

Timescale

Autumn 07: new specifications available in centres
 Spring/summer 08: extended project specifications finalised
 September 08: First teaching of revised A-levels.

The Post-16 Phase Committee and AEWG published a guide to the new specifications in *Teaching Geography* in Autumn 07; a guide written by Bob Digby is also available on the GA website.

Diplomas

The first five diplomas (construction and built environment; creative and media; engineering; IT; society, health and development) will be offered from September 2008, followed by five more (business administration and finance; hair and beauty; hospitality; environmental and land-based studies; manufacturing and product design) in 2009 and finally public services; retail, sports and leisure; travel and tourism in 2010.

In October 2007 three additional diplomas were announced – science, MFL and humanities – for teaching from 2011. They will include ‘the best of existing GCSE and A-levels along with



specially designed content devised by leading academics and employers’. Work on them will start in the New Year through a Diploma Development Partnership.

The GA has written to QCA asking to be more fully involved in diploma development, especially additional learning. Diplomas may

well have a significant impact on the shape of the 14-19 curriculum, so the GA will be monitoring developments closely and will lobby to be actively involved in work on the humanities diploma.

John Hopkin, Chair, Education Committee

Visualising key stage 3

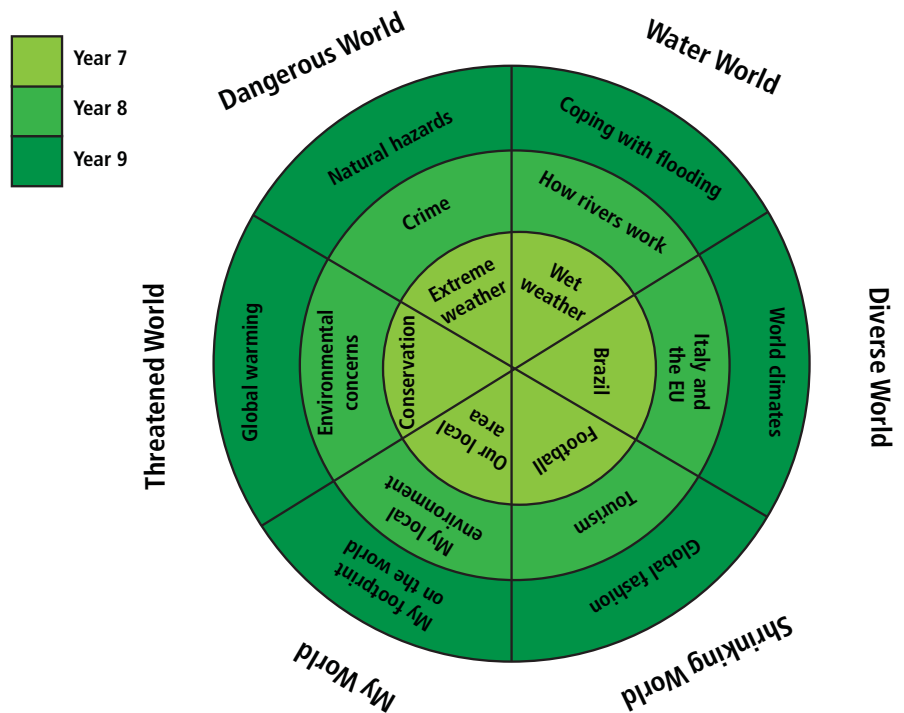
One department’s response to the challenge of the new curriculum
 by Ian Dixon

Arrrgh! More work?

The challenge of a new national curriculum for geography can be a daunting prospect. What to teach, when, to whom, where, with what resources and in what order? These are just a few questions we came up with at The High Arcal School in our departmental meetings, and I’m sure that schools up and down the country are trying to get to grips with the same questions. This article investigates how we are coming to terms with this challenge, with some inspirational help.

Useful CPD

Last autumn I was delighted to attend an excellent presentation by Garry Atterton and Laura Douglas at the Royal Geographical Society on the topic of visualising the new KS3 curriculum. It was one of those moments when a light bulb mentally turned on:



Garry and Laura’s concept

suddenly we could see a clear way forward. Garry and Laura’s concept was quite simple: divide years 7, 8 and 9 into six sections, each with a clear conceptual theme, which develops over the key stage (see above). In some cases this is existing teaching and learning slotted into roughly half-term

sections, with new units to be developed in line with an evolving curriculum strategy. The key stage 3 curriculum thus becomes a coherent geographical journey from day 1 in year 7 to the final lesson in year 9.

Seeing the wood for the trees

Armed with this and other inspiration from the RGS-IBG CPD event (notably David Gardner's gallop through the QCA 'Big Picture of the Curriculum'), at The High Arcal School we have taken this idea of a curriculum 'dartboard' and developed (after much argument ... in the true sense of the word) our own version.

Putting the idea of 'Place' at the centre of learning is crucial to developing students' conceptual understanding of geography, hence themes such as 'Dangerous Places' and 'Linked Places'. Some of these 'slices' merely repackaging what we are already doing into a theme; others are new units gleaned from other schools, or just topics that we would like to teach and think students will benefit from. Ultimately our version of the curriculum represents a trade off between all these elements:

- what we would like to teach: what's current? what's interesting? what's unique to geography?
- what students would like to learn about: is it relevant? does it interest them?
- what we think we will have time for: how does geography fit into the wider curriculum? do we have time for fieldwork? can we cover each subject in enough depth?
- all with an eye to recruitment for key stage 4.

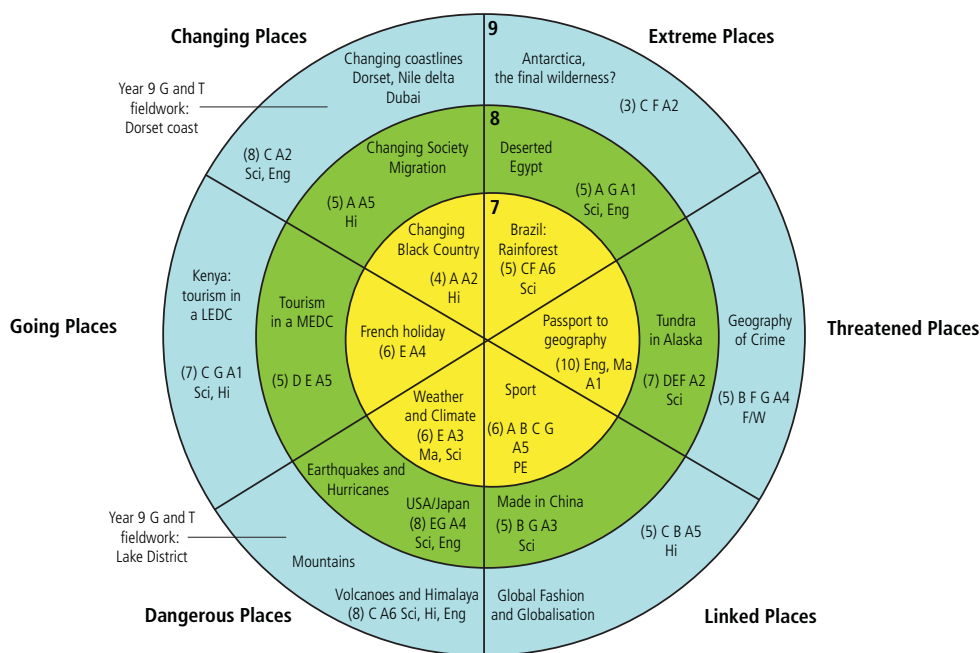
Good idea ... let's run with it

We then took Garry and Laura's idea one stage further, adding cross-curricular links, fieldwork, anticipated number of lessons per topic and assessment opportunities. Thus our key stage 3 geography curriculum is visually condensed to one side of A4.

We also think that sharing a simplified version with students will help them to understand what they are studying and pre-empt questions such as 'When do we do volcanoes, Sir?' A copy of the diagram in every student's geography book/file will also contribute powerfully to assessment for learning (AfL), as students can add any assessment results into the relevant section of the visualised curriculum. Combined with other AfL strategies I think this approach will be a winner with teachers, parents and students as they can easily 'map' their learning throughout key stage 3 geography.

Other subjects to benefit?

The idea of a dartboard curriculum has subsequently been shared with the Heads of



Key

Figures in brackets are anticipated number of lessons per unit.

A1, A2, etc. are references to assessments, e.g. assessment A1 in Year 9 'Kenya: Tourism in an LEDC' will be a thinking-through task on the topic 'Tourism is Bad for Kenya'.

A, B, C, etc. is our code for cross-curricular dimensions in the QCA overview of the Curriculum. See <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/cross-curriculum-dimensions/index.aspx> (website active as at 02/12/2007).

Eng, Ma, Sci etc. are cross-curricular links.

F/W = fieldwork planned for this unit.

The High Arcal School key stage 3 geography curriculum

History and Religious Studies, who agree that visualising the curriculum in this way makes sense and will help staff now, and students in the future, to see not only what we are teaching but also how each part of the curriculum fits together into a meaningful learning package. At the time of writing, the three humanities subjects at High Arcal are working on a way forward that will see co-operation between the subjects. For example, in year 9 when geographers are studying globalisation, in religious studies students will be investigating the ethics of the global fashion trade. Thus a good idea for geography can be adapted for other curriculum areas in a complementary way.

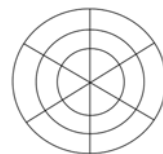
A sting in the tale?

There are those who see the geography national curriculum as a means to cut down lesson time devoted to meaningful subjects and replace them with yet more coached exam 'success' in a limited range of subjects ... you know, dear reader, what I mean. (Watch out for 'curriculum flexibility' over the coming months as a possible way to remove geography teaching time from your school's timetable!). A clear and meaningful curriculum that can be easily understood by

senior management and, perhaps, governors, should enable geography departments to not only cope with the new curriculum but also hold their ground against those who see geography as just 'colouring in'.

Want to give it a go?

If you have been inspired to have a go, e-mail me (IDIXSON@high-arcaldudley.gov.uk) for a copy of the dartboard diagram – that way I'll be able to get in touch in a few months' time and see how people have progressed. I would be most interested to hear what you do with the diagram ... even if it is playing darts whilst contemplating what your new curriculum will look like.



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