

*The design, impact and outcomes of experiential pedagogies on the formative and summative assessment outcomes for students within the Australian Curriculum model.*



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*Learning experiences need to be enjoyable and interesting enough to keep the learning engaged.*

**Dewey, 1938**

- **Develop an understanding of** ... where Outdoor Education sits in the Australian (and worldwide) curriculum according to the literature.
- **Identify** ... the different models of Outdoor Education practice or experiential learning being used.
- **Further our knowledge** ... in where the literature gaps are.
- **Engage with** ... current practitioners and administrators of Outdoor Education programs.

# AREAS OF FOCUS ....

We have developed three areas to **focus research** on....

- How are educational institutions with practical curriculum areas teaching these elements?
- How are schools incorporating cross-curricular content and culture-change initiatives?
- How do teachers adjust their pedagogies to achieve student learning in these areas?





**How are educational institutions with practical curriculum areas teaching these elements?**

# MY OBSERVATIONS ....

## **My observation of Physical Education/Geography/Science:**

- Isolated groups/classes
- Compartmentalisation of content
- Linked with Saturday sport
- Mix of “enthusiasm” from staff
- Shortage of highly skilled staff ie good at a lot, master of none

## **What does an active classroom look like?**

- Innovation and research
- Team/teaching / collaboration
- “Active” teaching – *never sit, always stand*
- Student co-constructing criteria – inquiry based models

# CONNECTING ACADEMICS & OEd ....

- The connection between **academics** and outdoor education is **uncertain**. Only a small number of schools, within Australia are **actively integrating or using** their academic program in their outdoor education program.
- *“Is the overcrowded curriculum squeezing outdoor education on to the periphery”* (Payne & Wattchow, 2008) or is there an *“already packed school curriculum”* (Chew, 2008).
- **Therefore**, it is far more common for OE to have a lower, non-formal curriculum profile that is aligned with the **pastoral care and social development** elements of a school.

# BATTLE GROUNDS ....

## Can the academic environment be brought into the picture?

- Research into facilitator education (Thomas, 2008; Hogan, 2002 and Hunter, 2007) highlight the **importance of relationships** and the need for facilitators to be **fully present and authentic** with group members.

## What does this mean for practical curriculum areas?

- Does the **biology teacher** wanting to do a marine studies unit involving SCUBA diving or snorkelling need to have an outdoor education qualification?
- Does a field trip to the top of Mt Ngungun mean you need a **qualified bushwalking guide**?
- **Therefore**, teachers need to take a vested interest in their out of classroom lessons and not be a “passenger” in the process.

Who embeds Australian Curriculum in their  
Outdoor Education program?

What are the preventers?  
What has been successful?

**Audience Question 1**



**How are schools incorporating cross-curricular content and culture-change initiatives?**

# SNAPSHOT OF SCHOOLS & OEd ....

## Overview of Schools in SE Qld:

- **ACGS:** “The skills, experiences and relationships developed during these expeditions provide students with the confidence to face future challenges both during and beyond school.”
- **GT:** “There are lessons that are powerfully taught at Maroon that help our young men develop and which complement their endeavours in the classroom and in their participation in other College programs.”
- **Hillbrook:** “The Outdoor Education program is designed so students gain an understanding of their potential, while helping to develop those highly prized qualities of initiative, self-reliance, co-operation and leadership.”
- **Iona:** “Offers all students a program of camps and retreats to enhance personal development and outdoor learning and initiate spiritual and leadership development.”
- **StP:** “The retreat program is among the most significant experiences encountered at the College. The retreats offer students, staff and parents an opportunity to reflect on their own life journey, to greatly strengthen their relationships with others, and to develop their spirituality.”
- **IGS, TGS, TSS, NC, BSHS, MCA, Padua:** no mention of outdoor education

# SNAPSHOT OF PROVIDERS & OEd ....

## Overview of Providers in SE Qld:

- **Mt Barney Lodge:** “All school camps are tailored specifically to suit the needs of the group”.
- **Camp Somerset:** “We believe that outdoor adventure holds a tremendous potential in values transfer and character building”.
- **Outward Bound:** “Seek to promote and develop Integrity, Responsibility, Resilience, Compassion, Community Service, Environmental Awareness, and tenacity in pursuit of a goal ... there are several schools that have cemented Outward Bound Australia into their curriculum as a central challenge and a right of passage”.
- **Kindilan:** “Programs emphasize personal growth through experience and challenge. Individuals develop self reliance, responsibility, teamwork, confidence, compassion and environmental and community awareness”.
- **Adventure Alternatives:** “Each of our programs work towards developing students across all of the general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum ... the reach of Outdoor Education is extensive and has the ability to provide long-term classroom-based results”.

# WHAT IS HAPPENING IN GEOGRAPHY ...?

- Munday (2008) found that teachers in Australia find the planning of fieldwork difficult.
- Other constraints are the **costs of fieldwork**, the **transportation** that is needed and **student behaviour** (Netherlands) (Oost, 2011).
- Wattchow (2008) states that “the greater a person’s physical dependence upon place the greater the propensity to connect with that place”.
  - **Therefore**, why not spend more than 5 days in the field?
- At compulsory education level (Taiwan), fieldwork is an essential part of the National Curriculum (Han & Foskett, 2010).

# FIELDWORK ....

- Upon the most recent search through **the online documents** there is small mentions of the term “fieldwork” scattered throughout the curriculum of:
  - Year 7 and 8 Science
  - Biology
  - Years 11 & 12 Geography
  - Years 5 to 10 Geography (ACARA, 2015)
- The wording of the term and use and implementation of fieldwork within these areas **are left up interpretation by academic planners and teachers**
  - *Year 7 – Water unit example*



# WHAT ABOUT FIELDWORK OUTSIDE AUSTRALIA ...?

- **Netherlands:** Fieldwork has never been obligatory in the geography curriculum (Swaan & Wijnsteekers, 1999)
- **Norway:** Takes the route of teacher training and urban fieldwork where it should be included in the teaching syllabus ... developing urban fieldwork as a part of the study programme in teacher education (Skavhaug & Andersen, 2013).
- **Hong Kong:** Environmental knowledge and attitude is hard to develop later in life (Lee et. al., 2000).
- **United Kingdom:** Sees geography's fieldwork origin as a traditional part of the geographical education that goes back to the days before the subject of geography itself was recognised distinctively on the curriculum (Cook, 2011; Walford, 2001)
- **Taiwan:** Where geography fieldwork is traditionally underdeveloped (Han & Foskett, 2010)
- **New Zealand:** Fieldwork is seen through Fuller (2012), who raises questions such as to what extent is the fieldwork experience informed by best practice in pedagogy
- **Singapore:** Chew (2008) there is a lack of critical focus on fieldwork as an essential part of geography education in Singapore

**What qualifications allow for  
exceptional fieldwork?**

**Audience Question 2**



**How do teachers adjust  
their pedagogies to  
achieve student learning  
in these areas?**

# ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT ....

- The Australian Curriculum has potential to **fundamentally change** how outdoor education is taught or used.
- *“Outdoor Education provides unique opportunities to develop positive relationships with the environment, others and ourselves through interaction with the natural world particularly in secondary schools”* (Martin, 2010).
- It *“can maintain its basic philosophical integrity”* (Barnes, 2006).
- **Therefore.....**
  - Do organisations regularly **review** their core values and philosophies?
  - Are they willing to adapt or change to the client’s needs if the client believes in the need for **academic pursuits** in the field?
  - Do schools who own Outdoor Education centres push to **develop academics** or do they up hold (their) “outdoor education” values as the number one priority?

# ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT ....

- This raises the question, **whether and how fieldwork** is being performed.
- In education in general, there is a growing interest in making the learning process **more inquiry** driven (Oost, 2011).
- The characteristics of fieldwork are important to the **deep understanding** of the subject matter as opposed to that at the **surface level**.
- **My observations:**
  - When large year groups of students in the secondary school deploy on field trips of up to 200 students to do curriculum based work, there tends to be **observational processes** rather than active field work.
  - Leydon and Turner (2013) remark that this is where the **student's potential** is limited when only working in an observational mode.

# DEVELOPING FIELDWORK ....

- The key to effective geography fieldwork includes:
  - the inclusion of active, direct experience
  - the use of authentic, real-world contexts
  - the ability to engage students' emotions, feelings and values
  - the requirement to attend to new environments and/or people.
- **So...**why do we structure many of our programs around activities that involve driving for hours to access particular environments?
- **For example...**why do we do cross-country skiing or white water paddling in the flattest, driest continent (Lugg, 2004)
- Why not let our environment dictate first and base our curriculum on that second?

How do we bring Outdoor  
Education back into the  
mainstream?

**Audience Question 3**

# SO...WHAT AM I SEEING SO FAR IN THE LITERATURE ...

- **Limited research** that supports the inclusion of OE models or the use of OE models within the existing Australian curriculum (Thomas, 2008).
- OE based **subjects** exist in a number of different formats across the Australian Curriculum at senior level (Years 11 and 12).
- Research tends to exist around **developing relationships** with the natural environment (Chawla, 1998; Kahn & Kellert, 2002)
- **Or** with the **personal development** aspect of experiential learning (Lugg, 1999; Martin, 1999; Payne, 2000).



# WHERE TO NOW ....?

We would like to **investigate the following:**

- How do schools use Outdoor Education or integrate it into curriculum areas assessment tasks?
- What length of time (in the field) is needed to see formal student outcomes increase?
- What support structures are needed to develop curriculum areas with outdoor education models within a school?



# MADE IT ....

- **How can you help...?**
  - Do you work in a school?
  - Are you from an Outdoor Education Centre?
  - Do you coordinate for a school?
- Do you want to be involved in **future research?**
- If you can contribute to the discussion or research further, please contact me on:
  - **[adam.wood@research.usc.edu.au](mailto:adam.wood@research.usc.edu.au)**



