

Outdoor studies in Japan

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The Wilderness Education Association Japan (WEAJ) was established in 2013 in affiliation with the Wilderness Education Association (WEA) in the USA, which was established in 1977. This sequence may suggest that Japanese outdoor studies and practices are more than thirty years behind those of the USA. That conclusion, however, is not completely true, as I will demonstrate in this chapter. Japan has a long history of outdoor education, with about 550 public outdoor centres throughout the country. On the other hand, the lack of outdoor leadership training systems in higher education and the barrier of language (i.e. most outdoor materials are written in English) has delayed the growth of outdoor studies in Japan.

Outdoor studies and practice are strongly influenced by the philosophy and history as well as the educational systems of any country. In this chapter, the philosophy and history of Japanese outdoor education is reviewed, along with the current status of outdoor leadership training systems, practices, and research. Outdoor studies in Japan include the overlapping ideas of wilderness education, outdoor education, adventure education and organised camping.

Philosophy and history

The traditional view of nature in Japan is known as monism, which recognises the unity of all organisms including nature and human beings (Terada, 1948; Imanishi, 1966). Japanese ancient life was heavily dependent and deeply influenced by the natural environment including the four seasons and frequent disasters. People found God in nature and nature was exalted above humans. The sense of *awe* integrating emotional states of fear, respect and thanks explained the Japanese view of nature.

In the Nara Era (AD 710–794), a mountain religion called *Shugendo* was established by Enno Ozunu (Gojo, 1983, 2002). The followers meditated and disciplined themselves by connecting with nature in the mountains. This mountain religion spread throughout the country and Japanese mountains were valued by everyone. By the end of Edo Era (AD 1603–1868), religious hiking groups were born. Gojo stated that there were eight (i.e. the number *eight* is the symbol for countless in Japan) hundred and eight hiking groups and eighty thousand hikers on Mt Fuji during the Edo Era.

This religious hiking culture influenced the modern school system in the Meiji Era (AD 1868–1912). Miyashita (1982) described how outdoor activities such as hiking, swimming in the sea, skiing, skating, snow hiking and hunting were introduced into elementary school curricula by the end of Meiji Era. These curricula were established as mountain schools and seaside schools in the next Taisho Era (AD 1912–1926). Ukai (1923) used the words *outdoor education* to describe these mountain schools, and the use of this term occurred twenty years before Sharp (1943) popularised it in the USA.

The first Western-style organised camping programme was founded by YMCA Osaka in 1911 and this group developed the roots for the later Boy Scout Movement in Japan. (Ebashi, 1987). The YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts developed residential camping areas throughout Japan and led Japanese camping education after the Second World War. In 1955, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (currently called the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) started the Central Workshop for Educational Camp Leadership in response to the growing movement. The Ministry published the *Handbook of Educational Camps* in 1956. These private and public camp movements resulted in the establishment of the National Camping Association of Japan in 1966.

From the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, the Japanese youth population and economy grew rapidly. The government constructed 27 National Outdoor Centres and more than 500 public outdoor centres to accommodate the post-war baby boom youth (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 1993). Ebashi (1987) named this active period as the *Outdoor Education Movement* in Japan.

Yoshida (1988), however, noted that conflicts were occurring in outdoor education because of the changing social system and the increasing numbers of school students. Yoshida described the interrelated problems of: environmental degradation, lack of safety management, and the limitations of the school teachers who usually led these outdoor programmes. Related to the limitations of school teachers, Hoshino (1988) noted particularly that outdoor education led by physical educators was problematic. The outdoor education system in the USA during the 1940s and 1950s, which strongly influenced Japanese outdoor education, focused on outdoor living skills and leisure education, but was part of the American Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (AAHPER). This US alignment shifted Japanese outdoor education into physical education. As a result, *outdoor activity* was defined in the Sports Promotion Act in 1961 as part of physical education. Hoshino regretted that Japanese outdoor education remained aligned with physical education while US outdoor educators began to specialise in adventure and environmental education during the 1970s. Nakamura (1995) also lamented that the *Handbook of Educational Camps* published by the Ministry of Education in 1956 stereotyped Japanese outdoor education as mostly activities such as outdoor cooking and hiking/orienteering. Those stereotypes seem to continue in Japan today.

In the 1990s, Japanese environmental education became active with the establishment of the Japan Environmental Education Forum. Shibata (1992), similar to Hoshino (1988), criticised how Japanese outdoor education tended towards physical education and away from nature study and environmental education. Yamaoka (1989) and Abe (1995) cited the environmental degradation resulting from the rapid development of youth camping and a changing philosophy that humans were more important than nature. Tsukuhara (1996) emphasised that outdoor educators must practise outdoor ethics as tacit rules to sustainability. During this movement towards environmental education, many school camps modified mountain hiking activity programmes to encompass environmental education to address the growing environmental issues.

The first outdoor pursuits and education laboratory established in higher education was at Tokyo University of Education in 1964. In 1969, Iida (1992) led the establishment of the

Yoshonen Camp Society, with its emphasis on outdoor studies, outdoor leadership and local community contributions through camp programmes for youth. After Iida completed his dissertation under Betty van der Smitten at Penn State University in 1976, he returned to the University of Tsukuba and resumed operating the Yoshonen Camp Society. He brought the latest American information about outdoor studies and practice, and experimented with them in this Japanese camp programme. Yoshonen Camp Society provided the earliest significant contributions to Japanese outdoor research.

Japanese outdoor education attracted attention again in the 1990s because of educational reform that emphasised alternative forms of education. In 1996 the government used the term outdoor education officially in the governmental report, *The Fulfillment of Outdoor Education for Youth*. Further, the National Outdoor Education Forum started in 1997 by gathering private agencies, university teachers and public administrators together. At that same time, the Japan Outdoor Education Society (JOES) was established as the first academic society for outdoor studies in Japan, with Iida as the first Chair of the Board. Iida named 1997 as the Japanese first year of outdoor education.

Outdoor practice

Outdoor education is strongly related to outdoor practices. In Japan, three types of setting for outdoor practices include school camps in public outdoor centres, youth agency organisations (e.g. YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts) and private outdoor agencies.

School camping is the largest component of Japanese outdoor practice. More than 500 public outdoor centres are available for school students. According to the Committee of Research for Promotion of Outdoor Education for Youth's report (1996), 70 per cent of these camping opportunities were for two-day periods, 22 per cent were three-day experiences, and the small remainder lasted longer than three days. The outdoor leaders at these centres are school teachers. Staff training quality and stereotypic programmes have been issues for some time, as noted earlier. In addition, the short-term nature has been a concern as have the uncertainty of the educational purpose and the lack of outcome evaluation.

On the other hand, these camps in public outdoor centres have frequently provided important research data because of the many students available as subjects and because some centres have good relationships with local universities. Collaborations between researchers and practitioners have resulted in obtaining governmental funding for outdoor studies projects. For example, Frontier Adventure Projects (1988–89) emphasised challenge-based programmes and ten-day experiences in eighty-four programmes over the course of two years (National Olympic Memorial Youth Centre, 1990). This project was significant in promoting the concept of adventure education in Japan. After this project, some centres started longer-term camp programmes with their own budgets, and new outdoor leaders were trained to administer these programmes. Funding for the Long-Term Outdoor Experience Project for Youth (1999–2000) also helped 120 camp programmes to offer fourteen-day or longer experiences (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2001). Nakagawa, Okamura, Kurosawa, Araki and Yoneyama (2005) compared the outcomes of long-term camp programmes with typical three-day programmes through this project, and found that outcomes regarding self-development and nature awareness were increased in long-term camp programmes. However, they also concluded that more systematic and continuous research is needed.

Youth agencies such as YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts have their own historical background, traditional camp programmes and staff training systems. Rarely do these organisations conduct research projects. In my personal experience as a committee member for

the camping programme of a YWCA from 2011 to 2012, recruiting participants was the biggest issue the organisation faced. The main goal of the committee was to increase the number of participants in summer camps. The camp programme could have been strengthened by more experienced and dedicated volunteer staff leaders and by having national and international networks to help them improve their organisation and outdoor programme.

In addition, outdoor practice has been undertaken by private agencies that differ greatly in character from schools or youth agencies. Some enterprises developed outdoor schools as a part of their corporate social responsibility. For example, Toyota is operating outdoor schools using a registered World Heritage Site. Some large companies have outdoor education divisions that manage outdoor schools. However, the organisations underpinning most Japanese private outdoor opportunities are small companies with few staff and small budgets. The Non-Profit Organization Promotion Act (NPO Act) of 1998 pushed to establish small businesses related to outdoor education.

Since 1993, these small businesses have formed the Japan Outdoor Network (JON), which currently includes sixty-five organisations. This network is active and sponsors some nationwide events for outdoor education. JON meets twice a year to share business information. JON Fest is a workshop for developing new skills and knowledge. JON Training School also is available for new staff in private businesses. Additionally, the Outdoor Leader Youth Meeting is supported by the government as a forum for young staff and university students to gain experience in the outdoor industry. The academic background of JON staff and employees is often from general disciplines since few training programmes exist in higher education for outdoor leadership. Nevertheless, JON has possibilities for offering rich research data because it provides high-quality outdoor programmes.

Thus, collaborations between JON and universities have the potential to further the evolution of outdoor studies in Japan for the future. Most Japanese higher education institutions compel undergraduates as well as graduate students to do theses. Therefore, universities can be the providers of outdoor research studies as well as outdoor leaders.

Outdoor leadership education

Professional training of outdoor leaders has historically occurred in physical education and sport programmes in universities. However, as noted earlier, the Japanese traditional discipline of physical education has focused on outdoor skills more than outdoor education.

The traditional Japanese view of physical education has three pillars: human and social science, natural science and coaching. Outdoor leadership is usually included in the human and social science pillar, emphasising education, psychology and sport management. However, when associated with coaching, the skills needed focus on outdoor pursuits. For example, when I taught in the University of Tsukuba, outdoor education classes were part of the sports management curriculum for undergraduates. Although some master's programmes are broader, doctoral degrees in outdoor education often included faculty in sport coaching who also focused on training top athletes. Many outdoor education degrees in sport colleges face similar patterns. The commingling with sport sometimes has hindered the development of systematic outdoor leadership education and outdoor research studies.

In 2003, Biwako Seikei Sport College was the first private sport college offering an outdoor education degree for undergraduates. It has two departments: Athletic Sport and Lifelong Sport. The outdoor education programme is one option along with school physical education and the community sport course that comprises the Department of Lifelong Sport. Faculty in this college were not constrained by the traditional disciplinary system, so they were able to create

an ideal curriculum for outdoor education. They now have six outdoor faculty members and a number of outdoor students.

Another opportunity for outdoor leadership education is within teacher training in Japanese colleges. The government announced a policy of a 5,000 Teacher Reduction Plan at the beginning of 1990s because of the decreasing birth rate. National teacher colleges were forced to cut faculty in teacher training and transfer them to other general education units. Outdoor education was one area of emphasis within general education in teacher colleges such as Shinshu University, Kyoto University of Education, Nara University of Education and Hokkaido University of Education. However, because of the retirement of the first baby-boom teachers, the small-class policy of government, and the declining pool of teachers, a shortage of school teachers arose in large cities. The government stopped the teacher reduction policy and teacher colleges were forced to return to teacher training curricula. As a result, outdoor classes became optional and few programmes now offer outdoor leadership education.

Nara University of Education, my previous workplace, is typical example of this story. The Lifelong Sports Department including outdoor education has recruited students since 1999 in response to governmental plans. The faculty moving from teacher training to this new general education department including lifelong sports from interdisciplinary perspectives. The university established the Environmental and Outdoor Education Course in graduate school, which was the first graduate programme that used the term outdoor education in its name. However, the university administrators decided to return the faculty to teacher training curricula gradually, and the Lifelong Sports programme stopped admitting students in 2007. Faculty members were recalled to teacher training, and the new Environmental and Outdoor Education degree lasted only two years.

Similarly, Shinshu University and Kyoto University of Education abolished the Department of General Education after the policy change. Only Hokkaido University of Education has protected the outdoor education programme as part of teacher training. Unfortunately, outdoor leadership training in higher education has been at the mercy of governmental policies and university business decisions.

Therefore, outdoor leadership training in higher education in Japan seems to be lagging behind that of other countries largely because of the lack of opportunities to promote outdoor education, develop systematic curricula and provide professional education through graduate school. This situation has been a detriment to the growth of Japanese outdoor studies. Other training institutes for outdoor leaders include youth agencies, volunteer schools in national and public outdoor centres, and staff training in individual private agencies. Fortunately, these groups are more flexible than universities, so they can provide customised alternatives for professional training/education systems.

Outdoor studies

Outdoor studies in Japan is spread over multiple disciplines. Describing what constitutes outdoor study and what databases are available is sometimes difficult. However, most outdoor research projects in Japan have been registered into the database named Resources for Outdoor Pursuits (ROP) developed by the Outdoor Education and Pursuits Lab at the University of Tsukuba.

Several trends have occurred in the outdoor studies literature and resources. More than 7000 studies have been published since 1936 and are recorded in ROP. Imura and Tachibana (1997) reported that, seventeen years ago, more than 50 per cent of the studies focused on skiing. Skiing is one of the most common classes in university curricula, whether associated with outdoor education or not, and getting data about this activity has been relatively easy. The latest review of studies

indicated that only 33 per cent of the ROP studies are about skiing. The trend appears to be towards broadening into other areas. Analyses of ROP also showed that, in camping studies, adventure education had increased from the 1980s to the 1990s, and environmental education also had grown since the beginning of the 1990s. The studies of adventure education had been led by the Yoshonen Camp Society from Camp Hanayama. Environmental education studies also have increased since the start of Japanese environmental education at the end of the 1980s (Sashima, 1999).

Okamura (2002) identified further issues when reviewing articles relating to outcome research published in the *Japan Outdoor Education Journal* from 1997 to 2002. He categorised the independent variables of outcome research into relationship with self, others, environment. The results showed that Japanese outdoor studies focused on self-development, and most of the studies were re-examinations of American studies. Examining independent variables had reached saturation. He appealed that the research paradigm for outdoor studies should shift independent variables from the whole camp outcomes to the elements of programme, environment, participants and leaders. He also noted the lack of qualitative research, and philosophical and historical research in Japanese outdoor studies.

In the 2000s, comprehensive camp outcome measurements became popular in Japan. Tani and Fujii (2001) developed the Outcome Scale of Outdoor Experience for Early Adolescents, to be used for general-purpose outdoor outcomes. The scales were constructed around five factors: decision making, environmental awareness, leadership, interpersonal skills and self-development. Nishida, Hashimoto and Yanagi (2002) also developed an Inventory of Organized Camp Experiences for Children, to measure the typical outdoor experiences occurring in camps: challenge and achievement, collaboration, open-mindedness, intrapersonal and nature based. Using both scales, Yasunami, Okamura, Yamada and Ashida (2006) identified significant findings related to outdoor camp outcomes including the positive relationship between outdoor pursuits programmes and open-mindedness, intrapersonal and nature experiences.

Tachibana and Hirano (2001) developed the Zest for Living Scale. The government announced *zest for living* as a new educational goal for schools and social education (Central Education Council, 1998). Large budgets flowed to outdoor education under this policy. The scale was developed to evaluate the effect of camping on zest for living. Tachibana, Hirano and Sekine (2003) reported the significant effect of camping on zest for living by examining sixty-seven camp programmes. Although the Zest for Living Scale has been used by many camp programmes, Okamura *et al.* (2011) were concerned that using such a scale to evaluate general camp outcomes did not aid in improving programmes. They noted a lack of theoretical interpretation between camp programmes and zest for living, and limitations in explaining the relation between cause and effect. The American Camping Association (2005) also developed the Camper Outcome Scale for a national survey, and Okamura *et al.* (2011) translated this scale and tested fifty-five camp programmes run by camp directors certified by the National Camping Association of Japan. They reported that important aspects that influenced camp outcomes were primitive setting, proper size with around thirty campers, and a staff ratio of less than 1:3. Developing comprehensive camp outcome measurements helped to integrate the benefits of camps and explore questions about outcomes and their causes.

The newest trend is the *Experiential Education Evaluation Form* (3 E Form). The software was developed by Okamura (2012a, 2012b) based on means-ends theory to identify meanings and connections among activities, experiences and outcomes of camping. This software made evaluation easier for practitioners due to the ease of data gathering, inputting the data and understanding the results. At the 2013 Japan Outdoor Education Society conference, about 10 per cent of researchers reported using this software (e.g. Inagaki *et al.*, 2013; Kobayashi *et al.*, 2013; Nakagawa, Takayama, Ota & Okamura, 2013; Wagstaff & Okamura, 2013).

When new theories are born in psychology, outdoor researchers often have tried to apply them to the outdoor field. For many outdoor programmes, however, these theories do not apply directly. Outdoor programmes vary greatly and these theories are not always appropriate. As Ewert (1987) also concluded, traditional pre-post design is useful, but studies ascertaining cause and effects in camp phenomenon would be useful in the next decade.

New dimensions of Japanese outdoor studies

Japanese outdoor studies have several ongoing issues that need to be addressed: (i) environmental degradation; (ii) short-term stereotyped programmes; and (iii) professional outdoor leadership training. The initiation of WEAJ in 2013 is significant in addressing the future of outdoor studies in Japan with a focus on these three areas.

Leave No Trace (LNT) is a powerful programme to connect outdoor education with environmental education. Tokuda and Okamura (2014) identified that the main issue in promoting LNT in Japan was to raise consciousness towards the environment. Okamura *et al.* (2014) evaluated the effect of the LNT programmes in organised camping on environmental awareness, and concluded that camps should introduce programmes to emphasise LNT and improve environmental awareness. WEAJ began to train LNT trainers in 2013 under the affiliate of LNT Centre for Outdoor Ethics. More than thirty individuals had been trained by March 2014. This training will be one important means to address environmental concerns.

Most outdoor programmes are short term, stereotypic in their activities and place based. Introducing longer wilderness trips in Japanese outdoor practice has been difficult. However, many studies (e.g. Hattie, Marsh, Neill & Richards, 1997; Yasunami *et al.*, 2006; Okamura *et al.*, 2011) point to greater outcomes associated with longer-term wilderness settings and outdoor pursuits. Most of the more than 500 Japanese outdoor centre areas are located in places having natural environments like a mountainside, seaside, lakeside and/or riverside. Most have accessibility to wilderness areas. If a WEA instructor were associated with each outdoor centre, they could contribute to increasing positive outcomes, decreasing environmental degradation, promoting safety management and organising a variety of programmes using the wilderness.

The Japan Outdoor Education Society was started with the aim of linking researchers and practitioners. This aim, however, has not been realised because the immediate benefits of research are not always available to agencies and private businesses. Further, interpreting and applying research results is often difficult. One mission of WEAJ is to develop outdoor leadership through academic research. Practitioners can touch the research world and understand research by university researchers with their activities. Ideally practitioners should be able to understand research results as they evaluate and develop their own programmes. On the other hand, researchers can also benefit from connecting with practitioners to improve their outdoor leadership skills and increase the opportunities to collect research data.

Concluding remarks

Much of the world's outdoor education has been led by Western countries, with the influence of their culture, environment, social system and worldview. Western and Eastern outdoor studies, however, are frequently not connected. Western outdoor educators know little about the Eastern world because of language issues. An activity of WEAJ is to connect Japanese practitioners and researchers with American practitioners and researchers. WEAJ has some English speakers on the board and is making efforts to translate English information and send Japanese

information translated into English. It is inviting American practitioners and researchers to the Japanese conference every year as small steps towards integrating world outdoor studies.

Asian countries do not have one view of outdoor studies because of different languages, cultures, religions and histories. However, Japan has a long history and culture that has connected to nature with lifestyles dependent on the environment. Unfortunately, setting national standards and systematic training for outdoor leaders has been delayed. Introducing the Western system, blending it with Japanese culture and nature values, and giving alternative paradigms for outdoor studies and education are necessary to develop Japanese outdoor studies in the future.

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