

ADVENTURE AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT



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"Experience in itself is neither productive nor unproductive, it is how you reflect on it that makes it significant or not significant for good or ill ..." (Bolton, 1979)

Most of us, involved in adventure take it as fun, excitement, thrill and a challenge. It is the thrill of doing something beyond, what is generally considered normal, which makes one go in for adventure activities. Sense of achievement and personal glory are perhaps the essential elements that lead us to this desire. This is called 'Pure adventure.' And if the experience gained is studied and analysed, from the behavioral angle, and used as a tool for learning and development, it is called

Learning

through experience is very interesting, simple and long lasting. We learnt cycling by practically riding a cycle till we attained our balance. As it was an experience, we never forget it in life, even if we did not cycle for ages. But what we learn in the classroom is forgotten sooner or later. Similarly, what we learn from an experience, and more so, if the experience involves challenge and passion, is likely to have a long lasting impact.

'Processed Adventure.'

Adventure education is a powerful medium in which to work. With power comes responsibility. It is precisely because the medium of adventure can be so powerful that adventure educators have a responsibility to find out what kind of impact adventurous experiences are having. And as educators, it makes sense to assist and assess the learning experiences which are aroused by adventure. Through reviewing, facilitators demonstrate that they care about what participants experience, value what participants have to say, and are interested in the progress of each individual's learning and development (Greenaway, 1992).

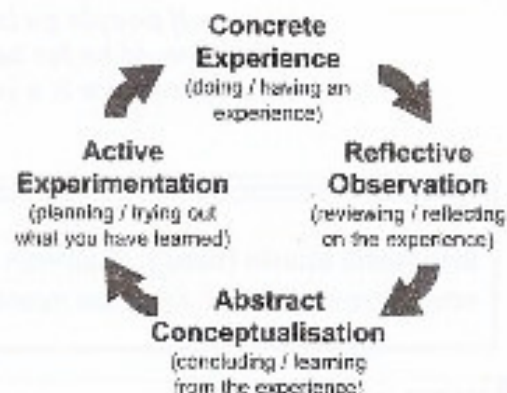
Many of us know what students learn in an outdoor setting, but few know the process through which learning occurs. It is important to identify the mechanisms through which it happens. Experiential

educators must focus on both what students learn and how they learn. Some learning objectives that should be targeted are :-

- Leadership skills
- Communication skills
- Environmental awareness
- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Team work, particularly small group behavior.



Studies conducted in the US reveal that students show significant perceived gains in all these objectives. It must also be remembered that the course design, activities selected, physical environment, capability of instructors and the willingness of the students to learn are variable factors that play an important role.



White Water Rafting

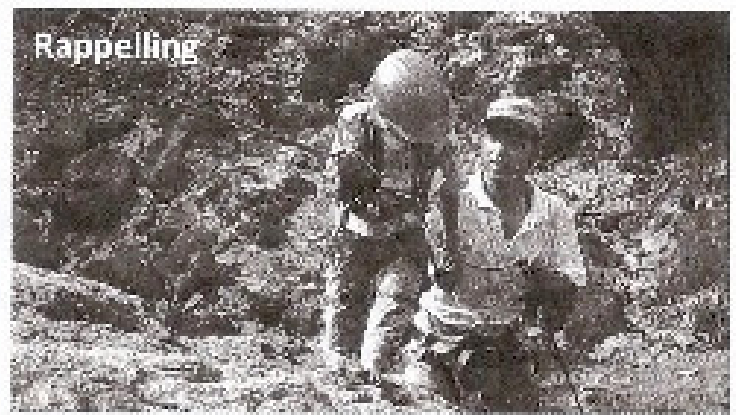


Learning through experience is very interesting, simple and long lasting. We learnt cycling by practically riding a cycle till we discovered our balance. As it was an experience, we never forgot it in life, even if we did not cycle for ages. But what we learn in the classroom is forgotten sooner or later. Similarly, what we learn from an experience, and more so, if the experience involves challenge and passion, is likely to have a long lasting impact.

In experiential learning, one model that is very common is that of Kolb. He said that a person would learn through discovery and experience. The reason why the theory is called "experiential" is that its intellectual origins are taken from the experiential work of Lowin, Piaget, Dewey, Freire and James, forming a unique perspective on learning and development.

Adventure and outdoors are effectively used as a tool for discovery and learning. In adventure camps, experience is simulated by an adventure activity. It could be any activity such as rock climbing, rappelling, raft building, white water rafting, flying fox or para sailing. After the activity the students are asked to reflect on the activity and write down their experiences. This is followed by a Small Group Learning, where the group sits down and discusses

Rappelling



the experiences and consequent learnings. They brain storm and arrive at some commonly agreed experiences. These are then shared with the entire group and are 'processed' by the facilitator. What emerges are interesting revelations and self discoveries. Lets take a simple example of rock climbing. Many people have indulged in this challenging activity only for the challenge part of it. If after this activity students are made to reflect :

narrate their experiences, certain discoveries emerge such as sense of achievement, goal setting, teamwork, etc. When we dwell on it deeper, we observe that some students realize how what can not be done alone, can be done as a team. In other words, they learn the value of

interdependence.

Experiential education based on 'processed Adventure' brings out the importance of extending classroom and boardroom theories to outdoor experiences. Students exposed to well planned structured outdoor activities overcome mindsets, build self confidence, discover their inherent and dormant strengths and demonstrate learning at an advanced level when confronted by real and meaningful real life challenges.

If people go into the mountains for development of some kind, they would be far better equipped if the 'vehicle' they are using to enhance their experience is a vehicle for development rather than a vehicle for learning.

(Roger Greenaway).

AUTHOR

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