

Physical Education, Recreation, the Environment and Our Quality of Life

體育、康樂、環境與優質人生的關係

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of physical educators in promoting an environmental ethic in individuals by expanding the traditional model of body, mind and spirit to include the environment

摘要

本文章以傳統的「身心靈」概念，探討體育工作者在推動環境保護中的個人道德行為。

Introduction

As one enters the train station in Guangzhou, China, there is a large sign which says in Chinese and English, Think Globally, Act Locally. In essence this sign is proclaiming the same message that John Muir an American naturalist, advocated when he stated "when we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." In a sense physical educators have always acknowledged this fact by reaching out to all aspects of the human spirit.

This philosophical base is best exemplified in the model presented in Figure 1. Through this model, physical educators have connected the mind, the body and the spirit of individuals to promote a balance in people which results in an improvement of their quality of life. Yet, the model presented in figure 1 can be enlarged to further the impact of physical educators upon the quality of life of society. With this thought in mind, this paper argues that the physical education model should be enlarged to include: the mind, the body, the spirit and the environment (see Figure 2).

By expanding the vision of physical educators to include the environment in which we all live, physical educators can continue to address the "complete" individual. Such an addition would be especially prophetic today as we struggle with environmental problems on a global scale and we realize the true inter-

connectedness of our world. The addition of a fourth component into the physical education model would also re-connect physical educators with the allied professions of health and recreation.

The Beginnings of environment preservation in the United States

Historically, the park and recreation movement in America has been deeply intertwined with environmental activism and protecting the natural resources of the United States individuals such as John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Bob Marshall, Sigurd Olson, Stephen Mather, Frederick Law Olmsted sought to bring the countryside into the city through city parks, preserve the "resource jewels" of America in the form of National and State Parks and wilderness areas, and encourage Americans to examine their relationship to the environment. The legacy created by these individuals has challenged park and recreation professionals to create park and recreation resources that are environmental reform laboratories for the whole population - places where environmental quality and human welfare come together for the benefit of all (Brown, 1972).

This challenge was reiterated in 1987, when the president's Commission on Americans Outdoors released its report on the state of outdoor recreation in America. The commission was charged by the president with reviewing public and private outdoor recreation opportunities, policies, and program and making

recommendations for managing outdoor recreation opportunities into the 21st century. The completed report offered 66 recommendations for future action to accomplish this goal. An integral part of making these recommendations work is creating an outdoor ethic in Americans, an ethic that goes beyond practicing techniques such as minimum impact camping, to a philosophy that pervades life itself.

The report concludes that for the past 25 years we have emphasized the role of government in conservation and environmental problems and have been given little attention regarding the role of the individual. A land ethic has not been created in the minds of individuals. Today, no attempt to protect the environment will be successful unless ordinary people are willing to adjust their lifestyles and develop a personalized environmental ethic.

Building a Land Ethic

The importance of developing an outdoor ethic in all people around the world will continue to grow. As Sigurd Olson, an American naturalist, wrote "the greatest achievement of our flight to the moon is the picture of the earth, a living blue-green planet whirling in the dark endless void of space, and the realization that this is home" (1976). There are no divisions in the picture, the earth is truly a global village which needs to pull together in dealing with the problems that affect our common home.

Businesses are already seeing the importance of becoming more environmentally friendly. People are starting to use the power of the pocketbook to direct companies to develop products and services that are more "earth friendly." Companies of all sizes are making the commitment to

Become more earth-friendly, leading some people to predict that the profit making opportunities of the 1990's will be in making and selling environmentally sound products and services. Already developing cleaner manufacturing processes, offering products that generate less waste, devising safer pest control methods (or even organic methods) and cleaning up past damage are becoming top-priority investment areas in Western Europe and North America (Shea, 1989). One company which understands the interconnectedness of business, social responsibility and the environment is Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream which has created a product mission, social mission and economic mission for its company. *Ben and Jerry's is dedicated to the creation and demonstration of a new corporate concept of linked prosperity. Our mission consists of three interrelated parts.*

Product mission : to make, distribute and sell the finest quality all natural ice cream and related products

in a wide variety of innovative flavors made from Vermont dairy products.

Social Mission : To operate company in a way that actively recognizes the central role that business plays in the structure of society by initiating innovative ways to improve the quality of life of a broad community : local, national and international.

Economic Mission : To operate the company on a sound financial basis of profitable growth, increasing value for our stockholders and creating career opportunities and financial rewards for our employees.

These initiatives from the business communities are encouraging; yet educators must play their part in leading the way to developing an environmental ethic in people. I believe that physical educators in Hong Kong and China have a unique opportunity to impact the world. They can become the champions of the environment in their part of the world. It is a natural outgrowth of their present philosophical base. Not only do people need to develop their own mind, body and spirit they also must take care of the environment around them. The interconnectedness of these four components is an important concept to grasp. This is a real opportunity to be leaders within your own communities.

A Land Ethic in China: Boundless Opportunities

Educators in China must learn from, rather than follow, the western model of environmental awareness and learn to plot that their own course. Within the United States, we have done a good job of creating legislation to protect our natural resources but we have failed to create an individual environmental ethic in people. Eastern philosophies have a long history of treasuring the natural environment. How can this historical perspective be further developed in the 21st century? How can physical educators work to educate those around them of the connectedness of the mind, body, spirit and environment in providing balance and an increased quality of life for all people in Hong Kong and China? How can physical educators encourage people to not only think globally, act locally but also to be personally.

I truly believe we are living at a unique time in history, a time in which we will see great changes in the way we live on this earth. Professionals in the allied fields of physical education and recreation can either sit back and follow those who will create the future or we can become leaders.

Regardless of our decisions, the changes are coming; the only unanswered question is what will be our role? In the words of the British Statesman, Edmund Burke, "Nobody makes a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do little."

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*This paper was presented at the Guangzhou Institute of Physical Education in 1996.

Figure 1

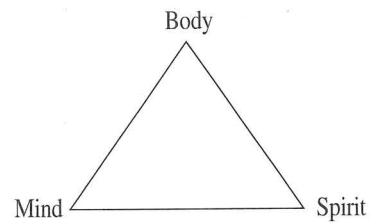


Figure 2

