

## **CHAPTER 4**

# **GENERAL SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES ON ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES FOR YOUTH-AT-RISK**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a summary of the major findings of the research study, followed by recommendations drawn from the research findings. Guidelines based on the research findings were formulated and presented as “worthy of confidence, acceptance, use, ... advisable” (The New Century Dictionary, 1948:1891). The researcher wishes to stress that the aim of this study is not to provide a "D.I.Y." manual for outdoor leaders. However, it is hoped that the proposed guidelines will be a valuable tool that can be used to influence the course and content of adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk in South Africa.

The achievement of the goals and objectives of the research is reflected and the chapter is concluded with the research question and final conclusion.

### **4.2 AGE OF THE OUTDOOR LEADER**

#### **4.2.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The age group mostly represented amongst outdoor leaders in this study is the 26–30 year olds, followed by the 31–35 year olds. Programme leaders have different views on the ideal or preferred age of the outdoor leader. On the one hand there are those who select the younger outdoor leader, e.g. Spirit of Adventure recruits 18 year olds, compared to those who prefer the outdoor leader to be older, e.g. Outward Bound, that requires the outdoor leader to be at least 24 years of age.

## **4.2.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The outdoor leader should be a minimum age of 19 years when working with youth-at-risk and programme leaders should be at least 21 years of age. An outdoor leader of at least 21 years of age should accompany participants on any trip or excursion away from the main camp. It is impossible to recommend a maximum age for outdoor leaders; however, only in exceptional cases would the researcher appoint a person older than 35 years of age, taking into consideration the previous experience, personality and motivation of the outdoor leader compared to the job description and task to be performed.

## **4.2.3 GUIDELINES**

- Team older outdoor leaders with younger ones when possible, especially where the activity is specifically designed for facilitating personal development, e.g. ropes initiatives.
- It is advisable that the outdoor leader should be at least nineteen years of age, i.e. having been out of school for at least a year before facilitating adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk.
- The programme leader should have at least three years experience as outdoor leader.

## **4.3 GENDER OF THE OUTDOOR LEADER**

### **4.3.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Outdoor leadership is a male dominated occupation in South Africa with more than two thirds (68.48%) of the respondents being male compared to 31.52% females.

### **4.3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The involvement and recruitment of both white and non-white females as outdoor leaders should be regarded as a priority by organizations offering adventure-based programmes. The researcher regards it as highly advisable for female outdoor leaders to facilitate and/or co-facilitate adventure-based programmes to female or mixed group participants, especially where living quarters are shared.

### **4.3.3 GUIDELINES**

- Recruit potential female outdoor leaders from previous participants.
- During all co-ed adventure-based programmes outdoor leaders should be representative of both genders.
- Where possible it is advisable to schedule both a male and female outdoor leader as co-facilitators during activities.

## **4.4 REPRESENTATION OF POPULATION GROUPS AMONGST OUTDOOR LEADERS**

### **4.4.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The largest population group represented amongst outdoor leaders in South Africa is the White population (72.83%), followed by Black persons (17.39%) and lastly by Coloured persons (9.78%). No Asians or any persons from other population groups in South Africa participated in the research.

The representation of all population groups on the staff of the adventure-based programme can significantly impact on the outcomes received in terms of diversity training, developing future outdoor leaders and behaviour management of campers.

#### **4.4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Participants and staff of adventure-based programmes should reflect the local and national diversity. Organizations offering adventure-based programmes should actively pursue the recruitment and development of outdoor leaders of all population groups in South Africa. Former participants represent one of the best recruitment sources and many students at tertiary institutions are keen to assist with programmes that will aid their professional development. An interpreter should be appointed as assistant outdoor leader where participants are from another population group and have little command of the English language.

#### **4.4.3 GUIDELINES**

- Employ outdoor leaders that reflect the regional and national diversity of South Africa by recruiting potential staff members from previous participants and networking with nearby or local facilities such as tertiary institutions.
- Create internships for students, e.g. from social work or psychology departments.

### **4.5 HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL TRAINING OF OUTDOOR LEADERS**

#### **4.5.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Outdoor leaders in South Africa appear to be well-educated in a variety of disciplines and field, from Psychology to Pest Control, from Nature Conservation to Communication. Research results indicate that more than two thirds (72.04%) of the respondents have post-matric qualifications. This diversely trained corps of outdoor leaders enriches and contributes to the inter-disciplinary nature of the adventure-based field.

## **4.5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is advisable for outdoor leaders to have a minimum qualification of grade 12. However, the researcher is of the opinion that academic qualifications are not as important as personal skills and qualities when appointing an outdoor leader.

## **4.5.3 GUIDELINES**

- It is advisable that outdoor leaders should have completed at least grade 12.
- In the absence of a degree or national certificate on adventure-based programmes, outdoor leaders have a personal responsibility to develop and acquire skills and personal qualities that will enable them to be more effective and efficient in their role as facilitators.

## **4.6 BASIS OF EMPLOYMENT**

### **4.6.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Nearly two thirds of the respondents (65.58%) were 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 with adventure-based programmes on a casual basis.

Full-time employed outdoor leaders have more scope and opportunities to develop their skills and extend their knowledge on adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk than outdoor leaders employed on a part-time or casual basis.

### **4.6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that organizations which are serious about adventure-based programmes to youth-at-risk, should develop an outdoor leadership component or

core group in their organization that can focus their attention on adventure-based programmes on a full-time basis.

### **4.6.3 GUIDELINES**

- Due to the specialized nature of adventure-based activities for youth-at-risk, it is advisable for organizations to invest in full-time staff to facilitate such programmes.

## **4.7 SKILLS AND PERSONAL QUALITIES OF OUTDOOR LEADERS**

### **4.7.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Outdoor leadership is the most critical element of any adventure-based programme and there is much more to appointing or becoming an effective outdoor leader than age, gender, educational background or race. The outdoor leader is the one variable that can have the most significant impact on the outcome of an adventure-based programme. This person can change a rainy afternoon into a memorable experience and an average activity into a profound learning opportunity.

It is evident when studying **Table 1** that the skills and personal qualities regarded by respondents as essential, are skills for managing participants; safety skills, e.g. first aid; a healthy self-concept/ self esteem; being a role model; and programme planning, implementation and evaluation skills. The skills regarded as important, rather than essential are group work skills, love of the outdoors, teaching skills, certification to teach at least one outdoor activity and lastly physical fitness.

In addition some respondents and interviewees added the following skills and qualities: being a role model, being motivated and valuing self-development, good interpersonal skills and the ability to work in a team, safety skills, love for children

and passion to work with them, flexibility, and experience gained through mentorship.

Outdoor leaders need to possess many skills and personal qualities, as is comprehensively listed in point 3.7. The effective and efficient outdoor leader makes the most of both skills and personal qualities. Adventure-based learning demands the total involvement of the outdoor leader. There are no short-cuts. Outdoor leadership becomes a life-style. It involves people who have discovered the value of adventure-based activities in the outdoors and have a sincere desire to guide the development of others through similar experiences. Outdoor leaders have a growth mentality, no matter who the target group, no matter what the activity and no matter where the programme is facilitated.

Facilitating personal growth demands mature outdoor leaders who value the needs of the participant above their own. Irrespective of the skills and qualities the outdoor leader may possess, there is no place for “ego” or self-interest.

#### **4.7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that programme leaders implement recruitment and appointment procedures that will include a detailed job description, emphasizing the skills and experiences required; thorough interviewing with specific questions that will reveal possible “red lights”; requesting references from a person who had the opportunity to observe the applicant in a position where he has instructed or facilitated an activity with children and youth.

Young, inexperienced outdoor leaders should be coupled with an experienced outdoor leader from whom the person can learn more about outdoor leadership and under whose guidance the younger person can practise skills.

### **4.7.3 GUIDELINES**

- Becoming an outdoor leader is a process and no single course or training module can prepare or equip a person with the necessary skills and qualities to be an outdoor leader.
- The personality and character of the outdoor leader is of primary importance compared to simply possessing skills to instruct an adventure-based activity.
- Personal qualities that an outdoor leader should display, include: maturity, being a role model, a love for children, valuing self development and personal growth, healthy self-esteem, love of the outdoors, flexibility, sound judgement.
- Skills the outdoor leader should master, include: behaviour management, safety skills, programme planning, implementation and evaluation skills, group work skills, facilitation skills, teaching skills, interpersonal skills, ability to teach through the use of metaphors.
- Skills and personal qualities can be effectively developed and enhanced through mentorship and experience.
- Becoming an effective and efficient outdoor leader is a journey; there is no destination. This implies a process of becoming rather than a place of being.

## **4.8 BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY YOUTH-AT-RISK**

### **4.8.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Youth-at-risk do present behavioural challenges to the outdoor leader. It is evident when studying **Table 2**, that the outdoor leader could experience any of the following behaviours during an adventure-based programme: substance abuse, truancy, eating disorders, vandalism, sexual misconduct, intimidation, bullying, lack of respect for or abuse of equipment and challenging authority. Smoking,

disobedience and hyperactivity has a high likelihood of occurring. Aggressive behaviour, e.g. fighting, and antisocial behaviour, e.g. theft, has a just below 50% chance of occurring.

The significance of this question in the research emphasizes the need for training outdoor leaders in how to deal with possible behavioural challenges.

#### **4.8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Organizations should establish written policies and clear procedures on dealing with every possible unacceptable behaviour that could occur during an adventure-based programme. Training of staff should include modules on how to identify and manage these behaviours. Other professionals and practitioners can be involved in staff training to assist with modules requiring expert guidance, e.g. youth delinquency. Education and training of staff need to be as practical and experiential as possible. “Training the trainer” appears to be the most effective approach to staff development.

Preventing the occurrence of behaviour problems is the most successful way of dealing with it.

#### **4.8.3 GUIDELINES**

- Behaviour management should be a vital part of the training of outdoor leaders.
- Outdoor leaders need a thorough knowledge of the developmental characteristics of children and youth.
- Training programmes for outdoor leaders should include modules on how to identify and deal with the occurrence of, e.g. hyperactivity, disobedience, anti-social behaviour and eating disorders.
- Written policies and procedures for dealing with every possible unacceptable behaviour should be available to the outdoor leader.

- It is crucial for programme leaders to provide support and guidance to outdoor leaders with challenging participants, since failure to manage challenging behaviour often results in tired and drained outdoor leaders, and could lead to "burn out" syndrome; more importantly, the aims of the programme is not achieved and the other respondents become discouraged by all the time and energy spent on "negative" behaviour. This support is crucial to the young and inexperienced outdoor leader.
- Participants that fail to benefit from the adventure-based experiences due to selfish attention-seeking or other destructive behaviour that cannot be successfully modified during the programme need to be withdrawn from the group and ultimately from the programme, should there be no improvement in their behaviour.
- A programme with clear and specific structure, time frames, guidelines for behaviour and consequences for anti-social behaviour can prevent the occurrence of behavioural problems and other time-consuming challenges.
- Follow-up and aftercare is important in providing a comprehensive intervention strategy to youth-at-risk presenting challenging behaviour.

## **4.9 DURATION OF ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES**

### **4.9.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Three-day programmes (26.67%) and five day programmes (23.33%) are the most popular length of adventure-based programmes offered to youth in South Africa. Outward Bound offers 14- and 21-day programmes to youth-at-risk. Costs and availability of funds, aim of the programme, skill level to be attained by the participants and research studies are factors that influence the duration of an adventure-based programme.

Many factors have a bearing on the duration of an adventure-based programme, e.g. needs and budget of the participants.

#### **4.9.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

More research on the impact which the duration of a programme can have on the outcomes achieved, is necessary to gain more insight into the exact implications of a programme's duration. One-day programmes, also referred to as "day camps", are an option that more organizations should investigate and consider.

#### **4.9.3 GUIDELINES**

- The aims of the programme, fiscal considerations and location of the outdoor venue are the primary factors that influence the choice of duration of an adventure-based programme.
- Research into the relationship between the duration of adventure-based programmes and the outcomes achieved can be of significant importance in determining the number of days over which a programme should extend.

### **4.10 PROVISION FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS**

#### **4.10.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Youth with physical and intellectual disabilities are grossly neglected and are accommodated in adventure-based programmes on an irregular basis. The costs of adjusting facilities, special equipment and the high staff ratio required when youth with disabilities participate in an adventure-based programme, are some of the reasons for the poor participation record reflected in the research.

Other "populations" accommodated include youth from Child Care Institutions, poor or deprived communities, abused children and youth from the streets.

#### **4.10.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Organizations should actively encourage and enable special populations, e.g. persons with physical and intellectual disabilities to participate in adventure-based programmes. Although these populations often have special catering, physical and programmatic needs, they can be accommodated with other youth in integrated programmes. This requires special planning and additional research into the needs of these groups. Staff will also need additional training to work with the population being served.

#### **4.10.3 GUIDELINES**

- Adventure-based programmes should be designed to meet the need of special populations, e.g. youth with disabilities.
- Outdoor (camp) venues can invest in the adaptation of their facilities and equipment to enable youth with disabilities to utilize their facilities.
- Special populations that can be targeted include persons with similar physical conditions, e.g. asthma, diabetes, AIDS; persons with disabilities, e.g. wheelchair bound, blind, hearing impaired; persons with learning disabilities: persons who share a similar psycho-social condition, e.g. persons from deprived communities, or from single parent families. The list is unending and with a little extra effort organizations can intervene in the lives of many youths with special needs.
- The special requirements and characteristics of a special population need to be researched before developing a programme.
- Train staff in understanding the special population and knowing how to deal with specific situations that might arise from working with them, e.g. menu considerations, medical conditions.

- Adjust the staff ratio if needed and/or appoint additional specialized staff, e.g. medical personnel.
- Serving special populations requires a change in the mind set of programme leaders, recognizing the need and value of adventure-based programmes to all populations despite the high initial costs of adjusting and modifying facilities, equipment and job descriptions.

## **4.11 ACTIVITIES PRESENTED DURING ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES**

### **4.11.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The majority of adventure-based programmes appear to offer a wide variety of activities to participants. There is hardly any limit to the variety of activities that can be included in an adventure-based programme. The results from this study indicate that the three most common activities offered are hiking/backpacking (94.62%), orienteering (87.64%) and quiet times (85.87%). Activities offered least are sailing (8.79%), archery (10.99%) and horseback riding (11.96%).

Due to increased demands to offer adventure-based activities, many traditional camping programmes had to include a greater variety of activities and expand the educational scope of their organization. This trend contributed to outdoor facilities becoming multi-functional outdoor centres.

Many **trends** influence adventure-based programming:

- The physical ability of children is changing due to longer hours of inactivity in front of television and computer sets.
- Interest in adventure-based activities is growing due to media coverage of adventure-based programmes and events such as “Survivor” and “Eco Challenge”.

- Cultural differences can influence participants' perception and consequent level of involvement in an adventure-based programme, 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).
- Adventure-based programmes are a new phenomenon to the non-white population groups in South Africa.
- The possibility of litigation will become increasingly important in the adventure-based field.

Adventure-based programmes offer many opportunities for activities that will require co-operation, team-work and decision-making, allowing the participant to accept responsibility for personal and group action. Very few interventions offer this immediacy and responsibility or accountability factor with such real consequences. The effective outdoor leader will utilize this quality of adventure-based programmes in achieving the objectives of the programme.

#### **4.11.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The list of possible activities that can be presented during an adventure-based programme is limitless. Organizations will need to broaden the variety of activities that can be utilized continuously in order to remain different and up front in the field. Debriefing or reviewing activities are required to derive meaning from the adventure-based experiences and special attention should be given to training outdoor leaders in the skill of facilitation.

Activities should be developmentally appropriate, conducted safely and selected carefully and specifically to achieve pre-determined aims and objectives. The small group context should be utilized as primary arena for change, and continuity or aftercare can be ensured through the involvement of outside leaders and follow-up programmes.

Outdoor leaders should be aware and alert to trends in the adventure-based field and cultural norms of participants.

### **4.11.3 GUIDELINES**

- Activities should be selected to meet the specific objectives of the programme.
- An adventure-based programme should consist of structured activities that stress excitement, allowing appropriate risk-taking behaviour; includes physical and mental challenges that allow the participants to extend their boundaries and move out of their comfort zones; encourages communication, problem-solving and group dynamics as they learn new skills – physical, social and emotional – ultimately contributing to personal growth.
- An adventure-based programme should include everything that happens during the programme at camp, from wake-up to clean-up, from eating to sleeping, from hiking to biking.
- Activities must be planned, prepared, reviewed and evaluated in order to maximize the outcomes on the personal development of the participant.
- Activities need to be developmentally appropriate for the participant.
- Progressive programming is imperative to avoid “venue fatigue” and to maintain the element of novelty in the programme.
- Small group dynamics should be utilized as often as possible; the more “at-risk” the participants, the smaller the group should be, never exceeding 12 and always with at least two outdoor leaders.
- Programme leaders will need to examine the trends and influences on the adventure-based field continuously in an effort to keep their programme appropriate, viable and in demand.

- Risk management should be ensured through out every aspect of the adventure-based programme.
- Follow-up or after care to ensure continuity of the programme should be implemented.

## **4.12 TERMINOLOGY**

### **4.12.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

This study reflects in no uncertain terms the division amongst outdoor leaders regarding the use of terminology that reflects the nature of the adventure-based programme offered by them to youth, including youth-at-risk. The term Environmental Education was chosen most often (28.57%), followed very closely by the term Experiential Education (27.47%). The rest of the respondents were about equally divided in their choice of a term: Outdoor Education (10.99%), Adventure Education (9.88%), Organized Camping (8.79%) and lastly Wilderness Therapy (4.4%).

It appears as if environmental educationalists define every programme in the outdoors as environmental education. This is similar to implying that every activity held in a church hall is religious. On the other end is a group of outdoor leaders and professionals who realize different aims and approaches in adventure-based programmes for educational purposes. There are more similarities than differences in these different outdoor programmes. However, the researcher is of the opinion that more specific definitions of the different terminology will add to a clearer understanding of the nature and essential qualities of the programme, clearly reflecting more accurately the meaning or significance and boundaries of the adventure-based programme. It is only through defining what we do, that we are able to get a clear, distinct image of what adventure-based programmes are all about.

It will be of great value to the adventure-based field in South Africa to have more accurately defined, generally accepted terms for different outdoor programmes.

Definitions reflect on the nature and qualities of the term being defined; explaining the meaning or significance of that which is defined.

The adventure-based field belongs to no one professional discipline and this lack of affiliation is both a strength and a weakness. It is enriched by a variety of theories, practices and paradigms of different fields and professional disciplines. Adventure-based programmes are available to complement and enrich any existing service and can be adapted to the needs of many diverse target groups. The social work profession is only one such discipline that can gain from and offer much to the development of adventure-based programmes as intervention strategy for youth-at-risk.

With regard to adventure-based programmes the researcher initially favoured the term “adventure-based learning”. At the end of the research, however, the term “outdoor learning” is most appealing to the researcher. This term is wide enough to include a wide array of activities that take place out doors in any natural environment. The term “learning” is preferred rather than “education”, because it shifts the responsibility to the participant to learn, rather than the outdoor leader to educate.

There is no simplistic solution to addressing the current differences on the issue of commonly recognized terminology for adventure-based programmes in an un-coordinated, divided field.

#### **4.12.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Dept. of Environmental Affairs, acting as “umbrella” organization for all outdoor programmes, can play a significant role in unifying a divided field and co-ordinating adventure-based programmes, but it needs to recognize the different methods and diverse aims in outdoor programmes. It is regrettable that there is a contingent amongst them that is not open for any discussion on the subject of terminology.

### **4.12.3 GUIDELINES**

- It will be of great benefit to the adventure-based field to have the different outdoor educational programmes more clearly and accurately defined in terms more commonly accepted amongst outdoor leaders.
- The notion of many environmental educationists to group everything under the umbrella of environmental education should be avoided. This notion fails to recognize and value the immense wealth, value and diversity of adventure-based programmes.

## **4.13 AIMS OF ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES**

### **4.13.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

It is evident that the aims of adventure-based programmes are diverse and quite extensive. An adventure-based programme is much more than a mere combination of activities in the outdoors to keep youth occupied and provide a fun time. It is apparent from studying **Table 5** that the five most important aims, i.e. those which received the highest ratings in the “Very Important” column, are:

- to achieve self-discovery (69%);
- to develop the child as a whole (67%);
- to build character (62%);
- to achieve spiritual awareness and growth (58%); and
- to promote the development of desirable personality traits, e.g. self-discipline (55%).

The above five aims are all related to the development of the “inner person” of the participant, compared to the acquisition of physical skills or the awareness of environmental issues. The outdoor leader faces many challenges in his quest to achieve the aims and objectives of a programme, e.g. knowing the target group,

meeting the needs of the target group and having realistic expectations about the outcomes.

#### **4.13.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Before an organization can develop aims and objectives for participating groups, it should have a clear vision, mission aims and objectives.

To qualify as an intervention strategy in the lives of youth-at-risk, aims and objectives should be formulated for each group participating in an adventure-based programme and these should comply with the following requirements:

- They should be based on a needs assessment and comprehensive knowledge base of the client group.
- They should be realistic, clearly and specifically defined in measurable terms.
- First the aim, then the activity, i.e. activities are a means to an end and not the end in itself.
- Aims and objectives should be formulated with the input of all key role players and should be communicated to all staff.
- All the resources – human, physical, natural and financial – should be critically evaluated to determine whether the aims will be achieved.

#### **4.13.3 GUIDELINES**

- Any organization offering adventure-based programmes should have a clearly defined vision and mission statement; and the aims of the specific adventure-based programme should be a reflection of this statement.
- The specific aims and objectives of an adventure-based programme vary, but most are aimed at personal development (self-esteem, character-building, spiritual awareness) and or group development (inter-personal skills, conflict management, team work).

- Be realistic and specific on the outcomes to be achieved and how the results of the programme will be measured.
- Aims and objectives need to be formulated for each participating group with the assistance of all the key role players, based on a needs assessment and thorough knowledge of the client group.
- All staff should be aware of and have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of the adventure-based programme and how these will be achieved.

## **4.14 TRAINING OF OUTDOOR LEADERS**

### **4.14.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The majority of respondents (96.66%) agreed with the statement that outdoor leaders should receive special training to work with youth-at-risk. There is a need for training guidelines that make provision for both theory and practical experience. Equipping outdoor leaders to work with youth-at-risk through adventure-based programmes is an ongoing process. There are no “short-cuts” and programme leaders should train younger outdoor leaders through the same processes participants experience during an adventure-based programme.

There are a few tertiary institutions and other private organizations in South Africa that offer training courses and/or modules to prospective outdoor leaders. Unfortunately, there is no separate module on working with youth-at-risk.

### **4.14.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

A training module or course for facilitating adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk should be developed by an accredited training institution or organization. Topics that could be included are child and youth development; delinquency; developmental assessment; goal-setting; special problems like enuresis, sleeping problems, eating disorders, stealing, hyperactivity, homesickness, suicidal

behaviour, sexual behaviour, abuse, vandalism; stress and burn-out in staff; behaviour management and discipline.

Organizations offering adventure-based programmes to youth-at-risk can and should train staff in the above mentioned topics during pre-camp training, in-service training and at staff meetings. Professionals with experience and knowledge can assist with training. Training should be grounded in a solid theoretical framework and be based on experiential learning practices, utilizing role-play, simulations and other methods to maintain a strong practical emphasis.

A staff manual is a valuable orientation and training tool to the outdoor leader and should include:

- personnel policies;
- operational and emergency procedures and policies;
- a job description;
- an organizational chart and description of the governing body (management); including the philosophy and aims of the organization;
- guidelines on issues such as behaviour management, games and ice breakers, risk management, general ideas for outdoor leaders; and
- a list of useful material.

It is also important to outdoor leaders to have access to literature and other material, e.g. videos on issues, topics and programme ideas. Organizations need to recognize the value of continuous training of outdoor leaders and create a climate of learning for staff. Guiding the development of the outdoor leader through mentorship and continuous support, is one of the most productive functions of the programme leader.

#### **4.14.3 GUIDELINES**

- In the absence of a degree or national certificate, module or course on facilitating adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk, organizations should

ensure that every staff member receives training prior to and during the course of a programme.

- Objectives for training include:
  - informing and infusing outdoor leaders with the philosophy and objectives of the adventure-based programme;
  - fostering a sense of pride in being an outdoor leader;
  - moulding the outdoor leaders and all staff into a harmonious team;
  - teaching skills necessary for the programme and allowing opportunity to practice those skills, e.g. facilitation skills;
  - guiding and encouraging the development of personal attributes and qualities expected from the outdoor leader as role model;
  - developing an awareness of the developmental characteristics of the different age groups and increasing the insight into working with the particular age group or special population;
  - understanding working policies and procedures within the organization and how they relate to the outdoor leader in particular; and
  - training outdoor leaders in behaviour management.
  
- Every staff member should receive a staff manual with comprehensive guidelines and information on the aforementioned topics.
  
- Topics to be addressed in training outdoor leaders to work with youth-at-risk include: child and youth development; delinquency; developmental assessment; goal-setting; special problems like enuresis, sleeping problems, eating disorders, stealing, hyperactivity, homesickness, suicidal behaviour, sexual behaviour, abuse, vandalism; stress and burn-out in staff; behaviour management and discipline.
  
- Training is an ongoing process and, although costly, it is the best investment in the programme; develop the participant by developing the outdoor leader.

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

### **4.15.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Although adventure-based programmes are costly, the majority of outdoor leaders (65.16%) regard it as a cost-effective way of teaching life-skills to youth-at-risk.

### **4.15.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is a huge challenge to organizations offering adventure-based programmes to youth-at-risk to determine the cost-effectiveness of their programmes, i.e. to justify the high cost against the results obtained. Due to the high costs of adventure-based programmes outdoor leaders should be effective and efficient in providing services, making the most of their facilities, resources and technology.

### **4.15.3 GUIDELINES**

- Programme leaders and outdoor leaders are challenged to provide effective and efficient adventure-based programmes, making the most of all resources, i.e. human, physical and natural.
- Adventure-based programmes cannot be everything to everyone; programme leaders should identify and focus on the two or three programme areas that they can do best, considering the resources available for the programme.

## **4.16 BENEFITS OF ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES FOR YOUTH-AT-RISK**

### **4.16.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Adventure-based programmes extend beyond the mastery of a narrow set of specific skills. Adventure-based activities are vehicles to achieve both psycho-social outcomes (self-esteem, sense of belonging, spiritual awareness, independence, generosity) and competency outcomes (skill mastery, social skills, physical health and fitness). Adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk, when well executed, is a powerful complementary child care service.

### **4.16.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Examining the efficacy of the adventure-based programme should remain a high priority to outdoor leaders. Carefully designed outcome studies provide an opportunity to compare and improve intervention models. The outcomes and processes of adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk should be determined and articulated to the public. Outdoor leaders need to identify the unique contribution adventure-based programmes make in meeting the needs of youth-at-risk in particular.

To intervene successfully and to gain maximum benefits, an adventure-based programme should be directed at where the young adolescent is, i.e. the developmental needs experienced by the person, and where they want to be, i.e. the developmental tasks they need to accomplish. Adventure-based programmes should be strength-based, focussing on promoting positive behaviour rather than preventing negative behaviour. This emphasis is of particular importance for adolescents who need to have positive future expectations that will help them avoid risk-taking behaviour that could jeopardize their expectations.

### **4.16.3 GUIDELINES**

- Evaluate and articulate the outcomes and processes of adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk to the public.
- Identify the unique contribution adventure-based programmes make in meeting the needs of youth-at-risk.
- The timing of intervention is critical; to promote personal growth is of greater value than to wait until youth are at a high risk. To be maximally effective and preventative in impact, children from an early age need to participate in adventure-based programmes.
- Specific learning objectives need to be formulated with clear outcomes that will be achieved; focus on promoting positive behaviour rather than preventing negative behaviour.
- The real effectiveness of the adventure-based programme is determined by how learning derived from the adventure-based experiences is transferred or relayed into the participant's everyday life. Outdoor leaders need to ensure that the learning which the participant experienced is successfully transferred into the future.

## **4.17 OBTAINING SPONSORSHIPS FOR ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMMES**

### **4.17.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Obtaining sponsorships for youth-at-risk to participate in adventure-based programmes is difficult and time-consuming, and there is no guarantee that all sponsored youth will participate or complete the programme.

Non-profit organizations offering adventure-based programmes to youth-at-risk in particular face many fiscal challenges and need to obtain adequate funding for these programmes from limited funding resources.

#### **4.17.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Organizations offering adventure-based programs to youth-at-risk need to determine and articulate the benefits of such programmes in an attempt to motivate the allocation of funds for the programme.

#### **4.17.3 GUIDELINES**

Non-profit organizations need to:

- adapt and operate their programmes according to sound business and effective marketing principles and practices;
- be the best provider of the programme that needs to be sponsored;
- measure and articulate outcomes of the adventure-based programme to prospective sponsors.

### **4.18 ROLE OF A SOCIAL WORKER**

#### **4.18.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

A social worker can play a valuable role as a member of staff during an adventure-based programme for youth-at-risk in the following areas:

- the programme: assisting with facilitation and group dynamics; goal formulation for participants;
- the participant: developmental assessments, behaviour management, referrals to outside agencies when appropriate, assisting with socialization problems; and

- the staff: objective assessments of campers, guidance and feedback, e.g. regarding group dynamics.

Social workers are highly suitable to develop models and skills needed to organize, maintain and evaluate adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk. Adventure-based programmes are a viable intervention alternative, compared to traditional approaches.

#### **4.18.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Social workers have a valuable role to play in the whole process of developing and offering adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk. Social workers should assist with the referral and assessment of client groups; follow-up and after-care; establishing and measuring aims and objectives; training outdoor leaders in the topics highlighted in 4.3.13; being a part of the staff during the programme and assisting with evaluations and observations of group dynamics, behaviour management, staff motivation.

Welfare organizations offering adventure-based programmes should develop intervention models and guidelines for programmes to youth-at-risk. The social work profession should also provide leadership for inter-disciplinary interventions and approaches such as adventure-based programmes.

#### **4.18.3 GUIDELINES**

- A social worker can play a valuable role as staff member during an adventure-based programme for youth-at-risk:
  - assisting with the management of participants, i.e. behavioural challenges, e.g. aggressive behaviour, hyperactivity, learning disorders, etc; cases of abuse and neglect; socialization problems;
  - compiling developmental assessments of individual participants;
  - supporting staff, i.e. assisting with inter- and intrapersonal issues affecting their work; providing objective assessments of participants; referring

- families for outside assistance; observing and assisting with group dynamics; reviewing interventions;
- documenting incidents and compiling reports that include recommendations.
- Social workers are often the persons referring youth-at-risk to participate on adventure-based programmes and they are the vital link from whom information about the target group can be obtained, and who can assist with follow-up and after-care once the participants return to their home environments.
  - Social workers are well trained in many aspects pertaining to adventure-based programmes to youth-at-risk, e.g. group dynamics, child and youth development and delinquency, and could therefore be valuable resources in staff training.
  - Social work and other community organizations should reach out to current organizations that offer adventure-based programmes to children and youth, and vice versa, and foster collaboration that will enhance service delivery to these target groups.
  - Field placements of social work students at organizations offering adventure-based programmes should be encouraged.

#### **4.19 TESTING THE RESEARCH GOAL**

The goal of the research was to develop guidelines for intervention through adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk. The guidelines formulated and reflected in 4.4 is a direct result of this research study. The researcher wishes to emphasize that the goal was not to formulate a “cook-book” style “D.I.Y.” guide to adventure-based programmes, but rather to develop a tool that can be used to aid the programming practices in the adventure-based field in South Africa. Many facts, ideas and propositions for possible consideration or possible action are

offered in the compiled guidelines. These guidelines are presented with confidence and many recommendations are viewed by the researcher as highly advisable and expedient.

## **4.20 TESTING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Three objectives were formulated for this research study:

### **4.20.1 To compile a theoretical framework for adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk by means of a literature study.**

In Chapter 2 a theoretical framework for adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk is provided, based on a review of the literature and related research. Many literature resources are not readily available in South Africa and the researcher had to obtain books and magazines during visits to the USA. The theoretical frame work in Chapter 2 provides substantial information for the reader to gain more insight into the nature, requirements and needs of adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk, laying the foundation for the consequent important research.

### **4.20.2 To explore and describe the nature, requirements and needs of adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk by means of a literature study and empirical research.**

The literature study and empirical research undertaken as part of this research clearly indicate the nature, requirements and needs of adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk. Through the research report the reader can develop an understanding of the dimensions, possibilities and complexities of this alternative, but under-utilized intervention strategy for youth-at-risk.

The research was undertaken on a national level and data was obtained from 93 completed questionnaires and 28 interviews. To date no other research on adventure-based programmes in South Africa had such an extensive base of

respondents distributed over such a large geographical area. This is of particular importance to the reliability and validity of data obtained.

#### **4.20.3 To develop guidelines for intervention through adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk, based on the research findings.**

Guidelines regarding many aspects of adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk were formulated, based on the research findings. Data obtained from interviewees in particular, have been extremely beneficial and informative, allowing for far greater detail on different issues. The guidelines proposed in this study are an important contribution to all involved with adventure-based programmes. It is a starting point for future expansion and will hopefully stimulate future in depth research.

### **4.21 RESEARCH QUESTION**

The collected and processed data reflected in this study address the research question formulated at the onset of the research study: “What is the nature, requirements and needs of adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk?”.

### **4.22 FORMULATION OF HYPOTHESES**

The formulation of the following hypotheses, based on the research findings, can serve as indications for further research:

- If social workers participate as staff members during adventure-based programmes, then both the participants and other staff will benefit from the professional experience and training of the social worker.
- If an adolescent participates in an residential adventure-based programme, then that individual will experience personal growth at different levels.

- If outdoor leaders receive training to deal with youth-at-risk (including aspects of behaviour management), then they will be able to deal effectively with challenging behaviour during an adventure-based programme.
- If a co-ordinating body for adventure-based programmes in South Africa is established, then the adventure-based field will benefit by increased professionalism and collective action.
- If more persons in the caring professions are trained to facilitate adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk, then more diverse client groups will benefit from adventure-based interventions.

#### **4.23 CLOSING STATEMENTS**

There is far more to an adventure-based programme than a few activities in the outdoors. Adventure-based programmes offer much as intervention strategy with youth-at-risk, but it is no quick-fix solution. Behavioural change is a process and adventure-based programmes should form part of a comprehensive service to youth-at-risk, rather than function as an isolated programme.

To realize their full potential as partners in the development of youth-at-risk, outdoor leaders need to be adequately trained, first as outdoor leaders and then to deal with specific populations such as youth-at-risk. The intervention potential of adventure-based programmes, specifically in relation to life-skills development in adolescents, is an area that requires greater understanding as well as action on the part of all the role players. Outdoor leaders need to reflect and interpret more on their practices, in order to stimulate more interest and support for this understated intervention strategy, with significant benefits for all concerned.

Social workers, because of their broad, value based approaches and extensive training, are well equipped, if not best equipped of all professions, to play an active role in the development of adventure-based programmes for youth-at-risk, be it in developing and offering programmes, training staff to work with youth-at-risk or as

staff member during an adventure-based programme. Adventure-based programmes as model of experiential education offer the social worker an alternative intervention strategy to achieve psycho-social and competency outcomes with youth-at-risk.

The researcher was impressed and encouraged with the efforts of some individuals and organizations that offer programmes of exceptional quality that can compete with the best in the world. From personal experience and the results obtained through this research, the researcher confidently declares that adventure-based programmes constitute one of the most exciting and effective intervention strategies that can influence adolescents to make the right choices, guiding their development while simultaneously exposing them to values modelled by excellent people.