

## On Taking the Geography Out of Geographical Education – Some Historical Pointers in Geography

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Abstract: Much concern has been expressed in recent times over the declining interest of academic geographers in the work of the Geographical Association (GA), and the negative potential of this for the quality of geography taught in schools. This article suggests wider cause for concern. The historical evidence demonstrates long-standing tensions between geographers and geographical educationists about the balance in the geography curriculum of three critical components: subject content, educational processes and social purposes. Thus geographers have periodically argued that the education 'lobby' has over-stressed processes and purposes, while educationists have been alleged to have down-graded content and simplistically linked it with traditional methods of delivery. Similarly, an excessive devotion to the 'good causes' of their time, whether religion, the empire or the environment, has served to divert attention away from distinctive geographical content. During the 1960s and 1970s there appeared a hopeful convergence towards a synthesis, but the increased politicisation of the curriculum during the 1980s re-opened gaps. Geography educationists became pre-occupied with the detail of curriculum planning and with polemics over the social purposes of the curriculum, neglecting new developments at the frontiers of the subject. The situation has been exacerbated in the 1990s as a result of government policy, with both university geographers and geographical educationists now driven to give priority to rankings in research league tables, rather than service to the GA. The resurgence of interest in 'place' at the academic frontiers, and the preferential status given to place study in the national curriculum, are potentially hopeful pointers to a new and distinctive synthesis, but can only be realised by a revived interest of geographical educationists and teachers in 'state of the art geography'.

*'IF THE ASSOCIATION were to turn its back on research geography, there would indeed be small hope of engaging and retaining the interest and support of the university geographers' (Wooldridge, 1955, p. 75).*

In his presidential address to the GA in 1955, Professor Wooldridge registered his 'grief and consternation' at the widening gap in the GA between school and university teachers of the subject. He was troubled, for example, about teachers criticising the inclusion of academic research articles in *Geography*. He also voiced his disapproval of 'the contest between matter and method which goes on in Training Colleges and Training Departments', condemning the 'education people' as having been 'potent agents in diminishing the status of our subject'.

The purpose of this article is in the first place to identify historical pointers relevant to the currently perceived gulf in communication between academic geographers and those involved with geographical education. These suggest that unhealthy stresses arise when the three basic components of curriculum planning are not kept in reasonable balance. One imbalance occurs if the *subject component* is given too

high a priority, resulting in a domination of content, as happened, for example in the old grammar school tradition. The second problem emerges when the *educational component* is over-stressed, as exemplified in the preoccupation with topic-based approaches entrenched in the progressive primary school ideology. The third tension arises when the *social education component*, often associated with a contemporary good cause or issue, holds sway. This was particularly characteristic of the emerging secondary comprehensive ideology of the 1960s and early 1970s. It is further argued that dominance of the educational and/or social education components will tend to drive the *geography* out of geographical education and that forces both within and without the GA have been pulling increasingly in this direction over the last twenty years or so. Furthermore, the historical record suggests that where social and/or ideological objectives are given primacy, there is a high risk of politicisation of the curriculum, and of the justification of instruction.

### **Geography, education and good causes: Geikie, Mackinder and Fairgrieve**

The tensions, contradictions, and resolutions as between geographical content (defined not as a collection of facts but as the state of the art conceptual frameworks of the subject), educational processes and social issues can first be highlighted in the work of three of the great names in the history of geographical education, namely Sir Archibald Geikie, Sir Halford Mackinder and James Fairgrieve.

Geikie's credentials as an earth scientist and as a geographical educationist were impeccable. He wrote one of the finest of all methodological treatises, *The Teaching of Geography* (1887), and a number of textbooks for primary schools, including *Physical Geography* (1873) and *Geology* (1874). The influences on Geikie were on the one hand the German *heimatskunde* (home studies) tradition, and on the other his own academic research training, which left him mindful 'of the enormous advantage which a boy or girl may derive from any pursuit that stimulates the imagination' (Geikie, 1882, p. 24).

As a pedagogue, therefore, he was a genuine progressive, his techniques in tune with child-centred education. Like others of his epoch, however, he espoused 'good causes' and for him one of these was the environment. To use current terminology, he went beyond education about and education in the environment, to promote education for the environment. A conservationist in spirit, Geikie had a deep feeling for the natural world, and expressed his anxieties over the centuries of depredation of the forest cover of Europe and, more specifically, over the building of the Snowdon railway. His *The Teaching of Geography* covered a broader field than the normal geography texts of the time, as befitted its environmental and local studies emphases. A contradiction appeared when environmental issues were introduced, however, with the hard-line Victorian moralist coming to the fore while the child-centred educationist retreated into the background. Geikie here supported an instructional rather than a progressive educational approach. Children must be instructed to treat the landscape with

*'loving care and respect. The rude and ribald spirit of desecration which cuts names on ... worm-eaten woodwork, scribbles over ... walls, or breaks off corners from ... mouldering carvings, ought to be absolutely repressed'* (1887, p. 134).

Halford Mackinder esteemed Geikie's contributions to geographical education, as represented in *The Teaching of Geography*. But he was also critical of that text, which he thought not tight enough in its definitions of the scope of the subject, accusing Geikie, in his wider environmental approach, of including topics which 'even the most grasping geographer would scarcely claim as his' (1887a, p. 506). As Geikie's influence in the geographical world waned, so Mackinder's waxed. He

pioneered a new synthesis in his famous article 'On the scope and methods of geography' (1887b), one he regarded as applicable at all educational levels. In justification of geography's presence, he stressed the subject's pivotal role in linking the physical and human aspects of the environment, and more broadly in bridging the arts and the sciences (1921). Over time he saw this as best achieved through undertaking studies of people and their environments in particular places, ranging from the home locality through ever-widening foci to the cultivation of a global outlook (Walford, 1993).

At this level of deliberation, there was no tension between Mackinder's functioning as a geographer and as a geographical educator. Like Geikie, he did not disdain to write school textbooks. His so-called 'six roads' to geography were designed for use with very young children. The fifth of these referred to 'the romantic road of...tales of distant lands and "once upon a time"' (Roxby, 1914, p. 405). In 1906 Mackinder was made President of the Froebel Society, and gave his presidential address on 'The teaching of geography to young children'. He favoured elementary schools preparing the ground for secondary school geography, not least by introduction to global study through regular use of the globe and through developing the visualising powers of younger pupils (1906, p. 114).

As an academic, Mackinder produced seminal works of political geography, such as *Britain and the British Seas* (1902) and *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1919). In his political life, he was not only a Member of Parliament but also a major figure in the imperial establishment. His intellectual, social and political development was at a time when geography was viewed as 'the science of empire par excellence' (Livingstone, 1994, p. 134). At school level, geography was regarded, with history and literature, as one of the triumvirate of subjects 'best fitted to be called the "Empire Group"' (White, 1933, p. 273). It was strongly supported in the imperial press, as in *United Empire*, to which Mackinder was a significant contributor. Mackinder's belief in the imperial cause has been presented benignly as a reflection of his view that in the post-First World War reconstruction the British Empire was an important force for world harmony, and should be given a high priority in geography syllabuses. A wide-ranging public speaker, he used every opportunity to disseminate his views on this particular 'good cause', not only at imperial education conferences (1911b), but even in a lecture ostensibly on 'Geography and nature study', at a London County Council teachers' meeting (1904).

James Fairgrieve was better known as a geographical educator than as a geographer, but he had credentials in both fields including, in the latter, another geopolitical text, *Geography and World Power* (1915). In the former capacity, Fairgrieve has always been regarded, with some justification, as a revered figure. His *Geography in School* (1926) remained in print for decades. He helped to modernise geographical education and inspired more than one generation of teachers (Scarfe, 1980). As a supporter of empire, Fairgrieve's convictions matched those of Mackinder. He was the right man in the right place at the right time, too, for at the University of London's Day Training College he established in 1927 a department which later became the Colonial Education Department and was subsequently the Centre for the Study of Education in Tropical Areas (Scarfe, 1980). In 1933 the Day Training College became the University of London Institute of Education, set up in part to promote imperial cooperation in education: a kind of intellectual power house for cultural exchanges of teachers at home and abroad (*TES*, 14 January 1933, p. 9).

The over-arching principle of geographical determinism had long been ingrained in Fairgrieve and others of his academic pedigree. While he was to shift away from the idea of regional study in his pedagogical thinking, he did not eschew determinism in his geographical writings. It was not a large step from environmental determinism to Social Darwinism. In *Geography and World Power*, the key terms are identified as *geography, history* and *control*. Over time, climate had emerged as a critical factor in

dictating geographical responses. 'Moral climatology' was used to set 'crucial boundaries' (Livingstone, 1994, p. 154), serving to justify the energetic and civilised peoples of temperate latitudes exploiting the slothful and the savage of the tropics:

*'Thus Africa, long occupied only by barbarous peoples ... has lately naturally and inevitably been partitioned among the peoples that matter, and those who matter most have had the most say in the partitioning.'* (Fairgrieve, 1915' (1932 edition) p. 281.)

The generalisations of determinism, whether environmental or social, inevitably fostered negative stereotypes of other peoples (Marsden, 1990). Even in the innovative co-authored series, *Real Geography*, triply negative stereotypes: hostile climate and vegetation; dangerous animals; and savage natives, were among the dominant images conveyed to British pupils (Fairgrieve and Young, 1939, pp. 1–2). In another of his texts, Fairgrieve and his co-author took the trains which ran through the 'dark continent' as symbolic of European benefits, transforming 'tattooed cannibals into railway passengers' (Fairgrieve and Young, 1931, p. 371).

During the inter-war period geography and history teachers were caught between two opposing political lobbies, both clamouring to see their interests disseminated in the classroom. Thus the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) established a Committee of Training in Citizenship after the First World War. It included Baden-Powell. Its reports suggested that training for world citizenship was necessarily based on a patriotic education: 'The British Empire is the greatest human institution under Heaven, the greatest secular organisation for good'. But patriotism was not to be allowed to degenerate into jingoism. The instilling of patriotic sentiments in the British variant was, therefore, to avoid the 'aggressive and immoral' manifestations of German patriotism before the First World War, based on its 'evil tradition' of military power (BAAS, 1920, pp. 292–3). Among other bodies promoting a narrowly nationalistic line were the Imperial Institute, the Royal Empire Society, the Navy League, and the Empire Marketing Board. In 1930 the Board of Education published a result of an inquiry into the teaching of the geography of the British Empire. It indicated that it was not being neglected (*TES*, 29 March 1930, p. 142).

It may be contended that criticisms of empire education are those of hindsight: an anachronistic back-referencing of a later set of values. Countering this argument, it must be emphasised that strong reservations about the inculcatory nature of the teaching of patriotism and imperialism were being aired at the time. Among geographers and geographical educationists, in either open or implicit opposition, were Roxby (1920), who sought through the subject to generate a 'sympathetic imagination' in children; Welpton, who advocated the promotion of a 'sympathetic understanding' of other peoples (1923, p. 7); and Unstead, who stated that children should be 'taught to try and imagine themselves in the place of other people' (1928, pp. 320–1). There was counter-propaganda also from the League of Nations and, after 1934, from the Association for Education in Citizenship. These organisations saw subjects like geography and history as critical agencies in fostering a global outlook, but one transcending nationalism and imperialism. The League, for example, defined geography's main justification as demonstrating that the earth as a whole was made up of 'increasingly inter-connected and inter-sensitive parts' (League of Nations, 1935, p. 179). It was in turn accused of leftist proselytisation, as in a *TES* review of the League of Nations publication *Geography Teaching in Relation to World Citizenship* (1935) which was criticised for its over-emphasis on fostering a 'non-nationalist' attitude. While agreeing 'we' should not be seen as superior to other peoples, it was equally important we should not regard ourselves as inferior (4 May 1935, p.143).

In sum, both Mackinder and Herbertson, in rightly recognising geography's contribution to social education, demanded consideration of the great issues of the time in geography syllabuses, training future citizens for the 'world stage'. Their

particular good cause was the British Empire, which they firmly believed was a key force for the world's good. But good causes tend to generate inculcation and indoctrination rather than genuine education. Mackinder was honest about this in his own writing, making explicit that social education in the last resort took precedence over academic priorities.

*'Let our teaching be from the British standpoint, so that finally we see the world as a theatre for British activity. This is, no doubt, to deviate from the cold and impartial ways of science. When we teach the millions, however, we are not training scientific investigators, but the practical striving citizens of an Empire which has to hold its place through the universal law of survival through efficiency and effort' (1911a, pp. 79–80).*

So, some of the geography (and indeed the education) was being taken out of geographical education.

### **Geography versus geographical education: before the Second World War**

During the working lives of these three great names, there were other historic tensions between geographers and geographical educationists. Thus Douglas Freshfield, a promoter of geographical education, resigned from the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) following the demands of the traditional geographical exploration lobby of the RGS to limit expenditure on the promotion of geographical education, and on its refusal to accept women as Fellows (Marsden, 1986, pp. 199–200). In 1893 the GA was established on the initiative of a group of secondary teachers, with the support of Freshfield, Mackinder, and other major geographical figures. The first edition of its journal, *The Geographical Teacher*, appeared in 1901. From the start, distinguished academic geographers contributed. Herbertson, a potent influence on the development of geographical education from the 1890s, was the first joint-editor, and soon become sole editor. While there was certainly address to educational processes, the general thrust of the journal was to initiate teachers into sound geographical principles, whether in the use of Ordnance Survey maps, in conducting fieldwork, or in keeping up-to-date with geographical developments in different parts of the world.

Not all, however, regarded the strong academic input into school geography as beneficial. During the 1890s, Herbertson had shown himself, like Geikie before him, to be well-acquainted with progressive approaches to geography teaching, based on the *heimatskunde* tradition (1896, p. 415). Ten years later, however, he was disseminating a more abstract general geography in the guise of 'The natural regions of the world' (1905), which became the basis of regional geography. It formed the 'new geography' of the twentieth century, emerging white-hot from the frontiers of academic thought. Part of its intent was to raise the status of geography in universities and secondary schools by moving it away from its 'capes and bays' image. But natural regions were soon to be criticised on educational grounds as abstract and over-complex: inappropriate starting points for younger children. Even Herbertson conceded that 'the best logical order is not necessarily the best pedagogical order' (1906, p. 281). Fairgrieve, at first a cautious supporter of the approach, later become disenchanted, referring to regions as being presented

*'gaily to immature children to be memorised, quite oblivious of the fact that what they memorise...can mean mighty little of geography' (Fairgrieve, 1936, pp. 6-7).*

Welpton had also criticised what he considered to be the excessive influence of the subject. He found advances at all levels 'presided over' by academic geographers (1914, p. 291). In the early 1920s a working party of the BAAS pronounced that school geography should be 'the geography of geographers' (1923, p. 324). Welpton

looked rather for the co-operation of educationists, who would see that the interests of children were put first, seeking advice from the academic world to ensure accurate knowledge, and from school teachers, to give advice on application to the classroom (1923, p. v). Similarly Unstead declared, in the context of the primary school, that the geography teacher should be a teacher first, and a geographer second: 'pedagogy is fully as important as geography' (1928, p. 319).

The underlying tensions erupted into personal conflict in a lively confrontation between L.W. Lyde, Professor of Economic Geography at University College, London, and Fairgrieve. Fairgrieve had criticised the teaching procedures in Lyde's Honours courses, asserting that his students emerged as rigid thinkers, believing they knew everything. Lyde retorted that the best teachers did not require training courses at all, which misguidedly concentrated more on pedagogy than on geography. He dismissed Fairgrieve's professional activities as training in 'mere class management' (1928, p. 330).

The changing of the name of the GA's journal from *The Geographical Teacher to Geography* in 1927 reflected an academic shift, suggesting perhaps that professors of geography retained greater influence in the GA than education tutors. But eminent geographers maintained their commitment to promoting school geography. Many of them wrote textbooks, though Garnett suggested in retrospect that one reason for this might have been the need to 'supplement their meagre incomes' with royalties (1983, p. 28). One of the major textbook authors was Sir Dudley Stamp, who, albeit writing some dull and stylised materials for secondary and tertiary phases, produced, with his wife Elsa, an innovative *New Age* series for junior schools, based heavily on photographs taken during his world travels. Thus the three geographical education knights of the realm, Geikie, Mackinder and Stamp, were all authors of primary school texts!

There were tensions too in the academic sphere. During the 1920s the RGS had largely given up an already declining interest in educational matters. At the same time personal relations between those running the GA and the RGS had reached a low ebb (Balchin, 1993, p. 24). As geographers in universities increasingly saw the function of *Geography* as giving priority to geographical education, and of the *Geographical Journal* to exploration, mountaineering and even head-hunting, an outlet for academic geographers was sought. Wooldridge, not least, was strongly committed to such a change. In 1933, the Institute of British Geographers (IBG) was formed (Stoddart, 1983). While one writer referred to it as reflecting a move to 'the ivory tower of scholarly seclusion' (Freeman, 1961, p. 94), its promoters regarded the IBG as a complementary and not as a rival organisation to the GA. For many years dates and venues of the conferences of the two organisations were arranged for it to be possible for academic geographers to attend both. But a divergence of interest was inevitably created.

### **Geography versus geographical education: the post-war years**

Wooldridge was to resurface as a key figure in the geography versus geographical education encounters of the post-war period. He was a trenchant peer critic. In 1950 he addressed the IBG and scorned the contentment of his audience with 'agreeably titillating' articles on subjects of minor interest which made 'no claim whatsoever to scholarship' (Stoddart, 1983, p. 5). To Wooldridge a firm physical basis was the *sine qua non* of a high quality geography. He claimed that the social/urban orientation of the subject was becoming too strong. Geography, he maintained, was about 'place' and not about 'man' (Graves, 1975, p. 56). On the educational front he abhorred the analogous post-war trends towards introducing social studies into the curriculum. These he blamed on geographical educationists. The tendencies threatened to take 'the ge- out of geography', as he put it (1949, pp. 9–18). Social studies would

'destroy the value of geography as an important medium of education' asserted the Education Committee of the RGS (1950, p. 181), in a report reputedly the work of Wooldridge. Like Geikie, he argued that the priority in schools should be detailed fieldwork in the rural landscape, developing a 'laboratory spirit and the careful, indeed minute study of limited areas' (1955, p. 80).

The strong support of eminent academic geographers for school geography was sustained in the early decades of the post-war period. They emerged as the dominant force in the GA in the 1950s. Of the twenty presidents from 1950, 14 were professors, three were teachers and none, in any formal sense, were geographical educationists. The secretary of the GA over most of these years was Professor Garnett, and the editor of its journal Professor Linton, followed in 1965 by Professor Pye. The contacts between academic geography and geographical education and teaching were maintained and even reinforced during the quantitative revolution of the 1960s. If academic geographers no longer wrote textbooks themselves, they co-operated in so doing. The Madingley and Charney Manor Conferences for over a decade testified to this co-operative spirit.

Another radical development of the 1960s, which caught the attention of geographical educationists as much as the quantitative revolution in geography, was the arrival in Britain of another academic novelty: curriculum theory. The educational underpinnings had been pioneered in the early years of this century in the United States and had influenced geographical education there in the inter-war period. They seem not to have travelled well for decades (Marsden, 1992a), but by the late 1960s and early 1970s the frameworks were being diffused on this side of the Atlantic and were incorporated in curriculum courses in departments of education, and also in the Schools Council projects of the 1970s. By the mid-1970s it can be argued that a balance between geography and geographical education was being approached. The social education component was not being neglected either, as in the resurgence of interest in environmental education and in the emergence of a welfare-based geography.

### **From the 1970s to the 1990s; the decline of the geography component**

Over the last 20 years or so, however, a series of forces have conspired to threaten this balance, and to imperil the maintenance of a quality geography in school, initial teacher education and INSET courses. Several negative trends can be discerned, including:

- academic geographers moving out of geographical education;
- geographical educationists down-playing the importance of the subject input, either for pedagogic, social or political reasons;
- outside political forces seeking to reinvent an outmoded form of geography and, potentially, marginalising the place of the fledgling re-entrant in the curriculum.

The first of these forces has been the well-documented reduction in the interest of academic geographers in geographical education. This is strikingly reflected in the changing make-up of the GA. Of the ten presidents of the 1970s, six were professors of geography; two were geographical educationists, and two were teachers. Of those of the 1980s, four were academic geographers (three professors), four were geographical educationists and two were teachers. Among the nine identifiable presidents of the 1990s there are but two academic geographers (one professor), five geographical educationists (including the first LEA geography adviser) and two teachers. Since 1973 no professors of geography have followed in the steps of Herbertson, Fleure, Garnett and Gregory as honorary secretaries. It may be argued that these changes have effected a healthier balance as between the

different interests and phases of education. But hardly so if the pendulum has swung so far that few distinguished voices in the academic field are being heard.

Thus in 1993 the last professorial President, Andrew Goudie, re-echoed Wooldridge's concerns of 1955:

*'for the most part the current generation of academics choose not to serve on GA committees or its Council, they do not join the Association, they choose not to send their best articles to its journals, and few attend its Annual Conference. A chasm has developed between those who teach at school and those who teach in universities' (p. 338).*

The chasm has not opened up overnight, however, and the buck should not be passed to academic geographers alone. Those in geographical education must share responsibility. In the latter field a historical shift occurred between the 1960s and the 1970s. The geography component remained the emphasis of the methodological texts of the sixties, which retained titles like *The Teaching of Geography* (Gopsill, 1966), *Teaching Geography* (Long and Roberson, 1966), and ended with Bailey's *Teaching Geography* (1974), offering little hint that between geography in the classroom and geography as a university subject there was a burgeoning curriculum theory. Those from the mid-1970s used subtly different labels: *Perspectives in Geographical Education* (Bale et al, 1973), *Geography in Education* (Graves, 1975), *Curriculum Planning in Geography* (Graves, 1979), and *Evaluating the Geography Curriculum* (Marsden, 1976).

These shifts of emphasis reflected larger forces at work. The curriculum theory movement helped to tighten curriculum planning in geography, but was also used to support arguments for more integrated studies in school. Again geographers and geographical educationists sprang to the defence of the subject, and were critical of the new wave of curriculum integrators, though in more measured tones than had been Wooldridge previously (Bull, 1968; Graves, 1968). But long-standing school subjects could no longer assume that their place in the comprehensive school curriculum was uncontested. Meanwhile, the low estate in which academic geographers perceived their own subject in the 1960s was seized upon by opponents, who could point to the fact that geography meant old-fashioned content: the mere accumulation of locational knowledge, and rigid and stylised studies of different regions of the globe. Reinforced by anachronistic essay-type examination syllabuses, regional study could be represented as the dead hand of tradition.

Pressure for curriculum integration intensified, its lobbyists including the heads and senior management teams of the new comprehensive schools, many of whom pioneered new faculty structures, and reduced the influence of subject heads of department; and also pressure groups for environmental studies, world studies and the like. The moves towards curriculum integration were even more intense in the primary sphere, reinforced by the Plowden Report. Here traditional subject foci such as geography were alleged to be alien to the needs of young children, even though that Report included a substantial section on what it saw as good practice in primary geography. In general, educational theorists strongly favoured integration, dismissing subject-based syllabuses as mere social constructions and/or historical accidents.

From the 1970s, there was evidence also of erosion of a distinctive geographical input from within. The quantitative revolution itself reflected a distancing from the real world of differentiated place study. Disillusion with the narrow and abstract positivism of the stereotypical version of this paradigm led to the emergence of broader and more humanistic welfare-oriented models for the geography curriculum. Many geographical educationists were strongly persuaded of the need for change by, for example, Harvey's *Social Justice and the City* (1973), and Smith's *Human Geography: A welfare approach* (1977). These argued forcefully that being a



geographer was not enough, and indeed proclaimed the social and moral inadequacy of self-regarding armchair academic study.

One of the most notable initiatives in introducing such ideas into the classroom was that of the Geography for the Young School Leaver (GYSL) Project, based at Avery Hill College of Education. Its three units were: 'Man, land and leisure', 'Cities and people', and 'People, places and work', manifestly prioritising issues-based content. GYSL followed an enquiry-based educational method, and was unusually successful in disseminating its ideas. Though it used case studies of particular places, it also served to legitimate a retreat from place. Pupil relevance was a cardinal criterion in the choice of resources and approaches. Followers of the GYSL approach thus made use of strip-cartoon material, particularly for less able pupils, supposedly to promote motivation. But this was at the expense of 'real geography'. There was also criticism of the want of a physical basis in the units.

The popularity of the GYSL Project, sealed through its successful *rapprochement* with the examination system, was more important than most factors in sustaining the growth of issues-based geography during the early 1980s. At the extremes zealotry took over, and in some secondary-school textbooks distinctive geographical content was seriously reduced. Cartoons became more evident than cartography; and sound-bite talking heads were granted more space than photographs of real-world landscapes. Issues dominance must mean some withdrawal from a distinctive geography; for the great world issues by definition demand a trans-disciplinary approach. As Naish has reminded us: 'Geography teachers alone cannot achieve education for a better world' (1988). In dealing with such matters, proponents of integrated world studies and peace studies like Heater (1980), Fisher and Hicks (1985), and Pike and Selby (1988), could legitimately claim the logical high ground and assert that while it was helpful to permeate geography as a component in investigating the major global social and environmental issues, the subject could play only a part. At the same time, moves away from a distinctive subject focus were also reinforced by the forces of structuralism, radicalism and postmodernism.

While accepting that a more integrated issues-based approach carries a compelling internal logic, historical precedents highlight its dangers, not least when applied to school work. The 'good cause' element in such curricula can subvert the balance between content, educational processes and the social purposes. Thus the early nineteenth-century curriculum was pervaded by religious instruction, the broad moral and doctrinal issues covered by the scriptures being given the highest priority. The instructional approach deployed was catechetical and indoctrinatory. Later, as we have seen, geography, history and literature became the 'Empire group' of subjects. In the case of Mackinder, it was not so much the content of his 'good cause' that was the main problem, but the fact that he regarded instruction and special pleading as justified in its furtherance. Thus one of his articles was entitled 'The teaching of geography from the imperial point of view and the use which could and should be made of visual instruction' (1911b).

From the late 1960s, geographical educationists also became more preoccupied with the educational component of their work. The concept of managing the curriculum loomed large, and process increasingly took precedence over content, a situation not confined to this country (Buchmann, 1982). By the 1980s the trend of in-service training was away from higher degree courses in institutions of higher education, and towards shorter, more practical and 'relevant' provision, often provided by local authorities, and which could be afforded by schools. Again this provision was heavily process-based.

In the build-up to the national curriculum, the polarisation of the debate predictably meant that the drafts of the subject working groups would receive a bad press. The Geography Working Group sought to reintroduce a distinctive place geography; but initial responses concluded that this merely harked back to an anachronism: a

descriptive and nationalistic regional geography. In the broader context, suspicions of official prescription were not difficult to justify. But it can be argued that the final geography programmes of study of the national curriculum were less politicised than, say, the materials of the National Curriculum Council's cross-curricular theme documents, such as *Citizenship Education*, *Health Education* and *Education for Economic and Industrial Understanding*. Here nationalistic undertones were readily discernible, and there was a strong whiff of instruction (Marsden, 1993). The global dimension was conspicuous by its absence (Marsden, 1992b). Like the imperialists of old, right-wing politicians and members of so-called 'think-tanks' sought to revive a curriculum that was utilitarian and merely informational in content, instructional in terms of educational processes, and nationalistic in its social purposes.

An important factor leading to the impoverishment of the curriculum debate in the 1980s and the 1990s (Rawling, 1993) has undoubtedly been this polarisation of educational discussion. Progressive geographical educationists have felt obliged to align themselves in ideological solidarity with their professional peers, with whom in more nuanced interchanges they might not otherwise have concurred. If the government supported content, then educationists had to support process, rather than engage in more differentiated debate about the nature of the balance between the two. Increasingly they tended to equate a subject-based curriculum with a constricting government policy, and not to appraise it on broader criteria. So that instead of a constructive resolution of tensions aimed at achieving a new synthesis, energies were devoted to unconstructive polemics and the buck-passing of opposing forces. The politicisation in turn generated a debilitating anti-intellectualism. More specifically, it distracted the attention of geographical educationists away from the exciting developments at the frontiers of geography.

There is not space to analyse these development here (Marsden, 1995, pp. 12–17), but significant texts over the 1986–96 period included Stoddart's *On Geography and its History* (1986), Bird's *The Changing Worlds of Geography* (1989), Gregory and Walford's *Horizons in Human Geography* (1989), Johnston's *A Question of Place* (1991), Livingstone's *The Geographical Tradition* (1992), Unwin's *The Place of Geography* (1992), Buttimer's *Geography and the Human Spirit* (1993), and Agnew, Livingstone and Rogers' *Human Geography: An essential anthology* (1996), leaving aside those in physical geography. Suffice to say that unlike the paradigms of the 1960s and 1970s, which for all their valuable stimulus embodied a retreat from the distinctive core of geography, some influential recent trends look for a return to differentiated place study, permeating issues into places, in a distinctively geographical approach, rather than places into issues, where the distinctiveness is blurred.

### **Conclusion: on putting the geography back into geographical education**

On the face of it these are hopeful tendencies, with developers at the frontiers and in the national curriculum regarding place as the distinctive core of geography. There would seem to be the possibility of university geographers and teachers being on converging tracks. But as we have seen, while the tracks of today may be converging, there is a chasm of non-contact between which is difficult to bridge.

In the academic domain, the Walford and Haggett article 'Geography and geographical education' (1995) is a harbinger of movement in the right direction. Similarly, the council for British Geography (COBRIG) was established in 1988 to advance the interests of geography, and is made up of all the main organisations of geographers and geographical educationists in Britain. Prominent among its initiatives in the educational context has been the recent COBRIG-inspired *Geography into the Twenty-First Century* (Rawling and Daugherty, (1996)), which has at its heart the central issue to which this article has been addressed: putting the

geography back into geographical education. This offers the basis of a fruitful agenda as represented, among other things, in Haggett's delineation of 'the central and cherished aspects of geographical education: a love of landscape and of field exploration, a fascination with place, a wish to solve the spatial conundrums posed by spatial configurations' (Haggett, 1996, p. 17); in Johnston's advocacy of a refreshed, dynamic, and distinctive place geography (pp. 73-4); and in Jackson's concern for developing sensitivity to place connections at a variety of scales (p. 91); or, as Allen and Massey have put it:

*'We live local versions of the world and in so doing we have to locate ourselves within a wider global context. We only understand the changes taking place in our own backyard when we begin to understand how changes taking place elsewhere affect our world' (1995, p. 1)*

Where this author is possibly less optimistic than Rawling and Daugherty, is in seeing the key influences in putting geography back into geographical education as not only academic geographers, or geography teachers in school, but geographical educationists, not clearly identified in *Geography into the Twenty-First Century* as a distinct group. There is not in fact a robust interface between academic geographers and teachers, except perhaps at sixth form level, where there is some identity of interest as between cognate phases. The most active GA branches are generally those offering sixth-form lectures from university geographers. Further down, the interface is stronger between geographical educationists and geography teachers, through initial teacher education and in-service courses, in which the emphasis on curriculum planning schemes rather than clarifying and updating subject content was reinforced by the more immediate attention demanded by government obsession with teacher assessment and the public grading of schools. Bearing in mind the pressures on teachers in the primary and lower secondary phases, it is unrealistic to expect them actively to peruse the research literature. But should this not be expected of geographical educationists? A key factor therefore is their commitment to keeping up-to-date with what is happening in the discipline. This would not seem, however, at present to be a priority, the ideological thrust still being directed towards educational processes and social education issues rather than to reviving subject content.

As already noted geographical educationists and, to a lesser extent, geography teachers, now occupy the positions once dominated by academic geographers in the counsels of the GA. The academic world is meanwhile preoccupied with research assessment exercises (RAE) (Unwin, 1996, p. 23), and with perennial issues of identity, for there still exists an internal lack of coherence within the discipline, a serious matter for schools in that students are recruited to teacher education courses with wildly different concepts of the nature of geography (Barratt Hacking, 1996; Walford, 1996).

Another major anxiety is that if the journal of the GA no longer ranks as a leading academic outlet for research articles, it will indeed, as Wooldridge prophesied (1955), be used only by university geographers as a last resort, if at all. Can we sense him turning in his grave? For *Geography* currently makes explicit its commitment to materials of likely interest to teachers, rather than as an outlet for fundamental research articles. It may be that university geographers, for some years an endangered species in the GA, are now almost at the point of non-sustainability in terms of the critical mass needed to serve the subject in schools through that organisation. Hopefully not but, if so, it is surely the compensating duty of geographical educationists and geography teachers to ensure that geography itself is conserved. Yet here too, staff in university departments of education are under similar RAE pressures and are showing decreasing interest in the GA and its activities. Contributions to *Teaching Geography* and *Primary Geographer* count for little in these circumstances.

Wooldridge sometimes overstated his case, misguidedly polarised issues (in a manner to which we have latterly become accustomed), and aggressively denigrated the role of pedagogy in geographical education. He was surely correct in principle, however, in appreciating that the educational process and social purposes components can become over-dominant; in demanding a distinctively geographical input into school geography; and in highlighting the GA's responsibilities in that endeavour. He therefore offered a cautionary anticipation of what we may now be losing, that is an authentic and freshly-cooked geography, consumed 'straight from the oven'. No doubt the subject will remain in school curricula, but of what import if in the form of what a nineteenth-century novelist rejected as 'ragged scraps' and 'thrice-boiled essence', hardly fit for consumption? (Gissing, 1894).

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