

Implementing the Australian Curriculum: Geography and the GeogSpace resources

Malcolm McInerney, AGTA Chair

From the beginning

It seems like only yesterday when the then AGTA Chair, Nick Hutchinson, set in motion the process for a National Geography Curriculum, which came to fruition on 20 May this year. To get the process underway Nick made an appointment with the then Federal Education Minister, Julie Bishop, to discuss the concern in the Australian geographical community of the declining number of students undertaking Geography in Australian schools, and the need for intervention in the diminishing place of the subject in the educational setting in Australia. The resulting February 2008 Erebus International report, *A study into the Teaching of Geography in Years 3–10*, played a crucial role in convincing the Australian Government in 2008 to include Geography as a subject in the development of the Australian Curriculum. Since the announcement by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in May 2009 that Geography was to be a Phase 2 subject of the new Australian Curriculum, life has been rather hectic for those involved in the development of the curriculum and support materials.

This article aims to:

- highlight the process of curriculum development over these four years
- unpack the curriculum and the supporting materials (GeogSpace) recently published by the Australian Geography Teachers' Association (AGTA) and Education Services Australia (ESA)
- discuss the opportunities and risks associated with the implementation stage of the curriculum.

Summary of the key stages of the development of the Australian Curriculum: Geography:

May 2009: ACARA presented with the TNGC Background Paper and Position Paper

October 2009: ACARA Geography Reference Group established to develop a draft AC: Geography Shape Paper

June 2010: draft AC: Geography Shape Paper released for online consultation

July 2010: ACARA Advisory Group appointed to produce the final AC: Geography Shape Paper

January 2011: AC: Geography Shape Paper released

March – October 2011: a group of writers and advisers worked on developing a draft scope and sequence

October 2011: draft scope and sequence released for online consultation

March – June 2012: writer and advisers respond to feedback and draft a new scope and sequence

June – July 2012: draft goes to jurisdictions and GTAs for feedback

August–September 2012: final rewrite by writers and advisers

October 2012 – April 2013: Geography curriculum to go to jurisdictions and the ACARA Board for approval

20 May 2013: on-line publication of the Australian Curriculum: Geography

31 May 2013: ESA SACOL geography site called GeogSpace (developed by AGTA) released

May – June 2013: final consultation on the senior curriculum for Geography

2013?: release of the senior curriculum for Geography.

The development of the Australian Curriculum: Geography was a complex and, at times, frustrating process. The process required considerable consultation with stakeholders such as the jurisdictions (State, Independent and Catholic) around Australia, AGTA and its affiliate geography teachers associations (GTAs), classroom teachers, university geographers represented by the Institute of Australian Geographers (IAG), Royal Geographical Societies, ACARA consultative groups on the cross-curriculum priorities (Indigenous, Asian and Sustainability), industry (spatial industry, farmers), special interest organisations (environment groups) and community groups such as emergency services. This extensive and thorough consultation, whilst deserving of respect, resulted in considerable negotiation, rewrites, compromise and delays. Despite the fact that the curriculum was published some 20 months later than originally scheduled, we have a curriculum which meets the needs of a wide range of individuals/groups, and one with the flexibility and positive intent which can be turned into quality education by the "curriculum makers", the teachers of Australia. As geographers, we look to the implementation of the curriculum as a key strategy in turning around the decline of Geography in Australian schools.

"Geography teacher professional associations have lobbied strongly to reintroduce geography as a core subject, as a strategy to reverse the significant decline in the number of students in Australia studying this subject in any depth. They rightly point

to the challenges for the discipline now and into the future if the number of teachers with sufficient knowledge and skills in the area is not significantly increased."

Excerpt from the conclusion of the 2008 Erebus Report.

The engagement of young people with Geography is of paramount importance in the development of an informed, responsible and active citizen. Further to this student-focussed aim, geographers have seen the new Geography curriculum as an opportunity to:

- evaluate courses and pedagogy in line with 21st Century learning
- integrate spatial technologies
- present Geography as a dynamic, relevant, vibrant and exciting discipline for students
- promote the "brand" of Geography in the community.

Unpacking the curriculum

The Australian Curriculum: Geography has been met with positive comments in regards to the clarity and appropriateness of the structure and content of the curriculum. In this section I wish to highlight the key components of the curriculum in an effort to provide a summary document which can be used with teachers trying to understand the new curriculum. The curriculum is available at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Rationale and, as a 21st Century online curriculum, is able to be modified and adapted as implementation occurs. Such adaptability is something which will add to the quality of implementation as teacher's trial and test the curriculum. Three sections which caused significant debate and consumed a great amount of time to get right were the definition, aims and concepts. These were fundamental to the development and character of the curriculum and provided the ethos and shape of what was eventually written as the core of the document.

Definition

Geography is a structured way of exploring, analysing and understanding the characteristics of the places that make up our world, using the concepts of place, space, environment, interconnection, sustainability, scale and change. It addresses scales from the personal to the global and time periods from a few years to thousands of years.

Aims

Geography aims to develop:

- a sense of wonder, curiosity and respect about places, people, cultures and environments throughout the world
- a deep geographical knowledge of their own locality, Australia, the Asia region and the world
- the ability to think geographically, using geographical concepts
- the capacity to be competent, critical and creative users of geographical inquiry methods and skills
- informed, responsible and active citizens who can contribute to the development of an environmentally and economically sustainable and socially just world.

Concepts

The Australian Curriculum: Geography identifies the concepts of place, space, environment, interconnection, sustainability, scale and change as integral to the development of geographical understanding. These are high-level ideas or ways of thinking that can be applied across the subject.

It is important to note that the Geography curriculum is unique compared to the other learning areas. It was built around these seven concepts, which were developed before structure or content was discussed. It is a truly conceptual curriculum requiring an understanding of the concepts to unravel and interpret the content, understandings, skills

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Rationale

Geography is a structured way of exploring, analysing and understanding the characteristics of the places that make up our world, using the concepts of place, space, environment, interconnection, sustainability, scale and change. It addresses scales from the personal to the global and time periods from a few years to thousands of years.

Geography integrates knowledge from the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities to build a holistic understanding of the world. Students learn to question why the world is the way it is, reflect on their relationships with and responsibilities for that world, and propose actions designed to shape a socially just and sustainable future.

The concept of place develops students' curiosity and wonder about the diversity of the world's places, peoples, cultures and environments. Students examine why places have particular environmental features.

and achievement standards. Another article in this edition of *Interaction* provides a detailed insight into these concepts and is required reading for those interested in exploring the richness of the Geography curriculum.

Structure

Once the definition, aims and concepts were decided upon, the task was to develop a structure to populate with content and skills and in turn to build a curriculum narrative. The writers were somewhat beholden to the History curriculum structure, requiring the Geography curriculum to have two strands, focussed on knowledge/understanding and skills. However, the Geography deviates from the History curriculum by building into the skills strand a geographical inquiry process, with the strand being called *Geographical Inquiry and Skills*.

The Australian Curriculum: Geography is divided into two strands as follows:



| Geographical knowledge and understandings | Geographical inquiry and skills |
|---|---|
| <p>Content descriptions with elaborations for each year from F–10.</p> <p>Geographical knowledge refers to the facts, generalisations, principles, theories and models developed in Geography.</p> <p>Geographical understanding is the ability to see the relationships between aspects of knowledge and construct explanatory frameworks to illustrate these relationships.</p> | <p>Content descriptions with elaborations over two years, commencing with Foundation but then 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8, 9–10. However the elaborations are customised on a yearly basis in accordance with the year level themes and topics.</p> <p>Geographical inquiry is a process by which students learn about and deepen their understanding of Geography.</p> <p>Geographical skills are the techniques that geographers use in their investigations, both in fieldwork and in the classroom (formulating a question and research plan, recording and data representation skills, using a variety of spatial technologies and communicating with appropriate geographical vocabulary).</p> <p>Geographical skills are described in the curriculum under five sub-headings representing the stages of a complete investigation.</p> <p>The stages of an inquiry are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>observing, questioning and planning</i>• <i>collecting, recording, evaluating and representing</i>• <i>interpreting analysing and concluding</i>• <i>communicating</i>• <i>reflecting and responding.</i> |

Using the two-strand structure, each year level is written using the following headings:

Year level description: provide a focus of study at each year level. The descriptions identify the key geographical concepts that are to be the focus for understanding and articulate how students’ geographical knowledge, understanding, skills and mental map of the world will be developed.

Key inquiry questions: provide a framework for developing students’ geographical knowledge and understanding, and inquiry and skills.

Content descriptions: knowledge, understanding and

skills that teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn.

Elaborations: illustrate and exemplify content and to assist teachers in developing a common understanding of the content descriptions. They are not intended to be comprehensive or compulsory content points that all students need to be taught.

Achievement standards: articulates the depth of conceptual understanding, the sophistication of skills and the ability to apply essential knowledge expected of students – the quality of student learning as a result of what they are taught.

Year 8

Year 8 Level Description

There are two units of study in the Year 8 curriculum for Geography: *Landforms and landscapes* and *Changing nations*.

Landforms and landscapes focuses on investigating geomorphology through a study of landscapes and their landforms. This unit examines the processes that shape individual landforms, the values and meanings placed on landforms and landscapes by diverse cultures, hazards associated with landscapes, and management of landscapes. *Landforms and landscapes* develops students' understanding of the concept of environment and enables them to explore the significance of landscapes to people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. These distinctive aspects of landforms and landscapes are investigated using studies drawn from Australia and throughout the world.

Changing nations investigates the changing human geography of countries, as revealed by shifts in population distribution. The spatial distribution of population is a sensitive indicator of economic and social change, and has significant environmental, economic and social effects, both negative and positive. The unit explores the process of urbanisation and draws on a study of a country of the Asia region to show how urbanisation changes the economies and societies of low and middle-income countries. It investigates the reasons for the high level of urban concentration in Australia, one of the distinctive features of Australia's human geography, and compares Australia with the United States of America. The redistribution of population resulting from internal migration is examined through case studies of Australia and China, and is contrasted with the way international migration reinforces urban concentration in Australia. The unit then examines issues related to the management and future of Australia's urban areas.

The content of this year level is organised into two strands: *Geographical Knowledge and Understanding* and *Geographical Inquiry and Skills*. These strands are interrelated and should be taught in an integrated manner, and in ways that are appropriate to specific local contexts. The order and detail in which they are taught are programming decisions.

Key inquiry questions

A framework for developing students' geographical knowledge, understanding and skills is provided through the inclusion of inquiry questions and specific inquiry skills, including the use and interpretation of maps, photographs and other representations of geographical data.

The key inquiry questions for Year 8 are articulated below.

- How do environmental and human processes affect the characteristics of places and environments?
- How do the interconnections between places, people and environments affect the lives of people?
- What are the consequences of changes to places and environments and how can these changes be managed?

Year 8 Content Descriptions

Geographical Knowledge and Understanding

Unit 1: Landforms and landscapes

The different types of landscapes and their distinctive landform features (ACHGK048)



Geographical Knowledge and Understanding

Unit 2: Changing nations

The causes and consequences of urbanisation, drawing on a study from Indonesia, or another country of the Asia region (ACHGK054)



Geographical Inquiry and Skills

Observing, questioning and planning

Develop geographically significant questions and plan an inquiry using appropriate geographical methodologies and concepts (ACHGS055)



Year 8 Content Descriptions

Geography / Year 8 / Geographical Inquiry and Skills / Observing, questioning and planning

| Content description | Elaborations |
|--|--|
| Develop geographically significant questions and plan an inquiry using appropriate geographical methodologies and concepts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing questions on an area of focus in the Geographical Knowledge and Understanding strand, for example, about types of landforms or reasons for urban settlements • developing questions about the significance of a spatial distribution, for example, the positive and negative effects of the spatial concentration of population in Australia • planning an investigation of the processes responsible for the geographical phenomenon being studied, at a range of scales, for example, the causes and consequences of urbanisation • using a range of methods including digital technologies to plan and conduct an information search about reasons for and effects of internal migration in Australia |

Code
ACHGS055

URL
<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Elements/ACHGS055>

General capabilities

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Information and communication technology capability
- Critical and creative thinking
- Personal and social capability

Resources

Discover scootle Resources

Analyse geographical data and other information

The themes and topics

Years F–6 is theme based, with five to six content descriptions being presented as the course of study. The themes are:

- Foundation Year: People live in places
- Year 1: Places have distinctive features
- Year 2: People are connected to many places
- Year 3: Places are both similar and different
- Year 4: The Earth's environment sustains all life
- Year 5: Factors that shape the human and environmental characteristics of places
- Year 6: A diverse and connected world.

In terms of the F–6 curriculum narrative, the themes across the years have been designed to progressively develop student understanding and to avoid repetition, so it is vital for teachers to know what students should have learned in previous years and what they will learn in later years. There are progressions in:

- Environment: from weather to climate, vegetation and natural hazards
- Understanding of places: from features to characteristics to explaining characteristics
- Knowledge of the world: from local to global
- Understanding of space: from knowing location to managing spaces.

At Year 7, the curriculum changes from a thematic approach to a topic structure with five to six content descriptions for each topic. There are two topics for each year level with one being focussed on physical geography and the other on human geography. After many changes during the consultation periods, with topics moved between year levels and some significant changes, the following topic coverage was decided upon:

- Water in the world (7)
- Place and liveability (7)
- Landforms and landscapes (8)
- Changing nations (8)
- Biomes and food security (9)
- Geographies of interconnections (9)
- Environmental change and management (10)
- Geographies of human wellbeing (10).

Unlike the F–6, a curriculum narrative is much more difficult to articulate, though such a process is an interesting activity for faculties to undertake in an effort to deconstruct the curriculum and develop their own rationale for the curriculum progression.



The next step: GeogSpace on-line resources

Once the Geography curriculum was written, AGTA saw the need to develop resources to support it. In March 2012, AGTA was successful in tendering to undertake the development of the Geography on-line resources for the *Educational Services Australia (ESA) Supporting the Australian Curriculum On-line (SACOL)* project. AGTA commenced developing the resource, to be known as GeogSpace, in July 2012 and employed 12 writers from across Australia to write innovative and comprehensive illustrations of practice linked to the Australian Curriculum: Geography. On 31 May 2013, the GeogSpace site went live at www.geogspace.edu.au and was met with great enthusiasm from geographers around Australia who saw the resource as much needed support to the successful implementation of the new curriculum. The illustrations of practice are not just activities for students but have also been designed to provide materials for quality professional learning. GeogSpace was developed with the following in mind, to:

- be a resource to support the teaching of the Australian Curriculum: Geography
- provide the framework, content pedagogical knowledge, teaching approaches and resources to support professional learning across Australia
- have the capacity to support the delivery of professional learning to “Geography” and “non-Geography” Geography teachers
- cater for primary and secondary school implementation of the Australian Curriculum: Geography
- integrate ICTs throughout the curriculum relevant to the teaching of Geography
- reflect “world best practice” i.e. range of sources, in particular the UK Geography teaching resources have been purchased
- be a free website (open to all) containing over 60 illustrations of practice and professional learning objects
- be written and developed by Australian Geography teachers from every state of Australia – a first ever resource for Australian Geography teaching
- be a 21st Century Geography resource dedicated to the Australian Curriculum: Geography.

GeoSpace structure



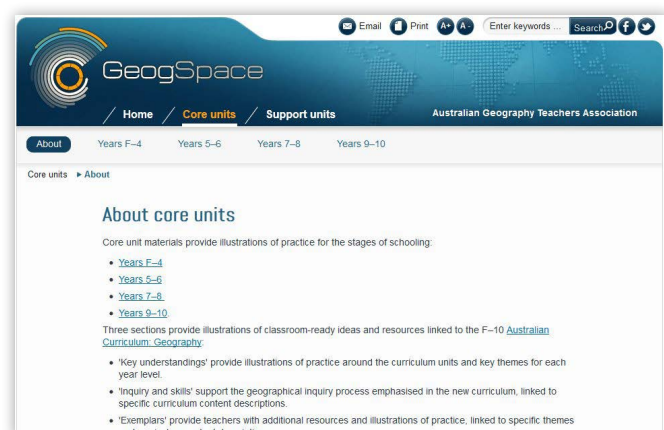
The GeoSpace site comprises two major resource sections – **Core units** and **Support units**.

Core units comprise illustrations of practice for stages of schooling described in the Australian Curriculum: Geography. The illustrations are provided for Years F–4, Years 5–6, Years 7–8 and Years 9–10.

The illustrations are designed to provide classroom-ready ideas and resources that reflect the dynamism of Geography. Each illustration is linked to the curriculum and provides opportunities for students to actively engage in learning, whether it be through undertaking class research, practical activities, field investigations or through taking local action.

The **Core units** have three sections for each of the stages of schooling:

1. **Key understandings:** the fundamental understandings are articulated and illustrations of practice are developed to model the understandings.
2. **Inquiry and skills:** the key inquiry and skills for the stage are articulated and illustrations of practice are developed to model the skills.
3. **Exemplars:** learning activities have been designed as illustrations of practice, directly linked into the content descriptions of the curriculum.



Support units provide illustrations of practice designed to support teachers' professional learning and provide guidance, information and resources in eight areas of geographical education:

1. **Thinking geographically:** illustrations to develop and enrich the geographical imagination and exploring vocabulary to adequately express the richness of geographical concepts.
2. **Why teach Geography?:** illustrations to explore how geographical studies help students to understand the uniqueness of their own place, the world they live in and their involvement within it.
3. **Professional practice:** illustrations to explore how teachers can support students whose attitudes, abilities, cultural backgrounds and preferred learning styles vary greatly.
4. **Fieldwork:** illustrations to support the use of fieldwork as a physical activity of "exploring Geography".
5. **ICTs in Geography:** illustrations to promote the use of geospatial technologies to support spatial thinking and to make the acquisition of knowledge more efficient and engaging.
6. **Assessment in Geography:** illustrations to support teachers in understanding the standards, and how to apply them in both planning and practice.
7. **Language of Geography:** illustrations to explore how literacy learning practices that can be employed in the Geography classroom.
8. **Geographical inquiry:** illustrations to show how geographical inquiry can give students the opportunity to actively engage in understanding their own place and the world they live in.



It is anticipated GeoSpace will continue to grow and become even more interactive and comprehensive as it reflects the dynamism of geographical education in the 21st Century. AGTA welcomes feedback about the GeoSpace site and resources and looks forward for the resource to be used across Australia, as it is intended, to support the implementation of the curriculum. Feel free to advertise in any way possible amongst your colleagues interested in

teaching the Australian Curriculum: Geography and “learn” about modern Geography in schools (flyer below, available on the GTAV site at www.gtav.asn.au).



Other important references to the use of spatial technology is to be found throughout the Inquiry and Skills strand, in the geographical level of inquiry titled: *collecting, recording, evaluating and representing*. For example from Year 6 onwards one of the content descriptions for this inquiry level is:

“Represent the spatial distribution of geographical phenomena by constructing special purpose maps that conform to cartographic conventions, using spatial technologies as appropriate.”

Foundation to Year 10 at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Curriculum/F-10

Such an overt reference to the use of spatial technology in the document is an important adjunct to our efforts to use the modern technology of Geography in Geography classrooms. Whilst an opportunity, for this expectation to not be a risk to the teaching of the curriculum, considerable time and effort needs to put into building the capacity of teachers to meaningfully use spatial technology. What the curriculum has done is give a green light for such work!

Fieldwork

As have all GTAs across Australia, the GTAV has been a strong advocate of fieldwork as an important and integral part of Geography. Whilst cautious in mandating fieldwork, the curriculum does make overt reference to fieldwork as an important activity if a school intends to conduct quality geographical education.

“They conduct fieldwork, map and interpret data and spatial distributions, and use spatial technologies.”

From the Rationale of the curriculum at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Rationale

Although it is somewhat disappointing that fieldwork is not specifically mentioned in the content descriptions in the *Inquiry and Skills* strand, fieldwork is implied in year level Content Descriptions and Elaborations in most years. For example:

“Evaluate sources for their reliability, bias and usefulness, and represent multi-variable data in a range of appropriate forms, for example, scatter plots, tables, field sketches and annotated diagrams, with and without the use of digital and spatial technologies.”

Year 9 content description

“... interpreting and creating maps such as flow and choropleth maps, or plans for specific purposes, for example, a bushfire management plan mapping geographical data using spatial technologies, the location of recent bushfires in Australia, or information they have collected through fieldwork.”

Year 5 elaboration

It is also worth noting that fieldwork was implicit in the 2011 Shape Paper for the curriculum with statements such as:

“The Australian Curriculum: Geography will involve field work at all stages, as this is an essential core component of geographical

Opportunities and risks

As with any new curriculum, there is a range of opportunities and risks associated with the implementation of the philosophy, ethos and content embodied in the new curriculum. During the implementation stage, it is important that we are cognisant of these opportunities and risks in order to take advantage of and address them. Here is a brief précis of just some of them.

Opportunities

Spatial technology

After years advocating for the use of spatial technology in schools, the Australian Curriculum: Geography overtly refers to the use of GIS and other spatial technologies as not only desirable but as an expectation.

“In Geography, students develop ICT capability when they locate, select, evaluate, communicate and share geographical information using digital technologies and learn to use spatial technologies.”

From the General capabilities section of the ACARA Rationale for Geography at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/General-capabilities

learning. Field work is any study undertaken outside the classroom, and could be within the school grounds, around the neighbouring streets, or in more distant locations."

Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography

January 2011, page 15

www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/Shape_of_the_Australian_Curriculum_Geography.pdf

Inquisitive inquiry

As geographers, we are keen to nurture the inquisitiveness of students so that they can develop an understanding of the geographical world for themselves. Such inquisitiveness and questioning is an important component of the inquiry approach, an approach strongly embedded and enunciated in the curriculum through the structure and content of the Inquiry and Skills strand. As is stated in the curriculum:

"Geography uses an inquiry approach to assist students to make meaning of their world. It teaches them to respond to questions in a geographically distinctive way, plan an inquiry; collect, evaluate, analyse and interpret information; and suggest responses to what they have learned."

The Rationale at

www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Rationale

"Geography aims to ensure that students develop the capacity to be competent, critical and creative users of geographical inquiry methods and skills."

Aim Number 4 of the curriculum at

www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Aims

Such an integrated focus on geographical inquiry, as developed in the new curriculum, lends great support to quality, student-centred geographical learning and should be a useful guide to the nature of the pedagogy employed in the teaching Geography.

Community perceptions of Geography

The curriculum also provides the opportunity to challenge a community (and educationalist to a lesser degree) perception of Geography as just about maps and studying the landscape. Whilst this is part of geographical studies, geographers know that the discipline and its concepts are much richer and all-encompassing. The study of human Geography, with all its relevance to the lives of students, is evident in the content descriptions of the curriculum and across the curriculum through the critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding, intercultural understanding and personal and social general capabilities of the curriculum. The extent of geographical learning is also enhanced by the cross-curriculum priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' histories, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia and Sustainability. As a holistic and integrated subject, the coverage of all these cross-curriculum capabilities and priorities in Geography is impressive and should be recognised as not only a strength of our subject in schools but also an opportunity to educate the community on the nature and value of Geography in the curriculum.

Engaging with primary schools and others requiring professional learning in Geography

The inclusion of Geography as a subject in the Australian Curriculum has provided the opportunity for it to be taught throughout the primary years, requiring all teachers in primary schools to engage with the discipline. Such a requirement is unprecedented and will provide the opportunity for Geography associations such as the GTAV to conduct professional learning with primary teachers – a long-time "Holy Grail" for GTAs. Already we are seeing an increase in the number of primary (and secondary) teachers attending Geography conferences and professional learning activities.

There will also be demand for professional learning from secondary teachers. Many Humanities/SOSE teachers will also need to revisit their knowledge and skills of Geography as they engage with the more discipline-based and conceptual Geography Curriculum. AGTA, and all GTAs are presently working on ways to meet the demand of providing quality professional learning. As mentioned earlier, GeogSpace has been developed to provide professional learning materials for teachers from F–10. This opportunity is quite a challenge, but one that must be met if we are to see quality Geography taught in our schools in response to the new curriculum.

Risks

Professional learning requirements

The demand for professional learning – to develop the capacity of teachers to teach the new curriculum as a discipline – needs to be met if we are to translate a theoretically good curriculum into a quality curriculum in application. All aspects of the curriculum need to be translated into practice to ensure that students receive a Geography education of the highest quality. This will involve teachers looking beyond the content descriptions as a checklist of teaching activities and to see that the curriculum has the potential to be intellectually challenging, dynamic, engaging and relevant to all students.

To do so, teachers need to be familiar and confident with the:

- concepts of the curriculum
- demands of the inquiry process and skills strands
- use of spatial technologies
- requirements to conduct fieldwork
- general capabilities
- nature of the achievement standards
- cross-curriculum priorities specific to the Geography curriculum.

Only when then these areas are addressed will teachers have the confidence to develop engaging pedagogy to motivate students to learn Geography.

Communicating with jurisdictions and schools

There is a need to work with jurisdictions and schools to ensure that the curriculum is taught with discipline rigour as Geography and not lost through the expediency of

integration with other subjects. In primary schools, it is very likely that there will be a need for connection with other learning areas. In fact, as the curriculum was developed, writers were required to “keep an eye on” the four learning areas already published. Hence, water is a topic in Year 7 Geography because water is also a topic in Year 7 Science. However, discussions are required with jurisdictions and schools to emphasise that the Australian Curriculum: Geography has been written as a discipline and that there is a requirement to engage with the knowledge, understandings, concepts, skills and inquiry processes specific to the Geography curriculum. Only through such a treatment of the curriculum can schools ensure that they are addressing the achievement standards appropriately and adequately so that they can report to parents with veracity on student achievement. Without these discussions and consideration of the issues of appropriate processes of curriculum connection and geographical pedagogy, the quality of the teaching, assessing and reporting is at the risk of being seriously compromised in schools, despite the fact that a quality curriculum has been developed.

The compulsory years

In some states, it has not been compulsory to teach Geography at Years 9 and 10. Despite the best efforts of AGTA and GTAs across Australia to lobby for these years of Geography to be compulsory, it remains a decision of the jurisdiction and/or schools in most states. This situation is quite a risk for the future of senior school Geography in our schools. It is important that all students study Geography to Year 10 – a level of greater sophistication in learning – to help them make informed decisions as they select their senior school subjects. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that if the subject is not compulsory, students will miss out on some critical geographical learning in relation to agriculture (Year 9 Biomes and Food security), development (Year 10 Geographies of human well-being) and sustainability (Year 10 Environmental change and management) by not

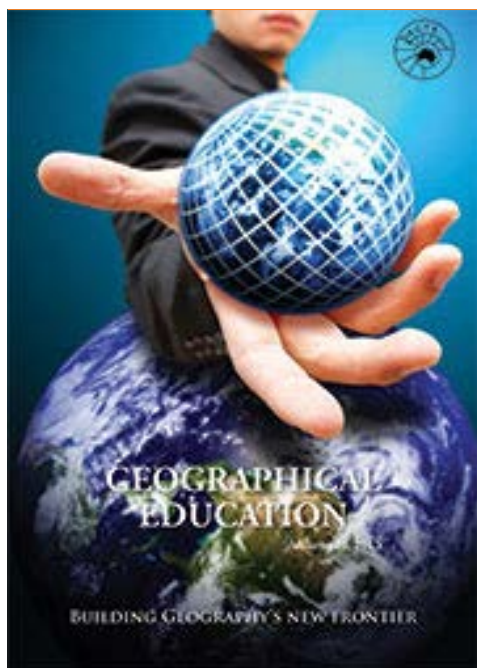
having the requirement of studying Year 9 and 10 Geography. These topics are all critical aspects of developing students to be *“as informed, responsible and active citizens who can contribute to the development of an environmentally and economically sustainable and socially just world”*. (Aim 5 of the curriculum).

The capacity to deliver professional learning

The final risk relates to the capacity of AGTA and GTAs to deliver professional learning. AGTA has helped ACARA write the curriculum and has developed the GeogSpace resources to support the curriculum, but how do we provide professional learning across Australia to the thousands of teachers requiring some degree of support as they engage with the curriculum? Unfortunately, over the years, jurisdictions have generally withdrawn from subject-based professional learning on the scale required. AGTA and the GTAs are actively working with jurisdictions, publishers, private providers, universities, Royal Geographical Societies and Geography-related industries to develop a strategy to deliver quality professional learning to teachers across Australia. This work is only commencing and, if not successful, there may be a risk that our goals of seeing this new curriculum reinvigorate Geography in our schools may be challenged. From my knowledge of the passion and commitment of the Geography community, I am sure this risk is minimal.

Conclusion

With the curriculum written and the resources online, AGTA and the GTAV are turning attention to providing professional learning to develop the capacity of teachers to deliver the curriculum. We are now embarking on a process commenced back in 2006 to reinvigorate and grow Geography in Australian schools – a process to enable Geography to take its rightful place as a critical subject for young people to learn. I am confident that the work of geographers across Australia during the writing of the Australian Curriculum: Geography and developing the GeogSpace resources will be truly worthwhile.



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Australian Geography Teachers Association – www.agta.asn.au/Resources