



USING AN ADVENTURE-BASED PROGRAMME TO EMPOWER FIRST-YEAR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

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Universities in South Africa increasingly find that prospective social work students face emotional and psychological challenges. These challenges, combined with an improper scholastic background, contribute to poor academic performance and often discontinuation of students' studies.

The aim of this paper is to explain how experiential learning, in the form of an adventure-based programme, can be used to help students take control of their lives, solve problems, identify their own strengths and use the environment to their advantage.

In order to empower the students, a life-skills programme was developed. Adventurous games and activities are used to transfer knowledge and skills needed to be a successful social work student. Specific attention is also given to the improvement of the psycho-social functioning, emotional functioning, self-perception, interpersonal functioning, spiritual functioning and physical functioning of the group members. Participants are motivated to use their combined knowledge, skills and values to enhance the well-being of every person involved.

In the empirical research, a comparison group pre-test/post-test design was used in order to determine the effect of the intervention on the respondents. The Personal Multi-Screening Inventory (PMSI) was completed by the respondents and the control group before and after the intervention. This measurement instrument, as well as qualitative interviews with participants, was used to determine the impact of this programme.

