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Students at Mt Piper Terrain Park, Perisher Resort, NSW by Tracey Dickson

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Editorial

Robyn Zink

This issue of the *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education* explores three very different aspects of outdoor education. One of the things that binds the three articles together is that all focus on practice. The authors offer insights into how policies and social contexts affect practice, and give suggestions on how outdoor education practice can be strengthened.

Chris North and Chris Jansen explore their experience of implementing a five year sustainability strategic plan within the Outdoor and Environmental Education Curriculum Centre at the University of Canterbury in *Holding a sustainability bearing through cutty-grass and clearings*. In the midst of implementing their strategic plan the university went through a major re-structure which impacted on the programs they could offer and reduced the number of staff in their program. They describe this as feeling like a "mortal blow" at the time, but new opportunities did also emerge out of this restructure that they may have been slower to recognise had the restructure not occurred. This article offers insights into the complexity of holding a sustainability bearing in a tertiary education setting requiring the authors to remain alert to opportunities beyond their immediate program.

Michelle Wright and Tonia Gray examine how three women have managed to sustain long-term careers in outdoor education in *The hidden turmoil: Females achieving longevity in the outdoor learning profession*. The autobiographical approach the authors take provides nuanced descriptions of the motivations and challenges faced by the participants in building and sustaining a career in outdoor education. Burnout was experienced by all three at different points in their careers. The authors suggest that career longevity is more likely if an individual's personal philosophy aligns with organisational values, and therefore organisations should include staff in the process of developing those values.

In the third article in this issue, Tracey Dickson and Anne Terwiel look at supervision issues in *Supervising snowsport activities: A reflection upon legislation, policies, guidelines and practice*. They compare participation levels and injury rates in snowsports to a range of other sporting activities. Risk factors that contribute to injuries are identified. This is followed by detailed discussion of the legislation and policies that provide a framework which should influence practice of school-based snowsports programs. The authors then give some examples of practice. The first comes from data collected through a questionnaire

sent to teachers who manage on-snow programs. What emerged from this small study is that risk management strategies used by these teachers are multi-faceted involving a mix of skill development, peer-buddy systems, check in times, teacher supervision, area restrictions and communication strategies. The authors then provide a more detailed description of Jindbyne Central School where snowsports are an integral sporting activity. They too have a multi-faceted and integrated risk management system. As the authors note in this work, adequate supervision is much more than ensuring schools have appropriate ratios of teachers to students.

One of the books reviewed in this issue is on the subject of risk management. John Maxted reviews *Risk management in the outdoors: A whole-of-organisation approach* which is edited by Tracey Dickson and Tonia Gray. The second book review by Heidi Smith looks at *Controversial Issues in Adventure Programming* by Bruce Martin and Mark Wagstaff, which is an up-date on the 1999 book by Scott Wurdinger and Tom Potter, *Controversial Issues in Adventure Education: A Critical Examination*.

Once again a Master's thesis and a Ph.D thesis that examine outdoor education are profiled in this issue of AJOE.

I would like to thank the people that have contributed work to the *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education* and to those who have taken time to review articles. Without your on-going support it would not be possible to produce this journal.



Robyn Zink, Ph.D
Editor

Holding a sustainability bearing through cutty-grass and clearings: Implementing sustainability during disruptive organisational changes

Chris North and Chris Jansen

University of Canterbury, New Zealand

Abstract

This article explores our experiences as faculty implementing a five year sustainability strategic plan within the Outdoor and Environmental Education (OEE) curriculum centre during a time of organisational restructuring. This paper builds on the work of Jansen and Boardman (2011) who describe the process of developing the strategic plan and some initiatives arising from it. Now at the end of the five year timeframe and with the benefit of hindsight, we describe some of the problematic aspects of our sustainability initiative. The role of a strategic plan appears crucial in providing a general bearing, however remaining 'true' to a small centre and its vision also limited possibilities for interdisciplinary sustainability. We discuss how disruptive organisational changes provided unexpected opportunities for our sustainability initiative. The ongoing journey through 'cutty-grass thickets' and 'clearings' for sustainability is described with a view to providing inspired self generalisation for others on a similar journey.

Key words: Sustainability education, Higher Education, outdoor education, initial teacher education, organisational change

Introduction

Calls for increased focus on sustainability in universities worldwide are becoming more intense as we approach the end of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) (UNESCO, 2003) but the means to this end are disputed. Sustainability initiatives require innovative approaches and tolerance of complexity (Wals, 2010). While, noting that there has been some movement towards sustainability in the tertiary sector in Aotearoa New Zealand, Irwin (2010) still considers that significant barriers exist. Resources to support sustainability in higher education tend to focus on projects rather than on how change happens and by whom (Brinkhurst, Rose, Maurice, & Ackerman, 2011). Brinkhurst et al. argue that staff are a powerful force for transformation that have been under-emphasised as change agents, and at times seen as passive or as adversarial in sustainability initiatives. Hill (2012) suggests that specific examples of what teachers are implementing would be useful. Responding to such calls, this paper provides a case study from a faculty perspective on sustainability initiatives. The context is an Outdoor and Environmental Education curriculum centre (OEE Centre) in the University of Canterbury and we take an optimistic approach that seeks to inform others through illuminating our journey towards sustainability.

This paper begins with an overview of the implementation of Sustainability Education in a tertiary education context. In particular we make reference to the recent research in the areas of outdoor education and sustainability education in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Covich, O'Steen, & Hewson, 2009; Hill, 2010; 2011; 2012; Irwin, 2010) and to highlight its contribution to this discussion. It then moves onto the current status of sustainability education across the University of Canterbury (UC) and reflects on a range

of initiatives at the University of Canterbury College of Education (UCCE) that are part of an ongoing process of re-visioning programmes based on a 5 year strategic planning process that occurred during a highly turbulent time (Jansen & Boardman, 2011). This includes an outline of the definition for sustainability education adopted by UCCE, some specific changes that have been implemented including transformation of student assessment tasks, and the design and implementation of new and innovative courses. We describe the difficulties but also opportunities that our OEE Centre's strategic plan and subsequent sweeping organisational changes provided for sustainability education at UCCE.

The clearings offered by case studies, metaphors and sustainability

This paper presents a case study, illustrated with a metaphor to describe our experiences of sustainability initiative within our setting. We consider this approach to be a strength for a number of reasons and explain the terms case-study, metaphor and sustainability below. Case studies are a powerful way to share the successes of faculty and staff in sustainability implementation, and should be presented as a means to overcome barriers and motivate others (Brinkhurst et al., 2011). Case studies can provide context rich information that allows readers to identify with our situation and see possibilities in their own context.

Metaphors are used frequently in presenting arguments or describing ideas. Indeed Lakoff (1995) states that "we may not always know it, but we think in metaphor" (p. 177). As outdoor educators, we have spent much time navigating in the dense bush around Aotearoa / New Zealand. Off-track travel can be exhausting and confusing, but at times highly rewarding. Much like off-track navigation, when

The hidden turmoil: Females achieving longevity in the outdoor learning profession

Michelle Wright

Youthworks

Tonia Gray

University of Western Sydney

Abstract

Being a woman in the outdoor learning profession can bring distinctive challenges and roadblocks. Even more difficult is sustaining a life-long career, flourishing into a woman's 50s or 60s. Based on this premise, career longevity seems elusive for some women who aspire to work in the outdoors. This paper analyses the autobiographies of three experienced Australian female outdoor educators who have successfully navigated careers in the outdoor profession. Four key emergent themes were identified in the women's life histories that included: orientation towards the outdoors; decisions and motivations for entering the field; career opportunities; and challenges. Their narratives exemplify the accomplishments of women with distinguished careers in the outdoor profession and highlight various manifestations of burnout. Finally, the findings shed light upon factors that allow women to achieve career longevity.

Keywords: Females, Outdoor Learning Profession, Outdoor Education, Career Longevity, Burnout

Introduction

Historically, adventure education, wilderness programs and outdoor activities have been portrayed as masculine and 'testosterone driven', involving strength, risk and unknown outcomes (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1989; Humberstone, 2000; Loeffler, 1997; Warren, 1985 & 1996b). Both authors have experienced firsthand the ways that women in outdoor fields face stigmas – that we are necessarily masculine or overly 'butch' – or that we must unflinchingly face any challenge, with fearless determination and a cup of 'toughen-up'. Erroneously, any failure is taken to indicate that women do not belong in the outdoor learning field. This conundrum is the double bind of prejudice: on the one hand, treated as inadequate or even odd for wanting to be in the field, but also subjected to unrelenting scrutiny and judgment, and held to a higher standard.

Adventure magazines traditionally have been located in the 'men's interest' section of print media aisles, implicitly endorsing the idea that the great outdoors as a 'male domain' (Henderson, 1992; Kiewa, 2001; Mitten & Ross, 1990). Despite these stereotypical roadblocks, women have accomplished remarkable feats in the outdoors (Bialeschki, 1992; Humberstone, Brown & Richards, 2003; Warren, 1996b). For instance, they have climbed the world's highest peaks, cycled across vast lands, explored and surveyed unmapped regions, sailed solo around the globe and paddled some of our most treacherous rivers. Stories of legendary outdoor women have long inspired many young women; from childhood fairytales such as Goldilocks or Little Red Riding Hood, to more recent women of courage in the twentieth century, including aviator

Amelia Earhart, Karen Blixen in Africa or Jane Goodall and her ground-breaking work with chimpanzees. These stories push against socially imposed limits and redefine the outdoors as a universal playground and learning environment for all, regardless of gender.

As female outdoor educators, both authors are cognizant of our ability to combine two great passions: the outdoors and education. Seldom, however, do women maintain long-term employment in the outdoor learning profession given its arduous nature and unconventional operations (Edwards & Gray, 1998). Additionally, the outdoor industry is associated with technical prowess and physical competence. Gender-based socialisation often clouds women's perceptions of success, creating a lonely journey for those who choose to remain (Loeffler, 1995; Warren & Loeffler, 2006).

An intractable problem for both female authors in the outdoor profession was feeling either dissuaded or torn between family roles and career longevity. Female outdoor leaders, when attempting to explain their career choice, are either pigeon-holed as "adventure women" or as "teachers," neither of which completely describe our role.

As women actively involved in the outdoor learning profession, we recognise periods of peace and turmoil in our respective journeys. Within the backdrop of experiential learning, we attempt to capture, analyse and share these experiences in order to unite and acknowledge women. The primary motivation for this paper is the desire to understand the etiological factors that have enabled women to achieve career longevity or bolstered their resilience.

Supervising snowsport activities: A reflection upon legislation, policies, guidelines and practice

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University of Canberra

F. Anne Terwiel

Thompson Rivers University

Abstract

This paper explores on-snow supervision in school-based snowsport excursions by investigating snowsport participation and safety data and relevant legislation and policies that form the framework for practice. Snowsports may present a more complex environment for managing of participants than many other outdoor environments and provide a valuable point of reflection for the management of other outdoor activities where students may be participating without direct supervision.

Keywords: Supervision, skiing, snowboarding, risk management, injuries

Introduction

Snowsports¹ present risk management challenges for outdoor educators as the inherent appeal of snowsports such as the speed, fun, and the freedom that one experiences also present the greatest risk management issues regarding physical safety (Dickson, Terwiel, Waddington, & Trathen, 2012). While the appealing aspects of snowsports are similar to many other outdoor activities (Sullivan, Carpenter, & Jones, 2011), snowsports have the added challenge of being conducted in vast physical environments that may extend over hundreds of hectares. Additionally snowsports, like downhill mountain biking, are gravity sports. When you point your skis or snowboard down the snow-covered slope you will pick up speed, unless you can control that speed with specific knowledge, skills and with appropriate equipment. Snowsports occur on hilly and sometimes steep terrain that is slippery, where there may be objective hazards such as rocks, trees and creeks, at times icy patches, and where the temperatures are regularly well below zero degrees Celsius. Subjective hazards such as decision-making and peer pressure also prevail. This is the normal environment for snowsports.

It is to this environment that schools take students for a range of snowsport experiences, such as cross country skiing and snowshoeing, lift-accessed skiing and snowboarding as well as backcountry overnight touring. As with any school-based program, there may be a range of educational objectives such as sporting skill development, developing environmental connection, and enhancing intra and interpersonal awareness (Martin, 2004; Sullivan, et al., 2011).

This article aims to contribute to the discourse about supervision in outdoor education and was prompted by the recommendations from a Coronial

inquest into the deaths in 2009 of two young people on separate snowsport excursions as discussed below (Inquest into the deaths of Hannah Taylor and Amelia Catherine McGuinness, 2011). This will be achieved by reflecting upon the benefits of snowsports; the real physical risks in snowsports; additional legislation that may influence snowsport supervisory expectations; current guidelines; and examples of current supervisory practice in school-based snowsport programs.

When things go wrong

In August 2009 two young people died whilst on separate school snowsport excursions in resorts in New South Wales (NSW), Australia (Stanley, 2009). This led to a coronial inquest that made several recommendations regarding on-snow supervision requirements for school excursions. The Magistrate concluded that "the supervision of school students whilst skiing on school excursions must improve" (Inquest into the deaths of Hannah Taylor and Amelia Catherine McGuinness 2011, Para 31). The recommendations in relation to supervision of students in snowsport excursions included:

... where possible all students on school ski excursions be closely and directly supervised by either teachers capable of skiing with them on the ski run they are skiing on, or by qualified ski instructors (Inquest into the deaths of Hannah Taylor and Amelia Catherine McGuinness 2011).

A qualification to this recommendation was,

If schools conducting ski excursions take the view that students may ski without close and direct supervision by teachers

Controversial issues in adventure programming

Reviewed by Heidi Smith

University of Tasmania

Martin, B. & Wagstaff, M. (Eds.). (2012). *Controversial Issues in Adventure Programming*. Champaign, IL.: Human Kinetics

ISBN-10: 1-4504-1091-X, 317 pages

Controversial Issues in Adventure Programming (Martin & Wagstaff, 2012) a Human Kinetics publication follows on from the previously published text *Controversial Issues in Adventure Education: A Critical Examination* (Wurdinger & Potter, 1999). This text presents a new collection of controversial issues in relation to adventure programming with minimal overlap between the issues across both texts. The editors are both from North America and the text focuses on the climate of Adventure Programming in North America. Taking into consideration the current global climate and changes over time to adventure programming since the previous text was published, this text aims to fill the “need for a contemporary account” (Martin & Wagstaff, 2012, p. v) of enduring issues as well as engagement with *contemporary* and *emerging* issues. The issues presented are intended to address the “theoretical foundations of the discipline” (p. v) and provide an opportunity to “reassess the underlying assumptions on which the practice of adventure programming is based” (p. v). The intended purpose of this text is to support class discussions at the college and tertiary level whether online, on-campus or in the field. It aims to encourage students to critically explore a range of issues and to support their engagement in the co-construction of meaning in adventure programming.

Presentation of Text

The structure and presentation of the issues is similar to Wurdinger and Potter’s (1999) text resulting in a sense of familiarity making it easy to pick up and use. The book is divided into two main sections: enduring issues, and contemporary and emerging issues. Each section comprises 10 issues. They are arranged in individual chapters which begin with a brief introduction, followed by the presentation of two opposing points of view (yes and no) from a range of authors.

The Controversial Issues

The text covers a broad range of enduring issues. These are risk, challenge by choice, transfer of learning, outdoor leadership certification, accreditation of programs, motorised pursuits, inclusion (in relation

to disability and ethnicity), health and wellbeing as well as technology. The contemporary and emerging issues comprise of extreme sports, access to permits, wilderness first aid certification, to accompany or not to accompany, social justice, leave no trace, education policy reform, decision making models, online programming and forms of research. What is, and is not, considered contemporary and/or enduring in this text could be argued however given this, the text provides a range of issues often up for discussion in Adventure Programming and Outdoor Education. The issues of risk and online learning are discussed to give a flavour of the content.

Controversial Issue 1: Do the benefits of adventure programming outweigh the risks?

This chapter attends to the debate around the use of physical and emotional risk as an educational tool with the potential to create positive change in individuals and groups. Blenkinsop and Beeman present an argument for risk – *The benefits of adventure programming outweigh the risks*, and Brown presents an argument against – *Freeing ourselves from narrow thinking about risk in adventure programming*. Blenkinsop and Beeman provide a range of reasons for including risk in adventure programming. They outline benefits they consider unachievable without risk and provide a compelling and thought provoking argument around the process of “becoming” human (p. 8). In contrast, Brown indicates that there are other ways of achieving the same outcomes in adventure programming without risk and that there exists a need for a paradigm shift. I found the definition of risk he provides does not give recognition to the potential to gain from risk. In conclusion he states that there is a need for learning that is responsive to local conditions and cultural traditions” (p.14) which took me back to the points put forward by Blenkinsop and Beeman around “becoming” human . I found both papers lacking evidence and/or tangible suggestions for their arguments. Blenkinsop and Beeman made great claims for “longer term wilderness trips” and the provisions they can make to learning largely related to the physical. Brown’s suggestion that adventure programming has the “potential for unwarranted student harm, if it fails to adapt and adopt changing understandings of how people can best be supported

Risk management in the outdoors: A whole-of-organisation approach

Reviewed by Dr. John Maxted

Eastern Institute of Technology, New Zealand

Dickson, T., & Gray, T. (Eds.). (2012). *Risk management in the outdoors: A whole-of-organisation approach for education, sport and recreation*. Vic AU: Cambridge University Press

ISBN 9780521152310, 245 pages

The idea that modern society is somehow more risk averse than previous eras is a contestable one. Certainly there have been legislative directives, and moral and ethical shifts, that have sought to reduce exposure to risk across contemporary society. Yet risk remains and, as outdoor folks know, exposure to healthy risk is at the core of human vitality. *Risk Management in the Outdoors* situates quality risk management practices at the heart of healthy and sustainable organisations and provides a refreshing exploration of contemporary understandings around risk and risk management in outdoor contexts. Thankfully the overarching theme of the text is *not* about avoiding risks; indeed the concept of risk being 'the potential to lose something' is replaced up front with a more intuitive philosophy grounded in the educational opportunities possible via exposure to healthy risk taking. The key thread of the text, and its greatest challenge and opportunity for outdoor organisations and programmes, is the integration of such a risk philosophy with a "whole-of-organisation approach".

As with most edited texts, *Risk Management in the Outdoors* presents diversity of perspective. There is an internal consistency of ideas threading through the text, with chapters from a range of well-known outdoor adventure practitioners, legal practitioners, and academics. The opening chapter provides indications of a contemporary "risk" discourse and philosophy, placing risk central to organisational sustainability for outdoor organisations. There are brief philosophical connectors between risk and the need for adventure, between risk and purported nature-deficit for young people, and around child protection and matters of the "nanny state". Thus the management of risk in outdoor contexts is presented within a socio-political and socio-ecological context before "the risk management process" (p.13) is introduced. ISO 31000, from the International Organization for Standardization, acknowledges a five stage risk management process involving "establishing the context", "risk identification", "risk analysis", "risk evaluation", and "risk treatment". Whilst possibly not a radical departure from risk processes within

many Australasian outdoor organisations, ISO 31000 does provide authenticity, legitimacy, and direction for ensuring risk management processes infuse the very mission and core of our outdoor centres, organisations, and programmes.

The remaining ten chapters expand upon the risk management process as presented and explore a variety of broader outdoor programme dimensions situated around risk and risk management. Chapter threads include programme design / activity selection, programme evaluation, and the legal and organisational context for risk management. There are well crafted, interesting chapters exploring the very real relationships between risk management and matters of organisational sustainability, of the use of technology in the outdoors, and severe weather events. Each chapter commences with "focus questions" providing excellent insights into chapter content. All but two of the chapters then follow the focus questions with "case studies", though sadly these are far less descriptive and analytical than they could be and in most chapters are not referenced further or built upon. Indeed the case study preceding the final chapter on "learning from injury surveillance and incident analysis" appears so factually simplistic as to reflect doubt upon all of the other 'cases' as presented.

Despite the intent of the various authors to orient each chapter to practice and to provide leadership action points, those "new" to outdoor leadership may struggle wading through the various chapters. Beyond the structure presented via the ISO 31000 risk management framework, and a very short appendix giving examples of risk analyses, there are actually few tangible directives or best practice exemplars for new practitioners. The reality is *Risk Management in the Outdoors* is far more philosophical than practical, and this in my view is paradoxically the books greatest strength.

Whilst the flyer accompanying the text describes it as "essential reading for students and practitioners", the text cannot be underrated as a thought provoking