An exploration of relationship development through Outdoor Education

By

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DECLARATION

"I, Paul Derek Barber, declare that the Doctor of Education thesis entitled An exploration of relationship development through Outdoor Education is no more than 60,000 words including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work". "I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures".

Signature:  Date: 08/03/2021

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Abstract

As a field of study and practice, Outdoor Education has a tradition of being ill-defined with a diverse range of understandings regarding its form, function and place in secondary school curriculum. This has resulted in Outdoor Education being neglected as a mandated component of formal curriculum for middle school learning in secondary schools.

Outdoor Education provides many learning outcomes beyond the scope of specified curriculums. One of the purposes of this research is to support the acknowledgement of theseoutcomes in the context of formal curriculums; to document and record them; and to provideан analysis of their benefit for students undertaking holistic Outdoor Education programs.

The framework for this thesis consists of a review of relevant literature, a domain evaluation and a case study. The totality of these findings support the general discussion for this research project which is followed by a summary, conclusions and recommendations for further research and improved practice. Through the exploration of Definitions, Curriculum and Outcomes for middle school Outdoor Education, this research aims to address ongoing debates regarding the nature of Outdoor Education in secondary schooling.

To provide both an overview of the field in general and a specific contextual analysis, the research has been conducted as two separate studies. Study 1 is a domain evaluation consisting of two phases, a curriculum content analysis and interviews with recognised and respected experts in the field of Outdoor Education. Study 2 is a contextual case study based on data drawn from interviews with specific teachers and a targeted focus group. Data generated throughout all phases of this research was coded and analysed thematically using NVivo data management software.

This research revealed that defining Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice is complex and that there is an array of differing perspectives for Outdoor Education.

The current research identified Outdoor Education as an experiential, holistic pedagogy which immerses students in outdoor environments to build relationships with the self, others and environment.

This study found that due to the rich diversity of experiences it offers, Outdoor Education can be used to inform educational outcomes in any subject area. Regardless, it was highlighted that because these experiences are unique, it should stand alone as an alternative to regular classroom learning and not be subordinate to any other discipline area. It is evident in the data generated from the curriculum analysis that Outdoor Education is under-represented in curriculums compared to other, more traditional learning areas. This was also reflected in the interviews with participants asserting that Outdoor Education is undervalued in some areas and should be acknowledged for its contribution to holistic development. All participants asserted that it has a place in the formal curriculum of secondary schools, advocating that it be embedded within the curriculum at all year levels.

The data also revealed that Outdoor Education has many outcomes beyond the realm of formal mandated curriculum requirements and that these outcomes are important whether they are included in official curriculum or not. Data generated from this study revealed that Outdoor Education provides social and emotional learning (SEL) outcomes which contribute to both wellbeing and academic progress in other areas.

Although Outdoor Education is interdisciplinary in nature it was found to be a holistic learning area which provides authentic experiential learning opportunities and distinct outcomes which are not found in any other discipline areas. The findings of this study affirmed that Outdoor Education contributes to the development of a positive relationship with the self by providing opportunities for learning outcomes through the explicit development of independence, self-direction and resilience. It also contributes to the

development of positive relationships with others and the environment simultaneously through direct practical experience with a variety of social situations and environments. Participants in this research advocated that the provision of such opportunities should be recognised as legitimate outcomes of Outdoor Education with the proposition that school is the only place where students in this context can access these types of experiences.

As an outcome of the findings from this research, it is recommended that due to the unique personal and social development opportunities that Outdoor Education provides, it be included as compulsory curriculum within all school year levels in Australia. This research advocates that the unrecognised outcomes of Outdoor Education programs be regarded as legitimate irrespective of their inclusion or exclusion as formal curriculum. In relation to Outdoor Education theory and future research, further development and explication of the philosophical foundations for Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice is recommended. In addition, it is proposed that the Outdoor Education community of practice develop a concise and unified basis for service provision (Wenger, 1998). Building on the current study, additional research exploring the relationship between Outdoor Education, student wellbeing and academic achievement is recommended.

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Glossary

ACARA: Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority. An independent statutory authority providing advice on, and delivery of, national curriculum, assessment and reporting for all Australian education ministers. ACARA is responsible for the development and ongoing refinement of the Australian Curriculum, national assessment, and reporting on schooling in Australia.

ACHPER: The Australian Council for Health Physical Education and Recreation is recognised as the leading professional association representing teachers and other professionals working in the fields of health and physical education. The purpose of ACHPER is to promote active and healthy living for all Australians through education and professional practice. ACHPER also provides programs and services that support continuing development of knowledge, skills and professional practice, focussing primarily on health education, physical education and recreation.

Australian Curriculum F-10: The Australian Curriculum F-10 is a national curriculum for all primary and secondary schools in Australia under progressive development, review, and implementation. The curriculum is developed and reviewed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, an independent statutory body. The Australian Curriculum F-10 sets the expectations for what all young Australians should be taught, regardless of where they live in Australia or their background (https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au).

Blank spot: Questions in emergent theories and conceptions of knowledge which are already familiar to researchers and their colleagues. Blank spots are areas waiting to be filled in with empirical description and detail though research "These are matters that scholars know they don't understand" (Wagner, 2010 p. 33).

Blind spot: Blind spots are created through looking at one thing but missing another and thus obscuring the truth we are trying to produce through our research. “These extend outwards from patterned phenomena that existing theories, methods, and perspectives actually keep scholars from seeing, patterns they have not yet noticed” (Wagner, 2010 p. 33)

HPE: The secondary school discipline area of Health and Physical Education in Victorian Curriculum F-10. This discipline area aims to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to enable students to: access, evaluate and synthesise information to take positive action to protect, enhance and advocate for their own and others' health, wellbeing, safety and physical activity participation across their lifespan. Beyond the Victorian State context, this discipline area may be known as PE or Physical Education.

Interdisciplinary: A planned approach to learning which uses links across different subjects or disciplines to enhance learning.

Middle school: In the context of this research, middle school refers to the junior and intermediate years of secondary schooling incorporating years seven to ten.

OEA: Outdoor Education Australia facilitates communication between State and territory outdoor education associations about the practice and delivery of outdoor education; advocates for outdoor education across primary, secondary and tertiary education; and provides policy advice.

Outdoor Education: Beginning with upper case letters – Outdoor Education as a subject or learning area within secondary schools.

outdoor education: Beginning with lower case letters – outdoor education as the broader field of theory and practice.

SEL: Social and Emotional Learning - The process of developing the self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, and life success.

VCAA: The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. The VCAA is responsible for the Victorian Early Learning and Development Framework (VELDF) and the Victorian Curriculum.

VCE: The Victorian Certificate of Education is one credential available to secondary school students who successfully complete year 11 and 12 in the Australian state of Victoria. The VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education) is the senior secondary school qualification which is used for the calculation of a student's Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

VET: Vocational Education and Training is a tertiary education pathway that enables individuals to gain qualifications for employment. It is designed to deliver workplace-specific skills and knowledge-based competencies in a wide range of occupations.

Victorian Curriculum F-10: The Victorian Curriculum F–10 is the common set of knowledge and skills required by students for life-long learning, social development and active and informed citizenship. The Victorian Curriculum F–10 incorporates the Australian Curriculum F-10 and reflects Victorian priorities and standards. A key distinction between the Australian Curriculum F–10 and the Victorian Curriculum F–10 is the provision of content descriptions and achievement standards in the four capabilities. The four capabilities in the Victorian Curriculum F–10 are: Critical and Creative Thinking, Ethical, Intercultural and Personal and Social. The Australian Curriculum F–10 includes three additional general capabilities: Literacy, Numeracy, and, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The Victorian Curriculum F–10 design does not include these three general capabilities as separate learning areas or capabilities with discrete knowledge and skills (victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au).

Introduction

Outdoor Education is recognised as being a complex field of study and practice (Quay, 2016), lacking a commonality of understandings and perspectives throughout the field (Martin, 2014). Traditionally Outdoor Education in Australia has been regarded as a branch of the Physical Education learning area. Outdoor Education as either a subject or learning process was not included in any documents or policy that provided the groundwork for a National Curriculum in Australia (Gray & Martin, 2012). In the National Statement on the curriculum future of Health and Physical Education in Australia produced by the Australian Council for Health Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) in May 2009, the organisation considered Outdoor Education to be a small sub-division of Physical Education (Hewison & Martin, 2009). Recent research has shown Outdoor Education to be much more, specifically it is an interdisciplinary holistic learning area with a range of student skill, knowledge, social and well-being outcomes (Davidson, 2001; James & Williams, 2017; Mitten, 2009). One of the purposes of this research is to provide acknowledgement of these outcomes; to document and record them; and to provide an analysis of their benefit for students undertaking holistic Outdoor Education programs.

Supporting the views of Dyment and Potter (2015) who suggest that Outdoor Education is often undervalued, James and Williams (2017) have observed that untested curriculum and time-intensive, student-centred, experiential learning that integrates subject matter in meaningful ways have been de-emphasised or eliminated. The findings of their research which involved data derived from middle school students, preservice teachers, and practicing middle school teachers regarding the value of Outdoor Education, indicated that one type of education that is currently receiving less emphasis in schools is experiential Outdoor Education.

As a distinct discipline area, Outdoor Education provides many learning outcomes beyond the scope of specified curriculums. These are under-acknowledged, under-documentedor under-recorded and under-analysed (Hewison & Martin, 2009). Why are these important outcomes under-represented and undervalued in prescribed curriculum documents for this learning area? This appears to be what Wagner (2010) refers to as a blind spot for the field ofOutdoor Education with a general lack of awareness amongst practitioners and curriculum developers of many unidentified outcomes specific to Outdoor Education as a learning area.

Building on existing literature and current research there is merit in critiquing the field of Outdoor Education and focusing more attention on its value and importance (Dyment & Potter, 2015). “Theorizing about Outdoor Education and relationships with nature is evident in the literature, but a research base is scarce” (Martin, 2014, p. 1). Compared to other learning areas Outdoor Education theory has a lean knowledge base and historically there appears to be a general lack of research in this field. (Dyment & Potter, 2015). This research contributes to what has historically been regarded as a field which is perceived to havea scant theoretical and research base (Nicol, 2002) and provides further data to support robust philosophical foundations for Outdoor Education as a field. The need for further research relating to the critical rationale for, value and importance of and consolidated understandings of Outdoor Education has been identified by Brookes (2002), Lugg (1999), Martin (2014) and Dyment and Potter (2015). For example, Quay (2016) suggests that “The lack of clarity about the purpose and content of school outdoor education, even amongst outdoor educators, serves to inhibit its development both within the education system and in the industrial sector” (p. 42). Thomas (2005) and Neill (2002) highlight the need for further research in the areas of Outdoor Education theory and practice including outcomes.

This research is important to consolidate definitions and understandings of Outdoor Education and to identify it as a distinct learning area which is valuable for holistic outcomes

particularly related to student wellbeing and interdisciplinary curriculum. It contributes to the general field of education and the specific field of Outdoor Education, identifying it as a holistic, interdisciplinary learning process and explicating its hidden outcomes. It provides evidence to support this with the aim of consolidating understandings of middle school Outdoor Education as an interdisciplinary process rather than a sub-branch of Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum. Humberstone et al. (2015) suggest a shifting landscape in the understanding and extent of outdoor studies is mirrored by shifting perspectives on research in the outdoors. As an example of this shift, this research addresses identified gaps in knowledge and research in the field of Outdoor Education relating to curriculum, definitions and outcomes.

This study builds on previous research conducted for a Masters level minor thesis titled *Outdoor Education in secondary school -An Analysis of the Outdoor Education Curriculum in Years 7-10 in Secondary School* (Barber, 2015). The previous thesis is based on a case-study outlining Outdoor Education curriculum in a particular context exploring interdisciplinary and holistic learning opportunities. One of the key findings of the previous research is that Outdoor Education relates to holistic development which transcends curriculum-based outcomes. As a larger and more comprehensive extension of the previous study, this current research investigates the relationships between curriculum, outcomes and student wellbeing carried out in order to understand, to evaluate, and then to change, in order to improve educational practice (Thomas, 2005). Aligning with the purposes of James and Williams's (2017) research efforts, the intent is that other teachers and schools will use the results of thisstudy to integrate experiential Outdoor Education experiences into their curriculums.

This research is a form of existential reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2004) as a practice of self-formation (Forbes, 2008). It may be regarded as reflexivity as introspection (Finlay & Gough, 2008) where the researcher has used personal revelation derived from research not as an end

in itself but as a springboard for interpretations and more general insight into not only their own practice but the greater field of Outdoor Education as a learning area. As reflexivity leads individuals to undertake ethical work on themselves (Fox & Allan, 2014), reflexivity in this context is a form self-criticism in the sense that it will be a critical analysis of the widely shared values and interests that constitute the researchers own institutionally shaped research and practice assumptions (Harding, 1992).

A specific purpose of this research is to describe Outdoor Education as a distinct, holistic and interdisciplinary learning area. This research also aims to demonstrate that pre-Victoria Certificate of Education (VCE) Outdoor Education incorporates learning beyond the scope of the HPE learning area where it is currently situated. This has been done by explicating hidden outcomes of Outdoor Education in this context and demonstrating the contribution of Outdoor Education to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and the environment.

The overall intent of this research is to increase understandings of middle school Outdoor Education in secondary schooling. This necessitated the appropriate positioning of Outdoor Education as a pedagogy within curriculum and explicating its outcomes. Four over-arching questions were investigated as follows:

1. *What is the nature of Outdoor Education in contemporary secondary schooling*?
2. *Where should middle school Outdoor Education be positioned in secondary school curriculum*?
3. *Are there further outcomes of middle school Outdoor Education which are not included in formal curriculum*?
4. *In what ways does Outdoor Education contribute to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and environment*?

Through the exploration of Definitions, Curriculum and Outcomes in middle school Outdoor Education, this research aims to address ongoing debates regarding the nature of Outdoor Education in secondary schooling and contribute to the consolidation of understandings throughout Outdoor Education as a field. This research is intended to contribute to the philosophical foundations of Outdoor Education by providing a contemporary overview of the field and explicating hidden outcomes of middle school secondary school Outdoor Education in this specific context.

Because it is contextual and focused on a specific situation, this research does not fit within the positivist research paradigm, rather lending itself to a qualitative inquiry (Hinchey, 2008). It has been undertaken from within an interpretivist paradigm where qualitative data was collected which is directly relevant to a specific context (Cohen et al., 2007). The overall research incorporates two separate studies, a domain evaluation and a case study. Consisting of a curriculum analysis and expert interviews, the domain evaluation aimed to provide an overview of contemporary Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice.

The case study is composed of data derived from interviews with teachers and a focus group. The aim of this study was to capture the participants and researchers own lived experiences of the Outdoor Education program at the study school as well as their impressions and perceptions of the outcomes of the program.

This research revealed that defining Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice is complex. Analysis of the data highlighted that there are differing perceptions of Outdoor Education throughout the broader field of education. The study identified that there are differing definitions of Outdoor Education between local, State, National and international contexts although there are core values which are shared. It was acknowledged that Outdoor Education exists in a number of different forms, where ‘it can be seen as a subject’, as an ‘approach more so than a curriculum area’, that it may be ‘interdisciplinary’ and ‘integrated

with other subjects' or 'stand-alone'. In the context of the study school, Outdoor Education is recognised as a distinct learning area with specialised outcomes and unique learning opportunities.

Although Outdoor Education is interdisciplinary in nature it was found to be a holistic learning area which provides authentic experiential learning opportunities and distinct outcomes which are not found in any other discipline area. The most distinctive feature of Outdoor Education in secondary school was identified as *immersion of participants in different natural environments which are removed from their regular classroom context*. This study established that in secondary school curriculum, Outdoor Education is regarded as a branch of the Physical Education domain and is not recognised as a distinct learning area or a separate subject within the Australian Curriculum F-10 or Victorian Curriculum F-10. It also revealed that there is no mandated curriculum for middle school Outdoor Education in either the National curriculum for Australia or Victorian curriculum, therefore the nature of, and value placed on Outdoor Education in curriculum is at the discretion of the individual school.

Participants in this research advocated that Outdoor Education should be given credibility to have a defined place within curriculum and should not be subordinate to any other discipline area. They proposed that it should have a place as part of the core curriculum of secondary schools and that it should be compulsory at all year levels.

This research found that Outdoor Education provides important unique and specialised learning outcomes beyond specified curriculum requirements some of which are not visible or measurable. Regardless of their absence from curriculum, it is proposed that these outcomes are important for the development of social and emotional intelligence. It was determined that Outdoor Education provides holistic learning outcomes through immersion, experience and challenge in the natural environment and unique opportunities for undirected

and incidental learning in the areas of personal and social development. In addition, it was acknowledged that any personal, social or environmental learning or development must first begin by the provision and acceptance of learning opportunities in these areas.

The study describes Outdoor Education as providing social and emotional learning (SEL) outcomes which contribute to resilience and wellbeing as well as academic progress in other discipline areas. It was proposed that these outcomes are generally achieved through the development of positive relationships with the self, others and environment. This study indicated that Outdoor Education contributes to the development of a positive relationship with the self by providing opportunities for learning outcomes through the explicit development of independence, self-direction and resilience. It also found that Outdoor Education contributes to the development of positive relationships with others and the environment simultaneously through direct practical experience with a variety of social situations and environments.

The findings of this research are significant in relation to curriculum development and improved teaching practice in secondary school Outdoor Education. It will benefit curriculum developers and practitioners by providing them with explicit wellbeing outcomes related to relationship development to be drawn on when developing and facilitating Outdoor Education curriculum. As an interdisciplinary learning area, the outcomes of Outdoor Education may be disseminated across many other areas of school curriculum, providing a range of benefits for students across the school. With the goal of increased student wellbeing through positive relationship development in Outdoor Education, it is ultimately the students who will benefit from this research as well as other stakeholders such as parents, learning coordinators and other teachers of the students.

There is a vast body of literature to demonstrate connection of Outdoor Education with wellbeing and the development of interpersonal relationships although this is not

reflected in middle school curriculum. With the aim of building on this knowledge, the findings of this research will contribute to the development of a consolidated, shared vision for Outdoor Education in this context as well as a deeper understanding of Outdoor Education theory and philosophy (Yin, 2009). The findings from this study will contribute to the development of more formalised and explicit curriculum for Outdoor Education for the study school. This will provide an example which may be disseminated across the field of Outdoor Education and secondary school education in general.

Following this introduction, the framework for this thesis consists of a review of relevant literature, a domain evaluation incorporating a content analysis of current Outdoor Education curriculum and findings from interviews with recognised experts in the field of outdoor education. This is followed by a context specific case study which is based on findings from interviews with teachers and a focus group. The totality of these findings support the general discussion for this research project which is followed by a summary, conclusions and recommendations for further research and improved practice. Following is a preliminary review of literature relating to definitions of Outdoor Education, Outdoor Education as a holistic and interdisciplinary learning area, wellbeing in Outdoor Education and building relationships in Outdoor Education.

Literature review

Literature relating to six factors which impact on Outdoor Education in middle school schooling has been reviewed. These six theory, research, and policy factors which have been identified as relevant to this research include: Curriculum theory; Defining Outdoor Education in curriculum; Policy contexts for Outdoor Education; Learning outcomes unique to Outdoor Education; Holistic nature of Outdoor Education, and Wellbeing through SEL in Outdoor Education. The alignment of the key insights drawn from the literature review with the aims of the current research is presented. It must be noted that the literature sources regarding Outdoor Education are drawn from a range of English-speaking countries. There is value in drawing on work done in other cultures and educational systems although this may be more appropriate for a more extended study such as a Ph.D. and is beyond the scope of this professional doctorate.

Curriculum theory literature has been included in this review to provide a context for the implications of initiating broad scale curriculum change. The topic of Defining Outdoor Education in curriculum has been included in this literature review due to a diversity of perceptions regarding the key elements of Outdoor Education in secondary schooling, and a lack of consolidated understandings of existing definitions of Outdoor Education within this discipline area. Policy contexts for Outdoor Education have been reviewed on three contextual levels, national, State and local. These have been included due to the overarching effect that policy has on the inclusion of Outdoor Education in secondary school curriculums.Literature regarding learning outcomes unique to Outdoor Education has been reviewed dueto the importance placed on differentiating between discipline areas by the governing bodiesfor curriculum in Australia. It is also important to demonstrate that Outdoor Education provides opportunities and outcomes which are not present in any other learning area.

Literature highlighting the holistic nature of Outdoor Education has been included in this review because Outdoor Education is recognised as providing a complete learning experience, contributing to the holistic development of the individual and groups rather than focussing solely on academic outcomes. As both the areas of individual and group wellbeing, and SEL are recognised as being important components of holistic development, literature regarding their relationship with Outdoor Education has also been included in this review. This is also the case with Outdoor Education literature regarding relationship development which in this context is based on the self, others and environment.

This review includes literature which highlights the need for further research to reveal gaps in knowledge throughout the field of Outdoor Education theory and practice. This examination of the theoretical, research, and policy material provides an overview of conceptual and applied factors which have been observed to be deficient in Outdoor Education research.

Curriculum theory.

Curriculum theory as a distinctive field is the interdisciplinary study of educational experience (Pinar, 2004). The emergence of curriculum as a concept came from a concern to direct and control individual teachers' and pupils' classroom activities (Goodson, 1989). Kerr (1968) defined curriculum as "all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the school" (p. 16). Although developed in 1968, this definition remains pertinent in an educational system which has a growing focus on standardisation and increased test scores. This has been recognised by Kelly (2009) who asserted that "such a definition provides us with a basis for planning all the organised activities of a school" (p.7). Curriculum theory has its origins in the discipline and experience of education. Curriculum theory is critical of contemporary school reform, posing

that educational experience seems to conflict with the aims of politicians who focus on test scores (Pinar, 2004). Advocating against this type of curriculum, Priestly (2011) argued that current curriculum models focused on standardised outcomes fail to differentiate between theoretical and everyday knowledge while McNeil (2001) has observed: "Standardization reduces the quality and quantity of what is taught and learned in schools" (p.3). Pinar (2004) highlights the negative effects of this, asserting that examination driven curricula demotes teachers from scholars and intellectuals to technicians in service to the State. He proposed thatwith curriculum based on standardised testing, the cultivation of self-reflexive, interdisciplinary erudition and intellectuality disappears. This provides reinforcement for the view that mainstream curriculum reformers often view curriculum as an objective text that merely has to be imparted to students (Giroux, 1994).

Eyal (2008) suggested, "despite the prevalent image of public institutions as highly conservative and stagnant, it might be interesting to investigate their potential as sources of innovations that are no less radical than the alternatives proposed by free-market ideologues" (p. 487). School reform creates stress on all stakeholders and requires careful consideration of theoretical framework.

Vernez, et al. (2004) reported that there is little evidence to support the validity and effectiveness of many school reform initiative policies, which makes research of the different strategies essential. Priestly (2011) observed the emergence of technical curriculum policy making that is seemingly ignorant of, or at least fails to recognise decades of curriculum development theorising and proposes that "a reinvigoration of curriculum theory is necessary to counter such recent curricular trend" (p.10). He proposed that critical realism provides possibilities for such theorising.

Paralleling Outdoor Education (Quay & Seaman, 2013), curriculum theory is complex (Pinar, 2004). Recognising the complexities of negotiating curriculum development,

Goodson (1989) asserted that “The curriculum is such a slippery concept because it is defined, redefined and negotiated at a number of levels and in a number of arenas” (p.132). Providing support for this view, Kelly (2009) recognised that a gap exists between the ideals of the curriculum planners and the realities of the work of the teacher in the classroom. Extending on this, Kelly (2009) stated that “Direct political intervention, by concentrating on the economic functions of the educational system, has largely ignored that dimension of educational provision alongwith its responsibility for promoting the personal development of the young” (p.1). This further supports the views of Goodson (1989) who explicitly states that “secondary teachingis not all subject based” (p.136). To implement a holistic curriculum within schools, curriculum planners could benefit from the support of studies which can and do take full account of all dimensions of education (Kelly, 2009). These views of curriculum align with the holistic nature of Outdoor Education in the sense that school curriculum should go beyond merely academic outcomes and incorporate the development of the whole person in students (Quay & Seaman, 2013).

Kelly (2009) highlighted difficulties in attempting to operate with a definition of curriculum which excludes from consideration the unplanned effects of teacher activity and proposed that any definition of curriculum must embrace all the learning that goes on in schools whether it is explicitly planned and intended or is a by-product of planning and/or practice. He warns that “we should not adopt a definition of curriculum which confines or restricts us to considerations only of that which is planned” (p.6). As highlighted by Priestly (2011) “Schools and other educational institutions are complex social organisations” (p.18). Exploring curriculum as a focus allows the study of the intersection of individual biography and social structure (Goodson, 1989). When curriculum is approached as a socially constructed process, hidden curriculum is revealed and can be addressed. Hidden curriculum are those things which pupils learn at school because of the way in which the work of the school is planned and organised, and through the materials provided, but which are not in

themselves overtly included in the planning or even in the consciousness of those responsible for the school arrangements (Kelly, 2009). Hidden curriculum has a history of negative connotations however within Outdoor Education, exploring the hidden curriculum can reveal positive outcomes of programs which have not been recognised before. Kelly (2009) suggests that this hidden dimension of curriculum should not remain hidden, proposing that "activities of this kind are usually regarded as having as much educational validity and point as any of the formal arrangements of the school" (p.7). Kelly (2009) poses a further question of whether any limit should be placed on the kinds of school activity which are allowed to count as part of the curriculum when it is defined in a holistic context such as that of Outdoor Education.

In relation to explicating the value of individual elements of a curriculum framework, Bernstein (1990) presents a curriculum theory described as pedagogical device. This theory refers to the social relations of the classroom in terms of knowledge construction, dissemination and acquisition. This theory can be described through two dimensions, horizontal and vertical. The horizontal dimension refers to specialised categories such as school subjects within mandated curriculum. The vertical dimension refers to the rank position of a particular school subject within that curriculum (Singh, 2002). Bernstein (1990) makes the point that "power may be necessary to enter a set and is always necessary to change hierarchical positions within and between sets" (p.22). Through his theory of the pedagogic device, Bernstein modelled how change may be instigated in the ordering and disordering principles of the pedagogising of knowledge (Singh, 2002).

With respect to implementing meaningful change, the goals and processes of change are narrowly proscribed by existing structures, resources and traditions (Macdonald, 2003) and "curricular experimentation does not come easily" (Pinar, 2004 p.227). Priestly (2011) proposed that drawing on the theory of critical realism "offers the potential for fresh

perspectives on the thorny issue of curriculum change, both in terms of how policy makers construct policy for change, and in the management of change in schools and local education authorities" (p.15). He explores the potential of critical realism to address the issue of how teachers might constructively engage with policy promoting curriculum change. The key concepts are emergence and social interaction. They offer possibilities at two linked levels: as methodologies to guide those engaged in change; and as an explanatory approach for those researching change contexts. As a practical means of managing reform at a school level, critical realism potentially provides methodological tools for engaging with policy.

Kelly (2009) asserted that "curriculum development must be deliberately managed rather than merely left to happen" (p.1) and presents an option whereby the individual school appoints a curriculum coordinator or such to ensure all learning outcomes are included in formal curriculum. Although Pinar (2004) has observed that teachers, and education professors, have little jurisdiction over the official school curriculum. He proposed that even though curriculum theorists may not necessarily be in schools, if they can build bridges between the realms of theory and practice, they can participate with subtlety and acumen in school reform.

Defining Outdoor Education in curriculum.

Outdoor Education is a complex learning area and field of study. It is difficult to define due to the large diversity of understandings within the field and is largely recognised as being based on practical activities with little theoretical and philosophical foundations (Nicol, 2002). Humberstone et al. (2015) acknowledge this and suggested that Outdoor studies is a young and emerging discipline not without issues of identity and that the positioning of outdoor studies is clear and understood in practice but the theoretical conceptualisation of both experiential education and learning remains a challenge. This supports the view of Quay (2009) who notes that "the literature in the outdoor education field

is quite diverse in its claims about the exact nature of outdoor education" (p. 33).

As a result of limited development of education policy, Outdoor Education has evolved in schools from local initiatives and State-based lobbying (Martin, 2008) or having grown out of accepted practice (Nicol, 2002), rather than from Government Education Department driven objectives and policies. There are many different understandings of Outdoor Education between schools, regions and States that contribute to a level of confusion between practitioners, leaving them to form their own understandings. This is reflective of observations made by Thomas (2005) who noted that the quality of learning is dependent on the individual teachers and school leaders and highlighted disparity between programs. These observations also support Neill and Heubeck (1998) who acknowledge variability in many areas of the field including programs and outcomes.

The most relevant recent work conducted in relation to defining Outdoor Education as a learning area was undertaken in the years prior to 2010 as an effort to define and position Outdoor Education within the Australian National Curriculum framework. Notable Australian researchers in this specific effort have included Peter Martin (2008, 2010), Allison Lugg (1999, 2001, 2004), Andrew Brookes (2002), Glynn Thomas (2000, 2005), Danny Parkin (1998), Lou Preston (2004) and Anna Griffiths (2004). Current researchers tackling the issue of definitions of Outdoor Education include John Quay (2016) who frames Outdoor Education as a way of being and James and Williams (2017) who explicate the benefits of Outdoor Education and identify it as being a necessity in education.

Chandler (1998) highlighted the complexities of connections between elements of Outdoor Education. This aligns with Josselson (1995) who identified a lack of continuity in understandings relating to human-nature relationships. The lack of common understandings in Outdoor Education has also been identified by Thomas (2005) who acknowledged that although programs may differ, the focus of individual programs should be explicitly stated to

consolidate understandings of Outdoor Education throughout the field. Building on this, Martin (2014) observed a lack of clarity with Outdoor Education curriculum, suggesting that there is a need for more consolidated understandings of Outdoor Education as a learning area.

The merit in critiquing the field of outdoor education and focusing more attention on its value and importance has been highlighted by Dyment and Potter (2015). Potter and Dyment (2016) proposed that Outdoor Education is undervalued and conducted an exploration of 'if' and 'how' Outdoor Education is a discipline. As an extension to an initial description of the nature and scope of Outdoor Education in Victorian schools (Lugg & Martin, 2001), Lugg (2004) further outlined a lack of robust educational rationale for some Outdoor Education activities, highlighting an area of deficiency in curriculum development. Numerous researchers have identified a need for a critical rationale for Outdoor Education as a learning area (Brookes, 2002; Martin, 2008; Thomas, 2005), calling for a targeted consideration of Outdoor Education theory and practice (Thomas, 2005). Regardless, the majority of international theorists who work in this area have similar views in relation to Outdoor Education as a learning process (Brookes, 2002; Martin, 2008; Mitten, 2009; Neill & Heubeck, 1998; Noble & McGrath, 2012; Peel & Richards, 2005; Priest, 1986; Pryor, Carpenter, & Townsend, 2005; Thomas, 2005). Supporting Preston and Griffiths (2004) with the findings of their collaborative action research project, these views were also exemplified by Martin and Thomas (2000) who assert that Outdoor Education is based on connections with the environment, and that the primary human focus of Outdoor Education should be to develop relationships with self, others and environment.

Illustrating the scope, timeframe and complexities of the issue of consolidating understandings of Outdoor Education across the field Priest (1986) provides theoretical perspectives both historically and on an international level by describing Outdoor Education as being founded on six major principles. He suggests Outdoor Education: is a method of

learning; is experiential; takes place primarily in the outdoors; requires use of all senses and domains; is based on interdisciplinary curriculum matter; and is a matter of relationships involving people and natural resources.

Building on this, Parkin (1998) identifies and describes six essential characteristics of Outdoor Education. He suggests that Outdoor Education: occurs in the out-of-doors; has participants directly involved in the activity; involves the interpretation of original objects; defines relationships rather than reciting individual, apparently isolated facts; involves as many senses as possible; and, invites participation because the activity is perceived as being interesting, challenging or even fun (Parkin, 1998). Gass and Seaman (2012), Quay and Seaman (2015) and, Priest and Gass (2017) worked on finding commonality in Outdoor Education programs proposing that they occur in novel environments, use small groups, present challenging activities aimed at developing group support, and focus on the transfer of lessons from the adventure to the participants' broader life.

Project Adventure, an influential American outdoor education provider, detailed that curriculum should help group members develop in four areas: 1, Skills, such as collaboration, teamwork, and effective communication; 2, Behaviours (values and attitudes), such as helping the group members accomplish tasks, being a supportive group member, and expressing concerns in a way that works for other group members; 3, Critical thinking and problem-solving, including being able to apply, analyse, and synthesise information in order to solve problems and make sound judgements; and, 4, Technical content specific to individual activities (Prouty et al., 2007). Henderson and Potter (2001) "use the term 'outdoor education' to denote the overarching curricular enriching education in the out-of-doors that includes practices of environmental and adventure education" (p. 226). Szczepanski (2009) promotes Outdoor Education as a way of learning through it being an object of learning, a place of learning and a process of learning. Peter Martin (2008) suggests that as a process of

learning, Outdoor Education is mostly personal development education. This perspective can be used to promulgate the traditional view of Outdoor Education as a branch of the HPE curriculum area, with the goal of Outdoor Education being personal development through recreational activities. This is in contrast to much of Martin's other work particularly in relation to the holistic and interdisciplinary nature of Outdoor Education (Martin 2008, Lugg & Martin 2001, Martin & Thomas 2000). These differing perspectives presented by an experienced practitioner and academic working in the field demonstrate the complexities of Outdoor Education as a learning area, its positioning in secondary school curriculum and whether it should be perceived as a unique body of knowledge, integrated with HPE or a distinct interdisciplinary and holistic learning area.

Historically Outdoor Education has been concerned with adventure activities (Neill & Heubeck, 1998). Outdoor activities are often based within Physical Education frameworks, with the major learning processes being the development of kinaesthetic awareness. Personal development uses Outdoor Education as a way of promoting qualities such as self-esteem and self-awareness relating to people's personal lives. Social development relates to interpersonal skills and is concerned with nurturing the processes involved in group work.

In relation to Outdoor Education in the Australian Curriculum, definitions and understandings of Outdoor Education are simplified and often interchanged with the concept of outdoor recreation. Outdoor recreation constitutes only a very small component of the principles and practices of Outdoor Education. In the National curriculum policy, Outdoor Education is described as engaging students in practical and active learning experiences in natural environments and settings typically beyond the school boundary. It specifies that elements oflearning in outdoor education will draw on both content and achievement standards from across the Australian Curriculum including HPE, Geography and Science. The primary content that will be drawn from HPE will be in the area of outdoor recreation.

In the *Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education*, outdoor recreation refers to recreational activities, or the act of engaging in recreational activities, that are typically associated with outdoor, natural or semi-natural settings (ACARA, 2012).

The curriculum requirements for the VCE subject entitled Outdoor and Environmental Studies are relevant for pre-VCE Outdoor Education programs because on an academic level, it is these programs which should be providing the scaffolding for VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies. The governing body of VCE-Outdoor and Environmental Studies in Victoria, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) identify that knowing, caring and practical competence when related to human/nature relationships is exactly the province of Outdoor Education. This has been articulated in Outdoor Education curriculum documents at the senior school level in Victoria.

The VCAA define the aims of VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies to enable students to:

i. develop experience-based relationships with, and knowledge of, outdoor environments;

ii. develop an understanding of the ecological, historical, economic and social factors which have had an impact on and will influence outdoor environments over time;

iii. develop skills, knowledge and behaviours that promote safe and sustainable interaction with outdoor environments;

iv. identify and analyse the strategies used to protect, conserve and manage outdoor environments in a sustainable manner;

v. understand the implications of trends towards sustainable environmental relationships;

vi. critically analyse interactions with outdoor environments in shaping Australian cultural practices (VCAA, 2011).

Outdoor Education is quite different in its practice and its outcomes to other subjects, such as Physical Education or Health, within the HPE learning area. The socio-cultural imperatives that justify Outdoor Education in a young person's education are also different to those used to justify Health or Physical Education (Hewison & Martin, 2009). This is supported by Boyes and Potter (2015) who asserted that "what is unique about the outdoor education context is the pedagogical and environmental decisions that permeate practice" (p.13). Probing Outdoor Education's positioning in the school curriculum, Quay (2016) proposed two questions, the question of distinctiveness and the question of indispensability. Examination of Outdoor Education's distinctiveness has been explored by numerous researchers and theorists including Martin (2008), Lugg (1999), Neill and Heubeck (1998) and Priest (1986). In recent times James and Williams (2017) have tackled the question of the indispensability of Outdoor Education and although recognising that it is often neglected as a part of the curriculum in our current era of high-stakes test-based accountability, conclude that it is definitely a necessity.

Policy contexts for Outdoor Education.

James and Williams (2017) have observed that for the past two decades, the emphasis in education has increasingly been on improving academic achievement and raising standardised test scores. This has led to a continuous re-focussing of curriculum importance where active, experiential, in-context learning has been de-emphasised or eliminated. Consequently, there has been limited research completed on the value of outdoor environmental education, particularly from the viewpoints of participants. Following a critical discourse analysis (Rogers, 2011) of policy relating to Outdoor Education curriculum, it has been acknowledged that understandings relating to the field of Outdoor Education are

varied and diverse. As a result, there appears to be little continuity between Outdoor Education policies both nationally, or in State and local contexts.

The current research has been undertaken in response to the diverse range of definitions and variety of differing understandings of Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice. Because the application of policy is subject to re-contextualisation and re-interpretation (Ball, 2013), Outdoor Education policy discourse has been explored in the context of national, State and local Outdoor Education policy. In relation to Bacchi's (2009)problem analysis model, the policy problem is represented through a lack of consolidated understandings of Outdoor Education, culminating into the broader question '*What is Outdoor Education?'*. It is within the context of this question that this review of Outdoor Education policy has been conducted.

Australian Government National perspectives on Outdoor Education curriculum policy.

Although there are a number of different understandings of the definition of Outdoor Education, the core values of Outdoor Education in Australia reflect global discourse. In alignment with international discourse of Outdoor Education policies, the incorporation and facilitation of Outdoor Education in Australia is at the discretion of the individual school.

In relation to Australian Government curriculum policy, the problem is represented to be (Bacchi, 2009) the need to compromise or sacrifice some specialised learning areas to be able to define and describe compulsory learning areas in the already complex and overloaded curriculum of Australian schools. On a Government level, the Australian Curriculum recognises that schools organise learning depending on student learning requirements, local needs, resource availability and timetabling structures. The content from the Australian Curriculum can be organised and delivered in a range of ways and through a number of different school subjects (Polley & Atkin, 2014). This implies an assumption that Outdoor Education principles and learning outcomes may be achieved through other more traditional

discipline areas, devaluing Outdoor Education as a distinct learning area in a competitive market between other disciplines. In federal government curriculum policy for Australia, Outdoor Education as a distinct curriculum area is virtually absent, represented very minimally as a small part of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) curriculum policy for the learning area of HPE. The four dimensions of Outdoor Learning in the Australian Curriculum are Skills and knowledge, Human–nature relationships, Conservation and sustainability, and Health and wellbeing (ACARA, 2012).

From the perspective of Australia's advisory body on Outdoor Education, Outdoor Education Australia (OEA), the problem being represented (Bacchi, 2009) for Outdoor Education is that "nowhere in any of the relevant documentation is it mentioned as a separatesubject" (Martin & Hewison, 2010 p. 5). This has led to a fragmentation of Outdoor Education across school's curriculum with its inclusion being only on an ad hoc basis where it is integrated across a number of different learning areas rather than being recognised as a distinct learning area. In the OEA policy, assumptions are made that every child has a right to access quality Outdoor Education as part of a balanced curriculum from pre-school to Year 12 and that Outdoor Education should be included in the National curriculum as a distinct and valued discipline (OEA, 2012). The implication here is that "mandated access to OutdoorEducation at a national level could benefit the learning outcomes of every child in Australia. Although every subject in the National Curriculum will not be mandatory, there is potential for a vastly improved profile and coverage" (Martin & Hewison, 2010 p. 6) for Outdoor Education as a subject and its outcomes.

A key issue appears to be the result of a lack of acknowledgement of Outdoor Education throughout the planning process of the National curriculum. In the draft of the Health and Physical Education curriculum document, the word Outdoor can only be found once (ACARA, 2012a). ACARA (2012b) provided a consultation report, and a number of significant statements can be found. Under matters for improvement, claims of 'under

representation of explicit outdoor education related components' (ACARA, 2012b, p. 5); and'consideration should be given to including outdoor education as a third senior secondary subject in Health and Physical Education' (p. 6) were identified. Responses to this from outdoor educators were characterised by disappointment about the perceived marginalisation of Outdoor Education in the Australian Curriculum and passion for the importance of Outdoor Education for promoting environmental stewardship and providing students with theknowledge, understanding and skills to recreate safely in outdoor and natural settings (Polley & Atkin, 2014). The resulting 'The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education' (ACARA, 2012c) used the word outdoors 14 times. After consultation with State representatives, with the result that the document 'Australian Curriculum Health and PhysicalEducation: Foundation to Year 10, Draft for Consultation (ACARA, 2012d) has the word 'outdoor' 23 times. Significantly it acknowledged the role and place of Outdoor Education, advised that outdoor recreation and challenge and adventure activities should be a core component of the curriculum and provided further scope for Outdoor Education to deliver key elements of the HPE curriculum. The document mentions 'specialised opportunities' ofoutdoor activities (Polley & Atkin, 2014).

With Outdoor Education being virtually absent from government curriculum policy in Australia, Outdoor Education as a discipline is becoming fragmented and understandings and definitions are becoming more diverse and varied throughout schools in Australia. This has led to confusion amongst not only outdoor educators but also other learning area teachers, curriculum developers, and principals, regarding many factors relating to Outdoor Education. One of the most significant of these is its value and positioning within Australian school curriculum frameworks. This has led to a hugely diverse range of Outdoor Education programs across the nation in relation to its importance within curriculum, time allocations, facilitation, staffing and resources. The lack of a large-scale policy from the government in

this area has led to a state of confusion amongst Outdoor Education as a field which needs to be addressed in order to provide Australian school students with the highest quality education (and school experience) possible.

With the introduction of the implementation of the National Curriculum ACARA have since sought to work with OEA to construct advice on how Outdoor Education can intersect with the Australian Curriculum, across all learning areas and cross-curricular priorities, not just HPE. Key effects/outcomes of this are:

- Acknowledgement that Outdoor Education can intersect with all learning areas, but has the greatest capability to deliver components of Health and Physical Education, Science and Geography.
- The creation of Key 'Organising Ideas' to group Outdoor Education learning outcomes taken from these areas.
- Advice that Outdoor Education can inform other learning areas (Polley & Atkin, 2014).

By lobbying for the inclusion of Outdoor Education in the National Curriculum, OEA aim to stimulate thinking within the school for an articulated, sequential, whole school approach to Outdoor Education either integrated with other learning areas or as a stand-alone strand that delivers a number of aspects of other learning areas (OEA, 2012).

Victorian State Government perspectives on Outdoor Education curriculum policy.

Historically, the Victorian Outdoor Education Association (VOEA) was the peak body and professional teaching association supporting teachers and educators in the conduct of Outdoor Education in Victoria. The VOEA provided teaching resources and professional development opportunities for educators and provides advocacy and policy advice to public authorities on matters that affect Outdoor Education (VOEA, 2014). Outdoors Victoria is responsible for the development and implementation of 'Government policies for an

outdoors-oriented society'. State government policy and investment decisions profoundly shape how we experience nature. Good policies can ensure that everybody has the opportunity to get outdoors and conversely, lack of investment can limit access and discourage economic development in the outdoors sector (Outdoors Victoria, 2017).

In contrast to international discourse, particularly the UK and USA, where Outdoor Education is acknowledged as a learning area in government education policy, in Victorian curriculum policy, Outdoor Education is only addressed in relation to the safe practice of Outdoor Activities in schools. These take the form of Adventure Activity Standards (AAS). The AAS are agreed minimum activity standards for adventure operators and they do not necessarily reflect the greater duty of care owed to students. For activities not listed on this site, principals, teachers and school council members need to comply with the AAS, and consider the greater duty of care that is required for students (DETV Department of Education and Training, n.d.). These guidelines provide a framework for the facilitation of outdoor activities in relation to environment, staffing and qualifications. The adventure activity guidelines are a primary reference for the development of risk management plans specific to the location, activity and group participating in a program. They are designed to support professional judgement and experience (DETV, n.d.). As with any duty of care, safety is paramount, and it is an expectation that these guidelines are followed. In Victoria, the facilitation of middle school Outdoor Education is at the discretion of the individual school rather than governed by the State curriculum authority.

Study school perspectives on Outdoor Education curriculum policy.

The problem being represented from the perspective of the study school is rationalising the position of Outdoor Education as a compulsory component of core curriculum, without Government support. This is within an already crowded curriculum full of mandated discipline areas as prescribed by Government curriculum policy. In contrast to

both National and State Outdoor Education discourse, regardless of Government curriculum policies, Outdoor Education is intrinsically valued throughout the study school and forms a critical part of the compulsory core curriculum of the school.

On an individual school level, the lack of curriculum policy from a governing body has led the school developing its own curriculum policy for Outdoor Education. This has been developed in alignment with recommendations from the advisory body OEA. This is an example of a different way to think about the "*problem*". The development of an Outdoor Education policy for the study school has been facilitated because Outdoor Education is highly valued by the school and given importance within the core curriculum. This view is taken even though Outdoor Education has not been prescribed as compulsory curriculum by the governing authority. This provides Outdoor Education with recognition and value as a distinct and important discipline within the curriculum framework in relation to competition with other learning areas for recognition, time and resources.

Outdoor Education at the study school is not only accepted but promoted as a distinct discipline and compulsory learning area as part of the core curriculum from years seven through ten. This reflects the view of Gray (2018) that "Outdoor Learning-'learning for, with, and about the natural environment'–must be included in the curriculum" (p. 145). Outdoor Education is undertaken annually by all students from years' seven to ten and offered as an elective in year eleven and twelve through the VCE subject Outdoor and Environmental studies and the Vocational Education and Training (VET) elective Outdoor Recreation. All Outdoor Education at the participating school has an emphasis on the development of positive relationships and a focus on environmental empathy while providing opportunities for each student in the school to experience success through the completion of experiential learning adventure activities (CCCC, 2016).

Learning outcomes unique to Outdoor Education.

The issue of distinctiveness is proffered as the key curriculum question for Outdoor Education (Quay, 2016). Hewison and Martin (2009) identified Outdoor Education as being distinct and unique from other curriculum areas. They proposed that "Outdoor Education should be a separate discipline within the National Curriculum, because it delivers student outcomes which no other discipline can deliver, and because where other disciplines can offer similar outcomes; Outdoor Education delivers these outcomes more effectively" (p. 8). This is supported by Kendall and Rodger (2015) who have observed that residential learning experiences such as those present in Outdoor Education provide opportunities, benefits and impacts that cannot be achieved in any other educational context or setting.

In response to the ongoing question of the distinctiveness of Outdoor Education, Martin (2010) identified three specific outcomes which are unique to Outdoor Education. The first of these is that as a distinct discipline, Outdoor Education contributes to an acknowledgement that excessive dependence on technology is unnecessary (Loynes, 2018) and can be harmful while promoting the need to reconnect with the natural world. The second unique outcome identified by Martin is that Outdoor Education encourages a deep personal understanding of and empathy with the environment, an understanding of environmental degradation and an appreciation of nature gained by being immersed in the environment rather than via simple observation. The third, and perhaps the most significant, unique outcome specified by Martin (2010) is the engagement with risk, its identification, and management.

Building on this, Polley and Atkin (2014) have identified five unique and specific outcomes that Outdoor Education can contribute to a student's education:

- Providing direct personal contact with nature (the outdoors) – in ways that promote enjoyment of outdoor activity and nature. Such enjoyment can be the basis for

ongoing outdoor recreation and nature experiences through their lifespan. This supports personal health and wellbeing and providing the foundations for ecological literacy.

- Enabling perspectives on contemporary living and human to nature relationships. In Outdoor Education, students are provided with opportunities to reflect on healthy alternatives for everyday living and lay vital foundations for sustainability and stewardship into the future.

  Developing competence and safety management in the Australian outdoors. This is especially relevant for those in urban settings or born overseas. This outcome includes how Outdoor Education can teach students to assess risk and make judgements abouttheir management of it.
- Enhancing well-being through guided reflection on involvement in group and individual activities that are challenging and adventurous.
- Developing essential personal and social capabilities such as communication, resilience, self-confidence, leadership, teamwork, goal setting, personal autonomy and initiative.

In the National Curriculum for Australia, the unique and specific benefits that outdoor learning can contribute to a student's education have been identified as:

- providing direct personal contact with nature (the outdoors) in ways that promote enjoyment of outdoor activity and the natural world.
- enabling perspectives on contemporary living and human-to-nature relationships.
- developing competence and safety management in the Australian outdoors.
- enhancing wellbeing through guided reflection on involvement in group and individual activities that are challenging and adventurous.
- developing essential personal and social capabilities

(http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/).

Quay and Seaman (2015) examine connections between education and experience, articulating a theory of experience that embraces being, doing and knowing. Quay (2016) extends on this proposing that the distinctiveness of Outdoor Education lies not with a body of knowledge or skills and practices but in a deeper level of educational understanding which emphasises ways of being. This type of perception of Outdoor Education, contrary to discourse in defining Outdoor Education which focuses on content and processes, provides further support for Outdoor Education as form of holistic learning. This shifts the focus of learning from traditional academic, curriculum-based outcomes to personal, social and community wellbeing outcomes as part of an integrated learning program based on the development of relationships with the self, others and environment.

Holistic nature of Outdoor Education.

Principles of holistic education include psychological freedom, self-governance, individualised learning, social and emotional development (Miller, 2019). Holistic learning processes promote and support self-reflection, self-respect, self-esteem, imagination, discovery, expression and communication while developing resilience, alternative perspectives and SEL through active participation and challenge (Venville et al., 2008). Miller (2019) describes holistic education as a form of transformative learning based on self-discovery, connections to the community, to the natural world and humanitarian values.

Thomas (2005) has observed a shift in discourse for Outdoor Education, increasing its integration with environmental education while Nisbet et al. (2008) identify outdoor and environmental education as being holistic. Martin (2008) also acknowledges the evolution of Outdoor Education as a learning area, observing the trend away from traditional outdoor recreation to a more holistic approach with the integration of sustainability and ecological literacy. Holistic education aims to make interdisciplinary connections in learning as

opposedto the fragmented forms of learning offered by traditional disciplinary practices (Forbes & Martin, 2004). Outdoor Education provides an example of this, contrasting our current educational climate which places inordinate focus upon evidence-based outcomes (Gray & Pigott, 2018). Thomas (2005) acknowledges a progression of discourse in Outdoor Educationfrom traditional Physical Education based approaches towards a more interdisciplinary and holistic approach to learning. Contemporary Outdoor Education researchers and theorists share a common view that Outdoor Education is a distinct, holistic and interdisciplinary learning area (Foster & Linney, 2007; Martin, 2008; Mitten, 2009; Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2008; Pryor et al., 2005; Quay & Seaman, 2013; Szczepanski, 2009; Thomas, 2005; Venville et al., 2008).

In his seminal text *Redefining outdoor education: A matter of many relationships* Priest (1986) describes Outdoor Education as interdisciplinary, sensory, and based on relationships while integrating outdoor recreation and environmental education. Outdoor pursuits have traditionally concentrated on intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. Intrapersonal refers to how the individual relates to themselves. Interpersonal refers to relationships which exist between people. Ecological studies have traditionally concentrated on ecosystemic and ekistic relationships. Ecosystemic refers to the dynamics and interdependence of all parts of an ecosystem. Ekistic refers to the interactions between people and their surroundings (Priest, 1986).

Integrated programs, such as those in Outdoor Education generally, work to break down traditional boundaries between disciplines (Comishin et al., 2004) and skilled practitioners are constantly looking for ways to connect content to students' everyday lives (Prouty et al., 2007). Interdisciplinary learning is based on the premise that division between disciplines is eliminated with the aim of understanding the world in wholes, looking towards multiple dimensions (Venville et al., 2008) as much as possible and not in fragmented parts

bounded by disciplines (Somerville & Rapport, 2002). Polley and Atkin (2014) advocate that any learning experience that can be undertaken in the outdoors or in a natural setting can contribute positively to a range of learning areas. Supporting this by identifying Outdoor Education as interdisciplinary, Coates et al. (2015) also acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of outdoor studies.

The organisation "Learning and Teaching Scotland" (LTS) offer an international perspective on this, suggesting that learning outdoors can be the educational context which encourages children and young people to make connections experientially, leading to deeper understanding within and between curriculum areas and meeting learner needs (LTS, 2010). In the context of the UK, Towers and Loynes (2017) propose that the discipline of Outdoor Education is both process and content ranging across traditional subjects such as physical education and environmental sciences at the same time as foregrounding personal development. As an example of American discourse, Project Adventure describe Outdoor Education as a means of curriculum enhancement through experiences in the outdoors. Stating it is not a separate discipline with prescribed objectives like math and science; it is simply a learning climate that offers opportunities for direct laboratory experience. These experiences include; identifying and resolving real-life problems, acquiring skills with which to enjoy a lifetime of creative living as well as attaining concepts and insights about human and natural resources (Prouty et al., 2007).

In contrast to this, Neill and Heubeck (1998) acknowledge that although Outdoor Education is interdisciplinary and holistic, they consider its curriculum domain as being distinct and unique. While advocating the perspective that Outdoor Education should be regarded as holistic and interdisciplinary, Priest (1986) observes its distinctiveness noting thatOutdoor Education provides a learning climate for the things which can be learned best outside the classroom while Chandler (1998) acknowledges the opportunities for serendipitous learning provided by Outdoor Education. Szczepanski (2009) identifies

Outdoor Education as a cultural construct which can be thought about and applied in different ways and also specifies that Outdoor Education is directly related to a learning space/place/environment. This is in alignment with Preston (2004) who identifies Outdoor Education as being contextual and related to place (environment). While it is widely acknowledged that Outdoor Education is in fact holistic, this is not to say however, that it is automatically more holistic than traditional classroom teaching (Szczepanski, 2009). Mitten (2009) observes Outdoor Education as being interdisciplinary, emphasising its interconnectedness to wellbeing and White (2007) details wellbeing as being part of a holistic learning program. This is further supported by Pryor et al. (2005) who highlight the benefits of Outdoor Education on wellbeing, observing that Outdoor Education consists of a unique blend of educational and therapeutic methodologies that include nature, small groups and adventure. The value and meaning of Outdoor Education cannot be fully measured by outcomes or credits gained, or increases in self-concept scores. "The more relaxed learning environment, the availability of one-to-one support and small group work, practical and experiential learning opportunities, as well as the chance to experience success, were all felt to contribute to improved learner engagement" (Kendall & Rodger, 2015 p. 5). Davidson (2001) claims the benefit of Outdoor Education may only be shown when an individual is willing or able to challenge assumptions about self and society and to stand or fall on these conditions is to limit the potential of adventure to enhance our capacity for living.

Contrary to the National Curriculum authorities positioning of middle-school Outdoor Education as a sub-branch of HPE curriculum, the discourse amongst Outdoor Education practitioners and researchers reiterates that Outdoor Education offers a holistic and interdisciplinary curriculum (Quay & Seaman, 2013) which should exist as a distinct learning area. In practice, Outdoor Education has little in common with Physical Education. This is clarified in OEA's *Statement on Outdoor Education and the National Curriculum*:

> "Through interaction in the natural worlds, Outdoor Education aims to develop an understanding of our relationship with the environment, others and ourselves. The ultimate goal is to contribute towards a sustainable world….
>
> There is no congruence here with Physical Education. Neither Health nor Physical Education is concerned with 'our relationships with the environment,others and ourselves'. Nor is their 'ultimate goal to contribute towards a sustainable world'. Nor is their learning process in any way similar to the unique process at the heart of Outdoor Education" (Hewison & Martin, 2009p. 8).

In a qualitative case study conducted by Davidson (2001) questions relating to subjective meanings of adventure experiences in outdoor education were explored. Their study incorporated observation involving some researcher participation and in depth interviewing with ten participants from senior secondary school who have had experience in Outdoor Education programs. The findings revealed that learning through adventure is potentially valuable as a holistic and life-long form of activity that enhances the capacity to enjoy and engage in living. This is an important extension beyond its often limited and compartmentalised applications, which are rationalised by specific outcome-based objectives (Davidson, 2001). As a holistic learning area, Outdoor Education provides both curricular and wellbeing outcomes (Loynes, 2017), which should be used to compliment the learners overall experience in school. This view is exemplified by Alistair (2000) who states that education should be "by no means accomplished by mere intellectual stimulation. It has other aims of equal if not higher importance relating to the character of the individual, resilience, habits of order and other social and emotional learning objectives" (Alistair, 2000 p. 87). Miller (2019) unites many perspectives from wide-ranging disciplines in his conceptualisation of holism and holistic curriculum, advocating for an integrative approach to teaching and learning with a focus on developing a deep connection between mind and body.

Wellbeing through Social and Emotional Learning in Outdoor Education.

It is largely agreed that wellbeing should be one of the purposes of education and that increased wellbeing has a positive effect on academic outcomes of students (De Fraine, Van Landeghem, Van Damme, & Onghena, 2005; Dudman, Hedges, & Loynes, 2019; Engels, Aelterman, Petegem, & Schepens, 2004; Kendall & Rodger, 2015; Priest, 1986; Szczepanski, 2009). Although a plethora of information exists which illustrates the intimate connections between SEL and academic outcomes, the indeterminate and ambiguous nature of SEL makes it difficult to tease apart from academic success. This highlights the need for researchers to give more attention to the processes and mechanisms linking SEL competencies and academic success (Denham & Brown, 2010). Foster and Linney (2007) suggest that Outdoor Education is a vital learning methodology for the children of today. They specify that outdoor and experiential education relates curricula to real-life situations (Szczepanski, 2009) and results in improved personal and social development and increased academic performance. Following a comparative study exploring the impact of residential experiences with eight primary schools during the 2017-2018 academic year, Dudman et al. (2019) provide evidence that the residential programs impacted on pupils' retainment, engagement, progress and academic achievement.

In Outdoor Education, self, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsibility lead to academic competence (Denham & Brown, 2010). Comishin et al. (2004) documented a significant improvement in student performance in reading, writing, math, science and social studies following participation in Outdoor Education programs. Learning in the outdoors can make significant contributions to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Neill (2002) suggests that results from research in this area provide scientific support that Outdoor Education programs, on average, provide legitimate and effective educational training. This is reinforced by the observations of Jamesand Williams (2017) whose research supports that integrating experiential outdoor educationinto K-12 curricula results in better

standardised test performance, reduced discipline and classroom management problems, and increased engagement in and motivation for learning.

Outdoor Education promotes the development of higher emotional intelligence (Levitan, 2016) and research has shown that the social skills constituting SEL in Outdoor Education are related to academic success (Denham & Brown, 2010; Fraillon, 2004). Whilethere is an increasing amount of research on wellbeing and SEL in adventure therapy programs with similar student cohorts, the difference in intent and construct takes them beyond the scope of this research and they are therefore not included in this review.

Outdoor Adventure Education is widely recognised for its ability to elicit personal and social development for its participants. Scrutton (2015) provides some of the first statistically determined evidence from Scotland that Outdoor Adventure Education benefits personal and social development. Thomas (2005) questions whether the personal and social benefits of Outdoor Education are enough to justify its position in a crowded school curriculum.

Wellbeing outcomes are under-represented in prescribed National Curriculum documents for middle secondary school Outdoor Education (VCAA, 2011). Although outcomes related to student wellbeing have been identified by Outdoor Education researchers (for example: Cobb, 1977; Hartig et al, 2002; Loynes, 2017; Neill & Heubeck, 1998; Pryor et al., 2005; Wells & Evans, 2003), gaps in knowledge regarding explicit wellbeing outcomes in Outdoor Education have been identified by Neill and Heubeck (1998), Pryor et al. (2005), White (2007), Nisbet et al. (2008), Noble and McGrath (2012). This is supported by Gray and Pigott (2018) who highlight a lack of longitudinal research to outline the impact of Outdoor Learning in the school curriculum.

McCree et al. (2018) conducted a longitudinal study tracking eleven children through outdoor learning sessions over three years which highlighted important links between emotional learning and wellbeing developed in outdoor settings and academic development. Their

research incorporated two case studies which applied mixed methods and adopted elements from the child-centred Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2001) and employed a two-stage Mosaic approach of community reflection and participation (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008). This involved interviews with children regarding their perspectives, interpretations and self-reports on their experience, a questionnaire and quantitative observation of wellbeingand involvement using Leuven scale measures (Laevers, 2005). Learning outcomes of all kinds generated in Outdoor Education have the capacity to lead to a state of perpetual improvement in both wellbeing and academic achievement. The very academic success that is fuelled by SEL may contribute to an increase in the students' wellbeing, which supports the development of increased academic success in a perpetual cycle (Denham & Brown, 2010).

Further articulating the ideas of Wells and Evans (2003), Szczepanski (2009) observes limitations with holistic wellbeing outcomes of classroom teaching which can be addressed by Outdoor Education. There are associated health benefits related to emotional wellbeing and improved mental health from learning in this context in the outdoors (LTS, 2010) and participants who perceived themselves as having relatively poor personal and social skills appear to benefit the most (Scrutton, 2015). Supporting Foster and Linney (2007), Mitten (2009) acknowledges that Outdoor Education promotes numerous forms of wellbeing but reinforces that although the positive relationship between spending time in nature and wellbeing is well known, the benefits of outdoor experiences are generally undervalued, even by practitioners. Carpenter and Harper (2015) identify numerous health and wellbeing benefits of outdoor activities and frame connections to the natural world with a socio-ecological approach to develop health and wellbeing. This is reflective of Ewert (1989) who describes the benefits of outdoor adventure in relation to four categories: psychological, sociological, educational and physical.

Reporting on the findings of two pilot studies in outdoor and adventure education which involved interviews with 27 students during challenging wilderness adventure activities,

Mutz and Müller (2016) suggest that outdoor education and wilderness programscan foster mental health in youths and young adults. This supports Levitan (2016) who has observed emotional, physical and psychological benefits as a result of Outdoor Education programs. While Neill and Heubeck (1998) have observed improved mental health from participation in Outdoor Education, they warn against programs being too intense, resulting in negative consequences of Outdoor Education programs. Stewart (2004) is critical of someOutdoor Education practices that seek to develop human-nature relationships or connecting with nature, suggesting that this may be developing a form of neo-colonialism with detrimental consequences to learning as well as the environment.

Education systems vigorously maintain a focus on the importance of students establishing and maintaining relationships (Gray, 2018; Joseph & Strain, 2004; Luthar, 2006; Noble & McGrath, 2012). Oberski et al. (1999) and Roffey (2010) extend on this proposing that the explicit development of positive relationships is an essential part of schooling and that relationships are essential to effective learning. Gray (2018) proposed that "teaching begins and ends with relationships" (p. 1). Opportunities to develop positive relationships with the environment, others and ourselves through interaction with the natural world can be achieved through outdoor education. These relationships are essential for the wellbeing and sustainability of individuals, society and our environment (Polley & Atkin, 2014).

Outdoor Education subject matter is considered to be a matter of relationships (Dudman et al., 2019; Priest, 1986). It is generally accepted by researchers and practitioners that Outdoor Education contributes to the development of positive relationships on three levels, being the self, others and the environment (e.g., Brookes, 2002; Martin, 2008; Priest, 1986; Pryor et al., 2005; Quay, 2016). Through their 2015 qualitative case study of a fifteen-lesson adventure-based learning program, Stuhr et al. (2015) utilised the process of reflection to demonstrate that adventure-based learning could produce student-learning outcomes that promote SEL associated with the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills required

to function effectively in society. Organisational mission and culture have shown to be a critical factor underlying program effects (Neill, 2002). The effectiveness of Outdoor Education programs is a subjective topic, even among participants and facilitators of the same program. For example, the child's view of the effectiveness of interaction in Outdoor Education contexts could be quite different from those of other peers or adults in the environment (Denham & Brown, 2010). This is supported by Hattie et al. (1997) who emphasise that only some adventure programs are effective, and then only on certain outcomes, and it is probable that only parts of the programs are influencing these outcomes. Effects of Outdoor Education programs varyconsiderably from participant to participant and from program to program although there is a general consensus that immersive programs are more effective than short-term sessional programs (Neill, 2002). When psychosocial constructs are measured before and after OutdoorEducation programs, research shows that education programs have impacts on social and emotional development which appear to be retained over time. Evidence suggests that, on average, Outdoor Education participants experience additional growth on returning to their home environments. Self-concept changes in particular are begun during a program and then continue to unfold afterwards (Neill, 2002). According to Hattie et al. (1997), Outdoor Education programs can have particularly strong, lasting effects with notable SEL outcomes. These were categorised as outcomes related to Leadership, Self-concept, Academic, Personality, Interpersonal, and Adventuresome.

In consideration of students' SEL, the perspectives of teachers are critical. The current research aligns with Buchanan et al. (2009) who conducted a survey to examine teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and practices regarding SEL in the classroom. Collie et al. (2015) also conducted qualitative research regarding teacher's perspectives on students' SEL. Esen-Aygun and Sahin-Taskin (2017) have identified previous studies focused on social-emotionallearning where teachers' knowledge, perceptions beliefs of SEL were examined.

The authors also directly examined teachers' interview responses as a framework for analysing views andperspectives regarding students' SEL in Turkey. Their research aimed to understand primaryteachers' opinions of SEL and to explain what teachers know and think about SEL through their own reports of student development. They found that the teachers consider student's social-emotional development as an important issue and work to support the improvement ofsocial-emotional skills.

Using survey data from 457 Italian sixth grade secondary school students and 58 of their teachers Marucci et al. (2018) conducted a study that examined the extent to which secondary school teachers had knowledge of the social characteristics of their students as their students perceive these attributes. They found that on average teachers' perceptions overlap with the students' perspectives in almost half of the cases and that teacher attunement was positively associated with the amount of time teachers spent with their students. They proposed that this is because the more time teachers spend with their students, the more opportunities to acquire information about the social dynamics in the classroom. They also asserted perceptions are important given that behaviour is often driven by perceptions rather than by the actual circumstances.

Thomas (2019) conducted a naturalistic inquiry of two schools that participated in 28-day Outdoor Education programs facilitated by the same outdoor provider in Australia. Data were collected through five semi-structured interviews with the school teachers and program leaders and five focus groups conducted with the students. The Life Effectiveness Questionnaire was also administered to 261 students pre- and post-program. Results from this study confirmed that the Outdoor Education programs were producing desired improvements in the students' perceptions of their general life skills (Thomas, 2019). This is affirmed by Dudman et al. (2019) who found that residential experiences had a significant impact on a range of indicators associated with self-efficacy and locus of control.

White (2007) relates wellbeing to values and morality and while acknowledging that definitions of wellbeing are varied and diverse, specifies that wellbeing should be based on a foundation of the exercise of our senses, physical activity and self-awareness. Aligning with Neill and Heubeck (1998), White (2007) also acknowledges that wellbeing is subjective to the individual and relates to what individuals can do and experience.

Outdoor Education is involved with the development of personal and interpersonal relationships (Kendall & Rodger, 2015) which contribute to student wellbeing (Carpenter & Harper, 2015). Brookes (2003) urges teachers to open the way to construct on-going relationships between individuals, particular groups, and particular places in the outdoors. Outdoor learning provides fresh settings for children and young people to demonstrate what they know and can do and therefore for assessing their knowledge and skills and self-evaluation should be integral to planning outdoor learning experiences. The outdoors provides excellentopportunities to use a wide range of skills and abilities not always visible in the classroom. Becoming aware of such skills can fundamentally change personal, peer and staff perceptionsand lead to profound changes in life expectations and success (LTS, 2010).

McGrath and Noble (2010) identify the association between positive relationships and wellbeing and emphasise the need for a whole school focus on wellbeing through positive relationships. This is supported by Luthar (2006) who has observed that positive relationships build resilience. Further to this, Noble and McGrath (2012) acknowledge that resilience can also enhance wellbeing. Curriculum programs that teach social and emotional skills for coping, self-management and establishing and maintaining positive relationships have been described as among the most successful interventions offered to school-aged young people (Noble & McGrath, 2012).

A noticeable feature of Outdoor Education programs is that these programs seem

capable of triggering an ongoing cycle of positive change within participants where the overall effects seem to suggest enhancement of self-related constructs, action-orientation, and coping behaviours (Neill, 2002). Peel and Richards (2005) suggest that responses to learning outcomes are subjective to the individual and have observed that the experience of success in completing outdoor activities can also enable people to incorporate a new sense of themselves as achievers into their self-structure. Drawing on ten studies into residential experiences, Dudman et al. (2019) report that the most commonly perceived form of impact was affective changes in students' confidence, self-esteem and resilience. Research in support of the perspectives of Ntoumanis (2001), who relates OutdoorEducation to self-motivation, have observed outcomes such as self-optimisation from studentengagement in Outdoor Education (Noble & McGrath, 2012). They describe this as a realisticawareness of, and predominantly positive judgement about, one's own strengths and a willingness to strive to build and use these attributes in meaningful ways. This aligns with White (2007) who identifies personal autonomy as a wellbeing outcome in itself. The development of a positive relationship with the self can be enhanced by the students experiencing challenge and success (Dudman et al., 2019). This has been observed in Outdoor Education by Chandler (1998), Thomas (2005) and Martin (2014). Outdoor Education can be instrumental in the teaching of self-reliance, interdependence and leadership, the development of an adventurous spirit, managing personal risks, safe journeys in nature, the value of life-long outdoor recreation for enjoyment, health and well-being (Dudman et al., 2019).

As with other learning areas, learning in Outdoor Education is embedded within a social context (Burridge & Carpenter, 2013). When students can understand self and others, comprehend social information so as to make good decisions, interact successfully, and regulate behaviour, many of their learning tasks are made easier. Price (2019) provides evidence that participation in outdoor learning can enhance social and emotional learning.

One of the primary aims of education should be the promotion of resilient individuals

who have meaning, purpose and a sense of belonging (Pryor et al., 2005). This can be achieved through developing positive relationships with 'others'. In Outdoor Education, "relationships come from shared experiences" (Gray, 2018 p. 145). A new theory explaining the success of outdoor adventure programs has emerged based on research and the belief that students experience a special sense of belongingness promoted by social dynamics found in these programs (Dudman et al., 2019; Kendall & Rodger, 2015). Noble and McGrath (2012) note that one of the strongest themes in research in this area is the significant contribution of positive peer relationships to young people's wellbeing and resilience (Noble & McGrath, 2012). Analysing data from a qualitative survey, Bell and Holmes (2011) observe that students report that making connections and forming bonds are the most important aspects of outdoor adventure programs.

Social groups typically contain status differences, but within outdoor experiences, these differences are discouraged to create equal status through a willingness to share the basic human quality of respect (Dudman et al., 2019; Kendall & Rodger, 2015). The equatingof status can provide a powerful sense of connection. What this element of SEL illustrates is that reported benefits are based on strong and immediate feelings of belonging and an ability to be authentic within a new status system where a group shares power among participants ina just and equitable manner (Bell et al., 2014). The goal in this aspect of SEL is to promote positive and effective exchanges with others and ultimately relationships that last over time (Denham & Brown, 2010). Apart from the need for positive relationships with others throughout life, developingrelationships with 'others' in schooling is important (Joseph & Strain, 2004; McGrath & Noble, 2010; Noble & McGrath, 2012). Not only does relationship development enhance theindividuals' wellbeing but it also addresses curricular outcomes in the areas of General Capabilities and Cross Curricular priorities such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Sustainability and Physical, Personal and Social learning.

Martin and Thomas (2000) suggest a framework for understanding Outdoor Education as developing more intimate human-nature relationships. These views of Outdoor Education are reinforced by Preston and Griffiths (2004) who suggest that Outdoor Education has the ultimate goal of creation and maintenance of healthy, positive, sustainable relationships between people and the natural environment. Mitten (2009) affirms this philosophy, detailing that it is time to appropriately blur the lines between Outdoor Education and leadership and environmental education to help leaders understand the contributions of the natural world to human development, health and wellbeing. Martin (2014) observed that students were clear that relationships developed most with specific places as a consequence of extended and repeated shared experience and identifies relationships with nature as a foundation for wellbeing in education.

Physical experience in nature has a high importance rating amongst researchers and practitioners in relation to specific wellbeing benefits (Raffan, 1993; Nisbet et al., 2008; Brymer et al., 2010). This is reflected by Kellert (2005) who proposes that young people needto actively engage with the natural world "repeatedly and in multiple ways to mature effectively" (p. 4). As the leading voice for the outdoors in Victoria, the organisation Outdoors Victoria advocate that outdoor activity is a highly efficient way of increasing mental and physical health, asserting that students learn better when outdoor and nature-based experiences are a regular and integrated part of their education (Outdoors Victoria, ,n.d). Mitten (2009) observes our dependence on nature for our human identity, personal fulfilment, emotional, cognitive, aesthetic and spiritual development and identifies physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual and societal benefits of contact with nature. Addressing the lack of contact with nature in contemporary society, Hartig et al. (2003), Pryor et al. (2005) and Peel and Richards (2005) have identified a large and diverse variety of physical and mental wellbeing as a result of contact with nature. Szczepanski (2009) has specifically observed advanced motor fitness, improved cognitive development, and an increase of the

capacity to deal with adversity.

Outdoor Education engages students in practical and active learning experiences in natural environments and settings typically beyond the school classroom. In these environments, students develop deeper human–nature relationships through direct experience (Polley & Atkin, 2014). This aligns with the earlier work of Thomas (2005) who specifies that adventure activities are a powerful medium to elicit emotional connections to the natural world and are very effective as a way of building profound relationships between people and nature.

Alignment of literature to current research.

Considerations from the review of literature have emerged that future research shouldseek to understand more about why different programs and different participants achieve different outcomes. While overall outcomes are useful as a general guide, detailed information about the effects is needed. The findings of a longitudinal mixed methods evaluation of Learning Away conducted by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) from 2008 to2015, indicate that it would be valuable for future outdoor education research to further explore: the longer-term impacts of residential experiences; effective strategies for reinforcing and embedding learning; the impact on students' health and emotional wellbeing;and the benefits of residential experiences in the non-formal youth sector (Kendall & Rodger, 2015). Neill (2002) suggested that there has been a lack of high-quality research reviews conducted that are applicable to both researchers and practitioners, and that professional outdoor educators could benefit from knowing more about research results. This supports Lugg (1999) who has identified a need for further research relating to clarity, purpose and content of Outdoor Education in schools and the curriculum and pedagogical characteristicsthat make Outdoor Education distinctive and significantly different to other subjects or learning areas. Aligning with Brookes (2002), who identified a

need for further research relating to a critical rationale for Outdoor Education, Martin (2014) acknowledges the complexities of consolidating understandings in Outdoor Education and proposed further research in this area.

Neill (2002) outlined that given the wide variation of outcomes between different types of programs it is critical that future research should be undertaken to document in much greater detail the nature of the programs being conducted. More research is needed to confirm the teaching and learning strategies that could be prioritised in the education of future outdoor education leaders (Thomas, 2019). Neill (2002) also highlights that further investigation is needed regarding the influence of individual differences on outcomes and that Outdoor Education programming methods need to receive greater attention in research.

The area of wellbeing has been highlighted as a major blank spot (Wagner, 2010) in education, particularly Outdoor Education. White (2007) acknowledges that there are deficiencies in providing for student's wellbeing and identifies a lack of authority on wellbeing, suggesting that there is no community of experts to turn to for support and advice.Pryor et al. (2005) explicitly highlight a lack of research relating to wellbeing outcomes of Outdoor Education, proposing that research is needed on the process, impact and outcomes ofprograms on participants' health, wellbeing and learning outcomes. Nisbet et al. (2008) identified a lack of research relating to the wellbeing benefits of contact with nature. This builds on the views presented by Neill and Heubeck (1998) who indicated that there is a lackof research in the field of Outdoor Education in general and specifically identified a gap in research literature relating to wellbeing and Outdoor Education. Noble and McGrath (2012) have worked in the area of wellbeing and identified a lack of consolidated understandings inthis area, suggesting that a clearer, more specific and robust definition of student wellbeing would more effectively guide educational policy and teaching practices to enhance the wellbeing of students.

Pryor et al. (2005) have identified many gaps in knowledge and indicated that there is

a need for more research into the benefits of Outdoor Education. Supporting this view, Mitten (2009) identified a deficiency in knowledge relating to the impact of nature in Outdoor Education and suggested that the outcomes of Outdoor Education have been overlooked and undervalued. James and Williams (2017) proposed that further research is required on the unique and subjective experiences of individuals and groups concerning how and why school-based, experiential, Outdoor Education might be beneficial. This highlights the need for more research in this field and its importance for the future development of Outdoor Education.

Nicol (2002) recommended further research in Outdoor Education to add to a scant theoretical and research base and provide further data to support the establishment of robust philosophical foundations for Outdoor Education as a field. This is reinforced by Gray and Martin (2012) who pose that the short history of research efforts in Outdoor Education compared to other influences and disciplines is limiting. Neill (2002) suggested that future empirical studies in Outdoor Education be treated as mixed mode studies with in-depth qualitative descriptions of the program process. Pryor et al. (2005) identified a lack of research on the interrelationships present in Outdoor Education which is supported by Martin (2014) who has identified gaps in research relating to human-nature relationships. Both Josselson (1995) and Brymer et al. (2010) have highlighted a need for further research in this area.

Gray and Martin (2012) suggested that ACARA has a blind-spot when it comes to embracing the positive dimensions of human-nature interaction. They also identify a blind spot in exploring health and well-being in the Outdoor Education literature. The current study aims to address some of these blank spots (Wagner, 2010) in relation to wellbeing, with the intent of exposing blind spots (Wagner, 2010) in the field as a form of reflexivity. Building on the work of James and Williams (2017), whose research study goes beyond the simplistic question “Is school-based experiential outdoor education beneficial?”, the current research

seeks to capture both teacher's perspectives and participation-based observations through the analysis of their responses regarding *how* and *why* it is beneficial. It is hoped that findings will contribute to Outdoor Education being conceptualised in innovative ways to stimulate critical discourse and strengthen the field so that it may realise its potential and best serve society (Dyment & Potter, 2015). This will add to the theoretical and knowledge base of Outdoor Education as a field of research and practice.

Literature review summary

A review of literature related to curriculum theory has informed the current research by describing the implications of initiating broad scale curriculum change in relation to Outdoor Education in Australia. Due to the high diversity of definitions and perceptions regarding the key elements of Outdoor Education in secondary schooling, a review of literature relating to definitions of Outdoor Education has provided a foundation for the development of contextual definitions for Outdoor Education throughout the current research. Reviewing the literature relating to policy contexts for Outdoor Education have informed the current research by exploring the overarching effect of policy on curriculum development on Outdoor Education. This review of literature regarding learning outcomes unique to Outdoor Education highlights the importance placed on differentiating between discipline areas by the governing bodies for curriculum in Australia. It also demonstrates that Outdoor Education provides opportunities and outcomes which are not present in any other learning area.

Reviewing literature related to the holistic nature of Outdoor Education and it's contribution to the development of SEL and wellbeing has informed the current research by presenting Outdoor Education as a complete learning experience. This is also the case with Outdoor Education literature regarding relationship development which in this context is based on the self, others and environment. In total, this literature review highlights the need for further research to reveal gaps in knowledge throughout the field of Outdoor Education.

Methodology and Research Aims

Researchers in education should know how their work is informed and justified by particular educational theories (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) and how their practice is guided by theoretical and data generated choices in defining the research problem (Zipin, 1999). Drawing on Dewey's theories of practice (Shulman, 1998), this research is underpinned by the view that learning is a social process (Kim, 2001) and as such the importance of culture and context has been considered throughout this research. This study has been undertaken with the view that individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and with the environment in which they live (Blake et al., 2008).

This study is based on an integrated framework developed by the researcher where the researcher is a theorist-practitioner (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). The process involved seeking local understandings and strategies, rather than universal knowledge and methods (Hinchey, 2008). This research has been approached from within an interpretivist paradigm where qualitative data has been collected which is directly relevant to a specific context (Flick, 2009). Aligned with the autoethnographic principle of treating research as a *political, socially-just and socially-conscious act* (Ellis et al., 2011), data was collected "by means of participation, self-observation, interview, and document review", verified by "triangulating sources and contents" and analysed "to decipher the cultural meanings of events, behaviors, and thoughts" (Chang, 2016 p. 4).

A case study methodology is most appropriate (Silverman, 2013) because a single case has been examined to provide insight into the learning outcomes of Outdoor Education. The suitability of a case study is reinforced by Yin (2009) in relation to the full variety of evidence being examined for this research including reflections, documents and interviews (Ary et al., 2009) as the process is exploring how events, processes and activities are perceived by participants.

There are six elements of this research which define it as a casestudy:

1. It's purpose to portray, analyse and interpret the uniqueness of real individuals and situations through accessible accounts;
2. To catch the complexity and situatedness of behaviour;
3. To contribute to action and intervention and to present and represent reality – to give a sense of 'being there';
4. It's focus on individuals and local situations, a unique instance, a single case and bounded phenomena and systems including: individuals, groups, roles, organisations and community;
5. Key terms including individuality, uniqueness, in depth analysis and portrayal, interpretive and inferential analysis, subjective, descriptive, analytical, understanding specific situations, sincerity, complexity and particularity; and
6. It's characteristics being in-depth, detailed data from a wide data source, reflectivity and reflexivity in relation to what can be learned from this particular case (Cohen et al., 2007)

Because the context is unique, the case study provides an appropriate framework from whichto investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in this educational situation (Cohen et al., 2007). This case study has an emphasis on the importance of those pedagogies that foster the combining of theory and practice in its local context (Shulman, 1998). It strives to portray 'what it is like' to be in the particular circumstances of the research subject and to provide a thick descriptionof participants lived experiences of, thoughts about, and feelings regarding their unique context (Cohen et al., 2007). The achievement of the aims of this research are supported through the implementation of curriculum analysis and interviews in the field of Outdoor Education. Thepurpose of the curriculum analysis is to identify mandated curriculum requirements and perspectives of Outdoor Education in relation to secondary

school curriculums on a National, State and local level. This research approach also aligns with the recommendation of earlier investigations for the undertaking of future research relating to defining Outdoor Education within secondary school curriculum (Martin, 2008, 2014). The expert interviews were aimed to elicit narratives related to perceptions and definitions of Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice, Outdoor Education curriculum, and outcomes of Outdoor Education. Thiswas facilitated to describe discourse within the field and inform the development of theories and questions to be explored throughout the Study.

Aligning with the ethical research requirements of confidentiality and anonymity, the subject school for the case study is referred to by the pseudonym Urban Independent School (UIS). Study 2, the UIS case study is aimed at providing a rich description of teachers and students lived experiences of the Outdoor Education program at UIS as well as their impressions and perceptions of the outcomes of the program. The aim of interviews with accompanying teachers is to explore their differing perceptions of Outdoor Education as curriculum and to provide expert judgements regarding the relationship development of their students. These interviews also aim to uncover teaching and learning outcomes of Outdoor Education which are not visible in current curriculum. The aims of the focus group were to support the triangulation of data from the preceding phases of the research and to provided data to further inform the case study.

The general aim of this research was to increase understandings of student relationship development through Outdoor Education. This necessitated the appropriate positioning of Outdoor Education as a pedagogy within curriculum and explicating itsoutcomes.

Four over-arching sub-questions were investigated as follows:

1. *What is the nature of Outdoor Education in contemporary secondary schooling*?
2. *Where should middle school Outdoor Education be positioned in secondary school curriculum*?
3. *Are there further outcomes of middle school Outdoor Education which are not included in formal curriculum*?
4. *In what ways does Outdoor Education contribute to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and environment*?

Through the exploration of Definitions, Curriculum and Outcomes in middle school Outdoor Education, this research aims to contribute to the clarification and consolidation of understandings regarding these elements and address ongoing debates regarding the nature of Outdoor Education in secondary schooling. Data addressing each of the research questions was sourced from one, or a combination of the research methods as per Table 1, Research question data table.

Table 1- Research question data source table

Research Question	Curriculum document analysis	Expert interviews	Accompanying teacher interviews	Focus Group
What is the nature of Outdoor Education in contemporary secondary schooling?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Where should middle school Outdoor Education be positioned in secondary school curriculum?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Are there further outcomes of middle school Outdoor Education which are not included in formal curriculum?	NA	✓	✓	✓
In what ways does Outdoor Education contribute to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and environment?	NA	✓	✓	✓

Methods and Results

To provide both an overview of the field in general and a specific contextual analysis, the current research has been conducted as two separate studies. Study 1 is a domain evaluation consisting of two phases. Phase 1 constituted a content analysis of current mandated curriculum for middle school secondary schools while phase 2 sought the views and perceptions of recognised and respected experts in the field through a series of open-ended interviews. Study 2 is a contextual case study based on data drawn from a range of methods and data sources directly related to the case. The two phases of the case study involved interviews with specific teachers and a targeted focus group consisting of members from phase 1 of the case study. The findings from eachresearch method are presented individually and sequentially throughout this report. They are then combined to provide the foundation for the general discussion to address the four over- arching research questions.

Study 1 – Domain evaluation research design

For this exploratory qualitative investigation, Study 1 incorporated two phases. Phase 1 consisted of a document analysis of current Outdoor Education curriculum while Phase 2 took the form of interviews with recognised experts in the field of Outdoor Education. Phase 1 of this study involved a curriculum document analysis as a qualitative research method of data collection and analysis (Atkinson & Coffey, 1997; Berg, 2004,2007; Hodder, 2000; Prior, 2003). “The use of documents as sources of evidence has a long and worthy tradition in the empirical social sciences” (Prior, 2008 p. 112). Document analysis was used as a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents that entailed finding, selecting, appraising, and synthesising the data contained within them (Bowen, 2009). Content analysis of curriculum documents highlights explicit components of Outdoor Education curriculum, identifies curriculum gaps and exposes blank and blind spots (Wagner,2010) in curriculum. This addresses the research questions in relation to current curriculum

documentation. As suggested by Cohen et al. (2011), documentary research has been allied to good effect with other research methods in this study.

Phase 2 of this study was a series of six open-ended interviews with recognised Outdoor Education experts as defined by their extensive experience in the field and current involvement with Outdoor Education theory and academic development. Participants were sourced from a diverse range of sectors and educational contexts throughout the field offering a variety of perspectives and a range of views. Within qualitative studies, open-ended interviews are a highly accepted method for researching participants' perceptions, opinions and ideas (Bryman, 2006). They have the advantage of allowing the researcher to probe the participant in depth and allow more detailed findings (Muijs, 2006). As representative experts in their field, participants were invited to take part in a semi structured interview to gain insight into their perceptions of Outdoor Education. The methodological rationale of open-ended interviews is that they allowa rich, deep and textured picture which is locally produced in, and through, the method of producing topic-initiating and follow-up questions (Rapley, 2001).

Phase 1 – Curriculum document analysis

This phase incorporates a *content analysis* of existing documentation for Outdoor Education curriculum and policy in secondary schooling (Ary et al., 2009). One of the purposes of content analysis as described by Ary et al. (2009) is "to discover the relative importance of, or interest in, certain topics*"* (Page. 464). This is the case for Phase1 of this study along with exploratory and descriptive purposes to examine explicit current curriculum (Cheng-Man Lau, 2001; Shagoury & Miller Power, 2012; Titscher et al., 2000) in National, State and local contexts.

Krippendorff (2018) describes content analysis as a *scientific description of the content of communication*. In this case the communication is from governing authorities and

advisory bodies in the field of education. The content includes mandated curriculum requirements and perspectives of Outdoor Education in relation to secondary school curriculum on a National, State and local level. Content analysis provided an opportunity to go outside the immediately observable physical vehicles of communication allowing the unobservable context of the data to be analysed (Krippendorff, 2018).

Content analysis design.

Content analysis is a technique that supports researchers to explore their own context for enquiry (Krippendorff, 2018) and in the current study, the researcher has adopted an interpretive approach as recommended by Jupp and Norris (1993). Owen (2014) notes that documents are produced in social settings and are always to be regarded as collective (social) products therefore this study has been undertaken with a belief that the documents being analysed have been socially constructed. This content analysis sought to analyse data within a specific context relative to the meanings that are attributed to them by stakeholders (Krippendorff, 2018).

One of the most widespread uses of content analysis in the field of education is to infer the importance writers assign to particular subject matter contained within the content (Krippendorff, 2018). This phase of the study is included in this category where the importance of Outdoor Education within official curriculum is explored and explained on a National, State and individual level.

Throughout the process of the content analysis and as prescribed by Ary et al. (2009) there was a need to establish the authenticity of the document such as its history, its completeness and its original purpose. In this case, the documents being analysed are the documents containing the official mandated curriculum requirements for secondary schooling in Australia. As has been observed by Krippendorff (2018) in other studies, this content analysis has shed light on the kind of values expressed and attitudes held on particular issues

by a variety of stakeholders, in this case the governing bodies of education for Australia, ACARA, VCAA and the individual school participating in this research. Cohen et al. (2011) highlight one of the particular problems with documentary sources in relation to education is that they tend in the main to record approaches adopted by policy makers and administrators, and so may privilege a top-down view of education. This is certainly the case here where the curriculum has been developed on a political level which is far removed from the context of the facilitators of said curriculum. This has led to differentiated understandings of curriculum implementation by a diverse range of stakeholders within the field of secondary school education. The individuals' interpretation of curriculum is dependent on their context within the field along with their individual agendas and those of the body that they represent. This phenomenon has also been identified by Cohen et al. (2007) as one of the factors to be considered when conducting content analyses which they describe as *the role of the community of discourse in the reception of the text*. The community of discourse in this case is the field of secondary school education curriculum as a whole as the text is produced by the governing authority and is relevant to all secondary schools rather than being specific to an individual school or learning community.

This stage of the study implemented a modified version of the content analysis model presented by Krippendorff (1989). The procedure commenced with the description of the context that underpins the content analysis. This was followed by a process of 'unitising' which involves defining and identifying units of analysis. Coding was used to describe the units and categorise them in relation to the analytical constructs chosen. Inferences could then be drawn in relation to Outdoor Education content within secondary school curriculum. As suggested by Krippendorff (2018), data generated from content analysis can be paralleled with data drawn from other research techniques to enhance the analyst's confidence in the validity of the findings. This procedure was adopted for this phase of the study.

Data Collection.

Data collection for this study involved the detailed examination of documents related to secondary school curriculum requirements in local, State, national and international contexts. As described by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) documents used for review often fall within two broader categories: formal and informal. Policy documents are typically regarded as formal documents while the responses to formal policies by various stakeholders are more aptly characterised as informal documents. This phase of the study includes the analysis of both formal and informal documents.

Fourteen documents were sourced and analysed as illustrated in Table 2, Document analysis data sources. Four formal curriculum documents for secondary school were used to represent curriculum requirements on National, State and individual school levels. Four academic documents were used to provide perspectives on the relationships between Outdoor Education and the Australian Curriculum F-10. Three documents were used for perspectives of a State level, in this case, Victoria; and, three documents were used to represent views on Outdoor Education from an international perspective.

Document selection criteria.

Ary et al. (2009) acknowledge that documents are good sources of data which provide descriptive information because they are stable sources of data which can help ground a study in its context. Krippendorff (2018) proposes that the most obvious sources of data for content analysis are texts to which meanings are conventionally attributed. Wesley (2010) asserts that "qualitative document analysts ought to provide reasonable access to their raw materials" and that "ideally documents should be placed in the public domain" (Wesley, 2010 p. 11). Considering this, the documents used for this analysis are what Merriam (1998) describes as public records and have been selected considering the authorship of the document, the

audience of the documents, and the outcomes of the document as recommended by Cohen et al. (2007).

Table 2- Document analysis data sources.

Document type	**Data source document**	**Data collected**	**Context**
Formal curriculum	CCCC. (2016). Outdoor Education Policy, Outdoor Education booklet, unpublished, Caroline Chisholm Catholic College, Braybrook, Victoria.	Documented Outdoor Education Curriculum for participating school	Local
	DETV Department of Education and Training (n.d.) Safety Guidelines for Education Outdoors, http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/Pages/outdooractivity.aspx.	DETV Outdoor Education requirements	State
	VCAA. (2011). Outdoor and Environmental Studies: Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design 2012-2016. Melbourne: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.	VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies learning outcomes	
State advisory body	http://outdoorsvictoria.org.au	Victorian perspectives on Outdoor Education	
	http://www.voea.vic.edu.au/	State perspectives on Outdoor Education	
Formal curriculum	ACARA - Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. (2012) The Shape of the Australian Curriculum v3.0, (http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/The_Shape_of_the_Australian_Curriculum_V3.pdf), viewed February 2016.	Australian Curriculum Outdoor Education requirements	National
	http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/		
National advisory body	Outdoor Education Australia. (2012) Guidelines for R–12 Outdoor Education curriculum, 2012 OEA, Pelagos Productions Revised 5 June 2012, http://www.outdooreducationaustralia.org.au/curric.html , viewed February 2016.	Australian perspectives on Outdoor Education	
Academic advisory	Hewison T and Martin P, 2009. Outdoor Education and the National Curriculum. Report. Outdoor Education Group, Eildon.	Outdoor Educations relationship with Australia's National Curriculum	
	Martin, P. (2010). Outdoor education and the national curriculum in Australia. Australian Journal of Outdoor Education, 14(2), 3.		
	Polley. S, Atkin. J, (2014) Advice for Outdoor Education in the Australian Curriculum, proceedings of 18th National Outdoor Education Conference, 14 - 16 April 2014, Prince Alfred College, Adelaide, SA		
International advisory	LTS (2010) curriculum for excellence through outdoor learning, Learning and Teaching Scotland, Glasgow.	International perspective of Outdoor Education	Internatio nal
	Panel, O. E. A. (2005). High Quality Outdoor Education'. The English Outdoor Council.		
	Prouty, D., Panicucci, J., & Collinson, R. (2007). Adventure education: theory and applications. Human Kinetics.		

Documents related to curriculum policy on international, national, State and local levels were selected in relation to general selection criteria. Selection criteria for documents include that documents must be current and explicitly relate to secondary school curriculum in the area of Outdoor Education. Documents were sourced by searching relevant government agency websites and consulting with policy experts. These documents were related to, for example, national and State policy, local interpretations of these policies and recommended curriculum content and processes.

Document review and data extraction procedure.

Documents were reviewed using a protocol based on a modified version of the document analysis process presented by Ary et al. (2009). The phenomena to be investigated in this content analysis are the inclusion of Outdoor Education in secondary school curriculum and outcomes which may be addressed through learning in Outdoor Education. This addresses step one of the content analysis process which they refer to as *specifying the phenomenon to be investigated*. The next step of the process was *selecting the media from which the observations are to be made.* In this case, fourteen documents were used as the content for this analysis as per Appendix 4 - Research methods summary table.

The protocol was used to extract relevant sections of text which were categorised by reference to Outdoor Education within the curriculum or reference to outcomes which may be achieved through Outdoor Education learning processes. Step three in the content analysis process was *formulating exhaustive and mutually exclusive coding categories* then coding the data into these categories. The final step in this process was to *analyse the data*, (Ary et al., 2009, page 465) the details of which are described in the data analysis section of this this phase of the study. In total data collected from this phase of the study generated 57912 words equating to 10242 lines or 151 pages of text.

Data analysis.

Data was managed and analysed thematically (O'Leary, 2004) as a way of focusing, identifying and describing common themes or ideas within this set of data (Guest et al., 2012). As is the case with qualitative research, data was being analysed from the time it was collected and recorded (Cohen et al., 2005). As highlighted by Boyatzis (1998), coding must be undertaken before analysis can happen effectively therefore NVivo software was used for data management and coding (Beightol et al., 2012). Initially coding of the data was undertaken (Boyatzis, 1998) prior to it being examined, compared and conceptualised as a form of comparative analysis (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Titscher et al., 2000). Identified themes were discussed with the researcher's supervisors as a form of theme substantiation throughout the data analysis process. The data set was then reconstructed highlighting links, similarities and differences (Bryman & Burgess, 1994), working with multiple perspectives that correspond to the multiplicity of coexisting, and sometimes directly competing, points of view (Bourdieu, 1999).

A coding list was developed as a form of data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Open coding (Brown et al., 2002; Charmaz, 2000; Goulding, 1999) was implemented as a process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data. Following this, axial coding (Charmaz, 2000) procedures were facilitated whereby data was put back together in new ways by making connections between categories (Bryman & Burgess, 1994) as a form of data display (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Through an ongoing process of comparing and contrasting the data, connections were made between these sets of relations (Cuban & Spiliopoulos, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and relationships between and across these elements were explored (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) as a form of data verification (Miles & Huberman, 1984) with the aim of creating meaning by looking for patterns and irregularities.

Wesley (2010) describes a three-stage process for the analysis of qualitative data. The first step requires the researcher to take a broad overview of the raw materials, in search of general themes. This "open coding" stage involves reading through a smaller sampling of the available documents, recording any noticeable patterns in these texts. A second stage of "axial-coding" allows the researcher to review the entire sample of documents, categorising data into the various themes identified in the initial phase of open-coding. The third and final "selective-coding" stage, involves a search for mis-coded passages and discrepant evidence. By following this three-stage process, qualitative document analysts are more likely to produce trustworthy and convincing interpretations of their data. Through this three-stage process, the researcher was able to systematically identify several themes, refine their content, and support their existence with evidence drawn from the documents, themselves (Wesley, 2010).

The categories were given titles designed to represent their common theme. Through a process of constant comparison between the emerging themes, the categories were refined so that the main themes represented within the data could be identified (Davidson, 2001). As a result, three core themes emerged, Curriculum, Definitions and Outcomes, each of which contain a number of sub-categories and/or themes as per Appendix 5 – Content Analysis thematic analysis map. For example, the data entry of 'Students develop skills to work independently and to show initiative, learning to be conscientious, delaying gratification and persevering in the face of setbacks and frustrations', was coded within the core theme of Outcomes, in the theme Relationships and in the sub-category Self.

Findings

The intent of this analysis was to outline the current framework of Outdoor Education within prescribed curriculum for secondary schools in Victoria. This was undertaken by identifying elements of Outdoor Education which are present across secondary school

curriculum in National, State and local contexts. It also highlighted explicit components of Outdoor Education curriculum and identified curriculum gaps. The research process provided an opportunity to determine where Outdoor Education learning outcomes are present in curriculum requirements of other subjects. All data generated throughout this content analysis was situated in one of three core themes; *Definitions, Curriculum*, or *Outcomes*.

Core theme: Definitions.

Theme: Defining Outdoor Education.

Defining Outdoor Education provides explicit definitions of Outdoor Education within the data. This theme is comprised of 27 data entries. Seventeen entries provide comparisons between international, National, State and local definitions for Outdoor Education. Five entries provide descriptions of Outdoor Education from a National perspective and two from a Victorian perspective while three data entries provide definitions which relate to wellbeing.

In the Australian National Curriculum, Outdoor Education is referred to as Outdoor Learning. Its defining factors are specified as integrated learning across the curriculum in natural environments; the opportunity to gain unique and specific benefits; the development of positive relationships with others and with the environment through interaction with the natural world; practical and active learning experiences in natural environments and settings typically beyond the school boundary; promoting lifelong physical activity and developing movement competence and enhancing interpersonal skills.

Victorian Curriculum F-10 describes Outdoor Education as engaging students in practical and active learning experiences in natural environments and settings typically beyond the school boundary. Elements of learning in Outdoor Education draw on content

from across the Victorian Curriculum: Foundation to Year 10, including HPE, Geography, Science and Personal and Social Capability.

OEA also describes Outdoor Education as interdisciplinary. They identify outcomes in numerous other areas of curriculum. They express that HPE, Humanities and Social Sciences, Geography, Science, General Capabilities and Cross-curriculum priorities can be organised and delivered through learning in the outdoors (F–6) and Outdoor Education (7–10). Outdoor learning not only addresses content across several learning areas, it is also uniquely placed to address general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities of the Australian Curriculum F-10. In particular, these are Personal and Social Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, Ethical Understanding, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, and Sustainability. There is scope to link to focus areas such as: challenge and adventure activities; safety, health benefits of physical activity; food and nutrition; mental health and wellbeing; and lifelong physical activities.

In the context of the participating school, Outdoor Education is described as developing essential personal and social capabilities such as communication; resilience; self-confidence; leadership; teamwork; goal setting; personal autonomy and initiative through the development of positive relationships with the self, others and the environment.

Core theme: Curriculum.

Theme: Outdoor Education within curriculum.

Outdoor Education within curriculum outlines the presence and location of Outdoor Education within specified secondary school curriculum. This theme contains 44 data entries. Four entries were in relation to Australia's National Curriculum, three entries focused on the State curriculum for Victoria and four were related to the local context of the individual school. Fourteen entries identified elements of Outdoor Education in the area of cross curriculum priorities and nineteen entries identified elements in general capabilities.

In the Australian Curriculum F-10, Outdoor Learning is present although it is not as a curriculum area. It exists as a portfolio in the curriculum connections section of the resources folder from the home page https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au in the form of Outdoor Learning. In the government curriculum policy, Outdoor Education as a distinct curriculum area is virtually absent, represented very minimally as a small part of the ACARA curriculum policy for the learning area of *Health and Physical Education*. Outdoor Education is not recognised as a learning area within the Victorian Curriculum F-10. Regardless of this, on an individual school level, Department of Education and Training Victoria (DETV) guidelines are followed in relation to environment, staffing and qualifications, location and activity risk management plans.

Outdoor Education curriculum policy at UIS advocates the idea that Outdoor Education at a National level could benefit every child in Australia as recommended by OEA. In the participating school Outdoor Education is accepted and promoted as a distinct discipline and compulsory learning area as part of the core curriculum from years seven through ten. Outdoor Education is undertaken annually by all students from years seven to ten and offered as an elective in year eleven and twelve through the VCE subject Outdoor and Environmental Studies and the VET elective Outdoor Recreation. All Outdoor Education at UIS has an emphasis on the development of positive relationships and a focus on environmental empathy while providing opportunities for each student in the school to experience success through the completion of experiential learning adventure activities.

Theme: Outdoor Education curriculum.

Outdoor Education curriculum provides descriptions and definitions of explicit Outdoor Education specific curriculum in secondary school. This theme consists of ten data

entries. One entry represents curriculum in a National context, four entries relate to the curriculum for State of Victoria, three represent the curriculum of the participating school andtwo entries focus on the curriculum of OEA, the nationwide leading advisory body for Outdoor Education curriculum.

As a result of a deficit in explicit mandated curriculum for Outdoor Education in middle school secondary school, a suggested curriculum framework is provided by OEA. This curriculum is aligned with Outdoor Learning requirements within the HPE learning area of the National Curriculum for Australia and curriculum for the State of Victoria. OEA provide two sets of recommended curricula, one that encompasses years seven and eight, and another for years nine and ten.

In the curriculum recommended by OEA for years seven and eight, it is expected that students will develop skills and knowledge to undertake journeys in natural environments. They will develop greater responsibility for self and skills of interdependence within the group immersing themselves in natural environments for longer than they have previously. They develop strategies to safely manage minor incidents in the outdoors and other places. Through reflection and introspection, they explore their place in the world and in nature, promoting wellbeing, connection and balance to life. Exploring natural environments from a field naturalist perspective, they learn about the role and place of different species in ecosystems. In year nine and ten, students typically develop a deeper understanding of, and reasons for, codes of conduct in outdoor recreation activities. They explore more adventurous activities as a way ofexploring self and nature, and apply lessons learned to everyday living. Students are increasingly required to assess and manage risk in recreation and everyday life. Assuming leadership roles in group management, they develop the knowledge and skills to prepare for and participate in an independent lightweight journey with adult guidance and supervision.

Students develop an understanding of the impact of decision-making by administrative bodies and governments on natural environments via the investigation of issues relating to conservation. Through conservation service students develop increased self-efficacy and citizenry towards the natural environment and develop their own ideas and strategies to support such efforts (http://outdooreducationaustralia.org.au/education/sequencing).

At the participating school Outdoor Education is core compulsory curriculum. It is undertaken annually by all students and is facilitated as a sequential four-year course. Stage 1, the Year 7 camp focuses on participation and fun. The activities have been selected to provide enjoyment and to develop the necessary skills for safely participating in outdoor activities. Stage 2, the Year 8 camp is an aquatic camp. This program is designed to expose the students to the marine environment and give them the experience and skills necessary to enjoy aquatic activities safely while providing an opportunity to experience the natural world in a variety of settings. During Stage 3, the Year 9 students undertake an initiative-based program at the College's Outdoor Education facility. The activities are designed to extend the students' camping and outdoor skills as well as teamwork and initiative, testing the group's and the individual's self-imposed boundaries. The program concentrates on activities that promote aspects of personal development and incorporates an environmental based action project. Stage 4, the Year 10 program incorporates a one day Nordic skiing experience. At this stage of the program, students have experienced the natural environment in a number of settings, providing them with the scaffolding needed to pursue outdoor recreation and adventure as well as environmental education as they enter their senior years of schooling. At each year level, the Outdoor Education program at UIS addresses Victorian Curriculum F-10 requirements in ten curriculum areas. These include Critical and Creative Thinking; Ethical Capability; HPE; English; Geography; History; Personal and Social Capability; Science; and Religious Education.

Core theme: Outcomes.

Theme: HPE curriculum outcomes addressed by Outdoor Education.

Outdoor Education outcomes in HPE curriculum lists Outdoor Education outcomes which exist within specified HPE curriculum. This theme consists of 26 data entries, of which nineteen focus on National curriculum and seven focus on the State curriculum for Victoria.

Outdoor Education in the context of UIS has outcomes in Victorian F-10 HPE curriculum in the areas of; being healthy; safe and active; moving the body; communicating and interacting for health and wellbeing; understanding movement; contributing to healthy and active communities; learning through movement; and food and nutrition. Appendix 6, Outdoor Education outcomes In the Australian National Curriculum consists of a list of nineteen specific National Curriculum outcomes which may be addressed through Outdoor Education.

Theme: Relationships.

Relationships relates to outcomes which contribute to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and environment. Forty-eight data entries make up this theme. Fourteen entries relate to relationships with the self, twelve relate to others and fourteen relate to the environment. This theme also includes eight data entries which relate to links between the different types of relationships.

OEA identifies development of the self as specific outcomes of Outdoor Education. They propose that students are able to develop higher levels of skill and have greater capacity for endurance, they are able to develop greater responsibility for self. They refer specifically to pre-VCE secondary school where they acknowledge that in these years, students are increasingly required to assess and manage risk in both recreation and everyday lives, capable of developing the knowledge and skills to prepare for and participate in an independent lightweight journey with adult guidance and supervision.

Victorian Curriculum F-10 identifies self-awareness and management as a set of outcomes which form part of the general capabilities of personal and social capability. The Self-Awareness and Management strand involves students in identifying and describing the factors that influence their emotional responses. Students develop the knowledge and skills to regulate, manage and monitor their emotions. They develop a realistic sense of their personal strengths and have a realistic assessment of their own achievements and a sense of self-knowledge and self-confidence. They identify personal characteristics and interpret their own emotional states, needs and perspectives. Students develop skills to work independently and to show initiative, learning to be conscientious, delaying gratification and persevering in the face of setbacks and frustrations.

Identified outcomes of Outdoor Education at the participating school which relate to development of the self include: managing personal risk; responsibility; stewardship; belonging; personal autonomy; self-reliance; food preparation; independence; faith development; reflection; group reflection; self-confidence; initiative; communication; environmental immersion; adventure; decision-making; challenge; opportunity; goal-setting; self-awareness and management; physical activity; and resilience.

The Australian National Curriculum stipulates that on a social level, Outdoor Learning helps students to form and maintain healthy relationships and prepares them for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members. This is an example of the contribution of Outdoor Education can make to the development of positive relationships with others. Through engagement in more adventurous outdoor activities students can learn to gain skills for personal and group well-being. OEA specify that at these levels, students begin to develop skills of interdependence within the group. Interdependence is an example of social awareness and management.

Victorian Curriculum F-10 identifies social-awareness and management as a set of outcomes which form part of the general capabilities of personal and social capability. The Social Awareness and Management strand involves students recognising others' feelings and knowing how and when to assist others. Students learn to show respect for and understand others' perspectives, emotional states and needs. They learn to participate in positive, safe and respectful relationships, defining and accepting individual and group roles and responsibilities. Students gain an understanding of the role of advocacy in contemporary society and build their capacity to critique societal constructs and forms of discrimination. This strand involves students interacting effectively and respectfully with a range of adults and peers. Students learn to negotiate with others; work in teams; positively contribute to groups and collaboratively make decisions; develop leadership skills; resolve conflict and reach positive outcomes. Students develop the ability to initiate and manage successful personal relationships.

At the participating school, outcomes of Outdoor Education which contribute to the development of positive relationships with others have been identified. These include leadership; interdependence; teamwork; communication; initiative; ownership; responsibility; community; resilience; belonging; stewardship; managing personal risk; challenge; self-confidence; goal setting; creativity; problem solving; adventure and opportunity.

The Australian National curriculum highlights that Outdoor Learning engages students in practical and active learning experiences in natural environments and settings, and this typically takes place beyond the school classroom. In these environments, students develop the skills and understandings to move safely and competently while valuing a positive relationship with natural environments and promoting the sustainable use of these environments.

OEA recognise the contribution of Outdoor Education to the development of positive relationships with the environment, acknowledging that students begin to develop skills and knowledge to undertake more extended journeys in natural environments as well as immerse themselves in natural environments for longer. They identify that through short periods of reflective time in natural settings they develop greater knowledge of the role of nature in promoting wellbeing and balance to western living. They are able to assume increased responsibility for the nature and forms of such journeys, and have increased appreciation for the role of vistas and expanse in developing a sense of wonder for the natural world.

The development of positive relationships with the environment are identified in curriculum for the participating school. Students are provided with opportunities for safe journeys in nature while managing personal risk and through a direct immersive experience with nature they develop deeper human-nature relationships. It is noted that this is achieved through adventure; environmental immersion; resilience; self-confidence; challenge; physical activity; interdependence; belonging; responsibility; decision making; initiative and stewardship. Students begin to explore more adventurous activities as a way of exploring self and nature, and the lessons that can be learned for everyday living. Through reflection and introspection they explore their place in the world and in nature, and what positive contributions they might make.

Theme: Wellbeing.

Wellbeing refers to outcomes of Outdoor Education which relate to the development of the wellbeing of participants. This theme contains eleven data entries. Six data entries originated from the curriculum of the participating school. One entry is from National curriculum and four from Victoria's curriculum.

Wellbeing outcomes in the Victorian Curriculum F-10 are explicitly referred. It is noted that the curriculum has a stronger focus on supporting students to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills they require to make healthy, safe and active choices that will enhance their own and others' health and wellbeing.

Outdoor Education curriculum in the participating school is explicitly referred to in formal Wellbeing Links documentation. Numerous wellbeing outcomes have been identified. These include managing personal risk; responsibility; stewardship; belonging; leadership; interdependence; teamwork; communication; initiative; ownership; responsibility; independence; community; resilience; self-reliance; food preparation; faith development; reflection; adventure; self-confidence; environmental immersion; belonging; self-reflection; group reflection; hygiene; challenge; physical activity; goal-setting; motor skill development; problem solving; decision-making; opportunity; and autonomy.

Discussion

The relationship between the Federal, State and individual school curriculums for secondary schools is complex. There are differing definitions of Outdoor Education amongst local, State, National and international contexts although there are core values that are shared. In the Australian National Curriculum, Outdoor Learning is presented in a cross curricular interdisciplinary context and does not exist under the title of Outdoor Education as a curriculum area nor a curriculum component. This presents Outdoor Education as a learning process or pedagogy rather than a discipline area and implies that Outdoor Education is interdisciplinary or cross curriculum rather than a distinct, discrete component of curriculum (Quay, 2016). This raises questions in relation to how Outdoor Education should be facilitated and who by, due to the specialisation of qualifications required for the instruction of many outdoor adventure activities (Martin, 2008).

The document analysis identified that the recognition of Outdoor Education as a discipline area in the Victorian Curriculum F-10 is similar to the National curriculum, where it is only mentioned as a small component or sub-branch of HPE curriculum. Outdoor Education only appears in these curriculum documents under the guise of *outdoor activities* the guidelines for which exist with the purpose of safety, staffing and qualifications rather than curriculum-based learning outcomes (DETV, n.d.) or mandated curriculum requirements.

Review of curriculum policies within UIS, demonstrated that Outdoor Education is highly valued and given importance within the core curriculum of the school even though it has not been prescribed as compulsory curriculum by the governing authority, ACARA. The development of an Outdoor Education policy for the individual school has come about because in contrast to Australian National Curriculum policy and Victorian Curriculum, Outdoor Education in the participating school is recognised as a distinct holistic learning area with specialised outcomes and unique learning opportunities. Conducting content analyses of curriculum documents on all three levels has contributed to the stimulation of critical discourse in Outdoor Education as suggested by Dyment and Potter (2015) with the aim of strengthening the field and identifying discrepancies across curriculum.

Outdoor Education as a component of curriculum was virtually absent from both the National and Victorian State curriculum structures analysed. From the perspective of the national advisory body, OEA, the problem being represented for Outdoor Education is that in the development of the National Curriculum "Outdoor Education was not included in any description of any discipline, general capability or cross-curricula priority" (Polley & Atkin, 2014 p. 1). This has led to a fragmentation of Outdoor Education across a school's curriculum, with its inclusion being ad hoc and typically integrated across a number of different learning areas rather than a distinct learning area.

It has been well documented that Outdoor Education is quite different in its practice and its outcomes to other subjects, and that the socio-cultural imperatives that justify Outdoor Education in a young person's education are different to those used to justify Health or Physical Education (Hewison & Martin, 2009). Unfortunately, it has become common practice in Australian schools to include Outdoor Education as only a small sub-branch of HPE curriculum. This seems to have come about as a result of a combination of an overcrowded curriculum and a lack of definition and unified understanding of what constitutes Outdoor Education (Martin, 2014). Examining Outdoor Education through a different paradigm where it is regarded as a methodology rather than a distinct discipline may be one way to solidify its place in secondary school curriculums while providing opportunitiesto spread the load of curriculum requirements for other subjects through interdisciplinary programs based on Outdoor Education. This extends on the views of Martin and Hewison (2010), Polley and Atkin (2014) and Quay (2016) who suggest that Outdoor Education may be facilitated in a number of different ways.

Data generated through the curriculum content analysis highlights the absence of mandated curriculum for middle school Outdoor Education in Australia's National curriculum. Although Outdoor Education is represented very minimally as a small part of the ACARA curriculum policy for the learning area of *Health and Physical Education*, as a distinct curriculum area it is virtually absent in government curriculum policy. Within the National Curriculum definitions and understandings of Outdoor Education are simplified and often interchanged with the concept of Outdoor Recreation (ACARA, 2012). Outdoor Recreation as a form of outdoor learning represents only a very small component of the set of Outdoor Education principles and practices. This analysis of curriculum is aimed at addressing the need for further research relating to defining Outdoor Education within secondary school curriculum such as those identified by Martin (2008, 2014).

In the Australian Curriculum F-10, Outdoor Learning exists as a portfolio in the curriculum connections section of the resources folder of the Australian Curriculum F-10 home page. Although it is mentioned in the curriculum document, it is not referred to as either a curriculum area or a specific component of curriculum in any form. The Australian National Curriculum outlines the structure for *Outdoor Learning* as consisting of four dimensions; Skills and knowledge; Human–nature relationships; Conservation and sustainability; and Health and wellbeing (ACARA, 2012) although it does not provide any guidance or framework on how these outcomes are to be met.

Within the Victorian Curriculum F-10, Outdoor learning is mentioned in the HPE curriculum. It appears in the *Learning in HPE* section of curriculum and is presented asa way to combine content descriptions across the learning areas and capabilities to create teaching and learning programs. It stipulates that Outdoor Education engages students in practical and active learning experiences in natural environments and settings typically beyond the school boundary and students develop knowledge, understanding and skills to move safely and competently while valuing a positive relationship with and promoting the sustainable use of these environments (DETV, n.d).

Polley and Atkin (2014) advise that since the implementation of the National Curriculum, ACARA has worked in collaboration with OEA to construct advice on how Outdoor Education can intersect with the Australian Curriculum F-10 across all learning areas and cross-curricular priorities, not just HPE. They consider the possibility of Outdoor Education being facilitated as a methodology rather than a discipline area which contrasts with recent discourse in this area (e.g., Martin & Hewison, 2010, OEA, 2012, Polley & Atkin, 2014, Quay, 2016) which identifies Outdoor Education as a distinct discipline. Making this compromise may be a way of legitimising Outdoor Education in what is already a

crowded competitive school curriculum, adding to the strength of the field and offering learning opportunities with outcomes across many if not all other areas of the curriculum.

Although not mandated by the government, the advisory body OEA provides a comprehensive framework for Outdoor Education curriculum in secondary schools (OEA, 2012). This may be used at the individual school's discretion and is not an official curriculum requirement of either the State or National governing body. In relation to the National Curriculum in Australia, if, where and how Outdoor Education is implemented in school's curriculum in Australia is determined by the individual school. This is in contrast to the views of the national advisory body for Outdoor Education, OEA who specify that every child has a right to access quality Outdoor Education as part of a balanced curriculum from pre-school to Year 12 and that Outdoor Education should be included in the National curriculum as a distinct and valued learning discipline (OEA, 2012). The implication here is that Outdoor Education at a national level could benefit every child in Australia.

Outdoor Education at the participating school is based on the framework provided by OEA and is facilitated as a sequential four-year course to be undertaken annually by all students as part of the core compulsory curriculum for the school. This provides another example of the importance of Outdoor Education within the participating school regardless of a perceived lack of value placed on Outdoor Education by the government or other schools.

As presented in the results of this phase of the study, there are 22 outcomes specified in National HPE curriculum which may be achieved through participation in the Outdoor Education program. Due to its lack of presence in mandated curriculum, outcomes of Outdoor Education are not directly referred to in the documentation. Regardless of this, in the Australian National Curriculum it is proposed that Outdoor learning can be instrumental in the teaching and learning of self-reliance, interdependence and leadership along with the

development of an adventurous spirit. In addition to these outcomes, the curriculum acknowledges that Outdoor Education enhances understanding nature through direct experience; and the development of deeper human–nature relationships (ACARA, 2012).

In considering Victorian HPE curriculum, Outdoor Education addresses outcomes in HPE curriculum in the areas of Safety and Challenge and Adventure Activities. Although not specified as Outdoor Education outcomes, there are three specific HPE outcomes addressed by Outdoor Education; VCHPEM157-Understanding movement; VCHPEP131-Contributing to healthy and active communities; and VCHPEM138-Understanding movement (DETV, n.d.). This provides an example of the interdisciplinary application of Outdoor Education, supporting the view that it may be regarded as a pedagogy rather than a discipline area.

Wellbeing outcomes of Outdoor Education are also under-represented in both National and State curriculum documentation even though it has long been known and is well documented that Outdoor Education has psychological, sociological, educational and physical benefits (Brymer et al., 2010; Cobb, 1977; Ewert, 1989; Levitan, 2016; Nisbet et al., 2008; Raffan, 1993; Szczepanski, 2009). Outdoor Education provides an opportunity for increased wellbeing through direct contact with nature in Outdoor Education. This addresses societal issues such as depression, crowding and social isolation identified by Pryor et al. (2005) and "Nature Deficit Disorder" (Brymer et al., 2010 p. 21). A lack of direct contact with nature has been identified by these researchers as a major contributor to such issues. Martin (2014) identified relationships with nature as a foundation for wellbeing in education. This, in combination with Noble and McGraths' (2012) observations that positive peer relationships make a significant contribution to young people's wellbeing and resilience, demonstrates the value of Outdoor Education in relation to increased wellbeing.

Although these outcomes are not specified as curriculum requirements, they do contribute to the holistic development of students and this should be acknowledged by the governing bodies for curriculum. In addition to this there are a number of outcomes relating to personal and social development, human nature relationships, adventure and risk. All of these have been identified as unique to Outdoor Education (Martin, 2010; Polley & Atkin, 2014), but not specified in official curriculum documentation. There are twenty-six specified activities with explicit outcomes that contribute to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and/or environment. Outdoor Education makes a significant contribution to outcomes in the general capabilities and cross curricular priorities of personal and social capability (DETV, n.d; http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/). This is an example of the contribution of Outdoor Education to the development of positive relationships with the self and others.

Outdoor Education also addresses requirements within the Australian National curriculum which specifies that Outdoor learning engages students in practical and active learning experiences in natural environments and settings, and this typically takes place beyond the school classroom (ACARA, 2012). This is an example of the contribution of Outdoor Education to the development of positive relationships with the environment.

Polley and Atkin (2014) provide support for this data, observing that Outdoor Education provides opportunities to develop positive relationships with the environment, others and ourselves through interaction with the natural world.

Summary

In summary the content analysis in this study provided an outline of the presence of Outdoor Education in curriculum as specified by governing authorities on a National, State and local level. It is evident in the data that Outdoor Education is under-represented in

curriculums compared to other, more traditional learning areas. In relation to Australian Government curriculum policy, the problem appears to be the need to sacrifice or compromise some specialised learning areas to be able to define and describe compulsory learning areas in the already complex and overloaded curriculum of Australian schools. From a government perspective, this problem has come about through competition between learning areas for curriculum time, resources and perceived value.

Content analysis of curriculum provides evidence that Outdoor Education contributes to SEL outcomes as specified in Australia's National curriculum in the areas of Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding and Intercultural Understandings within the General Capabilities domain as well as Physical, Personal and Social Learning and Interdisciplinary Learning within the Cross Curriculum Priorities domain. In relation to the individual school curriculum of the participating school in this research, and in contrast to both National and State Outdoor Education discourse, regardless of Government curriculum policies, Outdoor Education is intrinsically valued throughout the college and is explicitly a critical part of the compulsory core curriculum of the school (Gray, 2018). It is undertaken annually by all students and is facilitated as a sequential four-year course which offers twenty-six specified activities with explicit outcomes that contribute to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and/or environment as part of an immersive holistic learning program.

Data generated through this analysis addresses gaps in knowledge related to wellbeing as identified by Noble and McGrath (2012) and Nisbet et al. (2008) as well as providing clarity by describing the purpose and content of Outdoor Education in schools as suggested by Martin (2014). It also addresses the need for further research regarding the outcomes of education as identified by Dyment and Potter (2015) and Martin (2014, 2008) particularly in relation to human-nature relationships.

Phase 2 - Expert interviews.

Phase 2 of the domain evaluation explored the perspectives of experts in the field of Outdoor Education beyond the local context of the research. Interviewing academics and experts in the broader field of Outdoor Education provided a primary data source for the domain evaluation, assisted with describing discourse within the field and informed the development of theories and questions which will be explored during Study 2.

Roulston (2006) describes an 'open-ended qualitative interview' as one in which a researcher poses open-ended questions to participants of research studies, and follows up on responses with further questions. The interviews took place in the form of open conversations between the researcher and participants (Bryman, 2006), becoming a form of deliberative inquiry, (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2010; Short, 1991). As identified by Creswell (2012), interviews provide useful information that cannot be directly observed and permits participants to describe and present detailed information. For Study 1, the semi-structured interviews in this case were aimed to elicit narratives related to perceptions and definitions of Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice, Outdoor Education curriculum, and outcomes of Outdoor Education.

Participants.

Participants were recruited using a form of *criterion sampling* where all those in the group meet some stated criteria for membership of the group under study. In this case, the criteria to be met is experience in the Outdoor Education field as either an academic, a representative of an Outdoor Education advisory body or a representative of an institution with an exemplar Outdoor Education program (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As an outcome of their direct involvement in the broader field of Outdoor Education, the participants may be regarded as primary informants and identified as what Morse (1994) declares are 'good' informants. This implies that they have the necessary knowledge, information and experience

of the issue being researched, can reflect on that knowledge and experience, and have the time and are willing to be involved in the project.

Six participants were recruited from a cross section of sectors within the field of Outdoor Education. Profiles of participants in Study 1 include two academics from two different Melbourne universities, two representatives of exemplar Outdoor Education programs, and two representatives of Outdoor Education advisory bodies. Although a gender balance was aimed for, the gender of participants for the domain evaluation is imbalanced by 2:1 which is reflective of a gender imbalance throughout the broader field of outdoor education. This is a limitation for which further investigation is recommended. For the purposes of confidentiality, a pseudonym coding process has been used to represent each participant as illustrated in Table 3, Domain Evaluation participant profiles.

Table 3– Domain evaluation participant profiles.

Pseudonym	**Sector represented**	**Gender**	**Age range**	**Experience (years)**	**Profile**
*1	Academic	male	40+	20+	Curriculum theory and development History and philosophy of education Physical education; outdoor education; environmental education
*2	Academic	female	40+	20+	Tertiary Outdoor Education, Teacher training Wilderness therapy; youth work
*3	Advisory body	male	40+	20+	Outdoor Education Australia, Victorian Outdoor Education Association, VET sector
*4	Advisory body	male	40+	20+	Secondary school Outdoor Education, Outward bound, School leadership administrator
*5	Exemplar school	male	40+	20+	Specialist outdoor school Principal
*6	Exemplar school	female	30-35	5-10	Outdoor Education Coordinator, residential program, private ladies college

Procedure.

To recruit participants an initial email was sent to prospective contributors seeking their expression of interest. This email detailed the aims and purposes of the study as well as expected requirements of their participation. Participants were then contacted by phone to confirm their interest in participating in the study. Participation in this study was voluntary with informed consent being obtained from all participants via the CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH as required by Victoria University. Appendix 1 – Consent form for participants involved in research provides an example of this. The consent forms were distributed to participants and returned to the researcher once completed.

An open-ended interview with each participant was facilitated at a suitable location as negotiated between the researcher and participant, usually a meeting room or office at the participants' institution for their convenience and comfort. Following introductions between the researcher and participant, and upon confirmation they were comfortable with the interview conditions, it was agreed that the interview could commence. The duration of interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour and were guided by questions as per Appendix 2 – Domain Evaluation interview guiding questions. Each interview was recorded as a voice memo which was later transcribed for further analysis.

Materials - Interview design.

Cohen et al. (2007) described interviews as a distinctive research technique whereby the purpose was to gather research-relevant information. As suggested by McNamara (2009), the same information and general topic was discussed with each participant. The development of interviews followed the format of *standardised open-ended interviews* (Kvale, 2006) where the exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance

and all interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order (Cohen et al., 2007).

As specified by Maxwell (2005) qualitative research questions were developed which are suitable for answering questions about the meanings attributed by participants to situations, events, behaviours and activities. Groenewald (2004) recommends that the interviewer and interviewee should be engaged as if they are having a conversation. Therefore, the interview protocol was developed with the intent of promoting conversation where the interview questions were, although directly related to the research questions, not written in the same format (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The extended interviews were in-depth and face-to-face to allow participants to openly discuss their knowledge and experiences (Creswell, 2005).

The interview protocol for this study was based on a framework similar to The Four-Phase Process to Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) developed by Castillo-Montoya (2016). In alignment with this process, the interviews consist of *Introductory Questions* that are relatively neutral leading to the elicitation of general and nonintrusive information, *Transition Questions* that link the introductory questions to the key questions to be asked, *Key Questions* that are most related to the research questions and purpose of the study, and *Closing Questions* which provide an opportunity for closure (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

The semi-structured interviews in this study consisted of 40 open-ended questions within 7 discussion topics; Outdoor Education as a broad field of study and practice; Outdoor Education as a holistic learning area; Definition and location of Outdoor Education in secondary school curriculum; Outcomes of Outdoor Education in secondary schooling; Relationship development in Outdoor Education; Overall relationship development; and Disparity of programs and practices. These questions were intended to explore different

perceptions of the field of Outdoor Education, Curriculum and Outcomes. In total, interviews conducted during this phase of the study generated 332 minutes of interview recordings resulting in 53228 words or 86 pages of transcript.

Data analysis.

Data from this phase of the study was analysed thematically (O'Leary, 2004) following the process described in the data analysis section of Study 1 – Phase 1, which is based on the data reduction, data display and data verification model presented by (Miles & Huberman, 1984). To simplify the interview transcripts, a coding list was developed (Sydnell, 2010) as a form of what Miles and Huberman (1984) describe as data reduction. Identified themes were discussed with the researcher's supervisors to ensure their meaning was aligned with script segments. Participants' responses were analysed and compared to identify common themes and concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Following this, the process consisted of creating codes and categories, gleaning themes, and then restructuring the data to support the integration of experts' opinions on the various issues (Moghaddam, 2006) occurring within the field of Outdoor Education. Transcribed interview texts were divided into 'units' of meaning. These units were grouped thematically to become categories.

Upon analysis of the data generated from this phase of the study, three core themes emerged, *Curriculum*, *Definitions* and *Outcomes*, each of which contain a number of sub-categories and/or themes as per Appendix 3 – Expert interviews Thematic Data Analysis Map. For example in relation to the question: 'In your opinion, where do you think Outdoor Education should be located in secondary school curriculum?' the participants' response was 'It needs to be a subject in its own right and a curriculum in its own right with its own importance, because I think it's too important for kids not to do'. It was coded within the core theme *Curriculum*, in the theme *Outdoor Education as core curriculum* and in the sub-category *Outdoor Education should be compulsory*.

Findings

The intent of Phase 1 of this study was to elicit the perceptions, opinions and ideas (Bryman, 2006) of recognised experts within the field of Outdoor Education research, theory and/or practice. Through the provision of individual open-ended interviews, this phase allowed the researcher to probe the participant in depth and allow more detailed findings (Muijs, 2006). In this case the selected topics were perceptions of Outdoor Education, its role and positioning in secondary school curriculum and its un-recognised outcomes. All data produced throughout this interview process was situated in one of the three core themes of this research being *Definitions*, *Curriculum* or *Outcomes*.

Core theme: Definitions.

Theme: Factors defining Outdoor Education.

This theme provides data related to individual elements which influence various definitions of Outdoor Education. Language was identified by three respondents as one of the major factors which influence understandings and definitions for Outdoor Education. This is exemplified by participant (*1) who stated, “for me it’s the language and the definitions which is what’s important in the political field. What I’ve been trying to argue is that education isn’t just about knowledge and it’s not just about skills, it actually about who you are”. This participant also expressed that the “external contexts which influence what we understand ‘outdoor’ to be”, and the differences in understandings of not only Outdoor Education but the field of education in general as a factor in defining Outdoor Education.

This was followed up by questioning the merit of having a universal definition of Outdoor Education to the diverse nature of its form, its political context and a lack of specific understandings as what Outdoor Education is. An example of this is the comment, “Well my sense is that the safer way to go is to encourage a broad array of responses. So it can be many things and that’s fine” (*2).

The paradoxes that exist in trying to universally define Outdoor Education were recognised by all but one respondent. This is evident in the idea that on a philosophical level a diverse range of understandings seems to add to the depth of Outdoor Education as a field although it creates problems on a practical and political level where curriculum needs to be legitimised and accountable. This causes a lack of unity when trying to compete with other discipline areas in a neoliberal education system due to the lack of standard definitions, and a diverse range of understandings of the content and structure of Outdoor Education (*5).

Theme: Definitions and perceptions of Outdoor Education.

This category contains a diverse range of data both in complexity of responses and perceptions of what Outdoor Education means to people from different sectors within the field. Responses range from simplistic, such as 'learning that takes place in the outdoors', to complex as evident in the response "it is a profession for a start as well as a whole area of curriculum if you want to do it, but it's also something that is immersive throughout a whole range of other (curriculum) areas, so it can be quite fluid" (*2) or "connection to nature, personal and social capabilities, and critical and creative thinking and you know, you could put a sustainable umbrella over it if you like" (*5).

Responses were either theoretical, political or practical. Theoretical where Outdoor Education is regarded as "a body of knowledge, field of study and practice, a distinct discipline area and a way of being" (*1). Practical, as exhibited in the response "the fact is they go away from their home environment" (*5). Political such as the comment that "it needs to be identified as something. I'll use the word community of practice, so an outdoor learning community of practice" (*3). From the six respondents, three had a focus on practical definitions, two were focused mainly on political based definitions and one focused solely on theoretical based definitions.

There was consensus among participants that Outdoor Education is perceived differently among stakeholders depending on their context and agenda in relation to secondary school education. Reasons for this were put forward which mostly related to systemic problems with education in general where "it's perceived differently and it probably differs due to the constraints, structurally, and delivery" (*3). This confirms the lack of unified understandings in relation to Outdoor Education as a field and implies that this should be addressed.

Discussing differing perceptions of Outdoor Education amongst the general public, participant *5 suggested that parents are perhaps the largest stakeholders in education so their perceptions are important. This highlights the importance of communication, awareness and consolidated understandings amongst stakeholders to develop positive perceptions of Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice.

All participants acknowledged that there are many differing perspectives and opinions within the field of Outdoor Education, particularly regarding definitions of Outdoor Education and the various factors which make up its identity. The participants' personal perspectives for Outdoor Education also emerged within this theme. Participant *1 described Outdoor Education as a way of being while participant *2 noted their perception of Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice as well as a pedagogy rather than a content-based subject. Participant *3 perceives Outdoor Education as a profession firstly while participants *4, *5 and *6 perceive Outdoor Education as curriculum.

Perceptions of traditional subjects being more important than more contemporary and progressive subjects were acknowledged and challenged (*5,*6). This is exemplified by the comment from respondent *1, "being a maths student is a way of being and yet we don't think that way, we just think oh put them in a room, teach them maths, they're learning that

important maths stuff. In Outdoor Ed we are working with various ways of being and ways of being that are relevant to people at their age".

Regardless of differences in perception and definition, all respondents advocated that Outdoor Education should be aimed at *connecting people with nature* and should be *experiential* and *immersive* as well as providing *learning outside the classroom*.

The authenticity of the learning experienced was raised by two of the respondents acknowledging the experiential nature and transferable skills and knowledge of Outdoor Education. Evidence of this can be identified in comments such as "they can directly see it. It's immediate, the effect happening straight away" (*4). These same two respondents emphasised the importance of the experiential nature of Outdoor Education describing it as "first person learning rather than third person learning" (*3) and recognising that the learning is happening "in real time" (*4).

Theme: Distinct features of Outdoor Education.

Distinct features of Outdoor Education relates to the individual defining features of Outdoor Education and provides rationale for it as a distinct curriculum area. All participants in this study acknowledged that Outdoor Education consists of distinct and unique features which distinguish it from other key learning areas. Three distinct features of Outdoor Education emerged in the data, *risk*, *connection to nature* and *experience outside regular classroom context*. The six participants provided eight responses in total, two relating to risk, two relating to connection with the natural world and four describing the removal of students from their regular learning context as the most distinct feature of Outdoor Education. Common themes in all responses were related to "engaging in risk in a safe and manageable way" (*2) and developing a "connection to the natural world" (*2). These two factors have long been identifying features of Outdoor Education in practice (Martin, 2008, 2014).

"The fact is they go away from their home environment" (*5) provides an example of responses from all participants specifying that the main point of difference between Outdoor Education and other discipline areas is that students are learning outside of their regular routine and place at home and school. It was noted that being in a different environment provides them with "different situations which wouldn't normally come up in the everyday classroom" (*6). This aligns with participant (*1) who noted that "the notion of place is now a big thing in Outdoor Ed".

Theme: Limiting factors for Outdoor Education.

Limiting factors for Outdoor Education provides examples of constraints to the development of Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice. This theme also has a focus on the problems encountered when defining Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice.

Limiting factors provoked a large array of responses with all participants identifying impediments relating directly to their context within the field. They range from individual institution issues to government encumbrances as well as systemic problems within the greater field of education. All six participants raised the issue that at a school level, a lack of understanding was prominent. This is exemplified in the comments "people back at school don't often recognise how important, they don't even realise" (*1) and "a lot of people don't understand the academic rigor behind it or the reasoning" (*5).

In relation to government perspectives, there is also an acknowledgement by four of the respondents of a lack of understanding. Comments such as "I'm in a privileged spot, you know I get to talk to ministers and what I've noticed lately is that people in positions of power if you like, have all done Outdoor Ed. but a lot of them, they know, they get it. They don't really understand it, why it's important, but they know it's important" (*3) provide an

example of this. Responses such as “limiting factors to me is the system (*5)” provide evidence that some of the problems with Outdoor Education stem from problems within the education system in general. These types of problems were mentioned by all participants.

Seeking an explicit definition of Outdoor Education from each participant, issues became apparent with all participants. It was made known that the question *What is Outdoor Education*? is a long standing one, the answer of which has not been fully determined. This is apparent in the response “I think your question about factors that define it, I think that’s been part of the problem, because you can define it as a VCE subject but then beyond that, historically we’ve had all these problems about ‘what is outdoor education?’” (*3).

When considering the process of defining Outdoor Education as part of curriculum a number of factors need to be considered. It was suggested that these should include “is it its own subject? So then, as soon as you start to codify a subject, start to codify a body of knowledge, so then the question is, so then you start playing that curriculum game, you look at the curriculum and where does it fit?, where does it fit and how is it different to everything else?” (*1). The questions raised in these discussions may be applicable to every component of curriculum, the challenge for Outdoor Education is to rationalise its value to be included in curriculum compared to other disciplines. This is a difficult undertaking without a consolidated understanding of what Outdoor Education is.

Core theme: Curriculum.

Theme: Outdoor Education as curriculum.

Outdoor Education as curriculum discusses the nature and form of Outdoor Education and its function within curriculums. All six respondents noted its absence as an explicit discipline area. Examples of this include National, State and single school contexts. On a National level, it was highlighted that “it’s not in the Australian Curriculum. It didn’t make it

as a learning area. From F to ten, because it hasn't become a learning area within the Australian Curriculum or Victorian curriculum, it's got lost a little bit" (*3). The virtual absence of Outdoor Education in Victorian State curriculum was a common theme with responses such as "I don't find a very big presence, it's only just a slight mention of it, in the Victorian curriculum anyway" (*2).

There was a strong message that the nature, form and value of Outdoor Education in curriculum is at the discretion of the individual school, "its school specific, and it depends on the values of, it depends on what the principal values" (*2). This led to discussions regarding how each respondent perceives Outdoor Education in curriculum. While acknowledging that Outdoor Education means different things and "has different levels of value" to different people" (*1), all participants expressed that it should exist as part of secondary school curriculum. Four participants presented that "Outdoor Education can be seen as a subject" (*3) while in contrast to this, one participant perceives Outdoor Education as an extra-curricular activity and one proposed that Outdoor Education may be regarded as an "approach more so than a curriculum area, (where) in a perfect world, we're looking for something that is integrated, interdisciplinary, not just with Outdoor Ed, but across all learning areas" (*4).

One respondent highlighted the complex and political nature of curriculum and the effects of this on the field of Outdoor Education, commenting "there's a body of knowledge question, but there is also a curriculum question, but there's the politics of the curriculum and you know, because even with the Australian Curriculum which is now Victorian curriculum. That's a political document. You know a lot of people have had lots of arguments about what should be in there" (*1).

Theme: Interdisciplinary learning.

Interdisciplinary learning refers to the integration of Outdoor Education with one or more other discipline areas in curriculum. Although all respondents expressed their preference for Outdoor Education to be recognised as a distinct discipline, there is strong evidence to support Outdoor Education as an interdisciplinary learning area with all responses listing numerous links to other existing discipline areas. These include "literacy, numeracy, history, geography" along with the traditional location of its place within the HPE key learning area.

The benefits of Outdoor Education as an interdisciplinary learning area are represented in relation to its strengths and value in secondary school curriculum. This is evident in comments such as "Well I sort of think politically you need to go with sort of strength and the strongest acknowledgement of Outdoor Ed is with Health and PE. That's a political thing. So if the principal sees oh, wow, they're actually connecting into a whole range of curriculum, they're valuable" (*1). It is also suggested that Outdoor Education doesn't necessarily have to be a discipline and may be regarded more as a "pedagogy or process" (*2) which may be present or integrated "across all domains" (*2).

Theme: Positioning of Outdoor Education in secondary school curriculum.

Positioning of Outdoor Education in secondary school curriculum outlines both the actual and perceived location and value of Outdoor Education within secondary school curriculum. All participants concur that Outdoor Education has a place in secondary school curriculum although there is a range of different responses regarding its form and positioning within the curriculum. A number of respondents advocated that it should be present "throughout" (*2,*3) the curriculum which implies that it should be "interdisciplinary" (*1) while others would have it as an "independent discipline" (*5,*2). One participant suggested that it could exist as a co-curricular activity as part of a "Duke of Edinburgh" (*4) type

program. Having such a diverse range of responses from highly experienced and well qualified people within what should be a consolidated field of practice highlights some of the issues which are present in Outdoor Education regarding peoples' perceptions and differing opinions in relation to defining Outdoor Education in secondary schools.

Theme: Outdoor Education as core curriculum.

Outdoor Education as core curriculum discusses the merit of Outdoor Education to be included as a compulsory component of school curriculum. All but one participant supports Outdoor Education as compulsory curriculum regardless of its form or formal positioning in curriculum due to its holistic nature and contribution to the development of the whole person in participants. "People can call it different things but at least they recognise that there's an importance behind it and I'd say every government school kid, they should have that. It's a part of a holistic view of teaching kids and every kid has a right to be part of it" (*5). Contrary to this, an argument was put forward for it not to be compulsory but to be an elective learning program, not mandated for every student but made available for students who were interested (*4).

Core theme: Outcomes.

Theme: Outcomes of Outdoor Education.

Outcomes of Outdoor Education explores both exposed and hidden outcomes of Outdoor Education in practice. The most common outcome mentioned by all participants in this category related to the development of the *self*. This is reflected in the comments "I think probably that personal development would have to be one of the keys that come through" (*3) and "student development in terms of their own personal awareness and growth" (*2).

Personal development leading to social development was identified as a ubiquitous outcome of Outdoor Education by all respondents. Relationships with others as an outcome

also had a strong presence in all responses. This can be seen with one respondent stating “we were finding a lot of growth in cooperative learning, a lot of growth in conflict resolution, a lot of growth in leadership actually” (*5). These are examples of outcomes which are known. It was also implied that there are many other outcomes of Outdoor Education which are unknown and it was proffered that “there are underlying outcomes which are specific to the individual” (*5) and that “the outcomes may not surface until further down the track and the realisation of those outcomes as well” (*5). This provides support for an investigation into the unknown outcomes of Outdoor Education, one of the primary purposes of this research.

All respondents acknowledged that outcomes beyond formal curriculum do exist throughout Outdoor Education. It was raised by four participants that these outcomes may seem invisible with one suggestion that they may not surface until some time after the program has concluded while one participant noted that even the students themselves may not have realised it. This is evident in the comment, “they might not be able to articulate in words or in writing what they’ve learnt but they’d always take something extra away” (*6). The difficulty of recognising all outcomes of a program was identified as a conundrum for Outdoor Education by all respondents. This lead to discussion regarding the nature of learning outcomes and their definitions an example of which is “it’s a pre-determined, desirable learning outcome as opposed to just an incidental outcome of just doing the program” (*3). Contrary to this it was also suggested by the same respondent that “if it’s not defined as a learning outcome, there’s still value in that, in it as an outcome” (*3) This demonstrated the differing opinions and perceptions of what constitutes a learning outcome of a single respondent and provides an example of the mixed opinions regarding this topic throughout the field.

Three respondents expressed that not all outcomes can or should be accounted for, for example “every little thing doesn’t have to be rationalised and accounted for” (*2), “we can

have outcomes of outdoor education which don't have to be measured" (*3) and "they don't need to be assessed either" (*5). Three respondents had the view that as much as possible should be accounted for to provide support for rationalising Outdoor Education with other learning areas.

It was also emphasised that although we may not be able to acknowledge or even know every outcome, they are still very important in the development of students. For example, "every kid would have definitely got a lot more from it than just what was on the box that we needed to tick" (*4). This implies that although all outcomes have not been specified, acknowledged or explicated, they still have an important place in student's learning and should not be disregarded or ignored.

Theme: Changes in students post camp.

Changes in students post camp provides participants perspectives of whether and how the effects of Outdoor Education have a lasting effect on participants. This category elicited varying responses as to how strong the effects of Outdoor Education and how long they last with participants. Responses ranged from blanket effects for all students such as "they always become really confident" (*4) to individual and differentiated effects which relate specifically to individual students. Evidence of this includes comments such as "I think there are differences in students' attitudes and behaviours, depending on which students, what their background brings to it" (*3). This reflects the diverse nature of Outdoor Education in practice and highlights conflicting perceptions and opinions across the field.

Theme: Immersion.

Immersion discusses the immersive nature of Outdoor Education and perspectives of the effects of this. All participants agreed that immersion is a powerful and effective learning experience. The reasons put forward for this were varied although multiple respondents made

the point that the development in students generated from immersive programs had a greater effect that the fragmented learning which is symptomatic of their regular school education (*1).

Three responses discussed the holistic nature of immersive programs, the authenticity of an immersive experience and the process of providing the students with learning activities both formal and informal which are outside of their regular home or school experience. The discussion regarding the holistic nature of immersion suggests considering the program as a whole rather than as individual activities, for example "I'd be thinking about the program as a whole, so it's a program not just a collection of activities. So the program as a whole will work so the activities themselves, will have meaning within the program as a whole" (*1).

In relation to the authenticity of experience, the automatic, real-time response to learning was discussed by two respondents along with the flow-on effects of this, particularly related to both self and social awareness which "leads them straight into an immediate reflection" (*1). All participants acknowledged that significant learning occurs outside of formal activities on Outdoor Education programs. This is evident with comments such as "incidental learning would happen quite a lot" (*6) as well as the implication that this type of learning relates directly to personal and social development. These two ideas can be seen in conjunction within the response "I think a lot of the learning occurs between formal activities. So the whole social group, self, community dynamics happen more often than not between the activities" (*2). It was stressed that "there is a place for incidental learning" (*2) in secondary school education in the form of "teachable moments" (*2).

Theme: Opportunity.

Data generated in this category outlines the importance of being able to provide a range of different opportunities for students and the effects of this on different learner types

and styles. It highlights that without the initial provision of opportunity, learning in this area is limited and that having an opportunity to experience new things is essential for many students who, due to their home situations and accessibility, have school as their only provider for such things. This is illustrated in the comment that such opportunities "for the first time ever maybe, or very rarely, give students an opportunity to feel like they belong or that they've achieved or to feel like… that they've never had before" (*2). The importance of being given opportunities in Outdoor Education is reinforced by responses such as "new experiences, being outside in the natural world because lots of students wouldn't have been able to have that opportunity" (*4), or "just providing them with the opportunity for some kids can make all the difference" (*5).

Further discussions in this area revolved around relationships between opportunity and success with one participant explicitly stating that "it's about having opportunity for success" (*1). This was supported across the board with discussions advocating that non-academic experiences and opportunities should be a critical factor in education. This can be seen in the comment "the ones that were horrendous in school were absolutely the stars on camp. Just imagine their lives without those opportunities and that comes down to that whole personal development" (*2). This again adds to the evidence to support holistic outcomes of Outdoor Education as being legitimate and essential learning outcomes. This is then reinforced with comments from other participants such as "there are some important things that can't be measured, that are important to do. So I think even having access and opportunity to be outdoors, if it doesn't come with strong curriculum background, or assessment, it doesn't matter" (*3).

Theme: Relationships and wellbeing

Conversations regarding wellbeing in Outdoor Education were focused around the issues of mental health, resilience, social interaction and the benefits of being connected to

nature and the importance of these being recognised as learning outcomes. This has been summed up in the response stating that there is "evidence around the health and wellbeing, there's that connection with nature, being outdoors. Mental health issues and that, so to me the outdoor space can be something that will help that. I think the health and wellbeing and resilience is a key, that I do think you need to recognise, because if they are not recognised then why do people at central office put money into it" (*3).

This information is well supported by all other respondents, many of whom framed it within the context of the foundational pillars of Outdoor Education which are Self, Others and Environment. The relationship between these three elements is illustrated in the comment "personal sustainability, so again if you can't look after yourself, there's no way you can look after somebody else and the environment so I used to talk about that as the number one priority, your personal sustainability and then the rest would flow after that" (*4). Considering the development of self, others and environment as major contributors to wellbeing provides supporting evidence for these three factors to be utilised as a framework for Outdoor Education curriculum development.

Relationships between the students and their teachers were a highlight in this area with all respondents recognising that relationships which develop in Outdoor Education are of a different nature that those in the regular school context. The relationships between self, others and environment were explored by four respondents and expressed in numerous ways but with the same meaning. This can be seen in the comments "by going on the trip you can really focus on all like personal sustainability, community sustainability and environmental sustainability all in three" (*6) and "who they are has changed, and it's changed in relation to their own experience, their shared experience that they shared with other people and the place that they are doing it in, and that's your Self, Others and Environment" (*1). Some responses provided descriptions for holistic outdoor education in terms of self, others and environment

conveying that it is “finding out about themselves, so their identity, doing this through connections with community, working together and teamwork, doing that out in the natural world” (*6) while all respondents made comment on the benefits of Outdoor Education in a holistic context.

In relation to the development of *Self*, the concept of multiple selves was discussed by one participant as is evident in the statement that “there doesn’t have to be one definition of your positive relationship with yourself because you have many selves” (*1). Discussing outcomes which relate to developing positive relationships with *Others*, the over- arching thread from all respondents was that relationships developed in Outdoor Education become deeper and more personal than those developed in the regular school environment. The most prominent contributor offered by all participants is the concept of shared experience, particularly shared adversity. This is highlighted in the observation that “what they are doing is sharing time together in natural environments” (*2), and that “the power of having a shared experience is a strong outcome in itself” (*5). This provides yet another example of the relationship between Self, Others and Environment and the contribution of these to the development of the whole person. Overall it was expressed that “shared experience should be considered a legitimate learning outcome in its own right provided that you develop your program for that to be an outcome” (*3).

Responses from all participants relating to the contribution of Outdoor Education to positive relationships with the *Environment* were specifically directed towards the benefits of physical experience in different environments. The benefits of tactile experience in these environments were raised in relation to developing awareness as scaffolding for the development of an appreciation for natural environments. The opinion that “you can only get a true empathy for the environment from direct contact with it, tactile experience. You can’t get it any other way” (*5) had a strong representation within the data.

Discussion

The complex and political nature of curriculum and the effects of this on the field of Outdoor Education was well noted amongst participants. This reflects the general views among Outdoor Education theorists and practitioners that there is a lack of consolidated understandings within the field (Dyment & Potter, 2015; Martin, 2014, 2008; Thomas, 2005). In alignment with discourse among Outdoor Educators and noted by Hewison and Martin (2009), all participants acknowledged that although traditionally Outdoor Education has been regarded as a branch of the Physical Education learning area, this view of Outdoor Education is simplistic and outdated. Also reinforcing Hewison and Martin's (2009) views, all participants explicitly expressed that Outdoor Education is quite different in its practice and its outcomes to other subjects.

Respondents identified that the nature, form and value of Outdoor Education in curriculum is at the discretion of the individual school. It was also posed by Martin (2008) and Nicol (2002) that the diversity in format may be a result of a lack of education policy and differing perceptions and understandings of Outdoor Education as a field. "Instead of talking about outdoor education as a broad field of study and practice, it could be either education outdoors or outdoor learning. A lot of people feel that outdoor education is a subject where for me, outdoor learning is a way, a potential way of teaching and a way of delivery" (*3). This suggests that contrary to the current discourse, Outdoor Education may be viewed as a pedagogy or process rather than a subject or discipline area. This has connotations, both positive and negative for the way that Outdoor Education may be incorporated into secondary school learning, either as part of the curriculum or in a pastoral, wellbeing or social and emotional development context within secondary school education.

All participants acknowledged that in contrast to international discourse (UK & USA) where Outdoor Education is acknowledged as a learning area in government education policy

(LTS, 2010; Panel, 2005; Prouty et al., 2007), it is not recognised as a distinct learning area or a separate subject within the Australian Curriculum F-10 or Victorian Curriculum F-10. As noted by Martin and Hewison (2010), participants identified this as problematic for the development of consolidated understandings and an agreed 'mode of service' (*4) for the field of Outdoor Education.

The general view amongst outdoor educators is that it would be preferable for Outdoor Education to exist as a stand-alone subject or discipline area within curriculum although it is widely acknowledged that Outdoor Education is also highly suitable for interdisciplinary applications (Dudman et al., 2019; Martin, 2008; Pryor et al., 2005; Szczepanski, 2009; Thomas, 2005). This creates a paradox where Outdoor Education is facilitated as a stand-alone subject but also regarded as interdisciplinary. Participant *2 provided one potential solution to this conundrum, expressing an opinion whereby Outdoor Education does not necessarily have to be a subject or discipline area, rather it may be described more as a pedagogy or process which may be present or integrated across all domains.

As reported by Dyment and Potter (2015), differing perceptions of the value and importance of Outdoor Education were identified as significant limiting factors for the field. Differing perceptions regarding the value and importance of Outdoor Education were raised in the context of "staffing, budget and politics" (*2). This context for describing the limiting factors was ubiquitous across all respondents. Although these limitations are generic to the field of education in general, they have significance in Outdoor Education specifically in an educational context where, as highlighted by participant *5, "There's a crowded curriculum and something's got to go".

Contrary to National and State curriculum requirements which do not mandate Outdoor Education in curriculum (ACARA, 2012), all participants agree that the core curriculum of the school should include Outdoor Education is some form. This highlights the view that Outdoor Education is a vital learning methodology for the children of today as proposed by Foster and Linney (2007) and endorsed by OEA who propose that Outdoor Education at a national level could benefit every child in Australia (OEA, 2012).

In alignment with Martin (2014), participants *1 and *3 acknowledge the complexities of consolidating understandings in Outdoor Education both reflecting on the question, 'what is Outdoor Education?'. As identified by Nicol (2002) Outdoor Education is difficult to define due to the large diversity of understandings within the field and is largely recognised as being based on practical activities with little theoretical and philosophical foundations.

All of the current participants acknowledged that perceptions have changed over time. They have observed a change in discourse from where Outdoor Education has historically been concerned with adventure activities (Neill & Heubeck, 1998) to current perceptions with an awareness that Outdoor Ed is about more than just activities (Thomas, 2005; Nisbet et al., 2008; Martin, 2008). The holistic outcomes of Outdoor Education related to wellbeing were identified as factors which should be emphasised to develop awareness amongst stakeholders. This was particularly highlighted by participant *5 who uses an increase in results for the PISA test in happiness and in collaboration as an example of measuring success in Australian schools rather than academic achievement and standardised assessment scores.

Supporting Martin (2010), and Polley and Atkin (2014), all participants acknowledge that Outdoor Education has unique and specific outcomes that can contribute to a student's education which relate to direct contact with nature, management of risk and, personal and

social development. Participant *2 specified engagement with risk along with connection to the natural world as being unique to Outdoor Education while participants *5 and *6 indicated that taking students away from home and out of their regular school environment were the features of Outdoor Education which make it distinct from other curriculum areas. Identifying and explicating these distinct features of Outdoor Education directly addresses a need for further research as identified by Lugg (1999) as to what it is that makes Outdoor Education distinctive and significantly different to other subjects or learning areas.

Four out of the six respondents observed that the most common outcomes of Outdoor Education are related to personal and social development. Aligning with historical discourse (Brymer et al., 2010; Cobb, 1977; Nisbet et al., 2008; Raffan, 1993; Szczepanski, 2009), it was implied that these outcomes contribute to increased wellbeing. In relation to the contribution of Outdoor Education to wellbeing it was noted that some outcomes are universal to all students, some outcomes are specific to individual students and that there may be underlying outcomes which are specific to the individual, unknown and may not be immediately apparent. Data generated from these discussions provides further evidence of outcomes of Outdoor Education which are either unacknowledged, undocumented or even unknown.

Regarding immersion, all respondents made note of the advantages of being immersed in real-life situations for extended periods of time as opposed to fragmented blocks of learning. These perspectives parallel the views of Venville et al. (2008), Somerville and Rapport (2002) and Szczepanski (2009) who note that this type of learning provides deeper understandings than those experienced within normal timetabled classes at school.

Participants *1, *2, *3 and *5 stressed the importance the non-directed incidental learning that occurs between activities. This has been observed by Dudman et al. (2019) and

supports the view presented by Alistair (2000) that education should be more than just intellectual stimulation. Participants *2, *3 and *5 proposed that not all outcomes need to be legitimised. They also emphasised that even though they are not formally recognised within curriculum these types of outcomes are as equally important as curriculum-based outcomes and should not be disregarded. This provides reinforcement for the views of Pryor et al. (2005), Noble and McGrath (2012) and Martin (2014) regarding the difficulties in legitimising non-academic outcomes in a crowded secondary school curriculum, competing with other subjects or discipline areas.

Supporting the views of Martin (2008, 2014), Mitten (2009), Pryor et al. (2005) and Priest (1986) among others, all participants expressed the view that the primary focus of Outdoor Education should be to develop relationships with self, others and environment (Martin & Thomas, 2000). An example of this was illustrated by participant *6 with the comment "you can really focus on all like personal sustainability, community sustainability and environmental sustainability all in three". This assists in addressing gaps in research in this area as identified by Martin (2014), Brymer et al. (2010), Pryor et al. (2005) and Josselson (1995).

Summary

All data generated from the development of this Domain Evaluation fell into at least one of the core themes of Curriculum, Definitions and/or Outcomes. Data generated in the Definitions category aims to address a need for further research in relation to the consolidation of understandings in Outdoor Education as identified by Martin (2014). Data generated in the Curriculum theme is aimed at addressing the need for further research relating to clarity, purpose and content of Outdoor Education in schools as identified by Lugg (1999). Data generated within the Outcomes theme is aimed at addressing gaps in knowledge

identified by Mitten (2009) who reported that the outcomes of Outdoor Education have been overlooked and undervalued.

It was highlighted in the domain evaluation that defining outdoor education as a field of study and practice is complex and difficult, and that there is an array of perspectives for Outdoor Education. It was proposed that this has resulted in a lack of consolidated understandings and program disparity throughout the field. On one hand, this illustrates some of the challenges in defining outdoor education as a field, with many different perspectives from members of the same field of practice but on the other hand, it shows somelevel of unity with all participants agreeing that Outdoor Education should connect people to nature, be experiential and immersive and should happen outside the realm of regular day to day teaching in the classroom.

In relation to secondary school curriculum, Outdoor Education is regarded as a branch of the Physical Education domain and is not recognised as a distinct learning area or a separate subject within the Australian Curriculum F-10 or Victorian Curriculum F-10. It was identified that the nature, form and value of Outdoor Education in curriculum is at the discretion of the individual school. All respondents expressed a preference for Outdoor Education as an independent subject or discipline area although recognised the value of its interdisciplinary applications and stressed that it has a place as part of the core curriculum of secondary schools in either form.

This domain evaluation describes Outdoor Education as a holistic learning area which provides authentic experiential learning opportunities (Loynes, 2017a) and distinct outcomeswhich are unique. Immersive learning is a feature of Outdoor Education and incidental learning is prominent in programs. Data generated from this study revealed that Outdoor Education provides SEL outcomes which contribute to wellbeing as well as academic

progress in other areas. These outcomes are generally achieved through the development of positive relationships with the self, others and environment and although it is holistic and interdisciplinary, Outdoor Education it is not a panacea and has limitations (Gray, 1997; Dickson et al., 2008). Legitimising all outcomes of Outdoor Education is neither possible nor necessary although it was expressed by all participants *that provision of opportunity*, and *shared experience* should be regarded as legitimate outcomes of Outdoor Education in secondary schools.

Data generated throughout the development of this domain evaluation for Outdoor Education expresses Outdoor Education as having numerous definitions depending on the context of its facilitation. It illustrates that regardless of its form and structure, Outdoor Education is important in middle school secondary schooling. The domain evaluation also demonstrates that Outdoor Education has many outcomes beyond the realm of formal mandated curriculum requirements and that these outcomes are important whether they are included in official curriculum or not.

Study 2 – Case Study research design

As recommended by Hinchey (2008) this case study utilises multiple methods of data collection to generate a variety of evidence sources. The resultant data was examined in this research through the process of exploring how events, processes and activities are perceivedby participants. Using a combination of different methods to collect data (Hinchey, 2008) provides triangulation. This helps to increase the trustworthiness and reliability of the data and adds rigour to the research design (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). Data collection methods used in this case study include teacher reflections and interviews (Ary et al., 2009). Study 2 consists of two phases, both within the same study school. Phase 1 incorporated interviews with accompanying teachers on twelve programs at UIS, while phase 2 consisted of a focus group with six participants recruited from phase 1 of this same study. Interviews provide deep understandings of perceptions of Outdoor Education in relation tothe development of positive relationships with the self, others and the environment.

In relation to Outdoor Education theory and practice, most of what we know comes from firsthand observation or anecdotal evidence (Kelly & Allen-Craig, 1991). As observed by Neill (2002), post-program investigations have always been a prevalent method to explore the outcomes of programs. Phase 1 of the case study was facilitated as a series of open-ended interviews with teachers who have participated in the program or accompanied a group throughout their participation. Accompanying teachers provided expert judgements regarding the relationship development of their students as they work towards establishing a positive relationship with their student group before, and maintaining this relationship during and following their Outdoor Education experience. Being a qualitative study, open-ended interviews are a highlysuitable method for researching teachers' perceptions, opinions and ideas (Bryman, 2006) as they have the advantage of allowing the researcher to probe the teacher in depth and allow more detailed findings (Muijs, 2006). Interviews took the form of

open conversations between the researcher and participants (Bryman, 2006), as a form of deliberative inquiry, (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2010; Short 1991). As participants in the program at UIS, accompanying teachers were invited to take part in a semi structured interview that provided opportunities for a deeper understanding of their personal perceptions regarding the nature ofOutdoor Education.

As highlighted by Vaughn et al. (1996) focus groups are compatible with qualitative research and can be used simultaneously with other data collection methods to triangulate data. Phase 2 was a focus group facilitated with volunteers recruited from phase 1 of this study. As recommended by Krueger and Casey (2014), participants were selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the research topic. In educational research, focus group interviews allow researchers to gather qualitative data regarding the perceptions and opinions of purposively selected individuals (Vaughn et al., 1996). In this case, the commonality between participants was their experience with the Outdoor Education program from UIS and their participation in the individual interviews conducted in phase 1.

Vaughn et al. (1996) suggest that focus groups are best used when conducting exploratory research. Kitzinger (1995) noted that group discussion is particularly appropriate when the interviewer has a series of open-ended questions and wishes to encourage research participants to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary. The data in this focus group was solicited through open-ended questions as recommended by Krueger and Casey (2014) with the intent of bringing the investigator closer to the research topic through a direct, intensive encounter with key individuals (Vaughn et al., 1996). The purpose of the focus group was to allow triangulation of the data and to encourage self-disclosure (Krueger & Casey, 2014), elicit perceptions, feelings, attitudes and ideas of the participants regarding Outdoor Education in this context.

Phase 1 Interviews with accompanying teachers

Phase 1 was facilitated as a series of open-ended interviews with teachers who have participated in the UIS Outdoor Education program or accompanied a group throughout their participation. Post- program investigations have been a predominant method to explore the outcomes of OutdoorEducation programs (Neill, 2002). On the basis of the qualitative study design, open-ended interviews are an appropriate method for investigating teachers' perceptions, opinions and ideas (Bryman, 2006). This method supports the researcher to probe the perspectives of the teacher in depth to facilitate more detailed findings (Muijs, 2006).

As school staff recruited for the program, accompanying teachers were invited to take part in a semi structured interview that provided a locally produced, rich and textured overview (Rapley, 2001) regarding the nature of Outdoor Education. Accompanying teachers provided insightful expert judgements regarding the relationship development of their students as they work towards establishing a positive connection with their student group before, during and following their Outdoor Education experience. These interviews also generated data identifying outcomes of the program which are not necessarily prescribed in curriculum. The teachers provided dialogue regarding the positioning of Outdoor Education within middle school curriculum along with a varied range of definitions for Outdoor Education.

Participants

Participants were recruited using a simple form of the Miles and Huberman (1994) procedure described as *criterion sampling,* where all those in the group meet a specific set of criteria for membership of the group under study. In this case, the criteria to be met was that the teachers have been involved in the Outdoor Education program of the participating school as an 'accompanying teacher' to provide firsthand accounts and perceptions relating to the program. Based on this experience, the participants may be regarded as primary informants

and identified as "'good" informants where they "have the necessary knowledge, information and experience of the issue being researched, are capable of reflecting on that knowledge and experience and have the time to be in the project and are willing to be involved in the project" (Morse, 1994 p. 228).

Twelve participants with varying degrees of Outdoor Education experience were recruited within the school taking into consideration a diverse range of demographic characteristics. This includes male and female staff members from UIS aged from twenty-four to sixty years old and varying in teaching experience from early career to thirtyplus years in the field. Participants also represented different professional areas and different levels within the management hierarchy within the school structure. Profiles of participants inPhase 1 of this study included six males and six females, six participants aged over forty and six under forty, seven participants with ten years or more experience in education and five with ten or less, five with fifteen or more camp experiences and seven with less, three expert teachers, three accomplished teachers, three novice teachers, an accomplished international teacher and two expert Learning Support Officers. One participant works in the upper level of management of the school while two represent middle management, five represent subject teachers and two represent support staff. For the purposes of confidentiality, a pseudonym coding process has been used to represent each participant. Table 4, Accompanying teacher participant profiles presents an overview of the profiles of participants in this phase of the study.

Table 4– Accompanying teacher participant profiles.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age range (years)	Experience (years)	Outdoor Education experience (number of camps)	Profile
*7	Female	35-40	16	600+	Expert Learning Support Officer, Outdoor Education instructor
*8	Male	20-25	2	80+	Novice Outdoor Education teacher
*9	Male	25-30	5	20+	Accomplished teacher, HPE/Outdoor Education
*10	Female	25-30	3	3	Novice teacher, HPE/Outdoor Education
*11	Female	35-40	10	5	Middle management, Accomplished HPE/Outdoor Education teacher
*12	Male	40-45	20+	20+	International teacher, Maths/HPE
*13	Male	55-60	35+	16	Expert teacher, VCAL/Humanities
*14	Female	20-25	3	3	Novice teacher, English/Religion
*15	Male	40-45	15	10	Middle management, Accomplished Religion teacher
*16	Female	45-50	25+	15	Expert teacher, Drama/Religion
*17	Female	50-55	30+	15	Upper management, Expert English teacher
*18	Male	35-40	5	10	Learning support officer, differentiated learning

Procedure

Twelve accompanying teachers from UIS, three from each year level of seven, eight, nine and ten, were interviewed for this research. This cohort provides an appropriate and manageable sample size for this type of qualitative study. The selection of research participants has takeninto consideration age, experience, gender and cultural characteristics to provide diversity and generate a rich data set.

The recruitment of participants involved an initial email being sent to prospective participants who have participated in the schools Outdoor Education program seeking their expression of interest. This email detailed the aims and purposes of the study as well as

expected requirements of their participation. Participation in this study was voluntary with informed consent being obtained from all participants via the CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH as required by Victoria University (see Appendix 1).

An open-ended interview with each participant was facilitated at a suitable location as negotiated between the researcher and participant, usually a meeting room or office at the participating school for their convenience and comfort. The duration of interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour and were guided by accompanying teacher interview questions (see Appendix 7). Each interview was recorded as a voice memo and then transcribed for further analysis.

Materials - Interview design

As per Study 1 – Domain Evaluation, the purpose of interviews for phase 1 of this study was to gather research-relevant information used to develop a process of systematic description and explanation (Cohen et al., 2007). As recommended by Creswell (2012), these interviews have been used to provide useful information that cannot be directly observed while providing an opportunity for participants to describe detailed information.

As per Study 1 – Phase 2, qualitative research questions were developed which are suitable for answering questions about the meanings attributed by participants to situations, events, behaviours and activities (Maxwell, 2005). The interview protocol for this study was based on a framework similar to The Four-Phase Process to Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) developed by Castillo-Montoya (2016) as described in the interview design for the domain evaluation. Groenewald (2004) suggests that the interviewer and interviewee should be engaged as if they are having a conversation. Therefore, interview protocol was developed with the intent of promoting conversation where the interview questions were, although directly related to the research questions, not written in the same format (Castillo-Montoya,

2016). The semi-structured interviews in this case were aimed to elicit narratives (Tripp, 1994) related to perceptions, definitions and outcomes of Outdoor Education and its associated curriculum in this context.

The extended interviews were in-depth and face-to-face to allow participants to openly discuss their knowledge and experiences (Creswell, 2005). Interviews took place in the form of open conversations between the researcher and participants (Bryman, 2006) and aligning with the development process described by McNamara (2009) where the same information and general topic should be discussed with each participant. The conversational development across the interview followed the format of *standardised open-ended interviews* where the exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance and all interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order (Cohen et al., 2007).

The semi-structured interviews in this phase of the study consisted of 32 open-ended questions within 4 discussion topics: Outdoor Education as a holistic learning area; Definition and location of Outdoor Education in secondary school curriculum; Outcomes of Outdoor Education in secondary schooling; and, Relationship development in Outdoor Education. The topic questions were intended to explore different perceptions, definitions and outcomes of Outdoor Education and its associated curriculum in a specific context. In total, interviews conducted during this phase of the study generated 520 minutes of interview recordings resulting in 76445 words or 128 pages of transcript.

Data analysis

Data from this phase of the study was analysed thematically (O'Leary, 2004) following the process described in the data analysis section of Study 1 – Phase 1, which is based on the data reduction, data display and data verification model presented by (Miles & Huberman, 1984). To simplify the interview transcripts, open coding was undertaken as a form of data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Following this axial coding (Charmaz, 2000) was

facilitated as a form of data display (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Relationships between and across these elements were explored (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin,1998) as a form of data verification (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

As a result of this process, three core themes emerged, *Curriculum*, *Definitions* and *Outcomes*, each of which contain a number of sub-categories or themes as per the "Accompanying Teachers Interview Thematic Data Analysis Map" (see Appendix 8). For example, in relation to the question: 'As a participant in the program, describe the key outcomes of the program which you have seen/experienced, which relate to wellbeing?' the participants' response was 'positive relationships' and was coded within the core theme *Outcomes* and in the theme *Wellbeing.*

Findings

The intent of this analysis was to elicit judgements from teachers who have taken part in the Outdoor Education program at the participating school. Teachers were queried regarding their perceptions of Outdoor Education in secondary school, its positioning within curriculum and its contribution to relationship development of their students. Accompanying teachers were selected as participants in this phase of the study because they have a close relationship with their students before, during and following their Outdoor Education experience. This provided an opportunity to generate contextual data particularly in relation to the development of relationships in participant's pre, during and post program participation. All data produced throughout this interview process was situated in one of the three core themes of this research being *Definitions*, *Curriculum* or *Outcomes*.

Core theme: Definitions.

Theme: Definitions of Outdoor Education.

Definitions of Outdoor Education include participant responses which contribute to definitions for Outdoor Education. This theme contains 104 data entries, twelve of which provide a specific definition for Outdoor Education. Thirty-one responses discuss the immersive nature of Outdoor Education and ten describe it as holistic. Twenty-three identify Outdoor Education as being experiential, practical and/or applied learning. Twelve entries discuss different perceptions of Outdoor Education and three discuss problems with defining it. Six data entries acknowledge a flexible curriculum and seven define it as the removal from the regular learning environment.

It was widely acknowledged that a succinct definition for Outdoor Education is challenging with three data entries explicitly stating that it is too difficult to define. “It’s a pretty tough one to define isn’t it?” (*13) was a common sentiment among respondents. “It means something different to everybody. Everybody has their own different definition. As a field, Outdoor Education doesn’t have one single definition” (*10).

Removing students from their regular school environment for immersive learning experiences was the predominant focus of discussions in this area for all participants. When asked what factors most define Outdoor Education, all responses aligned with statements such as “I think it is going to be outside experiencing something that is against your school norms” (*12) or “it would be engaging students in environments, alternative environments where they explore the world around them but also explore the world within them. So you know, they learn about their place in the world” (*17). This perspective was reflected in the statement “It has to be done, if it’s to be done properly, in the outdoors” (*8). The general thread of definitions may be summed up in the response,

> "Outdoor Education is the study of the natural world, a combination of the natural world. You're talking about different activities that students would normally not be exposed to and doing that in an out of classroom element. It's one of the distinctive factors is that you are pulling the kids out of their regular learning environment, out of the institution and they're having a different type of an experiential learning experience. An immersive experience" (*13).

Secondary to this, but widely acknowledged, was connection with nature and place, a diversity of learning environments, experiential learning, and challenge. For example, "Outdoor Education in a secondary environment offers students within those six years, a range of circumstances and opportunities to engage with the environment in a range of ways and activities using practical outdoor skills and more challenging activities" (*12).

Responses in this theme provide examples of the differences in perceptions relating to Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice. It was observed that "amongst the general populous, there are some misconceptions" (*8). Conversations were not so much about what these different perceptions are, but more so that there is a lack of awareness regarding Outdoor Education as part of school curriculum and that we should be "making people aware of what happens because especially now, there would be hordes of teachers who have absolutely no idea what an Outdoor Ed experience is" (*16).

Theme: Holistic, experiential learning and immersion.

Holistic learning considers the outcomes of Outdoor Education which contribute to the development of the whole person. This theme incorporates 184 data entries, 83 of which acknowledge the contribution of Outdoor Education to holistic learning outcomes. Limiting factors were identified for both Outdoor Education and holistic learning in general in 41 and ten entries discuss the holistic nature of Outdoor Education. Seven entries refer to challenge,

six entries relate to life skills and six entries refer to Outdoor Education being different to the academic nature of the classroom. Twelve entries advocate that immersion offers opportunities for the development of a deeper understanding than the fragmented learning of blocked classes. Six make note of the flexibility in learning which immersion allows and six propose that there is an immediate response to learning through immersion. Five data entries note the development of stronger relationships with immersion while two entries highlight a higher level of student investment in their learning.

Developing students through outcomes beyond the academic was the focus of discussion in this category as one respondent stated, "For me it's about teaching the whole person, it's about teaching kids about who they are and what their place in the world is" (*17). It was stressed by the teachers that the holistic outcomes of Outdoor Education contribute to students' "emotional intelligence" (*14) and "resilience" (*15) along with spiritual development. It was also highlighted that "the development of the whole person often happens outside the classroom" (*16) and that Outdoor Education contributes to the development of "the mind, body and soul, being the interconnectedness between the three and how important that is for young people to make those connections and Outdoor Education seems to do all of that" (*17). The differing value placed on Outdoor Education was also acknowledged where it was stated that "it's severely undervalued in some areas. It probably needs to be valued more for what it actually does contribute to the holistic"(*13).

It was universally accepted amongst respondents that Outdoor Education should be regarded as a form of experiential learning which is important for personal development. It was reported by a participant that "It really is changing it from a third person context to a first person context" (*12), providing "that life experience, fending for themselves" (*18).

It was widely acknowledged that the immersive nature of Outdoor Education provides a "more intensive learning opportunity" (*12) where "the effect of whether they learnt or not is immediate. That's an immediate response to learning" (*11). Comparisons were made between immersive experiences and the regular timetabling of other subjects with all participants asserting that the type of learning that occurs through immersion is deeper than that which occurs in short, timetabled classes.

Core theme: Curriculum.

Theme: Outdoor Education as curriculum.

This theme describes the nature and form of Outdoor Education and its function within curriculum2. It is based on three comments, all of which specify that there is no officialcurriculum for middle school Outdoor Education. Furthermore all respondents commented that the nature and form of Outdoor Education in Australian is at the discretion of the individual school. Making note of a lack of a consolidated curriculum for Outdoor Educationin Australian and particularly Victorian schools were ubiquitous with comments such as "There isn't a formal curriculum. There is no defined curriculum for Outdoor Ed" (*7) and that "Outdoor Ed doesn't really have a curriculum at the moment. There is definitely development needed in that area, especially from what I have seen in my experiences" (*8).

Theme: Interdisciplinary connections.

Interdisciplinary connections refers to the integration of Outdoor Education with one or more other discipline areas in curriculum. Fifty-eight data entries constitute this theme. All 12 participants acknowledged the scope for Outdoor Education to be integrated with all discipline areas across the curriculum. Eight data entries describe links with HPE curriculum, seven with humanities, five with science, seven with literacy and five with numeracy. In addition, five entries were related to links with sustainability, two with art, three with

spirituality and four with indigenous education. Two entries noted links with VCAL and VET, six identified links with SEL through general capabilities and cross curricular requirements, two noted a lack of documentation of links and one mentioned discrepancies between programs and facilitators.

The general thread of discussions in this area are aligned with the participant statement that "Almost every other curriculum area is present in outdoor education in some way shape or form" (*9). The alliance of Outdoor Education with the HPE discipline area is the most recognised example of integration between Outdoor Education and other subjects. This is illustrated in the response "I think the nearest one that I can think of would be the link between PE and Outdoor Education" (*12). It was also acknowledged that Outdoor Education has links with most if not all other areas of the curriculum. It was proposed that "you could connect it to almost everything. You describe it as cross curricular or interdisciplinary. I could sit down and go through every subject if you wanted me to but I think there is a place for it in every subject area and every learning area as well" (*17).

The differing contexts for Outdoor Education between schools was mentioned. The role of individual facilitators in developing the identity and value of programs was revealed through the participant proclamation "It's up to the Outdoor Ed facilitator as to how much, or how they could integrate it with other subjects. It can apply to almost every subject I am thinking of" (*10).

Theme: Positioning Outdoor Education in curriculum.

The theme of positioning of Outdoor Education in secondary school curriculum details the actual and perceived location and value of Outdoor Education within secondary school curriculum and is based on 62 data entries. Six entries specify that Outdoor Education should be regarded as a high priority in middle school education. Six entries advocated that it should stand alone as a discipline area, six identify it as interdisciplinary and two indicate it

could be either. Nineteen data entries advocate for Outdoor Education to be included as core curriculum and compulsory at all year levels. Fifteen entries relate to its unique learning opportunities while four discuss its benefit for the development of life skills. Regardless, three data entries identified problems with its current positioning (or lack of) within curriculum.

The general thread of discussion in this area was that Outdoor Education should be given credibility to have a defined place within curriculum, for example "I would see it as a formal part of the curriculum, part of a domain area, that occurs outside the school classroom" (15). The difficulties with positioning Outdoor Education in secondary school curriculum were highlighted by respondents. This is evident with the general notion that as a discipline area, "it just gets shoved where it can fit in a schools' busy timetable". It was also stated that "a lot of schools just plop it in with PE and sport and health" (*8).

The ability to provide authentic learning outside of the classroom context was presented as a major factor for the inclusion of Outdoor Education as core curriculum. This is illustrated in the response "the reality that their learning isn't just in the classroom and to actually open their eyes to the fact that learning can happen in a number of places" (*14). The unique and distinctive features of Outdoor Education were identified as reasons for Outdoor Education to be compulsory as core curriculum in secondary schools where it was commented that "it provides those opportunities that I don't think that you can get anywhere else" (*15).

Theme: Outdoor Education as a distinct discipline area.

Outdoor Education as a distinct discipline area discusses both positive and negative aspects of Outdoor Education being regarded as a stand-alone subject in school curriculum. This theme incorporates 55 data entries. Forty-two entries identified what it is that makes

Outdoor Education distinct and thirteen advocated that it should stand alone as a distinct discipline area.

It was consistently asserted that "the engaging factor in Outdoor Ed would be breaking that daily routine" (*12) where "it gives students experiences outside of four walls" (*8), "putting them in a situation that they are not usually in" (*11). This was discussed in the context of the experiential nature of Outdoor Education or "tactile learning" (*13) which seems to be becoming less common in the classroom context. This is evident in the comment, "the kinaesthetic, hands-on learning experiences, in the classroom you don't get much time for that anymore because the curriculum is basically very academic" (*14).

Although it was widely acknowledged that Outdoor Education has interdisciplinary applications, all participants agree that Outdoor Education should be its own distinct discipline. This is apparent in the response "it needs to have its own curriculum because it does have different outcomes, because those outcomes are very much an internal thing mixed in with external things that you can see" (*8). The view from participants that Outdoor Education should be regarded as a distinct discipline area is summed up in the statement "I see it as something that all students should have experience of and it should stand alone in that manner and should not be subordinate to another area" (*12).

Core theme: Outcomes.

Theme: Outcomes of Outdoor Education.

Outcomes of Outdoor Education provides participant commentary on what the expected outcomes of Outdoor Education are in secondary school curriculum. This theme consists of 146 data entries. Sixty-three of these identify non-curriculum-based outcomes and nine specify outcomes which are unique to Outdoor Education. Fourteen entries acknowledged that there are not many formal opportunities for the development of resilience.

Seven data entries identified the physical nature of Outdoor Education as a unique way to develop resilience. Twelve entries support the view that all outcomes cannot be documented while four advocate that all outcomes should be documented to strengthen the subject. Fourteen data entries provide suggestions on how to optimise the documentation of outcomes. Eleven entries specify that not all outcomes are visible and may surface later, six oppose standardised testing, proposing that participants should only be measured against themselves and six solicit that over reporting is detrimental to the subject.

Outcomes of Outdoor Education were mostly discussed in the context of holistic development where it was suggested that "in essence they want for the kids to have experiences that shape them into good human beings" (*17). Providing opportunities for self-direction and challenge were also identified as significant outcomes. This was presented in the context of "experiencing freedom" and "healthy stress" (*18).

The development of relationships was identified as one of the most significant outcomes of Outdoor Education. This is supported by comments such as "I would say the most positive outcome from camps, that I have seen afterwards is the difference in relationships" (*13). This was exhibited mainly in the context of self, community and place where it was proposed that one of the most significant outcomes of Outdoor Education is "I think to have respect, for yourself, others and the environment" (*7).

The suggested current trend of declining resilience in students was identified as one of the most significant issues in education by all participants (Loynes, 2017a). This was exemplified in the comment. "I just think the system has taught our kids not to be resilient" (*13). In light of this, the development of resilience was highlighted as one of, if not the most important outcome of Outdoor Education because it is "about providing safe opportunities for failure" (*13). This develops "that feeling of competence that they can

manage themselves in the natural environment, there's so many benefits that I've seen" (*16). The difficulties with legitimising, documenting and measuring resilience as a learning outcome were acknowledged by most participants. Participant *11 provides an example of this, "resilience can be visible but not measurable". Expanding on this they provide an explanation, "I think your resilience is different in different situations, so it would be unfair to tick a box that they're low resilience in one situation where in the next they could be thriving" (*11).

It was acknowledged that "there has got to be accountability and there has got to be outcomes" (*13) however "there are some intangibles" (*12) and that perhaps it is ok to "just let the incidental stuff happen" (*14). It was asserted that "it is not possible to document every outcome that every child achieves. Surely it's not if you are talking about the whole person" (*16). For example, "How would you assess socialisation? I don't think there are some things that can be assessed formally" (*12).

Theme: Wellbeing and relationship development.

Wellbeing and relationships refers to outcomes of Outdoor Education which relate to the development of the wellbeing of participants through the development of positive relationships. This theme contains 288 data entries. Nine entries note social outcomes, seven note physical outcomes and seven identify mental and emotional outcomes. Five data entries discuss spiritual wellbeing, four specify resilience as a wellbeing outcome and seven relate to self-efficacy. Fifty-nine data entries identify the contribution of Outdoor Education to the development of the self, 69 relate to relationships with others, 48 discuss relationships with the environment while 30 acknowledge the positive effect of Outdoor Education on these relationships. Twelve entries identify shared experience as contributing to the development of communication, four to relationships with others and eight to creating a sense of belonging. Seven data entries acknowledge the importance of sharing significant experiences and four

specify that a shared experience is richer than an individual experience. Five entries propose that outcomes from these experiences are immeasurable while three assert that shared experience is under-acknowledged as a learning outcome.

The wellbeing benefits of Outdoor Education were well advocated amongst participants. This is exemplified by the comment "the Outdoor Education experience contributed to a better wellbeing for the students in their relationships" (*16). The major factors that were highlighted which relate to wellbeing include, "opportunities for achievement" (*11,*12), "commitment and respect, and ownership" (*14), "sense of self" (*17, *14, *9), "stewardship" (*15), "risk management" (*9) and "resilience" (*9, *15) (*17). It was proposed that "it's about developing in them, resilience. Outdoor Education creates a maturity in kids that other subject areas don't" (*17).

One of the most significant identified outcomes of Outdoor Education which contribute to the development of the self is challenge which "puts people out of their comfort zone so they have to draw on their own personal relationship with themselves" (*11). This leads to the development of "self-esteem, self-confidence" (*12) and "appreciating yourself" (*17). "Having a purpose" (*11), "being in the moment" (*7) and "achieving goals" (*12) were also identified as significant contributing factors to the development of positive relationships with the self.

Developing positive relationships with others was discussed mainly in the context of "being put in a situation where you are spending time with other people, having the opportunity to actually share time" (*7). It was advocated that relationships with others are formed "through shared experiences, that's the only way" (*12). It was strongly agreed by all participants that "shared experience should be a learning outcome in itself" (*13, *11) "both formally and informally" (*12). It was posed that "having a common story somewhere helps

to develop positive relationships" (*17). This was reinforced with the comment that "you have got to have those shared experiences to develop relationships with others" (*12). Data derived from this phase of the study revealed that having shared experiences contributes to a "sense of belonging" (*11) which has been highlighted as a significant contribution to wellbeing.

Direct tactile experience (*16, *8) in the natural world was identified as a significant factor in developing positive relationships with the environment. Participant *17 posed that "you can't appreciate something unless you've experienced it" while *12 emphasised that "it makes a massive difference to actually experience, understand and be able to quantify things".

Five of the participants asserted that Outdoor Education is about connection to place and the natural environment (*11,*10) and the development of respect and ownership (*10,*14,*16). The thread of these discussions is illustrated in the summation that Outdoor Education promotes "understanding and respect as well, knowing what is around you, and understanding how you can impact that, both positively and negatively" (*18).

Theme: Opportunity.

Opportunity as a theme provides data which expresses the concepts of provision of opportunity and participation as a learning outcome for Outdoor Education. One hundred and seven data entries constitute from this theme. Twelve entries advocate for provision of opportunity to be recognised as a legitimate outcome of education. Eleven referred to school being the only place for these opportunities while nine entries posed that providing opportunity creates a level playing field among students. Seven data entries stressed the importance of providing a diverse range of experiences and seven noted a change in environment. Eleven data entries discussed recognising and knowing an opportunity when it

presents itself and then taking it. Sixteen entries discuss relationship development through incidental experience while ten identify life skills. Seven data entries identify transferrable knowledge as an outcome of incidental learning and eight specify experience in nature. Nine entries note that although incidental learning is not explicit, it is important and four entries advocate that incidental learning is as important as structured activities.

The sentiment from all respondents is that the provision of opportunity, experience and participation should be regarded as legitimate learning outcomes of Outdoor Education (*9, *14). It was asserted that because "it provides those opportunities that I don't think that you can get anywhere else" (*15), "only at school" (*11). Examples of the reasons for this is "for a lot of our boys, the opportunity to experience these things is limited" (*17) and "having an opportunity for students to partake in activities and situations they may not normally get a chance to do is important" (*7). The specific context of UIS was highlighted where it was noted that for many of the students at the subject school accessibility to these types of experiences can be challenging, posing that "it may be the only time in their lifetime that they have had that opportunity" (*12).

Awareness of opportunity was also highlighted as a legitimate learning outcome. This is reflected in participant *13's comment "having that opportunity and to be aware that there is an opportunity. There is a further realisation that they are being valued, the program is being valued and, that fits in to what an outcome should be". Reflecting on opportunity, participant *11 stated, "I think that shows resilience, putting themselves in a situation, offering something and them saying yes to it".

The learning which happens outside of formal structured activities was widely acknowledged among participants. It was highlighted that this type of incidental learning is, and should be, providing opportunities for "self-regulation" (*13) and "peer learning" (*11).

This type of learning was identified as being an "organic process" (*12) and "a great opportunity for people to learn to be themselves" (*12). Participant *13 asserted "That's where the rich learning is". This was extended on by participant *12 with the reflection, "leaving it organic like that, is different to actually having it as a formal directed learning activity. Isn't the pinnacle we try to get to as educators about self-learning?" (*12).

Discussion

Phase 1 of this study has generated data relating to the perceptions of accompanying teachers in relation to Outdoor Education curriculum, definitions and outcomes. Supporting Martin's (2014) observation that there is a lack of clarity with Outdoor Education, both participants *7 and *8 made a point that there is no official mandated curriculum for Outdoor Education in Victorian secondary schools. This data adds to a body of evidence which supports the need for a critical rationale for Outdoor Education as a learning area as identified by Martin (2008). Irrespective, Outdoor Education at the participating school is regarded as a component of the core curriculum of the school and facilitated as a distinct curriculum area.

Aligning with this, all participants reported it has a place in the formal curriculum of secondary schools, advocating that it be embedded within the curriculum it at all year levels. Furthermore, the general view was that it should be a distinct discipline with its own portfolio and utilised as an integrated pedagogy in an interdisciplinary context. There was also a consensus that it should not be subordinate to any other discipline area which is in contrast to both National (ACARA, 2012) and State (DETV, n.d.) policy contexts for curriculum where Outdoor Education is only present as a small sub-branch of HPE curriculum.

The perceived value of Outdoor Education compared to more traditional subjects was presented as a reason for its limited presence in official curriculum. It was implied by teachers that 'schools just try to squeeze it in where they can' in a busy and competitive

curriculum and timetable so it is often facilitated under the guise of HPE. Although this parallels mandated curriculum policy it is in contrast to the views of the majority of Outdoor Educators and theorists who acknowledge and advocate that Outdoor Education is quite different in its practice and its outcomes to other subjects, HPE being one which was explicitly contrasted by Hewison and Martin (2009). Participant *13 provides an example of the support for this view among participants stating “I think it’s so uniquely different to the other disciplines and it’s something that all students need to be exposed to”. As an argument for Outdoor Education to be compulsory or core curriculum, Participant *15 highlighted the unique and distinct features of Outdoor Education as the primary reason because “it provides those opportunities that I don’t think that you can get anywhere else”. There are examples of support for these arguments in both international (Foster & Linney, 2007), National (Gray, 2018) and local contexts (Quay, 2016) within the theme of holistic education.

Supporting Hewison and Martin (2009), the view that Outdoor Education should be a separate discipline within the National Curriculum because it delivers student outcomes which no other discipline can create was well supported by participants with all respondents expressing that Outdoor Education should be a distinct discipline area. Paradoxically all participants identified Outdoor Education as being interdisciplinary with the ability to address learning outcomes in many, if not all other discipline areas of the school. Respondents identified curriculum connections outside of Outdoor Education and outside their own specialised field.

The idea of breaking routine by removing students from their normal classroom context to provide a diversity of learning environments and situations was presented as the most significant point of difference for Outdoor Education by all participants. This was presented in the context of developing resilience by placing students in atypical situations. Participant *12 elaborates on this with the comments,

> "generally in most subject areas, the chance of the unpredictable or the chance of an unexpected unknown or outcome is next to nil. It's the unpredictable, the un-expectable and assisting the students to know that in general that can be safe but also observe and work to respond to that nature and that is something that I would suggest is almost impossible in any other area".

In contrast to these views, all participants acknowledged the interdisciplinary nature of Outdoor Education as curriculum and were quick to highlight the opportunities it provides to meet learning outcomes in other discipline areas. This is based on the premise that division between disciplines is eliminated with the aim of "learning across learning areas, or transcending their boundaries" (Venville et al., 2008 p. 859) where "queries and investigations are not bound by disciplinary norms" (Somerville & Rapport, 2002, p. 1). These discussions lead to questions relating to the depth of integration versus the scope of integration, with other subjects creating two different potential situations for interdisciplinary learning through Outdoor Education. The first is where Outdoor Education is integrated with numerous other subjects although the integration of each subject is quite limited, providing just a flavour of the other subjects. The second is targeted and focused integration with a limited number of subjects although the integration is much deeper with stronger cross curriculum connections. This offers opportunities for Outdoor Education to explicitly address the curriculum requirements of these other subjects.

Outdoor Education is difficult to define due to the large diversity of understandings within the field and is largely recognised as being based on practical activities with little theoretical and philosophical foundations (Nicol, 2002). Nicol's difficulties defining Outdoor Education from 2002 are still relevant today. Being able to articulate a consolidated definition for what constitutes Outdoor Education provides a solid foundation for arguing for its inclusion in formal curriculum at all levels. To do this we must first identify the factors to be

used as the raw materials for creating a definition. This raises questions as to what it is that makes Outdoor Education distinct, its applications within school curriculum and the learning outcomes it provides. These three elements may be simplified under the core themes used in thisresearch, *Curriculum, Definitions,* and *Outcomes.*

The comment "it's a pretty tough one to define isn't it?" from participant *13 reflects the general response from most interviewees when asked to define Outdoor Education. Some participants had a quick response although the definitions they provided were simple and tended to describe Outdoor Education in traditional terms with the general thread being related to Outdoor Recreation or Adventure. These differing responses may be explained in relation to the context of the interviewees. For example, participants who were experienced in curriculum development as part of their leadership role tended to ponder the question of definition further. This process led to their realisation that defining Outdoor Education as either a discipline area or as a field of practice is challenging and complex. Respondents who were quick to define it in terms of Outdoor Recreation or Outdoor Sport have a background in HPE and tended to view it from an HPE curriculum perspective. Contrary to this, one of the most senior and experienced members of this group acknowledged the difficulties in defining Outdoor Education and after some consideration provided a complex and articulate description of Outdoor Education in relation to its distinct features, its interdisciplinary applications and its outcomes. For example, as stated by participant *13,

> "Outdoor Ed provides experiential and immersive learning which contributes to the whole person. I would say its interdisciplinary and holistic because it has a diverse range of learning experiences which develops skills which are transferable to not only other areas of curriculum but to other areas of their life as well .....it's a complete learning experience".

Considering the overwhelming responses from interviewees during this phase of the research, it becomes apparent that the most significant defining factor for Outdoor Education as a learning area is the process of removing students from their regular classroom context for an extended period of time to provide learning opportunities in a variety of environments and situations. Polley and Atkin (2014) provide a range of factors which define Outdoor Education relating directly to direct personal contact with nature, sustainability, safety and risk and personal and social development.

It was noted by participants that often the development of the whole person happens outside the classroom. This aligns with one of the main processes of Outdoor Education where students are removed from their regular classroom context for external learning opportunities which provide transferrable knowledge and were referred to as living through a learned experience by participant *9. They posed that the transferrable knowledge derived from these experiences is able to be practiced immediately through Outdoor Education where the effects of decisions and actions are practical and immediate as opposed to abstract concepts learnt in a formal classroom setting which may, at times, be less tangible. This provides support for Gray (2018) who states that “first-hand experience trumps vicarious experience, every time” (p. 145). Many participants could not specify the exact changes in behaviour post camp, although it was generally agreed that “there is something a little bit more mature about them after they go on camp” (*17).

Martin (2010) has expressed that Outdoor Education should contribute to the development of a deep personal understanding of, and empathy with the environment achieved by being immersed in the environment rather than by observation. This inference that Outdoor Education should be immersive is reflected in responses from all participants. It was identified that the type of learning that occurs through immersion is deeper than that

which occurs in short, timetabled classes. Reasons posed for this included unrestricted time constraints, flexibility of curriculum and the immediate adaptability of students to the effects and consequences of their learning.

In relation to defining Outdoor Education in the context of secondary school curriculum, one of the most significant factors to be considered are the outcomes. It is widely acknowledged that there are a multitude of outcomes that are not specified in curriculum (Noble & McGrath, 2012) which are beneficial for the holistic development of students (Mitten, 2009). All participants provide support for this, acknowledging that there are many outcomes of education beyond formal curriculums. Supporting Noddings (2003) who identifies happiness as an aim of education, when asked what the most important outcomes of education are, participant *9 responded with *happiness*. This appeared as a refreshing surprise amongst answers which generally relate to academic and developmental outcomes. It raised the point that if a student is not happy, they are not going to learn, which could deconstruct the learning process to its most basic elements.

Outcomes of Outdoor Education noted by participants in this study were discussed in relation to their contribution to holistic development and were focussed mainly on personal development, relationship development, wellbeing, challenge, opportunity and resilience. Each of these types of outcomes may be aligned with the categories previously described by Hattie et al. (1997) apart from the category of Academic, as academic outcomes should be present in formal curriculum documentation. Although not explicitly identified in curriculum as outcomes of Outdoor Education, outcomes in each of these categories were observed by teachers while participating in the program at this school.

Participant *12 observed that Outdoor Education provides “a great opportunity for people to learn to be themselves” which leads to self-awareness, self-competence and a positive self-concept (Pryor et al., 2005). This reinforces the views of Polley and Atkin

(2014) and Dudman et al. (2019) who propose that Outdoor Education can be instrumental in the teaching of self-reliance, leadership, interdependence, personal risk, and the development of an adventurous spirit. In relation to the development of relationships with others, participants *7, *12, *15 and *17 asserted that having shared experiences which are challenging generates a common story (Loynes, 2018) amongst participants which then creates a sense of belonging (*15) (Dudman et al., 2019).

Martin (2014) identifies relationships with nature as a foundation for wellbeing in education. Responses from participants support this view, asserting that Outdoor Education is about being connected to nature through awareness of the interdependence between components of the environment, including people and ownership or stewardship which is developed through connection to place and tactile experience in different environments. For this to happen, students must initially be provided with an opportunity to do so. This forms the basis for the argument that provision of opportunity be regarded as a legitimate outcome of Outdoor Education. This is particularly significant in the context of the participating school where “the opportunity to experience these things is limited” (*17) and “having an opportunity for students to partake in activities and situations they may not normally get a chance to do is important” (*7). As exemplified by participants *15 and *11, it was acknowledged that Outdoor Education provides specialised opportunities, that they cannot get anywhere else, only at school (Polley & Atkin, 2014). The significance of this was captured by participant *10 who outlines that as educators it is our responsibility to facilitate as many different opportunities in as many different situations as possible to present students with the knowledge and skills to be effective in the broader world beyond school. Providing the opportunity is the first step in reaching the outcome. The next and more critical step in the process is for students to become aware of the opportunity in front of them and to be encouraged to value that opportunity (*13) and take it.

It has previously been advocated that Outdoor Education promotes numerous forms of wellbeing (Foster & Linney, 2007) and this was reflected in the participant responses accessed during this study. The most common examples of wellbeing outcomes in Outdoor Education from respondents include opportunities for both achievement and failure, sense of self and community, respect (for self, others and environment), and *freedom (*17, *18)*. Each of these types of outcomes can be categorised using Ewerts' (1989) framework for outdoor adventure benefits which align to the facilitation of psychological, sociological, educational and physical personal attributes.

An argument was presented that the passive, non-directed time during the Outdoor Education experience was when the *rich learning* occurred with opportunities for *self-regulation* and *peer learning*. Supporting this, participant *12 made the assertion that undirected 'organic' learning is an example of 'self-learning' which should be seen as the pinnacle of what we try to reach as educators.

Shared experience, maturity, resilience and freedom were offered as examples of important outcomes which may be observed although difficult to measure. It was unanimously acknowledged that not all outcomes can be measured. This supports Breakspear (2014) who proposed that there should be an acknowledgement that some important aspects of education will remain elusive to empirical measurement yet must still be emphasised and valued. Upon analysis, data generated from teacher interviews provides evidence that Outdoor Education provides outcomes which, although not measurable or even visible, are important regardless of their presence in curriculum or not.

Summary

All data generated from interviews with accompanying teachers fell into at least one of the core themes of Curriculum, Definitions and/or Outcomes. The core theme entitled

Curriculum is aimed at addressing the need for further research relating to clarity, purpose and content of Outdoor Education in schools as identified by Lugg (1999). Data generated in the core theme of *Definitions* aims to address a need for further research in relation to the consolidation of understandings in Outdoor Education as identified by Martin (2014). The core theme *Outcomes* is aimed at addressing gaps in knowledge identified by Mitten (2009) who proposed that the outcomes of Outdoor Education have been overlooked and undervalued.

Providing support for Potter and Dyment (2016) who proposed that Outdoor Education is under-valued, the accompanying teachers asserted that Outdoor Education is severely undervalued in some areas and should be valued more for its contribution to holistic development. It is evident in the data that Outdoor Education is under-represented in curriculum for Victorian schools compared to other, more traditional learning areas. The perceived value of Outdoor Education compared to some of the more traditional subjects along with a lack of clarity relating to Outdoor Education curriculum were identified as reasons for its limited presence in official curriculum frameworks. This data adds to a body of evidence which supports the need for a critical rationale for Outdoor Education as a learning area (Martin, 2008).

Aligning with Gray (2018), the analysis of data derived from this phase of the study demonstrated that Outdoor Education is intrinsically valued throughout the participating school and is explicitly a critical part of the compulsory core curriculum. Respondents emphasised that the learning processes of Outdoor Education are unique and as such should be included as a component of the core curriculum of the school and facilitated as a distinct curriculum area. Aligning with this, all participants reported it has a place in the formal curriculum of secondary schools, advocating that it be embedded within the curriculum it at

all year levels. Data from the teacher interviews indicated that regardless of its form and structure, Outdoor Education is an important component of secondary schooling.

Throughout the interview process, difficulties defining Outdoor Education emerged and were recognised by participants. Attempting to define Outdoor Education, the accompanying teachers described it as a holistic learning area which provides authentic experiential learning opportunities (Loynes, 2017a) and distinct outcomes which are unique (Levitan, 2016). The process of removing students from their normal classroom context to provide unpredictability and diversity in learning was presented as the most significant defining factor for OutdoorEducation. Outdoor Education was identified as being immersive and holistic with skills and knowledge which are relevant and transferrable to real life situations and that the effects of students' learning are immediately visible to them. It was noted by participants that often the development of the whole person happens outside the classroom and that the type of learning that occurs through immersion is often deeper than that which occurs in short, timetabled classes. In addition to these features, numerous teachers identified unique outcomes of Outdoor Education as significant defining factors. Developing contextual definitions for Outdoor Education addresses gaps in knowledge as well as providing clarity by describing the purpose and content of Outdoor Education in schools as suggested by Martin (2014).

Incidental learning was identified as being prominent in immersive Outdoor Education programs. Interviews with accompanying teachers have revealed that Outdoor Education has many wellbeing outcomes beyond the realm of formal mandated curriculum requirements and that these outcomes are important whether they are included in official curriculum or not. It was also noted that these outcomes are beneficial for the holistic development of students (Mitten, 2009).

Interview responses identified maturity as an outcome from immersive Outdoor Education and the development of resilience was highlighted as one of its unique outcomes. Participants asserted that for this type of development to occur, students must initially be provided with an opportunity for such experiences. The importance of the provision of opportunities was raised in the context of the participating school where it was identified that for many of the students, school is the only place where they have the opportunity to undertake these types of experiences. It was also highlighted that provision of opportunity builds awareness of the identification of opportunities throughout their life to be valued and accepted. This supports personal development and resilience (*13, *11).

This phase of the research found that the development of relationships with others is one of the most significant outcomes of Outdoor Education. These interviews revealed that shared experiences, particularly addressing adversity, contribute to the development of a sense of belonging which was identified as one of the most powerful outcomes in relation to the development of positive relationships with others (Dudman et al., 2019). It was expressed by all participants *that provision of opportunity*, and *shared experience* should be regarded as legitimate outcomes of Outdoor Education in secondary schools. While recognising the importance of less explicit outcomes of Outdoor Education to personal and social development, it was unanimously agreed that not all outcomes can be measured and it would be detrimental to holistic learning to try and do so. Data generated through this analysis addresses gaps in knowledge related to the development of wellbeing (Nisbet et al., 2008; Noble & McGrath, 2012). It also addresses the need for further research regarding the outcomes of education as identified by Dyment and Potter (2015) and Martin (2014, 2008), particularly in relation to human-nature relationships.

Phase 2 – Focus group

Phase 2 of this study involved the facilitation of a focus group discussion with the intent of bringing the investigator closer to the research topic through a direct, intensive encounter with key individuals (Vaughn et al., 1996). As recommended by Krueger and Casey (2014), participants were selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the research topic. In this case, the commonality between participants was their experience with the Outdoor Education program at UIS and their participation in the individual interviews conducted in Phase 1.

The data in this focus group was solicited through the use of open-ended questions as proposed by Krueger and Casey (2014). This approach has been noted by Kitzinger (1995) to be particularly appropriate when the interviewer wishes to encourage research participants to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary. Along with the triangulation of data, the goal of the focus group was to encourage self-disclosure (Krueger & Casey, 2014), elicit perceptions, feelings, attitudes and ideas of the participants about selected topics (Vaughn et al., 1996). In this case the selected topics were perceptions of Outdoor Education, its role and positioning in secondary school curriculum and its un-recognised outcomes.

Participants

Participants were recruited using a simple form of *criterion sampling* where all those in the group meet specific criteria for membership of the group under study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this case the group was small and relatively homogenous (Vaughn et al., 1996) in the sense that all members have been recruited from Phase 1 and have participated in the Outdoor Education program from the participating school.

Six participants were recruited from phase 1 on the basis of a diverse range of demographic characteristics. The focus group included male and female participants ranging in age from twenty-four to sixty years old and in experience from early career to thirty plus years in the field. Participants were recruited from different curriculum areas and from different levels within the management hierarchy of the school structure. One participant works in the upper level of management of the school while one represents middle management, three represent subject teachers and one represents support staff.

For the purposes of confidentiality, a pseudonym coding process has been used to represent each participant. Pseudonyms for focus group members recruited from Phase 1 are *7, *8, *9, *13, *15 and *17. The profiles for these participants are illustrated in Table 4 – Accompanying teacher participant profiles.

Procedure

Six participants recruited from phase 1 of this study were interviewed for this phase of the study as this provides a large enough while manageable sample size for this type of qualitative study. The selection of research participants has taken into consideration age, gender, experience and cultural characteristics to provide diversity and generate a rich data set.

To recruit participants an initial email was sent to prospective participants who have participated in Phase 1 of this study seeking their expression of interest. This email detailed the aims and purposes of the study as well as expected requirements of their participation. Participation in this study was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from all participants via the CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH as required by Victoria University. Appendix 1 “Consent form for participants involved in research” provides an example of this.

The focus group session took place in one of the classrooms of the participating school which was conducive to creating a relaxed group setting where participants could sense that their opinions and experiences are valued (Vaughn et al., 1996). The focus group discussion was 43 minutes in duration and its facilitation was guided by questions as per "focus group interview guiding questions" (see Appendix 9). The focus group interview was recorded as a voice memo and then transcribed for further analysis.

Materials - Interview design

As per Study 1 – Domain Evaluation and Study 2 – Phase 1, the purpose of the focus group discussion for Phase 2 of this study was to gather research-relevant information used to develop a process of systematic description and explanation (Cohen et al., 2007). As recommended by Greenbaum (1999), the focus group interview was implemented using a discussion guide that had been prepared in advance to ensure that the appropriate topics have been covered in the session and that the proper amount of time was allocated to each question.

Group interview style items were developed which were suitable for answering questions about the meanings attributed by participants to situations, events, behaviours and activities (Maxwell, 2005). In this case, the interview was used as a form of deliberative inquiry (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2010; Short, 1991) to provide support for better decision-making and problem-solving in relation to the development of Outdoor Education in this context. As recommended by Krueger and Casey (2014) the focus group discussion was conducted in one of the classrooms of the participating school as it is familiar location for all participants that creates a comfortable permissive environment and minimised the possibility of the interviewer being in a position of power or influence.

The purpose of the focus group interview is not on consensus building, rather it is on obtaining a range of opinions from people about issues (Vaughn et al., 1996). By aligning

with the perspectives of Creswell (2012), these interviews have been used to provide useful information that cannot be directly observed. This provided an opportunity for participants to describe detailed information and conducted in a group format providing opportunities for individuals to form opinions autonomously (Vaughn et al., 1996).

The focus-group interview process followed the stages outlined by Breen (2006), including a welcome; an overview of the topic; a statement on protocol, an assurance of confidentiality; and the questions, beginning with general experiences and progressing to specific problems. The interview protocol for this study was based on a framework similar to that presented by Krueger (1997) which includes opening questions, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions, and closing questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

The interview schedule consisted of 31 open-ended questions within 6 discussion topics. Discussion topics included, Outdoor Education as a holistic learning area; definition and location of Outdoor Education in secondary school curriculum; outcomes of Outdoor Education in secondary schooling; relationship development in Outdoor Education; overall relationship development; and, disparity of programs and practices. These questions were intended to elicit responses as an extension of Phase 1 discussions to cross check data and understandings. They were also intended to provide an opportunity for participants to elaborate on their understandings and perceptions of Outdoor Education in a collaborative and creative environment. In total, interviews conducted during this phase of the study generated 43 minutes of interview recordings resulting in 5082 words or 13 pages of transcript.

Data analysis

Data from this phase of the study was analysed thematically (O'Leary, 2004) following the process described in the data analysis section of Study 1 – Phase 1, which is

based on the data reduction, data display and data verification model presented by (Miles & Huberman, 1984). To simplify the interview transcripts, open coding was undertaken as a form of as data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Following this axial coding (Charmaz, 2000) was facilitated as a form of data display (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Relationships between and across these elements were explored (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) as a form of data verification (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

As a result of this process, three core themes emerged, *Curriculum*, *Definitions* and *Outcomes*, each of which contain a number of sub themes as per "Focus Group Interview Thematic Data Analysis Map" (see Appendix 10). Analysis also involved aligning similar statements based on intent or meaning to matched codes. For example, in relation to the question 'Where does Outdoor Education belong in a secondary school curriculum framework?' participants' responses were varied although they were coded in the same way. One response was 'it should stand alone as an interdisciplinary learning area' while another was 'used to link and integrated discipline areas across the curriculum'. Although differing answers, these two responses were coded within the core theme *Curriculum* and in the theme *Location of Outdoor Education in curriculum.*

Findings

The focus group was used simultaneously with other data collection methods to triangulate data (Vaughn et al., 1996). The intent of this analysis was to encourage self-disclosure (Krueger & Casey, 2014), elicit perceptions, feelings, attitudes and ideas of the participant group regarding Outdoor Education in this context. Building on the interviews from phase 1 of the case study, the focus group discussions in this case allowed the researcher to gather qualitative data regarding the collective perceptions and opinions of purposively selected individuals (Vaughn et al., 1996). All data generated throughout this

content analysis was situated in one of three core themes: *Definitions, Curriculum*, or *Outcomes*.

Core theme: Definitions.

Theme: Defining Outdoor Education.

Defining Outdoor Education provides explicit definitions of Outdoor Education within the data and comprises 69 data entries. Thirty-one entries identify the features of Outdoor Education which make it distinct and nineteen entries describe Outdoor Education as being holistic. Nineteen data entries specify Outdoor Education as being holistic while seven note that it is experiential. Three entries discuss first-hand experience, two discuss challenge and two refer to real life learning.

Discussion in this area generated a list of specific terms which participants agree should be included in any definition of Outdoor education in secondary school. These include, applied learning; experiential; environment; and, "obviously outdoor" (*8). It was shared within the group that "Outdoor Ed is an experiential holistic learning program which places students in outdoor environments to build relationships with the self, environment and others" (*7), contributing to the development of the "whole person" (*7).

The focus group members identified Outdoor Education as a pedagogy which "should stand alone as a curriculum area but with outcomes linked to other parts of the curriculum" (*17). Removal from the classroom context was identified as the most significant defining factor. This is evident in the comment, "it's about getting them out of the classroom and experiencing real life things" (*10).

Theme: Distinct features of Outdoor Education.

Distinct features of Outdoor Education consists of 24 data entries. This theme discusses the individual descriptive features of Outdoor Education and provides rationale for

it as a distinct curriculum area. All participants acknowledge that Outdoor Education has features which distinguish it from all other learning areas. Six data entries are place-related, specifically removing students from their regular classroom context to expose them to different learning environments. Six entries highlight the importance of contact with nature while four are related to adventure and exploration. Three data entries propose that there is an immediate effect from this type of learning, two identify social connections and two entries are related to risk. One data entry proffers that Outdoor Education provides a "level playing field where students are tested only against themselves rather than other people" (*8).

The focus group identified "the removal from their normal learning space" (*17) and exposure to "different experiences that they would find in the outside world" (*10) as the most distinctive feature of Outdoor Education in secondary school. It was noted that different learning environments in this context provide freedom, space, social experience, adventure and direct connection with nature. This creates a situation where there are "immediate consequences of their learning" (*17) where "their decisions, words and actions matter and have an immediate effect" (*13). Outdoor Education was explicitly advocated as "a safe place to take risks" (*7). High levels of teamwork and cooperation were identified as distinct features as well as first-hand experience. This is exemplified in the comment, "it's the personal and social development stuff that you can only get by actually experiencing it and going out there and doing it yourself. It's the bonding and the group development" (*17).

Theme: Holistic learning.

Holistic learning considers the outcomes of Outdoor Education which contribute to the development of the whole person and contains thirty-two entries. Five entries identify Outdoor Education as having diverse learning experiences which transcend academic outcomes. Four data entries identify spiritual outcomes, three highlight social and emotional outcomes and two relate to psychological wellbeing. Seven entries propose that immersive

learning provides richer experiences than traditional learning methods. Five data entries discuss the relationship between challenge and resilience, five entries pertain to the contribution of immersion to the development of relationships with others and two entries highlight that immersion provides immediate visible consequences resulting from learning experiences.

Data generated from these discussions is reflected in the comment from the focus group, “I would say its interdisciplinary and holistic because it has a diverse range of learning experiences which develops skills that are transferable to not only other areas of curriculum but to other areas of their life as well” (*17). Group reflection revealed that in Outdoor Education “immersive learning is more condensed, less structured and can be a lot more relaxed” (*8). They posed that this creates a sense of freedom “because it’s a new experience for everyone, it creates a level playing field which gives all students a chance to shine” (*7) and that “being in that different environment is the biggest difference” (*10). One anecdote noted, “With immersion on camp, it puts them in a situation where they have no choice but to adapt, you have no choice as a group but to complete the activity otherwise you will not get back to camp” (*10).

It was also acknowledged by group members that Outdoor Education provides “real learning with real risks and consequences” (*13) which inevitably lead to “life skills such as resilience and teamwork” (*7). The context of the participating school was also raised where it was presented that “being in a Catholic school you have to look at the spiritual awareness and development as part of a holistic program” (*17).

Core theme: Curriculum.

Theme: Outdoor Education curriculum.

This theme provides descriptions and definitions of explicit Outdoor Education specific curriculum in secondary school. It contains eighteen data entries. Eight entries refer to new experiences, five relate to the environment and two to relationships. Inclusivity, interdisciplinary learning and authentic are the focus of one data entry each. As opposed to definitions of outdoor education as a field, these discussions were related directly to Outdoor Education curriculum as it occurs in secondary school. Terms that were used by the group to describe Outdoor Education as curriculum include *experiential learning*, *inclusive*, *immersion*, *diverse learning activities*, *real, authentic learning*, *positive relationships* and *self, others and environment*.

Theme: Interdisciplinary nature of Outdoor Education.

This theme consists of fourteen data entries and details the intrinsic links between Outdoor Education and other discipline areas in secondary school curriculum. Four data entries describe links with all curriculum areas, and four entries highlight links with environmental science and sustainability. Links with HPE and humanities appear separately across six data entries. Discussing the interdisciplinary nature of Outdoor Education, it was acknowledged that links have been identified with HPE, environmental science, sustainability, geography and humanities. Regardless, it was concluded by the focus group that Outdoor Education "really can reach all areas of the curriculum" (*17) and "can be used to inform educational outcomes in any subject area due to the rich diversity of experiences that can be created by teachers" (*13).

It was noted that Outdoor Education as curriculum is relevant across all levels and proposed that "it should be at all year levels and could be integrated into all subjects in one way or another" (*17). In relation to its form and function, it was also advocated that "it

should stand alone as a curriculum area but the outcomes could be linked with other parts of the curriculum" (*13).

Theme: Positioning of Outdoor Education in curriculum.

Positioning of Outdoor Education in secondary school curriculum outlines both the actual and perceived location of Outdoor Education within secondary school curriculum. This theme contains eighteen data entries, eleven of which specify that Outdoor Education should stand-alone as a discipline area. Of these, four acknowledge the interdisciplinary nature of Outdoor Education. Three entries advocate for Outdoor Education to be interdisciplinary and integrated with other curriculum areas and four entries state that it should be compulsory for all students.

When asked where Outdoor Education should be positioned in secondary school curriculum, the response was unanimous, *across all levels*. It was proposed that Outdoor Education should be a stand-alone subject at all year levels because it is distinct from all other subjects and has a diverse range of unique activities and outcomes. The focus group advocated that it should "stand alone as an alternative to regular classroom learning" (*17), it "should be sequenced throughout their schooling" (*9) and "should not be subordinate to any other individual learning area" (*13). It was also stressed that "it should be part of the core curriculum of schooling" (*17). The focus group identified Outdoor Education as a distinct discipline although they identified links with numerous other curriculum areas. It was suggested by focus group members that "it could exist as part of an experiential learning curriculum area which encompasses interdisciplinary learning outcomes" (*13) and should be "an immersive program which is then followed up back at school in the other curriculum areas to maximise learning outcomes" (*17).

Theme: Outdoor Education as core curriculum.

Outdoor Education as core curriculum consists of six data entries, all of which propose that Outdoor Education should be compulsory core curriculum at all year levels. The reasons provided were that Outdoor Education provides learning opportunities not found in other subjects and has unique and distinctive learning outcomes.

Core theme: Outcomes.

Theme: Outcomes of Outdoor Education.

Outcomes of Outdoor Education explores both known and hidden outcomes of Outdoor Education in practice. This theme contains 47 data entries. Six data entries discuss non-academic outcomes of Outdoor Education, five entries highlight outcomes related to the development of the self and five entries make note of social outcomes. Four entries relate to resilience, three describe real life experiences outside of the classroom and three identify that there are different outcomes for different students, highlighting the inclusive nature of Outdoor Education. Two data entries specify that Outdoor Education results in outcomes which may not be visible or cannot be measured, two entries discuss challenge as an outcome and one notes integrated interdisciplinary outcomes. Nine data entries indicated that Outdoor Education has a lasting effect. Four data entries proposed that no judgement could be made on whether the outcomes of Outdoor Education last because not all effects are visible while three entries specified that effects are individualised and different for each student.

The debate regarding explicating or legitimising outcomes was a focus of discussions relating to outcomes of Outdoor Education. It was proposed by one participant and supported by all members of the focus group that,

> "Outcomes in Outdoor Education do not need to be made explicit as far as individual student 'achievement' is concerned. However, in the current

> Australian education system, explicit educational outcomes are necessary to gain support from educational institutions (and ultimately politicians) to improve the implementation (funding and allocation of resources) of Outdoor Education programs to ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage in the rich social emotional physical and environmental learning that Outdoor Education provides" (*9)

It was acknowledged that learning outcomes are different for all students. This is exemplified in the response, "I think it is really important to base it on the individual and not have it as a universal goal as all students learn at a different level and a different pace" (*7). The focus group agreed that Outdoor Education contributes to "a long-term gain in attitudes, beliefs and self-respect" (*9) and that "it improves social skills and helps with respect for other people" (*7).

All participants in the focus group identified life-skills, challenge and particularly resilience as the most important outcomes of Outdoor Education with "opportunities to experience success and achievement as well as failure in a safe environment" (*8). Other identified important outcomes, whether documented or not, include personal and social development, experience of life outside the classroom, and the application of skills and knowledge in real life situations. The focus group described Outdoor Education as a place "where students can experiment" (*13), "where non-academic students can find success and achievement" (*10) and gain "an appreciation for the natural environment" (*9).

Theme: Do the outcomes of Outdoor Education have a lasting effect?

The general view of the focus group was that Outdoor Education does have a positive effect on participants although the strength of and longevity of its effects were in contention. This is highlighted in the comment:

> "I think it does have a positive effect, but it tends to diminish with time so I think that it is important to have an ongoing program where they go to camp and do follow up activities when they get back to school to ensure those positive effects are maximised and lasting" (*17).

It was agreed by all participants that although identifying and measuring the effects of Outdoor Education can be challenging, if possible at all, they are generally positive and last for some amount of time after camp. It was observed that "they tend to grow more in confidence and have more enriched friendships" (*17). This was followed up with comments such as "it's hard to know all of the effects, but I do definitely think they are positive and that it does last" (*13), "it depends on the student, their experience, there is a whole range of factors which come into it" (*17) and, "they may not know it straight away. They may use or do something years on that they did or took from camp" (*9). Focus group discussions in this area illustrated a positive perception for the lasting effects of Outdoor Education. This may be summarised by the response, "the more students who engage in this learning (the greater we cast the net) the more positive outcomes will be reached not only for the individual but also society as a whole" (*13).

Theme: Wellbeing.

Wellbeing refers to outcomes of Outdoor Education which relate to the development of the wellbeing of participants and consists of 105 data entries. Eighty-seven entries relate SEL outcomes through relationship development to wellbeing. Of these, 23 entries relate to the development of a positive relationship with the self, 34 to others and 29 relate to relationships with the environment. Three entries highlight the holistic value of outcomes to wellbeing through Outdoor Education and 15 advocate for shared experience to be recognised as an explicit learning outcome for Outdoor Education.

Data generated from the focus group in this area identified wellbeing outcomes through Outdoor Education in secondary school. The focus group indicated that Outdoor Education delivers outcomes beyond a traditional academic context, emphasising that the SEL outcomes it provides contribute to the holistic development of students. It was proposed that through "nurturing the mind, body and spirit" (*7) Outdoor Education provides both "physical and mental wellbeing" (*9) for students.

Discussing outcomes which relate directly with the development of positive relationships with the self revealed that "being in the outdoors can give you a real sense of happiness and freedom" (*9) and "provides opportunities for adventure as well is introspection and reflection" (*7). Other factors identified as contributing to relationships with the self, include "having a purpose and goals and achieving them" (*8), "knowing your strengths and weaknesses" (*13) and "seeing some positive in the world and having some hope for the future" (*7). The comment that "just providing students with a large and diverse range of opportunities to accomplish things and experience achievement and success contributes to the development of positive relationships with the self" (*17) provides a summation of this view which was common to all members of the focus group.

The development of trust through "reliance on others" (*8), respect "facilitated through necessary teamwork" (*17) and "developing empathy" (*9) were three significant factors identified as contributing to the development of positive relationships with others. It was acknowledged that Outdoor Education provides opportunities for "sharing experiences, pre, during, and post activity or outdoor adventure" (*9) and that "just having the opportunity to work together in a challenging environment and potentially risky situations develops trust which leads to a positive relationship" (*7).

It was proposed and strongly supported by all members of the focus group that "shared experience should be recognised as a legitimate learning outcome, particularly in relation to face to face contact rather than contact via screen or social media" (*8). Different forms of shared experience were presented, most notably that the students do not necessarily have to have shared the same experience at the same time. This is outlined in the response to the question of whether shared experience should be regarded as a legitimate learning outcome, as follows; "yes and even the individual experience may be shared later. Having that shared activity, even if they didn't do it together provides some common ground and helps develop relationships and respect for each other" (*9).

In relation to developing positive relationships with the environment, the focus group members stressed that "definitely direct contact is the key, and it should be ongoing and occurring regularly" (*17) and that "spending time in nature creates advocacy" (*9). It was also noted that "realising that the natural environment is different to the urban environment that they live in" (*7) intrinsically contributes to the development of positive relationships with the environment because "it immediately engages them since it is conducted in an alternative situation to their regular learning. It is outside their normal day to day routine" (*17) and, being engaged in their learning is an example of a positive relationship.

Theme: Opportunity.

This theme expresses the concept of *provision of opportunity* as a learning outcome achieved through participation in Outdoor Education programs and contains 31 data entries. Twenty-two data entries acknowledge opportunities for incidental learning. Of these, seven mention self-regulation and seven make note of face-to-face communication due to the technology free nature of the program. Three data entries highlight life skills, three entries discuss mindfulness and a change of pace while two entries identify adaptation as an outcome of this type of learning. Nine data entries in this theme advocate that provision of opportunity

should be recognised as a legitimate outcome of Outdoor Education. Of these, five propose that school is the only place where students can have these experiences. Two data entries identify the diversity of learning experiences as provision of opportunity and two entries are related to the provision of individualised learning outcomes.

Data generated in the focus group outlined outcomes in the context of informal and incidental learning. This mostly related to personal and social development and the differences between SEL in the classroom and the immersive contexts which occur on Outdoor Education programs. The focus group observed that during the immersive camp experience, students "have to manage themselves both personally and socially" (*7) and "regulate themselves with no formal direction" (*10). They extended on this, noting that "they have to be creative and self-motivated to use their time effectively" (*9).

It was unanimously agreed that provision of opportunity and participation should be regarded as legitimate learning outcomes of Outdoor Education, "particularly in the context of this school" (*17). It was noted that "because of their home situations, many students are restricted with what they do outside of school, so school should be a place where they have the opportunities to experience new things" (*9).

It was suggested by focus group members that "camp creates a sense of freedom, both physical as well as freedom from the structured nature of their school day" (*9). It was also posed that students develop social skills which are "different from school because there are less distractions" (*10). Participants further added, "they learn how to spend casual time together. Just talk, just to be present, to be quiet" (*7) and "they learn how to be active without the use of their phone. They have to communicate with each other in person" (*8).

Discussion

Data generated in this focus group phase of the study compliments and builds on data derived from the accompanying teacher interviews facilitated in phase 1. This provided an opportunity for deeper reflection on concepts associated with the curriculum, student outcomes and definitions of Outdoor Education. A focus group was utilised that followed other research methods as suggested by Krueger and Casey (2014) to help refine and interpret data and to further explain the findings. This is in contrast to the use of focus groups described by Vaughn et al. (1996) where this process is reversed with focus groups being facilitated prior to other research methods. Having had time to consider and reflect on their individual interviews, the participants appeared to be more comfortable and confident to use common terms which are subject specific. This provided the foundation for the development of a common language and understandings of Outdoor Education in this context. As with the previous phases of this study, three core themes emerged, *Curriculum, Definitions* and *Outcomes*.

Discussing Outdoor Education in the context of curriculum there was unanimous consensus that Outdoor Education has a place in secondary school curriculum and should be compulsory at all year levels. This provides support for James and Williams (2017) who advocated that although often neglected, experiential Outdoor Education is a necessary aspect of school curriculum. This also reflects the view of Gray (2018) that outdoor learning must be included in the curriculum. Analysis of the data found that Outdoor Education should stand alone as a distinct part of curriculum and should not be subordinate to any other learning area. This view was reported by all participants in the focus group. Regardless, contradictory arguments emerged as to which curriculum format Outdoor Education should take. This was exemplified by participant *9 who commented, “It should stand alone as an interdisciplinary learning area”. The terms “*stand alone*” and “*interdisciplinary*” present an incongruity in the

sense that the former implies a distinction between Outdoor Education and other discipline areas while the latter implies the opposite, alignment between discipline areas. Therefore, concurrently identifying Outdoor Education as both a discrete discipline and an interdisciplinary learning area provides further evidence of the conundrum of positioning Outdoor Education in school curriculum (Quay, 2016).

The unique and distinct features of Outdoor Education provide an argument for it to stand alone as a discreet discipline or learning area, and the interdisciplinary applications of Outdoor Education are so significant that they cannot be ignored. Respondents identified curriculum connections with Outdoor Education in areas which were outside of the field of their own subject specialisations. This demonstrates the cross-curriculum reach of Outdoor Education and its ability to be applied to other subject areas across the school curriculum. Participant *8, while advocating for Outdoor Education to be a distinct discipline, highlighted its interdisciplinary nature with the comment that "It really can reach all areas of the curriculum". This was reinforced by participant *15 who asserted that Outdoor Education should stand alone "but be used to link and integrate discipline areas across the curriculum" (Coates et al., 2015). In an effort to determine the most appropriate positioning of Outdoor Education in secondary school curriculum, and recognising that debates regarding the issue of defining Outdoor Education are ongoing (Quay, 2016), the focus group prioritised the need for a consolidated definition of Outdoor Education in the context of UIS.

The removal of students from their normal learning space (*17) and the provision of different learning experiences in different environments (*13) emerged as critical features of Outdoor Education. Providing support for Gray (2018), the focus group discussion led to the recognition of the provision of authentic learning experiences in real time. It was noted that this type of experiential learning involves the application of skills and knowledge in real life situations, and immediate consequences of their learning. Identifying the defining features of

Outdoor Education contributes to the reduction of gaps in knowledge relating to clarity, purpose and content of Outdoor Education in schools (Lugg, 2009).

The focus group highlighted that Outdoor Education is interdisciplinary and holistic, and that it provides distinct and unique learning opportunities. The identification of Outdoor Education as holistic, was exemplified by participant *15 who described it as "A complete learning experience", further stipulating that:

> "Outdoor Ed provides experiential and immersive learning which contributes to the whole person. It's interdisciplinary and holistic because it has a diverse range of learning experiences which develops skills which are transferable to not only other areas of curriculum but to other areas of their life as well".

Throughout discussions regarding the immersive nature of the program it was noted that much of the learning which occurs in these situations actually happens in the time between formal activities where students "have to manage themselves with no formal direction" (*15). Self-regulation was identified as a significant outcome from this type of informal learning (Noble & McGrath, 2012). Comparing downtime at camp with that which occurs at school, during recess and lunch breaks, participant *17 summarised their own perception of the physical differences:

> "there are less boundaries at camp. In the school yard, every twenty meters or so there is a physical fence or a wall or a door and the concentration of large numbers of people in a small area, it's loud and busy. I think camp creates a sense of freedom, both physical as well as freedom from the structured nature of their school day".

The recognition of spatial factors and the informal nature of the program as providing opportunities for personal development and self-realisation was prominent within the focus group. These notions are in direct alignment with the principles of holistic learning as identified by Venville et al. (2008) which include psychological freedom, self-governance, social ability, development of character and emotional development.

As asserted by Polley and Atkin (2014), Outdoor Education provides specialised opportunities. The provision of these types of opportunities was identified as a legitimate outcome of Outdoor Education by all participants particularly in relation to the context of the participating school. The inner suburban nature of the student's lives was highlighted with the suggestion that the students do not have many opportunities to go beyond their local neighbourhood. It was noted that many of students are restricted with what they do outside of school and as such school should be a place where they have the opportunities to experience new things. Acknowledging the *provision of specialised opportunities* as a legitimate outcome in Outdoor Education curriculum was advocated by all members of the focus group. However, it was consistently acknowledged by members of the focus group that the incorporation of provision of opportunity as an outcome in formal curriculum presents challenges in relation to its measurability and assessment. Discussing this conundrum, it was unanimously agreed that this type of outcome cannot be measured. It was suggested that you do not have to assess all outcomes of the program to know that they are happening. It was further noted by the focus group that although not all outcomes of a program can be measured or even identified, they are nevertheless important to the holistic development of participants and should not be overlooked. Identifying the underlying outcomes of Outdoor Education in this context adds to a deficiency in research relating to outcomes of programs (James & Williams, 2017).

The focus group found that Outdoor Education provides outcomes which are beyond those specified in curriculum, most notably *experience of life outside the classroom* and *real learning with real risks and consequences* (Gray, 2018). It was reported by group members that Outdoor Education immediately engages students "because it is conducted in an alternative situation to their regular learning" (*15). Acknowledgement within the focus group that Outdoor Education provides students with real life situations, problems and challenges, in conjunction with opportunities for both achievement and failure is reflective of outcomes identified by James and Williams (2017).

The focus group identified that the outcomes from immersive Outdoor Education are authentic and immediate, leading to richer learning and deeper understandings. This provides support for Venville et al. (2008) and Somerville and Rapport (2002) who note that challenges presented through immersive experiences lead to deeper understandings than those experienced within normal classroom contexts. This is reinforced by Gray and Pigott (2018) who conducted a retrospective study of Outdoor Education participants to explore the residual impact of Outdoor Learning over 30 years. Qualitative data was obtained through in-depth interviews with eleven program participants responding and a subset of four active research participants. The researchers traced the participants life journeys into adulthood in an attempt to map the enduring or longitudinal effect from their historical Outdoor Education experience. Respondents argued the outdoor experiences eclipsed their indoor classroom counterpart and left an indelible impression on their formative years of education (Gray & Pigott, 2018).

Learning in Outdoor Education is embedded within a social context (Denham & Brown, 2010). The contribution of Outdoor Education to the development of positive relationships with others was identified and reflected upon during the focus group. Providing opportunities for shared experiences which lead to a sense of belonging along with shared

challenge, and risk and achievement, emerged as important contributing factors (Dudman et al., 2019). Focus group members reported that participants develop trust and commonality (*8) (*17) through Outdoor Education, which make a significant contribution to the development of positive relationships with others. This provides supporting evidence for Noble and McGrath (2012) who claimed that curriculum programs which teach social and emotional skills and support relationship development are among the most successful. In light of this, it was agreed by all participants that shared experience should be acknowledged as a legitimate learning outcome of Outdoor Education and that this should be reflected in the curriculum.

Polley and Atkin (2014) advocate that human-nature relationships are developed through direct experience with the environment. This was evident in the focus group with discussions emphasising the importance of tactile experience (*15), direct contact (*17) and immersion (*9) in natural environments. This is reflected in the comment from participant *17 who asserts that “definitely that direct contact is the key”. This finding also reinforces the view of Martin (2010) who proposed that Outdoor Education contributes to a deep personal understanding of and empathy with the environment gained by being immersed in the environment rather than by simply observing it.

The relationships between the self and the environment were acknowledged in the focus group discussion. It was asserted that “spending time in nature creates advocacy” (*17). This finding supports Loynes (2018a) whose research findings indicate that programs such as this have the potential to promote pro-active, pro-environmental behaviours in everyday life beyond the program. The value of immersion was referred to in the specific context of the participating school where the demographic of students was highlighted as a significant element.

It was noted that generally the students in the participating school very rarely have the opportunity to experience the natural environment so every experience they have in nature is new and engaging. This provides an example of the contribution of Outdoor Education to a positive relationship with the environment. Analysing relationships with the environment as part of this study directly addresses in issue identified by Martin (2014) who has observed that although theorising about Outdoor Education and relationships with nature is evident in the literature, a substantive research base is not available.

Summary

Through analysis, all data produced by the focus group discussions was categorised into at least one of the core themes of Curriculum, Definitions and/or Outcomes. The core theme entitled *Curriculum* is aimed at addressing the need for further research relating to clarity, purpose and content of Outdoor Education in schools as identified by Lugg (1999). The core theme of *Definitions* aims to contribute to the research in relation to the consolidation of understandings in Outdoor Education as identified by Martin (2014). The core theme *Outcomes* is aimed at reducing gaps in knowledge identified by Mitten (2009) who suggests that the outcomes of Outdoor Education have been overlooked and undervalued.

Focus group discussions related to Outdoor Education as curriculum revealed that as a component of secondary school curriculum, Outdoor Education is a form of experiential learning providing a diverse range of learning activities (Loynes, 2017a). It was posed that as a pedagogy it is immersive and inclusive, and is an example of real, authentic learning (Gray, 2018). Reflecting discourse throughout the field, the focus group described Outdoor Education as primarily related to the development of positive relationships with the self, othersand environment.

In relation to its form, the focus group concurred that Outdoor Education should be an individual distinct subject that has interdisciplinary applications which may be integrated with other subject areas. The focus group advocated that Outdoor Education should stand alone as an alternative to regular classroom learning and not be subordinate to any other individual learning area. The focus group presented a unanimous view that Outdoor Education should be core compulsory curriculum at all year levels because it provides unique learning opportunities not found in other subjects.

Defining Outdoor Education, the focus group identified that it has unique and distinct features, the most prominent of which is the provision of a diverse range of learning experiences and environments through the removal of students from their regular classroom context. The focus group collectively defined Outdoor Education as *an experiential holistic learning program (pedagogy) which immerses students in outdoor environments to build relationships with the self, others and environment, providing different real-life experiences that they would find in the outside world*. Developing a contextual definition for Outdoor Education in this case addresses gaps in knowledge as well as providing clarity by describing the purpose and content of Outdoor Education in schools (Martin, 2014).

The focus group found that Outdoor Education provides outcomes which are beyond those specified in curriculum, many of which relate to SEL and contribute to the development of wellbeing in participants. Of the identified outcomes, the development of resilience through challenge and the provision of opportunities for the development of life-skills were highlighted as the most significant. Focus group discussions in this area illustrated a positive perception for the lasting effects of Outdoor Education.

It was further noted by the focus group that although not all outcomes of a program can be measured or even identified, they are nevertheless important to the holistic

development of participants. The focus group emphasised that the provision of such opportunities should be recognised as a legitimate outcome of Outdoor Education with the proposition that school is the only place where students in this context can access these types of experiences. In the context of Outdoor Education providing real-life experiences, it was identified that much of the learning which occurs in these situations actually happens incidentally in the time between formal activities (Loynes, 2017a). This was recognised as being particularly significant in relation to the development of positive relationships.

The contributions of Outdoor Education to the development of positive relationships with the self were identified in terms of the unique challenges that students face in Outdoor Education which enhance a sense of independence and responsibility. These challenges were also identified as contributing to the development of resilience.

The focus group identified Outdoor Education as contributing to the development of positive relationships with others through the provision of opportunities for shared experience, particularly shared adversity. It was proposed that shared experience should be regarded as a legitimate learning outcome of Outdoor Education as it creates a sense of belonging.

Providing further support for current discourse in the field of Outdoor Education, the focus group highlighted that Outdoor Education contributes to the development of positive relationships with the environment through providing direct contact with nature through a diversity of immersive tactile experiences in a variety of settings. The analysis of data generated through the focus group addresses gaps in knowledge related to the development ofwellbeing (Nisbet et al., 2008; Noble & McGrath, 2012). It also addresses a need for further research into the outcomes of education identified by Dyment and Potter (2015) and additional exploration of the perspectives of Martin (2014, 2008), regarding human-naturerelationships.

General discussion

The general aim of this research was to increase understandings of student relationship development through Outdoor Education. This necessitated the appropriate positioning of Outdoor Education as a pedagogy within curriculum and explicating its outcomes. Four over-arching questions were investigated as follows:

1. *What is the nature of Outdoor Education in contemporary secondary schooling*?
2. *Where should middle school Outdoor Education be positioned in secondary school curriculum*?
3. *Are there further outcomes of middle school Outdoor Education which are not included in formal curriculum*?
4. *In what ways does Outdoor Education contribute to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and environment*?

What is the nature of Outdoor Education in contemporary secondary schooling?

Data generated as an outcome of the domain evaluation produced the findings that Outdoor Education exists in a number of different forms and that there are differing definitions of Outdoor Education between local, State and National contexts. This is supported by data produced during the teacher interview phase of the case study with the finding that there are differing perceptions of Outdoor Education across the broader field of education. Expert interviews conducted for the domain evaluation culminated in the finding that there is a lack of consolidated understandings within the field of Outdoor Education. This reflects discourse throughout the field as highlighted by Humberstone et al., (2015) who acknowledge ongoing issues of identity within the field of Outdoor Education. This also reinforces the observation by Martin (2014) that "there is little to guide curriculum construction or conceptual clarity" (p. 1) for Outdoor Education curriculum. Martin further

suggested that there is a need for more consolidated understandings of Outdoor Education as a learning area.

The domain evaluation revealed that there is no mandated curriculum for middle school Outdoor Education in either Australia's National curriculum or in Victorian curriculum and as such, it is not recognised as a distinct learning area or a separate subject within either curriculum framework. With Outdoor Education being virtually absent from government curriculum policy in Australia, Outdoor Education as a discipline is becoming fragmented with understandings and definitions becoming more diverse and varied throughout schools in Australia. This has been observed by Quay (2016) who acknowledges the ongoing debate regarding the issue of defining Outdoor Education. Although the debate surrounding definitions of Outdoor Education is ongoing with no apparent end in sight, it was proposed during the focus group discussions that Outdoor Education means different things to different people and definitions for Outdoor Education should be contextual and situational. This is reflective of Loynes (2002) who posed that "each community should develop its own authentic approach to experience, learning and the outdoors" (p. 2). Providing contextual definitions for Outdoor Education provides more specific solutions to the problems involved in developing a universal definition for outdoor education across the field.

The analysis of the interviews with experts from across the field of Outdoor Education revealed that Outdoor Education is quite different in its practice and its outcomes to other subjects. This finding is supported by the conclusion drawn from teacher interviews and focus group discussions in the case study that it is the unique outcomes of Outdoor Education that make it distinct as a learning area. This parallels the perspectives of Quay (2016), Martin (2008), Lugg (1999), Neill and Heubeck (1998) and Priest (1986) regarding the distinctiveness of Outdoor Education in relation to other discipline areas.

Both the teachers and experts reported that many of the unique outcomes of Outdoor Education are unrecognised in curriculum documentation. The two more significant outcomes identified by the participants were taking students away from home and out of their regular school context and immersing them in different learning environments. This builds on the work of James and Williams (2017) who identify provision of opportunities that incorporate in-context fieldwork and scaffold prior and post classroom learning are a defining factor of Outdoor Education programs. Further support for this perspective was generated through the focus group discussion finding that the most distinctive feature of Outdoor Education in secondary school is the removal of students from their normal learning space which provides them with different experiences (Loynes, 2017a) to reflect those they might encounter in life beyond the classroom and school yard in preparation for the future.

During one of the teacher interviews, participant *18 presented a view that the *outdoor* part of Outdoor Education may not necessarily have to refer to out-of-doors and may just refer to being outside of the regular classroom environment. Identifying the removal of students from their regular classroom as a context confirms the views of Szczepanski (2009), Gass and Seaman (2012) and Priest and Gass (2017) who propose that Outdoor Education is about direct experience with different natural and experiential environments. It was evident in the data that *connection to the natural world* should be a defining feature of Outdoor Education. This finding aligns with discourse throughout the field where it is ubiquitously recognised as one of the primary functions of Outdoor Education (Gray, 2018; Loynes, 2017a; Quay, 2016; Martin, 2014, 2008; Carpenter & Harper, 2015; Priest 1986).

The distinct and unique outcomes related to SEL and health and wellbeing which are encompassed within the philosophy of holistic learning were reported as significant defining factors for Outdoor Education by all participants. Data derived from the interviews with experts and teachers found that Outdoor Education provides unique opportunities for

undirected and incidental learning in the areas of personal and social development, reinforcing observations by Dudman et al. (2019). This is supported through the focus group which presented personal and social development under the guise of relationship development an important defining factor for Outdoor Education. This finding also provides further support for the views of Martin (2008, 2014), Preston and Griffiths (2004) and Mitten (2009) who along with Quay (2016) and Gray (2018), identify the primary function of Outdoor Education being relationship development with the self, others and environment.

Interviews with accompanying teachers identified *challenge* as one of the defining factors for Outdoor Education. This aligns with the views of Hewison and Martin (2009) who also proposed challenge as being a significant factor in Outdoor Education. Martin (2010) extends on the recognition of challenge as a significant outcome of Outdoor Education programs, advocating that Outdoor Education provides opportunities for personal risk management.

Data generated from expert interviews and the focus group reveal Outdoor Education as being experiential. Highlighting the experiential nature of Outdoor Education as one of its defining factors provides further support to the views of James and Williams (2017) and Hewison and Martin (2009) who also acknowledged experiential learning as being a significant identifying factor for Outdoor Education as a component of secondary school curriculum. As detailed within OEA's *Statement on Outdoor Education and the National Curriculum,* Outdoor Education is adventure based and experiential. It is a learning process that draws upon experiences encountered during outdoor journeys and/or through specific activities (Hewison & Martin, 2009). Discourse in relation to the experiential nature of Outdoor Education is exemplified by Learning and Teaching Scotland who propose that learning outdoors can be the educational context which encourages children and young people to make connections experientially (LTS, 2010).

Throughout the process of development of a National curriculum for Australia OEA argued for the distinctiveness of Outdoor Education in schooling based on three main outcomes for students. 1 - *Providing direct personal contact with nature (the outdoors) - in ways that promote enjoyment of outdoor activity and nature*. Fostering a level of enjoyment can serve as a basis for on-going outdoor recreation throughout the lifespan, personal health and well-being and acts as a stimulus for ecological literacy. 2 - *Enabling socially critical perspectives on contemporary living and human to nature relationships*. A socially critical perspective recognises the symbiosis of human and environmental health, through the provision of alternate lived outdoor experiences. These experiences assist students to reflect back upon less healthy aspects of everyday living and lay vital foundations for sustainability and stewardship into the future. 3. *Developing competence and safety management in the Australian outdoors* - for all Australians, particularly those in urban settings or born overseas. This outcome includes how Outdoor Education can teach students to assess risk and make judgements about their management of it (Gray & Martin, 2012).

Data produced through interviews and focus group discussions highlighted that Outdoor Education is interdisciplinary in nature. Identifying Outdoor Education as being based on interdisciplinary curriculum materials provides direct support for the claims of Priest (1986), Mitten (2009), Martin (2014) and Coates et al. (2015) who all emphasise Outdoor Education as being interdisciplinary. The combination of its interdisciplinary nature along with the defining factors which identify it as a distinct discipline display Outdoor Education as a unique learning area. This provides support for Outdoor Education to be acknowledged as an essential component of secondary schooling providing students with holistic learning opportunities which transcend the boundaries of mandated curriculum requirements.

In the context of the participating school, Outdoor Education is recognised as a distinct holistic learning area with specialised outcomes and unique learning opportunities. The lack of curriculum policy from a governing body has led the participating school to developing its own curriculum policy for Outdoor Education. This has been developed drawing on components of Outdoor Education curriculum as suggested by OEA. The interview process and focus group discussions undertaken during this research have contributed to the consolidation of understandings for Outdoor Education in this context. It was reinforced that Outdoor Education is a compulsory component of core curriculum across all year levels and although it has numerous interdisciplinary applications it is facilitated as an independent discipline area and not subordinate to any other learning area. Gray and Martin (2012) have argued that Outdoor Education is worth preserving as an educational right for all Australian children. Inviting debate on the value of Outdoor Education being embedded in the National Curriculum seems a logical path to that end.

While recognising that there is still a lack of consolidated understandings regarding what constitutes Outdoor Education, interviews with accompanying teachers and in particular the focus group discussions resulted in a genuine collaborative definition for Outdoor Education in this context. A major conclusion from the members of the focus group was that *Outdoor Education is an experiential interdisciplinary pedagogy with a flexible curriculum which utilises nature to develop positive relationships with the self, others and the environment.* In this context it offers freedom from routine daily life providing opportunities, experience, inspiration and confidence for a self-directed life. The development of this definition addresses a need for further research in relation to the consolidation of understandings in Outdoor Education as identified by Martin (2014). Providing support for Hewison and Martin (2009) who specify that through interaction in the natural worlds, Outdoor Education aims to develop an understanding of our relationship with the

environment, others and ourselves. The development of this definition provides clarity, purpose and content, as requested by Lugg (1999), for Outdoor Education curriculum at the case study school. In addition to this, it addresses gaps in knowledge identified by James and Williams (2017) relating to the benefits of school-based, experiential Outdoor Education.

How should middle school Outdoor Education be positioned in secondary school curriculum?

The analysis of data derived from teacher interviews resulted in the finding that there is no mandated curriculum for middle school Outdoor Education in Australian schools. This may have come about as a result of a lack of specific Outdoor Education policy. Martin (2008) suggested that Outdoor Education has developed in schools from local initiatives and State-based lobbying, rather than from Government Education Department driven objectives and policies. Furthermore, Gray and Martin (2012) have noted a lack of Outdoor Education in Australian Curriculum F-10. They observed that Outdoor Education was not included in any documents or policy that provided the groundwork for a National Curriculum. The significant challenge for Outdoor Education identified by James and Williams (2017) is solidifying its position in what is perceived to be a crowded curriculum driven by academic performance and competition. Because of the shift toward these neoliberal values in education, Outdoor Education has been marginalised and its place in Australian schools is under question (Gray & Martin, 2012).

Data generated from the current curriculum content analysis revealed the presence of Outdoor learning within the 'Learning in Health and Physical Education' section of the Victorian curriculum. It is presented as a way to combine content descriptions across the learning areas and capabilities to create teaching and learning programs (DETV, n.d). Traditionally Outdoor Education has been regarded as a branch of the Physical Education learning area. This is reflected in in ACARA curriculum documents where there is no

mention of Outdoor Education as either a subject or a process of learning (Gray & Martin, 2012). This is also the case with curriculum provided by ACHPER whose publications only include Outdoor Education as one of several *components* of HPE along with aquatics, athletics, ball games and the like. These documents are more accurately referring to outdoor activities or pursuits, rather than Outdoor Education (Hewison & Martin, 2009). The perception that Outdoor Education is primarily outdoor based sport (e.g., rock-climbing) as opposed to a holistic learning experience, together with a struggle for limited curriculum time and space, are significant threats to quality outdoor education learning experiences in schools.

The curriculum content analysis also highlighted that HPE curriculum in both National and State frameworks contain numerous outcomes which may be addressed by Outdoor Education. Regardless of this, the risk in advocating for Outdoor Education within the National Curriculum HPE area is that such involvement could diminish the potential for more expansive elective subjects as schools struggle to fill multiple agendas in an over-crowded, increasingly complex school week. This has the potential to lead to a situation where schools may feel they have *done* Outdoor Education when presenting the National Curriculum HPE content alone. Gray and Martin (2012) assert that "Outdoor Education is not Physical Education, although it is based in the health and physical education learning area" (p. 45). They extend on this, through the observation that Outdoor Education and Physical Education each draw upon a different body of knowledge, have different accreditation pathways in some States, seek differing specific educational outcomes and respond to different educational and social imperatives. Interviews with teachers consistently reinforced the perspective that although currently under-represented, Outdoor Education should be given credibility to have a defined place within curriculum.

The finding emerged from the curriculum content analysis that Outdoor Education addresses learning outcomes in other discipline areas of both National and State curriculum.

It is further supported by data from the teachers through the interview finding that there is scope for Outdoor Education to be integrated with all discipline areas across the curriculum. These results align with discourse identifying Outdoor Education as being interdisciplinary (Martin, 2014, 2008; Mitten, 2009; Priest, 1986). The curriculum content analysis also found that Outdoor Education addresses outcomes in the General Capabilities and Cross Curriculum Priorities areas of mandated middle school curriculum. Due to its interdisciplinary nature, Outdoor Education is positioned to fulfil requirements in the General Capabilities area of curriculum (e.g., Personal and Social Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, and Ethical Understanding). Furthermore, Outdoor Education in this context fulfils requirements in the Cross Curriculum Priorities of both State and National curriculum (e.g., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, and Sustainability).

Supporting Martin (2014) data derived from the domain evaluation, teacher interviews and the focus group identified Outdoor Education as a distinct learning area which delivers student outcomes which no other discipline can (Hewison & Martin, 2009). This is reinforced by the findings of a study by Levitan (2016) which involved an extensive literature review and supporting observations of Outdoor Education programs. They suggest that the benefits of Outdoor Education are unique and that the same benefits cannot be derived from a typical in-class curriculum. Therefore they, along with many leading Outdoor Education researchers, believe that Outdoor Education should be a mandatory part of every student's curriculum and school experience. This data also supports Gray (2018) affirming that Outdoor Education should be a core component of curriculum. Considering these two factors which emphasise the importance of Outdoor Education in secondary schooling, the question of why it is virtually absent from all mandated National and State curriculum documentation was raised. This question becomes more pertinent when it is explicitly acknowledged by the governing body, ACARA that outdoor activities are an important part of learning in relation

to promoting lifelong physical activity and provide a valid environment for developing movement competence and enhancing interpersonal skills (ACARA, 2012).

Upon analysis of the combined data from all sources that relate to curriculum, differences in perceptions of Outdoor Education became apparent in relation to its importance, its form, and its functions. Regardless of this the analysis of data originating from expert interviews produced the finding that Outdoor Education is a vital learning methodology for the students of today and should be included in the core curriculum of schools in some form. This reinforces the views of James and Williams (2017) who propose that Outdoor Education is definitely a necessity in our current era of high-stakes test-based accountability. In conjunction with this, the analysis of data generated from both the teacher interviews and focus group resulted in the conclusion that Outdoor Education should be a compulsory core component of secondary school curriculum at all year levels. It was also proposed by teachers and experts that although it has interdisciplinary applications, it should be a distinct component of formal curriculum and not be considered inferior to any other discipline area.

As to which form Outdoor Education should take in secondary schools, the ongoing conundrum of whether it should stand alone or exist as an interdisciplinary component of curriculum emerged. Extending on the view of Gray and Martin (2012) that Outdoor Education offers distinctive content and learning experiences that would be lost in the current National curriculum framework, both the teacher interviews and focus group data highlight that Outdoor Education should not be subordinate to any other discipline area.

Are there additional outcomes of middle school Outdoor Education which are not included in formal curriculum?

The combination of data generated from all interviews and the focus group indicate thatOutdoor Education provides important learning outcomes beyond specified curriculum requirements. Evidence of this is exemplified in the comment from participant *13 that "Outdoor Education provides 'so many' learning outcomes beyond the realm of formal curriculum". In relation to what these outcomes may be, data was not definitive although it was posed that they relate to experience of life outside the classroom, real learning with real risks and consequences (Chandler, 1998) and wellbeing (Mitten, 2009).

Although it has been described as one of the defining factors for Outdoor Education, identifying 'experience of life outside the classroom' as a learning outcome in formal curriculums is ambitious due to its ambiguity and exposure to interpretation. Data from both the expert and teacher interviews and the findings derived from the focus group contributed to an overall perspective that Outdoor Education provides unique and specialised learning outcomes which may not be visible (Josselson, 1995; Neill, 2002) or measurable (Scrutton & Beames, 2015) and reflective of *experience of life outside the classroom* (Davidson, 2001).

Data from all sources contributed to the finding that provision of opportunity should be regarded as a legitimate outcome of Outdoor Education. Provision of opportunity encompasses what James and Williams (2017) refer to as memorably relevant learning. Memorably relevant learning is reinforced when students are provided with experiences that are significantly different to their day to day lives, in particular, within the realm of their schooling. Without having practical experiences of life outside the school context, students are less likely to be able to recognise opportunity when it arises and therefore are less inclined to take advantage of those opportunities. Providing the opportunity is the first step in reaching the outcome. The next critical step in the process is for students to become aware of

the opportunity in front of them, and to be encouraged to value and engage with that opportunity (*13). Data derived from the teacher interviews revealed that Outdoor Education participants recognise that unique challenges have been offered annually and that these experiences are beneficial to wellbeing, social and emotional development. Acknowledging their own learning in this manner enhances their personal development and contributes to the development of their resilience (*11). Experts and teachers both identified the development of resilience in this manner as one of the unique outcomes of Outdoor Education and provides an example of the contribution of Outdoor Education to wellbeing.

If, as suggested throughout this research, definitions for Outdoor Education should be contextual and situational, then it may be inferred that outcomes should also be contextual. In the case of the participating school where it has been widely acknowledged that opportunities are limited beyond the students' schooling, it was proposed and unanimously agreed that provision of opportunity should be regarded as a legitimate and important outcome of Outdoor Education due to the diverse range of experiences offered. This is based on the premise that "Outdoor Education delivers student outcomes that no other discipline can deliver and where other disciplines can offer similar outcomes, Outdoor Education delivers these outcomes more effectively and at a greater depth" (Hewison & Martin, 2009 p. 8).

Through the analysis of data derived from the expert interviews, risk management was identified as one of the most obvious unique features of Outdoor Education. Data produced in the teacher interviews supports this finding where it was revealed that learning opportunities related to risk management do not present themselves in any other learning area. This reinforces and builds on the work of Martin (2010) who has identified the development of skill in personal assessment and management of risk as one of the three specific outcomes which are unique to Outdoor Education. Interviews with teachers revealed that opportunities for challenge and risk management along with a safe environment for

success and also failure, are significant factors contributing to the development of resilience. The relationship between these factors has also been observed by Martin (2010), Noble and McGrath (2012), and Dudman et al. (2019). This provides support for the perspective that the learning of safety and risk management as a skill, learnt through schooling, has relevance to multiple facets of adolescent and adult health and wellbeing (Gray & Martin, 2012).

Throughout the process of interviewing teachers, numerous participants suggested that resilience is an area that is deficient in current school student cohorts. Many discussed their views that Outdoor Education is better placed to effectively provide opportunities for the development of resilience than other discipline areas. It was proposed that this is due to the diversity of challenges that arise during a program. Participant *11 identified challenge as an outcome of Outdoor Education (OEA, 2012) which contributes to the development of the self. Data from this research provides evidence to support resilience as being recognised as a legitimate learning outcome from Outdoor Education and therefore it should be reflected in curriculum. The development of resilience was also identified as one of the unique features of Outdoor Education (Polley & Atkin, 2014). This is exemplified in the comment from participant *17 who emphasises that "It's about developing in them, resilience. Outdoor Education creates a maturity in kids that other subject areas don't". Recognising maturity as a positive effect of Outdoor Education provides an example of an outcome which is not included in formal curriculum.

Along with numerous other researchers such as Martin (2008, 2014) and Dudman et al. (2019), Carpenter and Harper (2015) have identified numerous health and wellbeing benefits of outdoor activities. Data derived from all interviews and the focus group affirms this by identifying Outdoor Education as making a significant contribution to the wellbeing of participants. Data relating to wellbeing in Outdoor Education focused around the issues of mental health, resilience, social interaction and the benefits of being connected to nature.

Furthermore, the focus group identified that Outdoor Education provides "physical and mental wellbeing" by "nurturing the mind, body and spirit". According to Pretty et al. (2009), the investigation of childhood outdoor experiences has identified increased cognitive functioning to be a key benefit of immersion in natural environments. Identifying these outcomes demonstrates the value of Outdoor Education in relation to increased wellbeing which, as highlighted by Brymer et al. (2010), inevitably lead to increased academic outcomes. The area of wellbeing has been identified as a major blank spot (Wagner, 2010) in education, particularly Outdoor Education. Data generated through this analysis addresses gaps in knowledge regarding explicit wellbeing outcomes in Outdoor Education (Neill & Heubeck, 1998; Nisbet et al., 2008; Noble & McGrath, 2012; Pryor et al., 2005; White, 2007).

Szczepanski (2009) reported limitations with the holistic wellbeing outcomes of classroom teaching which can be addressed by Outdoor Education. Supporting this, Polley and Atkin (2014) identified enhanced wellbeing as one of the distinctive features of Outdoor Education. Throughout the interview process, experts identified the holistic outcomes of Outdoor Education related to wellbeing as factors which should be emphasised to develop awareness amongst stakeholders. They acknowledged that explicating wellbeing as a legitimate outcome of Outdoor Education has its challenges. This may be due to the benefits of outdoor experiences being generally undervalued, even by practitioners (Foster & Linney, 2007; Mitten, 2009). This was reflected in the data where it was suggested by participant *3 that "wellbeing is one of the most important outcomes that we haven't fully acknowledged yet". Supporting this in the broader field of Outdoor Education it has been noted that wellbeing outcomes of Outdoor Education are also under-represented in both National and State curriculum documentation. This is occurring even though it is widely known that Outdoor Education has psychological, sociological, educational and physical benefits (Cobb,

1977; Ewert, 1989; Levitan, 2016; Szczepanski, 2009). Focus group data emphasised the importance of these being recognised as learning outcomes.

The Australian National Curriculum identifies health and wellbeing as one of the four dimensions within the structure for *Outdoor Learning* (ACARA, 2012) although it does not provide any guidance or framework on how these outcomes are to be met. In the Victorian Curriculum F-10 wellbeing outcomes are addressed by a blanket statement implying a focus on healthy, safe and active choices that will enhance students' own and others' health and wellbeing (DETV, n.d). Similar to the National Curriculum, how this is to be undertaken is not clearly specified. This research explicitly addresses cross curriculum priority requirements in the area of physical, personal and social learning as specified by ACARA (2012a). ACARA advocated that students require opportunities to build and maintain satisfying relationships, to strengthen their sense of self and to develop the skills, self-efficacy and dispositions to advocate for, and positively impact their own and others' wellbeing. Outdoor Education curriculum in the participating school is explicitly referred to in formal Wellbeing Links documentation. Numerous wellbeing outcomes have been identified. The links to wellbeing identified in this document feature an extensive list including 22 links with self, seven with others and four related to the environment. This directly addresses the issue of under-representation of wellbeing outcomes in prescribed National Curriculum documents for middle secondary school Outdoor Education (VCAA, 2011).

The findings of Davidsons' research in 2001 illustrated that learning through adventure is valuable as a holistic and life-long form of activity that enhances the capacity to enjoy and engage in living. This is an important extension beyond its often limited and compartmentalised applications, which are rationalised by specific outcome-based objectives. Affirming this, the analysis of data generated through the interviews with teachers produced

the finding that Outdoor Education provides incidental learning outside of formal activities. Supporting Gray and Pigott (2018), focus group data revealed that rich learning occurs incidentally outside of formal structured activities (Loynes, 2017a). Data derived from both the teacher interviews and the focus group highlighted the suitability of immersion as a teaching process to encourage incidental learning in the areas of personal and social development.

This reinforces observations by Scrutton (2015) and Dudman et al. (2019) that Outdoor Adventure Education is broadly acknowledged for its ability to elicit personal and social development for its participants. In relation to immersion, all respondents made note of the advantages of being immersed in real-life situations for extended periods of time as opposed to fragmented blocks of learning. These perspectives parallel the views of Venville et al. (2008) and Somerville and Rapport (2002) who note that this type of learning provides deeper understandings than those experienced within normal timetabled classes at school.

Regardless of whether specific learning outcomes appear in mandated curriculum or not, the analysis of combined data from all sources resulted in the finding that Outdoor Education provides holistic learning outcomes through immersion, experience and challenge in the natural environment. Furthermore, data derived from expert interviews indicated that not all outcomes of Outdoor Education need to be legitimised or measurable. This is supported by data generated through the teacher interviews which revealed that it is neither possible nor necessary to document every outcome of a program. These findings address assessment and reporting issues which may arise from the explication of some of the less definitive outcomes of Outdoor Education such as provision of opportunity, experience outside the classroom and environmental immersion. Even though these are not documented or legitimised, such types of intangible outcomes should still be regarded as very important in

relation to the overall holistic development of secondary school students. Davidson (2001, p. 8) presents a strong view on this emphasising that "the value and meaning of Outdoor Education cannot be fully measured by outcomes or credits gained, or self-concept scores increased" and proposed that "to stand or fall on these conditions is to limit the potential of adventure to enhance our capacity for living". The findings of this research highlight numerous outcomes of Outdoor Education which are not included in formal curriculum in the areas of social and emotional learning, and relationship development as illustrated in Table 5 – Social and Emotional Learning outcomes of Outdoor Education beyond formal curriculum.

Table 5 – Social and Emotional Learning outcomes of Outdoor Education beyond formal curriculum

Social and Emotional Learning outcomes of Outdoor Education beyond formal curriculum		
Development of relationships with self	**Development of relationships with others**	**Development of relationships with the Environment**
Self-confidence	Communication	Adventure
Managing personal risk	Interdependence	Environmental immersion
Resilience	Teamwork	Responsibility
Responsibility	Belonging	Interdependence
Personal autonomy	Group reflection	Belonging
Self-reliance	Leadership	Stewardship
Independence	Social-responsibility	Sustainability
Motor skill development	Community	Tactile experience
Initiative	Problem solving	Respect
Challenge	Shared adversity	Diversity of experience
Decision-making	Respect	Awareness of opportunity
Goal-setting	Socialisation	Appreciation
Identity	Common story	Aesthetic
Respect	Peer learning	Empathy
Self-esteem	Inclusivity	Advocacy

The findings also revealed that Outdoor Education contributes to the development of learning outcomes which transcend prescribed curriculum in the area of student wellbeing. Table 6 – Wellbeing outcomes of Outdoor Education beyond formal curriculum, displays these outcomes.

Table 6 - Wellbeing outcomes of Outdoor Education beyond formal curriculum.

Wellbeing outcomes of Outdoor Education beyond formal curriculum		
Maturity	Mental health	Ownership
Food preparation	Faith development	Reflection
Opportunity	Creativity	Belonging
Freedom	Healthy stress	Respect
Competence	Physical activity	Adventure
Safe opportunities for failure	Hygiene	Having a purpose
Being in the moment	Achieving goals	Non-competitive
Spirituality	Being valued	Stimulus avoidance
Life-skills	Happiness	Trust

In what ways does Outdoor Education contribute to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and environment?

Acknowledging the roles of positive relationships with the self, others and environment as major contributors to student wellbeing supports the importance of incorporating these opportunities within the framework for Outdoor Education curriculum. The analysis of combined data from all sources revealed that Outdoor Education makes a significant contribution to the development of relationships with the self, others and the environment (Polley & Atkin, 2014). Data derived from expert interviews provides further confirmation for this finding as exemplified in the comment relating to Outdoor Education students by participant (*1) who stated "who they are has changed, and it's changed in relation to their own experience, their shared experience with other people and the place that they are doing it in, and that's your Self, Others and Environment". In the context of the participating school, data derived from both the teacher interviews and the focus group affirmed that in year seven, relationships are formed, in year eight relationships are developed, in year nine they are consolidated, and in year ten relationships are strengthened. This finding is aligned with data drawn from the teacher interviews which revealed that the progression of awareness and management in relation to the self, others and environment is compounded with successive experiences (Loynes, 2017a; Towers & Loynes, 2017).

Interview data illustrates that Outdoor Education contributes to the establishment of a positive relationship with the self by providing opportunities for learning outcomes through the explicit development of independence, self-direction and resilience (Kendall & Rodger, 2015). By identifying the contribution of Outdoor Education to the enhancement of independence, this finding directly aligns with discourse in Outdoor Education theory which recognises that Outdoor Education can be instrumental in the teaching of self-reliance and that outdoor environments are important to children's development of independence (James & Williams, 2017; Szczepanski, 2009). Data derived from expert interviews also adds to the evidence for the contribution of Outdoor Education to the development of independence in students. This is demonstrated through the observation that personal development in terms of self-awareness and growth is one of the most significant outcomes of Outdoor Education programs (Levitan, 2016). Neill (2002) proposed that Outdoor Education programs appear to have positive effects on participant's self-perceptions of personal qualities and capabilities. The focus group discussions further identified that this is due to students having a purpose, setting goals and achieving them.

James and Williams (2017) propose that through Outdoor Education, independence and responsibility are enhanced by self-regulation. The interpretations of student and teacher commentary, and incidental observations made by the researcher revealed a self-realisation by participants that they have control over their own behaviour. This demonstrates a progression of self-awareness that has been elicited through Outdoor Education. Martin (2014) noted the contribution of Outdoor Education to self-efficacy. Making the self-realisation of what students are actually capable of provides scaffolding for the development of self-regulation. This in turn provides further scaffolding for the development of self-motivation and eventually autonomy which, as identified by participant *12 and advocated by White (2007), should be recognised as an outcome in itself. Ntoumanis (2001) observed that

Outdoor Education contributes to self-motivation. This has been built upon by Noble and McGrath (2012) who label this development as self-optimisation. They describe this as "a realistic awareness of (and predominantly positive judgement about) one's own strengths and a willingness to strive to build and use them in meaningful ways" (p. 19). The researcher's recollections of incidental student commentary regarding independence, initiative and self-direction noted feelings of empowerment and a recognition that they are more independent. This aligns with the observation by Prouty et al. (2007) that in Outdoor Education experiential learning is used to purposefully help students acquire life skills including self-efficacy.

Focus group data provides evidence of the contribution that Outdoor Education makes to the development of positive relationships with the self through risk management as an explicit learning outcome. This is a result of the provision of both formal and incidental opportunities for self-direction and self-regulation in an environment which is conducive to both success and failure. This adds evidence to the assertion of Polley and Atkin (2014) that the development of a positive relationship with the self can be enhanced by the students experiencing challenge and success. They further proposed that this leads to the development of an adventurous spirit and opportunities for managing personal risks as also recommended by ACARA (2012).

Analysis of the data generated from the teacher interviews revealed resilience as an outcome of Outdoor Education in this context, a finding which supports the observations of Dudman et al. (2019) that Outdoor Education promotes the development of resilience. This was exemplified in a quote by participant *16 who noted a comment from a student that reinforced the student perspective that "as a learner I don't have to get everything right and that if I fail, I am a learner and that is a part of the process to continue to learn". The teacher respondent then proposed that this recognition by the student of their own resilience was a

result of having a safe environment to experiment with failure. Providing further reinforcement for this outcome, data derived from the focus group identified Outdoor Education as providing students with real life situations, problems and challenges along with opportunities for achievement as well as failure.

Teacher interviews revealed a belief that the provision of opportunities for challenge are one of the most significant identified outcomes of Outdoor Education which contribute to the development of resilience. The analysis of data produced through the interview process related challenge to resilience in terms of participants adapting to changes, stepping out of their comfort zone, having determination and coping. Data derived from teacher interviews identified challenge as a way to invoke "healthy stress" (*18) which was described as a key component of resilience development. This supports the findings of a case study of a Learning Away residential program conducted by Loynes (2017) which identified the development of resilience as one of the most significant impacts of the program. Teacher interviews also revealed challenge as a significant contributing factor to the development of positive relationships with the self. It was proposed that challenge puts people in a position where they have to draw on their intrinsic skills and knowledge which leads to the development of self-esteem and self-confidence (Dudman et al., 2019). Peel and Richards (2005) suggest that the experience of success in completing outdoor activities can also enable people to incorporate a new sense of themselves as achievers into their self-structure. The recognition of an increase in self-concept among students provides affirmation for the view that Outdoor Education programs are capable of triggering an ongoing cycle of positive change within participants where the overall effects seem to constitute enhancement of self-related constructs, action-orientation, and coping behaviours (Neill, 2002). The proposal that "just providing students with a large and diverse range of opportunities to accomplish things and experience achievement and success contributes to the development of positive

relationships with the self" (*9) emerged as a result of analysis of data generated from focus group discussions. This implies that Outdoor Education has the capacity to contribute to the development of positive relationships with the self in a number of ways, some of which may not be visible or apparent (*17). Many of the participating teachers could not specify the exact changes in behaviour post camp although acknowledged that there was a positive change amongst students following their Outdoor Education experience. Supporting Dudman et al. (2019), this is exemplified by participant *17, stating "there is something a little bit more mature about them after they go on camp".

Noble and McGrath (2012) noted that one of the strongest themes in research is the significant contribution of positive peer relationships to young people's wellbeing and resilience. The researcher's interpretation of incidental discussions and observations of students revealed that the most common discussion topic related to the positive changes in their peers' behaviours and attitudes. The behavioural and attitudinal differences identified by the students during the program were based on contrasts with their behaviours within the regular school environment. Complimenting this, was the recognition by participants that they were working in a positive way with people they would not usually work with or didn't even know. This type of social awareness and recognition is an example of the contribution of Outdoor Education to the development of positive relationships with others.

Responses from all participants in the expert interviews indicated that relationships with others developed in Outdoor Education become deeper and more personal than those developed in the regular school environment. This finding builds on the work of Bell and Holmes (2011) who observed that students report that making connections and forming bonds are the most important aspects of outdoor adventure programs.

Data derived from focus group discussions provides confirmation for the observation by Denham and Brown (2010) that learning in Outdoor Education is embedded within a social context. Focus group discussions highlighted that most outdoor pursuits involve others which facilitates sharing experiences, pre, during, and post activity or outdoor adventure. This data also indicated that "just having the opportunity to work together in a challenging environment and potentially risky situations develops trust which leads to a positive relationship" (*9). Data derived from interviews with teachers illustrates that that risk management contributes to the development of relationships with others by providing opportunities for undirected incidental social interaction, shared challenge, and collaborative problem solving in a real-life context. The identification of risk management as a learning outcome is also evident in the expert interviews where it was proposed that shared adversity, which occurs when students are placed in unfamiliar environments and social situations, requires students to work together regardless of their differences or disagreements. It was proposed that through this, a commonality and trust develops which contributes to the development of positive relationships with others. Teacher interviews also revealed that peer to peer relationship development was enhanced through shared challenge. This is exemplified by participant *12 who advocated that "relationships with others are formed through shared experiences, that's the only way".

Through the analysis of focus group data, *creating a sense of belonging* emerged as the most significant contributing factor to the development of positive relationships with others through Outdoor Education. It was noted that "shared experience encourages a sense of belonging" and that "a sense of belonging should be the number one priority of all schools, particularly Catholic schools where inclusivity is paramount". The focus group also noted that "a sense of belonging encourages a safe and supportive environment on all levels." Creating a safe and supportive learning environment through the development of a sense of

belonging aligns with the perspective posed by Bell et al. (2014) who acknowledge the ability of outdoor adventure programs to create a level playing field amongst participants by negating social status. They suggest that the balancing of status can provide a powerful sense of connection based on strong and immediate feelings of belonging.

One of the primary aims of education should be the promotion of resilient individuals who have meaning, purpose and a sense of belonging (Pryor et al., 2005). This can be achieved through developing positive relationships with others in Outdoor Education via shared experience. The significance of shared experience to the development of a sense of belonging was highlighted in both expert and teacher interview data. This provided the basis for the proposal that "shared experience should be considered a legitimate learning outcome in its own right" (*3). This finding was advocated by all participants in both sets of interviews and aligned with data derived from the focus group discussions.

Expert interviews identified risk management as an outcome which contributes to the development of relationships with the environment. In this case it was noted that promoting awareness and familiarity with natural environments via risk assessment and direct contact via challenging activities in nature contributes to positive relationships with the environment. This view is supported by data derived from interviews with accompanying teachers. Teachers advocated that Outdoor Education is about being connected to nature through awareness of the interdependence between components of the environment, including people. Similar to Martin (2014), teachers also proposed that ownership or stewardship is developed through connection to place and tactile experience in different environments.

Data derived from all sources reveals that the provision of direct contact and tactile experience with nature is the most significant factor contributing to the development of positive relationships with the environment. Exemplifying this sentiment, participant *5

declared “you can only get a true empathy for the environment from direct contact with it, tactile experience. You can’t get it any other way”. This affirms discourse in Outdoor Education theory which advocates that human-nature relationships are developed through direct experience with the environment (Polley & Atkin, 2014). Martin (2010, 2014) provides another example of this, asserting that deep personal understanding of, and empathy with the environment, is gained by being immersed in it, rather than by simply observing the environment.

Upon reflection, the researchers’ interpretation of student commentary identified a realisation by students of the differences between the natural environment and the urban environment in which they live. The recognition of these differences by students demonstrates engagement with their own learning. Being positively engaged in their own learning in this manner provides an example of the development of a positive relationship with the environment (Pretty et al., 2009).

Martin (2014) identifies relationships with nature as a foundation for wellbeing in education. This view was reflected in data generated from expert and teacher interviews as well as the focus group. The significance of experiential Outdoor Education was highlighted in relation to the specific context of the participating school. It was noted during the focus group that due to living in an inner suburban environment along with socio economic restraints, students have little opportunity to experience natural environments outside of their schooling. Data derived from the teacher interviews and focus group advocated that experiential Outdoor Education should be ongoing and occurring regularly. The reason posed for this was that it provides an opportunity for first-hand experience where students can learn in a first-person context rather than the third-person context that they get studying it from a distance.

The analysis of combined data from all sources highlighted that Outdoor Education contributes to the development of positive relationships with the self, others, and the environment simultaneously through direct practical experience with a variety of challenging social situations and environments. It was reinforced by teacher participants that this transpires due to engagement in practical and active shared learning experiences whilst immersed in natural environments and settings typically beyond the school classroom. Supporting Dudman et al. (2019) among others, the analysis also found that these relationships are essential for the wellbeing and sustainability of individuals, society, and our environment.

Limitations

As an Outdoor Education practitioner at UIS, there is an inherent positive inclination towards Outdoor Education as both a discipline and as a field of study and practice. This may have resulted in unintentional bias of the interpretation of data. The limitation of researcher partiality has been somewhat mitigated through the recruitment of a diversity of participants who have no affiliation with Outdoor Education at UIS. Participant teachers included male and female staff members aged from twenty-four to sixty years old and varying in experience from early career to thirty plus years in the field. Participants from UIS were also recruited from different professional areas and different levels within the management hierarchy of the school structure. Profiles of participants in this research from UIS included six males and six females, six participants aged over forty and six under forty, seven participants with ten years or more experience in education and five with ten or less, five with fifteen or more camp experiences and seven with less, three expert teachers, three accomplished teachers, three novice teachers, an accomplished international teacher and two expert Learning Support Officers. The researcher is employed as the Outdoor Education Coordinator of UIS which may be perceived as causing an imbalance of power between the researcher and participants. This has also been alleviated by the recruitment of participants from varying levels of management within the school structureto create a more balanced power structure within the research. One participant works in the upper level of management of the school while two represent middle management, five represent subject teachers and two represent support staff. All teachers are required to attend camps regardless of their level of interest or experience in Outdoor Education or their designated teaching disciplines. This provided a selection of opinions from participants with a diversity of backgrounds and differing levels of interest in Outdoor Education.

Due to a range of administrative and policy-based factors facilitated by UIS, students

were not made available as participants for the current research endeavour. Therefore, it was primarily the views of educators and curriculum developers that were sought to address curriculum-based factors which may be perceived as a lack of direct student voice as a limitation for this research. This was alleviated by seeking the perceptions and opinions of specific teachers who have been directly involved in the Outdoor Education program at UIS. This approach has also been utilised in previous research (e.g., Buchanan et al., 2009; Collie et al., 2015; Esen-Aygun and Sahin-Taskin, 2017; Marruci et al., 2018). Teachers were recruited from a range of learning areas that were not necessarily associated with Outdoor Education. Teachers participating in this research are described as 'learner mentors' at the school level and have three years of continuous connection with each group of students. Participation in the Outdoor Education program at UIS is compulsory for all learner mentors regardless of whether they have an interest or background in Outdoor Education. This approach sought to mediate the limitation by involving a teacher sample that would present diverse and varying perceptions of the efficacy of Outdoor Education, its value and position within the curriculum.

Recommendations for research

In relation to Outdoor Education theory and future research, further development and explication of the philosophical foundations for Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice is recommended. Building on the current research, future research in this area will contribute to addressing what Neill (2008) regards as a field which is "undermined by ad hoc theory and limited research" (p. 1).

Additional research exploring the relationship between Outdoor Education, student wellbeing and academic achievement is recommended. In the context of the study school, it would be beneficial to conduct a longitudinal study exploring whether the outcomes of Outdoor Education have a lasting effect or not. This could involve a follow up investigation into students completing the program 5, 10 15 and 20 years after their Outdoor Education experience. Building on the research recommended in the current study, it would also be advantageous to conduct a comparative study considering national and international perspectives on the long-term effects of similar programs to provide inferential data for Outdoor Education.

Although a gender balance was aimed for, the gender of participants for the domain evaluation was imbalanced by 2:1. This pattern is reflective of a gender imbalance throughout the broader field of outdoor education. Further investigation of expert perspective of outdoor education curriculum is recommended utilising gender balanced samples. In response to a lack of direct student voice in this research, it is also recommended that a follow-up study be conducted which engages students directly as participants in the research to provide a more accurate representation of their perspectives of relationship development through Outdoor Education.

Recommendations for practice

Ongoing differences in perceptions regarding the nature of Outdoor Education in Australia continue to prevail. As a result, it is recommended that the Outdoor Education community of practice develop a concise and unified vision for Outdoor Education as a field of practice (Wenger, 1998). Due to the diversity of programs and learning experiences, definitions relating to Outdoor Education should be contextual to individual situations rather than universal across the field.

In the context of the study school, Outdoor Education is a compulsory subject which is not only accessible to all students but provisioned in the form of a comprehensive, immersive residential program for all students at no cost. As a result of the findings of this research, it is recommended that other schools consider adopting this practice to ensure that the specific and unique learning opportunities provided by Outdoor Education are accessible to all secondary students regardless of their demographic or personal situations.

This research advocates that the unrecognised outcomes of Outdoor Education programs be viewed as authentic irrespective of their inclusion or exclusion as formal curriculum. Participants in this research asserted that the provision of such opportunities should be recognised as legitimate outcomes of Outdoor Education with the proposition that school is the only place where students in this context can access these types of experiences. Outdoor Education should be accessible to all students and as such, it is recommended that due to the unique personal and social development opportunities that Outdoor Education provides, it be included as compulsory curriculum within all school year levels in Australia.

Summary and conclusions

Building on existing literature the current research engaged in critiquing of the field of Outdoor Education curriculum and focussed attention on its value and importance (Dyment & Potter, 2015). Through the exploration of definitions, curriculum and outcomes for middle school Outdoor Education, this research addresses ongoing debates regarding the nature of Outdoor Education, its situation in middle school curriculum and its learning outcomes. The current study specifically investigated different perceptions regardingOutdoor Education and examined the development of relationships with the self, others and environment through Outdoor Education programs.

Overall, the research incorporated two separate studies, a domain evaluation consisting of a curriculum analysis and expert interviews and a case study comprised of data derived from interviews with teachers and a focus group. With the intent of extending the philosophical foundations of Outdoor Education, the domain evaluation provided a contemporary overview of the field and highlighted differences in perceptions of Outdoor Education as curriculum. The case study captured the participants and researchers own lived experiences of the Outdoor Education program at the study school in conjunction with their impressions and perceptions of the outcomes of the program. Teachers provided dialogue regarding the positioning of Outdoor Education within middle school curriculum and shared a varied range of definitions for Outdoor Education. They also generated data identifying outcomes of the program that are not necessarily prescribed in curriculum. This contributes to the aim of explicating the hidden outcomes of middle school secondary school Outdoor Education. All data generated throughout each of the research methods was situated in one of three core themes: *Definitions, Curriculum*, or *Outcomes*.

As a field of study and practice, Outdoor Education is recognised as being complex (Quay, 2016), demonstrating a lack of commonality in understandings and perspectives

throughout the field (Martin, 2014). This has been affirmed by the number of variations in the definitions theme across all research methods which highlights the diversity of perceptions regarding the fundamental elements of Outdoor Education. One of the most prominent findings of this research in relation to the nature of Outdoor Education was the suggestion that descriptions and definitions of Outdoor Education should not be universal but contextual. It was posed that this is because it is a complex learning area to classify and that it has been left to individual schools to determine if, how and where Outdoor Education is implemented in their curriculums. In summation, Outdoor Education was proffered as a distinct learning area with specialised opportunities and outcomes. This research found that Outdoor Education has the capacity to support other learning areas that are constrained due to a crowded curriculum through the provision of these identified specialised learning opportunities.

In relation to the research question *What is the nature of Outdoor Education in contemporary secondary schooling*?, the current study revealed that defining Outdoor Education as a field of study and practice is complex. This occurs due to the incorporation of an array of differing perspectives regarding its nature, situation in curriculum and its outcomes. Within secondary schools, Outdoor Education exists in a number of different forms where; it can be seen as a subject; as an approach more so than a curriculum area; it may be interdisciplinary; and it may be either integrated with other subjects or stand-alone. Outdoor Education was identified as being an experiential, holistic pedagogy which immerses students in outdoor environments to build relationships with the self, others and environment. This study also found that Outdoor Education provides unique skills and knowledge which are relevant and transferrable to real life situations and that the effects of students' learning are immediately visible to them. In the context of the study school, Outdoor Education is

recognised as a distinct curriculum area with specialised outcomes and unique learning opportunities.

The findings of this investigation affirmed that Outdoor Education is a holistic learning area which is interdisciplinary in nature. Regardless of its interdisciplinary applications, Outdoor Education was found to provide authentic experiential learning opportunities and distinct outcomes which are not clearly identified in any other discipline areas. The current research described Outdoor Education as providing SEL outcomes which contribute to resilience, wellbeing, and academic progress in other discipline areas. It was observed that these outcomes are generally achieved through the development of positive relationships with the self, others and environment. This study found that immersive learning and incidental learning are prominent features of Outdoor Education programs (Loynes, 2017a) and identified the immersion of participants in different natural environments which are removed from their regular classroom context as the most distinctive feature of Outdoor Education in secondary schools. Therefore, the role of Outdoor Education may be perceived as a demonstration of the capacity to provide a diverse range of immersive and holistic learning opportunities in different learning environments which are beyond the context of regular classroom learning. This contributes to the holistic development of students, as observed by Straker et al. (2017) who posed that "experiencing a range of outdoor locations provides students with opportunities to learn in diverse ways" (p. 105).

The findings of the current research established that in secondary school curriculum, Outdoor Education is regarded as a branch of the Physical Education domain and is not recognised as a distinct learning area or a separate subject within the Australian or Victorian curriculum. It was also confirmed that there is no mandated curriculum for middle school Outdoor Education in either the National curriculum for Australia or Victorian curriculum,

therefore the nature of, and value placed on Outdoor Education in curriculum is at the discretion of the individual school.

In curriculum publications produced by ACHPER, Outdoor Education is only included as one of several components of PE along with aquatics, athletics and other sports. This is a constrained view of Outdoor Education, through the simplistic alignment of its learning outcomes with adventure sports and outdoor recreation activities. Addressing the problem with taking a simplistic view of Outdoor Education, Quay (2013) provides an explanation of the issue and an example of more refined and articulated view for Outdoor Education:

> "If outdoor education discourse only engaged with transactional thinking in (a) one-track way, then outdoor education would consistently overlook the aesthetic, feeling or emotional side of experience, thereby rendering self, others and nature as merely beings to be reckoned with and manipulated relationally,….somehow outside of any more holistic consideration….Of course outdoor education is discussed in broader terms than transaction.…So there is, of course, another way of thinking—one that does not begin with an understanding of experience as transaction between things. This way of thinking begins with an experiential emphasis on be-ing as simple whole, sometimes ambiguously described as living experience" (p. 149).

The discourse amongst Outdoor Educators concurs that ACHPER's view of Outdoor Education is at best outdated and at worst ill-informed (Hewison & Martin, 2009). The implication that the main focus of Outdoor Education relates to Outdoor Recreation is incorrect and has contributed to a situation where the significance of Outdoor Education has been inhibited to allow it to conveniently fit within the more traditionally recognisable learning area of HPE. The current study revealed that this is a result of competition between learning areas for

curriculum time, resources and importance. This can be illustrated using Bernstein's curriculum theory of pedagogical device. In relation to the context of the current study, the horizontal dimension refers to specialised categories such as school subjects within mandated curriculum. The vertical dimension refers to the rank position of a particular school subject within that curriculum (Singh, 2002). The current study poses that due to imprecise perceptions of Outdoor Education, it tends to fall in the lower reaches of the vertical dimension of Bernstein's pedagogical device, devaluing it in a competitive environment.

Henderson and Potter (2001) suggested that "outdoor adventure education has never been at the top of the priority list for most school boards" (p.235). Building on this and the view of Dyment and Potter (2015) that Outdoor Education is often undervalued, James and Williams (2017) have acknowledged that one type of education that is currently receiving less emphasis in schools is experiential Outdoor Education. From a government perspective it has been a matter of deciding which curriculum elements should be prescribed by the government and which elements should be left to the discretion of individual schools. In relation to the National Curriculum in Australia and Victorian State curriculum the 'if, where and how' of Outdoor Education is implemented in curriculum is determined by the individual school. Taking this into account, one end of the spectrum involves Outdoor Education as a distinct and holistic learning area or discipline as part of the core curriculum of the school. At the other end of this spectrum, no Outdoor Education is present or it is incorporated on a small scale as part of the HPE learning area with a focus on Outdoor Recreation. It is the former of these scenarios within which the study school is situated.

It is evident in the data generated from the curriculum analysis that Outdoor Education is under-represented in curriculum compared to other, more traditional learning areas. This was also reflected in the interviews with participants asserting that Outdoor Education is undervalued in some areas of school management. This study found that due to the rich

diversity of experiences it offers, Outdoor Education can be used to inform educational outcomes in any subject area and should be acknowledged for its contribution to holistic development. This research ascertained that Outdoor Education addresses learning outcomes in other discipline areas of both National and State curriculum. The study identified that HPE curriculum contains numerous requirements which may be addressed by Outdoor Education, as do the General Capabilities and Cross Curriculum Priorities areas of mandated middle school curriculum.

In relation to the overarching research question, *Where should middle school Outdoor Education be positioned in secondary school curriculum*?, the domain evaluation interviews, teacher interviews and the focus group data presented a unified view that Outdoor Education should be core compulsory curriculum at all year levels. This is because it provides exclusive learning opportunities not found in other subjects. The findings of this study highlighted that because these experiences are unique, Outdoor Education should stand alone as an alternative to regular classroom learning and not be subordinate to any other individual learning area. All research participants asserted that it should be given credibility to have a defined place in the formal curriculum of secondary schools.

Considering the research question: *Are there further outcomes of middle school Outdoor Education which are not included in formal curriculum*?, the current research demonstrates that pre-VCE Outdoor Education incorporates learning beyond the scope of the HPE learning area where it is currently situated. The data also revealed that Outdoor Education has many outcomes beyond the realm of formal mandated curriculum requirements and that these outcomes are important whether they are included in official curriculum or not. The current study found that Outdoor Education provides important unique and specialised learning outcomes beyond specified curriculum requirements some of which are not visible or measurable. Regardless of their absence from curriculum, it was advocated by participants that

these outcomes are important for the development of social and emotional intelligence. One of the purposes of this research is to support the acknowledgement of these outcomes in the context of formal curriculum; to document and record them; and to provide an analysis of their benefit for students undertaking holistic Outdoor Education programs. This aim has been addressed by explicating hidden outcomes of Outdoor Education in the context of the study school and demonstrating the contribution of Outdoor Education to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and the environment.

Kelly (2009) highlights that "the values and attitudes learnt via the hidden curriculum are not directly intended by teachers" (p.5) asserting that "since these things are being learnt as a by-product of what is planned and of the materials provided, teachers should be aware of and accept responsibility for what is going on, for what their pupils are learning in this unplanned way" (p.5). Although hidden curriculum usually has a negative connotation, it can be used in a positive way to explicate the un(der)acknowledged outcomes of Outdoor Education programs.

Data generated from this study revealed that Outdoor Education provides SEL outcomes which contribute to both wellbeing and academic progress in other areas. The findings of this research determined that Outdoor Education provides holistic learning outcomes through immersion, experience and challenge in the natural environment and unique opportunities for undirected and incidental learning (Loynes, 2017a) in the areas of personal and social development. In addition, it was acknowledged that any personal, social or environmental learning or development must first begin by the provision and acceptance of learning opportunities in these areas. This study also affirmed that the progression of awareness and management in relation to the self, others and environment is enhanced with successive program experiences (Loynes, 2017a; Towers & Loynes, 2017).

Addressing the research question: *In what ways does Outdoor Education contribute to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and environment*?, the findings

of this research revealed that Outdoor Education contributes to the development of a positive relationship with the self by providing opportunities for learning outcomes through the explicit development of independence, self-direction and resilience. It also found that Outdoor Education contributes to the development of positive relationships with others and the environment simultaneously through direct practical experience with a variety of social situations and environments. This finding provides support for Quay (2009) who, while discussing the results of his study comparing outdoor education with other classes at school, identified that "outdoor education is the best context within the school for students to experience caring relationships and thus to learn about community" (p. 79).

Exploring relationships between the program, student wellbeing and academic achievement supports the consolidation of understandings of Outdoor Education amongst practitioners. This research addresses identified gaps in Outdoor Education knowledge and theory from an Australian perspective with the intent of improving teaching practice in a specific context. Identifying outcomes from Outdoor Education in this context which relate to SEL and wellbeing, and explicating their links to the development of relationships with the self, others and environment, explicitly address a lack of research relating to wellbeing outcomes and the interrelationships present in Outdoor Education identified by Pryor et al. (2005).

The findings of this research are significant in relation to curriculum development and improved teaching practice in secondary school Outdoor Education. Insight gained from this research may be used to challenge the specific logic (Zipin & Brennan, 2010) of the field of Outdoor Education where it is positioned as a sub-branch of the HPE learning area, rather than an independent interdisciplinary and holistic learning area. In contrast to Australian National Curriculum policy, Outdoor Education in the context of the participating school is

recognised as a distinct holistic learning area with specialised outcomes and unique learning opportunities.

The current study found that the legitimisation of all outcomes from Outdoor Education is neither possible nor necessary. Regardless, it was expressed by all participants *that provision of opportunity*, and *shared experience* be considered as legitimate outcomes of Outdoor Education in secondary schools. This research advocates that the unrecognised outcomes of Outdoor Education programs be viewed as authentic irrespective of their inclusion or exclusion as formal curriculum. It is intended that the findings of this research will benefit curriculum developers and practitioners by providing them with explicit wellbeing outcomes associated with relationship development that can be drawn upon when developing and facilitating Outdoor Education curriculum. As an interdisciplinary learning area, the outcomes of Outdoor Education may be disseminated across many other areas of school curriculum, potentially providing newly identified benefits for students across the school. Aligning with the purposes of James and Williams's (2017) study, the intent of the current research is that other teachers and schools will use the results of this study to integrate experiential Outdoor Education experiences into their curriculum.

The overarching aim of this research is to contribute to the consolidation of perspectives and understandings related to the field of Outdoor Education in middle school secondary schooling. This necessitated the appropriate positioning of Outdoor Education as a pedagogy within curriculum and explicating its outcomes. This study identified Outdoor Education as a distinct learning area which is valuable for holistic outcomes particularly related to SEL and student wellbeing. It provides evidence to support pre-VCE Outdoor Education as an interdisciplinary process rather than a sub-branch of HPE curriculum. This research will contribute to the general field of education in the area of curriculum

development through the dissemination of interdisciplinary and holistic applications of Outdoor Education programs. It will also contribute to the specific field of Outdoor Education by adding to its theoretical foundations, identifying it as a holistic, interdisciplinary learning process and explicating its hidden outcomes.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Consent form for participants involved in research

Appendix 1 - CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCHINFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study into the undocumented outcomes of middle school Outdoor Education through the context of the development of positive relationships with the self, others and the environment.

This research project is a descriptive case study which aims to address ongoing debates regarding the nature of Outdoor Education in secondary schooling and contribute to the consolidation of understandings throughout Outdoor Education as a field.

You will be invited to take part in a semi-structured interview, providing expert judgements regarding the relationship development of students before, during and following their Outdoor Education experience. Interviews are expected to be between 45 minutes and 1 hour duration and will be undertaken at a time and in a location to be negotiated between the researcher and the participant.

There are no foreseeable risks for participants in this project although being explicitly voluntary, anonymous

(pseudonyms will be used to maintain confidentiality) and collegiate in nature, this research has been designed to ensure that respect for the participants will not be compromised by the aims of the research, by the way it is carried out, or by the results. Informed consent will be gained from all participants with participation in the study being on a voluntary basis with on an opt-in rather than opt-out philosophy. All participants have an option to discontinue with the study at any time without consequence. Constant and continual reflection throughout the research process will provide opportunities for risk management and ethical dilemmas to be addressed as they arise.

CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT

I, (participants name):_____of (participants suburb):_____certify that I am at least 18 years old* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study: 'An exploration of relationship development through Outdoor Education' being conducted at Victoria University by Associate Professor Anthony Watt.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Paul Barber and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

• a semi-structured interview, providing expert judgements regarding the relationship development of students before, during and following their Outdoor Education experience.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher

Associate Professor Anthony Watt

Ph: 0399194119

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email Researchethics@vu.edu.au or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

Appendix 2 – Domain Evaluation interview guiding questions

- **Discussion Topic: Outdoor Education as a broad field of study and practice**
    - What are the factors that define outdoor education as Outdoor Education?
    - Is there a difference between (o)utdoor (e)ducation and (O)utdoor (E)ducation? If so, what is the difference?
    - Compare and contrast Outdoor Education as a field of study, as a field of practice, and as curriculum?
    - How has Outdoor Education changed during your time involved in the field?
    - What are the general perceptions of Outdoor Education by theorists and practitioners?
    - Have these perceptions changed over time? If so, how?
    - What factors have contributed to these changes?
    - How does Outdoor Education differ between education sectors? (primary, secondary, tertiary, VET/Tafe/Vocational)

Discussion Topic: Outdoor Education as a holistic learning area

- In your own words, define holistic education?
- In your opinion, What do you think are the most important factors contributing to holistic education?
- In your opinion, What do you think are the most limiting factors to holistic education?
- Aside from formal curriculum-based outcomes, what are the most important outcomes of education?
- Describe any relationships you are aware of/have witnessed/experienced between Outdoor education and other learning areas?

- Describe how (if at all) Outdoor Education contributes to the development of the 'whole person' of participants?

Discussion Topic: Definition and location of Outdoor Education in secondaryschool curriculum

- What, if any, outcomes/experiences/opportunities does Outdoor Education provide which other learning areas don't?
- In your opinion, where do you think Outdoor Education should be located in secondary school curriculum?
- In many instances, Outdoor Education is not regarded as core curriculum in middle secondary school curriculum, why do you think this is so?
- Should Outdoor Education be regarded as core curriculum? Why/not?

Discussion Topic: Outcomes of Outdoor Education in secondary schooling

- Describe the key outcomes of Outdoor Education in secondary school?
- Which, if any are related to wellbeing? How?
- Are there further outcomes of middle school Outdoor Education beyond those included in the formal curriculum? ; and if so, how do we make these outcomes explicit?
- Is provision of experience (i.e.: participation) alone an outcome in itself? Discuss.
- How do different learner types benefit from learning in a different environment with a diversity of active and passive learning opportunities?
- What, if any, learning occurs during the time between formal activities? How does this learning occur? How do we make these explicit?

- Do all outcomes of the program need to be legitimised and documented? Or need to be integrated into formal curriculum (assessed/accounted for)? Discuss
- What are the major limiting factors to Outdoor Education?

Discussion Topic: Relationship development in Outdoor EducationSelf:

- How would you define a positive relationship with yourself?
- What factors drive the development of a positive relationship with the self?

Others:

- How would you define a positive relationship with others?
- What factors drive the development of a positive relationship with others?

Environment:

- How would you define a positive relationship with the environment?
- What factors drive the development of a positive relationship with the environment?

Overall relationship development:

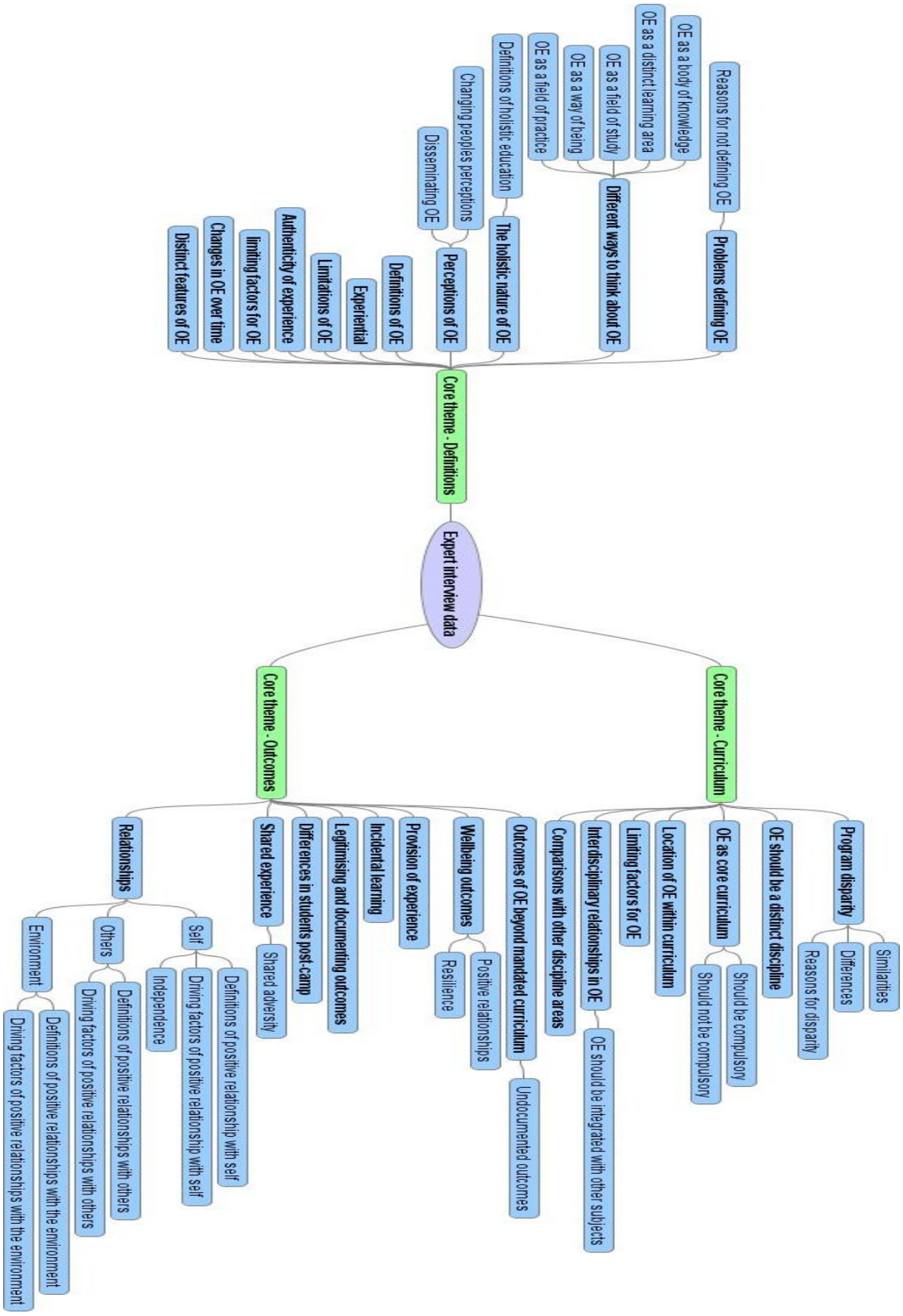
- What, if any, are the differences in student's attitudes, behaviour & relationships (self/others/environment) when they are immersed in unfamiliar environments such as those experienced during an Outdoor Education experience?
- What effects do Outdoor Education outcomes have on relationship development?

- In what ways does Outdoor Education contribute to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and environment?
- Discuss the concept and effects of shared experience. Is shared experience a learning outcome in itself?

Disparity of programs and practices:

- As either a member of the Outdoor Education field/community, what are some of the similarities and differences between programs that you have experienced?
- Are the outcomes the same? Explain.
- Why do you think that Outdoor Education is viewed/facilitated/managed differently between teachers, schools, systems, sectors, States etc.?
- As someone with extensive experience with research in the field of Outdoor Education, do you have any advice, feedback or suggestions for this research?

Appendix 3 – Expert interviews Thematic Analysis Map



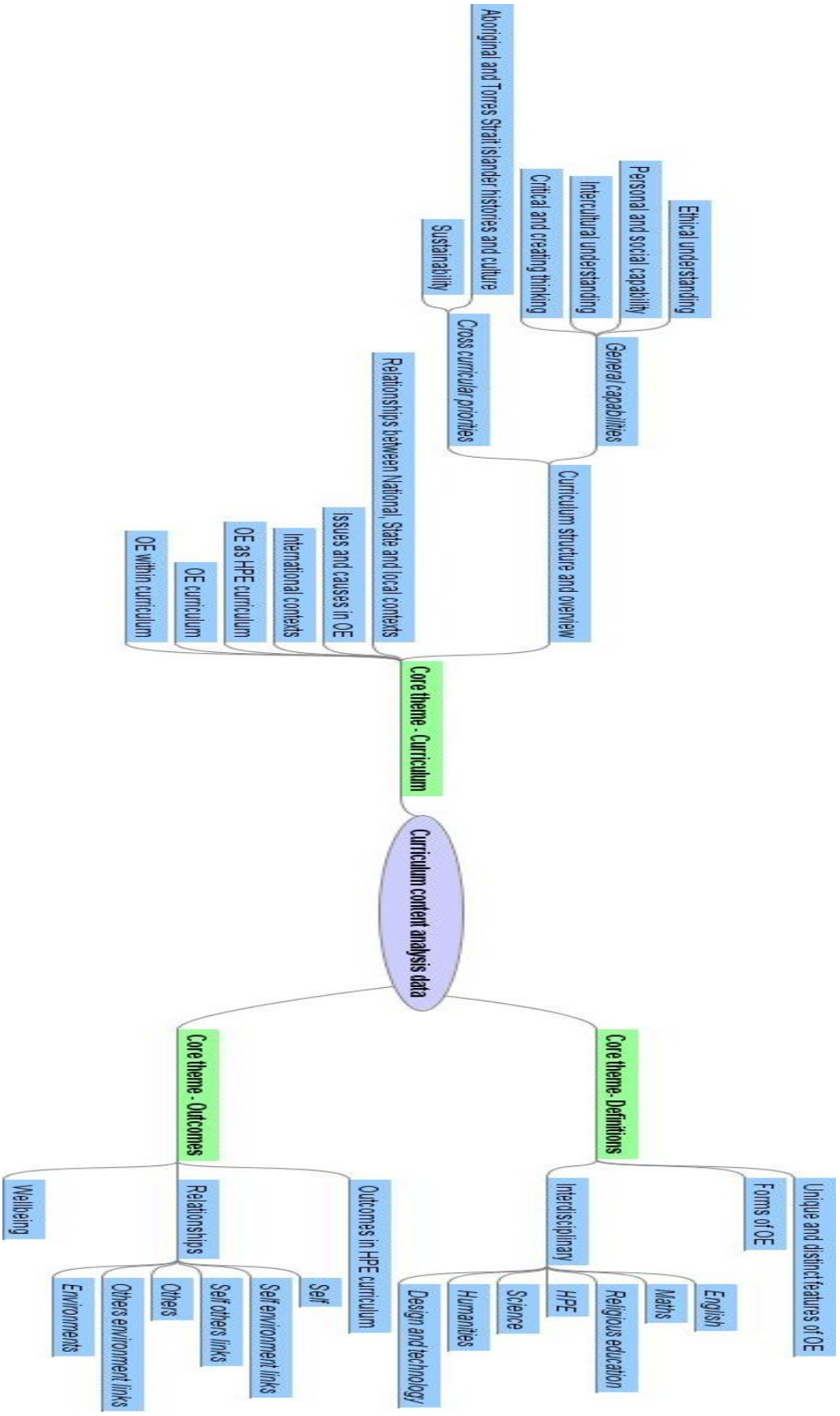
Appendix 4 – Research methods summary table

Research method	Specific data source	Data collected	Data analyse d
Document analysis	CCCC. (2016). Outdoor Education Policy, Outdoor Education booklet, unpublished, Caroline Chisholm Catholic College, Braybrook, Victoria.	Documented Outdoor Education Curriculum for Caroline Chisholm Catholic College	Detailed descriptiv e analysis
	ACARA - Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. (2012) The Shape of the Australian Curriculum v3.0, (http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/The_Shape_of_the_Australian_Curriculum_V3.pdf), viewed February 2016.	Australian Curriculum Outdoor Education requirements	
	http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/		
	DETV Department of Education and Training (n.d.) Safety Guidelines for Education Outdoors, http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/Pages/outdooractivity.aspx.	DETV Outdoor Education requirements	
	Hewison T and Martin P, 2009. Outdoor Education and the National Curriculum. Report. Outdoor Education Group, Eildon.	Outdoor Educations relationship with Australia's National Curriculum	
	Martin, P. (2010). Outdoor education and the national curriculum in Australia. Australian Journal of Outdoor Education, 14(2), 3.		
	Outdoor Education Australia. (2012) Guidelines for R–12 Outdoor Education curriculum, 2012 OEA, Pelagos Productions Revised 5 June 2012, http://www.outdooreducationaustralia.org.au/curric.html , viewed February 2016.	Australian perspectives on Outdoor Education	

	http://outdoorsvictoria.org.au	Victorian perspectives on Outdoor Education	
	Polley. S, Atkin. J, (2014) Advice for Outdoor Education in the Australian Curriculum, proceedings of 18th National Outdoor Education Conference, 14 - 16 April 2014, Prince Alfred College, Adelaide, SA	Outdoor Educations relationship with Australia's National Curriculum	
	LTS (2010) curriculum for excellence through outdoor learning, Learning and Teaching Scotland, Glasgow.	International perspective of Outdoor Education	
	VCAA. (2011). Outdoor and Environmental Studies: Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design 2012-2016. Melbourne: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.	VCE Outdoor and Environment al Studies learning outcomes	
	http://www.voea.vic.edu.au/	State perspectives on Outdoor Education	
	Panel, O. E. A. (2005). High Quality Outdoor Education'. The English Outdoor Council.	International perspective on Outdoor Education	
	Prouty, D., Panicucci, J., & Collinson, R. (2007). Adventure education: theory and applications. Human Kinetics.		
Interviews	2 Academic Outdoor Education specialists	Domain evaluation	Directio nal and advisory foundati on data
	2 Representatives from exemplar programs		
	2 Representatives from Outdoor Education Advisory bodies		
	12 Accompanying teachers	Perceptions of learning outcomes and effects of Outdoor Education program	Participa nt percepti ons and perspecti ves

Focus group interview	**6 accompanying teachers**		

Appendix 5 – Content Analysis thematic analysis map



Appendix 6 - Outdoor Education outcomes In the Australian National Curriculum

- (ACPPS072) Practice and apply strategies to seek help for themselves or others
- (ACPPS074) Investigate the benefits of relationships and examine their impact on their own and others' health and wellbeing
- (ACPPS079) Investigate the benefits to individuals and communities of valuing diversity and promoting inclusivity
- (ACPMP080) Use feedback to improve body control and coordination when performing specialised movement skills in a variety of situations
- (ACPMP082) Practice, apply and transfer movement concepts and strategies with and without equipment
- (ACPMP086) Practice and apply personal and social skills when undertaking a range of roles in physical activities
- (ACPMP087) Evaluate and justify reasons for decisions and choices of action when solving movement challenges
- (ACPPS091) Plan, rehearse and evaluate options (including CPR and first aid) for managing situations where their own or others' health, safety and wellbeing may be at short or long term risk
- (ACPPS093) Investigate how empathy and ethical decision making contribute to respectful relationships
- (ACPMP099) Provide and apply feedback to develop and refine specialised movement skills in a range of challenging movement situations
- (ACPMP101) Develop, implement and evaluate movement concepts and strategies for successful outcomes with and without equipment
- (ACPMP105) Devise, implement and refine strategies when working in groups or teams that demonstrate leadership and collaboration skills

- (ACPMP106) Transfer understanding from previous movement experiences to create solutions to movement challenges
- (ACPPS070) Investigate the impact of transition and change on identities
- (ACPPS075) Analyse factors that influence emotions and develop strategies to demonstrate empathy and sensitivity
- (ACPPS078) Plan and implement strategies for connecting to natural and built environments to promote health and wellbeing of their communities
- (ACPMP083) Participate in physical activities that develop health-related and skill-related fitness components and create and monitor personal fitness plans
- (ACPMP085) Participate in and investigate the cultural and historical significance of a range of physical activities
- (ACPPS089) Evaluate factors that shape identities and critically analyse how individuals impact on the identities of others
- (ACPPS094) Evaluate situations and propose appropriate emotional responses and then reflect on possible outcomes of different responses
- (ACPPS097) Plan and evaluate new and creative interventions that promote their own and others' connection to community, natural and built environments
- (ACPMP104) Examine the role physical activity, outdoor recreation and sport plays in the lives of Australians and investigate how this has changed over time

Appendix 7 - Accompanying teachers interview guiding questions

- **Discussion Topic: Outdoor Education as a holistic learning area**
  - In your own words, define holistic education?
  - In your opinion, What do you think are the most important factors contributing to holistic education?
  - In your opinion, What do you think are the most limiting factors to holistic education?
  - Aside from formal curriculum based outcomes, what are the most important outcomes of education?
  - Describe any relationships you are aware of/have witnessed/experienced between Outdoor education and other learning areas?
  - Describe how (if at all) Outdoor Education contributes to the development of the 'whole person' of participants?

Discussion Topic: Definition and location of Outdoor Education in secondaryschool curriculum

- In your words, define Outdoor Education?
- What, if any, outcomes/experiences/opportunities does Outdoor Education provide which other learning areas don't?
- In your opinion, where do you think Outdoor Education should be located in secondary school curriculum?
- Should Outdoor Education be regarded as core curriculum? Why/why not?

Discussion Topic: Outcomes of Outdoor Education in secondary schooling

- As a participant in the program, describe the key outcomes of the program which you have seen/experienced, which relate to wellbeing?
- Are there further outcomes of middle school Outdoor Education which are not included in formal curriculum? ;and if so, how do we make these outcomes explicit?
- Is provision of experience (i.e.: participation) alone an outcome in itself? Discuss.
- How do different learner types benefit from learning in a different environment with a diversity of active and passive learning opportunities?
- What, if any, learning occurs during the time between formal activities? How does this learning occur?
- Do all outcomes of the program need to be legitimised or documented? Or need to be integrated into formal curriculum (assessed/accounted for)? Discuss.
- What are the major limiting factors to Outdoor Education?

Discussion Topic: Relationship development in Outdoor EducationSelf:

- How would you define a positive relationship with yourself?
- What factors drive the development of a positive relationship with the self?

Others:

- How would you define a positive relationship with others?
- What factors drive the development of a positive relationship with others?

Environment:

- How would you define a positive relationship with the environment?
- What factors drive the development of a positive relationship with the environment?

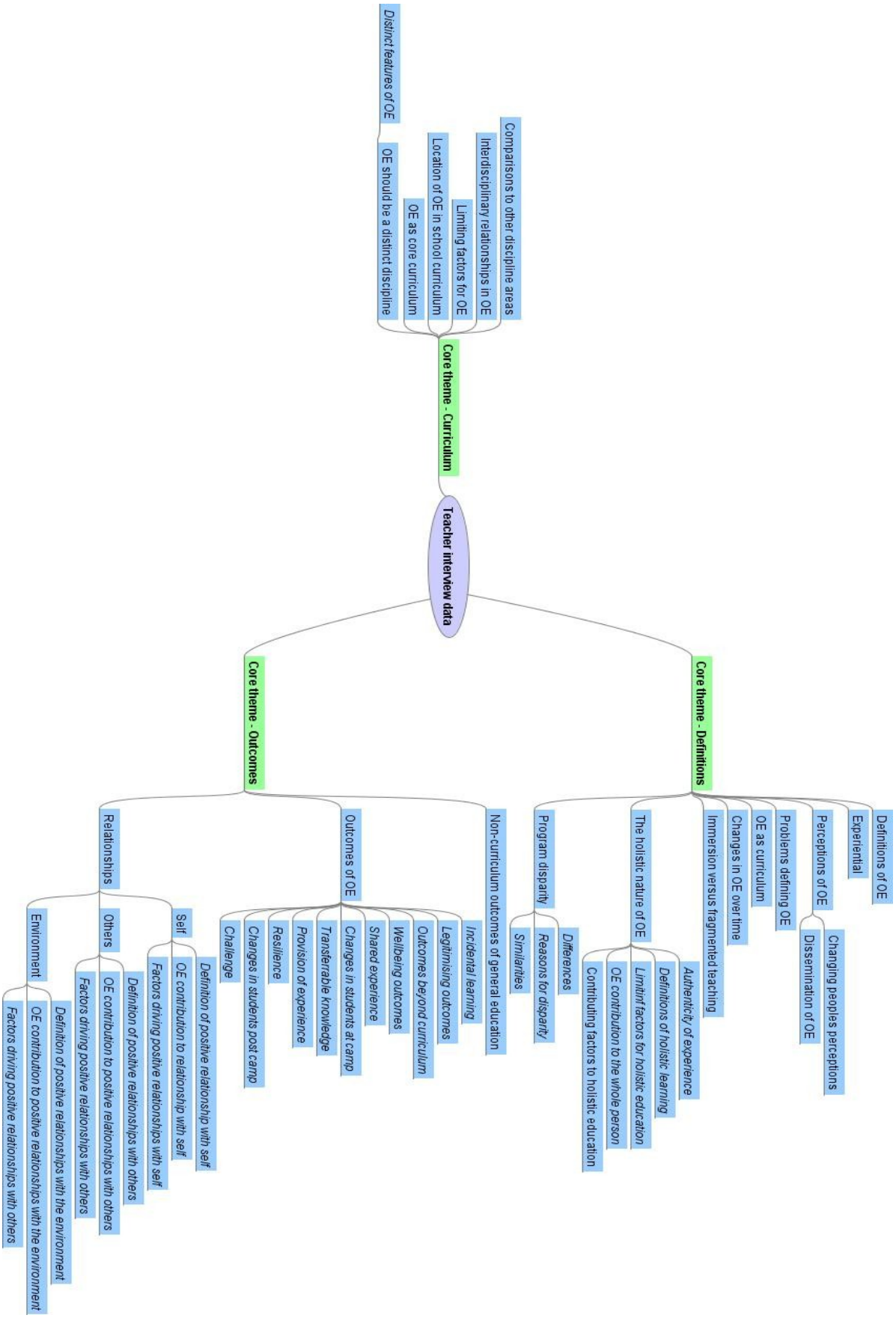
Overall relationship development:

- What, if any, are the differences in students attitudes, behaviour & relationships (self/others/environment) when they are immersed in unfamiliar environments such as those experienced during camp?
- What effect do Outdoor Education outcomes have on relationship development?
- In what ways does Outdoor Education contribute to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and environment?
- Discuss the concept and effects of shared experience. Is shared experience a learning outcome in itself?

Disparity of programs and practices:

- As either a teacher or student at different schools, what are some of the similarities and differences between Outdoor Education programs that you have experienced?
- Are the outcomes the same? Explain.
- Why do you think that Outdoor Education is viewed/facilitated/managed differently between teachers, schools, systems, States etc.?
- The difference between students prior to and post camp.
- Discuss the immersive component of the program.

Appendix 8 – Accompanying Teachers Interview Thematic data Analysis Map



Appendix 9 – Focus group interview guiding questions

Discussion Topic: Outdoor Education as a holistic learning area

Probing question

- What is it that makes holistic education "holistic"?

Follow-up questions

- As a group, what do you think are the most important factors contributing to holistic education?
- As a group, what do you think are the most limiting factors to holistic education?
- Aside from formal curriculum based outcomes, what are the most important outcomes of education?
- In relation to interdisciplinary learning, what is the relationship (if any) between Outdoor Education and other specific learning areas?
- How (if at all) does Outdoor Education contribute to the development of the 'whole person' of participants?

Exit question

- Is there anything further that anyone would like to add to the discussion of Outdoor Education as a holistic learning area?

Discussion Topic: Definition and location of Outdoor Education in secondaryschool curriculum
Probing question

- What is it that makes Outdoor Education different from other learning areas?

Follow-up questions

- What, if any, outcomes/experiences/opportunities does Outdoor Education provide which other learning areas don't?

- Where does Outdoor Education belong in a secondary school curriculum framework?

Exit question

- Is there anything further that anyone would like to add to the discussion regarding the definition of Outdoor Education and its place in secondary school curriculum?

Discussion Topic: Outcomes of Outdoor Education in secondary schooling

Probing question

- What are the Outcomes of the Outdoor Education programs which you have been involved in?

Follow-up questions

- Which outcomes, if any, are related to wellbeing? How are they related to wellbeing?

- Are there further outcomes of middle school Outdoor Education which are not included in formal curriculum? ;and if so, how do we make these outcomes explicit?

- How do different learner types benefit from learning in a different environment with a diversity of active and passive learning opportunities?

- What, if any, learning occurs during the time between formal activities? How does this learning occur?

Exit question

- Is there anything further that anyone would like to add to the discussion regarding the outcomes of Outdoor Education?

Discussion Topic: Relationship development in Outdoor EducationSelf:
Probing question

- How would you define a positive relationship with yourself?

Follow-up question

- What factors drive the development of a positive relationship with the self?

Others:

Probing question

- How would you define a positive relationship with others?

Follow-up question

- What factors drive the development of a positive relationship with others?

Environment:

Probing question

- How would you define a positive relationship with the environment?

Follow-up question

- What factors drive the development of a positive relationship with the environment?

Overall relationship development:

Probing question

- What effect do Outdoor Education outcomes have on relationship development?

Follow-up question

- What, if any, are the differences in students attitudes, behaviour & relationships (self/others/environment) when they are immersed in unfamiliar environments such as those experienced during camp?
- In what ways does Outdoor Education contribute to the development of positive relationships with the self, others and environment?

Exit question

- Is there anything further that anyone would like to add to the discussion regarding relationship development in Outdoor Education?

Disparity of programs and practices:

Probing question

- As either a teacher or student at different schools, what are some of the similarities and differences between programs that you have experienced?

Follow-up questions

- Are the outcomes the same? Explain.
- Why do you think that Outdoor Education is viewed/facilitated/managed differently between teachers, schools, systems, States etc.?

Exit question

Is there anything further that anyone would like to add to the discussion regarding differences in Outdoor Education across the field of practice?

Appendix 10 – Focus group interview thematic data analysis map