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Geography and Development: Development education in schools and the part played by geography teachers

David Lambert and John Morgan



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Preface

This research report is the third in a series undertaken by colleagues associated with the Development Education Research Centre at the Institute of Education, University of London. It is produced in partnership with the Geographical Association. Its purpose is to discuss the role of school geography teaching development issues. It raises major questions about how understanding of global development questions is taught within the schools and suggests there is a need for a more critically reflective approach towards the teaching of geography within schools.

This report is part of discussions and research taking place within the Research Centre on learning and understanding about development within education. In our view there has been too little discussions about what is meant by development in the discourses in and around development education.

Douglas Bourn

Director, Development Education Research Centre

Executive Summary

The focus of this paper is the role of school geography in teaching about development issues. In the light of recent moves to stress the importance of 'traditional' subjects in the school curriculum, it is timely to consider what knowledge and understanding of development is offered to students through curriculum subjects such as geography, which is one of the key sources of knowledge about development issues. The paper, written by two geography educators, takes a reflective and self-critical approach. In particular, the paper seeks to consider the criticism frequently levelled at geography teachers that the subject adopts an anti-educational and 'growth sceptical' view of development. After an initial discussion of the theoretical stances the field of 'development geography' has taken in recent years, the paper examines the types of knowledge encouraged in exam specifications and textbooks. It argues that there is some evidence that school geography serves to promote an ideological view of development issues. In particular, it suggests that students are denied access to a wide range of theoretical viewpoints and perspectives, are left with an ahistorical and simplistic understanding of the development process, and encouraged to accept positive ideas about 'Aid' and 'Fair Trade' without first examining them in a rigorous or critical fashion. The paper suggests that this ideological approach, which is largely perpetuated through 'unexamined discourse', leaves students with an unrealistic understanding of development and calls upon teachers to 'make the theoretical effort' to reconfigure teaching of this topic.

The implication is that geography teachers, who play an important role in furthering development education in English schools, need support, encouragement and some reflective space in which to develop and refine their subject knowledge in this field.

1

Introduction: Reading this paper in context

Before embarking into the main contents of this paper, which is a critical discussion of school geography and development education, we need to address some definitions and the broad policy context in order to help orient the reader to some of the challenges identified in the paper. Of fundamental concern here is the status of development education, and how it is regarded by those that matter in education policy circles and the Department for International Development (DFID).

To some extent the territory has been brought into focus through an influential critique from Civitas (Whelan 2007), subsequently elaborated by Alex Standish (2009), which points to the lack of distinction between education and propaganda in the school curriculum, and the ease with which the curriculum can be corrupted or diminished by political or other motives. We say 'influential' because it is likely that it is this argument that has reinforced one of the key messages in the 2010 education White Paper, to return the school curriculum to traditional subjects and their 'essential' contents. Whilst we open up this discussion to some degree in the paper, it is worth making the additional point here that DFID also recognises the distinction between development education and *support* for development as is often sought by NGOs in the development sector such as Oxfam, ActionAid and War on Want. In 2010 DFID had allocated around £14m on 'development awareness' which was seen as highly controversial by an incoming government committed to value for money in a context of extreme financial stringency. Some projects were subsequently cancelled and the very need for development education put under review: the case for a development education programme in schools was finally agreed by DFID in late 2011.

Development education according to DFID consists of "activity that aims to inform individuals and to enhance the public's ability to make critical judgments about globalization and development." (COI 2011 p.27). This report goes on to say: "Note that this [education] is not the same as support" (ibid p 3). It concludes that although impossible to prove, a persuasive case can be made that raising awareness of development issues (i.e. through education) has contributed to reducing poverty overseas. This is a very significant conclusion for a ministry under intense pressure to spend a large, protected budget wisely and in a way that is fit for purpose (i.e. reducing global poverty). It is also interesting in a context where there are calls for the national curriculum to focus on 'traditional' subjects. We regard it as important that those who teach geography have some responsibility to think hard about its role and purposes, not least in relation to development education. This paper aims to make a contribution to this thinking.

As we demonstrate in this paper, economic development can be regarded as an established and deeply embedded idea in school geography. 'Development' as a topic became mainstream in secondary school geography during the 1970s and 1980s, and was written into the National Curriculum statutory orders for geography

in 1991. As John Hopkin points out in his historical overview of geography and development education (Hopkin 1994), with the national curriculum all pupils were required to study an 'economically developing country'. The then Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Clarke, described geography thus:

"Geography has a fundamental relevance to young people because it relates to many aspects of their lives and the environment in which they are growing up ... study at regional, national, international and global level is required as ... all are vital for pupils' understanding of the increasingly complex interdependent global village in which we live" (Clarke 1992 p.28-30)

This is a strong frame for development education in geography. However, despite this aspiration the First National Curriculum was widely agreed to have been framed in a somewhat restricted manner (Graves et al 1991; Lambert 2004) and Hopkin's judgement was that the wider world view that pupils in this age group would develop through geography lessons would be 'at best partial' (op cit p 70). This was largely because the curriculum made certain selections for teachers, in effect providing a 'short list' from which to select a single country study of economic disadvantage. There was no rationale for the list, although in the Programme of Study, where it stated that children should be taught to 'evaluate the extent to which the country displays the characteristics of development' the implicit justification was clear: these are countries of the South with low per capita incomes. But perhaps significantly, the very poorest nations do not make the 'short list'.

This paper examines some of the assumptions that underpin how 'development' is understood in school geography and the implications of teaching with such an implicit, yet apparently fixed 'us and them' view of the world. To stress the teaching of development as a contested issue from the outset illustrates our approach to writing this paper, and the spirit in which we hope it will be read. Our challenge is to conceptualise the practice of teaching geography in a way that does justice to the *educational potential* of the subject, which means paying due regard to the emergence of 'development' as a content area that is anything but straightforward.

That teaching development geography well is challenging has long been realised. For example, John Bale's report for the Geographical Association (Bale 1983), written at a time when geography's place looked somewhat insecure in the early stages of the formation of a national curriculum. It was commissioned by the GA in order to clarify and help teachers with meanings, content selection and pedagogy (though it was not called that then). It was informed by some very important contemporary work by David Wright (1983) and David Hicks (1981) and was *meant* to be challenging to teachers. This work from this period has had impact: geography textbooks are no longer explicitly 'racist'; and the majority of geography teachers are alert to the dangers of simple stereotyping and the misuse of images. But it is nevertheless instructive to read the title of Bale's publication: specialist geography teachers are now alert to the not so hidden assumptions behind the 'Third World' as a designated term and it is doubtful that many

geography teachers now use this term without qualification. Our point is not to display some kind of 'political correctness' for its own sake but to emphasise the point that at no time can geography teachers afford to settle on a particular viewpoint or way to interpret the world. Just as the meaning of development can be contested, geography too continues to be made and remade. Geography is about the contemporary world and how we interpret or make sense of it. The world continues to change, and so does our sense of it, as we bring new perspectives and understandings through which to frame our gaze.

Our understandings continually develop and in no topic is this more evident than in the field of development. Geographers have contributed to the critique of established orthodoxies (such as 'the third world') *and* to the design of new frameworks and ways of interpreting observable 'facts' like shanty town or 'subsistence' farming. Geographers do not work in isolation of course and much of this critique and design is in part a product of engaging with ground breaking ideas from the realms of other disciplines, like economics or political science: we can cite the self-evident impact of Amartya Sen's development economics which has changed how poverty is understood using tools such as the Human Development Index, and Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism* which in a post-colonial world stressed the importance of seeing things from the perspectives of 'others'. Bill Marsden has frequently pointed out that one of the great benefits of having subjects frame the school curriculum is that they are connected to the wider academic disciplines which, independent of government and propaganda machines such as NGOs or the press, develop powerful knowledge of the world (see, for example, Marsden 1997). Schoolteachers have the task of inducting children and young people into this space of reason (Backhurst 2011). It is vital, according to this logic, for schoolteachers of geography to be in some way engaged with the wider disciplinary advances in the field: it is inadequate to imagine modern school geography consisting entirely of a fixed body of knowledge.

Our aim, in this paper, is address advances in our thinking about development in school geography, paying special attention to the contribution of geography the discipline, and geographers. We are critical of syllabus specifications and portrayals of development in school textbooks, which makes for a challenging, but we hope lively and, in the end, optimistic read.

When the bell goes we have to teach, ready or not. Some may argue that teachers have to prepare lessons for what is going to be tested and examined – and that is hard enough without worrying about 'the theory' or taking a critical standpoint on what to teach. Some may even argue that young people are not ready, intellectually, to deal with change, challenge and uncertainty and that the complexities we uncover in this paper are too distracting. Indeed, one of the authors remembers an 'inset day' with heads of geography during which 'images of the world' were explored - explicitly to shake up pupils' conceptions of the 'third world'. He was told, in no uncertain terms, that before pupils in his school could discuss that, they have to be taught 'what the third world is'. There was no irony meant, but the comment shows how deeply problematic it is for all of us the

notion of how to teach in a way that maintains or promotes open mindedness, or an outward looking viewpoint to the world. This is a particular issue for teachers of geography, as we aim to show in this paper.

It may be helpful delving into these debates to have in mind a concept of geography education not as an end in itself but as a means to an end. Again, this is a well-established point (see for example Frances Slater's notion of 'learning through geography' [Slater 1983] leading to formulations of geography as a 'medium of education'), but sometimes difficult to hold on to. It is this formulation that underpins the Geographical Association's 2009 'manifesto', knowingly called *A Different View* implying that the point of acquiring and developing geographical knowledge is to enable us to see the world in new ways (GA 2009). This leads David Lambert (2011) to frame school geography in terms of the 'capabilities' it develops in pupils. Just as in development economics, where poverty for example is seen to be significant in terms of how it deprives individuals of certain capabilities, education can be analysed in terms of its contribution to individuals' capability to understand and function effectively in the world. Here, capability implies a mix of knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions, and if geography can contribute to capability, any young person without geography as part of their general education could be considered to be uneducated and thus ill-prepared to function in a global society. They would lack *knowledge* and the capacity to *make meaning* geographically; this in turn impairs their capability¹. By capability we mean human agency, which is diminished without the acquisition of enabling world knowledge and the capacity to think creatively and critically about society and environment - and entering the lifelong conversation about 'being at home on planet earth'.

Overview of the paper

The following chapter considers how development education has evolved as a distinctive 'adjectival' study, and how this is related to the work of geography teachers in schools. Development education emerged in the wake of the end of empire and the immigration of peoples from Britain's former colonies. The widespread re-evaluation of colonial projects led to a questioning of the assumptions about life in the so-called 'developing world' contained in school curricula and textbooks. Traditional approaches to history and geography were critiqued as reflecting imperialistic and Eurocentric perspectives. This led to the emergence of world studies, development education and global education, which specialised in developing alternative approaches and pedagogies. Some of the most interesting developments in geography teaching can be related to these strands of work.

Chapter three offers a short review of geography's treatment of 'development' as a theme. Historically, geography has clearly involved the study of regions and countries. However, it was not until the 1960s that a distinctive sub-field

1 This framework has guided the Geographical Association's 2001 'geography curriculum consultation', designed to influence government and teachers alike in the way geography is articulated in the national curriculum: www.geography.org.uk/getinvolved/geographycurriculumconsultation

of geographical study, 'development geography', was established. Since then, development geography has been subject to the succession of 'paradigms' that have influenced the discipline as a whole. Development geography's contribution was to assert the importance of a spatial dimension to the processes of development and economic modernization. There was a concern to measure and map the levels of development. There were early critiques of this approach which were based on the discipline's acceptance of models and theories from neoclassical economics. Against this, 'radical' geographers argued that levels of development were closely linked to events in the global economy as a whole, and the differences in levels of development should be understood as part of an active process of underdevelopment. There was a focus on the importance of interdependence. Feminist geographers pointed to the way in which gendered assumptions were built into development projects, and there were moves to highlight the perspectives of indigenous peoples. It is important to recognise the tension between policy-oriented studies and more critical forms of geographical work which questioned the assumptions of development. In the light of continuing and widening disparities, the concept of development itself was challenged, leading to the advent of post-development geographies, which are linked to the geographies of post-colonialism, and sustainable development.

Chapter Four focuses on the types of knowledge about development that are required by students taking public examinations in geography at GCSE, AS and A Level through specifications, textbooks and exam questions. Based upon a selection of such evidence it argues that the choice of case studies and the use to which they are put, the language and unexamined ideas that frame the topics and the reasoning that is expected in examination questions all diminish what we regard would be an 'educated' response to development issues. This perhaps is the most challenging chapter for it forces us to confront the 'realpolitik' of the classroom. It is very important, we think, for teachers (and students) to resist the tempting pact, simply to teach to the text (test). To do this requires belief in the notion that a deeper understanding helps students perform better in the test (as well as become more capable individuals). It would surely be cynical to believe anything else. And yet, it is well documented (e.g. Stobart 2008) that in high stakes assessment systems (and there are few more high stakes than the system in England) teachers behave cautiously, looking for low risk course specifications, predictable examinations - and preferably with a textbook written by the examiner.

Chapter Five takes the form of a brief conclusion which stresses the need for geographical education to offer a theoretically informed and intellectually robust account of 'development'. This is a call that puts 'curriculum making' activity at the centre of teachers' work. Curriculum making, according to Lambert and Morgan (2011:51), is a term that recognizes the intensely practical nature of teachers' work at the same time as acknowledging the need for teachers to intellectually engage, as knowledge workers. Subject resources are one source of intellectual engagement for geography teachers which when used effectively can enrich and deepen development education.

2

Geography teaching and development

In schools in England and Wales, Geography is one of the most important sources available to pupils for gaining knowledge and understanding of development issues. This role was established from the earliest stages of school geography at the turn of the 19th century, when teaching served to tell Britain's Imperial subjects about 'their' place in the world. Inevitably this means that the development of school geography has been linked to broader changes in how the relationship between Britain the 'rest of the world' is conceptualised.

For instance, it almost goes without saying that geography played a part in Britain's Imperial past. Research on early school geography textbooks has highlighted the derogatory representations of 'other' peoples. One of the 'Founding Fathers' of Geography, Sir Halford Mackinder called for teachers to place Britain at the centre of an Imperial world: 'Let all our teaching be from the British standpoint', and the achievements of Empire were to be celebrated: 'The gaining of so extensive a territory by Britain is one of the greatest miracles of history' (cited in O Tuathail, 1996). The trend at the end of the 1800s was to emphasize the differences between races. There was an acceptance of the achievements of other civilizations in adapting to and managing to live in 'intemperate' climes (though the 'negro' race was less likely to be complimented).

However, the simple argument that geography as a school subject served to propagate and reproduce 'imperialist' ideologies is complicated by the recognition that from at least the early 1920s there were distinct moves away from the racial imaginaries that had informed geographical thinking in the 19th century, in the form of environmental determinism. This was achieved through a concern with recognizing common links and early forms of 'global citizenship' expressed in the idea of 'international understanding'. Geographers who travelled in the colonies and beyond came back with a measure of respect for how life was lived in different (often intemperate) environments, and this was reflected in geographical 'readers' produced for school children.

In the post-Second World War period there was more focus on development and environment. All of this was framed within a regional geography approach in which 'numerous bulky, regional geographies of the non-western world were published'. These were related to Britain's own histories in relation to these areas, and opportunities to travel. Each expedition allowed for the writing about previously undocumented space. These were what Marcus Power (2000) has called 'Colonial geographies of modernity'.

From the 1950s academic geography experienced a 'scientific turn', which was based on a critique of descriptive 'regional' approaches. The criticisms of the 'regional method' revolved around the fact that there were no formal rules for recognizing, defining, delimiting or describing the region, and that regional

approaches were seen as focusing on the unique, and failing to identify more general laws governing development in all regions. The 'new' geography that came to replace the descriptive regional approach was concerned to produce more general models of development that were underpinned by ideas of 'modernization'. In effect, these divided the world into 'modern' and 'traditional' societies and saw that the path of development would lead to modernization. Geographers were interested in the spatial patterns of development which could be measured through indicators of development. Examples of such modernization included the move towards large urban centres, agricultural modernization schemes and transport systems. Geographers' contribution to this was to map the modernization process and develop the spatial aspects of modernization theories. School textbooks were filled with ideas of writers such as Rostow, Myrdal and Friedman all of whom were writing about how to resolve the problem of the uneven development of capitalist economies. However, part of the familiar story of school geography in the post-war period is its tendency to focus on spatial patterns rather than explore the social processes that help to shape them. The effect of prioritising such 'geographical theories of development' was that they tended to ignore the economic, social and political circuits of which development is part.

From the late 1950s, the process of 'de-colonization' and a widespread re-evaluation of Britain's Imperial past, along with a growing awareness of economic inequalities and environmental problems led, in the 1970s, to the rise of the World Studies movement, which itself was part of a broader set of 'adjectival studies' which sought to challenge the 'nationalist' frameworks found in school subjects such as Geography, History and English. These new subjects were regarded as particular fertile ground for the work of campaigning NGOs such as Oxfam, Action Aid and so on, all of whom had strong links with the growing network, from the mid-1970s, of Development Education Centres.

World Studies in schools challenged 'traditional' geographical approaches to development. It tended to operate with a much broader sense of what development means, was infused by NGO thinking and new pedagogical approaches, and was more politically aligned, working out of and developing the tradition of values education. There was an explicit concern to 'teach for a better world'. In many respects they sought to promote an alternative conception of development, one which recognised the voices and experiences of people in the 'Third World'. They were part of an 'anti-development' critique which eventually led to the rise of global perspectives in the school curriculum.

Whilst these 'adjectival studies' found it difficult to gain a foothold in the curriculum during the 1990s with the advent of a 'restorationist' national curriculum, the election of a New Labour government, intent on establishing and supporting Citizenship Education within schools, allowed for a resurgence of concerns about global citizenship and Education for Sustainable Development.

These developments mean that, in the 'long decade' of New Labour government, geography teaching in schools has become increasingly concerned with the study

of global issues; and the global dimension is evident in schools. However, it is perhaps ironic that this has not been accompanied by an increased breadth of studies of places. In a recent (and well publicised) critique, Alex Standish argues that this is because teaching about global issues in geography has become more concerned with promulgating particular moralistic values rather than learning geographical knowledge. He argues that the 'anti-development' arguments of the 1980s have moved to centre stage in geography teaching as part of a wider loss of faith in the project of Western modernity. For Standish, the 'developmentalist' perspective whereby each nation-state is pursuing its path to industrialization and modernity is rarely found in school geography, where the desirability of large-scale development is frequently questioned:

"Instead, Western anxiety over environmental limits and socio-political unrest, projected on to the developing world, has become the main prism through which development is viewed" (p.137).

This leads to a focus on 'sustainable development' – the problem with this for Standish is that it places industrialization and *real* development off the agenda. Instead of building dams to provide large-scale irrigation to modernize farming, sustainable development seeks to sustain the life they have, rather than transform it. This is a limiting and limited ambition for Standish.

"...frequently global issues have become divorced from the geographical and political context in which they arose. Instead of seeking to understand the problems faced by people in their physical and human settings they are reinterpreted as problems we in the West should have a stake in. In place of trying to understand the lives of individuals in situ and the challenges they face, global issues become viewed from a Western perspective. In the classroom students are encouraged to make a connection with these global issues and evaluate their personal values and behaviour according to Western ethics of environmental conservation, cultural tolerance, social justice, empathy and human rights instead of political rights. But it is important to recognise that this is not geography. The only insight it provides is into the misanthropic nature of contemporary Western society and how its values are being exported across the world" (Standish 2009:153).

Whilst geography educators have been quick to challenge Standish's arguments, it is worth reflecting that his arguments about how development is taught in schools are the strongest part of his analysis. As we will argue later in this paper, 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. We think it is possible to argue that many geography lessons in schools are underpinned by a world-view based on what Daniel Ben-Ami calls 'Growth scepticism':

"Growth scepticism. *The tendency to see economic growth and popular prosperity as problematic. It usually involves an indirect attack on the benefits*

of growth or prosperity. For example, growth can be seen as damaging the environment, causing inequality or bringing unhappiness. Typically, growth sceptics suggest there are various limits – natural, social and moral – to economic growth. Alternatively they advocate a goal of well-being which involves humans seeking to achieve various ‘capabilities’, by which they mean the freedom to achieve various lifestyles. Such a therapeutic approach involves a substantial downgrading of the importance attached to economic growth” (Ben-Ami 2010:11).

This is the position that school geography today faces. There are strong arguments that school geography tends to support positions of ‘soft’ development or growth scepticism, and that the curriculum has become subject to the promotion of what Marsden calls ‘good causes’ (see Morgan 2011 ch 1 for an extended discussion). Recent moves (for example in the 2010 White Paper *The Importance of Teaching*) to argue for essential or ‘core knowledge’ are in part a reaction to this tendency. This raises the question of what knowledge and understanding of ‘development’ children should be taught in school geography.

3

From Development Geography to geographies of development

“A descriptive term for the process or transformation through which the poorer countries of the world achieve the standards of living experienced in the so-called developed countries of the West” (Jones 2006:62)

The previous chapter argued that there is an established tradition of teaching about development in school geography. However, when we look at the ways in which geographers think about, study and write about development, a complicated picture emerges. This is closely linked to important changes in the theoretical frameworks or paradigms that influence geography as a field of study.

The definition of development offered by the geographer Andrew Jones in his *Dictionary of Globalization* is one that many geography educators will broadly accept. At the same time, the definition has some ‘warning signs’. The most telling of these signs is ‘so-called developed countries’, because it signals that there are some doubts about whether the ‘standards of living’ do in fact lead to desirable development. Some people might want to replace the economically derived term ‘standards of living’ with a broader notion of ‘quality of life’. This questioning of the economic basis of development then raises issues about the use of the term ‘poorer countries’. Jones’ definition is a good starting point, but it is written in a way that hints at other interpretations.

In many ways, this is an example of the broad trajectory of geographical debates about development. As Harold Brookfield (1975) argued in his book *Interdependent Development*, the field of development was based in economic models of progress. Geographers who became interested in development saw their role as describing and modeling the spatial aspects of the development process. Geographers sought to identify indicators of modernization or development, and then record and map the spread of these features. The general approach was based on the idea of modernization theory whereby each individual nation-state was assumed to be on a pathway to development, defined as the transition from traditional to modern societies. The classic statement of this position, and one that was commonly taught in geography lessons was Rostow’s model of economic growth. Geographers recognised that the rate of development differed both between nation-states (hence ideas of more and less developed countries) and within states (the notion of growth and backward regions).

This type of modernization theory is still influential. However, from the 1970s geographers were influenced by criticisms of this approach. These criticisms included the determinism that seemed to suggest that development simply unfolded across economic space; the tendency to ignore the historical and geographical distinctiveness of Third World societies; and the sense that these

models of economic modernization were an uncritical celebration of European and North American achievements.

Geographers were engaged with arguments about the production of society and space linked with radical or structural explanations. Important here were the works of scholars based in Latin America who took a rather different view of the development project. Dependency theory emerged as a series of critical reflections on the historical experience of the peripheral peoples of the world. It sought to explain continued economic backwardness in Latin America. The Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) was established in 1948 and throughout the 1950s developed a distinctive explanation of development under its director Raul Prebisch. This argument was that although the theory of comparative advantage suggested that there should be advantages for all countries in specialization, this failed to happen because of monopoly conditions in the economic advanced countries. The terms of trade were fixed against those countries involved in the extraction of primary products. Dependency theory took up this analysis and asserted that underdevelopment was not an original condition to be overcome by closer integration of the world economy, but as a process brought about by that integration. For English readers the classic statement was provided by Andre Gunder Frank who argued that development in Latin America is hindered by the expansion of capitalist development and that this expansion is the cause of underdevelopment, or as he put it 'the development of underdevelopment'. He argued that development and underdevelopment are opposite sides of the same coin, and that both are the necessary outcome and manifestation of the contradictions of the capitalist system of development. The condition of developing countries is not the outcome of inertia, misfortune, chance, climate change, etc. but a reflection of how they are incorporated into the global capitalist system. Dependency theorists argue that the dominant capitalist powers encouraged the transformation of political and economic structures in order to serve their interests. Colonial territories were organised to produce primary products at minimal cost, simultaneously becoming a market for industrial products. Surplus value was siphoned off from poor to rich regions, and from the developing world to the developed world.

In an important statement, Corbridge (1986) provided a critique of what he saw as the 'impasse of radical development geography', which he criticised on grounds of its oppositionism, determinism, spatial over-aggregation and epistemological confrontation:

- radical development geography tends to see things in 'black and white': capitalism either promotes development by definition or it promotes underdevelopment by definition. There is little space for a middle ground;
- although it rejects the idea of environmental determinism, radical development geography tends to suggest that what happens in a place is the outcome of its location within the structures of a powerful global system;

- The world tends to be divided up into distinct blocks, whether these are 'North' and 'South', or 'core' and 'periphery'. Again, there is little recognition of the diversity of places;
- Radical development geography has been characterized by an arrogance and contempt for other theories about development. It tends simply to replace one perspective on the world with another.

These structural explanations of underdevelopment were challenged, in the 1980s, by the emergence of a focus on 'alternative models of development' promoted by NGOs and pressure groups. These approaches stress the things that can be done to achieve locally sensitive, endogenous and ecologically sustainable forms of development. In particular, in human geography there tended to be a focus on small scale case studies, a concern with the role of indigenous peoples in the process of development, and recognition of the gendered aspects of development.

The 1990s and 2000s were marked by the emergence within human geography of a concern with questions of representation and discourse. Development is perhaps the archetypal modern project, one which seeks to offer a template for how societies should organize themselves. Such 'grand narratives' are seen as totalizing or insensitive to difference. Thus, geographers influenced by postmodernism and the cultural turn would argue that development is a discourse that needs to be deconstructed.

So, where does this leave us? It is important to note that contemporary human geography recognizes that the meaning of the term 'development' cannot be defined once and for all. Instead, following Raymond William's argument in *Keywords* (1976), it is important to recognise the changing and contested nature of the term. As the argument in the next section of this paper will suggest, such sensitivity to language and meaning is not generally a feature of geographical teaching about development in schools. The following table offers definitions of development taken from recent texts on development geography and provides short interpretive comments. These give a sense of the nuanced ways in which geography as a subject discusses 'development'.

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| <p><i>“Development” itself is a complex, contradictory and powerful term that takes on particular meanings in the context of specific intellectual, institutional and political moments. Particular definitions of development have been invoked to justify and design material and political interventions that have transformed livelihoods, relocated the course of rivers, redrawn national boundaries, reworked governance across a range of scales and even changed people’s perceptions of themselves. In this book, we will not search for the ‘right’ definition of development, but rather, we will look at what these various ideas about what development mean. For a particular meaning of development we will ask, whose version of development is this? What political work is it doing? And who does it include or leave out of the development project. (Neumann 2008, p.1)</i></p> | <p>This statement shows something of the ways in which geographers discuss development. It reminds us that there is no single, once-and-for-all meaning to the term, and that we need to pay attention to the specific contexts in which development is used. But at the same time this statement makes clear that this is not simply about clever ‘word games’: development has impacts on the material world and on people’s lives. When there are claims to bring about development, there is politics at work, and the role of the critically attuned geographer is to ask questions about the particular ways in which development is used. Who uses this term and for what purposes? And whose perspectives are excluded or left out?</p> |
| <p><i>“Little consensus exists around the meaning of this heavily contested term yet most if not all leaders of the world’s many nation states and international organisations claim to be pursuing this objective in some way. This book seeks to show that, by contrast, the strength of the term comes directly from its power to seduce, to please, to fascinate, to set dreaming, but also from its power to deceive and turn away from the truth. Development is nearly always seen as something that is possible, if only people or countries follow through a series of stages or prescribed instructions”. (Power 2000 p.1)</i></p> | <p>This statement once more draws our attention to the contested nature of the term development, but also suggests that it this ‘slipperiness’ which gives the concept its power. It is a term that can move people to imagine new ways of living, can recruit them to projects to bring about development. This means we have to look carefully at the ‘discourses’ or ‘world-views’ that underpin discussions of development. In practice, this statement seems to suggest, development is almost always a set of steps or ‘blueprints’, which are likely to unravel as they meet the hard ground of people’s lived lives in places.</p> |
| <p><i>“Globalization and regionalization are overtaking the standard unit of development, the nation or society. The conventional agent of development, the state, is being overtaken by the role of international institutions and market forces. The classic aim of development, modernization or catching up with advanced countries, is in question because modernization is no longer an obvious ambition. Modernity no longer seems so attractive in view of ecological problems, the consequences of technological change and many other problems. Westernization no longer seems</i></p> | <p>This statement argues that the whole project of studying the ‘geography of development’ may be misplaced in a world where there are complex ‘scalar’ shifts around globalization and regionalization. In short, the traditional focus of development geography on individual nation-states is no longer useful in a world where decisions are made elsewhere. In addition, this statement seems to suggest that the ‘modernist’ approach of development geography, based on notions of</p> |

continued

table continued from p18

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| <p><i>attractive in a time of local culture and cultural diversity. Several development decades have not measured up to expectations, especially in Africa and parts of Latin America and South Asia. The foundation of development studies – that developing countries form a special case – has been undermined by the politics of structural adjustment and the universalist claims of neoclassical economics”. (Pieterse 2010 p.1)</i></p> | <p>progress and improvement, has been undermined by the realisation of environmental degradation and cultural imperialism. In short, this statement suggests, development – and by extension the development geography – is in crisis.</p> |
| <p><i>“..The focus [of this book] is not on the meta-geographies of globalization, urbanisation, industrialisation, democratisation, and so forth..The book explores the details and minutiae of local lives and livelihoods and the local structures and processes that create such everyday lives and which are, in turn, created by them. This is not to overlook the important role played by national and international actors, structures and processes. The intention, rather, is to begin with the local and the everyday and, in that way, to avoid the tendency to see and explain local outcomes as the result of overarching meta-processes. In ‘theorizing up’ in this way the hope is to realign the balance of understanding and to avoid portraying people as ‘victims’ and locality as the mere state on which meta-processes of globalization are worked out”. (Rigg, 2007 p.7)</i></p> | <p>Following on from the argument that the modernist project of development geography is no longer appropriate, this statement seeks to shift the scale of study to the local or the scale of the ‘everyday’. The grand concepts that end in ‘-ization’ do not capture the colour and feel of lives lived in cities, factories and communities and it is the job of the geographer to focus on these everyday realities, to understand the perspectives of the people in places, and then to make links to the broader contexts that enable and constrain their lives.</p> |
| <p><i>“Although many geographers have re-emphasised the importance of place in the globalization dimension of development, T.G. McGee would argue that most geographers continue ‘to interrogate the development project from within the modernist project in the liberal belief that good research can provide workable solutions’. What constitutes the heart of this approach is that geographical investigation is rooted in an empiricism which focuses on the interaction of society and environment, on networks and flows of people and goods, on uneven and unequal development and, most important in all these contexts, on the nature of local places. All of these factors, according to McGee, place development geography firmly within the humanist tradition”. Potter et al. (1999 p.24)</i></p> | <p>Against the ‘postmodern’ approaches which question the very notion of development, which see development as a compromised concept, and which argue that development is a rhetorical construct used by the powerful to order and corral the lives of ordinary people, this statement seeks to cling on to the broadly humanist tradition of development geography which undertakes empirical study of people and places, and which holds to the idea that geographical knowledge can be used to ‘solve problems’, to be ‘a force for good’.</p> |

4

The Language of development in school Geography

In a review of the influential 16-19 Geography Project in the 1980s, Andrew Sayer (1986) commented that examination syllabuses or specifications generally make 'frustrating' reading. This is because they have to offer guidelines for teaching, yet cannot be too restrictive. In practice this tends to lead to rather bland and anodyne statements. However, Sayer suggested, beneath these statements it is possible to discern 'a distinctive approach to geography'. This section is concerned to read the sections on 'development' of a number of current exam specifications in the light of the discussions in the previous two sections. Though this is not meant to be the final word on this matter, we hope that the approach we have taken is indicative of the types of 'ideology critique' necessary to understand what is at stake in these representations. A good starting point is Richard Henley's (1989) article 'The ideology of geographical language'. Henley makes a number of points:

- He takes as his starting point the idea that the language we use is not a transparent reflection of the world or a 'mirror of reality'. Instead, he argues that the language we use is a product of our society. He draws upon the ideas of Raymond Williams who demonstrated how ideas (as reflected in language, literature and art) can never be seen as separate from the society that produced them.
- Henley uses this idea to consider how 'the nature of the language used by geographers...reflects the wider social and economic climate and the dominant ideological formations'. He uses the example of Bradford and Kent's (1977) book *Human Geography: Theories and their application* to show how the language of 'science' dominates school geography. For example, change in cities is explained using metaphors from the biological sciences, whilst economic processes are discussed in terms from the natural sciences, such as slump, trough, or competition. He suggests that this language, although appearing neutral, is 'infused with ideology'.
- The same is true of more 'humanistic' language, such as where pupils are asked to write about their feelings or empathise with others. For Henley, such language risks replacing language that explains why things happen.
- Henley argues that geography teachers need to pay close attention to the language they use in classrooms and reproduce in textbooks, in order to uncover the deep meanings and images the language gives of society.

With Henley's ideas in mind, let us consider some examples of how 'development' is discussed in some of the 'texts' of school geography.

OCR GCSE Geography A (http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gcse/hss/geog_a/index.html) contains a section on 'Trade, Aid and Superpowers'. It states that

"Candidates should be able to explain why some countries are more developed than others, and why there is a large gap between the most and least developed. They should know that there is an imbalance in trade across the globe, and be able to describe some of the reasons for this. Candidates should also know that different types of aid have advantages and disadvantages and that fairer and more effective trade can help countries develop. They should have an understanding of the role/involvement of superpowers".

On the face of it this seems a perfectly reasonable expectation for any student who has studied geography until the age of 16. However, Henley's approach urges us to take seriously the language which is used in this statement. In this statement 'development' is an uncontested term. It is assumed that there can be agreement on what development is, and that having more development is better than having less. With this agreement in mind, the focus is on closing the 'gap', adjusting the imbalance and 'helping' countries develop. The effect of this is to redefine the issue of development as one of 'problem-solving' rather than 'problem-posing', and the solutions to be considered are all concerned with modifying or reforming the existing (global) system rather than pose the question of whether that system may itself generate the 'development gap'. Thus, the solutions are to do with 'aid' and 'fairer trade'. Indeed, the whole problem of the development gap is seen to result from an 'imbalance of trade across the globe'.

The impact of this 'closing down' of the issue of development is to prevent an educated response which understands that there are different perspectives on what development means. The framing of the problem in terms of the global system of trade has the result of suggesting a certain timelessness that fails to recognise the historical construction of the 'development gap'. A 'problem-posing' approach might examine changes in the so-called 'development gap' over time, since this would require some attempt at explanation. However, this is not a stated requirement, and the likely impact is that students will get the impression that the large gap between the most and least developed countries is fixed and immovable. There is no indication in the specification of the range of explanations students might be expected to consider, although the specification does go on to offer a strong hint that the explanation is to do with unfair trade. The answer is that a mix of fair trade and judicious aid is the mechanism for effective development. The specification is, then, firmly fixed in a model of a global economy which is 'unbalanced' and which requires intervention on the part of the more developed countries.

EdExcel's GCSE B (<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/geography/b/Pages/default.aspx>) specification is organised around the key question 'What is meant by 'development'?' and the key idea that 'There is more to development than wealth'.

In answering this question and examining this idea it is expected that candidates will measure economic well-being and quality of life; identify and explain why countries are at different stages of development; consider how development can be affected by aid and learn that some aid is more sustainable than others. Candidates are required to explore how levels of economic well-being and quality of life are measured, consider the advantages and disadvantages of using economic and social indicators and how development has been described and mapped in the past and give an assessment of its validity. In addition, candidates are to consider the 'sustainability' of aid in terms of its economic costs, impacts on the environment and effects on people, and undertake a case study of an aid project in an LEDC.

Again, in reading this specification it is striking how far the representations of development found in geography examination specifications serve to reproduce partial and ideological accounts of the issue. EdExcel's account is underpinned by a general ideology of 'global welfarism' which echoes the mainstream view that there are unacceptable differences in the levels of development between nation states, and that narrowing this gap is desirable. In addition, the specification reflects a form of 'growth scepticism' in that it leads candidates to question the narrow economic definition of development to take in a concern with 'quality of life'. Students are clearly encouraged to see development in wider terms. However, there is a quick move to involve students in measuring and mapping 'levels of development'. Here is a long-standing concern of geography teaching in schools with empiricism and positivism. Once again, the failure to examine critically the very notion of 'development' but simply to 'get on and measure' it results in the quantification of levels of development and the search for solutions in terms of 'aid' from the developed to less developed countries.

Taking these specifications together, we suggest that there are four effects of this on pupils' understanding of development:

- Not being able to relate the parts to the whole – a fragmented view of the world
- A lack of theoretical frameworks or perspectives with which to think about development
- An unreal sense of political agency about development issues
- The promulgation of a set of ideologies about the economic system due to the lack of any disciplined way of making sense of the world.

By way of extending this discussion, it will be useful to explore how the issue of development is treated in school geography textbooks. The textbook *Horizons* (first published in 2006) is a good source because it counters the common claim that geographical knowledge and understanding is confined to the '2-page spread'. In the case of *Horizons*, no less than 10 double page spreads are devoted to the theme 80:20. This ratio highlights how 20 percent of the world's

population has access to 80 percent of the world's resources (and vice versa). The titles of the sections making up this unit are:

- What is development?
- Where in the world?
- How do we measure development?
- How do you use ICT for a development enquiry?
- What are the causes of poverty?
- 80:20 – what can be done?
- 80:20 – what can I do?
- Fair trade?
- What is sustainable development?
- 80:20 where are we now?

The textbook offers the following definition of 'development':

"Development is a complex term. Most simply, development means all people reaching an acceptable standard of living, and having the basic things they need to live. Development is a never-ending process: people will always be striving to improve the quality of their lives and the lives of their children". (Gardner, D., Knill, R. and Smith, J., 2006,p.24)

If course, it is important to offer definitions of important terms. However, there is no attempt in the text to set out the parameters of limiting conditions of the definition. The result is that the definition performs one of the classic tricks of ideology: development, which is surely a historically produced construct, is equated with a natural desire to improve the quality of our lives and children's lives. This locates development within some sort of socio-biological realm. There is certainly a concern to offer a wider definition of development than economic wealth, and this is reflected in the use of the Human Development Index. However, we might question the concern with mapping the levels of these indices and wonder whether this is not another example of the empiricist and positivist nature of school geography. The effect of this mapping is to render development – a complex and personally felt process – into a rather static representation. This is compounded by the distillation of 'the causes of poverty' into a list of factors – some of which may surely be effects or consequences rather than causes. Indeed, there is little in the way of explanatory theories that might help students to put these figures in perspective, and there is little attempt to develop in students a recognition that geographical explanations are tentative, provisional and contested (after all, the 'causes of poverty' are intensely debated).

Reading the Horizons spread, with its focus on 'mapping and measuring' development, we are reminded of Yapa's (1999) argument about the effects of this on pupils' view of development. It reinforces the idea that there is an 'objective' reality somewhere 'out there', and the role of geographers is simply to observe and map that reality. Geographers' maps and accounts are assumed to reflect the world as a mirror. Take for example, the world map of GNP per capita.

This is taken as an unproblematic 'fact' of the world, a representation of the world. However, the map of GNP per capita is a construction, a specific way of choosing to represent the nations of the world within a certain discursive logic of 'development'. In reading the map in a geography textbook, or seeing it displayed on the wall of a classroom, the reader is being invited to 'buy into' or think in terms of, the discourse of development.

Yapa suggests that this 'lesson' is not lost on school students. They *know* that Bangladeshis or Africans live in 'underdeveloped' nations. They are secure in their own sense of self, that they 'rank' higher than millions of those 'other' people in underdeveloped countries (or LEDCs). He argues that after socializing the young mind into the *hierarchical logic of self and the other* built into the map of GNP per capita, it is difficult to imagine any other possible alternative views or outcomes prevailing. The point Yapa is making is that these school students are not simply learning about a world that is 'out there' like proverbial 'well-known facts'. Rather, their subjectivity is being literally constructed through the same discourse. This is an important argument that should stop us in our tracks.

Having constructed the 'problem of underdevelopment', the *Horizons* sequence goes on to offer some solutions. It tells readers that:

"Many people all over the world are now aware of the issues of poverty. Pressure is increasingly put on world leaders to act to relieve the suffering and to change the 80:20 balance between the rich and the poor". (Gardner, D., Knill, R. and Smith, J.,2006, p.34)

These world leaders responded in a 'very positive way' by agreeing the Millennium Development Goals. Despite these promises 'it was clear by 2005 that the goals would not be met'. The section ends with a description (rather than an explanation or evaluation) of the 2005 Make Poverty History campaign.

What is striking about this section is the complete lack of critical comment on these developments, and the failure to even discuss the political issues of power surrounding the Millennium Development Goals, and it is this failure to offer any evaluative or critical commentary that limits the educational potential of this text. The wider context for these philanthropic moves is explained by geographer Richard Peet (2009:183):

"In the Western, Calvinist tradition, philanthropy is the way rich people salve their consciences. In global finance capitalism an emotive, idealistic, moralistic veneer is added...The hegemonic capitalist countries, the International Financial Institutions, leading members of the global financial and industrial elite, famous academics, a dazzling array of pop stars...all the guilty parties want to 'end global poverty now'.."

Peet questions whether we can 'accept these widely acclaimed acts of altruistic benevolence simply, in their own optimistic terms? Or is "ending poverty now..."

the world cannot wait" a civilizational gloss on the pursuit of more brutal, speculative self-interest?'

Note that we are not claiming that the perspective of a 'radical geographer' such as Peet should be taught in school geography lessons as 'unexamined discourse'. We are suggesting that school geography lessons on development ought to allow students to gain access to a wide set of perspectives and viewpoints, and that the skilled geography teacher will be able to set these in their disciplinary and intellectual contexts.

The same issue of 'partiality' is evident in the final two spreads of the Horizon textbook which focus on Fair Trade and Sustainable Development. The fair trade spread adopts an uncritical view of fair trade. It does suggest that trade can benefit all, but that the 'terms of trade' (it does not use this term) are 'biased in favour of the rich':

But what can you do? Surely it's beyond your control? Wrong. You can buy fair trade products. (Gardner, D., Knill, R. and Smith, J.,2006 p.38)

The activities do not allow students to explore the issues around fair trade, but are given over to explaining why fair trade is a 'good thing'. Indeed, one of the activities suggests that 'Your class could help LEDCs in a variety of ways:

- Make sure that your family purchases Fair Trade products
- Set up a fair trade tuck shop
- Visit the Fair Trade website and download resources to create a fair trade exhibition as part of a campaign to raise awareness in your school (Gardner, D., Knill, R. and Smith, J.,2006, p.39)

In this activity, geographical education, based on a strong understanding of the contexts and issues surrounding development, have been replaced by an uncritical approach to global citizenship. There is no getting away from it: this is an ideologically loaded approach to teaching the subject.

5

Conclusion: on making the 'theoretical effort'?

In writing this discussion paper, we have not shied away from attempting to ask some challenging questions of geography educators. The context in which we write is important. We are committed to the project of geography education, since we think it is one of the remaining places in our society where young people are explicitly asked to learn about and reflect upon their socially and historically constructed relationship with people in other places. As it is expressed in the Geographical Association's 'manifesto' *A Different View*:

"Geography serves vital educational goals; thinking and decision-making with geography helps us to live our lives as knowledgeable citizens, aware of our own local communities in a global setting". (GA 2009,p.5)

But we are not complacent. We are deeply concerned that critics of current approaches to school geography such as Alex Standish and others are able to make claims about the ideological nature of school geography and in particular the argument that school geography serves a wider 'left liberal' agenda of 'growth scepticism'. From our perspective, it is deeply troubling if school geography lessons fail to examine carefully the politics of Fair Trade, uncritically recite the mantras of Sustainable Development, or engage students in citizenship activities that are not grounded in principled and disciplined study of the issues. This is why we have spent a good deal of space in this paper exploring the nature of geographical knowledge about development. Our conclusion – and the point that we hope geography educators will dwell upon - is that much teaching about development is *ideological*.

Of course, ideology is a complex term, but our starting point is that ideology is *unexamined discourse*, which tends to reflect the world-views of the powerful. Almost three decades ago, Derek Gregory (1983) outlined three ways in which geographical knowledge tended to reproduce ideology. Many geography teachers will be familiar with Gregory's work and will recognise that our discussion of the teaching of development in geography seems to fit these well. They will understand the significance of these points and these teachers attempt to teach in a way that responds to them.

- Geography routinely abstracts itself from society and fails to provide a rigorous account of the making of the structure of social relations. The result of this is to flatten the complexity of societies. In terms of teaching about development school geography still tends to define terms such as 'development' and then proceed to 'map' the patterns rather than delve into the question of how 'development' has been constructed. This leads to a failure to recognise the complex social formations that exist in space. For example, talking about whole countries as 'less developed' when there are important divisions within societies based around class, gender or locality.

- Geography teaching tends to look for general models or 'cases' rather than explore the conflicts and contradictions that exist within societies. This is often expressed in the search for 'solutions', which are often framed within a consensual politics, in which everyone wins, rather than focusing on the 'difficult' cases which involve winners and losers.
- The lack of attention to the historical construction of geographies tends to present the idea that the present set of conditions is 'natural' or 'inevitable'. This is perhaps an inevitable result of the reliance on empirical and positivist methodologies within the subject and the marginalisation of more critical approaches which are invariably concerned with the historical-geographical analysis of society. The danger is that students in schools are left with a superficial understanding of the contexts in which development is supposed to happen. For example it would be misleading to draw many conclusions about Haiti's response to its devastating earthquake without some historical and geographical contextual knowledge of that country.

Gregory argued that to overcome the problems of ideology would require a 'theoretical effort' on the part of geography teachers - 'the world in which we live is an opaque one'. The analysis we have offered in this discussion paper leads us to a similar conclusion. But this is not theory for theory's sake – if the world is opaque, it means it cannot be comprehended without disciplined reflection. As Gregory concluded:

"The object is to illuminate the world in which we and our students live: and to show that we care about it, not as an assemblage of random samples, case studies or illustrative sketches, but as a connected whole. If we ever lose that traditional concern, we put at risk more than the integrity of a discipline" (1983:42).

In demonstrating a commitment to this ideal there is no more powerful way to show the importance of specialist subject teachers in schools. If the world were not opaque – what we see is in fact what we get – then surely *anyone* can teach geography. Indeed, in many secondary schools geography is taught by specialists in other subjects and, as Ofsted (2011) repeatedly tell us, this is generally not good for ensuring a high quality of geographical experience for students. In the particular context of this paper, if school geography claims development as a topic it can tackle effectively, then the theoretical basis needs to be fairly robust. This includes a working knowledge of, and disciplined reflection on, how the concept and the subject have evolved and how the topic can be taught more, or less, carefully.

As we noted earlier in this paper there has been a long association between geography in school and development education. Our emphasis in this paper has been on the former and its hinterland of academic geography. This has contributed to the field of development studies conceptually and this, we argue, should continue to have an influence on school geography. However it is also true to say that development education is a field of study and practice in its own

right and also has had a significant impact on geography and its practices in many schools. Development education has had a 'difficult history', according to Bourn (2008) but has steadily carved out a position which demands that the pedagogy is dialogic in a manner that allows a 'voice' for southern perspectives. This imports values into educational transactions that challenge assumptions such as 'west is best'. Or as Kumar (2008) puts it, 'One of the larger global goals of development education is to ensure that development is not pro-rich, monopolised and manipulated' (p 44).

The dialogic values and practices of development education offer a number of challenges to teachers of geography. Perhaps the fundamental issue is the question of blending development education pedagogies with the knowledge contents of geography. That this task can be achieved is signalled well in the GA's manifesto which emphasises the value placed on perspectival understanding: what is seen and understood depends at least in part of who is looking and what they bring to the view.

We hope this paper has made a further contribution to the process of reconciling geography and development education.

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