

A critical review on motricity, adventure, and education: introducing the issue

Uma revisão crítica em motricidade, aventura e educação: introduzindo a questão

Una revisión crítica sobre motricidad, aventura y educación: introduciendo el tema

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GENERAL FRAMING OF THE PROBLEM

From what came to be known as “outdoor education” (OEd) many decades ago to the most current reproductions that address educational practices in nature, including directive documents in formal education, ‘adventure’ appears as a key element. The construction of outdoor education as a concept was originally fueled by the romanticism of excursionist poets from the 19th century, with highlights including the work of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, in addition to the rich narratives from John Muir in the late 19th and early 20th century about his expeditions in the region now known as the Yosemite National Park, in the United States. The aesthetic construction of nature as a ‘place’ of beautiful, sublime, and spiritually invigorating adventures, as described by these romantic explorers, emphasizes an opposition to the aesthetics of the ‘wild’ as a ‘place’ of the primitive and the barbaric, where royal courts and domestic habits were seen as the places of ‘civilized man’ (as described, for example, by Norbert Elias [1939] in his works about the civilizing process).

This aesthetic conversion established precedents for important schools of OEd practices in the United Kingdom, especially from the beginning of the 20th century, such as the Scouting Movement, proposed by Lieutenant General Robert Baden-Powell, and the Outward Bound School of Outdoor Education, proposed by educator Kurt Hahn. In the second half of the 20th century, educational models involving the acquisition of skills from leadership training in contexts of challenging and risky outdoor activities kept growing in numbers and legitimacy, especially in the United States. These instructional models reproduce the idea of adventure as conceptualized in naturalistic accounts and in the British models of scouting and OEd schools. This movement's greatest institutional expression is the National Outdoor Leadership School - NOLS, founded in 1965 by Paul Petzoldt, a climber and member of the 10th Mountain Division of the United States Army. Just like scouting and Outward Bound, NOLS aims to teach environmental ethics, however, from within an objective focus on the development of technical and leadership skills (safety and decision making) on long outdoor expeditions (in the ‘wild’).

Looking at this historical sketch of the history of OEd we can reflect on how, and how much, it still influences current adventure imaginaries that, to a large extent, mirror adventure experiences today, including in (potentially) educational and schooling contexts. But, nearly

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100 years after the initial conceptualizations of OEd, important questions must be asked about the continued relevance, priorities, and purpose or rationale of the field. Indeed, the ‘world’ has changed from the two World Wars in Europe that gave birth to OEd.

Specifically, when considering the praxis of the relationship between motricity, adventure, and education, such reflections unfold into very significant questions about the possibilities and limitations of (eco)pedagogical processes in adventure experiences. Under the umbrella of the central question “What pedagogical praxis is possible in adventure experiences?”, other questions invite critical and non-idealistic responses to the current and future status of OEd: There are many;

- What are the possible (eco)pedagogical ramifications and acknowledgeable limitations of adventure experiences that use or explore the ‘wild’ nature for human-centered only ‘anthropocentric’ purposes, that is, limited under the banner of personal development (individual formation) and/or social development (group or team development)?
- What are the possible (eco)pedagogical ramifications and acknowledgeable limitations of outdoor education when in its core are priority objectives associated with the acquisition of technical skills (performance, fitness, endurance, agility) and competences (risk management, safety instruction, nutritional orientation, navigation)?
- How can the instrumentation of adventure experiences that are objectively quantified, for example, based on the degree of difficulty established for trails, river rapids, and climbing routes, be converted or transformed into/for (eco)pedagogical experiences (outdoor education)?
- What are the possible (eco)pedagogical ramifications and acknowledgeable limitations of adventure experiences given the long historical anthropocentric and materialistic tradition, or dualisms, of body-environment relationships? And, in specific contexts of outdoor education, still highly influenced by the militarism roots in OEd?
- What are the possible (eco)pedagogical ramifications and acknowledgeable limitations of adventure experiences in different geo-cultural/historical and geo-epistemological contexts, given that the models, frameworks, and imaginaries of adventure/outdoor (education) were, to a large extent, exported globally from Europe (originally) and the United States (especially from the 20th century onwards)?
- What are the (eco)pedagogical ramifications and acknowledgeable limitations of adventure experiences considering possible contributions from the epistemologies from the Global South?
- What are the (eco)pedagogical ramifications and acknowledgeable limitations of adventure experiences considering possible contributions from Indigenous philosophies and epistemologies?
- What are the possible (eco)pedagogical ramifications and acknowledgeable limitations of adventure experiences given the super-valorization (including economic) of ‘commodified’ nature and of experiences in nature in modern times, including the cost of equipment specifically developed for better performance in nature experiences, trips to the exotic/remote ‘places of privilege’ in which nature experiences occur, and participation in preparatory courses to learn the ‘necessary’ skills and competences for experiences in nature?
- What are the possible (eco)pedagogical ramifications and acknowledgeable limitations of adventure experiences given the super-valorization of adventure as, now, a sporting spectacle (for example, inclusion of sports such as surfing and skateboarding in the Olympics), considering the historical limitations of sport as a pedagogical experience?

- What are the possible (eco)pedagogical ramifications and acknowledgeable limitations of adventure experiences given how the imaginaries of adventure are increasingly standardized and commodified in and by social media?

Within the scopes of these questions, and beyond, the aim of the special issue (SI) ‘Motricity, adventure, and education: A critical review’, published by the journal *Motricidades*, is to critically discuss the relationships between motricity, adventure, and education by acknowledging the ecopedagogical potentials of moving in nature (ecomotricity – Rodrigues, 2018; 2019) **while** contextualizing such potential in the face of the historical limitations associated with imaginaries and collective representations of adventure and of outdoor education.

This SI seeks a critical dialogue about how adventure experiences can be (eco)pedagogical while also highlighting the limits and problems (including, and especially, those that are difficult to resolve) for the praxis of what is being proposed, minimizing idealisms, reversing theoretical abstractions, and reducing/eliminating theory-practice gaps. Thus, the aim of the SI is a ‘collaborative-collective’ construction that is signified by empirically contextualized contributions targeting the effective pedagogical transformation of what is framed above as the general problem.

ASSEMBLING THE SPECIAL ISSUE

The general framing of the problem outlined above was publicized as a call for papers (CfP) for the SI, along with recommended complementary readings (Payne, 2002; Payne; Rodrigues, 2012; Rodrigues; Payne, 2017; Rodrigues, 2018). After receiving the initial abstract proposals from a range of experts in the fields of (outdoor) education, leisure studies, physical education, and health (among others), the criteria for selecting abstracts for full paper submissions were, mainly, consistencies with the focus and scope of the SI and the potential of creating an ‘assemblage’ of research studies; by assemblage we mean a collection of papers with the potential to collectively become a meaningful and generative unit(y). Assemblages are a meta-methodological innovation and compare ‘holistically’ or ‘ecologically’ with the conventional ‘individualism’ of research productions (e.g. Payne, 2016, 2018; Rodrigues; LowanTrudeau, 2021; Rodrigues *et al.*, 2020; Misiaszek; Rodrigues, 2023).

The first round of reviews of the full papers submitted after abstract approval included, along with the specific suggestions from the reviewers, a series of **general** comments (same comments to all authors/teams) from the editors of the SI asking for:

1. The precise (practical) problem of the study and purpose very early on in the manuscript, and addressing (the terms/language) of any or all of motricity/ecomotricity/movement experiences in nature.
2. A description of how the study elaborated the idea and practices of ecopedagogy and experiential doing/learning/becoming in the outdoors and nature.
3. A clear statement of the limitations/limits of the study.
4. Some accounting/responsibility of ‘what is in it for nature?’ (as well as humans).
5. Some short ‘auto’ description about how the researcher(s)/author(s) had changed as a consequence of his/her involvement in the research. And how future framing(s) by the researcher could proceed to extend/broaden the study.

These general comments were complemented with additional questions from the editors (once again, same questions to all authors/teams):

1. How had the text demonstrated (**conceptually/empirically**) what is ecopedagogical (**how? why?**) and what is reproduction of the anthropocentric history of adventure? (materialistic tradition of body-environment relationships; influences of militarism in outdoor education; adventure as a sporting spectacle).
2. How had the text demonstrated (**conceptually/empirically**) emerging ecological ‘affections’, aside/along/mixed with the acquisition of technical skills (performance, fitness, endurance, agility) and competences (risk management, safety instruction, nutritional orientation, navigation)?
3. How had the text demonstrated (**conceptually/empirically**) emerging ecological ‘affections’, aside/along/mixed with the perception of challenge/achievement/(overcoming) fear/adventure?
4. How had the text demonstrated (**conceptually/empirically**) the ways in which the particular geo-cultural/historical and geo-epistemological contexts where the research was conducted had **directly influenced** the models/frameworks/imaginaries of adventure/outdoor (education) presented in the paper? And how did this, in anyway, oppose/challenge the models/frameworks/imaginaries (imported) from Europe (originally) and the United States (especially from the 20th century onwards)?
5. How **accessible/available** was the ‘nature’/adventure education experience described in the paper? (considering, e.g., the costs of equipment, trips, courses, etc.; overall physical and symbolic limits to accessing ‘nature’; imaginaries of adventure standardized and commodified in and by social media).

There are at least three important editorial reasons for our early intervention offering of these general comments and questions: (a) Creating better links between the SI contributions and the CfP; (b) facilitating the process of the SI as an assemblage (as previously defined); and (c) guiding future publications that might want to dialogue with and expand the present assemblage, building on the critical review proposed by this SI. Hopefully these future contributions will tackle some of the missing considerations and remaining silences of this SI, some of them acknowledged in the final part of this introduction.

OVERVIEW OF THE SI CONTRIBUTIONS

As a SI proposal for publishing in a Brazilian journal, we (the co-editors) anticipated a ‘South(ern)’ response (even though the CfP circulated among research networks of both North and South). With that in mind, we thought it appropriate to offer a (short) history of the Northern ‘cultures’ of the outdoors and of adventure (education), along with a critical exegesis of how this culture has been often permissively and unresponsively endorsed and fostered elsewhere. We wanted the SI to be provocative and critical. And comparative – nationally, culturally, and globally. We, therefore, critically review the history of outdoor education and its pedagogical deployment as experiential learning in Australia, generating comparative possibilities for conceptually and methodologically ‘detraditionalizing’ the practices, policies, and research in OEd.

The aim of this reconstructive contribution, entitled ‘Movement and the challenge of Nature: An adventure?’ (Cae Rodrigues and Phillip G. Payne), is to provide a detailed thematic account of the roots and key issues that are outlined above in the general framing of the SI, as well as to ‘kick off’ what we hope is a (re)framing of the praxis of outdoor/adventure education and the environmentalization of Physical Education.

Most contributions to the SI came from researches and ‘stories’ from the South (Brazil, Chile, and Colombia), but papers from colleagues from Australia offer rich possibilities for local, national, and cultural comparisons. Table 1 and Table 2 summaries will help. While Table 1 is focused on structural elements of the assembled studies such as the general focus, empirical groundings, and methods, Table 2 is focused on how each paper responds to the general framing of the SI, highlighting main links with the CfP, ‘what is in it for nature?’, and emerging and needed ecopolitics.

Table 1: Summary of contributions – Structural elements of the papers.

Special Issue Motricidades - Motricity, Adventure, and Education: A critical review Invited editors: Cae Rodrigues (UFS, Brazil) & Phillip Payne (Australia)			
Title	Focus	Empirical grounding	Methods
Ecopedagogy and culture of peace: A case study of 'La Casa del Camino' foundation in Bogotá - Colombia	'Education for peace' and its synergies with ecopedagogy and environmental education	District of Bogotá, Colombia; 285 adults and children (parents and their children) that participated in the ecopedagogical activity 'Walk for Peace'.	Participant observation (walking ethnography) in case study of the ecopedagogical activity 'Walk for Peace', within the broader scope of the pedagogical contexts of 'La Casa del Camino' Foundation (for children/teenagers aged 3 to 18).
Socioenvironmental and community education: The experience of Raíces de Calafate School in the Chilean Patagonia	Ecomotricity as early childhood ecopedagogy in school settings	Chile Chico, Region of Aysén (South of Chile); children that regularly attend the Raíces de Calafate School, which has an ecocentric disposition to education.	Critical interpretation of narratives involving the history and daily practice(s) of the Raíces de Calafate School.
Dialogues on children's experiences in nature and the dual educational perspective of adventure	Ecopedagogical potential of family (parents and children) outdoor adventure experiences	Florianópolis (South of Brazil, known for nature sports); 6 children (3 boys and 3 girls) with regular experiences of adventure with their parents, and 6 parents (4 fathers and 2 mothers).	Instruments: guidelines for systematic and participant observations; pictures and videos; drawings from the children; dictionary where participants defined meaningful words related to the research (e.g. adventure, leisure); audio interviews, later transcribed and validated by the participants. 10 months of research. Content analysis.
Nature, bodies, and practices: Walking, adventure, and ecopedagogy	Walking as ecopedagogical and ecofeminist praxis	Bogong High Plains National Park (Walking with/in mountainScapes), and Kooyoora/Guyura State Park (Walking with/in bush/graniteScapes), Southeastern Australia; personal phenomenographic experiences of the researcher.	Autophenomenography of two case studies as embodied experiences in/of (bush)walking.
Cycling from the Pacific to the Atlantic in South America: Educational Processes Experienced on a bike-journey	Bicycling as ecopedagogical praxis	South America (Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil); personal phenomenographic experiences of the researchers.	Autophenomenography of a 60 day trip across 4 different countries of South America as embodied experiences in/of bicycling.
Movies about adventure activities as educational strategy for active learning	Watching and debating films and documentaries about mountain culture, sports, environment, and adventure & exploration as (eco)pedagogical praxis in school settings.	Films from the 2023 edition of the Banff Mountain Film Festival.	Critical filmographic analysis of selected films from the 2023 edition of the Banff Mountain Film Festival.

Source: Elaborated by the authors, based on submitted contributions for the SI.

Table 2: Summary of contributions – paper responses to the general framing of the SI.

Special Issue Motricidades - Motricity, Adventure, and Education: A critical review Invited editors: Cae Rodrigues (UFS, Brazil) & Phillip Payne (Australia)			
Title	Main link(s) with the SI call	What is in it for nature?	Ecopolitics (emerging; needed)
Ecopedagogy and culture of peace: A case study of 'La Casa del Camino' foundation in Bogotá - Colombia	Just and ecological dispositions to movementScapes; walking as ecopedagogical praxis; geo-epistemologies of the South as (cultural) context for movementScapes	Embodiment of ecocentric aesthetics~ethics~politics through the praxis of walking as ecopedagogy in formal/institutional education settings ('trust' in the institutional[ized] structure; regularity of 'time and immersion')	Emerging: 'Education for peace' and 'good living' as (embodied) ecopolitics of the South. Needed: Physical and symbolic (public) structure for experiences of walking as ecopedagogical praxis as autonomous and 'ordinary' (regular/frequent) experiences, added to (more commonly available) guided and 'exceptional' (isolated/sporadic) experiences
Socioenvironmental and community education: The experience of Raíces de calafate School in the Chilean Patagonia	Ecocentric disposition of presented ecopedagogies (in school settings); focus on embodied ecopedagogies in daily school and community practice(s); local grounded experiences (of the South), in opposition to imported 'models' (of the North)	Deconstruction of anthropocentric human-nature relations and embodiment of ecocentric aesthetics~ethics~politics, allied to the (positive) institutionalized/legitimized symbolic capital of schools in/for education (processes); as well as the regularity of 'time and immersion' offered by education in school settings	Emerging: Challenging standardized curriculum (theory; practices); (eco)somaesthetically challenging historically embodied anthropocentric paradigms. Needed: More (case) studies to better understand the generative possibilities and limits of the proposed ecopedagogies to a wider range of geo-cultural/historical contexts
Dialogues on children's experiences in nature and the dual educational perspective of adventure	The essence of time and immersion (especially with children) for imagining possibilities of "beings of experience"; education in available/voluntary time (leisure), in addition to the more formal school education	(Inter)generational ecological affectivity; conservation of nature (even if for anthropocentric purposes, as 'places of privilege')	Emerging: Pressure for the creation of more places/spaces for experiences in nature. Needed: Greater variety of experiences; more/better public access; more engagement from schools (and other institutions) for more time and immersion with nature ('education for', that can possibly generate 'education through')
Nature, bodies, and practices: Walking, adventure, and ecopedagogy	Just and ecological dispositions to movementScapes; walking as ecopedagogical praxis	Ecosomaesthetics~environmental ethics~ecopolitics of walking as ecopedagogical praxis	Emerging: Ecosomaesthetics~environmental ethics~ecopolitics of moving with Nature (in Australia; Global North). Needed: Combined efforts for de-territorializing, de-imperializing, de-sporticizing, de-technilizing, and de-masculinizing walking (and other 'outdoor' experiences)
Cycling from the Pacific to the Atlantic in South America: Educational Processes Experienced on a bike-journey	Just and ecological dispositions to movementScapes; bicycling as ecomotricity	Ecosomaesthetics~environmental ethics~ecopolitics of bicycling as ecopedagogical praxis	Emerging: Ecosomaesthetics~environmental ethics~ecopolitics of moving with Nature (in South America; Global South). Needed: Physical and symbolic (public) structure for bicycling as ecomotricity (ecopedagogical praxis) in diverse contexts of time and immersion ('short' frequent/regular/daily; 'long' travel/vagabonding/discovery)
Movies about adventure activities as educational strategy for active learning	Deconstructing paradigmatic imaginaries of adventure and the outdoors	Deconstruction of anthropocentric human-nature relations in formal/institutional education settings ('trust' in the institutional[ized] structure; regularity of 'time and immersion')	Emerging: Environmental pedagogies in school settings, including scopes/scapes of adventure and the 'outdoors'. Needed: Ecocentric environmental pedagogies for de-territorializing, de-imperializing, de-sporticizing, de-technilizing, and de-masculinizing adventure and outdoor education

Source: Elaborated by the authors, based on submitted contributions for the SI.

REMAINING GAPS AND SILENCES

The aims of this SI are clearly defined in the last paragraph of the opening section of this introduction. The (very condensed) summaries of the contributions are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Contrasting aims and summaries gives us an assembled idea not only of the important issues that have surfaced as a result of the dynamic/moving/living process of critically reviewing the relations(hips) between motricity, adventure, and education proposed in/by this SI, but also the equally important remaining gaps and silences within these relations(hips).

To better understand how the following assemblage of manuscripts take shape as a relevant and meaningful ‘unit’ that is indeed ‘special’ as a historically and geo-epistemologically grounded account of the (potential) synergies between motricity, adventure, and education, we invite the readers of this introduction to go beyond the summaries offered in Tables 1 and 2, and read the complete collection of manuscripts of the SI. We do, however, offer here our particular view as co-editors of the SI of some of the remaining gaps and silences that we hope can be the focus and scope of future research and publications, including those wishing to directly dialogue with the present collection.

- Considering the growing calls to challenge standardized curriculum in its theory and practice(s), we need to see more geo-cultural/historically and empirically grounded accounts that offer adaptable ‘path(way)s’ for meaningful, locally-based, justice-centered, ecocentric (eco)pedagogies, ‘humbly’ acknowledging probable limits along with the (more commonly stated) possibilities.
- Considering the growing ‘lure’ of Nature, and the resulting pressure of more people wanting to be in/with Nature, we need broader and more culturally diverse platforms to discuss the aesthetics-ethics-politics of ‘being’ in/with Nature; this is key for the creation of (where lacking) or move to (where needed) more just symbolic and physical structures of ‘access’ to Nature.
- Considering the urgencies of numerously entangled ecological crises (bodied, local, regional, national, international, global) we encourage researchers, teachers, policy-makers to adapt a critical position and framing of inquiry. Critical means both ‘reflexive’ and ‘ethico-political’, as they can then be applied directly to.
- Considering the growing understanding of how movementScapes can (eco)somaesthetically challenge historically embodied anthropocentric paradigms: Where the possibility for movementScapes in diversified contexts of time and immersion, and within different intentionalities, is limited by lack of physical structure and restrictive symbolic structures (e.g. social violence or cultural immobilism/sedentarism), we need to better understand what is needed, (eco)politically, for creating greater access to ecomotricity as autonomous and ‘ordinary’ (regular/frequent) experiences; where this becomes available (or is already available), efforts are needed for de-territorializing, de-imperializing, de-sporticizing, de-technilizing, and de-masculinizing movementScapes in/with Nature.
- Considering the growing acknowledgment of Indigenous/South epistemologies such as *Bien vivir*, *Ubuntu*, and ‘Education for peace’ in the elaboration of (eco)politics, we need to learn how these ecopolitics can be influential for ecological praxis in different contexts, be it bodily, locally, nationally, regionally, and globally.

In putting together the CfP for this SI as a critical de/reconstruction of motricity, adventure, and education, our expectation was to ‘provoke’ responses to what we understand

as historical paradigms that are limiting to other possible scopes/ways/meanings of movement Scapes in/with Nature (briefly presented in this introduction, and further detailed in ‘Movement and the challenge of Nature: an adventure?’). In now publishing the SI, our expectation remains the same.

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