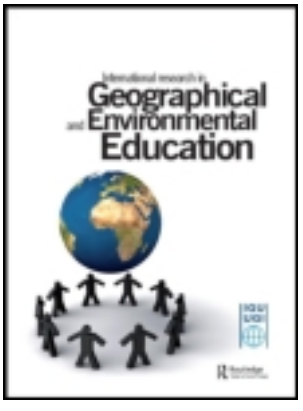

International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rgee20

Changing times in England: the influence on geography teachers' professional practice

Clare Brooks [a]

[a] Institute of Education, University of London, London, UK

Version of record first published: 18 Oct 2012.

To cite this article: Clare Brooks (2012): Changing times in England: the influence on geography teachers' professional practice, International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education, 21:4, 297-309

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10382046.2012.725966

International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education
Vol. 21, No. 4, November 2012, 297–309

Changing times in England: the influence on geography teachers' professional practice

Clare Brooks*

Institute of Education, University of London, London, UK

School geography in England has been characterised as a pendulum swinging between policies that emphasise curriculum and pedagogy alternately. In this paper, I illustrate the influence of these shifts on geography teacher's professional practice, by drawing on three "moments" from my experience as a student, teacher and teacher educator. Barnett's description of teacher professionalism as a continuous project of "being" illuminates how geography teachers can adapt to competing influences. It reflects teacher professionalism as an unfinished project, which is responsive, but not beholden, to shifting trends, and is informed by how teachers frame and enact policies. I argue that recognising these contextual factors is key to supporting geography teachers in "being" geography education professionals. As education becomes increasingly competitive on a global scale, individual governments are looking internationally for "solutions" to improve educational rankings. In this climate, the future of geography education will rest on how teachers react locally to international trends. Geography teacher educators can support this process by continuing to inform the field through meaningful geography education research, in particular in making the contextual factors of their research explicit. This can be supported through continued successful international collaboration in geography education research.

Keywords: geography education; enquiry; teacher professionalism; professional practice; 16-19 Project

Introduction

My research interest in geography teachers' development has focussed on how teachers adapt their practice to changing policy and societal contexts, and still teach geography well. In this paper, I reflect on how teachers have adapted their professional practice in relation to a series of changes that have influenced geography education, and how they may adapt in the future to the professional challenges that face geography education.

Perspectives on the future are influenced by experiences of the past. In this paper, I begin with a description of three incidents from my experience in geography education: as a student, as a newly qualified teacher and as a geography teacher educator. In these descriptions I focus on the specific context, and how geography teachers adapted their professional practice. In England, the policy framework has been described as a series of pendulum swings between curriculum and pedagogy (Lambert, 2009; Marsden, 1997). In my accounts, I show the influence these shifts between curriculum and pedagogy have had on geography teachers. I use these examples to show how teachers' professional practice

*Email: c.brooks@ioe.ac.uk

ISSN: 1038-2046 print / 1747-7611 online

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10382046.2012.725966
http://www.tandfonline.com

is continually being "made and remade" drawing upon Barnett's definition of "being" as a continuous act of professional formation (2008).

In the later part of this paper, I focus on how the geography education community can support teachers in this continuous act of professional formation. As globalisation becomes an increasing force in education, and governments dabble in "policy tourism", patterns and trends in education policy become more internationalised, but are then subject to local interpretations. I argue that to support geography education, there is a need for geography education research to emphasise these contextual factors, to enable colleagues from around the world to consider how to adapt their professional practice and to work collaboratively to support geography education internationally.

Curriculum and pedagogy

Before I begin with my reflections on three periods of change in geography education, I want to clarify what I mean by curriculum and pedagogy. Whilst both words are used frequently in education in England, their meaning, and in particular how they overlap is often interpreted differently. Curriculum is commonly used to refer to content of school education at a number of levels: what happens in the classroom, in a school or indeed at a policy level such as the National Curriculum. The focus of discussions around curriculum is often on the content of each education encounter: "what" is to be taught. Curriculum is therefore distinguished from pedagogy, which is understood as the science of teaching: or the "how" of teaching.

The distinction between curriculum and pedagogy is not this clear cut. Simon (1981) asked "Why no pedagogy in England" to draw attention to the lack of discussion in England about the process of teaching, and the focus on curriculum content. He argued that there was no "science of teaching" in England that was equivalent to the notion of didactics found in many European traditions. (In English, the word "didactic" is used to refer to transmission style lecturing.) This has been more recently highlighted by Alexander (2004) in his criticism of the pedagogy promoted through the New Labour Strategies. Alexander argues for an understanding of pedagogy that is broader than teaching strategies or approaches but also incorporates decisions about curriculum, or the selection of content.

Conversely, Young (2010), a sociologist of education, welcomes the distinction between curriculum and pedagogy, as he notes that it is pedagogy which is the realm of the teacher and which can be adapted at a local level. Expressed simply, Young argues that curriculum focuses on content whilst pedagogy, how that content is taught, lies within the realm of the individual teacher. Young's distinction ties in with the research on teachers' knowledge which suggests that it is the understanding of pedagogy which is the specific domain of the teacher. For example, Grossman, Wilson, and Shulman (1989) argue that a teacher knows their subject differently to the scientist because of this pedagogical perspective. This is also recognised by Banks, Leach, and Moon (1999) who describe teachers' ability to see knowledge from a pedagogical perspective as "didactic transposition". Shulman (1987) claimed a specific knowledge domain of the teacher that of "pedagogical content knowledge". I have argued elsewhere (Brooks, 2010) that it is unhelpful to overemphasise this pedagogical dimension too far from curriculum content. Similarly, McEwan and Bull (1991) highlight that all knowledge (as "text") has a pedagogical dimension through how it is communicated. Segall's (2004) distinction here is useful, as he summarises that whilst curriculum content and pedagogy are related, the particular skill of teachers is that they are able to recognise the pedagogical nature of the curriculum. This is useful because it acknowledges teachers' role in the creation of learning opportunities through how they work

with both curriculum and pedagogy, and also how curriculum can be written to promote certain approaches to knowledge construction and pedagogy (e.g. see Kelly, 2009). Segall's understanding of the relationship between curriculum and pedagogy highlights how the process of enacting the curriculum is an important part of teachers' professional practice, and key to understanding how teachers respond to changing policy frameworks and contexts.

Examples of professional practice

In the analysis that follows, I have selected three periods from my experience in geography education. Each reflects a period of change in geography education, and I recount the specific context alongside the influence it was having on geography teachers' professional practice. There are a number of caveats to these data. I have drawn upon my own experience, and as such the recollections are specific to me, and relate to my own context: this is particularly important as my relationship with colleagues was not the same in each scenario: in the first I was a student, in the second a junior colleague and in the third a tutor and mentor. In addition, I acknowledge the selective and partial nature of memory, and the limitations of being able to recount all details of the context and characters in full. I have selected what to include in the hope of making the context and descriptions clear; the conclusions I draw are my own.

Introducing enquiry-based learning: 16-19 Project

My early memories of school geography were not that impressive. I remember enjoying a regional study of the USA in my first year of secondary school (aged 11 to 12), but the rest of my school geography was uneventful and uninspiring. My enthusiasm for geography began when I studied A'level geography at aged 16–18 years. My school had recently moved to the Schools Council Geography 16-19 Project – an A'level set up by the Schools Council that focused on working with teachers to develop enquiry-based style learning, and later adopted by the EdExcel Exam Board as an A'level syllabus. A key feature of the 16-19 Project was the "Route for Enquiry" which became an enduring influence on geography education (Roberts, 2003). My teachers were explicit that we were the first year to undertake this examination and style of learning and that they were working to understand the enquiry approach. This fits with my memories of the lessons: some were enquiry-led, others were more traditional featuring dictation and note-taking.

The context of this period of geography education is significant. Clark (1986) observes that between 1975 and 1985 there was a shift in teachers' thinking towards conceptual development, and with additional focus on educational processes. This could be observed in the Schools Council Projects which were influential in geography education at this time (Marsden, 1995), all of which featured a form of enquiry approach (Roberts, 2003). In terms of teachers' work, Marsden refers to this period as "enlightened professionalism", where teachers saw themselves as professionals and responsible for what they taught (Rawling, 2001). This trend can be traced back to Stenhouse's Curriculum Project which placed teachers in the role of "teachers as researchers" as a way of promoting long-term curriculum development and change.

The changes that were happening in education: the inclusion of what were called "progressive" ideas in education; a move away from traditional curriculum content to issues which were more relevant to young people; and a focus on constructivist pedagogies and how children learnt were dominant at the time. These ideas were reflected in the 16-19 Project. Morgan and Lambert (2005) record that the project was based on conceptual thinking

and key ideas rather than learning traditional content, and Roberts (2003) highlights three innovative dimensions to the 16-19 Project: the incorporation of values into the enquiry process, the range of questions students considered including future orientated ones and the Route for Enquiry which linked all areas of geography (including theory- and context-related issues). The 16-19 Project also had a strong emphasis on teacher engagement with curriculum development. It can be seen as a development that very much reflected the contemporary ideas in education, and was a radical shift to what had happened before (Rawling, 2001).

As a student, I was certainly aware that learning geography in this way was different to my previous school geography experiences. I distinctly recall some enquiry-led lessons: in particular, those that featured a series of units produced by the School Council project and published by Longman in 1984. The one that influenced me the most was a unit on squatter settlements in Lima, Peru (Morrish, 1984). The focus was on a series of squatter settlements in and around Lima and the unit explored how migrants to the city were working to improve the area and some of the geographical issues that stood in their way. I remember thinking how important this was to learn, and how outraged I was by the inequalities. I empathised with the settlers, I reflected on my own living conditions and felt that the issues really mattered.

However, it would be fair to say that this was not typical of my experience of A'level geography. The transition to this "new" approach was not a smooth one. As a student, I remember feeling at a loss sometimes as to what was expected of me, and that my teachers also appeared unsure of the examination specifications. There were periods of time when my geography teachers reverted to more familiar ways of teaching: dictation and note-taking, this appeared to be in areas they were less certain about or when 16–19 resources were unavailable.

Looking back on that period of time, I can relate my experience to the transition that was taking place in education. My school was a coeducational school in central Bristol, known locally for good results and for a fairly traditional approach to school discipline and teaching and learning. The A'level geography that I experienced was significantly out-of-step with my prior experience of school geography, and was very different to the more traditional approaches to teaching and learning I experienced in other lessons. My geography teachers talked openly about their adaption to the new examination syllabus and approach, and I was conscious that they were relying on official sources of geographical knowledge (like published resources) to support them through this change. Upon reflection now, I understand that the department was in a period of transition with new teachers promoting these approaches (I have subsequently learnt that a new appointment in the team had recently competed her pre-service training with colleagues who had been involved in the development of the 16-19 Project), and the more experienced teachers less comfortable with the enquiry approach and expectation that teachers would develop their own enquiry opportunities. I can also contextualise that the transition was part of a bigger shift in education: a move to more "progressive" approaches to teaching and learning, and that the enquiry approach developed and promoted by the 16-19 Project was a geographical interpretation of that movement.

I do not know why my teachers decided to adopt the 16-19 Project Syllabus; I know that more traditional exam syllabuses were available, and that the 16-19 approach was out-of-step with their previous practice. However, it was in-step with some of the movements in education, and in particular geography education at the time. And I like to think that my geography teachers were undergoing this period of transition in their professional practice because of the benefits for their students and the quality of geography education we learnt. Indeed, what I learnt whilst studying the 16-19 Project had an extraordinary impact on me

as a student, as I was drawn into the real-life examples, the importance of the issues and the satisfaction I gained through developing a deeper understanding through geographical theories and ideas.

Negotiating with the Geography National Curriculum

My experience as an A'level student was influential in my desire to study geography at degree level, and to eventually seek to become a geography teacher. By this time, I had moved to London, and I wanted to teach in the heart of the inner city. After completion of my geography PGCE (the one year post-graduate teacher certification programme), I accepted a job at a coeducational comprehensive school in Hackney, East London. I was attracted to the school because it was truly comprehensive: situated in Stoke Newington, the school attracted students from the affluent Stoke Newington "village" as well as surrounding estates with a more transient and diverse population. The school population was characterised as mixed and diverse with a large number of students who were recent arrivals to the UK, some seeking refugee status. However, there was also the influence of the multi-ethnic Stoke Newington middle class. The school's reputation, influenced by its involvement in a number of social projects (described in Harrison, 1983), its location (in a London Borough with large deprivation issues) and its innovative approach to the curriculum, meant that it was seen as a progressive and forward thinking but caring school.

My appointment was directly attributed to the introduction of the Original Orders of the Geography National Curriculum (introduced following the Education Reform Act, 1988). It was made clear at my interview and subsequently, that the school was keen to have a newly qualified teacher who had been "trained to deliver" the National Curriculum (to use the vernacular at the time). Until the introduction of the National Curriculum, the department had developed an issues-based curriculum, which featured active and enquiry-based learning. The curriculum consisted of a range of commercially produced and locally designed curriculum unit packages involving simulations, role-play and enquiry-based decision-making exercises. The teachers planned the curriculum collaboratively and often in mixed disciplinary teams. In the light of the National Curriculum, the department were very keen to keep the best of their previous practices and maintain their issues-based enquiry approach.

A good example of this was a particular unit on working and living conditions. The module started with background to the triangular trade of the slave trade, and the working conditions of the slaves on sugar farms, and then continued with a comparison to the working and living conditions of factory workers who worked in the UK for Tate and Lyle. The module then focussed on current factory working and living conditions in north and east London. Whilst all of these elements were included in the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for History and Geography, the limitations of both curriculums (particularly the stipulation that history had to be taught chronologically) meant it became increasingly difficult to continue using these units in the lower school (11–14 years) curriculum and maintain a degree of subject coherence (see Marsden, 1995). The favourite units of work had to be significantly reduced in time in order to make space to "cover" the rest of the programmes of study.

The difficulties teachers experienced with the introduction of the geography National Curriculum has been well documented (Lambert, 2004; Morgan & Lambert, 2005; Rawling, 2001). Morgan and Lambert (2005) argue that the Original Orders of the National Curriculum were seen as part of what Ball described as the "discourse of derision" (1994) which was seen as an attack on progressive teaching methods (such as the approach that

had been popular in my department). The focus in the National Curriculum on traditional content of school subjects, and the amount to be covered affected how teachers were able to construct the curriculum. Teachers started to talk less of curriculum planning and more about curriculum "delivery" (Lambert, 2009). In the department I was working in, this played out through our professional conversations and collaborative working.

Departmental discussions were dominated by heated debates about professional practice. The National Curriculum had set the curriculum content, and whilst the departments were opposed to the style and content of the curriculum, the debates centred around how we would interpret the curriculum: what should be taught when, how would certain topics be approached and how could the previous interdisciplinary approaches be maintained without one (i.e. geography) becoming subservient to the other (i.e. history). The department had a clear frame through which they viewed the curriculum and how it should be taught (see Roberts, 1995). However, the sheer weight of the curriculum content meant that the pedagogical approach had to be adapted. This reflects Morgan and Lambert's observation that it became increasingly difficult for teachers at this time to define and develop local curriculum (2005).

A further significant influence at the time was the introduction of inspections by the Government's Inspectorate Ofsted (the school received its first inspection in my first year of teaching). The school had had a chequered past with local authority inspections and knew that the lower-than-national average results put the school in potential danger of a poor inspection result. There was an air of mystery about the new inspection body Ofsted, and what style of teaching and learning the inspectors wanted to see. Like most schools of the time (see Ofsted, 1999), the department opted to purchase a set of geography textbooks to supplement the areas of the geography programme of study. It was hoped that these textbooks "covered" the curriculum and were insurance against potential accusations that the geography was non-compliant with the National Curriculum Programme of Study. This was a pragmatic response to the accountability agenda as most of the department were deeply unhappy with the thematic structure and the pedestrian nature of the textbook and its activities.

Commentators of this period of geography education reassure that our approach was not uncommon. As Roberts (1995) identified in her research into geography departments and how they responded to the National Curriculum, my department had a strong frame for how the Geography National Curriculum was conceptualised and understood. However, in seeking to adapt, the department used a variety of positive and divergent strategies that could be seen as reflecting the range of approaches identified by Ball and Bowe (1992). The conflict was grounded in the reworking of our definition of professional practice, and how to respond to what was seen as an erosion of teachers' professional autonomy (see Whitty, 2008). My experience was that this period of transition was hard. It required a lot of discussion and soul-searching about what the department saw as being good practice, and also the constraints we saw ourselves under: influenced by both organisational influences and micro-politics (Ball, 1987).

Teacher education under New Labour

The next phase of my career also coincided with a political shift in education. I began working with geography student teachers at the onset of the implementation of the New Labour government's "Strategies". The Strategies began with the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy which then developed into the Key Stage 3 Strategy (DfES, 2002, 2005). The strands of these Strategies were focussed on developing teaching and learning approaches:

key outcomes for teachers were the development of the three-part lesson (starter, development, plenary), the incorporation of thinking skills and assessment for learning. As Scott (2000) notes the communication of education policies is key to how they are interpreted and implemented at a local level. The Strategies were supported by a huge amount of information circulated from central government, combined with professional development activities, most of which were intended to be executed with the whole-school and therefore were generic in nature. Alexander (2004) argues that to characterise these Strategies as "pedagogy" represents a misreading of the term: they were dominated by a notion "what works" or "best practice" that teachers were expected to emulate.

The context of education at this time reflected these new developments alongside a continuation of what had gone before. Gunter and Forrester (2008) note the delivery metaphor was still dominant in education. However, the most recent version of the GNC was "light touch" (see Rawling, 2008), although this was tainted by a hangover from the Original Orders and an ongoing perception that the curriculum was over-loaded (Morgan & Lambert, 2005). Morgan and Lambert recall: "It was as if teachers no longer believed in the capacity to decide the what and the how of teaching geography" (2005, p. 38).

The focus of the implementation of the Strategies was devolved to schools. Furlong (2005) describes how the New Labour era refocused attention away from the individual teacher and onto the school as an institution. Therefore, the school became the focus for the implementation of policy and in turn many schools developed school policies on what constituted a "good lesson", and set about rigidly enforcing them. This context was also influenced by a school inspection regime that required ongoing self-evaluation and continuous improvement. Many schools responded by purchasing commercially available skills or learning-based packages such as Building Learning Power, or Learning to Learn.

Many of these ideas were introduced to teachers without any discussion of what underpinned them or a rational for why they worked. As Hipkins, Reid, and Bull (2010) argue, new pedagogies do not produce lasting change without related thinking about curriculum and assessment. The dominant ideas of the "teacher as a technician" appeared to prevail, if not at a policy level, certainly at the school level of implementation.

In my role as a geography teacher educator, I was working with student teachers as they worked towards becoming qualified teachers. I conducted a range of visits to schools to observe student teachers teach and to discuss their progress with colleagues. During my discussions about geography lessons, I was struck by the number of teachers who defended teaching outdated geographical content because it was "on the curriculum". When I asked student teachers why they were teaching particular topics, or out of date case studies, they made little distinction between the National Curriculum and the school curriculum. It was as if the geography curriculum had become stuck in time. Further discussion revealed that the selection of geographical curriculum content had become less of a focus for departmental discussion.

The policy swing towards "pedagogy" was being felt at a local level and appeared to be influencing teachers' professional practice. My student teachers became preoccupied with the school emphasis on generic skill development or student engagement. Their main targets for development were around implementing certain approaches to teaching and learning. Morgan and Lambert (2005) have described this as the "pedagogic adventure" where the focus is on the activities that students undertake rather than the learning that they are expected to gain. I observed this often. For example, I had one student teacher who had lived and worked in Australia during his gap year. The school had developed an activity that featured Australia – however, their main resource: a mystery activity developed from a thinking skills workshop they had attended included factual inaccuracies. The

student teacher raised this with his department team and the response was that it was more appropriate for the students to develop their thinking skills than their knowledge about the place. I subsequently used this example as a focus for discussion with the tutor group of other student teachers, and it became clear that not only was this normal practice in some departments but that in some schools the drive towards the "pedagogic adventure" was often at the neglect of curriculum content or accuracy (for similar observations, see Roberts, 2010).

Student teachers are at a key stage in the formation of their professional practice. At this time, they were experiencing a considerable tension between the advice they were receiving from me and my colleagues, and their school-based mentors. On the one hand, we were encouraging them to think critically about both their curriculum decisions and their practice in the classroom. On the other hand, schools were insisting they aligned their practice with school policies. Many schools had a school lesson plan, which outlined a rigid structure for most lessons, often including Strategy initiatives such as thinking skills, or assessment for learning. I visited one school, and the geography mentor talked me through a lesson plan that had over 30 different "requirements" for each 50 minutes lesson. Typically, student teachers were advised that each lesson should begin with three lesson objectives that students copied into their books. This is part of the assessment for learning advice to share learning intentions with students. In practice, there was little sharing, as the objectives were copied by students and rarely referred to (see Davidson, 2006). The student teachers talked openly about their frustration of working within rigid expectations. This frustration was shared with many experienced mentor teachers who were also frustrated at the mechanistic approach they had been expected to take.

The situation I have described can be seen as another period of tension and change in teachers' professional practice. However, in this incidence the site where teachers negotiated their reactions to this change had changed, as the school department (previously the place where colleagues worked together to work with or around periods of change) became the focus for the change itself. In her description of the activist professional (Sachs, 2003), and Lambert's (2010a) geographical interpretation of this, importance is placed on the collegiate networks to enable teachers to develop their professional response to external forces for change. In the previous two examples, the school department was an important focus for this collegiate professional network. However, in this third example, the school itself was becoming the locus for change. As such, my conversations with experienced mentors, and experienced teachers seemed to suggest that the school department was no longer a place where these issues could be shared and professional practice developed.

Competing notions of professionalism

In each of the situations, I have described above the teachers were dealing with competing tensions and influences over their professional practice. In each case the influence was being exerted from a different source (the dominant ideas in education, government policy or school directives), but the influence on geography teachers was similar. In the example of the 16-19 Project, my teachers were willingly engaged with the process of change, as they were working with a new approach. In this sense, their tension can be seen as "professional development", that they were engaging in a professionally difficult process working towards enhancing their practice.

This was not the case with the other two examples, in each of those cases the professional context of education had changed due to changes in government policy, although the scale of

enactment was different. Rawling (2001) articulates the professional tensions that emerged with the introduction of the National Curriculum. She characterises this as a continuum between fully developed professionalism and the restricted professional (or the skilled technician). Rawling argues that the National Curriculum pushed teachers towards restricted notions of professionalism. Subsequent to these changes, Whitty (2006) notes the rise of the accountability agenda and the impact on the professional status of teachers, reflected in his term "accountability professional". These shifts in teacher professionalism have not occurred smoothly but can be seen as sites of tension and conflict, influenced by micro-politics and organisational structures (Morley, 2008). The idea of an activist professional (Sachs, 2003) has been used as a way of emphasising the agency of teachers to be proactive in the face of change. However, the emphasis is on the teacher working collaboratively and collegially, in structures (or departments) that may not always be available, for example when this context itself becomes the driver for change.

A useful way of understanding the increasingly individualised experience of being a professional is through the lens of "being" as adapted by Barnett (2008) from his work in higher education. Barnett argues that being a professional in this age of "supercomplexity" requires an ongoing awareness of what it means to "profess" (2008). He uses Heidegger's notion of "being" to emphasise the active and ongoing nature of this form of professionalism:

> Being is not just how individuals are in the world, but also how they stand in time, backwards and forwards. Therefore "Being" has possibilities and is always restlessly searching, working forwards, even if it knows not where or to what. Related to what we know, and our understandings. (Barnett, 2008)

Barnett emphasises this continual reworking of the professional project, which enables the professional to draw upon their "epistemological authority":

> The modern professional – if we do any justice to the phrase – has to be both a practicing epistemologist and a practising ontologist. On the one hand, she has to know things and go on knowing; and to practise what she preaches; and find new things to preach. On the other hand . . . also has to take on – on a daily basis – the task of making herself in the world. . . . bound up with moments of criticality and discursive formation. (2008)

Barnett's ambitious description of a professional emphasises the professional's specialist knowledge and experience: that which they use to understand trends in curriculum and to see the pedagogical principles within it. Barnett also acknowledges that professionals are no longer autonomous but can use their particular expertise to respond to changing contexts and policy frameworks. This analysis of professionalism is an active and ongoing process, responsive to individual histories and contexts, but also cognisant of future developments and influences.

By using this lens, we can see that the geography teachers in each of the examples above have been reforming and remaking their professional practice in the light of their changing contexts. The network they have chosen to support them in doing this has depended on where the significant influences have come from and how they stand in relation to them. In this sense, the identification of the network is a professional act in itself. A dominant feature of geography education in the future may be increased homogenisation, and redeveloping of professional networks for geography teachers. In this respect, a strong international network of geography educators is important to support teachers' professional practice.

Future challenges to professional practice

In an era of global economic crisis, the future is increasingly uncertain. There are a number of current trends that appear to be sustained and so may present challenges to geography education in the future. Firstly, the 2008 global economic crisis has illuminated the links between national economic systems, and that economic concerns about recession and decline are widespread. In the light of increased global competition, education is commonly cited as an important mechanism to encourage economic growth (see, e.g. DfES, 2010).

Increased global competitiveness has also increased the dominance of world league tables such as PISA, as governments seek to discover the secrets of the best performing countries. In England, the 2010 government White Paper "The Importance of Teaching" cites influences from Finland, Singapore and South Korea. Dylan Wiliam has described this approach as "policy tourism" (see Barton, 2010) – where governments select features of education systems from the "best" systems in the world, without due consideration as to their transferability to the local context or the inequality issues that they raise. This is in spite of a wealth of evidence that context is a key driver in the successful implementation of such policies (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Chan, 2004; Goodson, 2003; Leaton Gray & Whitty, 2010). The challenge for geography education is to consider how to respond to these "alien" ideas.

There appears to be a growing international consensus as to the goals of schooling and the desired attributes of a school leaver. Popular commentators such as Wagner (2009) emphasise the need for criticality, creativity, disciplined thinking and internationally minded individuals who have the ability to synthesis information. I recently attended two conferences: one in Mexico, the other in Singapore, where the same message was communicated: that education is the main "hope" for economic growth and success, and the ambition was for education systems to produce globally aware critical thinkers. There is great potential here for geography education.

This consensus is reflected in increasing homogenisation of education policies around the world. This is already reflected in the international collaborations evident in Michael Fullan's work on educational change and leadership (2011), and Hargreaves and Shirley's manifesto for educational change (2009). In both of these publications, emphasis is placed on the importance of teachers in responding positively to changing contexts. In English policy texts this has been understood as a period of process, of continual change, and improvement:

> Indeed, these jurisdictions show us that we must pay attention to all of these things at once if our school system is to become one of the world's fastest improving. Even the best school systems in the world are constantly striving to get better – Singapore is looking again at further improving its curriculum, while Hong Kong is looking at ways in which it can improve its teacher training. (DfES, 2010, p. 8)

As the global education context continues then to shift between curriculum and pedagogy (as history suggests it will), the challenge is for the geography education community to provide a fertile community to nurture individuals and groups as they engage with the challenging job of "being" a professional geography. The main challenges to geography teachers' professional practice will be to consider where geography will "fit" into this homogenisation of education policies? And how will this reflect ongoing developments within academic geography and geography education?

The nature of "being" a professional, as I have described it, emphasises that the act of professional practice firmly lies with the geography teacher and how they perceive

their epistemological authority: teachers have to be confident about what they know and the positive influence they have. The geography education community can support those teachers in three ways:

a. By focussing on the development of professional practice as an ongoing professional project, reflecting Barnett's idea of "being" a professional. This would require an emphasis in initial teacher education as the beginning of professionalisation, inducting new geography teachers into professional practices, networks and forms of dialogue that they can continue to engage with throughout their career. In addition, instilling within new teachers confidence and pride in their distinctive contribution to education.
b. By geography education research focussing on the specific importance of context when reporting research findings. The homogenisation of education policies makes it increasingly important for geography educators to be aware of the effectiveness of initiatives in other places. By emphasising the significant contextual factors, researchers will enable local experts to interpret for themselves the transferability to their local context. Geography educators can then decide how to respond and what their own significant local factors are.
c. By continuing to promote an international community of geography educators that work collaboratively to build up our understanding of geography education across the world. In the examples I have recounted in this paper, community has been an important site of professional discussions and debates. The last example illustrated the erosion of small-scale communities, in the light of school-based influences. In such incidences, geography teachers seek support from other networks: higher degrees, association with higher education institutions, professional associations, teacher unions, etc. A strong international community is able to support national and local communities of geography educators to sustain and support these collaborative practices.

These three points emphasise that the future of geography education can be supported through successful international collaboration, informed and enhanced by meaningful geography education research. This is not a call for research to illuminate "what works", to merely respond to external trends, or to outline the definitive answer to enduring curriculum questions, but to strive for a deeper understanding of the professional work of geography teachers: to support teachers in "being" geography education professionals. Geography education research that supports geography teachers' professional practice could result in context-sensitive, locally relevant solutions to internationally inspired shifts and policies. Needless to say, the continued success of journals such as IRGEE is key to this sharing and community building for those involved in geography and environmental education research.

References

Alexander, R. (2004). Still no pedagogy? Principle, pragmatism and compliance in primary education. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 34*(1), 7–33.

Ball, S. (1987). *The micropolitics of the school*. London: Routledge.

Ball, S.J., & Bowe, R. (1992). Subject departments and the 'implementation' of National Curriculum policy: An overview of the issues. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 24*(2), 97–115.

Banks, F., Leach, J., & Moon, B. (1999). New understandings of teachers' pedagogic knowledge. In J. Leach & B. Moon (Eds.), *Learners and pedagogy* (pp. 89–110). London: Paul Chapman.

Barnett, R. (2008). Critical professionalism in an age of supercomplexity. In B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Exploring professionalism* (pp. 190–207). London: Institute of Education, Bedford Way Papers.
Barton, G. (2010). *A monopoly game in which poor people lose* (Times Educational Supplement reported 6th August 2010). Retrieved August 5, 2012, from http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6053515
Beijaard, D., Meijer, P.C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*, 107–128.
Brooks, C. (2010). Geographical knowledge and professional development. In G. Butt (Ed.), *Geography education and the future* (pp. 165–180). London: Continuum.
Chan, E. (2004). The conceptions of geography teaching and learning of two proactive teachers. *Geography, 89*(3), 282–286.
Clark, C.M. (1986). Ten years of conceptual development in research on teacher thinking. In M. Ben-Peretz, R. Broome, & R. Halkes (Eds.), *Advances of research on teacher thinking* (pp. 7–20). Lisse: Swets and Zeitlinger.
Davidson, G. (2006). Start at the beginning. *Teaching Geography, 31*(3), 105–108.
DfES. (2010). *The importance of teaching: The schools white paper 2010*. London: Author.
DfES. (2002). *Training materials for foundation subjects*. London: Author.
DfES. (2005). *Secondary national strategy for school improvement 2005–06*. London: Author.
Fullan, M. (2011). *Change leader: Learning to do what matters most*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Furlong, J. (2005). New labour and teacher education: The end of an era. *Oxford Review of Education, 31*(1), 119–134.
Goodson, I. (2003). *Professional knowledge, professional lives: Studies in education and change*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
Grossman, P.L., Wilson, S.M., Shulman, L. (1989). Teachers of substance: Subject matter knowledge for teaching. In M.C. Reynolds (Ed.), *Knowledge base for the beginning teacher* (pp. 23–36). Oxford: Pergamon.
Gunter, H., & Forrester, G. (2008). New labour and school leadership 1997–2007. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 56*(2), 144–162.
Hargreaves, A., & Shirley, D. (2009). *The fourth way: The inspiring future for educational change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
Harrison, P. (1983). *Inside the Inner City: Life under the cutting edge*. London: Pelican.
Hipkins, R., Reid, A., & Bull, A. (2010). Some reflections on the philosophical and pedagogical challenges of transforming education. *Curriculum Journal, 21*(1), 109–118.
Kelly, A.V. (2009). *The curriculum* (6th ed.). London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
Lambert, D. (2004). Geography. In J. White (Ed.), *Rethinking the school curriculum* (pp. 75–86). Abingdon: Routledge Falmer.
Lambert, D. (2009). *Geography in education: Lost in the post?* London: Institute of Education, University of London.
Lambert, D. (2010a). On being a professional geography teacher. In C. Brooks (Ed.), *Studying PGCE geography at M level: Reflection, research and writing for professional development* (pp. 9–22). London: Routledge.
Lambert, D. (2010b, August 27). *Crack curriculum's core and open a world of opportunity*. TES. http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6055960
Leaton Gray, S., & Whitty, G. (2010). Social trajectories or disrupted identities? Changing and competing models of teacher professionalism under New Labour. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 40*(1), 5–23.
Marsden, W.E. (1995). *Geography 11–16: Rekindling good practice*. London: David Fulton.
Marsden, W.E. (1997). On taking the geography out of geographical education. *Geography 82*(3), 241–252.
McEwan, H., & Bull, B. (1991). The pedagogic nature of subject matter knowledge. *American Educational Research Journal, 28*(2), 316–334.
Morgan, J., & Lambert, D. (2005). *Geography: Teaching school subjects 11–19*. London: Routledge.
Morley, L. (2008). The micropolitics of professionalism: Power and collective identities in higher education. In B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Exploring professionalism* (pp. 99–120). London: Bedford Way Papers.
Morrish, M. (1984). *Squatter settlement in the third world* (16-19 Project). London: Longman and School Council Publications.

Ofsted. (1999). *Standards in the secondary school curriculum 1997–1998*. London: HMSO.
Rawling, E. (2001). *Changing the subject: The impact of national policy on school geography 1980–2000*. Sheffield: Geographical Association.
Rawling, E. (2008). *Planning your key stage 3 curriculum*. Sheffield: Geographical Association.
Roberts, M. (1995). Interpretations of the geography national curriculum: A common curriculum for all? *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 27*(2), 187–205.
Roberts, M. (2003). *Learning through enquiry*. Sheffield: Geographical Association.
Roberts, M. (2010). Where's the geography? Reflections on being an external examiner. *Teaching Geography, 35*(3), 112–113.
Sachs J. (2003). *The activist teaching profession*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
Scott, D. (2000). *Reading educational research and policy*. London: Routledge Falmer.
Segall, A. (2004). Revisiting pedagogical content knowledge: The pedagogy of content/the content of pedagogy. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*, 489–504.
Shulman, L. (1987). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher, 15*(2), 4–14.
Simon, B. (1981). Why no pedagogy in England? In B. Simon & W. Taylor (Eds.), *Education in the eighties: The central issues* (pp. 124–145). London: Batsford.
Wagner, T. (2009). *The global achievement gap: Why even our best schools don't teach the new survival skills our children need – and what we can do about it*. New York: Basic Books.
Whitty, G. (2006, 14 March). *Teacher professionalism in a new era*. Paper presented at the First General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland Annual Lecture, Queens University Belfast, Belfast, Ireland.
Whitty, G. (2008). Changing modes of teacher professionalism: Traditional, managerial, collaborative and democractic. In B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Exploring professionalism* (pp. 28–49). London: Institute of Education, Bedford Way Papers.
Young, M.F.D. (2010). The future of education in a knowledge society: the radical case for a subject-based curriculum. *Journal of the Pacific Circle Consortium for Education*, *22*(1), 21–32.