
Turbulent times: Outdoor education in Great Britain 1993–2003.

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Abstract

Outdoor education has a long and well documented history in Great Britain which is regularly linked to Hahn, Gordonstoun School, and the Outward Bound movement. A kayaking tragedy in 1993 resulted in the introduction of new legislation through Parliament. This has led to major changes in outdoor education in Great Britain and extensive debates, which are only partially documented. This paper outlines some of these changes and offers readers references that direct them to more detailed information. In addition, some of the resulting trends and debates that have emerged in the aftermath of the tragedy are provided. The paper concludes by considering some implications for outdoor education as a profession and argues that outdoor educators in Great Britain ought to consider the value of becoming a profession before striving to become one. Finally, some suggestions are made as to why these reflections on 'turbulent times' might be relevant to the field of outdoor education in Australia and other countries.

Introduction

This paper summarises and reviews changes in outdoor education in Great Britain since the Lyme Bay tragedy in 1993. Outdoor education has a long history (since the 1940s according to Cook, 1999; Nicol, 2002a) in Great Britain, which is frequently linked to Hahn, Gordonstoun School, and the Outward Bound movement. Those interested in the work of Hahn are advised to read some original texts (Hahn, n.d.) and James (1990). For a well referenced history of outdoor education in Great Britain, see Nicol (2002a, 2002b, 2003). Those interested specifically in outdoor education in Scotland are directed to Higgins, Loynes and Crowther (1997) and Higgins (2002). In addition to the literature above, a number of philosophers have informed outdoor education in Great Britain such as Dewey (1938), Heidegger (1927/1962), Hume (1978) Rousseau (1911/2000) and Wittgenstein (1979). Complementary to the historical literature, publications on the philosophical underpinnings of some approaches to outdoor education have emerged (Higgins, Loynes & Crowther, 1997; Hunt, 1990; Nicol, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Wurdinger, 1997).

A kayaking tragedy in March 1993 resulted in a great deal of attention in the press and subsequently the introduction of new legislation through Parliament. This has led to major changes in outdoor education in Great Britain and extensive discussions including issues surrounding professionalism in the sector. This paper details some of these changes and developments and reviews the main threads in the discourses. Inevitably, any attempt to review themes and trends cannot be conclusive and without some aspects of debate and contention. Where possible, evidence is supplied so readers can follow up on various points,

but in some areas experience is the only evidence, which can be drawn upon. We have structured the paper around some themes that illustrate various aspects of outdoor education in Great Britain. These themes are not intended to be exhaustive or definitive but provide a starting point for readers who wish to learn more. However, we have also tried to highlight some of the undercurrents, or themes, which we believe hold potential to connect provision in the future and contribute to the growth of outdoor education in Great Britain. It is also clear to see throughout the paper how the discussion of a range of issues and themes may relate to outdoor education in Australia and highlight some commonalities as well as differences.

Changes as a result of the Lyme Bay tragedy and some influences on education

One of the most significant changes in outdoor education in Great Britain came as a result of a kayaking tragedy in March 1993. A group of eight pupils and their teacher were accompanied by two instructors from an outdoor centre on the south coast of England. As a result of a series of errors and circumstances, four of the teenagers drowned. The subsequent trial resulted in the prosecution of the parent company and the centre manager. In addition, this tragedy accelerated governmental discussions until, in January 1995, the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995 was passed through Parliament in January 1995. An independent licensing authority, the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA), was designated by Parliament, under the guidance of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), a government body charged with overseeing health and safety in all workplaces. AALA inspect and issue licences to providers. These licences give an assurance that, so far as is reasonably

practicable, participants and employees can be “safe.” Readers interested in AALA are advised to visit their website (www.aala.org).

The consequences of AALA have proved to be immense. The Activity Centres (Young Persons’ Safety) Act, only applies to centres, companies or individuals, who make a charge for providing adventurous activities for under 18 year olds. This is only *one* sector of provision within Great Britain. The Act does not apply to voluntary organisations as long as they are only providing activities to their own members, schools providing for their own pupils, or Her Majesty’s forces when on duty. Despite many providers falling outside the legal remit of AALA, the standards are widely regarded as applying to any organisation providing outdoor activities and would probably, according to Marcus Baillie (the head of inspection services), be used as “the standard” in any court case. It is not clear if provision has declined across the country as a consequence of the Act, but risk analysis and management systems appear to have increased. It is fortunate that the head of inspection services and the inspectors all have extensive experience in the field of outdoor education and are typically well respected within the outdoor community. This adds credibility to AALA and, one hopes, to the field of outdoor education in general.

It is difficult to predict the future of AALA and the consequences of this on the field. One possibility is the expansion of the remit to increase the range of activities covered. Another possibility is to widen the remit to apply to all providers regardless of the age groups with which they work. Further options might be considered for voluntary organisations. This currently looks very unlikely, primarily due to cost. There is also discussion about a non-statutory scheme for those providers who are outside the remit of the licensing scheme, but again cost of implementation is likely to prove prohibitive. There is, not surprisingly, some debate regarding whether AALA has achieved its original aims following the kayaking tragedy (Loynes, 1996). One study, which focused on sea kayaking, suggests that AALA has had almost entirely positive effects on both quality and quantity of provision in sea kayaking (Woolven, 2004). Empirical data on other activities are not yet available and, as far as we are aware, no one is currently conducting research in this area.

Although the AALA regulations appear to be working well and are typically well received, they may have added force to the culture of over-protection placing an increased emphasis on safety and administration of risk assessments as opposed to a deeper discussion on educational practices. In the light of these changes and trends detailed above, there are some polemics regarding whether it is possible for young people to experience adventure

in an “educational way” within tight regulations. Loynes (1998) has suggested that outdoor education is increasingly an entertainment park consumption experience and Greenaway (1998) has commented on the “... bewildering array of explanations and theories about the educational value of mountaineering and other adventures” suggesting that “... some of these explanations are adopted simply to add ‘respectability’ to outdoor adventure” (p. 24). It is clear that some people view AALA regulations as tight and thus, restricting their opportunity to provide what they believe to be *meaningful* outdoor education. This view (questioning the appropriateness of such restrictive legislation) may be supported when contextualised among the only other fields licensed in the same way: the nuclear industry, munitions and asbestos. Later, Greenaway (1998) critiques the practice of what is often called outdoor *education* “If we simply rely on providing ‘new experiences’ and following ‘learning cycles’ or ‘processing sequences,’ we may be doing very little to enhance the quality and effectiveness of courses that are intended to provide ‘development’” (p. 26). In a controversial paper critiquing the *algorithmic paradigm* Loynes (2002) has also called for an increase in “... creativity, spontaneity and vitality ...” (p. 124). These dialogues indicate a need for those working in outdoor education to examine assumptions to ensure that their work is *educational* (Hovelynck & Peeters, 2003). We should note we recognise the value of recreational experiences (both indoors and outdoors) but our concern in this paper is with the provision of *outdoor education* which may be essentially *recreational* in nature but ‘sold’ as *educational*. It is our understanding that providing outdoor recreational experiences under the name of outdoor education is a matter of deception. This may be intentional for numerous reasons, for example, outdoor education may attract more participants and therefore perhaps more funding. It may be unintentional if a lack of knowledge, for example, means providers believe they are offering educational experiences when, in fact, they may actually be recreational. The boundaries between education and recreation are far from clear in many circumstances but further exploration of these issues may prove fruitful.

One further area worthy of note is the Campaign for Adventure (Campaign for Adventure, 2000a). This campaign started in 2000 following a one day conference titled “A Question of Balance.” Since then the campaign has concentrated on lobbying political individuals and parties to support risk taking and to acknowledge and work against the increasing trends indicated by a “culture of fear.” This phrase is the title of Furedi’s (1997) book, which is heavily cited in recent UK outdoor education literature. As with most political campaigns it is difficult to assess progress but the work of those involved in the campaign can be followed on line (Campaign for Adventure, 2000a). Consistent with

this position, a recent report (September 2004) from the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted), which covers England and Wales concluded,

Outdoor education is uniquely placed to offer structured opportunities for students to identify hazards, calculate the related risks and decide the significance of a risk in order to determine and implement the precautions necessary to eliminate and minimise risk. Students' involvement in risk management makes them aware of potential harm and contributes towards their being able to take greater responsibility for their own and others' safety. (Ofsted, 2004, p. 13)

While on the surface Ofsted may appear to be consistent with the Campaign for Adventure there are some significant inconsistencies here worthy of brief explanation. It appears that Ofsted is suggesting that the very idea of risk taking is to be avoided and the role of outdoor education could be to enable students to assess risk and then 'eliminate or minimise' it. A contrary position is taken by the Campaign for Adventure based on adventure and risk as, at least an educational value, and perhaps even as central to life and a way of being, which is threatened by a culture of fear. The Campaign for Adventure believe that life is best approached with a spirit of adventure and that absolute safety is unachievable.

Funding and politics

Historically, a great deal of outdoor education provision occurred through the formal education system when outdoor education was a part of a required curriculum or when financial pressures in education were not so great. Those times are gone.

Provision and regulation of education in Great Britain is not uniform. Scotland has always maintained its own educational systems with policy from the Scottish Parliament. The General Teaching Council (GTC) is the self regulating body for the teaching profession in Scotland. In England and Wales policy is created by Parliament (London) and regulation is through the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) on behalf of the government. Currently, outdoor education as a curricular subject comes under the title of 'outdoor and adventurous activities' in England and Wales where school children experience various activities depending on resources and staff skills. In Scotland, outdoor education is not a formal part of the curriculum and those children experiencing outdoor education through the formal education system do so as 'extra-curricular' or through integration with one of five broad subject areas: *personal and social development, environmental studies, mathematics, religious and moral education and expressive arts* (Salisbury, 2004).

However, it is financial decisions not pedagogical or curricular decisions that have influenced outdoor education provision most. Nicol (2002b) details the introduction of Devolved Management of Resources (DMR) to local authorities and the resulting focus on the 'customer' or the 'client' and the conceptualisation of the relationship as primarily one of consumption. In the mid 1990s, Scottish local education authorities suffered a further blow when a reorganisation saw nine regional authorities become 32. The resulting proportional funding led to a reduction from 15 staffed outdoor centres in 1996 to nine in 1999. These trends led Higgins (2002) to comment on the substantial reduction in residential provision in Great Britain and the decline of outdoor education centres in Scotland,

Outdoor education has often been perceived as expensive, but in times of less financial pressure the educational arguments and long term benefits have generally prevailed. In recent years a number of factors have led to a decline in formal outdoor education provision in Great Britain. The gradual attrition has left the area susceptible to pressures, which have taken some provision past the point of viability. (p. 158)

Not all of the news is doom and gloom. According to one respected outdoor educator in England, provision in England and Wales is 'better than ever before' (C. Loynes, personal communication, March 5, 2004). Two main areas of funding have developed in recent years that indicate Loynes' assertion is correct and they are briefly detailed below.

Until recently the National Lottery in Great Britain distributed money to 'good causes' through the New Opportunities Fund (NOF). In 2004, a merger with the Community Fund saw the creation of the Big Lottery Fund. It is too early to report the influence of the Big Lottery Fund but the NOF are reported to have allocated a total of £89 (AUD c211) million to Physical Education and Sport over a four year period of which £35 (AUD c83) million was allocated specifically to out-of-school projects (Nelson, 2004). Unfortunately, and to the frustration of many in the field, despite this large investment, no funds were allocated to evaluate the work conducted with the money. However, this supply of money can be seen in a positive light and will, hopefully, continue to support young people having experiences out-of-doors. No evidence is available to indicate how meaningful these experiences are.

Connexions is a government initiative, launched in 2001, which aims to assist 13–19 year olds to "provide integrated advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities ... and to help them make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life" (Connexions, n.d.). According to the Connexions

service the scheme gives young people the opportunity to “carry out activities designed to develop their teamwork, leadership and interpersonal skills. The activities might include: outdoor activities; art; drama; ICT [Information Communication Technology], sport; volunteering and work ‘taster’ sessions” (n.d., para. 1). They also reported,

In 2001, over 9,000 young people participated in the programme. The total budget of the pilots was £10 million. Funding of £38.75 million is being provided through the New Opportunities Fund from 2002–03 until 2004–05. We expect that around 16,000 young people will benefit from the programme in each of the next three years. (Connexions 2002, p. 20)

It is difficult to assess the value of such a scheme but the preliminary indications suggest that the scheme has had some success and is an additional resource and support structure for young people during the transition years. It is also refreshing to see the government investing in ‘youth focused’ schemes that include outdoor education but do not concentrate exclusively on outdoor education as the sole medium for personal development. A range of similar, well-established schemes (such as Fairbridge, 2004; Weston Spirit, 2004) offer experiences using the outdoors for the purpose of youth development.

More recently, in England and Wales the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) published a report titled *Outdoor education: Aspects of good practice* (Ofsted, 2004), which details the findings from a study of 15 local education authority centres (LEAs). The report is generally positive and supportive of the practices of outdoor education within the school curriculum as well as identifying areas for improvement and the ‘fragile’ nature of some provision. They note,

Such residential experiences are most effective where there are good links between schools and outdoor centres so that the contribution to the curriculum of residential experiences is clear and is evaluated to guide future planning. Too often, however, such coordination is absent and this challenging environment is only recognised as a ‘one-off’ activity. Consequently, the work of the programme is not developed further when students return to school, so that the long-term benefits are lost. For example, the strength of this work is significant in students’ personal development but it is not yet an integral part of the formal curriculum. (p. 13)

In Scotland, the Education Minister, Peter Peacock (2004), recently announced (October 8, 2004) that a national development officer for outdoor education will be appointed “to help schools and pupils make the most of the opportunities offered by outdoor education” (para. 1). While it is clearly too early to know what impact this may have, the comments from the Education Minister indicate good support for outdoor education and further potential for the development of outdoor education opportunities for young people through the mainstream education system.

There is little doubt that the provision of outdoor education is closely linked to political decisions and trends, so influencing decisions at governmental level should be a priority. It also seems axiomatic from the above that outdoor education in Great Britain is developing and enjoying a period of rejuvenation. This is contrary to the claims of Priest (1999) who proposed a model of life cycles of outdoor adventure programming. Despite the inherent problems of referring to Great Britain in a generic sense (as provision in England and Wales and Scotland is very different) there are more fundamental difficulties with this kind of generalisation. First, while some of the indicators Priest cites have become evident in Great Britain in the last ten years, when he proposes that outdoor education is in a state of decline there is little, if any evidence, to support this kind of generalisation. It may be more helpful to conceptualise outdoor education in Great Britain as going through some transitions which have led to signs of growth and further integration into both mainstream education and the broader contexts of society (e.g. youth and community work). Second, Priest refers to British Outdoor Adventure Programming—terminology that describes a practice that is uncommon in Great Britain and should be contrasted with the practice of outdoor education. For further discussion in this area see Ringer (2000) and Loynes (2002).

Access to the land

Examination of much of the previously cited literature makes it clear that the nature of outdoor education in Great Britain tends to rely heavily on the natural environment and the environment is seen as a crucial component, alongside activities and personal and social education (Higgins, 2002). Traditions of access to land have varied in different parts of Great Britain although the general principles have been based on agreements of ‘good will’ and shared use among the various stakeholders.

Until recently Scotland was one of the few countries in Europe where public access to the countryside was not enshrined in law. Wightman (1996) describes the system and pattern of landownership in

Scotland. Simply put, outside of the main conurbations the ownership of land is highly concentrated amongst a very small number of individuals, private trusts and corporations. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 addressed three issues regarding land ownership, one of which is concerned with public access to land. In legislating a public right of recreational, commercial and educational access to all land and inland waters in Scotland, the Act overturned one aspect of feudal control still extant in contemporary Scottish society. There are, of course, exceptions to this recently bequeathed right of access which address justifiable concerns regarding such matters as individual privacy, environmental protection and the pursuance of commercial concerns (for example, farming and forestry). However, the summary principle of the Act could be argued to be a right of public access except where there is justifiable reason to deny it. This Act is a crucially important development to the future of outdoor education as it protects the position of outdoor educators to play a central role in teaching about aspects of the rights and responsibilities of access, understanding of the countryside and the natural heritage (Higgins et al., 1997). Access to land has long been a vexed issue in outdoor education in Scotland, and the Act has given standing to existing informal or traditional rights which in some areas created considerable conflict (Wightman, 1996).

A similar process of enshrining public rights of access in the law has been underway in England and Wales in recent years. However, the equivalent legislation, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRWA, 2000a) differs significantly from the legislation in Scotland. The approach in England and Wales has been one of identifying and mapping land that is considered suitable for public access (generally large areas of open land, common land and uplands). Of equal significance and great concern to outdoor educators, the public right of access is defined as being for 'open-air recreation' (CRWA, 2000b). Therefore, in contrast to Scotland, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act neither explicitly includes access for commercial and educational reasons nor does it apply to all inland waters.

Whilst we have suggested that the access legislation in Scotland could be summed up as providing a right of public access except where there is justifiable reason to deny it, it could equally be argued that the approach taken in England and Wales has been one of denying a right of public access except where there is justifiable reason to provide it. The nuance of language may be small but the philosophy that it reflects is powerful. It remains to be seen what effect these two land access Acts will have in the long term but on first impression there seems to be more

reason for optimism regarding the opportunities for the growth of outdoor education in Scotland than in England and Wales.

Global education or recreation?

In addition to issues of land access within Great Britain there has been a notable increase in travel to other countries which is associated, to varying degrees, with outdoor education. The Expedition Advisory Centre (EAC) at the Royal Geographical Society currently lists 92 organisations who are recruiting expedition members (Expedition Advisory Centre, 2004). Since 1932, Great Britain has a long history of exploration overseas (especially to the poles and the greater ranges) for scientific and adventurous purposes and implicit educational purposes. As this aspect of outdoor education has grown the undertaking of community based work has appeared as an additional objective. With an increasing trend for young people to take a year off (usually between school and university) and the ease of global travel, the popularity of both overseas expeditions and 'gap years' has escalated, resulting in the appearance of numerous different providers. While 'gap years' may not be considered to be directly 'outdoor education' they are often promoted by organisations as having educational value whether it be an opportunity: to consolidate and assimilate previous learning experiences; to improve employability; or to satisfy a plethora of other, often spurious, claims. It may be noted here that the educational value of these overseas expeditions may not be so much about outdoor education but more about cultural education in a country, typically, very different from Great Britain.

The majority of the above mentioned 92 providers are non-profit or voluntary organisations offering a wide spectrum of experiences from month long visits to 12 month placements primarily in developing countries. While these experiences have become very popular there are a multitude of ethical issues associated with them that have received increasing attention. For example, many of these providers could be criticised for deceptively claiming educational outcomes but providing essentially recreational experiences. There is, of course, a range of provision with some organisations offering very high quality educational experiences that are ethically sound. However, some of the practices on these overseas expeditions have come under criticism (Allison & Higgins, 2002; Greenaway, 1998). Although it seems safe to predict that this type of provision will continue to grow and become a significant aspect of the outdoor education sector in Great Britain, the degree to which this part of the sector gains credibility remains to be seen.

Future generations

Recent years have seen a growth in provision for outdoor education in the further and higher education sector. A range of organisations offer a variety of courses. Historically there are five universities that offer degrees of some kind (University of Bangor, Edinburgh, Liverpool John Moore's, St. Martins and Strathclyde) but in recent years several other Universities have started to offer undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. This increasing number of courses has led to a flooding of potential staff into a changing and growing field. Our experience suggests that many of these staff entering the field are activity or recreation specialists but it is questionable whether they have a sound underpinning knowledge of education and can apply principles of experiential education (Dewey, 1938, 1958; Hunt, 1990; Rousseau, 1911/2000; Wittgenstein, 1979). This difference between education and recreation is crucial for issues of funding and the way in which outdoor education may or may not be supported by governmental funds in the future. Research tracing career paths and employee expectations in this area may prove to be a fruitful undertaking.

A number of people have contributed to the development of the academic study of outdoor education and several PhD and Masters theses have been completed in this area. This research has led to increasing publications of books (for example, Beard & Wilson, 2002) and journal articles. In 1997, the peer reviewed international *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning* was launched and currently publishes two issues per year (see <http://www.outdoor-learning.org/journal/journal.htm>). The revised edition of "Why Adventure?" (Barrett & Greenaway, 2005) provides a good summary of research on young people and outdoor education in Great Britain. A number of researchers have been meeting informally in a 'research forum' initiated by Chris Loynes. As this group has emerged it seems there has been a significant shift to embrace research focused on 'improving practice' rather than on 'proving' the value of various experiences (Allison & Pomeroy, 2000). Research from sociological, psychological, gender and philosophical perspectives is increasingly common (Nicol, 2001).

Critical issues

Perhaps inevitably, some of the developments described here (among others) have led to a safety conscious culture and fear of litigation (Furedi, 1997; Campaign for Adventure, 2000b). There are growing concerns on two related issues that will probably create further debate in coming years. First, necessary attention to safety in recent years has placed the *education in outdoor education* on the fringes of many

debates. This may well be partly due to a lack of robust, well argued literature and research in the field of outdoor education. This creates difficulties in a multiplicity of ways. One of the most obvious is the place of *outdoor education* within schools where ever-increasing accountability on spending of taxpayers' money requires robust justifications of practice in terms of education *and* safety. Many outdoor education providers have yet to move beyond romantic notions of the value of outdoor education as character building (Brookes, 2003), which may lead to criticism of practice and potentially reduced funding.

Second, the discussion of outdoor education as an *industry* rather than a *field* or *sector* has become increasingly common. A few unfortunate magazine articles appear to have brought this term into common use. The term 'industry' suggests a focus on production and profit, and it also oversimplifies a complex practice that typically focuses on people, relationships and environment (Higgins et al., 1997). Some people who focus on education object to this 'production line' metaphor and oversimplification (Loynes, 2002) and tend to use terms such as field or sector. Whether outdoor education is an industry, sector, field, or profession leads to a contentious debate to which we now want to turn our attention.

Profession?

It is common to hear people within the field of outdoor education refer to themselves as part of a profession. This assumption has received some attention (Higgins, 1997, 1998) and the professionalisation of outdoor education appears to have been influenced by AALA and an increasing need for accountability (especially evident in educational initiatives funded by the government). There is little doubt that many people working in the field of outdoor education are professional in the way they conduct themselves and the organisations they work for. However, the idea of outdoor education as a profession is more problematic. It is important here to differentiate between an individual conducting themselves in a professional manner and an individual working within a profession. We want to examine the concept of professions in a little more detail and suggest that this may be limiting the development and acceptance of the practice of outdoor education in Great Britain (and perhaps other countries).

Historically members of the professions were viewed as respected members of society having a high social status who exchange their competence, judgement and integrity against the trust of their client and communities while enjoying relative freedom from supervision and interference. However, in recent years research on the professions has found that while "previously the state sought to protect citizens from the unqualified practitioner, it now seeks to protect them

from the qualified" (Eraut, 1997, p. 5). The general lack of trust of the professions and professionals may be seen as symptoms of the previously mentioned culture of over protection and litigation. This is illustrated by high profile cases of malpractice emphasised by disproportionate sensation seeking media coverage. Despite this changing view of the professions our experiences suggest that people in the field of outdoor education in Great Britain are generally keen to portray themselves as members of a profession. Put another way, it is generally seen as desirable to be a member of a profession although there may be some value in scrutinising this assumption or belief.

Eraut (1997) has examined professions in Great Britain and focuses his work specifically on continuing professional development. He identifies three central features for acceptance as a profession: a specialist body of knowledge, a high level of autonomy, and an ethic of service.

These criteria are generally accepted in literature discussing professions and have received extensive attention in the education literature (Carr, 1999, 2003). Based on these criteria, in Great Britain there are three main professions: law, engineering and medicine. In Scotland, teaching is also a profession as it is self governing (General Teaching Council) while this is not the case in England. If these criteria are accepted, then we can examine how outdoor education features in each of these three areas. While there is an emerging body of knowledge in outdoor education (currently four peer reviewed journals in the world) and there are an increasing number of books available, the body of knowledge is small and very young when compared to law, medicine and teaching. Those contesting this are advised to examine the references in some recent journals and consider how often the same texts emerge as a foundational rationale for both theory and practice. In Great Britain, the field does not enjoy a high level of autonomy. Those working with people under 18 years of age are subject to a licensing scheme which is imposed upon the field rather than developed by the field (as in law, for example). It can be argued that those working in the field of outdoor education have an ethic of service and this can often be seen as an underpinning value. It is also possible to point to examples that would contest an ethic of care as a feature in the field, such as the increasing use of the term industry and the values this terminology implies.

Space prohibits the development of this issue any further but it seems evident that outdoor education is a long way from becoming a profession in Great Britain and we advise caution when using the term profession with regard to outdoor education. If outdoor education is to grow as a field it may be helpful for those in Australia (and other countries) to also grapple with this issue.

Tentatively ... growth

In summary, outdoor education in Great Britain has changed radically in the past 10 years and the changes look set to continue. Many of these changes are for the better and will help to develop the field. Although the summary above has focused on outdoor education, there are a large number of recreation providers in Great Britain, many of whom offer high quality experiences that include educationally sound practices.

Through this paper we have outlined a collection of current issues which we believe are important and intricately connected in numerous ways. We started by outlining the influence of the Lyme Bay tragedy and the subsequent licensing scheme (AALA). The perennial issue of funding and political issues influencing outdoor education was then discussed, we suggested that funding from non-governmental sources throughout Great Britain had improved in recent years and that this illustrated a shift of funding source from governmental funds (tax payer's money). We also noted that the provision of outdoor education in schools in England and Wales is considerably different from Scotland where it is not a statutory part of the curriculum. However, recent events appear to suggest positive changes in this area at a political level in England, Wales and Scotland.

Recent legislative changes regarding access to land in Scotland led us to suggest that there are good opportunities for growth for outdoor education. Conversely, new legislation in England and Wales may present more challenges to outdoor education providers.

Following a brief overview of land access issues we detailed one sector of provision that has seen considerable growth in recent years – overseas expeditions. We argued that this part of the sector, having received some criticism, seems set to grow in size but the credibility of the area remains unsubstantiated.

In the latter part of the paper we have detailed current provision of training and preparation of outdoor educators through further and higher education institutions and recent developments in research and publications. Finally, the paper concluded with some discussion on conceptions of outdoor education as a profession and those working in the sector as professionals.

The precise way in which the field grows and develops and the way the wide variety of practices merge or fragment remains to be seen, it seems safe to speculate that growth is and will continue to occur. It is, we believe, fair to say that in the past 10 years outdoor education has undergone many transitions

but contrary to the claims of Priest (1999), British outdoor education is strengthening in many areas and receiving funding and support from sources outside mainstream education such as social services and community education. Hopefully, in coming years, a balance of safety issues and educational issues can be reached in order to address the current imbalance and over emphasis on safety. It also seems that the time is approaching in the development of the field of outdoor education when dominant paradigms and assumptions can be challenged, such as adventure and risk as the primary philosophical theme, in favour of pluralistic themes such as creativity, trust, learning, care and critical discourse alongside adventure.

We hope that offering such commentary on recent trends in Great Britain might stimulate readers to consider trends in Australia (or their respective countries). We also hope that such commentary and analysis will stimulate discussion on what we believe to be important philosophical, pragmatic, practical and theoretical issues. Furthermore, our experience has suggested that the varied practices and conceptions of outdoor education can learn from each other despite, the often radically different beliefs and desires regarding the role, purpose and practices of outdoor education.

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