

Journal of

**Adventure Education
and Outdoor Learning**

Contents and Abstracts

JAEOL

5 (1) 2005

ISSN 1472-9679



Institute for Outdoor Learning

Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning

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“If only”: Outdoor and Adventurous Activities and Generalised Academic Development

Harriet Dismore

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Abstract

This paper reports on research conducted as part of a project, the aim of which was to utilise outdoor and adventurous experiences to help schools address their ‘if only’ factor — that aspect of learning perceived to be key to raising standards, whether it be the acquisition of knowledge, skills or a change in attitudes to learning. The project involved nine schools and 671 children, all engaged in the “I Can!” project and the follow-up activities that took place at schools. The research was carried out with children, teachers and parents and consisted of a series of focus groups and analysis of children’s work. Limitations inherent within the research opportunity prevent the confident attribution of causation. However, the study’s findings do offer insight into an under-researched, yet potentially valuable educational experience. The findings suggest that outdoor and adventurous activities can impact upon children’s learning in school by addressing their intellectual, affective and social development.

Graduate Pathways: A Longitudinal Study of Graduates in Outdoor Studies in the U.K.

Heather Prince

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Abstract

A longitudinal study provides a more detailed analysis of the career pathways of graduates than the First Destination Survey can achieve. This survey of 41% of graduates from a BSc (Honours) Outdoor Studies degree also examines the importance of named skills to their careers and the success of the degree in developing each skill. Two thirds of graduates surveyed were in careers related to Outdoor Studies and there is an increasing relevance of employment activity to degree and work satisfaction with time in the workplace. However, there is no trend towards increasing graduate level employment in the workplace with indications that the majority of Outdoor Studies graduates seem to make choices based on interest, values or work satisfaction rather than salary or status, beyond a baseline of earnings (which contributes to a low unemployment rate). Personal and process skills, often poorly developed in other degree programmes, are developed successfully within the Outdoor Studies degree and applied in the workplace. It is suggested that suitably qualified Outdoor Studies graduates are able to find employment in the outdoor industry but that this will need monitoring in the future. The need for, and the development of, outdoor technical skills may be illustrative of a circular argument but graduates report the need for further National Governing Body award opportunities and professional experience at undergraduate level.

The Power of the Instructor in the Solo Experience: An Empirical Study and Some Non-Empirical Questions

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate participants' perceptions of an organized solo within a wilderness experience program and the influence that the instructors have on their perception of the solo. More specifically, this research project focused on the role of the instructor in the solo as perceived by the participants while still on solo, at the end of their wilderness experience, and three and a half months following the program. Qualitative data indicated that the instructors do have an influence on the participants' perception of their solo experience through the (a) preparation for, (b) facilitation during and (c) discussion after the solo. Recommendations to enhance the use of the wilderness solo include: (a) understand student expectations prior to the solo, (b) provide a clear rationale for the solo and associated activities, (c) implement an optional instructor/student visit during solo, (d) provide a one-on-one discussion with students prior to a group debrief after the solo, and (e) carefully consider the impact of the solo on program events and group dynamics that follow.

Teaching and Evaluating Instructor Effectiveness using the Instructor Effectiveness Questionnaire and the Instructor Effectiveness Check Sheet Combination

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Abstract

This article describes the use of two linked instruments, the Instructor Effectiveness Check Sheet (IEC) and Instructor Effectiveness Questionnaire (IEQ). The use of an evaluation instrument during a course can enable improvements to be made – even with experienced instructors. Detail can be taken from the IEC and IEQ to find obvious and not so obvious needed changes and attention to individuals in the group. The article gives an example where the instruments were used to teach instructors about different pedagogical constructs, describes further research using the instruments at the Nantahala Outdoor Center, USA, and describes a case study on a wilderness education group that illustrated improvement in effective teaching.

Outdoor Education in Hong Kong: Past, Present and Future

Simon Beames

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Abstract

This paper examines the development of outdoor education in Hong Kong from its colonial roots to the challenges of its uncertain future. The scene is set by a synopsis of Hong Kong's geography, history, economy, and culture. Next, we trace the history of organised outdoor education from the early 1900s to the present day. This is followed by a critical exploration of issues facing youth adventure education programmes and management development programmes. The paper closes with recommendations to return to "real" outdoor courses in natural environments, to raise the standards of training available to outdoor leaders, and finally, to create a governing body that would facilitate inter-organisational learning, raise standards of programme design and delivery, and help build a body of literature that is specific to experiential learning in Hong Kong.

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ISSN 1472-9679

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PRINTER: Fingerprints, Barrow-in-Furness

PRODUCTION & TYPESETTING: Fiona Exon

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