

Chapter 3

Is Policy the Whole Story? International Trends and Perspective in Policy Making and Enactment in Outdoor Environmental Education



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3.1 Introduction

In the last two decades, children's lifestyle has taken place inside their homes and most often in front of digital screens (Hechter & Fife, 2019; Walter, 2013). They have also become increasingly separated from the outdoors as a place for leisure and adventure (Gill, 2011; Louv, 2010; Moss, 2012; Williams & Wainwright, 2016a). Children have lost the opportunity to explore their environment, despite studies advocating the importance of children's direct rapport with nature. Children should develop an emotional connection with nature and an understanding that humanity relies on it, and direct experiences with nature motivate activities relating to its conservation (Chawla, 2020). This distancing from nature is indicative of a gap we must narrow. Outdoor education, according to its broad definition, might offer a solution (Fiennes et al., 2015; Maher, 2018).

Outdoor education is not a new concept; it has been known worldwide for more than a century, and there are several studies that deal with policy related to it (Cook, 1999; Stott et al., 2015). Among the large number of definitions of outdoor education, for this review we adopted the following: Outdoor education allows learners to “experience the interdisciplinary nature of the real world through interactions with each other and the planet” (Dolan, 2016, p. 49). The National Association for Outdoor Education defines this concept as a “means of approaching educational objectives through guided direct experience in the environment, using its resources as learning materials” (Department of Educational Science, 1975: 1). According to this definition, outdoor education includes diverse disciplines such as geography, history, art, biology, environmental studies and physical education.

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Dillon (2005) defines the setting of the outdoor classroom as “those spaces where students can experience familiar and unfamiliar phenomena beyond the normal confines of the classroom” (p. 10). They also refer to the outcomes of outdoor education, identifying them as “changes in thinking, feeling and/or behavior resulting directly or indirectly from outdoor education” (p. 10). They consider that these changes are a combination of the outdoor education itself and what happens in school and at home (Dillon, 2005).

Literature emphasizes the importance of outdoor education for students’ cognitive, physical, emotional and social development (White et al., 2019). Many studies indicate that this type of learning supports the holistic development of students and offers them learning opportunities in a variety of fields that are not possible within the classroom (Maher, 2018; White et al., 2019). Learning that takes place outside of the classroom instills a multi-sensory experience (Henderson & Potter, 2001) that is imprinted in memory (Hodgson et al., 2008), is more engaging than traditional learning (Ho et al., 2015), and encourages interest and motivation to learn (Hodgson et al., 2008). When students are engaged in an outdoor activity that touches upon emotional and social aspects, their basis for learning is more solid, they express empathy towards environmental issues and, accordingly, develop pro-environmental perspectives (Chawla, 2020).

Although outdoor education has been recognized in policy agendas worldwide for many years (see for example, in England) (Cook, 1999; Marmot et al., 2019), to date it has not been well studied from the perspective of the gaps between policy and its implementation. Much of the literature has already recognized that international and national policies and guidelines of environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD) do not necessarily include the approach and principles of outdoor education as an inherent part or a required way of developing learners’ environmental citizenship. This is the case in pre-school education (Inoue et al., 2019) as well as in elementary and post-secondary school levels. Scotland in this sense is unique because it incorporates outdoor education specifically, in addition to its policy related to ESD (Bamber et al., 2016). It is also the case vice versa: not all outdoor education is equivalent to ESD. For example, many adventure-based outdoor education programs which involve traveling to remote nature places can be viewed as opposed to the sustainability agenda because they may not be based on nature protection (e.g., canoeing in protected areas and long-distance travel trips) (Waite et al., 2016). In addition, it is not obvious that young learners who experience nature-based learning in the outdoors will become more responsible for sustainability without an explicit focus on ESD. Critical pedagogies that focus on global environmental, political, social and economic problems and injustices are needed to make outdoor learning ESD-oriented (McLaren, 2015). This review focuses on this gap. It aims to identify and explore the interconnections between outdoor education and EE at the national policy level.

Policy refers to a process, a product or a text, as suggested by Stevenson (2013). In this study, we adopted the meaning of policy as a text, focusing on policies that are explicitly explored, described and discussed in recent peer-reviewed articles that deal with outdoor education. We also acknowledge G. A. Smith and Stevenson’s

(2017) claim that although policy is often positioned at the state level, it is strongly influenced by global processes, such as economic globalization and neoliberal approaches to educational policies. The outcomes of such global influences have an impact on assessment and accountability, which both relate to outdoor education policy, as will be further discussed in this review.

The objective of this article is to review the body of empirical and theoretical research studies that focus on outdoor education policy and then identify and summarize current literature with reference to several central discrepancies or gaps concerning the implementation of outdoor education policies. Identifying these gaps, though not conclusive, has important contribution. For example, it can serve policy makers and implementors in the field in determining outdoor education policy. Here, we have related to the public education policy that is outlined by the state or national government whose responsibility is to determine the education system (Gray, 2018). In addition, the importance of the article is strengthened in light of the recent years of distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and the education system's accommodation of the situation. Learning outdoors during a pandemic can serve as an alternative to online learning, as was the case in many countries around the world.

3.2 Methodology

This literature review focused its search on post-2010 literature regarding outdoor education policy. This review is not a pure systematic review (e.g., Khan et al., 2003) nor a meta-analysis (e.g., Hattie et al., 1997) nor a comprehensive one (e.g., Chawla, 2020). Our assumption was that most of the relevant data will be available electronically, hence our search included only an electronic database. We acknowledge that non-electronic or pre-2010 literature publications may have been missed in our search. Although we are aware of the potential relevance of legislation of policy documents, for this review we used only academic peer-reviewed publications.

In all the publications, we searched the abstracts where the full e-copies were accessible. To conduct our search, we used the word "policy" combined with each of the following keywords: outdoor pedagogy, outdoor learning, out of school learning, wild pedagogy, outdoor teaching, outdoor play, wild learning, education for sustainability, environmental and sustainability education, and education for sustainable development. The search process, which was based on the database of Google Scholar, was conducted in several phases. Our initial search in the first phase yielded in total more than one million results, including duplicate publications.

To achieve a manageable number of publications to analyze, we filtered the high number of results according to the following criteria: the publication range (post-2010), the type of published work (peer-reviewed journal articles only) and a representation of different countries, from Western and Eastern cultures. In the third phase, we read the abstracts of the publications and checked how many times the

word “policy” was presented in each of them and whether policy issues in outdoor education were indeed the focus of these publications. In the final phase, we narrowed down the database to 30 publications that served as the data for this review and rechecked this final list to assure that they were all peer-reviewed articles, in which policy was the focus. We also identified several key authors who discussed policy of outdoor education (e.g., Paul Higgins, Sue Waite, Rowena Passy) and specifically searched for relevant publications they have written.

Our final list of publications includes empirical studies (mostly qualitative), and conceptual articles. The final reviewed articles represent Western countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, UK, USA), and Eastern countries (e.g., Indonesia, Japan, Singapore). We analyzed the final list of articles using a thematic analysis (Stott et al., 2015). The relatively short list of publications used in this review indicates the very restricted research on policy in the field of outdoor education. While much research has focused on the characteristics of outdoor education in theory and in practice, only a few have focused on its policy. Many of these are presented in this article.

3.3 Outdoor Education Policy Worldwide

Recognizing the value and necessity for combining outdoor learning in educational frameworks has increased over the years. Accordingly, different countries are taking action to define an official educational policy for outdoor learning (Gilchrist et al., 2017; MacQuarrie et al., 2015; Passy et al., 2019; Waite et al., 2016). This policy is fundamentally dependent on the local context (Waite et al., 2016). Differences in cultural, social, political, economic and other characteristics between countries create a variety of interpretations of outdoor education (Waite, 2020) and a diverse policy that is expressed by different objectives, motives and modes of implementation of outdoor learning in the education arena (Bentsen et al., 2017; Waite et al., 2016).

Our point of departure is that outdoor education is inherently part of education for sustainability (EfS) (Nicol et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2016) and part of ESD, when outdoor education is explicitly mentioned. To continue this, we can assume that policy related to EfS will include directions for outdoor education. However, due to the complexity and vagueness of its policy, outdoor education is usually not discussed explicitly. This is the case, for example, with the global policies related to United Nations’ sustainable development goals (SDGs). Although the SDGs are the strongest directive yet seen for sustainability education policy and practice (Sterling et al., 2017), outdoor education is not explicitly mentioned as a suitable guideline or practice. This situation illustrates the complexity of outdoor education as implemented in the field by different actors and the principles of outdoor education as they appear or should appear in relevant policy documents.

This situation is specifically reflected when closely examining the outdoor education policy in various countries. In the UK for example, the motivation for developing outdoor education emerged from the national appeal to decrease inequality in the public health arena (Marmot et al., 2019) by cultivating connections between personal and social skills within the framework of outdoor learning (Paterson et al., 2014). In another example from Scotland, outdoor education is supported by the curriculum for excellence: there are explicit guidelines for outdoor learning that are manifested in sustainability as well, and this is a professional requirement of all the teachers in the country (Higgins, 2019). Also in Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, Taiwan, Australia, Ireland, Poland, Spain, Switzerland and Canada, the outdoor education policy is anchored in the curriculum. In the USA, the policy tends to be state-wide and is motivated mainly by health perspectives (physical activity and healthy diet awareness) and science education (Bentsen et al., 2017). In Finland, where the recognition of the importance of outdoor education has increased among teachers and policy makers in the past decades, there is a guideline to make schoolyards suitable for learning spaces, as well as the natural and man-made areas on the school grounds (Higgins, 2019). In Sweden, outdoor education is implemented in schools, in higher education institutions and in environmental non-profit organizations (Backman, 2018). In Denmark, the policy advocates relevant learning in outdoor education contexts as well (Barfod et al., 2017). In Norway, outdoor learning is part of the national curriculum (Bentsen et al., 2017) in accordance with the idea of “friluftsliv” (which means a simple life in nature without destroying or disturbing it), according to which life outside the home is part of the local culture in the country (Gurholt, 2014).

3.4 Challenges from Theory to Practice: Discrepancies Between Education Policy and Its Implementation in the Field

There is a consensus among researchers of education policy that its implementation by educators in the field is a complex effort; greater than instituting the policy itself (Fixsen et al., 2005). Educators who implement outdoor education highlight its many advantages (Bentsen et al., 2017; Hodgson et al., 2008; Maher, 2018; Waite, 2020; White et al., 2019). However, in many cases policy makers believe that outdoor learning is not “real” learning in the traditional sense of the word (Higgins, 2019). There are several central discrepancies between the policy and its implementation. In the following section, we will address four gaps that relate to outdoor education policy that we identified in the thematic analysis based on the final list of publications we selected for this review:

3.4.1 Discrepancy Between Policy Makers and Implementation in the Field: Obstacles in Implementation

There are several studies that document gaps in the policy for outdoor education and its implementation in the field. Some of the reasons that teachers refrain from implementing outdoor teaching include teachers' perceptions of teaching processes and meaningful learning, their perceptions regarding the significance of outdoor education, their apprehension towards teaching outdoors that stems from lack of experience in teaching in the outdoor environment and, finally, lack of appropriate training. Consequently, there is a lack of teaching strategies that are suited for outdoor education (Gray & Pigott, 2018; Higgins, 2019; Waite et al., 2016).

For example, research conducted in Wales presented partial application of the outdoor education policy among children aged three to seven. Following the policy's implementation, teachers indicated that they had made more use of the environment, but it seemed only on a limited and partial level. Teachers went outdoors only when the weather was agreeable and then their teaching methods reverted to traditional methods used in the classroom. In addition, the teachers overlooked many learning opportunities that the environment offers and contributes to enhancing the students' learning. Reasons for which implementation was unsuccessful were difficulties such as the outdoor location, its size, its accessibility (O'Sullivan, 2018), lack of awareness of the uses and the underlying advantages of outdoor learning, concern for the children and the need to protect them from incumbent weather, accidents, and strangers (Smith & Stevenson, 2017).

Another study examined the developing awareness among policy makers in Australia, Denmark, England and Singapore. They found that in Australia, there were discrepancies in the outdoor education policies and their implementation, as well as differences in the statewide education bodies and the various states (Waite et al., 2016). It can be stated that teaching a curriculum that combines outdoor education in each state varies accordingly to the level of teachers' expertise, as well as their level of training. Furthermore, it was found that teachers are unsure of how to implement outdoor teaching (Waite et al., 2016).

3.4.2 Discrepancies Within the Education Policy: Promoting Achievement by Means of Testing as Opposed to Promoting Outdoor Education

One of the difficulties in implementing outdoor learning is an education policy that emphasizes achievement and studying towards national and international tests, which leaves outdoor education behind. This tests-culture trend extremely contradicts the promotion of outdoor education approaches in those countries, such as the USA (James & Williams, 2017), England, Australia (Smith & Stevenson, 2017) and

Israel (Pizmony-Levy, 2018), in which their current major policies and agenda is to improve their International Large-Scale Assessment achievements. This situation narrows the curriculum to focus on preparing for tests (Gan, 2021; James & Williams, 2017) and changes the position of EE in those countries. In the context of accountability and assessment, teachers who began implementing EE, including outdoor education, stopped doing so due to the stress on international and national testing, which mainly emphasizes literacy, math and science (Smith & Stevenson, 2017). Several examples reflect this gap. In England, it was found that teachers are faced with contradictory guiding principles; on the one hand, they are assessed according to the level of student preparation for these tests, and on the other hand, they are asked to implement meaningful and experiential learning (Smith & Stevenson, 2017).

In accordance with the approach which puts much of school effort on the promotion of academic achievement, in their review about EE policy in secondary schools in England, Glackin and King (2018) claim that EE provision in England is focused on content knowledge which occurs mainly indoors and fails to offer opportunities for students to gain various skills and participate in social and environmental citizenry activism. An additional study in Australia observed two schools in which outdoor education had been implemented as part of EE as a result of a supportive policy. In light of changes in the government, the policy was reformed in favor of a test-promoting policy. Despite the significant change, schools continued to promote EE that encourages outdoor education, while dealing with tests as well. The ability to address policy reforms is manifested in finding ways to implement the requirement for tests in an EE worldview. This process was challenging for both the teachers and the principals (Smith & Stevenson, 2017).

3.4.3 Culture-Based Gap: Outdoor Education Policy Facing the Cultural Characteristics of Target Audiences

An additional reason for the lack of success in implementing the outdoor education policy is that in many cases outdoor environment does not characterize the cultural identity of the teachers or the students. Teachers who do not feel a connection to their environment will refrain from teaching outside of the classroom (Smith & Stevenson, 2017; Waite et al., 2016). In Canada for example, outdoor education is affected by the cultural and geographical diversity that exists in the country (Maher, 2018) and includes a variety of perceptions towards the environment and the level of connection to it (Asfeldt et al., 2021). Considering its size, its multiculturalism and varied geographic landscape, outdoor education curricula in Canada is generally based on local perspectives; i.e., motivated by the skills and vision of the teacher on a local level (Henderson & Potter, 2001).

Looking at school curricula related to outdoor education is an interesting way to discuss policy texts. There are several examples of the culture-based gap in the

curriculum level. For example in physical education in the UK, critical curriculum theorists have argued for many years that student learning must focus on more localized and culturally responsive forms, and that a locality-sensitive set of experiences helps students to make meaning from what they have learned and make their learning more engaged. Physical educators also stressed that the existing curriculum is lacking in this sense (Tannehill & Lund, 2005; Kirk, 2010; Metzler, 2011). To address this issue, Williams and Wainwright (2016a, b) described an in-depth process of developing a new curriculum model for outdoor adventure education in the UK. The local culturally responsive guidelines that were developed in the new pedagogical curriculum model included several non-negotiable features: The first one, being mainly outdoors, reflected the recognition that learning in the outdoors should occur in the immediate locality of learners (e.g., the school grounds and buildings, local neighborhood or outdoor spaces surrounding the school) and should not be isolated many miles away from their home environment. Using residential outdoor centers, which had been the dominant option, should no longer be favored. In this way, by maximizing the learning potential of local environments, outdoor settings become more supportive of students' needs and abilities, and a stronger connection is made to local and accessible outdoor spaces (Wattchow & Brown, 2011; Beames et al., 2012).

A study in Canada explored similarities and differences in the outdoor curricula from different areas in the country. Though Canada has a long history of outdoor education, there is difficulty in defining an acceptable method for its implementation, while taking into consideration the country's large size, the sparse population, the various landscapes, and cultural diversity. Researchers have focused on describing the philosophical foundations, learning objectives and outdoor education curriculum from various locations in the country to obtain a deeper understanding of outdoor learning in Canada. Within the framework of the research, it was found that outdoor education in Canada is influenced by a combination of philosophies, including *practicum*, learning (or holistic learning) and traveling in the country. The common objectives were personal growth and building a community with situational awareness and environmental perspectives. The most prevalent activities included hiking, canoeing and kayaking, skiing and snowboarding (Henderson & Potter, 2001). Findings from the research, support previous research on outdoor education conducted in Canada; i.e., that outdoor education in Canada is motivated most often by teachers who seek it and not by a national curriculum (Hodgson et al., 2008), reinforcing Maher's claim (Asfeldt et al., 2021) that outdoor learning in Canada was influenced by the geographic and cultural diversity of the country's regions.

Culture can also be reflected in policy adoption between countries. For example, England borrowed outdoor learning policy as part of its forest school curriculum from Scandinavian countries, but without due consideration of cultural factors. In this example, it is difficult to implement outdoor learning when there is an emphasis on safety issues, which restricts government legislation, as is the case in England. This is in contrast with Denmark, in which risk does not influence outdoor education to the same extent. Moreover, the public media in the Scandinavian countries reflects their cultural attitudes towards nature more than in England. As a result, we

can assume that outdoor education policy will be implemented differently due to these cultural differences. More specifically, practice might translate differently in diverse cultural contexts (Waite et al., 2016).

From an organizational perspective, school culture could be considered as another cultural-oriented factor, which influences the implementation of policies of outdoor education. Recent studies that explored the gaps between policy and practice in governmentally certified eco-schools show that when the ideas of EE are inherent in school culture, school staff recognize it as a promoter for the implementation of outdoor education and feel more committed to it (Alkaber & Gan, 2020). For example, Harrison-Vickars (2014), who investigated the gaps between policy and practice concerning the implementation of school community gardens in Ontario, Canada, found that most of the eco-school teachers who participated in the study recognized school gardening as part of school culture and agreed that this supported the implementation of school gardens. This exemplifies how eco-schools, which are originally related to top-down policy in EE, developed bottom-up policy in the school, which was translated by the teachers into outdoor learning practices. The principles of outdoor education became an inherent part of EE at the school level (bottom-up), but not necessarily at the top-down level.

3.4.4 Discrepancies in the Source of the Policy: A “Bottom-Up” and “Top-Down” Policy

A “bottom-up” policy regarding outdoor education is created and applied through the initiative of those who are often most influenced by change but are not in a place of official capacity of power and authority (Hodgson et al., 2008), as opposed to “top-down”, in which the main policy from authority figures determines to what level outdoor learning can be and needs to be included in the school (Ho et al., 2015).

3.4.4.1 Top-Down

Policy makers in different countries determine the outdoor education policy in different ways. In Australia for example, the outdoor education policy is anchored in two policy documents: The Melbourne Declaration and the national curriculum (Passy et al., 2019; Waite et al., 2016). In 2017, the Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) of the curriculum in Australia linked the outdoor learning program with the curriculum (Gray, 2018). There are many ramifications in the national educational amendment in Australia regarding the implementation of outdoor learning and the frequency that it actually occurs. The connection between outdoor learning and the curriculum offers the students an experiential framework in a natural environment that can be linked to four dimensions: health and physical education,

humanities and social sciences, geography and science. In reality, the scope of the program and its continuity depend on the needs and interests of the individual school. Hence, a gap emerges that is attributed to teacher training and the level of support vis-à-vis funding, local culture and national appeal to adopt outdoor learning (Waite et al., 2016).

Another example comes from Singapore. Since Singapore's independence, its policy has leaned towards pragmatic national considerations, in which patriotism and love of country are seminal. Outdoor activities, such as the national cadets, were established in middle and high schools with the objective of alleviating fear and resentment towards the military. The Ministry of Education was given the responsibility to improve students' physical condition and develop a positive attitude towards challenging outdoor experiences in order to form a strong and dynamic society. Furthermore, the need to adapt the curriculum to life's complexities and allow the students to acquire life skills and develop knowledge and approaches for the concern for the environment through outdoor education became official. In 2014, government offices recognized outdoor education as a suitable field in which to develop students' skills in the twenty-first century and instill values such as self-confidence, resilience and leadership skills among youth, and national prototypes were developed for outdoor education connected to Singapore's natural heritage. The lack of experienced educators in outdoor teaching and proper training appeared to be the principal obstacles in implementing the policy during the time while the prototypes circulated throughout the country. In other words, there is an understanding in Singapore that outdoor education warrants expertise and experience, which need to be developed over time (Waite et al., 2016).

3.4.4.2 Bottom-Up

In Denmark, there is a long-standing culture of being outdoors in an open environment that is recognized as recreation and outdoor education; activity in nature is considered an integral part of life (Passy et al., 2019). Outdoor education is left in the hands of the teachers, as they have the autonomy to instate the curriculum and the freedom to develop ideas and new pedagogic methods. In the 1990s, the national movement, "udeskole", was founded by a private initiative of teachers. This movement shares knowledge, implements outdoor education, and connects knowledge within a social, economic, political and geographical context. The program was supported by municipalities such as Copenhagen and non-government organizations such as the Outdoor Council, but without formalization or government support. Only in 2010 did a change ensue when projects funded by the EU improved outdoor education among teachers. The accrued knowledge served as a basis for the projects and even larger grants. The first project was "Teach Out", which examined the effects of outdoor education and found a rise in physical activity, motivation, well-being and improvement in social relations. Later, a project of €1.8 million was funded by the Denmark government for developing and conveying practical knowledge. Udeskole changed within a short time from a movement that emerged from

the teachers' initiative to a policy that emerged from the top, but the enactment and the state budget framework did not necessarily improve outdoor education, and the decision regarding its existence still lay in the hands of the teachers (Waite et al., 2016).

In England, outdoor education has a long history beginning from the bottom as well and developing top-down. There are both public and private organizations that offer this learning service. In 2006, the government published a policy document that supported outdoor learning; it was granted a budget and a supervising body. However, the policy presented mixed messages: The fear of health and safety standards and the national curriculum encouraged the teachers to remain in the classroom. As a result, only teachers committed to outdoor teaching actually taught outside of the classroom (Waite et al., 2016). A significant turning point occurred when the government published a document entitled "The Natural Choice" (HM Government, 2011), which called for the strengthening of the connection to the natural environment through the understanding that today this connection is getting lost. The objective of the program was to support teachers to teach outdoors. The project indicated that there was a hidden demand for outdoor learning in school (Gilchrist et al., 2017), and the many advantages of outdoor learning were supported in international and local research. Instead of attempting to modify approaches and positions through training, the government aspired to change the culture by funding teacher support in schools (Waite et al., 2016).

An example of bottom-up influence on policy is the outdoor learning program that supports the development of forest schools in England (Dean, 2019) or "Bush Kindergarten" in Australia (Campbell & Speldewinde, 2019; Elliott & Chancellor, 2014). In these cases, after implementing the outdoor education program, policy makers acknowledged the importance of it and changed local policies according to diverse aspects, such as risk management, teacher training, and policy recommendations. In Australia, for example, they developed eight different policies to support "Bush Kindergarten" (Campbell & Speldewinde, 2019). The example of forest schools in England may also be seen as a response to the national curriculum, by offering an alternative to the outcome centered approach (Dean, 2019).

3.5 Summary and Conclusions

In this article, we reviewed outdoor education policies worldwide, and provided examples of the gaps between the written policy and its implementation in the field. This review indicates that a clear, written policy on the national level can promote outdoor education in the field. However, to succeed at the implementation level, the written policy may require specific adaptations in the geographical, sociocultural and political contexts. Many countries are culturally diverse societies with a variety of geographical landscapes, ancient histories and diverse climate areas that can be pleasant and accommodating for outdoor education most of the year to different

extents. Creating an official policy for outdoor learning must be adapted to the unique characteristics of each country.

In addition, outdoor education policy cannot conflict with existing educational policies in other fields. To generate a comprehensive change, the top-down/bottom-up approaches must be combined, as they complement one another. Furthermore, to implement the approach and principles of outdoor education, it is imperative to supply resources and time to train new teachers for outdoor education, as well as support experienced teachers so they can incorporate pedagogies of outdoor education effectively. Based on the unclear policy in outdoor education that characterizes many countries, this review can encourage policy makers to promote outdoor learning and support educators who are already implementing outdoor education and are interested in making progress in policy clarification in this field.

Regarding the connection between outdoor education and environmental education or EfS at the policy level, both nationally and internationally, policy documents that focus on promoting efforts to achieve a more sustainable society through education (for example, the SDGs), must include explicitly the role, importance and value of outdoor education.

In the current times of crises and uncertainty, felt by every citizen around the globe (for example, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change), the need to promote outdoor education is increasing tremendously. This type of learning encourages social interaction, reinforces emotional resilience both on a personal level and within the community and fosters creativity and flexibility, which is today more crucial than ever. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to act to promote outdoor education and the sooner the better.

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