Adventure Education And Environmental Education In A High School Teaching Environment

Introduction

In this essay, I will be explaining and discussing two different approaches to outdoor learning. The first form of outdoor learning will be adventure education, and the second form will be environmental education. Outdoor education will also be briefly covered in the first stages of this essay to introduce the two types of outdoor learning. Later in the essay, I will demonstrate how adventure education and environmental education can be implemented in a high school teaching environment. Labelling the respective strengths and weaknesses of both forms of outdoor learning. Then to finally explain my thoughts on which area would be better suited for a career in high school physical education.

Outdoor Education

Outdoor education is a form of outdoor learning that obeys the experiential viewpoint of learning by participating (Priest & Grass, 2005). This type of education usually takes place in the outdoor natural environment, but not exclusively (Priest et al., 2005). Some would suggest that the purpose of outdoor education helps promote self-sufficient learning, free-thinking, and self-supporting problem solving (Priest, 1986). The emphasis on learning within outdoor education is based on four relationships regarding people and natural resources (Priest et al., 2005). These four relationships include interpersonal, intrapersonal, ecosystemic and ekistic (Priest, 1986). The interpersonal relationship relates to interactions between people; how they work together, converse, and trust each other during social group experiences (Priest, 1986). The concept of intrapersonal relationships refers to an individual's relationship with themselves; their independence level, their concept, and their ability to identify personal strengths and limitations (Priest, 1986). Ecosystemic relationships refer to the ecosystem and how it all works; how energy is conducted through a food web, how nature recovers and heals from natural or human-influenced disasters, and how some organisms depend on each other for survival (Priest, 1986). Lastly, ekistic relationships are the interaction between people and the natural environment around them; the impact humans may have on natural resources that could affect the quality of the land, leading to the quality of life in society (Priest, 1986). According to Priest and Grass (1997), outdoor education is comprised of two primary education approaches: adventure education and environmental education (Martin, Cashel, Wagstaff & Breunig, 2006). Truly functional outdoor education incorporates all four of the relationships explained across both adventure education and environmental education (Priest et al., 2005).

Adventure Education

Adventure education can be defined as a form of learning that uses adventurous outdoor activities that offer a group or an individual with an exciting task to complete (Priest et al., 2005). Some of these activities include outdoor pursuits, ropes courses and initiative games (Priest et al., 2005). These compelling outdoor tasks can require group problem solving, which influences the individual to engage in decision making, personal judgement, teamwork, communication and

trust (Priest et al., 2005). It can also require personal challenges like testing capability against social, mental, or physical hazards (Priest et al., 2005). These types of tasks allow adventure education to follow the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014). A major benefit of providing adventure education is the increase in one's self-confidence by using the challenges of outdoor living and travel (Martin et al., 2006). Another benefit is it encourages participants to pursue and maintain an active, healthy lifestyle (Martin et al., 2006). It also encourages individuals to work more effectively in groups by requiring them to communicate, problem solve and resolve conflict if it may arise (Martin et al., 2006). These benefits support the idea that adventure education can be used for personal growth and that the skills individuals learn can be transferred to other areas of their life (Martin et al., 2006). However, to achieve this effect through adventure education, it is crucial that the learner is open to learning and is physically able to perform tasks. (Priest et al., 2005). As well as being able to deal with any form of intense stress that may arise (Priest et al., 2005). This can be seen as a potential limitation regarding the value of adventure education if the participant cannot meet these requirements.

Environmental Education

Environmental education can be defined as a form of practical education that teaches people about the environment and their relationship with the natural world (Martin et al., 2006). This entails developing an understanding of problems in natural resources management, environmental protection, and other areas that may be problematic in the field (Martin et al., 2006). The purpose of this teaching is to ideally create ecological or environmentally literate members of society (Martin et al., 2006). As opposed to adventure education, environmental education is associated with both ecosystemic and ekistic relationships (Martin et al, 2006). Learning within these relationships promotes a wide range of benefits to environmental learning. These benefits include awareness and sensitivity to the environment and environmental challenges, knowledge, and understanding of the environment, the level of concern for the environment and the need to improve or maintain the environment's quality, as well as skills to identify and resolve environmental issues (US EPA, 2020). More specifically, environmental education focuses on enhancing society's ecological knowledge to encourage sustainable actions (Bywater, 2014). An example of this encouragement was the use of a PAR project (Participatory-Action-Research) conducted by Krista Bywater, a sociology professor at Muhlenberg College, Allentown (Bywater, 2014). This project is best described as a study in communities that highlights participation in action (Bywater, 2014). The study focused on bottled water consumption and was used to determine whether participatory action research would improve environmental knowledge and motivate individuals to pursue more environmentally friendly practices in their community (Bywater, 2014). After the project was completed it was evident that the project complemented the goals of environmental education as it taught student researchers to develop; ecological understanding, investigational and evaluative skill, conceptual awareness, and action skills, which endorse pro-environmental awareness and behaviours (Bywater, 2014). Despite this learning being of significant value to the environment, environmental education has not yet found evidence to suggest that this form of education improves or maintains an individual's health or well-being (Maller, 2004). According to Maller (2004), there is a large amount of potential for environmental education to generate positive health and well-being outcomes (Maller, 2004). However, there are too many significant gaps in current knowledge to determine whether it does promote these types of benefits (Maller, 2004).

Compare & Contrast

The career path I am choosing regarding the future teaching context of this assignment is a secondary physical education teacher. I believe adventure education and environmental education support this future teaching context as they both involve an educational and developmental context to learning (Priest et al., 2005). The educational context refers to understanding concepts, generating awareness and the overall aim is to alter the way people think (Priest et al., 2005). Whereas the developmental context promotes improving functional behaviours, enhancing interaction in different environments, and learning new behaviours to apply to a new situation (Priest et al., 2005). Both of these categories are crucial to the academic and personal growth of secondary students. As a physical education teacher, the use of adventure education would be valuable as it promotes physical learning in an adventure setting. Through movement and outdoor activities, students would gain motor skills and personal fitness, as well as self-confidence, communication skills in a fun and supportive environment (Waldman, 2020). In contrast, I believe that environmental education focuses on more of an academic style of learning rather than a physical experience. Regardless of it being an outdoor activity, the aim is to gain knowledge and thought on environmental issues rather than develop personal physical skills.

Conclusion

After examining both the respected strengths and weaknesses of adventure education and environmental education. I have concluded that adventure education would be a more applicable approach when working as a secondary physical education teacher. Although both forms of outdoor learning can be implemented in this profession, adventure education offers both the physical and mental skills required to develop students in that particular subject. Whereas, environmental education does not quite offer the same physical and mental benefits that adventure education offers. Therefore making adventure education the more applicable option.