have to do everything you can to help the person next to you.

Figure 14. Participant F Quote

Leadership emerged consistently, more prominently in long expeditions (n=9) but also in short expeditions (n=6) and general accounts (n=8). Most references framed leadership positively; however, rotating leadership roles proved challenging in shorter programmes (n=2), contrasting with the general category (n=1) (Figure 15).

Participant E:

It was about giving opportunities, even to people who were not comfortable with the idea at first. On one recent trip, one person would not even introduce herself to me at the start. Talking in front of people was something she dreaded. But by the end, she was stepping into those roles.

Figure 15. Participant E Quote

Communication (n=12) and *empathy* (n=9) were primarily found in general references, with fewer occurrences in specific duration data. Short expeditions included three references to each, while long expeditions showed one communication and two empathy mentions. These were all positive, indicating valued outcomes may be less visible in itinerary coding, which emphasises teamwork and leadership (Figure 16).

Participant B:

I think for some people to hear that other people struggled as well makes them feel more comfortable. Or for some people to realise that the way they approached it maybe made it more difficult for others. That openness and sharing after the debrief at the end of each day can really help.

Figure 16. Participant B Quote

References to *conflict and repair* were minimal, with only one general positive mention (n=1), suggesting that tension can provide opportunities for interpersonal growth (Figure 17).

Participant C

It may sound harsh, but in the early days I used to think it was like competent people attract competent people, and incompetent people attract incompetent people. You then had to work with that split and try to bring the less competent up to a higher level. You could see that split very quickly because of the harsh environment. It was up to the leaders to manage that so it did not cause hidden agendas or problems.

Figure 17. Participant C Quote

In summary, *interpersonal* outcomes were evident across all expedition types. *Teamwork* and *leadership* emerged robustly, particularly in longer programmes, while *communication* and *empathy* were more common in general reflections. Negative and neutral responses clustered in short expeditions, indicating that compressed timeframes may create variability in group dynamics.

4.5.3 Global & Environmental

Global and environmental outcomes were well represented in the dataset, with (n=24) general references, (n=21) linked to long expeditions, and (n=24) associated with short expeditions (Table 9). This theme highlighted the significance of cultural interaction, environmental engagement, and the impact of preparation and expectations on expedition experiences. Most outcomes received positive coding, although a few negative and neutral references indicated that new environments could present challenges.

Table 20. Global & Environmental Parent, Sub-Themes and Valence Analysis

Colours indicate relative frequency, ranging from green (least frequent) to red (most frequent)

		A : General Expedition ▾	B : Long Expedition ▾	C : Short Expedition ▾
1 : Global & Environmental	▾	24	21	24
2 : Cultural Interaction	▾	14	11	14
3 : Negative	▾	1	1	2
4 : Neutral	▾	0	0	0
5 : Positive	▾	14	10	12
6 : Environmental Engagement	▾	8	10	10
7 : Negative	▾	1	0	1
8 : Neutral	▾	2	1	1
9 : Positive	▾	6	9	8
10 : Preparations & Expectations	▾	7	1	3
11 : Negative	▾	2	0	2
12 : Neutral	▾	0	0	0
13 : Positive	▾	6	1	2

Cultural interaction was the predominant sub-theme, appearing in (n=14) short expeditions, (n=11) long expeditions, and (n=14) general references. Most references conveyed positive experiences, reflecting meaningful engagement with local communities and the broadening of participants' perspectives (Figure 18). A small number of negative references, mainly from short expeditions (n=2), depicted moments of discomfort or reluctance.

Participant D:

The most valuable thing is experiencing different cultures and lifestyles. They appreciate what we have in the UK compared to what others do not. That, and meeting challenges and earning achievements, are the best takeaways.

Figure 18. Participant D Quote

Environmental engagement featured evenly across long (n=10) and short (n=10) expeditions, with an additional (n=8) general references. Positive accounts highlighted how participants adapted to diverse conditions and developed a deeper appreciation for natural environments. Neutral mentions

(general n=2; long n=1; short n=1) offered descriptive insights, while negative references (general n=1; short n=1) disclosed instances where environmental demands felt overwhelming (Figure 19).

Participant D:
I think they underestimate the trek itself. They tend to think they can handle it without adequate training or preparation. Many students struggle on the second day of the trip. Once they get past the third day, they tend to meet the challenge, but that initial shock is something they do not prepare for.

Figure 19. Participant D Quote

Preparations and expectations were most notable in general reflections (n=7), with less emphasis on short (n=3) and long expeditions (n=1). Generally positive comments underscored the importance of preparation for navigating cultural and environmental challenges (Figure 20). However, some negative references (general n=2; short n=2) indicated confusion when preparation was insufficient.

Participant F:
Yes, managing expectations is crucial. Pre-loading trips — letting participants know what to expect and what challenges they may face — is the most important factor in success.

Figure 20. Participant F Quote

Overall, *global and environmental* outcomes emerged consistently across expedition durations. Shorter programs provided impactful yet occasionally challenging introductions to new environments, while longer expeditions facilitated sustained cultural engagement. General reflections reaffirmed the essential role of preparation in enhancing these experiences.

4.5.4 Civil & Practical Competence

Civil and practical competence emerged consistently across expedition durations, with (n=22) general references, (n=13) for long expeditions, and (n=15) for short ones (Table 10). This highlights the importance of logistical responsibility, budgeting, project engagement, and problem-solving in expedition learning. Most references were positive; however, a few neutrals reflected merely descriptive accounts of planning tasks, and a single negative mention related to the pressure of responsibilities during a short expedition.

Table 21. Civil & Practical Competence Parent, Sub-Themes and Valence Analysis

Colours indicate relative frequency, ranging from green (least frequent) to red (most frequent)

	A : General Expedition	B : Long Expedition	C : Short Expedition
1 : Civil & Practical Competence	22	13	15
2 : Budgeting	3	1	1
3 : Negative	0	0	0
4 : Neutral	0	0	0
5 : Positive	3	1	1
6 : Planning & Logistics	12	4	6
7 : Negative	0	0	1
8 : Neutral	6	1	0
9 : Positive	6	3	5
10 : Problem-Solving & Adversity	4	4	5
11 : Negative	0	0	0
12 : Neutral	1	0	0
13 : Positive	3	4	5
14 : Project Work & Service	10	4	3
15 : Negative	1	0	0
16 : Neutral	0	0	0
17 : Positive	9	4	3

Planning and logistics were most represented (general n=12; long n=4; short n=6), emphasising skill development through managing transport, equipment, or accommodation. Neutral references included (n=6) general and (n=1) long expedition accounts, while the negative short expedition case illustrated the stress of logistics under time constraints (Figure 21).

Participant C:

To be fair, all of it. I think that is the job of a leader, to make sure that is happening all the time. You put people into leadership roles, into budget roles, into doing the basic stuff like travel, transport, cooking food, organising food. Everybody is thrown into that. You are pressurising them all the time so throughout the expedition that is happening.

Figure 21. Participant C Quote

Project work and service were strongly featured, particularly in general references (n=10) and in long (n=4) and short expeditions (n=3). Nearly all were positive, highlighting the rewarding aspects of contributing to communities (Figure 22). A single negative general reference criticised the project work as poorly structured.

Participant C

The projects also gave people the chance to look at different types of projects in different countries, which was always nice because people got the ability to see things they had never seen before. Regardless of whether they came from private schools or state schools, they then had the chance to see places where they might later work, for example in medicine, with NGOs, or on conservation projects. These opportunities do not happen as easily in the UK.

Figure 22. Participant C Quote

Problem-solving and adversity were evenly distributed (n=4 long; n=5 short; n=4 general), with all but one reference positive, emphasising overcoming difficulties as a central developmental process (Figure 23).

Participant A:

I like it when a disaster occurs, as long as it is not a serious disaster. So, if you have got student X who goes down with diarrhoea, for instance, ideally early on in the program, then the entire team tends to rally around and support on that side. An instance like that is a great leveller early on.

Figure 23. Participant A Quote

Budgeting, though less frequently coded, consistently appeared in general (n=3), long (n=1), and short expeditions (n=1), with all references depicting financial management as empowering (Figure 24).

Participant D:

Yes, managing the budget. Once you empower them to do that, they take ownership. They want to make sure they have enough funds to do what they want. Towards the end of the expedition especially, you see them taking more responsibility for the budget.

Figure 24. Participant D Quote

Altogether, *civil and practical competence* was highly valued across both short and long expeditions. Differences mainly emerged in emphasis; shorter expeditions reflected greater variation in valence due to practical challenges within compressed timeframes. In contrast, longer expeditions provided steadier opportunities for problem-solving and service, reinforcing these as key developmental outcomes.

4.5.5 Emergent Themes

Emergent themes captured sector-level insights that transcended formal expedition structures (Table 11). They were most frequently noted in general references (n=40), with additional appearances in long (n=12) and short (n=9) expeditions. These themes illuminate broader contextual factors shaping expedition outcomes, particularly leadership, industry trends, cost, digital technology, and the impact of COVID-19.

Table 22. Emergent Parent, Sub-Themes and Valence Analysis

Colours indicate relative frequency, ranging from green (least frequent) to red (most frequent)

	A : General Expedition	B : Long Expedition	C : Short Expedition
1 : Emergent Themes	40	12	9
2 : Cost and Accessibility	3	2	0
3 : Negative	3	1	0
4 : Neutral	0	1	0
5 : Positive	2	0	0
6 : Covid and Post Covid Impacts	2	0	0
7 : Negative	1	0	0
8 : Neutral	1	0	0
9 : Positive	0	0	0
10 : Digital Dependence	2	0	0
11 : Negative	2	0	0
12 : Neutral	0	0	0
13 : Positive	0	0	0
14 : Expedition Trends	11	6	6
15 : Negative	5	4	2
16 : Neutral	5	0	1
17 : Positive	3	2	3
18 : Leader Facilitation Style	26	5	4
19 : Negative	1	1	0
20 : Neutral	0	0	0
21 : Positive	26	4	4
22 : Pre Loading	2	2	0
23 : Negative	0	1	0
24 : Neutral	0	0	0
25 : Positive	2	1	0

Leader facilitation style emerged as the most prominent sub-theme, appearing in (n=26) general references, (n=5) long expeditions, and (n=4) short ones. Most comments were positive, highlighting leadership's pivotal role in enhancing participant experiences. However, a few critiques (n=2) raised concerns about inconsistency and excessive control by leaders (Figure 25).

Participant A:

It is difficult. I think it is important that we are not too rigid and that ultimately we jump in when we feel we need to, and let them get on with it outside of that. There is no easy answer. I suggest an exploratory approach, with appropriate supervision, is possibly the best.

Figure 25. Participant A Quote

Expedition trends attracted notable attention, reflected in (n=11) general references and (n=6) mentions across both long and short expeditions. While some positive indications suggested providers are adapting to current needs, neutral and negative responses (n=5 each in general) expressed concerns about increasing commercialisation, shorter programs, and diminished impact (Figure 26).

Participant C

In the past, the final phase was sometimes left for participants to organise, like a cherry on top at the end. If you had done well during the expedition, you might get the chance to put together the final phase. Nowadays it is often pre-organised, but the principle was the same.

Figure 26. Participant C Quote

Cost and accessibility received less emphasis (general n=3; long n=2). Positive remarks acknowledged efforts to broaden participation, while neutral and negative perspectives pointed to persistent financial barriers restricting access (Figure 27).

Participant A:

It is one of those things where, unfortunately, because of cost, you tend to get self-motivated individuals signing up or those that can afford to. There has been a lot of evidence in the past — the DES projects would be a really good example — where if you take disadvantaged kids and put them on longer programs in alien environments, then ultimately that will build aspiration. If they were involved in crime, they are less likely to reoffend. It can be a force for good, it is just about structuring it in a way that works for the individual and the group.

Figure 27. Participant A Quote

Digital dependence and *COVID and post-COVID impacts* were each noted in (n=2) general references. Digital reliance was framed negatively, as practitioners argued that constant device use detracted from immersive experiences (Figure 28). The influence of COVID-19 was similarly coded as negative or neutral, reflecting ongoing sector uncertainty and the cautious approaches adopted by schools and families (Figure 29).

Participant F:

Yes, phones. The digital element is huge now. On the Nepal trip, some kids were genuinely distressed without Wi-Fi. One was so tied to his phone that he did not know what to do without it. Cutting away from phones is a massive part of expeditions. Schools may restrict phones, but being away from home in a new environment without that safety net is very different.

Figure 28. Participant F Quote

Participant A:

No, other than the fact that the sector is changing. Ultimately, it comes down to cost, willingness of schools and teachers to give up their time, and also, post-Covid, there needs to be a reset in the mindset of kids. Unfortunately now they will not necessarily see the benefit of going on a three-week expedition to Zambia compared to going on a weekend with their friends to Boardmasters.

Figure 29. Participant A Quote

Pre-loading was mentioned less frequently (general n=2; long n=2) but held significance. Practitioners found that cultural briefings and preparatory work facilitated participant adaptation, whereas the absence of pre-loading often led to initial challenges. This positioning underscores *pre-loading's* role in fostering resilience and cultural adjustment (Figure 30).

Participant E:

Yes. The more we can speak to individuals beforehand, the better. On one adult group I led recently, they did not pay a penny themselves, but because their company invested in them, they took it seriously. We had a WhatsApp group before we went, so I could talk to them about what was going to happen, and they got more out of it.

Figure 30. Participant E Quote

Together, these emergent themes provide insights absent in itinerary analyses. General reflections reveal systemic issues such as cost and commercialisation, while duration-specific references illustrate practical dynamics. They highlight leadership, structural barriers, and wider sectoral pressures as influential factors on expedition outcomes, alongside duration and program design.

4.6 Findings and Analysis Summary

The analysis revealed distinct developmental outcomes linked to short and long expeditions. Practitioners described short expeditions as “stepping stones,” providing an initial boost in confidence, independence, and resilience, while igniting interest in future travel.

In contrast, longer expeditions yielded deeper resilience, enhanced teamwork, and consistent leadership development. Cultural immersion and reflection, both structured and informal, emerged as key outcomes that necessitated time. Practitioners noted that group cohesion typically developed after several weeks.

Both formats shared common outcomes, such as cultural and environmental engagement, interpersonal development, and practical responsibility. Intrapersonal growth, particularly confidence and self-awareness, remained central to all expeditions regardless of duration.

The itinerary analysis confirmed these patterns, indicating that both short and long programs were intentionally designed to facilitate intrapersonal, interpersonal, practical, and cultural learning. However, factors such as leader facilitation, sectoral trends, cost and accessibility, digital dependence, and the impact of COVID-19 influenced the realisation of these outcomes.

In summary, the findings highlight the ongoing value of expeditions in participant development, shaped by duration, program design, and broader educational and social contexts. The subsequent Discussion chapter will further interpret these findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Purpose of Chapter

This chapter interprets the study's findings within the broader literature on outdoor education and youth expeditions. Unlike the previous chapter, which presented the analysis results, this section examines how the findings align with, challenge, or extend existing knowledge. Guided by Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows model, this framework provides a structured approach to evaluating developmental processes associated with expeditions of varying lengths (Figure 2).

The study investigated how the duration of youth-led expeditions influences participant development, comparing outcomes from shorter expeditions (up to three weeks) and longer expeditions (three to four weeks). It also examined contextual and sectoral factors shaping the duration-outcomes relationship.

Emergent themes beyond the Four Arrows framework included cost and accessibility, the impact of COVID-19, digital dependence, changing sectoral trends, leader facilitation style, and increasing pre-loading. These themes highlight the broader educational, social, and cultural contexts influencing current expedition outcomes.

This chapter first addresses the findings against the literature, focusing on shorter and longer expeditions, common outcomes, and emergent themes. It then compares results with the Four Arrows model, reflects on literature's role in shaping interpretation, and discusses the practical implications for providers and leaders. Finally, it evaluates the study's methodological strengths and limitations and suggests directions for future research.

5.2.1 Short Expeditions, Outcomes and Literature Comparison

The study indicated that expeditions lasting up to three weeks are significantly linked to intrapersonal outcomes in Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows framework, specifically confidence, independence, and resilience. Practitioners noted these gains as immediate and visible. This aligns with Beames (2004), who argued that short, intensive experiences foster "critical moments" essential for youth development. Hattie et al.'s (1997) meta-analysis supports this, demonstrating that even brief adventure programmes enhance self-concept and resilience.

Literature also supports meaningful growth in condensed formats. Ewert and Yoshino (2011) reported measurable confidence gains in outdoor programmes focused on growth mindset

principles. Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development theory underscores that experienced leaders can accelerate developmental outcomes through timely support. Therefore, short expeditions may be particularly effective when designed to connect immediate challenges with broader lessons.

However, the data suggest that these benefits might be fragile (Table 4). Practitioners emphasised that reflection and leadership need intentional design within short trips (Figure 9). Dewey (1938) noted that experience alone does not ensure learning; interpretation is necessary. Other studies reinforce this view, emphasising that structured reflection is vital for lasting learning beyond the expedition (Priest & Gass, 2018).

This complexity challenges Humphreys' (2014) case for microadventures, which posits that short trips can replicate transformative qualities of longer ones. The current evidence tells a different story; while confidence and resilience were evident, cultural immersion and environmental connection were largely missing. Stott et al. (2016) found that deeper self-understanding and global awareness typically require extended durations.

Sectoral pressures contribute to the prevalence of short expeditions. Brown and Beames (2017) observed that schools prefer affordable, time-efficient formats, although Becker et al. (2018) cautioned that compressing programmes can diminish depth. Practitioners acknowledged that shorter programmes are sometimes chosen for logistical rather than educational reasons (Figure 29). Conversely, shorter formats can widen access by reducing costs and logistical barriers, raising equity issues regarding the availability of deeper outcomes typically associated with longer trips.

In summary, while shorter expeditions yield reliable yet limited developmental gains, especially in confidence, independence, and resilience, the sustainability of these benefits depends on effective facilitation (Table 4). Though valuable within financial and logistical constraints, the educational potential of shorter programmes hinges on careful design, structured reflection, and intentional leadership opportunities (Povilaitis et al., 2019; Priest & Gass, 2018).

5.2.2 Long Expeditions, Outcomes and Literature Comparison

The results indicated that three to four-week expeditions yielded sustained outcomes across Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows framework (Table 5). Practitioners reported participants demonstrating enhanced teamwork, leadership, and resilience compared to shorter trips. The extended duration

allowed for deeper cultural immersion and reflection, often resulting in transformational experiences.

Literature supports these findings. Mortlock's (1984) adventure progression model posits that growth becomes meaningful only when participants venture beyond their comfort zone into the uncertainty of adventure, a shift facilitated by longer expeditions (Allison et al., 2018). Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle also emphasises that repeated experiences paired with reflection solidify learning. Prince (2020) noted that longer residential experiences are more frequently perceived as life-shaping, particularly when challenges are intertwined with community and reflection opportunities.

The theme of reflection emerged consistently. Wurdinger (2005) highlights reflective practice as essential for consolidating learning, a notion echoed by this study, which found that longer expeditions facilitate both structured and informal reflection (Figure 10). Stott et al. (2016) similarly reported that reflection was vital for making sense of participants' experiences during a five-week Himalayan expedition. Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory further supports this, suggesting that extended time in challenging environments fosters critical re-evaluation of assumptions.

Cultural immersion also emerged as a distinctive aspect of longer expeditions. Takano et al. (2009) found that extended exposure integrates cultural values, fostering lasting intercultural respect and global awareness. Allison et al. (2018) linked prolonged immersion with enhanced cultural sensitivity and ecological awareness. These observations echo the researcher's experience leading a five-week British Exploring Society expedition, where shifts in cultural understanding were commonplace. Together, they emphasise the significant impact of duration on outcomes extending beyond the expedition.

However, the findings revealed tensions regarding feasibility. Practitioners cited barriers such as school timetables, staffing, and financial pressures, echoing Brown and Beames' (2017) concern that market forces encourage shorter, less depth-focused programs. Leather (2018) warned that compressing programs risks losing their depth. Thus, while the literature and this study affirm that longer expeditions produce unique benefits, practical challenges increasingly hinder their implementation.

In summary, the evidence indicates that long-duration expeditions uniquely foster leadership, teamwork, reflection, and cultural immersion (Table 5). While literature strongly corroborates these outcomes, issues surrounding accessibility raise important questions about equity and the sustainability of extended youth expedition models.

5.2.3 Outcomes Across All Expeditions, Commonalities and Differences

Patterns emerged showing common developmental outcomes across shorter and longer expeditions. Participants often exhibited increased self-awareness, improved interpersonal skills, and enhanced respect for cultural and environmental contexts (Table 6). These outcomes align with the inward, outward, and downward domains of Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows framework, suggesting expeditions, regardless of length, foster holistic personal growth. Hattie et al.'s (1997) meta-analysis supports this, indicating that adventure education programmes enhance self-concept, leadership, and social skills. Allison et al. (2018) echoed these findings in their study of British Exploring Society expeditions, noting consistent gains in confidence, teamwork, and cultural awareness, irrespective of duration. Collectively, these studies affirm that expeditions yield broad developmental benefits, although the extent and longevity of these gains vary (Rickinson et al., 2004).

A recurring theme was the role of facilitation. Short expeditions required deliberate incorporation of outcomes such as reflection and cultural awareness, where leaders implemented journaling and group discussions to encourage deeper engagement (Figure 15). This aligns with Dewey's (1938) assertion that experience alone is insufficient; learning demands reflection. Pryor et al. (2005) affirm this dynamic in their socio-ecological model, emphasising facilitators' central role. Asfeldt and Hvenegaard (2014) demonstrated that expeditions facilitated both immediate learning and long-term impacts through reflection.

In contrast, longer expeditions allowed outcomes to unfold more naturally. Informal reflective moments arose around campfires, and cultural immersion deepened through extended interactions with host communities (Figure 22). Stott et al. (2016) found similar results in a five-week Himalayan youth expedition, where unplanned insights emerged over time.

The consistency of outcomes raises the question of whether duration matters less than design. Nicol (2002a, 2002b) argued that effective outdoor learning relies on pedagogical quality and meaningful engagement rather than length. Similarly, Scrutton and Beames (2015) caution against valuing programme length as a proxy for effectiveness and highlight methodological rigour. All itineraries in

this study (Appendix 4) showed intentional design aligned with the Four Arrows framework (Table 3), reinforcing educational credibility regardless of duration (Stott et al. 2015). Thus, while duration may impact outcome depth, the quality of programme design is equally crucial.

Nonetheless, duration should not be disregarded. Confidence, teamwork, and self-awareness were universally noted, but findings indicated these were more consolidated on longer trips. Mezirow's (1997) theory of transformative learning suggests that perspective changes often require time and repeated reflection cycles to solidify. Overall, the commonality of outcomes across expeditions underscores the Four Arrows framework's robustness. However, the variation in achieving these outcomes emphasises the duration's role. Shorter programmes depend on structured facilitation, while longer ones allow outcomes to emerge organically, highlighting that both design and time shape developmental pathways.

5.2.4 Emergent Themes, Explaining Variations

While the Four Arrows framework provided a useful structure for analysing participant development, this study revealed themes that extend beyond its domains (Stott et al., 2015). These emergent themes explain how outcomes were achieved and highlight the broader pedagogical and sectoral conditions shaping expeditions today (Table 11). Key themes include cost and accessibility, COVID-19 impacts, digital dependence, shifting expedition trends, leader facilitation style, and the practice of pre-loading.

Cost and accessibility significantly influenced programme length, with shorter expeditions often selected for their financial viability rather than educational merit. This trend reflects broader inequalities in outdoor learning access, aligning with Brown and Beames' (2017) observation that adventure education has shifted towards shorter, affordable formats (Asfeldt & Hvenegaard, 2014; Rickinson et al., 2004). Economic drivers correlate with a preference for domestic over international trips (UK Youth, 2023). Prince (2020) identified this pattern in residential outdoor learning, while Beames et al. (2023) noted that shorter, school-based programmes can yield substantial developmental outcomes, albeit within specific institutional and cultural contexts.

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these pressures, causing schools and families to favour shorter expeditions due to concerns about long-duration commitments (Figure 29). Practitioners reported that the pandemic fostered a preference for flexible formats, a view supported by Breunig (2022) and Mackenzie and Goodnow (2022), who noted the rise of microadventures. While these models

enhance accessibility, they may struggle to replicate the cultural immersion and reflective learning associated with longer expeditions.

Leader facilitation style proved the most influential factor across expeditions (Table 11). Practitioners highlighted the critical role of scaffolding, including guided reflection and rotating leadership, in achieving meaningful outcomes, particularly during shorter programmes where learning often required intentional structure (Figure 9). Dewey (1938) argued that reflective experience is educative, a principle echoed by Pryor et al.'s (2005) socio-ecological model, which centres facilitators in outcome generation. Even on longer programmes, facilitation remained vital for helping participants derive meaning from their experiences.

Pre-loading was viewed positively overall (Table 11). Participants typically arrived equipped with knowledge of routes and contexts via digital resources, enhancing safety and preparedness (Figure 30). Nicol (2002a, 2002b) suggested that pre-departure orientation boosts engagement without eliminating discovery, a notion affirmed by this study's findings.

Conversely, digital dependence was regarded negatively (Table 11). Practitioners argued that constant device access diminished immersion, autonomy, and the sense of challenge that characterises powerful expedition learning (Figure 28). This contrasts with Hills and Thomas' (2020) dual perspective on technology, where practitioners saw little educational value in digital dependence, viewing it as a factor that diluted the experience, consistent with Loynes' (2010) critique of the "sanitisation" of adventure.

Collectively, these emergent themes extend the Four Arrows framework, demonstrating that outcomes are shaped not only by duration and design but also by broader social and structural contexts. Cost and accessibility dictate participation, while COVID-19 and shifting trends influence programme models. Facilitation mediates experience translation into learning, and digital dependence or pre-loading alters the expedition experience itself. Providers face the challenge of adapting to these evolving contexts while preserving the core elements of challenge, reflection, and community that underpin expedition learning.

5.3 Comparison with Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows Framework

The Four Arrows framework by Stott et al. (2015) offers a valuable structure for examining youth expedition outcomes in this study (Figure 2). Rooted in Greenaway's (1997) four circles model of

personal growth, this framework reveals visible outcomes across all four domains, though their realisation varies depending on duration, facilitation, and sectoral pressures.

The upward domain, linked to civic and practical competencies, emerged through communal living and shared responsibilities during expeditions (Table 10). Practitioners noted that participants enhanced their organisational skills, logistical competence, and accountability through activities like cooking and campcraft (Figure 21). These findings align with Priest's (1986) definition of outdoor education promoting responsibility across relationships and with Sibthorp et al.'s (2007) assertion that practical autonomy contributes to competence. While both short and long expeditions showcased these competencies, longer experiences facilitated deeper refinement and internalisation. Therefore, the upward domain highlights how expeditions foster responsibility for self and community.

The outward domain, focused on teamwork and interpersonal development, was present in both short and long expeditions but more deeply in longer programmes (Table 8). Stott et al. (2016) noted a similar trend in a five-week Himalayan expedition, where collaboration emerged as a significant outcome. Structured practices in shorter expeditions led to outward outcomes, while longer expeditions permitted these dynamics to develop more organically. This indicates a limitation in the Four Arrows framework, which identifies what develops but does not explain how design and duration influence this process.

The inward domain, related to intrapersonal growth, prominently encompassed outcomes like confidence and resilience, particularly on shorter expeditions (Table 8). This aligns with Beames' (2004) concept of "critical moments" and Hattie et al.'s (1997) meta-analysis showing that brief adventure programmes can enhance self-concept. Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development supports this, suggesting that well-supported challenges enable swift personal growth. However, the data indicate that these outcomes can be fragile without proper facilitation, echoing Dewey's (1938) and Wurdinger's (2005) focus on structured reflection. On longer expeditions, intrapersonal growth often coincided with deeper self-awareness, enabling perspective shifts and identity formation, which is consistent with Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory. Collectively, these findings emphasise that confidence, independence, and resilience form a broader spectrum of intrapersonal growth, shaped by duration and facilitation.

The downward domain, concerning environmental and cultural engagement, was most pronounced in longer expeditions involving immersion in host communities and natural landscapes (Table 9). This resonates with Allison et al.'s (2018) review of British Exploring Society expeditions, linking ecological sensitivity and cultural respect to prolonged immersion. Wigglesworth and Heintzman (2017) further demonstrate that intensive, shorter outdoor courses can also foster deep connections. Thus, while downward outcomes can occur outside long formats, extended immersion enhances their depth and sustainability.

While the Four Arrows framework effectively categorises developmental outcomes, this study suggests potential extensions. Structural factors such as cost and accessibility, highlighted by practitioners, lie outside the model yet critically shape expedition design. Additionally, facilitator roles, pivotal on shorter expeditions, receive minimal attention within the framework (Stott et al. 2015).

5.4 How Literature Shaped Interpretation

Both contemporary empirical research and established theoretical frameworks informed the interpretation of this study's findings. Coding and interview design adhered to Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows framework, which effectively mapped outcomes across upward, outward, inward, and downward domains. Subsequent applications, such as Stott et al. (2016) in the Himalayas and Ramirez and Allison's (2023) retrospective study of British Exploring Society expeditions, reinforced its relevance in illustrating how expedition experiences shape personal and professional trajectories over time.

Recent scholarship sheds light on the role of duration. Prince (2020) highlighted that residential outdoor experiences are often remembered as pivotal life events. Ewert and Yoshino (2011) demonstrated that even brief adventure experiences can enhance resilience and well-being. These insights explain this study's finding that shorter expeditions fostered confidence and independence, while longer formats were more conducive to consolidating learning. Asfeldt and Hvenegaard (2014) further supported this by showing how immersive outdoor programmes promote enduring self-confidence and a stronger sense of identity, underscoring reflection and cultural immersion as critical in extended durations.

Longitudinal and retrospective research also framed interpretation. Sibthorp et al. (2007) examined identity and resilience over time, while Allison et al. (2018) showed that international expeditions

often foster long-term intercultural awareness. Together, these studies reveal that shorter expeditions typically resulted in positive outcomes, such as increased confidence, whereas longer ones excelled in fostering inward reflection, outward teamwork, and a deeper cultural connection.

Classic theoretical perspectives clarified the mechanisms behind these outcomes. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle and Dewey's (1938) philosophy of experiential education emphasise the importance of reflection, clarifying the need for deliberate facilitation in shorter expeditions but not in longer ones. Mezirow's (1997) theory of transformative learning helps explain reports of perspective shifts and heightened self-awareness in extended programmes. Mortlock's (1984) adventure progression and Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) stages of group development provide further context, indicating that resilience, leadership, and collaboration often intensified during prolonged expeditions. These theories served as scaffolding, enhancing understanding of modern empirical findings rather than serving solely as explanations.

Critical perspectives in outdoor education shaped the interpretation of emergent themes. Brown and Beames (2017) and Leather (2018) contextualised the pressures driving expeditions towards shorter, more affordable models. Nicol (2002a, 2002b) and Loynes (2010) prompted reflection on sustainability and the managed nature of adventure. Though environmental consequences didn't prominently surface in the data, participants' surprise at trekking challenges indicated the relevance of preparedness and expectation-setting. This literature provides avenues for future inquiry, even where current findings were limited.

Contemporary studies, therefore, offered parallels to this research, affirming that expedition outcomes remain valued yet increasingly influenced by factors like duration, access, and facilitation. Classic theories provided the interpretive tools necessary to understand processes such as reflection, challenge, and group dynamics that underpin these outcomes (Parry & Allison, 2020). Consequently, the interpretation developed in this chapter is grounded in the current evidence base and informed by the theoretical traditions of outdoor education.

5.5 Implications for Practice

This study highlights that both shorter and longer expeditions provide significant educational value, although their design and facilitation require adaptation to sectoral changes. For practitioners, several implications arise.

Short expeditions can yield impactful outcomes, such as confidence, independence, and resilience, but these benefits are often precarious without reinforcement. Ewert and Yoshino (2011) noted similar improvements in resilience and well-being from brief programmes, while Mutz and Müller (2016) found that outdoor adventures enhanced not only confidence but also mental health, contingent on effective programme design. To reinforce gains from short expeditions, leaders must employ scaffolding strategies, guided reflection, rotating leadership roles, and journaling, aligning with Dewey's (1938) idea that experience gains educational value when connected to meaning, and Kolb's (1984) emphasis on reflection in consolidation.

Longer expeditions excel in depth. They consistently foster outcomes in the inward, outward, and downward domains, such as reflection, teamwork, leadership, and cultural immersion, more effectively than short programmes. Asfeldt and Hvenegaard (2014) discovered that immersive experiences cultivated lasting confidence and identity, while Ramirez and Allison (2023) demonstrated that resilience and group cohesion strengthened over time. Providers should continue to prioritise longer formats, recognising their capability to facilitate perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1997) and group development (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). However, accessibility concerns may necessitate blended models, combining short domestic trips with select longer international opportunities to maintain depth.

Facilitation style emerged as a crucial factor in both types of expeditions. Practitioners emphasised that leader practices directly influence outcomes such as reflection and leadership. This is consistent with Pryor et al.'s (2005) socio-ecological model, which places facilitators at the core of outdoor learning, and Prince's (2020) review, finding that effective leader input transforms experiences from ordinary to impactful. Providers must prioritise leader preparation, equipping staff with a varied repertoire of facilitation strategies adaptable to both program length and participant needs.

Cost and accessibility remain major challenges. Short expeditions are often selected for pragmatic reasons, as noted by Brown and Beames (2017). While these options may increase participation, they risk perpetuating a two-tier system that privileges longer expeditions for certain groups. Providers should address these inequalities by implementing subsidy or fundraising models to expand access. Simultaneously, shorter programmes require intentional design to ensure meaningful outcomes.

Finally, sectoral shifts necessitate ongoing adaptation. The post-COVID context has heightened caution around long-duration programmes (Mackenzie & Goodnow, 2022) and raised sustainability

concerns regarding international travel (Loynes, 2018). As a result, providers must justify programmes both educationally and environmentally. Localised or hybrid models, including shorter, accessible trips alongside targeted longer expeditions, represent practical responses. While this study did not delve deeply into environmental outcomes, existing literature indicates that sustainability will increasingly influence expedition design and implementation (Becker et al., 2018; Loynes, 2018).

These findings emphasise that expeditions are not homogeneous experiences. Outcomes depend on duration, facilitation, accessibility, and sectoral pressures. Providers face the task of balancing inclusivity with depth, preserving essential qualities of challenge, reflection, and community while adapting to contemporary realities. For leaders, the focus must be on embedding facilitation practices that ensure learning persists, irrespective of programme length.

5.6 Methodological Evaluation

This study has several assumptions and limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings.

Firstly, reliance on practitioner accounts may not accurately reflect participant outcomes. While practitioners provided rich insights, their perspectives are inevitably filtered through their roles as facilitators. As Allison and Pomeroy (2000) argue, outdoor education research often depends on leader accounts, risking the neglect of participants' lived experiences. As a result, the absence of direct participant voices limits the depth of understanding regarding personal development during expeditions.

Secondly, itineraries were assumed to represent the expedition experience. Though analysed for programme design, they can also serve marketing purposes, presenting an idealised version of the experience that may not align with actual participant experiences. The initial intent to triangulate these with post-expedition leader reports was thwarted by ethical considerations surrounding consent, further narrowing the available data.

Thirdly, the study's small sample size of six practitioner interviews restricts the diversity of perspectives included. While qualitative research values depth, small samples risk overrepresenting specific viewpoints. Although thematic saturation was achieved, a larger, more varied sample would enhance confidence in the findings.

Fourthly, while the varied backgrounds of practitioner participants, from support staff to expedition leaders, provided multiple perspectives, this diversity also introduced inconsistencies that could not be fully accounted for in the analysis. Combining these varied accounts offered an overview but may have obscured differences in emphasis and interpretation across roles.

Fifthly, focusing on a single expedition provider limited the study's scope. While it ensured consistency in data gathering, the findings may skew toward one organisation's practices rather than reflecting the broader sector. Allison et al. (2018) assert that examining multiple providers is vital for capturing the full diversity of expedition practices, an acknowledgement that is necessary in this context.

Sixthly, the researcher's positionality impacted the study. As an industry professional, the researcher provided valuable insider knowledge, which also raised concerns about potential bias. Finlay (2002) encourages reflexivity in qualitative research; although systematic coding and the Four Arrows framework were employed to mitigate bias, the potential influence of professional expectations remains an important consideration.

Finally, participant feedback was excluded due to ethical concerns about consent. Practical limitations further restricted access to data, leaving practitioner insights as the most ethically viable source. The absence of participant perspectives, as noted by Allison and Pomeroy (2000), is a continual challenge in expedition research, and their omission limited the study's ability to capture the full range of experiences.

In summary, this study's methodological limitations stem from assumptions about practitioner accounts and itineraries, the inability to use post-expedition leader reports, the small and diverse sample, inconsistencies across practitioner roles, researcher positionality, and the exclusion of participant voices due to ethical and practical challenges. While these limitations do not invalidate the findings, they highlight the need for caution in generalising and suggest directions for future research.

5.7 Future Research

The limitations of this study reveal several crucial avenues for future research on youth expeditions. A primary focus should be the inclusion of participant perspectives alongside practitioner accounts. While practitioners provided valuable insights, the exclusion of participant feedback due to ethical

restrictions created a significant gap in understanding how young people interpret their experiences. Integrating participant voices will triangulate findings, diminish reliance on facilitator narratives (Allison and Pomeroy, 2000), and yield a more balanced view of developmental processes.

Another key direction involves broadening the inquiry beyond a single provider. The study's focus on one organisation, while consistent, limits generalisability. Comparative research across multiple providers, including charitable and commercial organisations, would capture the diversity in expedition design and facilitation. Allison et al. (2018) illustrated that multi-cohort and multi-provider approaches reveal nuanced outcome patterns, thereby strengthening the evidence base for practitioners and policymakers.

Expanding the participant pool of practitioners is also essential. Though thematic saturation was achieved, the small sample restricts generalisability. Larger studies encompassing varied roles; leaders, teachers, support staff, and managers, would provide a richer picture of expedition planning, facilitation, and evaluation.

Moreover, future research should employ longitudinal designs to track participants beyond the expedition. Ramírez and Allison (2023) highlighted the value of retrospection in showing long-term impacts; yet, prospective approaches could provide more substantial evidence regarding how different expedition durations influence enduring outcomes.

Investigation into facilitation strategies warrants greater depth. This study underscored facilitation as a significant factor in shaping outcomes, particularly in shorter expeditions. Examining strategies such as structured reflection, leadership rotation, and socio-ecological facilitation (Pryor et al., 2005) would yield precise guidance for programme design and leader training.

Finally, exploring broader sectoral and contextual factors affecting expeditions is essential. Practitioners noted how cost, accessibility, post-COVID caution, and sustainability shape provision, yet targeted research on their interplay with educational outcomes remains scarce. Initial studies by Prince (2020) and Garden and Downes (2023) examined these dynamics in residential outdoor learning, but focused research on youth expeditions is needed.

Future research should prioritise participant perspectives, examine multiple-provider comparisons, involve larger and more varied practitioner samples, employ longitudinal designs, investigate facilitation strategies in detail, and explore sectoral pressures. Addressing these areas will enhance

understanding of how expedition duration, design, and context shape developmental outcomes for young people.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Restating Aim and Research Questions

This study investigated the impact of expedition duration on participant development, focusing on short (up to three weeks) versus long (three to four weeks) youth-led experiences. Building on Mortlock (1984), Hattie et al. (1997), and Stott et al. (2015), it explored the complex role of duration in shaping developmental outcomes.

Utilising the Four Arrows framework by Stott et al. (2015), the analysis organised outcomes into *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, *global and environmental*, and *civil and practical competence*, while allowing for the emergence of additional themes.

A qualitative, multi-method approach facilitated the research. Six expedition itineraries were examined to understand how outcomes were integrated into program design. Additionally, six semi-structured interviews with seasoned practitioners provided insights into the real-world realisation of these outcomes. This methodological framework supported a systematic comparison of short and long expeditions and highlighted themes extending beyond the Four Arrows framework

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What developmental outcomes are associated with short youth-led expeditions (up to three weeks)?
2. What developmental outcomes are associated with long youth-led expeditions (three to four weeks)?
3. Which outcomes are common across both expedition durations?
4. What additional sectoral or contextual factors influence the relationship between duration and participant outcomes

6.2 Summary of Key Findings

This study revealed that both short and long youth-led expeditions generated meaningful developmental outcomes, though the character and depth of these outcomes varied by duration. Short expeditions primarily fostered intrapersonal growth, such as confidence and resilience, serving as “stepping stones” for young people. These programs focused on concentrated challenges, like

summitting peaks or service projects, which provided impactful learning. In contrast, long expeditions yielded broader, more sustainable outcomes across the Four Arrows domains, emphasising self-awareness, teamwork, and cultural immersion. Practitioners observed that these deeper benefits emerged over extended timelines through multi-phase itineraries.

Common outcomes across both formats included confidence, self-awareness, and practical responsibility, confirming that expeditions, regardless of length, enhance personal and social development (Hattie et al., 1997; Allison et al., 2018; Ramírez & Allison, 2023). The study also highlighted critical themes, such as facilitation style, sector pressures, and the influence of COVID-19, emphasising that outcomes are shaped by design and context, not solely duration.

In summary, while shorter expeditions yield immediate gains, longer ones facilitate deeper growth, significantly influenced by quality facilitation and thoughtful programme design.

6.3 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to outdoor and expeditionary learning in multiple ways. Firstly, it enhances our understanding of the relationship between duration and developmental outcomes. While previous research has suggested that longer expeditions foster deeper learning (Loynes, 2010; Mortlock, 1984; Stott et al., 2016), shorter programs also have their benefits (Hattie et al., 1997; Beames, 2004). However, few studies directly compare these formats. By systematically examining both short and long expeditions within the same provider, this study identifies shared and unique outcomes effectively.

Secondly, the research affirms Stott et al.'s (2015) Four Arrows framework as a valuable analytical tool while recognising areas for expansion. The framework's domains, *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, *global and environmental*, and *civil and practical competence*, were evident in both expedition types, showcasing its robustness. Inductive analysis revealed emergent themes such as facilitation style, cost and accessibility, digital dependence, and post-COVID pressures, suggesting that while the Four Arrows framework categorises developments well, it must integrate additional contextual factors.

Thirdly, this study emphasises facilitation as crucial in expedition learning. Prior research has highlighted the importance of leader competence and reflection (Allison et al., 2018; Priest & Gass, 2018). Here, facilitation was particularly vital in shorter expeditions, where intentional support enhanced outcomes like leadership and cultural awareness. In contrast, while longer expeditions

allowed outcomes to arise naturally, facilitation remained essential for participants to interpret and consolidate their experiences meaningfully.

Lastly, the research adds complexity to discussions of equity and access in youth expeditions. Although longer programs support deeper developmental processes, their higher costs can create barriers, as noted by Brown and Beames (2017). Shorter expeditions thus provide meaningful developmental experiences while serving as more accessible entry points for young people at risk of exclusion. This underscores the need to view expedition duration not just as an educational variable but also as a matter of equity and opportunity. Overall, this study enriches our understanding by confirming the value of expedition learning across durations, expanding the Four Arrows framework to include contextual influences, emphasising facilitation, and linking duration to broader issues of access and sustainability.

6.4 Implications for the Youth-led Expedition Sector

The study findings indicate that both short and long expeditions provide educational value, but their design should reflect the strengths and limitations inherent to each format. While short expeditions effectively foster confidence, independence, and resilience, these outcomes can be tenuous without structured facilitation. Providers should integrate opportunities for reflection, leadership rotation, and cultural engagement to ensure learning extends beyond the trip. This aligns with Dewey's (1938) assertion that experience must be interpreted to be educative, complemented by Kolb's (1984) emphasis on the reflective cycle.

Longer expeditions yield unique benefits. Specifically, self-awareness, resilience, leadership, and cultural immersion are consistently developed over three to four weeks. However, access is increasingly restricted by factors such as cost, school scheduling, and parental concerns (Rickson et al., 2014; Scrutton and Beames, 2015; Sutton Trust, 2022). Providers might explore blended models, such as preparatory short expeditions for younger students alongside targeted longer programs for older participants. This approach balances inclusivity with depth of learning, enhancing participant recruitment. The effectiveness of facilitation also plays a significant role, as leader competence and adaptability can greatly influence the depth of outcomes (Poviliatis et al., 2019; Prince, 2020; Pryor et al., 2005). Consequently, training for providers must encompass both technical and pedagogical skills. Practitioners should prioritise reflexivity, adapting their approaches to group needs and programme duration.

Various sectoral pressures, including financial constraints, post-COVID caution, digital reliance, and sustainability, shape decisions in expedition selection. Schools often gravitate towards shorter, less costly options. This research clarifies that while shorter trips reliably build confidence, independence, and cultural exposure, longer expeditions justify their expense by uniquely fostering resilience, teamwork, leadership, and cultural immersion. Presenting these distinctions enables schools and stakeholders to make informed choices, allowing providers to credibly position both formats in a competitive market.

6.5 Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides new insights into the relationship between expedition duration and participant outcomes; however, several areas warrant further exploration. First, future research should incorporate participants' perspectives. This study relied on practitioner accounts and itinerary analysis, which may not fully capture lived experiences. Direct participant voices gathered through interviews, surveys, or longitudinal follow-ups would significantly enhance the evidence base (Allison and Pomeroy, 2000).

Second, expanding the research to include multiple providers would improve generalisability. Multi-provider studies could highlight differences in design, facilitation, and culture, determining whether identified patterns are consistent across the sector (Allison et al., 2018). A larger sample of practitioners from diverse roles, such as teachers and expedition leaders, would enable more nuanced comparisons.

Third, longitudinal designs are essential for assessing the persistence of outcomes. Retrospective studies indicate that expedition experiences may leave lasting impressions decades later (Allison et al., 2018; Ramírez & Allison, 2023), but prospective research would yield a more comprehensive understanding of how outcomes evolve.

Lastly, future research should explore facilitation and sectoral pressures in greater depth. Leader competence proved significant, especially in short expeditions, yet strategies for effective facilitation remain underexplored. Moreover, factors such as cost, accessibility, digital dependence, and sustainability affect educational quality but have not been thoroughly investigated. Addressing these directions would bolster the study's findings by integrating participant perspectives, broadening the comparative base, and deepening the understanding of the contextual forces shaping expedition learning today.

6.6 Final Reflection

This study investigates the impact of youth-led expedition duration on participant development, revealing that both short and long programs possess significant educational value. Short expeditions offer accessible experiences that foster confidence and cultural exposure, while longer ones enable deeper engagement with resilience, leadership, and teamwork. Crucially, effective facilitation transforms experiences from fleeting to impactful.

Moreover, expedition outcomes are influenced by broader contexts. Financial pressures, post-COVID caution, digital dependence, and sustainability issues restrict longer journeys, yet these challenges also prompt innovation. Shorter expeditions serve as valuable entry points, whereas longer ones are framed as unique, premium experiences.

Ultimately, youth-led expeditions are powerful for personal and social development. Their value lies not in duration but in design, facilitation, and contextual framing. By acknowledging the strengths and limitations of each format and adapting to sectoral realities, providers can ensure ongoing meaningful learning for young people now and in the future.

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Appendix 1: Ethical Approval Form

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Patrick Rutledge			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☐	Taught Postgraduate Student	☒	Postgraduate Research Student

3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	Institute of Management and Health, health, Outdoor Education & Physical Literacy
4	Campus:	Carmarthen
5	E-mail address:	
6	Contact Telephone Number:	

For students:		
7	Student Number:	██████████
8	Programme of Study:	(MA-OE) Outdoor Education
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Maria Jose Treviño Gonzalez

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☐
					Date
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
		Institute Research Committee	☐		
		Other (write in) Supervisor/module Leader approval. Maria Jose Treviño Gonzalez	☒	07/05/2025	

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice	☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy	☒
3	<i>[List any other relevant documents here]</i>	☒

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution	████████████████████
2	Contact person name	██████████
3	Contact person e-mail address	██
4	Is your research externally funded?	YES ☐ NO ☒
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES ☐ NO ☒

6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	☐	NO	☒
7		Employed	YES	☐	NO	☒

8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	YES	☐	NO	☒
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	☒	NO	☐

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☒
	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	Evolving Structure in Youth Expeditions: A Mixed-Methods Study of Itinerary Changes and Provider Perspectives			
2	Proposed start date:	22/04/2025	Proposed end date:	30/09/2025	
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> Demonstrate, briefly, how Existing Research has informed the proposed activity and explain <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>				
3	Purpose of Research Activity To investigate how youth-led expedition models have changed over the last decade in terms of trip length, structure, and focus, and to explore how industry professionals interpret these shifts in relation to participant development outcomes. (this box should expand as you type)				
4	Research Question How have youth-led expedition structures evolved in the last ten years, and how are these changes perceived by expedition professionals in relation to participant development? (this box should expand as you type)				

5	Aims of Research Activity • To explore trends in expedition length and structure using historical itinerary documents • To gather expert perspectives on shifts in the expedition sector • To identify perceived implications for youth development in changing expedition formats
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	(this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity • Thematic analysis of itineraries from one provider (5 trips/year over 10 years) • Conduct 6–8 interviews with industry professionals • Identify emergent themes around duration, leadership, personal growth, and external pressures (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	This mixed-methods study includes: • Document Analysis: Thematic analysis of 50 itineraries (2014–2024) from a single youth expedition provider, selected across multiple destinations to capture structural and thematic change over time. • Semi-Structured Interviews: 6–8 interviews with professionals from various expedition organisations, using a standardised interview guide and qualitative thematic analysis to extract perceptions of sector change, rationale for shorter trips, and implications for outcomes. All data will be anonymised. Interviews will be recorded (with consent), transcribed, and coded. (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	Remote data collection and analysis using secure personal computer. (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	Not applicable – data analysis conducted in UK only. (this box should expand as you type)

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO	☐
		YES	☒

11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. Permission granted in writing from Adventure Lifesigns. Documents stored and analysed in compliance with GDPR and institutional policy. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
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	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☒
15	A more equal Wales	☐	☒
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☒
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☒
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☐	☒
2	Use of interviews?	☒	☐
3	Use of focus groups?	☐	☒
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☒	☐
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☒	☐
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒

13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☐	☒
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)		

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☐	☒
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.	☐	☒
	Details of any other participant groups: (this box should expand as you type)		

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	6-8 (this box should expand as you type)

11	Who will the participants be?	Adult expedition professionals from a variety of youth-led organisations
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		<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
12	How will you identify the participants?	Identified via existing contacts and Expedition Providers Association member lists, anonymised in research. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☒
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☐	☐	☒
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended?	Yes ☐ No ☒	
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
	Risks to participants: This research involves analysis of past itineraries from one expedition company and 6–8 semi-structured interviews with professionals in the expedition field. The main potential risks to participants and organisations include: Disclosure of sensitive organisational information: There is a risk that reviewing past itineraries or interview responses may lead to disclosure of trade secrets, operational methodologies, or internal practices that the organisation considers sensitive. If any information is found that could be reputationally damaging or indicate potential non-compliance with legal or ethical standards, there is a duty to report this to appropriate third parties (e.g., safeguarding authorities, regulatory bodies). Disclosure of third-party information by interviewees: Participants may inadvertently disclose information about other organisations they have worked with, which could include commercially sensitive data or negative evaluations. Emotional distress: While minimal, there is a potential for emotional discomfort if participants reflect on negative past experiences or sensitive topics within their careers. No financial disclosures or physical harm are anticipated in this study. All data will be stored securely and in compliance with GDPR and university policies regarding personal data handling. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to participants:</i> Risks to participants: • The name of the organisation will be anonymised in all outputs. • Any identifiers linking data to specific companies or individuals will be removed during transcription and analysis. Disclosure of sensitive organisational information: • Within the information sheet provided to the organisation will clarify the researcher's responsibility to report any discovered harm or human rights violations to the appropriate authorities. • Any excerpts of data that are proposed for publication or inclusion in the dissertation will be reviewed for potentially sensitive content and trade secrets. • If applicable, existing NDAs or contract clauses will be reviewed to ensure compliance before any sensitive information is used or disclosed. • All third-party organisational references will be anonymised during transcription. • Interview participants will be informed in advance not to disclose information they are not authorised to share. • All transcripts and written data will be reviewed for references to other identifiable organisations or individuals and anonymised accordingly. Emotional distress: • Interviews will be conducted in a professional and respectful manner, with	

		participants free to skip questions or stop the interview at any time without consequence. • A debrief will be offered at the end of each interview, and participants will be reminded of available support resources should they experience distress. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	No <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risks to the investigator: There are minimal physical or health and safety risks associated with this research, as data collection involves document review and remote or in-person interviews with professionals in the field. However, the following risks have been identified: Perceived conflict of interest: The researcher has a prior working relationship with the organisation providing the historical itineraries. Risk of accusation of harm or impropriety: In qualitative interviews, there is a low risk of misinterpretation or discomfort that could lead to negative perceptions of the researcher's conduct. Emotional distress: There is minimal anticipated emotional risk to the researcher, but reflective conversations about changes in the expedition sector could potentially include discussion of challenging events or industry shortcomings. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:</i> Perceived conflict of interest: • This relationship will be fully disclosed to the University and to all participants as part of the research briefing. • The research will maintain clear boundaries between professional affiliations and academic inquiry. • It will be clearly communicated to participants that there is no ongoing financial relationship between the researcher and the organisation in question related to the research. • Participants will be informed that the research is conducted independently under University oversight, with ethical protocols in place to ensure objectivity and integrity. Risk of accusation of harm or impropriety: • A professional, neutral, and respectful tone will be maintained throughout all communications. • Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw or decline to answer questions at any stage.

		- Interviews will be conducted in line with ethical research standards and fully documented to ensure transparency. Emotional distress: - The researcher has professional experience in this sector and is comfortable managing such discussions. - Should any distress arise, appropriate support will be sought via University resources. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: Low Risk of potential reputational damage: There is a risk that the research could lead to reputational harm for the university. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: Risk of potential reputational damage: All ethical procedures will be strictly followed, including informed consent, anonymisation where appropriate, and compliance with relevant regulations. All participants will receive clear information about the purpose, scope, and handling of data related to the research to ensure transparency and minimise risk. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: None <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

	Disclosure and Barring Service			
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☒	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?

	Participants offered a copy of findings/dissertation upon request and the organisation that has provided the itineraries. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	Info sheet & consent form emailed in advance. Written consent required. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	All data anonymised. No names or organisations linked to quotes. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

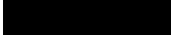
	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 “GDPR” and the Data Protection Act 2018 “DPA”)?	YES	NO
1	“Personal data” means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘data subject’). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.	☒	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	Only contact and role details used for scheduling; interviews anonymised <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	“Special category data” means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects’ – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	☒
6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☒	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	Files password-protected, pseudonymised during analysis, Anonymised data will be securely stored on the University's encrypted and password-protected OneDrive system, in accordance with institutional data protection policies and GDPR guidelines after 10 years. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☒	☐
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	Interview recordings may be transferred electronically between the researcher and transcription service or between devices used by the researcher. All transfers will use secure, password-protected cloud services (e.g. encrypted Google Drive or WeTransfer with password protection). No data will be emailed directly as attachments. Files will be pseudonymised before transfer and deleted immediately after secure download. All transfers will comply with GDPR and UWTSD Data Management Policy, ensuring confidentiality and appropriate handling of personal data. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	Researcher and supervisor only		

	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	Patrick Rutledge, Maria Trevino Gonzalez <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	Anonymised data will be securely stored on the University's encrypted and password-protected OneDrive system, in accordance with institutional data protection policies and GDPR guidelines after 10 years. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	No <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.		
	In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:		Date: 16/04/25

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:		Date:
3	Signature:		07/09/2025

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☒	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☒	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.



17th April 2025

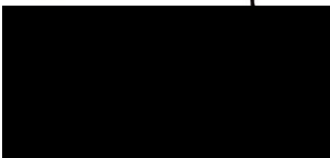
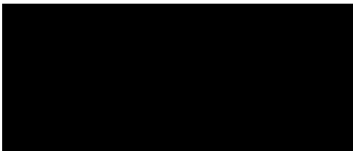
To Whom It May Concern,

This letter confirms that we [redacted] give permission for Patrick Rutledge, postgraduate student at the University of Wales Trinity St David, to use historical and current expedition itineraries for their Masters Dissertation in Outdoors Education.

We understand and agree that:

- All itineraries will be fully anonymised and no individual or school will be identifiable in the data or research
- All itineraries provided will be stored securely and used solely for academic research purposes by Patrick Rutledge in line with GDPR and university guidelines

Should you require further clarification or confirmation of any of the above, please feel free to contact me.



Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

Title of Study: Exploring the duration of youth-led expeditions and the outcomes for personal development through a qualitative mixed-methods analysis of itineraries and practitioners perspectives.

Researcher:

[REDACTED]

MA Outdoor Education

University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD)

Email:

[REDACTED]

Phone:

[REDACTED]

Supervisor:

[REDACTED]

Email:

[REDACTED]

Participant Information Sheet

What is this study about?

This research explores how youth-led expedition programmes have changed in structure and duration over the past decade, and how these changes are interpreted by professionals in the field. It aims to understand whether and how these changes influence participant development outcomes.

Why have I been invited?

You are being invited because you are a professional with experience in the youth expedition sector. Your insights will contribute to understanding recent trends and their implications.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview, lasting approximately 45–60 minutes, conducted on Microsoft Teams. The discussion will explore:

- Shifts in expedition structure or length.
- Trends in participant development outcomes.
- Your insights into programme structures.

The interview will be audio-recorded, then transcribed and anonymised.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is entirely voluntary. You may skip any question or stop the interview at any time without giving a reason. You may also withdraw your data after your interview by emailing the researcher.

How will my information be kept confidential?

Your name, organisation, and identifying details will be fully anonymised in transcripts and reports. Audio recordings will be deleted after transcription. Only the researcher and

supervisor will have access to the original data. All files will be stored securely on encrypted, password-protected systems.

Are there any risks or benefits?

There are no significant risks and anonymisation protects you from reputational damage. You may request a copy of the research findings which may help inform your practice moving forward.

What will happen with the data?

The findings will contribute to a Masters dissertation submitted to UWTSD. Anonymous insights may also be shared in academic publications or conferences. You may request a summary of findings.

Who has reviewed this research?

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at UWTSD and is conducted in line with university policy and GDPR.

Questions or concerns?

Please contact:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Consent Form

Please read each statement and tick the box if you agree:

- ☐ I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.
- ☐ I understand what participation involves and that I can withdraw at any time and request my data is withdrawn after interview for any reason by email.
- ☐ I consent to the interview being audio-recorded.
- ☐ I understand that my responses will be anonymised in transcripts and reports.
- ☐ I give permission for anonymised quotes to be used in the final dissertation and possible publications.
- ☐ I understand how my data will be handled and stored in line with GDPR and university policy.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research study.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Semi Structured Interview Guide

Questions were developed in alignment with the Four Arrows framework (Stott et al., 2015), which categorises participant development in outdoor expeditions into four domains: Upward, Outward, Inward, and Downward.

General Experience and Background

These questions provide essential background and establish participants' relevance to the study's comparative aim (Patton, 2015).

1. Can you describe your role in youth expedition programmes?
2. What kinds of expeditions have you been involved with, and over how many years?
3. Have you led or supported both shorter (up to 3 week) and longer (3–4 week) expeditions?

Upward, Personal Challenge and Growth

These questions aim to explore participants facing experiences and programme design elements that promote self-development (Stott et al., 2015).

4. What aspects of the expedition tend to challenge participants the most?
5. In what ways do you see young people develop personal confidence or resilience during the expedition?

Outward, Social and Interpersonal Development

These questions are designed to assess expeditions as catalysts for interpersonal learning (Hattie et al., 1997; Beames, 2004).

6. How do group dynamics typically evolve throughout the expedition?
7. Are there specific structures or moments that encourage teamwork, leadership, or collaboration?

Inward, Self-Awareness and Reflection

These questions seek to understand whether there are structured or informal reflection, linked to deeper learning outcomes in youth-led expeditions (Wurdinger, 2005; Thomas, 2015).

8. Are there points in the expedition where participants are encouraged to reflect on their experience?
9. Have you observed changes in self-awareness or emotional insight among participants?

Downward, Environmental and Cultural Engagement

These questions are meant to explore how expedition programmes link to global awareness and ecological or cultural respect (Stott et al., 2015).

10. How do participants interact with the natural or cultural environments they travel through?
11. Are these interactions structured intentionally, and if so, how?

Duration and Development

These questions directly align with the study's research question on the role of duration. Framing them after the core Four Arrows questions encourages participants to reflect on how time impacts depth and breadth of development (Stott et al., 2015).

12. Do you think the length of an expedition makes a difference in terms of participant outcomes?
13. Are there developmental changes that seem more likely on longer expeditions compared to shorter ones?
14. Are there opportunities or outcomes that are equally achievable on shorter expeditions?

Closing Questions

These questions allow for emergent insights or contributions that were not anticipated but may be relevant (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2015).

15. Is there anything else you'd like to add about how young people develop during expeditions?
16. Are there particular programme structures you've seen work especially well or not?

Appendix 4: Expedition Itineraries

Borneo Long

Year: 2016

Duration: 27 days

Day 1: Depart UK. Transit overnight.

Day 2: Arrive Kota Kinabalu. Transfer to hostel. Team briefing and local orientation.

Day 3: Transfer to project site. Introductions to local hosts. Begin project work.

Day 4: Project work.

Day 5: Project work.

Day 6: Project work.

Day 7: Project work.

Day 8: Project work.

Day 9: Final day of project. Complete tasks and handover to community.

Day 10: Transfer to trek start point. Trekking phase begins. Initial jungle trek and set up camp.

Day 11: Jungle trek continues. River crossings and steep ascents. Overnight camp.

Day 12: Trekking day. Dense jungle terrain. Overnight camp.

Day 13: Trekking day. Campcraft, navigation, group management. Overnight camp.

Day 14: Trekking day. River section. Overnight camp.

Day 15: Trekking day. Continue through jungle. Overnight camp.

Day 16: Trekking day. Group reflection in evening. Overnight camp.

Day 17: Trekking day. Final night of jungle trek. Overnight camp.

Day 18: Conclude jungle trek. Transfer to hostel. Rest, recovery, and debrief.

Day 19: Transfer to Mount Kinabalu National Park. Begin ascent to Laban Rata Hut. Overnight at hut.

Day 20: Summit day, Mount Kinabalu (4095m). Early start. Return to park HQ. Overnight hostel.

Day 21: Rest and recovery. Local cultural visits.

Day 22: Transfer to island for R&R phase. Beach activities, swimming, snorkelling.

Day 23: R&R on island.

Day 24: R&R on island.

Day 25: Return to Kota Kinabalu. Final debrief and shopping.

Day 26: Travel day. Prepare for departure.

Day 27: Return flight to UK. Arrive home.

Tanzania Short

Year: 2016

Duration: 14 days

Day 1 (22nd July): Depart London. Stopover in Istanbul. Parents to drop students at the airport. The team need to be at the airport 3 hours prior to departure. Team to meet at 06.45 at check-in. *NB: Team must fly in hiking boots!* Overnight flight.

Day 2 (23rd July): Arrive Kilimanjaro International Airport. Bus transfer to project accommodation (45 minutes). Introductions and acclimatisation. Begin project work at the school.

Day 3 (24th July): Project work.

Day 4 (25th July): Project work.

Day 5 (26th July): Rest day in Arusha – visit to Cultural Centre and other sites. Overnight at project accommodation.

Day 6 (27th July): Final day on project.

Day 7 (28th July): Transfer to Mount Meru for Day 1 of trek. Momella Gate to Mariakamba Hut. Drive 1 hour. Hike distance 10 km, 4–5 hrs, 1000m ascent, Altitude: 2516m. Dinner and overnight Mariakamba Hut.

Day 8 (29th July): Trek Day 2. Mariakamba Hut to Saddle Hut. Hike distance 4 km, 2–3 hrs, 1050m ascent, Altitude: 3566m. Dinner and overnight Saddle Hut.

Day 9 (30th July): Trek Day 3. Summit day. From Meru Summit to Saddle Hut to Momella Gate and return to Arusha. Hike distance 14 km, 6–8 hrs, 3050m descent, Altitude: 1516m. Drive 1 hour back to Arusha. Overnight at project accommodation.

Day 10 (31st July): Safari in Tarangire National Park. Overnight camp.

Day 11 (1st August): Safari in Ngorongoro Crater National Park. Overnight camp.

Day 12 (2nd August): Safari in Lake Manyara National Park. Overnight at project accommodation.

Day 13 (3rd August): Sports Day at the school with both teams. Overnight at project accommodation.

Day 14 (4th August): Morning shopping. Lunch and debrief at River Trees. Return to project accommodation for dinner and showers before departing late evening for the airport.

Day 15 (5th August): Transit home.

Cambodia Long

Year: 2019

Duration: 29 days

Day 1: Depart UK. Flights to Phnom Penh.

Day 2: Arrive Phnom Penh. Transfer to accommodation. Team briefing, orientation and acclimatisation.

Day 3: Transfer to Kampot. Local orientation and preparation for trek phase.

Day 4: Trekking begins in Bokor National Park. Carrying full kit. Overnight camp.

Day 5: Trekking continues through Bokor jungle. Camp overnight.

Day 6: Trekking continues. Navigation, team leadership and campcraft rotation.

Day 7: Trekking continues. Overnight camp.

Day 8: Final trek day. Return to Kampot. Overnight accommodation.

Day 9: Transfer to Phnom Penh. Briefing for project phase.

Day 10: Begin project work at school/community site. Orientation and introductions.

Day 11: Project work. Construction, teaching and cultural exchange.

Day 12: Project work.

Day 13: Project work.

Day 14: Project work.

Day 15: Rest day. Cultural visit, local exploration.

Day 16: Project work continues.

Day 17: Project work.

Day 18: Final day of project. Complete tasks, farewell to local hosts.

Day 19: Transfer to Siem Reap. Orientation in city.

Day 20: Visit Angkor Wat and surrounding temples. Guided cultural activities.

Day 21: Free day for cultural activities and exploration.

Day 22: Transfer to floating villages. Community engagement and local immersion.

Day 23: Travel to Battambang. Orientation and local activities.

Day 24: Trekking phase begins in Battambang region. Jungle trekking with full kit.

Day 25: Trekking continues in Battambang. Overnight camp.

Day 26: Trekking continues. Team-led navigation and leadership rotations.

Day 27: Final trek day. Return to Battambang. Debrief and rest.

Day 28: Return to Phnom Penh. Reflection, debrief, and preparation for departure.

Day 29: Depart Phnom Penh. Return flights to UK.

Morocco Short

Year: 2019

Duration: 7 days

Day 1: The expedition will start with an administrative session at the school lasting around 2–3 hours to check kit etc. Transfer to the airport and fly to Morocco. On arrival in Marrakesh, the team will transfer to the riad. Possible visit to the main square in the evening (flight dependent).

Day 2: Depart from riad and travel to the mountains. Arrive at Imlil and walk to Armed (about 45 minutes). Lunch at Armed, followed by an acclimatisation trek. Accommodation in gites (1900m).

Day 3: Trek from Armed to Nether Refuge (approx. 5–6 hours with lunch on the way). Follow trail up valley via Chamarouch, where snacks and drinks are available. Evening at Nether Refuge (3100m), a mountain hut. Meals prepared by Berber cook.

Day 4: Summit day. Early start to attempt Toubkal (4169m). 4–5 hours ascent, 3-hour descent. Steep scree sections. Overnight again in Nether Refuge.

Day 5: Descend from Nether Refuge to Armed (approx. 3 hours). Scenic trek, with stop at Chamarouch. Overnight in gites at Armed.

Day 6: Trek down to Imlil. Transfer to Marrakesh. Remainder of day in the city. Evening meal and overnight in riad.

Day 7: Early morning departure from riad to airport for return flights.

Zambia & Botswana Long

Year: 2025

Duration: 21 days

Day 1: Depart UK. Overnight flight to Zambia.

Day 2: Arrive Lusaka. Transfer to Livingstone. Orientation and team briefing. Overnight in lodge accommodation.

Day 3: Cultural orientation in Livingstone. Visit local markets and historical sites. Preparation for project phase.

Day 4: Transfer to project site. Begin community project work (construction and educational support). Overnight in basic accommodation.

Day 5: Project work continues. Team members rotate tasks. Evening reflections.

Day 6: Project work. Community engagement and cultural exchange.

Day 7: Final day of project work. Complete tasks and farewell to local hosts. Overnight at project accommodation.

Day 8: Rest and recovery. Cultural activities and optional visits in Livingstone.

Day 9: Transfer to Batoka Gorge. Trekking phase begins. Hike along gorge trails with full packs. Overnight camp.

Day 10: Trekking continues in Batoka Gorge. Team-led navigation and campcraft. Overnight wild camp.

Day 11: Trekking continues. Mixed terrain of gorge trails and open ground. Overnight camp.

Day 12: Trekking continues. River section crossings. Overnight camp.

Day 13: Trekking continues. Team reflections in the evening. Overnight camp.

Day 14: Trekking continues. Final night of gorge trek. Overnight camp.

Day 15: Final day of trek. Conclude trekking phase. Transfer to Livingstone. Overnight in lodge.

Day 16: R&R day. Visit Victoria Falls. Opportunities for cultural visits and local exploration.

Day 17: Transfer to Botswana. Safari begins in Chobe National Park. Game drives. Overnight in safari camp.

Day 18: Safari continues in Chobe National Park. Wildlife viewing and cultural encounters. Overnight camp.

Day 19: Safari continues. Final night in safari camp. Evening reflection.

Day 20: Return transfer to Livingstone. Final debrief, shopping and preparation for departure. Overnight lodge.

Day 21: Depart Zambia. Return flights to UK.

Romania Short

Year: 2025

Duration: 9 days

Day 1: Depart UK. Travel to Bucharest. Transfer by road to Braşov area. Overnight accommodation in local lodge.

Day 2: Transfer to project site. Orientation with local staff. Begin community project work at bear sanctuary. Tasks include construction, maintenance, and environmental education support.

Day 3: Project work continues. Team will rotate tasks, including animal feeding support, construction, and maintenance. Evening group debrief.

Day 4: Final day of project work. Complete allocated tasks and farewell to hosts. Transfer to mountain region.

Day 5: Trekking phase begins in the Carpathian Mountains. Full day of hiking through forested terrain. Overnight camp in mountain huts or tents.

Day 6: Trekking continues. Route through alpine meadows and ridges. Team-led navigation and campcraft rotations. Overnight mountain accommodation.

Day 7: Trekking continues. Visit remote villages en route, opportunities for cultural interaction. Evening reflections as a group.

Day 8: Final day of trekking. Descend to Braşov region. Return to lodge for debrief, showers, and final group meal.

Day 9: Transfer to Bucharest for return flights to the UK.

Appendix 5: Practitioner Interview Transcripts

Participant A Interview

Interviewer:

Recording started. Uh, so Participant A, what this is, is this is an interview for a Master's dissertation that is looking at participant outcomes from youth-led expeditions, with a focus on the duration of the expedition and where that can affect outcomes. Uh, what I have got is I am going to be asking you a series of questions, in a semi-structured format, which, what that means is if we have an interesting point we are talking about, we may just follow that rather than sticking to the rigid questions we go through.

But generally, I will be asking you questions to kind of get a fully rounded view of your opinion. You have been selected for the study as someone who has worked for a number of years in the youth expedition sector and has led trips yourself and that is why your opinion is considered an expert opinion to be able to share on these matters.

So if we can just start off, could I just ask you to describe your role in youth expedition programs?

Participant A:

These days it is ultimately running a youth expedition company, where we take out groups for between one and four weeks on overseas expeditions, 20 plus destinations.

Interviewer:

And historically, what sort of expeditions have you been involved in?

Participant A:

I have been leading expeditions now for 30 plus years. The early expeditions were military expeditions, mostly to jungles or mountains. From there, I then started working in the youth expedition world, predominantly with organisations like Expedition Provider D, then transiting into gap year sectors, with organisations like Expedition Provider E and Expedition Provider F.

And again, they were mostly jungle-based. And then finally, starting to organise our own expeditions 26 years ago.

Interviewer:

And have you led and supported both shorter, which for the purposes of this study is defined as two to three weeks or less, and longer, which for the purpose of this study is three to four weeks or longer?

Participant A:

Both. Historically, anywhere between one week, generally close to the European theatre such as Morocco, right the way through to five months in Central America.

Interviewer:

Okay. And then thinking of these expeditions and specifically the participants on them, what aspects within those expeditions do you find tends to challenge participants the most?

Participant A:

What I love about them is the fact that you take them out of their comfort zone into a new, alien environment where it is a great leveller. It does not matter what your background was before you

came out on the trip, it is really a question of how you adapt from there. Some can, and some cannot, and some struggle and some do not, but it is that great leveller.

And hopefully, if you have done your job well in facilitating it, then at the end of it, they come out in a really good way.

Interviewer:

So the act of taking someone away and into a different environment would be the key thing you would say people find challenging?

Participant A:

Yes, I think that is the biggest one. If it was an environment similar to our own, so you are taking them to, for instance, Paris, then it would not... although it is different, it is still similar enough. I think taking them to an alien destination with a different culture and different language is absolutely fantastic.

Interviewer:

And you have touched upon there with culture and the environment being different. Do you think those are two key factors and separate?

Participant A:

Very much.

Interviewer:

And for these young people on the trip, do you see a difference in their personal confidence and resilience as it develops over these trips?

Participant A:

Yes, I think if it is done well, then ultimately they develop in themselves and also with the nurturing from the staff team. It just makes them a good all-rounder. And again, if it is done well then there are skills there, such as resilience, cooking skills, budgeting if that is what they are doing. All of these things they can bring into their everyday lives and hopefully enhance their future life.

Interviewer:

And then thinking less about the individual participant outcome, in what ways do you see the entire group, the team, develop as an expedition goes on?

Participant A:

If the leader is doing their job well, then ultimately the whole team will develop. Team building, the team being more cohesive, general support of each other and understanding of each other. I think there is a lot you can learn from these kinds of programs by working together as a team. That is a good skill for later life, whether at university, work as part of a team, or more likely in the workplace.

Interviewer:

And are there any specific structures or moments you feel in an expedition that specifically encourage teamwork, leadership, or collaboration?

Participant A:

I like it when a disaster occurs, as long as it is not a serious disaster. So, if you have got student X who goes down with diarrhoea, for instance, ideally early on in the program, then the entire team tends to rally around and support on that side. An instance like that is a great leveller early on.

Interviewer:

So adversity could be what does that. And do you think there is a difference between engineered adversity and naturally occurring?

Participant A:

Definitely on that one. I mean, you can engineer things to a certain degree, but it is always going to be a little bit artificial. But I think when you have a genuine problem, and there is no easy answer, they have got to find the solution on that side or work with you on the solution. That is worth its weight in gold.

Interviewer:

And do you find that post these sorts of experiences there are points in an expedition that students are encouraged to reflect?

Participant A:

Yes, during the expedition they should hopefully be reflecting. You have to be careful doing review sessions every night because I think it can get a little bit same-samey. But certainly reviewing at the end of key points, like at the end of a phase, is brilliant. And then at the end of it to review with them, as both an individual and a group, what they have achieved over the last X weeks, that is really powerful.

What is even better is if you then meet up with them at a later stage. It tends not to happen in school expeditions, but certainly in the gap year sector — reunions and so on — to actually see how they have developed and changed. That really is powerful.

Interviewer:

So regarding reflection, post-expedition follow-up can be a really powerful tool in your opinion?

Participant A:

Yes.

Interviewer:

And these reflections that happen on expedition, would these be facilitator-led or student-led?

Participant A:

I think sometimes it is nice to coax the answers out of them. But sometimes I think the team can do it themselves. It is one of those situations, if you are doing the same reviewing techniques over and over, it will get very dull. To mix it up with a combination of student-led, staff-led, games, chats, etc., works really well.

Interviewer:

Have you observed any changes in self-awareness or emotional insight among participants as an expedition has progressed, in relation to these reflections?

Participant A:

Yes. I think if it is done well, then you see people developing. And certainly, when it is student-led programs, they need a lot of handholding at the start of the program, but by the end of the program they should be pretty much running the show themselves with minimal input from adult company staff.

Interviewer:

So you would facilitate a lead approach at the beginning that then gives way to a student-led approach?

Participant A:

Yes, that is the ideal stream. You cannot just throw them in and expect them to be experts in where to get a bus or to converse in Arabic, for instance. But over time as they pick up the odd word here and there, or they get to understand the culture, or just gain confidence, then ultimately they should be the ones going off and finding that information.

Interviewer:

We touched on culture, and we have already talked about some of the elements of nature and culture as well. How do you find participants interact with the cultural and natural environments?

It is a different thing. To give you some context of what we mean by this: do you find that they are just observers, do they get involved, and in what ways is this different? And what might cause these differences?

Participant A:

I think in a lot of respects, it comes down to preparation ahead of time and really understanding what the team want to get out of it and their rationale behind it. Early days, when I was leading expeditions for another company, I was parachuted in at the last minute to deal with a team that had lost their leader. They were going out to Borneo. I had half a day's session with them before we went overseas and it was a bit of a disaster. One participant, for instance, had signed up because she wanted to go to Australia and looked on a map and realised Borneo was close to Australia.

Others, culturally, had not looked into it at all. This was a Kent farming community where it was very much meat and two veg every night. The vast majority of them had never had a curry, they had certainly not eaten noodles before, and that really was just on the food front. If nothing else, it was an absolute shocker. Most adapted over time, it was a four-week trip, but all struggled. If we had had time beforehand to do some prep work, maybe introduce them to a mild curry and so on, it could have actually been a lot easier.

Interviewer:

So the pre-loading of the trip can be a massive determiner of success?

Participant A:

Yes.

Interviewer:

For these interactions, when it is a cultural interaction or a nature interaction, how much of these interactions are structured intentionally within the plan of the expedition, or the facilitator's approach?

Participant A:

It is difficult. I think it is important that we are not too rigid and that ultimately we jump in when we feel we need to, and let them get on with it outside of that. There is no easy answer. I suggest an exploratory approach, with appropriate supervision, is possibly the best.

Interviewer:

These next questions are delving into the difference between short and long expeditions. Do you think the length of an expedition makes a difference in terms of participant outcomes?

Participant A:

Massively. A one-week trip is great for giving people an introduction to a different culture or a particular activity such as trekking. But ultimately, there is only so much you can do in a week, and

especially if you have 20 people, you are not going to get them all going through an experiential learning program.

The longer you are out, the more the individual will develop. When we used to do a lot longer trips, what we found is after about three weeks that is where the whole forming, norming, storming, etc., comes in, and they are performing after that three-week period. If you do even longer ones, like Trekforce, we used to on average operate for five months, and that is where you really see a massive difference.

The problem is by five months, a lot of people get very homesick. I think the ideal time is probably somewhere between four and six weeks to develop someone.

Interviewer:

Are there developmental changes, like team development, that you think are more likely on a longer expedition?

Participant A:

Very much so. Over a longer period, you get to know the team a lot more, they get to know you a lot more, they get more confident in their approach, and they are more honest in their reflections. The longer you can have someone out the better. Ultimately, the biggest cost is getting there. Once they are in-country, keeping them there longer is actually fairly cost effective. In an ideal world, the longer the better.

Interviewer:

And the converse of this is thinking of the fact that there may be a trend at the moment toward shorter expeditions. Are there any opportunities or outcomes that you think are equally achievable in a shorter expedition?

Participant A:

Not meaningful ones, no. Ultimately, the longer people are out, the better. Unfortunately, short term, even if it was a one-on-one in a week, there is only so much you can do. Hopefully what will happen on a short one-week trip is that someone gets an interest in it and develops from there.

A good example is when I was at school. We did not have the World Challenge style trips. Best case, if you went overseas, you went on a battlefield tour to France or a ski trip. We went to the Lake District for a week to an outdoor centre, and although it was only a week, that is where I got the bug for outdoor activities and ended up ultimately in the sector. So I think it can give people that initial spark, but realistically, the longer they are out, the better.

Interviewer:

Is there anything we have not touched upon within the scope of outcomes from youth-led expeditions that you think is relevant about young people developing on expeditions?

Participant A:

It is one of those things where, unfortunately, because of cost, you tend to get self-motivated individuals signing up or those that can afford to. There has been a lot of evidence in the past — the DES projects would be a really good example — where if you take disadvantaged kids and put them on longer programs in alien environments, then ultimately that will build aspiration. If they were involved in crime, they are less likely to reoffend. It can be a force for good, it is just about structuring it in a way that works for the individual and the group.

Interviewer:

Speaking of structure, are there any particular program structures for expeditions that you think work especially well, or not, in achieving outcomes for individuals?

Participant A:

The age-old four-week program, where it was broken down into different phases, is a brilliant way of doing it. You have an achievement phase, where they are trekking, a project phase, where they are giving back. Programs like that, where you are doing three or four different concepts alongside getting off the beaten track, that is where it is really important.

Interviewer:

That is it in terms of my questions. Is there anything you think we should discuss in addition to this?

Participant A:

No, other than the fact that the sector is changing. Ultimately, it comes down to cost, willingness of schools and teachers to give up their time, and also, post-Covid, there needs to be a reset in the mindset of kids. Unfortunately now they will not necessarily see the benefit of going on a three-week expedition to Zambia compared to going on a weekend with their friends to Boardmasters.

Interviewer:

So you think there is an economic and societal perspective impacting these historic models?

Participant A:

Very much. I hope that will change in time, but I think it will be some years before that happens. Covid has had a significant impact.

Interviewer:

So just in terms of some last bits of admin, you have read the consent form, and you are aware that your data will be anonymised and that you can withdraw your input at any time by emailing me. You are also allowed to request a copy of the finished research.

Participant A:

Awesome.

Interviewer:

Is there anything else?

Participant A:

Thank you.

Participant B Interview

Interviewer:

Cool. Okay, Hannah, this is an interview for a dissertation topic, which is all about looking at how expeditions, the difference in duration of expeditions, and how that may affect participant outcomes. Have you read your consent form?

Participant B:

Yep.

Interviewer:

And you are happy with the structure, happy with everything involved?

Participant B:

Yep.

Interviewer:

Brilliant. So we will just launch straight in. This is generally just a bit of an idea of what your views are as a professional about everything. So could you describe your roles in youth expedition programs?

Participant B:

I have been the adventure leader for the Expedition Provider A, for Expedition Provider B, and for an upcoming expedition with Expedition Provider C. That role is mainly involved helping with safety on the route, managing the team when they are out. A lot of it is linked to my Mountain Leader Award, and that is looking at the safety on treks, doing the risk assessments, and making sure everything is done safely.

Interviewer:

Nice. And what kind of expeditions have you been involved with, and over how many years?

Participant B:

Probably over the last seven or eight years. I have been doing expeditions, and they have mostly been hiking expeditions.

Interviewer:

And have you led both shorter expeditions — which in this case we are classing as two to three weeks — and longer expeditions, three to four weeks or more?

Participant B:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

What aspects do you find within an expedition structure tend to challenge participants the most?

Participant B:

I think initially it is getting participants used to it. The challenge is getting them to expand their comfort zones. Initially, they are quite nervous, and they do not realise how much potential they have. A lot of the expeditions I have led, the participants had maybe never camped, hiked, or been on a broad expedition before.

I think the first big challenge is to make them feel confident in themselves and that they are able to do that.

Interviewer:

And in what ways do you see young people develop in this confidence, or in their resilience, during the expeditions? Where do you see that the most?

Participant B:

I think maybe in their independence and ability to make decisions and choices themselves. For example, when they start planning where they want to go in the next phase of an expedition, or they start thinking about the distance and associating that with the time it will take, and maybe factoring in the breaks and things like that. They learn a lot of the skills, but then it is being able to apply that and communicate it to the rest of the group.

Interviewer:

And how do you find that group dynamics develop as the expedition goes on?

Participant B:

I think initially it is hard, particularly if it is a group where everybody does not know each other. I think everybody is trying to find their place in the group, and that can lead to some of the bigger personalities trying to dominate, while the quieter ones maybe become less involved.

But that dynamic shifts and changes as the expedition goes on. Everybody gains confidence and realises it is more of a team effort than just an individual effort. The ones who want to dominate start to take a step back, and the quieter ones are happier to speak up, and it becomes a better dynamic.

Interviewer:

Are there any specific structures you use, or moments in particular, that you find encourage teamwork or leadership within students?

Participant B:

I think not trying to force it, but waiting for either a situation to come up or, whenever you are planning the day, asking everybody, you know, asking what everyone is excited for or nervous about. Then everybody has their voice. Asking the group how they think the day should go, and even reflecting back on, well, how was that day for you?

I think for some people to hear that other people struggled as well makes them feel more comfortable. Or for some people to realise that the way they approached it maybe made it more difficult for others. That openness and sharing after the debrief at the end of each day can really help.

Interviewer:

So you would say there are points in the expedition where participants are encouraged to reflect on that experience?

Participant B:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

And when would those points be? At the end of the day, as you describe there, or at other times?

Participant B:

Maybe at the end of the day, or at the end of key phases. For example, if you have been spending a couple of days getting to a particular area, then you have a longer debrief when you have actually got there and achieved what you set out to do, or maybe did not achieve.

Then it is looking at: why have we turned back or stopped? That needs more of a debrief. Or, if you feel that it was a really good day, it is trying to figure out what made everyone feel comfortable. Equally, if there was a real challenge, it is about asking: why did we feel like that? Why did we feel uncomfortable? Was it a justified feeling? Was it too big a push, or were we just not prepared for it?

Interviewer:

And have you observed, from doing that sort of process, any changes in self-awareness or emotional insight among the participants you have had on your trips?

Participant B:

Yes, I would say so. Sometimes having that reflection in a group scenario can help, whenever you hear other people voicing things that you are not entirely sure how you would say yourself. That can help some of them identify with other people's feelings, because usually most of the group are feeling the same way.

If they hear the way someone else expresses it, they can agree with it, and that can really help some people. Or maybe people have a sense of feeling — whether it is fear or excitement or whatever — but they do not actually take the time to understand where that came from. Then it is going, well, actually, it was the environment, or the weather, or the exposure. That was a step out of their comfort zone compared to all the other days.

Interviewer:

And thinking about the link to global awareness of participants, how do you find they interact with the natural and cultural environments? Does this change as the expedition goes on?

Participant B:

I think it does change. Young people, anytime you ask them before an expedition abroad, always say they are really excited about going out to experience a different culture. But when you ask, what do you mean by that, how will you experience it, that is actually a difficult question for some of them to answer.

They will say, I want to experience a different culture, but they break that down into trying the food, observing other people, engaging with people in the community, trying things, being prepared to try things differently than at home. Initially in a trip, it is maybe more observation, more of, let us just watch and see what everyone else does. It is more from a spectator point of view.

But as the trip goes on and gets longer, their confidence grows, and they are more likely to have conversations, to get to know people, to start asking questions, and to feel comfortable doing that. That is where it becomes a deeper cultural experience.

Interviewer:

Do you structure any of those interactions intentionally, or do you let them naturally occur?

Participant B:

I think it is important sometimes, if it is going to be a big cultural difference, to prepare the group. For example, telling them this is what we can expect to see. Also, if there are things with clothing, or if we want to be culturally sensitive to different religions or customs, then it is important to let the group know that.

So I would structure that in an initial briefing, so that nobody feels completely bewildered by what is going on around them. After that, I think it is quite nice to see how things naturally go, to let their own inquisitive natures take over, and to let them ask the questions they want to ask.

Interviewer:

So almost an initial structure, followed by then letting the team explore from that point?

Participant B:

Exactly.

Interviewer:

Do you think the length of an expedition, thinking of the wider outcomes of the whole expedition, makes a difference in terms of participants' overall outcomes?

Participant B:

I think it probably does, because initially, particularly if you have gone on an expedition abroad and it is very much out of participants' comfort zones, it takes them a while to acclimatise to that, to get used to the new environment, to being away from home, maybe for the first time, and to the challenges that brings with it.

There are a lot of things, maybe even on a personal level, that they have to get over. Once they are confident with that, then they can really expand their comfort zones and their learning experience. So I think the longer the expedition is, the longer they have to do that. They have the settling-in period and then they can grow from there.

Interviewer:

And do you think those developmental changes are more likely to occur on a longer expedition compared to a shorter one?

Participant B:

Yes, I think so, particularly if you have got time to reflect on it in between. You can touch base with participants, even at the start, about what they want to get out of the expedition. Then halfway through, you can check where they feel they are at, are they achieving that, and if they are not, you can try to help them achieve their goals.

If it is too short, maybe by the time the expedition is over you realise they have not quite achieved what they wanted to, or they have not experienced the culture in the way they hoped. Maybe they were too shy, or too focused on themselves, making it more about them than about learning from the culture.

Interviewer:

Do you think there are any options or outcomes that are equally achievable on a shorter expedition as on a longer one?

Participant B:

Yes, I think a lot of the personal outcomes are achievable on both. For example, the feeling of personal achievement from going out and doing something completely out of your comfort zone and experiencing a new culture. The length of the trip does not necessarily determine that. It is still about being resilient enough to go and do it, to see things done differently, and to adapt to it.

I think those changes can come through in either case. Even team bonding does not necessarily depend on trip length. They still gain a greater sense of who they are and what they can contribute to the team. That is achievable on both.

Interviewer:

Are there any other aspects you would like to add about how young people develop during expeditions that we have not touched on?

Participant B:

The biggest one I see is confidence. Somebody going off on an expedition might have doubts and fears — will they be good enough, will they fit in, will people like them? By the end, usually there is a good team and they have found their place in it. The confidence that brings is hard to get anywhere else.

Interviewer:

And are there any particular program structures that you have witnessed that you think work especially well in achieving outcomes for participants?

Participant B:

I think it is important to have a reflective structure in there. Having debriefs, maybe a quick daily debrief on major things, about how you can make the next day better or how you can achieve goals, is really helpful.

It is also important, before you go, to find out what each participant is trying to get out of the expedition. Then keep returning to that and asking, have we achieved that today? Did doing X, Y, Z bring you closer to the stage you wanted to get to? Having reflections at key points of the expedition, both as a group and individually, helps participants track how they are doing as individuals and as a team.

That is a good structure: at the beginning, figure out what everyone wants to get out of it, and then keep assessing that as the trip goes on.

Interviewer:

Brilliant. Well, thanks, Hannah. That is all my questions. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Participant B:

No, that is good.

Interviewer:

Brilliant. Thank you so much for your time. As I mentioned before, you are able to request a copy of the research, and you may withdraw your answers at any time if you wish.

Participant B:

Thank you.

Participant C Interview

Interviewer:

Hi Participant C. This is a semi-structured interview, relating to a study where we are looking at structures in youth expeditions. The study is about itinerary changes and interviewing providers such as yourself about the differences. The purpose is to look at the structure and duration of expeditions over the past decade and how changes have happened over the last 10 years, and what your views are on those.

I am going to ask you some questions. I have questions to answer, but if there is a topic of interest that we are talking about, we may go off from those points. To start, could you describe your role in youth expedition programs?

Participant C:

For the past 20 years I have worked in the youth expedition market. I have started up expeditions from the cradle to the grave. Really, I started expeditions over a two-year period where we got the young people involved, got them funding, got them trained, and then took them out to the expedition wherever that might be.

I did that for 20 years, 10 years as an expedition manager, and in the follow-up period when I was not expedition manager I would still assist with the expedition teams to get them out there. With my general expertise and knowledge of various credits, I worked across a wide variety of expeditions.

Interviewer:

What different types of expeditions have you been involved with over the years?

Participant C:

All types really. I have done desert expeditions, jungle expeditions, and mountainous expeditions. Predominantly in the early days there was a lot of project work involved with them, so there was a project side to it as well. The normal format would be that you would go on the expedition, have a build-up phase, an acclimatisation phase, and then the other phases depended on the itinerary.

You would usually have a leadership phase, a trekking phase, or an endurance phase, followed by a project phase, and then an R and R phase at the end. Originally they were always 31 days long. There were very few that were shorter, unless it was a basic package off the shelf where you went to somewhere like Morocco and just did seven days trekking.

Interviewer:

So you have done both shorter expeditions, which for the purpose of this study we are defining as under two to three weeks, and longer expeditions of three to four weeks?

Participant C:

Yes, both. I have done the under two weeks, and I have done the longer ones. Predominantly though, expeditions were 31 days.

Interviewer:

In your experience on these expeditions, what aspects within them do you feel challenged the participants the most?

Participant C:

In the early days there was a real emphasis on using travel to learn life skills as much as expedition skills. It was to push people, to give them the ability to push themselves out of their normal comfort zones. To arrive in a country where they had no understanding of what they were doing, to be watched, checked, and made sure they understood what they were doing, but also to make sure they had a skill set that would enable them later, at university or afterwards in real life, to fend for themselves.

There was a real survival instinct to it. The projects also gave people the chance to look at different types of projects in different countries, which was always nice because people got the ability to see things they had never seen before. Regardless of whether they came from private schools or state schools, they then had the chance to see places where they might later work, for example in medicine, with NGOs, or on conservation projects. These opportunities do not happen as easily in the UK.

Interviewer:

And in what ways did you find those young people developed personally during these expeditions, in terms of resilience as well?

Participant C:

There are always a few people who struggle with resilience, but the majority of young people are

very good at adapting. If they are exposed to challenges under the right conditions, and the leaders have the experience to manage that, then it is a win-win situation.

In the early days of expeditions, from the end of the 1990s through to the 2000s, young people picked up some amazing skills. Many came back saying, “Wow, that was great.”

Interviewer:

And how did you normally see group dynamics evolve during expeditions?

Participant C:

Group dynamics changed massively, because you go through forming, norming, storming, and performing. People do not really know themselves when they only see each other for a few hours a day in school. The same is true for adults — we usually only have to deal with things for seven or eight hours a day, and then we go home, hide under our bed, hide with our parents, put the washing in the machine, or just disappear.

Putting someone under 24-hour stress really pushes them to the limits, and that has been one of the most interesting things over the years. It gives them the chance to adapt and overcome. They have to form new friendship groups.

It may sound harsh, but in the early days I used to think it was like competent people attract competent people, and incompetent people attract incompetent people. You then had to work with that split and try to bring the less competent up to a higher level. You could see that split very quickly because of the harsh environment. It was up to the leaders to manage that so it did not cause hidden agendas or problems.

Interviewer:

Linking into that, are there any specific structures or moments in expeditions that you have used which encourage teamwork, leadership, or collaboration?

Participant C:

To be fair, all of it. I think that is the job of a leader, to make sure that is happening all the time. You put people into leadership roles, into budget roles, into doing the basic stuff like travel, transport, cooking food, organising food. Everybody is thrown into that. You are pressurising them all the time so throughout the expedition that is happening.

When you go to projects, for example, and you need to buy materials, you ask who is best suited to go and buy them. So all the expedition elements can be used. The only part that is not really is the R and R. But even by the time you get to R and R, you find there are certain people — competent, well-liked, or get-up-and-go people — who naturally step up. The rest of the group usually allows them to organise that final part of the expedition.

In the past, the final phase was sometimes left for participants to organise, like a cherry on top at the end. If you had done well during the expedition, you might get the chance to put together the final phase. Nowadays it is often pre-organised, but the principle was the same.

Interviewer:

And are there points during an expedition where students are able to reflect upon their experiences?

Participant C:

Yes. It is down to the leader and staff, though. People will reflect naturally, but that is not always visible or useful. So you need to put in reflection time. Most days, you might walk around, or get the

group together in the evening, and ask them to talk about what the best thing they did today was, the worst thing, what they would change. You prompt them with those questions.

What I tended to do was by day two or three, once they realised it did not have to be me doing the talking, I would invite them to run an evening reflection session themselves. They often came up with great ways of reflecting.

On treks, especially, you have a lot of time on your hands. You can walk at the back of the group, chat to people one-on-one, and ask, “How is it going?” That informal reflection often got them to open up and share their experiences.

Interviewer:

So from what you are saying, there is a facilitator-led approach in the initial stages of the expedition, which then, if done well, gives way to students reflecting themselves?

Participant C:

Yes. You are encouraging them, because what we are doing is facilitating these young people so that when they go back from the expedition into university or into working life, they have those skills.

One of the things we often talked about was John Adair’s principles — team, task, and individual. You are a team, you have tasks, whether that is climbing a mountain, crossing a river, or doing a project, but you also have individual people in there. By reflecting, they get the skills and everyone can buy into it.

Interviewer:

Have you observed changes in people’s self-awareness or emotional insights during expeditions?

Participant C:

Massively. I can give you a good example. I took a school to Zambia quite a few years ago. As usual, you build up a profile of the group, of what works and what does not work for each person. The teachers had described two young women in the group as not being the stereotypical kids who would fit in easily.

When we went on the project, they wanted to get involved with cooking. We knew we would be given chickens to prepare. One had worked in KFC, the other in a shop. They wanted to learn the whole process — plucking, gutting, cooking — alongside local women.

It was not just about cooking, it was about understanding the life of the local people. By the end, the teachers’ views of those girls had changed massively. One even talked about wanting to work in an NGO in Africa afterwards. Whether she did, I do not know, but that experience changed their outlook completely.

An organisation like ours, taking them out there, gave them a perspective on life they would never have got from a UK careers office.

Interviewer:

How do you find participants interact with the natural and cultural environments they find themselves in?

Participant C:

That again is down to you to manage, but it is difficult. Even if you manage it, sometimes it does not work as it should. Some people are not happy in the environment, or they are not happy with the culture.

For example, in India we had a participant from a very affluent school who did not like working on the project. He thought it was unhealthy and unpleasant. The local families were living in very poor conditions and he just did not want to be there. He even suggested his father could come and pick him up. That was never going to happen.

We had to persevere. When he got to the trek phase — which was a long trek, 21 days — he settled back into his own way of life and felt he could cope. But living in substandard accommodation, which for him was a school, was a step too far. We had to manage that carefully as leaders.

Interviewer:

And when you are on projects or treks, and students are interacting with local people or the natural environment, do you structure that intentionally or let it evolve naturally?

Participant C:

I think it naturally evolves, but it still has to be managed. That is why you need good rapport with the group and with local people. You need to make sure there are no negative connotations or situations. Usually participants take the lead, but you are always keeping an eye on things.

It is participant-led, with the facilitator listening in and stepping in if needed. Almost like remote supervision without taking your eyes off them.

Interviewer:

You have mentioned differences between expeditions in the past and now. Do you think the length of an expedition makes a significant difference to participant outcomes?

Participant C:

I honestly do, yes. It makes a big difference. As a leader, even with my background, 31 days is a long time. You are tested yourself, and if it pushes us that hard, it does the same for participants.

When people came back from 31-day expeditions, it was almost like a post-expedition shock. They were not used to losing that 24/7 infrastructure of living, eating, and breathing the expedition.

A seven-day expedition does not give the same output. Fourteen days gets you closer, but most people are used to holidays of one or two weeks, not more. Children may get six weeks off school, but they are not away that whole time. Putting someone into a 31-day expedition is amazing, a valuable experience.

That said, I understand why things have changed. Schools cannot always give up that much staff time. But from my experience, 31 days was very different. It brought out emotions and changes you do not see on shorter trips.

Interviewer:

Are there developmental changes you think are more likely on longer expeditions compared to shorter ones?

Participant C:

Yes, I think people really get to know themselves more. They also get to know what others think of them — sometimes positive, sometimes negative. That has to be managed, but it is powerful.

It is like acclimatising to a different world. After seven days you are probably not there yet, but after 14, 21, 31 days you really are immersed.

Interviewer:

On shorter expeditions, are there outcomes that can still be achieved with skilled facilitation?

Participant C:

Yes, 100 percent. Life changes, and leaders adapt. A leader should be able to achieve many of the same things on shorter trips. If you have never done a 31-day expedition, you would not know what you are missing, so shorter trips can still feel transformative.

For me, I did 31-day expeditions for 16 or 17 summers in a row, while shorter trips were usually at Easter or October. Both had value, but they are different.

Interviewer:

Would you say a more facilitator-led approach is needed on shorter expeditions compared to longer ones?

Participant C:

Yes, it has to be. The forming phase needs managing, otherwise groups could fall into bad habits. You need to set the standards and the way forward early.

Interviewer:

Is there anything else you would like to add about how young people develop during expeditions that we have not touched on?

Participant C:

Having good staff with you is crucial, especially school staff who know their students. I have worked with some schools for years, and having staff who know the students' pastoral needs makes a big difference.

That way, when I push boundaries to challenge participants, I know I am doing it with the right person, and I have school staff backing me up. Pushing too far and damaging someone's confidence is not good. The right team helps avoid that.

Interviewer:

Are there particular program structures you have seen work especially well?

Participant C:

In the early days expeditions were more open-ended. Young people had to figure things out for themselves. That is not possible now, with changes in health and safety and lifestyle. But creativity in program design still makes a difference.

For example, I have run trekking expeditions without project work, but built in leadership roles, responsibilities for organising transport, liaising with in-country guides, and so on. We backstop them, but they lead. Trekking expeditions bring out a lot.

Projects are valuable too, especially for schools that need them for assessment frameworks like the International Baccalaureate. It depends what is required.

Interviewer:

So there is an element of school requirements, rather than purely learning outcomes, influencing expedition structures?

Participant C:

Yes. But even on trekking expeditions you can put learning outcomes in place. It is about balancing school needs with participant development.

Interviewer:

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participant C:

No, that is good.

Interviewer:

Thank you very much for your time. As mentioned, you can withdraw your consent at any time by email, and you are also allowed to request a copy of the finished project.

Participant C:

Lovely, thank you.

Participant D Interview

Interviewer:

This is a semi-structured interview with Participant D. Participant D, this is an interview for a Master's dissertation looking at how the structures of expeditions have evolved over the years and what impacts this may or may not have had on participants' developmental outcomes.

I am going to ask you a series of questions. We may deviate from those questions if needed. Have you read the participant information sheet, and are you happy with it? Any questions?

Participant D:

Perfect, brilliant, no questions.

Interviewer:

Okay, we will jump straight in if that is okay. Firstly, could you describe your role in youth expedition programs?

Participant D:

My role is really a supportive role for the expedition leader. It would be assisting in whatever capacity I could. At the time I was only trained to a certain level, but I supported with student welfare and well-being generally. A little on the structural side, but also when needed at times.

Interviewer:

What kind of expeditions have you been involved with, and over how many years?

Participant D:

Over a five-year period, mainly trekking expeditions in Morocco and Romania.

Interviewer:

And have you led or supported both shorter and longer expeditions?

Participant D:

No, they have mainly been short. Shorter in this definition would be two to three weeks, so yes, that fits.

Interviewer:

What aspects of expeditions from your experience tend to challenge participants the most?

Participant D:

I think they underestimate the trek itself. They tend to think they can handle it without adequate training or preparation. Many students struggle on the second day of the trip. Once they get past the

third day, they tend to meet the challenge, but that initial shock is something they do not prepare for.

Interviewer:

In what ways have you seen young people develop in terms of their confidence and resilience?

Participant D:

On many trips we rotated leadership, so individuals took turns leading the expedition. They stepped up, pushed, and motivated each other. I noticed they were actually quite resilient, and it was nice to see that change when it kicked in.

Interviewer:

Would you say that is one of the group dynamics you have seen develop?

Participant D:

Yes. Once you empower them to take the lead — it is their expedition ultimately — they motivate each other, and that is where you see it coming through.

Interviewer:

Are there specific structures or moments you have used that encourage teamwork, leadership, or collaboration?

Participant D:

Yes, managing the budget. Once you empower them to do that, they take ownership. They want to make sure they have enough funds to do what they want. Towards the end of the expedition especially, you see them taking more responsibility for the budget.

Interviewer:

During expeditions, were there points when participants were encouraged to reflect on their experiences?

Participant D:

Yes. They had breakdowns of how they felt the day went and any aspects they could improve on for next time, just things to look out for.

Interviewer:

Were those reflections facilitator-led or student-led?

Participant D:

We would instigate them as leaders and encourage students to do the same. After a few days they tended to do it naturally themselves.

Interviewer:

So, initially facilitator-led, but later more participant-led as the expedition went on?

Participant D:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Did you observe changes in self-awareness or emotional insight among participants?

Participant D:

Yes. Students would identify areas where individuals were struggling and focus on supporting them.

For example, if one person struggled with fitness, others would help carry her kit. That kind of empathy developed strongly.

Interviewer:

How did students interact with the natural and cultural elements of the trips?

Participant D:

They were quite respectful. They did their homework and understood the culture. They were mindful in their interactions with locals.

Interviewer:

Were they more observational, or did they get involved?

Participant D:

They got involved, really good involvement.

Interviewer:

Were those interactions structured by the leadership team, or did they occur more naturally?

Participant D:

We would have a general chat about culture and things to look out for, then let them implement it and learn their own way. It was about allowing exploration within that context.

Interviewer:

Do you think the length of an expedition makes a difference to participant outcomes?

Participant D:

Yes, I think it does. Shorter expeditions are a stepping stone to larger ones. They test participants and encourage them to go on longer trips. They are more of a developmental foundation, but they do not necessarily produce the same depth of outcomes as longer expeditions.

Interviewer:

Are there developmental changes that are more likely on a long expedition compared to a short one?

Participant D:

Yes, resilience is the main one. They need to prepare more for long expeditions, especially carrying their own baggage and being exposed to different foods and preparation. That level of resilience is more pronounced on longer trips.

Interviewer:

Are there outcomes equally achievable on shorter expeditions?

Participant D:

Yes, the sense of achievement. Whether short or long, once they understand the challenge and get through it, they feel achievement. That can encourage them to go on longer trips and meet greater challenges.

Interviewer:

Is there anything else you think we have not touched on about how young people develop on expeditions?

Participant D:

The most valuable thing is experiencing different cultures and lifestyles. They appreciate what we

have in the UK compared to what others do not. That, and meeting challenges and earning achievements, are the best takeaways.

Interviewer:

Are there particular program structures you have seen work especially well?

Participant D:

Not really, no.

Interviewer:

Thank you very much, Participant D. As you are aware, you can withdraw your consent anytime by email, and if you would like a copy of the research at the end, you may request one.

Participant D:

Okay, fantastic. Thank you.

Participant E Interview

Interviewer:

Okay, Participant E, this is an academic interview for the study. You have been invited to be interviewed because you are a professional with experience in the youth expedition sector, and your insights will hopefully contribute to understanding recent trends and their implications for youth expeditions.

Can I check that you have read the participant information sheet and that you are happy to proceed?

Participant E:

I have indeed, I am indeed.

Interviewer:

Fantastic. This will be a semi-structured interview. I have some questions I will be asking you, but if we get onto a particular topic, we may diverge from those questions to pursue it further.

To start with, could you describe your role in youth expedition programs?

Participant E:

Currently I am the operations manager for a youth group travel company. I work with parents, overseas expedition providers, expedition leaders, and mostly the schools' senior management teams to make sure we are providing the experience they expect. That includes collecting details, health and safety, that sort of thing.

I have also led expeditions many times and worked through various roles within the industry.

Interviewer:

And what kind of expeditions have you been involved with, and over how many years?

Participant E:

Mostly student expeditions. I have done one adult expedition. I started leading expeditions when I was 24, so that is about 14 or 15 years ago now.

Interviewer:

And have you led both shorter expeditions, under two to three weeks, and longer expeditions, three to four weeks and beyond?

Participant E:

Yes. I have led 30-day expeditions, and one-week expeditions to places like Morocco. I have also led expeditions up to 30 days in Peru and Nepal, and ones in the middle too.

Interviewer:

What aspects of expeditions do you find tend to challenge participants the most?

Participant E:

Generally, not having their home comforts is the biggest challenge before they depart. They worry about lack of toilets, lack of toilet paper, lack of washing facilities. But once they are on the expedition, the physical element tends to challenge them most — whether that is hard work on a project or climbing a mountain.

Mentally, they are challenged by working with other people. They see a different side of life, and many realise they have a lot compared to people with very little. That impacts them and challenges them in a good way, because they start thinking about how they can change things or make things different.

Interviewer:

In what ways have you seen young people develop in personal confidence or resilience during expeditions?

Participant E:

Absolutely. I have seen so many students who started expeditions very quiet, timid, and nervous about life in general, and then come back with either a new group of friends or a new outlook on life. Some decide they want to be expedition leaders, or that they want to travel the world.

It impacts lots and lots of people, mostly because they are separated from their caregivers at home. They have to do things for themselves, and they realise they can. That makes a real change.

Interviewer:

And how do you typically see group dynamics develop on expedition?

Participant E:

Because of my leadership style, I ask lots of questions rather than telling participants what to do. For example, at the beginning they might be standing around waiting for a bus. Instead of saying, “There is the bus stop, we will go there,” I will ask, “Have you looked at the bus timetable? Do we know where the bus stop is?”

By asking leading questions, they start to think and gain confidence. They might also say, “I do not want to go into that market, it is too overcrowded.” By gently coaxing them, I help them realise they can do it. I give them autonomy — it is their trip, they have paid for it. I am there to make sure it goes well, not to do everything for them.

Interviewer:

You mentioned a bit of a structure you use, with an initial facilitator-led approach that then involves you backing off. Is that right?

Participant E:

Yes. That works for confidence building.

Interviewer:

Are there other structures or moments on expeditions that you use to encourage teamwork, leadership, or collaboration?

Participant E:

Yes. I actively encourage different people to take on roles, like leader or assistant leader. In the past, I would also have participants in charge of the budget. Sometimes three people ran the budget entirely. I knew what was going on, but they managed the day-to-day spending. For example, they would decide how much money we had for breakfast. I would let them get on with it, then at the end of the day I would ask what was left.

It was about giving opportunities, even to people who were not comfortable with the idea at first. On one recent trip, one person would not even introduce herself to me at the start. Talking in front of people was something she dreaded. But by the end, she was stepping into those roles.

Interviewer:

So you structure it by facilitating and then stepping back, which helps confidence?

Participant E:

Yes.

Interviewer:

During expeditions, are there moments in the structure that allow further collaboration and teamwork to occur?

Participant E:

Yes, because they are doing everything together. They share tents, rooms, meals, and treks. A team is only as strong as its weakest member, only as fast as its slowest member. That gives them opportunities to work together and figure out how best to support one another.

If they pull together as a team, it works well. If they ignore each other, then it does not. That can happen at any point, depending on the students you have.

The longer the expedition, the easier it is to implement this. On a seven-day trip with 21 participants, it is difficult for everyone to get a turn at being leader. With only seven days, you would need four leaders per day, so it is harder to draw it out of them.

Interviewer:

Are there points when participants are encouraged to reflect on their experiences?

Participant E:

Yes. Personally, I would regularly have review meetings with individuals, and also group reflections, like campfire chats. I would schedule these at the end of significant moments — not just at the end of a phase or project, but whenever I felt something had really impacted the group.

It might be after a church service, or a safari. I would ask them to reflect on what they saw, what they thought they would see, and how they felt.

Interviewer:

So you would use your judgement to choose when reflection was useful, rather than following a rigid structure?

Participant E:

Absolutely. End-of-day reflection can be useful, but if you do it every single day for 30 days, by day

15 the kids are saying, “I don’t care what colour I am.” It is important to reflect often, but not unnecessarily, depending on the length of the trip.

Interviewer:

Have you observed changes in self-awareness or emotional insight among participants during trips?

Participant E:

Yes. People who spend more time fundraising, or putting themselves in the shoes of others, get more out of an expedition. That is not something we as leaders can control, but I have seen it. Even if they just give up their pocket money for a year, they engage more and reflect more deeply.

Participants who do not raise any money, where the trip is just paid for like a holiday, are harder to engage. They still get something out of it, but not as much.

Interviewer:

So you would say the pre-loading before the trip is very important for how much an individual gets out of it?

Participant E:

Yes. The more we can speak to individuals beforehand, the better. On one adult group I led recently, they did not pay a penny themselves, but because their company invested in them, they took it seriously. We had a WhatsApp group before we went, so I could talk to them about what was going to happen, and they got more out of it.

Interviewer:

How do you see participants interact with both the natural and cultural environments they are travelling through? Do they observe, or get involved?

Participant E:

Mostly they get involved. On shorter trips, they get less involved because the pace is faster and there is less time. Some people do not want to engage, but most do. The more time they have, the more they engage.

Interviewer:

Do you use any structures to help them actively engage, rather than just observe?

Participant E:

Yes, I remind them how privileged they are. Even the least privileged student from a state-run school in the UK has far more than many people we meet abroad. For example, they might get five pounds a week pocket money, while people in-country might not earn five pounds a day. That reminder makes them think, and they start to see the impact their lives have on others.

Interviewer:

Do you think the length of an expedition makes a difference in terms of participant outcomes?

Participant E:

Absolutely, no question. The more time you have, the more you can work with them, the more they see of the country, and the more they experience. A one-week whistle-stop trip up and down a mountain is no different from going on a week’s holiday with family.

On a 30-day expedition, you have time for each part of the trip without feeling rushed. There is more flexibility too — if they enjoy something, you can extend it or adapt. That creates more opportunities for learning.

By day 29, I would be tired and ready to come home, but I liked how much more we could get out of a longer trip.

Interviewer:

Are there developmental changes that are more likely on longer expeditions compared to shorter ones?

Participant E:

Yes, because there is more opportunity for everyone to take on different roles. On a short trip, with 20 participants and only seven days, not everyone can be leader or cook or organiser. On a 30-day expedition, everyone can rotate through different roles and develop in different ways.

Interviewer:

Are there outcomes equally achievable on shorter expeditions?

Participant E:

Yes, if the sole aim is something specific, like climbing a peak. A short trip can achieve that goal, and participants still get something from it. But for personal development outcomes, longer trips are much better.

Interviewer:

Do you think a skilled facilitator can still draw out outcomes within the shorter timeframe?

Participant E:

I do not think you can get as much out of a short trip. You can still achieve aims like climbing a mountain or doing a safari, but for learning outcomes, there is not enough time to plan, do, and review properly.

For me, the ideal duration is the same number of days as participants. If you have 16 people, 16 days means everyone gets a proper chance. Seven days is fine, but I find it difficult to get as much out of them.

Interviewer:

Is there anything else we have not touched upon that you think is relevant for how young people develop on expeditions?

Participant E:

I liked it when expeditions were less pre-booked and students had more budget to manage. I understand the world has changed, but if parents pay for everything and we manage everything, students do not get the same learning. They do not learn how to book food, find accommodation, or cope in new situations.

Even if we do pre-book things, we should sometimes pretend we have not and let them do it. For example, in Cambodia there are plenty of hostels, and splitting a group between two is fine. In Madeira, where there are not youth hostels, we would have to book. But where it is possible, letting students take more responsibility helps them develop.

On my first expedition, I saw how much confidence grew when participants did more for themselves.

Interviewer:

So you would say a more free-form program structure, with more student involvement, builds stronger outcomes?

Participant E:

Yes. In the past, with some organisations, students even developed their own itineraries. They were told which country, and that they needed to get from point A to point B. Within parameters, like budget and safety, they could choose. I enjoyed those trips, and parents could be told, “We will be in Borneo for 30 days, but we will not know the exact itinerary until closer to departure.”

That gave students more ownership and helped them get more out of it.

Interviewer:

And what about involving leaders? Does that make a difference?

Participant E:

Yes, massively. At one organisation, leaders were paid to review the manual in advance, check emergency numbers, check hospitals, and plan. They were more invested because they had put the work in. Leaders who are involved in the planning phase get more out of it, and their teams do too.

You can see it when teams come back at the airport. Some are clearly one team, with the leader fully part of it. Others look like separate staff and student groups. The more invested leaders have stronger teams.

If leaders are also paid for pre-training, they feel more valued. Leaders always want to do a good job, but if they are invested at 110 percent instead of just 100, it makes the difference between a good expedition and a great one.

Interviewer:

Brilliant. Thank you, Kerri. That is all my questions. As you know, you can withdraw your input at any time by email, and you can request a copy of the research when it is finished.

Participant E:

Thank you.

Participant F Interview**Interviewer:**

This is a semi-structured interview, looking at youth-led expeditions and how the duration of them can affect participant outcomes. I have a series of questions. We may stick to these, or we may go further into some areas if it is of interest. The idea is to get your general view, based on your many years of experience, of the key aspects that influence participant outcomes.

To start, can I ask you to describe your role in youth expedition programs?

Participant F:

In the past I have experienced expeditions not as school trips, but as an intern — data collection intern. I have also been the volunteer coordinator for an overseas expedition company, and now I am the office manager for an expedition company. I have also attended one of the expeditions as an assistant leader.

Interviewer:

What kinds of expeditions have you been involved with, and for how long?

Participant F:

For me it has been data collection internships, usually three to four months. These were species-

specific: bird data collection in Australia, marine data at sea in Wales, short-term seal surveys on the Isle of Skye, and coral reef conservation in the Philippines, Montserrat, and a little in Cambodia.

Those programs lasted from seven days to a year. Recently, I also joined a two-week expedition in Nepal.

Interviewer:

So you have supported both shorter expeditions, which in this study means two to three weeks, and longer ones of three to four weeks or more?

Participant F:

Yes. In the Philippines the standard was about two months, but they also had internship programs lasting a year.

Interviewer:

Within those expeditions, what aspects did you find challenged participants the most?

Participant F:

Homesickness initially. Often you could tell before they even went out if they were going to have trouble. In my volunteer coordinator role, I spoke to participants a lot before they left, and I usually knew in advance if they were likely to have issues on site.

The other main challenges were adapting to structure, and coping with the day-to-day difficulties of being on expedition. In the Philippines there was the additional challenge of scientific training — learning data collection.

Interviewer:

So pre-loading is very important to manage that?

Participant F:

Yes.

Interviewer:

In what ways did you see young people develop in confidence or resilience during expeditions?

Participant F:

I did not always see it directly because I was not always on site. Most of my information came from weekly reports by expedition managers. On longer expeditions, though, you would see dramatic changes. Someone might arrive shy and nervous, and by the end of three months they could be leading dives, giving talks, and showing others how things worked. Confidence built through practice.

Interviewer:

How did group dynamics develop on expeditions?

Participant F:

It depended a lot on the manager. Group dynamic was very leader-dependent. The culture that the manager set at the start, and how they adapted it for the team, made a huge difference. Sometimes negative personalities could really bring the group down. But with positive participants, and managers who were good at keeping momentum going, it worked well.

Interviewer:

Are there particular structures or moments you have seen that encourage teamwork, leadership, or collaboration?

Participant F:

For me it was when everyone did everything for each other. Basically, selfless behaviour. When you are living and working with people you have to do everything you can to help the person next to you.

I often worked with people who did not appreciate they were working for free, and that was an issue. I would remind them: “Do you realise your team leader is taking the worst kit, so that you can take the better kit?” or “They have chosen the difficult route so you can take the easier one.”

Encouraging them to take ownership helped. Also, food was crucial. If you had good food, you had happy people. Bad food meant unhappy people. It had a direct impact on resilience. Even small treats made a big difference.

Interviewer:

Are there points in expeditions where participants were encouraged to reflect?

Participant F:

Honestly, in my experience, possibly not — but that was because of the type of expeditions I worked on. On scientific expeditions you are working, not reflecting. When I went to the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan, the site was disrupted, and reflection was not really possible.

On the Nepal trip I joined, the group was very disengaged. Ian, who is an extremely experienced leader, could not even get them to take their eyes off their phones, let alone reflect.

Interviewer:

So even though reflection is valuable, sometimes the reality is that it will not happen?

Participant F:

Exactly. With a different group, yes, it would be excellent. I know Ian often took kids to quiet places to reflect and talk deeply, and that makes a big difference. But with some groups, it just does not happen.

Interviewer:

Even if there was no structured reflection, did you observe changes in self-awareness or emotional insight?

Participant F:

Yes. I will give an example. In Australia we all set out early in the morning for bird surveys. One day it rained constantly, and one girl came back almost hypothermic after sitting in a hide for four hours. The whole group was upset and angry, saying, “Why are we doing this? It is unsafe.”

There were no managers on site at that time. I calmed everyone down and told them, “We signed up for this. It is not unsafe, she just needs to dry off and warm up. We do not need to quit.” They were angry with me at the time, but a week later one of them came back and said, “You were right. We were upset and not ready to hear it then, but reflecting later, I see your point.”

So even if reflection did not happen in the moment, they processed it later.

Interviewer:

How did you see participants interact with the natural and cultural environments during expeditions? Did they engage deeply, or more superficially?

Participant F:

My main example would be Nepal. In the Philippines, when I was there, it was after Typhoon Haiyan, so people were focused on their families and survival, not on talking to us.

In Nepal, though, I saw more interaction. When we visited a school, the participants connected with the local children. They did not have much interaction with adults, but with the children they played games together. They did not speak the same language, but games became a common language.

Some participants were embarrassed, because the Nepali children were more advanced in maths than they were, even though they were much younger. That was a real eye-opener — these kids had very little, but they were enthusiastic learners.

Interviewer:

Were these interactions structured intentionally by leaders, or did they happen naturally?

Participant F:

Subtly structured. Leaders did not say, “Go and play,” but when they saw local children playing, they encouraged participants to take a break and join in. Sometimes there were cultural boundaries — for example, one boy went to play with girls, and local lads pulled him away. But generally the leaders created space, then participants took it from there.

Interviewer:

Do you think the length of expeditions makes a difference to participant outcomes?

Participant F:

Oh yes, of course. The longer they are away, the more time they have to let go of home norms and adapt. For example, brushing your teeth outside, using a squat toilet — those things are huge achievements at first. The longer they are away, the more normal it becomes.

Children adapt quickly. They settle into simpler ways of living, and the longer expeditions let them sink into that more fully. Adults sometimes find it harder, but kids adjust and thrive.

Interviewer:

Are there developmental changes more likely on longer expeditions than shorter ones?

Participant F:

Yes. On longer expeditions they are more likely to self-reflect. They may not realise it at the time, but when they come home and flick a light switch or turn on a tap, they suddenly see how much they have. That realisation often comes after the trip, but it starts because they were immersed for longer.

Interviewer:

And are there outcomes equally achievable on shorter expeditions?

Participant F:

Yes. Independence. Even two days away from home is an achievement. It does not matter if it is two days or five months, they are still away from Mum and Dad and looking after themselves to some degree. That is always beneficial.

Interviewer:

Is there anything else about how young people develop on expeditions that we have not covered?

Participant F:

Yes, phones. The digital element is huge now. On the Nepal trip, some kids were genuinely

distressed without Wi-Fi. One was so tied to his phone that he did not know what to do without it. Cutting away from phones is a massive part of expeditions. Schools may restrict phones, but being away from home in a new environment without that safety net is very different.

Interviewer:

You have worked with different program structures. Have you seen particular structures that work especially well?

Participant F:

My experience is mainly with scientific expeditions, which were very rigid: one week of diving, two weeks of science training, then data collection. Honestly, I do not think that worked as well. It was too structured, not adaptable to individual needs.

I prefer non-scientific expeditions, or at least ones with a mix — hiking, community projects, teaching. That way, different skills come out. The physical kids thrive on trekking, the creative ones love community or art, the people-focused ones connect with local children. Everyone finds their niche.

If it is only hiking, the less physical participants may disengage. So I think a mixed program works best.

Interviewer:

So a disclosure of what is involved is important?

Participant F:

Yes, managing expectations is crucial. Pre-loading trips — letting participants know what to expect and what challenges they may face — is the most important factor in success.

In the Philippines, the only real problems came when someone had not listened or understood before leaving. They would then be negatively surprised by conditions. If people know what they are signing up for, they cope better.

Interviewer:

Brilliant. Thank you, Tess. You have filled out the consent form, and you are aware you can withdraw at any time. You may also request a copy of the finished research.

Participant F:

Yes, thank you.