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

Duncan Picknoll

Follow this and additional works at: https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses

Part of the Education Commons

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
Copyright Regulations 1969

WARNING
The material in this communication may be subject to copyright under the Act. Any further copying or communication of this material by you may be the subject of copyright protection under the Act.
Do not remove this notice.

Publication Details

This dissertation/thesis is brought to you by ResearchOnline@ND. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of ResearchOnline@ND. For more information, please contact researchonline@nd.edu.au.
Chapter 7: Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations for Policy

7.1.1 Ideology

Misunderstandings from the past regarding OE need to be addressed. The response to ACHPER by the Minister of Education in 2007 should provide the basis for this. Dialogue with the Minister of Education, the DOE and the school principals needs to be re-opened, to provide them with a greater understanding of the distinctive nature of OE and the potential contributions it can make towards a holistic education. As policy should reflect the current needs of the community with consideration of the Australian Curriculum, this process should seek a clarification from the Minister regarding the appropriate teaching skills for the delivery of OE; where the responsibility for the education of emerging and current teachers lies; and how the recommendations within the Australian Curriculum for OE can be addressed.

7.1.2 Teacher registration

Depending on the response to the above from the Minister, further clarification will be required from the TRBWA to address the issue of teaching ‘out of field’ and should focus specifically on the mandated tertiary requirements for the teaching of OE, as is the case in Victoria.

7.1.3 Teacher training

The existing differences between the school sectors regarding OE-specific teacher qualifications, certifications and associated registrations must be addressed. If WA was to follow the same mandated requirements as Victoria, then the DOE would need to be accountable for ensuring that appropriate teacher PD is undertaken
by teachers in Government schools. Both Catholic and Independent schools would also be required to follow suit.

Current teachers need to be supported financially and provided with time to undertake further education and skills-based certifications. Importantly, they must be willing, or possibly more forcefully required, to engage in PD opportunities, both in and out of school, including participation in workshops and conferences offered by Outdoors WA, ACHPER and other professional organisations. The results from this study showed clearly that Independent schools had a greater involvement and commitment to OE-specific PD.

University students in undergraduate degrees must be taught appropriate theoretical knowledge and practical skills to teach OE effectively, from basic programmes to the more academically developed stages of the WACE Outdoor Education course.

7.1.4 Tertiary education

Universities should be encouraged and supported to deliver OE-specific degrees and given the current setting, greater OE content is required within undergraduate HPE degree offerings. This would be far more likely to occur if the TRBWA required specialist areas for registration. Further, universities in Australia offering OE could work towards benchmarking the requirements for degrees offering OE.

7.1.5 Shared curriculum time

As OE is positioned within the curriculum area of HPE, it should be included in the curriculum title. An appropriate mandated curriculum time allocation should be provided, to allow the compulsory representation of OE from Years 7 to 10, as is the case for HPE.
7.1.6 Synchronisation

Synchronisation of VET and tertiary education must occur and multiple pathways into NOLRS must be recognised. Given the current requirements of NOLRS registration and the inability for many teachers with a part-time OE teaching load to maintain currency, particularly for teachers in Government and Catholic schools who are restricted by the WACE Outdoor Education course, consideration should be given for a ‘restricted’ teacher registration.

7.2 Recommendations for Practice

7.2.1 Advocacy

Greater advocacy for OE is required. This process must involve the school principals, who play a major role in determining the curriculum offerings in their schools. Support for teachers through compulsory PD opportunities would need to be funded and provided within normal school time.

7.2.2 Tertiary education

Tertiary education institutions must attempt to lead from the front and provide greater opportunities for OE within undergraduate degrees. Given appropriate support to ensure adequate enrolments, postgraduate degrees including a Graduate Certificate, Diploma and Master of OE should be reconsidered. This would provide the basis for students to progress into Doctorate or PhD research, to provide further growth for OE in WA.

7.2.3 Department of Education

The lack of engagement in knowledge- and skill-based training opportunities and with professional associations such as Outdoors WA (particularly identified in Government schools) requires a more directed approach from the DOE to ensure the
quality of programme delivery and safety of students. This must start with the allocation of sufficient funding for training and associated teacher relief.

7.2.4 Western Australian collaboration

Given that the nature and scope of OE programmes varied greatly between school sectors, consideration of a collaborative approach to programme development, profiling the schools that are successfully promoting outdoor learning as part of a whole-school approach, is needed. Given the place of OE in the Australian Curriculum, this should include the way schools from all sectors are using OE to contribute to other curriculum areas.

7.2.5 Policy to practice

The refinement and use of the Department of Education Outdoor Activity Guidelines needs to be addressed. Synchronisation with VET and/or appropriate alternative pathways for registration with NOLRS must be developed.

7.2.6 History

It would be beneficial to revisit the historical development of OE in WA schools, especially the reasons for the intended OE curriculum from Pre-primary to Year 12 no longer existing. Revitalising the place of OE in primary schools could provide a solid base to allow the sequential development of OE learning in secondary schools.

7.2.7 National collaboration

A collaborative approach needs to be developed between states to ensure the place of OE within the Australian Curriculum. Profiling examples of successful inclusion of OE within the Australian Curriculum should be shared.
7.3 Recommendations for Research

7.3.1 Developing a research profile

To date there has been limited research conducted in WA in the field of OE. Further research projects should be developed in partnership with universities, schools and professional organisations such as Outdoors WA and ACHPER. It is anticipated that the development of a research profile in WA will provide greater collaboration with other states. Some potential research areas are outlined below.

7.3.2 The principal

This research showed that school principals had a significant role in choosing whether to implement and support the growth of OE in their schools. Investigation into identifying their perspectives on the underlying ideology, policy, curriculum and associated barriers may be beneficial.

7.3.3 An Australian profile

Given the relevance of the studies conducted in Victoria and SA and now WA, it would be beneficial to conduct a meta-analysis between the Australian states regarding the nature and scope of OE. Further, given the amount of time since the initial 2007 survey, it would be beneficial to conduct a new nature and scope study for all Australian states with an agreed survey tool.

7.3.4 Contributions to lifelong health and well-being

7.3.5 The contribution that OE can make to lifelong physical activity and overall health and well-being needs further research. Given the results presented in Table 5.1 it is evident that teachers in this study and similar research conducted in Victoria, South Australia and New Zealand all identified physical fitness as the lowest ranking learning outcome developed through OE programmes. Potentially, participation in a well-sequenced OE programme could have a positive effect on reducing the costs...
associated with physical and mental health through adolescence and into adult life.

7.3.5 Students with special needs

Consideration of students with special needs in OE programmes needs further investigation. To begin this exploration, using the *inclusivity scale* within existing OE programmes across school sectors would be useful.

### 7.4 Conclusion

Regardless of curriculum changes, OE has maintained a presence in the educational setting in WA. If OE is to be seen as a valuable part of a holistic education in WA for our youth to promote positive relationships, environmental awareness and overall well-being through participation in the outdoors, then changes in policy, educating school principals about OE, adapting to curriculum changes and overall advocacy are essential.

The key findings in this research highlighted significant sector differences, which were affected by school structure, competition with other curriculum areas, type of OE curriculum, budget allocation, teacher qualifications/registrations and engagement in PD. OE remains within the HPE curriculum and as it is not allocated any compulsory curriculum time, it is offered primarily as an elective in most schools. Although the WACE Outdoor Education course was sequentially structured, the majority of schools delivered Stage 1 and did not progress into Stages 2 and 3. The WACE Outdoor Education course provides an opportunity to maintain OE in schools and it has proven that it has the academic rigour required for an ATAR subject.

It was clear that there is a gap in teacher training and willingness to engage in further education, particularly in Government schools. Independent schools who taught OE programmes other than WACE were not confined by a set curriculum.
They were more likely to include other curriculum areas in their programmes and were able to contribute to a whole-school learning approach. This is particularly timely, given the introduction of an Australian Curriculum and the place of OE within it.

It is intended that this research will provide the motivation to begin the necessary dialogue to bring about changes in policy and teacher training and increase the contribution of OE in WA schools.