

# **The Outside Classroom**

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## **Abstract**

Teaching outside the classroom is becoming widely acknowledged as a way of promoting a number of desirable educational outcomes and assuring the realization of current policy agendas. The 'outdoor education gives depth to the curriculum and contributes to students' physical, personal and social education'. Furthermore, a number of potential benefits as a result of outdoor learning and experiences are significantly benefited. Engaging and Learning with the Outdoors, as well as cognitive developments and curriculum-related consequences, personal and social developments could also be observed in pupils involved, supporting the potential impacts. This research identified specific benefits, including individual growth and advances in social skills, impacts on attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions, and, to a lesser extent, the development of general and specific academic skills. Improvements in employment and achievement were observed, alongside the promotion of positive conduct. Considering these outcomes, Education outside the classroom potentially provides a significant contribution to recent agendas such as Every Child Matters, personalization and the extended schools remit.

***Keywords: Classroom, teaching, learning***

## **Introduction**

In that respect is rising fear that opportunities for outdoor learning by school students have fallen substantially in late years. The literature encompassed three main cases of outdoor learning with primary school students, secondary school students and undergraduate scholars:

- Fieldwork and outdoor visits
- It includes both outdoor education and adventure tourism
- School grounds/community projects.

### **The Impact of Fieldwork and Visits:**

- Substantial evidence exists to indicate that fieldwork, properly conceived, adequately planned, well taught and effectively followed up, offers learner's opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in ways that add value to their everyday experiences in the classroom.
- Specifically, fieldwork can have a positive impact on long-term storage due to the memorable nature of the fieldwork setting. Effective fieldwork and residential experience in particular, are directly related to individual development and advances in social sciences. More importantly, there can be reinforcement between the emotive and the cognitive, with each influencing the other and providing a bridge to higher order learning.
- The amount of fieldwork that takes place in some other regions of the Earth is seriously restricted, especially in science.
- The routine of works that address the experience of particular groups (e.g. Girls) or scholars with specific needs are negligible, although those that have been done draw conclusions that are significant in terms of both policy and practice. Some kids are more likely to hold part in fieldwork than others for a range of causes, many of which could and should be addressed.
- A minority of subjects provides a health warning to proponents of outdoor training. Poor fieldwork is likely to contribute to poor scholarship. Students quickly forget irrelevant information that has been inadequately represented.

### **Research Purposes:**

The inquiry team was required to critically analyze research on outdoor learning. For the intents of this review, outdoor learning is defined as learning that accrues or is derived from activities undertaken in outdoor locations beyond the school classroom. As explained in more this is taken to cover three main sorts of bodily processes:

- Fieldwork and visits to field study centers, nature centers, farms, parks or gardens
- Outdoor adventure education in local or distant settings
- Project on school grounds or the local community.

In reaction to the project funders' core interests and the pragmatic need to delineate the boundaries of the project, the research team did not look at research on learning beyond the classroom in indoor scenes, such as museums, art galleries and zoos. For like reasons, we also excluded research on general school sport and physical education, except that involving outdoor adventure activities, and work looking at virtual field trips except where these had been investigated alongside actual field trips. The age ranges considered included work with primary school students, secondary school students and undergraduate scholars.

The primary aims of the project were achieved:

- To establish what is experienced (and not known) about:
  - ✓ Young people's experiences of outdoor learning
  - ✓ The impact of outside learning activities for young people
  - ✓ Agents that can block or help young people's learning in the outside
  - ✓ Factors that can impede or facilitate the provision of outdoor learning
- To identify the implications of the research for future practice, policy and research in outdoor learning.

### **The Impact of Outdoor Adventure Activities:**

- Substantial evidence of the benefits of outdoor adventure education is offered by two meta-analyses of previous research. Looking across a spacious scope of outcome measures, these studies identify not only positive effects in the short term, but also extended gains in the long term. Yet, within these broad trends, there can be considerable variance between different kinds of coders, and dissimilar types of events.
- On that point is significant research evidence to suggest that outdoor adventure programmes can impact positively on young people's:
  - ✓ Attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions – examples of outcomes include independence, confidence, self-esteem, locus of control, self-efficacy, personal strength and managing strategies

- ✓ Interpersonal and social skills – such as social effectiveness, communication sciences, group cohesion and teamwork.
- The evidence base for cognitive and physical/behavioral benefits is less strong than for affective and interpersonal/social issues. In instances where there is a focus on such criteria, however, there are cases of outdoor adventure programmers yielding benefits in terms of:
  - ✓ The development of general and specific academic skills, as well as improved engagement and accomplishment
  - ✓ The advancement of positive behavior and brought down rates of re-offending, and improved physical self-image and fitness.
- The evidence base for cognitive and physical/behavioral benefits is less strong than for affective and interpersonal/social issues. In instances where there is a focus on such criteria, however, there are cases of outdoor adventure programs yielding benefits in terms of:
  - ✓ The development of general and specific academic skills, as well as improved engagement and accomplishment
  - ✓ The promotion of positive behavior and reduced rates of re-offending, and improved physical self-image and fitness.
- In relation to fostering environmental concern and awareness, the evidence of a positive link between outdoor adventure activities and environmental understanding and values is not substantial. On that point appears to be a hard case for questioning the opinion that nature experience automatically contributes to environmental consciousness, loyalty and action.

### **The Impact of School Grounds/Community Projects:**

- School grounds/community projects have the capacity to connect with most curriculum areas. Two specific examples of benefits stemming from this are positive gains in science process skills and improved understanding of innovation and applied science-related issues.
- There is important evidence that social development and larger community engagement can result from engaging in school grounds projects. Students get more positive relationships with each other, with their teachers and with the broader community through taking part in school grounds improvements.
- Few fields have centered on physical and behavioral impacts on school grounds/community projects. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that school grounds educational projects are able to improve children's physical being through better quality gaming and through an increased motivation to eat more healthily and to get more exercise.
- Compared with research on fieldwork/visits and outdoor adventure education, there is a demand for a larger number of rigorous in-depth studies on outdoor learning in school grounds and community contexts.

### **Factors Influencing Outdoor Learning and Its Preparation:**

The review hints that it is helpful to differentiate between:

- ✓ Agents that can act upon the supply of outdoor learning by schools, teachers and others.
- ✓ Agents that can influence the nature and quality of young people's learning in outdoor scenes.
- It is readable that the supply of outdoor learning in schools and universities is affected by a spacious range of barriers and opportunities. Notable barriers include: (i) fear and concern about health and safety; (ii) teachers' lack of assurance in teaching outdoors; (iii)

school and university curriculum requirements limiting opportunities for outdoor learning; (iv) shortages of time, resources and livelihood; and (v) wider changes within and beyond the teaching sector.

- Opportunities for outdoor learning provision, though, are also observed in the shape of: (i) new legislation and ordinances such as those pertaining to safety at outdoor activity centers.
  
- These several factors make clear the complexity of the challenge facing policy makers, practitioners and others who are seeking to increase and improve young people's access to learning beyond the schoolroom and the schoolhouse.
  
  
- The research that has been undertaken into students' experiences of outside learning activities suggests that there are various elements that can facilitate and/or impede learning in outdoor scenes. These can be conceptualized in terms of:
  - ✓ Program factors – including the structure, duration and pedagogy of outdoor education programs.
  
  - ✓ Participant factors – including the characteristics, interests and preferences of learners.
  
  - ✓ Place factors – relating to the nature and novelty of the outdoor learning setting.

Taken together, these factors provide a framework for thinking about how efforts to improve the quality and depth of young people's outdoor learning might be directed.

### **Conclusions and Implications:**

Against the backdrop of calls for educational practice and policy to become more evidence-based, there is a lot in this review that is of relevance and use to practitioners, policy makers and researchers. Thither is a fear that the amount of fieldwork in secondary schools is under threat. Nevertheless, the evidence from research carried out around the macrocosm is that

fieldwork can have a range of beneficial impacts on participants. To be effective, fieldwork needs to be carefully designed, thoughtfully implemented and followed up back at school. In planning activities, teachers and outdoor educators need to take account of factors such as students' fears and phobias, prior experience and preferred learning styles. With this in mind, it is significant that the determinations of this inspection are considered not simply in terms of how they might help to establish the value of outdoor learning, but likewise in terms of how they might help to improve its tone.

### **Key Messages for Practice**

- The review highlights demonstrable benefits for various cases of outdoor learning. These findings should provide a source of funding and justification for practitioners seeking an evidence base for the field of work in which they function.
- More precisely, the review gives a clear authorization for certain kinds of outdoor learning provision. Inquiry proves the value of programs which: (i) provides longer, more sustained outdoor experiences than is often provided; (ii) incorporate well-designed preparatory and follow-up work; (iii) use a range of carefully structured learning activities and assessments related to the school curriculum; (iv) recognize and emphasize the use of facilitation in the learning process and (v) develop close links between program objectives and program rules.
- More specifically, the review gives a clear endorsement for certain kinds of outdoor learning provision. Inquiry proves the value of programs which: (i) provides longer, more sustained outdoor experiences than is often provided; (ii) incorporate well-designed preparatory and follow-up work; (iii) use a range of carefully structured learning activities and assessments related to the school curriculum; (iv) recognize and emphasize the function of facilitation in the learning process and (v) develop close links between program objectives and program rules.
- The research also makes up several important challenges for practitioners. These include: the fact that the designs of outdoor learning are not always realized in exercise; the

dissimilar types of barriers faced by individual students in the learning out-of-doors; the unresolved issue of the relative benefits of novelty and/or familiarity with the outdoors learning setting; and the fact that the benefits of outdoor learning have not always kept over time.

- These challenges raise important questions for those involved in organizing and undertaking outdoor learning activities. Deliberation and reflection on such issues could help to inform the strategic readiness and growth of systems involved in providing outdoor learning opportunities for young people. They could aid to address the ways in which school staff think about the structure, focus and timing of outdoor learning within and beyond the curriculum.

### **Key Messages for Policy**

- This review makes clear the real amount and range of research that has been carried out in outdoor learning. It also highlights a piece of encouraging signs in this area, such as a diversification of research approaches and foci, and a maturation in the theoretical / critical exploration and meta-analyses / research syntheses.
- In parliamentary law for these gaps to be addressed, attention will need to be dedicated to two important matters. The foremost is how to improve the methodological rigor of outdoor learning research and valuation. Thither was a range of methodological weaknesses evident within certain sections of the literature in this recap, including poor conceptualization and research plan, and little or no follow-up in the medium to long term. The second topic is how to improve and deepen the research based understandings of the outdoor learning process. To put it simply, there is still much to be learned about how and why programs work or not.
- Lastly, on that point is a case to be pulled in for larger theoretical and empirical attention being applied to three significant 'blind spots' in the current literature. These apprehensions: (i) the environment of the 'learning' in outdoor education; (ii) the



relationship between indoor learning and outdoor learning; and (iii) the historical and political features of outdoor education policy and curricula.

**References:**

Geographical education/fieldwork (Higgitt, 1997; Foskett and Marsden, 1998, 2002; Cottingham et al., 2001)

Outdoor adventure education (Hattie et al., 1997; Reddrop, 1997)

School grounds projects (Malone and Tranter, 2003b; Dymont, 2004)

Environmental learning (Hart and Nolan, 1999; Rickinson, 2001)