

Working title:

Expeditioning in Local Authority Residential Outdoor Education Centres: a Scottish Perspective

Abstract:

The research aims of this project are:

- To investigate if there has been a decline in the provision of expeditioning/journeying activities within the last fifteen years in Local Authority Residential Outdoor Education Centres in Scotland.
- If a decline has occurred why is this the case?

Chapter 1:**Introduction / Rationale**

There are a number of valuable reasons why a research project of this nature should focus on the provision of expeditioning/journeying type activities in local authority outdoor education centres in Scotland. I have completed academic programmes of study on outdoor education in Scottish universities. I now work in Scotland, in the outdoor education field. For these reasons I have a vested interest in research on outdoor education provision in Scotland. Scotland has a rich history of outdoor education. Scottish outdoor education was shaped by early philosophies. Higgins (2002) notes the different influences that have helped to develop the provision of outdoor education in Scotland. In Scotland, educationalists like Sir Patrick Geddes and more recently Kurt Hahn have influenced outdoor education by their philosophies. Over the last century Scottish provision of outdoor education has developed from informal outdoor activities to formalised outdoor education. In 1944 the Education Act stated that there was value in the direct experience of the outdoors. One result of this was local authorities establishing “camps”. Camps provide children time to extend their normal school work in a rural setting. Higgins (2002) notes during the 1960s and 70s many local authorities purchased and converted old mansions that were adapted and acted as a base from which outdoor education activities could occur. These were some of the first outdoor education centres in Scotland.

This project will focus specifically on permanently staffed residential outdoor education centres funded by local authorities. There are currently 32 Local Authorities in Scotland. In 1996 the Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education identified 15 centres of this type (In: Scottish Environmental Education Council, 1996:1). More recently Nicol (1999) noted that there are now nine local authority residential outdoor education centres, which are permanently staffed. By focusing on local authorities it will provide a geological picture of this type of provision. Most outdoor education employees are part of the bigger ‘Education’ team. Those who provide outdoor education in local authorities support and work with their education colleagues. Because of this they often work towards similar goals, for example to achieve the criteria set out by the 5-14 curriculum guidelines. It is vital that outdoor education centres are providing the right type of programme to achieve these goals. This project will investigate if outdoor education centres are using expeditions as part of their programmes to achieve their target.

Unlike commercial centres, local authority centres are partially funded by 'taxpayer's money'. Like any other local authority service outdoor education has to show that they are providing the best quality programme possible with the best value for money. This is also the case if there are programmes funded by grants like the New Opportunities Fund. Outdoor education provision is monitored both internally and externally. Inspections like 'best value reviews and HMI' achieve this. With a reduction in funding and resources, it is important that topics like this are researched, so that the cost effectiveness of the programmes and particularly expedition type activities are obvious to all - funders, educators and students.

Local authority centres offer outdoor education programmes at a reduced rate to some clients. People that live within a local authorities region can benefit from these opportunities. This results in a large amount of people participating in outdoor education programmes. I am developing Clackmannanshire's Councils outdoor education provision. Clackmannanshire is the smallest local authority in Scotland. The outdoor education service is in its infancy and consists of one person who completes both instructional and administration duties. From August 2002 to August 2003 over 800 people participated in outdoor education programmes there. Bigger local authorities with a better develop outdoor education centre deal with much higher numbers of participants. With such a large amount of participants it is important to provide them with programmes that help them to develop in a positive manner and maximise the opportunities provided.

Programmes in local authority outdoor education centres are wide and varied. This research project is interested in expedition/journeying type of activities. There are different studies that have been completed on expeditioning in outdoor education centres. Hattie, Marsh, Neil and Richard (1997) researched Outward Bound expeditioning in Australia. Expeditioning in L.E.A.s centres is generally shorter in duration than the programmes they focused on. For an expedition to be included in this research it has to fulfil two criteria;

- a.) It has to have a journeying element to it.
- b.) The duration has to be a day and night or longer.

This criteria was developed following a review of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award expedition guidelines. The guidelines provide similarities to the expeditions this research project is concerned with. Expeditions normally took place at the end of a multi-activity week. They were the climax of the week. It was the culmination of skills and planning developed by the participants during the week.

After being involved in expeditions I can see from first hand experience the benefits of participation. I am aware of the value they hold for all outdoor education programmes. Keighley (1998) believes that an expedition provides some of life's most valuable and enriching experiences. He describes the benefits of an 'adventurous journey', as being involved in such an activity can offer pupils of all ages and ability scope to widen their horizons of life, at every level. The journey will give increased awareness, new opportunities and challenges. It also provides the opportunities to travel in terms of time and space. Keighley (1998) feels that the educational benefits of establishing 'journeying' as a feature within the framework of the school curriculum is

axiomatic. The evidence above supports the argument that expeditioning type activities have benefits and can be an integral part of an outdoor education programme (this will be investigated further in the literature review). For this reason it is important to assess what the current level of provision is in Scotland.

“a great deal of anecdotal evidence together with survey results (Nicol, in prep; Higgins, in press,a) suggest that the trend in outdoor education is towards the provision of short duration, high excitement experiences of the type noted above. Furthermore outdoor activity courses at outdoor centres have become shorter in recent years, reducing the prospects of even a full week ‘apprenticeship’.” Higgins (2000)

Considering statements like the one above and through discussions with people involved in outdoor education in Scotland it has come to my attention that there appears to be a decline in expeditioning type activities in local authority outdoor education centres. Looking at different promotional material for programmes currently provided in local authority outdoor education centres confirms this to be the case. This material focuses more on multi-activity programmes. As of yet I have only anecdotal evidence to support my concern. Using a questionnaire I will gather further evidence to support this claim. During a recent discussion with an Adventure Activities Licensing inspector he was adamant that there has been a decline in this type of activity. He was responsible for inspecting the Health and Safety practices in outdoor education centres in the U.K. As part of this inspection the type of provision has to be accounted for. Following this discussion, I plan not only to research the extent of the decline in expeditions but also to the reason for this decline. If reliable and valid information can be researched on this question may be then this matter can be addressed and hopefully rectified.

The research question is a comparison of the provision between fifteen years ago and now. The reasons fifteen years was chosen is because; there is anecdotal evidence suggests there was more expeditioning before this time. In April 1996 a reorganisation took place of local authorities and how they were managed, this had a direct effect on outdoor education centres and their funding. There has also been an introduction of agencies like Adventure Activities Licensing Authority, which affect provision.

On completing this research project I will develop my research skills. To collect the information I will use a questionnaire. Using this specific research method will develop my technique on how to design and develop a questionnaire. This project will provide me with the confidence to complete more research in the future.

Another good reason for completing this project is because it will aid my professional development. It will provide me with the opportunity to read up to date information on this subject in current journals. I will contact and meet different people involved in outdoor education in Scotland. This will allow me to exchange ideas and approaches to this subject. When the project is completed it will provide me the opportunity to compare the service I am providing in Clackmannanshire to the other local authorities in Scotland. Using

the results of the research will provide me with direction, when I develop and implement future outdoor programmes.

Chapter 2:

Literature in the Area of the Study:

After completing an initial review of the literature for this proposal several themes became apparent. Therefore the literature review will be divided into three sections. This will provide ease of reading and allow for the most frequent themes to be dealt with adequately.

- **Section one** will review the literature that makes reference to the delivery of expeditioning type activities in local authority outdoor education centres.
- **Section two** will review the literature academics have completed on the changing nature of outdoor provision. In addition to this it highlights some of the reasons this change has occurred.
- **Section three** will review the literature that highlights the benefits for participants that are involved in long duration activities like expeditions.

Section 1:

This Section focuses on the development of expeditioning type activities in local authority outdoor education centres. A Department of Education and Science report (1983) titled 'Learning out of doors – An HMI survey of outdoor education and short stay residential experience' noted that from 1945-60's the Board (and subsequently the Ministry) of Education produced pamphlets to help to promote organised camping in schools. One pamphlet, which appeared in 1954, was entitled 'Mobile Camping'. In 1963 the Newson Report, 'Half Our Future' drew attention to the value that camps, expeditions and residential course might hold for people. It is evident that there was support by education departments at national and local level for expeditioning type activities at this time.

Nicol (2002) has compiled a detailed history of the development of outdoor education in Scotland. He notes expeditioning type activities play a substantial role in the early introduction of outdoor education in Scotland. There are themes of expeditioning in the early stages of the Outward Bound movement. Although not financed by a local authority, Outward Bound, did influence other outdoor education centres that local authorities opened. Some key people with experience in Outward Bound programmes went to work in local authority centres.

Nicol (2002) reports Scotland's first local authority centre was actually called Benmore Adventure and Expedition Centre (1969-75). Through personal communication with Roger Mansfield (previous principal at Benmore) Nicol (2002) noted that courses at Benmore followed a very similar format to the Outward Bound courses. They were twelve-day programmes which were structured towards a final expedition. From the initial development of 'formal' outdoor education course there is evidence of expeditioning taking place in local authority centres.

From this point there appears to be little research completed specifically on expeditioning type activities in local authority centres in Scotland. However Cheesmond and Yates (1979) completed a research report on the Outdoor Education Programme in Lothian Region Secondary Schools – 1978/79. In

this document it is noted that a number of expedition type activities were taking place. These activities were facilitated both in schools and local authority outdoor education centres in the Lothian region.

The report notes the Cairngorm tragedy of mid November 1971. This expedition resulted in the death of six students. A male instructor attached to a Lothian high school led it. After the public enquiry a number of recommendations were made, one being;

“Certified teachers should accompany pupils to outdoor centres. Expeditions should then be led by fully qualified and long-experienced instructors”
(Cheesmond and Yates 1979pg14)

This was recognition of the capabilities of instructors at outdoor centres who ran expeditions safely.

The Countryside Commission for Scotland produced two reports (1970, updated in 1983) entitled ‘Outdoor Education Centres in Scotland’. The aim of these reports was to try and gauge the variety and level of provision of outdoor education centres in Scotland. This report provides various details on local authority centres, but nothing specifically on expeditioning type activities. The Department of Education and Science report (1983, discussed earlier) was conducted by HM Inspectors who made a series of visits to local education authority short stay centres. They produced some interesting findings, it was possible in the longer courses to include an expedition with a camp or stay in a mountain hut. They did observe a three-day hill and mountain walking expedition that involved secondary school boys. From this report it can be ascertained that expeditioning type activities were taking place in the early 1980s in local authority outdoor education centres in the U.K. Because of the nature of the report it is not possible to be specific as to the exact location of the centres the programmes were occurring in or even how often they were occurring.

Nicol (1999) produce research specifically on Scottish local authority residential outdoor centres. The survey did not get specific information on the frequency of expedition type activities. However it did note there had been a reduction in local authority outdoor education centres. He recognised that there are only 9 permanently staffed local authority residential outdoor education centres in Scotland. This is important information as they are the target group of this research piece. With a reduction in the number of this type of centre, it could be argued that there would be a reduction in the provision of this type of activity.

Section 2:

Over the last decade a number of academics have commented on the change in the nature of outdoor education programmes. They have reported that outdoor education programmes in local authority centres have significantly decreased in duration and changed the type of programme provided. Participants who are now spending less time in centres and want to do a greater range of activities could see a reduction in the amount of expeditioning type activities taking place. Noble (1995) a warden at a local authority centre comments;

“One was allowed to offer a single activity without feeling guilty that a chocolate box selection of other taster activities should also be available.”(Noble 1995,pg20)

He notes in the 70s he ran eight-day courses, and then this reduced to seven days with an option of five days. This was further reduced to 48hrs in the 80s; he believes this was less time than one needs for a modest camping trip.

Becker (1996) voices similar concerns believing there is a trend towards short high-intensity taster courses or ‘excitement kits’. Loynes (?) agrees by saying “The standard programme shifted from one that encouraged a progressive development of skills leading to the undertaking of a self reliant journey on to a series of taster of each activity, the multi-activity programme”. He takes this argument further as he refers to the development as ‘Mc Donaldise Adventure and Adventure in a Bun’. He feels that activities like ropes courses are an excellent example of this change. This is resulting in a growth of what he refers to as ‘closed environment facilities’ – all activities on site and using manmade constructions. If all activities are on site than an expedition cannot occur. He comments that no local authority centre in the ‘area’ (English Lake District) camps any more. Higgins (2002) agrees that a change has occurred. He feels there has been a shift from ‘experiential education to recreation’ in formal outdoor education. There is a general feeling that in local authority outdoor education centres changes in the programme where occurring. Changes, which result in the decrease of long duration, time consuming activities like expeditions.

There are different reasons for this change in provision to have occurred. Noble (1995) reports that difficulties in raising money for fees and pressure on teacher’s time lead to the reduction to the duration of courses. Loynes (?) believes the four factors that have been dominant in the evolution of outdoor education in the last fifteen years are funding, commercialisation, bureaucratisation and safety. He believes because of the reduction in funding (similar time as Hunt Report, In Search of Adventure) provision has had ‘profound’ changes. Providers almost all charge a commercial rate and often adopted commercial providers practice in order to complete. “The activity base has shifted again so that, for example, few centres now offer camping as an activity” (Loynes ?)

Nicol (2002) believes it is financial rather than curricular issues, which dominate the changes in provision from the 1980s to 1990s. He notes a research report (1995) commissioned in Wales. It found as a result of financial pressure local authority centres, are seeking to diversify their activities in order to generate more income. These arguments present some of the different reasons/pressure that resulted in the evolution of outdoor education provision in local authority centres in the UK. This evolution is resulting in the reduction of activities like expeditioning.

Section 3:

This section is concerned with the potential benefits that can be gained by participating in expeditioning/ journeying type activities in local authority outdoor education centres.

“The involvement of young people in outdoor adventure activities is now recognised as offering valuable experiences which bring them a range of

personnel and social, as well as other benefits” (Barret and Greenaway 1995 pg1)

As can be seen by the above statement outdoor adventure activities have the potential to provide benefits for young people. Many other authors agree with Barret and Greenaway (1995) beliefs that benefits can be gained. Higgins (1997) argues the case for outdoor education for young people in the article titled “Why Educate Out of Doors?” Similarly Gair (1997) and Keighly (1998) support these arguments, and believe there are benefits for participants in outdoor education programmes. This list is not exhaustive list and there are many other authors that support the belief that outdoor education provides benefits for its participants.

One of the activities participants might complete during an outdoor education programme is an expedition or adventurous journey. Because expeditioning activities are generally longer in duration than taster sessions there is more potential for a participant to develop. This development could either be positive or negative depending on the circumstances.

After an initial literature review there appears to be little specifically written on short expeditions (duration of two days, one night) in local authority outdoor education centres. However there are substantial amounts written on longer-term expeditions in countries like America and Australia. Kaplan and Talbot (1983) researched the Psychological Benefits of a Wilderness Experience. Hattie, Marsh, Neil and Richards (1997) researched Outward Bound expeditions that ‘Make a Lasting Difference’. Brand (2001) completed a study on ‘The Effects of a Wilderness-Enhanced Programme on Behaviour-Disordered Adolescents’. In each of these studies the authors noted that participants had benefited positively in some way from their expedition experiences. There are significant differences between this type of expeditions and the expeditions this research project is concerned with. Two major differences are the duration and the location of the expedition. The above research is on long duration, (seven days plus) journeying through wilderness areas.

Bronze level expeditions in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme are more closely matched to those that are provided in a local authority outdoor education centre. The duration and location of this type of expedition has similarities. There has been research completed on the benefits of this type of expedition. In the Duke of Edinburgh expedition guide Keay (1996) lists nine opportunities from which young people might benefit from if they participant in the expedition section of the award.

Gibbs and Bunyan (1997) completed research that highlighted self-esteem could be developed through the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Participants who completed the expedition section achieved this. It must be noted that Gibbs and Bunyan (1997) feel that this only occurs if the participant is involved in the full expedition section (planning) and not just the expedition activity. Would this level of planning / ownership take place in expeditions in local authority outdoor education centres?

Keighly (1998) devotes a chapter to ‘The Value and Potential of Adventurous Journeys at Key Stages 3 and 4’ in his book ‘Learning Through First Hand Experience Out of Doors’. He argues the relevance of this type of outdoor activity in the National Curriculum.

“Adventurous journeys also offer opportunities, possibly unrivalled in any other sphere of life, for people to work as a member of a team, where each person becomes, to some degree, dependent upon other colleagues in playing their part in working towards the successful outcome of the venture”

(Keighly 1998 pg 97)

Keighly (1998) believes for the most beneficial effect journeys should be at least thirty-six hours.

Ames (1992) has completed psychological studies of classroom learning. These findings can inform practitioners in the outdoor education field. She researched class motivation in relation to effort and learning. She has highlighted teaching techniques and class activities that result in higher levels of motivation and participation from students.

Rubens (1999) has used this research in an outdoor education context. He identifies outdoor activities as having a ‘broad or narrow view of adventure’. He developed criteria for broad and narrow activities. Expeditioning fits the criteria of a broad activity. Rubens (1999) believes if an outdoor programme is made up of entirely of high thrills, low effort, and short time scale activities with little responsibilities (narrow activities) then the education value must be questioned.

Higgins (2000) notes there are advocates of such an approach. For example Orr (1996) promotes the value of ‘slow knowledge’, Hodgkins (1986) believes in the notion of the importance of effort, failure and above all ‘apprentices’. Expeditioning activities provide opportunities for this type of learning to occur and that is one of the major benefits for participants.

Chapter 3:

Research Design and Methods:

The aim of this research project is to assess if there has been a decline in expeditions in Scottish local authority outdoor education centres within the past fifteen years. It will also assess if there is a decline, why this decline has occurred? A research method that is suitable to complete both of these tasks will be required.

The Participants:

Because of the nature of information required the participants must:

- Be involved in a Local Authority Outdoor Education Centre in Scotland.
- Have knowledge or access to records of the past and current outdoor education programming, in particular the amount of expeditioning activities completed.
- Be accessible.
- It would be of huge benefit if the group were forthcoming with the required information. This issue will be discussed in the methods section.

Considering the above criteria, the potential target group is Managers of Local Authority Residential Outdoor Education Centres. They should be aware of the provision they provide. If they have not been involved in the centre they manage for fifteen years they can look at past records, or involve staff that have been there longer.

My concern with using this target group is that I do not have a contact name and address for each outdoor education centre manager. It might take a considerable amount of time for me to target the right person. In an attempt to improve the process, I will use resources like the A.A.L.A. and the Scottish Executive web site. I will use literature like Nicol's (1999) article – a survey of Scottish centres. I can contact local authorities for guidance on the target group. These will provide me with the contact details I require.

The Method:

I have provisionally decided to use a questionnaire to research my topic. I have considered other options like interviews, observation, and documentation. I think a questionnaire has advantages for this type of project over different research methods because:

- Information will be more uniform and easier to quantify.
- I can post or email it to many different locations. This is suitable because the project focuses on all of Scotland.
- The target group can complete the questionnaire in their own time and at their own pace independent of my direction.
- It will not involve a great amount of face-to-face time like interviews or observations.
- Because the research project is based on a measurable activity, the questionnaire is a good tool. It can be completed using past records or opinion of past provision.
- Nicol (1999) used this target group for his research. The questionnaire provided a good response.

Using a questionnaire can also present problems;

- Participants do not complete it.
- Not collecting the right information.

I will consider the ethics of such a research method. I will reassure the participants that anonymity will be kept and all information will only be used just for this project. They then should feel confident to answer questions openly and honestly. This should provide greater reliability. I will keep the questionnaire short so participants don't feel overburdened with it.

In an attempt to achieve high levels of reliability and validity, I will develop the questionnaire over time; I will pilot it with different target groups before completing a final draft. I will attach a cover letter that will give detailed instructions on how to complete it and I will provide an explanation of any key words used.

The results found from the questionnaire will be compared and contrasted with the literature reviewed.

Timetable for the Dissertation:

To be completed

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings (To be completed)

Chapter 5: Discussion and Analysis (To be completed)

Chapter 6: Conclusion (To be completed)

Chapter 7: References:

Hawker, S. (1996) *The Little Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus Oxford*: Oxford University Press

Hattie, J., Marsh, H., Neil, J. and Richards, G. (1997). *Adventure Education and Outward Bound: Out of Class Experiences that make a Lasting Difference*. *Review of Educational Research*, 67(1), 43-87

Cheesmond, J. (1979). *A research report of the outdoor education programmes in Lothian Region secondary schools, 1978/1979*. Edinburgh: Lothian Region and Dunfermline College of Education.

Nicol, R., (1999). Scottish Decline – A survey of Scottish Outdoor Centres. *Horizons* 6,14-16

Keighley, P. (1998) *Learning Through First Hand Experience Out of Doors* Cumbria:N.A.O.E.

Scottish Environmental Education Council. (1996) *Outdoor Education: Issues and Priorities*. Stirling: Scottish Environmental Education Council.

Chapter 8: Appendices