

Motive of Service

Kathy Mann

At the 12th National Outdoor Education Conference in January 2001 a group of approximately fifteen passionate delegates formulated a working draft for a 'motive of service' as inspired in particular by the work of Peter Martin from La Trobe University (Martin, 2000; Martin, 2001). In true conference style this draft was consolidated on butchers' paper and placed in the main gathering place (the dining area) for public comment/feedback. Conference delegates wrote 20 comments. The working draft and a list of the comments are included below (only names of contributors have been omitted for reasons of confidentiality or illegibility).

At this point I would like to reiterate the empowering suggestions of James Neill (2001, p.2). It is in this article that he strongly invites readers to reflect on the most profound simplicities for each of us regarding outdoor education, to synthesise these into a statement that reflects common values and goals, and to take these discussions into the workplace. This comments list is part of this reflection process. It could well provide some 'food for thought' or starter blocks for discussion at your next workplace forum. The simplicity of language used by delegates should encourage open discussion.

Working Statement about Outdoor Education

"Through interaction with the (our) natural world outdoor education aims to develop an understanding of our relationship with the environment, others and ourselves. The ultimate goal of outdoor education is to contribute towards a sustainable community."

This statement was followed by the following request: "PLEASE comment on this working statement about outdoor education. Are you happy with it as a general statement of what outdoor education is? If not – explain why below.

Resultant comments were as follows:

1. Happy with the definition but maybe it should define "Education Outdoors" or a broader view "outdoor Australia"
2. (*direct response to 1 above*) No it is meant to be an educational focus in Australia.
3. Natural World? Where do urban based OE activities fit?
4. Not happy with the ultimate goal because it is far too general and dismissive of the huge diversity of programs that exist in the industry.
5. Sounds good to me – we (our staff) worked on this for most of T4 (*Term Four*) and came to a similar conclusion – so great stuff in such a short time!
6. Excellent – make it public via newsletters etc., ask for comment review at future conferences.
7. Let's cut to the chase. We are putting 'conference jargon' into a goal (the word sustainable). 10 years from now is this our goal? Has this always been our goal?
8. not limited to school based professionals – involve all volunteer agencies and actively facilitate their involvement (Scouts/Guides/DE (*Duke of Edinburgh Scheme*) etc.)
9. focused yet sufficiently flexible to allow different groups some autonomy
10. Like this!

11. Keep the order of "... environment, others and ourselves." I believe this is important (language as per George Seddon)
12. Can this be 'imposed' from above (National Council) after common show of hands/verbal agreement here? Get it in place and if people violently disagree then they can have some input which is then 'democratically' discussed and decided upon!
13. I can live with it.
14. Me too.
15. I think this is quite good.
16. "Outdoor Education" no longer represents the profession/industry as represented by the people who would call them part of the larger profession. It represents a sector!
17. To define something negates the diversity. Maybe forget defining it for economic/professional reasons and look at stating common values or beliefs.
18. Start with the word 'predominantly'.
19. Change wording to be more "inclusive" of all outdoor users rather than "exclusive" OE (*Outdoor Education*).
20. Write the statement, have it responded to – then begin to focus on process of doing it." (*Motive of service about outdoor education*, 2001)

Reading through these comments will hopefully serve to remind many of readers of the importance of language and our oft-emotive responses to certain terms. It highlights the philosophical assumptions underpinning tacit belief. It will also, I hope, remind readers of the purpose and importance of establishing a 'motive of service' as a signpost towards becoming a more professional body, rather

than a disparate collection of occupations. I expect and hope that we'll experience an equally fervent continuation of this discussion at the next NOEC in 2003.

In the meantime, discuss these ideas with your colleagues and send your comments to the editor or to the email discussion list (La Trobe University website outdoored@latrobe.edu.au) or to k.mann@student.canberra.edu.au

References

- Martin, P. (2000). Outdoor Recreation and Outdoor Education, Parts of a Bigger Whole. Outdoor Recreation (ORCA) and Outdoor Education (AOEC). *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 4(2), 48.
- Martin, P. (2001, January 2001). *Key issues in the industry: towards the Summit*. Paper presented at the 12th National Outdoor Education Conference, La Trobe University Bendigo campus, Victoria.
- Motive of service about outdoor education*. Unpublished manuscript (2001). created at La Trobe University Bendigo campus, Victoria.

About the author

Kathy Mann is a Masters of Education candidate at the University of Canberra. Her thesis (in progress) is focusing on an examination of the professional preparation of outdoor leaders in Australia. Her research interests include gender issues in outdoor pursuits, leadership, authentic pedagogy and authentic assessment. Her involvement as an outdoor practitioner began in 1989. All correspondence is welcome at: k.mann@student.canberra.edu.au