

# Research on the Impacts of Wilderness Learning Experiences as an Educational Curriculum in Higher Education

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## Abstract

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This paper is to study the characteristics of outdoor wilderness education and the impacts of outdoor wilderness experience on the participants in higher education. The first part of this paper addresses the common components of outdoor wilderness programs: adventure or self-discovery in disequilibrium, small groups for accountability in a temporary community, problem solving processes for decision making in real situations, solo time for integration in solitude, and leadership styles and role of the trip leaders. These elements of outdoor wilderness programs help the participants to achieve their goals according to its mission. The second part of this paper divides outdoor wilderness programs into three categories according to the objectives and outcomes of outdoor wilderness education: orientation programs for incoming students, personal leadership development programs, and professional training programs. The impacts of outdoor wilderness experiences on the participants of different programs in higher education were reviewed. Then guidelines for spiritual formation programs were proposed for Christian educators who are involved in wilderness programs in higher education to develop their practical wilderness experiences into holistic development programs according to its mission and goals.

〈 **Keywords** 〉

Christian Camping, Wilderness Experiences, Adventure-based Education, Outdoor Education, Higher Education.

## I. Introduction

We can easily find the concept of Christian camping in the Bible. In the Old Testament, God called the people of Israel from Egypt to the wilderness in order to lead them to the land God promised to give their ancestors. During forty years in the wilderness they were taught how to live in God's presence in holy reverence, how to follow the road God set out for them, and how to obey the commandments and regulations of God. As such, the wilderness program was a place of life for the Israelites and a time of education to be equipped as God's people. In the New Testament, before Jesus started His public life, He went to the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. After defeating the temptation, He chose the disciples and traveled all the time with them during his public life. God led and guided His people to a unique environment in order to train and educate them. This pilgrimage with Jesus was a space for experiential learning and a period of renewed training as apostle of the Lord for the disciples. These Biblical models of Christian camping are a unique learning environment to equip people through rich experiences.

Meanwhile, according to the history of Christian camping, various types of camping experiences are found: day camping for family picnics, weekend retreats for church or family reunions, seven-day residential youth camps, R.V. auto camping,

Christian conferences, two-to-three-week wilderness trips etc. These various camping experiences provide participants with a rich experience of nature and opportunities for self-discovery. Among these programs, wilderness programs provide a variety of short-term outdoor challenge experiences that give participants a fuller sense of their own capabilities and ultimately give qualities of confidence and self-mastery that will be extremely valuable to them in their personal and professional lives(Kraus and Scanlin, 1983, 186).

Among wilderness programs, outdoor wilderness education has been often defined in several ways: a wilderness trip, experiential education, adventure-based stressful camping, and survival training(Lee & Nam, 2015). However, in this paper outdoor wilderness education refers to an adventure-based experiential education. There are two characteristics of outdoor wilderness education. First, as an adventure-based camping, outdoor wilderness education shows us the impact of learning environments with the tension that is brought about by carefully planned initiatives and challenges in order to accomplish personal growth. Fortosis(1977) cites the observation of adventure camping from Johnson's graduate paper, *The Contributions of Stress Camping to Education*, as follows:

Stress camping, then, is basically using the wilderness setting to provide challenging, sometimes panic-stricken experiences. The growth is internalized within the individual. Growth happens because of a shock effect, a need for more stamina or courage, and a need for teamwork(21).

Like this, one of the crucial elements in outdoor wilderness education is the tension between comfort and challenge. Throughout the trip the participant always faces the stressful

situations and the challenging circumstances where character development and spiritual growth will take place by overcoming the seemingly impossible task.

Second, as an experiential education, outdoor wilderness education focuses on the overall experience that brings personal growth through stressful wilderness settings. Through the questioning processes the trip leaders should guide the participants to think about who they are and what they experienced through learning activities. Dewey(1938) points this out.

A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by environing condition, but that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth(22).

The trip leaders use instruction, teaching, and counseling where the emphasis is on experimentation and participation in the wilderness trips. Especially, in Christian higher education by using God's word and His creation, the trip leaders also help the participants to magnify the meaning of the learning experiences through individual reflections and group discussions.

Therefore, this paper is to study the characteristics of outdoor wilderness education and the impacts of outdoor wilderness experience on the participants in higher education. In this paper, "outdoor wilderness education" will be used as an adventure-based experiential education through which the participants of wilderness programs are allowed to learn and grow physically, mentally, and professionally. We will research the impacts of outdoor wilderness experiences on the participants of different programs in higher education. The first part of this paper will address the common components of outdoor

wilderness programs. Then, the impacts of outdoor wilderness experience will be reported in three categories according to their objectives and outcomes: orientation programs for incoming students, personal leadership development programs, and professional training programs. Especially three main impacts of outdoor wilderness education will be reviewed on the participants of post-secondary education programs. Finally, the result of this study will be a guideline for Christian educators who are involved in wilderness programs in higher education in order to develop their practical wilderness experiences including spiritual formation process and adventure-based programs. into holistic development programs.

## II. The Educational Mechanisms of a Wilderness Program

The history of organized camping in North America is close to 200 years. Among them, the history of camping programs that use wilderness for education or healing purposes is about 100 years old(McNeil, 1957). These wilderness programs were started with the primary goal of providing fresh air and natural environment to young urban students. After that, according to the need of the participants, it developed into an educational program for emotional growth, character development, and elimination of problem behaviors. In order to achieve these educational objectives, various educational mechanisms have begun to introduced into the wilderness program. Cowles (1995) has shown the overview of the development of wilderness programs and explained these basic programs;

It was also in the 1970s that many Christian organizations began to discover the wealth that was deep in the woods. Some of the more progressive camps and centers developed extensive programs using the forests, mountains, and rivers that were literally in their backyard. ... Christian camps from Florida to Alaska developed “stress” programs. Marathon runs, dawn-to-dusk days of hiking, and “solos” became well-used tools to teach kids how to deal with difficult situations in their lives and increase their faith(7).

Like this description, the basic components of wilderness trips can be considered as follows: a wilderness setting as an environmental contrast, small group as a temporary and accountable community, problem-solving initiatives and stress situations designed for specific growth purposes, and a solo time for internalizing the experience. Each educational mechanism helps participants to achieve different educational objectives while helping to integrate various educational goals. Therefore, this section of this paper introduces the five educational mechanisms of outdoor wilderness education (adventure, small group dynamic, problem-solving, solo, and non-directive leadership) and their characteristics.

## **1. Adventure for Self-Discovery in Disequilibrium**

In order to implement effective education, various studies on educational space are being conducted. This is because the content and method of education is determined by how the educational space is created(Woo, 2020, 320-321). Outdoor wilderness education utilizes situations in which participants will step out of their comfort zones and face disequilibrium in order to achieve self-discovery by overcoming the seemingly im-

possible task. The components of wilderness trips generate a sense of the unknown so that participants can be stretched to their limits and discover that their inner resources are enough to help them overcome the obstacles and their fears. Kalisch (1978), an assistant professor for wilderness program of Honey Rock Camp of Wheaton College, has given the definition of stress or adventure in wilderness trips as follows:

Wilderness learning leaders do use stress as a method to shape learning. Stress is anxiety or hardship or tension as experienced by a particular individual. ... In teaching a wilderness course I often find myself doing all I can to relieve stress and hardship on the students as well as creating experiences at other times which are designed to stretch them(13-16).

Through disequilibrium in wilderness trips, the participants discover who they are, what they are made of, and what they can do. The trip leaders operate learning activities that force the participants to step out of their comfort zones and go through disequilibrium, by using learners' senses, intuition and imagination and being in a teaching and learning community. The participants can realize that they have learned about themselves through facing their limitations. They have been growing by accomplishing the seemingly impossible task and overcoming their fears and anxieties. This concept of self-discovery contributes to making outdoor wilderness education valuable. Fortosis(1977) cited Carlyle Johnson's explanation of the value of the wilderness experience:

A man is removed from the familiar to the unknown, from his schedules and complexity, from his conveniences and his luxuries, to an environment that challenges his will to resist. He is

returned to the simplicity of his basic physiological needs. He is thrust into an environment that forces him out of himself. To survive he must become a part of someone else. He must give and cooperate. ... Stress camping is basically using the wilderness setting to provide challenging, sometimes panic-stricken experiences. Growth happens because of a shock effect, a need for more stamina or courage, and a need for teamwork (21).

## **2. Small Group for Accountability in a Temporary Community**

Small groups are the fundamental structure of outdoor wilderness education. Wilderness trips are in a variety of length between short-term trips (less than one week) and longer trips (usually 26 to 30 days). However, wilderness trips usually form small groups which consist of eight to twelve participants with one or two trip leaders. In small groups the group members carefully and intensively take care of each other according to their needs and wants in temporary communities. Slater(1984) points out that Christian camping provides unique experiences and models as a temporary community.

The challenge is for organized camping to provide the following:  
a) experiences which give a taste of, and kindle a desire for living in deeper harmony and relationship with others. b) models of how relationship can be developed and difficulties dealt with in a [temporary] community situation (53).

These experiences in a temporary small group help the trip leaders and the participants to grow physically, mentally, relationally and spiritually. Through the dynamics in the small group the participants develop the whole person in relationships with others through the action and interaction during



the wilderness trip. As a group, facing the challenges, attaining the goals and completing the task teaches the participants how to get along and work together selflessly. Through the group dynamic the participants have opportunities to evaluate their lifestyles and value systems. They also practice new leadership styles and communication skills in the decision-making process. Cain and Jolliff (1998) state this point.

The ability to work as a group, to effectively communicate, to collectively solve problems, to foster a sense of empathy and respect for other team members, to provide honest and useful feedback, to resolve conflicts, to effectively manage resources and to share in a group experience builds a sense of community that, when properly accomplished, translates effectively back to the work environment (1).

### **3. Problem Solving Process for Decision-Making in Real Situations**

In problem-based learning used in schools and churches, the problem-solving process is structured and utilized as a standardized systematic module(Park, 2009, 379-380). Meanwhile, outdoor wilderness education places the participants in situations where they must work as a group to solve problems. In the beginning of the trip the trip leaders give minimal instruction for the trip. They facilitate the group with activities and situations that are intended to meet the goals of the trip. These planned activities and situations, which trip leaders can anticipate in the planning phase for the trip, are real and concrete problems which are given to participants. In order to solve real problems, participants should go through decision-making processes as individuals and as a group. As in-

dividuals each participant assesses his or her capabilities and problems. The step in which assessment of participants' capabilities and problems takes place requires for each participant to use their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual resources to carry it out. As a group, in order to solve a problem, participants determine alternative solutions and choose the best solution through group discussions. In a group decision making situation, conflicts between group members and resistance to a conclusion will take place. In order to overcome conflict and remove resistance, the trip leaders facilitate the group in non-directive ways. For instance, Johnson and Johnson(1982) suggest as follows:

The resistance of group members to changes observed by other members is a typical restraining force in a problem-solving situation. One of the most successful strategies for changing the direction of this force is to involve the resisting members in diagnosing the problem situation and planning the solutions (410).

Especially, wilderness trips offer an opportunity for each participant to be the day's leader. Practicing the role of the day's leader, each participant has a chance to be involved in a situation and take initiative to solve problems. At the end of the day, he/she is given feedback and interaction from leaders and fellow members of the group. Problem-solving processes in real situations help individuals' character development and spiritual growth.

#### **4. Solo Time for Integration in Solitude**

Outdoor wilderness education organizes solo time for the

participants to have some alone time in the wilderness. Solo time is planned for as short as half a day and as long as 72 hours. This is an opportunity for personal debriefing during the wilderness trip. It is a period of isolation in which each individual experiences loneliness by being apart from the group. At this time the participants concentrate on the inner voice personally while living with minimal equipments and no food for simplicity and relaxation. It is also intended to be a time of reflection about what has happened in the previous days during the trip with the group. It is also planned to be a place where individuals integrate their experiences and thoughts, according to their behavior and attitude about their successes and failures during the trip. Solo time is a place not only to be isolated from the group physically, but also to be separated from the world and to allow the participants to focus on themselves mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Magdalen(1987) points out the effect of solitude for spiritual discipline as follows;

We [can] withdraw from the world not only to search our own heart but in order to plunge deep into the heart of the world, and to listen more intently to the deepest and most neglected voice that proceed from its inner depths (50).

Throughout solo time, with fasting and minimum belongings, participants experience loneliness, pain from hunger and coldness, and a fear of darkness. At the same time, they realize how content they can be with very little and what they really long for. Through meditation on books and contemplation of nature, participants start not only to appreciate what they have in their lives, but also to place an emphasis on how they should live(Kim, 2021, 356-360).

## 5. Leadership Styles and Roles of the Trip Leader

Research on leadership was conducted from various perspectives: trait theories, behavioral theories, situational theories, transformational leadership theories, and servant leadership theories, etc. (Park, 2005; Choi, 2014). Kouzes and Posner spoke of the purpose of writing in their book, *The Leadership Challenge*: "It is about how leaders mobilize others to want to get extraordinary things done in organizations" (xvii). Likewise, the main role of wilderness trip leaders is to encourage participants to solve problems on their own and to help them discover themselves. Reynolds(2007) describes the role of these leaders as follows;

But when we explain leadership this way--"Leadership is seeing what needs to be done and getting a group of people to do it"--the students usually get it. Suddenly being a leader doesn't seem so intimidating or out of reach. Student leaders quickly learn to identify what needs to be done and organize their peers to do it, whether it is packing up camp, following a compass bearing, or reaching the top of a distant summit. What's more, really good leaders not only others to do something, but they get them to want to do it (34).

Kalisch(1979) clarifies the role of the wilderness trip leaders, analyzing the Outward Bound process. The wilderness trip leaders should be "an effective skill trainer, program designer, translator, group facilitator, and one-on-one counselor"(23). Among them the three key roles are as follows. First, as an effective skill trainer, the trip leaders should understand skill instruction as the means to enhance the quality of living and learning in wilderness settings, as well as the means to offer

the participants certain disciplines and attitudes which can be applied in real life situations(Kalisch, 1979, 26). Therefore, an effective skill trainer carefully plans, but lets the group accomplish the goal without dominating group situations. Second, as a program designer, the trip leader should plan a trip with the question: what will this trip do to the trippers? Trip leaders assess the group in terms of participants' needs, wants, capabilities, and goals. The designing of the trip is more than planning an expedition. It is the educational goal setting process. Third, as a translator, the trip leader acts as a bridge between each participant and the experience, in order to help them translate the raw experience into organized words and concepts, which in turn will embellish the experience with meaning and significance. For this, the trip leaders listen to the voices of participants, encourage them, give personal feedback and facilitate group debrief. Therefore, the wilderness trip leaders can be described as non-directive leaders who facilitate the group enough so that they can teach the participants how to use their equipment safely and meet their needs. The trip leaders also are catalysts, which help the participants to grow with wise and timely advice and feedback (Kim, 2011, 457).

In conclusion, these educational mechanisms of outdoor wilderness education allow the participants to have unique experiences to learn about themselves and achieve the objectives of wilderness education. Therefore, the following section of this paper will cover the impacts of outdoor wilderness education on the participants of wilderness programs in higher education.

### III. The Impacts of Wilderness Programs

Outdoor wilderness programs which are operated based on the aforementioned educational mechanisms, show educational effects in various fields. Kellert(1998) reviewed literature related to the impacts of outdoor wilderness experiences on the participant. He found the physical, emotional, intellectual, environmental, and moral-spiritual impacts associated with educational experiences in wilderness settings(9). Kellert postulated the impacts of the outdoor wilderness experience on the participants as follows;

Environmental awareness and knowledge; Environmental attitudes and ethics; Career choice and community service; Outdoor recreational interests, activities, and skills; Personal values and beliefs; Interpersonal relationships; Critical thinking and problem solving; Self-esteem and self concept; Academic interests and performance; Physical fitness and well being (11-12).

Furthermore, Harper(2017), who looked at the research trends related to adventure education and physical activity after 2000, reports that he found the following educational effects.

Adventure education also identified as a component for alternative programs for spiritual development and in alignment with Indigenous teaching for contemporary youth. ... Adventure education approach was comprised of new experiences, challenge, support from peers, and fun, which led to increased self-confidence, and new perceptions of self. ... The researchers found positive benefits including reduced time pressure and mental stress, and increased self-efficacy, mindfulness, and overall subjective levels of wellbeing (75).

In view of these effects, it is considered that outdoor wilderness programs can be an effective educational method for developing the leadership of the next generation in era when higher education is seeking a new approach to natural environment and personal growth. Therefore, this part of the paper investigated the impacts of outdoor wilderness education on the participants of the three different kinds of wilderness programs in higher education. And the empirical studies about these programs were introduced in order to find the applicability of the outdoor wilderness experience of educational programs in higher education.

### **1. The Orientation Programs for Incoming Students**

In the last twenty years, a number of colleges have provided outdoor wilderness education as the orientation for incoming students. That's why there is a growing belief that physically challenging adventure based orientation programs emphasizing small group work help freshman students adjust to college life (Devlin, 1996, 324). The typical wilderness-based orientation programs can be found in a number of colleges such as Vanguard, Wheaton College and Passages, the University of Puget Sound.

First, Wheaton College, Illinois, has adapted a wilderness-learning program in its curriculum. Wheaton started camping programs at Honey Rock Camp which is located on Long Lake of the Eagle Chain in the northeastern section of Wisconsin. Honey Rock Camp provides two-week wilderness expeditions such as "High Road." One of the wilderness expeditions is Vanguards known as an optional program for freshmen students. A variety of studies have been done on Vanguards regarding

the impacts of the program on the incoming student including growth in self-concept, trait anxiety, and college adjustment. Fortosis(1977) studied Wheaton College's Vanguards for incoming students in order to outline the historical and conceptual bases for the wilderness camping programs at Honey Rock Camp, the Vanguard School and the wilderness Learning Seminars (1977, 3). Furthermore, Wells(1975) analyzed the 1974 Wheaton College Vanguard group by using the Personal Orientation Inventory, Life Decisions Questionnaires, and Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale, in order to discover if factors relating to personality and background determine a successful outdoor wilderness experience(9). His findings pointed out the impact of the outdoor wilderness experience. It was that the background factor of the population played a small role in changing people in the program. Participants of the Vanguard trip increased in inner control and decreased in their propensity to take risk. Meanwhile, Ribbe(2010) analyzes the vangard program for incoming students as an experiential laboratory for spiritual formation and leadership development and introduces the future direction of Christian camping as follows:

Churches and Christian colleges should be encouraged to reengage the powerful experiential laboratory of Christian camping as a place for young adult staff to develop skills, perspectives, and habits for life. ... Christian colleges that prioritize student equipping for a life of ministry and service for Christ's kingdom should consider ways to partner with camps to develop academically based, experientially applied life development programs for their students(159).

There are other outdoor wilderness programs that serve this purpose. For example, the University of Puget Sound has in-



stituted a three-day outdoor adventure program called “Passages” as apart of the orientation programs for new students. “Passages” is administrated the week prior to the beginning of the fall semester. Goals for Passages focus on community building between new students and returning students, faculty and staff; providing a transition from high school to college, and orienting students to the Pacific Northwest outdoor environment (Stremba, 1991, 171). Stremba investigated the impact of an outdoor adventure-based orientation program on freshman students through pretest and posttest. It was found that students in the program showed decreases in a number of psychological symptoms and they showed increases in personal, academic, and total self-efficacy.

Another example is a short (4-day) Outward Bound-type program at Connecticut College. Devlin(1996) in the 4-year longitudinal study investigated the effect of a wilderness trip for incoming students on their adjustment to college and the remainder of their college career. The participants of this study were 137 freshmen at a selective liberal college in the Northeast. 72 participants experienced a 4-day wilderness trip for orientation program, but 65 participants had not picked any special freshman orientation or first year academic program. There was no significant difference between two groups in their sex, age, race, income, mother’s occupation, parent’s education, self-reported socioeconomic class, and high school grade point average(Devlin, 1996, 325). Devlin found that the orientation program had a significant impact on friendship formation that lasted over the course of college(331).

Therefore, outdoor wilderness-based orientation programs are helpful for incoming students in making the transition from high school to college easier, adjusting to college life

and developing their self-efficacy. In this sense, it is suggested that Christian colleges and universities organize and operate an outdoor-based leadership program centered on small groups rather than the existing indoor-oriented freshman orientation.

## **2. The Personal Leadership Development Programs**

Young people who grew up only in civilized cities live far from the natural environment. Not only that, the reality is that students who grew up in a forest of concrete buildings lack the skills to communicate with others. In order to equip these urban students with social skills, two factors are necessary. One is group life and the other is outdoor life. It can be said that the outdoor wilderness program has these elements. In particular, it can be said that the educational mechanisms of outdoor wilderness programs mentioned above provide a great opportunity to train new students who are starting their college life away from home. Some schools in the United States know the effect of outdoor wilderness programs in advance and use the principles and process of wilderness program to design and operate personal leadership development programs.

First, Western Kentucky University has offered the Wilderness Education Association(WEA) Wilderness Stewardship(WS) course since May of 1992. The schedule of 15 days courses is as follows;

It is broken down into 1 initial meeting a month prior to the course. This meeting takes place in April and students are instructed on fees for the course, a basic outline of the course and assigned lessons that they are to teach. In May, students are to meet in the classroom for 1 day to go over format of the course and requirements. On this day there is also a gear

check and food distribution. Following the classroom day there are 2 shakedown days, Students practice paddling skills and camp set up in the Barren River Area. Students then spend 10 day of field experience hiking and canoeing in the Big South Fork National Recreation Area. Upon return from the field portion of the course there is 1 debriefing day. Students complete evaluations and clean gear on this day.

Throughout participating in the course, students can achieve the objectives of the wilderness stewardship course as follows:

- to use and enjoy the wilderness with minimum impact.
- to apply safe practice for groups in outdoor recreation activities.
- to begin to recognize leadership abilities and limitations.
- to demonstrate a basic standard of outdoor user knowledge and experience based on the WEA curriculum.
- to receive WEA Wilderness Stewardship certification for course completion.

Hobbs and Spencer(2002) investigated the change that students had in their leadership skills after participating in the WEA WS course, using the Leadership Skills Inventory as a pretest and posttest tool. They measured perceived ability within nine leadership categories: fundamentals of leadership, written communication skills, speech communication skills, character-building skills, decision-making skills, group dynamic skills, problem-solving skills, personal development skills, and planning skills. Through analyzing a paired-samples t-test, it was found that mean difference from pretest to posttest scores for all LSI categories showed higher posttest than pretest rating. Especially, a significant difference was found in the area of fundamentals of leadership, speech communication

skills, character-building skills, and group dynamic skills(5).

Hobbs and Spencer(2002) estimated that the requirements of the course and the setting for the trip played the factors to make significant differences in the four categories of leadership. First of all, the requirements of the Wilderness Stewardship course can be considered as an explicit factor to give an opportunity for participants to develop their leadership skills. For example, participants were assigned a day to be the leader of the day and facilitate the group. They also were required to teach lessons during the 10-day trip according to the guideline of the trip manual. Lastly, through the evaluation process participants had a chance to examine themselves and evaluate peer students. Throughout completing the requirements of the course, the participants were encouraged growth in the fundamental of leadership and speech communication skills. Meanwhile, the length and wilderness setting of the course serve as an implicit factor for participants to develop their character and understand group dynamic. The 15-day long course allows participants to reexamine themselves, re-affirm their leadership styles, and practice their skills they already knew. Especially, extended time with others in wilderness setting fosters development of group dynamic skill and character-building skills(5).

Second, the Student Conservation Association(SCA) provides a Resource Assistants(RA) program involving mainly college students, typically majoring in environment science and management. Most students who participate in this program are either interested in wilderness or looking forward to positions of responsibility related to wilderness environments. Kellert(1998) administered the retrospective study with randomly selected lists of past participants of the Student Conservation Association,

National Outdoor Leadership School, and Outward Bound. In the study 429 surveys were completed. SCA respondents more frequently cited learning about the natural environment, protecting and conserving nature and contributing beneficial work (21).

Through overall experience in the outdoor wilderness education SCA respondents reported stronger impacts on their knowledge of conservation activities including trail building, restoration, and natural resource management. Therefore, Kellert's retrospective study(1998) shows that the SCA outdoor wilderness programs had significant impacts on students' interest in environmental education(27). He pointed out the personal and character developmental impact of outdoor wilderness education. Sixty to seventy percent of respondents reported very positive program impacts on four aspects of personal autonomy and security including self-reliance, independence, maturity, and self-confidence(27).

Third, Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts, provides a 12-day LaVida Wilderness Expedition. Its mission is "to provide a supportive, experiential learning environment which encourages participants to explore the meaning of the irrelatship with Jesus Christ; its goals is that "participants engage in adventure activities that will challenge them spiritually, mentally, and physically, there by initiating the process of self-discovery and character development within the context of Christian community"(Gin, 1998, 2). Gin investigated the nature of the students' wilderness experiences in terms of how program characteristics help the participants achieve its goals and produce its outcomes. Self-efficacy measures, Spiritual Well-Being Scale, Spiritual Maturity Index and the American College of Sports Medicine fitness test were used to measure any change

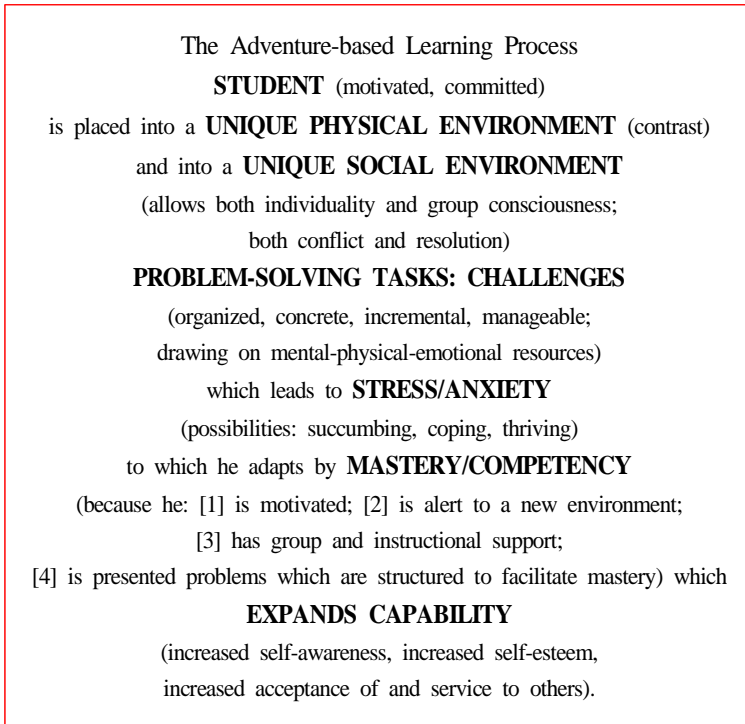
during the trip with pretest and post test scores(Gin, 1998, 4). The result of tests showed a strong relationship between the program's goals and the participants' experiences. Gin(1998) led the discussion in terms of what factors in the participants' experience enabled the program to meet its goals. He postulated that the LaVida program elements-social, individual, and leadership factors-contributed to the participants' achievement of its goals.

Therefore, these studies reveal that wilderness trip programs provide an opportunity for the students in post-secondary education to develop their leadership skills related to the fundamentals of leadership, speech communication skills, character-building skills, and group dynamic skills. In this sense, it is suggested that Christian colleges and churches organize and operate an outdoor-based leadership program, away from the classroom-oriented leadership development program. In particular, it is necessary to design and use a more environmentally friendly self-development program by utilizing various outdoor activities that can be used within the school.

### **3. The Professional Training Programs**

Outdoor wilderness education in higher education is considered as a new way to develop executive leadership potential. Kurt Hahn, the founder of adventure-based education, launched Salem School based on Plato's educational philosophy in 1920 in Germany, which was devastated by World War I. And in 1941, he reorganized and operated Outward Bound in Wales. Meanwhile, in the United States, the Colorado Outward Bound School was established in 1962 and has been operating ever since. Behle (1994) analyzed the Outward Bound programs and

addressed its applications for Christian higher education by developing leadership, relationship, and personal characteristics. He articulated the adventure-based learning process as shown in the figure below:



〈Figure 1〉 The Adventure-based Learning Process (Behle, 1994, 85)

In particular, Golins and Walsh(1976) identified the adventure-based learning process as an internal educational dynamic and explored the implication of the wilderness stress program for Christian higher education(33). In other words, the inner conviction formed by solving a given problem brings about an inner transformation, which in turn leads to an external

achievement. This learning process acts as a very important factor in professional training. In that sense, a well-formed problem situation can be a very unique educational environment for professional training, and has the advantage of maximizing the effectiveness of training under the guidance of trained instructors. In consideration of these characteristics, adventure-based outdoor programs are being used in several professional training fields.

First, Freeman and his colleagues(2003) demonstrated the philosophical principles of outdoor wilderness programs for professional leadership training. One of the examples is the Conservation and Outdoor Leadership Training(COLT) program administrated by Brigham Young University(BYU). The program is an intensive, semester-long program for students to complete twelve credit hours of coursework. COLT is designed to prepare students to provide safe and effective wilderness-based outdoor programs and to develop within its participants and ethical stewardship philosophy about the land(25). Through backpacking, rock climbing, mountain biking, mountaineering, canoeing, and desert survival, the students are exposed to the experiential learning opportunities in the wilderness setting and implement land management theory and leadership theory discussed in class. During these activities students have opportunities to implement safety procedures and program-planning ideas practically. They also meet with professional workers to discuss issues in terms of their respective agency (Freeman, 2003, 25). Freeman and his colleagues analyzed the COLT program with six philosophical principles of John Dewey: (1) an educated citizenry and democratic society, (2) education and meaningful experiences, (3) life as educational setting, (4) cooperative learning and living, (5) participation in an actual ex-



perience, and (6) development of interpersonal relationship. They concluded that the sound philosophical tenets of the program help the university administrators create worthy programs to fit the curriculum needs.

Second, Judge(1999) presented the evolution of several outdoor-based experiential trainings(OBET) in terms of an executive MBA program in the College of Business at the University of Tennessee. The program consists of four elements of leadership development: expanding conceptual awareness, providing comprehensive and constructive feedback, offering skill-building session, and providing personal growth opportunities(95). Judge assumed that outdoor-based experiential training holds potential to positively influence managerial attitudes, increase trust within teams, and help the participants to realize leadership potential(95). Judge concluded that outdoor-based experiential education is viewed as a creative and effective way to explore executive leaderships skills and concepts for professional training in higher education.

Therefore, outdoor wilderness education has enormous potential to educate the students in postsecondary education for professional training. In particular, various leadership development methods used in outdoor education have skills that can be effectively used in other professional fields, such as various communication skills, group facilitating skills, and highly experienced in technical skills. If these skills are passed on to the next generation through a structured curriculum, it will be a very meaningful educational method.

## IV. Conclusion

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the educational environment has changed to a completely different form than before due to COVID-19. In particular, social distancing is emphasized due to respiratory infections, and the online education environment has been expanded due to the development of communication technology. In this educational environment, schools and churches are seeking new educational methods. Among them, interest in outdoor wilderness programs can be said to have been a steady research for the past half century. Nevertheless, it is considered to be an educational tool that has not been used sufficiently due to a lack of understanding of environmental factors and how to use it. However, as wilderness therapy programs are introduced to academia, their value is gradually being revealed. Especially, we recognized that the wilderness is one of the richest educational environments. In the wilderness, the trippers acquire self-discovery by accomplishing seemingly impossible tasks on the trips. Their experiences of seeing the wilderness can teach them an awareness of God and of themselves. The participants of the wilderness trips can appreciate God's sovereignty and His presence by placing themselves in the wilderness and facing their limitedness and mortality. The wilderness is a classroom in which people can discover themselves and experience God's presence.

This paper addressed the common components of outdoor wilderness programs: adventure or self-discovery in disequilibrium, small groups for accountability in a temporary community, problem solving processes for decision making in real situations, solo time for integration in solitude, and leadership styles and role of the trip leaders. These elements of outdoor wilderness programs help the participants to achieve

its goals according to its mission. Also, we divided outdoor wilderness programs into three categories according to the objectives and outcomes of outdoor wilderness education: orientation programs for incoming students, personal leadership development programs, and professional training programs. The impacts of outdoor wilderness experiences on the participants of different programs in higher education were reviewed.

We recognized that outdoor wilderness camping is one of the powerful tools for spiritual formation. On the trip, trip leaders provide the participants with a carefully planned program to meet their needs and wants according to the goals of the trip. Through solo experience and post-trip reflection, participants also integrate their wilderness experience and thoughts into their real life situation. Therefore outdoor wilderness camping can be a laboratory in which people are able to examine themselves and partake of the divine nature. The outdoor wilderness camping will be structured with four learning cycle phases in which the trip leader reaches participants in diverse ways to meet the needs of each participant effectively in different levels. The wilderness trip will be operated in four phases: information, formation, transformation, and reformation (Lee & Nam, 2015, 312-323). By adapting the learning cycle theories, the outdoor wilderness camping for spiritual formation will be considered as a journey of exploration undertaken by an effectively organized group with specific goals. We will start with a Biblical foundation and achieve the ministry goals. We also use the wilderness so that it will capture the participants' hearts and minds for spiritual formation. First of all, we will structure the trip with the logistics, the planning, the outfitting and all of the instruction. We set the

goals for the trip by studying the participants' physical, mental and spiritual needs as an effectively organized group. The trip leaders allow the participants to make mistakes and face their limitations. The challenges and expeditions help the participants to think of themselves and others. The participants also will practice the roles of the day's leader in situations where participants consult with their peers in the group, make decisions, and use good judgment, as they travel through the wilderness. Through an outdoor wilderness camping, the participants achieve the specific desired outcomes for spiritual formation.

Furthermore, outdoor wilderness camping for spiritual formation will be an alternative idea for Christian educators who are committed to holistic spiritual disciplines. Especially, stressful wilderness experiences allow the participants to shape their bodies and expand their minds by accomplishing seemingly impossible tasks on the trip. Integration of experiences and thoughts helps them search their souls and renovate their hearts. Therefore, wilderness camping provides outward and inward disciplines for spiritual formation. With a prayer of the heart, this paper is concluded with Erik Madsen's statement:

We must remember that the Spirit of God is not under our control. We cannot program God's activity. No matter how hard we try, we are not in control. Our responsibility is to come to the task of ministry - in church school, site camp, and wilderness trail - with hearts and minds open wide to the movement of God's Spirit. We have further responsibility to seek the most effective ways to implement the insights we receive through this openness to God's Spirit. Because God not given us a sport of timidity, powerlessness, or uncontrolled mediocrity (2Timothy 1:7), we can take whatever risks are

necessary to become involved effectively in God's ministry (1982, 124).

Therefore, it is expected that the outdoor wilderness program will be further activated by developing various types of programs in schools and churches.

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국문 요약

대학교육에서의 교육적 커리큘럼으로써  
광야학습경험의 효과 연구

이종민(충신대학교/조교수)

본 논문은 야외광야교육의 특성과 야외광야체험이 고등교육 참여자에게 미치는 영향을 연구하는 것이다. 이를 위하여 첫 번째 부분에서는 야외광야 프로그램을 구성하고 있는 핵심적인 공통 요소를 다룬다. 예를 들어 불균형 상태의 모험 또는 자기 발견, 임시공동체의 책임을 위한 소그룹 역동, 실제 상황에서 효과적인 의사 결정을 내리기 위한 문제 해결 프로세스, 고독에서의 통합을 위한 솔로 시간, 지도력 스타일과 트립 지도자의 역할 등이다. 이러한 야외광야 프로그램의 다섯 가지 공통적 요소들은 참가자들이 프로그램의 성격에 따라 각자의 목표를 달성하는데 도움이 되는 교육적 메커니즘으로 작용하고 있음을 소개한다. 그다음으로 두 번째 부분에서는 야외광야교육이 각각의 목적에 따라 세 가지 범주로 활용되고 있음을 소개한다. 예를 들어 신입생 오리엔테이션 프로그램, 개인 리더십 개발 프로그램, 그리고 전문 교육 프로그램이다. 그리고 고등교육에서 활용되고 있는 각각의 프로그램들을 통해 참여자들이 누리고 있는 교육적 효과에 대해 소개한다. 그리고 결론에서 기독교 교육자들이 실제 광야 경험을 활용하여 자신들이 추구하는 사명과 목표에 따라 전인적인 성장을 위한 개발 프로그램으로 구상하는데 필요한 영적 형성 프로그램에 대한 지침을 제안하였다.

〈 주제어 〉

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