

Czech research in outdoor experiential education

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade there has been limited publication in journals in the outdoor experiential education field of non-English-language perspectives (Thomas, Allison, & Potter, 2009), although there has been acknowledgement of non-English-language outdoor terminology (Turčová, Martin, & Neuman, 2005). The indigenous nature of the Czech turistika activities (Martin, Turčová, & Neuman, 2007) and the dramaturgy methods of creative course design have also attracted recent attention (Kudláček, Bocarro, Jirásek & Hanuš, 2009; Martin, Franc & Zounková, 2004). This paper provides an overview of Czech outdoor research over the past decade. The findings indicated that there is a need for more collaborative cross cultural (language) outdoor research to provide greater understanding of these context specific differences and theoretical perspectives.

KEY WORDS

Outdoor education, experiential learning, dramaturgy, turistika activities

INTRODUCTION

Recent analysis of journals in the outdoor experiential and adventure education field (Journal of Experiential Education, Australian Journal of Outdoor Education, Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning) indicated limited publications related to non-English perspectives (Thomas, Allison & Potter, 2009). However, over the past decade there has been increasing recognition of research published in English related to the indigenous nature of Czech turistika activities (Martin, Turčová & Neuman, 2007). The purpose of this paper is to review outdoor research undertaken in the Czech Republic over the past decade.

METHODS

Recent Czech outdoor experiential education research sources were analysed primarily from doctoral and master theses (www.theses.cz), particularly from the three biggest universities Charles University Prague, Masaryk University Brno and Palacky University Olomouc, which have specific departments and related programs of turistika, outdoor sports and outdoor education; sport studies; and recreology (leisure studies), respectively. Other sources were from Czech research journals in the field, based at different centres (e.g. Prague, Olomouc, Brno, Č. Budějovice).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preliminary findings indicate that outdoor research in

the Czech Republic has developed since the foundation of the International Mountain and Outdoor Sport conferences (Charles University, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012). These conferences have provided excellent international networking opportunities and sharing of best practice, particularly with Eastern European colleagues, however, empirical research has been limited (Baláš, Martin, Neuman & Nováková, 2012; Baláš & Nováková, 2011; Baláš, Pohanka & Vo-máčko, 2006; Neuman & Turčová, 2004; Turčová & Martin, 2009; Turčová, Bartůněk & Martin, 2007).

The Journal of Outdoor Activities (University J.E. Purkyně Ústí nad Labem, 2008), and the e-journal for theory and research Gymnos Akademos (Palacky University Olomouc, 2010) have also been developed. Most studies presented are inspired by foreign (English language) theories and methods. The number of studies discussing the influence of *zážitková pedagogika* has increased, but the difference in understanding of this Czech term makes comparison with foreign terms difficult (Experiential Education, Adventure Education, Experiential Learning, Erlebnispädagogik, Abenteuerpädagogik). The findings indicate that although there are many diploma or masters theses connected to some 32 study programs about experiential education at various faculties, there have been limited PhD studies in outdoor education (Bartůněk, 2008; Turčová, 2005); see Figure 1. The following is a summary of recent research publications in English related to Czech outdoor experiential education studies.

University	PhD	Outdoor education	Experiential education	Turistika	Outdoor sports	Quan.	Qual.
UK FTVS Prague	153	2	3	2	13	18	2
MU FSS Brno	75	0	0	1	7	8	0
UP FTK Olomouc	93	0	5	0	3	2	6
Total	321	2	8	3	23	28	8

TURISTIKA ACTIVITIES

Martin, Turčová and Neuman (2007) reviewed the historical development of Czech outdoor experiences in nature in Henderson and Vikender's (2007) text on Outdoor life the Friluftsliv way. The turistika approach of Czech origin has some parallels and connections with Scandinavian Friluftsliv, for example the Norwegian adventurer, Fridtjof Nansen's (1861-1930) influence on the Czech skiing movement (Repp, 1994). These activities link to a specific style of living and ecotourism. In the Czech Republic, their development parallels that of the Sokol (physical education) movement and Turistický organisations from the middle of the 19th century, and then more formal stays in nature and informal tramping and outdoor life. They then trace the 20th century origins of the Junák (Scouting) and Foglar movements, and schools in nature (Jirásek, Martin & Turčová, 2009; Neuman, Turčová & Martin, 2007). Guth-Jarkovský (1917) originally defined the term turistika, as travelling for fun with the aim of learning about nature with the primary goal being mainly about developing aesthetic and educational experiences. Turistika activities also link to basic sport activities. The original form of turistika was on foot (walking, hiking), but more recent forms use movement for learning about nature, for example predominantly bicycles, canoes, boats and skies. According to Guth-Jarkovský (1917), scouting, focussing on movement and stays in nature connected with camping can also be included as turistika, along with combining activities using different means of transport. Mountaineering and easy forms of climbing are also part of turistika activities (Martin, et al., 2007).

OUTDOOR TERMINOLOGY

Turčová, Martin and Neuman (2005) reviewed literature related to outdoor terminology as it is used within the languages of British English and Czech, which has adopted and adapted many English language outdoor terms. Based on Turčová's (2005)

PhD thesis, where semi structured interviews were conducted with British and Czech academic experts, the research highlights problems associated with defining and explaining outdoor terms and translating the British English terms into Czech and vice versa. The findings suggest that as the outdoor field develops there is a need for more understanding of the cultural, historical, and geographical differences between concepts and terminology used in both English and non-English speaking countries, for example, as highlighted above, the specific indigenous nature of the Czech turistika activities (Turčová, Neuman & Martin, 2003, 2004).

The most commonly used term is *výchova v přírodě* (outdoor education) followed by *zážitková pedagogika*, *výchova prožitkem* (experiential education). However, the translation of *výchova v přírodě* is not directly 'outdoor education', but education in nature, which links more effectively to turistika approaches (Martin, 2008). Similarly *zážitková pedagogika* is not expressed as 'experiential education' but a more holistic, experiential or experimental pedagogy, which links to the dramaturgy approach described below.

DRAMATURGY METHODS OF COURSE DESIGN

Martin's PhD thesis (2001a) evaluated the impact of a Czech outdoor experiential education course (Martin & Leberman, 2004), which was developed using an holistic approach to course design involving dramaturgy methods (Martin, Leberman & Neill, 2002). The international 'Intertouch' courses provided a new dimension for Outward Bound (Martin, 2000), and were trialled in Australia (Martin, 2001b), New Zealand (Leberman & Martin, 2004, 2005), Singapore and Hong Kong (Martin & Abdul, 2007). Dramaturgy wave principles (Martin, 2001c) challenge all the senses and push comfort zones in many different areas (Leberman & Martin, 2002/03). Framing 'games' in fantasy allows the use of 'play' in achieving educational outcomes, and is a distinctive part of Czech outdoor experiential edu-

cation courses (Martin & Jirásek, 2008).

The dramaturgy methods were developed by Vacation School Lipnice (VSL) in the Czech Republic. VSL is a non-profit, non-governmental organization of about 100 active members—volunteers coming from all over the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and other countries. Since 1991 VSL has been a member of Outward Bound International, a global experiential education organization. The aim of the VSL courses is to provide ways for further development of the capacities of body and mind using the ‘dramaturgy’ approach to creative course design (Martin, & Krouwel, 2006), which brings together the distinct elements of art, music, drama and adventure. Courses consist of body-and-mind challenging activities, creative art workshops, discussions and reflection. Dramaturgy goes beyond traditional interpretations of adventure training, allowing for the integration and balance of physical, social, creative and reflective/emotional ‘waves’ that can change according to the needs of the group (Martin, 2011). Kudláček, Bocarro, Jirásek and Hanuš (2009) presented the development by VSL instructors of an inclusive outdoor experiential education course using dramaturgy methods by VSL instructors. The article provides specific examples of activities that can help enhance the inclusion of people with disabilities within such environments.

OTHER CZECH RESEARCH

Bartůněk (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of Czech outdoor research, as part of his PhD thesis. However, although the findings indicated significant increases in effect size for participant’s self-concept, and medium effect size for participants’ behaviour and locus of control, there were a limited number of studies to be analysed. These results compared favourably with the other outdoor education meta-analyses presented (e.g., Hattie, Marsh, Neill & Richards, 1997), but a mixed method approach that leads to a bigger picture of experiential education linked to turistika activities and the natural environment may be more appropriate to the Czech context (Bartůněk, Neuman & Martin, 2008). Zappe and Okrouhlý (2007) used examples from published studies to focus on problems of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Although there has been some emphasis on developing a theoretical structure (Higgins & Loynes, 1997; Gilbertson, Bates, McLaughlin & Ewert, 2006)

and subsequently verifying these theories, Zappe and Okrouhlý (2007) argued that generating theory peculiar to outdoor experiential education in the Czech natural environment may help contribute to the creation of more common international outdoor language.

In the international literature there has recently been some reconceptualising of outdoor adventure education and critiques of experiential learning (Brown, 2009; Fox, 2008; Ord & Leather, 2011). Ord and Leather (2011) argued that the work of John Dewey (1938) was particularly important in developing conceptualisation for outdoor education, where ‘doing’ is integrally linked to ‘meaning’ (Dewey, 1938). They indicated that more recent models of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) are too simplistic. Leberman and Martin’s (2004) study suggested an extension and revision to Kolb’s ‘Experiential Learning Cycle’ model in relation to extended time of reflection. Brown (2009) highlights the importance of the situated nature of learning in the outdoors. Further, Wattchow and Brown (2011) advocate outdoor educators developing programmes that are responsive not only to their students’ needs but to their community and developing place responsive pedagogy that enhances connections to specific contexts. These suggestions support the use of the creative dramaturgy methods in outdoor experiential education course design (Martin, 2011) and the development of theories and research that are specific to the Czech outdoor context (Zappe & Okrouhlý, 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

The field of outdoor experiential education still suffers from cultural (English and non-English) terminology misunderstanding. Research aims often provide no causal relation between activities for teaching and activities for research. There is a need for more collaborative cross cultural (language) research to provide greater understanding of these context specific differences and perspectives. To improve research, teaching and leadership in the outdoor experiential education field there is a need for more, non-English outdoor terminology understanding, collaborative team-focused cross-cultural research and evidence-based research across disciplines and contexts, for example, health (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2009).

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