Teaching Geography 3–11

The Essential Guide

REACHING THE STANDARD SERIES

DAVID OWEN AND ALISON RYAN

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Teaching Geography 3–11

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE

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The Tower Building
11 York Road
London SE1 7NX

15 East 26th Street
New York
NY 10010

www.continuumbooks.com

First published 2001
Reprinted 2003, 2005, 2006

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 0-8264-5111-X

Designed and typeset by Ben Cracknell Studios

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Antony Rowe Ltd, Chippenham, Wiltshire

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Preface

This book introduces the teaching and learning of geography in 3–11 settings. Geography features as a foundation subject in the National Curriculum for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2, whereas the under-5s curriculum is organized into areas of learning where geography is not identified explicitly as a subject. However, in early years settings, children have many experiences and undertake a range of activities that develop their understanding of people and places.

As many early years settings are not within the mainstream education system, the contents of the Early Learning Goals are not compulsory in the same way that National Curriculum Programmes of Study are in schools. However, the Early Learning Goals set out the desired learning outcomes for children upon completion of their reception year, and those nurseries which are part of mainstream education, as well as reception classes, are expected to use these goals to structure their work with pupils aged 3–5. Therefore, although the Early Learning Goals have a slightly different status, the term *curriculum* is used throughout the book to describe the educational provision for all pupils aged between 3 and 11.

Second, the book addresses teaching and learning across the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2. In order to avoid the text becoming indigestible, terms such as *school* are used for those settings where the whole 3–11 age range is represented. In those instances where 3–5 settings are being discussed separately, the terms *Foundation Stage*, *nursery* or *reception* are used.

Standards Information

This book is aimed at newly qualified and teacher training students working in the 3–11 age range. It is intended to be of use to those students and teachers who require non-specialist geography knowledge and those who have a subject specialism in this area of the curriculum. Students and teachers with geography as a subject specialism are required to demonstrate that they:

- have a secure knowledge of the subject to at least a standard approximating to GCE Advanced level in those aspects of the subject taught at Key Stages 1 and 2;
- have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the geography National Curriculum Programmes of Study and level descriptions across the primary age range;
- can cope securely with geographical questions which pupils raise;
- understand the progression from Early Learning Goals to Key Stage 1, the progression from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2, and from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3;
- are aware of, and know how to access, recent inspection evidence and classroom-relevant research evidence on teaching primary pupils in geography, and know how to use this to inform and improve their teaching;
- know pupils' most common misconceptions and mistakes in the subject;
- have a secure knowledge and understanding of ways in which information and communications technology (ICT) can be used effectively in the teaching of geography; and
- are familiar with geography-specific health and safety requirements and plan lessons to avoid potential hazards.

As well as demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the subject, students and teachers also have to demonstrate the ability to:

- plan, teach and manage geography;
- monitor, assess, record and report on pupils' progress in geography; and
- fulfil any other professional requirements in relation to geography, such as ensuring equality of opportunity and taking responsibility for their own professional development.

(DfEE, 1998)

The grid below provides the reader with a quick guide to where particular information about the Standards can be located.

Standards	Chapters
• Knowledge and understanding of geography and the geography curriculum	1, 2
• Planning, teaching and managing geography	3, 4, 5, 6
• Assessing, recording and reporting on geography	7
• Fulfilling other professional requirements in relation to geography	8, 9

REFERENCE

DfEE (1998) *Circular 4/98 Teaching: High Status, High Standards*. London: DfEE

Introduction

This book is intended as an introduction to geography for newly qualified teachers and teacher training students on 3–11 courses. It seeks to provide the reader with insights into the nature of the subject and effective ways of planning, teaching and assessing geography in primary and foundation settings. It also considers cross-curricular issues, such as equal opportunities and special educational needs (SEN), that affect teaching and learning in all subjects. The book concludes with an exploration of the role of a geography specialist in co-ordinating geography across a school.

Chapter 1 deals with the nature of geography as a subject as perceived by children, adults and the academic geography community. It details the key concepts that underpin current geographical thinking and concludes with a rationale for including geography in the education of children aged 3 to 11.

Chapter 2 examines the nature of geography in the Foundation Stage and in the National Curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2 and offers suggestions on how aspects of the Early Learning Goals can be used to extend children's awareness of concepts such as place, location and environmental quality. The chapter explores the four aspects of geography as set out in the knowledge, skills and understanding component of the Programmes of Study and outlines the breadth of study at Key Stages 1 and 2. It concludes with an overview of the links between geography and the wider curriculum, focusing on numeracy, literacy, citizenship and sustainability.

Chapter 3 focuses on planning geography. It considers good practice at three levels of planning – long, medium and short term – and how teachers can provide for continuity and progression. It looks at how geography can feature in a school's curriculum and the merits of subject- or topic-based approaches to teaching the subject.

Chapter 4 deals with organizing and managing geography. It looks at how teachers can organize children, adults, their classrooms and resources in order to promote effective learning in geography. It also explores how teachers can match learning opportunities with pupils' learning needs through differentiation. The chapter concludes with guidance on self-evaluation as a means of improving practice and the quality of one's geography teaching.

Chapter 5 outlines appropriate teaching and learning approaches in early years and primary geography. It examines imaginative and evidence-based approaches and outlines some of the strategies practitioners and teachers can use to develop children's natural geographical competence successfully.

Chapter 6 reviews some of the resources for teaching and learning in geography. It focuses on the learning environment within the classroom and the use of out-of-classroom resources for fieldwork, and concludes with a review of ICT resources that can be used to improve geographical learning.

Chapter 7 deals with three further elements of good practice: assessment, recording and reporting. It describes ways in which pupils' achievements in geography can be assessed. It then suggests ways in which teachers can record their assessments and how they might report on pupils' progress to parents.

Chapter 8 explores how teaching and learning in geography can make a positive contribution to the provision of equality of opportunity in the classroom. Not only can the content of the geography curriculum be used to challenge stereotypical attitudes and beliefs, but the process of geographical enquiry can be used to ensure all children have access to a stimulating curriculum. The chapter examines strategies that teachers can employ in their geography teaching to foster fairness, equity and social justice in their classrooms.

Chapter 9 considers those pupils for whom special provision has to be made because they have special educational needs (SEN). Such pupils include those with physical disabilities or learning difficulties, and children who might be identified as gifted or talented. The chapter outlines some of the special needs that teachers may encounter and suggests how the curriculum can be adapted and delivered to promote the geographical learning of children with SEN.

Chapter 10 deals with the role of curriculum co-ordinator, one that most teachers now have to take on early in their careers. The chapter outlines the roles and responsibilities of geography co-ordinators. It considers how co-ordinators can address some of the problems and challenges they may face when trying to initiate and manage change in order to develop good practice in geography in a school.

1 The Subject of Geography

The standards for teachers (DfEE/TTA, 1998) insist that all primary teachers must have a specialist subject and at least A-level knowledge of that subject at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. It is important for primary teachers to have good subject knowledge, a point that is reinforced by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (Smith, 1997) and by many geography co-ordinators. The subject-based curriculum has changed the nature of the primary teacher's role, and the increased emphasis on single-subject planning (DfEE/QCA, 1999) and the growing importance of the subject co-ordinator reflect this.

Knight (1993) identifies three types of subject knowledge:

- knowledge of the subject;
- content knowledge; and
- pedagogical subject knowledge.

Knowledge of the subject

Students and teachers need to know what sort of a subject geography is. This is the focus of Chapter 1. Is it a 'pub quiz' subject in which success is measured by the ability to name capital cities, mountain ranges or different types of agriculture? Is it a knowledge that is mainly a vehicle for enquiry and developing generic educational skills? Is striving for social justice the primary goal of study?

Content knowledge

Teachers need to have knowledge of the 'subject matter' of geography: locations of towns and cities in the UK, how a river system works and what has influenced the development of a distant locality that they study with their class. This content is the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values present in the geography National Curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2. Student teachers

can audit their current knowledge against this (see Table 1.1, pp. 16–17) and set targets to develop through peer support, computer-assisted learning and focused reading. Chapter 2 also explains and analyses the present content knowledge in the National Curriculum and Early Learning Goals.

Pedagogical subject knowledge

The third type of subject knowledge, pedagogical subject knowledge, is crucial for the student or teacher. This is the knowledge of how teachers can share their understanding of geography with their pupils, and how they recognize their children's abilities as geographers. Teachers use this knowledge when they plan strategies for children to use aerial photographs effectively, or build on children's local knowledge to develop their understanding of settlement concepts. This knowledge is explored in subsequent chapters.

This chapter is concerned with the different definitions of geography as a subject so that students and teachers can make informed judgements about what sort of geographical work they plan with their classes; so they can look critically at resources such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) Geography Schemes of Work (DfEE/QCA, 1998); and so they are able to contribute to the development of geography in the twenty-first century. It investigates how children and adults view geography, and how academic geographers define their subject, and it discusses why geography has a claim to be taught and learned in early years and primary settings.

Children's Views of Geography

Students and teachers are often exhorted to start 'where the children are at' when beginning a unit of work or lesson. This might mean beginning a lesson by reviewing the children's existing understanding of sinking and floating in science, or asking 'What do we already know about St Lucia?' and then categorizing the children's answers. When asked the question 'What is geography?', children often provide illuminating and sometimes amusing answers. In 1989 Catling posed that question to Year 4 children when making an inservice training film (BBC, 1991). These are two highlights from the children's replies: 'It's about countries' [long pause] . . . 'It's . . . kind of art. . . like modern art.'

Ten years later, after a decade of National Curriculum geography, Catling and Brown asked the same question to another group of Year 6 children. Their answers make for surprising reading when matched against National Curriculum content. Children thought that geography was concerned with learning about countries, locating places around the world and naming some geographical features such as

mountains, towns and rivers. None of them focused on the local environment or small-scale features such as the local street or school grounds. Considering that these places have been the focus for much National Curriculum geography work, they raise more questions than they answer.

> Geography is where you learn about countrys and continents like Europe Asia, Oceiance, capitals like paris, Mexico city, it is a really good subject, seas, countrys, towns, villages, rivers, lakes, islands, flags, places, the world basicly and maps, roads.
>
> (Year 6 pupil in Catling and Brown, 2000, p. 1)

Many writers such as Blyth and Krause (1995), Wiegand (1993), Palmer (1994) and Matthews (1992) have highlighted the distinction between geography as a subject and the child as a natural geographer. In The Whole World in Our Hands (Catling, 1993), Catling suggests that geographical exploration is a natural part of a child's development and that geographical education in the early years and primary school should start from that premise rather than seeking to impose a set academic curriculum on the children. Spencer *et al.* (1998) have produced evidence that mapping is a 'cultural universal' – they found that children as young as 3 from a variety of cities around the world could read maps and use aerial photographs. Their tentative conclusions were that spatial way-finding was part of natural human behaviour. Other researchers (Altman and Low, 1992) have considered the concept of 'place attachment' and suggest that having a good understanding of your local environment is essential for psychological well-being. Clearly, knowing where you are, being able to navigate to another location, and being able to make some sense of the environments you find yourself in are skills that have developed separately from any school-based curriculum.

The child as natural geographer

Paul, aged 3, enjoyed the drive from his parents' house to Millhouses Park. He was able to recognize landmarks on the route such as the shops and the building site. On the way back from the park his mother stopped to visit a friend and her baby for coffee and cakes. During the visit Paul played with baby Susan. Each time Paul passes the road where Susan lives he now exclaims, 'There's baby Susan's house!'

'A baby learning to crawl is already developing an understanding of physical geography' (Tina Bruce, 2000).

Adults' Views of Geography

Adults' views of geography or their geographical abilities are occasionally featured in the media. 'History is about chaps and geography is about maps', a phrase adapted

from E. C. Bentley, was the title of a *Guardian* editorial discussing the virtues of each subject, and maps and the ability to locate places on them are recurring themes in the popular view of the nature of the subject. Indeed, geography graduates and teachers nationwide are wary of revealing their background when asked to join a quiz team. Often three years spent studying the sense of place in Thomas Hardy's novels has ill-prepared them for taxing questions such as 'Which is the biggest lake in the world?' or 'What's the capital of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia?'.

Many adults' views of geography are inevitably coloured by their school experiences. Some people may remember their primary school experiences of 'people in other lands' – learning about the exotic costumes of former colonial citizens. Others recount secondary school tests about the meaning of unusual vocabulary: the oxbow lake, the drumlin and the nunatak. For others, locational knowledge looms large in the ability to use an atlas or an Ordnance Survey map or name places on a world map. What is interesting about many adults' views is that they often see geography as a subject studied in an educational institution. Ask people what a scientist is and the answer will be someone who does science. Ask people what a geographer is and the answer may be more confused. Johnston (1997) makes the point that most geographers are employed as higher education teachers rather than as social scientists in their own right. The next section will explore what geography is like in higher education and how this relates to school and early years geography.

What Is Academic Geography?

In 1998 the Quality Assurance Agency (which has a role similar to that of OFSTED, but with a focus on higher education) required the academic geography community to undertake a benchmarking exercise. It created a document that could be said to be a geography 'National Curriculum' for undergraduate university study. The document stated:

> Geography occupies a distinctive place in the world of learning, offering an integrated study of the complex reciprocal relationships between human societies and the physical components of the Earth. The geographer's canvas is coloured by *place, space and time:* recognising the great differences and dynamics in cultures, political systems, economies, landscapes and environments across the world, and the links between them.
>
> The discipline is characterised by a breadth of subject matter in which the traditional division has been between human and physical Geography. In recent years, however, the third category of 'environmental geography' has sometimes been recognised, encompassing the many courses that deal explicitly with human–environment relations and sustainable development, *and building upon the role of Geography in schools as the main discussion platform for environmental concerns.*

(QAA, 2000, p. 2, my emphasis)

Geography in higher education would seem to have a wide range of approaches to investigate a vast subject matter. If something is different in particular places, or has changed over time, or has an unusual spatial pattern, then today's geographers can study it. Trainees who have completed a first degree in geography before taking a postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE) may have written essays about the geography of exclusion in the books of Enid Blyton, considered how the media shape the concept of place in tourism television programmes, and possibly attended a more traditional field course where they interpreted changing sediment discharges from a glacial lake. The subject's breadth and diversity may be a considerable strength, but it also makes defining it very difficult. Some writers now discuss 'geographies' rather than geography in an attempt to highlight the difference in interpretation. Saying 'Geography is what geographers do' (Johnston, 1997) is a convenient way of illustrating the way academic geographers have defined the subject, but it does not help the new geography co-ordinator or the well-established primary geography specialist communicate the nature of their subject. In order to help them do this, the following key concepts common to geography at all levels and age phases are defined.

What geographers study

Environments and landscapes

Geographers study how physical processes create particular environments. They study how people have modified environments and landscapes. A more recent development is the study of how our experience of the world is socially constructed.

Scarborough, North Yorkshire

Specific geological and coastal processes have created the physical landscape of Scarborough. Geological processes have led to the development of a prominent headland and impressive cliffs and wave-cut platforms over millions of years. Coastal processes of erosion, transport and deposition have constantly been altering the coastline, creating beaches, cliffs and wave-cut platforms and modifying these features through mass movement processes such as slumping and mudflows.

People have modified the coastal and headland environments for the past thousand years. Once the headland was settled, successive settlers modified the environment to create a landscape used for farming, fishing, residential use and tourism. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries people have modified the coastline in an attempt to control the geological and coastal processes by building breakwaters and sea defences. This type of intervention is at present being reviewed as stakeholders, such as the local council and environmental groups, consider the long-term costs of sea defence engineering.

Scarborough is many things to many different people. It has an image that is socially constructed through people's direct experience, exposure to the media and exposure to

'place marketing' by tourism and commerce departments. Is it a bracing traditional seaside resort, a twenty-first-century university town, or a place to be left as soon as possible to live in Manchester, Leeds or London? The film *Scarborough Ahoy* (Channel 4 Films, 1996) depicts the town as having a vibrant nightlife and a reputation as a popular place for heterosexual and homosexual romantic liaisons – an image very different from that of a seaside resort popular with senior citizens. During the past decade human geographers have also been interested in investigating alternative conceptions of particular environments, and have broadened their studies to take in some of the concerns of sociology such as sexuality and everyday life.

The concept of spatial variation

Geographers can demonstrate knowledge and understanding of spatial distributions in physical and human features. They can explain the patterns and changing nature of the physical world of earth surface processes, water landforms, climate vegetation and soils.

The El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO)

'El Niño' has been blamed for periods of heavy rainfall and droughts in many areas of the world. It is caused by the interactions between ocean currents and atmospheric circulation in the Pacific Ocean. Sea surface temperature increases over the equatorial Pacific Ocean and heavy rainfall events occur in the central Pacific, western South America and California, with corresponding droughts in Australia and Pacific regions. Geographers have sought to explain the El Niño event, forecast its frequency and predict its impact on global weather.

Geographers can recognize and explain how spatial relations are important features of economic, social and political activity. Spatial relations show the connections and relationships between places. The patterns that are created by how people use the physical landscape for work, recreation and everyday life are a major focus for human geographers.

The changing structure of urban settlements in the USA and Europe

Joel Garreau's (1991) concept of 'Edge City' has been becoming reality in many cities across Europe and the USA over the past decade. Across nations city centres are declining unless they have heritage value, and the new growth is on the outskirts. Malls, hypermarkets, tourist attractions, housing, call centres, e-commerce industries are all developing on the periphery of the city. Spatial advantages on the edge are increasing and the task of attracting investment into the central city is becoming more difficult.

The distinctiveness of place

Places are distinctive and physical, economic and cultural processes create this

distinctiveness. Geographers investigate this alongside the place-specific characteristics such as the site of a settlement and the particular advantages and disadvantages of its location at any point in time. Everyone can have a different view of what a particular place is like, the phrase 'a place is an environment touched by feeling' (Clay, 1973) gives a clear message about how geographers view place as a concept that is experienced by the individual rather than only defined by social and scientific processes.

Park Hill School catchment area, Sheffield

The area around Park Hill Primary School in Sheffield is indeed distinctive. Its site on the valley side of the River Don above the centre of the city demonstrates the importance of physical processes in its creation. Changing economic processes led to cramped inner-city housing being replaced by 1960s concrete high-rise flats known as 'Streets in the Sky'. They have recently been designated as Grade 2 listed buildings and dominate the landscape of the city centre. Such areas are good examples of how local, national and sometimes global processes combine to create distinctive places. Places can also demonstrate the links between different people, environments and processes that act on a local and global scale (see Massey, 1997). Park Hill's distinctive characteristics link Sheffield to the Balkans in the movements of refugees (many refugees from Kosovo were housed in the flats in 1999 and many still live on the estate), and reflect the changing economic history of the steel and cutlery industry in Sheffield in the former jobs of the senior citizens that dwell there. Different people experience the distinctiveness of Park Hill as a place in very different ways. To some it is an inexpensive place to live which still retains a sense of community, but to others it is an eyesore and a symbol for the failings of post-war modernist architecture and local government social policy.

Bangalore, India

Global economic processes and local factors have combined to make the city of Bangalore a centre for India's huge information technology (IT) industry. The city has become a focus for inward investment in IT, with IBM, Cisco Systems and other multinationals locating in the area. This process highlights the interdependence between places based on the global economy and illustrates the impact of globalization on places around the world.

Systems

Geographers recognize the linkages between events in the physical and human environments. The links between inputs, processes and outputs in systems is a focus for geographical enquiry from primary school (Wiegand, 1993, pp. 125–32) to post-doctoral research.

Global warming and the human impact on the atmospheric system

Geographers are able to explain the workings of atmospheric processes as a system with specific inputs (solar radiation), processes (such as flows of heat and circulation of water vapour) and outputs (long-wave radiation). The increase of carbon dioxide, methane and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in the atmosphere causes the greenhouse effect, in which the long-wave radiation is either absorbed by greenhouse gases or re-radiated back to the earth's surface. The impact of this atmospheric warming is analysed and projected; a 3-metre sea-level rise at the coast in Bangladesh could flood 29 per cent of the land and affect 21 per cent of the population. Such a systems approach can be valuable in modelling people–environment relationships such as changing sea defences, flood prevention systems in river basins and the impact of people in fragile ecosystems such as those of the Arctic or the Sahel.

The significance of scale

Geographers study human and physical features and processes at a variety of temporal and spatial scales. Social geographers will study the movement of people around a single street and create space–time diagrams showing how different members of a single family interact with the environment. Economic geographers study the flows of capital around the globe within multinational companies, and chart the movement of people at local, national and global level in response to changing economic patterns.

The water cycle in the school grounds

One can study the water cycle in a small section of the school grounds as well as at the global scale. Start by recording where the inputs to the system arrive. Where does the precipitation enter the school? How is it transported from the buildings to the ground? What happens when it reaches different ground surfaces? What throughputs are there; how does water enter your area of the school and leave – maybe via pipes, culverts or drains? What areas of water change state and evaporate or melt or freeze? What is driving this process? Aspects of the water cycle can be observed at this small scale as well as at a larger scale, for example when investigating the contrasting weather found on the east and west coasts of the UK, or the northern and southern extremes of Egypt.

An appreciation of change

Change is a central concept in geography and other humanities subjects such as history. So when is learning about changing places geography and when is it history? There is no simple answer to this question, as learning about changes in the geography of Greece or Egypt in past times could be seen as both geography and history. This highlights the advantages of skilful subject integration rather than potential problems of definition. Foley and Janikoun (1992) advised primary teachers that geography focuses on 'recent change' and 'changes that may happen in the

future'; however, the new geography National Curriculum requires children to learn about the history behind present-day settlement patterns, and historical geography is a strong specialism within academic geography. Whoever 'owns' the concept of change, it is in the end irrelevant, as the study of how places, spaces and environments change is crucial to understanding the world of today and tomorrow.

The development of UK settlement patterns

The majority of UK settlements were already established by AD 1066. Successive groups – Roman, Saxon, Celtic and Viking settlers – have influenced the development of this pattern, as have the agricultural, industrial and information technology revolutions. Knowledge of these changes allows future developments to be put in context. Awareness of the past geopolitical history of the Balkans or the Euroland countries can lead to a more perceptive analysis of the human and economic geographies of such regions.

The nature of difference and inequality

Difference can be defined simply as the variation found in particular geographical phenomena across physical space or time. It is used in human geography to express the variation in quality of life or human experience from one place to another.

The North–South divide

There are more telephones in the state of New York than in the whole of Africa. Approximately the same numbers of people suffer from obesity in the Northern parts of the globe as suffer from malnutrition in the South. Greater Manchester has the highest number of millionaires in one district and some of the poorest people in another when statistics are compared against other UK localities. Difference in human circumstances and difference in perception and construction of those circumstances are key concerns of twenty-first-century geography. The educational work of development education centres and charities such as Oxfam, Save the Children and CAFOD has been critical in raising the general public's and teachers' awareness of such difference.

The concept of globalization

Globalization is a term that rapidly entered the public domain during the 1990s. It can be defined as 'the conditions and consequences of financial, technological, cultural and political global interactions that are being put in place by and for national governments and transnational businesses' (Smart, 1993).

A common stereotype of globalization is that everything is becoming more standardized, similar and Americanized. Jargon words such as McDonaldization, Coca-Colaization and Disneyfication have been created to illustrate this alleged global convergence. However, detailed investigation (Potter *et al.*, 1999) reveals that inequality is being perpetuated through economic and cultural globalization. Only the affluent urban dwellers, who have access to relatively abundant cultural and economic resources, are

living a more 'global' and standardized lifestyle. Many people in economically developed and less economically developed countries are the victims of unequal development which sees the fortunes of the few prosper at the expense of the many. Such *uneven development* is the focus for much development and social geography.

10

Doing Geography: Using Geographical Skills in the Process of Enquiry

The concepts discussed in the past few pages were not handed down from teacher to teacher and geographer to geographer. They have been developed through research, through the questioning of existing data and ideas, and the sharing of new developments in understanding people, places and environments. Geographers at all levels have used geographical skills to *enquire* about the world and its people. This concept of enquiry will feature widely in this book.

Geographical enquiry can be interpreted in different ways: using a series of questions to provide a structure for a unit of work in school (for example, learning about a distant locality such as Antarctica); the identification of particular enquiry skills such as using a map; or planning for specific investigations. It may be focused on primary data, acquired through fieldwork, or on secondary data. The main focus of enquiry is on the participants taking an active role both individually and with others to make sense of the world around them. There is a range of specific skills such as fieldwork and using maps and photographs that allow geographers (of whatever age) to create and obtain evidence in order to gain answers to their enquiries.

Enquiry is part of the 'subject knowledge' of geography as defined by the QAA and QCA. The geographical skills needed to construct an understanding of place or of local or global patterns, or to learn about people in local or distant places are acknowledged at all levels of geography. These are:

- Posing and answering appropriate questions about geographical environments or phenomena.
- Gathering a variety of data to answer these questions.
- Using skills such as fieldwork, secondary data analysis, map and photograph analysis to gather these data.
- Presenting the results of these enquiries in poster, oral, written, visual or hypertext forms for a variety of audiences. Academic geographers may communicate the results of their enquiries (or research) to the wider geographical community through journals, books or conference presentations. Primary children may communicate the results of their enquiries to their teachers, parents and members of the wider school community, as well as perhaps to local planners or environmental organizations.
- Evaluating the results of these enquiries. Academic geographers' work is reviewed by their peers before it is published and is commented on after it appears in print; this is one of the

main ways in which the subject develops. Likewise, nursery and primary children can evaluate the success of their own enquiries and gain feedback from practitioners and teachers as well as other adults.

Enquiry as a day-to-day learning approach is less linked to subject knowledge acquisition. However, geography in the early years and primary school is not based on transmission of knowledge but is instead based on questioning and evidence-based approaches. Most academic geographers would now assert that the subject matter of geography is not fixed and is open to many interpretations; so questioning existing views of the subject would be seen as part of today's study of geography at all levels.

Enquiry example: developing subject knowledge

Primary geography specialist students used the enquiry approach to develop their subject knowledge through fieldwork and ICT-based enquiries. Figure 1.1 shows the outline of one of these enquiries.

The students wished to develop their knowledge about place; specifically, how people constructed their own sense of place in the Derbyshire village of Monyash. Their key question was 'What senses of place are associated with Monyash?' One group focused on the objects or experiences that epitomized Monyash as a place for local people and themselves as visitors. They decided to gather data by interviewing local people, by visiting Monyash and investigating what sense of place they themselves formed, and by using a geographic information system (GIS)

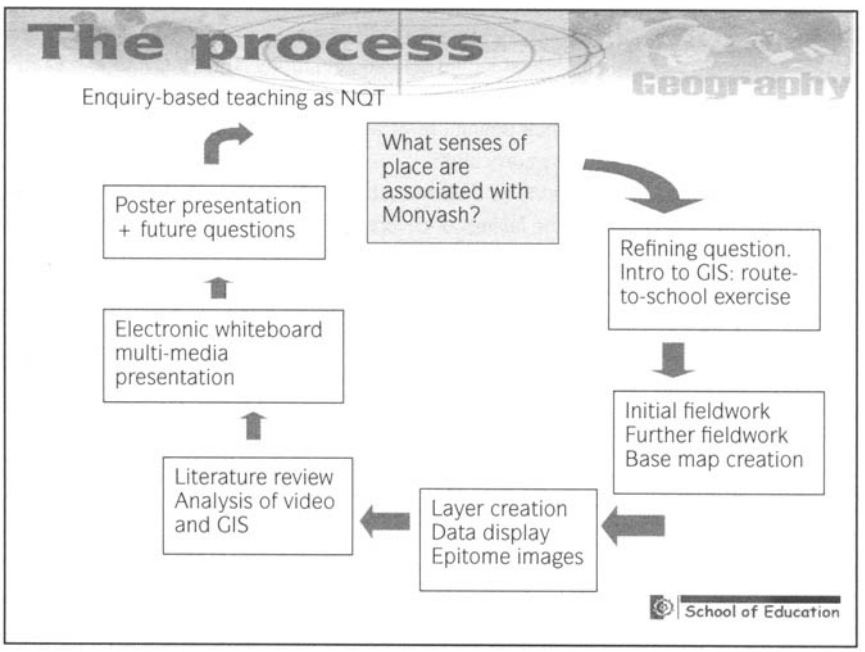

Figure 1.1 Enquiry-based teaching

mapping package to display and present the data they recorded. They learned the requisite GIS skills by practising using the package to draw a simulated route-to-school map, and then collected the data in the field. They made video recordings of their interviews with the local people, took digital images of their own epitomes of Monyash and combined this information into a presentation using a variety of presentation software and a poster. They read widely in the literature concerning place and rurality and used their findings to inform their conclusions. The students' evaluations suggested that they had both gained confidence in using an enquiry approach and developed their subject knowledge in place and rural geography.

As this above example shows, enquiry-based learning is an excellent way of acquiring subject knowledge at any level of geographical study. From nursery children investigating the route to the shops, to a PhD student enquiring into recent developments in green tourism, enquiry could be seen to be the key feature that links twenty-first-century geography at all age phases.

Summary

This section has sought to introduce some of the different ways in which geography is defined at the start of the twenty-first century. Geography exists as a way of grouping human experiences of places and environments and as a school and academic discipline. A number of points have been highlighted.

Geography and people's perceptions of it

- Children do have an understanding of what geography is. They favour explanations based on knowledge about countries and global location above local studies and enquiry-based work. Their definitions of what geography is may be very different from the statutory geography curriculum.
- Adults perceive geography as a school subject with a strong focus on location. The media often highlight the failings of children and adults in relation to their locational knowledge.
- Academic geography is a wide-ranging subject with many tools for analysis, ranging from cultural and social theory to geographic information systems (GIS).
- The wide range of geographies available makes defining the subject and communicating it to non-specialists a difficult task.
- Enquiry or research-based learning plays a major part in the construction of geographical knowledge.

Why Learn Geography?

> What is our knowledge worth if we know nothing about the world that sustains us, nothing about natural systems and climate, nothing about other countries and cultures?
>
> (Porritt, in DfEE/QCA, 1999, p. 108)

> What other subject tells us so much about the great issues of the age – global change, natural and human?
>
> (Goudie, *ibid.*)

These impassioned quotations in the introduction to the geography section of the National Curriculum (2000) would seem to render this section of the chapter irrelevant. Surely everyone involved in education in the twenty-first century would endorse Andrew Goudie's and Sir Jonathon Porritt's words? Surely geography in early years settings, schools and universities must be thriving? However, anyone with any experience of nursery and primary education will know that in many institutions this is not the case and that geography can still, in the words of Patrick Wiegand, be viewed as a 'cinderella subject' (Wiegand, 1993, p. 2). Literacy, numeracy and ICT are the priorities for today's child, and geography, along with other foundation subjects and science, must compete for that child's attention in the afternoon, after the important business of basic skills has been addressed. Even though geography has been a compulsory subject for 5- to 14-year-old pupils since the advent of the National Curriculum (apart from the 'relaxation' of the primary curriculum from 1999 to 2000 to focus on literacy and numeracy), many specialist primary geography students still report that their school 'is not doing geography' during their school experience, or that 'no one wants to be the geography co-ordinator'. So perhaps a rousing defence of geography is needed, and a case should be made for the inclusion of this statutory subject in the curriculum that children actually experience. The final section of this chapter makes this case, outlining five arguments in support of young children being allowed to learn what they are entitled to learn: geography as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

1 Geography offers children the means to develop from 'natural geographers' who have made sense of the environments around them, to become 'global citizens' who can make sense of what they experience of the world though first-hand and mediatized experience. The world is shrinking: learning geography can help to make sense of the interdependent yet constantly changing global scene.
2 Geography's focus on *people* as well as places can contribute to education that seeks to promote a fair and just society (see Chapter 8).
3 Geography provides opportunities to learn about the big issues that will affect life in the twenty-first century. Questions of access to drinking water, globalization, and rising levels of resource consumption and inequality can all be addressed through geography, alongside the opportunity to act to create positive change.

4 Geography can help children to 'learn how to learn'. The subject matter is intrinsically interesting and has the potential to motivate, stimulate and fire children's curiosity and sense of awe and wonder, whilst the process of geographical enquiry fits well with research on how children (and adults) learn.
5 Geography provides opportunities for the development of key skills that are used across the curriculum and in later life. Yes, geography can contribute to learning in literacy and numeracy, but equally it can contribute to the development of critical thinking and decision-making, and can use ICT to investigate real-world issues. Geography is uniquely placed to deal with the exponential growth of spatially referenced information (postcodes, digital map data and photograph data) and continues to develop children's graphicacy skills.

Geography is a broad and wide-ranging subject. This is both its strength and its weakness at all age phases. On the one hand, the subject integrates a wide range of academic disciplines, learning strategies and global locations, and on the other hand it can be seen as difficult to define, fragmented or a mere compendium of useful and not-so-useful facts to be learned before going a few rounds with Chris Tarrant on *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*. However, geography deserves its place in the early years and primary curriculum for the five reasons stated in the previous paragraph. The next chapter examines how these merits of geography as a discipline have been translated into a curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage and those at Key Stages 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum.

Box 1.1 The geography journey

From natural geographers to global citizens
Personal development and citizenship

Education for a fair and just society
Social and emotional development

Learning about twenty-first-century issues
Intellectual development: futures

Learning how to learn
Academic development

Developing key skills
Vocational development