

A Malaysian Private University's Alumni and Students' Experiential Learning Process
in an Outdoor Programme

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of Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education

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For you, Dad!

In Loving Memory of My Dad,

Donnell Yeap Kim Seng

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	i
List of Figures	v
List of Tables.....	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Abstract	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 My Personal Reflection	1
1.2 Background of the Study	5
1.2.1 A Malaysian Context.....	5
1.2.1.1 The Power Distance Level in Malaysia	5
1.2.1.2. Influence of National Education Philosophy and National Principles of Malaysia.....	7
1.2.2 The Malaysian Education Blueprint, Higher Education 2015-2025 (MEBHE)9	
1.3 Problem Statement	11
1.4 Purpose of the Study	14
1.4.1 Research Questions.....	16
1.5 Organisation of the Thesis.....	17
Chapter 2: Literature Review	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Soft Skills	19
2.2.1 Soft Skills Equivalent Names in Some Countries	20
2.2.2 The Historical Perspective of the Term “Soft Skills”	21
2.2.3 Definitions of Soft Skills	25
2.2.4 Soft Skills Development and Assessment	27
2.2.4.1 Global Soft Skills Development Initiatives	28
2.2.4.2 Soft Skills Development Initiatives in Malaysia	36
2.3 Learning in Experiential Learning	48
2.4 Learning through Experience and Reflection: Aristotle to Dewey to Kolb	54
2.4.1 Learning through Experience	54
2.4.2 Learning through Reflection.....	57
2.5 Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory	60
2.5.1 The Revised Experiential Learning Theory called The Experiential Learning Spiral	60
2.5.2 The Critiques of the Theory.....	62

2.6 Kolb’s Theory of Experiential Learning in Malaysia	73
2.7 Dewey’s Aesthetic Experience.....	77
2.8 Outdoor Education	78
2.8.1 Out-of-Comfort Zone	85
2.9 Theoretical Interpretive Framework.....	90
Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....	104
3.1 Introduction	104
3.2 Phenomenography as Research Methodology	104
3.2.2 The Blended Methods of Phenomenography Used for the Current Study	108
3.3 Participants	109
3.3.1 Research Participant Demographic Data.....	111
Participant:.....	112
Student Facilitator:	112
Working Facilitator:	112
3.4 Data Collection.....	113
3.4.1 The setting of Interview Questions.....	115
3.4.2 Ethical Considerations	117
3.4.3 Data Collection Process.....	118
3.4.4 Semi-Structured Interview.....	118
3.4.5 Focus Group Interview	120
3.4.6 Member Check Procedure	122
3.5 Data Analysis	122
3.6 Trustworthiness	128
3.7 Representation of Phenomenographic Data	131
3.7.1 Composite Narrative.....	132
3.8 Conclusion.....	135
Chapter 4: Findings.....	137
4.1 Introduction	137
4.2 Context of the Study.....	137
4.3 Outcome Space.....	145
4.4 Introduction to the Three Narratives	147
4.4.1 Ashok’s experiences: ‘Camp encourages learning awareness through reflections’	150
4.4.2 Lim’s experiences: ‘Camp enhances positive behaviours and habits’	169
4.4.3 Siti’s experiences: ‘Camp simulates personal and professional life’	188

4.5 Conclusion.....	207
Chapter 5: Discussion	209
5.1 Introduction	209
5.2 Relationships among the Three Categories	210
5.3 Commonalities and Variations of Experiences	215
5.4 The Cultured ‘Pearl of Wisdom’ Metaphor	217
5.5 The Farming of Pearls: The Process	219
5.5.1 Setting up the Oyster Farm	219
5.5.2 Layers of Nacre: Experiential Learning Cycle as a Metaphorical Model	221
5.5.3 In the Farm: Outdoor Out-of-Comfort Experience.....	224
5.5.4 The Oyster Farm’s Volunteers: Student as Facilitator	234
5.6 The Pearls: Outcome of Experiences	235
5.6.1 Cultured Pearls: Soft Skills.....	235
5.6.2 Formation of A Pearl: Transformation and Transference	237
5.6.3 The Meaning of the Return.....	241
5.7 Cultural and Contextual Process and Outcome	243
5.7.1 The Role of Discipline and Being Disciplined	243
5.8 The Neglected Lens and the Unexpected Outcome	247
5.8.1 A Neglected Opportunity: Unplanned Events in the Camp and Emancipation	247
5.8.2 The Unexpected Outcome: Self-Sacrifice	248
5.9 Conclusion.....	250
Chapter 6: Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations for Future Research ...	251
6.1 Introduction	251
6.2 Answers to the Research Questions	251
6.3 An Enhanced Approach for the Current Soft Skills Development Camp	252
6.3.1 Student Role Progression.....	253
6.3.2 Pre-Camp Elements	254
6.3.2.1 Preparation.....	255
6.3.2.2 Induction	256
6.3.3 Camp Elements.....	256
6.3.3.1 Correction	257
6.3.3.2 Reflection.....	257
6.3.3.3 Emancipation	259
6.3.3.4 Transference	259

6.3.3.5 Facilitation	260
6.4 The Implications of the Study	261
6.4.1 For the Researcher, Students, and the University	261
6.4.2 For the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education.....	261
6.4.3 For Experiential Educators	262
6.4.4 For the Corporate World.....	262
6.5 What will I do differently in the next camp?	263
6.6 Limitations of the Study	264
6.7 Recommendations for Further Research	266
6.8 Summary of the Study	267
Epilogue	269
References	271
Appendixes.....	291
Appendix 1: Sample Past Camp Schedule	291
Appendix 2: Ethical Approval.....	295
Appendix 3: Semi-structured Interview Guide and Questions	296
Appendix 4: Focus Group Interview Guide and Questions.....	298
Appendix 5: Examples of Soft Skills Listed or Identified from Data (First round)	299

List of Figures

Figure 1: Six primary attributes set by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015, p. 3)	11
Figure 2: Adapted and Translated from the Ministry of Ministry of Higher Education (2006), from Shakir's (2009) translated version	37
Figure 3: Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory	61
Figure 4: Three Traditions of Experiential Learning (Kolb, 2015, p. 18).	92
Figure 5: Theoretical Interpretive Framework.....	97
Figure 6: Camp integrating Kolb's ELT (Kolb, 2015)	138
Figure 7: Outcome Space of the Categories of Descriptions	145
Figure 8: Some potential relationships among the three categories	211
Figure 9: Camp with an enhanced approach based on research findings	252

List of Tables

Table 1: Terms referring to soft skills in some countries adapted from Bowman, 2010; Cinque, 2016; Malaysia, China, Singapore, and Indonesia are added to the table	20
Table 2: An adaptation of a chronological synthesis of some frameworks presented in outlining the different approaches to soft skills which was originally done by Cinque (2016, p.397 – 399).....	31
Table 3: Choices of methods used in each stage of conducting the current study adapted from Mendoza Garcia (2016, p. 42)	109
Table 4: Demographic data of research participants.....	113
Table 5: Guides to identify data in the narratives	148
Table 6: Categories of description and keywords	211

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“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” (New International Version Bible, 2011, Philippians 4:13)

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” (New International Version Bible, 2011, Colossians 3:23-24)

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Abstract

The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education has emphasised the importance of soft skills that higher learning institutions need to include in their curricula to graduate holistic, entrepreneurial and balanced students. Soft skills are usually taught through workshops conducted by instructors delivering the definitions and examples in a classroom setting. In this study “camp” refers to an outdoor experiential process experienced by the research participants. The research participants were selected by purposive sampling determined by their previous involvement as either camp participants and/or camp facilitators. Camp participants were those who had attended the camp without previous experience of this type of camp programme. Camp facilitators were those who had previously been camp participants and then facilitated the same camp programme more than once. The camps were held for a duration of three days and two nights. This study explores a camp programme repeated over the past 5 years utilising the same concepts and location. The main objective of this study was to gauge the camp participants’ and facilitators’ perceptions about their outdoor camp experiences in learning soft skills. The study employed phenomenography as the research methodology. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. Interviews were carried out until the data reached a saturation point. The study found three variations of learning for how camp participants and facilitators learnt soft skills through the camp. A framework for a future soft skills development camp was created from the elements that emerged from the data. The conclusions and implications aim to contribute to the field of experiential education and its role in students' learning of soft skills in Malaysia and other countries.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 My Personal Reflection

In the last decade, the Malaysian education system is almost always labelled as very exam-oriented where the schools, teachers, parents, and students see all schools and public examinations as their ultimate vision (Nurul-Awanis et al., 2011). In other words the number of grade A's (obtaining grade A for all subjects) in their exam results is the most important part of students' study, despite the Ministry of Education reducing the number of public examinations students should take. Principals state that the goals and visions of their schools are to have the most students with straight A's (Yasin et al., 2016). They still adhere to the exam-oriented system, which lacks an emphasis on the encouragement of learning itself. This has been a practice for a long period in Malaysia. From their actions and beliefs schools in Malaysia are only labelled as 'good' when they have the most students who score straight A's in the public examinations. Obtaining top grades in public examinations gives students a higher chance to obtain government scholarships and to secure enrolment into 'good' universities both nationally and internationally. The knowledge gained through classes is less of a priority as compared to obtaining A's in examinations. Nevertheless, I believe that the focus on education should not only be about gaining knowledge in class, but also the application of knowledge in real life where soft skills like leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills will be used. In contrast to the exam-oriented system, Malaysia sees hope in positive transformation in the education system since the Education Minister, Dr Maszlee Malik, has begun to gradually transform education from being an

exam-oriented system to a learning-centred one for primary levels one to three (Menon & Priya, 2018).

From my experience, I am one of the examples who did not do well enough in public exams in order to enrol in the university of my preference. I was also not allowed to choose courses, and that moved me to disagree with the exam-oriented system. I disagreed because I do not believe an emphasis on examinations could have helped me to learn better. I have to admit, since finishing high school, I do not remember most of the classroom knowledge due to my lack of interest and the unclear purpose of learning.. However, this could also be due to a lack of maturity at that time to understand the importance of examinations.(I started to gain more interest when I enrolled as a trainee teacher.) My main point here is to emphasise that learning does not only happen in the classroom but also outside the classroom. While examinations are important to test knowledge an emphasis on obtaining distinction in examinations might discourage learning.

From my own experience learning outside of the classroom, there are some memories that are very distinct in my mind. I was introduced to outdoor camps at thirteen years of age through the Scout organisation. I continued to participate during the five years of my secondary schooling and learnt much about life and skills. Every year, there were at least three camps. I was not used to the uncomfortable environments at first, but I chose to persevere. Therefore, I thought I would like myself to experience the same learning through outdoors and to find out if my students have learnt something out of the process, I conduct this research to explore potential learning among the students from the process. My late scoutmaster constantly reminded us to reflect on what we

experienced or learnt. We were reminded that we were learning through the tasks we performed and the experiences we went through. With his strict and fatherly nature, we would all naturally obey him as he made us aware of the reasons why we participated in the activities. It was tough, but I managed to endure and enjoy the five years in scouting. This awareness of learning encouraged me to endure the physically challenging labour involved in those camps. For example, we needed to chop bamboo so that we could build structures that we called gadgets. These gadgets such as tables or pot holders were built according to a particular standard to obtain specific badges. We had to endure the night to complete building the gadgets. The gadgets would be checked by the examiners the next morning by testing them to see if they were able to withstand the examiners' flying kicks. Sometimes, it would rain heavily, and we had to build gadgets and cook in the rain overnight. On occasion, we did not have time to scrub ourselves dust free with a shower, we had to eat a raw meal, and worst of all, we did not get enough sleep. These experiences were intense and required perseverance, persistence, endurance, and determination.

As I went through these processes, my mind worked hard to understand what I have learnt through this pain and suffering? I questioned what were the skills that I managed to grasp? What made me repeat this experience knowing that I would continue to suffer? I found the feeling of accomplishment after each camp made the pain and suffering worthwhile. It was not about the badges. It was all about the experiences. I was made aware of this process of learning and came to understand discipline, punctuality, leadership, responsibility, and teamwork. I used the skills acquired through the outdoor camps while I was working, and still use them now. I want to continue to share the knowledge. gained through these camps. Coming from this scouting background with

some relation to military training, I believe that the experiential process somewhat resembles my scouting experiences. Through my personal experiences of learning soft skills in the outdoors, I can conclude those experiences were powerful learning forces for me. I wanted to investigate how similar experiences affect other campers. My intellectual curiosity has driven me to examine the outcomes of the camp experiences of others. I will let the research guide me to see what other students have or have not learnt.

From my experience, reflection is an important way of learning in life, while being able to be emotionally involved in reflective experiences of others is also a valuable experience. Reflection in this study includes both intentional reflections after each activity and trial-and-error reflections throughout the camp among the participants. In my view, it is important to conduct the current study to investigate the perceptions of other people and their learning experiences through camp. As I was researching experiential learning, I identified Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) and found it to be useful in delivering the camp module. As I read further, I found Dewey's (1934) Aesthetic Experience (AE) to be one of the delivery methods I have used in the camp module adapted to a Malaysian context. Therefore, I decided to conduct the current study to find out if a camp module integrating ELT and AE could develop students' soft skills.

In this study, when the word "camp" is used, it refers to an educational camp that focused on soft skills development among the camp participants that I have conducted in the Malaysian context. I have conducted this camp from 2010 to 2016 using the same programme structure and pedagogy. The campsite was located in a place called "Janda

Baik, Pahang”, less than two-hours’ drive from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The campsite has a big field with an open-air assembly hall made from bamboo, some triangular chalets, gazebos, toilets, a river, and jungle on the other side of the river. The duration of the camp was three days/two nights’. The camp programme focused very much on reflections. After every activity, there were small group reflections, big group reflections, and end-of-day reflections. Activities included were both adventurous and non-adventurous. The main objective of the camp was to encourage students to learn soft skills. Some examples of soft skills are leadership, teamwork, communication skills, patience, and endurance. I will expand their meanings in a later section.

1.2 Background of the Study

In this section, I describe Malaysia as a context of the study. I then discuss soft skills listed by the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006, 2015). These publications were the main reference for my study.

1.2.1 A Malaysian Context

1.2.1.1 The Power Distance Level in Malaysia

Malaysia is a multicultural country with ‘high power distance’ where titles, positions and seniority are respected and generally accepted by the society, which inclines towards being hierarchical (Asma & Lim, 2001; Amir, 2009; Idris, et al., 2018). Hofstede (1980) classifies Malaysia as one of the countries with the highest power distance level where society thinks that hierarchy is important to gain respect in an organisation. House, et al. (2004) define power distance level as “the degree to which

members of an organisation or society expect and agree that power should be stratified and concentrated at higher levels of an organisation or government” (p.12). Malaysians respect their leaders and believe that leaders or elders are selected for their experiences and knowledge. They trust that elders and leaders are wise as they must have experienced more in their lives. This has led to the expectation that students are respectful towards decisions made by elders or leaders. It was initially unacceptable to challenge or question the elders or the leaders (Amir, 2009). However, Malaysia is a pluralistic and a multi-ethnic society where there are three main ethnic divisions, the Bumiputra that consists of the Malays, (the Natives of Sabah and Sarawak (Borneo)), Chinese and Indians. The Malaysian ethnic groups share the same time, space and boundaries but they may not share the same languages, cultures, religions, and economy. Therefore, a singular cultural description, such as the acceptance of power distance is not as extreme as Hofstede’s (1980) work almost four decades ago (Abu Bakar & Connaughton, 2019; Abu Bakar & Mustaffa, 2011; Kennedy, 2002) and in this era can be disputed.

Malaysia can be referred to as having a national culture with a high level of distance power, but it is balanced with human orientation and interpersonal communication (Abu Bakar et al., 2010). It is argued that Malaysian organisations display a balance in these universal features of being collectivist in nature, high power distance, and strong human orientation (Abu Bakar & Mustaffa). Being collectivist in nature, Malaysian employees prefer to work as a team, while in terms of strong human orientation, the leaders are expected to be compassionate while remaining autocratic (Abu Bakar & Mustaffa; Kennedy, 2002). In other words, Malaysian employees prefer to discuss work in a group, while respecting the group decisions made by the leader who is perceived

as being knowledgeable and able to provide input for group decisions. Malaysians accept inequality with certain beliefs, where according to Abu Bakar & Mustaffa (2011), they view power equals to show respect towards their superiors, which then bind together the group members in decision making. This means that employees are encouraged to be involved and to voice their disagreement in a discussion with their leaders leading the discussion, and still respect the final decisions made by their leaders. This approach is applied in the development of the Malaysian Education Blueprint, Higher Education (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015) which is discussed in the next section.

1.2.1.2. Influence of National Education Philosophy and National Principles of Malaysia

In 1969, a severe racial riot erupted in the country caused by social, economic, and educational disparity among the different racial groups. According to Abdul Rahim (2002), this was caused by unequal treatment and management where the colonial rulers had established an education gap between the Malays and non-Malays, as well as cultural and economic inequalities among the various ethnic groups. The riots forced the government to recognise the need to improve racial harmony by repairing the broken trust between the ethnic, social, and economic fabric of the population before progress could be made on the socioeconomic front (Malakolunthu & Rengasamy, 2012).

The government acknowledged the fragile and volatile racial balance in the country and tried to find ways to encourage lasting unity among the citizens. To unite the people,

national principles, called *Rukun Negara* originally in Malay language, were designed. The five *Rukun Negara* were meant to produce ideal Malaysians no matter their ethnicities, who should believe in God, be loyal to the King and country, respect the constitution, comply with the rule of law, and possess courtesy and morality (Watson, 1980). These principles became the guiding and mandatory principles for students in schools and universities. To encourage long-term unity among the races, education is one of the most important aspects.

In 1988, the Ministry of Education released a National Education Philosophy statement that adhered to the national principles which reads as follows:

Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society, and the nation at large. (Ministry of Education, 1988, p. 2)

Both the national principles and education philosophy have encouraged the development of soft skills among the Malaysian students from school to university. Besides a firm belief and devotion to God, Malaysian citizens should also stay loyal to our nine Kings. By having a total of nine Sultans ('King' in Muslim countries), from which the Agong (King of all Kings in Malaysia) is elected every five years, citizens are expected to respect the Kings and obey the decrees and orders given by the Kings. Malaysia has four types of schools namely: public or government schools, vernacular schools (Tamil and Mandarin as the medium of instructions for all subjects except

languages), international and private schools. All public secondary schools in Malaysia have discipline teachers who are not the principals or assistant principals of student affairs but a role that overlooks the behaviour of students with the help of school prefects and other teachers. The discipline teacher is the Head of the Discipline Unit in schools. The discipline teacher works alongside the assistant principal of student affairs.

I searched for the history of the establishment of discipline teachers but could not find any explanatory accounts. In my view, the development of discipline teacher roles in schools and wardens at university campuses, relates to the implementation of the National Education Philosophy and the National Principles of Malaysia. Authorities challenged by the multibackground, multireligious and multicultural nature of Malaysia have set up education based units that focus on disciplining the student population to conform to the governments ideals and be united as one nation despite their differences. While it is not overt, I believe outdoor camp programmes have been developed to support the Ministry of Education as they attempt to instil the values of the National Philosophy into their students.

1.2.2 The Malaysian Education Blueprint, Higher Education 2015-2025

(MEBHE)

The development of MEBHE was done through a collaborative and consultative process led by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, which involved thousands of individuals made up of leading Malaysian professionals and more than a hundred stakeholders' groups (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015). The Ministry of Higher Education has three aspirations through the blueprint: quality of graduate, quality of

institutions and quality of the overall system (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015). The Ministry's aspirations for students are based on the National Education Philosophy's vision of a balanced education where all school levels including preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education share a vision of the same anticipated outcomes for Malaysian education and for individual students (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015). The main objective is to emphasise the balance between knowledge and skills (*ilmu*), and ethics and morality (*akhlak*). Although it was designed to focus on individual students, the overall neoliberal direction is inevitable for a developing country like Malaysia. The principle aspiration is to generate a higher education system that is able to compete in the global economy and alongside the world's leading education systems (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015). One of the initiatives to achieve this is through: "increasing the use of experiential and service learning to develop 21st century skills...to enable more personalised learning" (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015, p. 20).

Student aspirations were developed around six primary attributes: ethics and spirituality, leadership skills, national identity, language proficiency, thinking skills, and knowledge. Definitions of each attribute are listed in Figure 1 below. Soft skills are among the six attributes listed. However, soft skills in this study are not limited to the soft skills set by the attributes but rather these serve as a guide. This is because student participants in this study might learn soft skills that are not listed in the blueprint. Soft skills referred to in this study also include the seven soft skills listed earlier in 2006 by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education:

1. Communication skills
2. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills
3. Teamwork

4. Lifelong learning and information management skills
5. Entrepreneurship skills
6. Ethics and professional morals
7. Leadership skills

In this study soft skills, as listed above, were used but not limited by the list.

Furthermore, the current study aimed at investigating various ways and resources that allowed students to learn soft skills.

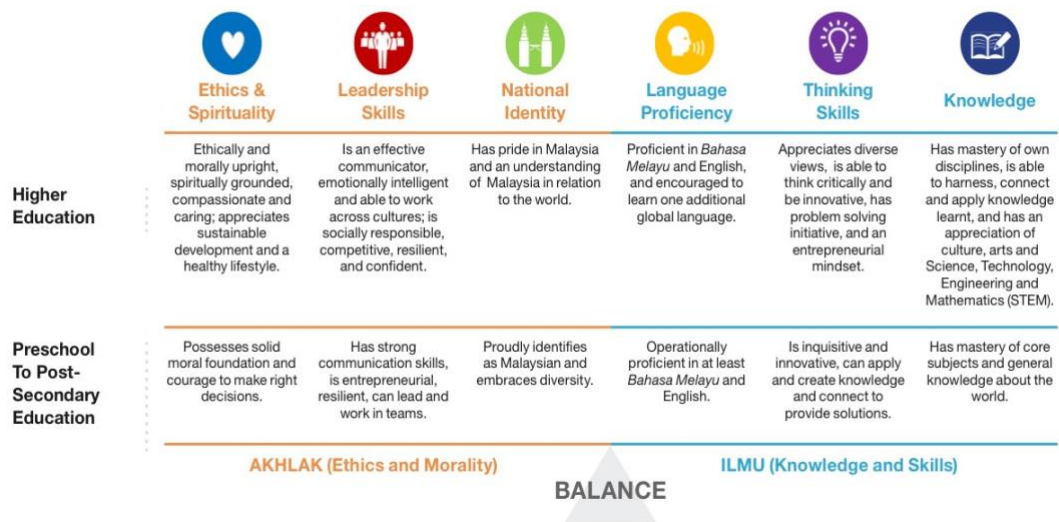


Figure 1: Six primary attributes set by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015, p. 3)

1.3 Problem Statement

Soft skills are required for Malaysian undergraduates to perform effectively and professionally in their future workplaces (Shakir, 2009). In 2006, the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education announced that all Malaysian universities were to incorporate soft skills elements in all undergraduate syllabi. Through this announcement, seven traits of soft skills were listed by the Ministry of Higher Education (2006) as discussed in chapter 1, section 1.2.2.

In 2015, the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education designed a new mechanism called iCGPA (integrated cumulative grade point average) where undergraduates' knowledge, skill, and attitude would be recorded throughout their studies at all public universities in Malaysia to nurture holistic, entrepreneurial, and balanced graduates. The former Malaysian Minister of Higher Education, Dato' Seri Idris bin Jusoh explained that the objective of iCGPA was to produce graduates who not only excelled in their courses but also in soft skills, knowledge of the world, values, leadership abilities, and critical thinking skills (Sani, 2017). However, it was announced by the former Minister of Education, Dr Maszlee Malik, that it was not compulsory for universities in Malaysia to implement iCGPA in consideration of the educators' workload (Abd Mutalib, 2018). Nevertheless, the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025, Higher Education (MEBHE) still applies in the current education system (Rajaendram, 2018) where soft skills are included in university curriculums.

In Malaysia, there is an urgent need for workers with soft skills because the manufacturing sector has been gradually replaced by the service sector (Aminah & Munian, 2010). Thus, people with soft skills who are also technically knowledgeable are currently in demand (Aminah & Munian, 2010). A study conducted earlier found that before they enter an organisation the demand for graduates with soft skills is high (Mohd Salleh et al., 2010). In addition, Jamaludin et al. (2019) conducted a study to match skills required by employers in Malaysia with the skills set by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (2017) in the 2017 Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF). MQF serves as a guide to the higher education institutions in Malaysia. Jamaludin et al. (2019) analysed the content of studies conducted by others (Buntat et al., 2013 in the field of agriculture; Rasul et al., 2013 in the manufacturing field;

Zaharim et al., 2012 in engineering; Singh et al., 2014 in multinational and local organisations; and Muda et al., 2012 in various industries) from 2012 to 2018 that focused on the skills required by different sectors in Malaysia. Jamaludin et al. (2019) found in all the industries studied that most employers in Malaysia require their employees to have good communication and interpersonal skills. Jamaludin et al argued that MQF stated skills such as thinking skills, personal qualities, workplace competencies and entrepreneurial skills were valued by the employers of different sectors. In response to the importance of soft skills in the workforce the Malaysian Qualification Agency (2019) has since realigned higher education learning outcomes into five clusters: [1] Knowledge and Understanding, [2] Cognitive Skills (critical, analytical and evaluation skills), [3] Functional Work Skills (Practical Skills; Interpersonal and Communication Skills; Digital and Numeracy Skills; Leadership, Autonomy and Responsibility), [4] Personal and Entrepreneurial Skills; and [5] Ethics and Professionalism.

Many universities have initiated programmes to aid the development of soft skills. For example, Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP) has implemented soft skills workshops for final year students before they leave for their practical training (Rashidi et al., 2013). Workshops are mostly conducted in classrooms with a range of speakers from different backgrounds. Other universities have initiated programmes that conduct workshops or speaker sessions to aid students' soft skills development. However, most of the programmes conducted that emphasised these skills were done in classrooms with passive learning styles. Passive learning styles in the classroom may be able to teach soft skills theoretically with the content knowledge but passive learning styles alone may be inadequate to enhance soft skills. On the other hand, from my personal

experience of attending many camps, most higher education institutions in Malaysia conduct outdoor adventure education by placing the emphasis on what Dewey (1938) called the “primary” experience or the “concrete experience” in Kolb’s (2015) ELT and lacking in the “secondary” experience or reflective experience. Opportunities for a fuller integration of experience would be missed when students stop at the primary or concrete level (Roberts, 2016). A combination of theory and practice or work and study with reflections could provide a more familiar and productive ground of learning for adult learners like university students (Kolb, 2015). The addition of experiential outdoor education could enhance the passive learning styles in the teaching of soft skills. Nevertheless, the impact of experiential outdoor education on student engagement and learning and teaching of soft skills remain unclear.

Thus, the current study seeks to explore whether the learning of soft skills through experiential outdoor education was feasible. This study investigates whether soft skills are learnt in outdoor camp environments. This study explores the use of experiential outdoor education for the learning of soft skills.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

Before beginning this study, We conducted two studies on the effectiveness of the soft skills-focused experiential outdoor camp module with a team of researchers. These two studies piqued my interest to further research this topic by gauging rigorous responses from those who have experienced the camp.

The first study entitled, “Outdoor-based Education Camp: An Essential Tool to Promote Leadership Skills” (Yeap et al., 2016a), was an exploratory study to examine students’ leadership skills after undergoing the camp module. This study used a survey questionnaire to gauge students’ responses about their learning of leadership skills through a camp that was conducted with eight activities. In this study, only leadership skills were explored. Most of the students responded that they were ready to become a leader. Furthermore, from their interview data, they mentioned the soft skills that they learnt through different situations in the camp. The situations they described showed they had learnt communication skills, to be courageous and confident, to have teamwork, responsibility, humility, respect, planning, and management. This study was only exploratory and insufficient to form rigorous conclusions. Therefore, we conducted the second study.

The second study, “The Effectiveness of Soft Skills Outdoor Camp Module on Undergraduates to Enhance Leadership, Teamwork, and Communication Skills” (Yeap et al., 2016b). This study further examined the effectiveness of the module in enhancing participants skills as stated through one group pre-test and post-test experimental design. In this study, a set of standardised questionnaires were disseminated to gauge responses of 43 participants who attended the camp about their learning of leadership, teamwork, and communication skills. From the statistical results, an increase in the mean score between the pre-test and the post-test showed that the respondents reported they had learnt three soft skills - leadership, teamwork and communication skills. Both studies were presented at an international conference and were completed with the support of a research grant provided by the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia.

These two studies examined the camp module focusing on the soft skills, leadership, teamwork and communication skills. Both camp participants' and facilitators' perceptions about the effectiveness of the camp in developing these three skills were collected through a quantitative research method. Both studies were narrowed down to only three soft skills that were feasible to say that the camp helped the students to learn - leadership, communication, and teamwork. However, this study covered only three skills and I wanted to explore further.

Therefore, the current study employs a qualitative research approach specifically using phenomenography as the research method to study the variation of perceptions of both the participants who have only attended once and facilitators who have attended the camp more than once, and have conducted the camp themselves. This study aimed to more rigorously explore the potential benefits of the camp in enhancing soft skills. The current study was conducted based on two research questions as the guidelines.

1.4.1 Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of those who have attended and/or facilitated an experiential learning process that is focused on the learning of soft skills?
2. What are the perceptions of the camp participants and the camp facilitators about the outcomes of the learning of soft skills?

In summary, this study is important to further explore the perceptions of the students and alumni in their learning of soft skills through the camp. The next chapter discusses the literature review and theoretical framework of the current research.

1.5 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis is organised into six chapters:

Chapter 1 begins my personal reflections. After that, the background of the study is discussed in the Malaysian context. Next, the problem statement, purpose of the study and the research questions are described.

Chapter 2 demonstrates a review of literature outlining the different names and definitions of soft skills. This chapter introduces learning through experience and reflections. It also describes learning theories, outdoor education and presents a theoretical framework.

Chapter 3 explains the reasons phenomenography was used in this study. Research methods and processes such as the selection of research participants, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, overall concept of the camp, and the representation of phenomenographic data are discussed.

Chapter 4 presents the findings in what phenomenography calls an outcome space represented by a diagram. Three composite narratives are used to describe the categories of descriptions that emerged from the data.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the research. The relationships among the three categories are described. A cultured 'Pearl of Wisdom' metaphor is used to explain the overall findings of the study.

Chapter 6 presents a model constructed and based on the findings of the data. As well, the implications of the study, what I would do differently, recommendations for future research and a summary of the study are discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The primary goal of this study is to examine the variation in perceptions about the ways students learn soft skills through an experiential outdoor camp. This chapter reviews the literature beginning with soft skills and the many initiatives taken to develop soft skills. This chapter continues to unpack the meaning of learning in experiential learning generally, followed by learning through experience and learning through reflection. This is followed by a critique of Kolb's ELT and ELT in Malaysia. After that, Dewey's AE is explained. How these theories can be applied in Malaysia is also discussed. Outdoor education literature is discussed and a theoretical framework is presented.

2.2 Soft Skills

Internationally, soft skills are conceptualised in different ways. Achieving a consensus on defining soft skills is challenging. However, it is important to first understand what they are before we can explore ways to encourage students in the learning of these skills (Nghia, 2019). This section describes the different names given to "soft skills" by a variety of countries. Then, a more critical approach to the nomenclature "soft skills" is analysed. Next, the origin of the term "soft skills" is discussed alongside definitions given by scholars. Lastly, how these skills can be developed, learnt, or taught, and the instruments used to measure attainment are outlined.

2.2.1 Soft Skills Equivalent Names in Some Countries

In Malaysia, “soft skills” is the term used by the Ministry of Higher Education when instructing all Malaysian universities to develop such skills among their students. Table 1 below is adapted from Nghia (2019, p. 1) and summarises the equivalent names for soft skills in different countries from Bowman’s (2010) report and Cinque’s (2016) journal article. The Malaysia, China, Singapore and Indonesia’s use of the name ‘soft skills’ are added into the table. For example, China (Li & Xue, 2019), Malaysia (Kenayathulla et al., 2019; Shakir, 2009), Singapore (Ong, 2018), and Indonesia (Widoyono, 2019). In addition Australia’s (Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre, 2018) terms have been added.

Countries	Equivalent names for soft skills
Australia	Generic graduate attributes, generic skills, key competencies, employability skills
UK	Key skills, core skills, life skills, key transferable skills, cross competencies
USA	Necessary skills, workplace know-how
New Zealand	Essential skills
Germany	Schlüsselkompetenzen (key competencies), Übergreifende kompetenzen (general competencies)
Denmark	Nøglekompetence (key competencies)
France	Compétences transversales (transversal competencies)
Spain	Competencias genéricas (general competencies)
Australia	Graduate attributes
Vietnam	Kỹ năng sống (life skills), kỹ năng mềm (soft skills)
China	软技能 (soft skills), 非技术技能 (non-technical skills)
Malaysia	Soft skills, employability skills, non-technical skills, generic skills, non-academic skills.
Singapore	Soft skills, people skills
Indonesi	Soft skills, transferable skills

Table 1: Terms referring to soft skills in some countries adapted from Bowman, 2010; Cinque, 2016; Malaysia, China, Singapore, and Indonesia are added to the table

In Asian countries like Malaysia, Vietnam, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Indonesia, the term soft skills is commonly used. Besides soft skills, they can

sometimes be called non-technical skills, transferable skills, generic skills or employability skills (Kenayathulla et al., 2019).

In Malaysia, the term “soft skills” is familiar because the first directive from the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education in 2006 to all the local universities used the term “soft skills” (Osman et al., 2012). However, Godin (2017) critiques that the term “soft skills” diminishes the value of these essential skills. He further emphasises that when these skills are called “soft”, it infers that they are not essential but optional. On the other hand, Britt (2016) views the word “soft” as being “easy, pliable, or yielding readily to pressure” (para. 9) where according to him, these skills are hard to learn and the connotation is deceptive especially when training for skills, such as change management or leadership, is complicated. Watkin (2017) in his discussion with 17 customer service and training experts found that 52% of them do not agree with the term “soft skills”, while 30% agree and 18% are impartial. He states that these skills should not be devalued. If calling it “soft” could do that, then it is best to change its name. However, more importantly according to him is to change the mindset about the term “soft skills”.

2.2.2 The Historical Perspective of the Term “Soft Skills”

Since the redefinition of the term “soft skills” has built up over the years, people start looking for new and more relevant terms to name those skills. Before doing that, it is crucial to review the historical perspective of the term “soft skills”. Wright (2018) summarised Whitmore’s (1972) research recorded in the proceedings of the CONARC (Continental Army Command) Soft Skills Training Conference in the United States.

The term “soft skills” was first derived from this research report. It was named “soft skills” to distinguish them from the “hard skills” that dealt with machines. The research was conducted by considering what the term “soft skills” meant to the staff members of CONARC schools. A questionnaire consisting of 35 general job functions on 9 dimensions was distributed to 29 schools, with 35 responses or a 72% return rate. Among the nine dimensions, three of them were intended to differentiate between the meaning of “soft” and “hard” skills. Whitmore (1972) describes three dimensions below to determine whether to call the skills “soft” or “hard”:

- **Degree of interaction with a machine**
At one extreme, an individual constantly operates a machine (such as a radar scope) or fills out a piece of paper (such as a maintenance form). At the other extreme, a job incumbent may manipulate machines (or forms) as entities but does not actually operate them or fill them out per se.
- **Degree of specificity of behaviour, action, or process to be performed**
This dimension also includes actions or processes to be performed. At one extreme, they can be explicitly stated and their application on-the-job is also quite specific. For example, there probably is only one way to change the oil in a given vehicle. At the other extreme, behaviour, actions, or processes are either implied within some context or application on-the-job is quite generalized [sic]. An example might be the requirement that the commander be able to motivate or lead troops, whenever and wherever the situation calls for it.
- **Typical kind of on-the-job situation.**
This dimension defines a continuum of on-the-job situations from established to emergent. In established situations, (a) physical and social environmental conditions are known, and (b) the consequences of alternative courses of action are known. On the other hand, in emergent situations, (a) not all physical and social environmental conditions have been determined, and (b) the consequences of alternative courses of action are not always known. Usually, job functions in emergent situations are also associated with a large amount of uncertainty. Judges rated each job function relevant to on-the-job situations as they were deemed to exist for job incumbents [sic]. (p. 5)

Although the above criteria could help in determining if a skill is “soft” or “hard” through job functions, Whitmore (1972) noticed that there is a grey area where these criteria revealed inconsistencies. For example, “Interprets and Uses a Military Map” which was purposely included as a “hard skill” because it made use of paper. Most of the respondents felt that the way the paper used was dissimilar to the interaction with a machine. Therefore, reading a military map was categorised as a “soft skill” in the first dimension. However, in the other two dimensions, the respondents thought that the process of using a map requires a specific set of applications, were objective, and it was considered as a typical on-the-job function. Therefore, it was categorised as a “hard skill” in these two dimensions. Whitmore’s (1972) summarises that an explanation of how a paper is used is required in order to determine if the job function can be categorised as either a “soft” or “hard” skill. In his words, “Does the user fill in standardized blanks or does he use "paper" to manipulate ideas or objects as mental images?” (p.7).

From the data, Whitmore (1972) tentatively defines soft skills as,

“(1) important job-related skills (2) which involve little or no interaction with machines (including standardized [sic] because the situation or context contains a great deal of uncertainty; that is, we don't know much about the physical and social environments in which the skill occurs and we don't know much about the consequences of different ways of accomplishing the job function. In other words, those job junctions about which we know a good deal are hard skills and those about which we know very little are soft skills.” (p. 7)

The study above explains where the term “soft skills” was first developed. Initially, based on Whitmore’s (1972) explanation, the term itself is not problematic in that context, whereby “soft” in Whitmore’s (1972) context refers to non-machine related skills or skills that do not require a specific application like mathematics. The outcome

of soft skills could be subjective. However, when “soft” is defined by itself using a dictionary or is viewed from a negative perspective like how it is described by Parlamis and Monnot (2019), the term becomes problematic and that devalues the “soft” in “soft skills”. According to them, from a political aspect, “soft” on crime means being merciful to criminals who should be accounted for their wrongdoings, encouraging the reduction of offenders’ punishments, or undermining tough laws. Secondly, from the academic perspective, the term “soft” science is meant to describe areas that investigate people, attitude or behaviours while “hard” science defines measurable and controlled variables fields. Parlamis and Monnot (2019) emphasise that the “hard” science study is measured more thoroughly in contrast with “soft” science that measures people. In other words, “soft” science is subjective while “hard” science is more objective. It is undeniable that “soft” can have more negative connotations as synonyms outlined in Merriam-Webster’s dictionary for the term “soft” has disagreeable meanings like ““dull,” “debilitated,” “unsubstantial,” “weak,” “wimpy,” “characterless,” “bland,” “indulgent,” and “cheap”” as pointed out by Parlamis and Monnot (2019, p. 226). They suggest the term to be changed to “core skills”.

However, when the word “soft” is positively connotated, it could mean good. For example, human’s emotions or characters. When the word “soft” is used on a person’s character like being soft-hearted, the synonym is kind-hearted or being a soft-spoken person, it means having a gentle and soft voice (Oxford Dictionaries Online). The word “soft” in Oxford Dictionaries Online has many positive meanings such as “not harsh or angry, conciliatory, soothing, not strong or violent, quiet and gentle, having a smooth surface or texture, not rough or coarse, or having a pleasing quality involving a subtle effect”. Therefore, soft can also be viewed positively, like water, it is soft but very

useful and flexible. It cannot be contained with bare hands without losing some of it, it needs a special material or method to contain. Similarly, these skills are very important and useful, but it is difficult to control or measure objectively. To call it soft skills or not, it is subjective.

Although “attributes” is the term used in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015), the term “soft skills” (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006) was introduced earlier. Thus, the term “soft skills” has become more commonly used or more recognisable in Malaysia. Therefore, the use of “soft skills” as the main term throughout this thesis, in my view, could help Malaysians relate better.

2.2.3 Definitions of Soft Skills

Soft skills have various meanings in different contexts, such as in the management or education sectors. Nghia (2019) states that some people define soft skills as innate abilities which could be hard to train in students. Soft skills are among the essential skills of the 21st century for graduates to be employable and to perform in their employment (Idrus et al., 2014). It is common for employers to seek employees who possess a balance of competencies with a good level of soft skills (Mitchell et al., 2010). Isaac (2019) suggests that to enhance students’ academic achievement and to ensure success choosing their preferred careers in the future, the government, school administrators, and all stakeholders should focus on the development of soft skills as an important aspect in the school curriculum.

Soft skills are often associated with employability skills (Gold & Bode, 2017; Meeks, 2017; Robles, 2012), where employers seek graduates with a high level of “general education skills that are not domain- or practice-specific” (Boyce et al., 2001, p. 37). Soft skills are sometimes called generic skills and are defined as the opposite of hard and technical skills (Boyce et al., 2001). They include communication and interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, conceptual or analytical and critical skills, visual, oral and aural skills, and judgement and synthesis skills” (Boyce et al., 2001, p. 37). Soft skills have also been defined as “skills, abilities and traits that pertain to personality, attitude and behaviour rather than to formal or technical knowledge” (Moss & Tilly, 1996, p. 253). In a library context where customer service takes place, flexibility, initiative, empathy, planning, and leadership ability are also considered as soft skills (Matteson et al., 2016). There is often something intangible to soft skills, as they are personal qualities, attributes, or a person’s level of commitment that stands out from the others (Perreault, 2004).

In human resource development Laker and Powell (2011) define soft skills as “intra-personal skills such as one’s ability to manage oneself as well as interpersonal skills such as how one handles one’s interaction with others” (p.112). Heckman and Kautz’s (2012) terms suggest soft skills are personality traits, goals, motivations, and preferences that the labour market, schools, and other domains perceive as important.

From the perspective of behavioural science research in psychology, Kyllonen (2013) uses examples like motivation, work ethic, teamwork, organisation, cultural awareness, and effective communication to describe non-cognitive skills, which he refers to as soft skills. Zaharim et al. (2011) in their study on the evaluation of soft skills performed by

the engineering graduates compared soft skills with employability skills and gave examples like communication, teamwork, problem solving, and decision-making skills. Mitchell et al. (2010) state that “soft skills describe career attributes that individuals should possess, such as team skills, communication skills, ethics, time-management skills, and an appreciation for diversity” (p. 43). Soft skills are hard to define as they are integral across a range of professions and are pertinent to various fields such as education, training and development, psychology, and human resources. Definitions by scholars illustrate how people across a variety of careers and businesses have different understanding and interpretations of soft skills.

Clearly, soft skills are difficult to define and vary between contexts depending on what employers seek. In the context of the current study based in Malaysia, the definition of soft skills comes from the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (2006) namely – communication skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, teamwork, lifelong learning and information management skills, entrepreneurship skills, leadership skills, and ethics and morals. The Ministry also listed six primary attributes in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015 – 2025 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015), namely – ethics and spirituality, leadership skills, national identity, language proficiency, thinking skills, and knowledge. However, this study is not limited to the soft skills and attributes mentioned by the ministry. As stated in the research questions, I seek to explore the students and alumni’s perceptions of their learning of soft skills through an outdoor experiential process.

2.2.4 Soft Skills Development and Assessment

In this section, the literature of the development, learning and teaching of soft skills are reviewed. Globally, there is a range of initiatives from different countries including Malaysia to aid in the development of soft skills among all levels of education. In this section, I first discuss the initiatives to develop soft skills globally. Then, I discuss the initiatives in Malaysia to develop soft skills.

2.2.4.1 Global Soft Skills Development Initiatives

Internationally, a range of skills development ideas were created by a number of developed organisations. These organisations include the World Health Organisation (WHO), Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori (ISFOL), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), European Union (EU), Tuning Educational Structures, and Institute for the Future (IFTF). Besides all the definitions and examples of soft skills outlined by the scholars above, Cinque (2016) designed a table about studies conducted toward the taxonomy of soft skills, on how soft skills are classified by different organisations and how each organisation demonstrates their initiatives in developing soft skills. Cinque's (2016) table has been adapted and updated (OECD, 2015; 2018) as shown in Table 2 below. This table illustrates how each organisation interpreted the concept of 'soft skills'.

Organisation	Year	Name	Skills
WHO (World Health Organisation)	1993	Life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making and problem-solving • Creative thinking and critical thinking • Communication and interpersonal skills • Self-awareness and empathy • Coping with emotions and coping with stress

ISFOL (Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori)	1994/1998	Transversal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful to diagnose the nature of the environment and task (mainly cognitive skills) • Useful to relate to people and issues of a specific context (interpersonal or social skills, which is the emotional skill set, cognitive and behavioural styles, but also communication skills) • Useful to address, that is to “face, cope, predispose to deal with the environment and the task, both mentally and emotionally...take action on a problem with the best chance of solving it” (Cinque, 2016, p. 397) (be able to set goals, to develop strategies, and to build and implement action plans)
OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)	2003	Key competencies for a successful life and a well-functioning society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using tools interactively, that includes the capacity to use language, symbols, and texts interactively, use knowledge and information interactively, use technology interactively • Interacting in socially homogenous group, i.e., relate well to others, cooperate, work in teams, manage and resolve conflicts • Acting autonomously, includes key competencies that empower individuals to manage their lives in meaningful and responsible ways by exercising control over their living and working conditions (for example, form and conduct life plans and personal projects, defend and assert rights, interests, limits and needs)
EU (European Union)	2006	Key competences for lifelong learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication in the mother tongue • Communication in foreign languages • Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology • Digital competence • Learning to learn • Social and civic competences • Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship • Cultural awareness and expression

Tuning Educational Structures	2008	Generic competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instrumental competences, i.e., cognitive abilities, methodological abilities, technological abilities, and linguistic abilities • Interpersonal competences, i.e., individual abilities like social skills (social interaction and co-operation) • Systemic competences, i.e., abilities and skills concerning whole systems (combination of understanding, sensibility, and knowledge; prior acquisition of instrumental and interpersonal competences required)
OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)	2009	21st century skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information — “Information as source” (searching, selecting, evaluating, and organising) and “Information as product” (restructuring and modelling of information and the development of own ideas/knowledge) • Communication — “Effective communication” (sharing and transmitting the results or outputs of information) and “Collaboration and virtual interaction” (reflecting on others’ work, creation of communities) • Ethics — “Social responsibility” (applying criteria for a responsible use at personal and social levels)
IFTF (Institute for the Future)	2011	Future work skills 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense making • Social intelligence • Novel and adaptive thinking • Cross cultural competency • Computational thinking • New media literacy • Transdisciplinarity • Design mindset • Cognitive load management • Virtual collaboration
OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)	2015	Skills for Social Progress: The power of social and emotional skills	<p>Socio-emotional skills for personal wellbeing among school children and adolescents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving goals • Working with others • Managing emotions
OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation)	2018	The future of education and skills Education 2030	<p>Added 3 categories of competencies which are called the “Transformative Competencies”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating new value • Reconciling tensions and dilemmas

and Development)			• Taking responsibilities
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Table 2: An adaptation of a chronological synthesis of some frameworks presented in outlining the different approaches to soft skills which was originally done by Cinque (2016, p.397 – 399).

Table 2 shows a variety of ways soft skills are interpreted and defined chronologically, and how these implementations could develop soft skills. This table was originally compiled by Cinque, 2016 (pp. 397 – 399). I have added the latest updates onto the table.

In 1994, WHO published a programme on mental health in Geneva, Switzerland. In this programme soft skills were identified as ‘life skills’ based on ideas to enhance human wellbeing through coping with stress and emotions by being empathetic. The publication was used to assist with further development of life skills in education for everyone (WHO, 1994). Agencies involved in developing school curricula, and health and social interventions in schools, were targeted. While the life skills programme was initially developed to aid children and adolescents in schools it could be used for home-schooled children, other children who are not in schools, and community adult education.

Istituto per la formazione e l’orientamento al lavoro (Translation: Institute for Training and Career Guidance) in Milano, Italy, introduced transversal skills for Italian workers, stating that these skills are useful in the analysis of environmental and task-related nature that are generally considered as cognitive skills. Transversal skills include interpersonal or social skills with communication skills that relate to the emotional skill set on ways to connect with people in a particular situation (ISFOL, 1994, 1998). Transversal skills can be used to mentally and emotionally cope and deal with tasks and

environment, by acting and eventually solving a challenge. This means that a person is able to set their own goals in creating and executing their plans.

In 2003, Rychen and Salganik, through “The Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations (DeSeCo)” Project demonstrated that soft skills or key competencies as they called them, include being able to use interactive tools (language, symbols, texts, knowledge, information and technology) to interact socially with colleagues, to cooperate, and work in a team to resolve conflicts. Other than working well together, one can work alone to empower others to manage their own lives meaningfully and responsibility in a way that enables people to take charge of their own lives as well as in work settings. For example, being a good leader and at the same time, a good team player. The goal of DeSeCo is to create a wide and predominant standpoint related to developing core competencies of individuals through the aspect of lifelong learning. This standpoint is linked to international evaluations of those competencies, and to the establishment and analysis of globally comparable measures based on skills that lead to a good life and upright society.

Moving forward to 2006, in order to enhance the lives of its citizens, the European parliament and council in its reference framework recommended a list of skills which they named key competencies for lifelong learning. Competencies according to the European Council (2006) combines knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the milieu. These include communication in different languages, mother tongues and foreign languages, being competent in mathematics, science and technology, digital, social and civic, being able to learn how to learn, having the sense of taking initiative, being an entrepreneur, having cultural awareness and expressions. These skills were

required to ensure that the citizens of the EU can be flexible and competent in adapting to the rapidly changing world, particularly those with low literacy who require basic skills. For example, early school leavers, those who are unemployed, disabled, migrants, elderly, and those who have returned to work after a long break caused by different circumstances (European Council, 2006).

In 2008, the Tuning Educational Structures, a university driven project aimed at offering a tangible method to execute the Bologna Process at the higher education level across subject areas. A Bologna Process is a process that encourages the mobility of students and staff in Europe to ensure that higher education is accessible, competitive, inclusive, and attractive across Europe and globally (Zahavi & Friedman, 2019). The project aims at developing generic competencies among students of higher education institutions (Gonzalez and Wagenaar, 2008). Tuning emphasises both the system and the structure of education. They focus on content and subject of all areas of studies. Even though the educational programmes are mainly the governments' responsibility, institutions of higher learning and their academic personnel are accountable for the structure and substance of education. The generic competencies outlined consist of instrumental (cognitive, methodological, technological and linguistic abilities), interpersonal (individual social skills, interaction and co-operation), and systematic competencies (regarding overall structure or system which combines understanding, sensibility and knowledge - prerequisites of the previous two competencies).

One year later, in 2009, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) created the 21st century skills and competencies. This working paper was compiled specifically for millennial learners. This paper outlines information,

communication and ethics as 21st century skills and competencies (Ananiadou and Cláudio, 2009). In information as a category, learners should be able to search, select and evaluate information as a source. Information is also considered a product to be restructured and modelled. Learners should be able to develop their own ideas and knowledge using information as a product. Secondly, communication being the ability to communicate effectively through sharing and transmitting information in both results and outputs. Learners should be able to process, transform, and format information, and then, reflect on the most effective way to convey ideas using the correct language and tools to a targeted audience. Apart from effective communication, one can collaborate and interact virtually by reflecting critically on other people's work e.g. providing constructive feedback using ICT tools or create learning communities that take different roles, such as teachers or students. Thirdly, the ethics that encompasses social responsibility and social impacts. Being socially responsible through applying criteria for the responsible use of ICT, knowing the potential risks, along with the behavioural rules that encourage acceptable social conversation in using the Internet either personally or socially. The social impact dimension develops consciousness about risks and challenges one could face in the digital epoch - to be developed especially among young people (Ananiadou and Cláudio, 2009).

In 2011, the Institute for the Future (IFTF) is a leader in advancing of anticipated methodologies such as the Delphi technique. IFTF accumulates expert opinions in the development of conceivable predictions, integrates ethnography in forecasting, and uses gaming podiums to gather sources of foreknowledge. IFTF (2011) begins a process called "Foresight to Insight to Action" (p. 2) to ensure that people can have visions in the future - then convert their visions into insights and actions that could help them to

have a successful future. IFTF (2011) employs signals methodology, a method that uses “an extension of decades of practice aggregating data, expert opinion, and trends research to understand patterns of change” to identify six key drivers and ten skills that they named “future work skills” (p.2). These drivers and skills are predicted from the data to be most relevant in the workforce in ten years’ time. The ten skills are sense making, social intelligence, novel and adaptive thinking, cross cultural competency, computational thinking, new media literacy, transdisciplinarity, design mindset, cognitive load management, and virtual collaboration. These ten skills are derived from the six drivers: extreme longevity; rise of smart machines and systems; computational world; new media ecology; super structured organisations; and a globally connected world.

OECD (2015) added skills for social progress, to counter personal wellbeing among children, in addition to the 21st century skills and competencies initiated in 2009. To ensure that a child is healthy cognitively, socially and emotionally, they require these three skills to confront the obstacles of the 21st century. Bright, inspired, goal-oriented, and collegial children are known to be capable in dealing with challenges in life, they are also known to be able to excel in their employments in the future and thus gain lasting success. Therefore, social and emotional skills are added to ensure that every child can face the challenges in life. The social and emotional skills listed are the abilities to achieve a goal, work with others and manage emotions.

From a whole child to a whole person, in 2018, OECD constructed a pilot learning framework, called the Learning Compass through their position paper “*The future of education and skills: Education 2030*”. This learning framework is now available on

their website for use in education. The OECD added three categories under “Transformative Competencies”. The three competencies are creating new value, reconciling tensions and dilemmas, and taking responsibilities. The main aim of the three competencies is to ensure that as a complete person, each learner learns, fulfils his or her potentials and helps form a common future focused on the well-being of their communities, societies, and the world.

In summary, there are different types of skills that are listed under diverse names. Various organisations in the world determine the types of skills to be developed among learners in order to ensure that their acquired skills match current societal and global needs. There are many initiatives taken by a range of organisations in the world to develop soft skills among their citizens and for the people of the world. These initiatives indicate the importance of soft skills or competencies development as they are also known. These skills should be developed and taught not only to ensure that learners are able to secure a job in their future, but also for their wellbeing in this challenging era.

2.2.4.2 Soft Skills Development Initiatives in Malaysia

In Malaysia, soft skills are seen as important elements to educate students to prepare them for their future workplace and life. In this section, I will discuss the Malaysian initiatives in developing soft skills through research, assessments and suggestions.

Soft skills were first introduced in Malaysia in 2006 with the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education listing seven soft skills namely -- communication skills; critical thinking and problem-solving skills; teamwork; lifelong learning and information

management skills; entrepreneurship skills; ethics and professional moral; and leadership skills. The ministry recommends all public universities to use the framework provided (Fig. 2) metaphorically with variations and additions allowed (Shakir, 2009).

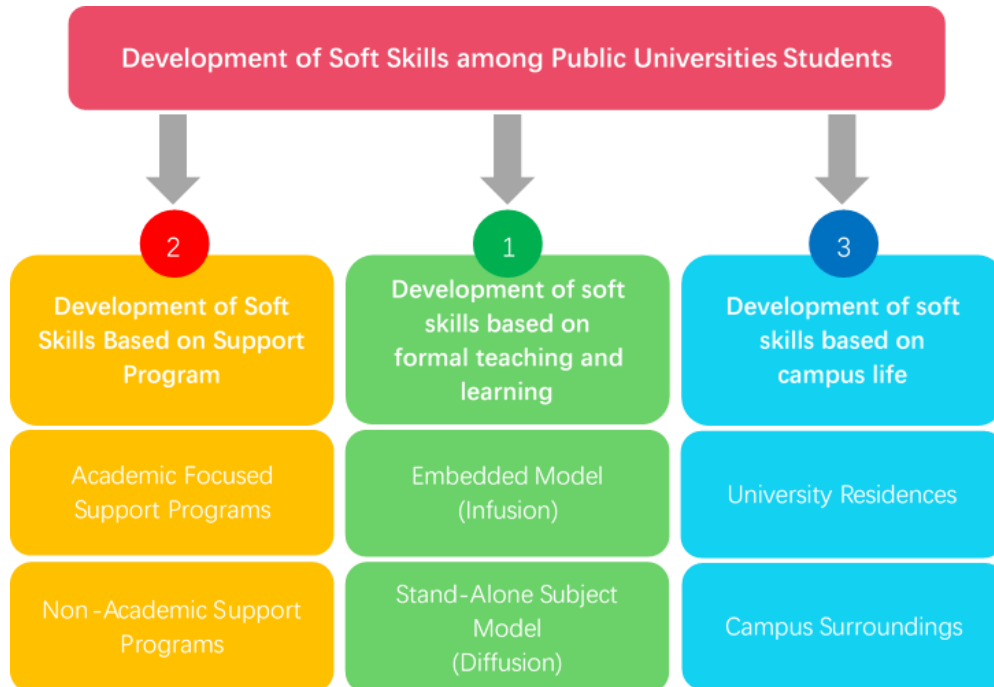


Figure 2: Adapted and Translated from the Ministry of Ministry of Higher Education (2006), from Shakir's (2009) translated version

The ministry suggested three different ways to develop soft skills (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006). They are the development through formal teaching and learning which includes the embedded model and stand-alone subject model, the development through academic and non-academic support programmes, and the development through campus life in university residences and campus surroundings.

Shakir (2009) wrote a suggestion paper on ways to implement the framework. The embedded model or infusion suggests incorporating the development of soft skills in the existing courses in the university. While for the stand-alone subject model named diffusion, colleges are recommended to provide specific courses for soft skills such as

an elective course for leadership skills or entrepreneurship skills that can be offered as a stand-alone subject (Shakir, 2009). Secondly, Universities in Malaysia are encouraged to develop soft skills in students through support programmes (Shakir, 2009) that are both academic and non-academic. Co-curricular activities and extra-curricular activities are meant as support programmes in developing soft skills. Thirdly, the development of soft skills through campus life as a significant number of undergraduates in Malaysia reside in campus accommodation. The ministry aims to develop students' soft skills through campus life through organising events and competitions among residential colleges (Shakir, 2009).

In her paper, Shakir (2009) also suggests implementing a programme called the "Soft" finishing school. She recommends every college carries out this programme before the end of every semester by identifying students who are deficient in soft skills. In this programme, training will be given to students by professional trainers or lecturers who have undergone training with a ratio of one facilitator to 20 students. Shakir (2009) did not mention specifically how the soft skills will be evaluated. She also encourages colleges to innovate the industrial or internship programme where students who are lacking in soft skills could attend informal internship after two years of studies as an exposure before doing their formal industrial training. What is problematic is soft skills are new to traditional rote learning and students may not understand the value of soft skills, however, it is important to build students' confidence through the various ways suggested by Shakir (2009).

In order to adhere to the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education's directive to develop soft skills among Malaysian undergraduates, many initiatives have been taken by

different groups of researchers and educators to develop soft skills. Before Shakir's (2009) suggestion paper was published, there was an important study conducted a year after the ministry's directive. The research was conducted by Abu et al. (2008) on 3696 educators from 20 public universities through a survey to gauge their responses about their readiness, knowledge and skills to develop soft skills among students using the ministry's framework. The results delineate that the majority of the respondents were aware that the ministry hoped to assimilate soft skills into teaching and learning. They agreed and began to execute the mission with the help of the institutions' management teams. However, the academic staff still required training, materials and infrastructures to equip them with the right knowledge and skills to teach and integrate soft skills elements into their courses. Only three out of seven soft skills were reported to be the focus: [1] communication skills, [2] teamwork, and [3] critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Most of them stated that they were using conventional teaching and learning approaches such as presentations to evaluate students' soft skills. Abu et al. (2008) noted their quantitative study was limited as it only gauged educators' responses about the integration of soft skills in their teaching and learning. There was a call for qualitative research to collect more comprehensive responses.

To assess soft skills, specific instruments are required. Using the Kepner-Tregoe (K-T) method, with the responses of 107 employers, Rasul et al. (2012) generated a tool to assess soft skills. They named these skills as employability skills. Skills were grouped into seven categories including some not listed by the ministry in 2006. The skills agreed by the employers as essentials were: "interpersonal skills, thinking skills, personal qualities or values, resources skills, system and technology skills, basic skills and information skills" (Rasul et al., 2012, p. 43). Results from the study show that the

agreement coefficient (a statistical tool used to measure agreement), is between substantial agreement and near seamless agreement. This is an important way to aid in developing soft skills as many researchers were able to use the tool in different contexts with diverse learners.

Due to the needs to select qualified students to enter into the public university in Malaysia, another assessment tool called Malaysian Soft Skills Scale (My3s) was constructed by Othman et al. (2007). This tool consisted of 180 items assessing the seven soft skills listed by the ministry (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006). A total of nine researchers conducted a large-scale survey using My3s as the instruments (Karim et al., 2012). This study compared the graduates' soft skills competencies between public and private universities with a sample comprised of 10,140 graduates. Results found that respondents from public universities had higher scores than respondents from private universities. From the findings, Karim et al. (2012) suggest embedding the teaching and learning of soft skills into existing academic courses in addition to offering extra courses to learn soft skills. This suggestion was made to both public and private universities.

Besides assessing students' soft skills competencies, surveys on soft skills were conducted to investigate perceptions about soft skills among Malaysians. An exit survey executed by Mohd Adnan et al. (2014) investigated 56 technical-technological students from a Malaysian tertiary institution about their learning and practice of four categories of soft skills: critical thinking, problem solving, information management, and lifelong learning skills. The results of the survey found that most respondents had

gained soft skills because the scores for each group of soft skill learnt was greater than the average score.

Esa et al. (2014) carried out a descriptive survey on 195 students and 106 educators from the field of civil engineering at a number of Malaysian Polytechnics including a study about the application of soft skills among both educators and students. The findings revealed a moderate degree of leadership ability, lifelong learning, entrepreneurial knowledge and ethics for both educators and students. The findings showed there were no statistically important variations in the application of soft skills between students and lecturers. This meant that both students and educators reported equal levels of soft skills applications in leadership ability, lifelong learning, entrepreneurial knowledge and ethics. Finally, this research indicated that educators should use different ways to aid students in enhancing their soft skills.

David and Saeipoor (2018) conducted a survey on 600 students from five research universities in Malaysia to investigate their knowledge about soft skills and how they were taught and evaluated. They found that the students were highly aware of the importance of soft skills. However, students are uncertain of how they are taught and assessed. Results indicate that there is no standard procedure in integrating soft skills in the curriculum. David and Saeipoor (2018) suggested a more collaborative effort among educators in Malaysia to offer better soft skill training programmes.

Surveys are meant to provide important information (Baker et al., 2011). Therefore, the discussed surveys are crucial to help other researchers and educators to proceed in their research and practices to seek approaches that aid in developing soft skills. Other than

surveys, research that gauges profound data is important too. Qualitative research approaches need to be used when there is a requirement to understand a complex issue in detail that a predetermined or guided questionnaire or a survey can not discover (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Nikitina and Furuoka (2012) conducted a qualitative study using a short-answer questionnaire developed by Walker (2008), on 96 students from the University of Malaysia Sabah (UMS) in Borneo. The study gauged students' perceptions about the effectiveness of educators' and courses offered that focused on teaching and learning soft skills introduced by the Ministry of Higher Education in 2006. They found that the students' perceptions about their expectation in learning soft skills were diverse as they grouped soft skills into three categories, namely, "Life Skills", "Subject Matter (Hard Skills)", and "Soft Skills" (p. 207). Results indicated that students considered learning soft skills as crucial. However, the students did not mention all the seven soft skills listed by the ministry. Nikitina and Furuoka (2012) suggest including soft skills when developing curricula.

To ensure that Malaysian employers perceived skills are similar to what universities are teaching or developing among the students, Ngoo et al. (2015) conducted a study using a similar method to Nikitina and Furuoka (2015). However, the sample of their study includes 66 graduates who majored in accounting and 50 employers. They utilised a constant sum allocation method to analyse the data collected from both soft skills (seven soft skills from the ministry) and technical skills related to accounting. Both employers and graduates rated the importance of those skills from 1 to 100%. Findings indicated that ethics and professional skills, lifelong learning and information management skills

were found to be important to both graduates and employers. However, they had dissimilar views about critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Overall, employers were seeking employees who are independent and have leadership skills. This again suggests to educators in the field of accounting to have a better understanding in the teaching and learning of soft skills. Nikitina and Furuoka also found that soft skills and technical skills were considered to be equally important (2015).

Osman et al. (2012) studied 25 educators from five public universities in Malaysia using semi-structured interviews, to gauge the educators' opinions on factors that affected their teaching and learning of soft skills. They found that the educators' beliefs and own expectations or perceptions influenced their teaching and learning of soft skills. Osman et al. (2012) suggested that all higher education institutions should support educators by offering training and recognising the beliefs of each educator about their responsibility. They also recommend designing the soft skills curriculum by emphasising experiential learning and incessant development.

Another common idea to develop soft skills is through industrial training, which involves learning from experience. Industrial training has become a compulsory requirement for all courses in Malaysia since 2011 (KPT, 2010). Maelah et al. (2011) studied whether their 136 accounting undergraduates believed that they develop soft skills through industrial training. The result of the survey indicated that communication skills, leadership, teamwork and self-management were the most learnt skills among the accounting students, while creative thinking ranked the lowest.

A module called the Industrial Training Soft Skills Module (ITSS) has been embedded in the industrial training programme to develop soft skills among polytechnic students in Malaysia (Mai, 2012). In her comparative study, Mai (2012) surveyed employers and students' responses in the soft skills competencies of students who have attended industrial training in their respective companies. Mai (2012) found that the students rated themselves higher than the employers. The skills with low ratings were problem solving, decision making, and leadership skills where students' soft skills competencies had not met their expected outcome. Mai (2012) suggested to review the delivery approach of the ITSS module to ensure that the students can apply soft skills learnt through the module.

Similarly in 2015, Chiu et al. conducted a survey on 438 employers from various sectors to evaluate students of Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM, a public university in Northern Peninsular Malaysia) who have undergone industrial training in their respective companies in soft skills competencies. Chiu et al. (2015) set five areas of soft skills to be assessed by the employers. They are: "basic knowledge, communication skills, practical skills, leadership, and attitude" (p.123). Results showed that all employers agreed the UUM students were well prepared for a real work environment, especially in the service sector. Nevertheless, in the manufacturing and trade markets, the employers viewed all dimensions of soft skills with moderate satisfaction. They evaluated the students with low scores for "hands-on" abilities, but they were generally pleased the students could communicate well (Chiu et al., 2015).

Other than research, Idrus et al. (2012) compiled initiatives taken and challenges the Malaysian higher education institutions have faced in developing soft skills specifically

for students with an engineering background. The government of Malaysia placed developing human capital as a priority in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (Shakir, 2009). The responsibility lies with the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA) to develop the Malaysian Qualification Framework (MQF) and this is an ongoing process until the present day (Malaysian Qualification Agency, 2019). MQF has since realigned higher education learning outcomes into five clusters: Knowledge and Understanding, Cognitive Skills (critical, analytical and evaluation skills), Functional Work Skills (Practical Skills; Interpersonal and Communication Skills; Digital and Numeracy Skills; Leadership, Autonomy and Responsibility), Personal and Entrepreneurial Skills; and Ethics and Professionalism (MQA, 2019).

Another initiative aimed to achieve Vision 2020, the Student Personality Development Programme. The goal of this programme is to produce all-rounded graduates who are “competent, patriotic, disciplined and possess moral values with an outstanding personality and holistic” (Idrus et al., 2012, p.100). According to Idrus et al. (2012), an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) programme is another idea to develop soft skills that has been applied in engineering colleges in Malaysian universities, (including the university I am currently lecturing - a private engineering, IT, and management university). The idea is to develop both technical and non-technical skills (soft skills) among engineering graduates.

Idrus et al. (2012) highlighted challenges faced by engineering colleges in Malaysian universities when developing soft skills. One of the challenges are the barriers when applying to conduct a soft skills-related programme because bureaucratic management can take some time to approve a programme (Adnan et al., 2007). Adnan et al. (2007)

mentioned that changes are inevitable and to ensure that academics commit to the change also takes time.

Universities in Malaysia are also using various approaches to develop soft skills among undergraduates. Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP) has run soft skills indoor workshops for students who are in their final year before they leave for their practical training (Rashidi et al., 2013). The University of Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) revised their curriculum and co-curriculum by integrating these skills: communication, technology (ICT), analytical thinking, learning to learn, languages, information communication, entrepreneurship, numerical competency, and character building (Yassin et al., 2008). While a private university in Malaysia, Taylor's University invented a framework called the New Curriculum Framework (NCF) that can be applied in designing, delivering and assessing soft skills among the students in the university. And in the current university I am serving, The Energy University (Universiti Tenaga Nasional or better known as UNITEN) since 2011, has designed a merit system called Students aCtivities Online Reporting System of UNITEN (SCORUN) to record activities attended by students in five categories: Communication and Entrepreneurship, Leadership and Intellectual, Spiritual and Civilization, Sports and Recreation, and Arts and Culture. The SCORUN points will then be printed as a co-curriculum or an extra-curriculum transcript. Ali et al. (2017) use SCORUN points as one of the data sets in their case study on UNITEN students' perceptions on their performance and development, both academically and non-academically. The students have received the SCORUN points through their contribution to any private sector, which according to them is a form of corporate social responsibility. I believe that other

universities in Malaysia are also actively trying out different approaches in developing Malaysian students' soft skills.

In conclusion, there are many initiatives taken by different organisations and individuals in developing and enhancing soft skills among students. The initiatives taken are continuous to ensure that graduates in Malaysia fit the employment requirements in all sectors in Malaysia. There are a limited number of studies using Kolb's ELT and Dewey's AE in their outdoor experiential process in developing soft skills that use qualitative method as referred to below in section 2.6 in this chapter. Mohd Yasim (2016) did not use ELT, rather, his study aimed to develop students' group cohesion, while Juriza et al. (2011) studied the perceptions of medical students in the outcome of learning that acquires teamwork and leadership where ELT was mentioned but is unclear how it was used. Lau and Mclean (2013) conducted a quantitative study using hierarchical regression analysis to examine factors that affect self-perceived transferable skills through a specific Outdoor Management Programme (OMD) applying Kolb's ELT. ELT was used as a foundation to comprehend the transferable skills obtained through the OMD. Abdul Hamid and Mohamed (2014) surveyed 106 students of the Sports Sciences and Recreation faculty at the Universiti Teknologi Majlis Amanah Rakyat (UiTM or MARA University of Technology Malaysia) on the effectiveness of an outdoor education programme using Kolb's (1984) ELT and the theory of student's involvement (Nicoli, 2011) in developing leadership practices among these students. This study mentioned that the outdoor education programme is supported by Kolb's (1984) ELT without a detailed explanation of how the theory was applied. Most studies use different approaches to develop soft skills, some studies focus on developing specific skills, for example, leadership, teamwork, and problem solving.

From all the studies conducted and reviewed above, none have studied how students learn soft skills nor have they allowed students to describe the soft skills they have learnt into their own definitions. Hence, the current study uses phenomenography as the research design to explore students' learning of soft skills as this approach could gauge a better insight into the ways that students learn soft skills. Further details about Mohd Yasim (2016), Juriza et al. (2011), and Lau and Mclean (2013), and Abdul Hamid and Mohamed's (2014) research can be found in section 2.6 below.

2.3 Learning in Experiential Learning

The question of how learning should take place has stirred a lot of debate in the academic world. Different learning approaches used to enhance learning have been introduced. For example blended learning, project-based learning, problem-based learning, and experiential learning. Learning, according to Mayer (2008) is "a relatively permanent change in someone's knowledge based on the person's experience" (p. 7). While Driscoll (2005) describes learning as "a persisting change in performance or performance potential that results from experience and interaction with the world" (p. 1), which agrees with Marton's (1981, 2000, 2015) non-dualistic view of learning, which he describes as a way where separation between an object or a phenomenon and a subject or how a person understands a phenomenon is non-existent,

From a non-dualistic ontological perspective there are not two worlds: a real, objective world, on the one hand, and a subjective world of mental representations, on the other. There is only one world, a really existing world, which is experienced and understood in different ways by human beings. It is simultaneously objective and subjective. (Marton, 2000, p.105)

Typically, learning equals change or transformation in a person and vice versa. As Marton (2015) puts it, learning specific skills is part of transforming or changing a person.

One of the most common approaches in outdoor education is the ELT developed by Kolb in 1984 and revised in 2015. This study will explore how ELT and AE underpin the experiential outdoor camp focused on developing soft skills.

According to Kolb's (2015) re-explained version of ELT,

“Learning usually does not happen in one big cycle but in numerous small cycles or partial cycles. Thinking and reflection can continue for some time before acting and experiencing. Experiencing and reflecting can also continue through much iteration before concluding in action.” (p. 57).

Kolb's (1984) ELT was built upon six propositions by referring to the ideas of scholars like Dewey, Lewin, Piaget, Vygotsky, James, Jung, Freire, Rogers, and Follett. I will now further explain each of the six propositions.

Firstly, according to Kolb (2015), it is best to conceive of learning as a process, not as an outcome. He adds that “learning is described as a process whereby concepts are derived from and continuously modified by experience” (p. 38). In order to enhance learning in higher education, it is best to engage students in a process that enhances their learning rather than by focusing on the outcome. de Borja et al. (2019) state that the students' engagements, behaviours and academic experiences are seemingly more practical to be assessed than to be quantified (rankings), by referring to the above proposition. An example of this is by providing feedback on the effectiveness of the

students' efforts in the learning process or each step of learning involved. Abdullah et al. (2015), in their preliminary study of the concepts, development and application in Malaysian universities about student engagement, noted that the government's action plans and the effort of policy makers in tertiary education in Malaysia will not end with results if students refuse to engage or involve themselves in the process of learning. Abdullah et al. (2015) also state that the outcome-based approach is considered ineffective if compared with the process-oriented approach where student engagement is inclined to bridge the gap of teaching and learning.

In research conducted in the 1970s by Marton and Säljö (1976) to find the differences in the level of processing information among a group of Swedish university students, found that the traditional method of quantifying the outcome of learning was inadequate. They explained that “a description of what the students learn is preferable to the description of how much they learn” (p. 4) through their examination of the processes and strategies of learning. What Marton and Säljö (1976) claimed in their study further enhanced the importance of the learning process which is emphasised when compared to the outcome of learning. Kolb (2015) expounds in ELT that “learning is an emergent process whose outcomes represent only historical record, not knowledge of the future” (p.37). This point highlights the importance of ‘process’ in the experiential learning context.

Secondly, “learning is a continuous process grounded in experience” (Kolb, 2015, p. 38). Kolb (2015) explains that learners' continuously gain knowledge by deriving from their experiences and by examining their experiences. He describes by quoting James's (1890) studies of the continuous human consciousness which is similar to Dewey's

(1938) belief in the powerful truth of the continuity of experience in human existence. Individuals learn from one situation to another, one environment to another, but in the same world they are living in (Dewey, 1938). Dewey (1897) adds that “education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing.” (p. 79). One can learn something from one experience and move on by taking the experience learnt to another situation and relearning it. Kolb (2015) puts it as “all learning is relearning” (p. 41). Kolb (2015) adds that it is convenient to design or plan a lesson with individuals’ minds being empty or blank as a piece of clean white paper but their minds are not ‘empty’ when they enter a learning situation with existing knowledge and experience. Put simply, they could be relearning the lessons that they have learnt because there might be differences in the environment and/or by different presenters. Kolb (2015) continues by delineating that “learning is best facilitated by a process that draws out the students’ beliefs and ideas about a topic so that they can be examined, tested, and integrated with new, more refined ideas” (p. 26). Hence, learning is not just about inserting new knowledge or experiences but also to reorganise or amend old ones (Kolb, 2015).

Thirdly, learning also occurs through resolving conflicts to adapt to the world where dialectically opposing and disagreement of ideas drive the learning process (Kolb, 2015). Kolb (2005) states that, “in the process of learning, one is called upon to move back and forth between opposing modes of reflection and action and feeling and thinking” (p. 2). Kolb (2015) explains that he used the concept of dialectic relationship advisedly because there are no other terms that expresses the relationship between the positions of learning. Kolb (2015) continues to state that the Lewinian model describes dialectics in two ways—the conflict that occurs between a concrete experience and

concepts that are abstract, and the conflict between observing others and acting. Kolb (2015) describes Dewey's main dialectic as between the driving force of ideas and the reason which gives its direction to desire. While in Piaget's (1960) framework, it is the assimilation and accommodation of experiences that encourage cognitive development. As for Freire (1970), it is the concept of praxis where the dialectic nature of learning and adaptation is incorporated, which he defines as doing reflection and taking action, in order to transform the world and to name the world. Kolb (2015) further explains that learning is a process naturally filled with conflict and tension. To gain new attitudes, skills or knowledge, confrontation is required among the four experiential learning modes. He adds that, when a conflict is resolved, learning occurs.

Fourthly, learning is also a holistic process of how learners adapt to the world. It does not only involve thinking but the integration of a person's thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving (Kolb, 2015, p. 43). In Jung's (1923) Psychological Theory of Types, experiential learning describes learning as one body of a working organism that include thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving. The concept of experiential learning is not a stepwise process. Kolb (2015) relates this notion of holistic modes with behavioural science which explains the relation. Hence, the four modes of ELT is a holistic process of learning. This kind of learning occurs not only in the school classroom but also in all arenas of life (Kolb, 2015). Learning in experiential learning is timeless from childhood to adulthood. When learning is considered a process that is holistic and adaptive, it will connect various life situations, across schools, and workplaces that render continuous and lifelong learning.

Fifth, the synergetic transactions between a person and his or her environment lead to learning (Kolb, 2015, p. 45). According to Kolb (2015), it is obvious that learning in experiential learning encompasses a transaction between people and their environments. However, this is ignored in some educational research and practice where superficial researchers have replaced this dualism with an individualistic psychological view of learning, for example how the traditional educational process views learning as a person-centred process (Kolb, 2015). This is when learning is viewed as a one way effect from a person to the environment. According to Piaget (1960), learning happens when new experiences are assimilated to existing concepts and when the existing concepts are accommodated to a new experience through an equilibrium of dialectic processes. In experiential learning, the word ‘transactional’ is used between a person and the environment which should be a two-way effect, where according to Kolb (2015), “The concept of transaction implies a more fluid, interpenetrating relationship between objective conditions and subjective experience, such that once they become related, both are essentially changed.” (p. 47). Hence, learning is a transactional relationship between a person and his/her environment.

Sixth, learning is the process of knowledge creation. Kolb (2015) explains that the key to understanding learning is first to be familiar with the epistemology of knowledge, such as the origin, nature, methods and limits of knowledge. This also includes the transaction of social and personal knowledge that equal knowledge as a whole. Furthermore, learning requires conscious attention, effort, and “time and task” (Kolb, 2015, p. 341). He adds that, when people pursue and engage life experiences with a learning attitude and believe in their ability to learn, they see themselves as learners.

Kolb (2015) summarises by providing a working definition of learning: “learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 49). This study defines learning according to these six propositions outlined with the working proposition that all learning is experiential in an outdoor camp context. However, due to being in a Malaysian context, there were some parts of learning that needed to be told directly to the participants for example, when they were late to an activity to help them see how their actions could affect their future learning at the camp. As Marton (2015) states, we can help learners see what they could not see, once they have seen, they cannot unsee. This helps to instil awareness among learners in their learning process. Furthermore, it is important to note that students in Malaysia are sometimes told about their misbehaviours by their discipline teachers in school (refer to section 1.2.1.2). I am cautious when using ELT in Malaysia because I do not want to appear to be a discipline teacher.

2.4 Learning through Experience and Reflection: Aristotle to Dewey to Kolb

In this section, I discuss learning through experience, followed by learning through reflection from Aristotle to Dewey to Kolb.

2.4.1 Learning through Experience

A quote attributed to Julius Caesar, the great Roman leader in “De Bello Civili” (c. 52 B.C.); “experience is the best teacher of all things”, reinforces the fact that we can learn numerous valuable lessons from our own experiences. A story of Greek origin included in the famous Aesop’s Fables tells about a farmer who taught his four lazy sons that

treasure could be earned through work. They first asked for immediate treasure from their father because they did not have the experience or knowledge that treasure could be earned. They were then told by their father to dig up the entire farm to look for hidden treasures, to plant corn and to sell them in the market, and to bring back a bag full of money. All the hard work they performed digging, planting, and selling gave them experiences and skills. They realised and learnt from their experiences that the treasure could be earned through hard work (Gibbs, 2008). This story emphasises learning through experience.

Learning through experience is a continuous and progressive process. Dewey (1938) states his belief in progressive education by indicating that “amid all uncertainties, there is one permanent frame of reference namely: the organic connection between education and personal experience” (p. 2). However, not all experiences are educative, and a mis-educative experience has the effect of halting the growth of further experience. In other words, a mis-educative experience may restrict the possibilities of having a richer future experience. An example of an educative experience is when a person gains experiences through an activity that teaches them to work well with others in an assignment that required a group to solve conflicts. From their shared learning it is hoped that participants will recall their experiences and apply what they have learnt to their everyday lives.

In contrast, Dewey (1938) explains that mis-educative experiences may cause a person to be insensitive or ignorant. An example of this is when a student who dislikes a teacher might decide to stop learning from the teacher and ignore all their lessons. A useful experience should be educative, continuous, and progressive (Dewey, 1938). For that

to happen, learning through experience should be unceasing, even if one has to repeat the same process many times as the more a person experiences, the better a person matures in that experience. Kolb (2015) called this process a learning spiral where learning is the process whereby development takes place.

Learning does not happen only in a structured, scheduled indoor classrooms; learning also occurs outside the classroom where people experience diverse situations or have conversations with a range of people at different times. Kolb (2015) defines experience as a specific type of learning from life experience. This experience may include past or recent events in the life of a person, or those from the person's participation in any events (Andresen et al., 1999). Kolb (2015) revised his work on experiential learning and stated that the ongoing investigation into the nature of experience and the process of learning from experience are the most important parts of learning. On the other hand, Itin (1999) made a clear distinction between experiential learning and experiential education. Itin (1999) clarifies that experiential learning occurs to an individual. While experiential education involves a transactive process between a teacher and a learner, the process of experiential education may also involve the ministry or other organisational parties such as the education system.

In summary, learning through experience is progressive and continuous, indoors and outdoors. In other words, learning through experience can happen anywhere and all the time.

2.4.2 Learning through Reflection

Aristotle (1999, as cited in Birmingham, 2004) defined *Phronesis* as “a state of grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a human being” (p. 314). It is not simply a skill (*techne*) or a factual scientific knowledge (*episteme*), but it involves the ability to decide on how to accomplish a mission and also the aptitude to reflect upon and regulate consistent success with the vision of generally leading a good life (Ebert, 2010; Kinsella, 2012). *Phronesis* “is sometimes referred to as practical wisdom or practical rationality” (Kinsella, 2012, p. 35). It is defined in many ways but is often defined in ways that connote reflection, emphasises the relationship to morality, and also denotes an existence of a relationship between reflection and action. Kinsella (2012) states that “*Phronesis* emphasises reflection (both deliberative and that revealed through action) as a means to inform wise action, to assist one, to navigate the variable contexts of practice, and as directed toward the end of practical wisdom” (p. 35). To simplify, *Phronesis* requires the capability to wisely contemplate actions that convey desired effects. With *Phronesis*, a person is capable to think and ponder upon the consequences of an action when it is taken or before it is taken. Building on the work of Aristotle, Dewey (1998) defines reflective thought as: “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 9). Birmingham (2004) synthesises Dewey’s definition suggesting, “being reflective involves more than thinking reflectively” (p. 316), highlighting the significance of action in reflection.

Dewey indicates that reflection itself is experience and he called this kind of experience “reflective experience”. In addition, “no experience having a meaning is possible without some elements of thought” (Dewey, 2001, p. 150). According to Dewey, there are two forms of reflective experience: the method of trial and error, which involves continuous action and intentional reflection, which might then involve further action.

Dewey (2001) calls the first method of reflective experience “trial and error” (p. 151). It is a stage where one is engaged in an experience and when something goes wrong, they try a different approach until they find a way forward. For example, in the camp context, when participants were challenged to do a problem-solving activity, they then tried different methods to ensure that a problem is solved without creating more problems. This form of reflective experience involves a series of actions. Dewey (2001) also calls this a “hit and miss or succeed process” (p. 151). This method teaches learners to identify the problem and gives them the experience to avoid repeating the same actions that failed them. The circumstances of the repeated actions in attempting different methods to solve a problem will then become a lesson for the learners (Dewey, 2001). This kind of reflective experience underpins activities used in the camp module to help participants acquire soft skills. Dewey (2001) supports this by stating,

In the discovery of the detailed connections of our activities and what happens in consequence, the thought implied in cut and try experience is made explicit. Its quantity increases so that its proportionate value is very different. Hence the quality of the experience changes; the change is so significant that we may call this type of experience reflective—that is, reflective par excellence. (p. 151)

Dewey (2001) defines thinking in other words, as an “endeavour to discover specific connections between something which we do (action) and the consequences which result, so that the two become continuous” (p. 151). Quay and Seaman (2013) simplifies

and defines this type of reflective experience as “in one sense, involving a basic level of thought, but in this mode, one is thoroughly preoccupied with ‘doing’” (p. 65).

Quay and Seaman, (2013) suggest another type of reflection, called intentional reflection, that involves a more analytical thinking process. This form of reflection is defined as “thinking that dominates first-hand activity by making it an object of thought” (Quay and Seaman, 2013, p. 65). It is more understandable through the general features outlined by Dewey (2001):

They are (i) perplexity, confusion, doubt, due to the fact that one is implicated in an incomplete situation whose full character is not yet determined; (ii) a conjectural anticipation - a tentative interpretation of the given elements, attributing to them a tendency to effect certain consequences; (iii) a careful survey (examination, inspection, exploration, analysis) of all attainable consideration which will define and clarify the problem in hand; (iv) a consequent elaboration of the tentative hypothesis to make it more precise and more consistent, because squaring with a wider range of facts; (v) taking one stand upon the projected hypothesis as a plan of action which is applied to the existing state of affairs: doing something overtly to bring about the anticipated result, and thereby testing the hypothesis. (p. 156)

This form of reflection is more analytical and thorough. A detailed investigation into thought is then reflected in action. Thus, this explains Kolb’s (1984, 2015) intention in transforming the reflective experience into four processes in his experiential learning cycle that helps researchers to examine learning through extended reflective experience.

Kolb refers to Dewey as one of the foundational scholars in ELT. Kolb (2015) builds on Dewey’s (1998) emphasis on the need to reflect on the experience, to extract the value in it and use it to guide future experiences. According to Dewey’s (1998) observation, the process of reflection is only initiated when a problem arises, or when a difficult or an unusual experience is struck. Kolb (2015) explains that:

Truth is not manifested through experience; it must be inferred by a process of learning that questions preconceptions of direct experience, tempers the vividness and emotion of experience with critical reflection, and extracts the correct lessons from the consequences of action. (p. XXI)

Whether there is specific learning to be derived from a lesson is an interesting question, however, in phenomenography as Åkerlind (2005a) notes, learning is more or less complete outcomes, not right or wrong outcomes. Kolb's (1984, 2015) ELT will be discussed in detail in the next section.

To summarise, it is believed that knowledge and experience gained should stay with a person until they can scaffold and add on new knowledge through the process of learning in different contexts. It is interesting to read this summary because you do not use the word scaffold in the discussion that I can remember. You might like to go back and check or find places to insert it.

2.5 Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

2.5.1 The Revised Experiential Learning Theory called The Experiential Learning Spiral

From the six propositions that define learning, that were discussed previously, ELT delineates learners learn best through a “process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb 1984, p. 41). As updated by Kolb and Kolb (2018) in the most recent account, ELT is described as “a dynamic view of learning based on a learning cycle driven by the resolution of the dual dialectics of action or reflection and experience or abstraction” (p. 50). It is “a recursive circle or spiral as opposed to

the linear, traditional information transmission model of learning used in most education where information is transferred from the teacher to the learner” (Kolb & Kolb, 2018, p. 8). The ELT was not a circle but a spiral. The ELT depicts two related ways to grasp experience and two other related ways to transform the experience. To grasp experience, the two modes suggested are *Concrete Experience* and *Abstract Conceptualisation*, whereby to transform experience; ELT suggested two modes that are *Reflective Observation* and *Active Experimentation*.

ELT involves a cycle of four processes that learning can begin at any stage of the cycle as shown in Figure 3 below. However, according to Kolb (1984), it is important to follow the sequence.

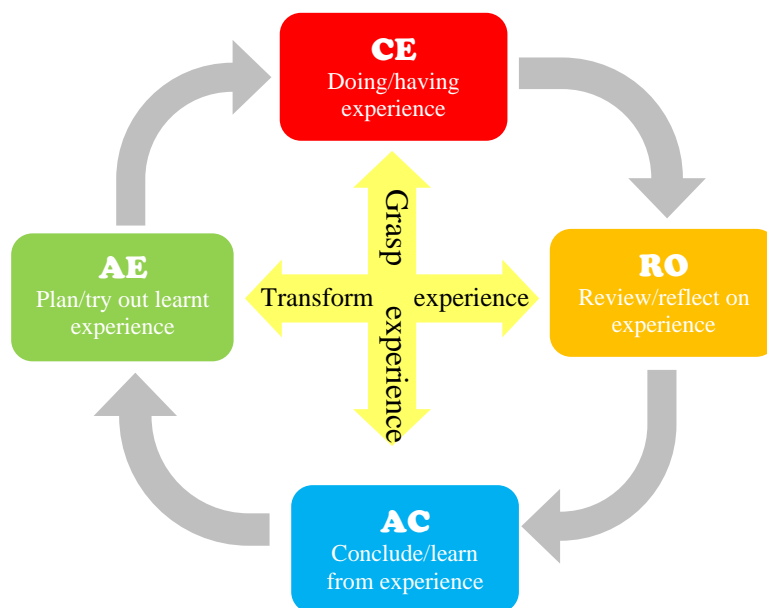


Figure 3: Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory

To better understand the modes, Roberts's (2016) vignette about a student's internship experience presents a clear representation of Kolb's (2015) ELT that includes the four cycles. The *Concrete Experience* was the internship itself. On the stage of *Reflective Observation*, the student's reflection on her internship experience was continuous but

throughout her internship, it was interrupted by some discussions about that experience with her supervisors or faculty advisors, and she may have accomplished some readings throughout the experience. Then, on the third stage, *Abstract Conceptualisation*, by thinking through her reflections and readings, she questioned the different social issues she encountered such as the interlocking issues of race, class, and inequality in public health policy. Lastly, the stage of *Active Experimentation* where overall experience will influence her future experiences when she tries out a new realisation in different settings, and she might become clear about her future career path. Hence, the whole process should be continuous and progressive.

2.5.2 The Critiques of the Theory

ELT is used and discussed widely. The interpretations and applications of ELT have been critiqued by many scholars to be oversimplified, individualistic, ignoring historical, cultural, and social contexts of learning, separates individuals from their environment and allowing shallow descriptions of reflection, adopting cognitivism, and independent concrete experience. Kolb (2015) admits that he felt disturbed by the oversimplification and inaccurate application of the learning cycle. The taken out of context use of ELT worried him and he was concerned that he might not have adequately explained the theory. Kolb (2015) also appreciates scholars who have critiqued ELT and initiated comprehensive conversations meant to polish the theory. Kolb (2015) revised his ELT, with the help of the critiques, and responded to ensure that the theory could be used wisely. I will now discuss the critiques.

Generally, Michelson (1996) states that, in adult education, one of the most noteworthy but problematic fields of study and practices is experiential learning. Fenwick (2000) adds that experiential learning should not be separated from experience itself where learning takes place. Fenwick (2000) states that adult learning takes place not only through formal learning but in various areas in life such as at the workplace, at home, with the family, in the community, or in every informal area of learning. She further indicates that the issue becomes confusing when one attempts to separate experiential learning from experience itself, particularly in the formal education-like “class discussion, reading and analysis, and reflection” (p. 244). Her argument implies that it is crucial to be aware of learning through experience in both formal and informal education. In her view, the intervention of an educator could be a disaster if a formal lesson is not carefully constructed.

ELT is also described as being individualistic and ignoring historical, cultural, and social contexts of learning (Hopkins, 1993; Seaman, 2008; Reynolds, 1997, 1998; Michelson, 1997, 1998; Fenwick, 2000, 2003; Miettinen, 2000). Reynolds (1997) mentions that ELT “is highly individualising, and its psychological perspective, whether orthodox or humanist, ignores or downgrades the social context...being psychological in conception, takes little or no account of the meaning of difference in terms of social or political process” (p. 128). Miettinen’s (2000) states that, Kolb’s (1984) ELT reflects the sort of “psychological reductionism” (p. 70) that is found misinterpret Dewey’s anti-dualistic experience. Miettinen (2000) adds that ELT is epistemologically misleading and should not be contextualised as an approach for learning, especially for people to learn the universe. He indicates that “When the romantic biological and therapeutic ideas of humanistic psychology are combined with

it (ELT), a thoroughly individualistic conception of learning emerges” (p. 70). Michelson (1999) critiquing from a wider historical dimension through the Enlightenment, an European intellectual movement in 17th and 18th centuries, highlighting reason and individualism rather than tradition, recommends that:

mainstream theories of experiential learning...rest on an interiorised subjectivity that emerged only with the Enlightenment, when inner consciousness came to be seen as a ‘space’ to be explored, a realm separate from and discontinuous with any external reality...(and) reproduce the Enlightenment relationship between psychic and cognitive interiority and political and economic agency. Just as in the writings of Locke, the autonomy of privatised inner experience is what grounds our rights and liberties under the social contract: according to David Kolb, the fact that we are ‘still learning from our experience’ means that ‘we are free’ and able to ‘chart the course of our own destiny’ (Kolb, 1984, p. 109). Indeed, the conjoining of privatised experience with the claims to political agency is made explicit in the quotation by John Dewey with which Kolb (1984, p. 1) begins *Experiential Learning*: ‘The modern discovery of inner experience, of a realm of purely personal events that are always at the individual’s command and that are his [sic] exclusively...is also a great and liberating discovery. It implies a new worth and sense of dignity in human individuality’. (1999, p. 144)

Kolb (2015) responded by emphasising his agreement with Dewey’s view as his intention for the ELT was to construct a model that describes how individuals learn and to encourage learners to value their own knowledge and develop their own knowledge. Kolb (2015) admits that he advocates for individuality. He argues that everyone is exceptional, and “we have an imperative to embrace and express that uniqueness, for the good of ourselves and for the world.” (p. 53). Kolb (2015) adds that an individual is unique for the good of the self and the world by differentiating individualism from individuality. He also argues that the purpose of “experiential learning is not a discourse on social and political factors that influence what people learn and believe in the tradition of critical theory” (p. 54), but believes ELT is compatible with these approaches. He emphasises that “ELT has much to offer critical cultural theory in

pedagogy, feminist theory, post-structural scholarship, social constructionism, post-colonial, and indigenous culture studies” (Kolb, 2015, p. 54).

ELT is also considered to be an oversimplified view of learning by Seaman (2008). He states that the “experience-reflect-learn” pattern is a stepwise model which could be considered an ideology rather than a philosophy or theory in experiential learning. Seaman (2008) reviewed the criticisms of Kolb’s (1984) ELT. Seaman (2008) indicated that these criticisms define experiential learning as “complex cultural, social, and physical processes during experience and learning” (p. 3) while Kolb’s (1984) ELT has been criticised to have reduced experiential learning “to a rational, excessively cognitive, individual phenomenon” (p. 3). Seaman (2008) adds a historical perspective to the critiques and concludes the substantial historical contribution of the cyclical model should be valued, rather than being used as an active theory. Seaman (2008) also called for an end to the “Learning Cycle Era” (p. 15) by suggesting that Kolb’s (1984) definition of experiential learning in an orderly manner or cycle is either incorrect or only approximates experiential learning. Seaman’s (2008) suggestions are based on other empirical studies (e.g. Fenwick, 2001; Rogoff et al., 2003). Seaman (2008) further specified that his suggestion on ending the learning cycle era does not mean practitioners abandon the sequential routines and patterns of activities conducted in any outdoor or adventure programme. Seaman’s (2008) intent is to argue against the idea that experiential learning can be effortlessly understood as a cycle. Kolb (2015) responds that, initially, he too used the cycle as a “pragmatic tool in a simplistic way to arrange learning events” (p. 56). However, after realising the rich experiences and learning created for learners was a good result, he then began searching for a theoretical explanation for the process of learning through the works of other scholars (e.g.,

James's radical empiricism) of experiential learning, and this helped him to frame learning styles.

ELT is also critiqued as being constructivist and cognitivist. Fenwick (2000) and Michelson (1997) argue that ELT separates the individual from his or her environment. Jarvis (2009), an adult learning researcher, evaluates Kolb's ELT stating that the cycle omitted the dimensions of social and interaction. Jarvis (2009) defines learning as follows:

Human learning is the combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person (...) experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person. (p. 25)

Kolb (2015) responds by explaining that they have missed out the holistic characteristics of ELT where it is neither just constructivist nor cognitivist. He further explains that ELT is the posited transactional relationship of the individual and the social environment based on the foundation scholars of ELT such as Lewin, Follett, James (radical empiricism), and Dewey (depiction of the difference between interaction and transaction) (Kolb, 2015). These scholars stand in contrast to Piaget's individual development process by portraying an incorporated view of the individual and the world that is widespread across various contexts of the world. I will elaborate further on each scholar's contribution later in the theoretical framework section.

In addition to the critiques above, Hopkins (1993) called ELT an experiential learning machine. He argued that ELT is instrumental and neglects the naturally habitual process of experience as formulated by Dewey. In Fenwick's (2001) observation, ELT from

this aspect delineates the supposition “that learning happens through cognitive reflection, experience can be considered like a bounded object, and an individual ‘learner’ can be separated from his or her experience to process knowledge from that experience” (pp. 7 - 8). Seaman (2008) highlights this supposition to aid in positioning ELT as “historical artifacts rather than as taken-for-granted truths” (p. 6). Hopkins (1993), Fenwick (2001) and Seaman (2008) agree that ELT lacks rigorous theoretical and empirical foundations as delineated by other scholars (see, e.g. Fenwick, 2003; Fenwick, 2000; Miettinen, 2000; Reynolds, 2009). As an avid phenomenologist, Hopkins (1993) indicated the “dialectic structural analysis” (p. 54) introduced to the cycle is not functional. He argued that ELT “as a formalistic reification of experiential process cannot withstand phenomenological reflection ” (1993, p. 54) as the cycle is unable to disentangle the relation between the combination of ELT structure and process. Miettinen agrees with Hopkin’s (1993) claim above by stating that Kolb (1984) does not link the stages to each other with any concepts. He emphasises that “there is surely no dialectics in this. Dialectic logic would show how these two are indispensable related to each other and are determined through other” (2000, p.61). Kolb (2015) responds to their arguments by explaining that the dialectic contrast allows him to explore the multidimensional perspectives of an experience and the four modes of the learning cycle. The four modes of ELT: Experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting “are not separate independent entities but inextricably related to one another in their dialectic opposition. They are mutually determined and in dynamic flux” (p. 56). Kolb (2015) compares his argument with Piaget’s continuous back-and-forth between assimilating experiences into existing notions and accommodating existing notions to new experiences, and Dewey’s concept of forming a purpose through the recursive uniting of desire and idea. Kolb (2015) further argues that ELT “may be pragmatic

utility in organising [sic] education around an idealised cycle” (p.57), but as people or as learners, the way we learn from our experiences are usually not systematic. Sometimes we may sit and think or reflect on things that have happened or things that could happen in the future. However, sometimes we may not be in our thoughts especially when our attention is drawn to an other event that happens. In this situation, our mind may be thinking about that particular other event. In Kolb’s (2015) words: “In one moment we may be lost in thought only to be jolted to awareness of a dramatic event, sparking immediate action or cautious observation depending on our habit of learning” (p. 57). Hence, the revised or re-explained ELT is not in an orderly manner but in a recursive spiral where experiences are not gained through a sequential process.

Another critique of Kolb’s (1984) ELT is the lack of description about reflection in learning and development in the cycle. Boud et al. (1985) mention that reflection has not been emphasised or explained in detail as Kolb (1984) does not define reflection in sufficient detail. However, Boud et al. state that ELT has helped them with planning activities and checking on students’ engagement with the activities. Reflections to Schon (1983), Mezirow (1996) and Brookfield (1995), are primary sources to transform learning and development. While in Kolb’s (2015) view, for ELT, reflection is not the main element of learning and development, however, it is one of four elements of learning (experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting) through experiences that form a holistic process. Kolb (2015) emphasises the need to initiate reflection through concrete experience for learning where he argues that “reflection in isolation can become retroreflection” (p. 57). When learners isolate themselves by validating their own learning outcome, they might not be able to meet an end or test the end result in action. Kegan (1994) and Kayes (2002) delineate that when reflection is organised in a critical

theory framework, essential techniques could aid a person to perceive their social context well. However, this person might be lost in his or her own complicated world without any ideas or tools to restructure this complication. Kayes (2002) explains that, "The newly 'emancipated' may undergo more persecution as they are deprived of their own right to respond to fresh, more demanding demands of emancipation" (p. 142). Kolb (2015) defines reflection in ELT as "internal transformation of experience" where according to him this is not a standalone definition. This definition includes three explicit reflective learning styles found in the Kolb Learning Style Inventory (KLSI) 4.0 (Kolb and Kolb, 2011, 2013) that aid in defining a range of reflections. Kolb (2015) elaborates that there are three phases of development in the development framework of ELT namely -- acquisition, specialisation, and integration. These three parts are each exemplified by different reflective processes. On the other hand, Humphrey (2009) calls these reflection, reframing and reform.

Besides not being detailed in defining reflection, ELT is critiqued to be similar with cognitivism. Some scholars appraise that it is impossible for concrete experience to be independent of abstract theories and symbols (Holman et al., 1997; Miettinen, 2000; Seaman, 2008; Michelson, 1996; Fenwick, 2000, 2003). For example, Holman et al. (1997) after analysing Kolb's (1984) ELT delineate that there is creation of a new dualism from reflection and thinking. They state that, in ELT, thinking does not happen simultaneously with action and experiencing, instead, thought happens after action. This is seen as replicating cognitivism. Miettinen (2000) indicates that Kolb (1984) omits necessary characteristics of the concept of experience. For example, there is a practical and technical history about the notion of 'immediate' and 'here and now' which can be philosophical in meaning like 'existential'. In Kolb's responses, he agrees

with cognitive theorists that cognitive schema shapes all perceptions. He mentions that it is also valid that the dialectical component of concrete experience/abstract conceptualisation typically defines the relation between experience and idea. Kolb (2015), in his newly discovered foundational theory in James's radical empiricism that has an equal contribution to ELT with Dewey, Piaget and Lewin, quotes James's words to support the idea that pure experience is an extreme idea of the dialectic. According to James, "only new-born babes, or men in semi-coma from sleep, drugs, illnesses, or blows may be assumed to have an experience pure in the literal sense of a that which is not yet any definite what... Its purity is only a relative term, meaning the proportional amount of un-verbalised sensation which it still embodies" (1912, 2010, p. 94). Hence, pure experience could only occur in the examples James mentioned. James' radical empiricism aids in understanding that all modes of the learning cycle are experiences (Kolb, 2015). Pure experience as responded to by Kolb (2015) is a special type of experience such as immediate or here-and-now experience that Dewey (1905) calls "immediate empiricism" (p. 397), and where Miettinen (2000) stated earlier that Kolb (1984) had missed in his first version of ELT.

More recent critiques on Kolb's first construction of ELT in 1984 are outlined below. The most recent study was conducted by Morris (2020). Morris's (2020) suggestion, after Kolb had thoroughly responded to and reviewed ELT, is to rename and reconstruct each stage of Kolb's (2015) four stages of ELT. There are still others who continue to refine Kolb's ELT – now called Experiential Learning Spiral (ELS) (Kolb, 2015). Morris's (2020) review was a systematic review of both old and new versions of ELT. He distinguishes Kolb's concrete experience from 61 other studies from the *Journal of Experiential Education* (JEE) to revise and clarify the four stages of ELT. Morris

delineates that concrete experience in ELT should be defined contextually. Based on his review of other articles he argues that “concrete experience” should be called “contextually rich concrete experience” such as in the outdoors. From Morris’s (2020) review, Kolb’s (2015) description of concrete experience is “an individual learning process that applied in all situations and arenas of life” (p. xx). This description according to Morris (2020), does not match the “highly contextualised, primary, experience that involves hands-on learner experience in uncontrived real-world situations” (p. 1070).

Morris (2020) continues to critique Kolb’s ELT stating that his reflection was uncritical as Kolb did not emphasise the process of reflections and recommends calling Kolb’s “reflective observation” as “critical reflective observation”. As for Kolb (2015), reflection is not the only element but one of four elements that form ELT. However, in Morris’s (2020) view, reflection in experiential learning should be critical due to experience being contextual and commonly used to solve problems. Similarly, in the next stage of ELT, “abstract conceptualisation” is critiqued as uncritical and should be clarified as “contextual-specific abstract conceptualisation” (p. 1064). In Morris’s (2020) analysis of Kolb’s (2015) learning spiral, he states that “in order for the model to operate as a spiral, with increasing complexity as a human develops and matures, contextual-specific abstract conceptualisations are mandatory” (p.1072) quoting the importance of being critical and contextual while learning through experience in the ever-changing time and space.

Lastly, the “active experimentation” stage of ELT is stated by Morris (2020) to be clearer if it is called “pragmatic active experimentation”. He explains that, “A key

potential benefit of contextual-specific abstract conceptualisations is that they may enable learners to act pragmatically – to base their actions on their concrete experiences – in active experimentation with an encounter with a new concrete experience” (Morris, 2020, p. 1072). Quoting Roberts’s (2018) explanation about the meaning of the word “experience” in Latin which means “to test” or “to risk”, Morris (2020) indicates that experiential learning inherently incorporates challenges and risks. Learners should be prepared to respond to spontaneous or unanticipated events throughout the process. They may come to understand that circumstances change over time and place, often very subtly through the pragmatic process.

Seaman, Brown and Quay (2017) wrote an essay on the historical foundation of experiential learning by tracing the line of research through the *Journal of Experiential Education* (JEE). Their study traces back to 1946 where experiential learning was a natural psychological process which was considered a foundation for pedagogical transformations through to 1970s when experiential learning had transformed into a humanistic and individual psychological process internally in a human’s mind. Seaman et al. (2017) state that the recent efforts taken by Kolb (2015) in re-explaining ELT is favourable, however, the findings suggest disagreement with canonical experiential learning where ELT ignores the origins in a certain social practice and philosophy. They recommend that future research should not focus on advancing ELT but pay more attention on education as a social life more broadly. They recommend that researchers be mindful of theories used in research through understanding their roots before embarking on using a theory. Seaman et al. (2017) suggest that future research could relate psychological processes with sociocultural perspectives of learning. As for the aspect of education, future researchers need to free educators and learners from

structured scripts by re-examining warrants to the action-reflection cycles which will be able to identify an array of characteristics in learning contexts and personal experiences.

In conclusion, I have compiled critiques from different scholars and various perspectives (e.g.. being cyclical, structured, individualistic, uncritical reflection, ignoring social and cultural context, ignoring historical context.) with the aim to refine ELT for the betterment of experiential education. Overall, Kolb (2015) responded to critique by emphasising his main objective when ELT was created. He specifies that ELT is a model created to explain how individuals learn to empower learners' beliefs in their own experiences and to have the abilities to master learning themselves. The spiral of learning involves not only reflection but three other processes of "experiencing, thinking and acting" (2015, p. 57). In his words,

the learning cycle, of course, is not a circle but a spiral where, as T.S. Eliot reminds us, we return again to the experience and know it anew in a continuous recursive spiral of learning. It is this spiral of learning that embeds us in a co-evolution of mutually transforming transactions between ourselves and the world around us." (p. 61)

2.6 Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning in Malaysia

Kolb's ELT has been widely used by researchers from different countries including Asian countries such as Japan (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004; Yamazaki, 2005; Yamazaki et al., 2007), China (Auyeung & Sands, 1996; Kvan & Jia, 2005), Singapore (Yuen & Lee, 1994), and Malaysia (Yeap et al., 2016a, 2016b), and in different fields of study (Würdinger & Carlson, 2010). The theory has also been used in many studies to

examine cultural patterns in learning styles, many of which are summarised in Yamazaki's (2005) review and published in Joy and Kolb's (2009).

In Malaysia, ELT has been cited widely. In outdoor experiential education, most of the studies done in Malaysia state that ELT is an underpinning theory, but most camps conducted did not integrate the whole process of ELT. For example, in research on the effects of outdoor education on group cohesion, Mohd Yasim (2016) found that there were two disadvantages in using ELT – it was time consuming and expensive. While he does not explain the cost further, Mohd Yasim does mention that ELT is a complex process leading to the time consuming aspect. This stands in contrast to effective short lectures on soft skills often seen in the universities in Malaysia. For example, lectures have less activities and more time is spent on reflecting learning through and after an activity. The focus is on the quality of learning, not on the quantity of activities conducted without concentrated reflections (Kang and Chen, 2016; Cox, 2016; AAAS, 1990). However, Mohd Yasim's (2016) findings indicate the importance of ELT as part of group cohesion development process.

Juriza et al. (2011) examined ELT in their research on the perceptions of medical students in the outcome of learning that requires teamwork and leadership. ELT was cited however, it is unclear how ELT was used in the study. Md Taff et al. (2010) studied the effects of residential outdoor education camps on environmental attitudes and knowledge of Malaysian undergraduate students. They also mentioned ELT in their article, but Kolb (1984) was not cited.

However, Md Amin et al. (2012) examined the framework of the Learning Space concept (Kolb & Kolb, 2005) and how the framework could be applied in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). They recommended fully integrating Kolb's ELT as the process to develop an indoor experiential learning space for TVET in Malaysia. Using Kolb's ELT, the findings supported the concept of thermal, visual, and acoustic comfort as a function of an experiential learning space. According to Md Amin et al. (2012), it is important to provide a comfortable learning space as the thermal (room temperature), visual (e.g. good lighting condition or good decorations) and acoustic (e.g. freedom from noise) comfort can affect the learning process.

Lau and Mclean (2013) conducted a quantitative study, using hierarchical regression analysis to seek factors that influence self-perceived learning transfer of transferable skills, through a specific Outdoor Management Programme (OMD) applying Kolb's ELT in detailed explanations. ELT is used as a foundation to comprehend the transferable skills obtained through the OMD. Three key variables consisting of "the components of OMD (training activities or methods), the working environment(s), and participating features (individual learner)" (p. 193) were examined. This study consisted of 148 Malaysian participants from executive and management backgrounds who attended the OMD programme for three days. The results indicate motivation to learn as the predictor of perceived transferable skills. While "Macro-dynamic activities, continuous learning culture and self-efficacy" (Lau and Mclean, p. 186) has significantly influenced the perceived transferable skills. However, "micro-dynamic activities, instructor's skills and perceived content validity" (p. 186) do not influence the perceived transfer of learning. The constructed OMD is seen to be ineffective to cause the transfer of skills to the workplace.

Abdul Hamid and Mohamed (2014) surveyed 106 students of the Sports Sciences and Recreation faculty at the Universiti Teknologi Majlis Amanah Rakyat (UiTM or MARA University of Technology Malaysia) on the effectiveness of an outdoor education programme. This study used Kolb's (1984) ELT and theory of student's involvement (Nicoli, 2011) in developing leadership practices. The survey used Student Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes and Posner, 2002) questionnaires to study two leadership practices: 'Enable Others to Act' and 'Encourage the Heart'. They used independent *t*-tests to compare two groups of students where one group had participated in the outdoor education programme, but another group had not. Results show that there was a significant difference between the two groups where the group who had attended the programme scored higher in the leadership practices. Again, Abdul Hamid and Mohamed (2014) mention that their study of the outdoor education programme is supported by Kolb's (1984) ELT. However, there is no description of how it was used.

The studies above suggest that Kolb's ELT is relevant to the multicultural context in South East Asian countries like Malaysia. However, there is limited rigorous research that use ELT in this context with the literature often offering a superficial mention of ELT without showing how it was integrated. Therefore, the idea to research into ELT in a Malaysian context specifically in the context of experiential outdoor camp is necessary.

2.7 Dewey's Aesthetic Experience

According to Dewey (1934, p. 38), “an experience of thinking has its own aesthetic quality.” He adds that “aesthetic cannot be sharply marked off from intellectual experience since the latter must bear an aesthetic stamp to be itself complete.” He calls this ‘Aesthetic Experience’(AE), where emotions play an essential part and defines this kind of experience as having the significant qualities to move and change action. From Dewey’s (1934) perspective, AE is an important notion in experiential learning to inform emotions as part of experiencing the “normal processes of living” (p. 10). It is an experience that includes cognition, emotion and physical elements (Dewey, 1934). As Dewey (1934) puts it: “emotion is the moving and cementing force” (p. 42). However, experience according to Dewey (1934) “is emotional but there are no separate things called emotion in it... it is attached to events or objects in their movements” (p. 42). Emotions are naturally part of experience.

AE is a “cogni-emotional experience”, where emotions play a significant role in enhancing learning (Manni et al., 2017, p. 108). In addition, through Manni et al.’s thematic data analysis, AE is identified through four themes in the meaning-making process: “prior personal experiences; immediate responses to environments and artifacts; social interactions; and situations in which students are allowed to assume responsibility, shown trust and granted independence” (Manni et al., 2017, p. 118). This shows emotional engagement makes outdoor experience meaningful and AE appears to play a crucial role in the meaning-making process of outdoor experiences. Quay (2013) states that emotion is an important element to outdoor education. He adds that, “If outdoor education discourse only engaged with transactional thinking in this

one-track way, then outdoor education would consistently overlook the aesthetic, feeling or emotional side of experience” (p. 149).

There is an earlier critique on the meaning of emotion in Dewey’s AE. Vivas (1938) critiques Dewey’s description as being inconsistent in asserting and at the same time denying emotion in its content. However, after a careful examination, Whitehouse (1978) argues that the definition of emotion as a term is unclear, but it is consistent and not confused and found Dewey does not contradict himself as emotion is directing the AE.

2.8 Outdoor Education

Outdoor education involves technical and hard skills or physical motor skills (Brymer & Renshaw, 2010). In other words, outdoor education generally involves physical activities like hiking, jungle trekking, kayaking. It is common that the outdoor learning process will involve various motor and hard skills. However, outdoor education also incorporates learning soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem solving. In this section, I will discuss the history and literature of outdoor education related to the current study, mostly in the context of Malaysia.

Outdoor education has been around for decades. Plato identifies outdoor experiences as virtues that enhances the health of not only the body but also the soul. The key aspiration of physical education has higher educational values than physical skills (Hattie et al., 1997). Hahn (1957) being one of the most quoted scholars in the field of modern adventure education designed the first Outward-Bound programme. This one-

month long programme was created to develop “independence, initiative, physical fitness, self-reliance, and resourcefulness” (Hattie et al., 1997, p. 44). Hahn’s (1957) initial aim of Outward-Bound schools was to “enthral and hold the young through active and willing Samaritan service, demanding care and skills, courage and endurance, discipline and initiative” (p. 10), which to a certain extent, meant to develop soft skills (see section 2.2.3 for the countless and complex definition of soft skills). Rhoades (1972) contends that certain valuable responses that are not required by the environment and forces students to learn through their interaction with the environment, are skills like “cooperation, clear thinking and planning, careful observation, resourcefulness, persistence and adaptability” (p. 26).

There is no single definition for outdoor education. It is futile to find a universal or shared definition for outdoor education (Wattchow and Brown, 2011). As stated by Dymont et al. (2018), there are a myriad of definitions about outdoor education, from different aspects such as process, objective, place, and outcome. The most challenging part of determining a shared definition for outdoor education is whether outdoor education is a subject or a methodology. If outdoor education is considered as a subject, it requires content and a specialist teacher to teach the subject as ‘outdoor education’. Outdoor education can also be used as a methodology or an approach for learning contents, it is then considered as a process, pedagogy, and technique to learn in the outdoors (Dymont et al., 2018). Outdoor education as methodology is concerned with the development of hard and soft skills.

Yıldırım and Akamca (2017), used outdoor education as a learning method that focused on learning experiences to develop knowledge and provide a medium for the

socialisation process. Outdoor education could also enrich the lives of individuals through exposure and experience in a nature setting. By using the natural environment to promote learning and emphasise hands-on experience outdoor education can develop and enhance learning obtained in the classroom. This confirms that learning does not always occur in a classroom environment and may be achieved in places such as museums, zoos, botanical gardens, aqua parks, playgrounds, forests, and rivers (Yıldırım & Akamca, 2017).

Outdoor Education is “out-of-doors, contains elements of adventure, and is educational” (Sibthorp & J. Jostad, 2014, p. 63). The educational aspects aid in developing the participants of outdoor education in terms of their attitudes, behaviours, personalities, and characters. For example, to enable them to complete a physically challenging task, they need strong minds with a high level of endurance. The aspects of adventure in outdoor activities intensifies their experiences in nurturing their self-efficacy and self-esteem. According to the Australian Education Standards Board (2019), natural spaces also offer participants a unique opportunity for considerable risk-taking activities and challenges during physical activities that they are unable to access in other ways. Natural space also helps participants to understand, respect, and practice behaviours and responsibilities toward nature. Therefore, in order to enhance learning, a secluded environment also plays a crucial role. It is intended to generate wholesome individuals with outstanding characters both mentally and physically which is in line with the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 initiative where outdoor education has attracted interest from the Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015).

In the field of environmental sustainability, a study was conducted to discover how outdoor experiential pedagogy might contribute to the current sustainability education agenda (Lugg, 2007). From the review of many empirical studies, Lugg (2007) suggests that, in the United Kingdom, outdoor education may have something to offer in developing sustainability literacy. Lugg (2007) recommends that in a critical paradigm, outdoor education can offer practical approaches to more sustainable living. However, her study focused on a different direction which is about how outdoor education contributed to develop care for nature among the society.

A study on outdoor education conducted by Lekies et al. (2015) examined the ways urban youth aged between 14 to 19, who had participated in a long-term outdoor adventure recreation programme, perceived and experienced nature (Lekies et al., 2015). Interviews were conducted to obtain data from the participants. The results support Lugg's study on the enhancement of greater appreciation among the youth towards nature. However, this study did not examine the learning of soft skills.

Research undertaken by Rickinson et al. (2004) examined students' experiences of outdoor learning suggests that, there are several factors that can facilitate and/or impede learning in outdoor settings. These can be conceptualised in terms of programme factors (the structure, duration and pedagogy of outdoor education programmes), participant factors (the characteristics, interests and preferences of learners), and place factors (relating to the nature and novelty of the outdoor learning setting).

Thomas (2019) calls for more confirmations from research to prioritise the teaching and learning methods in outdoor education. He conducted a naturalistic inquiry with

students from two private schools in Hong Kong and Australia who had attended a 28-day outdoor education programme facilitated by an outdoor education provider based in Australia. A Life Effectiveness Questionnaire was distributed to 261 students pre- and post-programme, followed by five focus group interviews. Based on the students' perceptions, the results delineated that the students gained desired improvement in their general life skills. Thomas based on four literature reviews (Sutherland et al., 2016; Williams & Wainwright, 2016; Blenkinsop, et al., 2016; and Cosgriff, 2000) found that experiential learning (beyond ELT), carefully sequenced activities, a facilitative teaching style, and active engagement were relevant to the pedagogical approach. These findings contribute to the ongoing discussion about using effective teaching and learning strategies in outdoor education programmes.

Sibthorp et al. (2018), suggested outdoor education was a Western concept with Western values, however, it has been employed in non-Western contexts. According to Beames and Brown (2005), outdoor education organisations such as Scouts and Girl Guides were established in Hong Kong in 1911, while Scouts and Guides in Malaysia were founded in Malaya in 1910 (Malaysia before gaining independence from the British colonialism), and in Singapore when Singapore was still under Malaya jurisdiction ("Persatuan Pengakap Malaysia", 2004, para. 1). These organisations used outdoor adventure for personal development (Beames & Brown, 2005). Taff and Yaakob (2010) mention that outdoor education in Malaysia is highly influenced by voluntary bodies or organisations like scouts. In Malaysia, outdoor education began as early as 1922 and Outward-Bound School started as early as 1952 (Taff & Yaakob, 2010) because of British colonial influences. Taff and Yaakob (2010) found the National Library of Malaysia had no articles published or officially catalogued in the

field of outdoor education in Malaysia, apart from two articles by Scholer and Teoh (1980) who detailed teacher training in physical education and outdoor education management. Scholer and Teoh (1980) defined outdoor education as any planned educational process implemented in nature, using experiential learning methods and involving high-risk elements that developed holistic potential individuals in line with the Malaysian National Education Philosophy and National Principles: Belief in God, Loyalty to King and Country, Supremacy of the Constitution, Rules of Law, Courtesy and Morality.

One of the long-standing programmes implemented for Malaysian youth after finishing secondary school is the National Service Training Programme, Malaysia (PLKN). PLKN was founded on the 16th February 2004 through a directive from the National Patriotism Congress where the decision had been made on 24th October 2002 (Zakaria et al, 2012). One of PLKN's objectives has been to foster cooperation among Malaysian youth to enhance racial unity among Malaysians. Their goals are to help youth cultivate a strong personality and a sense of independence, as well as to improve social cohesion and positive attitudes. Part of this programme is conducted in the outdoors. Zakaria et al. (2010) carried out an experimental study on group cohesion among 994 students who had undergone a series of outdoor adventure modules in the PLKN in Perlis State, Malaysia. Results found that there is an increase of group cohesiveness among participants in the outdoor adventure part of PLKN.

Harun and Salamuddin (2010) state that an outdoor education programme should incorporate activities that are thoroughly planned and prepared by educators using the natural environment for direct experience in teaching and learning. Their study

employed quasi-experimental design to examine gender and a sequence of outdoor activities as factors that influenced personality development among 671 students in physical education and sports and recreation programmes in Malaysia. The four variables that measured personality development, cooperation (teamwork), leadership ability, self-confidence, and coping with change were the main focus and Kolb's (1984) ELT was the theoretical framework. Results of the study found that the programme had strongly contributed to the personality development of the participants and the participants were able to retain the skills for a long period.

In the Malaysian tertiary education system, outdoor education is defined similarly to co-curricular activities or it can be a mandatory course in some degree programmes (Mohd Yasim et al., 2020). Mohd Yasim et al. (2020) carried out a quantitative quasi-experimental study focusing on residential outdoor education (ROE) camps. They investigated group cohesion among 142 first year undergraduate students who were doing a Physical Education degree in a public university (Sultan Idris Education University) in Malaysia. Data were collected before and after the ROE camp. They found that students who had attended the ROE camp perceived they had better group cohesion (social and task cohesion as a group) as compared to the non-equivalent control group.

Later, in 2019, Samsudin et al. conducted an experimental study using a descriptive approach to examine 94 participants' perceptions before and after a 12-day outdoor education programme. The objective of the study was to gauge Physical Education course students' perceptions on their learning and their level of resilience throughout the programme. They found significance difference of t-values between pre- and post-

programme. Students' resilience had positively increased after attending the programme.

In the same year, Setambah et al. (2019) studied the effectiveness of an adventure based teaching method on the students' critical thinking skills. These students were taking a basic statistics course which required critical thinking skills. The research design was a quasi-experimental with pre-, post- and delayed post-test. The second post-test involved conducting a test eight weeks after the adventure based programme to determine whether the students retained critical skills. This study was based on Novak's (1998) statement stating that most memorised lessons are forgotten after eight weeks. Results from the pre- and the first post-test found no difference, however, the delayed post-test after eight weeks showed that there was an increase in the students' critical thinking skills.

From the studies reviewed above, most studies conducted in Malaysia on outdoor education used quantitative experimental design, which according to the researchers, was the most suitable design to examine the impact of outdoor education experience on participants. Certainly, it is a suitable design to investigate the impact, however, in order to gauge rigorous responses from participants about their learning, qualitative interpretive studies are required. Hence, this study presents a deeper insight i how participants learn soft skills through an outdoor experiential process.

2.8.1 Out-of-Comfort Zone

Pushing participants outside their comfort zone is considered an important element in experiential learning (Morris, 2020; Bailey et al., 2017). Positive outcomes of learning through outdoor adventure programmes have been documented such as the improvement of self-efficacy, self-confidence, academic encouragement, wellbeing mentally and physically, and behaviours (Gillis & Speelman, 2008; Neill, 2003). Valuable knowledge about the physical, psychological, and social expectations and perceptions of outdoor recreation has emerged from outdoor education (Bailey et al., 2017). According to Bailey et al. (2017), the unfamiliar surroundings and adventure activity present obstacles that must be overcome to improve mental balance which could cause mental stress. However, the growth of social and emotional tolerance, mental resilience, and personality can be aided by an optimum level of stress associated with perceived danger (Dienstbier, 1989; Ewert & Yoshino, 2011; Neill, 2003). With an optimum level of stress and with comprehensible and acceptable risk, participants can learn out of their comfort zone. Brown (2008) advocates using comfort zone as a metaphor rather than a model suggesting stress should not be fabricated.

Panicucci (2007) in her comfort zone model stresses using a stretch zone (discomfort zone) as a learning zone by stating that,

Experience has shown that learning occurs when people are in their stretch zone. Intellectual development and personal growth do not occur if there is no disequilibrium in a person's current thinking or feeling. (p. 39)

This conception led to the notion that learning only happened in one's stretch zone. In contrast, Brown (2008) disagreed that learning does not happen when stress is not present, or when learners are in their comfort zone. Leberman and Martin (2003) indicated that moving participants out of their comfort zone does not necessarily result

in peak learning. However, with or without their comfort zone, Åkerlind (2005a) states that,

it is relevant to acknowledge here that any outcome space is inevitably partial, with respect to the hypothetically complete range of ways of experiencing a phenomenon. So, what we are considering when we talk about better or worse outcomes is more or less complete outcomes, not right or wrong outcomes. (p. 70)

Brown (2008) in his critique of the comfort zone model (Panacucci, 2007) disagreed with using risk to encourage students to learn. He noted that educational literature does not endorse the perpetuation of this model, where risk is used to foster circumstances of dissonance. Brown (2008) argues for using a comfort zone model as a metaphor for future post-activity discussion rather than pre-activity emphasis of having to go through stress. He posits that an uncomfortable zone should not be emphasised as stress to the participants prior to a risky event when it is problematic or unacceptable if students with a history of depression or anxiety are asked to take risks. Brown questions the 'risk' of taking depressive participants out of their comfort zone and whether outdoor instructors are clinically trained to face any unwanted circumstances that could occur to these students.

In my opinion, it is true that participants with mental health issues should not be forced to be taken out of their comfort zone. It is important to give guidance to students, prior to an activity, about what is going to happen or where they are going before taking them to their uncomfortable zone. They should be able to decide whether they are mentally healthy enough to attend a challenging programme. Students who know what they are going to experience and are willing to participate, can then be given the opportunity to experience their uncomfortable zone. A discussion about risk and sincere personal preference to challenge the risk could nurture a situation that motivates acceptable risk-

taking that may lead to positive learning outcomes (Estrellas, 1996; Brown, 2008). In addition, Berman and Davis-Berman (2005) stress that it is crucial to place safety as a priority. From the perspective of clinical psychology, clients need to feel safe, secure, and able to take control of a predicted situation to manage change (Trull, 2005). Thus, it may not be ethically right to challenge through a high anxiety level and observed risk (Berman & Davis-Berman, 2005; Canter, 1994).

In a different view, Borbye (2010) suggests being in one's comfort zone makes one feel pleasant, but being in one's comfort zone all the time may lead to "complacency, boredom, and an ungrateful or negative attitude" (p. 1). She says that when someone is hungry, it feels wonderful to be fed, and food tastes great. However, if that person eats too much and never feels hungry, food loses its good taste. It is a normal reaction to want to get out of your comfort zone in this kind of situation. However, being uncomfortable not only physically but also mentally and emotionally tests a person. Hence, students should not be forced but have the option to decide whether they desire to participate in challenging outdoor activities. Usually students will show excitement in attending outdoor activities, especially when told that they will be doing recreational and adventurous activities, despite understanding the risk.

Besides being mentally challenged, being out of their comfort zone could challenge participants emotionally. Dewey's (1934) description as part of AE where "emotion is the moving and cementing force" (p. 42), could change participants' behaviours. AE contains cognitive, emotional, and physical components, with emotions defined as important aspects that trigger a change in participants' behaviours. Dewey states that

“emotion is the conscious sign of a break. The discord is the occasion that induces reflection” (1934, p. 21). This again should be dependent on the participants’ choice.

Another way of unpacking out-of-comfort zone indirectly by Marton (2015) is that the descriptions match the idea of learning through out-of-comfort zone.

In order to perceive anything, it has to be perceptible. In order to be perceptible, it has to be separated (in the learner’s awareness) from other things. Why would we not be able to see the green color [sic] in an entirely green world? The reason is that in order to see the green color [sic] of a cucumber, for instance, we must be able to separate the greenness (the feature) from the cucumber (the whole). But if everything is green, we cannot think apart from the greenness and the green things. In order to do that, we need an alternative to green. And that we do not have in a green world. (p. 56)

According to Marton (2015), a feature cannot be visible until it is combined with another feature, and it is always difficult to undo what has been seen. Putting people in an unfamiliar zone, or a context they have not been in before, may make them see things they have not seen or done before. Encouraging them to be mindful of what they can see and learn in the unknown zone could also aid their soft skill growth. It is important to instil positive encouragement so that participant can persevere and learn from being out of their comfort zone.

In summary, there are negative or positive connotations of pushing participants out of their comfort zone. Precaution must be ensured to minimise risk and choices must be given to participants to ensure that they are willing to undergo the perceived risk. Furthermore, there could be no risk taken, but only when placed in an unfamiliar zone that is without stress. In addition to that, in the outdoors, activities are often done in groups with supportive communities. Even though participants may be placed in a stressful condition, when they are constantly being encouraged and being reminded

about their safety and security (with their facilitators or instructors), positive change can occur. The development and demonstration of the affirmation that people change for positive reasons in the context of supporting communities was an alternative perspective (Mitten, 1999; Warren, 1999; Berman & Davis-Berman, 2005). Being alongside positive and supportive team members, participants are able to work in a positive way no matter the zone.

2.9 Theoretical Interpretive Framework

Previously in this chapter, ELT and AE were discussed. In this section, I first draw on what is already known about soft skills development from the previously discussed body of literature. Then, I outline the ontological and epistemological stance of ELT along with a summary of how well-known scholars have contributed to ELT according to Kolb (2015). Finally, I discuss how AE and ELT are used in this study.

The vast and vague definitions of soft skills suggest that there is not one definition for each soft skill. For example, leadership skills and communication skills are described as inseparable. A leader should have good communication skills to give an order, or to work together as a team with their subordinates. A leader needs to be a good team player. In the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025, a person with leadership skills is defined as “an effective communicator, emotionally intelligent and able to work across cultures; is socially responsible, competitive, resilient, and confident” (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015, p. 14). This illustrates the difficulty of finding a universal definition of a soft skill and then relating it to a definition given by participants - as soft skills are interrelated and intertwined. Furthermore, this study seeks participants’

experiences and ways of learning soft skills, not about which soft skills they learnt from the experiential process.

Literature about how soft skills development and initiatives taken by different organisations globally and in Malaysia were discussed earlier in this chapter. Globally, organisations like WHO, ISFOL, OECD, EU, Tuning, and IFTF have taken initiatives to develop soft skills among citizens including students and employees. In Malaysia, the Ministry of Higher Education has made it compulsory for all higher institutions to integrate soft skills into curriculum, co-curriculum, and extra curriculum to prepare the students for future work and life. The directive has led to research conducted in different areas such as developing soft skills through, industrial training (Chiu et al., 2015; Mai, 2012), outdoor education (Setambah et al., 2019; Zakaria et al., 2010), experiential education (Mohd Yasim, 2016), and physical education (Harun & Salamuddin, 2014). Some of the studies discussed are directly related to the current study where using the outdoors as a method and Kolb's ELT is either mentioned to have been used (Mohd Yasim, 2016; Abdul Hamid & Mohamed, 2014; Juriza et al., 2011; Md Amin et al., 2010) or fully described and applied by researchers (Md Amin et al., 2012; Lau & Mclean, 2013) to develop soft skills.

Drawing from the body of literature, ELT is used to develop soft skills in multiple initiatives, especially as discussed in Malaysia my research context. A large portion of my study uses Kolb's (1984, 2015) ELT as one of the theoretical foundations. ELT is a holistic learning theory that offers a fundamentally dissimilar view of learning processes from the implicit theories of rational, idealist epistemology that support the traditional approaches of education. It is different from the empirical epistemology-

based theories like the theory of behaviourism or cognitivism that deny any part of consciousness and the subjective process of learning (Kolb, 2015). ELT is a “holistic integrative perspective of learning that combines experience, perception, cognition and behaviour” (Kolb, 2015, p. 31). This theory emphasises that experience plays the dominant role in the learning process. ELT is also a multilinear model of adult development with the consistency of how people learn, grow, and develop. It is called experiential because of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget’s scholarly backgrounds in their experiential work where a combination of their philosophical pragmatism, social psychology, and cognitive development made the standpoint on learning and development exceptional (Kolb et al., 2001; Kolb, 1984). Figure 4 below adopted from Kolb (2015, p. 18), portrays the application of the Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget’s experiential learning on ELT.

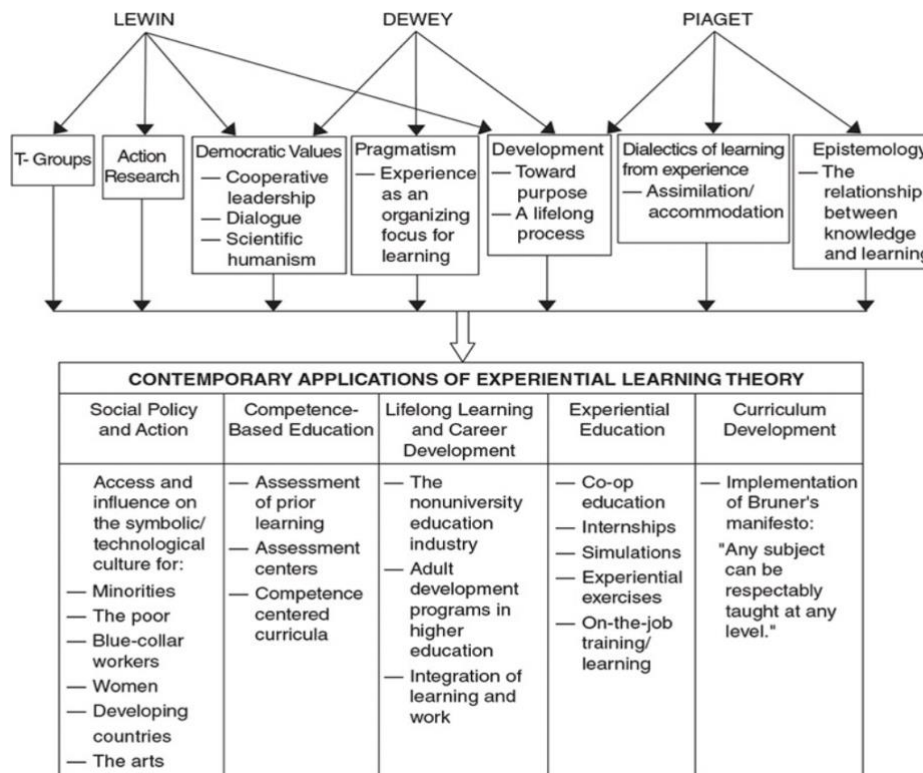


Figure 4: Three Traditions of Experiential Learning (Kolb, 2015, p. 18).

In the revised version of ELT, Kolb's (2015) inquiry took him back to James's (1912) radical empiricism where the old ELT only quotes Dewey, Piaget, and Lewin as the main foundational scholars as shown in Figure 4 above. Kolb (2015) added James's (1912) radical empiricism as one of the most inspiring foundational theories in the revised ELT which he renamed as the Experiential Learning Spiral. James is considered as the originator of ELT due to his radical empiricism and dual knowledge theory philosophy through knowing by both apprehension and comprehension. Kolb (2015) explained that James's radical empiricism is a new philosophy of reality and mind that resolves the conflicting rationalism and empiricism by integrating sensation and thought in experience (Kolb, 2015). In Kolb's (2015) updates, he promotes James to equal status alongside Dewey, Lewin and Piaget in ELT.

Besides the three scholars and James, there are other scholastic contributors such as Jung, Freire, Follett, Vygotsky, and Rogers. The origin of their work is in the Western context; however, they have also influenced other cultures (Kolb, 2015). In many ways, their methods are relevant to the East Asia Confucian and Taoist spiritual tradition which were formed by the five thousand years old Chinese literature called the Yijing – 易经 (Trinh and Kolb, 2012). Jung (1923) was inspired by Asian spiritual practices, while James's radical empiricism inspired the Japanese philosopher, Kitaro Nishida (Kolb, 2015).

According to Kolb (2015), one of the schools of thought that contributed to ELT were primarily therapeutic psychologies from the aspect of psychoanalysis predominantly reflected in Jung's (1923) work although Erikson's (1980) work is also included. Additionally, Roger's (1964) humanistic tradition of client-centred therapy, Perls's

(Perls, Hefferline & Goodman, 1951) Gestalt therapy, and Maslow's (1971) self-actualisation have also inspired ELT. Erikson, Roger, and Maslow's developmental schemes provide a consistent and clear representation of the obstacles of adult growth, one that fits well with the cognitive schemes in ELT.

The notions of the theorists above bring two essential dimensions that influence experiential learning. The first dimension is the adaptation concept that plays a key role in affective experience where an integration of affective and cognitive processes is required to ensure healthy adaptation. The second therapeutic psychological dimension of adaptation is the notion of social emotional development. Together, these two dimensions form a holistic framework that aids in describing the adult development and challenge.

Kolb (2015) found Jung's theory the most useful to understand learning from experience. He explained that Jung's theory, with its concept of psychological characteristics expressing various modalities of adapting to the reality and his developing idea of individuation are highly valuable in comprehending learning from experience (Kolb, 2015). In his later life Jung was influenced by Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism, leading to the conclusion that all religions have a central development towards integration and individuality. His concept of individuation integrates opposites like conscious and unconscious; introversion and extroversion; or thinking and feeling. Jung concluded that the wholeness of a person requires integration of the opposites. The concepts of individuation and wholeness underpin the development of ELT (Kolb, 2015).

The second stream of contribution comes from “radical educators” (Kolb, 2015, p.15) like Brazilian revolutionary educator, Freire. His work inspired Kolb’s (2015) ELT through the concept of “critical consciousness”. This notion actively explores meaningful personal and experiential abstract concepts through equals’ conversation. Kolb (2015) explains that this concept, from the liberal and humanistic perspectives highlight the dialectic role between abstract concept and personal experience that is subjective, in political and educational conflicts. This means people are able to converse in a respectful and democratic manner with each other to obtain a greater knowledge of their lived experiences to attain praxis, creating value in the world.

Follet’s contribution is the creativity, will and power in experiencing deeply in her creative experience and her theory of relations. She explains that all past life and experience have been woven into her life tissue, past experience is integrated into new experience, then led to a new experience that gives rise to the old self and becomes the new self with new experience (1924). Gestalt’s influence helped her to see everything in relations. In her theory of relations, Follet described how people co-create each other through rotational transactions. In the process of co-creation, people help each other to learn and develop, this is also called evocation as they evoke each other to learn through action and reaction (Kolb, 2015).

Vygotsky (1978) is well known for his Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which describes the difference between a learner’s process of learning with or without assistance and guidance from a more skilled educator in a space of learning. Vygotsky’s contribution to ELT was his social constructivism and scaffolding. Scaffolding provides necessary structure and support for continuous learning of new knowledge and

skills (Kolb, 2015). By scaffolding content, educators help learners learn by tailoring the process of learning to their needs. Piaget's constructivism describes cognitive development that is internal in oneself whereby Vygotsky's focus is on the social, cultural, and historical context of people in their relationship with each other (Kolb, 2015). Both constructivism and social constructivism are relevant to the application of ELT.

Three components from Rogers's thinking have influenced ELT. The first, is his emphasis on the cruciality of experiencing that is flexible and fluid to achieve a wholly functioning individual including its role in learning and transformation (Kolb, 2015). There is "a letting oneself down into the immediacy of what one is experiencing, endeavoring [sic] to sense and to clarify all its complex meanings... For there is involved in the present moment of experiencing the memory traces of all the relevant learnings from the past" (Rogers, 1964, p. 164). Kolb (2015) identifies this experience as different from the locus of evaluation. Secondly, Rogers's (1964) idea about how an individual develops self-worth through identifying unconditional positive regard, psychological safety, and respect as necessary elements for a therapeutic or educational atmosphere that promotes learning and growth. Rogers states that,

"One way of assisting the individual to move toward openness to experience is through a relationship in which he is prized as a separate person, in which the experiencing going on within him is empathically understood and valued and in which he is given the freedom to experience his own feelings and those of others without being threatened in doing so." (Rogers, 1964, p. 165)

Rogers's third influence is his development theory of self-actualisation which uses the capacity of deep experiencing of an individual as the foundation. Rogers (1964) explains that deep experiencing describes an individual who develops a fundamental

scepticism from their own experience which then guide actions. An individual absorbs and adopts preconceived values from others as their own, although the experience of others can be vastly dissimilar. An individual slowly appreciates the diverse elements of themselves. Significantly, they may start to be aware of what they are going through, feeling, experiencing, behaving, and reacting even though it is difficult. The individual then directly refers to their experiencing of events establishing appropriate understandings in guiding their behaviour (Rogers, 1964).

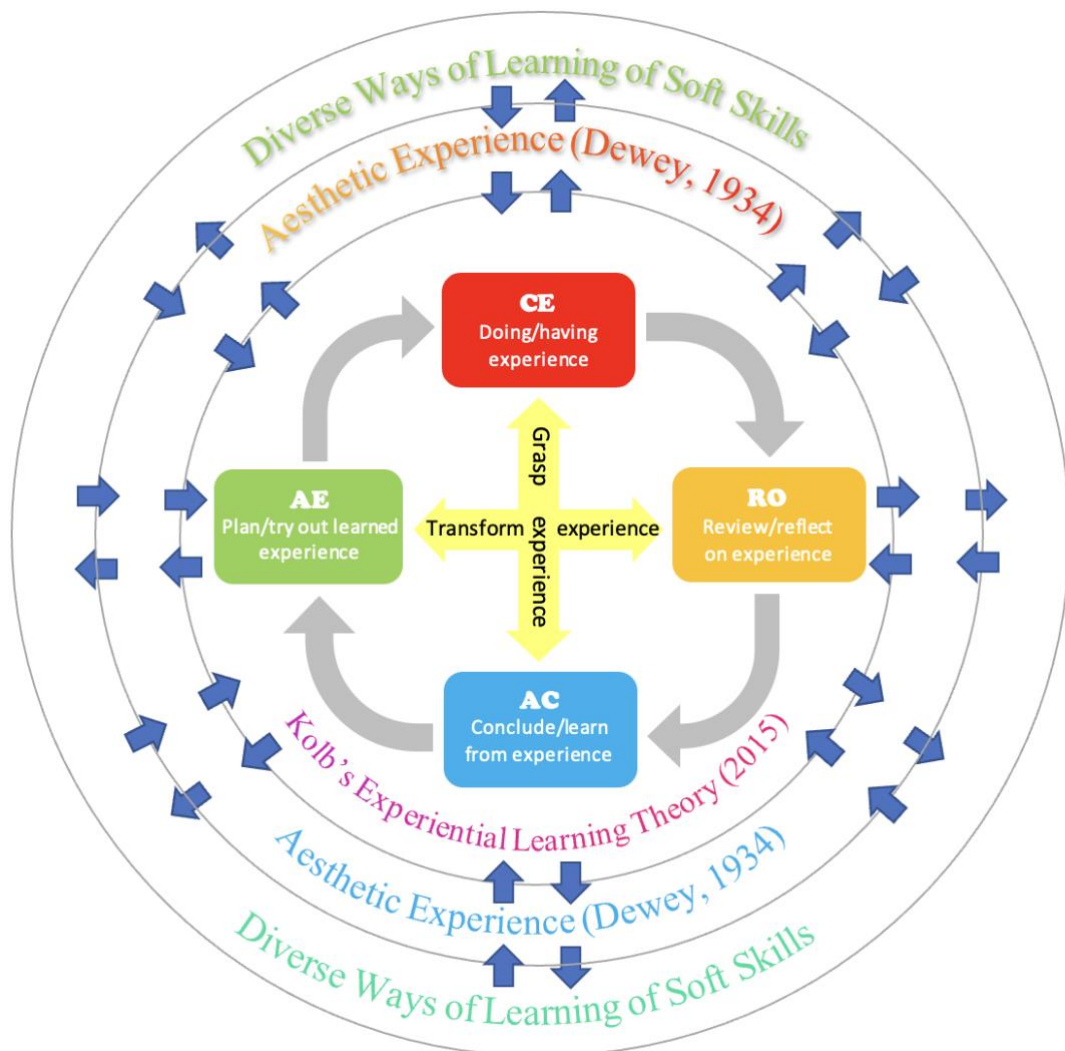


Figure 5: Theoretical Interpretive Framework

Figure 5 illustrates how ELT and AE serve as theoretical foundations for this study in two ways. Firstly, ELT is referred to when planning for the whole experiential process during the three-day camp. Secondly, AE, emerged during the research process. The figure also illustrates how participants can learn soft skills.

The centre of the multi-layered round-shaped framework shows Kolb's (2015) ELT which is central to the current study. In this study, ELT is used metaphorically whereby outside of the four processes and the inner axis of grasping and transforming experience, there are other times when facilitator-led or intentional reflections were not used, especially when there was no activity involved. For example, during bath time in the camp, when there was no water in the toilet, one could use Dewey's (1916) trial and error reflection to solve a leaking pipe problem. ELT or the stepwise process was metaphorically used to plan each of the activities that were carried out during the three days however, during an activity, trial and error reflections could have occurred. This means that ELT was used as a tool to plan the lesson carefully for each activity by preparing reflective questions to ask participants. In mind I was aware of constant reflections while the participants were involved in the process of activities. During the process, participants were not given any hints about what they would learn, as I was aware of the arbitrary reflective moments in their minds. Therefore, the steps were used for my own awareness while I was planning and sequencing the activities according to my understanding of how the spiral could work and when participants were doing each activity. At this point, ELT helped me understand how each participant's learning could progress from one activity to another through the gradual spiral process. However, I also understood they could have learnt nothing.

Additionally, ELT was used metaphorically because this study did not reject or ignore traditional methods of delivering lessons as I needed to be mindful of the historical, social, and cultural context of the study that should align with the National Education Philosophy as discussed in Chapter 1. Facilitator-led reflection or intentional reflection was done after an activity was experienced before concluding the activity. Participants were free to inform the final lessons they had learnt, and the facilitators concluded the activity by integrating what they had learnt and what was planned for them to learn. This means that, what was planned for them to learn could be different from what they would inform that they could have learnt. For example, activities integrating lessons were planned to teach a specific soft skill or a few soft skills. Participants may respond by stating that they have learnt different soft skills. The whole process of ELT was integrated through each activity and through one process to another without ignoring the unplanned reflection in participants' minds at any moment when they were experiencing an activity. Throughout the three days, participants were also told about their mistakes. ELT does not support this, but it was for contextual purposes where ethics and morality are part of the national principles in Malaysia.

The second layer of the framework is Dewey's AE. To use Dewey's AE as another theoretical foundation, it is crucial to discuss its compatibility in the Malaysian context. Dewey's (1916) view on education is progressive and learner centred. His view challenged the more traditional view of education and learning positioned practical life experiences and social interaction as drivers of learning. From Dewey's perspective, learner-centeredness does not diminish the role of the teacher, but the teacher has an important responsibility to facilitate learning (Aubrey & Riley, 2016). The teacher plays a facilitator's role by encouraging and motivating learners' curiosity to be developed

intellectually (Aubrey & Riley, 2016). In other words, students should be encouraged to play an active role in their learning. In the Malaysian context, Dewey's philosophy has been used, for example, Neo's (2004) study on cooperative learning and in Jumaat et al. (2017) project-based learning. Furthermore, Malaysia is initiating education reforms to reduce the exam-oriented system and move to the learner-centred approach, this should mean no hindrance for the application of Dewey's theory. Dewey's AE is applied when student facilitators have roles to play as unfriendly or friendly facilitators. Both positive and negative emotions were triggered throughout the camp to enhance learning. For example, when participants had completed an activity well, some facilitators would play their role to praise and encourage them. While, if participants had done something wrong like waking up late in the morning, the strict facilitators would record all their wrongdoings and discipline them by telling them what they had done wrong during a disciplinary slot in the camp with indirect and reflective questions. This disciplinary slot served as a barrier or obstacle to enhance the participants' emotional experience. This was the only part throughout the process that the traditional method of teaching was used. Emotions were a strong force for learning in the camp. As the country is gradually moving towards student centred learning, in this study the steps taken to move to experiential methods was done methodically.

Throughout all the other camps participants had attended, I had not been made aware of any discipline facilitator or instructor despite the necessity of researching this role in the Malaysian context. As an insider and a Malaysian, I had attended many camps as a participant and all had a facilitator or instructor who played that disciplinary role. From the participants' responses, one of them mentioned being scolded in 21 other camps, where in this camp, he saw it differently which will be discussed later in section 5.7.1.

From their emotional experience, Dewey's AE plays an important role to help them learn and make meaning of their experiences.

The last layer of the diagram in Figure 5 portrays the diverse learning of soft skills after going through the process with ELT and AE. This multi-layered round-shaped framework does not have a starting point or a step as the arrows point both inward and outward. This is because it is meant to express that there is no starting point in learning soft skills. Participants may already have soft skills while attending the camp or while doing an activity but they might not have the awareness of learning soft skills. When they go through an experiential process, they reflect on their learning and could become aware that they are learning. The learning through reflection and experience is illustrated through ELT. Then, they learn soft skills through their emotions felt throughout the process and see their own behaviours changed. AE underpins this process. They could already have learnt soft skills elsewhere, then transfer and apply in this process, and go back to reflecting on activities, learning, and changing their behaviours through reflections and emotional experiences. After that, transferring to the next context and continue to experiment and learn. That reflects the diverse ways of learning soft skills flexibly.

In conclusion, this study aimed to explore the learning experiences of camp participants and facilitators. Kolb's ELT and Dewey's AE were used in the experiential process which aimed to contribute to the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education's aspirations to produce balanced graduates with knowledge and skills as well as ethics and morality. Responses from those who have undergone the camp are valuable to determine if the camp was effective in producing well-balanced graduates who possess soft skills that

can fulfil the aspired attributes outlined by the Ministry. This camp aimed to produce balanced graduates who not only able to constantly reflect on their learning of soft skills but are able to adhere and adapt to the Malaysian way of being collectivist, high power distance and human orientation in nature. To simplify, a graduate employee is required to respect the higher authority who possesses knowledge and experience, to know how to work in a group and make decisions if given the opportunity to be a compassionate leader. In the context of this study, respecting elders or leaders is also one of the most important soft skills applied as participants do not address facilitators by their names in the camp.

Most importantly, both Kolb and Dewey's philosophies of learning indirectly encourage the learning of soft skills. Kolb's (2015) ELT suggests that it is natural that learning must experience the process of tension and is conflict-filled. Through confrontation among the four ELT modes, new knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes could be attained. He adds that learning is not constrained to merely school classrooms but in all settings that include workplaces, meeting rooms, research laboratories, and shopping malls (Kolb, 2015). Learning also covers all the stages in life from young to old age (Kolb, 2015). Learning encompasses skills that focus on the fundamental facet of adaptation e.g. creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, and attitude change (Kolb, 2015). Kolb's statement agrees with Dewey's (1900) idea of democracy in education where he mentions that the progress made by a child in his or her "ability to read, write, and figure, his [sic] growth in the knowledge of geography and history, improvement in manners, habits of promptness, order, and industry" (p. 3), is what wise parents and communities aspire. Dewey (1900) adds that, "We cannot overlook the factors of discipline and of character-building involved in this kind of life: training in

habits of order and of industry, and in the idea of responsibility, of obligation to do something, to produce something, in the world” (p. 7). Hence, all knowledge, skills, and attitude are covered in the explanations and shows that soft skills are important in life from centuries ago to the current worldview.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the research methodology used in the current study. The reasons why phenomenography is used as the most suitable research methodology are explained. Then, participant selection and sample size, the process of data collection, how the data were analysed, and trustworthiness of the data are described in this chapter. Lastly, the representation of phenomenographic data is explained.

3.2 Phenomenography as Research Methodology

Phenomenography is the qualitative approach chosen as the research methodology to explore the camp participants' and facilitators' perceptions of experiences. Three types of phenomenography are introduced in this section. In a later section, the type of phenomenographic research methods chosen for the current study are detailed. A table is used to illustrate the selections made.

This study uses a qualitative research approach because there is a need to understand, in detail, a complex issue, that a predetermined or guided questionnaire could not discover (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The issue is that the camp has been proven to be an effective tool to develop soft skills (Yeap et al., 2016b). However, the study conducted by Yeap et al. (2016b) only focused on three soft skills: leadership, teamwork and communication skills. In this study, it is important to examine the students' voices, that have been missed, through detailed responses from the camp participants and

facilitators about their experiences of a programmed outdoor camp. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), exploration is needed to “study a group or population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured, or hear silenced voices” (p. 45). It is essential to empower the participants to share their side of the story.

Phenomenography was first introduced in the early 1970s (Åkerlind, 2018; Pang, 2003) in a study conducted by Ference Marton in Sweden at the Department of Education, University of Gothenberg. It was used to investigate variation in perceptions about the same phenomenon. Marton (1988) describes phenomenography as: “a research method adapted for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them” (p. 143). Edwards (2007) clarified Marton’s definition of phenomenography as “a way to understand the variety of human experiences that relate to each other, how they are similar in certain aspects of the experience, and how, where and why they are distinctly different” (p. 88). Phenomenography is generally understood by many phenomenographers to examine the variation in people’s perceptions about different phenomena of the world (Wright & Ruksana, 2018; Åkerlind, 2018; Sin, 2010; Hasselgren & Beach, 1997; Bowden, 2000; Marton & Booth, 1997; Svensson, 1994; Marton, 1988). The basic tenets of phenomenography according to Marton (1981, 2000, 2015) is that it is non-dualistic in nature where the ontology is positioned in a way where there is no separation among the object, or the phenomenon, and the subject, or how a person understands the phenomenon. Marton’s phenomenography adopts a second-order perspective as it is concerned with the conceptions of a person about a certain phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997; Rands & Gansemer-Topf, 2016). Marton (2015) explains that, “A statement made from a second-

order perspective is a statement about what things appear to be (to someone)", not "what things are like" (p. 106). He further states that phenomenography is about how different people see, experience, and conceptualise the same thing differently. The thing denotes anything that might have dissimilar connotations. The focus of phenomenography is not the individual perceptions from each participant, but a collective experience of a group of participants that are seen as essential to discover the innumerable ways of seeing the specific experience (Edwards, 2007). In sum, phenomenography is non-dualistic in nature, adopts a second-order perspective where collective perceptions are concerned, and is used to explore variations of the ways that people experience a phenomenon.

To explore further the non-dualistic nature of phenomenography, Marton (2000) outlines three crucial ways through which the research enterprise of phenomenography is framed. Firstly, when a researcher "wanted to understand variation in learning" (Marton, 2000, p.104), phenomenography should be used. Secondly, "instead of applying a model of description defined in advance, the researcher wanted to explore the meaning of the variation with the hope to arrive at a way of describing the phenomenon of interest" (Marton, 2000, p.104). Third, when the researcher "aimed at finding the meaning of variation in learning by studying the learner's experience of learning" (Marton, 2000, p.104).

There are currently three versions of phenomenography. The first version was introduced by Marton (1981) and it is called "pure phenomenography" by Bowden (2000, p. 3). Pang (2003) uses two questions to describe Marton's "pure" phenomenography: "(1) what does it mean, that some people are better at learning than

others? And (2) why are some people better at learning than others?" (p. 146). Research conducted in the 1970s then progressed and aimed at "describing qualitatively different ways in which people make sense of various kinds of phenomena in the world around them" (Pang, 2003, p. 147). Questions were then adapted to "what are the different ways of experiencing the phenomenon" and "how are these related to each other?" (Pang, 2003, p. 147). This is the earliest version of phenomenography introduced to explore the different ways people experience a phenomenon and how the differences can be related.

The second version is named "developmental phenomenography" and advanced by Bowden (2000, p. 3) to specifically focus on research in education, which Mendoza Garcia (2016) calls the Australian version. However, Åkerlind (2018) mentions that not all Australians adopt phenomenography the Bowden way. Bowden (2000) contrasts 'developmental phenomenography' by stating that Marton's (1986) 'pure' phenomenography studies mostly the concepts of phenomena confronted by subjects or people in daily life rather than "course materials in school" (p. 38). Bowden's (2000) research is developmental, and used in a precise context, which is educational. He distinguishes his phenomenography by indicating that the method is meant to explore the way people experience their world in some perspectives, and also to let them change their ways on how they want their world to run, usually in the context of education. The intent is to use the outcome of a study to aid the planning of learning experiences, which then enhance students' understanding of the phenomenon under study. Potential interviewees for the developmental phenomenographic study must have experienced the phenomenon.

The third version is called the “new phenomenography” by Marton and Booth in 1997 (Mendoza Garcia, 2016; Pang, 2003) where the thread of phenomenography led from being methodological to pedagogical and theoretical (Marton, 2015). In the ‘new phenomenography’, Pang (2003) describes Marton’s (1986) continuous research in the detailing of phenomenography pedagogically and theoretically by asking two other questions: “(1) what is a way of experiencing something? And (2) what is the actual difference between two ways of experiencing the same thing?” (p. 147).

3.2.2 The Blended Methods of Phenomenography Used for the Current Study

The initial intent of the camp (the phenomenon of the study) was meant to develop students’ soft skills. Therefore, two research questions were asked in this study:

1. What are the experiences of those who have attended and/or facilitated an experiential learning process that is focused on the learning of soft skills?
2. What are the perceptions of the camp participants and the camp facilitators about the outcomes of the learning of soft skills?

The research design focused on the research questions outlined and unanticipated outcomes emerged.

The current study employed both Bowden’s (2005) and Marton’s (2015) approaches at different stages of the research, as Mendoza Garcia (2016) did in his study. The approaches used for each step are shown in Table 1 below, and each step is justified in Table 3 below, (adapted from Mendoza Garcia (2016)). The table shows my choice of

methods used to conduct a phenomenographical study as advanced by both Marton (1981, 2006 and 2015) and Bowden (2000 and 2005).

Method	Bowden's Developmental	Marton's New	The Choice for this Study	Reason
Data Collected	Ask for the past experience of X (the camp)	Ask to experience the same instance of X (the camp)	Bowden's	The purpose of this research is to gauge students' past experiences about the camp in learning soft skills.
Data focused	People are talking about "different things."	People are talking about the "same thing."	Both Bowden's and Marton's (new)	Bowden: Different ways of learning soft skills through the camp. Marton (new): Participants learnt soft skills through the camp and transferred those skills in other contexts.
Unit of analysis	Whole transcript	Ways of dealing with the task	Both Bowden's and Marton's New	Bowden: To gain familiarity Marton (new): Variation of ways to learn soft skills shown in three categories.
Data analysis	Sort transcripts in groups, from less powerful to most powerful	Search for dimensions of variation – pool of quotes	Marton's (new)	Pool responses into three different categories written in three composite narratives.
Bracketing	Yes	No	Bowden's	I am the one who designed the camp, bracketing the responses could reduce biases.

Table 3: Choices of methods used in each stage of conducting the current study adapted from Mendoza Garcia (2016, p. 42)

3.3 Participants

Purposeful sampling or purposive sampling was first used when selecting research participants. It is the most commonly used method in phenomenography as participants must fit the purpose of the research and have widely experienced the phenomenon the

research is exploring (Yates et al., 2012; Bowden, 2000). This method aims at an insight or deep understanding of a phenomenon. Samples selected must be rich in information regarding the phenomenon, as in this case, the outdoor camp experience (Patton, 2015). Hence, the sample was identified purposefully because the data obtained must be relevant to their experiences (Åkerlind, 2005a; Booth, 1997; Francis, 1996). Students who had participated and/or had facilitated the camp were selected as the sample of the current study. They comprised of undergraduates or graduates from National Energy University (UNITEN), Malaysia, who were either pursuing their bachelor's degree or had graduated and were currently employed in different companies. All students were from engineering or IT backgrounds. Their distinct backgrounds were essential in this study, as the variations of their perceptions are what phenomenographic research seeks. Then, a snowball sampling method was utilised to recruit participants.

After I used purposive sampling method to determine the sample, I then posted an advertisement on Facebook to recruit research participants through the use of a snowball sampling method. The Facebook Group consists of more than 300 students who had either participated or both participated and facilitated the camp. My post on the Facebook Group was about the research. I explained the intent of the post to recruit participants, then participants contacted me and helped me to get other participants.

According to Bowden (2005), Trigwell (2000), and Yates et al. (2012), the phenomenographic study is influenced by two factors: The first factor is to ensure that sufficient interviews are conducted to achieve variation in conceptions; and the second factor is to ensure that the data are manageable. However, data collected should be determined by a saturation point. In other words, data are required to be collected until

the informants give similar sets of answers or until no new information is observed in the data. Trigwell (2000, p. 66) proposes ten to fifteen as the minimum number for sample size with forty to sixty minutes of interview time for each participant. However, a pre-selection in which participants who have experienced the process should be included and this is the Facebook group that I had posted an advertisement with all students have participated in the experiential learning process. Although the number of participants was recommended to be a minimum of ten to fifteen, the interviews were done based on saturation points. Initially, nineteen participants contacted me and were willing to attend the interview and contribute to the study. However, it turned out that, after thirteen interviews, I realised the data had reached a saturation point where they responded with similar responses. To ensure that the data was truly saturated, I interviewed two more people. Hence, fifteen participants were interviewed for forty to sixty minutes of interview time.

I was aware of my role as a researcher and that the objective of the study was to get a variety of responses from the research participants and bracketing my own opinion was important to reduce biases. This is discussed further in the trustworthiness section.

3.3.1 Research Participant Demographic Data

This section discusses the research participants' demographic details and roles. There were three groups of respondents or informants, namely: participant, student facilitator, and working facilitator. Each role is explained as follows:

Participant: Respondents who had attended the camp only once without having any facilitation experiences of the camp.

Student Facilitator: Respondents who had attended the camp as participants and had facilitated the camp at least once. They were still university students at the time of this study.

Working Facilitator: Respondents who were working full-time and/or doing their postgraduate part-time at the time of this study. They were alumni of the university who had entered the corporate world for at least two years or more.

Table 4 below shows the demographic details of the research participants selected for this study. Their role, status, and number of camps joined is represented in the table.

No.	Role	Pseudonym	No. of Camps Attended	Status
1	Participant (Focus Group 1)	Naff	1	3 rd -year Mechanical Engineering full-time student, holding many positions in club and society.
2		Sally	1	3 rd -year Electrical Power Engineering full-time student, member of the Student Representative Council, and holding other roles.
3		Tim	1	2 nd -year Electrical Power Engineering full-time student, holding many positions in club and society.
4		Ann	1	1 st -year Electrical Power Engineering full-time student, holding one position in a club.
5		Penguin	1	1 st -year Electrical Power Engineering full-time student, an active member of an outdoor recreation club.
6	Student Facilitator (Focus Group 2)	Papan	2	2 nd -year Electrical Power Engineering full-time student, working part-time, very active inside and outside of the university, holding many positions.
7		AK	3	2 nd -year Mechanical Engineering full-time student, running a home catering business part-time, very active inside and outside of the university, holding many positions.

8		TCO	3	Final year Computer Science Software Engineering full-time student, working on a final year project, holding a position in one club.
9		AD	5	2 nd -year Computer Science Software Engineering full-time student, working part-time, holding many positions. Past member of the Student Representative Council.
10		FFK	5	Final year Mechanical Engineering full-time student, working casual job, and working on final year project, held many positions and active previously.
11	Working Facilitator (Focus Group 3)	Dan	3	Works full time at a hardware shop, final year Electrical Engineering part-time student has speech difficulties and stuttering, previously active in one club
12		Sam	5	Works full-time for three years at an IT company, and been recently promoted to a higher role, also doing a postgraduate degree.
13		Anip	5	Works full-time for nearly two years at an energy supply company.
14		Izz	7	Works full-time as a robotic engineer for nearly three years.
15		Raj	7	Works full-time as a network engineer for nearly one year but worked for another company for around two years.

Table 4: Demographic data of research participants

3.4 Data Collection

According to Bowden (2000), it is vital that participants can reflect on their past experiences which means that the experiences do not happen at the same time. On the other hand, Marton's (2015) phenomenography asks participants to experience a phenomenon at the same time. For example, to complete a problem solving question with multiple different solutions at the same time, and he will then research the different ways they solve the same problem. Another method suggested by Bowden (2000) is to bracket my experiences or perceptions while collecting data. In contrast, Marton (2015) does not suggest bracketing while collecting data.

Data collected in this study employs Bowden's (2000) developmental phenomenography because informants in this study had multiple past experiences. In other words, they had attended the same type of camp many times in the past. Their past experiences are lived experiences. While Marton's (2015) method would be irrelevant as camp participants were not asked to instantly experience a camp and collect data immediately after that. The research sought information about the 'how' and the 'what' from their past, and about their ongoing involvement for several years attending the camp with different participation experiences. For example, people who attended the camp were not the same people with improved modules at various times over several years. While Marton's (2015) method seeks data from the same experience by asking a group of people to experience a set phenomenon instantly - like how they solve a math question or a problem solving activity differently. The camp was a three-day, two-night camp with different activities that gave them a range of experiences. However, the focus was not on how they experienced a specific activity differently. Some research participants might have several years of experiences attending the camp as both participants and facilitators. It was not about a specific instant experience where all participants experienced the same thing here and now but it was about the past experiences of attending and facilitating the camp a few times. Therefore, in data collection, the study only used Bowden's developmental phenomenography (2005). Data from the variation of ways in which the informants had experienced the phenomenon (camp) were collected and were deemed sufficient.

Bowden's (2000) suggestion of the bracketing method was also used in data collection. This bracketing method was used to ensure that my perceptions, being an insider, would not be added into the respondents' pure responses. To bracket my opinion, I took notes

and wrote memos throughout the process of data collection. I stayed aware and alert at all time to ensure that I did not add any of my own opinions. Data were collected through second-order perspectives where only the respondents' perceptions about the camp was necessary for this study. To avoid bias, it was crucial to bracket my opinions.

In sum, data collection in this study used Bowden's development phenomenography and bracketing method to gauge respondents' past experiences about the camp.

3.4.1 The setting of Interview Questions

Before data collection, interview questions were created by referring to Åkerlind's (2005b) phenomenographic interview question preparation method with two types of structured questions: contextual questions and primary questions. Contextual questions are "meant to set the scene for the primary questions" (Åkerlind, 2005b, p. 106). An example of a contextual question is, "Please recall and describe your experience in this camp" where participants reflect on their experience of the phenomena examined. The contextual questions were meant to "generate a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere that would encourage frank discussion." (Åkerlind, 2005b, p. 106). The two forms of primary questions were: open questions about the meaning of the camp, for example, "What have you learnt from the camp?" and situated examples, which asked for concrete examples to clarify the context and follow up questions like "what do you mean by that?" or "can you explain it further?" were asked. The interview questions were not leading questions. Therefore, this helped me to avoid adding my own opinions to the data during the interview. However, there were some modifications because the questions were rephrased or translated when needed, as on the condition of the

respondents, English was not their first but second language. On some occasions, I had to simplify the questions by rephrasing them or translating them into another language for some participants to better understand the questions.

After developing the questions, three pilot interviews were conducted to ensure familiarity and to avoid biases. These pilot interviews were not included in the actual data for this research. Trials of the set interview questions are crucial to fine-tune the scenario of the interview (Åkerlind et al., 2005). Therefore, the pilot interviews were conducted before actual data collection in order to help me become familiar with the way the interviews should be conducted and to ensure that essential questions would not be missed out. Additionally, since this was my first time conducting phenomenographic interviews, the pilot interviews allowed me to practice the sequence of questions and improve my technique of not leading the informant. Pilot interviews were conducted with three individuals. During the first pilot interview, I was often side-tracked by the answers, and the interview was not smooth. The experience helped me to reflect on errors made during the first attempt and fine-tune my approach. The second interview was an improvement but I still asked many leading questions and added some of my personal opinions. When conducting the third interview, the technique was better than the previous two. The whole process of becoming familiar with the questions and the way to avoid asking leading questions or adding my own opinions were very helpful. It was an important aspect of demonstrating rigour. These three pilot interviews had helped me to collect actual data with bracketing and asking only the prepared questions. I never asked leading questions or adding my personal opinions during the actual study but I rephrased and translated for better understanding.

3.4.2 Ethical Considerations

In the process of deciding on the interview questions to use, the final version was sent for ethical consideration along with the information letter and a consent form. Several rounds of ethical considerations were conducted until the questions set were approved. The ethical issues were thoroughly checked by a group of experts from the University of Canterbury (UC). I managed to obtain permission to conduct interviews with students and alumni of the university (The Energy University, Malaysia) from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Student Affairs, Alumni, and Management.

Fleming (2018) mentions that it is challenging for insider researchers to ensure trustworthiness of research especially when a researcher is directly involved with research participants and when they are aware of the researcher's role. Initially, I intended to contact participants directly and requested ethical considerations from the Human Ethics Board of UC. I was advised by the committee that it would be better for me to provide an advertisement or request on Facebook. Directly messaging people (if this is the intended method of recruitment) can create a sense of obligation for people to take part in my research. New Zealand's Privacy Act makes the collection of third-party contact details by me illegal (someone giving me private contact details of another person). The committee suggested snowball recruitment by asking my contacts to pass on information about the research, and potential participants could contact me to take part of their own accord. They noted that the research would take place with Malaysian participants, but recommended best New Zealand practice to be followed in this study. Hence, in this situation, purposive sampling was first used because the research participants must be those who have experienced the phenomenon - the experiential

process. The Ethics Committee asked me to clarify the recording process for focus group interview. I then understood that I had to ensure I stated in the information and consent letter that the focus group interviewees' anonymities will be preserved since there will other participants in the group.

3.4.3 Data Collection Process

Data collection occurred in January 2018 over approximately one month including both the semi-structured interviews and the focus group interviews. The camp participants were first interviewed individually before the focus group interviews. The same method was applied to the student facilitator group and the working facilitator group. I found that this method was helpful for me to thoroughly understand the overall responses of each group.

The interviews were conducted in a counselling room at the university. It was a quiet room that helped in conducting the interviews. In the next sections, I describe the reason why semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were selected. Then, the detailed process of the interviews is discussed.

3.4.4 Semi-Structured Interview

Data were first collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used because they are typically the primary data collection strategy used in a phenomenographic study (Edwards, 2007; Green, 2005; Marton, 1988). More specifically, I used semi-structure interviews as described by Trigwell (2000) because they have a method that helps with digging in a greater depth of thinking without

probing or leading. To make the interview an active form of data collection, I needed to know the phenomenon and the interview method extensively (Trigwell, 2000). I was well-prepared for this study because I had been through the phenomenon together with all of the participants in the study. However, after much practising through conducting the pilot studies, I was careful not to ask any leading question or add my own opinions throughout the process of interviewing the participants.

I now describe how I conducted the interviews. I began by showing the participants photographs taken from past camps. We talked about the photographs for a minute to help them better recall their experiences. This process was to help them recall their experiences, and explain what had happened in the photos despite not all of them being in the photographs. When photographs were shown, I asked questions, “Do you remember what happened here and here?” rather than using questions in the interview such as, “What have you learnt during the process in this photo?” I explained that their responses were important and contribute towards the research even if they responded positively or negatively. I explained they were free to be truthful with their responses as I was not their instructor or teacher so their grade results would not be influenced.

I started the interview by using the scripted interview questions to avoid asking any leading question or including my viewpoint. At the end of the interview, I thanked them and stated that I needed them to check the transcripts once the transcriptions were done, and they agreed. There were some issues arising during individual interviews. For example, there were two participants who pulled out from the interviews at the last minute due to unforeseen circumstances. However, I managed to contact participants who were next on the list to do the interview. The total number of research participants

in this study recruited was nineteen and fifteen were interviewed due to the achievement of saturation points.

3.4.5 Focus Group Interview

In this study, three focus group interviews were conducted. These groups are the participant's group, the student facilitator's group, and the working facilitator's group. This section clarifies the reasons why focus group interviews were selected as another research method and describes the process of the focus group interviews. The objectives of the focus group interviews were to yield the best information from interviewees who might be hesitant to provide information when they are interviewed one by one (Creswell, 1998). Group interviews are useful to verify data gathered from the individual interviews (Savin-Baden and Major, 2012). Focus group interviews support the foundation of phenomenographic research which seeks variation of perceptions and conceptions because focus groups are useful when the "research goal is to learn more about the range of opinions or experiences that people have" (Morgan and Krueger, 1993, p. 14). Another advantage of the focus group interview is the exchanges of views among the participants will help them to clarify their opinions regarding the same experience. Moreover, as the moderator, I gained a more profound understanding of the ranges of perceptions they voiced and the collection of circumstances that had led to shared understandings (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). In contrast, a disadvantage of the focus group interview is when a participant feels unsafe to respond in a group or when an issue is raised that might trigger defensiveness due to different reasons for example, anxiety (Acocella, 2012).

I conducted the focus group interviews similarly to the semi-structured interviews, by first ensuring the participants were seated comfortably. I initiated a conversation to catch up with them about how they have been. I then reminded them about the research and the consent form they signed during the individual interviews. Once all the participants were ready, I gave them a piece of paper and a pen and told them that they could use it to scribble their points while waiting for other people to finish giving their responses. I then requested their consent to record their responses. Once the recording started, I showed photographs from the camp to help them recall their experiences. One of the challenges was two communicative respondents kept on giving their responses. I had to interrupt and call out other participants' names to ensure that they got their turns. After some time, all of them became more comfortable with each other, and the interviews went smoothly. One of the groups took longer time due to one of them having slow speech because of that, one participant could not stay longer and he left half an hour earlier before the interview ended. Nevertheless, that did not affect the overall data.

At the end of the interview, I gave the participants the pen they had used for scribbling, which I had bought from the University of Canterbury bookstore as a souvenir, thanking them for participating in my research. In sum, the focus group interviews added depth to the individual interviews as the respondents helped each other to recall the learning process and outcome of the experiences.

3.4.6 Member Check Procedure

In this section, I describe the process of member checking. After the transcriptions of the fifteen semi-structured interview scripts and the three focus-group interview scripts were completed, I emailed each script to the research participants respectively and according to their group. So, each research participant received two documents: the their individual semi-structured interview transcript and their focus group interview transcript . I emailed the participants and invited them to check if the transcribed data represented their points of view. The errors were minor, and participants used the Track Change function in Microsoft Word to edit those errors. Fourteen out of fifteen research participants responded with some minor changes in their own transcripts. One of the participants did not respond to my email. The whole process took some of them two weeks and others about a month to respond to my requests.

3.5 Data Analysis

This section discusses data analysis. To start, I first used NVIVO software to help classify direct mention of soft skills and indirect mention of soft skills. Nevertheless, the definition of each soft skill is diverse and can be inclusive of each other. I chose to analyse the data by organising it into ways of learning soft skills rather than which soft skills the participants said that they could have learnt. I used the software to group the diverse ways participants mentioned they learnt soft skills. NVIVO was used only to help me organise the data by creating different categories. After that, I manually analysed the data by reading the scripts and repeatedly listened to the recordings . I found there were repetitions in the ealier categorisation. I put the similar ones into a

single category. After that, three categories emerged from the data. Lastly, I reported the data using three composite narratives that represent the three categories.

Phenomenographic study is unusual in the way that no specific analysis approach must be followed. As reported in the literature, different analysis methods are used by scholars in their research, (Yates et al., 2012). According to the nature of phenomenographic research, the focus of data obtained is on the relationship between the participant and the phenomenon, neither just the participant nor the phenomenon (Bruce, 1997). There is no one specific, commonly used analysis approach (Prosser, 2000). However, most phenomenographers use phenomenographic analysis where categories of description are drawn. (Åkerlind, 2005a; J. Bowden, 2000; Green, 2002; Prosser, 2000; Smith, 2010; Smith & Hepworth, 2012; Yates et al., 2012).

The analysis follows universal principles of practices suggested by Åkerlind (2002) that are first, to avoid having any assumptions or pre-determined views, and must not instantly set categories of description. Secondly, the transcripts and the emerging categories are viewed collectively or as a whole, not individually. Lastly, the relationships between the variations of meanings across interview transcripts should be discovered. Green (2002) states that phenomenographic data should be analysed iteratively and inductively. It is a type of qualitative research where the data analysis process relies on reading and re-reading the interview transcripts as familiarity will increase through the process. Hence, it is crucial to ensure the data are manageable with sufficient interviews.

Data were put into categories of the description as shown in an outcome space in phenomenography. An outcome space is a “diagrammatic representation” (Bruce, 1997) of the data. It can be illustrated using different diagrams, tables or flowcharts that show the relationships of categories described. Marton (2000) delineates the outcome space as “the logically structured complex of the different ways of experiencing an object” (p. 105). In other words, Yates et al. (2012) put it as a space that “represents both the phenomenon as well as the various ways in which it can be experienced” (p.106). Hence, an outcome space in phenomenography is a diagram, where, in the context of this study illustrates categories of description were drawn from the analysed data. Overall categories of description on how to conduct the outdoor camp based on the feedback of the participants is discussed in later chapters.

Although analysing data in a team has been noted by Green (2005) as the best method to analyse phenomenographic data, there are still many researchers who have completed their doctoral studies analysing phenomenographic data individually, such as Åkerlind (2005a) and Smith (2010). It is essential to highlight that a doctoral study is never an individual study. It involves a large number of experts’ opinions, especially the supervisors and the views of conferences’ participants when a paper is presented at a conference or a seminar. Åkerlind (2005a) argues that the existence of many doctoral theses can prove the ability of an individual researcher who can conduct high-quality phenomenographic research. Therefore, a researcher can contribute substantially to the understanding of a phenomenon. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, Åkerlind (2005a) highlights ways of acting as one’s own devil’s advocate during individual analysis. As a devil’s advocate, I frequently challenged myself to justify the ways the categories were set. Every time after categories were set, I read and listened to the whole

transcript again to check if I had missed anything. The questions asked then led to an iterative process where data were regularly checked for accuracy. Questions asked when conducting the devil's advocacy process include:

“‘Where did this term come from?’ (avoiding the invention of new terms)
‘What is missing?’ (searching for gaps)
‘What else might this mean?’ (allowing for alternative meanings)
‘What does this not mean?’ (looking for contradictory evidence)
‘What do ‘unsuccessful’ notions mean for ‘successful’ ones?’ (using the negative instance to show the positive)
‘What is different about this category?’ (trying to maximise difference to find a coherent, consistent and focused category)
‘How else might this be represented?’ (looking for another way to show the category – such as the use of grids and concept maps.”
(Green, 2005, p. 42).

The slow work of transcription and the repetition of listening to the recordings made the data even more familiar. I listened to the transcriptions as if I was listening to songs even when I was not transcribing. I took substantial breaks during the analysis so that I could go back to it with a refreshed mind. Next, when analysing possible outcomes against the transcript, I actively looked for both positive and negative examples with a conscious mind. Even when I seemed to work alone on the preliminary outcomes, I asked for feedback from my supervisors, other researchers and my critical friend (Åkerlind, 2005a).

I analysed data using both Marton's and Bowden's method. Bowden (2000) suggests that the transcript should be viewed and analysed as a whole unit to avoid potential problems regarding de-contextualisation as he quotes Säljö (1994) saying, “when the communication context and the very motive for engaging in a particular task are lost as a focal background for understanding what people do, the exercises risk becoming abstract” (p. 74). Without viewing and analysing as a whole unit might jeopardise the

original meaning of the response. To gain familiarity as a novice researcher, for the first stage of data analysis I analysed the data as Bowden (2000) suggested, by reading the whole transcript - consisting of fifteen individual interview transcripts, and the three focus group interview transcripts.

At the second stage of data analysis, I used Marton's way of quoting excerpts from the transcripts to compile a pool of meanings. The first round of excerpt selection was to find as many variations of skills directly and indirectly mentioned by the interviewees as possible from the data. The indirect mention of skills learnt were then judged by using my own understanding and expertise based on the interviewees' descriptions of skills.

Bowden (2000) reminds me about a crucial difference between phenomenographical analysis and traditional content analysis by quoting Marton (1986). Bowden (2000) states that the traditional content analysis usually sorts data by determining the categories in advance. As for phenomenographical analysis, the process is laborious, time-consuming, and interactive. Marton (1986) describes that the "definitions of categories are tested against the data, adjusted, retested, and adjusted again. There is, however, a decreasing of change and eventually, the whole system of meanings is stabilised" (p. 42). After reading the whole unit of transcripts three times I found, based on the responses, possible categories emerged about what the camps achieved. I selected quotes and pooled them under each skill, which was Marton's old phenomenography, to locate variation of skills. Then again, I used my own understanding and expertise of each skill to compile the similar skills into a broader category. For example, Thinking Skills consists of creative thinking, critical thinking

and positive thinking skills. This was done to find out if the research participants thought the camp actually develops soft skills. The examples of soft skills identified can be found in Appendix 5.

I found there were different ways that the research participants experienced the camp (discussed in detail and in context in the next chapter). At this stage, Marton's new phenomenography was used to locate variation in ways students learn soft skills (Marton, 2015, Pang, 2003; Marton and Booth, 1997). This occurred when there were comparisons among the perceptions of different ways they learnt soft skills through the camp, where the selected quotes from each participant were vital to show the differences. According to Marton (2015), phenomenography was meant to look for the dimension of variation.

I employed Bowden's (2000) phenomenography to seek the common meaning on how soft skills were learnt and applied in different contexts e.g. a workplace. The common meaning here was whether they learn soft skills; for example, I wanted to know if transference of skill happened and how the skills were transferred.

The last part of data analysis was to create an outcome space to explain the categories determined as transcripts were analysed as a whole. Hence, a blended method was used in data analysis.

3.6 Trustworthiness

Before data collection, the first measure was taken by completing three pilot interviews to ensure that I was familiar with bracketing myself from giving my own opinions or asking leading questions. Secondly, the reason to have three groups of respondents was, to find out if and how they thought that they had learnt soft skills despite some of them having been the facilitators. In these cases it is possible they may have learnt different sets of soft skills e.g. event management.

The reason for having three groups was to ensure the camp participants who had zero experience in facilitation could contribute their perceptions about whether their camp experiences helped them learn soft skills. The second group of research participants were those who had less experience in facilitating. These participants may have facilitated as group facilitators but had not been involved in conducting the module. As well, these participants may have only stayed within their own small camp group where their job had been to support and encourage. The third group not only had more facilitation experience but also work experience. Their experiences were quite different but could be similar, especially between the camp participants and the facilitators.

From the interviews, all the participants hoped to be given the opportunity to take on the role as facilitators as they thought the camp had developed their soft skills. At the same time, the facilitators had voluntarily chosen to return to the camp for the same process. In addition, not all responses given were positive, and that reduced the bias of students giving good responses about the camp to impress me. The quote from the data below is an example of a negative response from one of the research participants:

“...I felt like that kind of discipline doesn't really take the effect. Ya, we were still the same, ya, we didn't change like very much, we were still slow. By the time because of the lack of emotion broke in the discipline facilitator, we couldn't feel that much.” (Tim)

In addition, research participants were not graded by me in any of the courses in the university because this experiential programme was not compulsory but an extra-curricular activity which they had the choice to attend or not. This included the choice to be research participants. Furthermore, being so familiar with the process of debriefing after each day, the camp facilitators who had facilitated the camp more than once may have become familiar with the process of improving the camp by giving constructive criticism or feedback. They were aware that their contribution of highlighting errors was better for their experience in the next camp. Furthermore, the main aim of the current study was to seek in-depth insights of how research participants learn soft skills. As stated by Fleming (2018), being an insider could help me to have a good rapport with the research participants to gain better insights from their views. Therefore, I believe that their positive or negative responses could contribute to the current study.

The interview transcripts were sent to all the research participants to check on the accuracy of data presented. Fourteen out of fifteen research participants responded with some minor changes to their own transcripts (see section 3.4.6 for detailed description of the member checking process). During the process of data analysis, I read the transcripts countless times to ensure that I had collated all the data needed for the study. Throughout the process, I discussed details of my decisions with a critical friend who was my research colleague with a PhD topic similar to mine, and we had the same supervisors. We met at least once a week to discuss our progress.

Being an insider, I am aware that it could be problematic that I assumed the role of researcher and the educator who designed and ran the programmes the research participants attended. This could have created a credibility, authenticity, and trustworthiness problem. However, studies where researchers who are also insiders or educators, have been widely conducted using various research methods. Education research conducted by teachers have also produced necessary insights for the betterment of teaching and learning (North, 2020). In recent years, educators who are researchers have been given attention to a rising number of well acknowledged research methodologies in their field; self-study, teacher research, action research, life history, narrative, phenomenology, auto-ethnography, and practitioner research (North, 2020). These research methods demonstrate a commitment to creating a better society by focusing on the researcher cum educator as a critical component of the research, pursuing others' perceptions (North, 2020; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009).

Since I am both the insider and the educator researcher, this study could seem similar to action-research and it could be unclear of how compatible it is in phenomenography. However, Elliot (2017 as cited in Beaulieu, 2017) argued that phenomenography has been largely disregarded as an analytic approach for analysing variations in experience and as a process for educators to fulfil the value and purpose of pedagogy. According to Beaulieu (2017), phenomenography provides an analytical structure to investigate the differences in students' learning experience and aspect, and the outcomes of this method could contribute to action research for customising education to accommodate a varied population of students. Hence, phenomenography as a method could contribute to action research and seems to be compatible. In his study, Beulieu (2017) indicates the prospective union of phenomenography and action research which could be named

“phenomenographic action research” (p. 62). He adds that action research, when integrated with phenomenography, may lead to a greater knowledge of varied perspectives, and provide ideas for solutions to address the educational imbalances that world educators continue to face.

Through the discussion above, I have sought to develop the trustworthiness of this study. I had practiced interviews using three pilot interviews to ensure that I did not add my own perspectives during the actual interviews and not asking leading questions. I completed the member checking process and had a critical friend and research team to check my analysis and took steps to avoid being biased throughout the process. Most importantly, I did not have the power to determine students’ grades and graduation. Lastly, I included a discussion about the worth of being an insider researcher.

3.7 Representation of Phenomenographic Data

This section describes how phenomenographical findings are reported. According to Åkerlind et al. (2005), phenomenographic research reports usually contain three aspects. The first aspect of the current study is a diagram, as shown in Figure 7 in the next chapter, which is commonly called an ‘outcome space’ in phenomenography (Åkerlind et al., 2005, p. 95). While the second aspect is a detailed description of the categories drawn from the data analysed. In this part, composite narratives are used to elaborate on each category using an invented character. The reason why the composite narrative is used is discussed below. The third aspect of a phenomenographic report is to analyse the relationship among the categories rigorously. The hierarchical relationship among the categories of description does not depend on the worthiness of each category but

the inclusiveness without the “value judgements of better and worse ways of understanding, but on the evidence of some categories being inclusive of others” (Åkerlind et al., 2005, p. 95). In Åkerlind et al.’s (2005) words,

“These relationships are commonly expected to form a structural hierarchy of inclusiveness, with some ways of experiencing being more complex than others but including aspects of awareness constituted in less complex ways of experiencing. This inclusive nature of such relationships makes some ways of experiencing not only more complex, but more complete, than others.” (p. 72)

3.7.1 Composite Narrative

This study uses three composite narratives to report the findings as its structure is comparable to the phenomenographic research structure. A composite narrative combines multiple interview responses in a single story. It is called a narrative instead of fiction to highlight the genuineness of the data (Willis, 2018). Willis (2018) outlines three advantages of using composite narratives. First, presenting findings as a narrative helps to bring out the intricacies of one’s enthusiasms and viewpoints, and unpacking more extensive overall learning. This study is about the students’ experiences of the camp they have been through. Hence, the first-person narrative depicts the engagement in their voices during the interviews. Additionally, Wertz et al. (2011) describe composite first-person narrative as a novel method and a reflective story that connects the voices of both the research participant and the researcher to enhance the understanding of both texture and structure of a phenomenon. Wertz et al. (2011) emphasise the complexity of writing a composite narrative in which data is interpreted in three significant ways: “through the researcher’s knowledge of the literature regarding the phenomenon under enquiry, through listening and hearing the stories told

by the informants, and through the researcher's own reflexivity during the process" (p. 2). Secondly, according to Willis (2018), the anonymity of informants is preserved, and in the current research the participants identities were kept confidential and known only to me. Lastly, composite narratives, through contextualisation and personalisation, helps non-academic audiences familiarise themselves with a specific group of people on how they experience a phenomenon.

Some of the data of this study were reported using the interviewees' responses in their authentic languages with a mixture of a maximum of three languages per narrative: English, Malay, Chinese (in Romanised form) and Tamil (in Romanised form), and are shown in italic form with translations in brackets. This is outlined in detail in Table 5, section 4.4, in the next chapter. The purpose of using authentic conversational language is to amplify the context of the study and to draw the reader's attention to a genuine Malaysian context. However, English is not the respondents' native language, if it is participants' direct quotes, pseudonyms are added, and their original spoken language will be preserved unless there are more than one informant who said the same thing. I also created conversations using the local Malaysian slang to blend my voice and the informants' voices when reporting. The reason was to ensure there was coherence in the narratives and to help the narratives become more compelling.

In addition, all direct quotes from the interviews were in italic form with pseudonyms in brackets at the end of each quote. The reason was to exemplify the use of authentic responses in the composite narratives. I did not solely create the stories from imagination. This study aimed to reach a wide range of audiences globally, and to speak

to Malaysian educators. Hence, I chose to report the data using authentic language transcribed with translation and to make the research accessible.

Furthermore, to show in writing that reflections do happen in the camp, I used a method where I placed participants reflections in separate vignettes. These are direct quotes from their responses. Pseudonyms were added to all quotes directly or indirectly. Table 5 in section 4.4 is to help the reader identify quotes before reading the narratives.

Since a composite narrative tells a story combining various individual interviews, it is somewhat parallel with the method of analysis when conducting phenomenography. The transcripts and the emerging categories are to be viewed collectively or as a whole and not individually when conducting research using phenomenography (Åkerlind, 2002). In phenomenography, there are three aspects when reporting phenomenographic research findings – “[1] the outcome space; [2] the thorough elaboration of each category; and [3] the analysis of the relationship among the categories” (Åkerlind et al., 2005, p. 95). I chose to use composite narratives to report on the second aspect of phenomenography where each category is elaborated. Three composite narratives are written to answer the two research questions as follows:

1. What are the experiences of those who have attended and/or facilitated an experiential learning process that is focused on the learning of soft skills?
2. What are the perceptions of the camp participants and the camp facilitators about the outcomes of the learning of soft skills?

The three composite narratives consist of Ashok, Lim, and Siti's experiences in the camp. They are written like flashbacks, where participants recall their past experiences attending the camp to describe each category. For the first category, "Camp encourages learning awareness and reflections"; the narrative is written from a facilitator's perspective recalling different roles played in different camps. As for the second category, "Camp enhances positive behaviours and habits"; I wrote from a camp participant's point of view on how the camp has changed him in different settings or situations in the camp although the responses can be taken from a student facilitator or a working facilitator. While the third category, "Camp simulates personal and professional life"; is written from a working professional's angle where a comparison between her past experiences in the camps and her current experiences in her workplace, show that the transference of skills happened. Their names are created based on the demographic data of the research. The study consisted of Indian, Malay and Chinese participants, and represents three big ethnicities in Malaysia with both male and female students. Since the university has more male students than female, most of the respondents were male. Detailed demographic data is provided in the methodology chapter.

3.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter described employing phenomenography as the best research design to answer the research questions, and in particular, to gauge respondents' variation of perceptions. The process of data collection and data analysis following three phenomenography methods helped to identify categories of descriptions in three different ways camp participants and facilitators learnt soft skills. This chapter

described the use of composite narratives to present the data. The next chapter describes the overall concept of the camp. I then present the outcome space with categories identified. Three narratives are used to present the findings.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores research participants' overall responses about their learning of soft skills through the camp. The first section presents the overall concept of the camp. The second section discusses the outcome space with a diagram showing the categories of descriptions drawn. The next section describes the use of three composite narratives to describe the research participants' overall learning experiences of soft skills through attending and facilitating multiple similar type of outdoor camps conducted. This writing style enabled the creation of three characters that portray three different research participants' experiences from their university life to their working life. Each character represents a variation in the way that soft skills were learnt through their camp experiences.

4.2 Context of the Study

The camp was designed to train students physically, mentally and emotionally. The facilitators were given different roles to play to enhance students' learning experiences, which is described in a later paragraph. Inductions were conducted before camp to rehearse each activity set in the schedule. Camp participants were not informed beforehand of the camp schedule to ensure they stayed alert and were always ready, unless it was a risky activity. Camps were conducted for three days and two nights in an outdoor natural setting with river and forest. Any technological devices like handphones and cameras were not allowed on the camp. This was to ensure the

participants were entirely focused on the camp activities without any distractions from the ‘outside world’. However, emergency contacts were provided to the students’ guardians. At the end of every significant activity or sometimes during an activity, educators or facilitators would ask reflective questions to help participants continually self-reflect on what they were doing at that time and on what they had learnt from the activity. At the end of the camp, the participants were asked to complete an overall reflection on what they had learnt from the camp.

The camp was first designed to intentionally focus on developing three primary soft skills: communication, teamwork, and leadership. However, other soft skills such as time management, creative thinking, critical thinking, problem-solving, were integrated throughout the camp activities. These skills were in the module but were never revealed to the participants. ELT was used in planning and preparing questions for reflective sessions. Camp participants shared their thoughts with their team members in small groups or a big group during debriefing sessions.

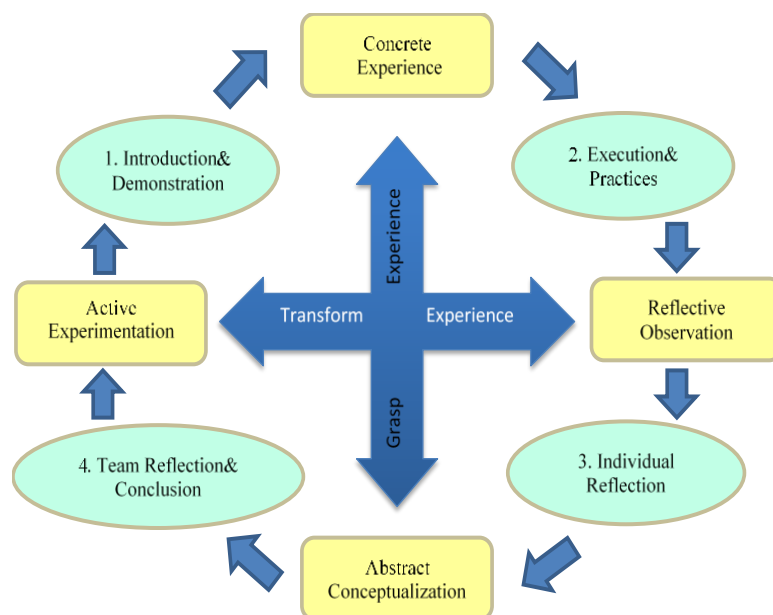


Figure 6: Camp integrating Kolb’s ELT (Kolb, 2015)

Figure 6 shows the structure of how each activity in the camp was conducted integrating Kolb's ELT. Reflections were encouraged intensively and intentionally throughout the camp by all the outdoor educators and student facilitators. The role of the outdoor educator here was to ensure that an activity moderator was well trained to apply the reflective process. An activity moderator could be an outdoor educator or a student facilitator, it merely meant a person who oversaw an activity. Pre-camp training was conducted before the camp. However, activity moderators or other outdoor educators knew only the simple terms outlined in Figure 6 without knowing that ELT was referred to in the process, namely: Introduction and Demonstration, Execution and Practice, Individual Reflection, and Team Reflection and Conclusion.

The way the activities ran was the activity moderator started with an *Introduction and Demonstration* so the participants could be prepared for the *Concrete Experience (CE)* stage, which was the doing of an activity. This brought them to the second stage of *Execution and Practices* to where participants experienced the CE. During the actual doing process, the activity moderator was aware that participants were potentially learning through the experience by doing "trial and error reflections". In other words, participants often experienced errors before succeeding at a given task. Participants reflected on which part of the process caused the error, and would keep trying and adjusting until they succeeded in the task. In addition, the activity moderator asked questions to help participants to reflect intentionally on their failed experiences to encourage them to keep going. The activity moderator and other facilitators would ask many questions but would not readily give any answers. This meant the participants were motivated to reflect on their experiences and decisions in the moment.

The continuous intensity of self-reflection proceeded with many rhetorical questions, while the activity moderator moved the participants to the next step of *Individual Reflection* in their small groups, with the anticipation that *Reflective Observation (RO)* was happening. There was a facilitator in each small group to moderate the participants reflections. The small group facilitators played a vital role in the process of RO after the participants had completed their CE. The individual self-reflection stage was when the participants identified their learning by voicing their thoughts with other small group members.

From the reflections that participants contributed through self-reflection in their small group, they were encouraged to voice their opinions voluntarily to the activity moderator as a big group with all the camp participants. As a big group, the participants reflected on their experiences and lessons learnt from aspects of the activity they experienced to seek profound understanding. In this *Team Reflection and Conclusion* stage, the role of the activity moderator was to help the participants reflect on the processes and to conclude their small groups' reflections. Anyone in the small groups shared their team reflection and conclusion on their learning and how they could apply the lessons learnt to the big group. The activity moderator drew logical conclusions from the participants' responses to help them relate the activities and lessons learnt. In this process, the activity moderator summarised the participants' responses and combined their responses with his or her thoughts about the lessons planned while organising the activity. This summary led to a conclusion of the overall learning process of the activity. The process described is the *Abstract Conceptualisation (AC)* stage where the logical conclusion was made. Examples of flexible guided questions for the small and big group reflection led by the activity moderators and facilitators were:

1. Let us recall the process of this activity we just did, what did we do first, and what was the next step?
2. What have we learnt from this activity? Then some probing questions such as Good and what else? Anyone else?
3. How are you going to use the things you learnt from this activity in the management of your club and society or life in general?

The next stage is *Active Experimentation*, where decisions and actions were taken after a conclusion was made. In this process, after lessons were learnt from the activity, participants then experimented with what they had learnt from the previous activity into the next activity. At this time, the activity moderator would continue to remind them to work together, and of their previous errors, so that, it was more likely during the new activity, they would experiment and build on what they had learnt from the previous activity. The activity moderators conducted the whole process from the *Introduction and Demonstration, Execution and Practices, Individual Reflection, Team Reflection and Conclusion* repetitively from one activity to another. Even the activity moderators were learners in this process as they would learn how to make a decision and how they should carry out the tasks assigned to them from their past errors. They would experiment first among themselves in the induction programme or pre-camp training where activities were rehearsed before they could conduct the camp.

In conclusion, activity moderators established new experiences through what they applied in conducting the camp. They learnt new experiences by conducting the camp with a structured module of planned activities. The more camps the activity moderators conducted, the more knowledge and experience they gained and they became more

experienced in using the cycle. The development of knowledge and experience enabled them to work consistently on enhancing their skills.

In the camp, participants positive and negative emotions were triggered. The outdoor educator assigned two student facilitators to play the role of head and assistant discipline facilitator to overlook the participants' behaviours in the camp. The discipline facilitators had only one job throughout the camp - to observe participants' choices. For example, if participants did not arrange their shoes in order or did not check if the eating area was clean, then these errors were recorded and there would be consequences for the group. Additionally, if good deeds were done, they were also recorded. Each day in the camp programme there was a disciplinary session where the participants accumulated wrongdoings in the camp were pointed out by the discipline facilitator, as a group without pointing it to anyone. This was also a session of reflection specifically on why they were told about their wrongdoings and what to improve from that point onwards. Only the group and the discipline facilitators were present. When the accumulated wrongdoings were too many, an additional disciplinary slot would be added. The camp participants' emotions were triggered based on their actions, and the head of the discipline would ensure that they were aware of their actions, and that they were being observed from time to time.

On the first day of the camp, the head of discipline would announce the rules in the camp. So, the participants were aware of their actions and mindful that they were being observed. During the disciplinary slot, the head of the discipline pointed out all the wrongdoings the participants had committed, strictly and sternly, and he or she would always be strict and might sound like scolding but not screaming. He or she would leave

the hall once this was done. At that moment, the participants would either be sad or angry.

The assistant discipline facilitator who served as a motivator remained to encourage the participants and help them reflect on their actions. As a big team, they would think of solutions to avoid making the same mistakes twice. The assistant head would also praise their right actions to motivate them to keep persevering. The other facilitators were not supposed to be in the hall at that time, but I stayed with to observe the head and assistant head of discipline as their educator. I would usually provide advice to the discipline head so they could play their roles well. In the camp, everyone including the head facilitator and the participants were asked to be reflective of their actions. This included the outdoor educators who would be reflective themselves especially during the debriefing at night when all the participants were asleep, and also after every camp. Hence, I was there to prevent any misinterpretation of intent, and to safeguard the participants from becoming hurt or over anxious.

Other facilitators were playing the “good cop bad cop” roles in the camp. They had a few roles to play depending on the workforce available at each camp. Facilitators played their roles from the camp organising committee, who had planned the three day camp with the educator, to the camp facilitator who handled everything in the camp. Roles that the facilitators played were a camp commandant who directed the whole team of both facilitators and participants, activity moderators who conducted or led activities planned, small group facilitators who stayed with their participant groups to support and motivate them throughout the camp and conducted reflections after every activity in the small group. In addition there was a secretary who recorded any meetings,

a treasurer who managed the camp funds, and committee members who worked together with the educator to book the transportation, logistics, and food.

Before the camp, the facilitators were selected to be in charge of different positions in the organising committee. One of the facilitators who was appointed as the director of the camp was also called the head facilitator, they automatically became the camp commandant who oversaw everything in the camp. The camp director/commandant was not left alone to oversee everything, all the facilitators were under my observation and supervision.

In conclusion, each facilitator played a “good cop or a bad cop” role to create a scenario situation with people of different character traits. However, in reality, no two persons are similar; the role-playing was meant to simulate real life situations. The “bad cop” facilitators needed to be less friendly with the participants, while the “good cop” facilitators supported and motivated the participants. Then, their wrongdoings and good deeds would be collated to be announced without pointing to any individual during disciplinary slots. Only the head and assistant head of discipline were given the roles to be in charge of the participants’ discipline.

4.3 Outcome Space

The outcome space of this study is portrayed in Figure 7 below. It shows a hierarchical relationship among the categories. The most bottom and inner layer of the diagram is set as “Camp encourages learning awareness and reflections”, while the second layer above the bottom layer is named “Camp enhances positive behaviours and habits”. The third layer, on top of the second layer, is called “Camp simulates personal and professional life”. Overall, the findings show that participants believed that the camp had helped them learn soft skills.

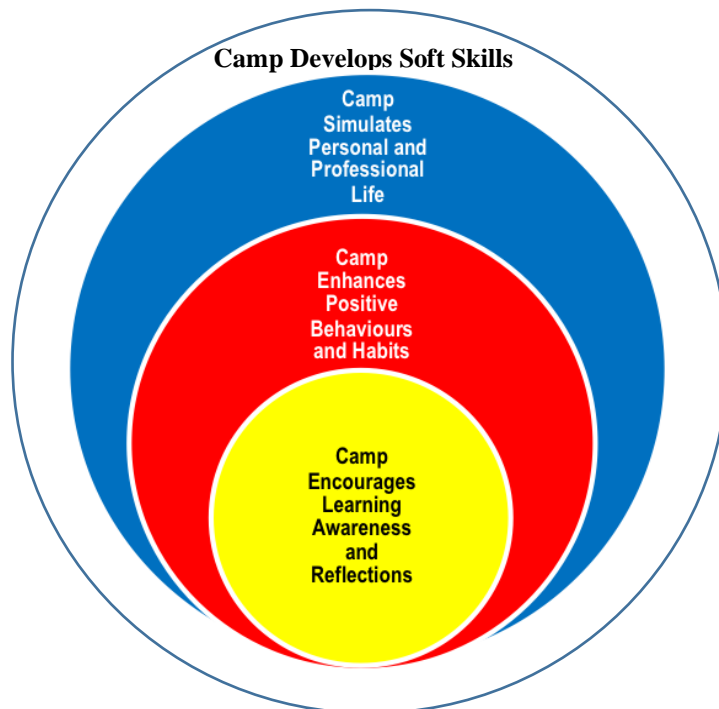


Figure 7: Outcome Space of the Categories of Descriptions

In Figure 7, an archery target-looking diagram is used because the bull’s eye (the yellow area) is the heart of all learning through reflections throughout the camp experiences. It is in a circular form, without arrows indicating the direction in their process of learning because a camp participant might already have some prior camp experiences

before participating in this camp. They may have already been through the red circle and come back to realise that camp is about learning these skills. A camp participant who may have attended more than ten camps, with a gradual change of behaviour in the tenth camps he or she had attended, but only in this camp does he or she realise the enhancement of his or her behaviours and habits. As an example, in the excerpts taken from a participant who attended 21 camps before this camp, the participant mentioned 'rather than learning', which indicates the awareness of learning.

I have participated in around 21 other camps... Most of the time, we would be scolded rather than learning anything [AK].

Another excerpt shows the participant notes the camp has changed him:

This camp helped me realise a need for change and it did change me [Izz].

Therefore, when participants realise and are aware that a camp with a lot of reflections may help them learn or change, they might look forward to attending more camps as stated by one of the participants in the excerpt below:

I do think that the camp is a never-ending process of learning actually. Because every time I went for Mak Lang camp, for five times, every time I went, I did feel that, that was my first time going to the camp [Raj].

Each category stated above is reported in three different composite narratives more thoroughly, and the relationships among the three categories are described after the composite narratives.

4.4 Introduction to the Three Narratives

In this section, I introduce the three characters in the three narratives. These characters represent the three categories shown in Figure 7, the outcome space above. The voices for all three narratives include both camp participants and camp facilitators' voices. All the narratives include the soft skills that they learnt directly and indirectly through the camp. For example:

It's more focused on soft skills actually. It's into our soft skills, it actually developed our personal skills and attitude. It's more about that [Raj].

The character for the first narrative is Ashok who is a facilitator aware of learning through reflections. This narrative describes different roles facilitators played in the camp. There are twelve facilitators' voices in this narrative.

The second character is Lim who is a camp participant. This narrative was created to reveal the changes of behaviours which is the second category in the outcome space. Some parts of the narrative are described through scenarios in a single camp. These scenarios are common scenes in the camp. Voices of thirteen informants including the participants and facilitators are added to Lim's narrative.

The third character is Siti. Her narrative portrays facilitators who have graduated, have work experience or are currently working. There are nine voices in this narrative that shows the third category in the outcome space. This narrative shows their responses about learning soft skills they can recall from the camp and their descriptions about how these soft skills have become their habits. They also described how these habits

have helped them with their work and how they interact or deal with people in their workplaces.

Table 5 provides a guide on how to identify original voices from the research participants. Quotes are taken directly from the participants. However, there are exceptions where some quotes have been changed from a third-person point of view to the first-person viewpoint. This is done when participants describe their friends.

Subject	Guide	Sample Sentence
Researcher's voice in English	Normal font	First, let me summarise those 20 odd camps.
Researcher's voice in one of the languages of Malaysia	Italic without pseudonym but with translation in bracket.	<i>"Hey Lim, you tak pernah makan dengan tangan ke? Come, I teach you to makan using your right hand, do like this (Translation: Hey Lim, you haven't eaten using your hand before? Come, let me teach you how to eat using your right hand, do it this way)."</i>
Direct quote in participant's original English	Italic form with pseudonym	<i>I have participated in around 21 other camps [AK]</i>
Direct quote in one of the languages of Malaysia	Italic form with pseudonym and translation in normal form in bracket.	<i>tujuan modul ini adalah untuk memudahkan kita untuk berkenalan dengan orang yang berada dalam camp dan berkenalan dengan apa yang berada di sekitar kita, so bila kita dah rasa comfortable dalam camp, baru kita boleh proceed dengan other modules [Izz]. (Translation: the purpose of this module is to make it easy for all of us to ensure that we know each other in the camp and to also know what is around us, so, when we feel comfortable in camp, only then can we proceed with other modules [Izz]).</i>
Reflection in vignette	As direct quote's guides in the third row of this table, but in the vignette.	Lim's reflections: <i>I learnt how to mingle with people [Tim, Ann and Anip]. I did not have the confidence to speak with people somehow, me, myself being brave joining the camp, meeting with lots of people, partly forcing myself to meet people, somehow, helped me improve in self-confidence [Dan].</i>
Adapted quotes from participants (to change the third-person point of view to a first-person point of view)	Normal font with pseudonyms	I was very tired and frustrated at first, because I am a lefthander and do everything using my left hand, and I had to use my right hand to eat, but my friend's patience in teaching me, and the good feeling of eating together from a plate calmed me down ([Naff] talked about his friend B, being a lefthander and learning to eat with his left hand).

Table 5: Guides to identify data in the narratives

In summary, to identify quotes, they are all marked with pseudonyms. Direct quotes are in italic form with pseudonyms while indirect quotes are in normal font with pseudonyms. The narratives portray the three categories or three ways camp participants and facilitators identified they had learnt soft skills.

4.4.1 Ashok's experiences: 'Camp encourages learning awareness through reflections'

Introduction to Ashok's narrative:

In this narrative, I put together all the responses about the awareness of learning through reflections. The respondents mentioned they have been learning soft skills through attending and facilitating this camp many times. This narrative is written in sections segregating different facilitation roles played and soft skills learnt through these roles. It is written from a facilitator's perspective. The first part of the narrative includes some comparisons they made between this camp and other camps. Then, the methods and elements in conducting this camp were mentioned. The second part of the narrative outlined the different roles facilitators played in learning a range of soft skills. The centre of this narrative is on learning awareness through reflections as reflection is an important element in this camp.

I have participated in around 21 other camps [AK] but this camp teaches reflection, it encourages us to think a lot [Tim, Raj, Naff, and Penguin]. I am aware that I am learning soft skills in this camp. I have been both the participant and the facilitator for this "Mak Lang" camps (Translation: the name of the location of the camp for this study). Mostly, they were either religious camps or survival camps where we were given a set of instructions to follow until the end. We were condemned and scolded, we had that negative kind of pressure where we were not told where we did the mistakes, but they would give us penalty and negative points. That affected the leader, not the whole group, when they found a mistake done by one of the members, then the leader of the camp would be punished, but the cause of the problem was not told. Most of the time,

we would be scolded rather than learning anything [AK]. We were not aware if we were learning in those camps. There were some challenging parts in the camps, they really challenged your physical only because you need to survive, and you really need a lot of energy. We were prepared to survive. Yes, surviving in the jungle and we didn't have the basic like a tent or what. So, we had just been provided with nylon clothes, and yup, we need to find our own wood and our own branches to build our own tent. They only provided us with sufficient amount of raw food, and we needed to cook ourselves and we even needed to plan where we wanted to build our tent actually. Everything needed to be done by ourselves, so it's more like an army camp, surviving skills. It's more like that [Raj].

However, Mak Lang camps were mostly experienced-based learning [Raj and AK]. At the end of the module, they wanted us to learn something and to bring back something and the module is basically designed to actually shape us. They don't have scolding, but there are corrections, instead of being bombarded without any reason. When we made a mistake, we were corrected and from those corrections, we learnt not to make the same mistake again. We were given chances to try it out ourselves, then, came up with a solution instead of being spoon-fed every single time [AK]. For example, when we were given a task like, if we want to cook rice, we were told to choose and think of how we should cook the rice. I remember there were two options given; we had to cook it with either our socks or a leaf [AK]. So, that's the kind of camp in Mak Lang. It's more focused on soft skills actually. It's into our soft skills, it actually developed our personal skills and attitude. It's more about that [Raj].

Ashok's reflection:

I do think that the camp is a never-ending process of learning actually. Because every time I went for Mak Lang camp, for five times, every time I went, I did feel that, that was my first time going to the camp. I really like to open my mind to learn everything because whenever I went, I met new, different participants there actually. So, for me, even to learn from them is benefiting me. At the same time, I do feel that the modules are changing every time we went for the camp. We were actually learning a new style of conducting the same activity, which I can learn and at the same time, now, I feel that I have benefited from that because I am using that in my working life [Raj].

I have attended the Mak Lang camp for a total of five times; once as participant and four times as facilitator [AD, FFK, Sam and Anip]. Let me tell you my story as a facilitator in *Mak Lang* camps. If I say ‘camp’ from this point onwards, I refer to *Mak Lang* camps.

A week before any of the camps, we would have our own induction among the facilitators. As a facilitator, we do have to learn before we can teach others [Anip], we can't be telling participants what to do if we ourselves don't know what we are doing [AK and TCO]. So, in those inductions, we were experiencing ourselves what would the participants be doing, so we get to see if we can actually work it out [AK]. Some of the activities like the falling egg, of course there is going to be a higher chance that it's going to break. When we did those activities, we were not expecting the participants to pass or fail. We did not focus on whether they succeed or not. We were thinking of what they or we will learn from it, and we try to emphasise this among the facilitators. To use the word ‘activity’ instead of ‘game’ does influence someone, when we say it's a ‘game’, and everyone thinks that, “oh, it's fun!” like we don't think about the consequences, but then when it comes to activities, it's like, “Oh! We are doing this in

a certain level, there is a tiny bit of formality to the word 'activity'." So we think we have a broader thought towards what we're doing. Even when we were doing the induction, we will ask ourselves what we will learn from the activities. So, we remind ourselves what we are supposed to learn from these compared to "Oh! It's fun and game" [TCO]. So, we were aware of learning even during inductions.

Ashok's reflection:

Induction is so important. It's really important because if you organise a camp, you have to be prepared before the camp. Induction is a must so that all the facilitators understand the objective of the camp and the objective of each module that we include in the camp. It's not just one person who should know, everyone should know, so that, we are prepared during camp, so that, there is no problem. Having problems or issues in the camp is normal, but at least we know how to handle the problem in the camp, we are well prepared, preparation is very important, it is very important [AD]. Most of the learning and learning about ourselves came from the induction where we decide what roles we play. Among us, we have to decide who does what job. I mean like what roles do each person play, and then when it comes to me, I was like, I have not done any of these roles before, OK, therefore, I just try this role. And I know that somehow, I will learn something, so it's like, OK, I just start with volunteering, OK, I will be the group facilitator this time because I want to learn more [TCO]. I thought, "Lagipun, tanpa induction, mungkin kita rasa kita dah jadi facilitator beberapa kali, tapi tak semua camp ada module yang sama, mungkin ada module yang berbeza, mungkin ada module yang sama tapi kita buat sikit perubahan, jadi kita tak boleh assume semua camp adalah situasi yang sama. Walaupun mungkin, let's say kita kata semua camp adalah situasi yang sama, adakah kita masih ingat lagi semuanya, adakah kita rasa kita betul-betul bersedia menghadapi camp itu sebagai facilitator? Jadi, macam mana pun kita kena ada induction untuk menyediakan diri sendiri sebelum kita berhadapan dengan participants. Jadi kita boleh berikan camp yang terbaik untuk mereka dan untuk diri kita sendiri untuk belajar.

[Izz]” (Translation: Furthermore, without induction, we might think that we have been a facilitator for a few times, but that doesn’t mean that all the camps are using the same module. The module might be different or we might have made some changes in the same module. So, we cannot assume that all the situations in the camps are similar, although, maybe, let’s say all the situations of the camps are the same, can we still remember everything, are we sure we are really prepared to handle the camp as a facilitator? So, no matter what, we need to have induction to prepare ourselves to face the participants. So that, we can give the best camp to them and to ourselves for learning [Izz]).

One of the most important parts that I remember were those steps in conducting each activity [AD, Izz, and Sam]. *There are five steps actually, the first step is introducing the activity we are going to do [AD].* For example, the game “Free Fall Egg”. I would say, “This activity is called Free Fall Egg, and *we will see whose egg is not broken at the end of the activity [N].*” Second, *we will explain the steps of the activity, the process of the activity [AD]* on what the participant should do in each stage. In this stage, I would say, “This activity is easy, I will give each group an egg, some straws and Sellotape, you have to wrap the egg with the straws and Sellotape in your own way. I will give you 15 minutes to do so. After that, I will come to each group and drop the eggs that you have wrapped from my height. You can start from now!” *Then the third step is conducting the activity [AD].* At this stage, the other facilitators and I would go around and ask them why they are doing it this way or not that way, keep them thinking through the process of doing [Papan]. *Fourth is asking the responses from the participants [AD].* I would ask them about their experiences and most importantly, I would ask them what they have learnt from the activity. *After asking the participants about what they have learnt from the activity [AD], for the last step, we just summarise their responses [AD].* I would also tell them what I thought and what our objective was

for this activity and informed them about the skills they should learn from this activity. They usually would have learnt more than what we planned from their responses.

Ashok's reflection:

Actually, we should never say that any of their responses are wrong whenever they told us that they have learnt something. We just have to say, "Yes, it's a good thing, ya, true". It's a very good process. They are in the best order based on my perception. There is nothing to be added actually. That's the best steps I have ever used so far. The most important process is the second process to tell the instructions of the activities, if let's say if the participants are not clear with the instructions, the activities wouldn't be going as what we really wanted it to. And in the third process, they have done it but they realised it later after that, "we have learnt this, yes, we have learnt that" [AD].

The camp director who was also the head of facilitators told us that *every night during the camp, we would have assessment or post-mortem and even after the camp also, we would have post-mortem [Dan].* When the participants were sleeping, we had a bigger responsibility. We would gather at the gazebo, reflecting on the day and looking for flaws. We would remind each other about what each of us had done wrong. So that, we get to learn from our mistakes and improve on the next day or the next camp [Sam].

After learning and practising how to conduct each activity and knowing how each activity throughout the camp worked, the real thing would happen the next weekend. We were usually well prepared physically and mentally not only to teach but also to learn more.

At the camp, there were times when some groups were not able to solve a problem in an activity, *when I saw them frustrated or upset, I'd try to make them calm down and think of life isn't just about winning or losing. I or other facilitators would give a little nudge like, "guys, remember what this is about..." It makes us stop for a while and think, "wait, this isn't about winning or losing, it really emphasizes the whole camp itself [TCO].* Even as a facilitator myself, I learnt from the participants. *We need to teach and learn from them [Tim].* The more I facilitate the camp, the more I improve.

Ashok's reflections:

From the little things, from the little activities, the little nudges from our facilitators, this is not just any other camps. This is where we should learn and for every activity, every non activity like when we had dinner or when we had lunch, or basically any time, in our leisure time, in between, we always had the thought, "OK, we are here to learn, we are here to learn". Even when we had our leisure time, "OK, after this, we have this." We have another activity, we are supposed to be there by this time, so we have that constant thought that, "OK, just do things that we're supposed to do and not trying to fool around that much, be responsible, and so when we think of being responsible, it kind of also increases our moral values and responsibility. Even outside the activities, we constantly think that the camp isn't just a fun camp. Those were the little things that make us remember we are here to learn. Learn, learn and learn [TCO].

Analytical comments:

In this first part of narrative, respondents mentioned that this camp is different from the other camps they attended because they were not aware that they were learning in those other camps. As a consequence they did not think that they had learnt anything. All facilitators found that it was beneficial to attend and facilitate this camp repeatedly due to the many (and different) learning opportunities from each camp.

They also mentioned that this camp focused on corrections whereas other camps gave a lot of punishment and scolding but without clear purpose. Preparation and induction are stated here as vital elements in a camp that helped them with learning even before the actual event. Respondents were aware that this camp is about learning. They believe that there was nothing to lose but much to gain by attending and facilitating this camp many times. They mentioned steps in conducting each activity with reflections. Other than that, facilitators were also reflecting daily during the camp at night to learn from weaknesses and to emphasise strength to enhance their practices on the next day. Emancipation in learning was also indicated by them as they pointed out that it was not about what they learnt specifically but the freedom to learn what they thought they have learnt. In sum, the learning awareness is what opened their mind to be willing to learn further. Next, the second part of this narrative below focuses on the different roles facilitators played in learning a range of soft skills, awareness of learning through reflections helped them to keep wanting to learn.

During my first camp as a facilitator, I was a group facilitator. Usually a group facilitator is a new facilitator who has only been through the camp as a participant. My role is mainly to guide, support and encourage a small group of participants. I must stay with my small group throughout the camp. *It was kind of odd because I was a participant once and suddenly, I became a group facilitator. But I feel I learnt more as a group facilitator than actually being a participant. But I had that initial learning as a participant. But it sank in even more when I was a group facilitator. When you are a group facilitator, you meet a lot of people and you get to have a good connection with all of them. As a group facilitator, whenever they have like a certain module, I facilitate like, I don't really help them out a lot because they had to think of an idea and come up*

with a solution. But if they had a certain doubt towards the module, then yes, I do help [Papan]. I need to ensure that I don't help them too much because I should facilitate them.

Ashok's reflections:

As a group facilitator, participants in the group would feel closer to us, they would try to communicate with us and ask us how to solve this and that problem. OK, asking questions is a good thing, but normally in the camp, we were taught to solve problems given in our own ways, but as group facilitator, it was not necessary that we should leave them there to think. We can guide them, only guide them but not to give them any solution. We would give them the guidance they need so that they can have their own ideas to solve a problem. If we give them the solution, meaning that we are not encouraging them to learn but asking them to solve it not with their own effort. For example, Radio Rosak (Translation: radio is like a music player in English, while rosak means spoiled). This activity is to make them line up, from the first person to the last person. They will be given a picture; first person will then pass the information to the next person with drawing. So, maybe there will be someone who will ask, "What picture is this? I cannot understand and I cannot draw." In this scenario, if we give them the answer straight away, such as, "This is a picture of a bear." Meaning that we have given them the answer and we didn't encourage them to think. Instead, maybe we can give them some guidance by giving them some clues. Maybe say, "This picture is easy to understand, if you look closely, you can see that this might not look like a human, it looks like an animal, this is not a vegetable, at least the participant will think on their feet and look closer and see what animal this is, always ask them a lot of questions. If they ask you question, that's good. For example, at work, if we ask too many questions, then it's not our own effort. People will feel that we are lazy, so, when we ensure that in the camp, the participants are used to this way (by not giving them an answer), then they will learn to be independent. I am aware that this is about learning [Izz].

Usually at the end of an activity, the head of the module will say aloud what they were supposed to learn from it, which I find useful as well. But sometimes, my group participants were not sure what they were learning. So, what I did was I have some sort of reflection session with my group. So that, they can reflect back on what they have actually learnt. I had a self-reflection among my group mates, and I am sure they learnt a lot more. I made sure that I sat with my group in all the activities and then, asked them questions like, “what have you done and what have you learnt from this?” Sometimes also and mostly if the next module started, then usually if they go through a certain problem, I usually helped them relate to the previous module they have learnt. So that they can apply it in this next module [Papan].

Ashok’s reflections:

Those questions deepen our understanding. As a student in class, if we don’t ask questions, yes, we might understand today but over a year, next semester we might forget, so questions are asked to deepen the understanding and knowledge from the module [AK]. I believe that I need to have this self-reflection to learn better because it’s not just individual self-reflection. Let’s say, during a module, someone says, “I learnt about communication because of my communication with this person, it actually helped me to carry out the task much more easily.” And then, that person he was talking about felt appreciated and then he also gets to learn what the other person learnt, you know. So, it’s not just individual learning, it’s also group learning during this self-reflection session. And it’s not just among the team, even I, as the group facilitator also get to learn something new. As a person who just went through the camp a year ago, I really really value the fact that I was a group facilitator that time and I learnt from a different perspective [Papan].

After being a group facilitator, during the second year, I became the programme facilitator. My job was to keep track of every activity from the day we arrived at Mak

Lang till the day we left [AK]. Sometimes, when we did not have enough people who could conduct the activities, a few of us under the programme bureau who usually monitor the duration and flow of each activity were told to be the back-ups. When a facilitator who was in charge of an activity could not do it due to some unforeseen circumstances, we had to step in. I had to check the time constantly because there were many activities planned for the three days, and I had to make sure that all the important modules were carried out. However, the programme changed all the time, so we had to deal with all kinds of changes. As a programme facilitator, that's what we do, we deal with changes. So, what kind of changes? When the lunch time got delayed, to compensate that delay, we had to change the activity. So, we checked with the head of the camp about the possible time he needed to prepare the food, if he said half an hour, then we would swap the activity to another activity that took shorter time to complete. So, utilisation of time, punctuality, they are all controlled by us under the programme bureau [AK]. I felt like a little manager of the camp. As a programme facilitator, we did not give out the programme schedule, so the participants had no clue what is going to happen next. I remember when I was a participant, we were not given the tentative programme, I had mixed feeling, because I don't know if I should go to the loo or not, it was a crazy moment. But I prefer it without the tentative, because with the tentative, we knew what's coming up next, then, where's the fun in that? So, if we didn't have the tentative, we would be waiting, "OK, what's next? What's next? What's next?" especially when the head of the camp gave us creepy feelings that we were going to do a night walk in the jungle. Without even knowing what time we were going and he would say things like, "There are a lot of things you are supposed to see in the jungle", he would give us the chill down our spine, and he also might say, "OK, today is not a good day, tomorrow, we go for it [AK]." We were always staying alert and aware because

we didn't know what was coming [AK and FFK]. At the same time, we were also alert and aware that everything in the camp was about learning of soft skills. Since we wanted to instil this kind of feeling in participants and we wanted them to stay alert all the time, so, keeping the tentative programme from them was a good move.

Ashok's reflections:

As a programme facilitator, I learnt to manage a camp, I also learnt to adapt to changes and managing time. Being a responsible person is important in this. If we do not care about what we do, the whole camp would have been ruined. *In the camp, as a facilitator, I had to change myself to suit the work that was given to me. I had to be responsible so that the participants would see it, and if they see me as a responsible facilitator, then it means that I had set a good example. I thought, "Now, if I am not arranging my shoes, how will the participants do it, so now, intentionally I corrected myself."* The drive that made me want to go back for more as a facilitator was because of the correction factor [AK] as I get to be corrected and to become better. A participant could be a platform for us to learn. As a participant, most of the time we were independent, but we still followed a set of instructions given by the facilitators and we had to follow. While as a facilitator, we had to adapt to learning, to learn good decision-making skills [AK]. We would decide whether we want to be a good role model for the participant because our advisor won't be everywhere with us as there were many of us [Izz and FFK]. We would reflect on our actions independently or constantly [AD, FFK, Papan, Izz, Sam, and TCO].

During my third time as a facilitator, I became an activity facilitator. *As the activity conductor or facilitator, I was in charge of conducting a module itself, it was the Cup Song, basically I just had to teach the participants on how to accomplish the song with actions. But teaching seems, for some people, it's just a song, there is nothing hard about it. But when there is a pretty large group basically just myself as the conductor,*

the only one who is teaching it, and I need to make sure that every single participant understood and is able to cope well with the pace that I was going on. At the same time, trying to make everyone listen and pay attention, So that was... as a facilitator, that was an eye opening session, how should I do this and how should I maintain the pace without going too fast or too slow that it gets boring, it was a nice experience, as the participants were also very positive [TCO]. Even this, I was aware that I was learning to be patient.

When I was conducting a module, I tried to learn as much as I could, for example when I was conducting one activity, there would be some outcomes from that activity, and that was only one module. Then, if I conduct multiple modules, there would be multiple outcomes. I would get to know more and more when I conducted more modules. That's my intention, at the end of the day, I learnt a lot of things and there was a variety of soft skills. But like some people, they might feel like, "OK, I am done and all, I went to the camp once and I got some knowledge and that's enough." However, I thought differently because I have the learning urge or I keep on wanting to learn, keep on wanting to know how I should conduct this or that module; and how I should talk to people or coordinate people. This is very important [Sam]. Furthermore, I always thought that, "OK, I already got this experience, I already have the knowledge, so now it's my time to give to others." You know how a sponge works, you have water inside, when you squeeze it, the water will come out, at the same time, it was kind of like still absorb some others stuff towards itself. So, it was a give but also a take, in new knowledge [TCO]. This drives me to return as many times as I can to the camp because I have the urge to learn the values like leadership, time management, how I should learn communication skills, which is one of the important skills [Sam] and also to give back

[Sally and TCO] and see others change [AK, TCO, and Raj]. To conduct a module is not easy because there would be a group of participants with different personalities [Anip and Izz]. Even like if I wanted to initiate a conversation, I needed to know how to do that the right way because with different types of people, I had to know how to deal with them. I would be coordinating these people. I need to know how to react, and when I got the reactions, I need to know how to react. So, I learnt all that. Not something easy you know. It's like the reactions were diverse, some people might be angry and wanted to give up at a certain point, and said, "No, I can't do this, you know I am not happy with this." So, as an activity facilitator, I must know at that point, how to talk to them, how to convince them. I learnt all these things. It's very hard to manage people [Sam].

Ashok's reflections:

In the camp, some people might not like some of the activities. So how do you convince them to participate? I learnt how to convince people through this. Because, at the end of an activity, the participants will feel positive or negative, so you get the feedback from them, and then you try to improve from that. That's one thing. To me personally, for my personal growth, about leadership, you need to know how to manage people, that's one of the keys. Time management is another skill. You manage all these activities in a provided time and space, within hours and within time, in the right order [Sam].

The main reason I returned for so many times is that I have the urge to learn and I always want to learn more [AK, AD, Sam, Izz, and Raj]. As an activity facilitator, I learnt many skills through multiple activities that I have conducted. I also learnt about people.

It was my final year at the university. My advisor assigned me to be the discipline facilitator. That was the most difficult role to play. Most facilitators would avoid this role because no one likes to be disliked by the participants. *As a discipline facilitator, it's pretty reverse compared to being an activity facilitator since I wanted everyone to listen to me and like me and be approachable. So, I think it varied in if I was conducting something, I would try to get people to cooperate. I think it's better for them to have a sense of safety around me, some forms of comfort, so that they are more willing to listen to me compared to like push me away at the first sight. But as a discipline facilitator, I was supposed to be soft and emotional [TCO]. During that time, that was when my patience was tested to the limit because as a head of discipline, I knew that I needed to set some rules, so that they would follow exactly what I said. That was how it was supposed to be but sometimes they would disobey the rules. So, the keyword is to be patient [Izz]. I was also supposed to break them in the mental kind of way, kind of push to bring them down. As a person who is most of the time too hyped up, it was a challenge to bring myself to be more serious or moody and try to point out things that make people upset. So, yes, it was hard because trying to influence people is not easy. Patience, a lot of patience. As a discipline facilitator, I was trying to immerse myself being something that I am usually not. As, someone who is sometimes negative minded it's more focused on myself rather than pointing at others. So, it was hard in that sense, and it also reminded me about when I was a participant and how it was so discouraging when people often point out your flaws and how you should be much stronger. So, I think that was what I learnt, I need to face it and be strong. It kind of reminded me of when I was a participant, and how it felt to be discouraged. I tried to remind myself that, with the discouragement of other people, I still have to believe in myself, trust myself, and be strong to face that. It's kind of helpful in the sense that I understand both*

angles, as the person who gives out the negativity and also as the person who actually receives it [TCO].

Ashok's reflections:

The disciplinary slots really helped you to think. When someone scolds you or someone pushes you down and says don't do that, It's like if you do something wrong or bad, someone will scold you, when you do something right, someone will praise you, and that's important. Praising is also important, it is necessary because at that time, for some people, they really did well and the praises would really make them grow. But if he or she does something wrong, we need someone to really scold to make it right, not really scold, you do it in a proper way, discipline, I don't mean real scolding, you just discipline them [Sam]. For example, scolding usually means yelling angrily to someone about something, but scolding here means not yelling but strictly and firmly telling someone that they have done something unacceptable. Normally, the activity facilitators would take that praising and motivating role after the disciplinary slots. Both discipline facilitators and activity facilitators took us through an emotional roller coaster where our emotions were triggered positively and negatively. *Emotions come in between in making the right decision, so if you are feeling sad, you might have made the wrong decision, if you are feeling over excited, you might have made the wrong decision too, so in the camp, you learnt how to calm yourself down, think and reflect on what is the problem and overcome the problem [AK].* I know everything that happens in the camp is about learning especially getting scolded by the discipline facilitators, if not, I would never attend the camp willingly for so many times. *To me, getting criticised is life, we have ups and downs [Anip].* From the discipline in the camp, *we learnt how to right our wrongs, if we are right also, we shouldn't feel that we are so proud that we are right. Maybe when we did the right thing, we can teach others. If we did something right, maybe we will be praised but we shouldn't be too arrogant. We should be proud of ourselves but not to the extent that we become so arrogant. Whatever we have done*

or whatever we have achieved, maybe we can share our knowledge with other people, who may not know how to do it or how we can be successful. But when we did something wrong, we got scolded, from the camp we learnt how to manage our emotion. Even though suddenly Miss scolded you, when Miss is angry and she scolds you, she didn't do it for fun, there must be a reason. So, from there you will know that you should right the wrong so that Miss will feel that you have improved, that you have learnt from your mistake. We learnt so much about that from the camp, we made a lot of mistakes, like not everything we did is right, so when someone advise us, we cannot deny 100%, we should accept and reflect about it, like maybe what he or she is saying is correct, that person is actually trying to right our wrongs [Anip]. So, having the role of discipline facilitator taught us to accept criticism and learn from it.

To sum up, through all the different experiences gained in different roles as a facilitator, one of the main things that I found which was being taught in this camp whether directly or indirectly is responsibility for other participants, it's like a training. After every camp, I would be reflecting, thinking about the camp at night or at certain time of the day. I would be thinking that, "What if I were to do it in a better way then..." That's why I had this thought, "OK, maybe, in the next coming camp, I will be probably taking other responsibilities." That's how I believe most of us ended up being facilitator [Dan]. I think everyone should actually join the camp and prepare to learn, having fun in the camp is fine, but from that fun, we also have to learn something. It will defeat the purpose of organising a camp if you are not going there to learn something [Sam]. This camp encourages us to learn. If I were to compare to other camps, I think it somehow is different yet similar. Even though the core activities where they have their own moral values, and things that you would learn from. But from the camp that we had, it brings out or highlight the moral parts more to actually make me realised that "Ok, this is not

just a game, but this is to do this, this or this, encourages patience, encourages teamwork, compared to other camps, you do the activities, of course it was to gain moral values, but at the same time, you don't highlight them. It doesn't give much highlight about all the values. Whenever I think of other camps, "Oh, it's just fun and games" most of the time, even though there are moral values in it. This camp reminds us why we came to the camp, and what benefits we should see and gain from it [TCO].

Analytical comments and summary:

From the different roles they played, research participants thought that they learnt a diverse set of soft skills and also enhanced their existing soft skills. As a group facilitator, they mentioned that they learnt even more and related these to their experiences when they were the participants themselves. As facilitators, they guided small group reflection session among the participants. They believed that reflection was an important part, they stated that they helped participants to identify and apply what they have learnt earlier into the new activities. This supports transference inside the camp context. As a programme facilitator, they stated that they learnt to stay alert at all times, adapted to different situations and solved problems. Alertness was required because they were not given their camp schedule of what was going to happen next. While as an activity facilitator, they learnt to manage diverse people. Facilitators kept wanting to learn and wanted to share and give back to others. In addition, as a discipline facilitator, their patience was tested. The disciplinary slots helped the camp participants to think and reflect on their own behaviours. The participants mentioned that, even though they are being criticised, they learnt not to give up but to stay strong, emotions played an important role in reflection. By

realising the importance of learning and not just “fun and games” increased their willingness to return to the camp many times.

In summary, Ashok’s narrative highlights that the different facilitation roles helped the participants to learn various soft skills and to enhance their existing skills. Furthermore, learning through reflections encouraged them to be a facilitator in different roles and they were aware that the more they facilitate, the better they learn.

4.4.2 Lim's experiences: 'Camp enhances positive behaviours and habits'

Introduction to Lim's narrative:

A different style of writing is used in this narrative where the objective is to take the readers through the camp with the respondents to see how this camp could have enhanced positive behaviours and habits. This narrative identifies chronologically the series of events and modules from before the camp to after the camp. It is written from a participant's perspective where Lim was a new student who has just enrolled in the university. Before participating in this camp, Lim described his negative behaviours and how he was a passive person. After this camp, he saw a change in himself and wished to be a facilitator for this camp in the future. The first part of the narrative is meant to set the scene for the narrative. It is also to introduce some responses from the informants.

I remember before the camp, I was not good at talking to people, I was emotional and grumpy all the time. It was my first club day at the university, I had no idea which club I should join because I was a reluctant scout back in school. I joined the scouts because back then all students must join a uniform unit. I was a bit shy and did not like to be social, I was hot-tempered sometimes and I was never a patient and tolerant person. I could not accept when other people tried to tell me my mistakes. With that old me, I thought, maybe by joining a club, I could make friends who would accept me for who I am.

There were clubs and societies trying to recruit new members. The club advisor encouraged me to join her club because she said it would help me to improve my soft

skills, and I had no idea what they were, but I thought I should find out what soft skills are. The requirement to join the club was first to attend an outdoor camp, which they called a leadership camp and sometimes a training of trainers camp. I thought to myself, since I had attended a few scout camps when I was in secondary school, it should not be a problem for me to go into the jungle and to sleep in a tent for a few days. However, I hope I don't have to swim as I can't swim, and I am scared of water. Since my friends were all joining the club, I just signed up for the same club.

During our first club meeting, some of us were chosen to be the high committee because the club we joined was a new club, we were sort of the pioneers for that club and the club advisor hoped that we could make the club active with more members. We were then told that we must participate in a training camp. I was like, "*OK lah! Camping only ma, it must be fun and free food for three days, why not?*" (Translation: Alright, since it is just a camp, it must be fun with free food for three days, why not?).

The afternoon before the camp, we were called to attend a briefing before the camp, we were quite excited, and we were given a list of things that we needed to bring for the camp. The advisor reminded us sternly that everything that happens in the camp will be all about learning, she said, "set your mind right, and know that things in life are not going to be easy!" Then, this one person came into the room, with an unfriendly face, started telling us about the rules in the camp and that we must obey the rules, if not, there would be punishment. Then, he walked out straight afterwards without even a smile. I was like, "*What's wrong with you, maca?*" (Translation: "maca" is like calling a friend your brother or in Tamil language, it means brother-in-law, it is a slang used in Malaysia.)

Analytical comments: The above part of narrative is created to help readers imagine a normal scenario in the university with people joining their first camp. All students have their own story of how they found and joined the camp. Normally, the induction starts a day ahead of the camp to create awareness of learning. During the briefing, camp participants were reminded that they were there to learn soft skills. Even in the challenging situations, they were to think about what they were learning from them. In the first part of this narrative above, Lim represents a new student who has just entered the university from school. He brings with him his past positive and negative experiences, behaviours, habits, culture, and backgrounds, when he embarked on his new journey at the university. All in all, new students usually wanted to have fun. The next part is when more learning and realisation were unpacked through the camp.

I was excited about the camp and knew that it must be all about having fun, so I had forgotten all about this unfriendly person whom we called, "*faci disiplin*" (Translation: discipline facilitator). On the first day after the Friday prayer for our Muslim friends, we were told to assemble at a nearby café for our bus. The bus arrived and we put our luggage in the storage compartment of the bus, then we headed to an unknown destination and no idea what was going to happen for three days two nights. I was very curious, and my friend asked me, "*Eh, Lim, where do you think we are going ah? Mesti masuk hutan la kan, or sleeping in a chalet ke? Cuak lah!*" (Translation: "Hey, Lim, where do you think we are going? I am sure we must be entering the jungle right, or sleeping in a chalet? I am worried!"). Then, I thought to myself, I am sure it must be fun.

It has been almost an hour now, and we are heading north, the bus drives us further and further to *Pahang* (Translation: the biggest state in Peninsular Malaysia). On my left and right are jungles. We went further into the countryside and came to a place with a big field beside the river. On the other side of the river, it was the deep jungle, which I assumed that at some point in the camp, we would be doing jungle trekking.

As a participant, I remember that we were divided into groups to sleep in tents with strangers. I think four people to a tent. That was a bit awkward because we were just completely mingling around with people we didn't even know. It took a while for me to accept willingly that I had to sleep with strangers. However, since no one was complaining, so I had no choice but to follow the crowd.

So, it was like I had expected. When we gathered in a big bamboo-made gazebo, we had a lot of fun doing ice-breaking activities. My shyness broke a little after the fun activity. After that, the facilitator who handled the activity asked us so many questions about the activity and asked us what we have learnt from the activity.

Lim's reflections:

I learnt how to mingle with people [Tim, Ann and Anip]. I did not have the confidence to speak with people somehow, me, myself being brave joining the camp, meeting with lots of people, partly forcing myself to meet people, somehow, helped me improved in self-confidence [Dan].

Then the facilitator in charge told us this after the activity, he said, "*tujuan modul ini adalah untuk memudahkan kita untuk berkenalan dengan orang yang berada dalam camp dan berkenalan dengan apa yang berada di sekitar kita, so bila kita dah rasa comfortable dalam camp, baru kita boleh proceed dengan other modules [Izz].*"

(Translation: the purpose of this module is to make it easy for all of us to ensure that we know each other in the camp and to also know our surrounding, so, when we feel comfortable in camp, only then could we proceed with other modules [Izz]).

Lim's reflections:

Ice breaking seems to be an important part in the camp that broke the barrier between the participants and the facilitators. To ensure that the participants are opened up to the facilitators, to make sure that we are really into the camp, this needs to be catchy, because that's the first activity we do for any camps. This part is really important to start us off. The activity is simple yet made me reflect a lot about its importance. The ice breaking activities helped me to make new friends in the camp, to socially interact with strangers [Raj].

Then, it's mealtime! My stomach was growling a lot in the camp. We were told to sit in a group of four. The facilitators gave us a big *dulang* (Translation: tray) with rice, chicken and some vegetable. The food smelled great, but we were wondering how we should eat because we were not given any fork or spoon. One of the Muslim facilitators said a prayer, then everyone started eating with their hands, and all four of us shared a *dulang* of food. We had to split the big tray of food into four equally. I wondered how to be fair in distributing food, it's like we have to think of others, how to be equal, especially when some people could eat a lot and some eat less.

Lim's reflections:

I felt like, that's the point of having groups so that we can cater for our needs according to our capabilities and work as a team. Like some people, they might be able to do task ABCDE, some people can only do task A. I felt like we should help each other even though like my team, OK, we knew

that girls don't eat that much, so we actually asked them first before they started eating [Tim].

Another challenge about the meal system is that I had never eaten with my hands before this. I wanted a spoon, but my tent mate who is an Indian patiently taught me and said, “*Hey Lim, you tak pernah makan dengan tangan ke? Come, I teach you to makan using your right hand, do like this* (Translation: Hey Lim, you haven't eaten using your hand before? Come, let me teach you how to eat using your right hand, do it this way).” The Malays and the Indians normally eat using their right hand. It is inappropriate to eat with your left hand according to their cultures. I was very tired and frustrated at first, because I am a lefthander and do everything using my left hand, and I had to use my right hand to eat, but my friend's patience in teaching me, and the good feeling of eating together from a plate calmed me down ([Naff] talked about his friend B, being a lefthander and learning to eat with his left hand).

What I learnt from the eating from the dulang is being very tolerant, being very understanding, because I was eating from the same plate with people I do not know, they are not the same, they are not from my blood, so, I tried to share. When it comes to food, when everyone is hungry, everyone will want food. Who doesn't want food? So, being very tolerant, we would say, “fair share fair share”. The survival skills came into play so much so that, if someone sees that my chicken is a little bigger, they would start making noises. However, what I really learnt is that, to be very tolerant lah [Sally] (Translation: *lah* is an interjection added at the end of almost every sentence in Malaysia when we speak- much like in New Zealand how people finish a sentence with ‘eh?’). We were eating from the same plate with people we do not know especially people like me who don't know how to use my hand. I would unintentionally take the

food with my hand covered with my saliva. That required a lot of tolerance from those who were eating with me, and that changed me ([Tim] described, “*People who don’t know how to use their hand to eat, right? They will stick their hand covered in saliva out and then take the food. Ya, that requires a lot of tolerance you know.*”).

Lim’s reflections:

Four students sharing the same meal from the same plate, where in the current and modern society, people would not do that, because it is not their comfort zone [AK] (Translation: comfort zone here refers to being uncomfortable to eat with the hand). The facilitators and the instructors also ate in the same manner, from there, I realised that, no matter where you come from, no matter who you are, if you are in a group, then you have no choice, then you have to give in to this circumstance. So, since eating in one plate is not going to kill me in any way, why not be together and eat in a plate? Why do I want to have this sense of, “I will only eat with my kind of people, which is my race and my type of people?” So that’s why it’s breaking this country apart, it’s polarisation, so, I feel that, the first step to connect people in Malaysia is through food. That’s the best way of doing it, because we have diverse versions of food here in Malaysia. The Malay version of Nasi Lemak (Translation: A very famous coconut fragrant rice served with fried anchovy, ‘sambal’ which is a type of blended chilli with garlic and onion which needed to be cooked for a long time, and eggs), the Chinese version of Nasi Lemak, and the Indian version of Nasi Lemak, but they are the same thing, it’s Nasi Lemak. I think that, eating out of a plate with four people sharing seems simple, but I have learnt a lot from it [AK].

Analytical comments:

It was fun on the first day, but camp participants also realised that they were learning from each other, and they started to mingle with others whom they might not have known without the ice breakers. They learnt to adapt to different cultures, which sometimes took them out of their comfort zone such as by sharing a meal in a big plate. In the next section, there was a twist and things started to change; they started going through an emotional roller coaster ride.

After the meal, we were all happy and full. As we were all anticipating another fun activity and chatting away, a sudden silence filled the hall. When I looked up, I met the eyes of the unfriendly facilitator who told us all the rules that we needed to obey in the camp. He walked in and stood in front of all of us, and stared at us with his straight face. I quickly looked down as his stare sent a chill down my spine. My heart was pounding quickly and everyone stopped talking. He opened his mouth and sternly, he said, "I am totally disappointed with you! You are full, right? Good. What about your plates? No one dared to look up when he talked, because deep down in my heart, I started to blame others. I was embarrassed by their actions and thought that the culprits who did not wash their own plates should be punished. To my surprise, the discipline facilitator punished all of us by getting us to clean up the dishes together. He also gave us an additional task of cleaning the toilets as a punishment. I was really angry and wondered why do I need to get punished, it was not my fault.

After the punishment, we were told to get back to the hall. Another facilitator who was a girl, gently and softly, helped us to reflect on our mistakes. I could see disappointment and sadness in her eyes, kindly she asked, "Can I know why this is happening? Did you

guys always do this at home? You don't wash your dishes at home? Did your Mom do it all for you?" At that moment, I felt dissatisfied about being punished for things that I did not do. However, my perception changed when she explained, "you must be wondering why everyone should be punished instead of just one person, right?" She paused and made us think hard on our own action. She then explained that *when one person makes a mistake in the camp, not only the person who committed the mistake gets the punishment but also, the whole camp will be punished. So that, this will make you think that you have the responsibility to be the best in anything. So that, others will not be punished because of your mistakes. Sometimes even in real life if you make some mistakes, others will be affected, you need to think about it before you do something [Izz].* That hit me hard and I did a long reflection about this, *and I started to realise that it is all about teamwork! We work together to make each other better [Naff].* That again, changed my thought.

Lim's reflections:

I was egotistic and got angry easily when people did not agree with my ideas or told me my mistakes, which I did not think they were even wrong at first. *After the camp, I realised that ideas brainstormed as a team do affect the decision a lot. I think what the discipline facilitators did was definitely needed when our mistakes are pointed out, and where our limit is, to how good we are or not. I think negative emotions help us to think critically [Naff].*

There was another time when the facilitators told us to arrange our slippers outside, many people were unhappy, because they brought in their shoes when they were wet [Naff], I wonder why they can be so selfish! So, in this kind of situation, we need to be disciplined. Things like cleaning up plates, and all the chores that we need to be

reminded of. Honestly, the way we were disciplined in the camp helped me want to become a more thoughtful person [Naff].

Lim's reflections:

Before I joined the camp, I was actually a very negative type of person, I didn't like to take suggestions from people, I liked to boss others around. I was like that a lot, I was grumpy, and I would fly into a panic fast. Through this camp, I learnt that by bossing people around, you don't earn respect and you don't learn much. Importantly, you don't get to put a team together. The other thing was to be able to listen to every suggestion, and not say 'no' all the time before the other person finishes what he or she wanted to say. In every camp and every activity, the main thing was to work as a team. In the beginning, what I disliked about myself was when people gave instructions I would always ask "why are you saying this?", "why can't we do this?" There was this one session, I was having an argument with one of the camp instructors until Miss (referring to author) had to come and tell me to stop arguing, I was like, "No, we didn't do this, we didn't do that, why do we have to get punishment?" I was supposed to listen first, but I was like debating and arguing. I was like, "OK, OK." And then, I realised that, I need to shut my mouth and listen, then think through it, discuss with my teammates; instead of expressing it with emotion before understanding the situation, then, I should use action to prove to them that, "No, we are not like that, we are like this" [AD]. I thought to be a leader, we should first learn to accept scolding (Note: Scolding is not yelling at someone here, it is more of being told of what is wrong strictly.) but most of us would not. But when we admit that we are wrong, that is when we realise, and that is when we change. It is like putting us in a place, telling us where we stand in the society so that we do not get over egoistic, we do not get too dominant. Yes. The two discipline facilitators who stirred our emotions helped us to change for good! Many people didn't realise or focus on the actions. I thought basically, as a leader, I was the one who came up with ideas and basically dominating the idea, basically not listening to other people

because I thought my idea was the best. So, I was like, in the club, I had the issue, my club mates and my president gave me their ideas and I was like, no, follow my idea. But this camp was the part where it made me realised a lot of things and I was beginning to change. I realised that this is not the right way to be a leader, it made me realised what being a leader is all about, listening to other people, considering their ideas and deciding as a team. Leader is not listening to only my own rules, listening to my own methods and thinking that all I think is right, that's what I really learnt from the camp, it was very big thing for me. It was hard to change but the camp made me realise about my own mistakes all this while [Naff].

Analytical comments:

When their mistakes were pointed out by the discipline facilitators, it was no longer fun for the participants. There were frustrations because some participants might not have learnt from the experiences but many of them learnt to reflect on their wrongdoings after that. Plenty of self-reflections usually happen after a disciplinary session. Another soft-spoken but emotional facilitator would help them with their reflections. When they realised the meaning behind the disciplinary session, they started to change and wanted to become a better person. The next part of the narrative is about the physical and emotional challenges through the jungle and river journey which was done on the third day when their team spirit had improved.

There were a few disciplinary slots throughout the camp and on the third day morning, I could feel the team spirit among us, it was so different from the first day. We were scheduled to go on a jungle and river trekking (Translation: It is called a river because it is directly translated from a Malay word called *sungai*, river here is actually a stream, which you can walk in it, however, there are some very deep pools along the stream.).

The camp instructor in charge of the trip, *Pak Anipah* (Translation: Pak means Uncle, while Anipah is his name, he is the owner of the campsite called Mak Lang Nature of Life) did the briefing and prepared us for the journey. He gave us our life jackets and other things that we would need for the trip. We were very excited because we thought it would be fun. We were given some raw ingredients for cooking in the jungle. Pak Anipah said, “*kita akan masuk ke dalam hutan dan balik river trekking, jalan dalam sungai lawan arus masa on the way balik nanti.*” (Translation: We will enter the jungle by the river track, walk in the stream and against the current when we are on our way back.). We were given small and extremely bitter leaves called “*Hempedu Bumi*” (Translation: a type of herb found growing in the wild, which has a lot of benefits to health.) or “*Raja Pahit*” (Direct Translation: King of Bitterness) to chew and swallow before entering the jungle. We were told that there were many leeches and mosquitoes, eating the leaf would cause our blood to taste bitter, hence, it would prevent us from being bitten by insects. It was so hard to swallow and I cringed when eating it and the bitterness stayed for such a long time. We were also told that we must respect nature and must not shout or swear in the jungle. Then, the journey began.

There was mud, trees, and almost 90-degree slopes. We helped each other to go through all the challenging parts [AK]. We worked together and cooked in the jungle. *The jungle trekking with the food cooking, that's a very good activity [Tim]*. We were happy that we managed to feed everyone. For me, there were three very challenging parts throughout the journey: crossing the deep river, cooking in the jungle and building a stretcher to carry a teammate who pretended to be injured back to the campsite.

We started our journey easily along a normal sealed road where our bus drove for about 500 metres. Then we were led to the stream. We were told that our jungle journey was

going to start from here where we had to cross the river by holding onto a rope because the water was too deep that no foot was able to even touch the floor. I was like, no way, I am not going to be able to do it, I am going to pretend that I am sick, but it's embarrassing if I give up now. It was a difficult part for me because I was afraid of drowning probably due to a bad past and I could not swim even though I had my life jacket on. I remember the water was so cold, and I was shivering. However, to ensure that I still look cool in front of the girls, I felt I had to face it. My ego saved me here! In the water, I had to hold tightly onto the rope that swung left and right following the current. At that time, I heard many voices cheering. *I felt motivated, I listened closely and followed their instructions. They ask me to lift up my left hand or right hand to swim, OK, so they are motivating me, I felt motivated and managed to cross the deep river to reach the other side [FFK].* In no time, I am on the other side! I made it! It's not that hard after all.

Lim's reflections:

Swimming is listening to instruction, oh, actually they are supporting me during that time. So, actually I feel good to be encouraged and led by others like that. Like they give me instructions to move to which side, at that time [FFK]. I do have phobia in deep water, I used to have, but when I get out of that, I just managed myself, then I think that's nothing [Raj]. I managed to overcome the fear of deep water.

After crossing the deep river, we had to hike up and up into the jungle. There were about forty of us, so, we had to move slowly and always looked back and checked if any of our teammates were left behind. And then, we arrived on a hill. *Pak Anipah* announced, *"kita akan berhenti di sini untuk masak dan makan tengahari."* (Translation: We will stop here, cook and have lunch.). We were like, "Yay! Finally!"

We were literally on a hill where the only water source that we had was a seven feet drop to a waterfall. That was creepy, because we had to go down to get water for cooking, and it was all muddy all the way down and up. So, basically, that was the only time in the whole camp, where small teams or groups were forgotten. We didn't have this team system, we forgot that we were parts of different teams, everyone just came together and decided to help each other out with getting the water. So, there were two guys in the middle, we just passed the water from the stream to the hill by making a line, and we even started cooking together. We were like literally helping each other out because some people didn't know how to cook, some people didn't know how to start a fire. Although we were at different stations, but we literally went around and helped each other, so, that was fun. And then basically there was like, we were washing the rice down there because we had to wash rice and half of the rice went down and the worst part was, you cannot cook rice without water. So, we just shared with each other [Naff].

Lim's reflections:

Before the journey, we had the money system [Tim] (Translation: This is not real money but it's like a game to accumulate money as merit of doing good or demerit due to committing a mistake such as not keeping our place tidy). When we do a lot of good things, we got more money, and then we had to use the money to buy certain items, some people chose wok, some people chose other stuff, food container, and so on. So, actually some of us had advantage over the others [Tim]. But, since we shared with each other, we collaborated in a big team together and cooked our lunch, we got it done quite fast. That's teamwork [Naff]!

"Mmm! Sedapnya, kenyang dah!" (Translation: That's delicious and we were full!). I felt fully energised and motivated after eating our cooking with lots of hard work,

teamwork and collaboration. I felt satisfied and happy to continue with the journey. Then, *Pak Anipah* gave his following instructions. We were taught some basic first aid in the jungle because *we needed to have the knowledge to attend to emergency, like first aid and bandage, how to perform all that [Penguin]*. He told us to work in pairs using *kain anduh segi tiga* (Translation: Triangular bandage) to bandage different parts of the body of our partners then switched our roles. We were having fun and laughing away throughout the session. He then said that *someone should act like he or she has broken their arms or legs, it was then harder for them to continue, so, it would be the role of the group mates to help these people to ensure that they reach the campsite. That's obviously teamwork [Penguin]*. *Pak Anipah* also asked a volunteer from each team to help him with chopping of some bamboo from the nearby bush. And I volunteered. He then gave each team two bamboos and asked the boys in our teams to take off our shirts to make a stretcher. *The stretcher tying really made me learn because it was something new. I used to learn how to tie, but none of us had actually tied a stretcher and sat on it like this before, with two long bamboos shoved through our shirts' sleeves. It was a good experience, learning from the stretcher thing, more like teamwork, yes, teamwork was very important. You could only have four people carrying the stretcher, meaning that we had to swap constantly among our teammates to take the role of carrying it. I remember there were times where all of us were extremely tired, we literally didn't have the strength anymore to carry. And the requirement was very strictly mentioned that someone has to be on top of the stretcher. So, by hook or by crook, we had to carry from one place to the next. We realised that the stretcher was slanting in one way. The people who were able to help had to run to the front to get it stabilised if not the stretcher would have just snapped because of the different pressure and weight. In that way, we had to really communicate. Tolerance is what we learnt from there. There is*

no little bit, little bit you want to leave, because if you leave, who will take over as everyone is equally tired [Sally] (Translation: You could not afford to leave when everyone is equally tired [Sally]). At that time, everyone was like physically extremely demanding. Imagine trying to carry 60 to 70kg and the bamboo itself had weight, and carrying the equipment, and carrying this and carrying that, put a lot of weight. It was tolerance, we had to tolerate, we carry until we absolutely could not carry, then only we got someone else to replace. So, it gave us a really short time to recover our stamina, which was like practically impossible. But, no choice, that's when we tolerated, we persevered and finally we arrived at the campsite, and we were all flat [Sally].

Lim's reflections:

It taught you how to tolerate the conditions, most of us when it comes to a scenario, we were like, if it's hard, most of us will just say never mind, I will try it later on but at that time, we had no choice so it taught what actually is your limit. You will never, there is very rarely you will be pushed to your limit, but every camp, there will be an activity that will push the participants to the limit, in this case, it's the stretcher carrying, it literally under that stress of mentality, your mental strained, your mental tiredness, your physical tiredness, you still had to carry on. It was fun. Camp really, it literally, how to say, took my energy out of arguing and then I had no energy to argue and just complied and learnt that there are better ways to get things done rather than showing my temper and being a pain in other people's butts. The camp, I didn't really get new skills but it enhances the skills that I already had. The major skills that I had really learnt from the camp, are tolerance and patience, which have actually helped me to join the SRC (Translation: Student Representative Council). Because I have to tolerate with a lot of different funny characters that I have to meet up, people, the ways of thinking, so those two skills really changed my perceptions on a lot of people. My old me wouldn't survive in SRC, not even at home with other housemates but the camp changed me. Even at home

also I would probably imagine that sort of scene, so the camp had really enhanced those two major skills which were patience and tolerance. Other skills I already had, it just, it kind of like add a little bit, but those two skills really changed how I am now. It was nice, it was good, finally I am able to control what I could not control for a very, very long time, and it was fun, I learnt a lot [Sally].

Finally, it's time to go home, we took our last shower, packed up our stuff with a heavy heart, our minds are filled with knowledge and skills learnt. We were debriefed and were asked to write down on a piece of paper about what we have learnt. The facilitators lined up, introduced themselves one by one, and explained their roles. This includes the discipline facilitator. It was the first time throughout the camp that I saw him smile. It was like a mask was taken off his face. Everything was revealed and we realised that it was not easy to be a facilitator.

Lim's reflections:

I hope to become a facilitator because I can deliver what I have learnt [Ann]. The camp was also fun and then it is an opportunity for us to learn how to conduct the activities [Tim] and see from the facilitators' points of view [Naff]. So that, I can compare how I learn and how they learn [Naff]. I was benefited from that camp, so I feel like it is my responsibility to contribute back to the community that I was benefited from. It is because of gratitude, we learnt from them, we should contribute back to them, to the people, to the students [Tim], that is why I think I joined the SRC (Student Representative Council), to serve and to learn at the same time [Sally]. In addition to that, it is also because of the skills that I learnt from being a participant, and from being a facilitator and organiser will be very different. As a facilitator, I will learn to manage and organise, I will learn the management part of the camp [Sally]. I feel that it's my responsibility to teach, to guide my juniors, so that if we don't do that, who will? That's being a senior, that's the responsibility of a senior to do that, to use

whatever experiences we have to guide new juniors, so that they can teach their own juniors, if not then who is going to do that [Tim]? Furthermore, I did see some changes in me. I had a reflection by myself, I think I can do this and be this person instead of this person. So, it was like, ya, so I wanted to be a better person. People told me that I improved, from A to become B, I was like, OK, I got affected by the camp. I think I would really like to join the other camps to become much better. Yes, I did enjoy meeting new people, to get more experience, to be a better person [AD]. I can see that, from this camp, everyone had brushed up on his or her certain weaknesses. It doesn't impact the same way for everyone but it impacts them in their ways that they are weak at, most [Naff]. This camp significantly also changed one person to a whole new character too because what I can see, there is a big difference between my friends who joined this camp and those who didn't. Because one of the things that I realised is that, those who never joined this camp or never join any camp before, they love to complain without solution. But those who joined this camp, they know if there is a complaint, or if you want to complain, you might come up with a solution, because you have learnt all these soft skills through this camp [Penguin].

This camp helped me realise a need for change and it did change me, soft skills ni bila kita lakukan kita tak pernah fikir pun, dia dah jadi satu kebiasaan, jadi habit [Izz]. (Translation: For soft skills, when we got used to it, we never even thought about them, they have become a norm, they have become a habit [Izz]). *So, I am really glad that I joined after all [Tim].* This camp has the ability to enhance positive behaviours and habits.

Analytical comments and summary:

Through the jungle and river trekking, camp participants were trained physically and emotionally. They were pushed to the limit especially when they had to carry a fictionally injured friend with a stretcher made of bamboo down the steep slope. To them it was the most challenging part of the camp where their patience and tolerance were tested to the limit. This experience was a breakthrough for them. Their hot tempers had decreased through the process of endurance and perseverance. One of them had overcome a phobia through team members' encouragement and becoming not afraid of water anymore. An important point mentioned by the respondents was how soft skills learnt became habits as they became familiar with them. The camp made them realise the need to change and to become better. They talked about how their behaviours and habits changed through the camp. Some camp participants wished to go back to take on the role of a facilitator. This shows the reason why some facilitators returned repetitively.

4.4.3 Siti's experiences: 'Camp simulates personal and professional life'

Introduction to Siti's narrative:

Transference is the main category in this narrative. This narrative is written from a working professional's point of view. It is a comparative narrative where the narrator explains how camp has impacted on her personal and professional work life. It is also to show how soft skills learnt from the camp were applied in the real-life context. Some examples of real experiences were given by the respondents to portray how skills were transferred to another context such as in a class, in a business, in a workplace, as a part-timer, and so on.

I am never late to work or class! *Tak pernah!* (Translation: Never!) I am always punctual. *I never skipped a class at the university because of the camp. It's really rare that I go to class late, very, very rare. I think it is from the camp, I went to the camp during my Foundation study, so I think it's very good because I attended the camp when I was in Foundation. So, during Degree, it's not really a problem for me to attend classes. I think I was very lucky because I attended the camp in my Foundation year. I was still fresh in this new environment after high school, so, it's like, when I stepped into my first year, when there was a slight change of environment, I could directly adapt to the new environment in the university, like there was no problem for me to attend classes [Penguin].* In camp, we must not be late to any activity, if not, we would be punished. So, I got used to that, since then, I am never late even to work now. Camp is absolutely a simulation of real life. They changed me personally and professionally.

I am going to tell you how I think I have used the soft skills I learnt through the camps I attended when I was in the university, in my workplace, classes and everyday life.

I am an engineer with a side business. I work with machines and people. I handle and sell different projects in my workplace, and I manage people too. So as the idiom goes, ‘no two days are alike’ in my workplace. I admit that I am a multitasker. When I was studying, I worked part time in different roles. I have to deal with customers with various behaviours, *ramai orang ramai ragam [Anip]* (Translations: Many people, many different behaviours [Anip]). *I am glad that I have all the skills that I have already acquired through those camps. Thinking back, I truly think that the camps were fun, rugi kalau tak join [Anip]* (Translation: It would be a loss if I didn’t join [Anip]). *And then, I dah kerja sekarang, I still rasa nak ada camp macam tu, nak join that camp [Anip]* (Translation: I am already working now, I still feel like I want to have this kind of camp, I want to join that camp [Anip]), *that kind of camp, because it’s not just about fun. It’s about what you learnt from the camp, and then, the experiences you get from the camp. I miss all the moments in the camp [Anip]*.

Before joining the camp, *I was always a scaredy-cat if I have to speak in public, I would not look at the faces, I was always nervous and having stage fright. So, when I joined this camp for five times, one time as participant and four times as facilitator, I know the right way to speak in public, the right way to give instructions, the right way to communicate with other people. For example, in this camp, when I became the activity facilitator I have to talk in front of other people right? So, from that, I learnt, macam mana cara nak cakap depan orang ramai tanpa rasa takut, tanpa rasa gentar [Anip]* (Translation: how to speak in front of a big crowd without fear, without shivering [Anip]).

Siti's reflections:

Honestly lah, I learnt a lot about skills from those Mak Lang camps. And I feel that I learnt a lot of communication, public speaking, teamwork, and so on. Because in life if we work, we will not work alone, we have to work with a lot of people or in group. So, from these camps, they taught me how to work in a team, how to work independently as well, we learnt both. In group, there are a lot of ideas and opinions, we learnt how we should handle all these ideas, so that everyone agrees with this idea, so that everyone will accept it without severe argument or fight [Anip].

Let me give you an example of how the camp has helped me to overcome my stage fright. As an activity facilitator, I had to understand the objective first. Even in life, I need to have an objective. So, to achieve the objective, I had to know how, so when I was given the task to conduct a module, I had to study first, I had to study the objective. I had to make sure when I ran the module, all the participants get what they need to learn from the module. The way I talk, the way I communicate the objective with participants. So that, the participants understand my instructions. So, from there, I learnt a lot about communication and ways to organise events [Anip]. One example is, when I was at the university, after facilitating the camp a few times and learnt those skills, I had to organise an event called Giant Monopoly. I became the director of the event. It was a bit tough for me because I never handled any big event like this. For this event, I was not prepared at all. I was actually replacing someone. At first, I went up to the stage and had to talk in public, but I realised that, actually I had done this so many times in camps. I was actually not afraid to do this. I became confident. When I had to do it, I knew I was able to do this and I had to make sure that this event was carried out successfully [Anip].

Siti's reflections:

I had learnt a lot from camp, I can use what I have learnt from the camp in the event to ensure the success of the event. I get to apply those skills when I organised the event. A lot of people will participate in the event. So, how you should make sure that they understand what you want them to do; such as how to play this Giant Monopoly game; what kind of event this is; what the rules are [Anip].

Just like when I am at work. When I have to do a presentation, when I need to talk to my boss, talk to many people, from there I knew the right way to talk, and how to communicate with these people, and during presentation, how I should convey my message, how to make them understand my message. At work, I have to deal with a lot of people. I have to deal with vendors and suppliers, with people from different stations. There can be a lot of misunderstandings or miscommunications. Sometimes, wrong specifications given or purchased, what they needed and what we understood can be different. So, from there, I will try to call the person in charge, email them and all, and from there, you know how to deal with them, and how to ensure that they understand what we are trying to deliver. As usual, we work in team with a lot of people, from there, how we work in teams, we have already learnt this from the camps. I have applied a lot of things during work that I learnt from the camp, how do we manage people, bosses, managers, subordinates. Those soft skills are important there [Anip].

Siti's reflections:

So, in the camp, we intentionally made the participants feel that we were superior to them, so that, they would address us with upward communication, so that they can learn how to communicate with the superior. Then, we can also learn how to communicate with the lower side. So this kind of communication, you need to learn, so that you can be prepared in your work life, because you cannot simply talk to your superior

at the same level as you. You need to use upward communication, so that they can give you their attention, and then they will pass the information with downward communication, so you need to get used to this kind of communication. It's not that we can simply talk to anyone in any manner. Even though they might be technicians, we must respect them and the way we talk to them should not be impolite. As for our bosses, we must not speak to them like speaking to our close friends, we must know our level and limit, so, we learnt a lot about that, even until I work now also I have to know my limit with superior or subordinate. There were a lot about communication, working in a team, and solving problems, and all that [Izz].

In addition to that, my company is a multinational company. So we are multiracial, multilevel people, so you have to talk across the countries, like you have people from Israel, you have people from the United States, you have people from India, so the customers are scattered around the world, We have to have good communication skills. Sometimes, I have to synchronise their availability for meetings, bring all of them together and conduct this meeting, and then I have to present to my manager, customers and stakeholders. So, for that, I have to talk, I have to communicate, I must have good communication skills. If I am shy, my manager will position me in a different role that really focus on coding. Yes, seriously, trust me, there are people in my team, they don't like to talk. They just want to finish their work and go back home, that's it [Sam]. They would not want to go the extra mile. I will be the person who coordinates all the stuff, arrange meetings, gather all the issues, and do trouble shooting. I think I have succeeded, I can mingle around with any kind of people [Sam].

Siti's reflections:

It's not easy you know to bring up this kind of attitude from scratch, it's not going to happen by birth that you are this kind of person. It's through

learning over the time, and how you change yourself. So, maybe I should say in schooling life, I was not this kind of person. At the beginning of university life, I became this kind of person, after going through those camps and talked to lots of people, we were reminded that we are multiracial. So, we know how to talk to people, that's one of the aspects. We know how to coordinate people as a facilitator. In the camp, you do that. We are going to do the same thing in our work life. The only different is the environment. You need the skills, if not you can't grow. Soft skills will help you [Sam].

Other than that, I remember one specific activity that taught me so much about skills. I was a participant at that time, it was my first time attending this camp. *It prepares me for real life [Papan]. This activity is called 'Balloon War'. We were told to look for our penghulu [Papan] (Translation: Leader of the whole participant group). At that time, each small group had to protect our own flags. Every one of us was so selfish and only protected our own flags. At the same time, we had to avoid being attacked by the facilitators who held the water-filled balloons. For me, the experience was, it kind of instilled a sense of belonging to a certain team especially during this activity. So, I felt that it (balloon war) was a real eye-opening thing for me because it came out of nowhere. The key thing was about collaboration, because during the balloon war, we were told to find somebody who is missing. And then when we got hit by the balloon, we had to fall down dead. Basically, since we all were actually separated in teams, most of the stuff that we do was all within our groups. The balloon war actually created this collaborating mechanism. So, all of the groups had to come together to find a single person, not necessarily all of the people in that group know this person in the first place. They still had to forget about their groups and come as one to find this single person. So, I think it really taught me about collaboration and how not even knowing each other,*

we can actually come together and be as one to solve the mission. Another thing I also saw is, we had waves in this activity. Every single wave that we had, the situation changed, so every time we had to like, break down our strategy for the wave before this, and come up with a new strategy for the new situation that was brought out to us. One of us actually created an exceptional role during my time where he was able to make everybody collaborate and also break down the strategy and come up with a new one. And yes, we really learnt and actually this topic about keep on changing in situations is actually discussed internationally as Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA). Basically, what VUCA talks about is the sudden change in situations and how complex it can be. So, the essence of it is in the balloon war and I was able to apply it very easily when I went for conference that talks about VUCA [Papan].

Analytical comments:

In the first part above, respondents relate what had happened and what they have learnt through the camp in their workplaces. They talked about being multiracial and multilevel in the workplace and in the camp. Respondents learnt about different types of communication skills like upward and downward communication. It is important to speak with high respect to a boss. It is not acceptable to speak to a superior like they are a friend unless told. This is because in Malaysia, titles and positions are important in an organisation. People usually address each other's title first before they call their names. One of the respondents also mentioned being exposed to a multiracial environment while working with different people from various cultures and backgrounds in a team, and even diverse countries. They talked about being able

to coordinate and lead a team in meetings. According to the respondents, the camp has shown them the simulation of a real life and how they should respond in real situations. They mentioned that they did not have those skills before attending this camp. As for the “Balloon War” activity, respondents managed to relate the similar method in other activities when they were at a different context. This is how “Balloon War” happens. Before the “Balloon War” begins, the facilitator-in-charge first gathers all the participants of the camp together to give them a briefing about how this activity works. Each small group has a flag of their own, and they are meant to protect their group flag. In this process, participants are told briefly that their *penghulu* (Translation: a camp leader in the Malay language) is missing, and they are to search for him or her while protecting their flags from being snatched by all the facilitators in the camp. They also need to avoid being shot by the facilitators using water balloons. If they are shot, they need to lie face down, indicating that they are fictionally dead and out of the game. The facilitators are the only ones who have water balloons. The next part of the narrative is about self-sacrifice, controlled emotion, and being optimistic. Self-sacrifice is an interesting and intriguing soft skill mentioned by the respondents. They talked about being a leader and how one should sacrifice themselves.

In this camp, a lot of sacrifice and controlled of emotions were required. Initially, I thought being a participant was tough but being a facilitator was even tougher. Why did I say so? I remember needing to be a role model throughout the camp. A lot of teamwork, *even among facilitators, a lot of things I have learnt. Not only about conducting the module or looking after the participants. As facilitators, it was actually quite tough, because every night we had to do a post-mortem of the activities conducted*

during the whole day. We went to sleep late. All those moments challenged the facilitators too. For example, as facilitators, we knew that we had to sacrifice our time and energy no matter how tired we were [Anip]. At night, we had to take turns to actually patrol the place. We had to be calm. I remember we had to wake up half an hour or one hour earlier than the participants did. It was definitely not something pleasant, but we had to take care, I mean like we must not show that we were not having enough sleep that we were sleepy, or we were frustrated. I mean we had to control our emotions [Dan]. So that the participants succeed in learning through the camp. Whatever knowledge or skills that they had obtained or learnt from the camp, they could bring back with them to apply in their real life, their study life or work life. So, to be a leader, I think sometimes I have to sacrifice my time [Anip].

Talking about sacrifice, there were two things that I had sacrificed, both my belief and my belongings to ensure that others were feeling at ease. *It's absolutely from the camp [Papan]. One of them is that, there were two times I had seen myself as a vegetarian and I had to cut chicken which I have never experienced before. First time I actually cut chicken in my life and usually it's something that I don't believe, so that my other peers can actually eat, so that's one thing [Papan].* The second thing is a situation I will remember forever because it has really left a strong effect in me. *At that time I was the discipline facilitator, myself, other facilitators, with all the participants, followed the programmes set for the camp. Some of the programmes prepared for the camp were jungle trekking, river trekking, meaning that, those tough activities, meaning that we need to enter the jungle and exit safely. OK, so, there was a situation, which made me feel that the action I took was worthy. In this situation, there was one participant, the sole of her shoe fell off. When I thought about it, as a participant, when my shoe fell off,*

do I want to continue with the jungle trekking, river trekking, and expect to go and return safely? I thought, if for me, I will choose not to continue as it will be risky, that was a good decision for us to prevent from any mishaps, if there is no replacement of shoes, it's better not to continue. But I thought if we continue without shoes, we cannot continue, if she did not continue, she will miss out. She would not get to learn like how other participants learnt. Therefore, in place, I gave her my shoes, so, that participant was thankful, meaning that, to me, not that the participant wanted to excuse herself, instead, when she got a solution, she felt honoured and wanted to continue with her journey, and even she herself wanted to learn something [Izz].

Siti's reflections:

This is about her effort, meaning that having an effort in doing something is not something that we can be trained in a sudden. This needs to be trained even from outside the camp, but in camp we will trigger that to make it work, so that we can see their learning effort [Izz].

So, that's from her perspective. As from my aspect, when I gave her my shoes, I think I had sympathy and empathy, when I saw it, I did not just let it be, I gave the solution, so that, she could continue with her journey of learning. If I couldn't continue with that activity, That's OK, because I had been through the camps a few times, so, if I missed out this part of the camp, it's still better than her. No matter what, with that excuse, I could say that I don't need to continue, but I still continued. Because for me, if I didn't join even though I have joined a few times, I would miss out the opportunity to learn as a discipline facilitator on the track, so, I decided to continue, so that I could learn and they could learn. And at the same time, she could see that no matter what kind of excuses we have or we can give, we have to continue with it. Therefore, that has indirectly trying

to develop their attitude of being able to endeavour in everything they do, and not to give up. This is one type of soft skill, from our action, meaning that our action shows the positivity, and to me, that's soft skill. So, when I saw that the participant wanted to continue and not give up, I felt inspired by the participant to continue with the journey. So, when I chose to continue, I was hoping that other participants would be inspired by us to continue with the journey. So, benda macam ni, walaupun di luar daripada kem, bila kita hadapi situasi yang kita anggap sangat mustahil, impossible untuk teruskan, tapi bila kita ada kesungguhan, sebenarnya masih ada lagi jalan lain, bukannya 198aka da jalan lain. So, kita kena teruskan walau apa jua, sampailah kita dapat achieve apa yang kita nak [Izz] (Translation: So, this kind of things, although when we are outside of the camp, when we face what we thought as an impossible situation to continue, but when we have endeavoured whole-heartedly, there must still be other ways, it is not like there is no other ways. So, we will continue no matter what until we get to achieve what we want [Izz]).

Siti's reflections:

We learnt so much in the camp, but then we forgot one important thing, which is, the camp is a leadership camp. Leadership camp means to train you to become a leader. So, there are so many ways that you can become a leader, but to me, the best thing to become a leader is to lead by example. So any action that you take, anything that you say will take into account by anyone who heard you, or anyone that saw your action. So you need to be a very good example, you need to be a good role model, so that other people will follow you. People will say that, "you also didn't do it, so why should I do it?" So, this is the best way to be a leader, which is to lead by example. When I recalled about the shoes that I had sacrificed, what I had done was something right. So that I can show that participant that whatever we do, we do it till the end, we never give up, we just need to find some solutions

so that we can continue to the end. Let's say if I didn't continue, others will say "Oh, why he didn't join, why he had the reason not to join, then I also might as well tear my shoes, then I don't need to join!" I didn't want that to happen. Then I thought, "That's OK, as long as I didn't hurt myself, I will continue [Izz]."

So, at work, I do the same thing. I sacrifice my time and effort willingly because I want to learn. I also do not give up. Let me tell you about an impossible project that I successfully made it work. It's all because of grit and sacrifice that I managed to get it done! *Last year, I was given a task that was impossible to achieve. Even others, even seniors said that this system was impossible to run but then the system was already fabricated, already have the materials, and already finished. But they said it was impossible to run. Of course customer won't accept that! And we could not simply say to customers like, "OK, this system cannot run." Of course the customer would sue us or anything, they won't matter as long as the system works, no matter how we do it, we needed to make it work. Because in the agreement it said that this was going to work, but it could not work at all. But then, I said to my boss, "OK, actually we can make it work, but not as good as other systems, we just need more time. If you are willing to let me think about something else so that the system can work, then I can make it work, so that, the customer will be satisfied as well." So, until last November, the system ran successfully. Initially, the system should take around one month to complete but I took around four months. It took longer time for me to complete the system but then I managed to make the customer felt satisfied with that system, which I think it's good enough, so the customer won't sue us. That's why I said that, even though throughout the four months, the office kept saying to me that, "This is impossible, not possible." I just mentioned one thing to them, "Then if cannot do, what to do? Can you simply say*

that we cannot do then you want to refund to the customer? Do you think the customer will accept the refund? The customer will ask for a better system instead of refund, which would cost more than refund. We might as well think of another way, so that we can make it work. So, I stayed to the end, not only halfway [Izz]. And, it was successful!

If you are wondering, what's my sacrifice? I am also the one who has family to take care. I want to believe that I have become a better person with all the things I have learnt during the camp. In my line of work, we need to attend to whatever client asked, no matter when and where. Sometimes even on weekend, or at night. I know some of my colleagues have family to take care. So, I took the initiative and responsibility to respond to any ad-hoc inquiry, so that, we can satisfy our client, while others can have their own time with family. Although most of the time the tasks are already assigned to another person, but when that person is not available at that time, I am willing to cover for them, investigate their task from the beginning, and continue it smoothly. To me, it's a win-win situation. I can also prove that I am a dedicated worker [Izz].

Siti's reflections:

Not only at work, even at home, I have taught my family that life is a journey. At some point, you may fall down and reach the bottom. As much as we want to know how and why we fall, what matter most is how we get up and resume our journey. I would like to be the one who bring them up, because who knows, at some points, I'll need someone like me to help me too. Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you [Izz].

Other than sacrifice, I also learnt to manage my emotions and conflicts with other people. I learnt to interact better socially. At the camp, *among the facilitators, sometimes we have conflicts, we could argue or fight, so from that, the most important*

thing is that we will learn something, although we are having conflict among us, from there we will think that, “OK, actually we are from the same group of facilitators. We should not fight against each other, we can discuss calmly, so that, we can solve it together. Some things can be done easily, but because sometimes we have lots of ideas, lots of different thoughts, so, we will have disagreements among us. So as a facilitator, we have to know how to manage things like this although there might be lots of other problems, we have to make sure that the camp is running smoothly [Anip]. Being disciplined as a participant, most of the time we were told about our mistakes. But being a discipline facilitator, we learnt how to tell others their mistakes. When I was a discipline facilitator, I knew I had the right to punish them but I should not punish them for hating them, but I should punish them because I needed to teach them a lesson. I needed to let them know that this was their mistake that they must not repeat it. I cannot avoid myself to think, “Aiya! This person ah, very stressful to deal with [Izz] (Translation: Aiya is an interjection, which can be used to express disappointment or dislike, the sentence describes that he felt stressed to deal with a person),” but I needed to know that this was my role. I needed to know my limit and know that any punishment made was to give the participants a lesson, not to let them suffer. If I didn’t have enough patience as the head of discipline, I would surely lead the camp with so many punishments without considerations. So, I tried to limit myself, so that the punishments were reasonable. So that the participants could learn. Even sometimes when at work, we also have our subordinates working under us. Like from my experience, most of the time they will do things wrongly but if I scold them without any purpose, that won’t help, instead I need to give them the idea on how to get a better solution instead of just scolding them, which won’t help with anything and it will just make it worse. But of

course, you cannot punish them like in the camp. This is a different situation, but the key thing is to be patient [Izz].

There is this one situation when I was facing my customers. This was when I had not finished my study, but I had facilitated a few camps. I worked part time in a hardware shop. *In the hardware shop, there was a lot of uncles, aunties, and foreign workers. Some uncles can be very, very rude, they scolded me foul languages, everything, anything, and somehow, I just had to remain composed. It's really not easy, some customers, because I cannot speak a certain language that they thought I should be able to speak [Dan]* (Note: In Malaysia, for example, some Chinese people expect all Chinese to be able to speak Chinese language, but some speak English from home because their parents only speak English with them, same for the Malays and the Indians. They expect you to speak like how you look). *Some of them really laughed at me and things like that. And then, there was this one customer, he saw that I was left-handed, he said that, "Eh, you cannot cut the net like that, how can you do it, later you cut unevenly." And I was like, "OK, I will make sure I cut it nicely and I managed to cut it nicely and he kept quiet." Even sometimes when my boss scolds me for my mistakes, I know that I have a customer in front of me, I have to settle it, so, I have to remain composed. In the camp itself, actually, the person who faces this kind of emotional challenges is not the participant, it's the facilitator, because we are handling more of them with less of us. I mean when there are more participants, there will be more variety of emotions from each of them. So, we are the ones who deal with the different kind of emotions and we need to be patient [Dan].*

Siti's reflections:

There are a lot of times we thought that we are not able to do something. We learnt to be optimistic. *OK. So, for one particular activity, I would like to talk about the blindfolded night walk. You need to have a lot of courage in this activity, so if you compare the activity with your real-life experience, it's much more connected, because in every activity that we are going to face if we are moving forward in our life, we need courage. And that activity itself is a big module to relate to real life. Because you are blindfolded, you have to walk in a distance right, and it's dark, you know that there is no one there to help you, and then you have to move on right? There are a lot of distractions out there, people distract you, and you still have to move forward. This one module is enough to really tell you how important the impact we are getting it alone. So, the key is you have to be courageous, be independent, and stay focus at that point, so this is one of the key aspects in real life that you have to have. That alone if you complete the walk, I would say that you have like a confident in you that, "I have made it." Previously I thought that I can't do it. When I was a participant, I felt scared at that point. So, I mean like I was scared in a way that this is something unusual for me, like blindfolded then you have to walk in the jungle or some dark places. Not the biggest but it gave a lot of meaningful impact. At that time, I felt confident, and then I finished it. At that point, I thought, yes! I did it! After the camp, suddenly at one point, I bumped into an issue in real life, I really thought that, "You made it through all that, why you can't do this, you can do this!" So, you have that kind of confidence in you. Because you are building this over the time [Sam]. This activity encouraged me in some situations in my life.*

Talking about how I became optimistic, high in confidence, observant and good in social interaction, I have this one experience to share. *When I entered my company in the third month, I needed to present in front of a manager. My team leader already warned me that he is kind of a serious guy. So, what I did? I attended his talk because sometimes the company has technical talks. So, I entered, and I saw what he was talking*

about and I learnt his interest. So, I got to know about his interest. Before I did my presentation, I asked him about his interest, which it actually amazed him and he became a friend of mine, and my team leader was surprised and said “Hey, he never talked to anyone like this before.” So, I can say that, camp is quite similar to working life. In camp, as a facilitator, I dealt with a smaller amount of people. Then, at work, I deal with a bigger amount of people [Raj].

Analytical comments:

In the above section, respondents talked about self-sacrifice not being a bad thing. They felt happy and thought that it can be beneficial for them and others. Both in the camp and at work, they could relate the two situations and apply the skills learnt from the camp in their lives. Because they had been through the hardest in the camp, they thought that there was nothing worse than they could not overcome in life. For example, the controlled of emotions. In the camp, there were multiple positive and negative emotions, especially when dealing with people of different behaviours. At work, they had to deal with customers, superiors or colleagues with different characteristics and behaviours. They also learnt to become optimistic and observant in diverse situations, in their personal and professional life. Respondents continued to reveal how the camp had also helped them in their side businesses.

This camp also helped me with how I do my side business. It’s a family business. In camp, we were taught time management a lot. We got punishment when we woke up late or went to the activity site late. *So, in the camp, if we were supposed to be there at 5:00, then we had to be there at 5:00. There were no 5 seconds after 5:00, 10 seconds after 5:00. So, that gives me the punctuality to submit assignments on time. So, we don’t go asking our lecturer, “Can you give me spare time, like half an hour, 20 minutes?”*

So, if it's 5:00, you keep to the punctuality of 5:00. Now, in the camp, they will give us instructions like, 'stand to' and all that kind of instructions. When we heard that kind of instructions, we were required to do that action. At that moment, no matter what we were doing, whether we were in the loo or not, we needed go ahead and do it. If we were supposed to take cover, then we had to fall flat on the ground no matter what. So, that concept was brought to me in this university. So, if I have to finish an assignment by today, then I set the deadline, by hook or by crook, I must finish it by today [AK]. It is also about having self-discipline. So, that's in terms of my academic. So, in my daily life, I have work and I also have a business that I am running. At the same time, I have to take care of my parents, as they are quite old. I am also currently furthering my study [AK]. Not to forget a husband (Translation: In the original response, it is the wife, but because the character in this narrative is a female, I changed it to a husband), and a son to take care. These are the many things I have to juggle in life [Izz]. So, in the camp, we were given codes by Pak Anipah that made us think hard. The code is 'you collect as many knives or skills as possible, then you sharpen one, use it now, and then you use the others when needed'. So, in running a business I need to know how to run a business; I need to know how to develop my business. It doesn't mean that if I run my business I can't be studying, and at the same time, if I am studying and running a business, it doesn't mean I can't take care of my family, so this kind of characteristics are developed in the camp. So, in the camp, I was taught that I can do more things than I thought that I can do. They give you more encouragement in that sense. Yes, it is until now that I am holding on to that [AK].

Siti's reflections:

Most of the modules in the camp are one-sided or unfair because we wanted to push the participants to the limit so that they can think of the solution critically. They might think that is impossible, even in the balloon war, we said that only us the facilitators had the balloons and only we could hit them. This is a one-sided rule but then at first, they refuse to act, they just wanted to stay in one place. We needed to convince them to proceed with it. Otherwise, they would not be able to find their leader. At that time, we hide their leader at one place. So, if they didn't find their leader, they won't be able to proceed to the next activity. Let's say the next activity is dinner or something, they will skip the dinner, then they have no choice other than to proceed even though it is quite one-sided, they need to think of something to overcome that challenge [Izz].

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that *camp is a simulation of real life, and people think why do we need simulation of real life when we can just go to the real life? Because sometimes in real life, there is not someone who can guide you and point out on what your action is missing out. The points where the little benefits you actually reap from the camp, the moral values, and the skills. Like when someone opens the door for you, sometimes, some people don't notice someone is holding the door for them and they just walk out of the door without saying thank you. We were like the person who just walks out ignoring everything, not saying thank you and being unaware of the surrounding. The camp actually reminds us and points out those little things that we do not pay attention to, in real life [TCO]. Like when we were cooking in the jungle, there was a big challenge because there was a surprise for everyone. Everyone was trying the best to cook out and play master chef. Some were doing good, some were OK, some were, "Well, it still could be eaten". After all their hard work and then cleaning up and all, we were given like this curve ball. Our food was exchanged with another group.*

So, all of our hard work and effort was like, just given away, and we were supposed to take something that wasn't belong to us, and who knows if it would taste as good as ours or not. So that taught us you know, in life, we could always plan for something, but sometimes, life gets in our way and we just have to accept and adapt to it [TCO].

So, this camp actually simulates our personal and professional life. It points out every little thing that I missed. Skills become habits and I naturally and subconsciously apply them in everything I do in my life.

Analytical comments and summary:

A respondent stated that soft skills learnt from the camp helped him even in running his side business. He mentioned that he was able to manage his time well as a student while running a family side business. Respondents stated that they can multitask and have self-discipline. According to them, with no challenge, it is impossible to overcome - they learnt this from the camp. One interesting idea told by the respondents was that the camp pointed out the little actions or mistakes they made, or their positive and negative behaviours that they missed. Those were the things they might not get in real life if no one pointed them out. The challenges in camp helped them to face the challenges in their life.

4.5 Conclusion

The three narratives about learning awareness, change of behaviours and transference show three different ways respondents said they had learnt soft skills. The composite characters of Ashok, Lim, and Siti represented all the respondents as they became aware

of the advantages of learning soft skills through reflections. Some of them have seen a positive change while others managed to transfer the soft skills learnt through the camp to other parts of their life. In the next chapter, the relationships among the three categories are discussed and a metaphor is used to explain the implication and discussion of the findings from this research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this study, phenomenography was used as a methodological framework to explore the qualitatively different ways in which participants and facilitators experience a reflection-based outdoor camp. The findings from the analysis identify three ways participants (campers) encountered an experiential learning process with the primary aim to learn soft skills. “Campers” in these chapters refers to both camp participants and facilitators and where it is important to distinguish them, I use either “participants” or “facilitators”. As for “research participants”, I interchange the term with “respondents” or “informants”. The term “soft skills” includes both working or life skills (e.g., interpersonal, leadership, teamwork) and character skills (e.g., moral values and ethics) as identified in the literature review that drew on global and Malaysian literature.

The findings were presented phenomenographically, which includes a diagrammatic outcome space and the descriptions of each category with three composite narratives. This chapter shows how the findings of this research may be applied more broadly. The organising structure for this chapter is based first on the discussion of the relationships among the three categories (awareness, change, and transference) represented by Ashok, Lim, and Siti’s narratives. The discussion about the commonalities and variation of experiences follows. Then, I use a metaphor about how farmed oysters produce pearls to describe the process and outcomes of learning soft skills through the camp which informs a discussion of the processes and outcomes.

This research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of those who have attended and/or facilitated an experiential learning process that is focused on the learning of soft skills?
(Process)
2. What are the perceptions of the camp participants and the camp facilitators about the outcomes of the learning of soft skills? (Outcomes)

5.2 Relationships among the Three Categories

This section analyses the potential relationships between the three categories and uses the ‘Balloon War’ as a context because participants mentioned it most frequently as the activity that assisted them in learning soft skills.

To recap, Åkerlind et al. (2005) refers to the hierarchy of relationships among categories with, “the hierarchy is not based on value judgements of better and worse ways of understanding, but on the evidence of some categories being inclusive of others” (p. 95). This means that there is no ranking but inclusiveness among the three categories. The outcome space does not have to be hierarchical because the categories of descriptions might not be related (Bowden, 2000; Mendoza Garcia, 2016). As for this study, there are possible relationships among categories that are interchangeable. In other words, the relationships are dynamic as any category can occur first, second or third in their ways of learning soft skills.

Category	Description	Keyword
1	Camp encourages learning awareness and reflection	C1 - Awareness
2	Camp enhances positive behaviours and habits	C2 - Change
3	Camp simulates personal and professional life	C3 - Transference

Table 6: Categories of description and keywords

Keywords for each category shown in Table 6 above are used to aid readers in comprehending the different potential relationships of the three categories.

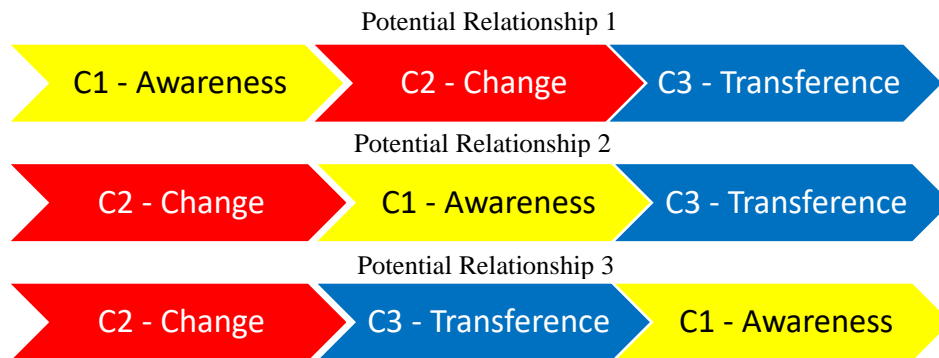


Figure 8: Some potential relationships among the three categories

Figure 8 shows some potential relationships among the three categories. It is possible for “C1 – Awareness” to happen first, followed by “C2 – Change”, then “C3 – Transference” as shown in “Potential Relationship 1”.

The two respondents Naff and Ann (see below), were anticipating future learning and transference through the awareness of learning soft skills in this camp when they said “made me realise” or “we already know”. This portrays the first potential relationship in their participation of the process where they become aware of learning, then change and transference of learning to other contexts. Kolb mentions that, “In one moment we

may be lost in thought only to be jolted to awareness of a dramatic event, sparking immediate action or cautious observation depending on our habit of learning” (p. 57).

These two quotes by Naff and Ann show awareness of learning, a potential change and transference.

OK, what happened was when I joined this camp, it pushed me to join a lot more camps after that... By the time I joined other camps, I already realised that, OK I need to communicate with people, take care of each other.[Naff]

And then when we join other camps, we already know what to do or expect [Ann].

In addition, one of the respondents (TCO) indicated that this camp made her aware that she was there to learn, but she did not mention the learning of soft skills directly, instead she focused on moral values which is one of the five national principles of Malaysia. Her responses can be found on page 166.

However, in “Potential Relationship 2”, some participants had already changed behaviours as a result of other camps and then become aware they were learning after they attended this camp. This means that were representing “C2 – Change” and going to “C1 – Awareness” and then “C3 – Transference”.

For example, one participant mentioned that he did not learn new skills, but the camp enhanced his existing skills. Kolb (2015) states that “learning is described as a process whereby concepts are derived from and continuously modified by experience” (p. 38). This shows that the participant might be aware about learning soft skills, and this camp may have enhanced his existing skills which were modified by the experience of the process. He mentioned he had transferred those skills to other contexts. Sally (A

pseudonym for a male research participant for his Indian name in short) explained the enhancement of his existing skills and added new skills like tolerance and patience in his skillset on page 183 and 184.

The participants might have already applied both “C2 – Change” and “C3 – Transference”, but only realised that camp is about learning, and return to “C1 – Awareness”. This shows the variation of learning experiences among the participants and facilitators through the process of experiencing and learning soft skills. It is also important to mention that this matches the nature of phenomenography. Marton (2015) states that “In order to be perceptible, it [learning] has to be separated (in the learner’s awareness) from other things” (p. 56). The respondent in the quote above had seen the difference between the application of skills he learnt in different contexts (in the camp and in SRC). Furthermore, Malaysia is a multicultural and multiracial country: backgrounds, experiences, and perceptions among the learners are diverse. Therefore, different relationships are possible too.

The data reported in the previous section is organised as “Potential Relationship 1”, and to provide examples of relationship 1. I now use “Balloon War” to describe “Potential Relationship 1”. At this stage, most of the participants were aware of the focus on learning through activities, because this is usually the last game in the camp. They were reminded about learning soft skills throughout the camp. This is when the first category (C1- Awareness) happens where the participants are aware they will learn something out of all the activities in the camp, but they may or may not know what skills they will acquire. During this first wave, participants usually failed to find their *penghulu* because they will all be fictionally dead. So, once they are all fictionally dead, the

activity facilitator gathers them to reflect on the reasons for their actions. A lot of questions will be asked at this stage by the facilitators who thoroughly understand the activity. The participants will also be provoked to think deeply about their actions. Intentional reflection is encouraged and the group will try to answer the questions themselves to decide on what they should do next.

Once they are ready, the next wave will start and here is when they have changed their strategies. This can be related to the second category (C2 – Change). For example, during the first stage, they usually forget that they can use their voices to shout for their *penghulu*, and they only look for their *penghulu* quietly without shouting for him or her. After some reflections and some questions asked by the activity facilitator, during the second wave, they start shouting for their *penghulu*. In addition during the first wave they rely on their own small group to protect their flags, but at the second round, all the small groups start to work together by building layers of a human wall, to protect the flags from the water balloons. Therefore, to become better, many people choose to change because they realise that there are different approaches. Hence, change occurs.

Once they have changed their strategies in the activity a few times, at the last stage, they commit to working together and collaborate to protect their flags. When they have found their *penghulu*, and they think that they have won, without being aware, we arrange for the facilitators to be attacked by non-university instructors (who the participants don't know about). This then reminds participants about unpredictable circumstances and to always be prepared. At this final wave, participants would be shocked and realise that they should be alert at all times for any sudden change that could happen. This is the third category (C1 – transference). As educators and

facilitators, we do a thorough intentional reflection after “Balloon War” ends. We also summarise after the reflections undertaken by the participants as a whole group to remind them about the objective or what they could learn from the activity. They are encouraged to use what they have learnt in the next activity and even beyond the camp and at their workplaces.

In summary, “Balloon War” is used to explain the first potential relationship among the three categories (awareness leading to change in behaviours and then transference). Relationships among the categories are interchangeable when participants experience the camps and learn soft skills through the camps. How these relationships line up also matches the nature of phenomenography, where there are variations in learning among participants.

5.3 Commonalities and Variations of Experiences

The analysis of relationships shows the process through which a camper could learn soft skills. In this section, details about possible commonalities and variations of experiences are discussed.

Respondents stated that they learnt soft skills through the camp and are able to use them in their lives beyond the camp. For example, some respondents described their experiences on how soft skills learnt from the camp become habits and then they used them in their workplaces or clubs and societies in the university. Izz talked about communication skills where he stated that he learnt subconsciously:

when I work as a robotic engineer... we have to communicate with customers and suppliers. Actually for soft skills, we applied subconsciously... we can convey information correctly without offending anyone[Izz].

while Dan talked about managing his emotions by remaining composed when being scolded by customers and his boss. This is recorded on page 202.

The commonalities are that the campers stated they learnt soft skills through it. They all went jungle trekking, cooked and ate in the same way using their hands with one big plate. However, the variations are that they learnt soft skills in dissimilar ways and in different activities, they could learn similar skills. For example, Naff learnt collaboration skills through jungle trekking (quote on page 182) while Papan learnt collaboration through the Balloon War activity (quote on page 193).

The respondents also learnt different skills from the same activity. For example, while eating from one big tray sharing among four people, Sally stated that he learnt to be tolerant (quote on page 174) while AK said that he learnt to accept people from different cultures and backgrounds and relatedly to give in to circumstances (quote on page 175).

There is no clear category of soft skills for this but according to the Malaysian National Education Philosophy (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 1988), they want Malaysians to be intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically balanced. The Malaysian philosophy encourages harmony to ensure that the people can be united despite living with different races in one country.

Respondents from the current study stated that they repeatedly experienced the same type of camp. They came from diverse backgrounds and cultures, even though they

were all Malaysian. For example, a participant might state that they had learnt collaborative skills from ‘Balloon War’, but another participant might state they acquired communication skills and leadership skills through the same activity. It could also be that it is common to eat with their hands at home; they learnt nothing out of eating with their hands at the camp. Other people who have never used their hands to eat and the same plate might have realised that they can be quite tolerant when eating using their hands in a shared plate. In the previous camps, everyone went through an out-of-comfort and out-of-the-concrete-world experience with little to no time for a shower or sleep. However, the set of soft skills from each activity and each experience learnt was personal. Some might have changed their behaviours or learnt a new habit. Others might have applied what they learnt in the same camp but in the next activity.

In summary, there are commonalities and variations in learning of soft skills through the outdoor experiential camp. To illustrate the overall learning experiences through the camp, I develop a metaphor in the next section.

5.4 The Cultured ‘Pearl of Wisdom’ Metaphor

A ‘pearl of wisdom’ is used to describe an insightful piece of advice that comes from experience. Wisdom is “the quality of having experience, knowledge and good judgement; the quality of being wise” (Oxford Dictionaries Online). This metaphor is used to make sense of participants’ overall experiences of learning soft skills through the camp.

Generally, a pearl is a highly appreciated gem in Chinese culture. Growing up as a Chinese although born in Malaysia, my family still practises some Chinese traditions, like celebrating Chinese New Year together, using chopsticks to eat and also speaking Mandarin or other Chinese dialects at home.

A pearl, in the Chinese culture, is a valuable gem dating back to the Han Dynasty of 206 B.C. to 9 A.D (Lin, 2016). The emperors and empresses wore silk clothing embroidered with high-quality pearls (Lin, 2016). The well-known Empress Dowager Cixi had a pearl cape of her own. They are not only used for jewellery but also as Chinese traditional medicine and cosmetics believed to be beneficial for bone and skin (Lin, 2016). A pearl symbolises wisdom, spiritual energy, and enlightenment (Lin, 2016). Not only that, the word ‘pearl’ is used in many Chinese proverbs as a precious gem. Likewise, by referring to the phrase ‘cast pearls before swine’ which has the meaning of giving something valuable to someone who is unable to understand its worth, a pearl is seen as a treasure even to Western society. I was introduced to my first pearl when my grandma gave me her pearl ring to keep. Since then, the pearl has become my favourite jewel linked to my passion for everything ocean related. Hence, pearls came to my mind when I thought of soft skills.

A pearl is seen as a precious gem in the eye of the world, but what makes it so valuable? One of the reasons is that it is not an easy and fast process for an oyster to produce a pearl. A pearl is produced after a grain of sand enters its mantle organ. When an oyster is triggered by a grain of sand, it begins to secrete and cover it with thousands of layers of a smooth crystalline substance known as nacre or the mother of pearl (Bryner, 2012).

The nacre or the mother of pearl is made of a light but potent combination of calcium carbonate and protein. After many layers of coatings, the iridescent gem is produced.

I now relate this metaphor to the overall experience of learning soft skills through the camp. All molluscs can produce pearls. Some produce more, some less. A cultured pearl is made by an oyster farmer under controlled conditions. An educator is like an oyster farmer. An oyster farmer sets up an oyster farm, controlling the process and condition of the farm, hoping that the oysters in the farm could produce beautiful pearls. In the context of this research, the oysters are the participants with the camp experience providing the grain of sand; initially seen as an irritant by the oysters and through reflections, transforming the sand into valuable pearls. If the sand is the activities of the camp, the numerous layers of nacre that coat the grain of sand are the process of countless reflections. So, without reflections, there are no pearls. Through multiple reflections and positive changes through a series of events in the camp, eventually, campers produce valuable pearls (soft skills). Oysters with pearls contribute to society broadly. Similarly, campers who learnt various soft skills could transfer and apply those skills in their personal and professional life.

5.5 The Farming of Pearls: The Process

5.5.1 Setting up the Oyster Farm

Respondents referred to strategies applied in the camp as helpful in learning soft skills. Data collected and analysed in Chapter 4 shows a pattern of progressiveness in learning soft skills through the camp where reflection is the key to encourage awareness of learning, positive change, and transfer to happen in other contexts (as Dewey's and Kolb's work was acknowledged in Chapter 2), although there are other potential

relationships as discussed in the analysis of relationship earlier. To ensure that there are better chances for oysters to produce desirable pearls, it is crucial to set up a farm by considering the condition of different elements such as deciding whether to use freshwater or saltwater in the farm. When putting together a module, several methods were considered. I learnt from the responses that the experiential learning process with both intentional and trial and error reflections are crucial for learning soft skills. Approaches used to set up the camp are discussed in this section.

“A well-developed lesson plan is central to effective teaching” (Zulfikar, 2019, p. 436). Lesson planning is crucial to ensure that the process of learning is effective to achieve objectives set in a lesson study (Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002). As an educator, lesson planning is one of the most essential parts to ensure efficacy in learning. From my personal experience, I remember being taught to plan each of the lessons towards the perfection of achieving the objectives of students’ learning. Often, there was a focus on a subject matter or content to teach. However, for outdoor education, the learning of soft skills is often difficult to assess (Abdullah-Al-Mamun, 2012; Anderson et al., 2018). Learning soft skills can occur if a lesson is well planned to encourage it, like how an oyster farmer carefully plans and monitors the conditions of the farm. Thus, it is vital to plan the camp with learning as the main aim, although the fun part should not be ignored to maintain interest in learning as the respondents Anip (quote on page 189) and TCO (quote on page 156) stated.

The planning for each activity is focused on one skill, although many other skills might be integrated through the whole process. This study answers to Thomas's (2019) call for more confirmations from research to prioritise the teaching and learning methods in outdoor education. His study found that experiential learning, carefully sequenced

activities, a facilitative teaching style, and active engagement are still relevant in the pedagogical approach. Like the current study, all four strategies were applied in different terms used when planning the program studied. The method is contextual and when used in Malaysia, there is a need to be careful when applying to the Malaysian culture and system of education.

Hence, having an oyster farm set up properly with the right conditions would enable higher productivity than leaving the oyster to swim in the wild with unknown progress of producing a pearl. There is no perfect metaphor for any situation (Keil, 1986). Therefore, this metaphor is not meant to accurately specify each element in the camp. Please note that I do not intend to take the metaphor too far but as much as it is adequate to describe the overall positive experience of learning soft skills. Furthermore, this is as Thomas (2019) suggests in his study that planning appropriately is important to the effectiveness of outdoor experiential education.

5.5.1 Layers of Nacre: Experiential Learning Cycle as a Metaphorical Model

Since planning is essential for an effective experiential learning process, it is crucial to plan on which method should be used and how a camp should be conducted using the theory or model. As one facilitator stated planning is essential to ensure the goals can be achieved:

how do we give clear direct instructions, now that is a skill, to be able to give the right instruction at the right time and you give them all the information they needed at that point, so the participants would be clear and so on. [AK].

Kolb's (1984, 2015) ELT is a significant guide to aid in the process of students' learning. It assisted me in visualising how a brain might learn something and by integrating ELT in planning and designing of the camp also helped me structure a process to teach soft skills. Having used Kolb's (1984, 2015) ELT for all the camps planned and conducted for the past years, it is essential to clarify how the theory is implemented. I am aware that there were many critics of Kolb's theory before he responded in 2015. Hopkins (1993) especially, calls ELT an experiential learning machine that is instrumental and neglects the naturally habitual process of experience as formulated by Dewey. He adds that ELT lacks rigorous theoretical and empirical foundations as delineated by other scholars (see, e.g. Fenwick, 2003; Fenwick, 2000; Miettinen, 2000; Reynolds, 2009) as discussed in Chapter 2. However, ELT has become a useful approach for many educators (e.g. Burns & Danyluk, 2017; Falloon, 2019; Konak et al., 2014; Mohd Yasim, 2016; Md Amin et al., 2012; Poore et al., 2014) because of its potential to aid in planning and organising the structure of a lesson.

In my view, there are two ways to view Kolb's ELT. It can be observed as a prescriptive model that is linear and must be followed without any innovation or it can be used as a metaphorical model that can be adapted by adding other elements. Nevertheless, presenting it as a model is helpful because it gives educators a structure to start from. For example, in Konak et al.'s (2014) study, although some scholars considered Kolb's model as being sequential and ignoring social, historical, and cultural perspectives of learning (Beard & Wilson, 2006), they stress that these critiques do not remove the advantages of the ELT as a guide to design hands-on activities in their field of study. Beard and Wilson argue that they did not use Kolb's ELT as a linear model, but that ELT was incorporated in their framework.

All the elements in the theory could be applied according to the prescriptive model, but there is another perspective. Kolb has clarified that the recursive process is sensitive to the learning situation and what the content of learning covers. He (Kolb, 2015) further clarified in his response to the critics and described ELT as “a dynamic view of learning based on a learning theory driven by the resolution of the dual dialectics of action or reflection and experience or abstraction” (p. 50). It is “a recursive circle or spiral as opposed to the linear, traditional information transmission model of learning used in most education where information is transferred from the teacher to the learner” (Kolb & Kolb, 2018, p. 8).

However, in Malaysia, there is a different flavour of ELT. I have to be careful not to ignore the historical and cultural context, as an insider and a Malaysian, I must understand that I cannot fully ignore the traditional information transmission way of learning as discussed in the theoretical framework section earlier and this is also visible in the way the camp is facilitated. Malaysia is developing its education system to move towards experiential learning. However, it is still developing, and the Malaysian Qualification Framework still follows the National Education Philosophy that is based on the five national principles as discussed in the background of the study.

To attempt to integrate ELT into the Malaysian context, I added other elements including having a more habitual reflection construct in mind (Dewey, 2001). I was not aware of Dewey’s reflective approach until I decided to do this study, and it all started from the flexible ELT. However, I have been practicing Dewey’s reflective approach in all the camps. ELT attracted me in the first place because ELT helped me visualise a way to structure an effective camp in teaching soft skills. Throughout the process of

designing and running the camp, ELT has been a practical tool that aided the structure of the camp with the objective to enhance the learning experiences of the camp participants and facilitators. With ELT, there is a way to consider and design every activity in the camp.

In addition to ELT, constant intentional and trial and error reflections are important parts of the camp. It not only could enhance students' thinking about the process of learning from each activity but also help in the planning and designing of the outdoor experience before and during the camp. Usually, before camp, during induction where facilitators practice how each activity should be conducted, there is much reflection among the facilitators. This nested form of reflection; where reflection is also important to facilitators running the camp, means that the philosophy of the camp is integrated on many levels. I also learnt from the responses that induction is the best time for the facilitators to reflect on lessons participants could learn from each activity in the camp. As stated, induction is an important part to ensure that facilitators are ready to conduct the camp.

5.5.3 In the Farm: Outdoor Out-of-Comfort Experience

The literature review provides some critiques of the way comfort zones are used in outdoor education. What was interesting was how campers used the phrase 'comfort zone'. To ensure that reflection is constantly happening throughout the camp, being out of the comfort zone is seen as an important factor by the respondents that aided in their learning of soft skills through reflections. Borbye (2010) states that being in a comfort zone makes a person feel good but feeling comfortable at all time could "create

complacency, boredom and an ungrateful or negative attitude” (p. 1). She adds that when a person is hungry, it feels great to be fed and food will taste delicious. However, if that person has too much food and never feels hungry, the value of food will be lost. Escaping from being outside of the comfort zone is a natural behaviour. Nevertheless, being out-of-comfort not only challenges a person physically but also mentally and emotionally.

From the responses, emotion is another essential element for reflection in learning soft skills. One of the most challenging parts of being outdoors is that it is out of the comfort zone of many people from cities. It is physically challenging and can trigger undesirable emotions. This is paralleled to Dewey’s (1934) description as part of AE where “emotion is the moving and cementing force” (p. 42), that causes a change in action. Cognition, emotion, and physical elements are included in an AE where emotions are described as significant qualities that cause a change of action. He states earlier that “emotion is the conscious sign of a break. The discord is the occasion that induces reflection” (Dewey, 1934, p. 21). By quoting Dewey, Hohn (2010) identifies the emphasis of the symbiotic relationship between emotion and cognition. He describes how organisms deal with difficulties in their environment by making an effort to understand the essentials of harmony, which then causes a break in balance and a reaction with an emotion. He further explains that a person should understand the break and somewhat identify what is wrong to be able to react emotionally. In a later section in this chapter, further discussion describes how campers were helped to identify their wrongs. He emphasises Dewey’s definition by stating that emotion is not only an outcome but also a cause for reflection to happen. Being out-of-comfort as in the camp, challenges campers’ emotionally. Therefore, as Hohn (2010) points out, it is also

important to identify the cause and understand how to break it. Hence, being aware of what one is going through is essential.

Findings state that being aware of what is to be learnt and being able to acknowledge the importance of learning something help campers to manage their emotions and enable them to endure the process of learning outside their comfort zone. Data gathered on how students were pushed to the limit when they faced tough challenges supports this. Juggling emotions due to tiredness and other causes led them to reflect unintentionally and intensively. The facilitators noted they were to push the participants to their limit to learn soft skills in the camp because that was how the facilitators learnt when they were the participants. For example, when they were all tired but still had to carry their friend on a stretcher down the slope, enduring and swapping with each other to ensure that everyone gets to rest their arms even just for a few seconds. One of the participants, Sally, stated that he learnt how to be more patient and tolerant, and able to control his anger after the camp due to being in a uncomfortable zone and knowing that he wanted to be an effective team player. This is reflected in his quote on page 183-185 about the activity where he had to make a stretcher and carry his friend on it that challenged him mentally and physically.

To ensure that students are aware of the importance of learning soft skills and acknowledge that camp was a place to learn these skills, the meaning and purpose of learning soft skills needs to be clarified and emphasised. This is supported by TCO's quotes on page 156 where she mentioned the facilitator's encouragement of learning during the camp and the application to life outside of the camp.

To instil awareness among the students: it is important to help them to see their learning, once they have seen, they cannot unsee, as Marton (2015) suggested. One way I found was to always remind them about the reasons why others more easily secure a job when they get out of the university. The respondents did see soft skills as important:

Soft skill is not something that you learn in your course you are doing, it's more on how you develop your own skills...I mean you learn from other friends and you learn from conducting events, you learn through conducting programmes, and things like that, which for me, it's very important for my working life now actually [Raj].

Conversely, Brown (2008) suggests that the adventurous environment of the outdoors is often risky. If a person is pushed too hard out of their comfort zone, they may become highly anxious especially when their high level of anxiety is not well taken care of by experts (Berman & Davis-Berman, 2005). Along the same lines, Leberman and Martin (2003) point out that not all activities that push students out of their comfort zone result in their the best learning. Brown (2008) advocates that this approach to activities is less beneficial for student learning. However, some respondents in this study specified that they learnt soft skills from being outside their comfort zones. Their understanding of being outside their comfort zone is when they experience unfamiliar situations or negative emotions as quotes shown:

I agree that emotion plays a very important role in the camp, and I like the good cop bad cop concept in the camp because you have ups and downs in your emotion... so the discipline bureau is good to get them out of the comfort zone [FFK].

the camps at "Mak Lang is very different... the place is suitable for any camps... it's mostly connected to nature, that's the reason we have to go for camps, so we have to come out of our comfort zone, and to go into the jungle [AK].

I will get scolding or not having enough sleep, but that's learning, not having enough sleep is normal, in camps, not sleeping or not taking bath or shower is normal [Anip].

This research suggests that, in this outdoor education camp, in a similar process, one participant may have learnt something, while another participant may have learnt nothing. For example, one respondent stated that he did not change much when being disciplined while another stated that the discipline facilitator helped:

Every time the discipline facilitator shouted at us, and then every time he showed us that kind of angry face, so I felt like that kind of discipline doesn't really take the effect [Tim].

What I realised is that, during that emotional roller coaster that we went through that three days in camp, it kind of allowed you to be criticised... I think the facilitator got better things to do than going around scolding people... what I realised is that the skill of accepting criticism. It's very easy to accept praises but to accept criticism and reflect on the criticism and do better, that's not what everyone can do [Sally].

There were many activities in this camp for learning of soft skills. The same module of activities might teach one participant intended soft skills but others might learn something else that was not intended to be learnt such as, the soft skill of self-sacrifice. As Kolb (2015, p. xix) puts it, "Lifelong learning is often conceived as a process of learning from direct life experiences that is controlled by the individual." For example, what this facilitator has mentioned in this experience of conducting activities in the camp:

So as facis, we do reflect upon ourselves... at the end of every activity, we asked the participants, so what do you get from here, and there was no wrong answer... because that was their point of view, and then we summarise... in our point of view, then we give them the feedback... so we keep on learning as facilitators... we are meeting over 40 students, from different walks of life and maybe their point of views are way better than ours [AK].

The following camp participant's perspective matches the facilitator's perspective about reflection:

At the end, the facilitator will explain to us about what we can learn from the activities, from the camp, from the activities that we have done, but first of all, they will ask us what we learnt from it and then after that they will explain further what we should learnt [Ann].

In Ann's quote above, she meant that facilitators discussed and summarised their points of views and explained further about their given point of views rather than telling them other or new things or skills that they should learn.

As another individual, although being an educator, planning and designing of a camp could only be done from our own learning experiences of what soft skills can be learnt from a specific activity, from the responses of the campers, and through reading of academic materials. Moreover, believing in both constructivism and social constructivism, I acknowledge that learning through reflection happens both cognitively and socially. Due to that, I did not let them go through that discomfort zone alone, and my job was to ensure that students do learn something. It is impossible to unambiguously determine what specific soft skills a student can learn from an activity. But the findings in Chapter 4 show that learning soft skills through out-of-comfort zone experiences is important to campers but not to the extent of causing serious anxiety as suggested by Brown (2008). It was interesting that the out-of-comfort zone experiences were all reframed as learning opportunities by campers and this may reflect the difference between Malaysian culture and the cultures of some of the authors (such as Brown) of these critiques. There is a danger that it may be too far out of the comfort zone for participants, and therefore it is important to first build the awareness and importance of learning soft skills among campers and constantly remind them that some

of the hardship they are going through will help them to reflect more deeply. However, besides being out-of-comfort, informants in this study stated that they learnt soft skills also from the good things such as helping each other while cooking as a team as stated by Naff in page 182 where he mentioned that the process was fun.

Berman and Davis-Berman (2005) point out the significance to ensure safety not only physically but mentally. From the beginning of the camp, during the briefing time, the camp commandant emphasises the three rules: safety, safety, and safety. It was spelt out three times because it was the most vital rule to adhere to in the camp. The local residents live there, hence they are familiar with the jungle and the risk for the students. Safety measures were the main priority for any outdoor activities, not only physically but mentally.

In addition to the discussion above, from the contrast between what is found and what is pointed out by scholars, I intend to justify the different definition of the comfort zone as stated by respondents and the scholars. Brown (2008) in his definition of being out of the comfort zone in the comfort zone model is by fabricating a perception of risk or using stress to challenge people to move outside their 'comfort zone' which is undesirable. In his words:

Creating a perception of risk and challenging people to move outside their 'comfort zone' is seen as an integral feature for growth and change in participants of 'traditional approaches' to adventure education programmes. Using stress as the way to achieve growth may possibly have taken on the mantle of an 'urban myth' in education in the outdoors.

While for the participants from the data of this research, they define being out-of-comfort zone as a less-risky state with subtle negative emotions when being disciplined.

According to them, it is an unusual or uncommon event in their life like sharing food in one plate (AK's quote on page 175) or as Naff stated about some off-routine comfort home situations as his quote here:

I think the only difficult activity was... we had really little sleep... had inconsiderate tent mates... I had an option to shower, it's just that I didn't want to because of how dirty it was... the part where we entered into something out of comfort zone is the part that's hard but after that it's OK [Naff].

It could mean just not sleeping in a fluffy bed but a tent with a straw mat or eating and feeding someone else with their hands which they do not normally do outside of the camp. It is a way to change the perspectives that will help them become more aware and help them to see things differently. Marton (2015) points out that,

In order to perceive anything, it has to be perceptible. In order to be perceptible, it has to be separated (in the learner's awareness) from other things. Why would we not be able to see the green color [sic] in an entirely green world? The reason is that in order to see the green color [sic] of a cucumber, for instance, we must be able to separate the greenness (the feature) from the cucumber (the whole). But if everything is green, we cannot think apart from the greenness and the green things. In order to do that, we need an alternative to green. And that we do not have in a green world. (p. 56)

Marton (2015) explains that a feature may not be seen unless it is put with a different light. The way to help people see things they have not seen or do things they have not done is to put them in an unknown zone that is a context they have not been in before which can include both hardship and pleasure. Furthermore, encouraging them to be aware of what they can see and learn from the unknown zone aids in their learning of soft skills. It is usually the educators and the facilitators' role to encourage the participants when they are about to give up. Showing them positivity could help with perseverance and learn from being in a less comfortable zone.

Being at the right location and place which offers out-of-comfort effects were seen as an important element in the process of learning soft skills. Being in the jungle was crucial to encourage non-technological and out-of-coverage learning of soft skills. However, in agreement with Wright and Ruksana's (2018) view I do not reject the possibility of learning through experience in an urban environment such as in a swimming pool or a football field. I also believe that such learning could happen in an indoor setting, like in a hall when the comfort zone of technological devices is taken away from learners so that they do not solve a challenge using Google (search engine). However, this depends on the objective of an outdoor experiential process. Hills and Thomas (2020) introduced a conceptual framework aimed at enabling facilitators of the outdoor experiential learning to think critically about the use, or non-use, of digital technologies in their camps. They add that, if outdoor education is taught as a subject, digital technology may be useful to acquire knowledge and skills. However, if it is used as a method to encourage interactions among the participants or with the environment, to develop virtues and values, then, digital technology could restrict participants' learning. Therefore, in this study, since outdoor education was employed as a method, I suggested removing digital technology to ensure better focus on the learning of soft skills as suggested by Tim:

without the phone, we are forced to communicate through our mouth, we are forced to speak... if we go through the camp without the phone, we can focus more on face to face communication... When there is phone, we have a lot of distractions, unnecessary attention... I felt like that's a good decision to ban technology in the camp [Tim].

In summary, the findings of this research indicate that taking campers out of their comfort zone can open their eyes to see the unseen world when they identify the

importance of what they are learning. This then challenges them to react with emotions and constantly. reflect Findings suggest that participants learn soft skills from a different angle. Being in a slightly unusual and uncomfortable state could enhance reflection in learning. Since building positive character is important, being able to endure an uncomfortable situation and to succeed in a challenge are what make learning soft skills possible. In addition, data indicate that being aware of the vitality of learning something and being ready to learn make campers more prone to succeed in life as they could become keen to learn further. This in turn encourages some campers to return to the same camp and learn further in different roles. A typical quote found on page 162 from Sam, helps to understand the reason why they return to the same camp and the importance of learning. Hence, it is crucial that participants have the awareness to strive to learn and learn further. Just as a grain of sand that is necessary to produce a pearl in an oyster in the farm.

5.5.4 The Oyster Farm's Volunteers: Student as Facilitator

Oyster farmers train helpers, just as, camps train facilitators. From the interviews, participants who came back to the camp and became facilitators stated that they got to use a different lens to view the same camp and learn different things every time. Moreover, most of the participants interviewed in this study who have not returned as facilitators indicated they hoped to be given an opportunity to return as facilitators. Even those who are currently working wish to go to the camp again. The idea of being able to learn more and see other people learn is deemed necessary by them. Although participants confirmed that they had learnt soft skills from the camp, they hope to go to the camp again as facilitators to enhance already established skills and to learn new skills.

From the findings in Chapter 4, students not only participated in the camp; they were also involved in the process of teaching and facilitating different groups of participants and working with different groups of facilitators. They managed the camp with the educators: planning the activities, attending the induction, conducting activities, undertaking reflection every night during the camp and after every camp. They were trained to be able to conduct the activities by integrating Kolb's (2015) ELT indirectly as discussed earlier.

Teaching and facilitating is what the students found helpful in learning new and polishing existing soft skills. They were given an opportunity to repeat the almost similar process of facilitating with a different group of participants and team members. As the saying goes, "practice makes perfect" or "practice makes progress." It is crucial

that those who teach can be role models to those who learn and those who teach should never stop learning through their teaching (Hagger et al., 2008). The repetition of a process helps to progress in learning. As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) put it, “Practice makes perfect—then, but not by itself. You have to have the means of learning from practice and making judgements with new cases as they come” (p. 96). While Nolan and Molla (2017) agree by emphasising that it is due to a learner’s awareness of what they are learning from their practices and not the practices itself that make him or her perfect in what they do; it is when critical self-reflection occurs every now and then that make the practices perfect.

Hence, repeated reflections in every activity in the camp are essential. Although I know there could not be perfection in learning soft skills just as genuine pearls are imperfect, this study has shown that students learn soft skills in their own ways when they participate or facilitate.

5.6 The Pearls: Outcome of Experiences

5.6.1 Cultured Pearls: Soft Skills

As has been stated previously, soft skills are required to complement hard business skills (Robles, 2012). Employers are now seeking graduates with a full package of knowledge, skills, and positive attitude (D’eloia & Fulthorp, 2016; Ministry of Higher Education, 2015; Roos et al., 2016). Roos et al. (2016), in their research, found the effectiveness of outdoor adventure camps in developing soft skills in students to be successful in both their university life and future employment. Initially, based on my personal experiences, my soft skills were developed through outdoor camps. Therefore,

when I became an educator, I took the initiative to design a camp that focused on developing soft skills. The findings of this study support the development of soft skills through camp experiences.

Through hard work in monitoring the oyster farm, pearls with different characteristics and colours are finally formed. A range of pearls, or various soft skills, were learnt by campers. The campers considered learning soft skills through camp to be the outcome of their experiences. The findings of this study indicate that the informants thought that soft skills can be learnt and enhanced through multiple repetitions of participating and facilitating in the camp, as discussed in the process earlier. Soft skills can also be learnt through different challenges, and who is learning which soft skills through any specific activity is subjective. Hence, there are variations of outcomes from the camp.

As has been established through the findings in Chapter 4, there are many ways campers learnt soft skills -- some learnt through planned slots, while others learnt through unplanned events in the camp. Some realised that they had changed their behaviours after camp, while others stated that soft skills have become their habits. Also, those who are currently working stated that soft skills have become their habits and they use soft skills developed through their participation in the camp at their workplace unintentionally and naturally. They reported feeling more self-aware about their job and even go the extra miles in their everyday work life.

In summary, the findings of this study indicate that camp not only changed the participants positively but also enabled them to transfer their soft skills in their workplaces and lives, although I acknowledge that not everyone had positive camp

experiences. Finally, the setting up of the farm has encouraged oysters to produce pearls with diverse characteristics and colours.

5.6.2 Formation of A Pearl: Transformation and Transference

The grain of sand has now transformed into an imperfect but a stunning pearl. From the responses, transformation or change and transference happened to the campers. Some stated that the camp managed to change their behaviours positively and skills became habits, while others stated that the camp reduced their negative behaviours, not changing entirely but making them aware of the problem in themselves and have developed an awareness of wanting to change for better. For example AD stated that he wanted to become a better person. His quote can be found on page 186.

The informants indicated that after their changes of behaviours and formations of habits, they managed to use soft skills in different contexts and situations. Kolb (2015) calls this the transformation of experience by defining part of learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 67). In Kolb’s (2015) adaptable ELT, the transformation of experience refers to both the second and the fourth parts, namely: reflective observation and active experimentation. He explains that they are two dialectically opposed modes of transforming experience. Reflective observation transforms experiences via intention, which he calls internal reflection. While active experimentation transforms experiences via an extension, which he defines as “active external manipulation of the external world” or “extensional action” (Kolb, p. 67). Both the positive change in behaviours and habits and transference happen around these processes subjectively through both reflections and

taking action by referring to previous experiences. For example, learning not to commit the same mistakes again or repeat the same method in a different situation after an earlier successful attempt. From the findings, there is a possibility of positive change of behaviours and habits in campers. Newby et al. (2011) state that change happens through experience and interaction with the environment. It is paralleled with the responses from the interviews that the intentionally set up reflection-focused camp with multiple activities, outdoor settings, and campers with a range of behaviours have given them the opportunity to interact and learn from each other. They changed their behaviours, formed their habits, and also transferred their learnt soft skills to other contexts and situations.

Moreover, I learnt from the data that it is possible for transfer to happen after the change of behaviours and the formation of habits. For example, Penguin who explained that she has not arrived late for any class at university since attending the camp once as participant:

Something that I can easily recall. I did apply all that I have learnt from the camp to my life. For example, time management, I never skipped class since then... I am always on time... I think it is from the camp [Penguin].

And also, AK who was both a participant and then a facilitator indicated that he transferred his learning from the camp to his business and university life:

as a faci, you have to be very particular on the time given... so the other activities could go on smoothly, from there we learnt time management. Now that time management is the first factor in my food catering business... timing is very important... I have to submit this assignments on that particular time [AK].

However, data suggests that the opportunity to repeatedly practice the soft skills through different roles and reflect on them is important to increase the possibility of transference. For example, in Raj's own words:

I can say that there is a lot of stuff I learnt which were useful in my work life like how to communicate in my current employment... but if I didn't join the camps and I straight away go into working life, I do think I will be an introvert... there is no problem for me to talk to new guy because you already meet so many people... That kind of confidence you get [Raj].

However, there have been critiques of adventure-based learning as contrived with little transference to different contexts (e.g. Brookes, 2003; Brown, 2010). The deeper, longer learning that happens over several years appears to address many of these concerns. Kolb (2015) cites T. S. Eliot's famous quote of continuous exploration in his clarification of the ELT, which he calls a spiral now, specifying that "we return again to the experience and know it anew in a continuous cursive spiral of learning" (p. 61). However, the informants in this research provide a different perspective. The findings indicate that they did report experiencing a positive transfer to other settings. Campers noted that they returned to a similar but different experience, learnt new knowledge in various roles with a range of participants, and transferred what they had learnt from the previous camps to the same camp and other contexts. Besides that, in between one camp and another, campers stated that they managed to transfer their learning outside of the camp when they were studying, working on assignments in a team, organising or participating in events and other extra-curricular activities, leading their life at home or with friends. Other events that happen outside of the camp give them opportunities to relate to the camp. Campers also reported that they used the skills learnt in their university, personal, and professional life as these had become a habit.

Brown (2010) agrees with the possibility of transferring skills and knowledge from one context to another at different moments in time, but he contests proving and measuring transfer through research. I do agree that measuring of transfer could be problematic especially when one attempts to measure how much transfer has happened. Also, proving exactly which skill is transferred to which particular situation is questionable. This is because the possibility of already having existing skills from other parts of learning could have added to the habit and then transferred to other settings or situations, as discussed in section 5.2, and the process is continuous. Brown (2010) adds that “facilitating for transfer and assuming that this learning will continue beyond the course is based more on wishful thinking and observations of behavioral [sic] change during the program than a strong empirical research base” (p. 19). To emphasise that the campers have transferred their learning to other contexts could be as what Brown (2010) has mentioned in the above quote that it could be every educator’s wish. However, the findings of this study provide a different view. The informants did report that they were able to transfer their learning. For example, Penguin (Page 188) mentioned that she never attended any class late after the camp taught her punctuality. Anip (page 189) also indicated that he gained confidence to speak in front of a crowd from the camp and managed to do that in other contexts. Izz (page 191-192) stated that he learnt upward and downward communication skills through the camp and managed to transfer the skills to his workplace. These examples show that facilitating transfer could help campers predict their future transfer and could also help them see the unseen.

Marton (2015) defines transference as “the effect of learning to handle one task on our ability to handle another task. Transfer is usually seen as a function of experienced similarity between the two tasks” (p. 72). He adds that, “transfer is about people being

able to do similar things in different situations because of similarities between those situations (Marton, 2006, p. 507).” Lave (1988) states that, it is possible for people to develop the similarity of relationships between their participation of dissimilar practices and contexts as they draws on their past experiences as resources. It is when a person can see the sameness of the two different tasks and be able to use what was learnt from the first task on the second task. While in Dewey’s (2001) word, “Wiser teachers see to it that the student is systematically led to utilize his earlier lessons to help understand the present one, and also to use the present to throw additional light upon what has already been acquired” (p. 169).

From one layer of nacre to another, the oysters are experiencing challenges to produce pearls. From one camp to another, in between camps, with other events experienced, findings suggest that campers were able to transfer what they have learnt from the camp to a different context and transfer back to the camp, and the experiential spiral of learning continues. Having their past experiences with some errors and successes and being able to see the similarities between two situations, campers reported that they are able to discern the skills they have applied and use them in different contexts.

5.6.3 The Meaning of the Return

One of the most visible and significant actions campers took or wished to take that supported their learning of soft skills was when they returned and wished to return the same camp to give back to the community from which they had benefited as Tim and Sally mentioned on page 185.

Erikson (1980) states that in human life, there is a need to give back to the community or society to develop meaning that involves some sacrifice. Seligman (2011) identified that one of the main factors to achieve wellbeing in life is to do things with meaning and purpose. Campers stated they felt responsible for the juniors from the same university and were able to relate when they saw them learn soft skills in camp. When a person feels the urge to engage and offer support to those in need this behaviour is referred to as being empathetic to others (Hoffman et al., 2010; Penner et al., 2005). The informants saw the importance of good behaviour and soft skills, not only in themselves but also in their juniors. They found it meaningful to be able to give back and believe that they learnt better by teaching repetitively, which meant having the opportunity to practice. Since the participants believed they had learnt soft skills from the camp, they hoped to return and train their juniors from the same university. They wanted to see their juniors learn, and that made them feel good. They not only benefited from the camp but were willing to give back to the community. They found meaning and purpose through the camp.

A reflection-focused camp can transform a person positively by changing their behaviours, forming good habits of soft skills and enabling them to flourish. It can also help them see the sameness in differences and apply what they have learnt to different contexts where the continuous recursion of learning from experience happens. Transformation and transference are found to be the outcomes of campers' experiences through the camp. Participants reported that they took action to return to the camp to give back and teach their juniors because they thought that they have learnt some soft skills through the camp.

5.7 Cultural and Contextual Process and Outcome

5.7.1 The Role of Discipline and Being Disciplined

To give an idea on how having discipline facilitators in this camp is contextual, I have described the hierarchical system, the National Principles, and the National Education Philosophy of Malaysia in section 1.2, and the background of the study. In this section, I explain how my personal experience had led me to set up the camp this way. Lastly, I discuss what I have found from the responses and relate them to other scholars discussion about the role of discipline in the experiential outdoor camp.

Naturally, because of my own positive experiences of having a strict discipline facilitator in camps I attended, I have inculcated this method in the camp. Earlier, I was not aware of the similarities between the school system of having a discipline teacher and in this camp. I only realised it after I came to New Zealand to do my PhD when I met with my supervisory team. Through our discussions, I found that this discipline role for a specific teacher is rather contextual. Not only in school but also in the university when I first joined for an undergraduate degree. In Malaysia, beginning from the orientation week, we had two discipline facilitators who were there to monitor us. Likewise, when I attended a leadership camp, there were two discipline facilitators who monitored us closely and pointed out our mistakes in that camp. I had benefited from my undergraduate experiences and thought it was time to give back when I became an educator. Hence, this was how I started the camp. I believe that facilitators should point out participants' mistakes, encouraging and praising their effort at times, and leave the punishment to the discipline facilitators during the disciplinary slots.

Parallel to my belief, the findings suggest that having discipline facilitators who are strict in managing the misbehaviours in camp is significant as participants responded that they were being disciplined and corrected, rather than being yelled at without clarifying what mistakes they have made. Respondents highlighted that, in the outside world or workplaces, little things or mistakes would typically not be pointed out by people around them, only in the camp where the small mistakes instantly corrected and during disciplinary slot as mentioned by TCO on page 206.

Since Malaysians respect hierarchy and seniority, and since educators are required to follow the National Education Philosophy closely, as led by the Malaysian National Principles, naturally campers are able to accept being corrected by their seniors or facilitators. This also means campers value constructive feedback, although it might invoke negative emotions in them. For example, Ann a camp participant, stated her thought that the discipline facilitator was always angry and caused stress in her, but in the end she mentioned that she has learnt to be more disciplined:

...the Facilitator did not scold but like always angry and strict. But then, from there we learnt how to be more disciplined. So, there is good and bad [Ann].

AK (quote on page 151), thought that he learnt from the discipline facilitator because they explained their corrections. This was in comparison to other camps he had attended where the discipline facilitator had scolded without giving a reason.

Sally, who was one of the camp participants also stated that he was being corrected and indicated that he learnt to accept criticism as in the outside world one does not get criticised often but if a mistake is made, one needs to face circumstances.

During the emotional part... you learn to accept criticism where you usually don't get criticised often... so if you don't follow the instructions, you get criticised like how the real world outside works, you are given a task, you don't comply with a task given, you will have to face the consequences, criticism is one part of it [Sally].

Pintrich (2000) suggests that, when a student has set their mind to accomplish a difficult task due to them valuing its content, negative emotion is considered as a signal to encourage them to put more effort into it. It is noted that both positive and negative feedback is effective in learning (Kluger & Denisi, 1996). Hattie and Timperley (2007) describe feedback as the conceptualisation of information provided by an agent such as a teacher, a friend, an experience, a parent, self, and so on, by referring to the performance and understanding of something. Ferguson (2019), in her study, found that students' engagement in feedback is highly related to what they think they need to succeed. In contrast to these Western settings, in Malaysia, this feedback is provided in large part by a strict figure. This concurs with the data that, with the will to learn, campers believe in the value of learning soft skills in the camp and see the need of learning for the benefit of their personal and professional life. Furthermore, negative feedback without corrective information can be less effective or of little use as it does not help in their next response (Breakwell, 1983; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Weiner, 1974). Respondents stressed that feedback that corrects their wrong is what makes them learn soft skills in camp. This kind of negative feedback is often called corrective feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Campers receive negative but corrective feedback during a disciplinary slot or after a punishment when they are having their reflections, although the educators and facilitators would sometimes correct them instantly when they see a mistake being

made. Having discussed corrective feedback and discipline, reward and punishment were used carefully in camp to encourage positive behaviours and reduce negative behaviours. Punishments in the camp were not harsh and daunting and usually done in a group, targeted at getting campers to be aware of their surroundings and their actions, such as cleaning up the sink area when they left it messy, picking rubbish around the campsite, or running around the field a few times together when they were not punctual. In camp, after a punishment, there was time for reflections with another facilitator or with their group facilitators asking them why they think they were punished. The facilitators then gave their feedback and encouraged the campers to avoid repeating their mistakes and to take responsibility through consequences based on actions taken. Respondents stated that this kind of punishment is reasonable and is meant to teach participants a lesson instead of inciting animosity. Punishment seems to be acceptable for Malaysia as a hierarchical context with the high acceptance level of power distance (Asma & Lim, 2001; Amir, 2009; Idris et al., 2018). However, data found that the balance between reward and corrections are essential, this compares with Boekaerts' (2007) suggestion that having a good ratio of positive and negative emotions is advantageous for learning. One camp facilitator suggest about ratio here:

I think emotion is important to acquire soft skills. But then I feel like in the camp the discipline bureau came out too much... It should be 65% up and 35% down.

Furthermore, I learnt from the data that taking on the role as a discipline facilitator also helped campers to learn soft skills. They managed to see themselves being both the one who finds others' mistakes and the one who had their mistakes pointed out before becoming the discipline facilitator as highlighted by a former discipline facilitator, TCO on page 164 and 165.

The role of the discipline facilitator is to help participants to identify their wrongs and react emotionally when they understand the effect and being able to identify what is wrong (Hohr, 2010). Bowdridge and Blenkinsop (2011) suggest that, as an educator, it is crucial to be mindful that our programmes are not entirely exempted from discipline or punishment. However, it is essential to also provide sufficient room for self-realisation and emancipation.

5.8 The Neglected Lens and the Unexpected Outcome

5.8.1 A Neglected Opportunity: Unplanned Events in the Camp and Emancipation

In the camp, there are plenty of occasions where campers were not engaged in planned activities where there is room around the planned activities when campers can do what they want. Other than that, activities were set up without fixing the outcomes, which then encourages emancipation in their learning process. Emancipation, according to Radford (2012), is when learners construct knowledge freely without being controlled by an authority. In camp, there was no specific answer to any activity. Participants were encouraged to freely identify which skill or what kind of knowledge they gained through the process. As facilitators and educators, we encouraged participants to reflect and learn from their own experiences, and we only facilitated the process. However, based on the findings, some obvious wrongdoings are required for them to be corrected as suggested by Naff on pages 177 and 178.

There are times when participants were free from joining activities. For example, when they were having their meals, cooking, bathing, swimming in the river, and even before

sleeping, they would communicate or talk about what happened during the day. This was the time where they would also reflect on their experiences, although it might be just a time when they talk about the fun part. However, as long as they reflect, they would learn or come to realise something constructed by themselves.

Through the neglected lens, I discovered from the findings that they learnt not only soft skills but also applied soft skills they already possessed. The participants used the camp as a platform to enhance their existing skills. The findings of this study indicate that it is not only during the planned events that campers learnt soft skills but also during unplanned time. There needs to be some free time for them to reflect themselves about what they have experienced.

5.8.2 The Unexpected Outcome: Self-Sacrifice

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, self-sacrifice is “an act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy” (Oxford Dictionary Online). It is something someone values or believes in, but he or she is willing to give in and give up for other more crucial purposes. The most valuable thing in life is none other than life itself. A gun attack in a Florida high school in the US, killed 17 people on 14 February 2018. Peter Wang, a 15 year old student and junior cadet, chose to hold a door open heroically to ensure that other students were able to escape the shooting. His noble act of sacrificing his own life earned him a Medal of Honour awarded posthumously by the US Army (Van Ackeren & Archer, 2018). His name is now carved in the hearts of many to remember his heroic act that saved others. From the incident, sacrifice is inherently a moral thinking or value. As Van Ackeren

and Archer (2018) argues that although it is an important value, it is surprisingly less discussed by the moral philosophers. In Wang's case, he did not only possess a self-sacrificial value, but also the value of self-sacrificial leadership, taking the initiative to stand in the frontline like an excellent commando to his soldiers, like a good superior to his subordinates.

Many historical leaders have depicted self-sacrificial leadership skills. One of them is the esteemed Mahatma Gandhi, who lived in forbearance and poverty his whole life. During a protest against the rule of British, he told his people that, "if a time comes when you have to starve, have confidence that we [the leaders] shall eat only after feeding you" (Erikson, 1969, p. 342). This act of self-sacrifice, as Sinek (2014) says, sums up to a true leader. Sinek's speech entitled "Leaders Eat Last" entailed that leadership has a price to pay, although people commonly want to be a leader in an organisation. This is because status earns the leaders, benefits, respect, and that makes them feel good. Sinek (2014), in his speech, highlighted that people want to feel safe under a person's leadership. Therefore, leaders who sacrifice their time and energy to their subordinates, make an organisation flourish.

This skill was not intended to be taught when designing the camp. However, the findings suggest that self-sacrifice emerged as a complex soft skill acquired through the outdoor camp. . From the responses, there are two responses from the camp facilitators about self-sacrifice. As presented in the findings chapter, on page 196 to 197, Izz sacrificed his shoes to one of the participants during their jungle and trekking. While in Papan's case, he sacrificed his belief as a vegetarian and cut chicken for his teammates. This can be found on page 196. This suggests that in future when conducting an outdoor

camp the facilitators need to be aware that self-sacrifice may be experienced by the participants.

From my own understanding, self-sacrifice is related to with humility and empathy. People who are willing to sacrifice themselves are usually humble, empathetic, and put others before themselves. The influence of their belief and spirituality develop a person's self-sacrificial skills.

5.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter first used the pearl metaphor to describe the overall learning experiences of the camp. Then, variable potential relationships among the three categories emerged from data are discussed: (1) camp encourages learning awareness, and reflection; (2) camp enhances positive behaviours and habits; and (3) camp simulates personal and professional life. Then, to answer the research questions, both the process and outcome of the camp were detailed. After that, the process and outcome based on the Malaysian culture and context were outlined. Finally, the neglected lens and the unexpected outcome of the camp were demonstrated. It was found that the data have given much insight into how to run a camp that could encourage the learning of soft skills. In the next chapter are suggestions for new ways to conduct the camp based on the data from this study. The implication of the study, recommendations for future research, and summary of the study are outlined.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter discusses how the research questions are answered with the findings that emerged from the study. Learning from the findings, an approach on how an experiential outdoor camp should be conducted to develop soft skills is detailed and portrayed through a model. Then, the implications of the study are outlined. Next, the limitations and trustworthiness of this study are demonstrated. Lastly, recommendations for future research are made.

6.2 Answers to the Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to investigate the camp participants' and camp facilitators' variation of perceptions regarding their outdoor camp experiences and acquisition of soft skills. A phenomenographic approach was used in this study. This approach aids in identifying the variation of experiences using categories of description from the data; it also allows in showing the relationship among the categories. An outcome space is used to portray the relationship between the categories. Three categories emerged from the data to demonstrate that the camp managed to develop, enhance, and transfer soft skills among the camp participants and camp facilitators. Two research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the experiences of those who have attended and/or facilitated an experiential learning process that is focused on the learning of soft skills?

Findings suggest that the experiential learning process with carefully planned activities and thorough reflections, discipline, feedback, out-of-comfort experiences, returning as facilitators, and focusing on the neglected lens all aided in the development of soft skills among campers.

2. What are the perceptions of the camp participants and the camp facilitators about the outcomes of the learning of soft skills?

Findings suggests that campers were able to learn soft skills through the camp and also transfer skills learnt to other contexts of their lives. Campers learnt soft skills through three categories, namely: (1) camp encourages learning awareness and reflections; (2) camp enhances positive behaviours; and (3) camp simulates personal and professional life.

6.3 An Enhanced Approach for the Current Soft Skills Development Camp

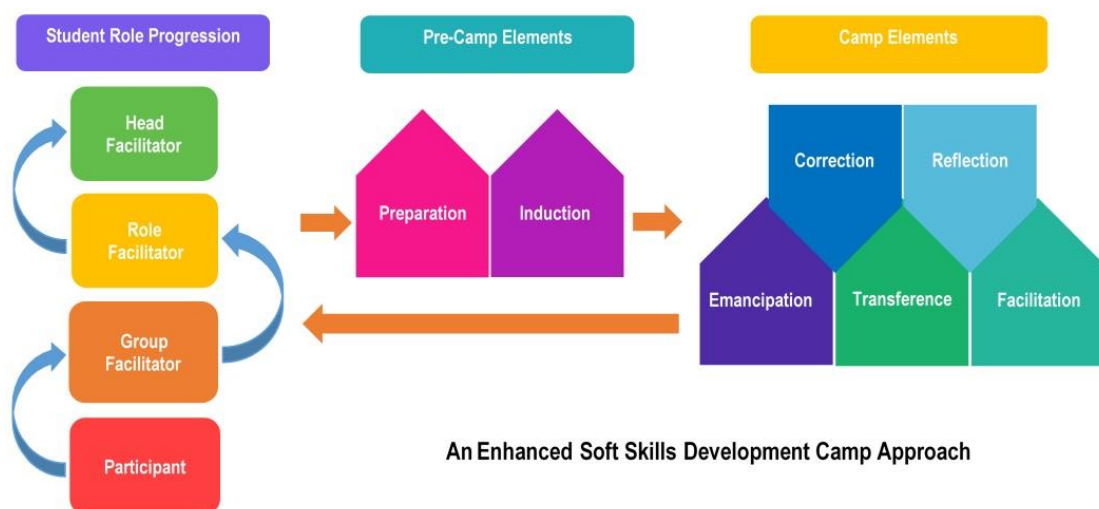


Figure 9: Camp with an enhanced approach based on research findings

To conclude this study, the model demonstrates the key principles that seem to underpin the learning of soft-skills based on the findings of this study. Figure 9 above shows an enhanced approach on how future camps intending to develop soft skills could be conducted based on the research findings. This model has three parts: student role progression, pre-camp elements and camp elements. It is important to describe all parts for the enhancement of soft skills because it allows campers to have more opportunities to practice different sets of soft skills while enhancing existing skills. I do not include location as an element because, in my opinion, this method can be used both indoors and outdoors. Therefore, even though this camp was located outdoors, this type of camp can also be created indoors. I now explain the three components of the framework: Student role progression, pre-camp elements, and camp elements. These steps could be common to all camps but it might be helpful to illustrate and describe the elements to be used as a checklist in future camps.

6.3.1 Student Role Progression

The first part of the model shows a gradual and spiral movement of role from a participant who comes to the camp only to partake in the camp planned and prepared by other parties, to go on to become the head facilitator after taking on several other roles. A student attends the camp as a participant only once. After that, if they are going to attend again, they will be given the role as a group facilitator. As a group facilitator, he or she not only takes care of a small group in the camp, but also participates in the induction to prepare prior to the camp . A group facilitator would not be given other roles during the camp as their main focus is to facilitate the small group assigned to them, including conducting reflections in the small group. After their experience as

group facilitators, if they can attend the camp again, they would be given other roles as role facilitators, such as activity facilitator or discipline facilitator. Finally, when they are familiar with the different roles played, they can become the head facilitator whose role is like the camp director or camp commandant. They would be the one who set up the camp together with the other outdoor educators. They monitor the whole camp with other outdoor educators and decide on which activities should be included before the training of other facilitators. After joining the camp as a participant and group facilitator, they are allowed to try out or hold different positions in the camp. When there are enough facilitators, it is then possible for them to volunteer for the role they prefer to hold in the camp. It is important to encourage participants to join as facilitators. On a side note, in between camp or after camp, there are usually other events, they are to be encouraged to be active in joining other activities for more opportunities to practice and learn soft skills.

6.3.2 Pre-Camp Elements

The second part of the model is about planning and rehearsing. Pre-camp elements are vital to plan and prepare the camp before it can be carried out. Preparation and induction are included in this stage. Although preparation and induction should be done before camp. In camp, there should be flexibility in continuing to adapt to different situations around which activity should be conducted first, next, or omitted. This is because there is variation in participants' backgrounds, experiences, and characters. It also depends on the weather and availability of budget and materials. Therefore, preparation and induction are ongoing. Despite that, the pre-camp elements are the foundation to the learning of soft skills. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the camp is carefully

planned, and modules are carefully sequenced and practiced. I now describe those two elements.

6.3.2.1 Preparation

An essential part of teaching is planning. As stated in the previous chapter, it is important to plan the process of experiential learning to meet its objectives. Determining that the activities are carefully sequenced, the location is appropriate, and the method to be used, are crucial decisions to encourage and enhance learning. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that the activities set should fit the required skills. For example, an activity could be mainly focused on developing teamwork. Educators should be mindful that campers might learn other skills in a similar process which is highly encouraged. In this camp, the itinerary is not revealed as it is to create alertness among campers throughout the camp. This is to ensure continuous alertness among campers but also to enable facilitators and campers to flexibly adapt to situations when scheduling activities based on camp participants' responses. Moreover, in order to enhance awareness of learning, it is vital to inform campers about the importance of soft skills as being beneficial for their personal and professional life, or to emphasise the objectives of the camp clearly. Hence, while planning the camp, it is better to do so as a team with both educators and facilitators. Even in this process, they should have already learnt some soft skills as numerous reflections are done to ensure that the whole camp is effective for teaching soft skills.

6.3.2.2 Induction

After a decision is made with the method chosen and sufficient activities planned, the team, which includes the educators and facilitators, rehearse each activity before the camp. It is necessary to make sure the team is familiar with the activities and itinerary of the camp. Induction is important to ensure the main objective to develop soft skills is met. Induction should be conducted at least two weeks before camp with materials required for each activity. During induction, educators and facilitators are encouraged to voice their opinions about each activity. Their ideas about whether each activity could help participants learn the determined soft skills are vital for improvement even though emancipation in learning, or the freedom in deciding what they have learnt from each planned activity, should be encouraged. Furthermore, the flow in conducting each activity is checked as some facilitators are newly upgraded from being a participant. They have not organised this camp before but only participated. Induction is the best time to check if the activities are suitable for learning soft skills. There are usually extra activities planned as backup.

6.3.3 Camp Elements

The third part of the model is the camp elements required, based on the data to conduct a camp focusing on developing soft skills especially in Malaysia. There are five elements, namely: correction, reflection, emancipation, transference, and facilitation. There is no specific step in these elements as all elements are included in conducting the camp. I now explain each element.

6.3.3.1 Correction

The first important element to discuss is correction. The respondents used the word ‘correction’ to describe the situations when they were being corrected by the discipline facilitators and educators. This creates an out-of-comfort experience as it is not common to be criticised by another person but it could happen in real life especially at work. It is important to have two discipline facilitators with different roles. One of them is usually the strict facilitator with a straight face throughout the camp while another one is the facilitator who does reflections with them after their mistakes are being pointed out by the strict facilitator. In the camp, there are also collective punishments that require participants to do some useful task such as collecting rubbish around the campsite, or washing the sink. This triggers their emotion about them taking the wrong action or not doing what they were supposed to do. To correct the participants, it is necessary to give both explicit positive and negative feedback.

6.3.3.2 Reflection

Using ELT metaphorically, for both induction, during the camp and after camp, there were reflections done in small groups, the whole group, and the facilitator group from one activity to another. Intentional reflections need to be conducted after each activity in small groups and the whole group. As for the facilitator group, reflections or post-mortems are done at night before sleep time with educators to learn from their day’s experiences and improve on the next day. Intentional reflections are done through asking rhetorical questions, giving answers by asking more questions using ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’, such as, “Why do you think this happens this way?” and a lot of follow up questions. Application questions or questions to encourage them to see the

sameness of the two tasks can also be asked to ensure reflection on how they can apply learning from camp to their life and workplaces. Some examples of guided questions can be used as follow:

1. Let's recall the process of this activity we just did, what did we do first, and what's the next step?
2. What have we learnt from this activity? Good, and what else? Anyone?
3. How are you going to use the skills you learnt from this activity in the management of your club and society or life in general? Give me some examples.

After conducting this study, I found that a focus group interview was a useful tool for after camp reflection. Putting the participants in small groups and doing a thorough interview after the camp helped them to reflect further. Through my observations, checking their understanding about what they had learnt or realised from reflections was important. They might give unanticipated answers. However, this means that they have learnt other skills and knowledge from the camp. Hence, as an educator, I have learnt to always be mindful that during an activity, there will be trial and error reflections. Furthermore, conducting intentional reflections after each activity, and each day was essential according to the findings of this study. Intentional reflections could be used to recall their accomplishments and errors made during the activities. This would encourage them to learn from both their success and failure.

6.3.3.3 Emancipation

Allowing emancipation or freedom is another result found in this study. Emancipation in learning, as defined in the discussion chapter, is when learners are free to construct their own knowledge without being controlled by any authority. When planning an activity, a skill is set as a focused skill to teach, however, the learning outcome can be different, or participants might have learnt additional skills through an activity. For example, in a planned activity, having a fixed answer or outcome could restrict the variations of knowledge gained. Therefore, it is important to allow them to construct their own knowledge. The educators and the facilitators should encourage emancipation in learning. While a camp needs structured and planned slots, but also needs sessions that allow participants to have some free time. This is to be encouraged in both planned and unplanned parts of the camp. In an unplanned slot, such as during mealtimes or throughout the way of a jungle journey, campers might have done something or learnt something outside the educators' expectation, like the example given in the previous chapter about an intriguing outcome: self-sacrifice. Therefore, as an educator, it is essential to leave some space for the participants own transformation, change, and learning. In addition, it is vital to be aware that an unplanned event in the camp is also a learning platform. On-going reflections can be conducted throughout the camp.

6.3.3.4 Transference

One of the main aims to conducting this camp was to create a context where campers learn soft skills and ideally be able to take with them to other contexts, which is also called transference of skills. If they are able to apply those skills in another context, such as workplaces or when having to do an assignment with a group of classmates, it

means that the camp conducted is effective in developing soft skills. Data suggest that soft skills learnt have become habits for them and the camp has transformed their behaviours. Therefore, transference happens. However, as an educator, providing more opportunities for transference after the camp or encouraging campers to participate in other activities especially in the extra-curricular activities, such as getting them to organise events through clubs and societies, helps campers to relate more effectively what they have learnt from camp to those activities. I am aware that even though they might have already applied what they have learnt through the camp in different contexts subconsciously, if they are exposed to more or less similar situations, they could learn soft skills comprehensively and form soft skills as habits.

6.3.3.5 Facilitation

Making participants the facilitators in the next camp gives them a different perspective on learning soft skills. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, being able to teach the same thing many times could enhance the familiarity of soft skills learnt, and could lead them to becoming an expert in running the camp, and also to reinforce the previously learnt soft skills . Giving participants the opportunity to share learning from their initial camp as facilitators and learn other facilitation roles encourages awareness of learning soft skills and nurtures their willingness to give back to the community which is another highly important soft skill. Repetition of an experience can heighten learning.

In conclusion, the three parts of the model are important for further exploration by other outdoor educators. This study suggests that outdoor educators can consider using this model if they are conducting a camp that focuses on the development of soft skills.

6.4 The Implications of the Study

6.4.1 For the Researcher, Students, and the University

At the beginning when I started this camp, it was solely based on my own experiences, and no form of professional study had been done to gauge in-depth responses from the students who have experienced this camp, especially those who have experienced it a few times. The findings of this study have taught me about how I should conduct a camp focused on soft skills. For university students, especially, the study has shown the importance of participating in a carefully constructed experiential process. Currently, there is no enforcement to ensure that university students should participate in this camp. I hope that this study could highlight the necessity for the university to encourage the students to partake in activities that are similar to this camp. The findings suggest that the campers found the experience beneficial. Since one of the aims of the university is to produce well-rounded and employable graduates, the university could consider experiences like the camp to help contribute to those outcomes.

6.4.2 For the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education

As a Malaysian educator, I have not been trained professionally as an experiential educator, but I have many years of practical experience in camps as both a participant and facilitator. The findings of this study could be used to inform the deliberations of

the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education to produce holistic, entrepreneurial and balanced graduates in terms of knowledge, skill and attitude. Therefore, I wish to be given an opportunity to present the model constructed to the Minister of Education and contribute to helping in the planning of an experiential learning process for Malaysian students.

6.4.3 For Experiential Educators

As for experiential educators, it is necessary to be careful in constructing every step in an experiential learning process. It is understood that learning of soft skills can happen anywhere other than a camp. Nevertheless, as I have explained using the cultured pearl metaphor, when there is a platform set up focusing on a particular aspect or objective, there could be a better chance to learn and meet the objective set. The findings of this study hope to enlighten experiential educators about using the experiential learning spiral metaphorically and as a dynamic process to suit the context.

6.4.4 For the Corporate World

The respondents of the current study are adults and some of them are professionals in their own fields. This study reveals that university students who have participated in an experiential learning process applying many intentional reflections possess soft skills. Soft skills in this study refer to skills that are non-technical. They are also called generic skills or employability skills, such as: communication skills, leadership skills, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, it refers to character skills such as responsibility, independence, and flexibility. The framework constructed could be

useful to help human resources in companies to develop soft skills in their staff members. This model could also be used as a team-building checklist. There is also a possibility for me to start a corporate team building or corporate soft skills development consultancy when I graduate. However, there should not be a harsh discipline facilitator when using this framework for adults who are already at work. Different strategies are required to replace correction in this context.

6.5 What will I do differently in the next camp?

When I began this research, I was curious about how my views would be different at the end of this research project after having explored in depth Kolb's ELT and Dewey's AE. I anticipated having a far better understanding of the theories behind my practice. Consequently, in the next camp, I will use the framework (Figure 9) constructed to aid in the process of planning. The camp will include more encouragement and praise, but the same method of having two discipline facilitators will remain to ensure that there is a balance between positive and negative feedback and emotions. However, I will try to facilitate a process to inform participants' wrongdoings and see if it works better in the future. I will ensure to remind other facilitators, such as the group and programme facilitators, to be more encouraging to the participants by giving positive feedback all the time by recording their good deeds and rewarding them. Furthermore, emancipation in both learning and setting of an itinerary will be applied.

As a result of this research, I have discovered the importance of listening closely to participants' and facilitators' experiences. Therefore, focus group interviews will be utilised after every camp to encourage thorough reflection. I have found that the

interview questions used for this research were effective in helping participants and facilitators reflect on their learning experiences. Hence, I will use the interview questions as a guide for after-camp focus group reflections.

6.6 Limitations of the Study

The present study has certain limitations that need to be addressed when considering the study and its contributions. Firstly, the study was conducted in a Malaysian context. The findings may not be generalised to all contexts and types of receivers. Furthermore, the participants selected were Malaysians from the same university. Therefore, I must be cautious in expanding the findings beyond this particular university.

Secondly, I conducted this study as an insider. Although measures to avoid being biased have been taken, and I have been careful in bracketing my opinions, it is possible that that informants might feel some pressure to only provide positive feedback because I was their educator. This concern is partly alleviated because I have found some responses about not learning anything from the camp especially from the disciplinary slots, and this helps in assuring the trustworthiness of the study. However, I am not in any way their lecturer who has control over their graduation or grades and enhances the trustworthiness of this study.

I acknowledge that the recruitment strategy of using social media to contact participants is limited, because the research participants may not be a representative sample of all past participants in the camp. It is possible that most of those who maintain contact with the social media platform are positive about their camp experience.

Furthermore, I acknowledge that if it is possible the participants hoped to be involved in future camps, this may have influenced their responses, because they may have felt this would improve their chances of being selected to be a part of future camps. However, this could also mean that the camp had taught them soft skills that they wished to learn further.

I also acknowledge that a constraint was that I worked with more than one languages. That in itself is a big constraint. There is the possibility that meaning could have been lost in translation and I could not have presented English language well when reporting the findings.

Lastly, this study only gauges students' past experiences about the camp. Some of the respondents might not have given their full responses especially during their individual interviews, as they stated generally that they had learnt so much from the camp but could not describe much of this as they had forgotten some of their experiences. However, the data are adequate for the current study because the focus group interviews have helped them in recalling their learning experiences. Their invaluable responses have contributed to the rigour of the study. The current study has shown that the camp has profoundly impacted the campers. This is because even the facilitators who had left the camp several years ago could still recall their experiences.

6.7 Recommendations for Further Research

The current study has been conducted to elicit campers' (camp participants and facilitators) perceptions about their soft skills learning and their transfer of skills to experiences beyond the context of the camp, employing phenomenography as the research design. Some recommendations for further research are discussed.

Further research can be done to test the use of ELT in different universities or other Eastern countries. A study can be done to find out which of the suggested variables are moderators or mediators to develop soft skills in a camp. In addition, specific skills can be tested by using the model constructed in this study.

The study has highlighted the extensive use of a discipline teacher in the school and also a discipline facilitator in the camp. This educational strategy is a common facilitation strategy used in educational and developmental programmes throughout Malaysia. All Malaysians were very familiar with the role of a discipline teacher at school. However, I did not have much knowledge of the role of discipline facilitators at a camp besides that gained through my own experiences when I was an undergraduate. My literature searches revealed no information on this phenomenon. As far as I can tell, this is the first study to identify the role. Therefore, future study could be conducted investigating the strengths and weaknesses of this facilitation strategy in Malaysian schools or camps.

In addition a study is recommended to further investigate if the framework that has emerged from this study can be applied not only in an outdoor experiential process in

a camp, but also in indoor learning or with the current situation, virtual learning. The present study was conducted on a camp which lasted three days and two nights in the outdoors. Further research could be conducted to explore if either a one- or two-day process or a longer experiential process could be equally effective to develop soft skills. However, my findings suggest that time and repetition are critical elements in student learning combined with the outdoor context.

Furthermore, practitioner research or action research could be conducted to enhance the practice of conducting an outdoor camp with other outdoor educators. The present study has found students learn soft skills in a variety of ways. Future study could be conducted on practices and methods used. Furthermore, self-study can also be conducted. This methodology could help educators to explore and analyse their practices with reflective continuous inquiry by using educators themselves as a topic of research.

Lastly, an experimental study could be conducted to compare the outcomes for a control group of students who have not attended any camps with those who have attended this kind of programme focused on learning soft skills.

6.8 Summary of the Study

This study explored Malaysian private university students' perceptions of how reflection-based outdoor experiential education contributes to the development of soft skills. Phenomenography was used as the research design to answer two research questions. There were three groups of participants in the research: (1) camp participants who have only attended the camp once, (2) student facilitators who have attended the

camp and facilitated the camp at least once and are currently still studying full-time, and (3) graduates who are currently full-time employees who have participated in the camp and have facilitated the camp more than once. The research found that the campers were able to learn soft skills via three methods: (1) through learning awareness and reflections, (2) through developing positive behaviours and habits, and (3) camp simulating personal and professional life. New knowledge is learnt through conducting this research, whereby correction by having a discipline facilitator who gives specific feedback is required but with careful planning and complement with more praise and rewards. A framework was constructed from the findings with suggested elements to be used in conducting an experiential outdoor camp: Preparation, Induction, Correction, Reflection, Transference, and Facilitation.

Epilogue

July 26, 2020

I knew this was coming.

I knew I could never resist this feeling of excitement. It's time to make it happen!

It has been a while since I came back to do an experiential learning process with them. I was about to plan, I had gotten in touch with my graduated facilitators about coming back to do this camp together with me.

Sadly, COVID-19 hit the country before we could run the camp. We had to go under Movement Controlled Order (MCO) and we had to find a way to still do a 'camp' no matter what, as we remember that we need to be resilient. We wished to keep persevering or trying to face this challenge together and so, we did! We managed to pull through.

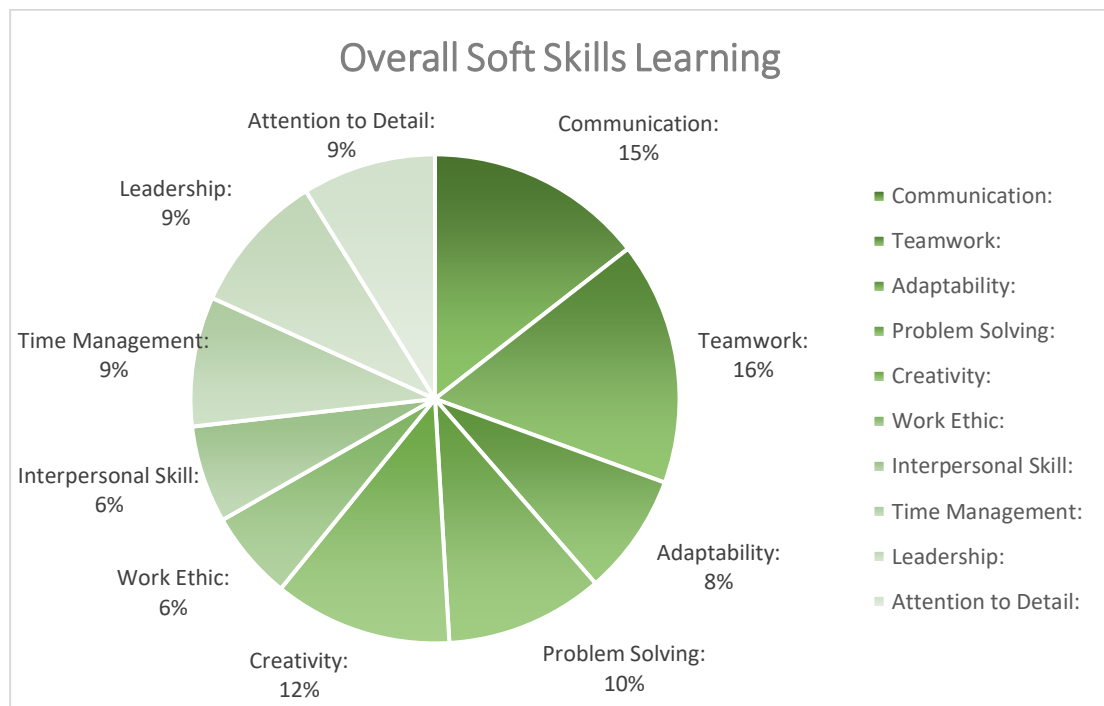
The pandemic has been hitting us since March 2020, but, be that as it may, students still need to learn soft skills. In this situation, they may need soft skills more. The condition at that time was not as serious as it is now. We could still come together as a small group. There were eight of us planning the modules together. Since I had been in NZ for about three years, the facilitator-led-participant progressive chain was broken. I had to press the restart button, to start it all over again. However, this time, I had added new experiences learnt from my PhD journey in Christchurch, New Zealand, I wanted to apply what I have learnt in the planning of this experiential learning process. I also saw an improvement in my knowledge of experiential learning. Therefore, I believe that, it is time to share again.

This time around, it was not in the outdoors, it was in the indoors and we relied on an online platform to help us set up small and big discussion groups. We also used this platform for reflections and feedback. We called this program "Virtual Team Challenge". We were given a small budget by the university to conduct this event. Eight of us were together physically at the university using our own computers in one huge room for the two days, but we ensured that we maintained our one-metre social distancing with medical masks on, following the standard operation procedure (SOP) set by the government. There were four others who joined us as group facilitators virtually. We planned modules that could be used for virtual team building. There were teamwork, communication, adaptability, problem solving, creativity, time management, attention to detail, work ethic, and leadership skills related activities. We had countless meetings to plan and test the activities. Finally, we managed to put a schedule together. This was a two-day event, as always, participants were not given the programme ahead of time. They only had the basic idea of when the break or activity was throughout the two days.

There was no discipline facilitator because this was the first time we were running this and we thought that the discipline facilitator role was not suitable for this virtual event. Since the students were at the comfort of their own homes, managing and making them attend every session throughout the two days were thought to be quite difficult.

Therefore, we decided to omit the discipline facilitator role but leaving the responsibility to the small group leaders and the big group leader. The number of attendees was fluctuating. We had different number of attendees after every break. Some of them would have other things going on and some of them had bad internet connection at home. We had to tolerate and trust their reasons for not being able to attend all the sessions.

Nevertheless, these two days event seemed helpful to the 38 participants to learn soft skills, according to their responses to a small survey at the end of the event. The pie chart below shows that this event had achieved a balance of soft skills learnt by the participants of this virtual event throughout the two days with a total of five modules and an ice breaking session. The most learnt soft skills according to the participants being teamwork and the least being work ethic and interpersonal skills. We are planning to do a more thorough research project on the next event for new participants. Facilitators also verbally mentioned that they had learnt new skills through conducting this virtual event.



This whole PhD journey in New Zealand has motivated me to learn even more about conducting this kind of experiential process that focuses on the learning of soft skills. I know that my passion and learning will never stop. I will keep exploring and learning in this field. The story is to be continued...

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Sample Past Camp Schedule

25 OKTOBER 2013 (JUMAAT)			
MASA	AKTIVITI	CATATAN	BIRO IN CHARGE
4.15pm	PESERTA BERKUMPUL DI ATM THE LOOP 1) Ambil kehadiran(headcount) 2) Simple briefing	Peserta LI dibenarkan datang selepas tamat briefing mereka	1. LOGISTIK/PERHUBUNGAN 2. PENGARAH
5.00pm	BERTOLAK	Baca and oaleh Aizat di dalam bas	
6.30pm	TIBA DI KEM		
6.35pm	TAKLIMAT PROGRAM DAN PERATURAN KEM	-Taklimat from Mak Lang to peserta -Taklimat pasang khemah	
6.45pm	KHIDMAT DIRI 1) Solat maghrib 2) Set up khemah	-Taklimat from Mak Lang to faci -Some faci continue pasang khemah	
7.30pm	ICE BREAKING MAK LANG		
8.30pm	SESI ICE BREAKING DAN PEMBAHAGIAN KUMPULAN 1) Round Table (THEVEN) 2) Magic Curtain (NURIN)* 3) Pembahagian kumpulan + Bendera	-Pilih penghulu/wati	1. DISIPLIN/PROTOKOL 2. PROGRAM 3. LOGISTIK/TEKNIKAL
10.00pm	MAKAN MALAM -Solat isyak	Cucipinggang sendiri	MAKANAN/KESEGARAN
10.30pm	TAKLIMAT SEALS	-Biro Disiplin(Dayah Aizat)	-Protokol collect hp, wallet, jam. -If tak cukup masa, cut the time

10.40pm	KULIAH	-Ms Eve (Leadership) -Miss Alicia (Teamwork)	given for each taklimat
11.30pm	KAMPUNG WALK + SOLO WALK		-Jaga barang SYIDI and SATIA
1.00am	TAKLIMAT HARI KEDUA (peserta)/SUPPER	Cucipinggang sendiri	1. DISIPLIN/PROTOKOL 2. MAKANAN/KESEGARAN
1.15am	TIDUR	END OF DAY 1	-Post moterm -Simple brief from maklang (faci)

26 OKTOBER 2013 (SABTU)			
MASA	AKTIVITI	CATATAN	BIRO
6.00am	SUBUH/KHIDMAT DIRI	Fasibagiceramah disiplin, lewat	DISIPLIN/PROTOKOL
7.00am	SENAMROBIK		-SARVIN, SATIA, THEVEN, THAMIL, SHARON, ANEP
7.30am	SARAPAN PAGI	Cucipinggang sendiri	MAKANAN/KESEGARAN
8.00am	TAKLIMAT JUNGE TRACKING		
8.30am	RIVER CROSSING + JUNGLE TRACKING		
2.00pm	SOLAT ZOHOR DAN MAKAN TENGAH HARI	DALAM HUTAN	
2.45pm	LDK 1. Save The Eggs (Thina) *Kerjasama 2. Poisonous Dam (Sarvin) *Provokasi 3. Snooker Ball (Syidi) *Komunikasi 4. Free Fall Egg (Mahirah) *Kreativiti	1. 15 minutes (outdoor) 2. 20 minutes (outdoor) 3. 30 minutes (out/indoor) 4. 30 minutes (outdoor) 5. 15 minutes (outdoor) 6. 20 minutes (outdoor)	1. DISIPLIN/PROTOKOL 2. PROGRAM 3. LOGISTIK/TEKNIKAL

	<p>5. Mat Flip (Sharon) *Kreativiti</p> <p>6. Blind Man (Syidi) *Komunikasi</p> <p>7. Tallest Tower Built (Azwan) *Kerjasama</p>	7. 30 minutes (indoor)	
5.30pm	SOLAT ASAR		
5.45pm	EXPLORACE	-Adjust tentative	
7.00pm	KHIDMAT DIRI/SOLAT MAGHRIB		
7.45pm	<p>LDK</p> <p>8. Rusted TV (Nurin) *Komunikasi</p> <p>9. Wrecking Ship (Wak) *Provokasi</p>	<p>8. 30 minutes (indoor)</p> <p>9. 30 minutes (out/indoor)</p>	<p>1. DISIPLIN/PROTOKOL</p> <p>2. PROGRAM</p> <p>3. LOGISTIK/TEKNIKAL</p>
9.00pm	SOLAT ISYAK		
9.15pm	BBQ NIGHT	Cucipinggansendiri	
10.00pm	<p>TOT NIGHT</p> <p>-Channel Flip Performanceby Faci</p> <p>-EACH GROUP WILL PRESENT ONE BY ONE</p>	<p>-Participants handle TOT night</p> <p>-Faciakan perform after peserta</p>	
11.45pm	SUPPER	Cucipinggansendiri	MAKANAN/KESEGARAN
12.00am	TIDUR	END OF DAY 2	-Post Moterm -Briefing maklang

27 OKTOBER 2013 (AHAD)			
MASA	AKTIVITI	CATATAN	BIRO
6.00am	KHIDMAT DIRI/SUBUH	Fasibagiceramahdisiplinseablewat	DISIPLIN/PROTOKOL
7.00am	SENAMROBIK		-SARVIN, SATIA, THEVEN, THAMIL, SHARON, ANEP -MS EVE
8.00am	MAKAN		
8.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ LDK ❖ Chicken Fight (Nurin) ❖ Limbo rock (Theven) ❖ Lipan Bara (Theven) ❖ Miming (Nurin) ❖ Math games (Nurin) ❖ Balloon War 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ *Any unfinished LDK ❖ 30 minutes (outdoor) ❖ 30 minutes (outdoor) ❖ 30 minutes (outdoor) ❖ 30 minutes (indoor) ❖ 30 minutes (outdoor) ❖ 30 minutes (outdoor) 	1. DISIPLIN/PROTOKOL 2. PROGRAM 3. LOGISTIK/TEKNIKAL
1.00pm	MAKAN TENGAH HARI	Cucipinggansendiri	MAKANAN/KESEGERAN
1.30pm	SOLAT ZOHOR		
2.00pm	SESI KONKLUSI		1. DISIPLIN/PROTOKOL 2. PROGRAM 3. PENGARAH
2.45pm	SESI FOTOGRAFI		
3.00pm	WAKTU SANTAI		
5.00pm	BALIK KE KAMPUS 1) Headcount	END OF KEM	LOGISTIK/PERHUBUNGAN

Note:

- There are 2 types of modules. First is by MakLang, second is by us.
- Modules by the MakLang is:
 - ICE BREAKING MAK LANG
 - Kampung Walk + Solo Walk
 - River Crossing + Jungle Tracking
 - Explorace
 - BBQ Night
- Each module by MakLang will be handled by us and guided by pihakMakLang, there will be briefing at any time before the module starts and after peserta sleeps.
- Our own module may or may not follow this tentative to adjust with the situation. So every person in charge need to prepare themselves for a surprise changes.
- Everybody need to keep in touch with biro program because they are the one who adjust the modules (Theven or Nurin)
- No matter what position you are, you need to help other faci, we need cooperation to make this camp successful.

Time filler activities

- ✓ Pisanggoreng
- ✓ BuayaBiawak
- ✓ Zap Tang
- ✓ 1, 2, 3, botol!
- ✓ Reversed Alphabetical Stories
- ✓

Appendix 2: Ethical Approval



HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Rebecca Robinson
Telephone: +64 03 369 4588, Extn 94588
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: 2017/53/ERHEC

15 December 2017

Evelyn Ewe Lin Yeap
Educational Studies and Leadership
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Evelyn

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal "Malaysian University Students' Perceptions of an Outdoor Camp to Acquire Soft Skills" has been granted ethical approval.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your emails of 1st and 14th December 2017.

Should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval, please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

pp

Dr Patrick Shepherd
Chair
Educational Research Human Ethics Committee

Please note that ethical approval relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research.

F E S

Appendix 3: Semi-structured Interview Guide and Questions

Phenomenographic Interview Guide

Before I start the interview, I would like to give you some overview of what I am researching. I am doing a phenomenographic study of outdoor camp experience that you have participated at Mak Lang Nature of Life, Janda Baik, Pahang, Malaysia. In this interview with you, I would like to explore your experience about the camp: the way you think about it and things you have learnt from the camp. I have prepared several key questions to ask you about the camp, soft skills, the outcome of your learning, and the application of what you have learnt in other contexts. Depending on your responses, these questions may be followed up by other questions. As stated in the consent form that you have signed, I will audio record this interview and it will be transcribed with others in this study. Is that OK with you? If so, let's do this.

Interview Questions for Participants

1. What is your current role? Study or work?
2. If studying, in what year? Where? What are you studying? (student only)
3. Are you currently joining any club or society in the university? What position are you in? Please describe your role in the club. (student only)
4. If working, where? What position are you in? How many years have you worked? Please describe the nature of your work. (employee only)
5. Have you participated in any other camps before the camp? Please describe further.
6. Is there any difference from this camp?
7. Please recall and describe your experience in this camp?
8. What have you learnt from this camp?
9. Please define soft skills?
10. What are the soft skills that you have learnt from this camp? Please give examples of situations.
11. How do you apply what you have learnt from the camp in your current role? (Club president, student, etc.) Please give examples that match?
12. What is your opinion about having no technological devices in camps in relation to the acquisition of soft skills?
13. What is your opinion about the role of emotion in the camps for the acquisition of soft skills?

Interview Questions for Facilitators

1. What is your current role? Study or work?
2. If studying, in what year? Where? What are you studying? (student only)
3. Are you currently joining any club or society in the university? What position are you in? Please describe your role in the club. (student only)
4. If working, where? What position are you in? How many years have you worked? Describe the nature of your work. (alumni only)

5. How many times have you participated in and facilitated the camp?
6. Have you participated in any other camps before the camp? Please describe further.
7. Is there any difference from this camp?
8. What is/are your role/roles in the camps? (Programme Head, Discipline Head, etc.)
9. As a facilitator, please describe your role(s) in all the camps you have facilitated?
10. What makes you go back? Why?
11. Please recall and describe your experience in camps?
12. What have you learnt from camps?
13. Please define soft skills.
14. What are the soft skills you have learnt from camps? Please give examples of situations.
15. How do you apply what you have learnt from camps in your current role? (Club president, student, employee, etc.) Please give examples that match.
16. What is your opinion about having no technological devices in camps in relation to the acquisition of soft skills?
17. What is your opinion about the role of emotion in the camps for the acquisition of soft skills?

Appendix 4: Focus Group Interview Guide and Questions

Focus Group Interview Guide

Before we begin, I would like to thank you guys for your willingness to contribute to this study. I hope the individual interview has helped you to refresh your memories about your camp experience. I was surprised with so many good information that you have shared with me about the camp experience. To begin, there are a few things to remind you guys about this focus group interview. Firstly, You have to think of an initial or nickname for yourselves. You have to speak that nickname or initial before you give a response, so that, when I transcribe the recording of this interview, I can recognise who is talking. However, this interview is focusing on group responses, therefore, the nicknames are meant to help me only when I need to further identify some points stated. Secondly, I will show you some pictures and videos to help you recall further about the camp experience. Then, we will begin. Please note that only your voice will be recorded and please speak clearly and loudly when you respond. This interview is a discussion-based interview. Therefore, there should be agreement and disagreement in some views. Please understand that this is about sharing of experience, I appreciate both positive and negative comments, and sometimes, negative comments are better. Do speak your mind firmly and honestly. Let's begin.

Can you please introduce yourself by your nickname, what field of study, in what year, clubs joined (describe) and positions held in those clubs?

How many times have you participated in the camp? (Participant)

How many times have you facilitated the camp (Facilitator), and why?

Is there anyone who would like to volunteer first to tell us about the camp experience? Recall the process from the 1st day till the last day.

What have you learnt from the camps?

What are your perceptions of the camp in enhancing soft skills? Why?

What are the soft skills that you have learnt? Give examples.

What have you learnt from the camp that you have applied in the clubs, workplaces or study contexts (assignments)?

What is your opinion about having no technological devices in camps in relation to the acquisition of soft skills?

What is your opinion about the role of emotion in the camps for the acquisition of soft skills?

Appendix 5: Examples of Soft Skills Listed or Identified from Data (First round)

SF-Character Skills - L	SF-Character Skills- T
L-Advocating the right thing	T-Alertness
L-Alertness	T-Anger Management
L-Anger Management	T-Bonding
L-Asking for Help	T-Carefulness or Awareness
L-Bonding	T-Commitment or Being Committed
L-Carefulness or Awareness	T-Confidence
L-Caring for Others	T-Courage or Bravery
L-Commitment or Being	T-Determination
Committed	
L-Confidence	T-Dignity or Pride
L-Courage or Bravery	T-Empathy
L-Determination	T-Endurance
L-Dignity or Pride	T-Exchange or Acceptance of Cultural
	Differences
L-Empathy	T-Flexibility or Adaptability
L-Endurance	T-Give Back
L-EQ	T-Gratitude
L-Exchange or Acceptance of	T-Grit
Differences	
L-Flexibility or Adaptability	T-Helpfulness
L-Focus	T-Humility
L-Give Back	T-Independent
L-Gratitude	T-Mental Toughness
L-Grit	T-Observant
L-Helpfulness	T-Patience
L-Humility	T-Perseverance
L-Independent	T-Proactiveness
L-Mental Toughness	T-Punctuality
L-Observant	T-Respect
L-Patience	T-Responsibility
L-Perseverance	T-Self-disciplined
L-Proactiveness	T-Selflessness
L-Punctuality	T-Self-Motivated
L-Respect	T-Self-sacrifice, giving in or giving up
L-Responsibility	T-Sharing
L-Self-Awareness or Self-	T-Thoughtfulness or Mindfulness
Consciousness	
L-Self-disciplined	T-Thrifty
L-Selflessness	T-Tolerance
L-Self-Motivated or Motivate	T-Trust
Others	
L-Self-sacrifice, Giving in or	T-Unity
Giving up	
L-Sharing	T-Willingness to Share Knowledge
L-Stay calm during crisis	

L-Sympathy
L-Thoughtful or Mindful
L-Thrifty
L-Tolerance
L-Trust

SF-Soft Skills - L

L-Accepting Other's Opinions or criticism
L-Asking Question

L-Collaborative Skills
L-Communication Skills
L-Conducting Activity - ELT
L-Conflict Management
L-Coordination Skills
L-Creative Thinking Skills
L-Critical Thinking Skills
L-Decision Making Skills
L-Event Management
L-Follow Instructions or Plans
L-Giving Feedback or Critiquing
L-Giving Instruction
L-Leadership Skills
L-Listening Skills
L-Observational Skills
L-People Management
L-Planning and Organisation
L-Positive Thinking Skills
L-Problem Solving Skills
L-Professionalism
L-Reflection Skills
L-Self-Management
L-Social Interaction Skills
L-Strategy Planning
L-Teaching Skills
L-Teamwork
L-Time Management

SF-Soft Skills - T

T- Conflict Management

T-Accepting Other's Opinions or Criticism
T-Collaborative Skills
T-Communication Skills
T-Coordination Skills
T-Creative Thinking Skills
T-Critical Thinking Skills
T-Decision Making Skills
T-Follow Instructions or Plans
T-Giving Instructions
T-Leadership Skills
T-Listening Skills
T-Management Skills
T-Observational Skills
T-People Management
T-Planning and Organisation
T-Positive Thinking Skills
T-Problem Solving Skills
T-Reflection Skills
T-Social Interaction Skills
T-Strategy Planning
T-Teaching Skills
T-Teamwork
T-Time Management