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Abstracts

Recognising and Exploring Action-Theories: A Reflection-in-action Approach to Facilitating Experiential Learning

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Abstract

Outdoor education has typically presented itself as a specific approach to experiential learning. This article proposes that experiential learning can be understood as a process in which learners recognise and develop their action-theory and that the aim of outdoor development programs – whether in mainstream education, corporate training or therapy – is to facilitate this process. After introducing the notion of action-theory, I will present a particular approach to facilitation, which can be understood as a reflection-in-action approach. I conclude by situating this approach in the wider range of facilitation models in the literature on outdoor education and adventure therapy.

The ‘Outdoor Industry’ as Social and Educational Phenomena: Gender and Outdoor Adventure/Education

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Abstract

This paper discusses social and cultural theory and tracks the ways in which gender has been conceptualised. It argues that the ‘outdoor industry’ in its various manifestations constitutes an aspect of society that can not be ignored. It suggests that outdoor adventure/education, like other dimensions of society, can usefully be subjected to critical examination. Having discussed perspectives surrounding the social construction of gender, the paper draws attention to classic work that has explored ideologies of femininity and the implication for women and men. The paper then goes on to argue that the more recent interactionist theories and cultural studies offer less deterministic and more insightful approaches to exploring people’s experiences of outdoor adventure/education. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is drawn upon to examine ‘the outdoor industry’ in light of the current ‘crisis of masculinity’. Finally, the paper raises further questions regarding outdoor adventure/education as a site of alternative femininities and masculinities and as counter-culture.

Leader Anxiety During an Adventure Education Residential Experience: An Exploratory Case Study

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Abstract

Research in outdoor and adventure activities has frequently focused on participant outcomes but has seldom sought to understand the experiences of the leader. This case study evaluates changes in the anxiety of a leader during an eight day residential experience for 30 Physical Education students, based in the Langdale Valley (English Lake District). A one way analysis of variance revealed significant differences in the self confidence scores of the leader measured using the CSAI-2 for the time prior to the group completing a ridge walk supervised by members of the teaching team, and prior to the group's self contained two day expedition ($p=0.048$).

The data also supports a general trend of higher cognitive and somatic anxiety before the group activities commenced in the morning and last thing at night. Qualitative information in the form of field diary entries supported that increases in anxiety and a reduction in self-confidence were symptomatic of instances where the leader felt that they could not directly influence event outcomes.

This study recognises a potential need for leaders to consider the implementation of strategies to manage stress levels during extended residential periods, although further research is required to more fully understand the phenomenon of leader anxiety.

Fred Outdoors: An Initial Report into the Experiences of Outdoor Activities for an Adult who is Congenitally Deafblind

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Abstract

Outdoor Education has long been used with groups that could be described as having "special needs". Research in this particular area has in the past concentrated on adaptations to equipment and activities, allowing access for people with physical disabilities, and expanding the learning and development opportunities available to those with learning difficulties. This article documents the initial observations made of the experiences of a man, who is congenitally deafblind, when given the opportunity to experience outdoor activities. The article highlights a number of areas, which appear particularly relevant to this specific target group, and may be worthy of further investigation. The use of video technology is also demonstrated to be a valuable research tool when working with people who have multi-sensory impairments.

Towards an Understanding of Flow and Other Positive Experience Phenomena Within Outdoor and Adventurous Activities

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Abstract

In considering what draws people to become involved in adventurous activities, studies on flow suggest that people are motivated to participate because of the intrinsic feelings of enjoyment, well-being and personal competence that they experience. This paper explores the positive experience phenomena termed peak experience, peak performance and flow. Similar and distinctive characteristics are identified, and factors influencing the ability to experience such peak moments are considered. A state of flow, which appears to hold the most relevance for adventurous activities, is explored in greater detail and considered in the light of The Adventure Experience Paradigm. Csikszentmihalyi's flow models are outlined and examined with particular reference to perceived levels of challenge and skill. It is suggested that an insight into the nature and characteristics of such optimal experiences can contribute to our understanding of why adventurous activities are intrinsically motivating. Such an understanding can assist practitioners in enhancing the learning experiences and opportunities for development of each individual participant.

The Contribution of Outdoor Recreation and Outdoor Education to the Economy of Scotland: Case Studies and Preliminary Findings

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Abstract

From a tourism perspective Scotland's greatest natural resource is its scenery. Recent studies have indicated that the contribution of outdoor recreation (which depend on this asset) to the Scottish economy have traditionally been underestimated. Published work from a range of sources are reviewed together with case studies of the additional contribution of Outdoor Education Centres, and other forms of provision. The main findings are as follows:

Outdoor recreation generates perhaps at least £600 - £800m of Scotland's tourist income, much of which is in rural areas and also extends the traditional tourist season; Outdoor Education Centres are significant employers in certain rural areas; Evidence from one area of Scotland (Lothian Region) suggests that the pattern of outdoor education provision has changed significantly in recent years; 'Therapeutic' outdoor activity programmes seem effective in reducing youth crime and the cost-saving to the tax-payer is substantial.