

Teaching Geography 11-18: a conceptual approach

Key word: 'Teaching'

Key Question: What does it mean to be a teacher (of geography)?

- Tackled head on in chapter 3 of the book
- And again, at the end in the 'coda' entitled A Mind for the Future. Quote:
"Teachers, we assume, possess a philosophy of education: they have beliefs and knowledge of education that shape their understanding of its goals, purposes and processes. It is this that contributes to their identity, and motivates them professionally. Furthermore, as geography teachers, it is just as important to have a philosophy of geography; that they have an understanding of geography that serves, or at least complements, their educational philosophy." [p 164]

Our book can be seen as a reaction or response to some of the social, economic and policy trends that have impacted on teachers' work in recent years – say the last 10-20 years. For what has happened in the vibrant neo-liberal epoch, that in educational England really followed the ERA of 1988 and is still with us, has led to an erosion and diminishing of two big ideas: education and geography.

Teachers operate in a system that is characterised by:

centrally laid down standards, centrally defined curriculum content, assessment infrastructure underpinning teacher accountability, national league tables of schools, targets, massively increased inspection of teachers and schools, national 'teaching and learning' strategies, technical competence in teaching, evidence-led practice ('what works'), learning to learn, building learning power for the knowledge society, and a professional culture that prizes innovation, creativity and change.

So,

- Geography is reduced to a *partial* view of the world (when the content-to-be-delivered) was defined – and now as seven 'key concepts', defined by the curriculum agency in little pop-up boxes on their website
- Education is reduced to a means to qualifications and a job.

Thus, education is confused with the idea of a destination, or product. The GA published its 'manifesto' last year – which our book probably speaks to in many ways. This is called, self-consciously, *A Different View* to emphasise and endorse the educational philosopher's notion that 'to be educated is not to arrive at a destination, but to be able to travel with a different view'.

To summarise:

We want teachers to engage with education, but with geography too. For this to happen, teachers need a theoretical means to grasp the subject, in order *to make* the school subject.

We believe in teachers as public intellectuals.