

## **Professional Profile: Experiential and Outdoor Educator**

### **Responsibilities and Tasks**

The key responsibility and task of experiential and outdoor educators is to design and implement focused, professionally sound experience-oriented learning opportunities that primarily take place in natural (green or blue) spaces and in interaction with nature.

Experiential and outdoor educators facilitate individually challenging, out of the ordinary, holistic learning environments that afford developmental and educational experiences. These predominantly promote the development of personal and social-emotional competencies.

Throughout the design, facilitation and evaluation of the experiential programmes, the experiential educator takes into consideration essential structural characteristics such as self-determination, personal responsibility, freedom of choice, resource and process orientation, and the facets of social interaction.

Outdoor experiential educators facilitate learning experiences in physical spaces with in-person attendance. Digital tools for interactions and learning can enhance and/or complement these direct experiences.

Besides adhering to the current safety standards, the physical, psychological and social safety of the participant is of utmost importance. As part of the ethics around sustainable development, outdoor experiential educators demonstrate a mindful and sustainability-focussed engagement with nature and the environment.

Experiential educators employ a range of methods for debriefing and reflection of learning and experience in order to support the transfer of learning and development into the participants' life and work contexts. This is guided by relevant theories and specific learning and teaching models.

### **Learning environments and activities**

Typical means of experiential outdoor education are physical outdoor-based activities such as hiking, sailing, rock climbing, canoeing, overnight trips into the wilderness as well as interactive initiatives and practical projects. Solo times, creative rituals and city bound activities are part of the broader spectrum of activities.

## **Scope and area of practice**

Experiential educators work in a range of educational settings, for example in child & youth care and development, in schools, afterschool programmes, in higher and further education as well as therapeutic settings.

In the area of 'Business', e.g., in Outdoor Management Development (OMD) and Corporate Adventure Trainings (CAT), experiential educators are predominantly engaged in process facilitation and training within frameworks of personal and organisational development.

Within the area of 'Health Promotion', experiential educators work in prevention and rehabilitation.

'Therapy' is another area of practice for the experiential educator within which they support therapeutic processes as part of a multi-disciplinary team.

In the wider spectrum of professional engagement, experiential educators contribute to the areas of environmental and nature education as well as "Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung" (Education for Sustainable Development, ESD). They also practice within tourism as well as after-school and leisure-time programming with a focus that will be mostly action- or adventure based.

## **Competencies and professional qualification process**

Throughout their qualification process, experiential educators acquire educational, pedagogical and psychological competencies in order to adequately and responsibly facilitate individual and group processes as well as the necessary technical qualifications to safely facilitate the relevant experiential activities.

The foundation of this work is a humanistic stance towards people, an appreciating approach towards diversity and a value system that is rooted in human rights. Professional, personal and social competencies are necessary to master these requirements and to implement them with consciousness and professionalism. This can be acquired through a professional qualification in (general) education and a comprehensive experiential education qualification as devised by the Bundesverband Individual- und Erlebnispädagogik e.V. (be). Different learning environments and activities require additional (activity-specific) qualifications.

This professional profile was developed over the period of three years by 'Hochschulforum Erlebnispädagogik' and the Bundesverband Individual- und Erlebnispädagogik e.V. (Task group for "Training and Further Education") and signed off on 13 March 2015. It is reviewed and updated regularly.