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NEED FOR A DEGREE CURRICULUM PROGRAMME FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION LEADERSHIP IN THE UNIVERSITY OF PORT AND HARCOURT, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research study was to investigate identifiable goals for University of Port Harcourt degree curriculum programme Recreational Outdoor leadership. The development of the curriculum was based on the curriculum rationale of Tyler and the statistical model of Raiola. The Thirty-seven (37) respondents to a questionnaire included professionals in the outdoor recreational programme. (n – 16) as well as undergraduate students in Human Kinetics and Health Educational Outdoor Recreational Adventure (n = 16) and Faculty numbers (staff) (n = 5) statistical analysis of the data was done by means of the statistical 5.5 package for windows. Mean and median statistics techniques were used to calculate the demographic variables. The goals were ranked as more or less important based on an 80th percentile criterion. A non-parametric Correlation Analysis of the data revealed that, a strong correlation existed between the response of professionals and students regarding the required goals for the undergraduate degree curriculum. However, the analysis revealed that the views of staff members were not in agreement with the other two groups on some of the goals.

Keywords: Recreation, outdoor, curriculum, undergraduate degree, and leadership

INTRODUCTION

Adventure programming on leadership where safety of participants forms a critical element of concern, show a high risk and uncertainty because it takes place in environments that contain objective dangers like falling rocks, lighting and subjective dangers, which include fear and irresponsibility of group members (Miles & Priest, 1999). To avoid accidents, reduce damage to the environment and maximize client learning, competent outdoor leaders are essential (Priest, 1999). Because the interest in outdoor adventure recreation activities has increase phenomenally over the last decade throughout Nigeria, there is a multitude of programmes focusing on adventure recreational activities such as backpacking, rock climbing, abseiling, orienteering, canoeing, kayaking, cycling and ropes courses. These activities are presented to arouse sensitivity. Learn practical life skills, shape values, expand cognitive understanding, develop commitment and strengthen personalities (Raiola & Sugaman, 1999).

Recreational education is in general a healthy and growing phenomenon Bilodeau (1987) reports that an inherent problem associated with any rapidly expanding field is that, as in the case in the adventure industry in Nigeria, demand often outstrips supply. Secondly, because of the growing demand, practitioners too often focus on accommodating masses, which results in participants mostly experiencing only recreation.

Further result of this phenomenon is that the process and specific outcomes are misunderstood. While, because of the shortage of qualified adventure leaders, empirically objective evaluation is seldom conducted in the adventure industry. This results in a poor theoretical foundation to support programmes. (Henderson, 1988) Colleges and Universities are the most logic institutions to provide the very important training for outdoor recreational adventure leaders. The demand for improved adventure leadership was already emphasized by the UNESCO international programme for environmental education at its intergovernmental conference in Tbilisi, USSR in 1977: "The training of qualified personnel is considered to be a priority activity. This holds good both in initial and in-service training, for the purpose of familiarizing teachers and researchers with environmental linked subject matter and education methodological processes" (UNESCO-UNEP, 1979).

Van Der Smissen (1975) reported that the training problem is an issue of competency and professionalism. She states that: One should be a reasonable and prudent professional. One is required to be a professional. You must have the competency required for the role you have accepted. If you hold yourself out to be qualified to instruct or lead rock climbing, then you are saying that you know the proper procedures for rock climbing. What is professional conduct? It knows the best practices of the profession and being updated on the latest developments as to the technique and procedure.

The growing demand for adventure leaders is encouraging from an employee's point of view. However, the demand has exceeded the supply, a situation Bilodeau (1987) describes as higher education's inability to supply an adequate number of competent outdoor educators and leaders. She further emphasized the importance of adhering to the need for higher quality educators and leaders, who would be responsible for conducting safe and meaningful high-quality outdoor adventure education programmes, a process that could only be achieved through well-rounded preparatory programmes.

High-quality instruction ironically results in an accelerated rate of skills development, which in turn raises participation. However, high-quality instruction decreases the individual risk factor (Simmons, 1982). Most injuries which occur for adventure activities are the result of inadequate safety precautions or poor judgment (Higgins, 1979). Fraht (1978) and Rankin (1977) support the importance of properly planned and carefully supervised programmes by stating that programme leaders that have obtained the desired qualifications have rarely been found responsible for injuries sustained during adventure programmes, as judged by a court of law.

The above research clearly indicates that a huge demand exists for qualified outdoor adventure leaders, a demand that emphasizes the fact that educational experiences are needed to prepare potential instructors for their desired occupation (Simmons, 1982). He further states that higher education should take responsibility for creating a balance between academic components and practical experience needed for the development of adventure leaders with the desired ability Petzoldt founder of the national outdoor leadership school in the United States of America, emphasized that there is no doubt that a standard educational experimental curriculum should be developed (Petzoldt, 1981).

Presently, to the knowledge of these researchers, there exists no collection of information on adventure knowledge, skills and behavioural competencies required for a degree programme in Nigeria. As a result, this study undertook to identify goals for a degree curriculum at the University of Port Harcourt, which would comply with the education and training needs of the adventure industry.

METHODS

The identification of objectives for the Outdoor Adventure leadership curriculum was based on Raiola's (1986) model, which is based on Tyler's curriculum rationale. Tyler (1949) emphasizes that wise and comprehensive decisions about goals are made only when consideration is given to each of mentioned sources as each has certain values to support it.

The education objectives of any curriculum could be defined by the subject matter. However, if only the content were considered, valuable perspective is lost. By including the prospective leader in the goal formulation process, it not only draws upon their strengths, it also enables the author to evaluate and address their prospective needs. The contribution of the practitioners further enables us to avoid repeating outdated concepts (Raiola, 1986).

The following procedures were used to identify the goals of the recreational outdoor adventure leadership of the University of Port Harcourt Degree model for the students of Human Kinetics and Health Education. The authors synthesized the goals common to outdoor leadership, outdoor adventure, outdoor recreation and outdoor education into an inclusive list. This list was then analysed to formulate a comprehensive list of prospective curriculum goals appropriate for the recreational outdoor leadership curriculum at the University of Port Harcourt.

Some staff members and students studying Human Kinetics were requested to form an advisory panel to evaluate the questionnaire and to make recommendations, which were used to modify and finalize the questionnaire. Having done that the questionnaire was administered on staff members (n= 5) that were involved in Outdoor Recreation and Adventure and had previously undergone adventure training. The Undergraduate students (n= 16), who had undergone an adventure course with either the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education or attend camping leadership course, were also requested to complete the questionnaire. To comply with Tyler's model, the questionnaire was distributed to practitioner/professionals (n = 16), who are of trained recreational administrators.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

In analyzing the data received from the completed questionnaires the mean (m) was calculated for each goal in order to determine whether a goal that was judged was fundamental in guiding the development of the curriculum. The median was calculated for each group and used as a proxy to determine if the goal met the 80^{th} percentile rank. The averages for the statistical mean for each question for the three groups were calculated as well as the average of the median values. This average was used to determine whether a goal was fundamental when one or more of the average values were below the median. In addition, the Speaman Rank – Difference Correlation Coefficient (Thomas & Nelson, 1996) was utilized to determine if there were significant differences in the distribution of scores between the three groups of respondents.

RESULTS

Table 1. Mean responses of professionals, staff members and students to curriculum goals

Variables	*Mean Score for Professionals N = 16*	*Mean Score for University Staff N = 5*	*Mean Score for Human Kinetics Students N = 16*	*Average Score*
1	3.64	4.60	3.31	3.85
2	4.36	4.80	4.56	4.58

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Variables	*Mean Score for Professionals N = 16*	*Mean Score for University Staff N = 5*	*Mean Score for Human Kinetics Students N = 16*	*Average Score*
3	4.73	4.80	4.44	4.65
4	4.09	4.80	4.00	4.30
5	4.18	4.40	4.25	4.28
6	4.73	4.60	5.00	4.78
7	4.91	5.00	4.36	4.76
8	3.55	4.60	4.00	4.05
9	4.45	4.40	4.56	4.47
10	3.27	3.80	2.88	3.32
11	4.45	4.40	3.88	4.24
12	4.64	4.20	4.81	4.55
13	4.73	4.40	4.56	4.56
14	4.91	4.40	4.56	4.62
15	4.45	4.20	4.36	4.34
16	4.45	4.60	4.19	4.41
17	4.36	4.60	4.63	4.53
18	4.55	4.40	4.25	4.40
Median scores for the group	3.86	4.10	3.72	3.90

Table 1 illustrates the responses of the practitioners, staff members and students to each curriculum goal, as well as the calculated average for the three groups.

Spearman rank order correlation coefficients, which assumes that the variables under consideration were measured on at least an ordinal (rank order) scale, that is, that the individual observations could be ranked into three ordered series, were calculated for different pairs of variables.

The coefficient between the professional and student variables was 0.616, whilst the coefficient between staff and professional variables was only 0.071 and those between the student and staff variables was 0.034. These results indicate that for each of the 18 goals there was no significant difference between the responses from the staff compared to both the responses from the professionals and the students.

Table 2. Ranking of mean score of goals for an outdoor recreational leadership curriculum by professionals, students and staff of human Kinetics and Health Education

Goal	*Rank*	*Mean*	*Goal No*
To develop technical knowledge and skills (kayaking, abseiling, orienteering rook climbing cycling, high and low ropes and camping)	1	4.78	6
To create an understanding of group development and dynamics	2	4.76	7
To create an understanding of human growth, group development and dynamics	3	4.65	3
To develop effective problem-solving knowledge and skills	4	4.62	14
To acquaint prospective leaders with leadership styles, characteristics and techniques	5	4.58	2
To develop communication, judgment and decision-making skills	6	4.56	13
To develop knowledge and skills regarding safety and rescuing	7	4.44	12
To development knowledge of safe and practical facilities, equipment and supplies	8	4.53	17
To develop life-saving and first aid skills	9	4.47	9

The nine goals contained in Table 2 ranked above the 80th percentile level by all three groups of respondents. They represent a consensus on the content of curriculum for outdoor leadership education. The topics are ranked by mean scores which ranged from 4.44 to 4.78, indicating that the respondents felt these goals to be most important.

Table 3. Ranking of mean scores of least important goals for an outdoor leadership curriculum by professionals, students and staff members

Goal	*Rank*	*Mean*	*Goal No*
To provide knowledge and skills to faster facilitation in adventure programming	10	4.41	16
To develop advanced programme planning techniques and skills	11	4.40	18
To develop environmental awareness	12	4.34	15
To provide information regarding the organisation and administration of adventure programmes	13	4.30	4
To familiarize the prospective leaders with different models and strategies used in adventure education	14	4.28	5
To acquaint prospective leaders with legal responsibilities	15	4.24	11
To develop basic knowledge and skills for wilderness survival	16	4.05	8
To provide sound philosophical historical and theoretical foundation	17	3.85	1
To development knowledge and skills required to maintain a balanced diet.	18	3.32	10

Table 3 shows the ranking and mean scores of the 9 least important goals for a curriculum for outdoor leadership education. The mean scores ranged from 3.32 to 4.41, indicating that respondents felt these 9 goals were of least importance.

DISCUSSION

The questionnaire was administered on professionals (practitioners), students and university staff of the department of Human Kinetics. The results indicate that for each of the 18 goals there was no significant difference between the responses from the professionals and that of the students. However, there was a difference between the responses from the staff of the department compared to both the responses from the professionals and the students, probably as a result of their educational experience as well as higher education requirements and practices.

The highest ranked goal, namely the development of technical knowledge and skills, could be attributed to the high demand for competent adventure leaders of recreations that are able to conduct safe programmes. The second and third ranked goal, which includes human growth and group development, could be attributed to the need to understand individuals and to control a group of people because of the skills involved. Leadership, problem-solving, communication, judgment and decision-making (ranked 4 to 6) are skills that no leader is able to do without while three goals encompass safety aspects. Safety skills were ranked first in a study conducted by Priest (1986) in the USA, Canada, Britain, New Zealand and Australia.

Facilitation skills that are required for the learning process were ranked in its rightful place, as no learning can take place before previous goals have been achieved. The goals that ranked high also play an important role, as they contribute towards the running of the programmes and the preservation of the environment. The philosophical, historical and theoretical foundation ranked high by staff members because of its contribution to research. All three respondent groups ranked knowledge of nutrition as the least important because of its value in the programme.

Regardless of the content of the curriculum, it must be kept in mind that the development of a leader is an ongoing process. Optimally, the curriculum normally provides a student with the fundamental skills and knowledge for beginning his or her maturation in any field of endeavour (Raioli, 1986).

CONCLUSION

Based on the 80th percentile judgement, the goals rated highest are deemed to be the most important components of a curriculum in outdoor recreational leadership. However, due to the difference in responses by staff members with respect to goal lowest and highest as well as the researchers' experience and the requirements for a university curriculum, these goals should be included in the list of important goals. The other goals identified at least important would obviously also be included in a curriculum but with less emphasis and time spent on them.

These findings are highly correlated with an international study done by Priest (1986). Eight of the first ten goals in this study were ranked amongst the top ten goals as judged by 169 experts from Australia, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, and USA. The two goals that differed from this international ranking were (facilities, equipment and supplies) and (life-saving and first aid skill). The international experts preferred awareness and empathy and environmental skills for developmental sustenance.

This study has thus not only indicated what training needs are, but has indicated that the needs of the University of Port Harcourt outdoor adventure industry are in line with those in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand and other African countries.

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