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Curriculum considerations for ABL South Africa

Dr. Pieter Snyman

Adventure-Based Learning and Adventure Guiding in South Africa

"In the vastness of space, our industry should unite as one, weaving a tapestry of endless possibilities for both our clients and practitioners."

– Adapted from a concept by John F. Kennedy

What is ABL or AEL

- **Adventure-based learning (ABL)** is an **experiential learning** approach using **challenging activities, often in the outdoors**, to develop personal and collective group growth opportunities via a variety of activities of varying physical, cognitive and emotional intensity. It emphasises choice, collaboration, and the application of skills to real-life contexts.
- **Adventure-Related Experiential Learning (AEL)** is basically the same, but with a major emphasis on **reflective and learning transfer** practices.

Positive outcomes of ABL or AEL

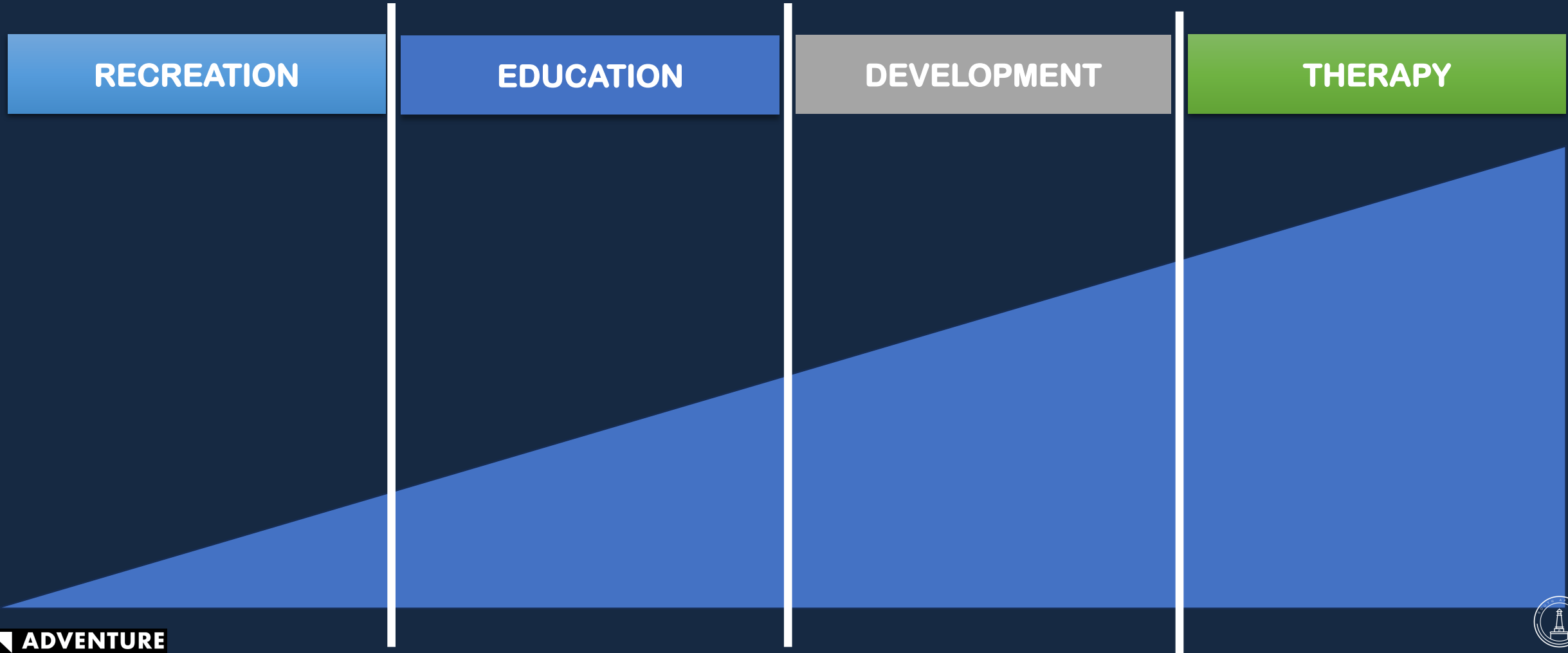
- **Enhanced Teamwork and Collaboration:** ABL activities require participants to communicate, strategise, and support each other, strengthening interpersonal skills and trust.
- **Improved Problem-Solving Skills:** Challenges such as navigation tasks or physical obstacles encourage critical thinking, creativity, and decision-making under pressure.
- **Increased Self-Confidence and Resilience:** Overcoming fears (e.g., heights in climbing activities) or pushing personal limits builds self-esteem and perseverance.
- **Leadership Development:** ABL often involves rotating leadership roles, allowing participants to practice decision-making, delegation, and motivating others in dynamic settings.
- **Emotional and Social Growth:** Group reflections and debriefs after activities promote emotional intelligence, empathy, and understanding of diverse perspectives.
- **Engagement and Motivation:** The hands-on, immersive nature of ABL makes learning fun and memorable, increasing participant engagement compared to traditional classroom methods.
- **Physical and Mental Health Benefits:** Outdoor activities promote physical fitness, stress relief, and mental clarity through exposure to nature and physical challenges.
- **Adaptability and Risk Management:** Participants learn to assess risks, adapt to unpredictable situations, and develop flexibility in unfamiliar environments.
- **Real-World Application:** Skills learned translate effectively to workplace, school, or community.
- **Inclusive Learning Environment:** Accommodates diverse learning styles, allowing participants to engage through action, reflection, or collaboration, fostering inclusivity.

ADVENTURE APPLICATIONS

RECREATION	EDUCATION	DEVELOPMENT	THERAPY
<p>What do I want: Fun Laughter, do I want them re-energized through laughter</p>	<p>What do I want: The group need to understand the concepts, I want to add knowledge, the need to better understand the topic at hand and themselves.</p>	<p>What do I want: Improving functional behaviour, teaching people how to behave differently via behaviour.</p>	<p>What do I want: Change dysfunctional behaviour patterns utilizing adventure. Habilitation and rehabilitation.</p>
Hike, climb, play, canoe	Learning via adventure, new ways to solve problems	Real life and simulate – transfer. Improvisation in Relationships	New strategies to cope via adventure, transfer to real life
Program transform Feeling Activity orientated	Program transform Feeling & Thinking Task orientated	Program transform Feeling, Thinking and Behaving Process orientated	Program transform Feeling, Thinking and Behaving and how clients clinically resist change Improvisation orientated
100% Activities	75% Activities – 25% Reflection	50% Activities – 50% Reflection	25% Activities – 50% Reflection

ADVENTURE APPLICATIONS

The deeper you go = smaller groups, more time, more knowledge, more reflection, more consequences



What a facilitator is not:

- **A teacher – we also teach but that is not our primary function**
- **Psychologist or Therapist**
- **Adventure Guide**

Difference between simulated & “natural” experiences

Simulated Camp Environment:

- Structured, controlled, and facilitator-driven, with focused activities for specific skills like teamwork and communication. Ideal for shorter programmes, urban groups, or targeted outcomes in a safe, accessible setting.

Journey-Type Trek:

- Immersive, participant-driven, and dynamic, with natural challenges fostering resilience, autonomy, and holistic growth. Suited for longer programmes and those seeking deep, transformative experiences in nature.

Profile of a Facilitator / Guide

Adventure Facilitator

- Works in a more controlled (simulated) environment like a campsite
- Young person with no dependants working for between R400 to R800 per day
- No qualifications, maybe facilitation qualification (in-house or by a provider)
- Qualification/ registration not required by law
- Qualifications seldom required by business owners
- No official code of conduct or ethical standard (other SAAIA)
- School camps/ corporate teambuilding

Adventure Guide

- Works in a more natural (uncontrolled) setting
- Older person some dependents working from between R1200 – R4000 per day
- Minimum GASG, technical speciality and First Aid
- Qualification/ registration required by law
- Qualifications required by business owners
- According to law must adhere to ethical principles
- Guiding in various disciplines at various locations

Types of ABL Employment

- Campsites
- Corporate team building
- Church youth
- School Assistants
- Limited – but also as Adventure Guiding Operators

Types of ABL facilitation

- Facilitate games and activities only
- Facilitate low risk type activities and games
- Facilitate simulated (on-site) high risk type activities (high risk = **emotional** and **physical risk**)
- Facilitate journey type high risk activities (on-site)
- Facilitate journey type high risk activities (off-site)
- All the above or combinations

Key differences between Guides and Facilitators

- **Guides** = Natural environment – **Facilitators** = Simulated & natural
- **Guides** = Experience orientated – **Facilitators** = Learning orientated
- **Guides** = Physical safety – **Facilitators** = Physical and emotional
- **Guides** = Career pathway – **Facilitators** = Exit sooner

Accountability structures

Facilitation:

- South African Adventure Industry Association (LOTC Chapter)
- Christian Camping Southern Africa – not really
- ARA – not really

Guiding:

- Tourism Act Tourism Act No. 3 of 2014
- South African Adventure Industry Association
- Professional Associations APA, MDT, SAAIA Chapters

Brick wall core competencies of Outdoor Leadership (Piest and Gass 2018)

Core Competencies,
Bricks and Mortar:

**FACILITATION
SKILLS**

Communication

**ORGANISATIONAL
SKILLS**

Conditional Leadership

**INSTRUCTIONAL
SKILLS**

Professional Ethics

**TECHNICAL
ACTIVITY SKILLS**

Problem Solving

**SAFETY AND
RISK SKILLS**

Decision Making

**ENVIRONMENTAL
SKILLS**

Sound Judgement

**Foundational
Knowledge:**

Evidence

Philosophy

History

Social Psychology

Trends and Issues

Adventure Guide Qualification

Mountain
Walking

First Aid

Climbing

Kayaking

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Generic
Adventure
Site
Guide

Generic Adventure Site Guide

Core:

- Plan a Guided Adventure Experience
- Conduct a Guided Adventure Experience
- Minimise and Manage Safety and Emergency Incidents
- Manage Environmental Impacts and the Tourism Environment
- Camping (Optional Core for Some Providers)

Electives:

- Conduct a Guided Nature Experience
- Conduct a Guided Outdoor Recreation Activity
- Perform Basic Rope Work for Access or Recreation

Additional Requirements:

- First Aid

Guidelines for facilitation skills

- Various registered Unit Standards
- ABL certificates NQF 4 and 5
- Industry currently presents modules or courses – based on presenter judgement

**My suggestion as discussion
point:**



Adventure Guide Qualification

Eg. Mountain Walking
(Elective)

First Aid
Compulsory

Eg. Climbing
(Elective)

Eg. Kayaking
(Elective)

Adventure Facilitation
Eg. (Elective)

**Generic
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Guide**

Legal/ Registered Adventure Guide

With facilitation being able to understand/ execute:

- Client Care
- Assess the environment
- Physical Risk
- Emotional Risk
- Transfer Learning

In any controlled/ simulated setting or in unpredictable natural setting

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