

# Global learning with geography

**Steve Brace, the Society's Head of Education and Outdoor Learning, discusses the role of geography and global learning as part of the new National Curriculum, which will be taught from September 2014.**

Many international commentators now believe that by the time our current pupils become middle aged, absolute poverty (the numbers of people living on less than \$1.50 a day) will be eradicated. Whilst achieving this will be a significant challenge - and inequality within and between countries continues to rise - very positive progress has already been made over recent decades with the proportion of people living in absolute poverty falling from 43% to 21% of the global population.

The study of developing countries, globalisation, inequality, poverty and development are features of many teachers' schemes of work; and the study of Asia, Africa, trade links and international development all are requirements within the new National Curriculum for geography. Indeed, geography has been identified as 'one of the most important sources available to pupils for gaining knowledge and understanding of development issues'<sup>1</sup> and [Ofsted's subject-specific guidance](#) for geography identifies the significant contribution of geography to learning and understanding about current and relevant local, national and global issues.<sup>2</sup>

## Global Learning Programme

To provide additional support for teachers, of geography and other subject areas, the new Global Learning Programme (GLP) provides a wealth of advice, guidance and resources which enable schools to review, develop and have recognised their work on global learning. This five year programme for English (and also Welsh) schools will help teachers to deliver effective teaching and learning about development and global issues at Key Stages 2 and 3 and help their pupils to better understand a globally interdependent world and explore strategies by which it can be made more just and sustainable.

The GLP is supported with funding from the UK Government and the project is led by Pearson in partnership with the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG), the Geographical Association, Think Global, Oxfam, SSAT and the Institute of Education. Primary, secondary and special schools can take part in the GLP either as [Expert Centres](#) or as [Partner Schools](#) and specific funding is available for schools in either category. For full details see: [www.glp-e.org.uk](http://www.glp-e.org.uk).

One of the key elements of the GLP is to enhance teachers' subject knowledge about development issues and how best they can teach about them through a focus on the following areas which will have particular resonance to geography teachers:

- Knowledge of developing countries, their economies, histories and human geography
- Knowledge of the basic elements of globalisation
- Knowledge of different ways to achieve global poverty reduction and the arguments around the merits of these different approaches
- Knowledge and understanding of the concepts of interdependence and sustainability

<sup>1</sup>Geography and Development Education 2013 Morgan and Lambert  
<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/GeographyAndDevelopment.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/generic-grade-descriptors-and-supplementary-subject-specific-guidance-for-inspectors-making-judgements>

- Supporting enquiry and critical thinking about development and development issues

For geography teachers, many will approach such content with key questions such as: Where is this place? What is it like and why? How is it changing and how do these changes impact of the people who live there? And how is this place connected to other places and other peoples' lives, including connections with UK?

### **Learning through geography**

A geographical approach enables young people to access to particular subject specific knowledge understanding and skills which will enable them to examine global learning through the lens of geography which will also highlight the following elements:

- The importance of places and their locations at different scales, including local, regional, national, international and global
- Human and physical geographical processes and their interactions and how they influence, shape and change the lives and prospects of people living around the world
- Spatial differences and disparities, helping to illustrate and better understand patterns of uneven development within and between countries
- Interactions and inter-relationships between different parts of the world, and between natural and human processes and systems and how this brings about change and also variation in the use of and access to resources.

Geography provides not only the opportunity to explore knowledge and understanding about the world but also different ideas and perspectives on it and whether some approaches might present a partial, incomplete or stereotyped view of particular parts of the world. For example, there are long standing debates within the discipline which are concerned with different perspectives on development issues and how these are explored and presented in the classroom. These debates span the examination of different approaches to development; what development is and the different ways in which it can be measured; why some places prosper whilst others do not; the changing characteristics of developing countries and the terminology associated with this (such as LEDCs, MEDCs, BRICS, developing/developed or the global North and South); and the nature and impact of local, national and global inter-connections. The following animation developed by the Royal Geographical Society, which is one of a number of online resources developed by the Society for the GLP, provides an overview and critique of different models of development spanning Modernisation and economic 'take-off' to the theory of 'post development' <http://www.rgs.org/OurWork/Schools/Teaching+resources/Key+Stage+3+resources/Global+Learning+Programme/Theories+of+development.htm>.

Geography is a key part of the curriculum for developing learners' knowledge of global learning. However, partly because it can involve the consideration of values, this is also the focus of debate within the discipline, which touches on both the 'what' is taught, 'how' it is taught and 'why' it is taught. One critique cautions against using geography to *promote* a particular set of values and actions that pupils should hold. A version of this argument is that it is only through dispassionate study that pupils can be introduced to an impartial body of geography knowledge about the world, compared with "the replacement of knowledge with morality as the central focus of the (geography) curriculum (in which) global problems are not presented as issues to be interrogated for truth, knowledge and meaning, with a view to developing ideas about the potential courses of social and political action. Instead, the solution is to be found in the personal and presented as a given: consume less, have fewer children, take public transport, be less money-grabbing (and) support charities." <sup>3</sup>

Another potential concern focuses on the choice of content, suggesting that "there is a tendency to promote particular values in school geography which favour 'local' development projects, focus on 'sustainable tourism' or persuade pupils that Fair Trade is the solution to issues of poverty ... it is possible to argue that many geography lessons in schools are underpinned by a world-view based

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<sup>3</sup> Alex Standish *The Corruption of the Curriculum* 2009

on ...'growth scepticism'.<sup>4</sup> (Lambert and Morgan 2011) A caricature of this tendency would be if pupils are led to believe inadvertently that most of global trade is 'fair trade'; when fair traded products account for roughly c\$5 billion of the total value of global trade estimated to be c\$18 trillion.

Finally, there is a significant debate about the meaning of 'development'. Defining which countries are 'developing' is complex, and some believe that such terms are becoming less useful. As many countries make rapid progress in their development, dividing the world up into North and South, or More or Less Developed, has less and less validity. The [Gapminder](#) and [Worldmapper](#) websites illustrates this graphically and highlights the range of diversity and the significant progress many countries have made over recent decades.

### **Support for teachers**

There is much support for geography teachers available through the GLP; I'd recommend that teachers also draw on the membership programmes and additional support, guidance and resources of the [Royal Geographical Society \(with IBG\)](#) and [Geographical Association](#) respectively.

Through the GLP the:

- The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is provided online case studies, interviews and interactives to support subject knowledge about development for Key Stage 3, alongside CPD and the provision of geography Ambassador visits with a specific focus on development issues. See: [www.rgs.org/glp](http://www.rgs.org/glp)
- Geographical Association is providing specific support for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 – including work to explore how Global Learning can support transition – as well as online support materials, CPD and the development of Global Learning through the respective primary and secondary geography quality marks. See: [www.geography.org/glp](http://www.geography.org/glp)

Both organisations also provide a wider range of support, advice and guidance for geography across the primary and secondary phases.

### **Further guidance and advice**

The following reports will provide further support, guidance and advice for the development of global learning within geography; please note that a number of them were written before 2013 so you may wish to review their specific support to the new curriculum:

- [Developing the Global Dimension in the School Curriculum, DfES, DfID, DEA et al \(2005\)](#)
- [Exploring together: a global dimension to the secondary curriculum, Think Global \(2009\)](#)
- [Geography and Development: Development education in schools and the part played by geography teachers, David Lambert and John Morgan 2011](#)
- [Geography: the Global Dimension, Development Education Association \(2004\)](#)
- Global Perspectives in the geography curriculum: reviewing the moral case for geography, Alex Standish 2009.

The National Curriculum for geography is [available online](#).

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<sup>4</sup> Lambert and Morgan *Geography and Development* 2011