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INTERACTIVE APPROACH TO CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES COURSE

Saša Radosav*
Faculty of Sport and Physical Education
University of Novi Sad, Serbia

Abstract

The Outdoor activities course is an important and very specific segment of study programs which prepare future teachers of physical education and recreation, instructors and similar professional profiles. With the purpose of creating a new concept of course or improve the existing one according to the attitude college students have to the Outdoor activities course, students of the Faculty and Sport and Physical Education were surveyed. The sample consisted of 191 college students of both gender who attended the Outdoor activities courses during the academic years 2000/2001, 2001/2002, 2002/2003. The sample was evaluated by the Likert scale and the following aspects were included: attitude towards the conditions of course delivery, content, organisation and implementation of the lessons of skiing and camping. Majority of students expressed the affirmative attitudes towards skiing and camping. The obtained results were used in a new conceptualisation of the Outdoor activities course.

Keywords: outdoor activities, teaching, college students, attitudes

Introduction

Even though outdoor activities, in the form if camping and skiing, are an obligatory course in the curriculum of the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, there has been no unique understanding, opinion and attitudes on behalf of professors, teacher assistants and students with respect to conceptualisation, organisation and course delivery. There is no enough agreement on behalf of all participants when it comes to expected learning outcomes of the course (knowledge, skills, values which will be acquired after successful fulfillment of all duties related to the course), selection of relevant course content, as well as direct organisation and delivery of camping and skiing.

A special practical significance belongs to the choice of location suitable for summer and winter outdoor activities and fulfillment of optimal conditions for the implementation of all

* Corresponding author. Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, University of Novi Sad, Lovćenska 16, 21000 Novi Sad, Serbia, e-mail: jazzer66@gmail.com

planned activities, together with the price of accommodation and food, which, in the existing economic situation in the society, has to be adjusted to the abilities of the students and their parents.

The programmed and applied course content should have, first of all, the function of acquiring the necessary expert knowledge and competences. Besides, it should be interesting and applicable in educational institutions, and adjustable to various age groups and levels of students. Apart from the educational content, the classes of camping and skiing also include a recreational part aiming at developing students' interests in those types of activities. Outdoor activities are an integral part of the school curriculum, not only of the compulsory, but also of the optional classes.

Many scientific studies, over a hundred of them, have proved that spending time outdoors and many recreational activities in the natural surroundings create people's positive physiological and psychological reactions, including stress reduction and general well-being (Thompson Coon et al., 2011; Lewis, 1996).

First-hand experience of the nature and living in accordance with it cannot be replaced with either the best educational means or sports equipment used for education and trainings in gyms or other indoor spaces, not even if it is performed by the best teachers or trainers. They cannot replace those sensory moments when a person's or a child's attention is focused on the natural occurrences, sunrays emerging through leaves, sounds and movements of plants in the wind, experiencing sand, soil, water, flora and fauna, endless views of the nature (Moor, 1996). That is especially important for the people and children living in cramped spaces.

Taking into account not only the importance of outdoor activities, but also the necessity of good conceptualisation of the Outdoor activities course as a very important segment of the education at the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, as well as the fact that opening the educational process at the university involves students in all areas to a higher degree, the attitude of the students from the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education in Novi Sad was examined, with the purpose of taking their attitudes into account during making new or modifying the existing concepts of the course, practical organisation and implementation.

Method

Participants

The empirical research was made on the adequate sample including three generations of students of the 3rd and 4th year of studies (total of 191 students) who attended the Outdoor activities courses in the period 2000-2003 at the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education in Novi Sad. The students filled in a questionnaire after attending both theoretical and practical lessons (skiing and camping) of the Outdoor activities course.

Measures

The evaluation of students' attitudes towards outdoor activities was done by using a special questionnaire (see the Appendix). Apart from this demographic variable (gender, way of financing the studies), the questionnaire consisted of 22 items which included different aspects of the Outdoor activities course, from satisfaction with the choice of location and lasting of the course, to the attitudes towards the implemented educational program. 18 items were positively oriented, in other words agreeing with the claim involved a positive attitude, while 15 items were negatively oriented (agreeing with the claim involved a positive attitude). Out of 33 items, 21 included summer camping, while 12 included skiing. The questionnaire consisted of four segments: *Place and conditions of camping* (VAR1-VAR6), *Applied program and gained*

knowledge about camping (VAR7-13), *Organisation and implementation of camping* (VAR14-21) and *Organisation and implementation of skiing* (VAR22-33). The attitudes were evaluated by implementing the Likert scale which included 5 verbal categories with the following meaning: I totally disagree with the claim (1); I partially disagree with the claim (2); I have no attitude towards the claim (3); I partially agree with the claim (4); I totally agree with the claim (5). Taking into account a lot of claims in the questionnaire, they are marked by the ordinal number of the items (see the Appendix).

Data processing

The obtained data were processed by using parametrical procedures. Parametrical statistical procedures were used for establishing the central (***arithmetic mean***) and dispersive parameters (***minimal value (min), maximal value (max) and standard deviation - S***). The Multivariate (MANOVA) and Univariate (ANOVA) Analysis of Variance were used to establish the multivariate and univariate statistical significance between the arithmetic means in the system of all applied variables of the attitudes,according to activities and putting the attitudes in groups.

Results

Central and dispersive statistical parameters on the level of the whole sample are showed in the table 1. According to the average scores of certain items, it can be concluded that the examinees expressed a high degree of agreeing (score 4.0 and higher) for all 18 positively formulated items. When the negative items are taken into account, a high degree of disagreement (score 2.0 and less) was expressed for 18 out of 15 items. The highest disagreement (4.80) was expressed for the claim "Skiing is nice and interesting" (VAR24), while extremely positive attitudes are expressed for three more items belonging to the segment organisation and implementation of skiing: VAR31 (4.79), VAR22 (4.75), VAR27 (4.72). Very high scores also included the items VAR15 and VAR 22, which referred to the organisation and implementation of camping. High average scores were also obtained for the claims VAR10 and VAR8 which belonged to the segment Applied programs and obtained knowledge about camping (4.71, or 4.67). Arithmetic means around the average value of the scale, which indicated a neutral attitude, were obtained for the items VAR23 (2.93) and VAR25 (2.72) which included the price and how long the course was. Items VAR2 (the price of camping) and VAR5 (camping at the seaside) showed arithmetic means close to the average value from the scale.

Dispersive measuring showed that the sample was rather heterogeneous with respect to agreement with the offered claims; the maximum range of results (from 1.00 to 5.00) was obtained for all items, while the values of the coefficient of variations varied from 12.58% (VAR15: I had a chance to get to know my colleagues while camping) to 70.65% (VAR4: Regardless of the price, I'd rather go camping at the seaside).

Table 1

Central and dispersive statistical parametres

VARIABLES	M	SD	CV%	min	max
VARl (-)	1.68	1.17	69.64	1.00	5.00
VAR2 (+)	3.59	1.34	37.32	1.00	5.00
VAR3 (-)	2.38	1.54	64.70	1.00	5.00
VAR4 (-)	2.01	1.42	70.65	1.00	5.00
VAR5 (-)	2.55	1.50	58.82	1.00	5.00
VAR6 (+)	4.04	1.27	31.44	1.00	5.00
VAR7 (+)	4.51	.89	19.73	1.00	5.00
VAR8 (+)	4.67	.78	16.70	1.00	5.00
VAR9 (+)	4.49	.84	18.71	1.00	5.00
VARIO (+)	4.71	.70	14.86	1.00	5.00
VARll (-)	1.56	1.06	67.95	1.00	5.00
VAR12 (-)	1.46	1.02	69.86	1.00	5.00
VAR13 (+)	4.51	.80	17.74	1.00	5.00
VAR14 (+)	4.51	.92	20.40	1.00	5.00
VAR15 (+)	4.77	.60	12.58	1.00	5.00
VAR16 (-)	1.31	.71	54.20	1.00	5.00
VAR17 (+)	4.38	.93	21.23	1.00	5.00
VAR18 (-)	1.64	.98	59.76	1.00	5.00
VAR19 (+)	4.52	.92	20.35	1.00	5.00
VAR20 (-)	1.99	1.37	68.84	1.00	5.00
VAR21 (-)	1.32	.79	59.85	1.00	5.00
VAR22 (+)	4.75	.81	17.05	1.00	5.00
VAR23 (+)	2.93	1.39	47.44	1.00	5.00
VAR24 (+)	4.80	.71	14.79	1.00	5.00
VAR25 (-)	2.72	1.55	56.98	1.00	5.00
VAR26 (+)	4.35	.91	20.92	1.00	5.00
VAR27 (+)	4.72	.71	15.04	1.00	5.00
VAR28 (+)	4.58	.91	19.87	1.00	5.00
VAR29 (-)	1.80	1.24	68.89	1.00	5.00
VAR30 (-)	2.08	1.33	63.94	1.00	5.00
VAR31 (+)	4.79	.72	15.03	1.00	5.00
VAR32 (+)	4.39	1.00	22.78	1.00	5.00
VAR33 (-)	1.24	.78	62.90	1.00	5.00

M – Arithmetic Mean; SD – Standard Deviation; CV – Variability Coefficient; Min – minimum; Max – Maximum

In order to examine the agreement of students from different generations with respect to their attitudes towards various aspects of the subject Outdoor activities, the analyses MANOVA and ANOVA were used to examine the significance of the differences among three generations of students at the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education in Novi Sad (Tables 2-5).

Testing the significance of the differences in the whole system of variables (in total 33) by MANOVA showed that among the three groups of students statistically significant differences exist (λ=.47; p=.00).

In the subspace of the variables which refer to the location and conditions of camping (Table 2) it was established that there were some statistically significant differences among the

groups in two out of six variables (VAR5 and VAR6). These variables included the attitude towards camping at the seaside, or the quality of food during camping, where the second generation of students differed from the first and third generation according to their attitudes.

Table 2

Significance of differences between groups: Location and conditions of camping

Variables	M1	M2	M3	F	p
VAR1 (-)	1.66	1.70	1.68	.01	.98
VAR2 (+)	3.67	3.72	3.45	.76	.46
VAR3 (-)	2.19	2.27	2.57	1.24	.28
VAR4 (-)	1.88	1.75	2.23	2.03	.13
VAR5 (-)	2.67	1.95	2.77	4.82	.00
VAR6 (+)	4.40	3.50	4.05	6.85	.00

M1 - Generation of students 2000/01, M2 – generation of students 2001/02, M3 – Generation of students 2002/03

When it comes to the applied programs and gained knowledge about camping (Table 3), significant differences were detected for only two variables (VAR9 and VAR12) out of seven. Those variables refer to the educational character of the programs and their applicability in practice.

Table 3

Significance of differences between groups: Implemented programmes and gained knowledge during camping

VARIABLES	M1	M2	M3	F	p
VAR7 (+)	4.45	4.54	4.55	.25	.77
VAR8 (+)	4.64	4.70	4.55	.07	.92
VAR9 (+)	4.46	4.22	4.64	3.71	.02
VAR10 (+)	4.58	4.65	4.84	2.79	.06
VAR11 (-)	1.80	1.54	1.38	2.80	.06
VAR12 (-)	1.75	1.27	1.35	3.89	.02
VAR13 (+)	4.37	4.47	4.63	2.00	.13

M1 - Generation of students 2000/01, M2 – generation of students 2001/02, M3 – Generation of students 2002/03

With reference to the attitudes which refer to the organisation and implementation of camping (Table 4), it can be noticed that all three observed generations of students exprssed high agreement on this subject, since significant differences are seen in only three variables, out of eight which define this domain. Those are the variables: VAR16 (I did not find the activities during camping interesting), VAR17 (The camping course was well-organized) and VAR21 (I am not interested in camping).

Table 4

Significance of differences between groups: Organisation and implementation of camping

VARIABLES	M1	M2	M3	F	p
VAR14 (+)	4.40	4.59	4.55	.66	.51
VAR15 (+)	4.80	4.79	4.74	.24	.78
VAR16(-)	1.50	1.34	1.17	3.78	.02
VAR17(+)	4.33	3.97	4.62	7.55	.00
VAR18(-)	1.67	1.70	1.58	.25	.77
VAR19(+)	4.59	4.52	4.48	.25	.77
VAR20(-)	2.00	1.72	2.12	1.24	.29
VAR21(-)	1.56	1.27	1.17	4.56	.01

M1 - Generation of students 2000/01, M2 – generation of students 2001/02, M3 – Generation of students 2002/03

The highest agreement among the students of three generations was showed for the attitudes towards the organisation of skiing (table 5). Namely, there were no statistically significant differences for any out of 11 variables which define this area.

Table 6

Significance of differences among groups: Organisation and implementation of skiing

VARIABLES	M1	M2	M3	F	p
VAR22 (+)	4.72	4.88	4.71	.70	.49
VAR23 (+)	2.90	2.79	3.02	.40	.66
VAR24 (+)	4.83	4.79	4.78	.09	.91
VAR25 (-)	2.85	2.50	2.75	.69	.50
VAR26 (+)	4.46	4.25	4.31	.83	.43
VAR27 (+)	4.64	4.84	4.72	.97	.37
VAR28 (+)	4.46	4.72	4.58	1.03	.35
VAR29 (-)	2.08	1.63	1.69	2.29	.10
VAR30 (-)	2.06	2.18	2.04	.15	.85
VAR31 (+)	4.64	4.77	4.91	2.62	.07
VAR32 (+)	4.50	4.38	4.31	.58	.55
VAR33 (-)	1.43	1.15	1.15	2.71	.06

M1 - Generation of students 2000/01, M2 – generation of students 2001/02, M3 – Generation of students 2002/03

Discussion

The survey conducted at the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education in Novi Sad which included the examination of the students' attitudes towards the Outdoor activities course, took place with the purpose of improving the existing concept of the course according to the results, or creating a new concept which would be more suitable for the needs and attitudes of the

students. This approach has its roots in an ever-present demand to include students as equal participants in the life of the faculty by asking them the questions about the curriculum, even if self-evaluation is included.

The obtained results show that the students have very positive attitudes towards different aspects of the Outdoor activities course, even though dispersive measures show that the sample was rather heterogeneous about agreeing with the offered claims.

In order to obtain as objective results as possible, the survey included three generations

(from 2000/01 to 2002/03). By testing the significance of the differences among those three groups, we wanted to identify those aspects of the courses which cause the highest agreement of the students (no matter which generation they belong to). The results of the multivariate and univariate analysis confirmed that there is a high degree of agreement among the students of different generations, taking their attitudes into account. The students expressed very positive and the similar attitudes towards winter outdoor activities (skiing).

All results obtained in this research are practically applicable in the adequate organisation and delivery of Outdoor activities on behalf of the teachers, as well as implanted in the curriculum and organisation of camping, to the mutual satisfaction of both teachers and students.

The interaction in the relationship teachers-students is very important for the innovations of the curriculum and organisation of practical lessons of the Outdoor activities course, the more similar attitudes, interests, abilities and the system of values teachers and students have, the more successful their relationship is (Jajatović, 2006).

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE EVALUATION OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Way of financing		1. self-financing				
		2. co-financing				
		3. from the state budget				
Sex		**M**			**F**	
I attended the camping course		YES			NO	
		I totally disagree with the claim	I partially disagree with the claim	I have no attitude towards the claim	I partially agree with the claim	I totally agree with the claim
VAR1	I did not like Begečka jama as a choice for the camping location.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR2	The price of 3000 din was adequate.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR3	I can pay the expenses of camping at the seaside in Montenegro (150 euro or 9000 din).	1	2	3	4	5
VAR4	No matter what the price is, I'd rather go camping at the seaside in Montenegro.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR5	I'd like to go camping at the seaside since that would be my summer holiday as well.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR6	The food at the location of Begečka jama was good.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR7	Camping at the location of Begečka jama was very useful as a life experience.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR8	The events were interesting and useful.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR9	The events were educational in a professional sense.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR10	I gained new knowledge and experience (putting up a tent, organisation of a camp, orientation in the nature, feeding in the nature, rowing…).	1	2	3	4	5
VAR11	I am not satisfied with the newly acquired experience.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR12	Newly acquired experience and knowledge cannot be applied practically.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR13	Newly acquired knowledge and experience will be useful in my further life.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR14	I liked staying in the nature and sleeping in tents.	1	2	3	4	5

VAR15	I had a chance to get to know my colleagues during camping.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR16	I did not find the activities during camping interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR17	Camping course was well-organized.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR18	I was looking forward to the end of camping and going home.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR19	I would go camping again, regardless of the subject.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR20	I wish we had gone to Montenegro instead of Begečka jama.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR21	I am not interested in camping, the only important thing is to do the course and get the necessary signature.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR22	I like skiing.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR23	I think that the price of 170 euro for seven days is acceptable.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR24	Skiing is nice and interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR25	I think that 2 seven-day skiing courses are quite enough.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR26	I learned how to ski.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR27	I wish I could improve my skiing technique.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR28	I think that two ten-day skiing courses would be more effective for improving my skiing knowledge and techniques.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR29	I prefer two seven-day to two ten-day courses.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR30	I think that one 14-day course is an optimal solution.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR31	Without taking money into account, I'd go skiing again.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR32	Skiing lessons were well-prepared.	1	2	3	4	5
VAR33	I am not interested in skiing, the only important thing is to do the course and get the necessary signature	1	2	3	4	5