



Stockholm Institute of Education

Inclusion of Young Persons in Outdoor Education

Learning in Motion Report II

Magnus Magnusson

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CONTENT

Abstract	2
Foreword	3
INTRODUCTION	5
DEFINITIONS	6
Defining the field – operational definitions	6
Defining the group of people	11
FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON OUTDOOR EDUCATION	12
AIM	16
METHOD	16
RESULTS	18
Reflections on Internet	18
Reflections on ERIC	23
Reflections on LIBRIS	24
DISCUSSION	26
On activities	28
On resources	29
On Future Research	31
CONCLUSION	33
REFERENCES	35

Abstract

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This short report is the second one based upon the work in the EG-project Learning in Motion (LIM). Both reports present literary reviews, the first one with a focus on children ages 0-18 and outdoor education, the present one on young persons age 18-25. The reports are based upon database searches, in the IR-systems ERIC, LIBRIS and Internet. The searches show that there is very little research reported through the annotated and validated retrieval systems represented by ERIC and LIBRIS on outdoor education for young persons with intellectual disabilities or disabilities in general. It also shows that very little information is age specific. The age group is described as a group in a process of transition and change.

On Internet there is a lot of information available on resources as centres, sites and courses. However, that information is not validated and entirely reliable as research material. The problems regarding linking on Internet are discussed in relation to this. The report presents a few examples on resources on the Internet, which might be worth deeper and future studies. The report ends with some reflections on the reasons for this lack of research information and some recommendations for future efforts.

Keywords: outdoor education, inclusion, young persons, outdoor learning,

Foreword

Transnational cooperation is regarded as a strategic task in order to contribute to the development of European research and education. In the project Learning in Motion (LIM), within the Socrates programme, Grundtvig 1, five countries are involved: Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Germany and Greece. Two parties are involved from Sweden: Studieförbundet, Uppsala, who is also the coordinator of the project, and the Stockholm Institute of Education, represented by The Disability and Handicap Research Group within Child and Youth Science. The overall aim of the European project is to develop, examine and spread learning modules in outdoor education containing modules for both physical and sensitivity training for the main target group: children and adolescents with intellectual impairments in inclusive education.

The LIM project is financed by the European Commission and the number of partners is seven in five countries. Sweden is responsible to conduct two brief literature reviews and to conduct empirical studies on inclusion in Sweden, Finland and Germany. The research will focus on inclusion of two groups: children 12-18 years and young persons 18-25 years. For the participants the final project result is expected to contribute to innovative ideas, learning material, examples of good practices and an increased quality of life. The contribution of the Stockholm Institute of Education is thus to highlight inclusion in outdoor activities as specified in the signed partner agreement based on the 'Application proposal' by 26/2/04 for the project Learning in Motion, 113719-CP-1-2004-1-SER-G1. The tasks are specified as follows:

Inclusion in outdoor activities

This project will focus on inclusion of young persons in outdoor activities. The first part of the project will be to conduct a literature review on outdoor activities for children and adolescents in order to find out what the conditions and prerequisites are. The second part includes field studies in Sweden, Finland and Germany in two different groups:

1. Children 12-18 years
2. Young persons 18-25 years

The first group with focus on children is to be regarded as a reference group. The main aim is to find out how inclusive education is working in outdoor environments in different countries and when exclusion is a reality (p. 3, Partner Agreement).

The planning of the project started already 2002/2003 and the practical work started in October 2004. The first meeting was held in Uppsala in December 2004. Jane Brodin, professor of Child and Youth Science is the project leader at the Stockholm Institute of Education and associate professor Peg Lindstrand participated. In April 2005 assistant professor Magnus Magnusson was included in the project.

The first task was to conduct two literature reviews on inclusion in outdoor education; one for children up to the age of 12 years (Jane Brodin & Peg Lindstrand) and another for young persons up to the age of 25 (Magnus Magnusson). This is the result of the second report.

Stockholm in January 2006

Jane Brodin

Project leader

Introduction.

The ambiguity connected to concepts within the educational or pedagogical field is a fact which meets the researcher daily. Any writer discussing pedagogical activities has to spend much energy on defining the meaning of the concepts used since concepts develop all the time and also at different levels. This report is no exception. It will focus on a concept which is based on very old and traditional ideas regarding learning, teaching and education which easily can be traced back to Comenius or even older sources. However, the concept has met with a fairly new and recent interest so that it is conceived of as new and in the forefront of new educational ideas in general. The concept is OUTDOOR EDUCATION.

This report is part of the project Learning in Motion (LIM) where the intention is presented in the foreword. The report is the second one of two reports investigating research through literature reviews in the area of outdoor education in relation to different age-groups. The first part focuses on the age groups up to 18 years of age, including small children. The present report focuses on the age-group 18-25 which can be described as young persons (or adults), that is a group in transition between children and adolescents on one hand and adults on the other hand.. It does not focus upon the group of elderly but presents a few comparative data on reports on that group.

The intention is to study inclusion which means concretely that there is someone or some groups which should be included. In our case we are indirectly and directly meaning individuals with intellectual disabilities. Even though the goal group is found within the so called impairment or disability or special needs field, the report will start from experiences in the

general field of outdoor education, since the original background data used to start this project show that the area of intellectual disability is a neglected one in connection with outdoor education.

Since the concept is based on education and pedagogy, the main sources of research knowledge will be in the field education. I have therefore identified three main types of sources for literature search:

- a. The databases ERIC and Libris
- b. Direct contacts with special educational institutions found through personal contacts
- c. Searches through Internet.

The report will not try to analyse the concept itself. It will base the use of the concept on two facts which will be presented below:

- the definition(s) agreed upon in the project
- the data or references found in the searches

The definition agreed upon in the project is based upon another definition which makes it necessary to give some information about that as well.

Definitions

Defining the field – operational definitions

There is an abundance of theories about the content and meaning of outdoor education. The concept itself is old and many-faceted as was mentioned

above and in the first report (Brodin, 2006) there is another reflection upon the meaning of the concept. The LIM- project, however, has established a concrete working definition of the concept which is based upon operative definitions used in practical work in the world today, primarily one established at The Outdoor Education Research and Evaluation Centre. The basic definition which has been agreed upon by the project participants is as follows:

Outdoor Education is a method of learning with the use of all senses. It takes place out-of-doors in a natural environment or other out-door learning spaces.

It is an ideal complement to the classroom and to traditional teaching methods.

Below, however, I briefly want to list different types of theories, based on an overview from The Outdoor Education Research and Evaluation Centre (www.Wilderdom.com) as a background to the origin of the definition in the LIM-project. They have gone through the field of outdoor education over the world, looking for differences and common traits and divided the field into six main categories, which will further illustrate the background of the present project definition:

a. Learning & Education

Theories which focus on experience, learning and change.

b. Wilderness, Environment & Nature

Theories which focus on the influence of the natural environment on human thinking and behavior.

c. Psycho-Experiential Theory

Theories which focus on the psychological and experiential nature of challenging group experiences in nature.

d. Psycho-Social Theory

Theories which focus on social psychology, sociology, and anthropology.

e. Facilitation

Theories which focus on the role played by the facilitator(s).

f. Multi-dimensional Theories

Theories which focus on synthesizing multiple elements into a greater whole, often based on elements-of-practice models.

All of the theoretical approaches present aspects of interest for our special goal-group.

An overview like this reminds us that there are many different aspects on the central concept and we have to go one step further to come closer to the essence of the concept, by looking at central keywords in connection with the concept. Keywords are valid tools for discovering the essential parts of concepts, as experienced by people who are familiar with a concept. Keywords also represent certain central aspects traceable to all of the approaches above. Within the LIM-project we have developed a set of four keywords. However, once again we have something which is based upon a similar set of keywords from The Outdoor Education Research and Evaluation Centre (www.Wilderdom.com) . I present them both and first the original one:

- Education/Learning
- Outdoor
- Environment/ nature/ wilderness
- Adventure

The second set is the one constructed by the LIM-project itself:

- Education/Learning
- Out-of-doors
- Outdoor learning spaces
- Experience – practical, social and emotional

The difference between the two sets is fairly evident. Both sets are firmly founded within the field of Education and with a focus on learning and not on teaching. The person in focus is the student and not the teacher. The second set, however focuses itself in several ways, first of all by stressing the concept out-of-doors which has a more limited and specific content than outdoor. Secondly, the first set stresses the connections between nature in general while the second set is more unspecific regarding the physical aspect of the environment but more specific regarding the aim of the environment, talking about “learning spaces”, inferring that there are specific places outdoor where learning can take place. A conclusion which will be interesting to discuss during the project is if this means that there are places which are not suitable for learning or if a place is something which is created by the learner – or the teacher.

Lastly but not least the first set of keywords focuses on the word adventure, thereby stressing an aspect which might be considered as slightly elitist where outdoor education contains an element of besting an obstacle and

placing yourself above something or someone. If we look away from the elitist aspect of the word and focus on the obstacle, the concept contains a very strong sense of overcoming something of a very deep importance and out of the ordinary, to experience something unique. The second set, however, takes on a more neutral note and just points out that it is a matter of getting a wide array of experiences. In both sets, it is easy to trace the six theoretical areas from Wilderdom, where I want to point out the fifth area (facilitation) as one of special interest to our work because we are talking about inclusion of a group which often can be considered as excluded.

I am going to use the concept “outdoor education” as my general concept when discussing our area of interest even though I am aware of the related words outdoor and/or experiential learning. I believe that the word education is more general and neutral since learning connects to a specific (student) perspective and limits the discussion. The word experience or experiential could also be experienced as slightly off the track since it does not focus on the outdoor aspect which is the central one for our project.

We have a deep respect for different ambitions and agreements regarding definitions and content of concepts. However, in a research study you have to think about two things first and last:

- to be independent
- to be clear

The discussion above can only be seen as a support in our trying to create some sort of working structure for analyzing the data that will be found in the literature investigated.

Defining the group of people

The goal group for the project has caused a few problems of definition since we use a bit different terms in different countries, even though the work within ICIDH has created a common ground. Within the European Community, however, I have the feeling that the concept “intellectual disabilities/ impairments” might be sufficient to cover problems related to what might be called mental retardation or cognitive disabilities in other contexts. Our project also will focus on certain aspects of mental illness but the main focus of the project as described in the agreement is intellectual disabilities and that is the scope of my report. A more general term which has been used when discussing assistive technology is the term special needs which includes any individual or group of persons with a disability or impairment which creates a special need. In this context, however, I will use the term intellectual impairment.

Since I am focussing on a special age group, we need to consider special aspects of this group. When you are at the end of your teens and approach your twenties, that is the age where you have finished all of your obligatory schooling and also might have spent sometime at secondary voluntary schooling as well as started to work. You probably also have moved away from your parents and to a place of your own, either living alone or in some sort of collective which is fairly frequent among students at university. You might also have done some travelling, you have probably acquired some working knowledge in at least one more language than your mother tongue.

When you are at the end of this age-span you might even have established a family and could be a parent. Within this age-span you probably experience a very large volume of new experiences and basic changes in life which

leads up to an expected stability of adulthood. In short, this period could be described as a period of change and independence, and this aspect of the age-group is probably common for all of Europe. Another word that describes this period well is the word “transition”. Even though other periods of life can be experienced as transitional period like the one when a child goes from home (or pre-school) to school is an important period of transition as well (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2006) the period for the young person between 18-25 is one of constant change.

This pattern of life can be seen as a socio-cultural patterns which also includes persons with intellectual disabilities, even though we all know that the state of inclusion and equality is far from optimal in any of our countries. If you are a young person in Europe today with an intellectual disability the chances are great that not all of the above-mentioned aspects will be passed through or fulfilled.

Further reflections on outdoor education

Mind and body is a classical dyad, originating in the division between mind and matter which can be seen as one of the results of the Cartesian “Cogito Ergo Sum”. In western educational tradition, for centuries, there has been a focus on the mind as the central focus of teaching (and learning). A learner or a student always has a mind which is governing the learning and the mind might be situated in a body which is of secondary interest only according to this tradition. This of course has its exceptions. Already from ancient Roman culture the expression “Mens sana in corpore Sano” has been brought down to us as an indication that our ancestors knew very well that there is an interdependent connection between mind and body. However,

science and also education has been formed by the polarization between mind and body since the days of Cartesius.

Learning is a form of development which goes on in a temporal as well as a spatial context. We learn in different physical and social contexts all through our lives, including the context when we are outside or outdoors of our communities or buildings. Most civilizations of the world have realized the importance of structuring learning to ensure that members of a certain community learn the basic things necessary to know how to be able to live and function within that specific community or society. This can be seen as a partial explanation of the fact that most cultures, societies or communities in the world have made an institution out of learning and developed theories and models for learning including specially trained teachers. This institutionalizing of learning means to a certain extent that a typical learning situation belongs to a situation separated from normal everyday life. Outdoor education could be seen as a reaction against this institutionalization to a certain extent. Developing institutions for what might be considered as a more natural and direct state of being, causes problems and maybe even alienation.

Through environmental and ecological movements today, we are constantly reminded of the fact that we are a part of nature or a complicated (physical) ecological system. We are in the world in a very physical sense and to remind ourselves of the Heideggerian concept of Being, we might say that Being is in many ways comparable to this ecological framework. The concept of the lifeworld as originally defined by Husserl makes it even clearer, our individual lifeworlds all are physical as well as mental. The world can be envisioned as a place within boundaries (indoor) as well as outside boundaries (outdoor).

Being a human being consists of carrying a load of cultural heritage and traditions. Among them, we find the idea that we have developed from a slightly pastoral stage where we all lived not only close to nature but also in nature. The western myth of the Garden of Eden is part of that myth where we all are supposed to originate from a more natural relation to our environment where we never reflected upon the state of our being, we just existed and knowledge in the sense of focussing on the structure or mechanisms or “secrets” of Being, caused a sort of downfall or parting from this idyllic way of “real and true” life.

This “longing for true ways of living” is a very real part of most cultures in our world. To use Jungian vocabulary, we could probably call the myth of Eden an archetypical myth. According to this myth, we have parted from the true way of life and to find our way back, we have to reach out into the outer world as well as inside ourselves to find ways of becoming true and real. Also, when we think about the age-group in focus of this report, we should consider the idea that a period of change in life is also a period where you tend to question a lot of things that earlier in your life might have been taken for granted. According to this idea, it might be a natural thing to expect, that people from this age-group might be especially interested in outdoor education or learning as a possibility to enrich this dynamic stage of life.

Looking for that unity we find ourselves looking in the outside world, that is Outdoors or Out of doors which is a variation of the basic concept. The one concept means to be outdoors in nature and the other concept is a modification to signify that you can be outside a building and out of doors within a human community. The latter concept is used to describe activities done for instance in a city.

Technology has changed some of our experience of the relation between our bodies and the outer world, be it outdoors, indoors or out of doors. We tend to divide very clearly between what is real and what is not in the sense what is directly approachable through our bodily senses – what we can touch, feel, hear and see directly without any intermediate tool in between. Through technology as an intermediate tool, however, we can experience the outside world indirectly and especially through the so called virtual reality technology, built on simulations, we tend to redefine the meaning of direct experience. If we would build a simulation of the world and if we would experience that simulation exactly as we would the real world – where would the difference be?

Briefly turning back to the myth of the Original State of Being in the Garden of Eden, that part of Humanity's mythological and original existence is considered as one without any tools or without any intermediating technology. Maybe the apple that the Worm gave to Eve was the first tool which is another way of saying that technology caused the downfall of Man (Ihde, 1990).

However, with or without technology, humans experience the outer world through the body or as Merleau-Ponty puts it, through our lived body (Merleau-Ponty, 1967) which means that we are our bodies, that there is no division in the Cartesian sense between the physical and mental self, that we are what we are, including the body. Any experience we go through, any learning activity we take on includes the body and in other words the physical aspect. To be able to learn in the sense that you can use your knowledge in a creative and active way you have to experience things directly with as little intermediary intervention as possible. This seems to be the credo of most Outdoor educators today and an explanation to the fact

that the term experiential learning is used in many of the texts almost synonymously to outdoor education/learning.

Aim

This report will present a knowledge study based upon literature searches where the intention is to find research on outdoor education and young persons with intellectual disabilities.

The report will be a companion report to a similar study on the age group between 0 – 18 years (Brodin, 2006). In both reports there will be combinatory discussions on the content of the concept outdoor education.

Method

I will primarily look for literature-references about research on activities, projects, resources and people in the world today, involved with outdoor education and disabilities, especially intellectual disabilities.

The main method for the study will be database searches and studies, focussing on the literature databases ERIC (1968 – 2005) and LIBRIS. I will also make supportive studies on Internet (2000 – 2005). On Internet the search tool will be Google. I will use the term “search” to cover any type of information retrieval over Internet or the databases. The term “hit” will be used to describe any single type of information that I find in any search. “Source” will be the term I use to cover the sources of information (journals, institutions, individuals, Internet-sites etc) where the piece of information originates.

I have used more specialized keywords like “intellectual disabilities” in combination with outdoor education in a few pilot searches. Then the results have been so very limited that I have decided to make more general searches and out of these make a more personal analysis to be able to catch pieces of information in the literature found that might otherwise be lost. Derived from the project plan and the central content of that, however, the general keywords for the literature and database searches in different combinations and isolated will be:

Outdoor

Education

Disability

Young

(Adult)

(Elderly)

In the preliminary pilot searches I included the keyword “research”. However, the word was used, especially over the Internet, in such an unspecific way and besides the number of hits in connection with disability was so low that I decided to use the Internet information as a support in my analysis of the rest of the data in a manual direct analysis of the references found. Finally, the keywords “adult” and “elderly” are used to retrieve material for reference and comparison.

I will also use the results of the LIM-project so far and also look into the forerunner of LIM - the European project “Outdoor Education –Authentic learning in the context of landscapes” (1999-2002) in the Socrates Comenius programme which is presented more in detail in the first report (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2006).

Results

The results will be published first in a general and quantitative way – how many hits did I get with each of the keywords and their combinations in each data-source and was there any significant information to be found in the relation between the hits for every keyword.. After that I will discuss the relevant literature findings.

Reflections on Internet

(Recent search 9.1.05)

GOOGLE: Outdoor Education 41.700.000 hits

Outdoor Education Research 17.600.000 hits

Outdoor Education Research Disability 3.560.000 hits

Outdoor Education Research Disability Adult 1.650.000 hits

The comparison between two so different sources of information as Internet and traditional information retrieval databases is difficult. I want to stress that I use Internet as a support for the searches in ERIC and LIBRIS. While a well established and highly structured high profile database like ERIC gives you fairly exact answers to your search questions, the unstructured and continuously expanding Internet with all its different search motors gives you a very wide array of results, demanding extra work, analyzing the data. The validity of Internet-information is highly vague and not transparent or self-explicatory.

The main profile of ERIC is research, even though the database contains information of a more general character, the profile is clear and well-structured. The main subject area is education and the items are written

papers from journals, reports or books, which means that an average search in ERIC will give research or development information in the field of education of a very clear type. Every item will be unique. The occasional exception where an item might be found under two titles or as two hits is very rare and generally means that the specific item will have been published more than once and in different sources. The main profile of LIBRIS is a little more unspecific than ERIC since it more presents availability in Swedish libraries. However, the database is as highly structured as ERIC which means that the information is highly valid.

Internet in comparison is of a very general and unstructured character, containing information from a very wide scope of contexts, where the same source might generate a multitude of hits. One specific source might be linked in any way to any number of intermediate sources all over the world, thereby creating the possibility that we might find several hundreds of links to one specific source, indicating popularity and usage of that specific source – or the ability of the source-owner to actively create new links to his or her source.

The basic component upon which Internet is built is the Site. A site is a place where a certain subject is presented, often in many forms of media. From this follows that literature is just one of many different types of sources on Internet. One way of measuring the value of a source on Internet would be to see the number of hits connected to one specific source. This, however, is a very unreliable way of validating the information.

The information found over Internet is demanding to analyze and to understand more deeply. To give a few initial examples, The Outdoor Education Research & Evaluation Center (www.Wilderdom.com) at New Hampshire

University and its founder/director James Neill is widely found through a large number of hits and links to other sources of information. It is probably the most commonly found single source over the Internet in the general field of outdoor education. A general search through Google on the keyword Outdoor education would render thousands of hits, leading through links to this specific site, which in its turn has several parallel sites connected to it. The Center has the ambition to make people link up their own sites to the center's site so that a network will establish itself, making it easier to find as much information as possible through one specific hit, only.

The phenomenon of linking itself is well worth a deeper study since it has changed the aspect of searches quite drastically, in comparison with the traditional databases where the keyword and the structures underlying the keyword would be the main instrument of orientation, and also of validation. Today, the number and actuality of the links available from one specific site will be important in steering your search in a valid direction and the ability of a site-owner to convince other site-owners that they should link themselves to his or her specific site, will be one of the tools of validating the content of a site. The linking is not under any form of validation control from anyone. This means that in general (there are of course always exceptions) anyone can link anything to anything else.

In any case, a site is comparable to a physical place, to an institution or quite simply a place where special knowledge is divulged. When I have investigated a random number of the hits in our search, I have seen that the general pattern seems to be that the sites of interest are connected to institutions where the subject Outdoor education is in focus. A typical example beside Neill's Center would be the Unity College of Maine (contact-person

Steve Guthrie) which presents itself on Internet as “America’s Environmental College”, although no special focus on special needs.

When I have looked more closely on the Internet at the sources which present themselves as working with outdoor education and disability questions, I find a few clearly identifiable research sources at the University of New Hampshire (Deb Sugarman, James Neill & al), The University of Strathclyde (Gilbert Mc Kay), The Portland State University (Paula Stanovich & al) and the Sea of Dreams Foundation and its Ocean of Possibilities Programme. If we focus a little deeper on these four institutions, we can see that Strathclyde and Portland are the only places where there is mentioned any research regarding mentally disabled persons and Outdoor Education. At Strathclyde the doctoral studies of Joseph Gibson under the title – Climbing to communicate: outdoor education for deaf-blind adults with intellectual disabilities (no direct reference given) – is the concrete example mentioned as regards outdoor education. Sugarman’s work is focusing on the elderly and the Sea of Dreams Foundation focuses on students within certain subject areas (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – STEM) at university and how to overcome certain disabilities in their academic programmes. Mental disability is not mentioned as one of the areas they are working in.

There is however another site which should be mentioned since it is described as a European venture – The European Institute for Outdoor Adventure Education and Experience of Education. At their site they describe some general efforts and an intended future project. However, their site does not seem to be updated for a couple of years so, once again we have a problem of validating the information. A final web-reference worth mentioning is the study supported by the American Camping Association of

Inclusive Outdoor Programs 1997-2000 which is one of the very rare studies, trying to cover activities over the whole spectrum and with a clear disability content.

In the presentations of the persons and the institutions and the projects etc, the sites also present some literature information. For the researchers at the universities there are CV:s with literature references and similar lists are connected to project information. It is safe to say that there is a certain validation to be found in that type of information, even though scientific references from the presented authors/researchers would be found through traditional databases. For the future work of the project, however, it might be valuable to return to these centres for a deeper study of their general work on outdoor education. The problem with their literature references, however, is the fact that even though their sites are classified with the concept outdoor education and even though we find them with our search, the hit does not necessarily say anything about the content of the literature references. I have included only one literature reference in this report from my Internet study since I do not find the rest of the references validated, or close enough to the aim of this report.

Another interesting fact is that all those institutions mention their scientific profile and that they stress the fact that they use phenomenological research methods. It is also worth mentioning that Portland State University mentions on their site-presentation a specific focus on inclusion.

To conclude, Internet has been used as a support but even though the volume of information is so enormous, the value of the information, from a research point of view is un-proportionally low.

Reflections on ERIC

(Recent search 9.1.06)

Education 918.857 ref

Outdoor 7.207 ref

Young 51.745 ref

Education young 38.778 ref

Education disability 7.967 ref

(Special Education 84.641 ref)

Young Disability 842 ref

Adult disability 1.941 ref

Outdoor young 498 ref

Outdoor adult 520 ref

Outdoor elderly 15 ref

Outdoor Education 6.820 ref

Outdoor education adult 472 ref

Outdoor education young 472 ref

Outdoor education Elderly 9 ref

Outdoor Disability 33 ref

Outdoor education Disability 29 ref

Outdoor Education Disability young 1 ref

When we look at the very narrow and compact search in ERIC, we can clearly see from the numbers some interesting facts. First of all. The references dealing with outdoor education do not seem to be age-specific at all. If we look at the number of references found on the keyword education, and compare it to the combination Education and young we can suspect that age might not be a focus of the database at all, at least not in the general

sense that we talk about young, adult or old persons. We can also see that outdoor education seems to constitute about 0,6% of all references found with the keyword education. A slightly higher figure gives us the number of educational references connected to disability. I added a search on Special Education and the difference between the number of hits on that keyword in comparison with the small number of references on Disability tells us that Special education and disability is not a common field.

An odd coincidence is that we have exactly the same number of references for young and adult in connection with outdoor education. We are talking about small and fairly marginal groups according to the references and the final and essential searches Outdoor Education Disability and the additional keyword Young gives us a very limited number of references which I will discuss separately below.

The validity and the reliability of ERIC and LIBRIS likewise is very high since every reference is classified according to a special centralized system and the item which is fed into ERIC (or LIBRIS) is then protected by law and computer-system likewise.

Reflections on LIBRIS

(Recent search 9.1.06)

Education 62749 ref

Outdoor 703 ref

Young 10663 ref

Education Young 559 ref

Education Disability 148 ref

Young Disability 13 ref

Adult Disability 15 ref

Outdoor Young 5 ref

Outdoor Adult 0 ref

Outdoor Education 112 ref

Outdoor Education adult 0 ref

Outdoor Education Young 4 ref - 3 for children

Outdoor Education Disability 1 ref

Utomhuspedagogik (Outdoor education) 99 ref

Utomhuspedagogik ung(dom) (Outdoor Education Young)0 ref

I added two Swedish keywords as a comparison to see if there was any variation in comparison with the English keywords but the results are almost identical. Otherwise we have a similar pattern regarding age concepts, they are not widely used and the references can be seen as age neutral. The only reference found which focussed on disability in connection with Outdoor education was a practical guide, a sort of “cookbook” for doing outdoor education (Cooper, 1998). This type of reference was very typical for the larger number of references found in both databases, not so much analytical research oriented books or papers as descriptive guide-books, mostly for work with children. The abovementioned book will be the only one mentioned in my report as representative of a large number of books which might be of interest to those interested in guide-books.

Discussion

I base this discussion on the number of hits from ERIC and LIBRIS based upon the keyword combination OUTDOOR EDUCATION DISABILITY, a total number of 30 hits. I have looked at them more carefully to establish if they fulfil the obligation to present (some aspect of) research on young people. This means that only a limited number of those 30 references will be mentioned or presented in this report. I will also discuss some of the information found on Internet which supports this other information. I also added four references which were found also in LIBRIS among the general OUTDOOR EDUCATION references, but produced within the earlier European project mentioned above, the forerunner to LIM. After careful consideration, I have found that only five from LIBRIS and five from ERIC will be included, and then one of the references is a journal which is worth mentioning because it is a special journal for Outdoor Education.

Almost none of the references is peer reviewed which is an instrument of research validation only for articles in journals.

On the margins of my search I find a few reports focussing on emotional, social or mental problems and outdoor activities created to work with these. However, they are strictly focussed on children and adolescents or in some cases elderly (Tranter, 1991) and fall out of the intent of this report. In general, if there is an age focus in the hits I have found, it tends to be directed more towards the younger age groups than towards young people or adults.

Overall, the one result which is evident from this study is the fact that there is no result in the sense that there is almost no research reported at all through the general channels of information, that is, peer reviewed journals. What I have found in the databases is instead a small number of reports which are described by their authors as research reports and also two knowledge studies of a similar type to this one and conference reports.

The first of the two knowledge studies or surveys is the one by Rickinson & al (2004). That I found only on Internet through the Wilderdom-site where it was described with the following words:

The best outdoor learning research review produced to date by a federal education agency. Reviews 150 outdoor learning research studies between 1993-2003 and presents a succinct 2000-word online summary. Focuses on primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors. Outdoor learning studies are categorized as focusing on field work, outdoor adventure, and school grounds/community programs. Finds that there is generally good support that outdoor learning has positive impacts on school students. Makes useful recommendations for theory/research, policy and practice.

The online summary mentions briefly that there is information available on different goal-groups, not focussing to any extent on individuals or groups with disabilities. It is evident that it is focussing on activities in the USA and that information from the rest of the world is not available.

The second knowledge study was written in Sweden by Szczepanski (1994) and is limited to Scandinavia and the Northern Europe with some additional information from the rest off the world. Both of these studies are of a certain basic interest to our work but slightly off the track, even though the Swedish

study has been used as one of the starting points for the Kinda-project (see above; Brodin & Hellstrand, 2006).

On activities

I have found some information of interest mainly on conferences from Australia, Europe and USA. Once again, the validity of the information is hard to estimate since the information is found in so different places. For instance, information on the International Outdoor Education Research Conference (2004) at La Trobe University is not available through ERIC even though it is a research conference, only through Internet. La Trobe University appears in several links on Internet but is harder to find with the same apparent ease in ERIC.

Activities like projects and courses are not presented as I find them in a research context and therefore they will not be presented here.

The same pattern can be seen for the second conference I have noticed, Outdoors, adventure and experiential learning : a wreath of European concepts : (2000).

Another hit in ERIC was the International Conference on Outdoor Recreation (Rademacher & Watters, 1991) where there were several papers on disability and inclusion presented. The proceedings included a total of 16 papers, and the information was found in ERIC. However, the single papers were not presented individually in the database, just as part of the ERIC-abstract. The one paper which would be of some interest in my report would be one written by A. Adler, entitled "Special Populations Outdoor Pursuits: Tapping the Ability in Disability".

The final conference I want to mention is Coalition for Education in the Outdoors Biennial Research Symposium Proceedings (Stringer, Allison, McAvoy, Young & Anderson, 2000). This conference or symposium report contains conference papers and abstracts of papers concerned with research into the processes and outcomes of outdoor and adventure education and it is the second one of the conferences I mention that has the word “research” in the title.

There are more conferences described on the Internet and especially through links from Wilderdom.com. However, of the four I mention, three are reported in ERIC and the fourth one contain the word “research” and can be seen as representative for information found on Internet.

On resources

Resources is a very general term and a bit off the track for this report. I have included it to clarify the difficulties connected with finding reliable data on research and that it might be necessary to look in several directions to find research in different stages, since the freshness of the field, from a research point of view, indicates that there probably is a growing awareness in many different places of the necessity to focus on research that will be possible to validate. Probably the centres and sites, especially those who are connected directly to a university, might be the “birthplaces” of such research in the not too distant future.

James Neill and his centre and site (Wilderdom.com) has already been mentioned as the most evident centre of information on Outdoor Education and Learning on the Internet. It is important to mention that the centre is located at a physical place and not only on the Internet, a conclusion which

is all too easily drawn for many Internet-searchers when they encounter sites of interest – where do we find a physical or geographical “place” for all this information. In the case of Neill, that place is New Hampshire University in USA and at that university there are other researchers as well, including Deb Sugarman whose writings can be found on Internet, where, incidentally, it is not easy to find writings by Neill himself. Sugarman is, however, focusing mostly on the problems of elderly with one interesting exception. She has made a study on the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its effects on outdoor education which has relevance to any study on our subject (1993). The abstract in Eric is worth quoting in its entirety:

The Americans with Disabilities Act demands a proactive approach in developing effective and integrated adventure education programs for the disabled. Programs cannot exclude qualified disabled individuals; modified participation is a choice, not a requirement; and staff must work toward removing physical barriers and providing reasonable accommodations for disabled participants. (LP)

Strathclyde University through professor MacKay might offer some research work in the future through one of the doctoral students and is worth mentioning also because it focuses on disability questions and inclusion which might grow into something in the future. I have found one report (MacKay, 2002) which has its focus on inclusion and disability, but not specifically on outdoor education.

In Sweden there is a group at Linköping University which did some basic studies a decade ago (Szczepanski, 1994). They have been involved in one European research project but have not published extensively during the years.

Finally, it might be of interest to mention the Sea of Dreams organization since it aims for inclusion in its courses, not as an example of research but as an example of many separate efforts over the world to include young persons with disabilities into a course and a developmental process.

On Future Research

The partners in our project of course represent a large volume of experiences, however not presented in any research context. We expect that we will be able to make some studies of present work during the project and to present it in the form of research reports. For future research activities in our project I think that there are certain themes where we could study more in detail how outdoor education and learning functions in our own efforts. The themes are inspired by the keywords mentioned earlier in the report:

- nature as learning place
- developing your body and mind and emotions through new experiences
- widening your awareness and abilities
- new ways of learning through your whole body
- reaching balance between all parts of the outdoor environment

If we are to reach a deeper understanding of our goal group, we have to study carefully their special needs. There is a lot of research data available on young persons or adults with intellectual disabilities in databases like

ERIC, which offers 678 references from the keyword combination YOUNG ADULT MENTAL RETARDATION (2006-01-12). Just to give two examples of studies which easily could be combined with outdoor education studies I would like to mention that Kraemer & al (1003) did a study on the quality of life for young persons on their road from school to work and that they found that individuals with jobs had higher levels of quality in life. Just to make studies on quality of life in relation to outdoor education would probably offer very interesting data.

Secondly, Ittenbach & al made a study already a decade ago (1993) into factors that alleviate community integration and found that five identifiable variables contributed substantially to the adjustment, among them number of daytime activities and number of limiting factors.

For Sweden it is remarkable that we do not have any real research into the educational work at the so called folk high schools where tens of thousands of young persons spend shorter or longer periods of their lives at this very important period of transition. It is even so more important since the folk high schools offer a large number of courses to persons with different types of disabilities, among them intellectual disabilities. This type of school has its counterpart in other countries and it is seemingly the same case there that no real research is available. There has only been one more extensive report written on these types of courses (Berndtsson, 2005) which in Swedish are called “anpassningskurser” (Adaptation-courses).

The folk high schools in their turn are parts of a very large educational or rather tutorial network in Sweden and also in the other Scandinavian countries where the project-leaders of the LIM-project belong. In other words we could stress that the LIM-project itself is one off the very few

projects where research is involved directly into the so called folk tuition network which makes the project extra important.

Conclusion

According to James Neill there is a lot of research going on about outdoor education and:

.... researchers have sought to understand:

- *the psychological, educational, and therapeutic effects of outdoor education programs on participants*
- *the effects of outdoor education programs on classrooms, schools, and communities*
- *the possible role of various causal factors (such as the facilitation methods used by an instructor) in influencing participants' outcomes*
- *the role of the natural environment in outdoor education experiences*
- *the role of particular activities or processes in influencing people's outdoor education experiences (www.Wilderdom.com)*

These statements offer a sort of baselines to general research in the field and it should be expected that we would encounter a lot of literature describing that research. However, as we have seen in the literature search in both our reports, there exist relatively few research reports on outdoor education and almost nothing at all in connection with disability and the age group of this report.

One cannot help but notice that the concept “research” is used widely on the Internet links. Still, we find very little information through other channels on this research in the form of literature and mainly then the peer-reviewed article or the accredited research report. There are probably many

explanations. One could simply be that the researchers involved at different universities etc do not have the time or the resources to write. Another reason might be that the research has not reached a stage where it is possible to write a valid research report or to get it published. A third reason might be that the texts on Internet and the texts in ERIC uses different intent in the concept research. A fourth reason might be that the research field is to unknown to make it accepted in a research journal. The only specific journal - Journal of outdoor education – is published by a University but not necessarily to be called a research journal with high ranking on the international ranking scale. A fifth reason might be that those working with research approach in this field do not consider themselves as very academic in the traditional sense. This might then lead to those researchers presenting their work on Internet since they have decided that they choose to publish on Internet and not through the old established research channels. The slightly anarchistic freedom of Internet in its open structures and unending possibilities to make yourself seen on your own ground so to say, might be tempting.

We have to reflect deeply about this and how to initiate activities for a group which is so very important because they find themselves in a very important stage of transition. Hopefully, this small report will add to this in some small way.

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