

WORKING DOCUMENT ON CASUAL LEISURE*

NOTE: The contents of this document have not yet been approved by the *World Leisure* Board of Directors and therefore do not necessarily represent the position of *World Leisure*

1. PREAMBLE

1.1 In “Educating for Serious Leisure,” (SL*) a position statement adopted by World Leisure’s Commission on Education in March 2000, the question is raised about the place of casual leisure in leisure education.¹

1.2 Because this is a complicated matter it was decided to address it in a separate statement. Doing so makes it possible to more fully explicate casual leisure and to highlight the importance of it and serious leisure in optimal leisure lifestyle and in educational efforts designed to promote the latter.

2. DEFINITION

2.1 Casual leisure (CL) is the immediately intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy it. It is fundamentally hedonic, pursued for its significant level of pure enjoyment, or pleasure.

2.2 Among its types are play (including dabbling), relaxation (e.g., sitting, napping, strolling), passive entertainment (e.g., TV, books, recorded music), active entertainment (e.g., games of chance, party games), sociable conversation, sensory stimulation (e.g., sex, eating, drinking, sight seeing), and casual volunteering (as opposed to serious leisure, or career, volunteering).

3. BENEFITS AND COSTS OF CASUAL LEISURE

Paradoxically, CL is by no means wholly frivolous; there are some clear benefits in pursuing it, as well as costs, such as follows:

3.1 Benefits

3.1.1 One lasting benefit of CL is the creativity and discovery it sometimes engenders. Serendipity, the quintessential form of informal experimentation, accidental discovery, and spontaneous invention, usually underlies these two processes. Such creativity or discovery does not result from trying to solve a problem, which instead, is often approached using exploration.

* Approved in 2001 by Commission on Education

¹ Serious leisure is the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centered on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge, and experience.

- 3.1.2 “Edutainment” is another benefit. It springs from participation in mass entertainment, including watching films and television, listening to popular music, reading mass books and articles, and attending theme parks. Inadvertently, while doing these things, participants learn something of substance about the social and physical world in which they live. They are, in a word, entertained and educated in the same breath.
- 3.1.3 Casual Leisure also affords regeneration, or re-creation, possibly even more so than its counterpart, serious leisure (SL), since the latter is often intense. Such relaxation and entertainment can have enduring effects since they help enhance general equanimity, particularly during periods of concentrated activity.
- 3.1.4 Another benefit that can arise from CL is the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. One of its types, sociable conversation, is particularly fertile in this regard, but other types, when shared, including sensory stimulation and passive and active entertainment, can also have this effect.
- 3.1.5 Well-being is still another benefit that can flow from experiencing casual leisure. This occurs when a person achieves an optimal leisure lifestyle (OLL), defined as the deeply satisfying pursuit during free time of one or more substantial, absorbing forms of serious leisure, complemented by a judicious amount of casual leisure. A person finds an OLL by engaging in leisure activities that individually and in combination realize human potential and enhance quality of life and well being.

3.2 Costs

Some of the costs of CL arise because its potential benefits have not been realized.

- 3.2.1. One such cost is boredom. It signals the absence of well being, and seems most likely to appear when the participant experiences none of the aforementioned benefits and is dissatisfied with the amount and kind of CL available. Boredom is not an inevitable feature of CL, however, as the idea of OLL attests, but rather one that lurks in the background ready to spoil the person's fun should it get out of hand.
- 3.2.2 Second, CL is, in most instances, unlikely to produce a distinctive leisure identity for its enthusiasts. To the extent that faceless CL dominates people's free time, this less than optimal balance of leisure activities deprives them of one or more leisure identities that they could otherwise have.
- 3.2.3 This situation suggests a third cost: large blocks of CL, even if not boring, leave little time for SL and therefore deprive the person of an OLL. Also at stake here is a significant reduction, or at least significant barrier to the rise, in well being and quality of life. The exclusive or nearly exclusive pursuit of pure pleasure, or hedonism, may bring a certain level of happiness, but it may not bring the richest expression of that emotion.
- 3.2.4 A fourth cost of CL is that, normally, it makes only a limited contribution to self. One aspect of this cost is that, unless a person has created, discovered, or learned something new, CL is unlikely to produce a distinctive identity.
- 3.2.5 Other aspects include the common failure of CL to generate a good feeling about oneself -- the problem of self-esteem -- and to lead to self-development -- the problem of personal improvement.
- 3.2.6 Further, individualized instances of CL contribute little to development of the community, viewed here as participation by its members in an activity resulting in improvement of one or more of its identifiable aspects, in a strengthening of the

community's pattern of human and institutional interrelationships. There are, however, three exceptions to this observation. (a) Casual leisure volunteers do contribute significantly to self and community; (b) provision and consumption of some CL is big business, sometimes resulting in a huge economic contribution to the community; and (c) some forms of collective CL (in groups running in size from social relationships to social movements) can contribute to community development.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 It is not generally the mission of leisure education to inform people *how* to engage in casual leisure activities. The pursuit of hedonism needs no instruction.

4.2 But leisure education can and should point out that CL is nonetheless important in the ways just considered.

4.3 Leisure education must also state that the different types of CL can at times have important benefits as well as costs and then clearly identify what these are.

4.4 Leisure education should encourage its clients to compare and discuss CL and SL within the framework of optimal leisure lifestyle.

4.5 Leisure education should stress the benefits of creativity, edutainment, and relaxation that can flow from CL.

4.6 Casual leisure should be promoted in ways consistent with the aims and objectives of leisure education (see Appendix).

APPENDIX

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Main aim

The main aim of leisure education in educational framework is to help the individual, the family, the community and the society to achieve a suitable quality of life and good health by using leisure time intelligently, by developing and cultivating physical, emotional, spiritual, mental and social aspects, each individually or combined, as they relate to the aims of education in the country and its cultural heritage.

2. Objectives

To achieve the above main aim, the school system should attempt to accomplish specific objectives as follows.

2.1 In areas of knowledge, understanding and awareness

- a. The individual will expand its knowledge of wise behavioral patterns in his free time.
- b. The individual will understand and be aware of the importance of leisure, whether serious or casual, its scope and its place in modern society.
- c. The individual will be exposed to a variety of leisure activities and will get acquainted with them.
- d. The individual will recognize creative expressions in the various art fields, will learn to appreciate them, and will develop his ability to understand different artistic expressions.

- e. The individual will know the cultural heritage of his society.
- f. The individual will get acquainted with the variety of leisure behavioral patterns of different cultures, communities, faiths, life styles and sectors, and will learn to recognize their differences.
- g. The individual will understand the risks and costs involved in leisure activities which are harmful to the individual and society and will learn to avoid them.
- h. The individual will learn criteria for choosing and appreciating leisure activities and for determining priorities according to his ability, tendencies and personal needs, and based on their contribution to both the individual and society.

2.2 In areas of behavior, habits and skills

- a. The individual will experience a variety of leisure activities which will be balanced in terms of their physical, social, mental, esthetic and spiritual content, as separate or combined activities.
- b. The individual will determine objectives for his leisure behavior which is pleasurable and gratifying.
- b. The individual will experience a variety of leisure activities suitable for him at present as well as activities that will constitute the basis of development of hobbies that will be useful to him as an adult in the future.
- d. The individual will experience activities with a potential for their wise implementation in his free time which can contribute to his personal growth and to the development of culture and society.
- e. The individual will engage in voluntary activities in the community including rendering assistance to the needy.
- f. The individual will develop his creativity in different artistic spheres based on his own level.
- g. The individual will engage in leisure activities that can contribute to his social development through group cooperation and by fulfilling different roles, such as leader, follower and group member.
- h. The individual will be introduced to leisure activities that can strengthen his present and future family roles and cultivate the family's quality of life.
- i. The individual will engage in a variety of enjoyable outdoor leisure activities according to geographical environmental conditions, without harming natural resources.
- j. The individual will engage in a variety of outdoor activities which will strengthen his ties with his place of residence, his country, his nation and his heritage, while maintaining the assets of the past.
- k. The individual will acquire skills in a variety of physical activities according to his abilities and preferences so that he can engage in active recreation occupations which are enjoyable and healthy.
- l. The individual will engage in relaxation and resting techniques for the improvement of his health.
- m. The individual with special needs, as a result of disability, will be reinforced with adaptable leisure activities.
- n. The individual will acquire sensible skills for the consumption of mass media in general and television in particular.
- o. The individual will acquire reading habits in his free time for gratification and enrichment of knowledge.
- p. The individual will engage in learning and educational activities and will acquire recreational habits for his cultural enrichment and widening of his personal horizons.

q. The individual will learn how to organize his time, which will enable him to generate more free time.

2.3 The areas of emotions and values

- a. The individual will choose leisure activities based on their contribution to himself and others.
- b. The individual will distinguish between leisure activities and will choose those that please and gratify him.
- c. The individual will aspire to contribute to the development of society and its culture.
- d. The individual will develop a positive attitude towards learning within formal and informal frameworks.
- e. The individual will develop a positive attitude towards his country and its assets.
- f. The individual will develop a positive attitude towards his past and heritage.
- g. The individual will learn to enjoy different creative activities and to express his feelings through art.