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Learning outdoors and living well? Conceptual prospects for enhancing curriculum planning and pedagogical practices

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ABSTRACT

In aiming to support school-based outdoor learning opportunities, this paper critiques the extent to which Deweyan and neo-Aristotelian theorising is helpful in highlighting how personal growth and practical wisdom gains can be realised. Such critique is necessary, as there are signs of an implementation gap between practice and policy, which is made worse by a lack of conceptual clarity about how educational aspirations can be dependably achieved. Dewey's habit-forming social constructivist emphasis on learning and problem-solving is reviewed and the prospects of a neo-Aristotelian conception of human flourishing, which recognises that virtues are nurtured as moral sensitivities, are then considered. Concerns that Dewey's writings are often vague on how ideas can be operationalised and criticisms that Aristotle's educational thoughts rather over-privilege cognition relative to emotions are also addressed. The article concludes by teasing out suggestions on how Deweyan and neo-Aristotelian ideas on learning might coherently inform curriculum planning and pedagogical practices.

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Introduction

Across many parts of the Anglophone world, curriculum aims have seen a rebirth of progressive education ideas in recent years (Priestley & Biesta, 2013). In this paper, we primarily draw upon the Scottish 'Curriculum for Excellence' (CfE) context as an exemplar programme for our review of the revival of progressive, experiential and holistic learning and teaching intentions. CfE is defined by high levels of teacher autonomy, positive references to enhancing pupils' developmental capacities and for utilising social constructivist theories of learning (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2008). The streamlined model of policy implementation associated with CfE is largely based on broad declarations of ambition (e.g. set capacities, experiences and outcomes) operating within a flexible and overarching curriculum framework for pupils of 3–18 years (Priestley, 2010). Since the announcement of

the CfE policy aims in 2004, emphasis and attention has been on articulating how the four identified developmental capacities (successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen, effective contributor) can become evident in practice (LTS, 2008). This has involved reference to the contribution of learning in specific curriculum areas but also a heightened emphasis on interdisciplinary and holistic learning contexts, as every teacher now has a responsibility in three particular curriculum areas: literacy; numeracy and health; and well-being (LTS, 2008). Despite these progressive intentions the CfE design structure can make it difficult for teachers to recognise the various ways in which educational theorising supports new policy imperatives (Humes, 2013b).

Nevertheless, one area that has received attention is outdoor learning, and with it a clear expectation that teachers use the outdoors as a context for their lessons. Specifically in this paper, we focus on outdoor learning and the connections learning outdoors might have for enhancing pupils' personal well-being and academic development. Through outlining a vision of a more progressive and holistic form of education CfE offers considerable prospects for increased levels of outdoor learning in schools (LTS, 2010). Under the new guidelines teachers are encouraged to plan integrated learning experiences that are 'enjoyable, creative, challenging and adventurous and help children and young people learn by experience and grow as confident and responsible citizens who value and appreciate the spectacular landscapes, natural heritage and culture of Scotland' (LTS, 2010, p. 5). Overall, the policy advice contains an endorsement for approaches to learning that are consistent with holistic and interdisciplinary methods and which aim to help pupils and teachers see connections between what might otherwise have been treated as discreet subjects (LTS, 2010). Thorburn and Allison (2013) found strong support for the holistic intentions underpinning outdoor learning as part of CfE. This was often reflected in policy stakeholders' and teachers' personal accounts of their own outdoor experiences and the impressions these made on their educational values. Furthermore, the potential for contextualising knowledge when learning outdoors through, for example, making connections between the environmental and the personal and social, as well as with more generic literacy, numeracy and health and well-being aspirations, was frequently reported (Thorburn & Allison, 2013). In some cases, elaboration on outdoor learning aims linked to wider society goals. Thus, as knowledge becomes more complex, e.g. in terms of sustaining economic growth as global citizens, greater levels of outdoor learning were considered a productive space and context for pupils reviewing and reflecting on how their lives are faring. In line with Allison, Carr, and Meldrum (2012), most teachers in the Thorburn and Allison (2013) study considered that outdoor learning was capable of engaging with pupils' deeper motivations and overall something that was more profound than the mastering of basic skills in a few adventurous activities. As such, the new policy guidelines were, despite their brevity, often considered relatively helpful in providing the endorsement necessary for learning outdoors and were the best prospect in many years for increasing the level and quality of pupils' outdoor learning experiences.

However, despite these seeds of optimism, two notable concerns exist; first, there is a lack of underpinning educational theory in outdoor learning policy documents (Thorburn & Allison, 2010) and second, as befits the streamlined model of policy elaboration in place (Priestley, 2011), it is often problematic to recognise the various ways in which policy aspirations can more fully support teachers with their curriculum planning and reviews of pedagogical practices. These problems might have been anticipated, for, as Humes (2013a) notes, there 'is no extended philosophical justification for the particular values' (p. 8)

underpinning CfE. In addition, Humes (2013b) has highlighted that, especially in secondary schools, adopting holistic and interdisciplinary approaches has proved problematic for teachers as they often lack the confidence to experiment, even though they believe these approaches to be worthwhile. Thus, despite the policy window of opportunity being further ajar than usual, theoretical and practical concerns exist regarding how increased holistic opportunities to learn outdoors can help young people to live well. Our task in this paper is to address these concerns (weak educational theory and limited connections of theory with policy and practice) through reviewing the contribution of John Dewey and Aristotle to debates about experiential education and its connections with the development of personal growth and practical wisdom. Dewey's (1938) emphasis on learners being active and engaged encourages teachers to review how deliberation, discussion, action and reflection can inform pupils' decision-making. Considered this way, personal growth is very similar to Aristotle's views on practical wisdom: Aristotle (2004) identified that the practices of reflection, deliberation, decision, and action are preconditions for practical wisdom and virtuous living. On this basis, personal growth and practical wisdom can feature as central tenets of curriculum planning, where social constructivist informed learning experiences intersect with pupils' own expanding mental maps of the world (Allison, Telford, & Marshall, 2011). We are also interested in how pedagogical arrangements that emphasise how the holistic development of cognitive skills and affective qualities can be realised in experiential-based learning environments. In taking forward our aims, we do recognise (as outlined later) that there are differences between Dewey's social constructivist practical knowledge thinking and Aristotle's naturalist epistemology of *phronesis*. Nevertheless, their shared emphasis on the importance of learning through experience and the belief that the development of knowledge requires some unified perspective on experience encourages us to review the contribution of both philosophers.

Before progressing further we should clarify what we mean by the terms outdoor learning and living well. We refer to learning outdoors as an inclusive term where practical and experiential learning experiences are free or relatively affordable for the vast majority of pupils in mainstream schools, and which take place for the most part in or close to school grounds. This is consistent with Doddington's (2013) view that by being outdoors 'we become subject to the contingency of the elements and are in locations and landscapes that are either predominantly natural or constructed for multi-purpose usage' (p. 2). Thus, the focus is predominantly on how personal growth and practical wisdom can flourish in relatively everyday outdoor learning contexts, rather than in more traditional and often residentially based outdoor education settings – which the outdoor learning guidelines in Scotland also encourage. What we aim to take forward therefore is a holistic, experiential and interdisciplinary learning approach that supports, for example, engaging with ideas concerning the natural history and ecosystems of the geographical areas pupils are living in, at the same time as trying to cultivate further pupils' ideas and reflections on how they want to live their lives in the future. Our notion of living well reflects the prominence there is nowadays in educating for personal well-being (Biesta, 2013). However, we recognise that making a judgement about one's well-being tends to suffer from the lack of a 'corresponding adjective' (Hursthouse, 1999, p. 10). Thus, we have chosen the term living well, as it shows signs of becoming a more widely used term in the years ahead (Curren, 2013).

John Dewey, personal growth and education

Dewey's pragmatism-informed writings on connecting the child and the curriculum and schools with society resonate with a good deal of contemporary theorising in education, where thinking is informed by trying to constructively address the educational and social issues that confront society (Pring, 2007). From a Deweyan perspective, the main learning challenge is on ensuring that subject knowledge has clear logical connections with the lives and previous experiences of pupils, and that a range of unhelpful dualisms, e.g. between indoor and outdoor learning, between process skills and subject matter and between doing and reflecting, are avoided (Dewey, 1902). Dewey's thinking on education contains an emphasis on scientific method, human practices and evolutionary biology as well as being broad and flexible enough to include the moral and the aesthetic. These various points of emphasis led Dewey to consider that learning and engagement could be best understood in terms of cultivating habits of an integrated character and in terms of how deep satisfaction could be gained through effort (Carden, 2006). Dewey believed that the traditional overemphasis on subject knowledge limited pupils' interest and ability to contextualise information, and argued instead that a link needed to be found which balanced curriculum goals with pupils' lives and experiences (Dewey, 1938). If successful, engagement with a democratic way of life would contain free and full interactions between social groups and would be supported by varied and numerous mutual interests with learning in schools being synonymous with being 'useful and liberal at the same time' (Dewey, 1916, p. 142). For Dewey, knowledge was a matter of human construction and was therefore most accurately conceived of as solving a series of practical problems rather than as memorising an inert body of facts or information. Dewey pioneered holistic and interdisciplinary approaches to learning that incorporated method and subject matter, and that enabled a deeper level of enquiry to support connections between experience and reflection (Dewey, 1929).

In order to foster personal growth, Dewey constructed two interrelated principles – continuity and interaction – to advance his views. Continuity of experience overtakes learning dualisms and ensures that learning is a rich and fluid process where every experience 'takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after' (Dewey, 1938, p. 27). Dewey was acutely aware that outside of formal education settings, pupils naturally integrate past and present experiences and therefore there is a need for curriculum to connect with learning that is already under way. Dewey considered this was best achieved by initial empirical experiences becoming refined by ongoing cycles of reflection and verification (Dewey, 1929). Dewey's second principle, interaction, points to the interplay between what Dewey (1938) called the objective and internal conditions of experience. For Dewey, objective conditions make up the aims and content of the experience and internal conditions refers to each pupil's unique mental map of the world, i.e. their perception, reactions, attitudes, beliefs, habits and emotions, and the way these interact within learning environments. Dewey advised that by merging the two (i.e. objective and internal conditions) learning could become more meaningful. For example, in an outdoor learning context, Ralston (2009) has investigated how the spatial and social-graphical moment of experience can deepen appreciation and understanding of the qualitative richness on outdoor journeys. Together these two principles challenge educators to review the needs of pupils, and to recognise the benefits and disadvantages previous experiences might have for their attitudes. Thereafter, there is the priority of making

subject knowledge connections with experiences in order to enhance the quality of pupils' reflections and decision-making at a personal and social level (Dewey, 1938).

Dewey's thinking on experiential-informed education has been regularly criticised for being rather scattered, vague on detail and inconsistent (e.g. Egan, 2002; Edmondson, 2006). From a pedagogical perspective as well Higgins (2005) notes that while Dewey was interested in teacher flourishing (as well as pupils flourishing) it 'is worrisome that he never addressed this concern in any depth' (p. 442). From a curriculum perspective, Peters (1977) was also concerned that Dewey focused too much on using problems as the context for learning rather than engaging with more abstract knowledge. Peters (1977) argued that Dewey's approach undervalued pupils' natural curiosity in disciplinary knowledge and limited the contribution of the teacher, as their subject knowledge expertise was insufficiently drawn upon. Peters (1977) also argued that Dewey's recurring focus on personal growth and forming productive habits through progressive cycles of problem-solving and reflection made it difficult for curriculum to contain more routine activities that might foster pupils' interest and curiosity. Furthermore, Peters (1977) had concerns that Dewey failed to adequately specify the criteria against which personal growth could be measured. Without this occurring, Dewey's ideal of groups sharing and solving practical problems together is rather ill-defined relative to identifying more clearly the end product towards which personal growth is leading. For Dewey, however, the idea of a human *telos* is illusory, and as such there is only a limited elaboration on how the internal conditions of pupils' thinking connect with the objective conditions that surround many aspects of curriculum planning. For Dewey, experiences are in constant state of flux and therefore to flourish people need to thrive within 'a social platform of liberalism that allows for experimentation, increased communication, and toleration of a variety of individual perspectives' (Carden, 2006, p. 4).

Aristotle, practical wisdom and education

Aristotle (2004) identifies two categories of virtues: moral and intellectual. Moral virtues primarily regulate our affections and are complex states that draw on appropriate feelings and the capacity to act in the right way, at the right time and for the right reasons. Intellectual virtues draw upon cognition (*NE*; *EE*, II.1, 1219b27–36) and are acquired through teaching. Aristotle (2004) further divides the intellectual virtues into two categories: the provisional include *sophia* (speculative wisdom), *nous* (intuitive reason), and *episteme* (knowledge). These collectively attend to necessary truths, whereas the practical include *techne* (technical, vocational thinking) and *phronesis* (practical wisdom). For Aristotle, distinctions between the provisional and the practical cannot be fully appreciated without understanding certain differences in their modes of acquisition. Thus, while provisional virtues (e.g. theoretical or academic knowledge) may best be learned via books and/or direct instruction, practical knowledge – whether *techne* or *phronesis* – requires more practical and experiential learning, which is based on something greater than just academic engagement. *Phronesis* also differs from *techne* in involving the cultivation of a repertoire of context-specific moral sensitivities that are not subject to codification or set rules. In short, the appreciation and understanding of *phronesis* is exhibited in good or wise judgement and is much more nuanced than the mastery of effective recall or technical routine. *Phronesis* is evident in the choices we make, e.g. when learning outdoors by whether our approaches to decision-making are coherent and considered when reviewing if it is acceptable or not to: light fires when wild camping;

make quick scree run descents of hills; mountain bike on particular types of terrain; and travel very long distances to experience adventurous activities (Thorburn & Marshall, 2011). It is evident as well in the relationships we have with others and whether these are equal and equitable, e.g. through recognising the need to walk together as a group and at the pace of slower walkers, and the need to volunteer help and support when noticing the need to do so (Allison et al., 2011).

Given the relationship Aristotle suggests between cognition and affection, the moral virtues are largely educated by the intellectual virtues. Practical wisdom is the intellectual virtue uniquely responsible for guiding a person's ability to be virtuous in particular circumstances. It is a 'truth attaining intellectual quality concerned with doing and with the things that are good for human beings' (*NE*; *EE*, VI.5, 1140b21). It is an essential constituent of human flourishing, as on Aristotle's account practical wisdom coordinates the virtues that are needed in particular situations through the various practices of reflection, deliberation, decision-making and action working together towards a common end. Thus, the generous person both actively deliberates about how to make wise decisions when learning outdoors and also *does* make good decisions when learning outdoors based on his/her previous experiences and habit of making sound in-the-moment second-nature decisions. This occurs even when evidence of deliberation and discernment is less evident (Marshall & Thorburn, 2014). Aristotle's account of practical wisdom also emphasises the social dimension. Thus, the practically wise person cultivates friendships in order to create conditions that are conducive for continued growth. In light of these complementary self- and group facets, practical wisdom maintains an elevated status among the virtues. As an intellectual virtue it serves the moral virtues by mediating particular situations, and coordinating action. This process leaves the moral agent (person) with a clear sense of why he/she acted in a particular way and is supported by the agent's experiences and his/her social relationships.

As noted, for Aristotle intellectual thinking informs practical wisdom and serves the moral virtues exclusively. In accord with Deweyan concerns about learning dualisms and preferences, Zagzebski (1996) takes issue with the rather privileged role for cognition and argues that practical wisdom ought to serve the moral and intellectual virtues, as from a contemporary perspective Aristotle did not suitably acknowledge that beliefs are rarely acquired without the influence of emotion and desires. Therefore, if moral virtues regulate our choices and decision-making in the same way that intellectual virtues regulate cognitive activity, then emotions and desires impact on both moral and intellectual virtues. Zagzebski (1996) identifies numerous states, e.g. curiosity, doubt, wonder and awe, that contain both a moral and intellectual character, where the cognitive overlap goes beyond the role of guidance and mediation offered by practical wisdom. Although Zagzebski (1996) identifies a number of intellectual virtues that benefit from teaching, e.g. open-mindedness and the ability to recognise a reliable authority, she also identifies a number of moral virtues that are underpinned by intellectual qualities such as perseverance, courage, humility, autonomy and discretion. If these virtues function together, practical wisdom can impact on the development of beliefs, as *phronesis* becomes both cognitive and action guiding. In highlighting the benefits of educating the emotions and desires, Zagzebski's (1996) perspective emphasises the importance of sequences of reasoning that are accessible to the moral agent. Thus, as different situations present themselves, discernment allows the moral agent to see the various decision-making courses of action that are possible. Therefore, practical wisdom helps people to see situations as they arise so that the right action can be identified

and implemented. Overall, experience is critical both in shaping our moral virtues and in developing our ability to exercise them through practical wisdom, as it provides the opportunity to review choices, practise moral actions and develop sound habits (Marshall & Thorburn, 2014).

The implications of Deweyan and neo-Aristotelian thinking for curriculum planning and pedagogical practices in outdoor learning

Dewey's claims that education is very often a social process that can support and encourage personal growth has been of interest to teachers and outdoor educators for many years (Quay & Seaman, 2013). Doddington (2013), for example, argues that outdoor experiences are strengthened when pupils possess initiative and reconstruct their experiences in order to grow further. As experiences bloom, Deweyan notions of continuity mean that pupils' thoughts and feelings become part of a repertoire of flexible and sensitised habits. Implicit in the work of Quay and Seaman (2013) and Doddington (2013) is an encouragement for teachers to take measured pedagogical risks and for pupils to have some measure of active co-constructor responsibility for the pace and direction of their learning, e.g. through engaging with the type of reasoning practices that promote active deliberation, discernment and decision-making (Thorburn & Marshall, 2011).

However, as noted earlier, a criticism of Dewey is that his writing is rather vague and lacking in specificity (Egan, 2002). This is something that may in itself prove problematic when contextualised within a policy environment which is based around an open and flexible curriculum structure that contains limited direct advice (Priestley, 2010). So, questions remain about how the main hallmarks of Dewey's work – increased experimentation, communication and tolerance – can be taken forward in terms of curriculum planning and pedagogical practices. For, as Dewey (1938) notes, it is 'not enough to insist upon the necessity of experience, nor even of activity in experience. Everything depends upon the quality of experience which is had' (p. 27). We consider that a key methodological point for teachers is to perceive ways in which pupils' outdoor learning experiences can assist them in making greater sense of their world, with their uncertainties and hunches informing the later establishment of more rounded conceptual understandings which are both accurate (objective) plus relevant to their lives (i.e. having an internal value). To aid this process teachers can use strategic questions and facilitative discussion to help pupils critically engage with their experiences, recognise available choices and discern viable ways forward. Succeeding James' (2009) outlining of how natural environments are inherently capable of making a virtue of exercising attention, a further key pedagogical requirement is to utilise experiential learning approaches that engage pupils in practising reflection. These approaches can aid the development of the cognitive skills and affective qualities required for pupils to construct coherent and diverse meanings (Dewey, 1938). Thus, when journeying by kayak on local rivers, a mixed approach (i.e. fulfilling objective plus internal conditions) could encourage pupils to engage with nature in multifarious ways, e.g. through exploring the sensitivity of habitats from a sustainable living perspective (objective) and by also using their attention to view the movement of the water in aesthetic (internal) rather than purely functional terms.

With regard to viable approaches to learning, Postma (2006) has concerns that outdoor learning programmes which narrowly focus on our responsibilities for sustainable development may fail to grasp the special opportunities outdoor learning provides for more

sensual-aesthetic experiences within our natural surroundings. Bonnett (2010) shares these views and, drawing on Heidegger, argues that our understanding of nature is not always socially produced, and that self-arising is a key component of establishing our relationship with essential aspects of our well-being. As Bonnett (2010, p. 521) notes, the 'experience of nature as self-arising is important in foregrounding otherness and an element of essential mystery in our relationship with the environment'. Bonnett (2010) then argues that the arts and language can in various ways foster character, aesthetic and moral development, e.g. poetry has the capacity to evoke and communicate 'various aspects of our complex and tensioned relationship with the natural world: its indifference to us; our continuity with it; our alienation from it; and its redemptive power' (p. 521). Thus enriched, we are better placed to judge right actions, with regard to both our relationships with the natural environment and our own health and well-being (Bonnett, 2012). Furthermore, pursuing a breadth of perspective on experience might allay concerns that Dewey's interest in science-as-method and social constructivism under-acknowledges such diversity. As McDonald (2004, p. 207) indicates, 'humans for Dewey are not separate from nature but are an organic element within it'. In addition, Fesmire (2012, p. 217) notes, on ecological matters specifically, that Dewey was very much aware of the 'general truth that we *cannot* [emphasis in the original] respond to what we do not perceive, and we *will* [emphasis in the original] not respond to perceptions unless they are immediately felt'.

Nevertheless, the pursuit of these various ambitions can become unstuck if pupils make poor decisions that are out of line with a certain framework of stable values, e.g. if pupils' poor deliberations lead to decision-making that fails to show some form of measured sensitivity and awareness towards others and the natural environment. This is quite possible to expect, as for many pupils making sense of their experience and contemplative mind outdoors will be a considerable point of departure from the norm of using their rational minds indoors. Therefore, teachers need to appreciate and to some extent wrestle with the normative values framework that underpins their professional role. Under the pedagogical plans set out in this paper, teachers' remit is one where they are guiding pupils towards discovering informed and stable values that are born of experience and a degree of reflection, deliberation and review. This advice follows standard Aristotelian plans for teaching where there is a threefold emphasis on: the requirement for practice; the need for teachers to exemplify the virtues; and extended opportunities for exercising reflection, deliberation and *phronesis* (Arthur & Carr, 2013). Allison et al. (2012) note, however, that for various reasons (e.g. poor behaviour, limited attention span, having excessively large groups to manage or through teaching particularly adventurous activities) it can be difficult in outdoor learning contexts to achieve as much of this type of progress as one might wish.

To help in these testing circumstances, following Roberts and Wood's (2007) lead that a pedagogical approach that creates space for reflection and where growth in practical wisdom constitutes thinking better, it would be helpful if teachers have an accurate predictive understanding of the type of choices their pupils are most likely to make. For example, if helping a younger group of pupils to make a miniature environment outdoors where the pupils might be using leaves, twigs, small branches etc. to construct a shelter, it helps if teachers can predict (and explain in advance if considered necessary) what materials from the forest floor can be used, as engaging with the environment should not lead (where possible) to damaging the environment. Such pedagogical anticipation matters, as, following Dewey, pupils' interactions with the environment will impact on their later decision-making

when in the outdoors. Therefore, if in later life a beach or river walk triggers an interest in making a stone circle or balancing large stones to form a cairn, it is helpful if earlier school experiences bring to the fore sensitivity-related issues and raise questions for example about what it is reasonable to expect others to tolerate (Carden, 2006). This might include considerations such as whether it is acceptable to build in a place where the circle or cairn is likely to remain permanent, or whether it is better to build on a beach or part of the river where incoming tides and rising water levels ensure the 'work' only exists for a short time. This example highlights the high level of teacher expertise required in defining contingent and particular learning tasks, being able to predict pupils' responses and being able to direct and redirect pupils' attention towards sequences of reasoning (Zagzebski, 1996) that help pupils to experience the outdoors and develop positive relationships with others at one and the same time (Stan, 2009; Thomas, 2008).

Anticipating these types of experiential learning considerations can avoid the problems of classroom-based learning becoming the context and stimulus for the raising of pre-specified subject matter imperatives when outdoors. Teaching in these circumstances can become rather didactic, as many of the issues surrounding learning outdoors are not sufficiently generated through pupils' situated learning experiences. This is relative to a mix of doing (experience) and thinking (reflection), as part of a situation-specific holistic approach to education which has the potential to become a 'window into humankind's role in the social and natural ecology' (Quay & Seaman, 2013, p. 57) and successful in helping pupils to cultivate informed and stable habits and values. Making this type of progress articulates with Dewey's notion of occupations or work activities that are informed by shared educational values and where the intellectual and moral content of values are clearly described and pursued together in social learning environments. In these contexts, teachers have the task of selecting content and of adapting its usage to suit particular circumstances, e.g. when ensuring that pupils have opportunities to become acquainted with how their new habits and skills can benefit their personal growth (Dewey, 1916).

Many neo-Aristotelians recognise similar challenges when considering how the original virtues can be shaped and adapted to suit current times. MacIntyre (2007), in elaborating on how the goods of practice are informed by a personal narrative order and virtues which derive from our social and moral life, considers that it is from inside practices that pupils and teachers can 'encounter thick and distinctive notions about what it is worthwhile to participate in, excellent to achieve and admirable to become' (Higgins, 2011, p. 50). The challenge to this predominant focus on internal goods is that there is an insufficient focus on external (objective) goods and of what the transferable gains of practice might be, i.e. in a Deweyan sense of making clear the criteria against which improvements in practice can be measured (Peters, 1977). As such, it needs to be evident how engaging in practices can increase the ways in which pupils make expert-informed value judgements from both a moral and intellectual perspective, such as when trying to understand more accurately the science informing ecological debates on local invertebrates. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) consider that this is best achieved by asking novices to recast their experiences, as *phronesis* can help guide learners' perception towards the situation-relevant issues and problems to hand.

Similarly, Kristjansson (2010) advises that helping pupils to connect their emotional lives with moral cognition through using their knowledge of responsibility, intellectual honesty and integrity can help pupils to wrestle with metaphysical questions. This line of thought builds on the view that we have at least some control over our emotional reactions and in

managing them virtuously, as evident by our ability to decide, choose, discriminate, judge and plan. On this basis, outdoor learning experiences can become (if suitably constructed) the catalyst for offering situated opportunities for practising deliberation and virtue and for making good decisions. This is provided teachers recognise at the outset that pupils may not make sound or coherent decisions until after their various experiences (Allison et al., 2012). Framed this way, ongoing outdoor learning opportunities can provide pupils with the context for making refined judgements through praxis, the term Aristotle uses to emphasise the process of making progressively better decisions as a result of experience and reflection.

MacAllister (2012), however, has resisted the recent trend towards relegating the intellectual relative to the moral virtues and argues that the legacy of focusing primarily on teachers' reflections on their practice is that it places 'unduly narrow parameters on the types of inquiry that can stimulate the development of philosophical knowledge regarding education' (p. 253). The thrust of MacAllister's (2012) concern, in pedagogical terms, is that a broader perspective is required which moves beyond the epistemic ideal of teachers being able to explain why they took a particular course of action to situations where 'teachers *do* [emphasis in the original] make reliably good professional judgements' (p. 265). This could be based on observations of practice or by more second-nature decision-making, which is informed by experience and habit and not necessarily as a consequence of practised reflection. Saugstad (2013) invokes similar Aristotelian ideas with regard to notions of settled character traits *hexis*. He uses these notions to explain that 'habituation of both the right practice and the right attitude' (Saugstad, 2013, p. 15) arises when teachers have a stable understanding of learning purposes and a strong practice-based professional identity.

In summary, in terms of curriculum planning, recognising that Dewey and Aristotle's views on personal growth and practical wisdom contain objective and internal components helps highlight the educational (objective) interest there is in what individuals want, e.g. positive psychological functioning, self-realisation and good relations with others as well as recognising the internal (subjective) importance of individual desires, e.g. the feeling of being engrossed in experiences that engage our skills, interests and capacities fully. This educational mix reflects the changing influences on society over time (e.g. current expectations of social justice agendas) as well as recognising the virtues people continue to endorse as being personally fulfilling. There is also a good deal in common between Dewey's social constructivist inclined view of practical knowledge and Aristotle's naturalist epistemology of *phronesis*. For Aristotle the wisdom of *phronesis* dovetails with the educational necessity Dewey identifies for personal growth to be informed by meaningful connections being established between experience and knowledge. Taken together, theorising from Dewey and Aristotle provides teachers with the theoretical foothold necessary for planning holistic outdoor learning experiences that carefully blend and reference pupils' subjective experiences with objective subject knowledge imperatives (Thorburn & Marshall, 2011). That said, we do see the need for a thorough interrogation in the future of how the holistic learning ideas informing curriculum frameworks can articulate with formal assessment protocols and definitions of academic standards.

Conclusion

In this paper we have analysed the aspects of Dewey and Aristotle's philosophies of personal growth and practical wisdom that are helpful in supporting the contribution that outdoor

learning can play in schools pursuing holistic and progressive education imperatives. In this respect, we think it is beneficial to consider outdoor learning as part of a larger moral endeavour that can make an important contribution in enhancing pupils' developmental capacities. We suggest that a partial folding of the intellectual and moral strains in Aristotle's conception of *phronesis* allied with applying Deweyan thinking on continuity and interaction can help ensure that outdoor learning has a mix of subjective relevance and objective accuracy benefits. This can help pupils to make sensitised and principled decisions, which not only outline their personal views but which also recognise the contested and different beliefs others may have on many matters. In terms of curriculum planning and pedagogical practice, we consider that holistic and interdisciplinary learning approaches best enable the development of intellectual and moral qualities. In pursuing this approach we have been reluctant to dwell overly on the types of institutional regress issues which many authors, e.g. Quay and Seaman (2013), argue have constrained the contribution of outdoor learning in schools for many years. Instead, we take the view that designing thoughtfully constructed close-to-school outdoor learning experiences that engage with pupils' prior interests and experiences can enhance pupils' learning and contribute richly to the collective life of schools.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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