

## **CHAPTER 3**

# **EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES FOR YOUTH-AT-RISK**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reflects the data obtained from the 93 questionnaires completed by outdoor leaders throughout South Africa and the 24 semi-structured interviews with 29 programme leaders of adventure-based programmes. The analysed data are represented diagrammatically and in tabular form, providing an excellent framework for gaining insight into the nature, requirements and limitations of adventure-based programmes to youth-at-risk.

The information from the interviews complemented the data from the questionnaires and provided a clearer and richer picture of outdoor adventure-based programmes in South Africa. The researcher chose to quote responses from interviewees fairly extensively, in order to retain the detail necessary for the reader to gain a more accurate understanding of the "bigger picture" on adventure-based programmes. Wherever the year 2001 is reflected in brackets, e.g. Kirkman (2001), without reference to a page number, the researcher has quoted one or more interviewees that participated in the research. The term "respondents" refers to outdoor leaders who completed the research questionnaire. The term "interviewee" refers to outdoor leaders with whom the researcher had an interview on adventure-based programmes. They are most often in a leadership position within an organization offering adventure-based programmes and are referred to in the research as programme leaders.

Information from the literature study (Chapter 2) and the personal experience of the researcher was incorporated throughout this chapter to further the readers' understanding of the nature, requirements and limitations of adventure-based programmes.

### 3.2 AGE DISTRIBUTION OF OUTDOOR LEADERS

Figure 3. Age Distribution (N=93)

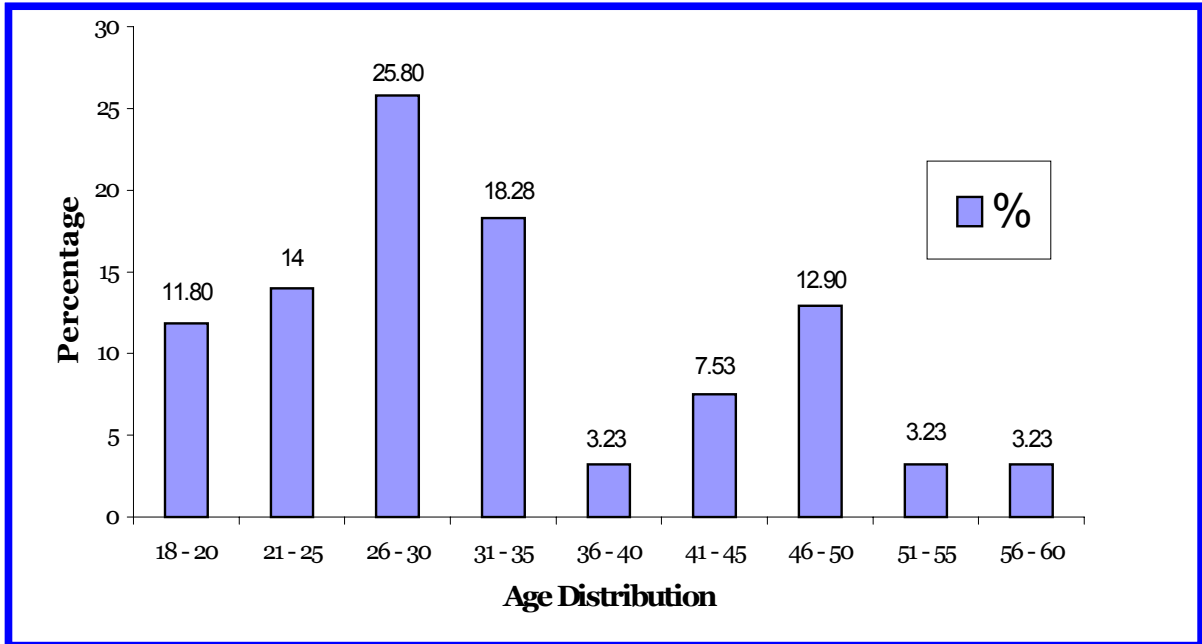


Figure 3 reflects that 69.88% of outdoor leaders are from 18 to 35 years of age with the largest age category (25.80%), being the group of 26 – 30 year olds, followed by the 31 – 35 year olds (18.28%). The 41 – 50 year olds comprise a significant group (20.43%) and these are usually the persons who act as programme leaders or supervisors in the organization offering adventure-based programmes. It appears as if adventure-based programmes are not a career option for retired persons as there was no respondent older than 60 years of age.

Interviewees reflected differences in opinion on the age factor of the outdoor leader. Telfer (2001) is of the opinion that the outdoor leader should be from the same generation as the participant, ideally 18/19 years of age, because “children have to get the message from their own generation or as close to it as they can”. This view is supported by Calitz (2001) who uses peer group members, usually prefects in schools, to act as assistant outdoor leaders when possible.

Outward Bound requires prospective outdoor leaders to be at least 24 years of age. EDUCO at times involves “elders” to teach the youth; “linking the culture with the people...”; these older persons have a wisdom that is beneficial to the youth and the younger outdoor leader, aiding the mentoring of the outdoor leader (Gumble, 2001).

Ball and Ball (1990:36) draws attention to the fact that, although age does not guarantee maturity, the outdoor leader should be at least 18 years of age. For assignments such as driving of vehicles, accompanying participants off-site, supervising high risk activities in areas such as the waterfront, the outdoor leader should be at least 21 years of age (legal adult age). It is preferable that the supervisor of the outdoor leader should be at least two years older than the staff member being supervised.

It is the opinion of the researcher that the outdoor leader, irrespective of age, should be able to relate to the participant. There must be a “connection”, more correctly defined as a “relationship” between the outdoor leader and the participant; described by Telfer (2001) as an “I-like-them, I-want-to-copy-her” relationship. In the absence of such a relationship it is highly unlikely that the outdoor leader will achieve most of the aims of the programme with the participant.

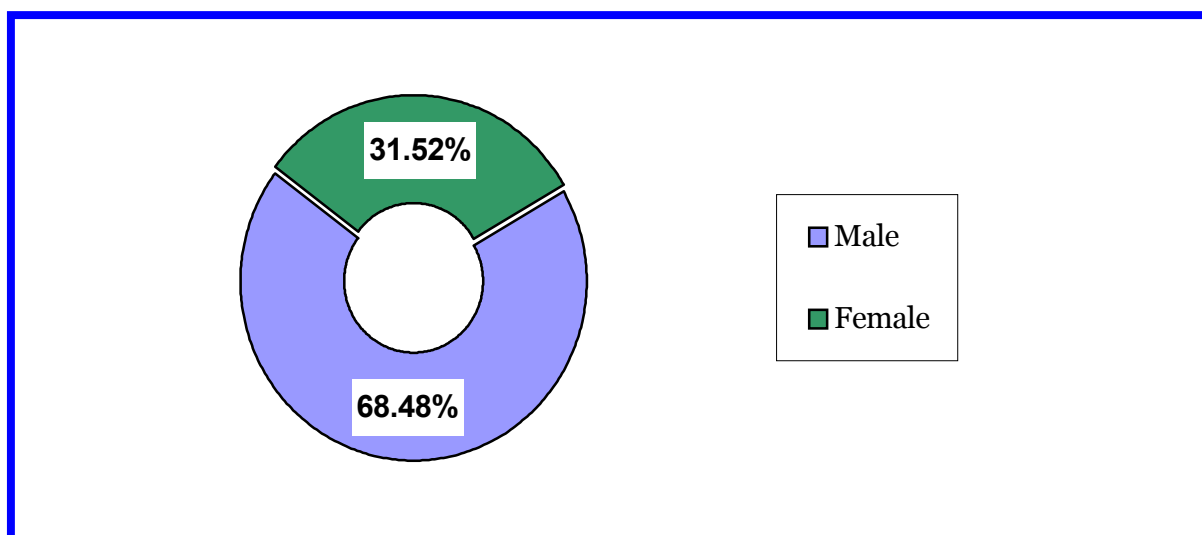
From experience in working with young outdoor leaders (18/19 years old), the researcher views the following as possible limitations: fluid life philosophy and value system due to general inexperience in life; lack of self knowledge; inexperience in dealing with participants who can present challenging behaviour; under-developed skills and personal qualities; inexperience in the art of facilitation. Generally the advantages of working with a person under 21 years of age include the fact that the participant relates to them more readily than with an older person; they have higher energy levels; they are more teachable and often keen to learn from an older outdoor leader; they adapt more quickly to change and often contribute to change with new ideas; they are often too inexperienced to keep comparing experiences.

There is no ideal age of an outdoor leader and their employment depends on the aim of the programme, nature of the activities and the needs of the participant.

From the data obtained in the study it appears as if about 39.76% of outdoor leaders over thirty-five years of age will leave the field and rejoin the open market in other positions. It is regrettable, yet inevitable, that this “brain drain” will happen, as outdoor leadership offers limited long-term career options.

### 3.3 GENDER COMPOSITION OF OUTDOOR LEADERS

**Figure 4. Gender Composition (N=92)**



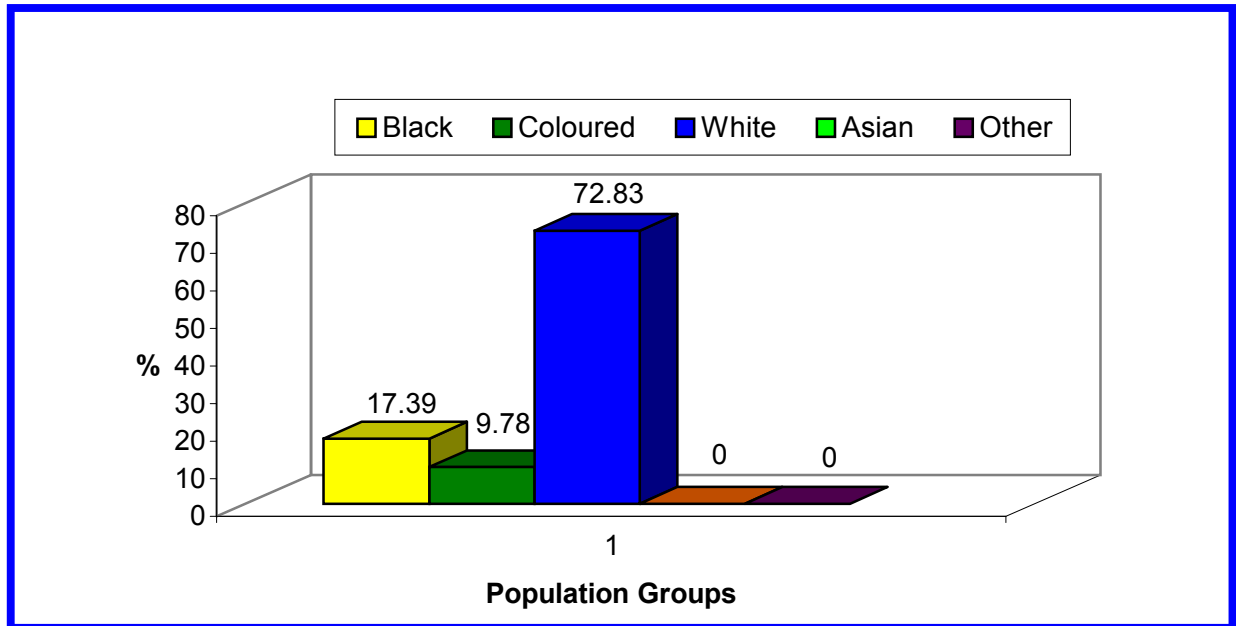
Outdoor leadership appears to be a male dominated occupation. **Figure 4** indicates that 68.48% of the respondents were male compared to 31.52% females. Possible reasons could include the fact that adventure sport in general is a male dominated outdoor pursuit due to the physical demands of many activities. Outdoor leadership seems to be a career option for white males finding it difficult to obtain employment due to affirmative action policies and many male outdoor leaders appear to have some military training.

Increased numbers of young females participating in adventure-based programmes can contribute to a change in the sex composition of outdoor leaders.

Too little is known about the influence of gender on the participant to conclude that it has an influence on the outcomes achieved.

### 3.4 REPRESENTATION OF POPULATION GROUPS

Figure 5. Representation of Population Groups (N=92)



White persons comprise 72.83% of the outdoor leadership composition, followed by 17.39% Blacks and 9.78% Coloureds, as reflected in **Figure 5**.

Much needs to be done to involve persons of all population groups in the adventure-based industry. It is significant to note that no persons of the Asian population are represented. After the democratic elections in 1994 and the subsequent integration of all community structures and services, adventure-based programmes appear to gain increasing popularity as racially integrated schools participate in adventure-based programmes.

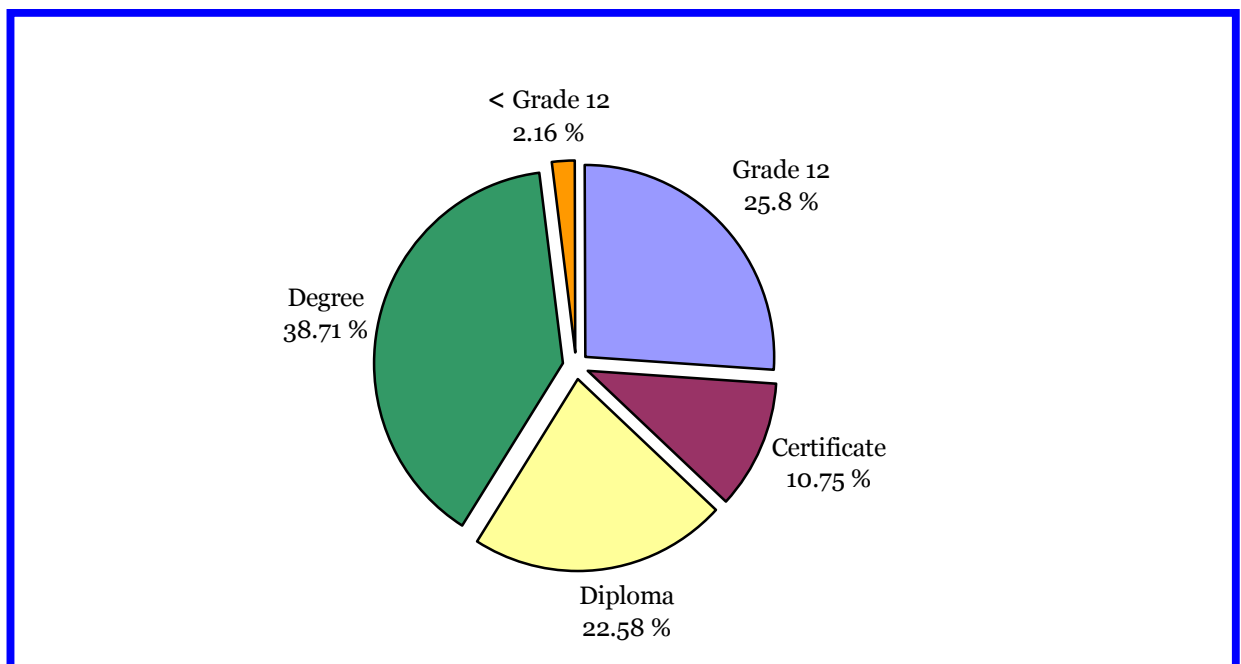
The more youth of all the population groups participate in adventure-based programmes and are exposed to different educational outdoor experiences, the higher the likelihood that young adults from these groups will be interested in outdoor leadership, even for a limited period in their lives.

Cultural norms and preferences constitute another factor that appear to influence participation in adventure-based programmes, consequently influencing a person's decision to become an outdoor leader. From media evidence Asians, for example, and specifically Indians, hardly feature at all in adventure sport or other outdoor pursuits and it appears as if adventure-based programmes are less appealing to this population group.

Representation of population groups on the staff has many implications for adventure-based programmes. Language and cultural customs can be potential barriers preventing the participant from gaining the most out of the programme, especially when working with youth-at-risk where verbal abuse, disrespectful remarks and bullying can occur. A multi-cultural staff corps is a huge asset to the adventure-based programme and aids diversity education to participants who can observe and learn directly from diverse outdoor leaders.

### 3.5 HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL TRAINING OF OUTDOOR LEADERS

Figure 6. Highest Educational Training (N=93)



This question determined the highest educational qualification of the respondent and does not mean that it is the only educational training the respondent has received. As can be seen in **Figure 6**, 72.04% of the respondents have post-matric qualifications; of which 38.71% gained a degree at university level. Two respondents had a qualification lower than grade 12; one completed grade 11 and the other grade 9.

The variety of disciplines involved in adventure-based programmes is reflected by the different fields in which respondents obtained training:

**National certificate** (10) : Pest Control, Programming.

**National diploma** (21) : Education, Child and Youth Work, Oral Health, Tourism, Engineering, Nature Conservation, Bible School.

University degrees were obtained in the following disciplines:

**BA** (16) : Social Work, English, Theology, Education, Psychology, Communication, Drama, Human Movement, Sociology.

**BSc** (4) : Engineering.

**Masters** (3) : Communication, Zoology, Education.

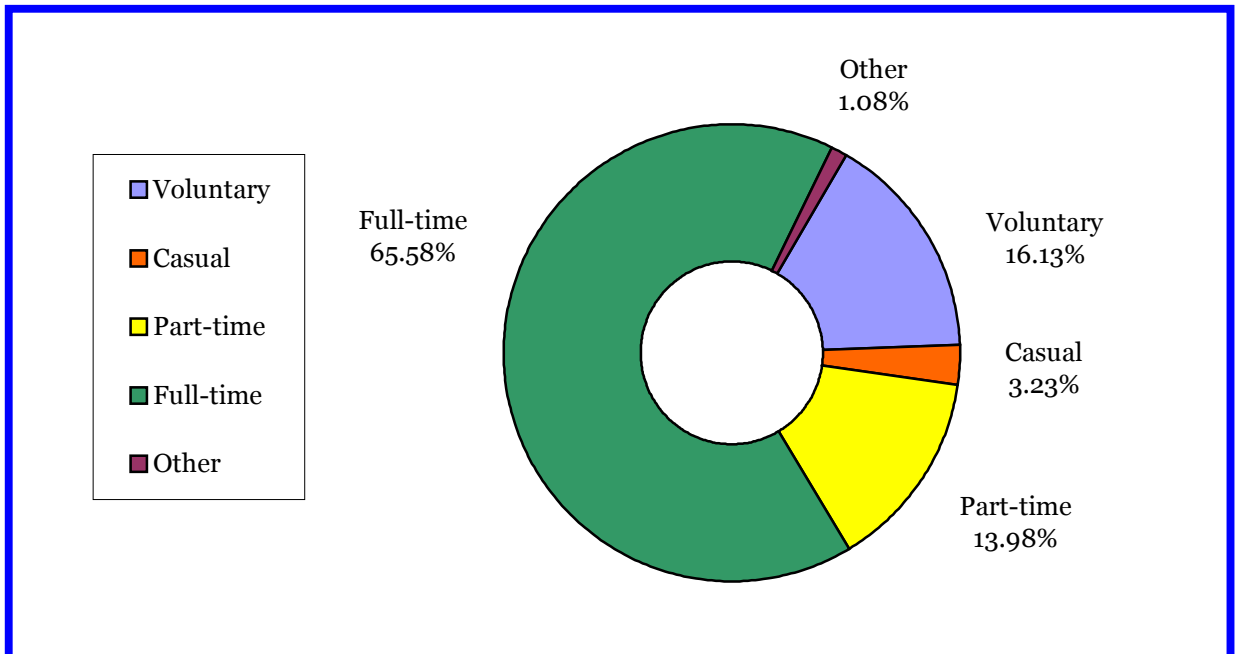
**PhD** (1) : Discipline unknown.

From the above research results it is evident that the adventure-based field boasts a well-educated, diversely trained corps of outdoor leaders that contributes to and enriches the inter-disciplinary nature of this field.

In the researcher's opinion it is difficult, especially in the South African context, to lay down the minimum requirement of grade 12 (matric) for outdoor leaders. It is the researcher's experience that academic qualification(s) as such form one of the least decisive factors in determining the "quality" of the outdoor leader.

### 3.6 BASIS OF EMPLOYMENT OR INVOLVEMENT IN ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES

Figure 7. Basis of Employment (N=93)



Nearly two thirds of the respondents (65.58%) are involved with adventure-based programmes on a full-time basis, followed by 16.13% volunteering, 13.98% employed on a part-time basis and 3.23% involved on a casual basis, as reflected in **Figure 7**.

Part-time outdoor leaders mainly include persons employed in organizations that offer adventure-based programmes on a part-time or irregular basis, i.e. it is not the only service provided to the public and therefore only one of many tasks in the job description of the respondent, e.g. a social worker in a welfare organization that organizes an adventure-based programme once or twice a year. On the other hand voluntary and casual outdoor leaders appear to be persons employed in other jobs who are involved because of a love of and belief in adventure-based programmes for youth. The fact that two thirds of the questionnaire respondents and nearly half of the interviewees are involved with adventure-based programmes



on a full-time, i.e. daily basis, is very significant for the research and validates the data obtained.

### 3.7 SKILLS AND PERSONAL QUALITIES OF THE OUTDOOR LEADER

**Table 1. Skills and Personal Qualities (N=93)**

Skills/ Qualities	Total Responses	PERCENTAGE (%)				
		Not Important	Somewhat Important	Unsure	Important	Essential
Certification to teach at least one outdoor activity	93	9.68	9.68	4.30	48.39	27.95
Healthy self-concept	93	0	2.15	0	44.09	53.76
Safety skills, e.g. first aid	93	1.08	5.38	0	36.55	56.99
Being a role model	93	1.08	2.15	4.30	38.71	53.76
Programme planning, implementation & evaluation skills	92	1.09	2.17	0	45.65	51.09
Love of outdoors	93	0	3.23	1.08	61.28	34.41
Skills for managing participants	93	0	2.15	1.08	33.33	63.44
Physical fitness	93	0	13.98	4.30	60.22	21.50
Teaching skills	93	2.15	6.45	2.15	56.99	32.26
Group work skills	93	1.08	1.08	1.08	59.14	37.62

### 3.7.1. SKILLS AND QUALITIES OF THE OUTDOOR LEADER

Outdoor leaders require specific and specialized skills. **Table 1** reflects the respondents' opinion on the importance they placed on ten skills and personal qualities listed in the questionnaire. Essential skills and qualities are summarized below (in order of decreasing importance):

1. Skills for managing participants (63.44%)
2. Safety skills, e.g. first aid (56.99%)
3. Healthy self-concept/self-esteem (53.76%)
4. Being a role model (53.76%)
5. Programme planning, implementation & evaluation skills (51.09%)
6. Group work skills (37.62%)
7. Love of outdoors (34.41%)
8. Teaching skills (32.26%)
9. Certification to teach at least one outdoor activity (27.95%)
10. Physical fitness (21.50%)

Responses from interviewees reiterated the need for the outdoor leader to possess a wide array of qualities and skills. These include:

**Facilitation skills:** To facilitate is “to make easy or less difficult; lessen the labor of; help forward (a process; also, to assist the progress of (a person)” (The New Century Dictionary, 1948:542). This skill enables the outdoor leader to assist the participant and group to make it easier for them to achieve the aims of the activity. It includes assistance with the progress of mastering a skill and helping with the process of learning. It is a skill where there is no room for the ego of the outdoor leader. There can be no “cook book approach” when facilitating learning experiences; in the absence of facilitation, you have mere instruction or supervision of a recreational activity (Heunis, 2001). Schoeman (2001) emphasizes the “ability to facilitate rather than dictate”.

Facilitation is not just about making the activity easier, but aiding the development of the person. This is where the researcher questions the ability of an 18 year old

to work at such a level when their own life and possible growth experiences are limited. You can only take a person to where you are, you can teach only what you know, hardly more. Facilitating personal growth demands mature outdoor leaders who value the needs of the participant above their own. The outdoor leader should understand the feelings of participants in certain situations. This awareness comes from the outdoor leader's own previous experience (Priest, 1990: 213).

**Being a role model:** Leadership is about influence. Influence is the result of how effectively the outdoor leader models the desired, positive behaviour. Telfer (2001) describes role models as “excellent people who behave well and contribute positively to the lives of other people. The key factor is that the children are attracted to them ... in an I-like-them ... I want-to-copy-them sense. You can teach a person rock climbing, but you cannot teach them to be a good person”. The need for the outdoor leader to be a role model was emphasized by most interviewees and respondents.

**Love for children and passion to work with them:** This is a pre-requisite when working with youth-at-risk. Fundamental to this love for youth is a respect for the inherent value of each participant and faith in their ability to change and grow and develop. Gumble (2001) advises “embrace the development of youth ... respect the story of each child”.

Priest (1990:214) cautions that the outdoor leader must know himself, his strengths and weaknesses and motivation for the job. The reasons why the person became an outdoor leader vary, but it rarely is because of monetary rewards.

No matter how big the “tool box” of skills and qualities the outdoor leader may possess, there is no place for the “ego” and self-interest.

**Interpersonal skills and ability to work in a team:** Heunis (2001) explains that the outdoor leader and his assistant must be a “metaphor of good team work” and they “should co-operate with each other” (freely translated from Afrikaans). The

outdoor leader should be able to articulate what happens and express the feelings, thoughts and emotions generated through the activity. Social skills include the confidence to speak in front of people.

**Ability to grow as a person:** Robertson & van der Huyden (2001) is of the opinion that “the most beneficial thing to do is to provide a psychological container for the experience, ... where everyone feels that it is in order to reveal themselves and it is in order to care at the same time. The facilitator must be able to grow within himself”. For Hobongwana (2001) being an outdoor leader “is not a duty; it is an opportunity to grow and become a better person”.

Outdoor leaders with a healthy self-esteem will place the needs of the participant above their own, having no pressure to prove themselves and using “mistakes” as learning experiences to grow from (Priest, 1990: 213).

**Problem-solving skills :** Taylor (2001) explains that outdoor leaders must be “people who can be responsible in the situations that arise. If an unexpected situation arises, then a mature teacher can turn it around and make it a productive one”. The outdoors can be very unpredictable, e.g. weather conditions, etc. People can be even more unpredictable and outdoor leaders are obliged to rely on their own judgement on many occasions. When there is a lack of information in a situation requiring input from the outdoor leader, sound judgement by the outdoor leader can be critical. Previous experience provides a foundation for the development of good judgement (Priest, 1990:213).

**Responsibility and safety consciousness:** Outdoor leaders need skills necessary to ensure the safety of participants in the activity being lead and this could include first aid, water safety (life-guarding), navigation, search and rescue (Priest, 1990:214). Respondents placed a high value on this skill and rated it as the second most essential skill the outdoor leader should have.

### **3.7.2. CAREER CHALLENGES FACING OUTDOOR LEADERS**

From the responses of interviewees it was evident that outdoor leaders face many career challenges:

- Long-term career options and scope for promotion are limited. Dippenaar (2001) expressed concern that the lack of career opportunities will demotivate outdoor leaders to undergo training for extended periods.
- Boredom can set in when the outdoor leader is mainly involved with one particular programme or target group for an extended time.
- Low pay for long working hours seems to be prevalent.
- Social isolation occurs due to the fact that many outdoor centres are in the countryside where the nearest city could be many kilometres away.
- Conveniences and comforts, e.g. privacy, are lacking.

### 3.8 BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY YOUTH-AT-RISK

**Table 2. Behavioural Challenges presented by Youth-at-risk (N=93)**

BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY YOUTH-AT-RISK	TOTAL RESPON-SES	OCCURRENCE OF BEHAVIOUR (%)				
		ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOME-TIMES	HARDLY EVER	NEVER
Aggressive behaviour, e.g. fighting	91	2.20	14.29	50.55	24.18	8.78
Antisocial behaviour, e.g. theft	89	3.37	12.36	44.94	28.09	11.24
Smoking	91	13.19	41.76	17.58	10.99	16.48
Substance abuse	91	0	10.99	24.18	32.96	31.87
Truancy	85	0	9.42	20.00	35.29	35.29
Hyperactivity	88	9.08	37.50	38.64	10.23	4.55
Disobedience	91	9.89	30.77	38.46	13.19	7.69
Eating disorders	91	3.30	4.40	35.15	34.07	23.08
Not motivated to participate	90	4.44	24.44	42.22	21.12	7.78
Vandalism	90	1.11	11.11	32.22	35.56	20
Sexual misconduct	82	0	7.32	17.07	32.93	42.68

The eleven categories of behaviour that were provided in the questionnaire are listed in **Table 2**. The aim of the question was to determine the occurrence of behaviour that could be challenging to the outdoor leader. Specifics regarding the behaviour, e.g. the type of eating disorder was neither provided, nor requested.

The following examples or explanations of sexual misconduct were provided by respondents: “ Bi-sexual relationships (freely translated from Afrikaans); hickeys & petting, boys and girls sneaking off; foul language and boasting about sex deeds (freely translated from Afrikaans), girls tend to be more promiscuous than boys” (freely translated from Afrikaans).

It is apparent when studying the data in **Table 2**, that:

- each example or category of behaviour listed does occur at some stage or other during an adventure-based programme to youth-at-risk;
- behaviour with a high likelihood of occurring includes smoking, disobedience and hyperactivity;
- aggressive behaviour, e.g. fighting and antisocial behaviour, is more than likely to occur;
- vandalism and eating disorders have a low occurrence rate, i.e. they are more likely **not** to occur;
- sexual misconduct, truancy and substance abuse have the lowest occurrence rate.

The significance of this question in the research emphasized the need for training outdoor leaders on how to deal with possible behavioural challenges. It is not surprising that the skill to manage participants received the highest percentage in the “essential” column in question 6.

Personal experience has taught the researcher that one participant who presents unacceptable behaviour, if not dealt with effectively, has the potential to hinder the progress of the whole group. The researcher has witnessed and experienced individuals with such destructive and uncontrolled behaviour that they needed to be withdrawn from the group, and in extreme cases, had to be withdrawn from the programme altogether. This is not an indication that the outdoor leader or programme has failed. The needs of the problem individual are on a different level and the adventure-based programme and/or outdoor leader(s) should be geared towards the majority of participants.

### **3.8.1 BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT**

There is no doubt that this research study reflects the need for outdoor leaders to be trained in behaviour management strategies, especially when accommodating youth-at-risk during adventure-based programmes. Within an unusual setting such as the outdoors, where new behaviour can be tried out, children of all ages,

at some time or another, will exhibit unacceptable behaviour requiring discipline. During staff training attention should be given to discipline procedures and methods, as well as circumstances requiring discipline. Role-playing and group discussion on possible and actual incidents are techniques that enable staff to gain more insight into these behaviours (Ball & Ball, 1990:79).

Behaviour management is challenging and demands that the outdoor leader be firm, adapting disciplinary practices to individual needs. What works for one participant does not necessarily work with another. Young, inexperienced outdoor leaders need to be supported by the more experienced outdoor leader. Behaviour management develops with experience over time. The programme leader or supervisor needs to be on the alert for stress or burn-out syndrome in the outdoor leader, especially when working with youth-at-risk. Negative behaviour patterns develop extremely quickly and if they are not identified and dealt with they can cause the diversion of valuable energy and time to be spent on dealing with negative behaviour.

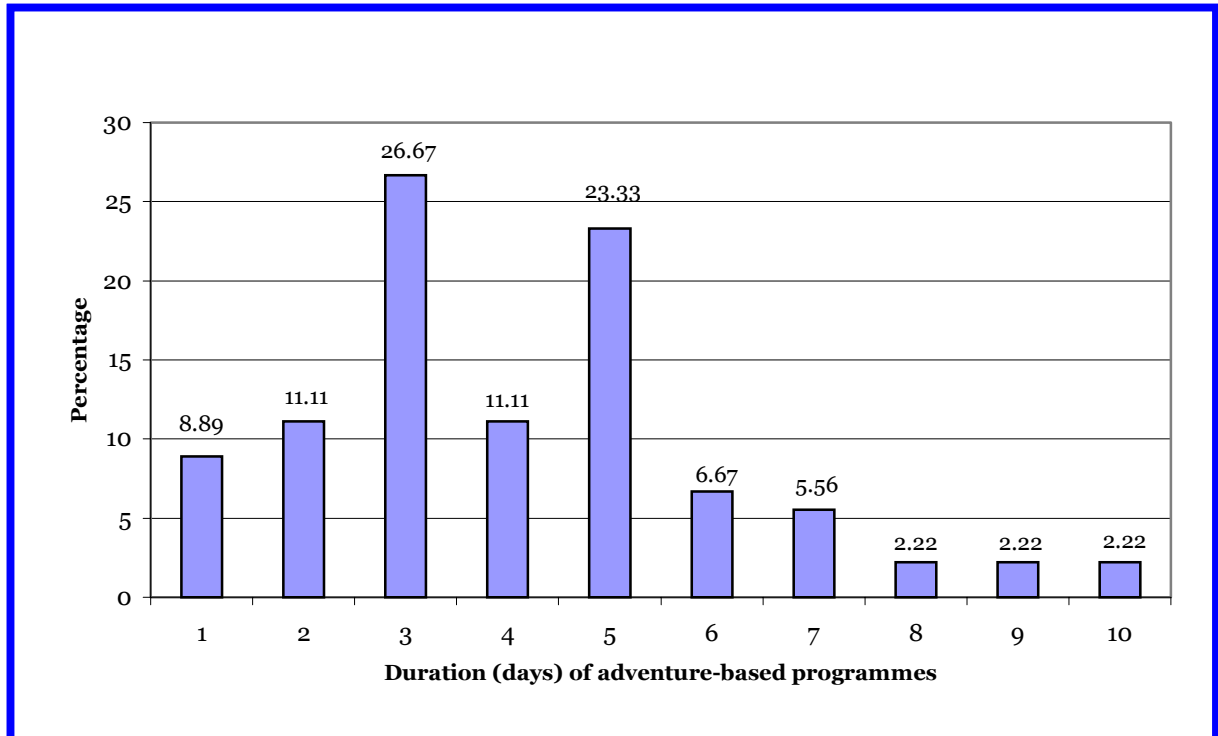
Outdoor leaders can have unrealistic expectations of their role with regard to challenging behaviour. They need to understand that it is unlikely for them to change the occurrence of certain problems, e.g. an eating disorder. It is however imperative to have policies and procedures in place to deal with such behaviour.

Unless the programme leader provides a strong and consistent support system to the young outdoor leader, the researcher questions the ability of an eighteen year old outdoor leader to deal with, e.g. a person using chemical substances. As programme director at an American summer camp in 2001, the researcher interviewed the 18 - 19 year old youth counsellors regarding their training in behaviour management techniques. The staff was unanimous in their opinion that the assistance, i.e. the guidance given and support to counsellors, coupled with timely intervention when needed from programme leaders was crucial in dealing with participants.



### 3.9 DURATION OF ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES

**Figure 8. Duration of Adventure-based Programmes (N=89)**



A variety of options in the duration of the adventure-based programme is available to participants, as reflected in **Figure 8**. Three day programmes are the most popular option (26.67%), followed by five day programmes (23.33%).

Factors that could influence the choice of duration include:

**Cost and availability of funds:** The longer the programme, the higher the cost.

**Aim of the programme:** Outward Bound offers adventure-based programmes of 14 days to street children and courses of 21 days to youths from disadvantaged communities. The rationale behind this is that “... experience taught us (Outward Bound) that you need at least 14 days to make a difference ...” (le Roux, 2001).

### 3.10 PROVISION FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

**Table 3. Provision for Special Populations (N=93)**

SPECIAL POPULATIONS	TOTAL RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE (%)			
		ALWAYS	OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER
Children with physical disabilities	89	3.37	17.98	56.18	22.47
Children with intellectual disabilities	91	5.50	26.37	47.25	20.88
Youth offenders	90	11.11	32.22	36.67	20.00

The aim of this question was to gain some idea of the provision organizations make to accommodate special populations. Although this question was included, no detail of the nature or the degree of the disability was provided or requested.

**Table 3** is indicative of the fact that persons with physical and intellectual disabilities are grossly neglected and are only accommodated in adventure-based programmes on an irregular basis. This irregular provision can be attributed to the costs of adjusting facilities, as well as the need for special equipment and a high staff ratio when accommodating persons with physical and intellectual disabilities. Less than a third (32.22%) of the respondents indicated that youth offenders were accommodated on a regular basis and 11.11% indicated that this group was always accommodated. Other populations catered for included “Street Children” (1), “Children’s Homes” (2), “Abused Children” (2) and “Deprived or poor Communities” (4). Respondents did not always indicate how often these populations were accommodated.

The benefits of an integrated programme are numerous and allow for participants to learn from and about each other. Additional research, staff training and possible modifications to the programme instruction and outdoor facility will be required in order to accommodate persons from diverse back grounds and abilities (Keung & DeGraaff, 1999:22; Ball & Ball, 1990:136).

### 3.11 ACTIVITIES PRESENTED DURING ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES

**Table 4. Activities (N=93)**

ACTIVITIES	TOTAL RESPONSES	YES (%)	NO (%)	RANKING
Archery	91	10.99	89.01	16
Horseback riding	92	11.96	88.04	15
Swimming	93	73.12	26.88	9
Canoeing	93	64.52	35.48	10
Sailing	91	8.79	91.21	17
Music	92	44.57	55.43	14
Drama	93	51.61	48.39	13
Arts & Crafts	93	54.84	45.16	12
Outdoor living skills	91	78.02	21.98	7
Hiking/backpacking	93	94.62	5.38	1
Abseiling	93	51.61	48.39	13
Nature studies	93	81.72	18.28	5
Conservation activities	93	78.49	21.51	6
Bible studies	89	64.04	35.96	11
Team sports	92	77.17	22.83	8
Quiet times	92	85.87	14.13	3
Obstacle course	91	84.62	15.38	4
Orientation	89	87.64	12.36	2

### **3.11.1. ACTIVITIES**

The “ranking” column in **Table 4** reflects the ranking of the activities from the highest to the lowest percentage of votes reflected in the “yes” column. The results from **Table 4** indicate that the three activities offered most by organizations as part of the adventure-based programme are hiking/backpacking (94.62%), orientation (87.64%) and quiet times (85.87%). Activities offered least are sailing (8.79%), archery (10.99%) and horseback riding (11.96%). This does not imply that the first three activities are the most popular and the latter three the least popular. Certain activities depend on the availability of specific facilities, e.g. a river or dam for canoeing, special equipment, e.g. sail boats for sailing and qualified or trained outdoor leaders that may not always be available.

Additional activities added by 18 respondents to the list provided in the questionnaire included “ ... water slides, tubing, cooking, tracking, environmental audits, rock climbing, kayaking, gorge crossing, cave crawling, team building, raft building, rituals and ceremonies”.

The variety of activities offered is indicative of the fact that organizations offering adventure-based programmes to youth-at-risk have developed a “broad-based educational approach” (Taylor, 2001). O’Donogue (2001) refers to the “adventurizing of the nature spirit of environmental education” that contributed to “multi-functional centres”. This approach is evident in the response from Friedel (2001) that Umgeni Valley offers “from prefect leadership courses to fun, adventure, group bonding, pure syllabus, hard core school learning”.

### **3.11.2. GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAMMING**

An adventure-based programme is much more than just a combination of activities in the outdoors to keep youth occupied for a few days.

Activities should comply with the requirements of what constitutes **adventure**: “uncertainty of the outcome” and “ the potential to lose something of value” (Telfer,

2001). There are different levels of risk: low, medium and high risk; a good programme will incorporate all three, according to Spies (2001).

Set **clear aims and objectives** with the co-operation of the referring agent, e.g. social worker (Calitz, 2001; Friedel, 2001; O'Donogue, 2001) and select activities to achieve the aims and objectives, rather than merely keep participants "occupied and happy" (Friedel, 2001); activities should be "structured for success, being challenging and enabling the participants to derive positive feelings from participating" (Telfer, 2001).

**Review**, also referred to as debriefing, needs to follow the activity (Telfer, 2001; Le Roux, 2001; Malan, 2001); the focus is not the activity per se, but what can be learnt from it, relating it to the participant's real world (Spies, 2001; Le Roux, 2001).

**Progressive programming** implies that different levels of competence can be achieved by the participant in a particular activity. According to Telfer (2001), planning programmes for different age groups and different skill levels prevents "venue fatigue". He further cautions that offering "the same activities, run in the same venue gradually reduces their effectiveness as they are repeated". At "Spirit of Adventure" developmentally appropriate aims are determined for different age groups, i.e. "from effective behaviour (youngest level) to an understanding of effective teamwork (intermediate group) to understanding leadership (young adolescents)".

There are different **levels of recreation programming**: pure recreation, educational recreation, developmental recreation and therapeutic recreation (Spies, 2001). Outdoor leaders need to understand the values and metaphors that can be generated from the activity. Too many outdoor leaders only know the technical aspects. Adventure without meaning derived through facilitation is simply recreation (Heunis, 2001). Gumble (2001) cautions against rigid structuring of programmes and advises to "put a process into place and then work with it".

Adolescents should **participate voluntarily** in both the programme (Blake, 2001; Robertson & Van der Heyden, 2001) and activities, referred to as the “Challenge by Choice” (Heunis, 2001; Le Roux, 2001).

**Continuity** must be ensured by encouraging and requesting leaders from the referring organization/group/community to participate in the adventure-based programme with the youth (Robertson & Van der Heyden, 2001; Van Dyk, Brink & Arendse, 2001; Friedel, 2001). As Robertson & Van der Heyden (2001) explain: “When a therapeutic process has occurred then it means that something has shifted. The difficulty is going back to the same system. ...That is why we work with different organizations. Staff can go on with the adventure-based programme”.

**Aftercare** or follow-up is important (Spies, 2001). This is where a social worker can fulfil an invaluable service in ensuring the continuity referred to in the above paragraph.

“Work within the **small group**”, advises Van der Spuy (2001). Adventure-based programmes are organized around a variety of small group experiences such as the cabin or tent group, activity group and the camp community as a whole. Halliday (1991:18) is of the opinion that “the group-living experience is one of the most unique and powerful aspects of camp life and is of primary importance to social learning. This community or small group situation becomes the laboratory for social learning”.

**Risk management** should be practised in all areas of adventure-based programming and every resource – human, physical, financial and operational – should be geared towards the safety of all aspects of the programme, in particular the participant (Ball & Ball, 1990:91). **Safety** is non-negotiable and high standards should be maintained throughout the adventure-based programme (Calitz, 2001; Chain, 2001). In specialized activities like mountaineering outdoor leaders need to be accredited (Calitz, 2001).

### 3.11.3 FACTORS AND TRENDS THAT INFLUENCE PROGRAMMING

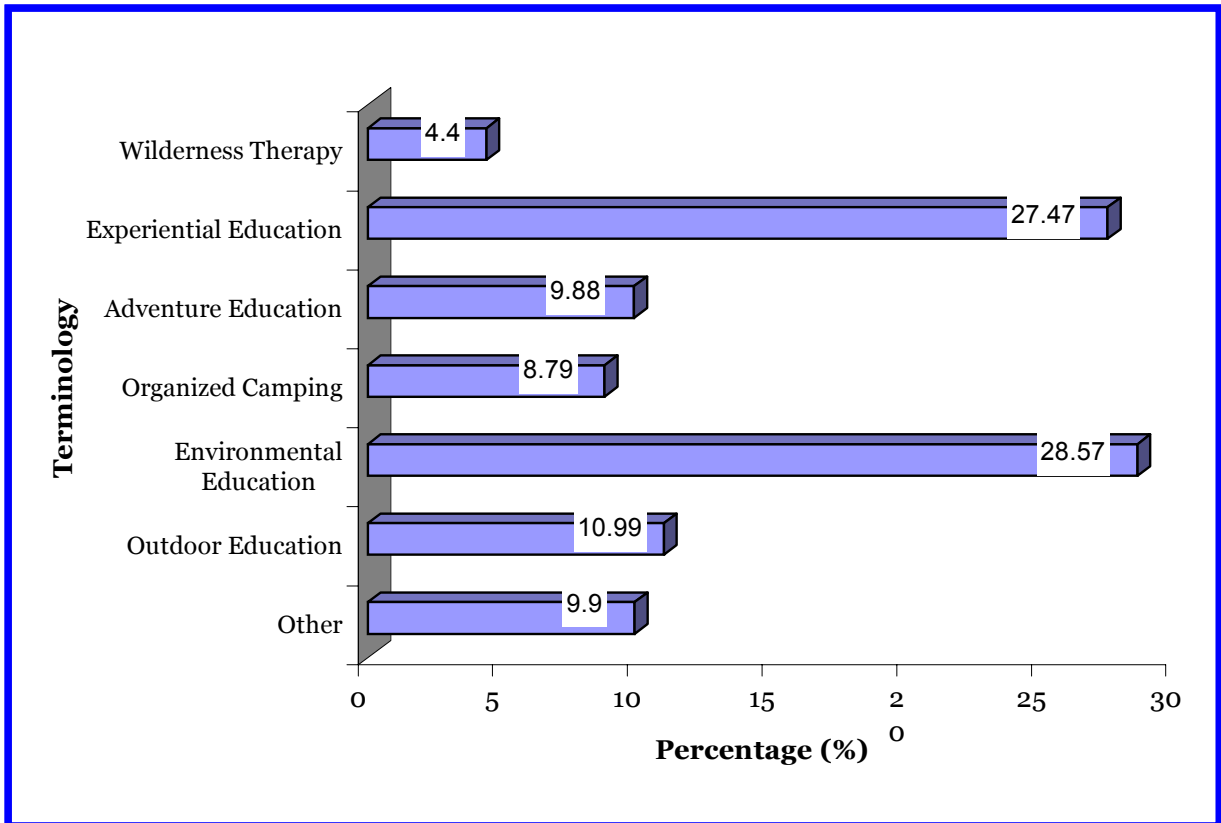
Some interesting issues affecting adventure-based programmes were raised by interviewees:

- The **physical ability** of children is changing due to long hours spent indoors with computers and TV games (Telfer, 2001).
- There is a **growing interest** in adventure-based activities due to media coverage of adventure events and TV programmes such as “Survivor”, “Eco-challenge” and “Gladiators” (O’Donogue, 2001; Telfer, 2001; Dippenaar, 2001; Le Roux, 2001; Funa, 2001; Van der Spuy, 2001).
- The **social and cultural context** of the participant should be considered when addressing developmental needs for programming purposes (Coughlan, 1997: 17). Cultural differences can impact on the participant’s perception of activities in many ways, e.g. black children from a rural village will be less excited about a hike, because they are often used to walking long distances (Calitz, 2001); Muslim girls are brought up in a protective environment and have more fears in the outdoors (Telfer, 2001); black teenage girls tend to be overweight and are less competent in physical activities than their male counterparts, who excel in physical activities (Telfer, 2001). Hobongwana (2001) states the following: “They (black South Africans) are used to the outdoors, but not to the activities associated with adventure. ... Black people are scared of water because very few know how to swim ... they also have a fear of heights”. The researcher would like to stress that these statements are obvious generalizations about the different cultural groups. Cultural norms and values are fluid and undergo constant change.
- Adventure-based programmes are a **new phenomenon** to black South Africans and there is increasing interest in this phenomenon (Hobongwana, 2001; Chain, 2001).

- The possibility of **litigation** will play an increasingly important role in the industry (Chain, 2001).

### 3.12 TERMINOLOGY FOR ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES

Figure 9. Terminology (N=91)



The question on terminology was included due to the personal experience of the researcher in finding the use of different terms for essentially similar programmes. The views of respondents on the terminology preferred by them to describe the nature of their programme is reflected in **Figure 9**. For the purposes of this study and the following discussion the following abbreviations were used to simplify matters:

- WT** : Wilderness Therapy
- OE** : Outdoor Education
- EE** : Environmental Education



- OC** : Organized Camping  
**AE** : Adventure Education  
**ExE** : Experiential Education

There are definite differences in opinion on the terminology issue as seen in **Figure 9**. **EE** was chosen most often (28.57%) followed by the term **ExE** (27.47%). Forty-four percent (43.96%) of the respondents were about equally divided (except for **WT**) in their choice of terminology: **AE** (9.88%), **OC** (8.79%); **OE** (10.99%); **WT** (4.4%) and other terms chosen (9.9%), including terms such as team building and leadership development (2); outdoor adventure centre (2); life-skills programme (2) and youth group with strong outdoor interests (1).

Interviewees reflected a similar pattern and it was clear that outdoor leaders are divided on the issue and the relevance of defining terminology. O' Donogue (2001) questions the need to define terminology and is of the opinion that persons have failed to define these terms separately, "because people had vested interests ... that drove them to define the differences, setting the programmes apart. ...The physical, spiritual, psychological and social benefits of the programmes are so interwoven that a clear distinction, particularly when dealing with children from a disadvantaged background, are highly questionable. I would shift to defining it within the learners' experiential challenges. I would just say that one is looking at a field that has many names".

On the other side of this debate are outdoor adventure leaders who stress the importance of defining terminology (Heunis, 2001; Telfer, 2001; Spies, 2001; Malan, 2001; Calitz, 2001). Heunis motivated that much is lost by placing everything under the umbrella of **EE** and Malan motivated strongly for defining terminology or "else you get nowhere" (freely translated from Afrikaans).

It was the experience of the researcher that many practitioners in environmental education tend to frame every activity that happens in the outdoors as environmental education. Children could become aware of the environment from participating in an adventure-based activity like canoeing, but it is not a specific objective and it does not qualify to be termed **EE**. It is important to understand

that both **AE** and **EE** can be combined in one, e.g. teaching a group the skill of canoeing and taking water samples while canoeing (Spies, 2001; Heunis, 2001). There is considerable overlapping between **AE** and **EE** in such a programme, but the key factor is the emphasis or main objective of the activity which will determine the term used to describe the outdoor programme (Malan, 2001).

This study is not an attempt to define terminology. The researcher does, however, feel compelled to reflect the opinions of interviewees who shared their views on the terminology, as this portrays more about the nature and issues in the adventure-based field.

**Environmental Education (EE):** It is not surprising to see that 28.57% of the respondents chose this term to describe the nature of their outdoor programme. Questionnaires were sent to many Environmental Education centres throughout South Africa. These centres have adapted over the years, especially in the nineties to the growing demand for adventure-based activities (Taylor, 2001; O'Donogue, 2001). Friedel (2001), director of an **EE** centre, refers to their work as “environmental education fieldwork” and explained that “environmental education is usually accepted as the more direct response to environmental issues; the fieldwork aspect is one of the ways to respond to environmental issues. The broad aim is to promote public participation in caring for the earth”.

**EE** is a component of **OE**, according to Calitz (2001) and Spies (2001). There is a difference in the types of activities environmental educationalists select to achieve their aims compared to those selected by adventure educationalists as medium for education (Spies, 2001). Malan (2001) views **OE** and **EE** as “one and the same thing” (freely translated from Afrikaans).

According to Spies (2001) it appears as if environmental educationalists have resistance towards the use of the term **OE** and his attempts to discuss the different terms with officials from the Department of Environmental Affairs had no impact whatsoever. O'Donogue (2001) provided a historical overview and explained that “the debate from conservation education to outdoor education in the late 1970's continued between **OE** and **EE**. There was a fundamental, ideological problem in SA, because **OE** was ascribing to Christian Nationalism. The **EE** educationalists

were labelled as communists. The paper ‘Sunny skies, a total onslaught’ made fun of this debate. Those skeletons have never been put to rest and there is still tension whether the veld schools are called outdoor centres or environmental education centres. We have a legacy of tensions”.

**Adventure Education (AE)** : Telfer (2001) describes his programme as “using adventure in the outdoors as a medium to develop objectives related to personal development”. **AE** occurs when an adventure-based activity, e.g. rock climbing is used for educational purposes (learning about the self) through facilitation and discussion on what was learnt through experience (Spies, 2001). According to Malan (2001) **OE** is on the one side of the continuum and **WT**, e.g. rock climbing, on the other end, with **AE** in between. The aim is to bring about change through the use of specific techniques during activities that can take place both indoors and/or outdoors (Malan, 2001).

**Outdoor Education (OE)** : The use of this term is fading out and is hardly used in SA, compared to Europe where the term **OE** figures strongly (Spies, 2001). **OE** has two legs: **AE** and **EE**. In the UK, the “Institute for Outdoor Learning” has established one “leg” for **EE** and one for **AE**. Spies is doubtful whether South Africa will reach this level soon.

**Wilderness Therapy (WT)** : Robertson and Van der Heyden (2001) explain that “you can call it whatever: adventure education, wilderness therapy, outdoor education. Therapy is a Greek work for healing. All therapy involves learning and growth and development. ... People tend to shy away from therapy. People need to understand what therapy is about, e.g. aroma-therapy does not mean that you have problems. Just the same, wilderness therapy is therapy. The experience is an intensive therapeutic one”. Gumble (2001) is of the opinion that “care has to be exercised when referring to wilderness therapy, because wilderness refers to land untouched by mankind at large; rather use the term remote areas. ... Is the experience therapeutic, meaning ‘healing’? Yes. Can you actively facilitate that? It depends on who the outdoor leader is”. The division in opinions on terminology will continue in the future and is bound to continue for some time in South Africa.

### 3.13 AIMS OF THE ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMME

**Table 5. Aims of Adventure-based Programmes (N=93)**

AIMS OF THE ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMME	Total Responses	PERCENTAGE (%)				
		Not Important	Somewhat Important	Unsure	Important	Very Important
To develop the child as a whole.	93	0	1.08	0	32.25	66.67
To make young people aware of and sensitive to environmental problems, and their role in solving these problems.	93	6.45	6.45	2.15	41.94	43.01
Leadership development.	93	1.08	4.30	0	45.16	49.46
To promote the development of desirable personality traits, e.g. self-discipline.	93	0	0	3.22	41.94	54.84
To serve others.	93	2.15	3.23	8.60	45.16	40.86
To build character.	93	0	1.08	2.15	34.40	62.37
To develop social skills.	93	0	1.08	1.08	47.30	50.54
To achieve self-discovery.	93	0	1.08	2.15	27.95	68.82
To teach young people the skills needed for understanding, evaluating and solving environmental problems.	93	4.30	8.60	11.83	38.71	36.56
To help young people select lasting recreational pursuits.	93	6.45	22.58	18.28	34.41	18.28
To achieve spiritual awareness and growth.	93	1.08	8.60	5.38	26.88	58.06
To help pupils evaluate the impact of human behaviour on the environment.	93	4.30	13.98	4.30	37.64	39.78
To produce increased physical fitness and improved health.	92	8.70	23.91	8.70	42.39	16.30

To provide pleasure	92	2.17	7.60	1.09	44.57	44.57
To teach physical skills in outdoor activities	91	5.49	12.09	3.30	51.65	27.47

### 3.13.1. AIMS OF ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES

The fifteen aims listed in the questionnaire were selected from Clayton’s (1979: 176 – 178) list of aims for organized camping, adventure education, outdoor pursuits and field study centres. It is apparent from studying **Table 5** that the five most important aims are:

- to achieve self-discovery (68.82%);
- to develop the child as a whole (66.67%);
- to build character (62.37%);
- to achieve spiritual awareness and growth (58.06%); and
- to promote the development of desirable personality traits, e.g. self-discipline (54.84%).

It is significant to note that the “top seven” aims in **Table 5** are related to the development of the “inner person” of the participant, compared to the development of environmental awareness and physical skills. The three least important aims are to help young people select lasting recreational pursuits (18.28%), followed by the aim to teach physical skills in outdoor activities (27.47%) and the aim to teach young people the skills needed for understanding, evaluating and solving environmental problems (36.56%).

Expectations from organizations referring youth to adventure-based programmes vary, according to interviewees, and include:

- “having fun, extending limits, developing self-esteem” (Taylor, 2001);

- “change, i.e. being better leaders, being more confident, outgoing, able to interact better with their peers, being able to apply what they’ve learnt from the syllabus better” (Friedel, 2001);
- identifying and training leaders, race integration (Dippenaar, 2001); Dippenaar (2001) claims that the true leader is identified in the outdoors rather than in the indoor classroom;
- developing the potential of the participant; life-skills development (Van Dyk, 2001; Le Roux, 2001; Schroder, 2001); and
- evangelizing children and improving their relationship with God (Van Dyk, Brink & Arendse, 2001; Voord, 2001; Van der Spuy, 2001).

### **3.13.2. CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING AIMS**

Interviewees highlighted certain challenges facing the outdoor leader in the process of establishing and achieving the aims and goals for adventure-based programmes.

#### **3.13.2.1 KNOWING THE TARGET GROUP**

It is vital for the outdoor leader to know the target group (Muller, 2001, Mtunzi, 2001) and to know the risk areas of the group, e.g. lack of trust in each other and low self-esteem (Malan, 2001). For Friedel (2001) prefect training suggests spending time with them in their context, i.e. observing them during a break-time at school. These are the times when prefects face most of their challenges like telling a grade 8 pupil to pick up a piece of paper. “When it comes to executing their role they fall flat and no amount of obstacle course is going to help them ...” (Friedel, 2001). Hobongwana (2001) echoes this sentiment in his advice on working with youth-at-risk: “Understand their background, where they come from. Get to know them, observe them, how they think and treat others ... before you go out on the programme”. In contrast however, Van Dyk, Brink & Arendse (2001) prefers to know as little as possible of the group sent to him on an adventure-

based programme to avoid labeling the participants and consequently having predetermined ideas about them and losing objectivity.

### **3.13.2.2 MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE TARGET GROUP**

“First the aim, then the activity” advises Telfer (2001). The aims of an adventure-based programme need to meet the needs of the participants (client group) (Taylor, 2001; Kirkman, 2001). Organizations offering adventure-based programmes have experienced increased pressure to offer “high adventure”-based activities, but there needs to be a balance between what the client group wants and what the organization can offer (Taylor, 2001). An organization offering adventure-based programmes should not just be able to state the aims and objectives of a programme and how they will achieve these, but should also be able to clearly indicate how outcomes and results are measured (Telfer, 2001).

### **3.13.2.3 REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS**

An adventure-based programme is not an instant cure, “it is a process” (Van Dyk, 2001; Gumble, 2001). Friedel (2001) is of the opinion that expectations of change in the individual are false, “because no one incident or activity can change people for the better. There is a huge lifetime of experience that can and will affect them”. Gumble (2001) explains that “in its essence wilderness programmes are not outcomes-based, they are process-based. ... Do you want the child to come into this programme and leave with a certain outcome? E.g. Johnny is juvenile delinquent and you want him to come out on the other side not doing crime. No one can say that. What you can say is, that if you put these and these in place one can hope that Johnny learns more pro-social skills, he develops morality, and so on”.

### 3.14 GENERAL STATEMENTS ON ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES

**Table 6. General Statements on Adventure-based Programmes (N=93)**

STATEMENTS	Total responses	PERCENTAGE (%)				
		Definitely do not agree	Do not agree	Unsure	Agree	Definitely agree
Outdoor leaders should receive special training to work with youth-at-risk.	90	0	2.22	1.11	33.33	63.33
Adventure-based programmes are not a cost-effective way of teaching life-skills to youth-at-risk.	89	34.83	30.33	17.97	11.24	5.62
All youth-at-risk (12 – 18 years of age) can benefit from an adventure-based programme.	91	3.30	3.30	4.40	18.68	70.33
It is difficult to obtain sponsorships for youth-at-risk.	90	4.44	7.77	26.66	36.66	24.44
A social worker can play a valuable role as a staff member during an adventure-based programme for youth-at-risk.	90	4.44	5.55	13.33	36.66	40.00

#### 3.14.1 TRAINING OF OUTDOOR LEADERS TO WORK WITH YOUTH-AT-RISK

Nearly two thirds of the respondents (63.33%) “definitely agreed” with the statement that outdoor leaders should receive special training to work with youth-at-risk, followed by 33.33 % “agreeing” as is evident in **Table 6**. This view was echoed by interviewees who also raised other issues regarding the training of outdoor leaders. Not every outdoor leader is equipped to work with youth-at-risk and outdoor leaders need to obtain the necessary experience or training to work on a therapeutic level, knowing his/her limits and how and when to refer a participant for further assistance when required (Spies, 2001; Dippenaar, 2001). Blake (2001) recommends that outdoor leaders should have knowledge about the



Child Care Act. Training guidelines need to be formulated for outdoor leaders to work with youth-at-risk (Malan, 2001).

Heunis (2001) cautions against simply training outdoor leaders to follow a “cook book, mechanical, approach” (freely translated from Afrikaans). Training should be done through mentorship and practical experience (Chain, 2001). Gumble (2001) also cautions against “sausage machine mass training”, and advises to take the staff out and “do not run the same kind of programme, but run the same kind of experiences”.

The strong emphasis on practical experience is evident in the training that organizations such as Outward Bound and The Wilderness Therapy Institute offer to prospective outdoor leaders. Outward Bound trains their outdoor leaders over a three month period. During this time attention is given to “soft skills” training and situations that could arise, e.g. smoking, are addressed (Le Roux, 2001). The Wilderness Therapy Institute offers training to individuals interested in becoming outdoor leaders by taking such persons through the wilderness experience process. Robertson & Van der Heyden (2001) state that “after 25 days they can assist with facilitation and then can become facilitators after a 100 wilderness days”.

Training is about equipping people - in this case outdoor leaders - with the necessary skills and knowledge for the job responsibilities; preparing the individual for the task ahead and furnishing the person with the knowledge (information, authoritative directions or commands) required for the position (The New Century Dictionary, 1948:838).

The training of an outdoor leader can be placed on a continuum, with the novice on one end and the skilled outdoor leader on the other side (Green, 1990:217). The researcher adapted the continuum provided by Green (1990:217). It is important to note that the continuum has a beginning point, but no end; as training is an ongoing process, particularly in outdoor leadership. Learning about outdoor leadership is a journey; there is no destination.



Untrained &  
inexperienced

Some training &  
some experience

Well trained &  
well experienced

Training opportunities for outdoor leaders in SA include:

- modules in adventure education as part of a degree;
- internships;
- short courses, e.g. level 1 of the OAA of South Africa, field-guiding, first aid;
- staff training that includes orientation, pre-camp training;
- practical experience participating in adventure-based programmes.

There is no standard course or curriculum for training outdoor leaders in South Africa. It appears as if insufficient attention is given to knowledge and understanding of the participant. Training focuses primarily on “hard skills” (technical skills to teach an outdoor pursuit, e.g. canoeing) with less time devoted to “soft skills” development (group dynamics and facilitation).

Facilitation of activities only started featuring as part of training modules about a decade ago. There appears to be a strong emphasis on “mentorship” of outdoor leaders, i.e. learning through practical experience in the company and with the assistance of an experienced outdoor leader(s). However, this is only one side of the coin. Training through practical experiences needs to be supplemented with a sound theoretical knowledge base on all aspects of adventure-based programmes.

### **3.14.2 COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES**

As reflected in **Table 6**, most of the respondents (65.16%) disagreed with the statement in the questionnaire that adventure-based programmes are not a cost effective way of teaching life-skills to youth-at-risk. Interviewees were of the opinion that adventure-based programmes are expensive and many youths cannot afford to participate in programmes (Taylor, 2001; Gumble, 2001; Funa, 2001; van

der Spuy, 2001). Costs of adventure-based programmes are mainly influenced by:

- high transport costs to outdoor venues (Dippenaar, 2001);
- competent (“quality”) staff (Taylor, 2001);
- expensive equipment (Van der Spuy, 2001);
- risk management (Taylor, 2001);
- high standards (O’ Donogue, 2001; Van der Spuy, 2001);
- labour intensity of organizing an adventure-based programme, especially if done only once or twice a year (Kirkman, 2001; Schoeman, 2001; Blake, 2001); and
- organizational overhead costs (Gumble, 2001).

It appears that outdoor leaders acknowledge that adventure-based programmes are expensive, but “the results obtained justifies the prevention of problems rather than trying to cure problems a few years later” (Van Dyk, 2001). Volunteers are an option to bring costs down, but the outdoor leader needs to convey his “heart and vision to this person or stand to lose some of the impact of the programme or adventure experience” (Schoeman, 2001).

### **3.14.3 BENEFIT OF ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES FOR ALL YOUTH-AT-RISK**

**Table 6** indicates a strong support (70.33%) of the statement that all youth-at-risk (12 – 18 years of age) can benefit from an adventure-based programme.

### **3.14.4 OBTAINING SPONSORSHIPS FOR ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES FOR YOUTH-AT-RISK**

Sixty one percent (61.1%) of the respondents agreed that it is difficult to obtain sponsorships for youth-at-risk to participate in adventure-based programmes with 24% “definitely agreeing”, as evident in **Table 6**. Twenty seven percent (27%) was unsure and this can be attributed to the fact that outdoor leaders are not involved with obtaining sponsorships for youth-at-risk.

It has become increasingly difficult to obtain sponsorships, according to Le Roux (2001), marketing manager of Outward Bound. Kirkman (2001) mentioned three important challenges: obtaining funds can be extremely time consuming; the process of identifying individuals with the potential to benefit from the adventure-based programme can be complex; and it is difficult to ensure that individuals who are sponsored attend these programmes.

### **3.14.5 THE ROLE OF A SOCIAL WORKER AS MEMBER OF STAFF**

**Table 6** indicates that 36.66% of respondents “agree” and 40% “definitely agree” that a social worker can play a valuable role as a staff member during an adventure-based programme for youth-at-risk. Interviewees in general appeared to agree with this statement. Friedel (2001) regarded the adventure-based programme as “a mere continuation of the social worker’s programme; the social worker is often the link between the outdoor programme and the community the child lives in”.

However, Blake (2001) is of the opinion that a social worker and/or other leaders from the referring organization should not accompany participants because “they undermine the authority of the outdoor leader and need a break from the children”.

Social workers are well-equipped to utilize adventure-based programmes as intervention strategy with youth-at-risk. Training of social workers include group-work skills, child and youth development, community work, individual therapy, assessing the needs and strengths of individuals and communities, referring and follow-up of clients when required. The researcher is of the opinion that adventure-based programmes to youth-at-risk can only be fully optimized with the active involvement of the social work profession.

#### **3.14.5.1 THE CHILD AND YOUTH CARE SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Adventure-based programmes are an effective and exciting new intervention option for child and youth development. It fits perfectly into the new CYCS of SA.

It is primarily prevention-orientated to youth-at-risk in general and equally effective as early intervention service for specific youth-at-risk. It is not surprising that welfare organizations such as NICRO refer many adolescent at-risk youth to participate in adventure-based programmes. The government expects welfare organizations to offer developmentally orientated programmes to client groups and adventure-based programmes complies to these requirements, according to van Dyk (2001), who is a social worker at a child care facility.

Adventure-based programmes offer innumerable opportunities for the participant to experience the spirit of belonging (friendship, sense of community), the spirit of mastery (acquiring new skills), the spirit of independence and the spirit of generosity. Very few programmes offer youth the opportunity to develop their “Circle of Courage” with the same intensity and effectiveness as adventure-based programmes.

#### **3.14.5.2. THE ROLE A SOCIAL WORKER CAN FULFIL AT AN ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMME**

A social worker can be an enormous asset to the staff composition of an adventure-based programme, in particular where youth-at-risk are accommodated. Possible involvement can be at different levels.

##### **3.14.5.2.1 The programme**

The social worker can actively assist with the facilitation of activities, contributing to the meaning derived from the experience. They must never just “go along”, but actively assist with facilitation. They can also help with programme planning as well as the formulation of goals and evaluation.

##### **3.14.5.2.2 The participant**

The social worker can assist with assessments, defining developmental needs, behaviour management, and can deal with abuse and neglect through direct involvement or referral. They can also assist where socialization problems occur.

#### **3.14.5.2.3 The staff**

The social worker can provide valuable support and guidance with group dynamics in particular and can provide objective assessments of campers in the group.

### **3.15 GENERAL COMMENTS**

General comments by respondents were wide and varied and appeared to mainly emphasize the value of adventure-based programmes, the need for public awareness and the skills required by the outdoor leader. The researcher selected some comments at random:

- “The public must have more faith in adventure-based programmes as they are perfect ways of developing leaders and equipping children to be able to become the best they can be and develop fully as people”.
- “There is no better way in which to achieve selected outcomes than adventure-based programmes. Comparative studies should be done to empirically determine long term behaviour change compared to other intervention strategies ...”
- “ It helps if the outdoor leaders are representative of the race and gender of the youth-at-risk group”.
- “In my time working as an outdoor leader, I have found it more important to teach team-building and leadership development rather than environmental aspects in order to make the youth-at-risk a more sociable person”.

### **3.16 SUMMARY**

This chapter reflects the diverse nature, specific requirements and complex limitations of adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk.

The adventure-based field is male dominated, white, with well-educated outdoor leaders who need to possess a wide array of skills and personal qualities.

The outdoor environment will become increasingly important as context and vehicle in which youth can experience fundamental lessons in a non threatening, active, real, fun way. Adventure-based programmes are interdisciplinary in nature and constitute a multi-disciplinary practice. Any domination of one discipline or school of thought should be avoided and role players should more accurately define the essential characteristics and nature of the programmes which they offer to youth in the outdoors.

Facilitating adventure-based experiences to youth-at-risk is no simple task and the outdoor leader needs to be trained to deal with behaviour that could include aggression, disobedience, hyperactivity and smoking.

It is clear from the research results that an adventure-based programme encompasses much more than simply offering activities in the outdoors to participants. Adventure-based activities can only be optimized to the level of an educational tool through purposeful planning, debriefing, follow-up and evaluation.

The division in opinions on terminology will continue in the future and is bound to continue for some time in South Africa.

Adventure-based programmes are a suitable intervention strategy for youth-at-risk and the social work profession has a great deal to offer, and even more to gain, utilizing adventure-based programmes in South Africa.

Although not a new educational invention, adventure-based learning has barely begun to unleash it's strength in the youth development field in South Africa. Without collective and co-ordinated action on the part of all role players in the adventure-based field, the researcher doubts whether adventure-based programmes will generate the attention, support and priority it deserves as intervention strategy with youth-at-risk.