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# The Generative Paradigm

By Chris Loynes

## Abstract

A number of commentators have identified and critiqued an approach to outdoor experiential learning as, variously, Priestian , American and algorithmic. These comments raise the questions of what are the characteristics of this algorithmic paradigm of outdoor experiential learning and what are thought to be the problems with it? This paper will address these questions and describe what the author believes to be a new, emerging practice defined by these critiques that he has called the Generative Paradigm after Robin Hodgkin. This paradigm is described and placed in the western and global cultural and educational debates responding to issues of sustainability and human purpose.

*"Outdoor, Experiential, Learning, Pedagogy"*

## Introduction

A number of commentators have identified an approach to outdoor experiential learning as, variously, Priestian after the author who it is believed has best described this approach (for an example see Priest & Gass, 1997), American imperialism by those who are concerned about the dominance of an American style on other continents, and algorithmic (Ringer, 1999) by those who have reflected on some of its key characteristics.

The commentary is often critical but has largely been left in verbal presentations, e-mail discussions or personal communications. One example of a written critique is a paper in which I questioned some applications of this approach (Loynes, 1998) describing the results as “adventure in a bun”, likening it to the Macdonald restaurant chain. I viewed this as something that was counterproductive to effective experiential learning wherever it was practised. My concerns were that an ‘off the shelf’, commodified approach to providing adventure experiences and talking about them was counter to the organic and emergent nature of experiential learning as it takes account of environments, individuals , groups, cultures and activities and the experiences that arise from their interaction. Others deplored the dominance of the voice of this paradigm in the literature claiming it gives the impression of only one way or, perhaps, a right way to do things. Such remarks also imply a criticism of other authors for not describing other ways of doing things as much as they might. It has also been suggested that this dominant rhetoric is not, in fact, a sufficient description of the practice it is intending to describe, even when that practice is that of the authors who are writing about it.

These comments provoked me to review my 1998 arguments in a wider critical context. For me they raised the questions,

- What are the characteristics of this algorithmic paradigm of outdoor experiential learning?
- What are thought to be the problems with it?
- What are the other approaches that lack a voice in the English language?

This paper will address these questions. The ideas presented here are the result of conversations with the commentators and critics mentioned above. I am writing this from the perspective of a white, English man who has been exploring the professional and cultural diversity in our work. This will inevitably give my remarks some ethnic, gender and cultural bias. I have become curious about the way an idea becomes an institution and, as such, is applied as a political tool both within and between countries and professions. I am also interested in what lies behind the apparently conflicting claims that, on the one hand, there are approaches to outdoor experiential learning that speak globally to the human condition transcending nations and cultures and, on the other hand, that each community should develop its own authentic approach to experience, learning and the outdoors. In the context of these questions the bias of my perspective is, potentially, a significant factor in my interpretation of which the reader should be critically aware.

### **The Algorithmic Paradigm of Outdoor Experiential Learning**

The approach that I am describing as algorithmic was first labelled this by Ringer (1999), another author who has written critically of this approach. It can be characterised in a number of ways. One way it can be recognised is by the language that is used to describe it. Typical words include programming, processing, framing, funnelling, front loading, sequencing, cycles, outcomes, task, leader and team.

It can also be recognised by the beliefs that are taken as axiomatic. Those mentioned by the critics of this paradigm as potentially problematic are listed below. The presence of some of these they claim can indicate a programme influenced, perhaps overly influenced, by the algorithmic paradigm.

- Programmes have predetermined outcomes, which are measured.
- Programmes are sequenced according to a conceptual framework such as the learning or training cycle.
- Action and conversation are the central ingredients. You are not learning unless you are doing.
- The world of the learning experience is understood as metaphor and so not entirely real.
- Raised self esteem is typically the dominant outcome.
- The principles of challenge by choice, informed consent and other ethical concerns are seldom questioned.
- A belief in personal development and human progress and the centrality of the ego.
- There is an uncritical stance to the social context in which the learning occurs.

- Groups are understood as teams in the context of a shared goal and not as communities with a multiplicity of needs and dreams.
- Self reliance and leadership are widely practised, taught and celebrated at the expense of human interdependence.
- Nature is understood as an assault course, gymnasium or puzzle to be resolved and controlled. It is a resource to be commodified instead of a home to which to relate.

It also draws on a particular body of theory including Maslow's humanistic psychology, Kolb's concepts of experiential learning, Tuckman's and Belbin's concepts of group dynamics (for examples see Barnes 1997, Miles & Priest 1999 and Hopkins & Putnam 2001) and, in relation to the environment, evolutionary biology (such as propounded by Dawkins, 1999).

### **A Military Tradition**

Although this approach is often tagged as “American” the origins can be traced back to the British Army's Ro Allen Company at Sandhurst in the 1950's (Adair, 1998). They were seeking an experiential approach to officer training and, in partnership with Adair, developed command tasks and the concept of action centred leadership. A number of tasks familiar to practitioners today from the books of Karl Rohnke and others (for example Rohnke, 1984) and including the first ropes courses, owe their provenance to the imagination of these army trainers.

Embedded within the design of the tasks and the intentions for their applications are the militaristic concepts of hierarchical leadership, masculine benchmarks for success, performance and achievement and a team discipline that was informed, intelligent, proactive but unquestioning.

Adair worked closely with a voluntary organisation later to become widely influential in the practice of experiential approaches, the Brathay Hall Trust in the English Lake District. In partnership with Brathay, Adair applied his concepts and techniques to the world of leadership and team building (Dybeck, 1996). The Brathay Hall Trust has been influenced by many ideas from various sources but when I worked there in the mid 1980's action centred leadership was still a common leadership model offered to delegates. It suited the militaristic metaphors and models popular amongst many British companies (for example see Morgan, 1986: 275-320) .

Adair's ideas have also been widely influential in the UK in the fields of youth expedition work through the Expedition Advisory Centre (EAC, 1993) of the Royal Geographical Society and also the training of leaders and young people for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (D of E Award, 2000).

The practice of youth expeditions draws heavily on British traditions of exploration and empire. Pioneered after the Second World War by John, later Lord Hunt of Everest fame and others under the banner of a moral equivalent to war, they have become increasingly popular with several hundred taking place each year overseas. Many youth expeditions were and still are led by ex service men and women trained at Sandhurst under Adair's model or influenced by its ideas. Many more occur at home, often in the name of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award for which

every participant must complete a self-reliant expedition. Today, the purposes are variously adventure, science and service minded, still reflecting what some would argue to be the better values of British imperialist history.

Programmes such as these are widespread and a common pathway for entrants into a career in outdoor experiential learning. The national centre for mountain activities at Plas y Brenin in Wales (directed for some time by ex service men) used these models to interpret the role of the mountain walking leader on nationally certificated training courses (see Ogilvie, 1993). The same models were incorporated in the handbook of the Victorian Bushwalking Leadership Scheme in Australia (Lingard, 1981).

I have not systematically followed the paths of the training staff or the officers that they trained into the civilian world of outdoor experiential learning. My evidence for their influence on early course design, beyond the organisations above, is anecdotal. However, Cook (1999) describes how the development of outdoor education within the post war school system in the UK was also influenced by the desire to toughen up young men for war. Whether by parallel evolution or dissemination, this military influence spread throughout the UK's outdoor education and development training practice, appeared in Australia and crossed the Atlantic to influence organisations like Project Adventure and the books of Rohnke (1984).

### **A Modernist Tradition**

Besides the militaristic and authoritarian characteristics there are, in my view, three other distinctive features of the paradigm that attract critical comment. They are all features of the currently dominant, western capitalist, post-renaissance paradigm called modernism that includes

1. A scientific rationale;
1. A production line metaphor lending itself to mass production;
2. A notion of learning as product and so a marketable commodity.

### **A Scientific Rationale**

Programmable, formulaic approaches are influenced by the positivist scientific paradigm. This positivist approach has set out to discover the theory behind all observable phenomena and seeks to express these theories as algorithms. The benefit to society is that these general algorithms can then be “plugged in” to a particular problem and deliver a solution. Computer language works like this. Input the data, select the algorithm for the task you want undertaken, the result is a consistent solution.

Applying this method to the study of human behaviour has been under severe attack by other methodologies that do not treat people as predictable phenomena. Nevertheless the positivist paradigm has had a major influence as a metaphor for a course design understood as an algorithm with the capacity to deliver a consistent solution, hence Ringer's (1999) use of the term “algorithmic paradigm” to describe this approach. When this metaphor is attached to the metaphor of the production line commentators believe that a powerful combination of ideas capable of widespread influence is forged.

### **A Production Line Metaphor**

Loading and processing are lifted straight from the world of production lines; programming, loading and sequencing form the world of computers. Both describe rational, mechanistic, technological, deterministic and linear approaches to a task. The raw materials or data are loaded at one end; they are then assembled and manipulated in a predetermined sequence to deliver a uniform outcome of a predictable standard as efficiently as possible. Applying the metaphor to a learning experience provides a rational proposal with measurable outcomes predetermined during the negotiations with the client. I suggest that the linear rationality of models such as Kolb's learning cycle or Tuckman's team development only help to emphasise a progression through a defined sequence of steps or stages to a desirable outcome, learning in Kolb's case and performance in Tuckman's.

The production line approach tempts the provider and the client to consider participants as objects, resource or labour, manufactured to fulfil their potential as a cog in a machine rather than as a human being. The positivist approach reinforces the idea that this object can be manipulated to a formula. Likewise it tempts the facilitator to focus on certain learning objectives to the exclusion of others. The result, pushed to an extreme, is a participant who is oppressed rather than empowered by their managed experience.

A recent article went as far as to claim that it was unethical to train employees unless there was a guaranteed contribution to the bottom line. The temptation to demonstrate to the client with the cheque book that the desired outcomes are the ones that were achieved influences the structuring of conversations before, during and after the activities. The participants learn the script to satisfy the "providers" and the client.

Of course there is often perceived to be all sorts of mutual benefits to the client and the participant and everyone is happy. Evaluation forms designed for this approach are widely referred to as "happy sheets". However, if a participant dares to suggest that they learned nothing, were unhappy about what they learned or simply learned something else unintended, heads roll, usually that of the facilitator who "failed" to deliver the "right" script.

### **A Marketable Commodity**

I have discussed elsewhere (Loynes, 1998) the possible consequences of outdoor experiential learning becoming a standardised product. In this paper I would like to extend the critique further.

Providers have developed technological solutions that attempt to enhance, accelerate and guarantee the outcome in order to achieve the predictable outcomes increasingly demanded by the client. This is partly cost driven, as the naturalistic approaches are both staff and time intensive. For an example of these two influences compare the approaches of Wilderness Therapy (Davis-Berman, 1994) and Adventure Therapy (Gass, 1993). Technological solutions include both hard and soft elements. The high ropes course is a hard response to the need for a guaranteed adrenaline buzz with guaranteed safety delivered quickly anywhere. The reviewing (processing in North America) techniques are often seen as a soft solution to establishing

conscious and rational learning outcomes from the experiences. These are then readily available for collection by the evaluation tools after the programme.

Considered from the business perspective, treating the experience as product and packaging it for marketing has at least one drawback. One provider confided that they could sell any programme provided it was a two day ropes course experience, Fordism alive and well in the learning market place. This approach does wonders for the programme marketing. The off the shelf product lends itself to branding, costs are driven down and the mass market can be accessed. Drucker (1989) claimed that “the only benefits in business are marketing and innovation; everything else is cost.” This provider has solved the marketing question. However, their ability to innovate has been seriously hampered by the “off the shelf” approach. Even in business terms this will give their product a limited life cycle. They will then have to come up with another product.

Considered from an educator’s approach, transforming the participant into a consumer can only lead closer to the oppressive end of the spectrum of outdoor experiential learning. The product is predetermined and the benefits to the consumers decided for them. Even the facilitation is influenced towards convincing the consumers that they have got what they asked for and that they liked it. In this sense I believe that an “off the shelf” approach to outdoor experiential learning cannot be properly described as experiential. This accolade can only be attached to bespoke services, those that have been tailor made or, even better, are emergent.

### **Problems with the Algorithmic Paradigm**

I have argued elsewhere (Loynes, 1998) that the hierarchical, scientific, technological and mass production elements of this paradigm are unsuited to an experiential education practice. Ringer (1999) coined the term “algorithmic” in a paper introducing psycho-dynamic approaches to group work to experiential education practitioners. He comments

It is my view that in the field of adventure education and outdoor leadership there has long been an implicit and hence invisible discounting of aspects of group leadership that do not fit into algorithmic schemes.

In explaining the term he adds

My concern is that the current political and economic climate in most of the western world supports the trivialisation and fragmentation of complex fields of endeavour such as group facilitation and leadership. In this vein, the title of this paper was a deliberate play on the word facile. If the meaning of the word – as derived from the French facile (easy) – signifies the state of being easy, then facilitation translates into the term ‘making easy.’ However, the meaning of facile in English has migrated to something akin to ‘trivial.’ Bending a few grammatical rules enables us to see ‘Facile-itation’ as trivialisation. Isn’t the activity of ‘making easy’ a group so simple as to warrant trivialisation? Should we not simply chunk facilitation into a number of algorithms, and derive from each algorithm the requisite competencies?

Ringer sees the reductionist approach popular with modernist science applied to facilitation in order to create simple, and therefore trainable, portable and assessable, competencies. He claims that, while this may help beginners to start their professional development, this is no reason to apply such a straight jacket to sophisticated practise. In discussing the militarist legacy Bowles (pers comm. 2000) comments

The correspondence with both military and masculine aspects remains both in-force and in-vogue. This is perhaps as it should be and this is necessary in the light of outdoor, adventure-based work having a history within war. War has been so hard on folk and we might say that it is only human to seek out alternatives. War hurts. War hurts men as it hurts women. War is ugly for all. Perhaps it is not so much the military and the masculine aspects that need to be addressed as it is the reasonable alternatives that are possible that need attention. This was one of the questions of the day that was a day of the last hundred years. Hahn, following William James and others, sought a moral equivalent to war. Lord Hunt carried on that search even through to the 1990s in the UK. Perhaps we might, today, seek out alternative adventures that are an alternative to war-like atmospheres. Perhaps we might en-vision today adventures that are not just any mere equivalent to war. There is both hope and there is potential here. Such maybe. Such maybe for all. The questions will thereby be put thus : Is an adventure programming atmosphere the alternative to war-like atmospheres or does it both express and reflect, at times, the condition of war and the conditions that do create war ? Perhaps to ask such questions is the only reasonable way in our work with OAE that wonderfully wobbles towards maturity.

These commentators raise the question that the dominance of the algorithmic paradigm in practice and in the literature is not only a matter of diversity corrected by a fuller description and dissemination of other paradigms. It is a deeper issue of a paradigm attached to a modern world view, a view that is also critiqued by these commentators. The implication is that an ethical educational practice attached to the development of people in the context of community and environment would find this algorithmic paradigm wrong in our current world context.

Before I take up this question I want to consider other paradigms available to us. I will also attempt an early description of what I believe to be a new, emerging paradigm to see if this will inform the critique of these commentators.

## **Alternative Paradigms**

### **A Moral Paradigm**

There are a number of alternative paradigms to the algorithmic approach already described in the literature. One might be described as Hahnian after Kurt Hahn, a movement led by the Outward Bound organisation but one by which many other organisations claim to have been influenced. Hahn's goal, to toughen the moral fibre of young people, can be described as a "moral paradigm". Wurdinger (1994) considers that the moral content of Adventure Education can be



traced from Greek thought through Hahn into Outward Bound. Nicol (2002) shows how he believes Hahn's views were then transferred into outdoor education in general both in England and Scotland and Wurdinger makes the same claim for Hahn's influence in North America. Hahn's approach grew out of a German liberal education philosophy. The same foundations led to the Hitler Youth Movement. Hahn's endeavours were very much a counter and a challenge to this fascist corruption. Cook (1999) describes how the toughening up of young men for war, a task supported during the war by the Aberdovey Sea School in Wales and subverted by Hahn's moral vision as it became the first Outward Bound School, was a priority for the British government. Cook describes how the education policy developed during the war and after the war led to the formation of a nation wide network of residential outdoor centres in the UK. Originally intended for the same toughening purpose, she shows how, after the war in the new climate of hope, this was subverted by Jack Longland and others to the widening of the horizons of the next generation of both girls and boys. The potential of any approach to remain a healthy contribution to society rather than degenerate into an oppressive tool remains in the hands of the community of users.

So the same programmes challenged in this article for their militaristic, masculine and imperial roots also contained the seeds of a new moral vision. Bowles (pers comm. 2000) describes how this possibility has so far been repressed by another dominating tradition, that of modernity:

When we talk in terms of "hope" which is a central critical-experiential concept we might be reminded of Kurt Hahn. At least before Outward Bound became a Trademarked ploy that would "own" and "possess" programmes ! Hahn would have been, I suggest most strongly, quite happy to discuss the matters of "faith, hope and charity". But then the meaning of those trinity-type words would have been deeply educational and deeply debated. Even climbers on Idwal Slabs climbed routes as "faith" as "hope" and as "charity". But when Outward Bound lost its nerve it threw away the motto of "To Serve, To Strive and Not to Yield" for such was not good marketing language. There is a huge debate here I guess and one that is only possible to participate when Kurt Hahn is seen again in a new light. There is much to do here. The education that was Hahn was not Outward Bound as such. But to debate this will take some disciplined research and knowledge-made-with-folk and such is not popular today in a market that wishes for no real content! In a society that consumes anything learning becomes ahistorical and critique is lost. Content is lost likewise. I firmly believe that the work of Kurt Hahn is waiting for an informed re-appraisal.

The moral paradigm has been at least as influential as the algorithmic paradigm with which it has combined on many occasions especially when being used to address issues such as social deviancy amongst young people. Although Hahn has received his fare share of criticism for adopting a moral high ground, being elitist and adopting a patriarchal stance, and some of the organisations influenced by him have been described as imperialistic, Bowles argues that his reform of a hijacked pedagogy has much to offer the future.

Is this Hahnian moral high ground to which Bowles refers the same as the current moral position of mainstream outdoor experiential programmes? Hahn's vision has non-modern and European liberal roots. Modernist programmes are embedded in a transformed socialist and communitarian morality. This is an interesting question to ask in order to maintain a critical perspective of practices that talk with the traditions of Hahn. According to Bowles (personal comm. 2001) such an attitude and question is itself part of the problem. When, Bowles claims, Hahn expressed the "Good Samaritan" act of neighbourliness this was in the context of meaning where meaning was attached to the word and the deed. To ask the question - "who is my neighbour?" is but one sign of both alienation and the loss of meaning. We are born as social beings and in this can never be asocial or anti-social unless we live an absurd life attached to the divorce of real meaning from words and deeds. Elements of British outdoor practice are rooted in such escapist ideas drawn from the adventurers who peopled the staffs of the earliest courses so there is a real danger of outdoor learning being absurd.

In adopting such a view of the person as a social being there is no high-moral-ground at all. In fact this is reality. We are born social and social we act through and through. There is one aspect here of a realism and this realism is, says Bowles, constantly adventuring with an ideal and romantic spirit. He claims that, in a world where political torture and war is evermore evil and yet evermore "naturalised" through the capitalisation of "indifference," to call this approach a so called "moral-high-ground" is indeed part of a very big story that demands telling again and again.

### **An Ecological Paradigm**

Recent attention in Europe has been given to "friluftsliv"; a Scandinavian pedagogy rooted in culture and history as much as nature (for example see Repp, 1996). Literally translated as nature free life it acknowledges the importance of a particular style of relationship with nature as defining of the culture's identity. If there are equivalent approaches in America they might be rooted in the idea of the pioneer, the cowboy, the settler or the native people.

Scandinavia is a western region that has not yet lost the idea of a connection with community and place as important. In Norway friluftsliv was championed by the explorer Nansen in an attempt to embed these values in the education system of a nation. Critically, it was seen as important for this to be an experiential education, felt and practised as well as understood. This sensual intimacy with the land and the people has strong links with ideas about indigenous traditions and the notion of authentic experience (see Loynes, 2000). Yet here a non-modern feeling has been brought forward into a modern nation state.

Friluftsliv has more to offer than another reform of the old ways valuable as this may be. Building on the tradition Naess (1990) developed his ideas of deep ecology, an idea that is rapidly establishing political and educational expressions. Deep ecology offers something different because it sees the planet as a whole and the person as a member of a species, not just a community, living on that planet, not just in a neighbourhood. Further, it offers a visionary framework and advocates that people engage critically and consciously with these ideas.

O’Sullivan (1999), who explores the contribution of thinkers like Naess to a new education, claims that the adoption of such a vision in education would be more than a reform, it would be a transformation that would have far reaching consequences to an emerging post modern society. This O’Sullivan sees as important because, in a world in which the consequences of our actions have world wide significance to ecosystems and communities, he claims it is essential to have a vision that offers the individual a way to engage with the planet as an idea. He believes that, in our world context, we need the experiential intimacy of the local but combined with the visionary cosmology of the global.

### **Other Paradigms**

Waiting in the European wings, described but not yet translated, are other pedagogues such as “erlebnis pedagogic” (loosely adventure education) from Germany (see May, 1996) or “pobyť v přírodě” (loosely outdoor life) from the Czech Republic (see Neuman, 2000). Also from Czech comes the concept of ‘dramaturgy’ (Martin, 2001). All have long standing pedigrees only now being interpreted to the English speaking world.

As western style outdoor, experiential learning interacts with eastern and antipodean cultures I am dimly aware of other emerging views. My summaries of different paradigms, already inevitably partial and so limited as a review, is further confined to approaches practised or described in the English language and the northern hemisphere.

### **The Emerging Generative Paradigm**

Rich alternatives as they are I don’t think the critics of the algorithmic paradigm are attempting to set it against these approaches only. When examined more carefully, I think they are attempting to define something else by defining what it is not, drawing on but not the same as these other paradigms.

In part these commentators are noticing what outdoor experiential learning could be or, indeed, is amongst the narratives and practices of certain less well known radical organisations in the field. They are also describing a paradigm that is emerging from the practice hidden behind the language barrier of a multi-lingual Europe and, in some cases, repressed behind the Berlin Wall. The critics amongst them are defining what outdoor, experiential learning should be from a different, radical, philosophical position. This is an exciting prospect.

### **A Political Engagement**

I have discussed elsewhere the form outdoor, experiential learning takes when it is understood as a radical practice (Loynes, in review). I argued it becomes a journey of discovery of a personal ontology and epistemology for the participant. It incorporates actions based on the experiences inspired by learners choosing for themselves how to make a difference. The individual moves through the role of participant and narrator, and becomes an agent in their world.

So far this particular radicalism could be criticised as it seems to applaud the individualism that is attached to the ideas of modernism that define the algorithmic paradigm I am critiquing. However, there are qualities within individualism that this alternative world view considers

worth retaining. For example the liberation experienced by a shift of power to the individual and the creativity as each individual struggles to reinvent a personal world view with which they can live. These are both values this radical perspective seeks to hold on to. Nevertheless, these qualities can only be transforming when the experiences supporting them do not occur in the context of the market. In this world the individual is constructed as no more than a consumer or as labour.

The emerging paradigm is thus critiquing the context of experiential learning as much as the approach. The activity of participants and practitioners radicalised in the context of a wider social and environmental field takes them into the political realm. Here is the potential for a synergy with the emerging vision, described by O'Sullivan (1999), of sustainable communities in congruence with the planetary ecosystem. In the politics of sustainability action finds a local and personal expression linked to the community and the land. Such a new and radical approach seems to be in congruence with the critical stances of some ecofeminist views (see Warren & Rheingold, 1996) already benefiting the practice of outdoor experiential learning, and the transformative learning concept espoused by O'Sullivan, a critique from which the field might benefit.

The moral paradigm sits firmly in the domain of political action and indeed informs it. By incorporating the moral paradigm in outdoor experiential learning it is possible to confront the technological, market place and image politics that have been allowed in by the algorithmic approach. This was one big hope that Kurt Hahn so deeply felt to be necessary for international co-operations and world peace. This remains true today even if we know that there is no one-way for a peace situation in multi-cultural worlds. Without such a position the dynamics of living with self, community and planet will be a lost battle rather than a hope filled struggle.

### **The Characteristics of an Emerging Paradigm**

If this new paradigm is being defined by what it is not then I could attempt to describe it by exploring what is hinted at in the critiques when considered from this radical, ethnographic and political view. I have called the approach that emerges from this perspective the generative paradigm after Hodgkin (1976) who first coined the term in the context of education's role in supporting young people in the creative interpretation of their experience and a transforming influence on their culture. From this point of view its characteristics are,

1. Instead of a rational approach it could best be described as valuing intuition.
2. Rather than being production oriented and valuing standards and predictability it is creative and founded on hope and possibility.
3. It takes its metaphors from spirituality and the journey rather than positivist science and productive business, being subject rather than object oriented.
4. It is not outcome focussed or process oriented; it is emergent as described by the educational thinkers Hodgkin (1976) and Heron (1999), valuing the twilight and the firelight where intuition and conceptualisation meet through storytelling. Meaning and value emerge within the experience rather than being represented or defined by the programme structure or the facilitator. Empowerment, rather than being represented as the gift of a tool, is understood as establishing congruence with an inner sense of self.

5. The facilitator accompanies rather than leads the participants as in Boud's (1997) advocacy of animation rather than facilitation. Its principles are egalitarian and not hierarchical as in O'Sullivan's (1999) transformative learning.
6. Learning is goal free, the experience offered a step on the road rather than a solution; the metaphor of the journey emerges as an alternative to the production line or computer programme.
7. Relational mutuality and trust replace transactional consent and choice.
8. It is influenced by feminine as much as masculine ideologies.
9. It restores place as a central and critical dimension of equal value for learning and meaning as the self and the group.
10. It subscribes to a sustainable vision in relation to, and congruent with, ideas of community and the environment.
11. It replaces egocentric evolutionary biology with ecocentric Gaian ecology.
12. It is politically engaged. Justice and congruence rather than progress and consumption are its highest values.

### **A Critical Stance**

Just as the algorithmic paradigm can be criticised for treating people as labour and perpetuating a culture of violence (Souranta, 1996) so the generative model is open to a critical appraisal. Some commentators recognise that it contains the potential for indoctrination. Critics of May (1996) for example, would draw parallels between the traditions of rites of passage that he advocates and approaches that support fascist tendencies. The potential for this paradigm to degenerate are as real as they were for German liberal education. It requires a liberal and critical approach to this radical form in order to keep clear of such possibilities.

The potency of the generative paradigm lies in the dance between the emerging participant and the, potentially, mutable, even transformable social order. As is the algorithmic paradigm, this paradigm is politicised, but its world view is a possibility for the future and not one of the established but increasingly unsupportable past. Its world view of sustainability and justice is also explicit, rather than the hidden and uncriticised agendas of the older paradigm. O'Sullivan believes that, in this context, change can best be achieved by helping people to act within their own communities, developing their critical faculties and valuing the diverse results of the solutions that emerge, values close to the roots of experiential education philosophy.

What the new paradigm offers is the possibility of a dance floor and not a production line or an arena; and an experience judged, if at all, on impression and not technical performance!

### **Just a Nice Idea?**

I have suggested that the generative paradigm might be an emerging, collective dream of a possible future for outdoor experiential learning, one that the commentators I have spoken with are intuitively moving towards as they sense its emerging form around them. If there is some truth in this notion it would be surprising if only the watchers were attuned to the possibilities. Just as they are articulating these ideas in their critiques I would expect others to be creating the

ideas in practice. Without such an expression the generative paradigm will remain the product of imagination rather than intuition, and stay in the realm of narrative and not practice.

One possible example is Eden Community Outdoors (ECO) (Reed, 2000), a new, charitable initiative in my own valley. Explaining their approach the members said:

'We became tired of being expected to tell people that the world is far too broken for it ever to be mended. On a local level EVERYONE can effect change - you just have to want it yourself and be prepared to work together to achieve your dreams. "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." (Aboriginal Activist Sister).

The members, who include the young people as well the adults involved, list some of the ways they work including creatively, supportively, non-hierarchically, with a sense of self responsibility, organically and innovatively. In the words of Dave "..... ECO is ..... just a set of ideas and beliefs that most people harbour, but just a few have realised". Ringer has identified the Wilderness Enhanced Programme (Handley, 1997) and Kadjininy Enterprises (Ellis-Smith, 1999) in Australia as other possible examples.

A critical eye on these brief examples might suggest that this is simply another rhetoric from a different but equally entrained world view. This is of course possible. Even if such programmes contain strong elements of creativity, spontaneity and vitality and are relational and generative in approach they could be the beginning of something that becomes institutionalised. I suspect that generative programmes have always emerged around the edges of the so called outdoor experiential education world and others are always drifting into bounded convention. Perhaps it is a characteristic of experiential approaches that they transform convention from time to time even if we resist it. Perhaps acknowledging these deeper processes in our field's best work will help us develop structures that sustain more rather than less generative outdoor learning experiences. If so then hopefully this brief description is not as unusual as the members of ECO believe, and that readers can identify other projects that could be described in this way. One way of seeing the generative paradigm at work is to understand it as work in progress drawing on the traditions of older paradigms, adding new ideas and gaining a particular, community and planetary political focus. If this is so, seeds of these ideas will be emerging in writing such as this and in the practice of experiential education organisations old and new.

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