

Education and Culture Committee

Outdoor Learning

Submission from Professor Peter Higgins

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The journey through education for any child in Scotland must include a series of planned, quality outdoor learning experiences.

Learning and Teaching Scotland (2010, p. 6)

1. Preamble

In the past five years the significant developments in Scottish education have been mirrored by those in outdoor education, and provision and interest in a wide range of aspects continues to grow in Scotland in ways not widespread in other parts of the UK or overseas. These changes have built upon a traditional Scottish empathy with outdoor education and a growing post-devolution policy interest. Recent policy changes have also been aided by an increasingly active research community, and a broadening of the term 'outdoor education' towards 'outdoor learning' and its synonyms². This change has acted as a reminder that learning outside the classroom can be in the school grounds or locally-based as well as residential outdoor centre settings.

In terms of *content*, outdoor education might be considered as education 'in' (*outdoor activities*), 'through' (e.g. *personal and social education, all sectors of formal education (ages 3-18), therapy, rehabilitation, management development*), 'about' (*environmental education*) and 'for' (*sustainability*) the environment/natural heritage. It is usually interdisciplinary, integrated across these areas and often practical, interactive and reflective with the role of the teacher being to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.

Learning outdoors contrasts with the 'classroom' as the environment is influenced by weather, the seasons, time of day and topography. In terms of *location*, our concentric circles³ model describes five zones of outdoor learning with the school in the centre, where outdoor learning opportunities are available in the immediate vicinity of the school grounds. Beyond the school grounds is the local neighbourhood, which can be explored on foot or by using public transport. Day excursions ('field trips') often take place a little further away and usually require some kind of group transport. Residential outdoor centres, cultural visits, and expeditions that involve being away from home overnight comprise the fourth 'zone'. The fifth zone is 'Planet Earth' which indicates the growing understanding attached to the importance of outdoor experiences in sustainability, health and well-being.

Recent policy interest has been stimulated by reports suggesting children are increasingly separated from the natural environment; they have poor skills in risk management and

exercise minimally⁴. Outdoor learning can provide such learning opportunities, and policy support for outdoor education is growing in the UK.

Scotland has an international reputation for research in outdoor learning which, in the period from 2005 to 2010 was actively supported by Learning and Teaching Scotland/Education Scotland⁵, Scottish Natural Heritage, National Parks, SportScotland, the Forestry Commission and charities. Studies have examined an increasingly diverse range of issues such as curricular relevance and educational attainment. Much of this has been conducted at the University of Edinburgh with important contributions also from the University of Stirling. This account is a summary of these findings together with relevant UK-wide and international studies.

2. The benefits, for pupils and others, of outdoor learning

- There is robust research evidence that experiential and adventurous outdoor learning contributes to many aspects of curricular and interdisciplinary learning, and to intellectual, physical, emotional, personal and social development.
- Guided time spent in outdoor environments can encourage positive behavior and attainment, develop skills in risk-assessment, promote health and well-being and stimulate an affective relationship with the environment that promotes sustainable behaviours.
- Outdoor learning in the broad sense, as well as in its contribution to learning for sustainability should be an everyday experience for all children who pass through the Scottish education system.

The recent emphasis on 'outdoor learning' has stimulated rethinking of 'adventure' as a concept. Traditionally adventurous experiences have been closely associated with physical outdoor activities. However, most teachers do not have access to the training or equipment to provide such opportunities, so the types of adventure that teachers are increasingly devising are essentially person-centred, where the outdoors provides opportunities for learner discovery, creativity, curiosity, imagination and wonder to inspire learning. Consequently, a local urban environment can be as valuable as 'remote' or 'wild' areas.

One rapidly developing new facet of outdoor learning is in the relationship between greenspace (areas such as urban parks, open countryside, woodlands, coastlines etc.) and health and wellbeing. Growing medical and social research literature indicates that young people are spending less time in greenspaces and are physically less active than previous generations, and there is evidence that exposure to greenspaces affords both direct and indirect (by stimulating physical activity) benefits⁶. Whilst some of this evidence relates specifically to the attainment and behavior of children in schools⁷, there are broader implications for outdoor education in terms of stimulating active lifestyle choices that may

bring long-term health benefits and the impact of outdoor learning experiences on attitudes to sustainability⁸. Taken together, Scotland's knowledge base, culture, education system, infrastructure, climate and outdoor environment all mean it is well placed to continue to develop outdoor learning as a legitimate, interdisciplinary, pedagogical approach that impacts upon personal, social and ecological/environmental domains within all sectors of formal education (ages 3-18). In short, outdoor learning in the broad sense as well as in its contribution to learning for sustainability should be everyday experience for all children who pass through the Scottish education system⁹.

3. The extent to which all schools across Scotland are consistently implementing outdoor learning approaches and realising associated benefits

- **Provision:** Outdoor learning is not consistently supported by Scottish local authorities; few schools have staff with specialist knowledge or qualifications; young people's experiences vary widely and there is no national equity of opportunity.
- There is no philosophical or practical coherence in national outdoor centre provision – whilst some provide valuable and curricular learning experiences, others essentially offer activity holidays in term time.
- **Management:** Whilst many bodies are involved in the management of outdoor learning there is no national framework, coherent integrated structure or approach. This makes communication, maintenance of standards and training problematic.

Provision

Though the value of outdoor learning is widely acknowledged, it is not consistently supported by Scottish local authorities some increasing and others decreasing provision. Some pupils will receive regular outdoor learning experiences in schools, others a few days (paid for by their families) at an outdoor centre, and others none at all.

Approaches to management vary within and between local authorities and may be cross-departmental (education, community, children's services); delivered by different people (teachers, rangers, instructors, youth workers), and take place in different settings (school grounds, field-visits, centres). From a high point in the 1970s when many schools had dedicated outdoor education teachers¹⁰, there are now very few other than those who work with children with additional support needs in a small proportion of 'Special Schools'.

Many local authority outdoor centres have now closed or are highly vulnerable. Those that remain have seen substantial reductions in central funding and have become commercial businesses or charitable-trusts, and independent external providers now deliver more pupil-days than local authority centres¹¹. All have shown adaptability in responding to demanding financial circumstances, which seem likely to continue. However, this 'mixed-

economy' lacks philosophical coherence, and provision (opportunity, duration, location) and is variable¹².

Representation and management of outdoor provision

There is no national framework for the management of outdoor education in Scotland although a number of bodies represent aspects of the sector. The situation is complex and mirrors some of the definitional issues identified earlier. The 'Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education' is a forum for those who hold an advisory position within the 32 Scottish Local Authorities whilst the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres is similar but for centre managers. National Governing Bodies (NGBs) regulate the outdoor instructional awards that have been adopted by the sector. There are a number of other agencies with a justifiable interest, such as NGOs (e.g. Field Studies Council, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, John Muir Trust), and government agencies (SNH, Forestry Commission); 'Real World Learning' includes membership of some of the above organisations and others. There is no specific organisation for teachers who teach outdoors. This breadth of the 'sector' is indicative of the difficulty in gaining an overview of provision, training needs or effectiveness of delivery (see below).

4. How any barriers to increasing and improving the provision of outdoor learning are being addressed

Barriers

- Dealing with issues of **cost, time and safety** remains problematic for both primary and secondary schools.
- Anxieties over **health and safety** seem to have been allayed by the legitimisation of curricular of outdoor learning and the merits of using local areas, and government policy support (such as 'Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning'¹³).
- The recent decision by the Scottish Government to retain current **Licensing and regulation** provision has been widely welcomed.
- Most outdoor centre staff have no **teaching qualification** and few of those who do in centres or schools have a specialist qualification or even formal training in outdoor education. There is no requirement for Teacher Education Institutes to deliver any teacher training outdoors. This situation is now untenable as the GTCS¹⁴ has embedded outdoor learning as core to learning for sustainability in the revised Professional Standards and it an *entitlement of all pupils* in the Scottish Government's commitment to learning for sustainability¹⁵.
- Opportunities for **Continuing Professional Development** are scarce and are not quality assured. Provision that helps practising teachers to be confident in local outdoor learning is essential to meet the needs of the GTCS and Scottish Government initiatives.

Quality Assurance

- Despite political support there remains no national policy, statutory requirements, regulatory mechanisms, formal teaching qualifications, nor quality assurance to encourage, establish and maintain standards of outdoor learning experiences.
- The inclusion of outdoor learning and learning for sustainability in HMIE school inspection schedules throughout the period of formal schooling (3-18) is essential as a means of both stimulating and assuring quality of learning. Currently inspections in schools and of outdoor centres and other providers are very rare.

Cost, time and safety

Our 2006 study indicates that teachers in Scottish primary, secondary, specialist and nursery schools perceive common and specific barriers to outdoor learning including financial costs to pupils and schools; time involved in organising events; adult/pupil ratios required; and issues to do with safety, risk and liability¹⁶. We have recently confirmed that these barriers persist to a similar extent at both primary and secondary level¹⁷.

This study raises two key issues in relation to safety: risk and liability. First, the study notes that health and safety appears to be a greater inhibiting factor for secondary teachers than for primary teachers. Perhaps, this difference reflects the customary use of school grounds in primary schools, coupled with the impact of recent investment in professional development and teacher support bolstering confidence at the primary school level. Whilst a correlation is difficult to establish, recent professional development provision has grown extensively (this is discussed in more detail below).

Second, current health and safety concerns are not as prominent as found in our 2007 study¹⁸. Despite perceptions amongst some parents, teachers and policy makers, accidents are rare, especially in the wide range of outdoor educational activities taking place from schools¹⁹. In the past this perception has generated anxiety over litigation, but this now appears less of a concern, perhaps reflecting an increasing recognition among teachers and school administrators of outdoor learning as a legitimate approach to delivering the formal curriculum. This is in turn reflected in increased government policy documents such as 'Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning'²⁰.

The potential for increased provision lies primarily in more teachers crossing the classroom threshold to take their classes outdoors, and local journeys do not incur high costs (and sometimes none). (Such opportunities would be stimulated and facilitated by for example, a government-supported scheme to provide free service bus transport in towns during school hours).

Outdoor learning should not be seen as a demand on curricular time but more an issue of the teacher choosing the most appropriate location. Some things are better taught indoors and some outdoors, and it is for the teacher to choose locations based on what they are trying to achieve²¹. Safety will quite rightly remain a significant issue, but if the curricular

potential of CfE is to be realised then local authorities will need to adopt a more enabling approach to support teachers in overcoming perceived barriers.

This cost/time issue may be a contributing factor to the growth of local school-based outdoor learning, and this may hold the greatest potential for development because of the new curricular importance attached to outdoor learning. A new multi-dimensional vision for outdoor learning has begun to emerge as more teachers recognise the potential for teaching subjects in the school grounds or local neighbourhoods, and realise that it is not just about taking pupils to residential centres for specialist activities, but seeing the potential for teaching subjects in the school grounds or local neighbourhoods. The high potential for meaningful learning in authentic contexts is well-documented in broader educational literature.

Licensing and regulation

There is specific Health and Safety legislation pertaining to outdoor education: the Activities Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act (1995) and a dedicated inspection and licensing agency - the Adventure Activities Licensing Service²². The current UK government recently precipitated a review of the service and the Scottish Government decided that a statutory licensing scheme should be retained²³. This was the widely held preference of local authorities and education professionals. The government will work closely with stakeholders in maintaining an independent Scottish licensing scheme, and to ensure that 'cross-border' activities are not compromised.

Teaching qualifications

There is no requirement for Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) to deliver teacher training outdoors. Any such training is entirely at the discretion of individual TEIs (e.g. the BEd and PGDE courses in Outdoor Learning at the University of Edinburgh are elective rather than required). Despite the absence of formal teaching qualifications in outdoor education in Scotland, the GTCS has included outdoor education as a recognised teaching subject (although registration is dependent on individual portfolios of experience) and also as a category in its professional recognition scheme.

The GTCS revision of the 'Professional Standards' in 2012²⁴ has led to a national framework for teachers' professional learning and development. Outdoor learning is seen as an important facet of learning for sustainability and education professionals are now required to address this in their practice. This also reflects the Scottish Government's interest in 'Scottish Studies' and 'One Planet Schools' noted above, both of which require teachers to understand the role of the outdoors in pupil development. Indeed, the report of the One Planet Schools Group²⁵ states that as part of learning for sustainability there is an entitlement that 'outdoor learning should be a regular, progressive curriculum-led experience for all learners'. This will need to be integrated into curriculum design in schools, with teachers supporting pupils from 3-18 by providing opportunities to experience the zones of learning in the concentric circles model above. This of course has implications for teacher education programmes.

It is also likely that the GTCS will encourage teachers committed to outdoor learning to apply for 'professional recognition' in the same way as for sustainable development education.

Continuing Professional Development

A lack of nationally coordinated in-service training for education outdoors leaves appropriate training/qualification open to interpretation. The widespread acceptance of outdoor activities qualifications seems inappropriate as these focus on safe and professional practice in skill development rather than 'education'. Similarly, qualifications such as 'forest school leader' are unnecessary for most teachers to take their classes out to a local wood or beach etc. Rather, what is needed is a means of helping teachers to be confident in local outdoor learning, and aware of when they need specialist input.

In 2010 Education Scotland instigated a national Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme for teachers (involving staff at the University of Edinburgh) which relates specifically to CfE, and was delivered in short (half-day or so) nationwide in-service programmes for teachers (~1000). However, recent research suggests that although this was welcome and well-targeted this is not sufficient and teachers report that they still require support at primary and secondary level²⁶. The authors recommend that future training should build on the shift towards locally-based outdoor learning (as noted earlier) and take account of the implications of recent initiatives and reports such as Learning for Sustainability, which recommends that:

every learner should have the opportunity for contact with nature in their school grounds on a daily basis and throughout the seasons through the provision of thoughtfully developed green space for outdoor learning and play²⁷.

Scottish Government, Learning for Sustainability, 2012

Such commitment from national educational policy will further legitimise school grounds as a vital context for learning, and importantly, provide teachers with officially sanctioned support for developing this pedagogical approach. Also, secondary schools appear keen to develop outdoor learning provision and future training and guidance should be developed specifically for this sector; this would take account of the timetabling structure and subject delineation of secondary education.

Quality assurance

Despite political support, the absence of a coherent understanding of the nature of outdoor learning and its benefits by education authorities and teachers continues to limit quality and quantity of young-people's outdoor learning experiences²⁸. There remains no national policy, statutory requirements, regulatory mechanisms, formal teaching qualifications, nor quality assurance to encourage, establish and maintain standards of outdoor learning experiences. Whilst HMIE has reported on outdoor education where they have encountered it there is no expectation that they will do so and inspections of outdoor centres and other providers are very rare.

With outdoor learning receiving much greater curricular attention teachers in schools,

outdoor providers, Education Scotland and HMIE are reported to be working with other partners to provide a national framework for outdoor learning, though recent progress on this is not clear.

5. How Curriculum for Excellence will affect the provision of outdoor learning

- The principles of Curriculum for Excellence have been central to outdoor education philosophy and practise for some time, and legitimised by recent Scottish Government policy documents.
- Curriculum for Excellence provides considerable opportunities for outdoor learning, but these will not be capitalised upon unless the issues outlined elsewhere in this paper are addressed.
- As learning for sustainability (and outdoor learning as a facet of this) is a requirement of the GTCS professional standards and a Government priority it is logical to locate it as a 'literacy', hence a 'Responsibility of All' in CfE, alongside 'Literacy, Numeracy and Health & Wellbeing'.

As interest in 'outdoor education' has grown it has become an increasingly nuanced concept which, within Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), is considered to be part of normal learning and teaching. Indeed as we have pointed out, as CfE 'aims to place the nature of the educated person at the centre of curricular purpose, to reduce the amount of de-contextualised subject content, and to promote real world experience ... situated learning in the world outdoors looks exceptionally legitimised by CfE and exceptionally able to deliver CfE's purposes'²⁹. Further, consideration needs to be given to the location of learning for sustainability and outdoor learning as a core priority in CfE – ideally as a 'responsibility of all'.

The principles of CfE have been central to outdoor education philosophy and practise for some time, as has been emphasised by the Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) policy document 'Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning':

The core values of Curriculum for Excellence resonate with long-standing key concepts of outdoor learning. Challenge, enjoyment, relevance, depth, development of the whole person and an adventurous approach to learning are at the core of outdoor pedagogy. The outdoor environment encourages staff and students to see each other in a different light, building positive relationships and improving self-awareness and understanding of others.

Learning and Teaching Scotland (2010, p. 7)

The 2005 Scottish Government's 'Outdoor Connections' programme³⁰ made 'connections across emerging outdoor education priorities and policies, programmes and people'; and has developed 'resources which will continue to improve the quality of outdoor learning'³¹.

Building on this and other developments, government funding has been provided to employ specialist fixed-term contract Development Officers at LTS (now Education Scotland). Their work has been supported internally and by advisory groups, notably the Outdoor Learning Strategic Advisory Group which operated between 2008 and 2010. Through this period considerable progress was made, culminating in 'Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning'. This was the first government document specifically to link a national curriculum with outdoor learning, and is a significant milestone.

Education Scotland, has continued to build its documentary and web-based support for outdoor learning³² with this primarily to support teachers to deliver formal and informal curricula outdoors, but also to understand and communicate the reasons for doing so. This progress has been achieved in collaboration with other government agencies (such as Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish National Parks), NGOs, universities and colleges, and the result is of considerable significance both nationally and internationally.

6. Whether current levels of resource for outdoor learning are adequate

- *Primary and pre-schools appear increasingly to be developing locally-based outdoor learning, using school grounds and areas within walking distance from school. This emphasises the crucial importance of protecting school grounds from development or sale.*
- *Some secondary schools appear keen to develop outdoor learning provision, though this is less wide-spread, suggesting timetable and curricular limitations.*
- *In all phases provision is neither extensive nor widespread and responses are indicative of the current emphasis on local outdoor learning **serious limitations of funding and in some cases the need for training/CPD.***
- *Almost all residential outdoor provision is now paid for by the families of the pupils, raising questions of curricular relevance, equity and entitlement.*
- *Many outdoor centres are hard-pressed financially and management decisions are as much about economics as education.*
- *The mixed economy provision of residential outdoor education available to schools is provided by a combination of the public, commercial and charitable sectors and further clarity is required to determine the nature of a suitable curricular professional body.*

A study of Scottish schools in 2007³³ showed that primary children's opportunities were limited but generally greater than secondary pupils, as many of the latter had no outdoor learning at all during the survey (summer term) and the average for those that did was 13 minutes/week. Following up on this and previous research in 2006³⁴ our recent study³⁵ provides a contemporary audit of the provision of, and support for, outdoor learning in a

sample of primary and secondary schools in Scotland. The study identified *several key findings*, which informed two principal recommendations for both pre-service and in-service professional development.

First, some *primary schools appear to be developing locally-based outdoor learning*, as there is a shift towards using school grounds and areas within walking distance from school. This may reflect an increasing awareness of the value of community and place-based education and the low-cost, authentic and meaningful context for learning that local resources can provide³⁶. As such, future training should build on this and take account of the implications of recent initiatives such as Learning for Sustainability, which recommends that ‘every learner should have the opportunity for contact with nature in their school grounds on a daily basis and throughout the seasons through the provision of thoughtfully developed green space for outdoor learning and play’³⁷. Such commitment from national educational policy will further legitimise school grounds as a vital context for learning, and importantly, provide teachers with officially sanctioned support for developing this pedagogical approach.

Second, *secondary schools appear keen to develop outdoor learning provision*. Future training and guidance should be developed specifically for this sector; this would take account of the timetabling structure and subject delineation of secondary education. We are currently conducting research into the development of a secondary-specific outdoor learning programme that addresses the practicalities and issues inherent in delivering aspects of the secondary curriculum out-of-doors, while capitalising on the opportunities afforded by CfE’s Broad General Education within the S1-S3 stage.

As noted in Section 3, outdoor centres are a ‘mixed-economy’ with some supported by local authorities and others as charitable trusts or commercial ventures, and there are also freelance providers in the field. Almost all such provision is now paid for by the families of the pupils and this raises ethical issues associated with equity and opportunity in public education. In our view, if such experiences are curricular and in school time the argument that parents should pay is problematic.

Currently there is increasing interest, support and commitment to the development of outdoor learning from individual teachers, their schools and local authorities, and at national educational policy level. It is important that future developments, specifically professional development (both pre- and in-service) proceed in-line with teachers’ needs and in relation to curricular aims and objectives. While advocacy at all levels is important, it is equally important to ensure that policy developments, central support and inspection regimes (through Education Scotland) and training courses positively influence everyday teaching practice – whether indoors or out.

7. Progress being made by Education Scotland on the Learning for Sustainability recommendations

- The core recommendation of the Learning for Sustainability report is that ‘All learners should have an entitlement to learning for sustainability’, and that ‘As part of this entitlement, outdoor learning should be a regular, progressive curriculum-led experience for all learners’. This has been accepted by Scottish Ministers.
- LTS/Education Scotland Development Officers have been crucial to the process of developing a national vision and provision for outdoor learning. Whilst this is now a responsibility of a wider range of staff, experienced specialist staff input is necessary, particularly as any inspection processes are devised and implemented.
- Education Scotland has core responsibilities to deliver the recommendations of Learning for Sustainability, but as yet there have been no public statements on progress.

Recommendation 1: *All learners should have an entitlement to learning for sustainability*

1.1 *As part of this entitlement, outdoor learning should be a regular, progressive curriculum-led experience for all learners.*

Accept:

Outdoor learning is a key approach to learning within the curriculum and practitioners are encouraged to make outdoor learning a natural and normal part of practice. The frequency with which outdoor learning activities take place in schools should be determined by the needs of the curriculum and learners. The Learning for Sustainability (LFS) Implementation Group should consider an appropriate and proportionate means of capturing practice.

Scottish Government Response to Learning for Sustainability (March 2013)

The establishment of a ‘One Planet Schools’ Ministerial Advisory Group and its report entitled Learning for Sustainability³⁸ is one of the most important recent policy developments in the field, both nationally and internationally. Whilst the ‘One Planet’ initiative has an overt focus on ‘whole school approaches to sustainability in schools’ it has an emphasis on outdoor learning with the intention of ‘raising attainment, improving behaviour, inclusion and health and wellbeing’. This is significant as it recognises the interdisciplinary nature and broad relevance of outdoor learning. Another Ministerial Advisory Group on ‘Scottish Studies’ has prioritised culture, history and language, and here the role of the Scottish landscape will be central, with outdoor learning experiences providing a context for a deeper understanding of Scottish natural and cultural heritage³⁹.

In the past 10 years or so the role of the LTS/Education Scotland Development Officers has been crucial to the process of developing a national vision and provision for outdoor

learning. However, funding for such posts and their short-term nature has not assured continuity. Recent commitments to embedding outdoor learning and learning for sustainability in the work of Education Scotland staff may support development, but it is difficult to see how they will be supported without experienced specialist staff input – particularly as any inspection processes are devised and implemented.

The Learning for Sustainability Implementation Group will commence a two-year programme of work from January 2014, and Education Scotland will be a member of this group. However, as the key recommendations have been accepted by Scottish Ministers and several relate to the work of Education Scotland, work has started on delivering these, but no public statements on progress have been forthcoming.

8. Concluding comments

Scotland has a rich tradition of educating our young people outdoors. The well-structured approach to outdoor education in Lothian and Strathclyde Regions in the 1960s and '70s, attracted attention from educators around the world, until school-based and residential outdoor provision waned during the period of Local Government re-organisation in the 1980s. However, there has been growing post-devolution interest amongst Scottish policy makers matched by an evidence base that validates teachers taking their classes outdoors. Perhaps now we are on the verge of re-establishing Scotland's international reputation in this area in line with many highly successful education systems of the world such as those of the Nordic countries, and the growing commitment found in New Zealand and several Australian states.

The decisions taken by policy-makers to support outdoor education since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 have had both instrumental significance (through initiatives, resources, events and research) and presentational significance (it is clearly seen as important and mainstream).

In an uncertain financial climate it remains to be seen what priority will be given to supporting outdoor learning in the future, but clearly growing curricular relevance provides a strong justification. Further, the inclusion of outdoor learning in the recent commitment to learning for sustainability⁴⁰ and the revised GTCS Professional Standards⁴¹, and related policy developments will further influence teacher attitudes and provision. Such national level support offers teachers a stronger and clearer professional justification for developing their outdoor learning practice.

Nonetheless, it remains the case that one common implicit theme of most of Scottish 'education' is that it takes place 'indoors'. Outdoor educators have long considered this illogical as it ignores important learning opportunities to be found outside the classroom. Outdoor learning is not a panacea, but it does support classroom learning and importantly offers many learning experiences in the natural heritage that are simply not possible to provide indoors.

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Biography

Peter Higgins

Peter Higgins is Professor of Outdoor and Environmental Education in the University of Edinburgh, and teaches academic and practical elements of these fields. He is a member of a number of national and international panels and advisory groups on outdoor and sustainability education and holds a wide range of high-level teaching qualifications in outdoor activities.

He has acted in advisory capacity to Ministers and Members of Parliament (Scotland, UK and European Union), the Department for Education and Skills (UK Government) and the Scottish Government on outdoor education, environmental education, sustainable development education, access to the countryside and related environmental issues, and has given evidence to several Parliamentary Committees; including the 2004/5 House of Commons, Education and Skills Committee enquiry into 'Education Outside the Classroom'. In 2008 he was appointed by the Minister of the Environment as the external member of the 2008 Review of the Scottish National Parks Act. Throughout the period since the opening of the Scottish Parliament he has advised ministers, Education Scotland and other agencies on outdoor education, and was a lead author of the current policy guidance from Education Scotland – 'Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning'.

In 2011 he was appointed to Chair a Scottish Government Ministerial Advisory Committee on 'One Planet Schools', and its report (Learning for Sustainability) was accepted in by Scottish Ministers in March 2013 and from late-2013 Peter will co-Chair the Implementation Group. He is the Scottish representative on the UNESCO programme 'Reorienting Teacher Education to Address Sustainable Development', and is Director of the United Nations recognised 'Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development' for Scotland which he jointly established in 2012. He is author of several books and has published over 100 articles on the theory, philosophy and practice of outdoor education, particularly in relation to environmental and sustainability education. Most recently, he has jointly written the chapters on 'Outdoor Education' and 'Sustainable Development Education' in the definitive text on education in Scotland ('Scottish Education' – edited by Bryce et al., 2013) and 'Learning Outside the Classroom' (Routledge).

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- ¹ Peter Higgins and colleagues work in outdoor, environmental and sustainability education at the University of Edinburgh. They teach primary & secondary school teacher trainees, MSc and PhD outdoor and environmental education students, carry out their own research and provide CPD in the field.
- ² When documents are referred to in this chapter the original term (usually 'outdoor education' or 'outdoor learning') is used as there is no definitive distinction between these terms.
- ³ Higgins & Nicol (2002); Beames, Higgins and Nicol (2011, p. 5-6)
- ⁴ Gill, 2010
- ⁵ Subsequently merged with HMIE to form Education Scotland
- ⁶ Geyer, 2013; Sustainable Development Commission, 2008; Burns, 2011.
- ⁷ Christie & Higgins, 2012a
- ⁸ Christie & Higgins, 2012b
- ⁹ See Higgins and Lavery, 2013.
- ¹⁰ Higgins, 2002,
- ¹¹ Nicol et al., 2007.
- ¹² Nicol et al., 2007.
- ¹³ Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2007, 2010
- ¹⁴ General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2013
- ¹⁵ Learning for Sustainability One Planet Schools' Ministerial Advisory Group, 2012, p.14.
- ¹⁶ See Nicol et al., 2007
- ¹⁷ See Christie et al, in press
- ¹⁸ Ross et al., 2007
- ¹⁹ Gill, 2010
- ²⁰ Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2007, 2010
- ²¹ Beames et al., 2011
- ²² <http://www.aals.org>
- ²³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/06/6153/0>
- ²⁴ General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2013
- ²⁵ One Planet Schools' Ministerial Advisory Group, 2012, p. 14
- ²⁶ Christie et al., 2013
- ²⁷ Scottish Government, 2012a: 30
- ²⁸ Nicol et al., 2007
- ²⁹ Beames, Atencio and Ross, 2009, p. 42
- ³⁰ <http://www.educationscotland.org.uk/takinglearningoutdoors/index.asp>
- ³¹ Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2007
- ³² <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/approaches/outdoorlearning/index.asp>
- ³³ Mannion et al, 2007.
- ³⁴ Higgins et al, 2006.
- ³⁵ Christie et al., in press
- ³⁶ Beames et al., 2011; Wattchow and Brown, 2011
- ³⁷ Scottish Government, 2012a: 30
- ³⁸ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/ACE/OnePlanetSchools>
- ³⁹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/ACE/ScottishStudies>
- ⁴⁰ Scottish Government, 2012a
- ⁴¹ General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2013