Outdoor Learning in Higher Education in Scotland

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Three topics...

1. The Scottish context
   - Curriculum, policy guidance

2. Framing outdoor learning
   - Approaches to teaching

3. Programmes and courses
   - Supporting outdoor learning
1. The Scottish context...
PhD research began

Research project 2011-13

1998 2004 2015

5-14 Curriculum

Curriculum for Excellence
Three big changes

• Curriculum support
• Requirement within professional teaching standards
• Policy support - key documents
Curriculum for Excellence

• Offers a student centred, holistic approach

• Reduces curricular boundaries = more interdisciplinary working

• Greater justification and curricular legitimacy for outdoor learning

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/
Guidance documents...

• Launched in April 2010

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

(LTS, 2010, p. 5)
• Building your curriculum: Outside and in (2011)
• Outdoor learning: Practical guidance, ideas and support for teachers and practitioners in Scotland (2011)

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningteachingandassessment/approaches/outdoorlearning/
Professional standards

‘…actively seek outdoor learning opportunities’ (3.1.3)

Includes the expectation that all teachers commit to including “Learning for Sustainability” in their practice
Learning for Sustainability

- Sustainable development education
- Outdoor learning
- Learning for Sustainability
- Health/Wellbeing citizenship
- Global citizenship
“a whole school commitment that helps the school and wider community develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and practices needed to take decisions that are compatible with a sustainable future in a just and equitable world“
2. Framing outdoor learning...
Three frames...

1. Interdisciplinary learning
2. Authentic learning contexts
3. Pupil agency
Interdisciplinary learning

The real world is not compartmentalised so it makes little sense to organise children’s learning in this way.

“the learner becomes better able to look at a topic from a number of different angles” (Gardner, 2011. xxii)

Interdisciplinarity is a form of ‘resistance’ against the bureaucratisation of education - counter-measure to subject divisions (Giroux, 2001)
“education is not preparation for life, it is life itself”  
(Dewey, 1897)

This is the ’productive interface’ between the individual, local and the educational habitus (ie. norms and taken for granted practices)  
Bordieu (1977)

• non-linear  
• requires experimentation  
• confidence  
• different pupils  
• different places
Learner agency

“education is not preparation for life, it is life itself”
(Dewey, 1897)

This is the ’productive interface’ between the individual, local and the educational habitus (ie. norms and taken for granted practices) Bordieu (1977)

• managing agency
• allowing curiosity
• encourage autonomy
• embrace inquiry
3. Programmes and courses...
• Undergraduate & Postgraduate & Online - MOOCs

• BEd Primary Education
• PGDE Secondary Education
• MSc Outdoor Education
• MSc Outdoor Environmental and Sustainability Education
• MSc Learning for Sustainability
MOOCs

MOOC - Massive Open Online Course

Environmental Education: A transdisciplinary approach to addressing wicked problems
Teacher education...

• Response to increase in support = Increase in **pre and in-service** provision across Scotland

• Primary & Secondary teachers
• All subjects
• Practical and theoretical
Focus on three areas...

1. Community-based
2. Place-based
3. Sustainability-focused

Curriculum is not mentioned formally... we start from the experience and the place...
Community – based

- Learn about local issues, other people and places in their community
- Develop skills by working alongside others
- Make links between school & community

HWB/ Social Studies/ Business / Art & Design…Life skills!
Key points...

• “...students develop the knowledge, skills........ to act on issues and concerns that affect their own community” (Melaville, Berg, & Blank, 2006, p. 24)

• “Agencies and workplaces become potential sites for student learning...” (Smith & Sobel, 2010, p. 23)

• “...involves the role played by community members in the delivery of education to the young” (Smith & Sobel, 2010, p. 23)
Place – based

Archeological survey of the site
Measuring, estimating, sketching, observing, discussing
Maths/ HWB / Social Studies/Geography/History/ Art and Design
Our local classroom...
Arthur’s Seat, Edinburgh
BEd Primary Teaching
*Undergraduate course*
St Anthony’s Chapel, Edinburgh, BEd Primary Teaching
Undergraduate course
St Anthony’s Chapel, Edinburgh, BEd Primary Teaching
*Undergraduate course*
Key points...

• “Place-based education is learning that is rooted in what is local - the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place.”
  (Rural School and Community Trust, 2005)

• “Place can be drawn upon to teach any subject area.” (Smith & Sobel, 2010, p. 23)
Sustainability - focused

Practically estimate the distribution of the world’s water
Learn about the way we use water
Discuss the environmental impacts

Maths/ HWB / Social Studies
“...all education is environmental education. By what is included or excluded we teach students that they are part of or apart from the natural world.”

(David Orr)
Urban sites

- Comparing architecture and design between Holyrood Palace and the Scottish Parliament
- Building materials, sustainable design, urban planning….

Art and Design/ Technology/ History
MSc Learning for Sustainability

MSc OESE

MSc OE
MSc OE/OESE

- 15mth programme
- Start of Sept. until end of November
- Week long blocks - (Mon - Fri, 9-5 or residential)
- PDP element

MSc LfS

- 12mth programme
- Sept. until August
- Evenings, online, weekends
- No PDP element
Arthur’s Seat - Environmental philosophy
MSc Learning for Sustainability
Postgraduate course
Skye - student-led expedition
MSc Outdoor Education
Postgraduate course
Rum - Ecology & field studies
MSc Outdoor Environmental and Sustainability Education
Postgraduate course
A sense of place ... 

Socio-economics – distilleries, agriculture etc.
Geology
History – Cultural heritage
Folk lore
The law, access etc.
National parks

Recreation – fishing, canoeing, walking
Estates / land ownership

Literature – prose, poetry, art
Physical activity - skills

Forests – history/management
Hydrology / meteorology

Ecology/natural heritage
Research informed...

- Explore some of the taken for granted terms that we use within broader field of educational research - *critical thinking, authenticity, risk etc.*

- Consider the how policy development leads (if it it does lead) to policy enactment - *who does it involve? how can encourage this to happen?*

- Examine the potential of online learning (MOOCs) within outdoor/environmental learning as a form of social learning with the potential to lead to action.
Thank you

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References

I Międzynarodowa Konferencja

EDUKACJA - INNOWACJA

www.outdoorpoland.com