

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330328861>

PUBLISHED OUTDOOR EDUCATION ITS RELATIONSHIPS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION

Article · January 2014

CITATIONS

0

READS

230

6 authors, including:



Mazuki Mohd Yasim

Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)

31 PUBLICATIONS 64 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



Md Amin Md Taff

Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)

54 PUBLICATIONS 83 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



Jaffry Zakaria

Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)

68 PUBLICATIONS 77 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



Azlizam Aziz

Universiti Putra Malaysia

89 PUBLICATIONS 508 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

OUTDOOR EDUCATION: ITS RELATIONSHIPS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION

Mazuki Mohd Yasim¹

Azlizam Aziz²

Md Amin Md Taff¹

Jaffry Zakaria¹

¹Department of Exercise Science, Faculty of Sports Science and Coaching, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, 35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia.

²Department of Recreation and Ecotourism, Faculty of Forestry, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.

*Corresponding author: mazuki@fsskj.upsi.edu.my

Abstract

There can often be confusion among practitioners about the relationship between outdoor education and outdoor recreation and how they relate to personal and social development. This article provides an overview of the relationship of both fields. Consequently, it is important for practitioners to understand and as an eye opener about the roots and its notions. The discussion hopefully will enlighten the issues of sceptical perception for both groups of practitioners' due to lack of understanding the notion, method, fundamental theoretical and objectives of each field.

Key Word: *Outdoor education, outdoor recreation, relationship.*

Introduction

The outdoor education profession and outdoor recreation industry in Malaysia are considered small fields if one refers to the number of members that make up the state and territory outdoor recreation and education associations (Dingle, 2006). Learning in the outdoors is believed to offer lasting educational experiences (Asfeldt & Hvenegaard, 2013). The emphasis on interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships is frequently deemed to be the primary focus of outdoor programmes (Brown, 2009). For example, Wigglesworth (2012) has suggested that, most students retain information best when doing an activity, and the outdoors allows for these opportunities. Outdoor education (OE) and outdoor recreation (OR) is a large, multi-disciplinary field cultivated from many roots. Outdoor education is claimed to provides open-ended, dynamic, varied activities and risk which assumed may contribute for learning enrichment and developing social competence (Greenfield, 2004) and has potential to accelerate change in personal and social development in individuals through its setting and process (Sheard & Golby, 2006). Meanwhile, outdoor recreation experiences have the ability for people with the time and the place to develop personal meaning in the out-of-doors (Hutson, 2007). Conversely, although it seems to be a positive development in both disciplines, there often confusion existed about the outdoor education and outdoor recreation practitioners, especially on the roots and philosophy that underpinning for each discipline. Therefore, this article will explore the roots of outdoor education and its relationship with outdoor recreation and the notion of both fields.

Semantic and Definition: Are We on the Same Track?

The field of outdoor is diverse today as it is complex, and a plethora of terms and definitions exists. The term of adventure education, adventure programming, outdoor learning, outdoor school, adventure therapy, adventure recreation, adventure tourism, expeditionary learning, challenge education, experiential education, environmental education, and wilderness education are widely used in order to refer to a variety of planned activities which organized in an outdoor environment for tremendous of purposes (Neill, 2008). However, there are varieties of the definitions of those terms because of the culture, philosophy and local condition influence conceptualizations, interpretations and local conditions of the understanding of the person (Brookes, 2006). Although outdoor education is accepted as one of the most popular educational method, there are still controversy over the semantic and definition of outdoor education with others outdoor discipline (Bunting, 2006). These definitions can help us with some recent arguments that challenged outdoor courses to consider their approach by asking the question whether they should be better understood as outdoor education or outdoor recreation.

Outdoor Education

Almost half a century ago, outdoor education was defined as '*education in, about and for the outdoors*' (Donaldson & Donaldson, 1958). '*Education in the outdoors*' referred to the use of the outdoor environment as a learning source and setting for enriching the formal educational process. '*Education about the outdoors*' referred to outdoor education as a teaching method, where it provides first hand learning experiences through

direct interactions between self, society and nature. Finally '*education for the outdoors*' referred to outdoor education as a medium of environmental responsibility and protection.

However, recently the definition has been widespread and interpreted according to one's understanding of the meaning of outdoor education. For instance, Lund (2004) has defined outdoor education as "an experiential method of learning with the use of all senses. It takes place primarily, but not exclusively, through exposure to the natural environment. In outdoor education, the emphasis for the subject of learning is placed on relationships concerning people and natural resources". Lund's (2002) definition has similarity with Priest (1986) in term of the idea which he highlighted outdoor education is not only occurs in natural environment setting for the purpose of promoting lifelong learning process.

Neill (2003) has defined outdoor education as "when small groups of people participate in organized adventurous activities in natural settings and primarily use themselves as the resource for solving problems". He later proposed another definition which defines outdoor education as "a term that means different things to different people, cultures, and organizations. Common themes include an emphasis on direct experience of the outdoors for personal, social, educational, therapeutic and environmental goals"(Neill, 2008).

In order to minimise the definitional debates, several researchers have proposed that outdoor education should not be defined in shallow terms because it has evolved and formed lots of new branches such as adventure education, environmental education, adventure based learning, ecology education, and education outside the classroom (Gilbertson, Bates, McLaughlin, & Ewert, 2006). These researchers thus proposed that outdoor education is best defined in broad terms as it is influenced by current practices and socially constructed and definitions can and should evolve and transform across time, space and culture (Neill, 2008).

Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation is an applied discipline that developed since the golden age of ancient Athens during the mid-20th century in response to the communities' concern regarding the use of natural area for recreational activity (McLean & Hurd, 2012). One of the earliest definitions of outdoor recreation recognised that outdoor recreation as simply recreation that is typically carried on outdoors (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966). However, some scholar urged that interpretation of outdoor recreation should include the use of indoor facilities, which permitted traditional outdoor activities to be participated in indoors (Ford & Blanchard, 1985). The notion that in line with the idea of broaden the concept of outdoor recreation is based on Ford (1988) which claimed outdoor recreation should be viewed as a holistic approach, encompassing every form of recreation as well as all human interests and abilities.

Though, later outdoor recreation is interpreted in more serious definition which involved human psychological aspect. For instance, outdoor recreation is defined "as the interaction between an activity and an outdoor natural environment that recreates an individual physically, psychologically, emotionally, and socially" (Leitner & Leitner, 1996). Krumpe (2006) has added element of personal expectation, satisfaction and enjoyment in his interpretation about outdoor recreation recently. He defined outdoor recreation as any form of experience during a person's leisure time where an individual voluntarily chooses to engage (physically or mentally) in activities due to personal expectations, satisfaction and enjoyment.

More recently, definitions of outdoor recreation have become more standardized, in that they recognize many of the same fundamental characteristics. The fundamental characteristics that underlie in modern definitions are (1) undertaken outside the confines of buildings, (2) do not involve organized competition or formal rules, (3) can be undertaken with or without the existence of any built facility or infrastructure, and (4) may require outdoor areas of predominantly unmodified natural landscape. For example, Leitner and Leitner, (1996) define outdoor recreation, "as the interaction between an activity and an outdoor natural environment that recreates an individual physically, psychologically, emotionally, and socially" Similarly, in more recent definition, Ibrahim and Cordes (2008) defined outdoor recreation "as the organized free time activities that are participated in for their own sake and where there is an interaction between the participant and an element of nature".

The Nature of Outdoor Education

Outdoor education is a form of learning system conducted in both outdoor and indoor settings which involves challenging or adventure activities as a medium to foster individual personal and social growth (Fiskum & Jacobsen, 2012; Foley, 2009). It has been proven useful in promoting academic achievement, work commitment, critical thinking, and in preventing delinquency (Ewert, 2005; Morgan & Streb, 2001). According to Foley (2009), outdoor education is interchangeable with other terms and often referred to as adventure education, adventure programming, outdoor learning, outdoor school, adventure therapy, adventure recreation, adventure tourism, expeditionary learning, challenge education, experiential education, environmental

education, and wilderness education. Typically, the stated objectives of outdoor education training programs improving leadership skills, group cohesion, improving problem-solving skills, self-concept, increasing trust, and improving communication (O'Bannon, 2000; Shivers-Blackwell, 2004; Williams, Graham, & Baker, 2003). In other word, the emphasis on interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships is frequently considered to be the primary focus of outdoor education programmes (Priest & Gass, 2005; Zink & Boyes, 2006).

The basic tenet of outdoor education is that learning can be facilitated from concrete environmental interactions utilizing the human sensory organs (Cronin, 2003). Nowadays, it is becoming more important to learn experientially so that the relevance of what is learned among students become more apparent in adapting to a rapidly changing society, and there is an ability to live and function in today's world (Som & Furqan, 2010).

Philosophy

Important commonalities in the philosophies of outdoor education are the purpose of assisting individuals in gaining a greater appreciation of nature and their relationship to it (Aspenson, 2010), and the focus of personal development through interactions with others, and responsible use of the natural environment (Pryor, Carpenter, & Townsend, 2005). Ford (1986) explains the subject matter of outdoor education is comprised of a combination of the interrelationships of all of nature and human beings. It encompasses attitudes for caring, skills for utilizing resources and pursuing leisure activities. She also writes about the philosophy of outdoor education as being based on four premises, one of which relates directly to this study, outdoor education is a continual education experience taught at all levels and pursued throughout life. Priest (1986) takes this a step further, stating that learning in outdoor education is a matter of many relationships: interpersonal, intrapersonal, ecosystemic and ekistic; relationships with and between other people and ourselves, and relationships between people and the environment. Summarizing these two schools of thought, outdoor education is thought to be a lifelong learning experience affecting relationships with others, self and the natural world.

Relationship of Outdoor Education to Outdoor Recreation.

Outdoor education is often synonymous with outdoor recreation. Many scholars agreed that both terms are very similar (Priest, 1988). These things proved to be true when Western State Coll. of Colorado, Phipps, & Cash (1991) explained that various terms such as outdoor education, environmental education, wilderness education, experiential education, adventure education, adventure activities, risk activities, outdoor pursuits, outdoor activities, wilderness pursuits, tourism, commercial recreation, and natural resource management have been used to describe different aspects of outdoor recreation.

However since the focus of this subtopic is to discuss the relationship between outdoor education to outdoor recreation, the following discussion will emphasized on these two terms. Based on the definitions offered, there appears to be a little difference between the two (Martin, Cashel, Wagstaff, & Breunig, 2006). According to Dingle (2006) outdoor education began as the product of outdoor recreation. It is believed that factors of enjoyment and positive values when teachers involve in outdoor recreation is the catalyst for development of outdoor education among school students. The goals are to teach students recreation activities, which they might engage for the sake of maintaining healthy, physical active lifestyle (Martin et al., 2006).

The fundamental difference lies in the outdoor education on an educational goal, whereas outdoor recreation places less emphasis on explicit educational goals and a greater emphasis on fun and enjoyment. Outdoor education normally occurs in a structured fashion in schools or higher institutions, whereas outdoor recreation normally occurs in people's own leisure time (Brown, 2007).

Distinctions arise primarily when considering the two disciplines in a formal sense or the contexts and ways in each is practised. Outdoor education is often taught in term of schooling. Students go to the same place, a school building, each day for a specific amount of time to study a particular set of subjects. The goals of education are oriented toward the development of competence in these subject areas. Outdoor recreation on the other hand is often taught of in terms of non-school and non-work activity that occurs in a wide variety of setting, ranging from community recreation to day care program. The goals of outdoor recreation are more loosely defined because of the participant-centred nature of recreation. The context in which outdoor education and outdoor recreation are practised is the same. Specific goals and objectives may vary depending on the character of particular program, but both outdoor education and recreation ultimately aim for growth and development among program participants (Martin et al., 2006).

Conclusion

The brief overview of the linkage between outdoor education and outdoor recreation has found strong relationship between the two fields. Outdoor education has often been considered to be a strategy to education and studying which can fill into many curricular topic matters. Meanwhile, outdoor recreation emphasis more on elements of fun, enjoyment and positive values which objective for each programme may vary depending on motives. Though, both disciplines are likely to share common views, which focus on personal and social development with experience as the main medium of learning. The themes of outdoor, recreation, enjoyment and education are all important as each element interchangeable for both fields. An experiential approach to learning is a central tenet of both fields and in this context "outdoor recreation" is seen as an approach to maximise the learning effect of the experience (Higgins & Loynes, 1997). As practitioner in both fields, we have much we can share and learn from both communities, and there is a tangible connection between outdoor educators and those in the outdoor recreation industry that support outdoor education programs in schools and higher education institutions.

References

- Asfeldt, M., & Hvenegaard, G. (2013). Perceived learning, critical elements and lasting impacts on university-based wilderness educational expeditions. *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning*, 1-21. doi: 10.1080/14729679.2013.789350
- Aspenson, J. L. (2010). *The influence of outdoor education to improve the quality of life for individuals with dementia thesis proposal*. (Master Thesis), University of Minnesota, Duluth.
- Brookes, A. R. (2006). *Situationist outdoor education in the country of lost children*. (Phd Dissertation), Deakin University, Melbourne.
- Brown, M. (2009). Reconceptualising outdoor adventure education: Activity in search of an appropriate theory. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 13(2), 3-13.
- Brown, S. (2007). *An exploration into outdoor education*. University of Otago.
- Bunting, C. J. (2006). *Interdisciplinary teaching through outdoor education*. Champaign: Human Kinetics.
- Clawson, M., & Knetsch, J. L. (1966). *Economics of outdoor recreation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.
- Cronin, D. P. (2003). *Elevating the Civic Science Literacy of American Adults: Assessing a Renewed Citizen Science Paradigm Integrating Nonformal Outdoor Adult Education and Enhanced Experiential Learning*. (PhD Dissertation), Cleveland State University, Cleveland.
- Dingle, M. (2006). Knowing our place: A perspective on the contribution of outdoor education and its relationship with the outdoor recreation industry. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 10(1), 54-57.
- Donaldson, G. E., & Donaldson, L. E. (1958). Outdoor education: A definition. *Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, 29(17), 63-76.
- Ewert, A., Greg, P., & Sibthorp, J. (2005). Early-life outdoor experiences and an individual's environmental attitudes. *Leisure Sciences*, 27(1).
- Fiskum, T. A., & Jacobsen, K. (2012). Outdoor education gives fewer demands for action regulation and an increased variability of affordances. *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning*, 1(24).
- Foley, J. M. (2009). *Measuring student learning outcomes on Outward Bound courses and associated independent variables*. (PhD Dissertation), University of Colorado, Colorado.
- Ford, P. (1986). Outdoor education: Definition and philosophy.
- Ford, P. (1988). Outdoor recreation: The holistic leisure pursuit. *Bradford Papers Annual*, 3, 44-49.
- Ford, P., & Blanchard, J. (1985). *Leadership and administration of outdoor pursuits*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Gilbertson, K., Bates, T., McLaughlin, T., & Ewert, A. (2006). *Outdoor education: Methods and strategies*. Champaign: Human Kinetics.
- Greenfield, C. (2004). 'Can run, play on bike, jump the zoom slide, and play on the swing': exploring the value of outdoor play. Paper presented at the Kidsafe National Playground Conference, Sydney.
- Higgins, P., & Loynes, C. (1997). Toward consensus on the nature of outdoor education. *Practical and Informative Adventure Education*, 1(4).
- Hutson, G. A. (2007). *Perceptions of outdoor recreation professionals toward place meanings in natural environments: A q-method inquiry*. (PhD Thesis), Oklahoma State University.
- Ibrahim, H., & Cordes, K. A. (2008). *Outdoor recreation: Enrichment for a life time* (3rd ed.). Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing.
- Krumpe, E. E. (2006). *Elements of a behavioral definition of outdoor recreation*. University of Idaho. Retrieved from <http://www.cnr.uidaho.edu/css287/Behavioral%20Definition2003.pdf>.
- Leitner, M. J., & Leitner, S. F. (1996). *Leisure enhancement* (Vol. 2nd). New York: Haworth Press.
- Leitner, M. J., & Leitner, S. F. (1996). *Leisure enhancement* (2nd ed.). New York: The Haworth Press.

- Lund, M. (2002). Adventure education: Some semantics. Retrieved 25 November 2009
<http://www.artsci.gmcc.ab.ca/courses/peds205ml/adventureeducation.html>
- Lund, M. (2004). Adventure education: some semantics.
<http://www.artsci.gmcc.ab.ca/courses/peds205ml/adventureeducation.html>
- Martin, Cashel, C., Wagstaff, M., & Breunig, M. (2006). *Outdoor leadership: Theory and practice*. Champaign: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- McLean, D., & Hurd, A. (2012). *Kraus' recreation and leisure in modern society* (9th ed.). Ontario: Jones & Bartlett Learning.
- Morgan, W., & Streb, M. (2001). Building citizenship: How student voice in service learning develops civic values. *Social Science Quarterly*, 82.
- Neill, J. (2008). What is Outdoor Education? Definition (Definitions).
<http://wilderdom.com/definitions/definitions.html>
- Neill, J. T. (2003). Reviewing and benchmarking adventure therapy outcomes: Applications of meta-analysis. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 25.
- Neill, J. T. (2008). *Enhancing Life effectiveness: The impacts of outdoor education programs*. (Phd Thesis), University of Westwrn Sydney, Sydney.
- O'Bannon, P. M. (2000). *The effect of the outdoor experiential rope course on perceived team performance*. (Doctor of Education Phd dissertation), Florida International University, Miami, Florida.
- Priest, S. (1986). Redefining outdoor education: A matter of many relationships. *Journal of Environmental Education*, 17(3), 13-15.
- Priest, S. (1988). Outdoor leadership around the world: A matter of semantics. *Journal of Adventure Education*, 5(1).
- Priest, S., & Gass, M. (2005). *Effective leadership in adventure programming*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Pryor, A., Carpenter, C., & Townsend, M. (2005). Outdoor education and bush adventure therapy: A socio-ecological approach to health and wellbeing. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 9(1), 3-13.
- Sheard, M., & Golby, J. (2006). The efficacy of an outdoor adventure education curriculum on selected aspects of positive psychological development. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 29(2).
- Shivers-Blackwell, S. L. (2004). Reactions to outdoor teambuilding initiatives in MBA education. *Journal of Management Development*, 23(7), 614-630.
- Som, A. P. M., & Furqan, A. (2010). Nurturing experiential learning in co-curriculum activities: Case Studies of tourism club in secondary schools. *International Journal of Academic Research*, 2(4).
- Western State Coll. of Colorado, G., Phipps, M. L., & Cash, R. G. (1991). *Employee Preparation towards 2001. National Conference for Outdoor Leaders. Public, Commercial, and Non-Profit Partnerships Conference Proceedings*. Washington, D.C.: Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse.
- Wigglesworth, J. (2012). The perceived life impact of a university outdoor education course. *Pathways: The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education*, 24(3), 20-21.
- Williams, S. D., Graham, T. S., & Baker, B. (2003). Evaluating outdoor experiential training for leadership and team building. *Journal of Management Development*, 22(1).
- Zink, R., & Boyes, M. (2006). The nature and scope of outdoor education in New Zealand schools. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 10(1), 11-12.