

CoDe is the official organ of the BCU Coaching Scheme. Members are free to express their views within its pages. Articles and comments therefore reflect the thoughts of the author and do not necessarily state the policy of the National Coaching Committee. CoDe is programmed for publication with Focus. Contributions, including pictures, are welcome. Please send them to: BCU, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 5AS.

Editor: Director of Coaching

THE AIM OF THE BCU COACHING SCHEME IS:

To promote the sport and recreation of canoeing and to ensure that newcomers are introduced to canoeing in a safe and enjoyable way and that they and those already in the sport are assisted to progress to whatever level and in whichever discipline within canoeing suits them best.

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SLALOM COACHING DEVELOPMENT

The Slalom Coaching Development Sub Committee is to launch the revised and rejuvenated Slalom Coaching awards syllabus and scheme structure, at the International Canoe Exhibition at Crystal Palace from 19-20 February:

Confused Parent ?

Aspiring Club Coach ?

Future Team Coach ?

Outdated skills ?

To find out more about this exciting new development in Slalom Coaching pick up a leaflet at the Canoe Exhibition (or send sae to the BCU office)

1994 COACH COURSES (recreation)

Training courses for the Coach Award are programmed for:

Plas y Brenin	11-17 April
	6-11 November
Glenmore Lodge	15-22 October

Please send sae to BCU office for full details

CANOEING INSTRUCTORS REQUIRED

Residential and non-residential vacancies at children's watersports centres in Surrey and Berkshire. 4 - 16 weeks, June - September. Full/part-time. Excellent salaries and enjoyable working environments. Further details: Freetime Leisure Limited, Tel. 0483 740242

ELECTION RESULTS

All the candidates notified in the last edition of CoDe have been returned unopposed, apart from one election, for West Sussex. LCO is confirmed as Mike Watson 6 Hillside Cres, Angmering, W Sussex BN16 4AA.

EXAMINING STANDARDS

Complaints have recently been made with regard to examining standards of Star Tests and Proficiency.

The Coaching Committee is concerned that standards should not be artificially 'jacked up' by those who have a particular enthusiasm or expertise.

On the other hand, candidates must reach the standard which, hopefully, is reasonably well indicated in the descriptions in the syllabus.

3 Star is the entry to Instructor Training. Candidates are appearing on courses who are clearly not up to the ability level described in the test.

Examiners are asked, therefore, to consider carefully the stated requirements, and assess to those standards.

Supervision of Proficiency Test Examiners

In order to gain E1 status, a Senior Instructor must assess a proficiency test candidate under the **direct supervision** of an established Examiner.

The established examiner should only sign the Examiner Log Book if he or she is satisfied that the candidate understands, and has assessed to, the standard of the test. If the examiner is not satisfied, the trainee examiner must undertake as many assessments under direct supervision as are necessary for them to be recommended.

WILTSHIRE PANEL MEETING

A meeting of the Wiltshire Coaching Panel will take place on Monday 21 February at Potterne, commencing 7.30pm. Details: Doug Manning, LCO, 371 Ferndale Rd, Swindon, Wilts.

Local Coaching Panel meetings are open to all members holding a qualification, including Supervisors/PW Teachers, and Trainee Instructors onwards.

RLSS SYMPOSIUM

The RLSS symposium on beach lifeguarding is to be held at the London Metropoloe Hotel on 17 March. For full details:

David Harris, RLSS UK, Mountbatten House, Studley, Warwicks B80 7NN.

The Use of the Open Canoe in Outdoor Education

by GRAHAM BAILEY

GRAHAM BAILEY, BA, MEd, FRGS works at the Plas Pencwllli Outdoor Education Centre, in Brecon, Powys

Outdoor Education Centres are increasingly using open canoes within their courses. In the past many centres have used general purpose white water kayaks as the principal means of introducing young people to water-based adventure.

Although popular with the children, kayaks have a number of inherent problems when they are used, in what are essentially taster introductions to outdoor pursuits.

Some of these are:

Once on the water the student is essentially working alone. This is often undesirable as it is key feature of many courses that they try to encourage teamwork and co-operation.

When used by a complete novice the craft itself is

Inherently unstable

Difficult to steer and difficult to paddle in a straight line. The skills necessary are not easily acquired in 1 day.

Difficult to get in and out of

Not easily adjusted to fit different sized students.

Likely to generate, fears of being trapped underwater.

So why use Canoes ?

Open canoes offer a number of advantages over kayaks some of these are:

Children are able to paddle in small groups

As far as the novice is concerned the open canoe:

Is relatively stable and therefore reduces the risk of group members capsizing.

Requires a relatively low level of skill acquisition in order to get it moving in a controlled way.

Easy to get in and out of. Sitting in it is non threatening and comfortable with frequent changes in sitting position possible.

It is an instrument of the long journey. Journeying activities have been an essential ingredient of outward bound type courses for many years. The reasons for this are:

It is able to take bulky even non specialist equipment. No need for expensive sleeping bags, or inedible dehydrated food

It is easy to load

For the instructor it also offers a number of practical advantages.

Children feel secure and are less likely to be frightened by thoughts of being trapped.

Fewer boats makes supervision easier.

Students experiencing difficulty can be paired with more able members and the journey can continue.

Provides instant access to safety equipment, First aid and spare clothing etc.

The absence of difficult spray decks and tight cockpits means that the instructor can:

Quickly land and offer immediate assistance to students in difficulty.

Easily transfer students to other boats including his own even while on the water.

Remove students from the water into the instructor boat.

Although there are a number of important practical advantages favouring open canoes, are they really better able to satisfy the specific objectives of outdoor education courses? Before examining this in detail it is necessary to agree on a definition of outdoor education, and then examine the overall aims of such courses. Keighley (1988) provided a good working definition when he described outdoor education as the term used to:

"describe all learning, social development and acquisition of skill associated with living and journeying outdoors . . . Outdoor education is not a subject, but an integrated approach to

learning, to decision making and solution of problems."

The HMI (1979) identified a number of aims for outdoor education, they included developing:

A respect for one's self through meeting the challenge.

Developing a respect for others through the shared group experience and shared decision making.

and the Schools Council (1980) developed the last point a little further when it highlighted a key aim of outdoor education to be:

"The development of social relationships through pupils living and working together in small groups in unusual situations . . ."

These objectives are still the foundations of many outdoor education courses offered today.

One of the key aspects in the design of outdoor education courses is to set groups suitable tasks which will involve and concentrate the energies of the whole group, to encourage, decision making, discussion, improved relationships and a strong positive group ethos.

Young get a real buzz when experiencing success, especially if this has come about as a result of their own efforts. These emotions can be enhanced if the success is a direct result of being in a team.

There is some evidence, Light and Glachen(1984) Renshaw and Garton (1986) to suggest that when an individual is given certain types of problem to solve, he or she will learn problem solving skills more effectively, working within a small group that when working independently. It appears that where tasks are designed to encourage active interaction - eg detailed discussion, experimentation, dissent or even argument - there are measurable improvements on an individual's performance. Differences of opinion, diversity of idea, must be resolved and any conclusions acted on. The resolution process and final decisions should involve everybody. *All members must talk about it and get their hands dirty.*

My own experience suggests that suitable tasks need to be *Open Ended*, with a number of different solutions possible. The final outcome may depend on satisfactorily solving other smaller problems many of which will not be apparent at the beginning of the exercise.

But what has this got to do with Open Canoes ?

The use of open canoes encourages communication within small groups. For example when:

Paddling in pairs; good communication is vital, clear instructions must be given. This is assessed in the star award scheme.

Loading and unloading the canoe trailer and placing canoes on the water. This is a very important part of any canoe trip and instructors must resist the temptation to do it themselves. Bite your bottom lip and let the group 'have a go', you can check the knots later !

Emptying water from canoes when on the bank. Again let the group do as much as possible.

In addition they provide many opportunities for open ended problems to be solved by groups of children. Obvious exercises include:

Joint planning of trips, even extended journeys over several days.

Building and sailing rafts down the river or on the lake.

Using a number of boats and groundsheets in order to make a shelter for the entire group.

Practising in safe water exercises such as:

Rescue of swimmers

Emptying a swamped canoe

Multiple capsize and recovery of canoes.

Because the immediate acquisition of skills is less important, the instructor can leave more to the group. He or she can often withdraw to the fringes of group dynamics. From this position the instructor is

concluded at bottom of page 4

Dear CoDe

A response from the DoC to each point, is contained under each item as it arises in the following letter, for the sake of simplicity

Dear CoDe

S/NVQ's Again

CoDe 54 contained an article on S/NVQ's with the final paragraph saying that our RCO's must vote on the issue in March 1994.

I will return to that paragraph but would first like to take issue with some of the advantages listed in the article.

For NGB's

- * provides a clearly defined framework . . .

The coaching scheme of the BCU defines the current framework, how does an externally administered scheme help us as the BCU ?

The claim is that it helps organisations and other 'employers' (not necessarily of the commercial kind) to understand the level of one GB's qualifications against another.

- * gives nationally recognised status . . .

As the National Governing Body, the status we confer by granting awards is by definition nationally recognised.

Yes - and that should be sufficient. However, if everyone else becomes NVQ'd and we don't our status would drop

- * will allow greater transferability . . . sectors of employment.

The article later quotes a figure of 90% being volunteers, so should we accept a scheme that only benefits the 10% that require employment qualifications to the possible detriment of the 90% ?

Sorry, my mistake. Sport generally runs on 90% voluntary effort. Around 40% of Coaching members earn their living, or some part of it, from canoeing instruction. Also, in due course, it may become difficult for the true volunteer to hire council owned premises, and so forth, unless the qualification is an NVQ.

- * will fit into the European framework . . .

I have yet to see how the changes fit into any greater European context and so would like this benefit quantified. If this activity is a goal then surely a global framework is even more desirable, is there an ISO/S/NVQ and will the coaching scheme need to be changed to fit that ?

Letters in the last two CoDes referred to the problems occurring in Europe - France in particular - regarding the recognition of British qualifications. A BASI (ski-ing) instructor was arrested ! High level negotiations are currently being conducted to have an NVQ qualification automatically accepted for work purposes in other EEC states.

- * will enhance . . . NGB awards

With whom, employers ? We as the BCU already recognise the value of our own awards so how is this a benefit to us ?

We are currently recognised nationally, but not necessarily immediately, and without question ! NVQs, in effect, would give us direct government recognition. Further, we are being forced to address issues to which perhaps we did not give sufficient attention previously.

- * will allow employers . . .

There's that word "employers" again. Where is this a benefit to the BCU ?

- * will give NGB's an opportunity to influence . . .

As the NGB we currently have total control of standards, to only have an "opportunity to influence" does not seem to me to be an advantage !

- * will attract additional Sports Council support . . .

How will this effect us (the 90% of volunteers) in the cost of maintaining our coaching qualifications ? The coaching scheme is changing to accommodate S/NVQ's, this may require levels of revalidation of BCU coaching qualifications, will funds be available to help in this ?

Coaching is currently subsidised to the tune of £25,000 by Sports Council. If this was withdrawn we would have to look for a further £2.50 per head from the Coaching members.

For Coaches

- * will enhance employment opportunities

Employment again !

Having said all the above, I don't disagree with S/NVQ's. I believe that there has been sufficient information published over the last several months to enable us all to understand what S/NVQ's are about. Several of the listed advantages could be seen as such in a wider context than the BCU. More importantly, there does seem to be an unstoppable bandwagon and we are better placed being on it rather than trailing behind.

The area I am still concerned over is the effect on the coaching scheme itself. CoDe 53, page 2, "Coaching Scheme Revision - Keeping You Up to Date" said, "The opinion is now being expressed that even if, and when, the S/NVQ system is fully implemented it will, in fact, be fairly simple matter to continue to offer BCU qualification . . ." To say an "opinion is expressed" is not the same as a simple statement that it will happen that way.

That same article also said that work was progressing in updating the coaching scheme along previously stated guidelines - presumably those in CoDe 49. Do we have a timetable for these changes or are they all wrapped up with S/NVQ's ? That may be a simplistic question but it brings me back to the RCO vote in 1994. Without knowing exactly what they are to vote on, we are being asked to "buy a pig in a poke". How can we give total support to an incompletely defined package ?

To conclude, I believe that information is essential if the BCU is to retain the support of the majority of current coaching scheme members. After all it is our coaching scheme and we should be happy with it in its own right. Once the changes are fully defined only then can we be happy administering S/NVQ's alongside the new scheme.

KEVIN DUDLEY, Rayne, Essex

Further comment from DoC: Our best estimate of the time-table now is as follows:

A 'consultant' has been taken on to write up our current Instructor award into 'outcomes' - NVQ-speak for the assessment criteria. Our 'consultant' is Brian Fuller, a Kayak Instructor and Slalom Coach. Brian has to ensure that we meet all the requirements of the generic framework for a coaching qualification which is set by the Coaching, Teaching and Instructing section of the Sport and Recreation Industry Lead Body.

While this is going on we are seeking, through separate working parties, to revise the skills definitions and progressions for the star tests, in so far as this is felt to be necessary.

We also need to ensure that the total package, and its manner of presentation, properly meets the requirements of the sport as it is today.

This is not all necessarily directly related to whether or not our qualifications become recognised as NVQs. However, we did not want to proceed with NVQs (if that is the final decision) and obtain recognition for the Instructor level, only to have to change it in six months' time. Nor did we want to launch a revision of the awards, with perhaps an NVQ option, only to then announce a change in star tests a few months later.

The ambition is, therefore, to have the whole package ready - regardless of whether the final decision is to 'NVQ' the qualifications, in one go.

To this end, we believe that most of the background work will be achieved by June, and information included in August Focus. The first wave of NVQ assessors would be trained in early October, and by March 1995, if such is the agreement, some Instructor courses would be available as NVQs.

If the final decision is against NVQs, it should be possible, and it is the aim, to have the whole of the revised scheme ready from 1 March 1995.

Dear CoDe

NVQ = Not Very Qualified

In reply to your article on 'NVQ Pros and Cons', can I please put forward my views gained from the 'chalk face' and 'water level'.

The opinions of my immediate Head of School, my teaching colleagues and myself, is that we have been forced to follow the NVQ scheme. Our students now have a shallower, and narrower band of knowledge, than was ever thought possible, compared to when we worked the old and trusted City and Guilds syllabus. Employers still look lost when faced with the task of interpreting what NVQ stands for.

The BCU should also be aware that colleges of technology are bound by rules imposed by the funding council: ie rules that ensure you adopt the NVQ doctrines, which are:

- 1 Everyone should have an NVQ qualification
- 2 No student should be refused to try for an NVQ
- 3 For every student who does not achieve an NVQ, a percentage of money/funding is withheld from the college by the funding council.

This means:

No qualification = no money to college = no salaries = no job

BUT . . . mortgages still need paying

- 4 No student is to fail.

In my profession this means that once a student enrolls, lecturers are on a 'no-win situation'.

The testing/assessment procedure is such that they can have as many attempts at your questions as they like.

Individual questions wrongly answered can be re-tried (separately) over and over again until successful. Anyone lacking the very basics of literary skills, is allowed to answer orally. Would any parent fancy having their siblings taught on a river, canal or the sea by an instructor who can't read?

- 5 As a lecturer, trying to train apprentices up to industrial/professional competency is a hard task. This is what employers will want from you, whether free lance or in a centre. Each skill is split up into tasks, each task requiring it's own mountain of paper work to be filled in. Forms to say your student has sufficient prior learning to attempt the task, paper work to complete during the exercise, (is your kayak fitted with a desk)? and all the forms to complete if they are successful. Don't forget the one to sign when they fail! What I am describing, don't forget, is for just one task. There could be as many as ten tasks to make one UNIT. An NVQ is made up of many units.

But, because your students are highly motivated, never get bored, and don't mind sitting around on the river bank waiting for you, you need never worry.

In the latter part of this year ('93) I attended an Instructor assessment weekend. Some parts of my teaching were OK, but the rest was just 'downright absent mindedness'.

Needless to say I failed.

Now that the hurt has gone, my pride restored, and I have had time to think about what I did, or did not do, I am wiser for that experience.

If I had been assessed under the NVQ scheme, I would now be 'an Instructor qualified to NVQ standards'.

That would have been because I could have kept trying and trying till I got it right.

The final decision, you say in your summary, is that a package will be put together, and administered by the BCU. Hopefully this will be a scheme CONSTRUCTED BY CANOEISTS FOR CANOEISTS and not by paper pushers for canoeists.

The new band of NVQ advocates are talking about the new 'advanced NVQ level 3'. Perhaps the general public and the BCU may not realise is that with the old City and Guilds scheme, there were two levels of achievement.

Craft certificate, now called NVQ lev' 2

Advance Craft, now called NVQ lev' 3

The dilution of standards becomes apparent when you know from experience that the syllabus for lev' 3 is what was in the old craft certificate, and has been taught for years.

This method of 'widening the goal posts' is to ensure that '... no student fails!'

Even if everyone else is satisfied with the lowering of standards, easier access to a 'qualification', please . . . calling all BCU members, and BCU officials, open your eyes and stop being dragged along with the others, before it's too late.

As a group of sensible people, let's be like the young boy who would not accept that the Emperor had a new suit of clothes. Should anyone need an extra signature, advice or help, please contact me.

On behalf of quality, common sense and canoeing

M K CHARLESWORTH

The Snowdonia Canoe Club, Parc Mawr, Llansadwrn, Anglesey. LL59 5SP

DoC comments: Similar concerns have been expressed by others, and I have passed these comments on. Please be reassured, however. Whilst the generic framework for coaching qualifications is set by others - even then, mainly coaches - the final decision, delivery and monitoring of canoeing qualifications will be by canoeists, for canoeists, as of now. There will very definitely be no change in that respect.

ROYAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND

RNIB requires help and a qualified instructor to assist on the water at Mercers Park, Merstham. They have their own boats. Please contact Steve Gale on 0737 768935.

better able to observe, note and later feed back observations. The instructor becomes an enabler and a safety net, not the helm or the chief decision maker.

If the venture has been successful the group will gain a momentum of its own. The communication and problem solving skills acquired will hopefully be transferred into situations away from the water, at home and back at school.

Too Good to be True!

Before thinking that the open canoe has all the answers let me mention some of the disadvantages:

They are very susceptible to elements of Britain's ever changing weather, especially strong winds. The high freeboard can cause considerable problems, even for experienced paddlers.

They are difficult to transport and handle on land, particularly with younger age groups.

The scope for diverse exciting open canoeing journeys within the United Kingdom is restricted due to a lack of water and suitable wild places, especially outside Scotland.

It is also my opinion that such activities can also hold back the talented individual. The transition from working in pairs to solo paddling is a particularly difficult one.

The reliance of outdoor centres on the single day taster concepts severely inhibits the scope for journeying.

The over reliance by outdoor centres on thrills and spills type activities means that students are less prepared for lengthy involved journeys.

To conclude

I know I am expecting a lot from a day on the water but it can happen. Not every time, not with every group, but with the right students, the right weather, the right preparation it may. Instructors must be able to read the signs and be ready to slacken off the reigns of leadership, allowing motivation to come from within the group. Never let go completely, but do let the team gallop a little.

Given suitable water the open canoe lends itself to many of the ideals of outdoor education. It is easy for a days canoeing to involve a lot more than just having a good time or simply the acquisition of canoe skills. Outdoor educationalists are more than just skill instructors, entertainers, or providers of exciting holidays. Using the open canoe they have a tool which will provide structured and productive social and personal development, the bread and butter of outdoor education.

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