The nature and scope of outdoor education in Western Australian secondary schools

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a definition of OE, its underlying philosophies and ideology, and the diversity of existing international and national programmes. Key recognised learning outcomes of OE are provided and the attributes required of an outdoor educator are outlined. To provide context for this study, the nature and scope of OE in other Australian states, New Zealand and Singapore are examined. An historical overview of the development of OE in WA is undertaken with consideration of curriculum structure, teacher qualifications and teacher-training opportunities. Finally, the similarities and differences between PE and OE are identified with consideration of the Australian Curriculum.

2.2 What is OE?

There are a wide range of definitions and descriptions associated with OE, highlighting the breadth and complexity of this learning area. Although published in 1986, the work of Phyllis Ford remains contextually relevant. She described a lack of standardisation in OE, particularly with regard to curriculum content, competency and knowledge, and highlighted the great diversity offered in communities, including schools and recreation and conservation organisations. Ford (1986) aptly concluded, ‘As a result, OE is viewed from different perspectives’ (p. 2). Brookes (1991) proposed that the meaning of OE is relative to time and place and is therefore subject to change, a belief supported more recently by Martin and Ho (2009), who stated, ‘Outdoor education’s contributions need to be grounded in time, place and culture’ (p. 79).

Allowing for this concept of change, several definitions of OE have been presented in this research to represent the evolution of the learning area. An analysis
of these definitions shows global commonalities in supporting efforts for national consolidation and a focus on the learning outcomes for OE that can contribute to the well-being of individuals, society and the sustainability of the environment. A simple, commonly used definition states that OE is education ‘in, for and about the outdoors’ (Donaldson & Donaldson, 1958, p. 17). This definition was used to describe OE as a method of learning and referred to the learning taking place in the outdoors, about referred to learning and nature and for the purpose of OE including sustainability of our world. Priest (1986) proposed a more detailed definition of OE based upon six major points. He states that ‘Outdoor Education: (1) as a method for learning; (2) is experiential; (3) takes place primarily in the outdoors; (4) requires use of all senses and domains; (5) is based upon interdisciplinary curriculum matter; and (6) is a matter of relationships involving people and natural resources’ (Priest, 1986, p.13). More recently, Neill (2002c) suggested that ‘Outdoor education is an international, experiential education phenomenon which engages people in adventurous activities for enhancement of the well-being of individuals, communities, and the environment’ (p. 1).

In addition, clarification is required regarding OE as a subject and the terminology of outdoor learning used to denote the OE as a learning method. Quay and Seaman (2013) referred to the work of Dewey describing the never-ending debate about educational priorities and approaches associated with OE. They explain the ‘persistent dichotomy between method and subject matter, or as Dewey famously put it child and curriculum’ (p.2) remain evident. They elaborate on the basis of what education fundamentally is and provide further clarity regarding OE as a learning method or as a subject arguing that ‘outdoor education can be characterised as confused, in the sense that Dewey used this word, meaning it has vacillated between
the two poles of method and subject matter, occasionally trying to overcome, but ultimately reproducing this dualism’ Quay and Seaman (2013, p.10).

In New Zealand, New Zealand Government through the Ministry of Education introduced Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom (LEOTC) which ‘supports community-based organisations to provide students with learning experiences that complement and enhance student learning, in alignment with the national curriculum’ (2017). This endeavour aims to support classroom learning by providing authentic and interactive learning experiences to build on classroom learning. Originations that have resources and expertise may include: zoos, museums, parks, art galleries, science and outdoor centres. This arrangement aims to contribute to school based programmes to meet the learning needs of students in years 1-13.

Similarly in the United Kingdom, Outdoor Learning in the UK was established to provide a variety of support services for organisations to maximise their outdoor learning opportunities, Outdoor Learning in the UK (2017). They state that this development ‘has been built on the firm foundations of our many years experience installing outdoor developmental play areas and delivering Forest School and Outdoor Learning projects in and around the Midlands region.’ As does the LEOTC) they provide outdoor areas and expertise designed to support outdoor learning.
Rickinson, Dillon, Teamey, Morris, Sanders, & Benefield, (2004, p.15) provide further clarification suggesting that 'The concept of outdoor learning is a broad and complex one, which touches on a wide range of educational activities in many different settings.' They refer to the work of Scott and Gough (2003) regarding the inclusion of the term environmental learning and conclude that “applying this idea to outdoor education, it seems that outdoor learning can be seen as a concept and practice with a range of different foci, outcomes, and locations (Rickinson, et al., 2004, p.15).

More recently Wattchow and Brown (2011) noted that outdoor education is not in its infancy and describe attempts made to define and qualify the scope 'are made increasingly difficult by the proliferation of these multiple forms of practice, each within its own educational, therapeutic or economic agenda, yet each claiming an allegiance to outdoor education and the outdoors itself' (p. 20). They believe it is timely to consider the concept of place, stating that ‘Place, we feel, has the potential to provide a renewed philosophical and pedagogical basis for outdoor education’ (p. 20), suggesting that a focus on place-responsive OE could positively contribute to youth in a rapidly changing world.

The above definitions encompass the breadth of OE as a learning method which in turn provides the foundation for OE as a curriculum based subject. The definition of OE used in this research is the one that was included in the WA Curriculum Council of Western Australia (CCWA; now the School Curriculum and Standards Authority [SCSA]) and takes a more educational approach: ‘Through interaction with the natural world, Outdoor Education aims to develop an
understanding of our relationships with the environment, others and ourselves. The ultimate goal of this course is to contribute towards a sustainable world’ (CCWA, 2008, p. 1). Most recently, in 2010, given the pending implementation of an Australian Curriculum, OEA offered the definition developed by Martin and McCullagh (2011a), which stated, ‘Outdoor Education provides unique opportunities to develop positive relationships with the environment, others and ourselves through interaction with the natural world. These relationships are essential for the well-being and sustainability of individuals, society and our environment’ (p. 71).

2.3 The Philosophy of OE

Joyce (2012) argued that modern-day attitudes towards OE developed through an understanding of philosophical elements linked to the origins of outdoor learning that have existed for many centuries. For example, Comenius (1592–1670) believed that children learned through play in the natural environment. Neill (2006) quoted the 18th-century philosopher Pestalozzi, who said, ‘Lead your child out into nature; teach him on the hilltops and in the valleys. There he will listen better, and the sense of freedom will give him more strength to overcome difficulties’ (p. 1).

Later, educational philosopher John Dewey (1897) explained the difference between two major models of education: a traditional education was characterised by a one-way transmission of knowledge from a teacher to student and a progressive education was based on personal experience and experimentation for the student. He noted that the quality of the student’s experience is of vital importance and should include the connection to wider and deeper experiences, including socialisation. Education programmes should place a greater emphasis on the broadening of the student’s intellect and the development of problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, rather than simply on the memorisation of presented facts. These beliefs are
still relevant today, if schools and their teachers embrace the ideal that children come to school to live in a community and that teachers are primarily responsible for providing their students with real experiences that are immediately valuable and that enable each student to contribute to society.

These beliefs also formed the basis of Kurt Hahn’s contribution to outdoor learning and adventure education. Hahn was the founder of the Salem Schools, Gordonstoun public school, Outward Bound, the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme and the Atlantic Colleges (Outward Bound, 2014). Outward Bound began in 1941 and it has continued to grow. Today, Outward Bound has over 40 schools globally, continuing the foundational beliefs of Hahn, who said, ‘I regard it as the foremost task of education to ensure the survival of these qualities: an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, readiness for sensible self-denial, and above all, compassion’ (Outward Bound, 2014).

To provide a scaffold for his programme, Hahn identified six areas of deficit that he believed contributed to the decline of modern-day youth: Fitness, because of modern methods of locomotion; Initiative and enterprise; Memory and imagination, because of the confused restlessness of modern life; Skill and care, given the weakened tradition of craftsmanship; Self-discipline, because of the availability of stimulants and tranquillisers; and Compassion, because of the haste with which modern life is conducted. Hahn (cited in Neill, 2003b) suggested the solutions or antidotes to these concerns were: Physical training, to develop discipline and determination through challenging the body; Expeditions, conducted on land or sea to develop endurance; Projects, involving crafts and manual skills; and Rescue service, including first aid and surf lifesaving, to contribute to the community. These underpinning beliefs have remained consistent for Outward Bound and have
contributed directly to the growth and development of the wide variety of OE-based programmes that exist today within schools and communities throughout the world.

Hahn’s philosophy also formed the basis for the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme, which embraces Hahn’s four main antidotes: Physical activity, Skill development, Community service and Expedition (http://www.dukeofed.com.au/). This Award is adopted by schools, often as part of an OE programme, within community groups and for individuals throughout the world. Its popularity indicates that the six areas of decline noted many years ago by Hahn are still relevant in today’s society and that the strong links between OE and the use of challenging expeditions can contribute positively to the youth of today.

Mortlock (1987) followed in the tradition of Hahn, believing that adventure, developed through expeditions, was an essential component in the outdoor learning process. He believed that changes in work, lifestyles and values in modern Western society had led to a reduction in real physical risk and danger and therefore, presented fewer opportunities for people to discover their inner capabilities. He stated, ‘To adventure in the natural environment is consciously to take up a challenge that will demand the best of our capabilities—physically, mentally and emotionally’ (p. 19). He later identified a shift from focusing on adventure education to highlighting the potential of nature to develop relationship with self and others (Mortlock, 2001). This concept of environmental awareness and connection with nature now contributes to OE programmes globally, including Australia and specifically, WA.

2.4 The Ideology of OE

The philosophy of OE was investigated in this research to create an understanding of the principles that govern this learning area. To provide greater
clarity regarding an educational setting, it is also important to examine the ideologies or the sets of ideas or beliefs that underpin a social institution or organisation. An ideology aims to change the context, in this case the place of OE in the education setting, and therefore can contribute to an individual’s or a society’s goals. An excellent description of OE ideology within the school context was provided by Pammer and Hewison (2001), who stated:

Surely what distinguishes Australian independent school education is not the usually privileged backgrounds of our students, as our opponents like to claim. Nor even, as our friends often declare, the excellence of their academic learning, which leads so many of them to distinction at university and in their careers. Rather it is our belief that education must be holistic, designed to bring out the latent strengths in each individual, to help every student to learn to fit into society, to develop character and to acquire sound values. Our primary aim is the development of the entire young person as a well-rounded, balanced human being with his or her potential for completeness already on the way to fulfilment. We are concerned about the ability of each individual to achieve that genuine happiness, which comes with an acknowledgement of his or her place in the scheme of things, and to enter into sound and successful relationships and to make a contribution to society. Our co-curricular programmes are all designed to achieve this, with each perhaps having a different emphasis from the others. Outdoor education is part of a seamless curriculum and co-curriculum, contributing to the totality of schooling and not outside and apart from it. (p. 22)

Continuing development in OE has seen programmes focus on both the traditional goals of adventure education and more recently, the environment, as well as on meeting the greater needs of a school community. This has contributed to a broader scope of OE programmes offered in schools, with many now demanding the same academic rigour as is required in the more traditional learning areas. In fact, to meet the needs of society, both Martin (1998) and Payne (2002) believed that educational ideologies are divided into three separate orientations: liberal/progressive, vocational and socially critical.

A liberal/progressive orientation aims to prepare a student for life learning rather than work learning alone and so education should fulfil more than basic job
training for economic return (Martin, 1998; Pingree, 2007). According to Martin (1998), a teacher provides both knowledge and concern for the student and as the maturity of the student increases, so can the student’s responsibility for, and ownership of, their learning. Alternatively, a vocational ideology forms the basis of VET programmes, which aim to help individuals to reach a desired level of skill-based competence for a workplace, given the specific needs of that industry. This education ideology is represented predominantly in the wider Outdoor sector, such as Outdoor Recreation, but as will be discussed later in this document, it has a significant effect on OE. Finally, Martin (1998), Payne (2002) and Munge (2007) all suggested that a socially critical ideology will engage learners in a shared learning process and therefore, the way knowledge is acquired is equally as important as the final outcome in the learning process.

2.5 Learning Outcomes of OE

Given the depth of philosophies and ideologies inherent in OE, the range of possible learning outcomes is extensive. Foran (2005) identified the underlying potential of learning in natural settings and described the use of place-based education to achieve desired learning outcomes. He referred to the work of Woodhouse and Knapp (2000), noting that place-based education is a new terminology for the education process and methodology advocated by John Dewey and that outdoor learning provides teachers with the opportunity to develop pedagogic intensity in a unique, instructional experience. Foran (2005) summarised the power of this approach, saying, ‘All the teachers observed that the outdoors somehow magnifies the teaching experience’ (p. 147). Considering this potential for enhanced learning in an outdoor setting, the range of specific learning outcomes of OE was investigated for this research.
Hattie et al. (1997) conducted a meta-analysis for Outward Bound using 96 studies from around the world to examine the effect of adventure programs. The analysis considered outcomes such as self-concept, locus of control, and leadership. Neill (2002b) concluded, ‘The evidence showed that, on average, OE programmes do at least as well as other innovative educational approaches in schools. Hence my lingering perceptions that OE is not a real education should be discarded’ (p. 24). To develop the outcomes associated with OE, Gass (2003) believed it is essential that programmes foster the development of an underlying compassion for others, integrated with an understanding of the experiential learning process. He noted that historically, the outcomes associated with OE have been attributed to the personal domain, including the development of self-esteem, confidence, motivation, cooperation, trust and empathy.

The social domain outcomes have been broadened more recently to include the development of communication, negotiation, decision-making, critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. Neill (2002b) stated, ‘After five decades of modern day outdoor education, the empirical outcome research has been synthesised. On average, outdoor education programmes appeared to have small to moderate effects on participant’s self-perceptions of personal qualities and capabilities’ (p. 7). Five meta-analyses also found that OE programmes have a small to moderate impact on self-concept, locus of control and teamwork (Bunting & Donley, 2002; Cason & Gillis, 1994; Hans, 2000; Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997).

In support, Dillon, Rickinson, Teamey, Morris, Choi, Sanders, & Benefield, P., (2006) provided a review of 150 research projects that investigated the value of outdoor learning in the UK and elsewhere between 1993 and 2003. (Rickinson, et al., 2004). Findings suggest that there is substantial evidence showing that well planned
and taught field work ‘offers learners opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in ways that add value to their everyday experiences in the classroom.’ (Dillon, et al., 2006, p.107). Additionally, Harun and Salamuddin (2014) conducted research specific to the development of social skills as part of a holistic education, they concluded that OE could positively contribute to the overall well-being of students in the academic, physical, emotional, social and psychological domains. In particular, the development and retention of social skills was considered significant in teamwork, leadership and the ability to cope with changes.

With today’s increase in societal concern for environmental sustainability, a greater focus on learning outcomes associated with environmental understanding and connection to nature has developed. These outcomes encourage the growth of imagination, personal responsibility, reflection and evaluation (Cooper, 1994; Hattie et al., 1997; Martin, 2003; Neill, 1998). Cooper (1994) suggested that a further outcome could be achieved through interaction with the natural environment in challenging situations, describing the promotion of a sense of belonging within the environment, with environmental outcomes often being achieved through place-based learning opportunities. Martin (2008a) identified three overarching learning outcomes for OE: knowledge and skills of an outdoor activity; personal development; and environment and sustainability. To address these outcomes and to meet the associated rigour of secondary education, he proposed that OE should include outdoor leadership, place-based education, environmental science and human/nature relationship critique. Table 2.1 groups the range of learning outcomes reported in studies conducted in Australia (Lugg & Martin, 2001; Polley & Pickett, 2003), New Zealand (Zink & Boyes, 2006) and Singapore (Martin & Ho, 2009) into three overarching learning outcomes for OE (Martin, 2008b), to enable comparison.
Table 2.1

Learning Outcomes of OE (Rankings) for Victoria, South Australia (SA), New Zealand and Singapore

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<td>Personal development</td>
<td>Group cooperation (1)</td>
<td>Cooperation (6)</td>
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<td>Increased responsibility (2)</td>
<td>Personal responsibility (1)</td>
<td>Increased self-responsibility (5)</td>
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<td>Improved self-esteem (3)</td>
<td>Improved self-esteem (3)</td>
<td>Improved self-esteem (2)</td>
<td>Improved self-esteem (5)</td>
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<td>Social skills (4)</td>
<td>Social interaction (4)</td>
<td>Social and communication skills (6)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Leadership skills (5)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group (8)</td>
<td>Relations with staff (2)</td>
<td>Problem-solving skills (7)</td>
<td>Enhanced critical-thinking/problem-solving skills (6)</td>
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<td>Environment and sustainability</td>
<td>Environmental appreciation (6)</td>
<td>Environmental appreciation (9)</td>
<td>Environmental knowledge and appreciation (9)</td>
<td>Enhanced knowledge of outdoor environments (11)</td>
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<td>Environmental knowledge (7)</td>
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<td>Understanding of human relationships and responses to nature (9)</td>
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<td>Human–nature relationship (8)</td>
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<td>Environmental appreciation (10)</td>
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<td>Environmental action (11)</td>
<td>Environmental action (12)</td>
<td>Environmental action (13)</td>
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<td>Knowledge and skills of an outdoor activity</td>
<td>Survival skills (9)</td>
<td>New skills (7)</td>
<td>Safety knowledge (4)</td>
<td>Provide an alternative to classroom-based learning (7)</td>
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<td>Survival skills (10)</td>
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<td>Recreation/leisure skills</td>
<td>Knowledge (10)</td>
<td>Physical fitness (11)</td>
<td>Recreation/leisure skills (11)</td>
<td>Extended learning in a range of discipline areas (12)</td>
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<td>Physical fitness (12)</td>
<td>Physical fitness (11)</td>
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<td>Physical fitness (14)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Academic (13)</td>
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<td>Cultural/ethnic understandings</td>
<td>Outdoor recreation/leisure skills (15)</td>
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<td>Tikanga Maori (16)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Data gathering and analysis (17)</td>
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<td>Spirituality (18)</td>
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Table 2.1 shows that the most important outcomes associated with OE were related to personal development, followed by environment and sustainability, and then the development of knowledge and skills of an outdoor activity. There are some notable differences between the studies, which could be due to the survey tool used and the specific context of each research project. In spite of this, the majority of outcomes for personal development were ranked similarly, with the exception of SA, where group cooperation was ranked lower and relationships with staff was ranked higher. In the Singapore study, the term increased personal resilience was introduced and was the highest-ranked outcome. This could be attributed to a key national directive at the time, which focused on the development of resilience in all children in Singapore. It was intended that OE would play a vital role in this future development.

Outcomes associated with environment and sustainability were ranked similarly in all of the studies, although Victoria ranked environmental appreciation and knowledge higher. Environmental action, such as conservation activities, were rated the lowest when compared to all environmental outcomes. Polley and Pickett (2003) noted that although environmental outcomes were considered reasonably important, they were not necessarily achieved through the teaching of OE. Interestingly, when considering outcomes associated with knowledge and skills of an outdoor activity, fitness, survival skills and recreation/leisure skills were ranked the least important in all of the studies. In New Zealand, Zink and Boyes (2006) identified that outcomes associated with Tikanga Maori (Maori customs and traditions), data gathering, analysis and spirituality were of least importance. Development of these learning outcomes as suggested by Brookes (2004) should consider societies, communities, culture and geographical differences which could
be embraced in OE. With respect to academic-related outcomes achieved in OE programmes, Martin and Ho (2009) observed that these outcomes have been investigated inconsistently across all studies.

2.6 Curriculum Outcomes for OE in WA

The WACE Outdoor Education course was introduced in 2008. It took into consideration the existing WA OE curriculum but was significantly based upon the learning outcomes and guidelines developed by Martin (2005) for the teaching of OE in Victoria. The Outdoor Education Course Document (2008) for WA schools stated the following four outcomes: 1: Understanding the principles of Outdoor Education; 2: Skills for safe participation in outdoor activities; 3: Understanding of the environment; and 4: Self-management and interpersonal skills in outdoor activities (p. 1). These outcomes were addressed over three stages, to allow OE to be delivered in a sequential manner according to the needs of individual school settings. Stage 1 allowed for a transition from the existing curriculum into the new WACE curriculum. Stages 2 and 3 were designed to demonstrate the greater depth of knowledge required by students for external examinations. As these stages provided the opportunity for students to use OE to contribute to an ATAR, the rigours were suitably matched.

2.7 Diversity of OE Programmes

OE programmes vary widely throughout the world. Neill (2003a) stated, ‘In the early format of outdoor education programmes (1940s–1970s), programmes such as those offered by Outward Bound were conducted as expeditions consisting of sequenced adventurous challenges lasting up to several weeks’ (p. 1). Since those early days, OE programmes have expanded in both communities and schools to include an array of adventure experiences based in curricular or extra-curricular
outdoor offerings, including residential, urban or expedition-based experiences. These programmes may have different foci, including personal and social development, leadership, environmental awareness, connection to nature and service-based learning.

Neill (2003a) provided a comprehensive analysis of the range of outdoor programme formats. In Australia, these may include residential camps conducted by schools, varying in length from days, weeks or even a year. Many of these programmes are supported by organisations such as the DSR and Outdoor Education Group, which employ specialist staff to meet the needs of groups. Adventure expedition-based experiences are also offered by organisations such as Outward Bound, World Challenge and Antipodeans, often incorporating elements of community service. Other programmes may be based on science or environmental expedition, such as the New Zealand Scientific Exploring Society and Green Corps. The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award is offered commonly, Scouts and Guides provide an array of programmes, and adventure racing events are growing in popularity. Unique programmes based on spiritual development or religion are common and may involve ceremonies, corroboree and rite-of-passage experiences. In addition, farm-based opportunities include permaculture, health and well-being, relaxation and meditation.

In the Australian school setting, programmes can be offered as curricular and non-curricular and may be short or long in duration (Pickett & Polley, 2001). They can include school-based experiences, excursions, field trips, residential experiences or expedition-based programmes and may be offered individually or be part of larger curriculum planning. Assistance with delivery may be provided by government agencies or other external experts or more recently, through the employment of
specialist OE teachers in schools. This has resulted in more emphasis on the personal and social development of students and awareness of environmental issues. For example, in Victoria, OE was first delivered in 1982 as an accredited senior secondary subject as part of the Victorian Certificate of Education and was later named Outdoor and Environmental Studies (Gough, 2007).

Current trends in urbanisation, environmental change and the need for sustainable practices have led to associated changes in teaching content and methodologies. Outdoor and environmental learning can positively contribute to the understanding of sustainability (Gough, 2007; Martin, 2003). Martin (2003) commented, ‘If outdoor education sees itself as making a contribution to human well-being and a more sustainable environmental future, then promoting healthy emotional connections between people and place seems a worthy step’ (p. 14). A shift towards environmental outcomes based on local environments has moved OE courses away from the traditional, pursuit-based expedition-style programmes (Martin & McCullagh, 2011a).

### 2.8 OE and Students with Special Needs

In Australia, Konza (2008) suggested that the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms began in the mid-1970s after nearly a century of segregation. This change resulted in the terms integration and inclusion being used, often interchangeable. According to Nedha (2015, p.1) ‘The key difference between inclusion and integration is that, in integration, the special need child is absorbed into the mainstream education but, in inclusion, this does not take place.’ This section will discuss the broader issue of people with disabilities in outdoor adventure and more specifically, OE and the opportunities for students with special needs in the school setting.
As people with disabilities have become more involved in outdoor adventure programmes, the importance of providing a safe, effective and inclusive experience for this client group has increased. Sugerman (2001) and Dillenschneider (2007) introduced models of inclusive facilitation to enable leaders to be comfortable and competent in including people with disabilities in their programmes. These models provided a framework to identify principles of inclusion in outdoor adventure education, methods to accommodate for specific differences and criteria for implementing inclusive practices.

Nabors, Willoughby, Leff and McMenamin (2001) investigated the importance of using outside play to enhance cooperative interactions between children with and without special needs. They found that unstructured, fast-paced play in an outdoor setting enhanced inclusion and cooperative behaviour with other students. If the inclusion of special needs students is seen as important to the educational setting and wider community, then engagement in outdoor learning provides valuable support for the place of OE within a curriculum for both typically developing and special needs students.

With the advent of greater mainstream schooling for children with special needs, it is relevant to consider the above models and the OE opportunities available for these students. A review of programmes and associated participation revealed that very little research had investigated the opportunities available for these students and how programme delivery is implemented (Magnusson, 2006). Fox and Avramidis (2003) examined the value of OE for Year 9 and 10 students with severe behavioural difficulties and found that both students and staff developed positive attitudes towards the outdoors, the programme was successful in developing positive behaviour, and academic gains were made by the majority of the students. OE is an
underused, powerful tool for promoting inclusive practices and has potential to decrease the risk of exclusion for students with special needs.

However, the inclusion of students with special needs has been identified as being problematic in the learning area of PE, in which OE is included. Students with special needs are more often integrated into mainstream PE classes, rather than included, given the use of traditional team games that exclude rather than facilitate inclusion (Smith, 2004). Morley, Bailey, Tan and Cooke (2005) clarified this concept of inclusion by exploring teachers’ perceptions regarding including children with special educational needs in mainstream secondary PE. They found that teachers’ perceptions of inclusion were based primarily on the level of participation and that this could be affected by the activity area, level of support, and training opportunities available to them.

Given the less competitive, team-oriented nature of OE and its associated outdoor learning outcomes, Brodin and Lindstrand (2006) suggested that it was easier to achieve inclusion through OE and that it was logical that OE had the potential to contribute more positively, in a more inclusive way, to the education of these students and the wider school community. Brannan, Fullerton, Arick, Robb and Bender (2003) developed guidelines for OE professionals describing best practices for promoting and achieving inclusion. Particular focus was provided for the facilitation of social interaction and associated personal development outcomes. These provided a process for programme development and implementation (including appropriate staffing) and specific training needs. The importance of quality communication with parents and sharing the values of inclusion with the greater community was stressed.
Brodin (2009) explored whether OE could be used for physical and sensitivity training for children, adolescents and adults with intellectual disabilities, given the identified shortage in the literature regarding OE for persons with intellectual disabilities. He aimed to develop, examine and disseminate ideas and found that inclusion was still a remote concept for people with intellectual disabilities. Organisations were genuinely interested in increasing OE for this target group but the main obstacles preventing implementation were a lack of educated staff and the current financial climate.

As federal, state and territory governments in Australia promote greater inclusivity, schools are being required simultaneously to be more accountable for their actions. To provide an appropriate process for schools to meet the requirements, Forlin (2004) developed the Index for Inclusion, which was validated for use in WA. This index used a multi-site case-study methodology to consider the process followed by schools and the perceptions of the community members regarding the inclusive practice. A number of recommendations were made for its future use in Australian schools.

During the past two decades, there has been a move away from educating children with disabilities in segregated schools to adopting a more inclusive approach within mainstream schools in all jurisdictions in Australia. Forlin, Keen and Barrett (2008) studied class teachers in WA who had been involved with the inclusion of a child with an intellectual disability in their classrooms. Seven categories of concerns were investigated to identify the use and effectiveness of a range of coping strategies for teachers. Demographic differences in age, year level being taught, qualifications, teaching experience and previous involvement with inclusion were found regarding concerns about inclusion. The discussion focused on
the relevance of PD and the need to ensure that it targeted the specific concerns of
teachers, focusing on the coping strategies recognised as being most useful to
provide optimal conditions for success.

In WA, Berlach and Chambers (2011) provided an historical account of how
special needs education has informed the inclusivity debate. They described what
was meant by inclusivity and provided an examination of its characteristics and a
functional, school-based inclusivity framework based upon a three-faceted model.
The model commenced with a philosophical underpinning that encouraged the
development of focus areas to be determined by the school, which were then
operationalised for classroom practices. It was contended that the model was a
defensible way of facilitating the development of an inclusivity ethos within the
school milieu.

Inclusivity may be easier to achieve in OE rather than in PE, given the
structure of mainstream PE. OE and other adventurous activities are underused, yet
are likely to decrease the risk of exclusion for students with special needs. No
specific research regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in existing
OE programmes in WA secondary schools were discovered in this review of
literature.

2.9 The Nature and Scope of OE in Australia

In WA, McRae (1990) found that many programmes, across many
curriculum areas, were described as OE. Learning experiences were structured from
primary to secondary school and were designed to be integrated into the curriculum
focusing on the management of self, others and the ecosystem, with learning taking
place through direct experience in the natural environment. Teachers were provided
with curriculum support and in-service training in outdoor pursuits such as bushwalking, sailing and canoeing in the form of expeditions.

Other than McRae (1990) and more recently, Zaurus (2009), very little research on OE delivery has been undertaken in WA. Consequently, the developmental growth of OE from a research perspective is similar to its position in Victoria and SA more than 10 years ago. At that time, Lugg and Martin (2001) reported, ‘most of what we know comes from first-hand observation or anecdotal evidence’ (p. 42). The last study conducted in Victorian schools in 1990 examined the types of activities and objectives of OE programmes, based on 28 questionnaires. Consequently, Lugg and Martin (2001) undertook an examination of the nature and scope of OE in Victorian secondary schools to attain a clearer understanding of who is teaching OE, where it is being taught, what programmes are being offered, what objectives are emphasised and what issues or problems are encountered in the delivery of OE. Lugg and Martin (2001) concluded that OE in Victorian schools was seen primarily as personal development education and programmes were delivered by staff who lacked OE-related qualifications.

Pickett and Polley (2003) found a similar historical pattern of development in SA, with OE being part of the SA educational landscape since the 1960s. However, little was known regarding student participation, the issues faced by teachers and principals, and the perceived future of OE within SA secondary schools. A major historical influence on the scope of OE was linked to commonwealth and state funding. To contribute to the process of developing a national profile for OE in schools, Pickett (1999) created a modified version of the Lugg and Martin (2001) survey. Many questions in the Victorian study were replicated, with some modifications to account for local differences.
In New Zealand, a similar study was conducted in 2002 and 2003. Zink and Boyes (2006) found that the outdoors was used to support programmes as part of a whole curriculum and that the learning outcomes considered most important focused on personal and social development. They noted that the considerable ambiguity in the terminology associated with OE and the understanding of teaching and learning in the outdoors warranted further investigation.

A summary of findings regarding the Australian research is provided in Table 2.2.

### Table 2.2

**Key Findings on the Nature and Scope of OE in Victoria and SA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Historical development</strong></td>
<td>OE has been part of the curriculum in its own right since 1989.</td>
<td>OE has been a well-established component of the curriculum, with most secondary schools offering some form of OE programme since 1960s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>OE contributes to the development of group cooperation, self-esteem and responsibility. Environment and sustainability outcomes are growing in importance.</td>
<td>OE contributes to the personal and social development domain. Environmental outcomes are considered to be of reasonable importance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme delivery</strong></td>
<td>Programmes offered in Government schools are significantly different from those in Independent schools. The majority of OE occurs at Years 9 and 10, particularly in Government schools.</td>
<td>Government schools have fewer offerings compared to Independent schools. Most schools offer some form of OE experience, particularly in the junior high school years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher training</strong></td>
<td>Most OE teachers do not have specific OE training.</td>
<td>Most teachers have a background in PE and not in OE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barriers</strong></td>
<td>Staffing, costs and timetabling are the main issues. OE teachers work out of school hours but receive minimal or no compensation.</td>
<td>Logistics, cost and staffing appear to restrict the implementation of OE programmes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.10 Barriers to the Delivery of OE

To date, three studies have sought to identify key barriers to, and enablers for, the inclusion of OE in the school curriculum (Lugg & Martin, 2001; Pickett & Polley, 2001; Zink & Boyes, 2006). In Victoria, Lugg and Martin (2001, p. 46)
reported that staffing, cost and finding room in the timetable were the three main barriers, as shown in Table 2.3. These barriers may be compounded in many settings, given that teachers often have limited training and lack the skills necessary for the delivery of OE programmes. These barriers also contributed to significant differences between school programmes, particularly between Government and Independent school sectors. The majority of OE was delivered in Years 9 and 10 and the Victorian Certificate of Education was more popular in Government schools than in Independent schools. OE in Independent schools was largely residential and was used extensively in other forms of extra-curricular or co-curricular programmes, including camps and the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme.

In SA, OE was a well-established and valued part of the curriculum and was offered in some form in most SA secondary schools (Polley & Pickett, 2003). The barriers were related to structural issues, rather than to the philosophical belief in OE. They categorised the barriers as economic, staffing and logistical issues and these were similar across all categories of schools. OE was being delivered within the PE curriculum by teachers with a background in PE but the outcomes of OE differed to those of PE.

Zink and Boyes (2006) found that the barriers to OE delivery in New Zealand were similar to those identified by the Australian studies. Cost was the major barrier, with similar findings regarding the demands on personal time, required paper work, unavailability of relief staff and an inflexible timetable. In addition, a crowded curriculum was reported as a barrier but this may have been because the majority of respondents in the study were from the primary sector, whereas both Australian studies only surveyed secondary schools. In New Zealand, appointing appropriate staff was not as much of a barrier as in Victoria or SA. There was considerable
ambiguity in terminology and understanding around teaching and learning in the outdoors existed, which could have related to the appropriateness of teacher training.

Table 2.3 compares the barriers to the delivery of OE in Victoria, SA and New Zealand. Key issues have been grouped according to themes and ranked to allow for comparison.

Table 2.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>New Zealand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Costs of programme (2)</td>
<td>Cost of programme (1)</td>
<td>Costs of programme (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
<td>Finding appropriate staff (1)</td>
<td>Availability of staff (4)</td>
<td>Finding appropriate staff (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expense of updating qualifications (13)</td>
<td>Training/qualifications of staff (2)</td>
<td>Expense of updating qualifications (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff–student ratios (3)</td>
<td>Staffing levels (8)</td>
<td>Staff–student ratios (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demands on staff personal time (7)</td>
<td>Time required of teachers (5)</td>
<td>Demands on staff personal time (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paperwork/organisation (10)</td>
<td>Paperwork (5)</td>
<td>Paperwork (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources (e.g., transport, equipment)</td>
<td>Lack of resources (9)</td>
<td>Lack of resources (3)</td>
<td>Lack of resources (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching aids/resources (11)</td>
<td>Inflexible school timetable (6)</td>
<td>Inflexible school timetable (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inflexible school timetable (4)</td>
<td>Competition with other curriculum areas (7)</td>
<td>Inflexible school timetable (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crowded curriculum (14)</td>
<td>Class size (15)</td>
<td>Class size (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>Risks involved in practice (12)</td>
<td>Risk concerns and/fears of litigation (9)</td>
<td>Risks involved in practice (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis on safety and standardisation (17)</td>
<td>Emphasis on safety (4)</td>
<td>Emphasis on safety (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of value</td>
<td>School perceptions of OE (6)</td>
<td>Undervalued curriculum area (13)</td>
<td>School rules (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General school support (10)</td>
<td>Parental support (14)</td>
<td>School perceptions of OE (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of student interest (16)</td>
<td>Lack of student interest (18)</td>
<td>Lack of student interest (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location and access</td>
<td>Limited access to practice venues (11)</td>
<td>Location of school (12)</td>
<td>Lack of suitable venues (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student absence</td>
<td>Student absence from school (8)</td>
<td>Student absence from school (15)</td>
<td>Student absence from school (15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.11 Enablers in the Delivery of OE

In both Victoria and SA, OE was generally a valued curriculum area (Lugg & Martin, 2001; Polley & Pickett, 2003). In Victoria, the main support measures or enablers for OE included the need for appropriate staff and an adequate budget. Independent school principals relied more heavily on the expertise of OE staff, who were more likely to have tertiary OE qualifications and more able to make decisions, particularly relating to safety. In SA, the key enablers were the ability to source experienced teachers and support services that related to the necessary funding and structural support within the school. However, support from state professional and training organisations and universities was desired and these organisations were missing opportunities to affect the curriculum directly through provision of services.

In New Zealand, a particular strength of the outdoor learning environment was the ability to support teaching across the whole curriculum (Zink & Boyes, 2006). Similar to the Australian studies, the most important learning outcomes were in personal and social development, which enabled OE to contribute positively to a whole-school approach to learning. The greatest enablers existed within human resources: specifically, skilled people, teachers and administration staff. The value of resources such as lesson plans and examples of best practice, including the identification of appropriate venues for programmes to help them integrate OE across the curriculum, were identified. It was noted that the demise of the School Advisory Service had created a vacuum in the support network for teachers and that the work of Allison & Pomeroy (2000), suggesting that support through theory and research was required to enable the outcomes of research to be accessible and relevant to practitioners in the field, was relevant.
2.12 Essential Knowledge and Skills for OE Teachers

Historically, there has been significant debate about the underpinning knowledge and specific practical skills required of an outdoor educator, including how and where these attributes should be obtained. This has been complicated by the great diversity of OE-associated programmes and the numerous titles that have evolved for those who deliver outdoor programmes in an array of community settings. These titles can include outdoor leader, facilitator, instructor, and in the school/tertiary setting, outdoor educator. For the purpose of this study, the term outdoor educator has been used, as it indicates a person who is teacher trained, has an academic ideology, is grounded in pedagogical process and has the key attributes of an outdoor leader.

The key attributes of an outdoor leader are often referred to in the literature as essential competencies and have been well described by many (Buell, 1981; Green, 1981; Priest, 1984, 1986; Sugerman, 1998; Swiderski, 1981). A meta-analysis undertaken by Priest (1987) identified 12 core essential competencies for outdoor leaders, which are considered the cornerstone of effective outdoor leadership. Based on a foundational understanding of OE philosophy, Priest and Gass (1997, 2005) divided these competencies into the categories of hard skills, soft skills and meta-skills. Hard skills include technical skills, safety skills and environmental skills. Soft skills include instructional skills, organisational skills and facilitation skills. Meta-skills include effective communication, flexible leadership, professional ethics, problem solving, decision making and experience-based judgement. As these competencies have been identified clearly in the literature, it would be expected that all teachers of OE, including those in WA, should exhibit these competencies to maintain the professionalism of the learning area.
Even though the Australian Government has mandated that teachers of PE must complete specific requirements as part of their tertiary training, this does not apply to the teaching of OE in WA. In the State of Victoria, the Victorian Institute of Teaching has established clear guidelines for a teacher of OE, comprising one year of study including environmental studies, outdoor recreational activities and an Emergency First Aid Level 2 Certificate (Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2008). Although the Victorian Institute of Teaching has not detailed the specific content of the one-year OE course, tertiary members of the Victorian Outdoor Education Association have agreed to a set of peer-endorsed guidelines that include:

**Discipline study:** The educational potential of outdoor experience for sustainability and personal and human development, Human interaction with natural environments (e.g., environmental ethics, sense of place study, environmental history, indigenous relationships with the environment), Outdoor activity knowledge, Ecological literacy, and Safety management.

**Skill areas to include:** Base camping (activities for), overnight bushwalking (navigation), flat water paddling, environmental interpretation, experiential education facilitation, organization and risk management planning, outdoor leadership. (Martin, 2008, p. 75)

OE is often taught by PE-trained teachers, rather than by OE-trained teachers. In Victoria, 35% of OE teachers were PE trained and 24% held specific OE qualifications (Lugg & Martin, 2001). In SA, 67% of OE teachers were PE trained and 6% held specific OE tertiary qualifications (Polley & Pickett, 2003). In Singapore, Martin and Ho (2009) found that while 88% of teachers agreed that OE required specialist knowledge and skills, 39% of these teachers were unsure whether their qualifications and experience were sufficient to teach OE. Martin and Ho
suggested that this result was not surprising, given the limited access to PD and specific OE training in Singapore. They noted that there was only a single outdoor pursuits experience within a PE teaching diploma course and that the lack of dedicated teaching modules for OE had directly contributed to the situation.

In 2009, Zaurs investigated the training background and perceived content knowledge of OE teachers in WA and found that OE was taught predominantly in conjunction with PE, by PE-trained teachers. This finding is of particular interest to this current study, given that in WA there is no clear distinction between OE and PE. As in other Australian states, teacher training for OE has primarily extended from PE degrees and OE is offered as small component in the key learning area of HPE.

Limited time allocations and expertise of instructors and lecturers, geographical settings, economic restraints and politics have all contributed to the lack of development of specific OE units in tertiary education in WA (Zaurs, 2009).

Lugg and Martin (2001) and Pickett and Polley (2003) identified that politics had an influence on the growth of OE in their respective states. This also seems to be the case in WA, as indicated in a letter from a previous Minister for Education, The Honourable Mark McGowan, to the president of the WA branch of ACHPER:

I acknowledge your concerns in relation to the new Course of Study in Outdoor Education due to be implemented in 2008 for Years 11 and 12. It is vitally important that all teachers have adequate level of teacher training and appropriate qualifications. The Department has representation on several university advisory boards and deems university graduates to be suitably qualified to teach all contexts of HPE. The Department is supportive of ACHPER in encouraging universities to ensure that sufficient Outdoor
Education content is provided to those students undertaking degrees in Health and Physical Education. (personal communication, 17 April, 2007)

This showed a lack of understanding of the essential knowledge and skills necessary for OE teachers in WA and supported the need to identify clearly the level of knowledge, skills and associated appropriate training opportunities for teachers in this state, highlighting what he considered suitable qualifications. McConney and Price (2009a, 2009b) investigated the practice of teaching ‘out of field’ in WA. They defined this as allowing or assigning teachers to roles for which they had no formal qualifications and suggested that this is a common practice in Australia and overseas, with 24% of teachers in WA reporting that they had been teaching out of field. This practice has developed because of teacher shortages, difficulties in staffing schools in small communities and changing workforce patterns. Further research is needed regarding the effect of this practice on students, teachers and the community.

2.13 Training Backgrounds and Developmental Opportunities for Outdoor Educators

The educator’s task is to prepare the child to compete effectively in an ever-developing, complex culture. According to Shapiro (1962), the attributes of humility and the value of nature-related study and the outcome of stewardship for the environment are essential in this process. ‘Nature training logically should be a part of any teacher training programme whether in public, private or parochial college and should be a requirement for teacher certification’ (p. 458). Shapiro believed that OE could only be effective when there was a sequential progression of theory and skill from year to year.

More recently, international research from the United Kingdom, United States of America, New Zealand and Australia has highlighted the numerous training
pathways to the qualifications necessary for teaching OE (Eiser & Knight, 2008; Holden, 2005; Higgins & Morgan, 1999; Lugg & Martin, 2001; Mann, 2004; Medina, 2001; Robertson, 2004; Zauris, 2009). Personal experience, followed by first aid and water-based qualifications were the most valued attributes in the training backgrounds of outdoor leaders in America (Higgins & Morgan, 1999; Medina, 2001). In Australia, Lugg and Martin (2001) found that most teachers of OE had a PE degree, a First Aid Certificate and a bronze medallion, and that some had canoeing or bushwalking skills. They also reported that Independent schools employed a higher proportion of staff with specific OE tertiary education, outdoor skills and certifications than Government schools.

A number of studies (Lugg & Martin, 2001; Plaut, 2001; Zink & Boyes, 2006) have established that many successful outdoor leaders have acquired skills such as judgement, decision making, humility and risk assessment from participation in personal expeditions. This highlights an ongoing need for PD, including expedition-based programmes, and suggests that degree-granting programmes are needed, to contribute to the specific development of knowledge and skills, thus adding to the professionalism of OE.

In America, Medina (2001) believed there was a lack of standardised curricula for outdoor leadership preparation and that the development of greater professionalism and holistic leadership in the training of outdoor leaders was needed. In Australia, Mann (2004) considered the scope of VET offerings in OE education and although this was not the most common pathway she identified an additional complicating issue, stating, ‘The danger of imbalance exists for the Australian Outdoor Industry/Profession regarding the dominance of the outdoor and sport and recreation industry orientations when coupled with the strong focus on the technical
skill development in outdoor leadership’ (p. 177). Therefore, it is important that ongoing teacher training and PD are offered, to maintain current trends and standards, including the consideration of funding and multiple pathways to maintain professionalism (Eiser & Knight, 2008; Holden, 2005; Robertson, 2004).

Zaurs (2009) found that very little WA research had been conducted regarding the training pathways for teachers to gain the skills required for teaching OE. There were many necessary outdoor-specific requirements that facilitated the teaching of OE and its components, such as specific outdoor pursuits, environmental theory and social theory. Zaurs also highlighted that while VET appeared to be the most common pathway in WA to gain specific outdoor pursuit competencies, it did not allow for the development of associated academic content or pedagogical process. He found that the current WACE Outdoor Education course, particularly Stages 2 and 3, required greater academic rigour. In WA, attempts have been made to provide developmental opportunities in both TAFE and tertiary settings to address a number of issues, as discussed in the next section.

2.14 OE Teacher Training

2.14.1 VET

The dominance of the sport and recreation industry in Australia (Mann, 2004) showed that VET provides a pathway for training outdoor leaders. VET courses have a stronger focus on technical skills rather than on personal/interpersonal, environmental and pedagogical development. However, the acquisition of technical skills is only a part of the whole development of an OE teacher. This poses an issue in WA, given the uptake of OE specific VET skills-based training has been low.

Numerous opportunities have been offered through Outdoors WA in partnership with the DSR and industry experts to address skill-based training and
assessment for the outdoor adventure industry, including OE teachers and providers of adventure tourism, camping programmes, corporate and community development programmes. In 2011, Outdoors WA, with the support of industry members, initiated a study to investigate the current position and needs of the Outdoor Industry in WA (Hamid & Wahid, 2012). They identified the need for professional-based training opportunities and so a three-day programme was developed, with an estimated maximum cost of $1,240 per person, depending on the number of days required for training and assessment. The training was highly subsidised to attract maximum participation, with a final cost set at only $150. The event catered for the training and assessment of an estimated 600 participants in January 2012; however, only 26 participants registered and only half of them completed the training and assessment. The majority of participants came from sectors other than secondary schools. This uptake was extremely disappointing, considering the very low cost of participation and the focus on technical skills.

2.14.2 TRBWA

In Victoria, the Victorian Institute of Teaching requires teachers of OE to complete eight tertiary units of specific OE training, containing both skill and theoretical content. A clear discrepancy between states exists as the Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia (TRBWA) does not endorse the same requirements for registration. There is a need for a more comprehensive criteria for registration from the TRBWA (2014), which claims, ‘Our vision is to be an effective regulator for a teaching profession that reflects the highest standards of expertise and professional conduct’. The Victorian Institute of Teaching standards have been developed to maintain the professionalism of OE and importantly, the safety of students. If the TRBWA was to endorse the same standards as the Victorian Institute
of Teaching, then the DOE would be required to ensure appropriate PD for current teachers and that tertiary institutions address these same standards in their degrees.

2.14.3 The Outdoor Industry

The Outdoor Industry, which includes the OE sector, has national standards. The Industry Quality Framework includes the Adventure Activity Standards (AAS), which provide the minimum standards to which outdoor leaders must adhere to operate within expected industry parameters. In addition, the National Outdoor Leader Registration Scheme (NOLRS) provides registration to leaders who meet the required competencies for specific outdoor pursuits, such as abseiling, rock climbing, mountain bike riding and bushwalking. In WA, the NOLRS scheme has been operating for over 10 years and it is now governed by the Outdoor Council of Australia, which manages the registration. However, to date, this registration recognises only VET-based competencies demonstrated against the National Training Package as a pathway for registration.

Both the AAS and NOLRS serve to create a level playing field with respect to the competency of a guide leading an outdoor pursuit and these benchmark standards are included in the DOE Guidelines for Outdoor Activities. However, the AAS does not specify the NOLRS as the only pathway for gaining the right to lead groups in the outdoors. This allows other national governing bodies, such as Australian Canoeing, to certify individuals to deliver training and provide registration for teaching an array of paddle craft skills. This creates some discrepancy, as an individual can be deemed qualified to deliver and assess paddling-based pursuits but the same individual, who may have substantial skills in other pursuits not under the VET-based National Training Package, is not able to train and
assess within the NOLRS. Further, teachers see the process of registration as unnecessary, as the DOE does not assess accountability or compliance.

2.14.4 Tertiary synchronisation

Mann (2004) suggested that ideally, accreditation and registration should be synchronised with the achievement of university qualifications. Issues around VET skill-based training, assessment and consequent registration continues to have significant ramifications for the growth of OE, affecting current teachers and the delivery of university degrees. This issue was raised with John McNaughton, the administrator of the NOLRS, who said:

As the OCA [Outdoor Council of Australia—
http://www.outdoorcouncil.asn.au/] website shows, several universities are in the same situation as Notre Dame. There are no university providers that can give direct NOLRS registration, for the same reasons that were described—graduates receive credit for the generic outdoor leader competency, but not the activity-specific units (personal communication, November 22, 2014).

This creates a point of contention, as identified by Hamid and Wahid (2012), who recommended, ‘Organisations like Notre Dame University which deliver degree programmes in Outdoor Pursuits should also be in a position to establish standards of competency for their students without requiring them to go through the VET system’ (p. 35). To date, the formal synchronisation described by Mann (2004) has not yet occurred in WA or, indeed, in Australia.

2.15 History of OE in WA

To understand the current issues associated with teacher training, certification and registration, it is valuable to reflect on the history of OE in WA. Throughout the world, OE has been taught primarily by those who engage in the outdoors
themselves and value the opportunities that outdoor learning can provide for students (Lugg & Martin, 2001; Polley & Pickett, 2003).

The growth of OE in WA began with the introduction of Camp Schools in 1946, which expanded to the appointment of a Camp Schools’ Officer in 1966. Adventure Camps were introduced for students completing Year 9, with a focus on sailing and canoeing expeditions, and led to the development of an OE programme in Years 9 to 12. The Education Department continued to develop camp facilities and created the position of Outdoor Education Officer in 1970, with advisory staff being employed to aid in teacher development. In 1975, an OE Centre was built at Point Walter. Programmes were developed with a focus on sailing expeditions. In 1984, the Marine Expedition Boatshed was purchased and incorporated with the Point Walter Centre. By 1986, there were eight Camp Schools throughout WA, mainly catering for primary schools; secondary schools implemented their own expeditions.

In the early 1980s, OE was recognised as a separate subject area but located in the key learning area of HPE. The Expedition Leaders Advisory Board oversaw the provision of Expedition Skills courses, which operated for one week during the school vacation time to train teachers who were interested in gaining new OE skills. Organisations such as Outward Bound Australia contributed to expedition opportunities. In the mid-1980s, the Secondary Teachers College included OE as part of the PE course, helping to bring mainstream adventure education to WA. Later in the 1990s, the Outdoor Recreation Advisory Group was tasked to oversee the Expedition Skills Course material and implementation.

At this time, Pearse and Cook (1990) (as cited in McRae, 1990) argued that in addition to developing the ability to cope with physical challenges in the environment, an OE curriculum for WA schools ‘must involve a study of the effects
of the outdoor environment on the human being, on group behaviour, and the effect of the human being on the ecological balance’ (p. 279). Learning experiences were structured from primary to secondary school and integrated into the existing curriculum, with goals focusing on the management of self, others and the ecosystem. Areas of learning were personal comfort, hygiene and safety, shelter and protection, nutrition and cooking, finding the way, social relationships, ecological awareness, planning and democracy, outdoor emergency response, expedition work, wilderness activities and outdoor leadership (see Appendix B). Teachers were provided with curriculum support and in-service training in outdoor pursuits, such as bushwalking, sailing and canoeing, in the form of expeditions.

OE was accredited in 1989 by the Secondary Education Authority (1989a, 1989b). In Year 11, the OE course contained three main areas: living in the natural environment, navigation, and survival and awareness, with an emphasis on the acquisition of skills, knowledge and attitudes. The Year 12 course contained three main areas: wilderness expedition, planning and route finding, and leadership and safety, with an emphasis on leadership and responsibility for self and others.

Interestingly, in 1990, the Secondary Education Authority OE syllabus was positioned initially in the learning area of Personal and Vocational Education and in 1992, was positioned in the learning area of Personal Development Studies. In 1995, the Year 12 OE course title was changed from Wilderness Expedition to Natural Environment Expedition. Few changes to the OE course were made until 1999, when the Curriculum Framework was rewritten to meet the needs of an outcomes-based education, with the underlying OE rationale remaining unchanged (Curriculum Council Syllabus Manual, 2000/2001). At this time, the OE course became firmly positioned in the HPE learning area.
One aim of the HPE learning area is to develop all aspects of the person. However, this appears to have been overshadowed by the need to concentrate on physical fitness and skill development. OE, in contrast, has continued to emphasise the development of the whole person, with holistic learning activities at its core and a strong emphasis on the natural environment (Bunting, 1989). In WA, McRae (1990) cited Pearse and Cook (1990):

There are a wide variety of programmes from all areas of the curriculum in Western Australian education which are described by the term outdoor education. The common factor in each of these is the method of learning: through direct experience in the natural environment. (p. 276)

From 1999 to 2007, OE was delivered using the outcomes-based education model, as were all learning areas. In 2008, all areas were adapted to meet another curriculum change, this time the requirements of the WACE. The OE course of study consisted of three stages, with the naming, terminology and content matched closely to the Victorian OE structure. The three overarching sections of the course were called Outdoor Experiences, Self and Others, and Environmental Awareness. From 2009, Stages 2 and 3 included an external examination, providing a pathway for students towards tertiary entrance, which created a new challenge for OE teachers to meet the necessary academic requirements of the courses. Teacher PD opportunities were delivered by the CCWA, with support from Outdoors WA. Engagement in these events was primarily up to the individual teacher’s desire to add to their personal skill set. In many cases, there was little direction or compulsion by the employer to ensure teachers gained sufficient theory and associated outdoor skills.
2.16 Tertiary Development of OE in WA

During the 1990s, PE undergraduates at Edith Cowan University could elect to specialise in OE in their final year of study by enrolling in three OE units. Byers (personal communication, July 18, 2008) advised that approximately 16 students per year graduated through this pathway. However, since 1999, Edith Cowan University has cut back this option to a single unit titled HMS 4340 Expedition Planning, which is considered the most valuable unit for teachers wanting to plan and conduct expeditions. Edith Cowan University also ran the Abseiling Instructor Course in partnership with DSR, and the Cave Leader Course in partnership with the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

The Marine Education Boatshed continued to provide programmes for schools and training for teachers, including undergraduate students from the University of Western Australia and the postgraduate course at the Western Australia College of Advanced Education, which was later offered through Edith Cowan University as a Graduate Diploma of Outdoor Pursuits. The Graduate Diploma of Science (Outdoor Pursuits) ran from 1986 to 1999 inclusive (Byers, personal communication, July 18, 2008), with approximately 130 graduates. Of these, around 80 were teachers, with the balance made up of youth workers, Department of Conservation and Land Management employees, commercial or casual instructors and others. This course ceased in 1999 and no other postgraduate tertiary teacher training was available in WA until 2006, when Malcolm Gilbey developed a Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and Master of Outdoor Education at The University of Notre Dame Australia in Fremantle. These postgraduate degrees were archived in 2010 due to low student numbers. In total, eight students graduated from
the Certificate, three from the Diploma and one Master of Outdoor Education, with two Masters students transferring to a Master of Education and Leadership.

In 2007, Malcolm Gilbey established a three-year Bachelor of Outdoor Recreation that could be combined with a fourth-year Diploma of Education. An environmental scan of OE offerings in tertiary institutions was conducted in 2012 as part of an audit process within the School of Health Sciences at the University of Notre Dame Australia. At this time, Edith Cowan University offered an OE minor as part of a HPE degree; the University of Western Australia offered one unit in Pursuits in the Bachelor of Science (Exercise and Health) and one unit in the Diploma of Education; and The University of Notre Dame Australia continued to offer two compulsory OE units in the HPE degree, as has been the case since the introduction of the degree in 2006. HPE students have been able to elect an OE specialisation (4 units), minor (6 units) or major (8 units) since 2012. The Bachelor of Outdoor Recreation continues to offer 10 specific OE units.

In 2009, the qualifications held by teachers of OE and their perceived content knowledge of the WACE Outdoor Education course suggested that strong historical connections still exist with past courses (Zaurs, 2009). Zaurs’ research identified that teachers of OE displayed strong tendencies towards the skills-based requirements of outdoor activities required within the Outdoor Experiences component of the WACE Outdoor Education course. Other components related to Self and Others and Environmental Awareness were not as well understood. In addition, Zaurs found that teachers who possessed postgraduate training in OE and had 13 years or more of teaching experience and/or held more than four current outdoor qualifications were more competent. He concluded that the transition to greater academic rigour associated with OE is yet to occur within WA, stating:
Units of study within an undergraduate degree which were indicated to be OE were minimal. This certainly, in my opinion, does not allow the development of OE, nor does it do justice to those who are either asked, told or choose to teach OE. (p. 87)

Zaurs (2009) suggested that although OE has developed significantly in WA in recent years, the training opportunities, particularly postgraduate qualifications, have not paralleled this progression. This is in contrast with Victoria, where teachers are required to undertake a minimum one year of full-time study, at either undergraduate or at postgraduate level, to gain teacher registration for a specialist area, including OE (Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2008). Zaurs (2009) recommended that the training shortfall should be addressed, saying that Western Australian College of Teaching (now the TRBWA) should follow the lead of their counterparts in the United States and Victoria. ‘Teacher preparation institutions must develop specific OE degree courses to heighten teacher perceptions, create a more specifically skilled workforce, increase student learning and potentially increase safety for staff and students alike’ (p. 87).

2.17 OE and PE: Together, Apart or Somewhere in Between?

2.17.1 Together

Historical evidence shows that OE and PE share some fundamental philosophical beliefs and associated outcomes. Hahn (1936) believed, ‘It is our duty to equip this growing generation, irrespective of class, with willing bodies’ (p. 3). Bunting (1989) also referred to the purpose of education and highlighted the need to develop the whole person. She aptly described the shared objectives of both OE and PE to include skill, social and intrapersonal development. Gass (2003) expanded these to include the development of self-esteem, confidence, motivation,
cooperation, trust and empathy. A number of theorists have argued that these outcomes could be achieved through experiential learning, which has been embraced in the OE learning area for many years (Dewey, 1897; Hahn, 1936; Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997). More recently, as noted earlier, Neill (2006) added social domain outcomes such as the development of communication, negotiation, decision-making, critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. Harun and Salamuddin (2013) concluded that OE could contribute positively to the overall well-being of students in academic, physical, emotional, social and psychological domains.

PE shares many of these outcomes. Outcomes associated with participation in sport include the development of mind and body, respect for self and others, enhancement of confidence and esteem, social and cognitive development and academic achievement (Bailey, 2006; Bailey et al., 2009; Penney, 2006; Pesce, Faigenbaum, Crova, Marchetti, & Bellucci, 2013; Sherman, 2001; Sollerhed & Ejlertsson, 2008). Both of these learning areas value the contribution that can be made to fitness and overall well-being through active participation. Many years ago, Hahn (1936, as cited in Neill, 2004) suggested that the decline in modern youth was, in part, because of lack of fitness. His antidote was to encourage participation in adventurous journeys. In 1989, Bunting clarified the relationship between OE and PE and suggested that physical fitness is a by-product of participation in OE programmes. More recently, continued industrialisation, urbanisation, environmental change and economic development have contributed to a further reduction in physical activity and nutrition levels in WA children and adolescents (Martin et al., 2008). They found that only 41.2% of primary school boys and 27.4% of girls participated in 60 minutes or more of daily physical activity and these figures were even lower for secondary school students.
Thus, it appears we are not fulfilling the educational duty to equip our youth with willing bodies, as identified by Hahn (1936). Interestingly, Martin et al. (2008) noted that although a proportion of daily physical activity was achieved through PE classes, participation in OE was not reported. This failure to consider the contribution that OE could make towards physical activity demonstrates that in this case, OE was not seen as part of PE, even though OE is positioned within the HPE learning area in the majority of schools in Australia.

Furthermore, this lack of recognition that OE can be seen to contribute to physical fitness was highlighted in the research conducted by Lugg and Martin (2001), Polley and Pickett (2003), Zink and Boyes (2006), and Martin and Ho (2009). As reported in Table 2.1, Learning Outcomes of OE (Rankings) for Victoria, South Australia (SA), New Zealand and Singapore, all studies reported that physical fitness was rated the lowest outcome for OE. When considering these findings and the place of OE in the HPE learning area is apparent that the contribution OE can make to physical fitness is currently undervalued but may have the potential to add to the togetherness of the learning areas.

2.17.2 Apart

There is also an argument that the two learning areas should be considered separately. Bunting (1989) stated, ‘The emphasis in outdoor education is not on the mastery of technical skills, but on the process of the individual or group confronting the challenge—competition is downplayed’ (p. 35). It is interesting to debate which curriculum area may better contribute to the specific outcomes attributed to both OE and PE. Martin and McCullagh (2011b) suggested that the two learning areas are complementary, given they share the promotion of well-being and the use of experiential learning. However, they argued that OE is a discrete discipline separate
from PE because it constitutes a different body of knowledge, has different learning outcomes and addresses different socio-cultural issues. They said, ‘As we enter an era of more nationalised education, it is vital professional understanding is developed across state borders and we take this opportunity to consolidate and re-affirm our respective educational contributions’ (p. 76).

The existing gap in knowledge regarding these learning areas is accentuated because both secondary and higher education institutions consistently incorporate OE into their PE programmes and therefore, OE programmes in the school setting are often taught by PE teachers (Boyes, 2000; Lugg & Martin, 2001; Polley & Pickett, 2003; Zaurs, 2009). In addition, Martin and McCullagh (2011b) noted that when OE is taught by teachers who are trained as physical educators, personal and group development outcomes take precedence over environmental learning outcomes.

With today’s increase in societal concern for environmental sustainability, a greater focus on learning outcomes associated with environmental understanding and connection to nature is important. These outcomes encourage the growth of imagination, personal responsibility, reflection and evaluation (Cooper, 1994; Hattie, 1997; Martin, 1992, 2008; Neill, 1997). For example, Cooper (1994) suggested that interaction with the natural environment in challenging situations promotes a sense of belonging. Other OE-specific outcomes include outdoor leadership, place-based education, environmental science and human/nature relationship critique (Martin, 2008a).

2.17.3 Somewhere in between

Given the many similarities as well as the distinct nature of OE and PE, there may need to be some middle ground established to maximise the learning
opportunities for students. Bunting (1989) believed that ‘outdoor education/outdoor adventure and physical education are quite compatible. Outdoor adventure is the epitome of education through the physical’ (p. 39). Future efforts to promote physical activity in the community and the associated well-being of children may require a shared effort.

Schwab and Dustin (2014) investigated how to engage students in lifelong outdoor adventure activities through non-traditional PE and Health programmes. They referred to a programme developed by Cavett Eaton, a Masters student, based on the notion that PE requirements can be met in a number of ways and that the benefits of participation can extend beyond the physical realm. Schwab and Dustin (2014) advocated for the inclusion of recreational opportunities, such as bushwalking, kayaking and climbing, into the school curricula, as these pursuits can promote lifelong participation in physical activity and promote learning through the development of exploration, wonder in nature, risk taking, problem solving, decision making and team building. Participation in leisure pursuits can provide greater holistic support for the child than sport skill instruction alone.

To continue to develop the idea of ‘somewhere in between’, it is worth considering some recent research conducted in Australia. In 2014, the Active Healthy Kids Australia consortium produced Australia’s first Physical Activity Report Card, based on Canada’s Active Health Kids Canada Report Cards, which have been produced annually since 2005, and since 2014, has been governed by ParticipACTION (https://www.participaction.com/). The aim was to rate Australia on the physical activity and sedentary behaviours of its children and young people. It was intended that the findings would provide advocacy for physical activity and
encourage all Australians to make changes in lifestyle behaviours through awareness of the need to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviours.

Overall, Australia had very good community-built environment areas, such as parks and sporting venues, and school-based PE and organised sport involvement scored well. However, sedentary behaviours and active transportation rated poorly and overall physical activity had a failing grade of D-. Interestingly, active play or non-organised physical activity was given an ‘incomplete’ grade, as there were no guidelines or operationalisation of active play. One conclusion was that children should be encouraged to spend time in the outdoors to engage in active play to promote participation in physical activity. This further strengthens the case for OE to educate students to participate in outdoor recreational experiences.

Further, the 2015 Report Card focused on Active Transport for Children and Young People (Active Healthy Kids, 2015). Fewer Australian children were walking or cycling to school and only approximately half were using active transport to get to and from school. In 2016, the second full Report Card again rated overall physical activity as D-. Sedentary behaviours scored a D- and physical activity participation in schools and active play had ‘inconclusive’ results. These results again provide specific evidence that the current design of PE alone in schools may not be meeting the needs of the students and highlight the contributions that OE can make towards participation in physical activity.

The Active Healthy Kids Australia 2016 Report introduced the concept of Physical Literacy, specifically referring to the ‘tools’ children need to be physically active for life. It outlined the need for greater advocacy to address the pandemic of physical inactivity, highlighting the need for contribution from all facets of the community suggesting:
Physical activity needs to be prioritised every day, and it should not be viewed as something we feel like we should do, rather it should be viewed as something we all want and choose to do for fun, enjoyment, and better health and well-being. (p. 2)

Given these results and the suggestions to increase physical activity, the inclusion of more OE, either within HPE or as a separate learning area, to provide the scaffolding required to educate students for participation in activity other than competitive sport now seems even more compelling.

2.17.4 Conclusion

Evidence shows that OE can provide a connection to the natural environment through participation in adventurous activities and can provide the opportunity to promote physical, mental and overall well-being to a greater extent than PE. In addition, the recognised outcomes of OE can provide students with the skills to recreate safely in a variety of environments with an underlying concern for others and the future of the environment. Martin (2010) stated:

Most obviously, participation in outdoor activity can develop good health and physical fitness and be a preparation for a lifetime leisure activity but these outcomes, like many others, can also be achieved through other subjects, such as well constructed Physical Education and Health programmes. (p.10)

This shared effort within the education setting was highlighted by Lugg (1999), who suggested that OE is also linked to other learning areas, particularly Society and Environment and Science. To consolidate the shared responsibility of OE and PE, the importance of sufficient curriculum time and a quality programme is essential.
Although OE and PE have obvious differences, they have many commonalities, which can create opportunities for OE to be a unique and positive contributor to well-being. If children are not educated in, about, and for a sustainable future in the outdoors, then they may choose not to safely participate in the outdoors at all. Finally, from an OE purist perspective, given the potential place of OE in the developing Australian Curriculum, Martin and McCullagh (2011b) argued that OE should not be included as a component of PE because of the lack of contemporary understanding of the distinctive nature of OE and its associated contributions to education.

At the national level, Martin (2008a) noted that the OEA endorsed the following statement on OE for the purpose of the development of the Australian Curriculum: ‘Outdoor Education provides unique opportunities to develop positive relationships with the environment, others and ourselves through interaction with the natural world. These relationships are essential for the well-being and sustainability of individuals, society and our environment’ (p. 13). Given the differences in the objectives of PE and OE, Martin and McCullagh (2011b) argued that OE teachers should be trained differently from PE teachers, as the knowledge and skills required to meet the desired outcomes are quite distinct. They believed that teacher registration boards should also acknowledge the difference, particularly given the different socio-cultural outcomes that can be achieved through participation in OE programmes.

2.18 OE’s Place in the Australian Curriculum

Although the importance of outdoor learning and the potential outcomes have been substantiated in theory and research, OE continues to struggle to cement a place in future curriculum development in Australia. Neill (2001) first addressed this issue,
suggesting that the reason OE has struggled for recognition is due to a lack of collective professional effort and commitment. Martin (2008a) also suggested that the organisation of the Australian federal, state and local governments has directly influenced the development of OE. Because of the different levels of success with lobbying within these settings, OE programmes have developed differently and consequently, the perception of OE in each setting varies. He acknowledges the strong national interest for mainstream learning areas but is wary of the impact this may have on smaller curriculum areas such as OE, given the lack of policy, assessment and compliance. In addition to these factors, Martin (2010) stated:

Outdoor educators don’t seem to have a history of political astuteness and national advocacy. When the OEA agreed to support a bid for outdoor education in the national curriculum, key federal education position papers had already been written, public consultation periods had already closed and no outdoor education submissions had been received, making the chances of success far less likely. (p. 4)

In response, a more focused national effort was made by individuals and groups interested in advocating for a place for OE in the Australian Curriculum. A timeline of major events contributing to this process is provided in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4
_A Timeline of Major Events Contributing to the Place of OE in the Australian Curriculum_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>National Curriculum Board begins consultation on the Shape of the Australian Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Martin and Hewison advocate for the distinct nature of OE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Grey and Martin advocate for the role and place of OE in the Australian Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Initial HPE consultation (84 responses regarding OE in HPE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>ACARA release the Draft Shaping Paper for HPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>ACARA release the Final Shape Paper for HPE (OE appears 14 times)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2013  ACARA release the Draft HPE Curriculum (OE appears 23 times)
2013  OEA Curriculum Advice Committee is formed
2014  OEA Curriculum Advice Committee draft release ‘Advice on Outdoor Education in the Australian Curriculum’
2015  OEA release Outdoor Education Curriculum Guidelines for Health & PE, Geography and Science

To elaborate on some key points in this timeline of development, Martin (2010) reported that the Australian Curriculum submission argued the uniqueness of OE stating:

- It is the only subject to specifically seek to enable students to gain the skills and knowledge to live more closely with and connect with the natural world.
- OE seeks a deliberate critical perspective on aspects of contemporary living as they impact upon our relationship with nature.
- OE teaches personal assessment of risk and the management of it.

(p. 6)

In 2011, HPE was included in the Australian Curriculum and although substantial progress was made in a short period, OE remained part of HPE and did not become a distinct learning area. This prompted a further response from Martin and McCullagh (2011), that ‘clarity of the respective contributions of PE and OE is even more compelling. Clarifying the respective roles of PE and OE will ultimately benefit curriculum planners, teachers, students and the wider community’ (p. 67). Additionally, Gray and Martin (2012) advocated that OE should maintain a strong presence given the experiential processes that can be applied across many curriculum areas stating that “Outdoor Education offers distinctive content and learning experiences that would be lost in the current draft framework” (p.39). Further consultation was undertaken and in 2012, ACARA released the Final Shape Paper for HPE, with 14 references to OE. Further continued lobbying for greater inclusion
of OE resulted in OE gaining 23 references in the Draft HPE Curriculum, released in 2013. This release prompted a statement from the OEA Curriculum Advice Committee titled *Advice on Outdoor Education in the Australian Curriculum* (2015). The authors described how OE could be organised and delivered to meet the outcomes of the Australian Curriculum and provided a rationale for an OE curriculum:

Opportunities to develop positive relationships with the environment, others and ourselves through interaction with the natural world can be achieved through outdoor education. These relationships are essential for the well-being and sustainability of individuals, society and our environment. Outdoor education engages students in practical and active learning experiences in natural environments and settings typically beyond the school classroom. In these environments, students develop the skills and understandings to move safely and competently while valuing a positive relationship with natural environments and promoting the sustainable use of these environments. (p. 1)

It further proposed that OE had the potential to address general and cross-curriculum priorities within the Australian Curriculum and to contribute to learning disciplines such as HPE, Geography and Science. In HPE, participation in OE learning could promote the development of personal and social skills, including self-reliance, risk management, leadership and critical thinking, which could contribute to lifelong physical activity, health and overall well-being. In Geography, participation in outdoor learning programmes could provide opportunities for students to engage with the natural environment, consider their relationship with the environment and develop ethical responsibility including Aboriginal perspectives, land use and management, and so develop concepts for a sustainable future. In
Science, OE programmes could support students to develop and apply scientific knowledge, understanding and skills to allow them to make informed decisions about local, national and global issues. This suggested structure would provide great opportunity and allow for the flexibility of content related to OE to be taught in a range of ways in the different school settings. OE could be taught as a sequential stand-alone subject, as an annual camp programme, within field trips, and as a teaching methodology promoting learning in, about and for the outdoors, drawing on content from a range of learning areas.

On 18 September 2015, Australian Education Ministers endorsed the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum in all eight learning areas. OE is still located within the HPE learning area, with a clear identification for more to be done in both teacher preparation and the associated implementation of outdoor excursions. The Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (F–10) Implications for teaching, assessment and reporting (2015) noted that organisation of learning could be adapted to the individual needs of schools given resource availability and timetabling structures. It is also suggested that the content of the HPE curriculum could be delivered through other curriculum areas, such as home economics or OE.

The document acknowledged that OE provides unique learning experiences that are conducted in natural environments outside the school boundary. These opportunities allow students to develop specific knowledge, concepts of risk management and a positive relationship with nature, including environmental sustainability. It further suggested that OE would draw on content from many subject areas of the Australian Curriculum, including HPE, Geography and Science. It noted that OE could provide a valid opportunity for developing movement competence, connection to natural environments, an understanding of the concept of risk versus
challenge, enhanced personal and social skills, and would promote lifelong physical activity health and well-being.

OE has maintained a presence in Australian schools regardless of the curriculum structure. The Australian Curriculum is set with recommendations for teaching, assessment and reporting outlined clearly. There is a new opportunity for the growth and development of OE.

2.19 Summary

In this review of the literature, the historical development and value of OE as part of a holistic education have been described. An investigation of the philosophical progression associated with OE has been provided and the diversity in the essential components in the range of OE programmes offered today was identified. Various formats of OE were presented, with examples included from education, government and community settings. The outcomes and associated benefits of OE programmes were highlighted, including personal and social growth, approaches to learning, and environmental understanding. The literature review revealed that very limited research has been undertaken regarding the OE opportunities and benefits for students with special needs.

Previous research on the nature and scope of OE in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore was examined to highlight similarities and differences in outcomes, programme design and existing barriers to implementation. The historical aspect of OE teacher training was examined, demonstrating the core competencies required in an OE teacher. Issues relating to teacher competency were explored, including VET, the TRBWA and the synchronisation with tertiary education, and consideration was given to the place of OE in the HPE learning area. Finally, to provide a current
perspective, consideration of the place of OE in the Australian Curriculum was investigated.

The attitudes of staff from both the bottom up and top down can influence the direction of OE in a school in many ways. The scope of OE programmes can provide an insight into the value the school community places on OE, the effectiveness of current offerings and can create future pathways for the development and implementation of new programmes. As aptly stated by Martin (2008), ‘The future directions and prospects for outdoor education will remain driven by such biases, differing personalities, political circumstances and resultant educational ideologies of individuals as well as different education authorities’ (p. 23).

It is clear that WA has its own unique developed history of OE. However, the development of tertiary education, teacher registration and OE-specific research in WA has not progressed at the same rate as in other Australian states. The methodology used for this project is outlined in the next chapter.