National Curriculum: the importance of Geography

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The beginnings

First recorded school geography textbook 1827 The Rev. J. Goldsmith’s *Grammar of Geography*

Long established in elementary schools, which became state funded from 1870.

Geographical Association set up in 1893 – ‘to further the learning and teaching of geography’

State secondary school subject from 1902

First published 1821
School Geography in England

Post second world war

Ordinary and Advanced level examinations introduced 1951 (for selective grammar schools)
GCSE examinations introduced in 1986 (for ‘all-ability’ comprehensive schools)

1. The idea of ‘curriculum’ is established. Schools Council established in 1968

2. The uneasy relationship between ‘geography’ and ‘education’ intensifies:
   - The growth of progressive ‘child centredness’
   - The advent of curriculum theory (and subject ‘integration’)
   - The re-assertion of ‘good causes’

1. On Taking the Geography Out of Geographical Education:
   Source: Bill Marsden (1997), Geography, 82, 3, pp. 241–52
The curriculum as an entire planned learning experience underpinned by a broad set of common values and purposes.

### 1. What are we trying to achieve?

**Curriculum aims**
- **Successful learners** who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- **Confident individuals** who are able to lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- **Responsible citizens** who make a positive contribution to society

**Every Child Matters outcomes**
- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic wellbeing

**Focus for learning**
- **Attitudes and attributes**
  - eg determined, adaptable, confident, risk-taking, enterprising
- **Skills**
  - eg literacy, numeracy, ICT, personal, learning and thinking skills
- **Knowledge and understanding**
  - eg big ideas that shape the world

### 2. How do we organise learning?

**Components**
- Lessons
- Locations
- Environment
- Events
- Routines
- Extended hours
- Out of school

**Learning approaches**
- A range of approaches eg enquiry, active learning, practical and constructive
- In tune with human development
- Building on learning beyond the school including community and business links
- Matching time to learning need eg deep, immersive and regular frequent learning
- Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social, cultural, emotional, intellectual and physical development
- Using a range of audience and purpose
- Including all learners with opportunities for learner choice and personalisation

**Whole curriculum dimensions**
- Overarching themes that have a significance for individuals and society, and provide relevant learning contexts:
  - Identity and cultural diversity - Healthy lifestyles – Community participation – Enterprise – Global dimension and sustainable development – Technology and the media – Creativity and critical thinking.

**Statutory expectations**
- Communication, language and literacy
- Creative development
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Mathematical development
- Personal, social and emotional development
- Physical development

**National Curriculum ‘Big Picture’ [QCDA 2007]**

### 3. How well are we achieving our aims?

**Assessment fit for purpose**
- Is integral to effective teaching and learning
- Draws on a wide range of evidence of pupils' learning
- Promotes a broad and engaging curriculum
- Maximises pupils' progress
- Gives helpful feedback for the learner and other stakeholders
- Helps identify clear targets for improvement
- Links to national standards which are consistently interpreted
- Informs future planning and teaching
- Uses tests and tasks appropriately
- Embraces peer- and self-assessment

**Accountability measures**
- Attainment and improved standards
- Behaviour and attendance
- Civic participation
- Healthy lifestyle choices
- Further involvement in education, employment or training

**To secure**
- Including all learners with opportunities for learner choice and personalisation

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**NATIONAL CURRICULUM OUTCOMES**

- **Every Child Matters**
  - Be healthy
  - Stay safe
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- **Successful learners**
  - who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve

- **Attitudes and attributes**
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**SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS**

- who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve

**CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALS**

- who are able to lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives

**RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS**

- who make a positive contribution to society

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**Achieving outcomes**

- Focus for learning
- Components
- Whole curriculum dimensions
- Overarching themes
- Statutory expectations
- Assessment fit for purpose
- Accountability measures
Geographical Association ‘Manifesto’ [2009]

Reasons
Growing ‘genericism’ in the curriculum
  • Skills rather than knowledge
  • Learning rather than teaching
  • Themes/issues rather than subjects
Political influences on the curriculum
  • Citizenship?
  • Sustainability?

Contents
The subject resource
Thinking geographically
Living geography
Exploration and enquiry
Real world fieldwork
Young people’s geographies
Curriculum Making
The neo-liberal orthodoxy has “dulled our ability to think for, or beyond, ourselves”

[Wadley 2008]
The physical environment
What is the world (and this place) made of?
Why do things move?
What becomes of things?

Our place in the world
Where do I live?
How does it look? How is it changing?
How might it become?

In a “Garden of Peace”
Identity
Who am I? Where am I from? Who is my ‘family’?
What is their story? And the people around me?

Society
Who decides on who gets what, where and why?
What is fair? Why care?

In a “Garden of Peace”
School Geography in England

To the present

NC to be revised: simplified and to focus only on the ‘core knowledge’ of academic subjects

Less concern with skills and competences; more concern with academic rigour

English Baccalaureate: Eng, Ma, Sc, Lang and either history or geography

State funded academies (and ‘free schools’) no longer have to follow the NC

Secretary of State for Education
Michael Gove (2010-present)
What kind of (curriculum) Future do we want?

**F1** subject delivery – of knowledge for its own sake; traditional subjects: under-socialised knowledge

**F2** skills and ‘learning to learn’ – knowledge is constructed: over-socialised knowledge; subject divisions are artificial. Experiential.

**F3** subjects are not given (as in F1), but not arbitrary either (as in F2) led by ‘... the epistemic rules of specialist communities’ to provide ways to understand the world objectively, and take pupils *beyond their everyday experience*.

(Michael Young 2008; 2010)
Enduring images

- of teachers
- of classrooms
- of subjects
Leads to a learning “fetish”? 

Where ‘learning’ is regarded as:

- A good thing in itself - and assumed to be value free in this sense. (It is not. Learning can be trivial, dangerous or wrong)

- An essentially scientific or technical process –thus, with correct technique, learning can be ‘accelerated’, as if this were a desirable end in itself. (But understanding aspects of science, history or art can be counter-intuitive, and require sustained, sometimes painstaking effort)

- Paramount. Teaching is subservient to, and led by, the learning. We become embarrassed by teaching, and instead talk only about ‘facilitating’ learning. (A profession that abrogates responsibility in this way may be one that has lost confidence in itself)
“Bringing Knowledge Back In”

- Schools are **special** places (they are not ‘everyday places’)
- Inducting young people into ‘**powerful knowledge**’
- Clear **distinction** between curriculum and pedagogy

(Michael Young 2008)
White Paper: The Importance of Teaching .... and ‘core knowledge’

‘The National Curriculum should set out clearly the core knowledge and understanding that all children should be expected to acquire in the course of their schooling. (para 4.7)

Does this imply F1?
White Paper: *The Importance of Teaching* .... and ‘core knowledge’

‘The National Curriculum should set out clearly the core knowledge and understanding that all children should be expected to acquire in the course of their schooling.

(para 4.7)

Does this imply F1? Or F3?
Developing the Manifesto and the ‘knowledge turn’

Need to:

Understand and develop the notion of ‘core knowledge’ as it applies to geography

Clarify the notion of geographic thought and perspective (or the claim of ‘geographic advantage’)

Articulate the idea of geography in terms of educational aims

Articulate the process of ‘curriculum making’
1. Rationale for handling geographical knowledge

- **Kn1**: geographical context; ‘core knowledge’

- **Kn2**: conceptual content knowledge

- **Kn3**: ‘procedural’ knowledge and applied practical skills

[www.geography.org.uk/getinvolved/NCconsultation](http://www.geography.org.uk/getinvolved/NCconsultation)
2. Clear vision of geography’s contribution

- The foundational ideas of geography

- ‘Thinking Geographically’ as an educational goal

- A ‘capabilities’ approach for connecting the geographical content to educational goals and purposes

www.geography.org.uk/getinvolved/NCconsultation
Human capabilities and education

**Not** to be confused with imparting value free ‘skills’ for the ‘knowledge economy’

Education to enhance the agency of young people, clarifying values and deepening understanding.
Developing human capabilities in geography education

In a context of ‘moral seriousness’ in what ways does school geography deepen and extend children’s capabilities? For example,

• Promoting autonomy: to use the imagination and to be able to think and reason

• Identifying and exercising choices in how to live: based on worthwhile distinction

• Making healthy allegiances: being able to live with respect towards others and to be able to imagine the situation of others

• Understanding their potential as creative and productive citizens
Thinking Geographically and ‘Capability’

Through geography, pupils’ ‘capabilities’ are enhanced through:

• Acquisition and development of ‘world knowledge’ (this may be equated with enabling ‘core knowledge’)

• Understanding inter-relationships (plus place and spatial relations, scale and connection and proximity and distance)

• Propensity to think, through ‘decision making’ and other applied pedagogic activities, about how places, societies and environments are made, and how they change
**Geography 5-16: the overarching framework**

**PLACE**
(places, territories and regions)

- Local place knowledge in community and regional context
- Britain/UK knowledge, in European context
- Broad world knowledge including continents, oceans, countries, significant Earth features such as wind patterns, tectonic structures
- In-depth studies of specific places or regions different from their own, focussing on people-environment interactions
- Study of places of great significance in and for the world today (including at least China, USA, Europe)
- In-depth study of places that are scenes of conflict at different scales (e.g. a local place, Afghanistan)
- Exemplar studies of places where physical extremes or hazards dominate

**SPACE**
(patterns and links)

- Examples of economic patterns of production, distribution and change in industry, leisure, agriculture
- Understanding of resource distributions and food, water and energy security on regional, national and international scale
- Reasons for and processes behind the location and changing distributions of population
- Understanding of flows and movements of people, goods and ideas, with examples on a regional, national and global scale
- Understanding of spatial systems, such as climate, through the distribution of energy through ocean currents and wind patterns

**ENVIRONMENT**
(physical and human interaction)

- Studies of fragile landscapes such as deserts, polar regions, mountains and reefs
- Understanding different approaches to managing and living with changing physical and human environments
- Processes involved in distribution and patterns of major physical features, including natural regions and ecosystems
- Understand the Earth’s oceans and their significance
- Understand landscapes as distinctive collections of landforms, soils and Earth surface processes
- Investigating the links between social, economic and environmental quality
- Understanding renewable and non-renewable resources from the Earth and its atmosphere

**GEOG ENQUIRY**
(procedures and skills)

- Maps – what they show us, how to use them and how to construct them
- How to use and apply geographic information systems (GIS)
- How to use a wide variety of sources, databases, and visualisation technologies, to analyse and evaluate
- How to investigate an environmental issue at first-hand or using primary sources
- First hand investigation via fieldwork: photography, GPS, sketching, interviewing, meeting people etc
- Writing descriptively and analytically about places, spaces and environments; constructing and challenging arguments
The previous slide is part of Geographical Association’s National Curriculum proposals

www.geography.org.uk/getinvolved/NCconsultation

• Designed to
  – Influence the government
  – Influence teachers, and gain support
  – Raise achievement in geography in both primary and secondary schools
  – To give geography clearer identity in the school curriculum and intellectual coherence

• The government will consult in ‘early 2013’

• First teaching of a new knowledge-based curriculum will be in September 2014
National Curriculum draft proposals
(Dec 2012)

Key Stage 3

Pupils should acquire a firm grasp of the location of the world’s major countries including their physical and human features. They should understand how the interaction of geographical processes combine to create distinctive human and physical landscapes that change over time. Their more developed use of geographical tools and skills should continue to enrich their locational knowledge and spatial awareness. Their understanding of geographical systems begins to develop and becomes increasingly complex. They should be able to analyse and interpret different data sources.
National Curriculum draft proposals
(Key Stage 3)

Pupils will be taught:

• To use maps of the world so that they continue to develop and deepen their locational knowledge of the world’s countries through a focus on Africa, Asia (including China and India), the Middle East and Russia: their environmental regions including polar and hot deserts, key physical and human characteristics, countries and major cities.

• Through the use of detailed place-based exemplars at a variety of scales, the key processes in physical geography pertaining to: glaciation; plate tectonics; rocks, weathering and soils (including geological timescales); weather and climate; and rivers and coasts.

• Through the use of detailed place-based exemplars at a variety of scales, the key processes in human geography pertaining to: population; international development; economic activity in the primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary sectors; urbanisation; and the use of natural resources.
National Curriculum draft proposals
(Key Stage 3)

Pupils will be taught:

• How human and physical processes interact to impact on and form distinctive landscapes.

• To build on their knowledge of globes, maps and atlases and to use these geographical tools in the classroom and in the field routinely.

• The interpretation of Ordnance Survey maps, including use of six-figure coordinates and scale; topographical and other thematic mapping; and aerial and satellite photographs.

• The use of Geographical Information Systems to view, analyse and interpret places and data.

• Through fieldwork to collect, analyse and draw conclusions from geographical data using multiple sources of increasingly complex information.
Towards a new era of localised curriculum making?