
Outdoor Education: — “After Us, The Deluge??”

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Outdoor Education for the most part is a term widely used, but poorly understood. Difficulty in answering “What is outdoor education?” has been a constant thorn in the side of outdoor educators for many years. Like Physical Education of the 1960's, outdoor education is currently plagued by growing pains — not only in terms of establishing it in the Australian cultural context, given its early European (particularly British) origins, and more recent North American trends, but also the constant reference to outdoor education being a part of physical education.

Bendigo College of Advanced Education is playing a leading role in assisting outdoor education through these growing pains not only in Victoria, but throughout Australia. Like Physical Education's humble beginnings (compared against the wide variety of Physical Education/Human Movement courses now available in Victoria), with the Diploma of Physical Education at Melbourne University, Bendigo College of Advanced Education has been running the only undergraduate course specialising in outdoor education in Australia, a two year Associate Diploma in Outdoor Education. This course, which largely came about as a consequence of the death of a student in Cradle Mountain, Tasmania while on a school excursion and the subsequent concern and initiative of staff at Bendigo College of Advanced Education, has emphasized the development

of practical abilities and safety procedures in outdoor adventure activities. Like the early physical education days which emphasized skill acquisition in sports and games, the acquisition of skills and experience in bushwalking, canoeing, skiing, rock climbing, scuba, horse riding, sailing and orienteering had been the thrust of this course.

The course commenced in 1975, with an intake of approximately 13 students, most of them being primary and technical teachers mainly from the local Bendigo area. Evening lectures, and weekend practical work students in the course were granted 2.5 days per week study leave to complete the course. Not only did this allow students to cope with their study and practical requirements in a more comfortable manner, but it did provide some credibility for this new course. The following year, 1977, opportunities for study leave were somewhat more limited and the College had to look for a different supply of students. Obviously school leavers proved to be the major source of intake in 1978, largely attracted by the exciting and practical nature of the course.

As rates of participation in the more active outdoor activities by Australians has increased substantially over the past decade so too has the Associate Diploma evolved. With the trend predicted to continue (Loder and Bayly,

1983, p.17), presently, the Associate Diploma, which has an annual intake of 20 students and is offered on a two year full time basis is one of the most sought after courses offered by this College. Typically, graduates have quickly picked up jobs in the outdoor field, often not career oriented jobs, but more of a life-style job.

Graduates of the course have generally found jobs as instructors within the private school system, leaders at outdoor education centres and with commercial adventure holiday companies, and outdoor equipment shops. Some students have embarked on further study either in Australia or overseas.

In 1982, planning for the introduction of a three year degree course, and a two year post graduate diploma in outdoor education commenced. Despite the fact that there was a ready market for graduates of the Associate Diploma, wide sections of the market were still not covered by personnel specifically trained and qualified in outdoor education. Career opportunities requiring a greater academic background were becoming available, generally within the teaching and special population area, yet there was no course appropriate to meet this need. Generally speaking, physical education courses which have contained some outdoor activity have been a major conduit for outdoor educators, however the limitations of such training, have

been suggested by a variety of bodies, the most notable being the Victorian Post Secondary Education Commission Report on Physical Education and Recreation in Victoria (January, 1984, p.70).

In 1984, a three year Bachelor of Arts (Outdoor Education) commenced at Bendigo College of Advanced Education with an intake of 20 students and which also saw a change of title for the Associate Diploma to Adventure Leadership. The Bachelor of Arts (Outdoor Education) follows the premise that outdoor education encompasses a balance of environmental knowledge, understanding appreciation and stewardship with the development of skills required to travel in the natural environment (bush walking, skiing, canoeing etc.) It also promotes the view that outdoor education and outdoor recreation, although often considered interchangeable, are in fact quite different.

The view held here is that graduates of the course will be better equipped for educating others about the out of doors, whether it be in the practical, theoretical or even philosophical sense. Typically, enhanced outdoor recreation, whether it be active or passive, would be a natural consequence for individuals or groups working with graduates of the course. Finally the course promotes the view that outdoor recreation, and inevitably outdoor education should be seen in the broader social context, that they are not isolated phenomena, but that social economical and political forces have a significant effect on the attitudes and behaviours of both individuals and collective society.

Although somewhat difficult to accurately assess where graduates of this course might find work, it is believed that the possibilities are numerous. Victoria has been offering Year 12, Group 2 Outdoor Education since 1983, and it is hoped that at some stage these positions will become tagged and advertised. Numerous schools both primary and secondary have been running outdoor education/camping programmes for many years with many of them having specialised facilities to accommodate their programmes. Coupled with the lurking concerns many school principals hold with regard to accidents and legal liability, it would appear a logical step (for all concerned) that people teaching outdoor education should be specifically and appropriately trained and qualified in outdoor education. Other employment possibilities include the camp system, private or public, of which specialised leadership and pro-

gramming would undoubtedly enhance existing programmes. At the moment, many camps are offered as a facility for user groups, to hire. Hopefully, the existing programme would be greatly enhanced by camps having a permanent Camp Director, a function which the degree course B.A. (Outdoor Ed) is working towards. Like all optimistic thoughts for a new course, it would seem that there is great scope for outdoor education working with special populations. In numerous countries throughout the world, adventure programmes have been used as a rehabilitative process for youth offenders. Programmes such as this are becoming more obvious within the Australian scene, yet it remains to be seen how enthusiastic the various authorities are about this approach to corrective programmes. Likewise, outdoor programmes are becoming more popular with physical or intellectually disabled groups with the community.

One notable area of employment potential is within the local government area. The Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation has played an extremely significant role in the establishment of the Municipal Recreation Officer Scheme throughout Victoria. Phillip Institute of Technology and Footscray Institute of Technology, in Victoria, have excellent courses providing for the broader leisure and recreation concept initiated through the M.R.O. scheme. Similarly, recent developments in other States, with new courses being developed to compliment existing courses argue well for developments at the government and local government level. One great possibility for graduates of the B.A. (Outdoor Ed) at Bendigo, is that the North American model of outdoor education/recreation programming by local government on a self supporting basis could be incorporated here in Australia. Previous experience of this system, in Oregon, U.S.A. suggests great potential for such an innovation here in Australia.

In conclusion, outdoor education, whether it be educationally oriented or recreationally oriented, lacks credibility in Australia, and probably will continue to do so for quite some time.

Bendigo College of Advanced Education through its two courses should play a significant role in the formal development of outdoor education, specifically with regard to the wide variety of areas where potential employment lies. The development of physical education over the past 20 odd years serves as model from which direction could and should be sought, by outdoor educators,

avoiding the mistakes in its development, and utilising some of the strategies which helped that field through its growing pains.

In a letter to Louis XV of France from Madame de Pompadour, in 1757 just prior to the French Revolution, the phrase "apres nous le deluge" was issued. We might well pose that question for the field of formal outdoor education!

REFERENCES:

Loder and Bayly. Planning, Engineering, Landscape Consultants.

Feasibility Study for a Mountain Training Centre. A Report to the Department of Youth Sport and Recreation and the Mountain Training Centre Steering Committee.

August, 1983.

Victorian Post Secondary Education Commission.

Final Report of the Advisory Committee on Physical Education and Recreation.

January, 1984.

BACHELOR OF ARTS (OUTDOOR EDUCATION)

The prime aim of this course is to meet the needs of students seeking professional careers in leadership, planning, management and teaching in outdoor education and outdoor recreation. The course provides for an intensive study of outdoor education, outdoor recreation and natural environments within the Australian context in the following ways: —

- by analysing the theoretical foundations upon which the fields are based;
- by investigating past, present and future concerns.
- by equipping students with the knowledge and skills appropriate to professional, personal and vocational endeavours in outdoor education, outdoor recreation and environmental stewardship.

On successful completion of the course, graduates will be well equipped in the theoretical and practical aspects of outdoor education and outdoor recreation.

This will include a sound knowledge of the natural environment, personal skills for use in natural environments, expertise in applying such skills to the public, and experience in the leading and the teaching of outdoor skills.

The course develops ability to plan, administer and implement a variety of enjoyable, safe and meaningful outdoor experiences for others.

At a personal level students will have learned much about themselves and their abilities through the variety of rich experiences provided over the three years. At a professional level, students entering the workforce will have clarified further a value position regarding the roles of outdoor education, outdoor recreation and environmental stewardship within society.

COURSE STRUCTURE

First Year — Students begin to identify the notion of outdoor education, and outdoor recreation as unique aspects of the overall leisure and recreation fields, which are affected by broader, historical, social, economic and political concerns. The relationship between people and the environment is explored. Outdoor Pursuits, which includes navigation and bushwalking, canoeing, kayaking, skitouring, rock climbing and aquatics are introduced, emphasizing such outcomes of enjoyment, safety and meaningfulness. Two elective units are commenced in the first year, and carry through until the end of the second year of the course. These are drawn from other faculties of the College, and allow for personal interests and vocational endeavours to be pursued.

Compulsory units include: —

Outdoor Education in Australian Society.
Historical Concepts of Outdoor Education.

Geography 1. Man and Environment A and B.

Outdoor Pursuits I and II.

and at least one of
Biology/Ecology and Conservation or
Geology.

Depending on personal preferences, one other unit can be elected from the Faculties of Arts, Business Studies and Engineering and Sciences. Typically these include units such as Sociology, Philosophy, Accounting, or the natural sciences.

Second Year — emphasises a more intensive study of many of the issues introduced in the first year, as well as further development and consolidation of specific outdoor abilities and skills. The elective units encourage a more detailed analysis of the natural science and business options, or a further broadening of the sociological and philosophical areas.

Compulsory units in Second Year are:

- Foundations of Outdoor Education Studies.
- Philosophy of Recreation and Natural Environments.
- Social Psychology A.

- Principles of Outdoor Leadership.
- Field Placement Seminar.
- Outdoor Pursuits 3 and 4.

Elective units involve the completion of at least one of the two sequences commenced in first year. This two year sequence must be a natural science option. Electives in second year also broaden into such units as Resource, Urban and Historical Geography, Cultural and Political Anthropology, Administrative Studies, Financial Planning and Analysis, and Communications. The natural science sequences focus on more detailed aspects of Biology, Geomorphology and Geological Map Interpretation.

A four week (minimum) field placement with an outdoor agency, in a leadership position, is required between the second and third year of the course.

Third Year — facilitates further development, clarification and evaluation of all information and experiences covered previously. Procedures for the professional application of such theory and practice are investigated and implemented via the Outdoor Pursuits unit which includes a Final Expedition and another Field Experience placement which emphasises management and administrative practices.

The third year of the course brings together all aspects — educational, vocational and practical, so that the overall purpose and objectives of the course can be met.

All units in the third year are compulsory: —

Principles of Outdoor Education
Recreation, Environment and Consumer Camp Management
Recreation Management in Natural Environments
Environmental Interpretation
Contemporary Issues in Outdoor Education and Outdoor Recreation
Theories and Methods of Social Research
Outdoor Pursuits 5 and 6
and
Field Experience

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Upon graduation from the Bachelor of Arts (Outdoor Education) students should hold a current recognised first aid qualification such as St. John Ambulance, and the R.L.S.S. Bronze Medallion (preferably Surf Bronze) or recognized equivalent.

ASSOCIATE DIPLOMA IN ADVENTURE LEADERSHIP
(formerly Associate Diploma in Outdoor Education)

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The prime aim of the Associate Diploma in Adventure Leadership is the development of leadership abilities and techniques in a range of adventure recreation activities. Included within this major focus is the safe management of persons involved in adventure recreation. The course has two major components: —

1. Theoretical studies which place adventure recreation and outdoor education into a modern and historical context.
2. The development of practical and organisational skills in adventure recreation. This component provides students with skill development, emphasizing safety, in a wide range of recreation activities.

The course encourages the development of an appreciation for the positive outcomes inherent within adventure recreation. A major expedition brings together all aspects of the course.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course is designed for two years of full-time study.

First Year — emphasises the development of practical skills in a range of adventure activities including a theoretical program dealing with personal organisation and safety planning in adventure. Students are actively encouraged to assess their own priorities regarding the nature of adventure recreation, personal development and group interaction.

All units are compulsory

Historical Concepts of Outdoor Education 60 hours
Recreation Planning 60 hours
First Aid and Safety 3 days — 36 hours
Environmental Education 60 hours
Bushwalking and Navigation 12 days
Canoeing 12 days
Rock Climbing 12 days
Snow Skiing 12 days
Orienteering 8 days

Second Year of the course encourages the further development and refinement of skills introduced in the first year of the course.

Leadership and group management techniques are encouraged and activated within the context of adventure recreation.

All units are compulsory

Outdoor Education in Australian Society 60 hours

Outdoor Recreation Leadership 60 hours

Instruction Techniques and Leadership 60 hours

Safety and Rescue Techniques 2 days

— 44 hours

Environmental Education 60 hours

Bushwalking and Navigation 12 days

Canoeing 12 days

Rock Climbing 12 days

Snow Skiing 12 days

Orienteering 8 days

Field Experience totalling 44 days which includes a 14 day Expedition, should be completed during the course.

