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The 1990 Recreation Personnel Study

A report prepared for the Recreation Association
of New Zealand

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THE 1990 RECREATION PERSONNEL STUDY:
RECREATION PERSONNEL EMPLOYED IN
THE CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT,
VOLUNTARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION
SECTORS IN NEW ZEALAND

A report prepared for the Recreation Association
of New Zealand (RANZ).

by

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February 1991

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1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

To gather information on, and describe, the present status of recreation personnel employed in the central and local government, voluntary and tertiary education sectors in New Zealand, and their:

- a. conditions of appointment;
- b. professional and educational backgrounds;
- c. job activities;
- d. education and training needs, and
- e. the extent to which those recreation personnel recognise RANZ as being an organisation which can meet their professional needs.

2. MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding One

Local authority recreation personnel are a very significant component of the New Zealand recreation industry.

Recommendation One

RANZ should focus a significant part of its effort in the delivery of services to meet the needs of local authority recreation personnel.

Finding Two

Recreation personnel are paid relatively low salaries.

Recommendation Two

RANZ should work with employers and trade unions to improve the salaries paid to recreation personnel.

Finding Three

Recreation personnel hold between them a great variety of tertiary academic and professional qualifications. A small but significant proportion of them hold no tertiary qualifications.

Recommendation Three

RANZ should work toward the development of adequate minimum qualification standards for new entrants to the recreation industry. This may include giving official recognition to particular education and training courses and institutions.

Finding Four

The present structure of the recreation industry is such that many personnel stay less than five years in recreation related employment.

Recommendation Four

RANZ should work with employers, professional associations, the Hillary Commission for Recreation and Sport, and trade unions to develop a career structure within the recreation industry which will encourage recreation personnel to stay in recreation employment for a longer period.

Finding Five

A significant proportion of recreation personnel are receiving little or no in-service training.

Recommendation Five

RANZ should work with employers and agencies such as the Hillary Commission for Recreation and Sport to achieve the following:

- a. adequate funding for in-service training.
- b. a commitment to in-service training by recreation agencies.
- c. a commitment to in-service training by recreation personnel.
- d. adequate information about in-service training opportunities.
- e. in-service training programmes to meet the special needs of part-time recreation personnel.

Finding Six

A significant number of recreation personnel (especially part-time service deliverers, recreation educators, outdoor recreation coordinators/instructors and outdoor recreation resource managers) have not heard of RANZ.

Recommendation Six

RANZ should adopt marketing strategies which will better promote awareness of RANZ and its services among the widest range of recreation personnel.

3. INTRODUCTION: THREE EARLIER STUDIES

This report should be seen as an extension of three earlier studies of recreation personnel in New Zealand. The first, an unpublished study, was conducted in 1975 by the New Zealand Council for Recreation and Sport. Focusing on recreation staff employed by local authorities, schools and voluntary organisations, it showed that:

the...career path (before taking up a recreation position) most commonly embraced school teaching and physical education. In some cases, however, while there was little evidence of candidates having further education qualifications, impressive personal records of sporting achievement and local knowledge were common (Smith and Stothart, 1983:7).

The second study was conducted by the Ministry of Recreation and Sport in 1982 (Smith and Stothart, 1983). Consistent with the focus of the Ministry's incentive funding to local authorities to employ recreation staff (The Local Authority Recreation Adviser Scheme) it focused on the conditions of employment, professional and educational background, education and training, and institutional location of local authority recreation personnel. The study found that by August 1982 there were "at least 42 recreation 'advisers' employed in 36 local authorities" of whom 38 returned completed questionnaires (Smith and Stothart, 1983:8). Of these, nearly one third had less than three years experience as a recreation professional. Just over a quarter of the total number of advisers had transferred from teaching at some time. Approximately half of all recreation advisers had a degree or postgraduate qualification. Only three of these had qualifications from the recreation education programmes at Victoria and Lincoln Universities. The reasons for this are that the Victoria University graduates often found employment in agencies other than local government, and the Lincoln

University community recreation option had at that time produced only a few graduates.

At that time no consistent pattern of recreation management within local authorities had become apparent. Thirteen councils had recreation staff employed in Parks and Recreation Departments; seven had recreation advisers in social service departments, and seven in general administrative departments. Two recreation advisers were employed separately from any particular council department and two were located in community agencies (YMCA).

Ranked in order of frequency of mention in job descriptions the principal activities of local authority recreation advisers in 1982 were:

1. Advising and supporting community groups.
2. Promoting existing facilities and activities.
3. Recreation planning.
4. Liaison between council and other agencies with respect to recreation.
5. Advising council about recreation.
6. Organising/running recreational programmes.
7. Administering recreation facilities.
8. Promoting community development.
9. Other, for example, conducting leadership courses, welfare work.

The third study was also conducted by the Ministry of Recreation and Sport, and it too focused on patterns of employment of local authority recreation staff whose salary was subsidised with funds from the Ministry's Local Authority Recreation Adviser Scheme (McClellan, 1985). The study found that the number of local authority recreation personnel had increased from 42 in 1982 to 58 in 1984 but the number of employing local authorities still remained at 36. The most notable feature of the 1984 study was that apart from this small increase in numbers of local authority recreation personnel, an increase in the number of recreation advisers having qualifications from the community recreation programme

at Lincoln University, and a decrease in recreation staff with teaching qualifications, very little about the employment of recreation advisers had changed since the publication of the 1982 study findings.

While limited to a discussion of local authority recreation personnel these earlier studies form a useful benchmark with which to compare the findings of the 1990 recreation personnel study.

4. THE 1990 RECREATION PERSONNEL STUDY

The purpose and breadth of our study is different from the earlier studies. We have sought to gather and interpret information from a wider range of recreation personnel. To this end we wrote to: RANZ; all central, regional and local government agencies with recreation provision and management responsibilities; Area Health Boards; voluntary sector agencies (for example, YMCA, YWCA, Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind, the Crippled Children's Society); and tertiary educational institutions (for example, polytechnics and universities); asking for the names and addresses of their staff who work in the recreation field in some capacity. We then sent a short questionnaire to those people. A total of 1075 questionnaires were dispatched and after one follow-up reminder 348 questionnaires were returned. This constitutes a 32.4 percent return rate. We contacted a ten percent systematic sample of our non-respondents to ascertain why they did not respond.

The two most significant reasons for non-response were:

1. The questionnaire did not reach its intended audience because we had been given incorrect addresses or respondents had moved (29 percent of non-responses).

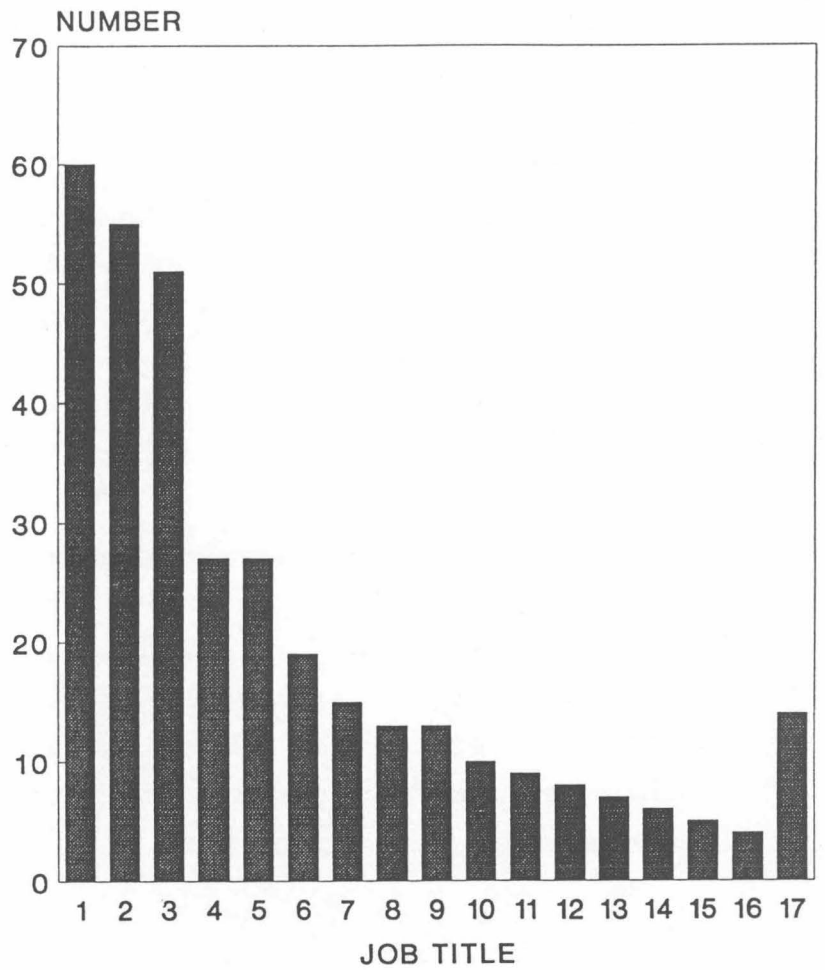
2. The respondents disagreed with our assessment that they were recreation personnel and therefore declined to participate. These definitional issues are important. We, for example, classed polytechnic tutors who teach recreational skills classes as recreation personnel. A number of them returned their questionnaires uncompleted indicating that they thought the study did not apply to them (27 percent of non-responses).

It is likely therefore that our total initial population of recreation personnel (1075) was too high.

It was also clear from our sample of non-respondents that people who are employed as recreation managers/executive directors; instructors in educational institutions which offer recreational programmes; pool, stadia and centre managers; sports trust personnel; and outdoor recreation coordinators/instructors are under-represented in the report findings.

5. RECREATION PERSONNEL EMPLOYED IN THE GOVERNMENT, VOLUNTARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION SECTORS.

To gain an understanding of the range of jobs in which recreation personnel are found, we asked our respondents to tell us their job titles. They are displayed in figure one. The largest job categories are: recreation officer (n=60, 17.2%), manager/executive director (n=55, 15.8%), programme coordinator (n=51, 14.7%), community recreation adviser (n=27, 7.8%), community activities officer (n=27, 7.8%), university/polytechnic teachers (n=19, 5.5%). The remaining 31.2 percent of respondents fell into small job title categories including: recreation planner, swimming pool manager or worker, community educator, private consultant,



1. Recreation Officer
2. Manager/Director
3. Programme Coordinator
4. Recreation Advisor
5. Activities Officer
6. Lecturer
7. Instructor
8. Recreation Planner
9. Swimming Pool Worker
10. Conservation Officer
11. Educator
12. Park Ranger
13. Occupational Therapist
14. Reserves Officer
15. Resource Planner
16. Private Consultant
17. Other

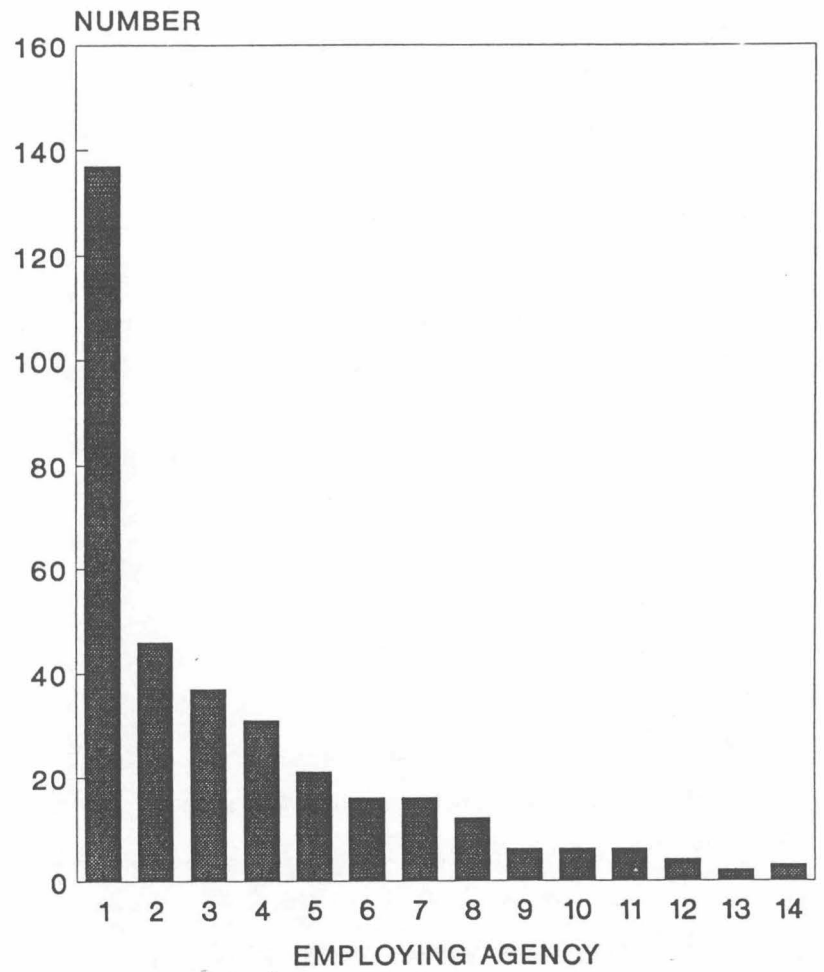
FIGURE 1. JOB TITLE

conservation officer, park ranger, occupational therapist, instructor, reserves officer, resource planner. A diverse collection of infrequently occurring job titles were categorised as "other".

The wide range of jobs available to those interested in employment in the recreation field is illustrated in this distribution. The most surprising aspect of the results was the emergence of a significant number of managers/executive directors who have not been mentioned in previous studies. This in part reflects our emphasis on gathering information on a wider range of recreation personnel than studied previously.

6. EMPLOYING AGENCY

We asked our sample members to tell us the agency for whom they worked. Where appropriate these were grouped into agency types. The range of agencies employing recreation personnel is illustrated in figure two. The largest group of respondents worked for territorial local authorities (n=137, 39.4%), followed by tertiary educational institutions (n=46, 13.3%), and central/regional government departments, including the Department of Conservation and the Hillary Commission for Recreation and Sport (n=37, 10.6%). The next two largest employing agencies were those meeting peoples' special needs (n=31, 8.8%) (Crippled Children's Society, Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind, the Intellectually Handicapped Children Society, and the Rehabilitation League); and the YWCA/YMCA (n=27, 7.8%). The remaining 20 percent of our respondents were employed by community associations/trusts, Area Health Boards, youth associations, rest homes, the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council, churches, the QEII Arts Council of New Zealand, or were self-employed. The most notable feature of this distribution is the continued dominance of local government employment of recreation personnel. It is difficult to tell whether this traditional



1. Local Authority
2. Educational
3. Government
4. Special Needs
5. YWCA, YMCA
6. Area Health Board
7. Community Associations
8. Sports Foundations
9. Mountain Safety
10. Church
11. Self
12. Resthome
13. QE2 Arts Council
14. Other

FIGURE 2. EMPLOYER

pattern will continue. Local government reorganisation in some cases may lead to the diminution of local government recreation services with a consequent lowering of the number of recreation personnel. However, in the short to medium term, local government recreation personnel should form a core constituency within the recreation industry.

7. SALARY

The median annual salaries for each job category are outlined in table one. Those recreation personnel on very low salaries are working in part-time positions. Leaving them aside, we are struck by the relatively low median salaries of all job categories except private consultants (n=3). The salary maxima for each job category is often high but these salaries are earned by only a very few category members. The range of salaries in each category is large and no obvious modal salary was evident. When one considers the working hours for recreation personnel (range = 1 - 80 hours per week, median=40, mean=37.6) and that many have tertiary education qualifications, their level of remuneration is not high. This is particularly the case for managers/executive directors with a salary median of \$40,000 per annum.

8. TERTIARY AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Two features stand out when discussing the tertiary and professional qualifications of recreation personnel in New Zealand. The first is that a small but significant proportion have no tertiary or professional qualifications. In our study sixty-one (13.8%) of our respondents had no formal qualifications. Second, the range of tertiary and professional qualifications held by recreation personnel is very wide. Our 348 respondents held between them 80 different qualifications. The principal qualifications held by

<u>Job Title</u>	<u>Gross Salary Range</u>	<u>Median Salary</u>
Recreation Officer	\$ 5500 - \$52000	\$27624
Manager/ Executive Director	\$16350 - \$70000	\$40000
Programme Coordinator	\$ 360 - \$53000	\$30000
Community Recreation Adviser	\$ 5277 - \$88000	\$33696
Community Activities Officer	\$ 5566 - \$56000	\$35767
University/ Polytechnic Teacher	\$ 720 - \$73000	\$44250
Recreation Planner	\$26000 - \$68055	\$31000
Swimming Pool Manager	\$27728 - \$43000	\$36334
Community Educator	\$ 4800 - \$60820	\$33366
Private Consultant	\$50000 - \$70000	\$65000
Conservation Officer	\$27000 - \$44000	\$37500
Park Ranger	\$ 2500 - \$59000	\$42605
Instructor	\$ 724 - \$35422	\$21899

TABLE ONE

The salaries of members of significant
job categories

recreation personnel are ranked in table two. The predominance of teaching qualifications and a strong emphasis on the Hillary Commission/New Zealand Council for Recreation and Sport Diploma of Recreation and Sport, and physical education qualifications, is consistent with Smith and Stothart's (1983) and McClellan's (1985) findings. The significant contribution of the Lincoln University Diploma of Parks and Recreation Management is a reflection of the growth of that education programme since 1984.

9. TIME EMPLOYED IN THE RECREATION FIELD

Information relating to the time our respondents have spent employed in the recreation field is illustrated in figure three. Sixty five (18.7%) of our respondents had spent less than one year as recreation professional. Thirty nine (11.2%) had been employed for one year, thirty five (10.1%) for two years, twenty three (6.6%) for three years, twenty (5.7%) for four years and twenty two (6.3%) for five years. The remainder (n=144, 47.7%) had spent more than five years employed in the recreation field.

The pattern reflected here is one of attrition in the first five years of employment in the recreation field. Once people make a commitment to recreation as a career then a significant number remain longer than five years. More research needs to be done to explain the attrition rate in the early years of employment.

10. TIME EMPLOYED IN THE RECREATION FIELD IN PRESENT AGENCY

Information relating to the time our respondents have spent in employment in their present agency is illustrated in figure four. One hundred and five (30.2%) of our respondents had

<u>Qualification</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Diploma of Teaching	64	14.6
None	61	13.8
Diploma of Rec. and Sport (NZCRS or HC)	43	9.8
Dip of Parks and Rec. Man.	40	9.1
BA	39	8.9
Dip Phys Ed	27	6.2
BSc	17	3.9
B Phys Ed.	15	3.4
MOWD Water Treatment Op. Cert.	14	3.2
NZ Dip of Swimming Pool Management	11	2.5
Other	110	24.6

TABLE TWO

The tertiary and professional qualifications held most frequently by recreation personnel

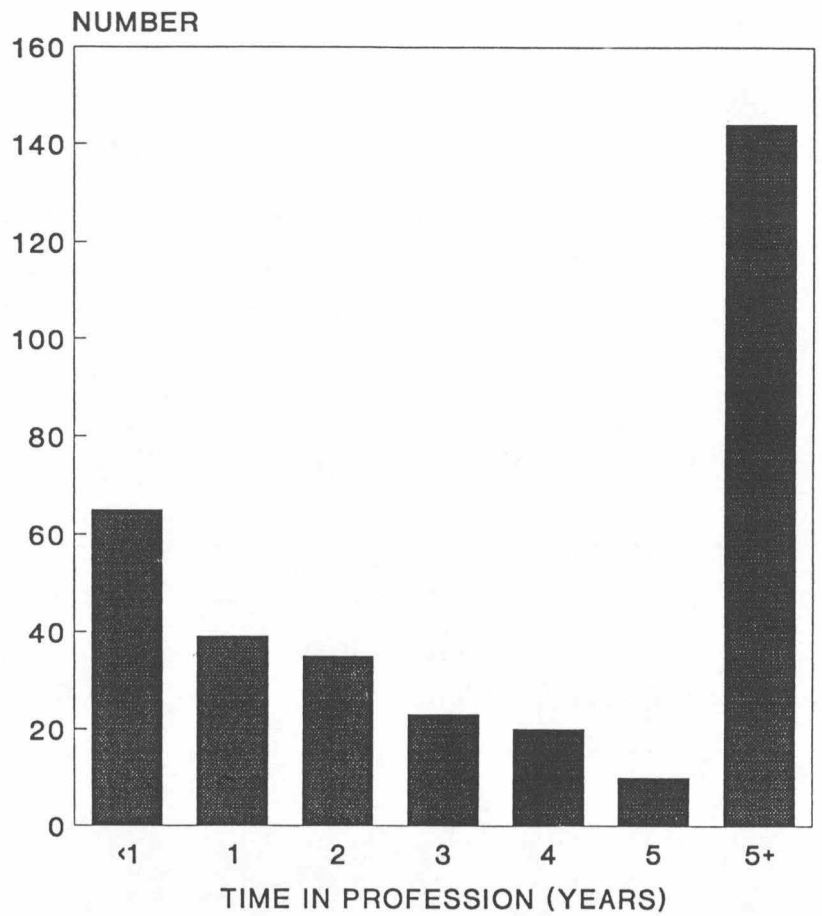


FIGURE 3. TIME AS A RECREATION PROFESSIONAL

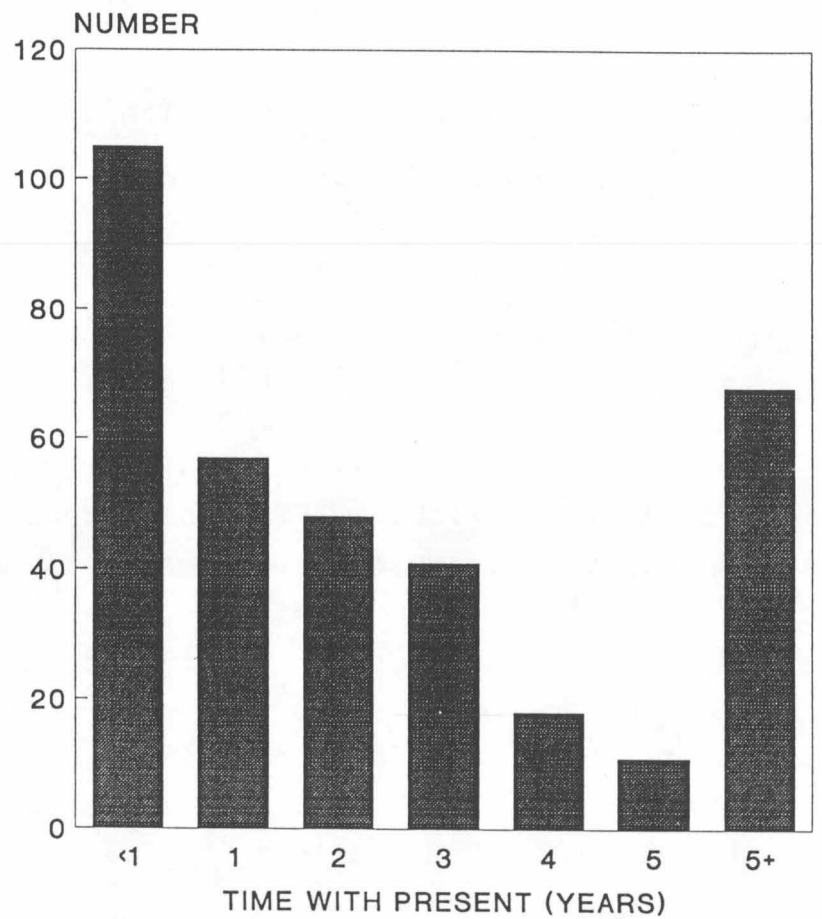


FIGURE 4. TIME WITH PRESENT AGENCY

spent less than a year with their present agency. Fifty seven (16.4%) had spent one year, forty eight (13.8%) had spent two years, forty one (11.8%) had spent three years, eighteen (5.2%) had spent four years, and eleven (3.2%) had spent five years. The remainder (n=68, 19.5%) had spent more than five years with their present agency.

When this information is cross-tabulated against data on the time our respondents had been employed in the recreation field the pattern which emerges is one of significant employment immobility in the first three years of employment with increasing mobility within the field thereafter.

11. PRINCIPAL JOB ACTIVITIES

Our respondents indicated that they participated in sixty eight specific job activities. The principal activities among them (ranked by frequency of mention) were:

1. Programme planning
2. Community consultation/liaison
3. Programme delivery
4. Advisory work
5. Administration
6. Staff management and training
7. Policy development
8. Funding/financial management
9. General management
10. Facility management

Both Smith and Stothart (1983) and McClellan (1985) took their job activity listings from their respondents' job descriptions. While this might reflect an official expectation of potential job activities it does not necessarily reflect the reality of day-to-day recreation work. To overcome this problem we asked our respondents to list their three main job activities. The list above reflects a two way split of activities into service delivery and agency management. This reflects the mix of community based

recreation staff and recreation agency managers among our respondents. The difference between the job activities outlined above and those in the earlier studies is that only junior level service deliverers were studied in 1982 and 1984 and hence only programmatic and community developmental work activities were recorded.

12. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In order to understand the situation for recreation personnel as regards their in-service education and training we asked our respondents several questions about: their present training opportunities, their most important training needs, the sum of money spent on their training, and barriers to their getting in-service education and training.

Respondents indicated that in the 12 months prior to our survey seventy two percent (n=252) of them had received training or education in a variety of fields. The annual cost of this training to the agencies employing our respondents ranged from nothing to \$15000 with a mean of \$643.00. This training had been received in or with 52 institutions, the most significant of which (ranked in order of frequency of mention) were:

1. In-house
2. Polytechnics
3. Universities
4. Hillary Commission seminars
5. New Zealand Institute of Management
6. RANZ¹
7. Joint Leisure Training
8. New Zealand Swimming Pool Managers Association
9. New Zealand Institute of Parks and Recreation Administration.

¹ The relatively low ranking of RANZ as a source of in-service education and training occurred in part because the Association had not held a training conference in the twelve month period prior to this study being conducted.

The reciprocal of this, of course, is that twenty seven percent (n=96) received no training. It is not clear whether all those who did not receive training were unhappy with their lack of training opportunities. However, of those who responded to our question about the adequacy of their training, sixty percent (n=171) said they were happy with their education and training opportunities and 40 percent (n=115) were not.

Twenty eight barriers to education and training were suggested by our respondents. The principal among them were:

1. Budget restrictions
2. Lack of time
3. Unavailability of relevant courses
4. Unavailability of information about training opportunities
5. Isolation
6. No employing agency training
7. Lack of recognition as a profession and therefore few training courses
8. Heavy workload.

It is clear from this information that if RANZ and the Hillary Commission believe that in-service education and training is important then a number of problems have to be solved before adequate training is available to the widest range of recreation personnel. The three main problems are: lack of finance, lack of training provided by recreation agencies, and lack of information about training opportunities.

When asked to specify their training needs our respondents listed sixty seven areas of training for which they had requirements. The most significant, ranked in terms of the frequency with which they were mentioned, were:

1. Recreation planning
2. Marketing approaches
3. Strategic management

5. Contracting out of recreation services
6. Evaluation techniques
7. Public relations/publicity/media skills
8. Time management
9. Community analysis
10. Sponsorship
11. Programme planning
12. Volunteer recruitment, training and retention
13. Quality service
14. Research techniques
15. Recreation concepts
16. User charges
17. Staff motivation
18. Marketing research.

This list should guide short to medium term planning for training programmes. It should also be noted that it reflects the new corporate management ethos which prevails presently in the public and voluntary sectors. The ranking of recreation planning as the most needed area of training reflects the Hillary Commission's requirement that agencies receiving and re-distributing its funds should have recreation plans. In this regard local authorities are of prime importance. It is therefore interesting to note that of the local authority employees who answered our question about recreation planning, fifty one percent (n=64) indicated that their agency did not work to a clearly developed recreation plan for the provision and development of its services and facilities.

13. PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

We were interested to discover the professional affiliations of our respondents and to understand their knowledge of RANZ. One hundred and twenty six (36.3) were unaffiliated. The remainder (n=222, 63.7%) were affiliated with a total of seventy seven organisations. The principal organisations among them are rank ordered below:

1. RANZ
2. New Zealand Institute of Parks and Recreation Administration

3. New Zealand Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation
4. New Zealand Swimming Pool Managers Association
5. New Zealand Outdoor Instructors' Association
6. Fitness Leaders' Network.

In order to gauge the name recognition of RANZ among our respondents we asked them if they had heard of the organisation. Of those who answered the question (n=331) seventy five (22.6%) had not heard of RANZ. Moreover, thirty percent of our respondents in part-time recreation employment had not heard of RANZ. Notably, a high proportion of respondents classified as programme coordinators, recreation instructors (many of whom are employed part-time), conservation officers, park rangers and reserves officers did not know about RANZ.

We further asked those who had heard of RANZ, and were not members, to give their reasons for not joining the organisation. The three most significant reasons (ranked in order of importance) were:

1. Lack of knowledge about the organisation
2. Not relevant to my requirements
3. Respondents feel that they did not have the time to attend RANZ meetings.

RANZ has it within its powers to increase its membership by promoting itself more actively and attempting to make itself more responsive to the needs of recreation personnel who are presently unaffiliated to a professional organisation. This should become a major direction for the organisation's development plans in the short term. Part-time recreation personnel and those working in outdoor or natural resource recreation management positions are worthy of particular attention. It is difficult to see how recreation personnel can further their professional aims if a significant proportion of them are not affiliated to an organisation such as RANZ.

14. CONCLUSIONS

Consistent with Smith and Stothart's (1983) findings it is yet too early to speak of a recreation profession in New Zealand. The conditions of appointment, professional and educational backgrounds, job activities, and professional affiliations of people working in the recreation industry do not display the regulated coherence characteristic of those working in a profession.

This is problematic if one wishes to clearly define membership of a recreation profession, offer educational and other services to those members, and assure client groups that they will receive a consistently high level of recreation service. However, the variation among personnel within the recreation industry is also a rich source of diversity from which comes a wide range of innovative recreational programmes. The test for agencies such as RANZ and the Hillary Commission for Recreation and Sport will be to maintain the benefits inherent in the diversity in the present structure of the recreation industry, while at the same time, enhancing the opportunities to recreation personnel and members of the general public which come from an emerging professional status.

16. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the Hillary Commission for Recreation and Sport for providing administrative support for this study; Deidre Graham for her help with questionnaire administration and data coding; Patrick McCartin at Lincoln University for his help with computer analysis of the data; Pat Devlin and David Simmons of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism at Lincoln University for their insightful comments on our questionnaire design and interpretations; and Alison Tait for her analysis of the survey non-response rate.

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