

Reporting Research

FRIDAY 13 APRIL

11.40-12.05

The residential fieldtrip experience: a sensory ethnography

Nick Gee, Associate Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of East Anglia

This doctoral research employs an ethnographic methodology to examine social learning on a particular residential geography fieldtrip. A conceptual framework based around notions of 'community' is constructed to focus upon the evolving processes that occur during the trip. Specifically, I undertake a case study of one particular week at a field study centre, accompanying a group of 36 A-level geography students and their three teachers. In adopting an ethnographic methodology I seek to participate in, observe and recount some of the complex and multi-faceted experiences felt by the participants. Participants also include five field study centre staff, who play a significant part in the evolving relationships. My analysis is shaped around three recurring themes: the use of space, developing relationships and common experiences. I argue that the factors of spatial management, informality, shared adversity, teacher control and the working environment all contribute to evolving community feelings during the fieldtrip. I conclude that the residential experience provides rich opportunities for social learning and suggest that sensory ethnography is a methodology in which embodied experience can successfully be captured and re-presented through text.

12.05-12.30

An exploration of how young people relate to the cultural landscape of London

Lauren Hammond, MPhil/PhD Student, Institute of Education, London

London has been represented, presented, discussed and portrayed through a huge number of mediums, by a vast number of people for a great number of reasons and purposes. It is a place with a complex and multifaceted history, which is ever evolving. As the political and economic epicentre of the UK, and home to 12.5% of the country's population (on just 0.6 of its land area) it has local, national and global ties and spheres of influence(s). The scale, history, and variety of functions and ties London has, means that the landscapes that Londoners traverse are varied, changeable and complex. This session will present the work that I have completed so far on my PhD, which explores how and why young people relate to the cultural landscape of London and how this can be explored through the geography curriculum at key stage 3.

13.50-14.05

Studying student perceptions of a subject at key stage 3 and their influence on option choices: geography at a rural 11–16 village college

Katie Niven, MA Student, University of Cambridge

This study considers student perceptions of geography, focusing on year 9 students. My rationale was to better understand student's views of geography and how this affects their options choices. The research has become more topical with the introduction of the English Baccalaureate at key stage 4.

In today's schools there is increasing choice of subjects available at GCSE. As a result students have to make complex decisions when opting for subjects. Geography has been identified nationally as a subject suffering from decreasing numbers of students opting for it. This study identified three main factors affecting the choice of geography for GCSE: enjoyment, perceived usefulness and current level of attainment. This study highlighted that students enjoyed more practical subjects most, for example art and physical education. The implications of the study need to be to address some of the barriers students have identified to taking Geography GCSE, which include informing them about the usefulness of Geography as well as aiming to increase their enjoyment of the subject at Key Stage three.

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14.15-14.40

The uses of Twitter for geography teachers/students

Jennifer Watts, Postgraduate Researcher, University of Manchester

Twitter has created another space for CPD, for linking geographers and for a range of ideas and resources to be shared and discussed. This session is designed to explain a little about the basics of Twitter, provide a range of examples of how it can be used by educators as a resource for finding information, gaining feedback on ideas (inside and outside the classroom) and linking with other geographers (and non-geographers). While the examples I use will be drawn from teaching KS3 onwards they can be used by teachers of any age group.

14.55-15.10

Secondary school geography teachers' conceptions of knowledge in school geography

Steve Puttick, DPhil Student, University of Oxford

The relationship between school geography and the academic discipline is contested. Questions have been raised over the authenticity of educational knowledge in school geography. However, there has been little empirical research into knowledge in school geography. This study views teachers as the curriculum makers and argues their understandings of educational knowledge are vital. An in-depth qualitative approach is taken in this exploratory study of one geography department in a comprehensive secondary school in England. It is argued that teachers judge the authenticity of educational knowledge by two main standards which are held in tension. Labelled physical and human, teachers viewed the former as derived from the natural sciences, which are used as a gold standard of truth claims. In the latter, knowledge was seen as uncertain, and judged by the extent to which it serves the enquiry approach. Against characterisations of the school subject as out-dated and static, these teachers' prioritise current knowledge. Substantive and methodological challenges for existing research are presented. The study is hoped to stimulate discussion and further research into knowledge in school geography.

15.10-15.25

Modernities and geography education: a comparative study of Romania, Sweden and England

Diana Larsson, MA Student, Institute of Education, London

The way in which we understand the world differs from person to person. In the same way, each country has its own view of the world, determined in part by its modernity path. This research study investigates, through a combination of theoretical and empirical methodology, the role of geography education in shaping modernity. To illustrate this, three countries have been chosen: Romania, Sweden and England, based on my personal connection to them. Their modernity paths and their geography education systems as represented by their national geography curriculum will be analysed and the interconnectedness between them established. All this is examined from the perspective of a world characterised by globalisation, where spaces converge and gain different identities. This in turn has its own impact on modernities and geography policies, which could either facilitate the convergence of the world or slow it down.

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15.25-15.40

The factors which influence children's locational knowledge

Lucie Towse, MA Student, University of Sheffield

Locational knowledge is a recognised aspect of geographical education. This research was prompted by the changing role of locational knowledge in geographical education and personal concerns regarding the limited locational knowledge of secondary school students. Various definitions of the term 'locational knowledge' were explored and the influences on young people's locational knowledge was investigated through semi-structured interviews. Participants were drawn from years 8 and 9. The findings of the interviews revealed a range of influences on locational knowledge from both within and outside school combining to form a complex network of influences.

16.30-16.55

Geospatial technology: acceptance and use in American high school geography classrooms

Mary D. Curtis, Doctoral Candidate, Texas State University-San Marcos

Research indicates that many American high school geography educators do not systematically integrate or use geospatial technologies (GST) in their classrooms to assist with teaching geography content and thinking strategies. Joseph Kerski's seminal study a decade ago analysed the use of GIS in American secondary education and found the diffusion of GST to be very slow. He reported many teachers had little or no access to computers and software. Research also suggests that they may not be equipped with GST skills, geographic cognition strategies and technological pedagogical knowledge. The problem may be that from most teachers are not geography majors, have little geography training and may not understand or know how to explain the relationships among data. Further, no federal mandate exists for the use of GST even though the demand has increased universally in the last decade. Developing savvy, technologically-literate global citizens is paramount to preparing 21st-century students. Access to the internet and Web 2.0 applications has enabled better access to technologies previously thought unattainable. This presentation examines the current status of GST in American high school geography and invites British secondary geography educators to engage in a discussion regarding teaching with GST in their classrooms.

16.55-17.20

Does a relationship exist between the teaching of required geography courses and advanced placement human geography test scores?

Matt Patton, Doctoral Student, Texas State University-San Marcos

Individual state legislatures throughout the United States determine whether or not geography classes should be required for middle- and high-school students. The content of these courses is largely focused on world regional geography. In light of this, many school districts in all 50 states offer the optional Advanced Placement Human Geography (APHG) course at the high-school level (grades 9–12). APHG scores range from one to five and, generally speaking, scores of three and above can earn students college credit. This study analyses recent APHG test scores from selected US states and seeks to discover if any conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between required geography courses and APHG test scores.

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17.35-18.00

Geo-information and Geo-media in primary school - Bridging the gap between everyday life and education

Daniela Schmeinck, Professor in Geography, University of Cologne

Our children and youngsters live in a network society; they grew up in an ICT, GI (geo-information) and GM (geo-media) dominated world. They use computers or mobile devices more and more often. There is already a new digital gap, not caused by the (lack of) access to computers but by the use. Bridging this gap is essential to get children and youngsters motivated and excited. For that education must be adapted to the way children and youngsters use ICT, GI and GM by means of informed teachers and updated approaches. The presentation shows the possibilities, limitations and risks of using social tools such as Facebook and Google Latitude, and proposes consequences for an appropriate didactic approach for the use of ICT, GI and GM in primary schools.

18.00-18.25

Using Google Earth to develop 'change' in the context of coasts

Xiang Xi, PhD student, Singapore

Secondary geography teaching in Singapore places emphasis on spatial and temporal changes in physical environments. Analysing change in a place is therefore an important geographic and spatial skill. As coasts are a continuously changing system, studying them provides a good context for developing a range of skills in spatial analysis, and Google Earth is an excellent tool for visualising the changes taking place.

SATURDAY 14 APRIL

11.45-12.10

The south-north educational linking process: comparing southern perspectives

Alison Leonard, Doctoral Research Student, Institute of Education, London

Numerous pupils, teachers and others have participated in school linking projects in northern and southern schools. My research seeks to understand how the linking process affects those at the southern end of these relationships. How do teachers use links in teaching and learning? How do partnerships explore the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)? How are pupils' knowledge and understanding affected? How do local southern communities benefit from their schools' relationships with northern partners? Are these links sustainable? As a classroom teacher (and observer of others' teaching) on the theme of development, I am very conscious of the risk of over-simplification of complex geographical concepts. This paper reports analysis of my qualitative research in Ghanaian, Ugandan and Tanzanian schools.

It builds on my initial research findings and explains how this research could promote critical thinking about some of the complex development issues which can emerge from linking relationships.

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12.10-12.35

The daring discourses of Teaching Geography?

Indra Persaud, Doctoral Research Student, Institute of Education, London

Journals foreground certain core messages and the way these are both constructed and interpreted constitutes a 'discourse'. The journal Teaching Geography offers its readers a highly constructed discourse and a particular version of events. My presentation explores Teaching Geography's discourse and is based on a study of over 100 editorials from across the journal's 35-year lifespan. The changing historical and educational context, within which the editorials were written is used to help dissect the journal's narrative. During the 1980s the journal became a key player in the struggle to secure and sustain geography's place in the national curriculum in England. Throughout its history the journal has expended considerable energy and expertise in defending the subject against threats coming mainly from shifting political priorities in education. Today, with unabated change in geography and geography education, I argue that the journal continues to act both as a site and a producer of a 'preferred' discourse in geography education.

14.00-14.25

Developing the global dimension

Dr Stephen Scoffham, Principal Lecturer, Canterbury Christ Church University

The growing interest in the global dimension is now leading to an increasing awareness of the challenges and difficulties in this area of teaching. Using the example of Fair Trade as a 'lens', this session explores some of the contradictions that permeate current approaches to teaching about the environment and international relations.

14.25-14.50

Children's atlases and geopolitical messages

Deborah G. Hann, PhD Instructional Assistant, Texas State University-San Marcos

Children's atlases open the world for young minds, yet little analysis of the kinds of geopolitical messages they carry within them exists. Careful examination of the text and images in these atlases, however, reveals differences in the ways countries are portrayed and discussed, especially in terms of their peoples, conditions and qualities. These differences have implications for the way biases or imbalanced attitudes may potentially affect the intended audience of these atlases. To identify the perspectives and constructions of the types of messages these atlases contain, this paper examines a group of atlases aimed specifically at children. A content analysis of the text, images and maps has been conducted; word choice, common themes, and tropes are analyzed, quantified and compared in an effort to explore the messages being conveyed to their audience. This study also elucidates the ways in which the world is being revealed to readers.