



Assessing the impact of subject-focussed  
CPD

*A Project Report for the Geographical  
Association*

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## INTRODUCTION

### Project rationale

The Geographical Association (GA) includes within its mission statement the aim 'to further the learning and teaching of geography' and this underpins the reason for its existence. Continuous professional development (CPD) is provided across the Association's activity profile but particularly through its publications and journals, conferences and meetings, and curriculum projects.

The GA strongly believes that there are professional benefits for geography teachers in being part of a subject community. As the Action Plan for Geography was getting under way, it was considered timely to assemble a view of these benefits and gauge the impact of the GA's professional development activities and curriculum projects.

This pilot study was undertaken to do this and to consider models and approaches that could be applied as part of the Association's ongoing self-evaluation and replicated more widely and systematically to assess the impact of subject-focussed CPD.

### The aims of the project

- To seek ways to identify the benefits to teachers of being involved in the subject community.
- To identify ways to gauge the impact of GA's professional development activities.
- To propose simple models and approaches for assessing the impact of subject-focussed CPD.

### Project methodology and evidence base

Three phases of work were planned to explore and report on the above aims:

- Desk research to overview the evaluation reports for each of the GA's recent curriculum projects and to identify the messages that emerged.
- Telephone interviews of a small sample of GA members with different levels of involvement in association activities.
- Telephone interviews of a small sample of project participants.

Evaluations of the following curriculum projects were analysed:

- Valuing Places
- Why Argue? (English)
- Why Argue? (Science)
- Where will I live?

- Spatially Speaking

Fifteen teachers who were GA members were interviewed by telephone. These were selected to provide a cross-section of members to include:

- GA members who were 'users', had purchased published materials but had different levels of engagement (seven had attended an Annual Conference in the last 2 years, six were 'activists', e.g. committee member, branch member, project coordinator).
- Teachers who had participated in curriculum projects (two from the 'Valuing Places' project, one from 'Where will I live?', and one from 'Spatially Speaking').

Six were primary and nine were secondary teachers. Eleven held responsibility for geography in their school, as head of department or subject coordinator. Three were male and twelve were female.

The questions for the telephone interview were shared with the participant in advance. The framework is at Appendix 1.

All the teachers interviewed were enthusiastic and active geography teachers who were strongly motivated to seek ongoing professional development in their subject. They reported good quality teaching and learning in geography in their schools. Evidence from other sources confirms their self-evaluations, for example from examination performance, Ofsted inspection outcomes, reports and articles written about their work and the award of the Geography Quality Mark.

## PROJECT FINDINGS

### CPD expectations

Most of the secondary teachers interviewed had middle manager responsibility as subject leaders and recognised that different forms of INSET were required to meet the range of needs found in a school. They distinguished between generic and subject-focused CPD and recognised the importance of the latter, particularly to keep up-to-date and abreast of new ideas in geography. They wanted opportunities to gain the necessary personal skills for teachers to move forward their subject teaching.

Some were concerned that the National Strategies have attempted to get all subjects 'delivering' the curriculum in the same way, which did not always coincide with a secondary department's provenly effective practice and culture. For example, one head of department pointed out that enquiry-based learning and teaching 'in the field' requires different strategies. Another commented:

*Professional development on teaching and learning strategies in our school has been good, but it is general and we need to work out how we can apply it to provide quality geography. To bring about geography learning we need more than just information about teaching strategies.*

And from a newly qualified teacher's (NQT's) perspective:

*We had some INSET on accelerated learning but I found there was a lack of professional discussion about 'why' and 'how' this approach could be applied to geography.*

Several of the heads of department had been active curriculum developers in the past and saw subject-focused CPD as very important to help them keep close to the cutting edge of developments, for example in the use of geographical information systems (GIS). A key focus for them was to match the geography curriculum to the needs of pupils in their school and subject-focussed CPD was important to assist them to do this well.

Secondary heads of department and primary subject leaders recognised their professional responsibility to keep aware of current educational agendas and maintain their knowledge so that they could be effective subject leaders and provide challenge and updates for other teachers in their departments. As one commented:

*Geography content is constantly changing. An understanding of progress in the subject is fundamental to successful teaching. Knowledge of what is*

*good geography can only come about by thinking about the subject and constantly refreshing my ideas and knowledge.*

There was a strong consensus amongst secondary teachers that the best form of CPD to develop teaching skills was not to be found on one-day or twilight courses, but from working with other geography teachers. Time to work with colleagues and share ideas, such as developing schemes of work or observing each other teach, was seen as essential. As one head of department explained:

*Engaging in discussions with colleagues in school and beyond about the craft of teaching and successful techniques in promoting student learning and motivation is the best way to develop my teaching skills.*

They recognised, however, that there needed to be some outside stimulus for effective development; for example, from a conference contribution, from reading an article or from others outside the school. One head of department explained how external stimulus had worked for her:

*I have been fortunate to experience some excellent CPD. We became a lead department for teaching and learning in foundation subjects at my school, and the external training from a geography consultant and the additional in-house support that was provided was very useful. Also, we were involved in two best-practice research scholarships with a geography focus, and the support of mentors and other colleagues through this initiative was particularly useful in formulating ideas about subject teaching and learning.*

The primary geography subject leaders viewed subject-focussed CPD differently. They recognised the importance of keeping in touch with modern ideas in the subject but they felt a strong sense of professional isolation because INSET was mainly focussed on the core subjects. The difference between primary and secondary was summed up by one primary participant who had moved from secondary teaching:

*I miss the professional discussions that I used to have when I taught in a secondary department, and feel a severe sense of isolation in the primary school environment. I want to meet other primary geographers, and share good practice with them. I went looking for a cluster group, but found that my local area was a 'geography desert'.*

Many primary participants, therefore, perceived courses external to the school as the only way to gain subject teaching expertise. One teacher summarised the CPD problem facing geography in her school thus:

*Raising the geography expertise of all class teachers in the school is a key issue since most have limited, or no, geography background or training and do not know where to start. They need some simple training focussed on their needs. I work alongside other teachers as much as I can to plan and deliver lessons, but my time to do this is very limited. It is important that they develop their geography understanding through working with others.*

## The benefits of being part of the subject community

### a Different levels of involvement

All the secondary GA members interviewed were very positive about the value of membership and particularly the *Teaching Geography* and *Primary Geographer* journals for keeping them abreast of subject developments. Most commented that they like to read about what other teachers are doing and several had contributed articles themselves. An NQT described herself as an 'avid reader' of *Teaching Geography*, a practice which she developed as a trainee, and explained how she has embedded many of the ideas and approaches described in articles in her day-to-day teaching. She felt that reading the journal kept geography 'alive' for her since there was little professional subject discussion in her school.

Most participants had attended at least one GA Annual Conference and several were regular attenders, although for some the timing at Easter did not fit in with family commitments. All found attendance worthwhile, and for some it was a significant aspect of their professional subject development. One vividly remembered every Conference he had attended since 1994. The NQT, who had attended the Manchester Conference in 2006 as a student teacher, said:

*The lectures were inspirational and I gathered lots of ideas and resources although I have not been able to use all of them yet! I began to feel part of a national group and subject community, and took back what I had found out and shared it with others on my course. I am very much looking forward to going again this year.*

A head of department who is a regular conference attendee commented:

*The conference reinvigorates me and I bring back ideas, resources and website links which I pass on to others ... but in some ways this stops others in my department attending and I wish they would all go personally!*

One primary teacher commented:

*It exceeded my expectations because it was an excellent source of ideas, but also the teachers who presented workshops listened to contributions from others. I cannot wait for this year.*

Most teachers paid their own conference fee and did not ask their school to fund them. Where a teacher was funded in one school they were expected to disseminate their findings to other teachers in the department and they prepared a booklet to do this. In another region quite distant from central England, one teacher from the local geography network always attends the conference and has an annual slot at their network meeting to report back to others.

The GA has an extensive list of publications on geography teaching and learning. All secondary departments had purchased GA publications to support professional development, and one had a veritable library! Most had purchased a copy of the *Secondary Geography Handbook*; *Learning through enquiry* was another frequent purchase. Others looked to more specific publications such as the *Discovering Cities* case studies series, or, for instance, *Theory Into Practice: Dramatically Good Geography*, to support particular aspects of their curriculum. Other materials were also valued. One secondary head of department commented:

*I regularly use ideas and posters from the GA for career evenings, and other departments are very envious of these materials.*

Most primary school coordinators had purchased the *Primary Geography Handbook* and used publications to support planning for non-specialist teachers in their schools, such as the *SuperSchemes* series, locality packs, or Barnaby Bear resources.

The use of the GA website was less widespread and teachers were slow to avail themselves of the benefits, even where they were regular users of other geography sites such as those of the Royal Geographical Society or Staffordshire Learning Net. The GA site has been recently revamped, but several participants had not visited it since; usually this was because they had found the previous version difficult to use. Many were unaware that their GA membership gave them access to electronic copies of the journal. Once hooked, however, the benefits became clear, as one commented:

*The website is much better now, we browse it quite often. We have used the photo galleries and the ITT section. We contributed to the forum discussion on GCSE coursework and read what others said to help us keep in touch.*

Two secondary participants were members of local branches, in one case a founder member of a new branch. Both regularly attended the 6th form lectures with their students and felt that these brought geography alive and made it relevant for them. In both cases branch membership brought them links with

university-led geography activities. One described 'fun activities' such as 'hazard days' and a master class on GIS with 15 gifted and talented students. Another described how they had set up a small project exploring the discontinuity between 6<sup>th</sup> form and university geography.

A new opportunity offered by the GA for schools to focus on geography professional development is the Geography Quality Mark. Two participants had been successful in gaining the Primary Geography Quality Mark in a pilot scheme last year. One primary subject leader explained how she got involved:

*I was isolated because there is no local cluster group. I wanted to raise the profile of geography in the school and I joined the GA as a school member and asked what they could do for us. I was pointed in the direction of the Quality Mark and it has provided a lifeline for support.*

Four of the participants interviewed were members of GA phase committees, two on the secondary committee and two on the early years/primary committee. This gives them opportunities to network with other experienced geographers, and several commented how they liked the way the GA was not hierarchical and offers young teachers opportunities to be committee members. As part of committee activities, all the participants had contributed to workshops at the GA Annual Conference and other in-service training (INSET) events both regionally and nationally.

b In-school/department use and dissemination of GA materials and activities

The secondary heads of department recognised that the plentiful ideas and materials in *Teaching Geography* had formed the basis for many topics and approaches in their schemes of work. It was commonly the first port of call when they were looking to revamp a curriculum unit, or teaching approach, or enliven a specific lesson. The articles provided a stimulus for professional discussions in the department. One head of department explained:

*We are always using ideas directly from Teaching Geography, such as resource cards and grids and trying out techniques for promoting student learning and motivation. We used the articles on teaching hazards for updating our curriculum. We always trawl through back issues when writing schemes, for example we recently developed a 'geography in the news' unit which is very different to everything else we do. From the last issue we used the article by John Hopkins as the basis for our departmental SEF.*

Another explained:

*We used Teaching Geography articles on assessment. I photocopied articles and teaching ideas for discussion and use by other teachers in the department. Our department is also responsible for delivery of some ICT provision and articles have been very helpful for ideas on how to incorporate ICT and retain geographical learning.*

Participants were asked if they could identify an area of the geography curriculum in their school which has changed recently and how GA materials or activities played a role in this change. Several referred to the introduction of new teaching units and the ways in which GA materials had influenced their thinking. One teacher offered this evidence:

*A good example is a geographical enquiry unit in the pilot GCSE unit on 'My Place'. I drew on GA exemplars to develop fieldwork and a questionnaire about young people's leisure time in the local area. This led to community involvement, and the pupils put forward a bid to the lottery fund for development of a youth club in the area. The pupils presented their ideas to the local council and others.*

Eight of the secondary participants had purchased the *Secondary Geography Handbook*. Most said that they used this to 'dip into' when they were thinking about new developments and one explained how it helped them to identify new directions such as GIS. Another department bought the book to support the induction of its NQTs.

Another explained how a different publication had been used in their department:

*Each member of the department has a copy of Learning through Enquiry and this has been a major influence on our teaching. In fact we use all the enquiry-based learning strategies when teaching the GCSE pilot, even though it was written as a key stage 3 book!*

On a smaller scale, teachers pointed to specific resources they had found useful – such as the HIV/Aids map in *Teaching Geography* that several had used to give secondary pupils a different perspective on maps. As one head of department explained:

*We have used physical resources such as worksheets directly from Teaching Geography. It also provides up-to-date information on curriculum developments and has given us many ideas about teaching thinking skills. In particular it has been a good source of ideas for fieldwork activities.*

All these secondary departments believed that GA materials and ideas have been a major influence on the strength of geography in their schools. Several heads of department pointed out that the number of pupils opting for geography at key stage 4 has been increasing in contrast to the national trend. One explained how this had occurred:

*We have introduced a new curriculum at key stage 3 based on approaches outlined in GA materials and it has been very successful. The pupils have benefited from lively schemes and activities and have responded well. The number taking the subject at GCSE has doubled and we had the best residuals in the authority last year. Pupils have been inspired and failing students and those who were previously absentees have achieved good quality work.*

And in another school:

*Using GA resources and activities has helped us to keep our geography curriculum up-to-date and relevant. This has had a strong impact on pupils' learning. They find geography enjoyable and motivating which is how we maintain our KS4 share and we have two big A-level groups. Our examination results show good 'value added' and we are considered a high-achieving department in the school.*

Subject leaders adopted different ways of ensuring that geography teachers in their department made use of *Teaching Geography*. One departmental head explained:

*The journal is always placed in a folder on the back of the geography office door, so that all can read it – and it is well thumbed!*

Several outlined ways in which they draw colleagues' attention to items they might not otherwise see. For example, one copied articles for colleagues, and another downloaded specific items from the GA website and e-mailed them to individual teachers. One was very direct in incorporating ideas into her practice, explaining:

*I try out ideas in my teaching and discuss them at meetings. I point individual teachers to specific articles and encourage them to use them as a starting point for small action-research projects.*

And another commented:

*Each department meeting has a teaching and learning focus for five to ten minutes at the start in which good practice is shared. Different teachers*

*take the lead on this. Generic CPD in this school is always followed up with department time, for example recently on brain-based learning and assessment for learning. GA materials are part of the essential resources that are used to facilitate discussion in these activities.*

GA information and materials is used by some heads of department as part of a deliberate strategy for professional development. One uses GA materials in her regular NQT induction meetings. Another head of geography explained how discussing articles from *Teaching Geography* with a departmental colleague had been particularly effective in her development:

*Her teaching was dated and tired, and a key element in her development and revival has been reading Teaching Geography. The ideas have fired her up, her confidence has been raised and she has rekindled her passion for the subject. Her teaching has been transformed. I could not have done this alone, but needed the support of the GA materials to create a supportive environment.*

For members who are primary subject leaders, *Primary Geographer* and the *Primary Geography Handbook* are key publications. A primary teacher outlined how he had used a book on contrasting localities for fieldwork and the toolkit of enquiry questions from *Primary Geographer*. In one school the *Handbook's* chapter on planning underpinned the subject leader's presentation to the whole staff on how they could move forward with their geography curriculum. Another outlined how it was used in her school:

*We have focus groups on subjects and everyone is in one group. We meet in non-contact time and our work spans over three years. In the first year we worked on developments, and the Primary Geography Handbook underpinned our thinking during that year. The second and third years are putting the plan into place and maintaining it.*

While several of the primary subject leaders were keen readers of the articles and case studies in *Primary Geographer* themselves, they were often less successful than their secondary colleagues in disseminating curriculum and teaching ideas to other class teachers. As one primary subject leader explained:

*I read Primary Geographer and leave it in the staff room, but others do not take the bait. They would rather look at the more general teaching magazines. I have created files of useful ideas, websites and information for teachers to dip in to, but they are not really used very much. Some find the ideas threatening and do not have the confidence to use them.*

The key issue for several primary coordinators was the lack of opportunity to support colleagues and work alongside them. One explained:

*Mine is only a small school with one-form entry. So there is no opportunity to plan with others as we did in my previous school. There are no meetings about geography in our school.*

And another said:

*I do not have the planning time for geography to work with other teachers. All the focus of the senior managers in this school is on maths at the moment – and I am the maths coordinator as well as the subject leader for geography.*

This problem is not confined to the primary school. One secondary head of department explained:

*Most discussion about GA materials takes place informally. The department only meets about twice a term for formal meetings and these are dominated by administration and departmental business, so there is little time for CPD.*

Where subject leader time has been available, GA materials have been put to better use. One primary coordinator outlined her approach:

*I bought the Primary Geography Handbook and the SuperSchemes and used these to support other teachers in planning time. I have particularly worked with key stage 1 teachers on map work. This was a real problem in our school because the teachers were facing young children with complex maps, without teaching a basic understanding of 'overhead view'. Some activities from the GA resources have really helped. The teachers have just completed a good display on footprints around the school showing imaginative work on learning direction.*

Several primary teachers commented that while they thought *Primary Geographer* was a good source of ideas, it did not compare with the stimulus they gained from attendance at a face-to-face GA course or the Annual Conference. The first-hand experience was thought to be more effective in helping them to understand good practice and making an impact on their school curriculum. Several vividly described the impact of conference workshops, for example one teacher explained how sessions on enquiry, thinking skills and memory games had been used in the gifted and talented programme in their school.

One primary teacher described attending a GA course on effective leadership for geography coordinators:

*Going on this course was inspirational. It fired my enthusiasm and it opened my eyes to the potential of teaching 'ongoing' geography and that to focus on topic blocks alone might not be the best approach. It also gave me ideas about the use of digital photographs and the use of photo trails around the school and grounds. It rekindled my subject enthusiasm – it was a long time since my degree in geography – and it gave me confidence. Working with other teachers on the course made me realise that I had things to contribute. My head teacher was very supportive and I am signed up to the Action Plan for Geography course.*

Another recalls the benefits of attending a GA conference:

*I attended a session on geographical enquiry and another on education for sustainable development, both of which were excellent. I bought publications to follow up ideas and have used these to plan the curriculum in my school.*

And another explained the influence on her teaching:

*I attended a 'rivers' workshop at the conference and incorporated the ideas for hands-on activities with my Y6 class. It very much opened my eyes to the possibilities for practical activities and enquiry in geography and this has changed my teaching.*

One primary teacher joined the Malham field visit organised during the Leeds conference, and for the following four years she led a residential visit to the area for Y6 pupils. She continues the visit, but now goes to Flatford Mill.

Both primary subject leaders whose schools were awarded the Primary Geography Quality Mark described its effect on geography teaching in the school:

*Everyone has benefited and improved their geography teaching, which is now much more effective. Our monitoring shows this and the school was rated good in geography in our Ofsted inspection. The head teacher was very supportive of my work for the Quality Mark. We had planning time to work together, drawing widely on GA materials, such as the SuperSchemes, and this had a strong impact on what we taught and how it was taught. The GA Quality Mark assessor spent a day in school and gave us lots of ideas and help during her visit. Achieving the gold award has had a vibrant effect on geography teaching in our school.*

And, in another school:

*The Quality Mark has had a major impact on this school. The feedback from the GA assessors was fantastic and very developmental. It helped us to evaluate what we did and ensure that the National Curriculum was at the heart of everything we taught. We concentrated on progression, so that creativity did not go off at a tangent, but was turned back into effective learning. We began to monitor learning. This approach – to achieve high quality planning and a sustainable curriculum with effective learning – has been carried into every subject in this school.*

One spin-off from GA activity that was seen as important by the secondary participants was the GA's work to bring about wider recognition of the value of geography in the curriculum. The teachers recognised that this has strengthened the perception of geography's role and provided a stronger context for their work. Several participants discussed how the involvement of the GA in the Today programme at New Year had helped their department by raising the profile of the subject with other teachers and with parents. Another identified GA materials which were particularly useful when arguing the case for fieldwork to senior managers in the school.

The GA has also worked closely with the OCR examination board to support schools who have adopted the new GCSE pilot. One school explained that this initiative had been so successful for them because it particularly motivated boys and mixed-ability groups. They had found the support of the GA project officer and the website materials very useful and valued the opportunities the GA provided to contact other teachers, enabling them to compare student work for moderation and standardisation.

c Professional development outside the school or department

It was clear from the teachers interviewed in this survey that sources of professional help and advice for geography teachers, apart from the GA, had dramatically declined in recent years. In most parts of the country, the participants reported there was no local authority geography adviser and no opportunities for subject CPD. Regular meetings of geographers had ceased, often when a geography adviser post was discontinued. This has had a direct effect on NQTs. One interviewed had received no subject-specific training at all in her induction year and was unaware of any geography support available to her. In another school, with three geography NQTs, no external induction support was provided for the subject.

Only two of those interviewed reported ongoing support from a local authority adviser. One praised the good local authority workshops and its website that provided a geography teachers' forum. The other said:

*We are fortunate in my authority to have a geography adviser who holds geography panel meetings every term so that teachers can share practice and discuss developments. As part of the GCSE pilot, I also benefit from regular meetings, convened by the adviser, with two other schools.*

In two instances, with no local authority adviser to facilitate meetings of geographers, local secondary teachers have taken the initiative to establish a geography network. In both cases there were links between these networks and GA projects and personnel. One of the primary teachers also tried, unsuccessfully, to start a local geography teachers' network:

*It did not take off because there was no cover available and people were not willing to attend twilight meetings after school."*

Two secondary participants discussed the work of advanced skills teachers – one was the participant herself, and she used her outreach time effectively to work with other geography departments. The other regularly drew on the support of a geography AST in a neighbouring authority and used him to review her department.

Three other secondary participants discussed the professional gains of working as a mentor with ITT trainees and the opportunities this provided to share practice with other geography teachers and the ITT tutor. But the most common form of external INSET quoted by secondary participants was the examination update meeting. It was noted by several teachers that senior managers perceive these meetings to be directly relevant to raising examination performance: they therefore take priority in terms of resources over other forms of subject professional development.

While secondary teachers are generally not well served in terms of subject support, the situation is worse for primary teachers. Most primary participants reported they had no contact with other geography subject leaders in their local area and advisory support was virtually non-existent. Some meetings have been held with a subject-related focus, such as 'resources on waste' or school self-evaluation for subject leaders; but where they were not led by a geography specialist teachers found them unhelpful in terms of subject professional development. As one primary teacher described:

*I was looking for support for geography from outside the school so I attended a local authority course on leading geography – but it was*

*useless. It was led by the religious education adviser and the content was generic skills of subject leadership. I did not need this, because I was already a competent subject leader in another area. Other course members who attended were not all willing leaders of geography and had been dragooned into the role because no one else was available. Thus their enthusiasm and interest was low. There was little sharing on this course.*

Only one primary participant described how her local authority has bucked the trend and recently appointed a humanities adviser:

*She arranges meetings for primary geography coordinators every term. This is brilliant because we can share practice with each other and the adviser provides useful updates of information. It has been so oversubscribed that she has to run two sessions!*

Others reported they had no recent opportunity to attend geography CPD in their local area – but recalled activities such as the ten-day GRIST course, a course on geography and ICT held five years ago, and being part of a network arising out of MA study; all of which had made a lasting impact on their practice. One participant has repeatedly asked if their local primary network meetings could occasionally meet as subject post-holders instead of year groups – but to no avail, and her isolation as a primary geography subject leader continues.

One secondary participant outlined how her local GA branch had recognised the paucity of support for primary teachers in geography and had run two INSET events for them. They used a local adviser to lead the day and both events were very well received.

All the GA committee members agreed that their involvement in phase committees had made a strong impact on their personal and professional development. They were very alert to new ideas and continually looking for opportunities for curriculum development and change and it had given them the confidence to put their ideas into practice. As one put it:

*My involvement in the secondary committee has been the most inspirational thing I have done. It has enabled me to draw on the expertise of other members – although it is always a two-way exchange of ideas, and I have both learned and contributed. It has taken me to a new level of curriculum thinking and has invigorated curriculum development and change in my school. Participation in national activities such as QCA consultations and Quality Mark development has enhanced my own professional standing.*

Another explained:

*Meeting and working alongside experts on the secondary committee has been particularly stimulating – unbelievable when I was a young teacher! It has kept me very informed and I have often heard of strategies and initiatives that are part of the next wave of reform. This has given me a chance to discuss it with other geographers and allowed me to start thinking about how to tackle changes.*

Similarly, a primary participant said:

*Membership of the primary committee has been important because of meeting and working with very experienced geographers. This was very formative when I was a young teacher. I have had the opportunity to contribute more widely to national subject developments, for example through steering groups and even a ministerial working party. This has given me insights into committee working and contributed to my recent success in gaining a headship.*

The committee members used widely the expertise they had developed, both inside and outside their schools. Several have contributed to articles in *Teaching Geography* and *Primary Geographer*. For example, one explained their wider contributions on assessment:

*I was involved with the Assessment Working Group of the secondary committee and, arising from this, I gave presentations at the GA conference and other national INSET events. This has been good for me and for the school. I am on the teaching and learning committee in my school and have led whole-school INSET events on assessment for learning, modelling and questioning. I have worked with the science department on an initiative to develop questioning.*

And another said:

*My GA involvement has opened doors for me. I have led several workshops at the conference and contributed to the GA Professional Development day in London. I have worked with my local authority adviser and led a workshop for more than a hundred head teachers and chairs of governors about geography in the school curriculum.*

Sometimes, however, the contributions that teachers have made through GA committees or curriculum projects have received scant recognition from senior managers within their own school beyond a comment in their threshold assessments.

However, a primary teacher explained how working for the Quality Mark had broadened her own horizons:

*It not only set goals for my colleagues, it also gave me the push to use opportunities outside the school. For example I did a work placement with an aluminium recycling company and developed resources for schools, as well as contributing to Teachers TV about linking geography and literacy.*

## Teachers' professional development needs

At the conclusion of the interview participants were asked what further professional development they would like to support their geography teaching. The overwhelming response from both primary and secondary teachers was that they wanted to network with local geography teachers for professional enrichment and to keep in touch with like-minded geographers. They also wanted their subject development needs to be taken seriously and 'quality time' to be available to work with other geography teachers on planning and curriculum development. One secondary teacher explained:

*Ideally, I would like time to network with others and have a block of time – like a day – to work with one or two other schools to develop a common curriculum idea, perhaps with someone from outside to act as a stimulus or facilitator”.*

In primary, raising the confidence of colleagues to teach quality geography was seen as important. One teacher's plea was for:

*Help for the class teachers in my school to see good practice in geography. Perhaps a teacher from a similar school to ours to talk about exciting practice that they can share and is not too threatening.*

Another wanted to:

*Take a scheme and have someone external to the school who is a geographer come in and give some practical ideas of what the teachers could do.*

Networking was particularly important for the sole geographer in a school, which was common in the primary phase. In secondary schools too, a head of department could feel isolated. One explained:

*I am working with NQTs and although they contribute good new ideas I have no contact with other experienced geographers for curriculum development.*

Most teachers were very positive about the Action Plan for Geography courses and hoped that these would not only provide ideas, but also help teachers to make contact with others locally so they could share work with in the future. As one said:

*It seems the right tactic for groups of teachers to meet, be stimulated and encouraged to go away to work, with support, in their own schools: then to meet up again and feedback on outcomes. This was how the Best Practice Research Projects worked and they worked very well.*

Some teachers, especially NQTs and primary teachers, wanted to develop their geography subject knowledge because they felt out of date, or had gaps in their knowledge.

## The impact of funded projects

### a The curriculum project approach

In recent years the GA has conceived its 'Local Solutions' scheme, which seeks to provide innovative professional development for teachers. As part of this initiative it has established several curriculum-led projects in which participants are seen as 'teacher-researchers'.

The evaluation reports of four projects were analysed as part of this study. 'Valuing Places' involved 63 teachers working in regional groups to develop curriculum materials which explored global interconnectedness for key stages 2 and 3. 'Why Argue?' involved teachers from the geography and English departments in six schools; they designed pedagogies for posing open-ended questions and developing students' capacity to maintain and respond to argument. A similar project was run for 14 geography and science teachers, with an emphasis on younger recruits. 'Spatially Speaking' was concerned with developing the skills and understanding of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to ensure geographical learning takes place in the classroom. In 'Where will I live?' geographers worked alongside citizenship teachers to support students' better understanding of the housing market and 'sustainable communities'.

The GA recognises that excellent teachers need to engage with like-minded colleagues who understand the intricacies of a subject for their professional development. Together, they can provide a great creative resource. Therefore, the projects seek to bring subject specialists together and buy them time to think deeply about the subject's big concepts and its distinctive contribution to children's learning.

The projects follow similar formats. There are regular group meetings coupled with more informal support for individual teachers, often provided by the project coordinator. This allows for regular discussions and reviews of progress. It also provides opportunities for teachers to reflect on innovative approaches and benefit from each other's expertise. As one teacher involved with 'Where will I live?' explained when interviewed:

*The project involvement was excellent CPD because it provided me with time to work with a colleague. It gave us whole days in school to really get into in-depth development. This quality time is not generally available. Also the GA project officer and other project teachers gave feedback, which helped us to develop our ideas further.*

Most of the teacher researchers were used to a 'quick-fix' approach of one-day INSET sessions with presentations by 'experts'. They soon came to realise that this was not the intention of this form of professional development. The focus was to discuss and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies and resources they were using in their classrooms. However, the project leaders recognised the teachers' starting points, and most projects opened with some form of initial input. For example, in 'Valuing Places', recognising that the majority of the KS2 & 3 teachers involved would have little curriculum development experience, the project leaders used professional development units to point teachers towards possible teaching strategies.

One participant explained how these resources were used:

*We tried out everything and had a go. Some strategies we shot down, some we continued to use, some we adapted – but it was good to have a starting point.*

The two-day residential experience at the start of the 'Spatially Speaking' project was crucial to set the scene for a group with mixed experience and expertise in GIS. Uninterrupted time away from school enabled them to have a sustained focus and explore issues on one aspect of their work.

The project coordinators were aware that the curriculum experiences and pedagogies which they wanted teachers to take on in these projects were challenging. They saw their role in collaborative terms, sharing and working alongside them. The time and effort put in by the project leaders was very much appreciated by the teachers and often was a vital element in the project's success. As the 'Spatially Speaking' evaluator noted:

*The project leader showed the ability to target support, conduct conversations, share his own enthusiasm and encourage individuals: I am*

*sure that without his gentle nurturing some novice schools may have dropped out.*

Another key factor contributing to the success was the establishment of support networks. These kept teachers 'on track' and provided them with encouragement and practical help. It was particularly important in 'Spatially Speaking' where participants had a wide range of GIS expertise. Each school took turns to host the meetings during which they observed each other teach a lesson in their schools. This helped them to share teaching and learning strategies with GIS and more generally. This project differed from others in that colleagues better versed in the use of GIS were part of the support system and visited less experienced colleagues in school to work with them on their skills development. This was much valued; for example, a novice teacher commented:

*The visit from [the GIS colleague] was the turning point for me. It helped me to sort so much out.*

b The impact of projects on teachers' professional development  
The GA commissioned evaluation reports for each of the projects. These, together with the comments from the teachers interviewed in this study, indicate that the projects made a positive impact on the teachers involved and led to effective pupil learning.

'Valuing Places' demonstrated that even non-specialist teachers can, given time and support and the right encouragement, create worthwhile, interesting, transferable teaching materials. The evaluation report stated:

*There is no doubt that all gained professionally through involvement in this project – in self-esteem, confidence and continued enthusiasm ... teacher researchers have moved forward in their understanding of how to reach out and begin to teach the concept of 'the global dimension'... Pupils' 'empowerment', 'enthusiasm' and 'self-awareness' crop up across all the (project) reports and evaluations indicating success in both learning and achievement.*

And a participant interviewed explained:

*Pupils have changed and 'Valuing Places' made us think about what makes geography meaningful for young people. It offered the chance to discuss how to engage our students and support them to think about the interconnections with other peoples and other places. There was lots of discussion about imaginative assessment approaches. Every team meeting was stimulating and resulted in teachers going away and trying out new ideas. Enthused teachers impact positively on students.*

Sometimes teachers might undervalue the longer-term impact on them of project involvement. For example one primary teacher interviewed commented:

*I do not think the project had as much impact in this school as it could have done and it had little effect on other teachers. I taught the unit I developed and welcomed the freedom this offered. It gave me the confidence to step outside the scheme and tackle an issue like fair trade. But we are now back to the QCA units. My own geography teaching has changed, though, and I draw on different GA materials and involve pupils more in active learning.*

In one regional group, the involvement in 'Valuing Places' has had a significant impact on the career prospects of the teachers and nearly all the teacher-researchers have got promotion.

The 'Why Argue?' evaluations showed that something quite substantial had emerged from pairing two curriculum areas not usually associated with each other. Working across curriculum boundaries the teachers gained a great deal from the collaboration with like-minded colleagues. The teachers found the project professionally exciting and worthwhile. They implemented a range of creative and challenging pedagogies and showed they had internalized the issues and adapted strategies to bring about effective learning. The teachers in all schools were surprised and impressed by the quality of the pupils' work and their improved behaviour. Pupils demonstrated the capacity to participate in debate, to evaluate the perspective of others and to reconsider their own position in relation to a geographical issue. The teachers wanted to continue to develop the work, expand into other classes and involve their other teachers in further developments.

Similarly the project evaluation of 'Where will I live?' indicates the positive impact on the teachers involved. It brought them renewed hope for the subject and new thinking about 'geography and development'. They were able to tackle the challenge of translating housing issues into work appropriate for secondary pupils without reinforcing stereotypes or encouraging tension. One of the interview participants described the impact on her teaching and how it had been sustained:

*'Where will I live?' was very influential in professional development in my school. I worked with an older colleague who had previously had little subject CPD. The outcomes were rich and had a very positive impact on our teaching. Students responded very well, particularly during the whole class discussion, and were more on-task and focused than usual. I now include more activities that use graphical information in my lessons. For example,*

*assessments or tasks do not always need to be in the form of a written piece of work, instead they can involve labelling maps at a variety of scales. As a more experienced teacher, the project reminded me how relevant geography is and reinvigorated my interest in teaching local issues in school.*

The evaluation of 'Spatially Speaking' demonstrated its impact on both experts and non-experts in GIS. The former extended their practice into new areas, while the latter gained confidence to build GIS into their lessons. All recognized the genuine pedagogical benefits for geography teachers; GIS now plays a more embedded role in their school geography curricula with further developments planned. Schools with more GIS experience reported a significant improvement in pupils' analysis and evaluation and recognized GIS to be especially powerful in engaging and challenging higher-attaining pupils.

#### c Constraints on projects' effectiveness

The project evaluations indicate several factors that could enhance or reduce their effectiveness as professional development. One was the availability of a good project coordinator. In some areas suitable project leaders were in short supply. They need a thorough understanding of current thinking in geographical learning and teaching. They also need the ability to motivate and enthuse the teacher researchers. For example, one of those interviewed led a successful 'Valuing Places' group whose success owed much to her energy and skill. She prepared carefully for meetings, ensuring that she met the needs of those from secondary, primary and a special school. As an advanced skills teacher (AST) she linked the project with her outreach work and was in a strong position to disseminate the outcomes widely through the region.

It is also important the senior managers in the teachers' schools fully understand the project aims and the teachers' needs. School culture can be highly supportive, or it can be an obstacle.

One teacher expressed her experience:

*Senior managers are supportive of action-research in this school, yet they give little recognition to the subject CPD work that I do. When we did the 'Where will I live?' project, nothing was said, although I know the GA wrote to the head teacher.*

And a primary teacher said:

*The head encouraged me to get involved in the project and was enthusiastic at the start. But she did not follow this up beyond a mention in the school annual review of the articles I had written in Primary*

*Geographer. It did not bring geography any higher profile in the school. We did a school assembly, but I do not have any subject leader time and there was no staff meeting about the project outcomes.*

However, when the project coordinator worked hard to make sure senior managers were aware of what the teacher researchers had done, such as by discussing their project work with them, the situation was different. As a result, in one regional group a teacher was nominated to be 'teacher of the year' in recognition of her work, and another became an AST responsible for teaching and learning.

Adequate time is needed in project meetings for in-depth discussions of difficult curriculum and pedagogical issues. It was too easy for teachers to be diverted into the production of resources. Where the approach promoted was particularly challenging, it was essential that teachers were given the opportunity to think through the ideas, such as how to promote more creative, critical enquiry. The complexity of the challenges facing them needs to be fully appreciated by the teachers themselves: for example, in 'Spatially Speaking', to consider the extent to which GIS contributes to pupils' spatial literacy.

Some projects, such as 'Valuing Places', set out to be cross-phase. While this was often helpful, at times teachers could feel marginalized. As one primary teacher explained:

*My school was the only primary school fully involved in the project in the region. The project was good, but it was secondary-dominated and I feel that the phase dimension is important. I would have liked a primary partner to share what I did. It was useful to meet other teachers a couple of times a term and even though they were mainly discussing the secondary phase it did open my eyes to some new teaching approaches.*

While in another case, a coordinator described the positive impact of cross-phase working:

*Primary teachers started out thinking they did not have anything to contribute, but grabbed interesting ideas and ran with them. Their response in discussion was phenomenal. Some partner schools linked up, for example a primary and secondary worked on a CD ROM map which helped with transition.*

In several projects the question remained how the teacher's own geographical knowledge, understanding and skills can be sufficiently enhanced that they not only use the materials they have developed but move forward in other areas of the geography curriculum. Although most participants were keen to continue

what they had started, time constraints frequently got in the way. The sustainability of the approach initiated in the projects needs to be carefully considered by project teams. The evaluators noted that a feature of projects is their relatively short life span. One year is often enough to kick-start ideas and facilitate a pilot phase but they found it was unlikely to make an impact of continuing significance.

In some projects, it was the intention that schools would post work on the GA website and provide each other with constructive feedback. While the intentions were laudable, most teachers are not yet tuned into regularly contributing to websites in this way.

Teachers were asked to see themselves as action researchers. It is not clear from the evaluations whether they actually saw themselves this way. However, it is perhaps a framework that could be utilised to encourage teachers to evaluate more systematically what they had achieved for their pupils.

#### d Dissemination of project outcomes to the wider audience

A key challenge for all the projects is the effective dissemination of project outcomes to other teachers. Since the approach relies strongly on the *process* of curriculum development, it is not easy to see how they can have a wider impact without further development work.

A key means to disseminate the outcomes from the Valuing Places project was through 13 full or half-day INSET sessions attended by over 500 teachers. The sessions made the teachers think about key concepts, such as global interconnectedness, and provided some starter materials from which they could develop ideas. The feedback cited in the evaluations suggests that delegates gained from the events because practising teachers shared their classroom experience and suggested manageable and transferable ideas. Further opportunities for dissemination were through workshops at the GA Annual Conference. Unsolicited comments to the evaluator at the Manchester 2006 Conference confirmed that the project was beginning to have an impact beyond the regional groups.

One regional coordinator explained her dissemination strategy:

*We incorporated the project dissemination into the annual INSET event held every year in the authority, so it had access to upwards of 150 primary and secondary teachers. The teachers ran different workshops and gave out a free CD ROM of ideas for teachers to take away. This worked well because of the 'hands on' workshops, which were necessary for people to understand the rationale behind the activities and use them effectively. Teachers talked to those who had developed the materials about how they*

*worked. I got lots of bookings arising from this and spread into neighbouring authorities.*

Similarly, a participant in 'Where will I live?' explained:

*We shared findings with other teachers through a presentation to the regional group and I have talked to a PGCE group on the outcomes. My scheme of work and evaluation are on the website and I am going to lead a teacher-to-teacher session at the GA Annual Conference in April 2007 on the project.*

The GA's intention is to use the website to draw more teachers into active engagement. However the 'Valuing Places' evaluator noted that it does not seem to have proved an effective means of dissemination. To date *Teaching Geography* and *Primary Geographer*, particularly the editions that focused on Valuing Places, appear to have been a much better showcase for the project's work. Teacher evaluations commented that these publications provided straightforward ideas adaptable for a range of pupils.

One benefit of 'Spatially Speaking' has been the sharing of good practice beyond the immediate participants. Some of the expert participants are providing GIS training for other schools, which seems to be particularly important where new levels of skills are required.

Schools indicated that others in their departments and in other subjects in the school were also beginning to work with GIS. Curriculum plans that had been developed on a small scale for specific groups during the first year of the project would roll out across entire year groups the following academic year. One participant from 'Where will I live?' explained how involvement had encouraged wider participation across the school:

*I coordinate action-based research in my school. The school provides small bursaries to individual teachers to focus on an area and then present the outcomes on the school website. Our department is involved in an innovation project using digital cameras to help motivate boys to higher achievement. One of the geography teachers is looking at kinaesthetic learning through model making and role play. I will encourage him to write this up, perhaps for a Teaching Geography article.*

By comparison, the 'Why Argue?' evaluation commented that there was limited involvement of other teachers in any of the schools by the end of the project.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESSING THE 'IMPACT' OF SUBJECT-FOCUSSED CPD

This was a short, focused study and the sample of teachers interviewed, while adequate in this context, was not truly representative of the whole GA membership. Teachers were selected because of the type of GA activities with which it was known they were involved. They were, therefore, generally activists and perhaps not typical of the average GA member. The response rate was around 50% of those approached, by letter, to participate.

As is usual in this approach, setting up the telephone interviews was time-consuming. It required negotiation of suitable times during the school day, and enough space between interviews to write them up. Making verbatim notes during the interviews, rather than recording and transcribing, worked well.

The teachers were given the framework of questions (Appendix 1) in advance, and all had taken time to consider their responses carefully. This particularly helped them to reflect on what subject CPD meant for them, what they would like in the future, and the specific ways in which involvement had influenced their teaching. The interviews were conducted as free conversations within this framework, rather than strictly following the questions, so teachers had the opportunity to expand on their opinions and perceptions in areas where they had much to contribute. This meant that the overlap in the framework questions about impact on aspects of the curriculum and teaching did not prove problematic in practice. I had prepared 'prompts' to ensure that interviewees' views on aspects such as senior management intervention were discussed, but they did not really prove necessary because conversations flowed easily. The interviewees were keen to express their thoughts and it was not difficult to fill half an hour in every case.

As the reported findings showed, there was a great deal of detailed information in the interview scripts. The rather open-ended interview style enabled the participants to explore several avenues which I had not anticipated, for example teachers who had been involved in the Geography Quality Mark describing its impact on colleagues. This definitely vindicated the less structured approach.

The most problematic aspect of the interviews was to determine exactly what impact the GA activity had had on the teachers' actual practice and its influence on pupils' learning. Some participants were very reflective, explaining how a project or journal article had directly changed their thinking and subsequent practice; others were more pragmatic and wanted to discuss the range of resources they had developed and teaching strategies they had adopted without evaluating their effectiveness. Similarly, pupils' learning was often reported in terms of improved motivation and enjoyment, or GCSE take-up and examination

results: few teachers had thought deeply about the quality of learning that had been achieved from their different teaching strategies. We have a long way to go before the culture of evaluating teaching effectiveness is secure enough in schools for its impact to be judged solely through self-reporting.

One reason why assessing the impact of CPD through self-reporting and evaluation is problematic is that few participants think about the possible impact before the activity starts, or record their aspirations and expectations. Therefore, they are not really in a position to evaluate their learning gains.

What readily emerged from the interviews was a snapshot of the current context of geography teaching in schools and how this constrained or provided opportunities to develop further GA CPD activities. Using this case study approach enabled the take-up of what GA membership had to offer to be seen in context. This gave a realistic view of the conditions that influence the impact of CPD today. In particular, it shed light on how subject information and innovations were, or were not, effectively cascaded within departments and schools. It also showed how determined many teachers were to move forward, despite the limited opportunities they are offered.

This telephone interview approach could be adapted by subject associations to explore teachers' understanding or needs in advance of establishing CPD themes or topics. While much of what teachers report is very consistent with what CPD providers identify to be their 'needs', it also showed that surprises do occur!

The second aspect of this study's methodology was a desk study of the evaluations that had already been completed on curriculum projects. These all followed a common format of evaluation questions, although the styles differed considerably between them.

However, there was no explicit expectation in the evaluation questions common to all the reports (see Appendix 2) to focus on the impact of teachers' professional development, apart from what was contained specifically in the project aims. The evaluators varied considerably in the extent to which they tackled this issue directly, and much had to be gleaned from their general comments.

It would be helpful for future studies of this type to include a question on the project's impact on teachers' professional development. This suggests the need to gather in advance information on their expectations, as well as teacher evaluations at the end. Increasingly the GA expects teachers to complete an evaluation report, and these are usefully shared on the website. However, the format does not seem to require teachers to evaluate critically the changes that have taken place in their teaching, and its effectiveness with pupils, as a result of

the project. Commonly the teacher evaluations focussed on how the products of the projects (resources) were received and used.

What is missing from the current approach to curriculum project evaluations is any follow up of participants to identify whether there has been any sustained impact from the project on their teaching. The use of telephone interviews could be very informative in this respect.

## CONCLUSIONS

All the teachers involved in this study are highly committed to teaching geography well and believe in the importance of subject-focussed CPD for their continued success in developing geography teaching in their schools. Professional development that is not subject-specific, although important to them for improving generic teaching skills, is insufficient to maintain a high quality of subject teaching.

These teachers are proactive in seeking subject professional development in their local area. But many have not found any. The local in-service opportunities, curriculum development groups and adviser support that existed in the past have, for the most part, disappeared. In this context the teachers see membership of the GA as providing an essential contact with their subject community. Repeatedly, interviewees concluded that belonging to the GA was a crucial part of their CPD and it provides them with an external subject stimulus.

Teachers recognise that forms of professional development are changing. The overwhelming majority see the importance of 'development through doing' and want to work with like-minded teachers to learn about, develop and reflect on effective teaching strategies. The key resource for them to achieve this is *time*. The impact of the GA's curriculum-led projects was so positive because they made time available for the 'teacher-researchers' to meet others away from their workplace and to work with colleagues in school. Yet, for most teachers, time to talk 'geography' remains an elusive commodity.

Primary geography teachers, in particular, feel a strong sense of professional isolation. Often they are often the only specialist in their school; in many schools, the geography subject leader has no specialist background. As a result, they see CPD opportunities external to the school as more important for raising their subject confidence than do their secondary colleagues. For many secondary heads of department, too, the numbers of non-specialists, or senior teachers with other in-school responsibilities, teaching in the department, makes keeping abreast of subject developments a solo task. Others also need links with subject professionals – the NQT; the manager supporting a weaker colleague.

In a climate where in-school professional development dominates, geography subject leaders and heads of department need a source of information and materials to draw on when training others. The GA, with its plethora of high-quality publications and curriculum materials, both paper and electronic, is recognised as a key source of geography information and advice. The resources are used very flexibly in a range of training scenarios – from the planning meeting with a colleague, to whole-staff INSET. It is noticeable that teachers quote a very wide range of GA resources as being influential. It is the breadth of

information that members find so useful. Whatever the geographical problem to be solved in their school they see the GA as their first port of call.

Those interviewed in this survey actively sought the stimulus of subject professional development from outside the school. They see their GA membership as a lifeline to their subject community, regularly reading the journals and publications, and going to the Annual Conference. The interviews showed the numerous different ways in which the teachers bring further 'added value' to their membership. Journal articles and publications are revisited as a source of ideas and inspiration during curriculum change. Involvement in local branches and curriculum projects offers entry to local networks of geography teachers. Regular conference attendance leads to membership of phase committees which was, for those interviewed, the most invigorating form of professional enhancement. There is no doubt that for all 15 teachers, membership of the GA brought substantial benefits – to them professionally, and to the pupils they taught.

It was surprising, therefore, that the GA website was not seen as more beneficial, both by those interviewed and by project evaluators. The earlier, less user-friendly site, was given as a reason by some, but many teachers have not yet developed a culture of turning to on-line resources for support.

The importance of first-hand, face-to-face professional development experience was clear from the interviews, particularly for primary teachers. The GA-run workshops at the Annual Conference, INSET events or project disseminations are highly regarded because they are tailored well to the participants' needs and provide opportunities to share ideas and teaching strategies with other geography teachers whom they would not otherwise meet. A particularly impressive finding from the interviews was the lasting impact of workshop attendance, especially at the Annual Conference.

Surprisingly, in view of the dearth of subject-specific professional development available in local authorities, those interviewed have rather modest aspirations for their future CPD. Perhaps this is realism, or acceptance of the status quo. Many of those interviewed had sought out their own CPD; maybe they are content to take matters into their own hands. They have joined the GA, they pay to go to the Annual Conference, they pay for publications out of their own pockets, they are active in projects and they voluntarily give their time to join GA committees and branches. This raises the question of what those who are less proactive might have requested.

While many areas of GA support, such as publications and the Annual Conference, have been available for many years, the new 'local solutions' initiatives were shown to be having a significant impact on teachers' CPD.

Curriculum projects, in which teachers are funded to engage with like-minded colleagues, are proving a very effective means of professional development. They also enable the GA to focus on developing the more challenging aspects of geography teaching, such as using GIS, involving pupils in developing and presenting argument and teaching global interconnectedness. The Geography Quality Mark – although only in its pilot stage – clearly is also having an energising effect.

A positive feature of the GA's approach to curriculum projects is the evaluations built into the project methodology to inform future projects. These are thorough and detailed and make good use of first-hand evidence from attendance at events and interviews of participants, as well as reviewing the material outcomes.

Dissemination of project outcomes, and the sustainability and further development of innovative teaching approaches, are problematic. The follow-up in-service events in projects such as 'Valuing Places' were undoubtedly influential in raising the awareness of participants, but their wider impact is doubtful. Perhaps it is right to focus attention on the process of CPD that occurs for those teachers directly involved. Nevertheless, despite the projects' positive influence on participants, there is limited evidence that most teachers continue the development after the project concludes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS – POSSIBLE WAYS TO ACHIEVE GREATER IMPACT FROM SUBJECT ASSOCIATION CPD

Arising from the report findings, the following are possible areas for further CPD subject activity.

- A common demand from teachers is the opportunity to meet with other like-minded individuals in a local face-to-face network. Former subject groups established by local authority advisors have disappeared and left a vacuum. Subject association curriculum project groups, new-style branches, INSET events and schools working for the Geography Quality Marks offer possibilities for incipient networks. National conferences could consider how to facilitate teachers meeting others in their locality. The local and regional 'courses' resulting from the Action Plan for Geography could also provide such opportunities.
- In parallel, 'virtual' local networks could be developed. Currently, subject websites mainly provide information, and apart from the generally underdeveloped forums there are few opportunities for interaction. Although to date teachers have not used websites widely, the potential is there for development.
- Two groups which the study identified as being in greatest need of support from local subject networks were primary subject leaders and secondary NQTs.
- One of the main benefits of effective professional development through projects and face-to-face training activities was teachers' confidence and self-esteem – particularly in the context of the two groups identified above. Ways for subject associations to provide 'recognition' for the contributions of these teachers might be explored.
- A pool of good project coordinators – or possibly network convenors – is essential to facilitate effective CPD. ASTs have been used effectively in some, but not all, areas. The 'teacher consultant' scheme, as yet undeveloped, could be one way forward.
- The role of school senior managers as the 'gatekeepers' of professional development arose starkly from the interviews. The lack of school funding for subject-focussed CPD, and the limited time for geographers to meet for professional discussions or planning, were mentioned repeatedly. Raising the profile of subject-focussed CPD with senior managers in project schools should be a key role of the curriculum project coordinators.

- While cross-phase projects and events are important, the pairing and interaction between teachers in different phases needs to be carefully managed and should not be undertaken lightly.
- Adequate time and skilful facilitation is needed in 'face to face' meetings for in-depth discussions of difficult curriculum and pedagogical issues.
- It is not always clear from project evaluations or interviews whether the teachers really saw themselves as 'teacher researchers'. A more explicit evaluation framework could encourage teachers to reflect more systematically about the learning gains for pupils from their teaching innovations.
- Project dissemination strategies need to be planned more systematically from the start of a project, and linked, when possible, with other in-service networks, activities and events.
- Some participants in projects provide training for ITT students and other schools – this could be directly encouraged and developed.
- Some schools are developing their own action-research mini-projects as part of their CPD, and occasionally have secured small bursaries for individual teachers. Subject associations could consider brokering small arrangements of this type.

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## Appendix 1: Framework for telephone interviews for the Geographical Association's CPD impact study

- What does continuous professional development (CPD) mean for you? What is the place of subject-focussed CPD? What is the best form of subject-focussed CPD for you?
- Clarification of the extent of your 'involvement' with the GA. (For example: are you a reader and user of the journals/publications/website? Have you attended the annual conference? Are you a GA committee member/branch activist? Have you participated in a GA-led curriculum project or INSET? )
- What do you see as the benefits of this involvement for you and your school/geography department?
- Are GA materials or publications used in your school for CPD activities, for example do they help to facilitate departmental or school-wide collegiate discussion?
- Can you identify an area of the geography curriculum in your school, or a geography unit that you teach, which has changed recently? Did GA materials or activities play a positive role in assisting these changes? How? (e.g. through introducing you to specific new teaching content or methods.)
- In what ways has your involvement with the GA made you more informed professionally as a geography teacher? Can you think of any examples that have made an impact on your teaching and your pupils?
- Following your involvement with GA activities, have you had an opportunity to share the outcomes with other teachers – in your own school, or other schools?
- Are there any specific ways in which involvement with the GA had helped you to develop your geography teaching in the following areas: fieldwork, assessment, using ICT in your teaching, geographical enquiry?
- Apart from the GA, what other sources of professional help and advice are available to you to develop your teaching in geography (e.g. in-service courses, LA adviser or AST subject support, geography teachers' network, participation in teacher training).

- What further professional development would you like – or feel you need – to support your geography teaching? How do you feel the GA could help you with this?

## Appendix 2: Framework questions for the project evaluation reports

1. How far have the original aims of the project been met?
2. How does the project enhance geography's contribution to the two overarching aims of the National Curriculum (2000)?
  - i. The school curriculum should aim to provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and achieve.*
  - ii. The school curriculum should aim to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.*
3. How has the project enhanced the work of the GA regionally and locally?
4. What lessons can be learnt from the project for the GA and future collaborative project work of the subject associations?