

My interpretation of the geography curriculum in England

By John Morgan

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the version of geography found in the QCA's schemes of work reflects a mixture of approaches. Some of the units, such as 'Limestone landscapes of England' reflect the cultural heritage argument that these are simply things that it is good for children to learn about! In this sense, there is a strong sense of cultural transmission. Other units reflect a desire to offer students a more up-to-date geography. For example, the unit on 'The global fashion industry' seeks to tap into students' own personal geographies and is linked to the idea that geography should engage with issues of social welfare. This is also found in the unit on 'Crime and the local community'. However, a closer analysis of that unit suggests that there are strong messages about how people are to behave as citizens.

All of the units have a strong emphasis on skills such as numeracy, literacy and ICT, and it is perhaps this version of geography that is most dominant in the document as a whole. However, it is worth remembering that the units are not statutory, and that there remains considerable scope for geography departments to interpret the curriculum according to its own beliefs about what purposes geography education serves.