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Research informed practice or practice informed research? Reflections on master's dissertation student journeys

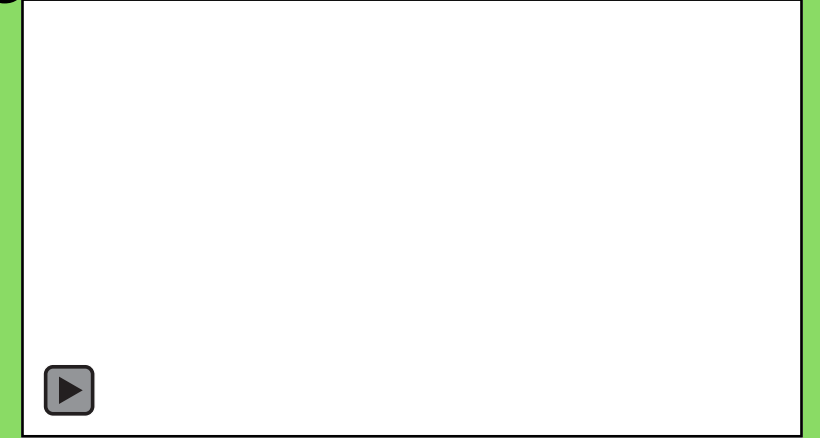
Professor Heather Prince
Jen Ager
Andy Weller
Roo Bannister



MA Dissertation

Starting points - Research? Practice?

Doors opening ...



Authentic (assessment)

Inquiring, expert, confident practitioners through research

Meaningful research to evidence change

Research: Significance, originality, reach,
impact ...

Student and graduate stories ...

**Teacher at the beginning
of the school year**



**Teacher at the end
of the school year**



Jen Ager

Assistant Headteacher, High Hesket CE Primary School, Cumbria
MA Graduate, Outdoor and Experiential Learning, University of Cumbria (2015 -
2018)





MODULES 1 – 4

BROAD AND CONTENT DRIVEN AIMS...hmmm ..!!??!!

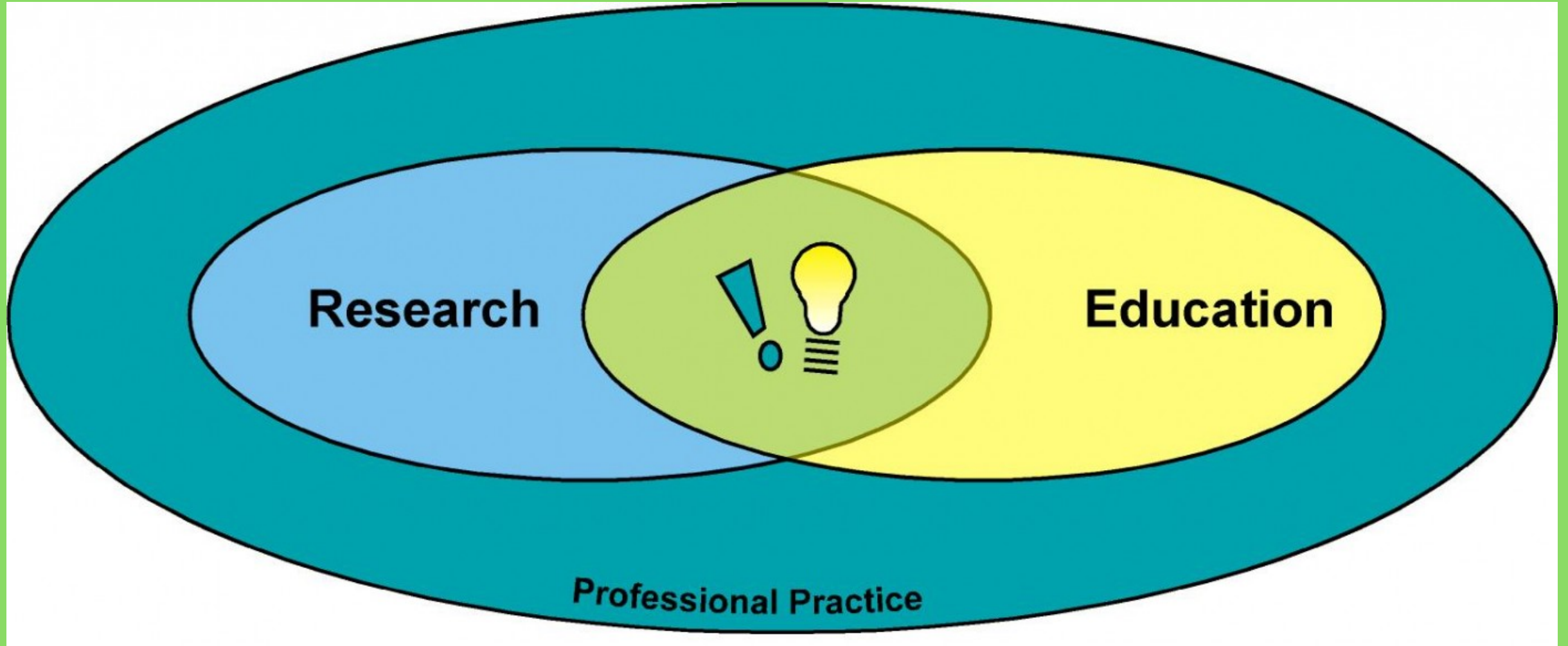
“I became incredibly uncomfortable in terms of what the expectations were. I felt let down by the module and disillusioned. I was paying good money for guidance and a learning experience that I could not access independently. Wasn't that the whole reason of being on the Masters course?”
(Ager, 2016)

“Was the reason I felt unsettled because I had no defined framework to refer to? Do I stifle experiential learning by over scaffolding my lessons? Can using the third teaching space (sitting in the woods) help quieten internal dialogue? Is my working space too full of distractions which add to more internal dialogue?” (Ager 2017)

MODULES 1 – 4

The gradual realisation on the train came after reading the following; “Freedom, along with guidance when necessary, allows students to voice ideas on what it is they wish to study and how to study it. Freedom empowers students to take control of their own learning, thereby promoting greater intrinsic motivation.” (*Wurdinger, 2005, p. 17*) (*Ager, 2017*)

MODULES 5 & 6 - AUTHENTIC MEANINGFUL RESEARCH



COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

University of
Cumbria 



High Hesket
CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

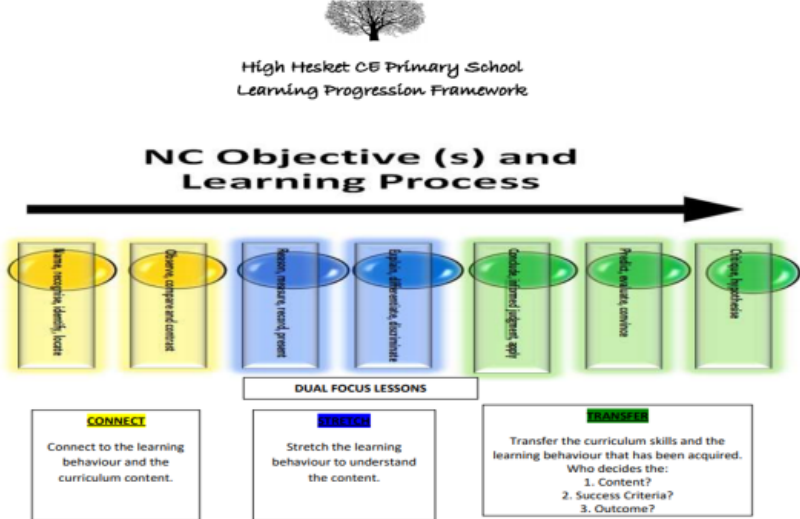


University of
Cumbria 

School Action Plan:

OUTDOOR LEARNING ACTION PLAN 2017 - 2018					
Action: To support and improve the teaching and learning of Outdoor Learning throughout the school.					
Action:	Outcome	Key actions:	Timescale:	Person nel:	Comments:
To audit the use of outdoor areas around the school grounds to ensure CIDIO is adopted across all year groups	All areas of the school grounds that can be used to enhance educational experiences and learning are being used by all year groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit to be completed by teachers Timetabled time for some areas if needed 	June 2018	JA All staff	
To purchase new outdoor / environmental/ nature equipment to support delivery of the equipment	Well-resourced curriculum for using the outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase equipment and share with staff 	By April 2018	JA	
To enable each child attending Forest School sessions to have the opportunity to develop an inquisitive and positive relationship with the natural world.	Some child-initiated learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More children being outdoors regularly; Integration with the National Curriculum; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery by a trained leader (Level 3 Forest School) 5 days training 	Oct 2018	JA	
For outdoor areas to be risk assessed and policy updated	Areas audited, risk assessed, and findings shared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 day non - contact 	JA Dec 2018		

LEARNING PROGRESSION FRAMEWORK

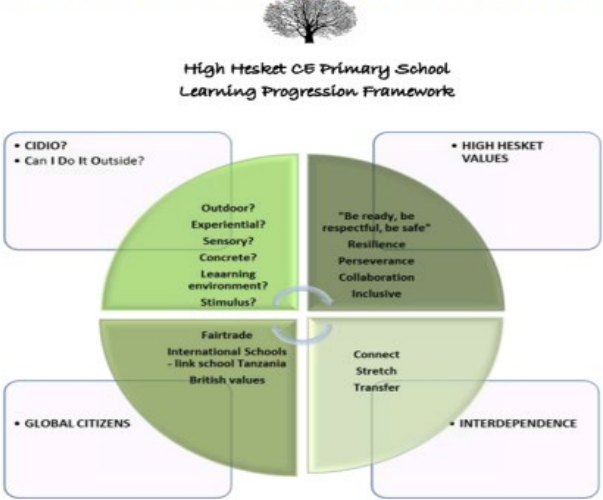


Key Question:
Is it possible to develop a progression of skills in Outdoor Learning from Year 1 to Year 6?

IMPACT



LEARNING PROGRESSION FRAMEWORK



Key Question:
Is it possible to develop a progression of skills in Outdoor Learning from Year 1 to Year 6?

High Hesket CE School, 2019

IMPACT

“CIDIO has transformed the way we teach, changed our view of what teaching and learning is and most importantly given our children real, deep, meaningful learning experiences” **Headteacher, 2018**

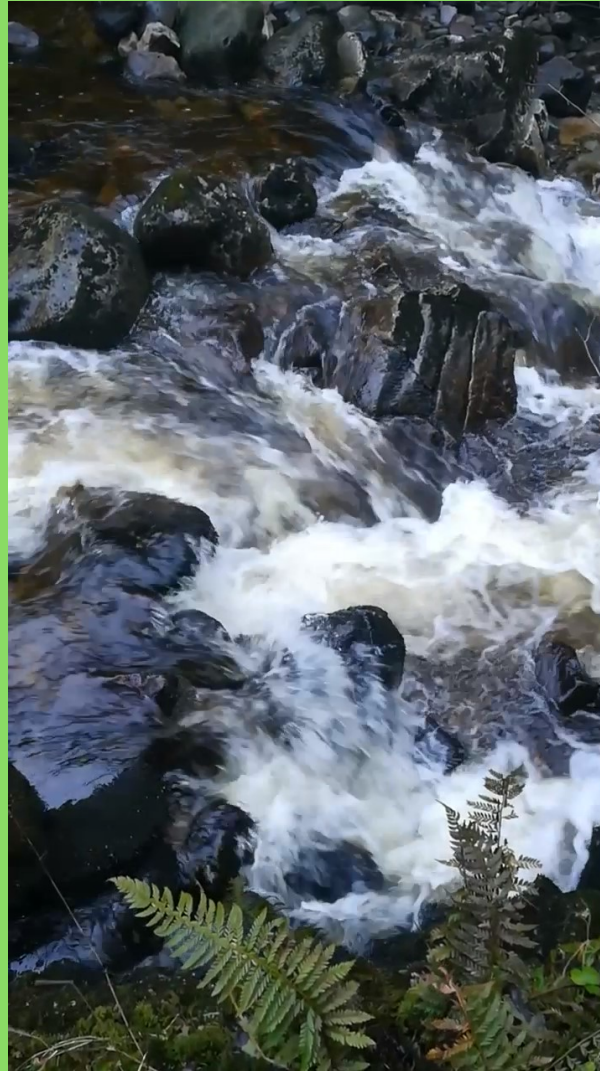


Shamanic Journey of a Wounded Soul: Qualitative study of grief and loss

Andy Weller

available at www.academia.edu

Starting point of my dissertation



Outdoor counselling



“I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.”
John Muir

Why shamanism?

- Could offer a more imaginative way of understanding mental health issues such as psychosis and psychological distress
- Creative approaches such as storytelling, journeying, music and art are celebrated opportunities for enriching the work of outdoor practitioners
- Traditionally practiced in informal settings such as in families, communities and public spaces lending itself for adaption to working therapeutically outdoors
- Outdoor practitioners already adapt and use practices from First Nation peoples namely canoeing, kayaking and fire lighting

Intention of research

- To improve knowledge about mental health by exploring bereavement and loss from a contemporary shamanic perspectives
- To increase understanding about the evolving culture of shamanism
- To increase respect and knowledge about the issues faced by First Nation peoples
- To influence and improve outdoor therapeutic practice

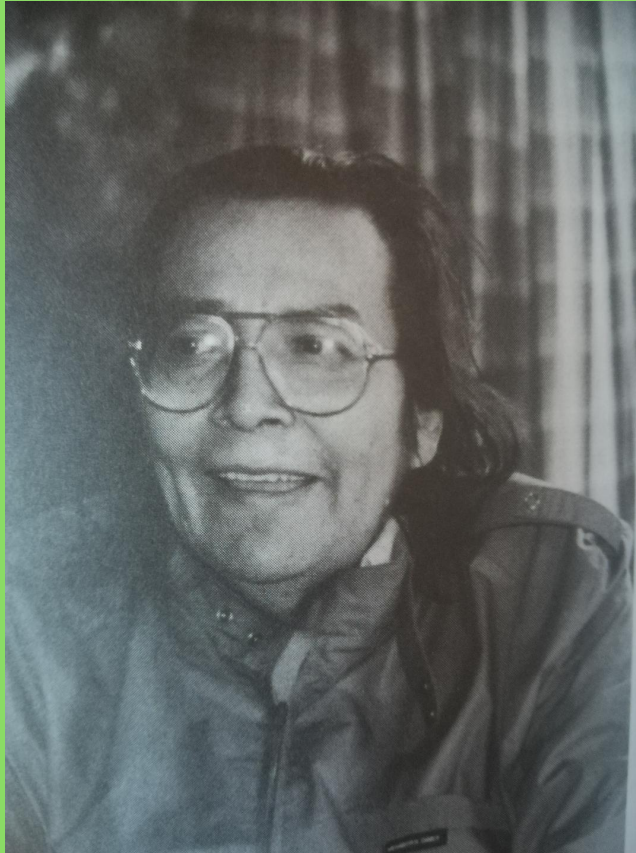
My journey guide



My shamanic journey



My spirit guide



Kikawa Unga

Journey to Wounded Knee



Summary of findings

- Outdoor practitioners need to be very aware of issues of cultural misappropriation of First Nation beliefs and practices
- Shamanic practices involve powerful, life changing techniques which should only be used with care by experienced practitioners
- There is little formal regulation of shamanic practice in the UK although there are organisations for shamanic practitioners which do have codes of ethics
- Outdoor practitioners could learn from shamanic practitioners about working with community, the imagination, metaphor and allegory, storytelling and music. They could make more use of simple rituals and creative approaches.

What went well?

- Using a qualitative research method such as ethnography gave me greater flexibility about how I could carry out research, what data I could use and how it was presented
- Scope for story telling, art, photography which I found interesting and enjoyable
- Auto ethnography gave me an opportunity to explore bereavement from a first person perspective. Getting ethical clearance to explore confidential client work with another person as client would have been very difficult
- Experience challenged me and changed me in ways I didn't expect.

What could have been better?

- Greater clarity early on about my intentions for research would have saved time and effort later
- Structuring time more carefully would have meant that I would not have neglected other important areas of my life
- Found it difficult to find a way to present my work in ways which both honoured the shamanic culture I was studying which celebrates creativity and imagination with the style of formal academic writing expected for MA
- I only partially managed to resolve this. If I had been braver I would have presented the whole work in the first person rather than the third person and possibly in Yorkshire dialect

Ending of one journey and the start of another



When the trapdoor springs open – a therapeutic journey into place and alternative approaches in mental health treatment for adult survivors of child abuse, PTSD and mental illness

Roo Bannister

Round Peg in a Square Hole

by Roo Bannister

Every school morning in my household is stressful as I am sure it is in every household across the globe. There is always the loud ticking of the clock over everything I attempt to complete before school so I won't need to rush and do it later. I have only one child and we have our routine but it is a very fixed and concrete routine which cannot be deviated from even slightly.

My son is Autistic and has ADHD. The minutes are reported to me as they pass until my nerves are almost frayed through and my patience is wafer thin. But then we are ready to issue the final command before departure. "Take your meds please."

In order that he function as part of the mainstream school my son attends, he must be medicated. He swiftly loses his spark, the glitter goes out of his eyes, the laughter slips away from him – zombified. As the parent to this highly intelligent and unique young man, I kick hard against the system that enforces this application of medicine to what could be repaired with a change of place and environment. I can prove that fact without dispute.

I take my son (and myself) to a remote valley in Cumbria as often as I possibly can. At least twice a month and most holidays are spent in a beautiful "place" with no phones, no wi-fi, no TV and absolutely no need for medication. He takes our dog out on the fells first thing in the morning and is gone until he

is hungry, needs the loo or a sheep stamps her foot at him. He is relaxed, happy and utterly safe in this wonderful world of freedom through he which he wanders without restraint.

He creates worlds in which he is superhuman and a hero beyond measure. So long as he can find two similar sized sticks and he has some wellies on he is out most of the day. There are no meltdowns, no tantrums, no need to escape or calm down – he is part of the 'place' and the 'place' is part of him too.¹

The dog has to be with him at all times so that he feels accompanied and protected against airborne villains and underground invaders but that is also true of bedtime. He can only settle at night if the dog is with him and his feet are tightly bound in case mice come and nibble his sonic toenails. Daily he embarks on an epic new journey in a place of magic (his mind) facilitated by a 'place' which can hold him.

Chris Loynes presents the 'Hero's Journey'² as a symbolic simile with youth intervention and redirection. Having encountered the Hero's Journey³ as a story writer, the comparison is tenable both in this instance and in the manner in which I practice as an outdoor exercise therapist. Interestingly, this links again with my own journey to this point – I am revisiting a theory I encountered sixteen years ago, from a different context, approach and perspective – and gaining an entirely new meaning from the same theory with a change of 'place' in my life. Physically, spiritually and metaphorically.

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Discussion points

Common themes?

Innovative?

Improvements?