

BOOK REVIEW

Adventure For Life: Perspectives On Issues In Experiential Education

Edited by Timo Lehtonen

Reviewed By Martin Ringer

Adventure For Life is refreshingly different from 'mainstream' experiential education literature that is available in the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand. The book is in English but is published in Finland and is written by Finnish writers with one German contribution. I loved the book. Most chapters are written in an engaging style that leaves plenty of room for the reader to make his or her own decisions: "Today experiential pedagogy and adventure education are in vogue, both for the good and for the bad. The goal of this book is neither to define nor to limit either but merely to examine phenomena related to them from many different points of view." (pg 7).

Isn't it refreshing to be given the space to consider multiple points of view without being told that there is only one way to think about experiential learning or adventure education!

However, having said that the book is readable and engages the reader, the first two chapters, one on Kurt Hahn and the other on the philosophy, history and evolution of adventure education, engage the cognitive rather than the emotional side of the reader. These chapters are stimulating and informative but require some persistence to read carefully. The tone changes with the third chapter. The author takes us on a personal journey where she places us in the situation of a leader not knowing what to do. Her chapter titled "Means and aims in adventure education" is followed by two more with a similar mix of personal and professional. This is refreshing stuff. The writers are human beings who use their own experience to inform the reader and to

challenge the reader to reflect on his or her own thinking, feeling and values.

The final four chapters are slightly more 'distant' in writing style, but just as stimulating as those that come before. They address respectively: the application of adventure learning to corporate settings; action research and its potential in adventure education; the application of adventure education in social change; and a discussion of the implications of the way in which the human body is conceptualized in modern society. All four are informative, stimulating and well worth reading.

Overall, what impressed me about the book in addition to the free thinking and refreshing writing styles was that almost all of the writers took into account the wider aspects of the social and environmental setting in which adventure education occurs. This is not a book of techniques. It is a book for people who want to be stimulated to think deeply about the meaning and usefulness of what they do as adventure educators.

Lehtonen, T. (Ed.). (1998). *Adventure for life: Perspectives on issues in experiential education*. Jyvaaskylaa: Atena Kustannus Ltd. ISBN 951-796-108-1.

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