

## The power and relevance of geography in education

**Source: Lambert, D., Geographical Association, August 2004)**

The place of geography in the school curriculum can be justified in terms of the subject's significant potential as an educational resource. This potential can be realised by drawing on both popular and academic geographical imaginations (Bonnet, 2003).

Responsibility for the quality of the educational experience provided through the medium of geography resides mainly with school teachers (see Morgan and Lambert forthcoming). This is because it is they who are in a position to design and create appropriate curriculum and pedagogic experiences (content selection, materials production and choice of learning activity).

It is desirable that teachers' professional responsibilities are underpinned with a clear sense of purpose. This enables specialist geography teachers to undertake their task 'carefully'. Teachers need a sophisticated concept of geography and what it means to learn with geography.

The learning of geography is concerned with:

- **The physical world:** land, water, air and ecological systems and the processes that bring about change in them. Can involve spiritual dimensions.
- **The human environments:** societies and communities, and the human processes involved in understanding work, home, consumption and leisure. Involves political, moral and ethical dimensions.
- **Interaction:** spatial manifestations of interdependence, such as trade, migration, climate change: involves, crucially, linking the 'physical' and 'human' and the emerging concept of 'sustainable development'.
- **Place and space:** the 'vocabulary' and the 'syntax' of the world, developing knowledge and understanding of location and interconnectedness.
- **Scale:** the lens through which the subject matter is 'seen'. Emphasises the significance of local, regional, national, international and global perspectives.
- **Pupils' lives:** using pupils' images, experiences, meanings and questions can introduce an explicit 'futures' orientation into lessons and 'reach out' to pupils as active agents in their learning.

### References

- Bonnett, A. (2003) 'Geography as the world discipline: connecting popular and academic geographical imaginations', *Area*, 35, 1, pp.55–63.
- Morgan, J. and Lambert, D. (Forthcoming, March 2005) *Teaching School Subjects: Geography*, London, Routledge/Falmer.