

**CONNECTING POLICY
AND PRACTICE:
RESEARCH IN
GEOGRAPHY
EDUCATION**

**Eleanor Rawling
University of Oxford**

*A Professional User Review of
UK Research undertaken for the
British Educational Research Association*

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*Eleanor Rawling
Honorary Research Fellow, University of Oxford
Subject Officer/Consultant for Geography, QCA
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Abbreviations used in the text

On the first occasion of their use, names of educational agencies and organisations have been given in full. Subsequently an acronym or abbreviated form has been used and a full list of these is given below:

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CCW	Curriculum Council for Wales (1988-1994)
COBRIG	Council of British Geography (from 1988)
DES	Department of Education and Science (to 1992)
DfE	Department for Education (1992-1995)
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment (1995-2001)
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (from 2001)
ERA	Education Reform Act 1988
GA	Geographical Association
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education (from 1986)
GWG	National Curriculum Geography Working Group 1989-90
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate (of schools)
NC	National Curriculum (from 1988)
NCC	National Curriculum Council (1988-1993)
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education (from 1992)
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority - established 1997 from merger of SCAA and NCVQ
PACE	Primary Curriculum and Assessment Experience - a project examining implementation of the national curriculum in primary schools, based at the University of Bristol during the 1990s
PoS	Programme of Study - a national curriculum term referring to the knowledge, skills and understanding which all pupils should be taught during a key stage.
RGS RGS-IBG	Royal Geographical Society - after 1995 merged with Institute of British Geographers
SAT	Standard Assessment Task
SC	Schools Council (England and Wales, 1964-1984)
SCAA	School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (England 1993-1997)
SEU	Standards and Effectiveness Unit (at DfEE from 1997)
SoA	Statement of Attainment (statement describing attainment for a specific level of an attainment target)
TTA	The Teacher Training Agency

I Introduction

What is this user review about?

This user review is a selective synopsis of a full research study (Rawling, 2001a) which focused on the impact of national educational policies on the school subject of geography in the 1980-2000 period. It is targeted in the first instance at practitioners of all school subjects, including subject teachers, subject researchers and subject associations. Inevitably however, there are messages of relevance to policy-makers and decision-makers at national level and these will be highlighted separately. The aim is to show how the research evidence about geography helps us to answer the following general questions and to consider the implications for subject practitioners.

- How has the subject curriculum changed as a result of national policies and with what implications for current practice? (**The changing subject curriculum**)
- How has the changing political context affected the subject teacher's professional role? (**The changing role of the subject teacher**)
- How has the relationship changed between the academic subject and its school counterpart and with what implications for the character and quality of the school subject? (**The changing relationship between the subject in school and in university**)
- What are the general lessons about professionalism and control of the curriculum which arise from the case study of school geography? (**The changing nature of professionalism and curriculum control**)

Why is the user review focused on the impacts of policy?

Since 1988 and the passing of the Education Reform Act, there has been an increasing degree of central control of the curriculum. It is no longer possible to trace a story of the changing curriculum for any school subject purely by reference to debates and trends within the subject community. It is now essential to understand the political context: - i.e. the roles of Ministers (empowered by the 1988 act to intervene in curriculum decision-making); of the government department responsible for education (currently the Department for Education and Skills, DfES); of the central advisory agencies such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA); of the school inspection agency OfSTED; and of the myriad temporary advisory units and task groups established by government. The actions and interactions of these agencies shape the environment within which subject

practitioners currently work, providing both the constraints and the opportunities. It is crucial for subject practitioners to recognise these.

Messages about subject-based professionalism may be particularly timely in 2003 as in March of this year, the government published a consultation paper signalling its intention to re-emphasise the individual subject specialist knowledge and expertise of teachers in all subjects (DfES 2003). The consultation paper requested comments on ways of supporting and developing subject teaching more effectively. This user review will suggest some possibilities.

What are the characteristics of this user review?

This user review is derived from the full research study that included, as part of the research process, a review of existing research about school geography up to 2000. In this research review, I have drawn on and, where appropriate also made reference to, more recent research published in the 2000-03 period. Although the output is growing, there is not a large body of research about school geography and what there is tends to be either small-scale and/or focused on specific teaching and learning issues such as geographical enquiry or pupils' understanding of maps.

Gerber and Williams, in their overview of international trends (2000) suggest that these features are typical of educational research worldwide in geography. As Daugherty has pointed out (1996), there is a paucity of research on some of the bigger topics such as progression and assessment in the subject. There are also few large-scale funded research projects for geography, with the main research grants being awarded to subjects seen as core or priority.

Given this situation, it was necessary, in my research, to draw on the monitoring activities of subject associations and of the national agencies (National Curriculum Council (NCC), School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA, QCA), and on OfSTED inspection findings throughout the period. Although these do not constitute research in the pure sense, they do provide some picture of the implementation of geography curricula.

Where the user review draws on my own original findings or analyses, I have given relevant chapter references or page numbers so that readers can go back to the original book if they wish.

The booklet is organised in six sections including this introduction. Sections II, III and IV focus, respectively, on the changing subject curriculum, the changing role of the subject teacher and the interactions between subject communities and policy-

makers. Each of these sections ends with key messages. Section V identifies a model of the phases of curriculum change and their characteristics for geography.

I suggest that other subjects might explore parallels with their own experience and propose potential implications for future curriculum development and change in all subjects.

A short conclusion (section VI) provides an overview of the key messages and also draws attention to some implications for policy-makers. A selected list of the most accessible and relevant references is given at the end of the review. A more complete list of references is given in the original research study (Rawling, 2001). Appendix 1 summarises the reasons why geography made a good curriculum policy case study and Appendix 2 provides some background about research approach and methodology.

It is hoped that this user review helps subject teachers and subject communities in the following ways:

- providing an insight into the processes of change which have affected subject curricula and the resultant characteristics with which teachers have to work;
- highlighting more clearly the opportunities provided by centrally prescribed frameworks for creative interpretation and school-based curriculum development;
- clarifying the creative and extended professional role still required of teachers, even in a centrally controlled curriculum system;
- pointing to the ways in which subject communities can work most effectively with, and alongside, central agencies to support the subject and subject-based professionalism.

The key messages for subject practitioners are summarised in the Conclusion (section VI, page 31) and have been organised to reflect these four dimensions.

II The changing subject curriculum

In my research, I analysed the centrally prescribed geography subject curriculum from two different perspectives.

1. Analysis from a functional perspective. I.e. does it provide a workable curriculum system capable of being a vehicle for teachers to use in developing high quality subject teaching and learning?
2. Analysis from an ideological perspective. I.e. how does the curriculum reflect the range of interests and values of the individual and groups influential in constructing it at different times and, more importantly for teachers, does the ideological slant matter to teachers and subject practitioners?

1. Does the curriculum provide a workable framework for subject teachers to use? (Rawling 2001a, chapter 5 pp 80-81; chapter 10 pp 170-172)

Geography curriculum development experience in the 1970s suggested that there are a number of factors essential to providing a workable curriculum system capable of being a vehicle for developing high quality teaching and learning in geography (Graves 1979; Naish *et al*/1987; Rawling 1996).

In brief, teachers need to know

- what is considered to be the subject's distinctive purpose in the curriculum;
- what big ideas or aspects of the subject provide an organising framework;
- whether there are minimum national content requirements and how much freedom of choice is left to teachers;
- about the approach to learning and how it is integrated with the development of skills and knowledge; and
- what outcomes are expected in terms of pupil achievement.

In order to implement the framework, they also need:

- advice on curriculum and assessment planning; and
- guidance on using the subject to develop wider curriculum dimensions considered important by the government and society at large.

In 2000, I analysed the performance of the 1991, 1995 and 2000 national geography curricula against the first five of these criteria (Rawling 2000a). The national

geography curriculum of 1991 failed to meet most of these criteria (Rawling, 1992). It provided no rationale, and the key aspects and ideas of the subject were lost in the mass of detailed content. Because each programme of study (PoS) was made up of level related content direct from the 183 geography statements of attainment (SoA), there were substantial overlaps between the PoS and so no clear content entitlement for each key stage. Geographical enquiry was mentioned by name but was not incorporated in the attainment targets nor explained in the PoS. Assessment had been virtually ignored by the National Curriculum Geography Working Group (GWG) which drew up the specification (Daugherty 1995), so the content specific statements of attainment caused difficulties both for teachers and for the various test development consultants attempting to design key stage 1 standard assessment tasks (1991/2) and key stage 3 tests (1993/4). Recognition of the difficulties teachers faced during implementation (NCC 1992, OfSTED, 1993a&b, 1995, 1996a&b, SCAA1996) provided one of the main justifications for geography to undergo more extensive structural change in the two reviews. By 2000, the national geography curriculum requirements had been slimmed and restructured to a model that more effectively met most of the criteria. However assessment, using level descriptions, has continued to give problems for geography as for many other subjects.

If the geography experience is typical it has taken ten years of negotiation, accommodation and amendment to produce a centrally prescribed framework for the subject which does provide a clear national entitlement but also appropriate opportunities or 'tools' with which teachers can do a curriculum planning job at school and classroom level. For geography, there is still the problem that teachers may find it difficult to recognise and capitalise on this new 'empowerment' after ten years of being more passive about National Curriculum requirements (Lambert 1994, Rawling 2000a, Roberts 1998).

In addition, two remaining problems may be identified with the geography curriculum framework for 2000.

One is its continuing failure to integrate assessment meaningfully into the curriculum system. Given the decision to retain the 8 level attainment scale and to make only minor adjustments to the level descriptions, the geography level descriptions seem to provide a reasonable basis for the end-of-key stage assessment function. However, as with other subjects, it has not been clear to teachers how assessment may be used more formatively (Bennetts, 2003; Hopkins 2001). The HMI *Assessment Report for 1996-97* (HMI 1998) revealed that use of assessment information to inform curriculum planning for instance, was unsatisfactory in 49% schools at KS3. For geography, the research shows that even after improvements to the national curriculum both primary teachers (Catling 2002) and secondary teachers (QCA 2002) found assessment for learning one of the most difficult aspects of curriculum planning. Many teachers feel pressure (often exerted by the school's senior management) to focus only on summative assessment and to 'level' pupils work termly or even for individual tasks.

As Broadfoot (1999) pointed out, this emphasis on assessment for 'performativity' meant that, prior to 1996, the central agencies had not given any lead in using assessment to improve learning. Since then, the Assessment Reform Group's reports, *Inside the Black Box* and *Beyond the Black Box* (1998 and 1999) have begun to influence national policy agendas and there are signs of developments in assessment for learning for many subjects (e.g. through the Key Stage 3 strategy) but it is not clear yet how quickly this will make an impact on the foundation subjects. QCA's monitoring activity for 2003-04 will include some small-scale research to monitor this aspect in a number of subjects.

The second of the remaining problems is that neither of the two reviews of the National Curriculum undertaken in the 1990s has allowed any consideration of the changing nature of the subject geography itself and in this sense, there has been no opportunity to update and ensure the relevance of the school subject for the 21st century. This point will be picked up in section 4 (p.18). Both these issues - appropriate use of assessment and updating of subject content - need addressing if any subject is to fulfil its potential. The geography experience has shown that central curriculum frameworks are now beginning to provide some of the flexibility for such curriculum development. Subject teachers and subject communities now have it within their power to build creatively on this enabling national framework.

One further point relates to the role of national guidance in promoting school-based curriculum development. All versions of the national curriculum have eventually been supported by some kind of guidance, ranging from designated non-statutory guidance (from the NCC in early 1990s) through guidance in recognising standards of attainment (from SCAA in mid 1990s) to the more recent web-based exemplification materials and Schemes of Work (QCA and DfES 1999-present). There are now also dedicated websites on developing wider curriculum dimensions (e.g. ICT, education for sustainable development, multicultural and anti-racist education). The experience of geography seems to indicate that:

- if over-prescriptive, nationally provided examples are too frequently taken on uncritically as the 'approved answer' with little customisation for the context (QCA 2001 and 2002);
- teachers need guidance on the process of curriculum development rather than solely the products of curriculum development undertaken by others (Carpenter and Langrish 2000);
- time for reflection and creative thinking is a crucial element if support materials are to be used effectively (Balderstone 2000).

Key Messages

For subject leaders and teachers

- National subject requirements (e.g. the National Curriculum, GCSE and AS/A criteria and specifications) only provide a minimal framework. The subject teacher needs to recognise and use the opportunities for interpreting and developing this framework to provide a curriculum appropriate for the school and the pupils. In particular this will involve the teacher in:
 - clarifying what content, which skills and what approaches to teaching and assessment are statutorily required, and
 - identifying what scope exists for teacher flexibility and creativity in relation to content, teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teachers should aim to use national guidance materials and websites selectively and critically to support and enhance the teacher's (and the school's) own planning, not to replace it.

For schools and national agencies

- Subject leaders and teachers should be provided with opportunities for reflection and creative curriculum planning activities as part of their normal professional development programme

2. How does the curriculum reflect different ideologies? (Rawling 2001a, chapter 3 pp. 30-34; chapter 9 pp141-145)

One way of analysing school subjects is to see them as socially constructed - that is they reflect the values and interests (the ideologies) of the individuals and groups influential in constructing them at different times (Ball, 1990; Goodson 1998). For school geography the last twenty five years has witnessed a substantial amount of controversial curriculum change, and particularly since 1991 when the geography national curriculum was introduced (Goodson 1988; Marsden 1997; Rawling 1992; Walford 2001).

Reference to five ideological traditions allows a sequence of influences to be traced (see Figure 1) and helps us to understand the character of the current curriculum. Some researchers have undertaken a similar analysis for other subjects (e.g. Phillips 1998)

Figure 1 Ideological traditions and geography: a simplified analysis

Ideological tradition	Characteristics	Impact on school geography in England
Utilitarian/informational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> education primarily aimed at 'getting a job' and 'earning a living' a focus on useful information and basic skills 	<p>Locational knowledge ('capes and bays'), map skills and useful information about natural resources, travel routes, economic products. <i>Prevalent in 19th century; but re-emerged strongly in 1991 national curriculum.</i></p>
Cultural restorationism (as promoted by the New Right in English policy making in the 1980s and 1990s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> restoring traditional areas of knowledge and skills (cultural heritage) providing pupils with a set package of knowledge and skills which will enable them to fit well-defined places in society and the workplace 	<p>Aspects of locational, regional and economic geography related to Britain's early 20th century empire and trading links. <i>School geography in early 20th century. Re-emerged in 1991 national curriculum giving a view of a relatively unchanging world.</i></p>
Liberal humanist (also called classical humanist)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> worthwhile knowledge as a preparation for life; the passing on of a cultural heritage from one generation to the next emphasis on rigour, big ideas and theories, and intellectual challenge 	<p>The development of geography as an academic discipline in the 20th century and resulting higher status. Stress on concepts, scientific methods, theories and quantitative techniques. <i>Transferred to schools via the 'new geography' of the 1960s and 70s and prevalent in GCE 'O' and 'A' levels</i></p>
Progressive educational (also called child-centred)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> focusing on self development or bringing to maturity the individual child/pupil using academic subjects as the medium for developing skills, attitudes, values and learning styles which will help them become autonomous individuals 	<p>Emphasis on enquiry, active learning and the development of skills (e.g. communication), attitudes (e.g. respect for others) and values (e.g. care for environment) through geography. <i>Emphasised in child-centred primary education in 1960s and 70s and in Schools Council geography curriculum projects of 1970s. Re-appearance in thinking skills in late 1990s?</i></p>
Reconstructionist (also called radical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> education as an agent for changing society, so an emphasis on encouraging pupils to challenge existing knowledge and approaches less interest in academic disciplines, more focus on issues and socially critical pedagogy 	<p>Geography's involvement with e.g. environmental education, global education, multi-culturalism. <i>Prevalent in 1970s and 1980s radical geography. Interest by 1997 Labour government in sustainable development education and citizenship seems to offer opportunities but may be a utilitarian reaction to societal concerns</i></p>
Vocationalist or industrial trainer (Note: in some ways this cuts across all the other traditions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides pupils with knowledge and skills required for work or use workplace and work-related issues as a stimulus for learning skills/abilities or use work-related issues for questioning status quo 	<p><i>The Geography, Schools and Industry project 1983-91 used work-related contexts in a progressive way for curriculum change and active learning. In 1990s and 2000s governments have promoted careers education, work-related initiatives and key skills, which are more utilitarian in character.</i></p>

In England, geography pre-national curriculum had expanded from an earlier *informational / utilitarian* tradition and had built up a strong claim to be included in the *liberal humanist* tradition as a rigorous academic discipline with a university base. Curriculum development activity in the 1970s promoted a more *progressive educational* ideology revealing that the subject could also be a vehicle for the development of general educational skills and abilities (such as communication and problem-solving) and the exploration of values. Some developments opened up the possibility for more *radical, reconstructionist* interpretations (see Huckle, 1983; 1997).

These developments were overturned in the late 1980s and geography only gained its place in the national curriculum by reverting to a more utilitarian character. As various commentators have shown, this represented a triumph for the 'New Right', and specifically for those so-called '*cultural restorationists*' active in educational policy-making at that time, who wished to reclaim traditional content and approaches (Ball, 1990; Callaghan, 1995). The government-appointed Geography Working Group was steered towards a narrow content-driven format (Butt 1997; Rawling, 1992).

Initially the subject community suffered a blow to its confidence and morale as many of the innovations of the previous twenty-five years were rejected at national level. In practical terms the curriculum was difficult to implement and much energy has been spent by the subject community in redressing its problems.

Despite what some see as the continuing promotion of 'New Right' policies by the Labour government (Power and Whitty 1999), the 1990s have seen the re-appearance of a progressive educational ideology for geography, at least in the national subject framework. A series of SCAA guidance materials exemplifying standards and curriculum planning approaches (1996/97), a QCA publication introducing geographical enquiry (1998), and Geographical Association support materials reinstated geographical enquiry, identified key aspects of the subject and re-emphasised curriculum planning. These developments laid the groundwork for the structural changes made to the latest National Curriculum (Rawling, 2000a) and the Labour government also introduced some 'new agenda' initiatives, - sustainable development education, citizenship - potentially providing some new opportunities for geography. Figure 1 describes the situation for geography and it may be useful as a model for analysing the experience of other school subjects.

As Alexander states (1985 p.158) "ideologies do not come in single file, one replacing the other, but compete, interact and continue in juxtaposition". Writing about the first geography national curriculum, John Bale (1994 p.96) suggested that rather than imposing a retrogressive form of geography, he saw the requirements as "a strange

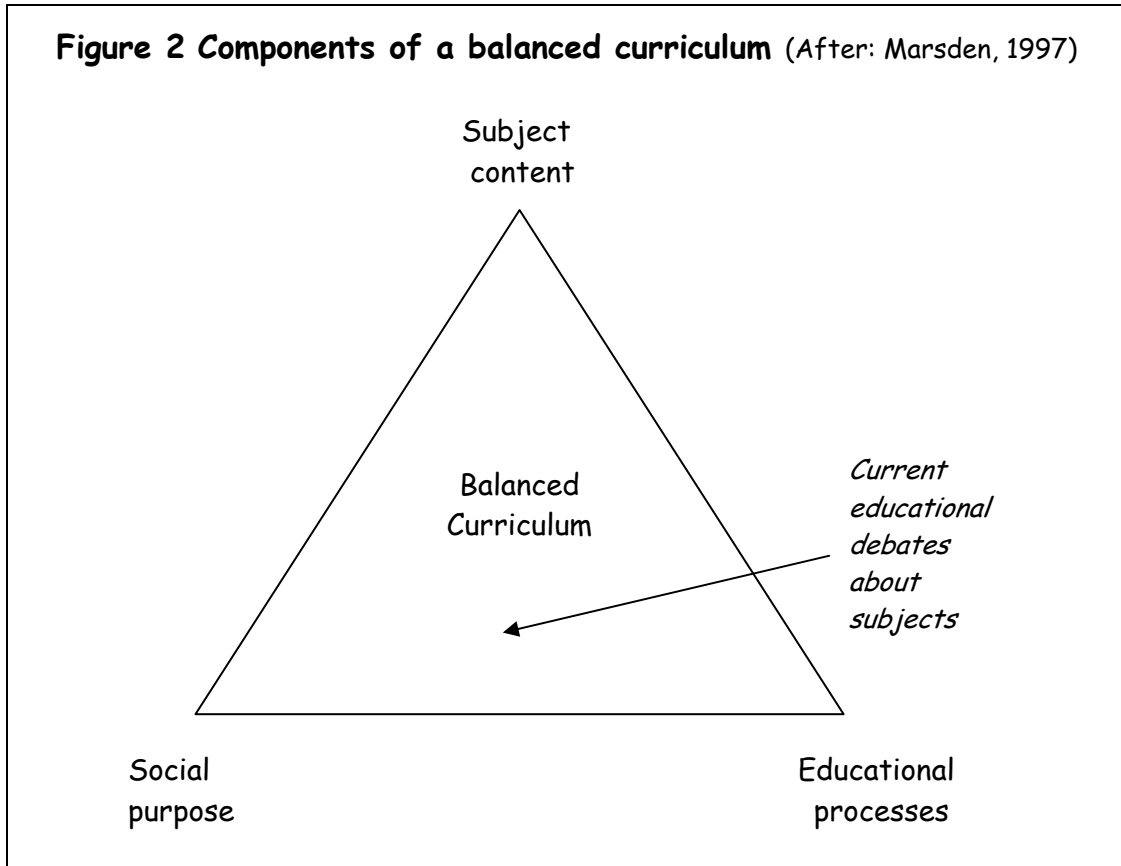
mixture of geographic paradigms and an equally eclectic mix of educational philosophies from utilitarian to reconstructionist". He viewed this as a reflection of post-modernism but providing opportunities for a range of interpretations by teachers. In the current national curriculum, for instance, it is possible to recognise a utilitarian influence in the basic map skills and continuing requirement for locational knowledge; the cultural restorationist concerns in the traditional theme titles and emphasis on knowledge of Britain and the world; some representation of the liberal humanist agenda in the separate strands of physical and human geography and spatial analysis; increasing representation of progressive educational opportunities through enquiry, values and issues-based work; and as a result of the Labour government's new agenda, token recognition at least of more radical emphases. We cannot start with a clean slate.

Marsden (1997) provides a slightly different analysis (Figure 2). He argues that the curriculum should contain a balance of three critical components - subject content, educational processes and social purposes. Without a balance between the three, the curriculum is likely to be unduly narrowed or distorted and to offer an inferior quality of education for young people. Throughout the last century, geography has at various times exhibited imbalance. Marsden quotes the over-emphasis on subject content in the old grammar school tradition and the dominance of the educational tradition in progressive primary ideology in the 1960s. The social purpose component was dominant in the interwar years (world citizenship) and in some of the integrated studies/humanities movements in the new comprehensive schools of the 1960s.

Significantly Marsden believes that by the mid 1970s, the school geography curriculum in England was reaching a reasonable balance. Sufficient of the new geography had disseminated from the universities to enliven and re-invigorate school work, the Schools Council geography projects were bringing fresh ideas about curriculum planning and pedagogy and the interest in environmental education and in welfare approaches were ensuring that social purposes were not neglected.

By about 1995, according to Marsden, the curriculum was out of balance again. As a result of the dominant debates and conflicts in the 1990s between the New Right and the progressive educational movement, links with academic geography had been neglected. Marsden refers to "a debilitating anti-intellectualism" apparent in 1997 and threatening to take the geography out of geography education (the title to Marsden's article). Referring to Marsden's diagram (Figure 2), it seems that policy debates in the late 1990s have still been taking place along the social purposes/educational processes axis. In fact because New Labour's priorities are not subject-based, the danger is that the debates will gravitate even more strongly to this area, leaving subject content out of the action. It is not just the national curriculum that seems to be frozen into a traditional and outdated framework. For

geography, the GCSE and AS/A level syllabuses have also failed to reflect recent developments in the academic subject and, in the push to address government initiatives such as key skills and modularisation/ unitisation, have become more utilitarian and technical (Bradford 1996; Hall, 1996).



The main lesson from the ideological swings taking place for geography over the past twenty years appears to be that ideologies **are** powerful influences on the curriculum, but it is important not to overstress this. The most negative effects have resulted not from the existence of different ideologies (arguably they can be a stimulus to critical engagement with the discipline), but from the extreme polarisation of the discourse at national level since about 1980, and the resultant impact on the image and status of subjects like geography. Geography continues to be constrained in national debates by the old utilitarian image, and the Press plays a significant role in promoting this (Rawling 2001a p.153-157). Articles about school geography are normally prefaced by concern about pupils' locational knowledge and focus on the mistaken view that there is a conflict between knowing where places are and gaining deeper awareness and understanding of the complexity of places, environmental issues and global change

(Gardner and Craig 2000). Indeed, the national newspapers appear to enjoy the idea of ideological conflict over the curriculum. During the 1998/99 national curriculum review, *The Independent*, for instance (September 1999), presented the issues for English, history, geography and citizenship as a polarised 'battle of the ideologies', taking place between the progressives and the traditionalists. What seems to be required, if geography is typical, is a more balanced debate and, specifically, a greater input from the academic discipline. The national geography curriculum now provides a very minimal framework and thus the possibility, through implementation, of reaching a more genuine balance between the social, educational and academic components. This is also true of the GCSE and A/AS subject criteria, though it is not yet reflected in the syllabuses. Such an analysis may well be true for other subjects. Macro-level struggles may have resulted in less than perfect curriculum frameworks for all subjects but creative curriculum development at micro-level is still a feasible strategy.

Key Messages

For subject teachers

- Different educational ideologies have made a significant influence on the content and character of school subjects over the past twenty years. Tracing the subject's ideological history may be a useful way of understanding how to work effectively with the curriculum and how to deal with public debates about the subject
- Subject practitioners may find it useful to distinguish (see Figure 2) -
 - those ways in which the subject is considered to fulfil social purposes because it develops knowledge, skills and information useful in getting a job and for everyday life (e.g. for geography - world knowledge, map skills, environmental awareness, citizenship);
 - those ways in which the subject curriculum helps to promote educational purposes by developing generic skills and abilities such as literacy, critical thinking, numeracy, study skills (e.g. geography's contributions to problem-solving and literacy);
 - the predominantly academic aspects of the subject, reflecting the big ideas and fundamental approaches of the discipline and, if kept updated, potentially bringing dynamism and excitement to the teaching and learning of the subject (e.g. new ideas about place and global-local links in geography).

For national agencies

- Policymakers should consider ways of ensuring that national subject requirements do not neglect their intellectual and academic base in the desire for school curricula to meet social purposes and educational needs.

III The changing role of the subject teacher (Rawling 2001a chapter 6, pp 95-100 and chapter 10 pp 165-172)

Since the mid 1980s, centrally prescribed curriculum guidelines (e.g. the national curriculum, GCSE and AS/A level criteria and syllabuses) have provided the framework within which subject teachers operate. Ultimately however, the quality of education offered and the achievements of pupils, through and in the subject, depend on the way in which teachers implement these guidelines in their own schools and classrooms. The existence of central guidelines does not rule out creative subject-based curriculum development; the key seems to lie in achieving a balance in which the national framework is accommodated while creative development activities take place at local and school levels (Kelly 1999; Lawton 1996). The history of school geography reveals how difficult it has been to achieve such a balance over the past twenty years, as central agencies have become more involved in the curriculum planning process.

Prior to 1988, teachers of geography had developed a relatively clear conception of what 'being professional' meant. The curriculum projects, in particular, had encouraged teachers to take on the full creative process of reviewing, designing and evaluating their own curricula at school level, starting from the base of broadly framed national project guidelines (Blythe *et al* 1976; Hickman, Reynolds and Tolley 1973; Naish, Rawling and Hart, 1987). Research studies and commentaries of the time confirmed that such professional roles were being taken on, certainly in many secondary classrooms (Boardman 1985) and teacher support texts built heavily on this tradition (Graves 1979; Hall, 1976) seeing it as a way of ensuring quality within the subject. Cooperative curriculum development work with other teachers was an essential part of the process. Within the subject community, a lively and fruitful dialogue in the 1970s resulted in transference of ideas about the subject from universities to schools. Professional development activities for school geography teachers were as often focused on updating in the subject as they were on pedagogy.

By the mid 1990s when the first, very prescriptive version of the geography national curriculum was being implemented in schools, the small amount of research that existed showed that the situation had changed dramatically in this newly politicised context. Roberts carried out a longitudinal study of the impact of the geography national curriculum on secondary schools during the 1989-95 period. She collected data by questionnaire and interviews in six case study schools. Her work (1995) revealed that one of the biggest changes was in the way that teachers perceived their role. The prescriptive national curriculum framework seemed to negate teacher involvement and to refocus curriculum control at the national level. The content seemed to require 'delivering' rather than interpreting. There appeared to be one approved set of knowledge and skills, leading many schools to become dependent on a single textbook, with one particular series dominating. This finding was backed up by

SCAA commissioned research into resources for national curriculum geography (SCAA 1997). Because the content seemed static, liaison with higher education colleagues or subject updating via new geography research studies seemed no longer appropriate. In any case, higher education colleagues were increasingly busy with their own priorities, particularly as the first research assessment exercise took place in 1986 and teaching quality audit was established in the early 1990s.

In a further article (1998), Roberts revisited the data and included new material to point out how cooperative work with teachers in other schools had declined and in-service development opportunities had become extremely limited. Knight's work analysing the role of subject associations (he looked at Home Economics and Geography, 1996) suggested that, to some extent, these bodies tried to fill the gap with subject support materials. Research into how teachers in south Wales and southern England were coping with the requirement for end-of-key-stage teacher assessment was also carried out by Daugherty and Lambert (1994). This confirmed that the 1991 geography curriculum was very difficult to work with and revealed that its complex structure and high degree of prescription were encouraging geography teachers to amend their 1970s view of curriculum and assessment as integral elements and to see assessment as a 'bolt-on' process.

Although there is much less data available about the experience of primary schools, what there is, both subject-based (Catling, 1999) and with a general primary focus (the Primary Assessment and Curriculum Experience project [PACE] Pollard *et al* 1994), suggest that the demands of a highly prescriptive and factually oriented subject national curriculum were leading to considerable challenges and tensions for primary teachers steeped in a more child-centred and developmental tradition. Again the curriculum seemed to demand less interpretation and more directive teaching.

Conversely, national agencies were promoting a greater emphasis on curriculum planning. Monitoring of the implementation of the geography national curriculum (NCC 1992 and CCW 1994) and OfSTED data for 1993-95 all referred to the importance of the teacher's role, making a direct link between high quality teaching and learning and sound school-based curriculum planning. It is interesting to note that both Robert's research for secondary teachers and the PACE project found that some teachers sought to hang on to their long-standing and cherished beliefs about curriculum development, so that in some schools, school-based curriculum development did 'hang on' despite the more constrained context. As Roberts described it (1995 p.203) "deeply held beliefs about what it is to teach and to learn are persistent. In these three schools, teachers' and students' roles have remained the same. Teachers frame the new curriculum according to the ways they framed the old curriculum".

The national curriculum reviews of 1994/5 and 1998/9 both resulted in substantially simplified and reduced requirements for the foundation subjects like geography. The rhetoric from governments, particularly after 1997, has also focused on flexibility and on reinstating the role of schools and teachers in interpreting national guidelines. To this extent, it might be thought that curriculum control is moving back to schools and that the conditions for school and subject-based curriculum development have been improving. The Labour government has apparently given renewed emphasis to teaching and learning via the Primary and Key Stage 3 Strategies and has spoken of partnership between schools rather than the competition that has characterised the 1990s. In 2003, a consultation paper also proposed a greater emphasis on what the government calls 'subject specialism' in schools (DfES, 2003). However despite the rhetoric, many commentators believe that the government still holds a restricted rather than a fully developed view of professionalism (Ball 1999; Coldron and Smith 1999; Quicke 2000), because so many other factors constrain teachers' work (target setting, performance management measures, highly directive national strategies, competition between schools). Ball, for example refers to "the managerial models and techniques which are being used to redesign teaching practices (and which) draw on the low-trust Fordist model of regulation and control" (1999 p 202)

As outlined above, the evidence from the geography research is that such a restricted view of professionalism still exists in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Despite the now minimal framework of the geography national curriculum, most teachers at primary and secondary level still read it as a prescriptive set of content to be delivered, as if conditioned by the past ten years experience. Few take the opportunities now provided to develop and interpret the curriculum in their own distinctive way (Hare and Naish 2002; QCA monitoring 2001 and 2002). This is partly because at secondary level, constant changes to examination requirements at 16+ and 18+ (e.g. modularisation and synoptic assessment) have absorbed teachers' time and energies so that development of the subject content and approach has been a much lower priority. It is also the case that professional development opportunities are few and what does exist tends to be focused on assessment requirements or managerial matters ('tips for teachers') rather than on creative approaches to planning or subject updating. The generation of teachers involved in the 1970s curriculum projects has generally moved on from geography classrooms. Research by Catling and some teacher education colleagues carried out for QCA in 2001-2 (Catling, 2002) found that non-specialist primary teachers struggle to interpret even the simpler version of the geography curriculum, having typically received very little subject-based training in the restructured teacher education courses and virtually no professional support in post. As far as dialogue about the subject is concerned, the gap between the kind of geography taught in schools and higher education reveals that this is still minimal, despite recent efforts from the subject associations. Research by Rynne and Lambert (1997) and Barrett-Hacking (1996) into the geographical backgrounds of intending geography teachers

showed that students direct from geography degrees and PGCE courses found little connection between the subject studied at university and that which they would be expected to teach at school.

Work undertaken by Roberts (2000) and Lambert (2001) also highlights the impact of the competence-based standards for teacher education, as established by circulars 10/97 and 4/98 (DfEE/TTA 1997, 1998). As Roberts (2000 p. 39) explains, the statements that make up the standards for both primary and secondary, "present a model of learning guided by the outcomes of learning (what students must know, be aware of, understand and be able to do)". It does not encourage questioning and dialogue with the subject. Lambert (2001 p.3) suggests that the problems with all this are twofold: "first, the lack of explicit reference to disciplinary expertise in its own right rather than how it relates to the classroom, syllabuses or programmes of study"; and second, the rather mechanistic view that suggests students acquire knowledge and then just apply it. What is missing, if these standards are followed literally, seems to be any deeper and more critical view of the discipline that recognises the dynamic and contested nature of the knowledge and skills, and the equally dynamic and creative processes required to translate this into teaching and learning situations. Once in post, most teachers of school geography have little time or opportunity to meet subject colleagues nor do they perceive encouragement from the centre to do so (Roberts 1997). In-service priorities at school level typically cover the core subjects of English, Maths, Science and ICT, though a widening of the professional development focus might be expected given the recent 'Subject Specialism' consultative document.

Overall then, the geography experience suggests that over the past twenty years policies designed to increase accountability and central control of education have resulted in at least one unintended consequence - a diminution of the creative professionalism of subject teachers. In the full research study on which this user review is based, I proposed five aspects of 'being professional':

How the teacher interacts with the pupils

- How the teacher interacts with other teachers
- How the teacher values him/herself professionally
- How the teacher interacts with the wider subject community
- How the teacher interacts with the state and policy-making

For each of these, a continuum is identified (Figure 3), ranging from the characteristics shown in fully developed professionalism to those shown in a more restricted version of professionalism. Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998 p.65) used the terms 'reflexive practitioner' and 'skilled technician' that seem to link directly with these descriptions. The characteristics are designed to show the end points of the continuum not to reflect a particular situation for any one time. However, it is striking

Figure 3 Being professional as a teacher

Aspects of professionalism	Continuum of characteristics of professionalism	
	Fully-developed professionalism (reflexive practitioner?)	Restricted professionalism (skilled technician?)
How the teacher interacts with pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - focusing on the needs of individuals and how to develop each to own potential - focusing on variety of teaching and learning strategies to fit each situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - focusing on the needs of the group to bring as many as possible to the required level/standard - focusing on transmission/direct teaching to ensure required detailed content is 'delivered'
How the teacher interacts with other teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - working in co-operation, emphasis on team work at school and subject level - professional development activities focus on new ideas, creativity and reflecting on own classrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - working as an individual teacher and/or subject department in competition with those in other schools - professional development focuses on 'tips for teaching' and how to manage and 'deliver' national curriculum/assessment requirements
How the teacher values him/herself professionally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gaining enjoyment and satisfaction from finding out about new developments in education, research and in society - seeing out of school hobbies and interests as feeding into personal development and professional creativity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - finding no relevance in and/or time to follow up new developments in the wider educational context - seeing school and 'outside school' as separate existences with no beneficial overlap or creative interchange
How the teacher interacts with the wider subject community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participating in interchange and updating activities with subject colleagues at all levels from higher education to primary education - having an interest in the subject, its character and relevance to society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seeing the subject in school and in higher education as being separate systems and therefore no need for interchange - accepting the national requirements as the definition of the subject and seeing no need for debate
How the teacher interacts with the state and policy-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - making a valued contribution to discussions about the appropriate national frameworks for the subject (need to be creative) - seen as a creative professional who is trusted to make decisions about subject and classroom matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seen as the 'technician' trained to deliver knowledge, understanding, skills prescribed by the state (need to be competent) - not envisaged as needing to make important decisions about subject or pedagogy and generally not trusted to do so

that, from the research evidence, geography teaching in the 1990s seems to have moved towards the right hand (restricted professionalism) end of the diagram. This is the case even though monitoring and inspection evidence, from QCA, OfSTED and analysis from the subject community itself (e.g. see Marsden 1995), seem to point to the importance of a more fully developed professionalism for achieving high quality geographical education. More recently there are signs of a revaluing of the teacher's role, through, for example, the KS3 Strategy's work, DfES Best Practice Research scholarships and DfES and QCA websites that include the experience and work of teachers and pupils.

The message for subject practitioners of geography, and of other subjects which this analysis fits, is that improving the quality and performance of the subject is most likely to result from taking all opportunities to revive a fully developed subject-based professionalism. The messages for schools and policy-makers is that they should do all they can to encourage and promote the wider view of professionalism

Key Messages

For subject teachers

- The subject teacher's professional role includes creative involvement across a range of areas of work - with pupils, with other teachers and schools, with the subject and with national agencies. Given centrally prescribed curricula and examination requirements, this kind of fully developed professionalism is the approach most likely to promote high quality subject teaching and learning.
- Subject teachers can best develop their professionalism:
 - in classrooms: by focusing on developing a variety of teaching/learning strategies and on the needs of individual pupils;
 - with other teachers in the school: by planning their own curricula and approaches which allow the school to take ownership and expand/develop national requirements, as well as promoting the subject to parents and pupils;
 - with other teachers beyond the school: by reflecting on each other's experience, sharing professional expertise, resources and strategies;
 - with subject colleagues: by participating in exchanging ideas/approaches and updating about the subject at all levels in education and research; and
 - with national bodies: by contributing via subject association activities and/or local meetings to discussions and consultations about the role and character of the subject.

For schools and national agencies

- Teachers of all subjects should be encouraged and supported by schools and national agencies to recognise and take up the full range of professional development activities.

IV The changing relationship between the academic and the school subject (Rawling 2001a, chapter 2 pp 21-27; chapter 7 pp 110-113; chapter 10 pp 165-177)

In the 1960s and 70s, there was a close, almost paternalistic relationship between university geographers and their schoolteacher counterparts, resulting in the transfer of many new ideas and approaches, particularly in the so-called 'new' quantitative and model-based geography. Higher education geographers were also heavily involved in writing textbooks, in setting and marking examination papers and in syllabus development. An added impetus to changes in the curriculum content was given by the Schools Council projects of the 1970s (Rawling 1991). All the geography projects (three secondary and one primary) involved teachers and subject communities in the process of curriculum change.

My analysis of the changes taking place for geography 1980-2000 showed that, with the establishment of the national curriculum and the extension of controls over GCSE and A level syllabuses, both these mechanisms for curriculum change (i.e. dialogue with higher education; national subject-based project) disappeared. For geography as for all subjects, the first version of the national curriculum was prepared by a government-appointed working group containing representatives from lay people and industry alongside geography educationalists. Butt's research (1997) revealed that there was tight political control over the whole process leading to a very traditional and rather 'backward looking' geography which did not seem to reflect any of the more progressive project developments of the previous twenty years. Ball (1994) saw this as a result of the influence of the 'New Right' ideology, aiming culturally to restore or reintroduce more traditional elements of the curriculum and to reduce the influence of progressive educationalists.

Since then, the geography national curriculum has experienced virtually no changes in content, despite two national curriculum reviews (1994/5 and 1998/9) because both exercises were carried out by central agencies and were aimed at reduction and simplification. Apart from the addition of some new emphases promoted by the Labour government (e.g. citizenship, education for sustainable development) the content framework of the geography national curriculum is the same as it was (already dated) in 1989-91.

For GCSE and A level, there have been an increasing number of structural and technical changes required by the regulatory authorities (e.g. modular format, new AS, synoptic assessment) but, as several papers have shown (Bradford 1995, 1996, 2001; Hall 1996; Westaway and Jones 2001), no curriculum reconsideration. The awarding bodies have moved into 'safe mode' - minimising change to that required by the dictates of accountability and maintenance of standards, and focusing their efforts on protecting their market share of schools. In this situation, few specifications/syllabuses have taken the opportunity to introduce new, relevant ideas

from academic geography. Higher education geographers have been notably absent from specification/syllabus development. Summarising the situation (Rawling 2001a p.113), I suggested that ten years of regulation without curriculum development is in danger of leaving central subject requirements as relatively static and technical documents rather than as living representations of a dynamic subject discipline. Teachers of other subjects might consider whether this is true for their own subject.

My research and analysis of policy initiatives suggests that, until the Subject Specialism document was issued in 2003, there had been a decline in interest throughout the 1990s from policy-makers about subjects per se. The 10 subject national curriculum was a Conservative government initiative. Labour curriculum policies have mainly stressed non subject-based priorities (e.g. literacy, numeracy, citizenship, thinking skills) though some such as literacy and numeracy have helped to promote core NC subjects. They have targeted whole school improvement (Quicke 2000), managerial approaches to leading subject departments (Thompson 2000) and more generic approaches to teaching and learning (e.g. KS3 Strategy Foundation strand). Whilst these may have positive impacts on some parts of the system, they do not promote subject specialisms. Following the review of the National Curriculum 1998-2000, QCA alerted the government to the need for subject content updating (QCA/DfEE 1999)-hence the establishment of some curriculum projects (e.g. Science, Maths, PE and school sports, the arts, history and geography). However, although these projects are making some immediate impact, their temporary existence, small budgets and limited remit highlight the fact that their impact is unequally applied and there is no longer a mechanism for subject-based curriculum development.

If subject-based professionalism is concerned with ensuring that the subject curriculum is constantly being interpreted, created and re-created to make its most appropriate contribution to education, then the experience of geography (and possibly of other non-core subjects) is that the 1990s have had a negative effect.

The question for subject practitioners at all levels is 'does it matter if the school subject becomes a relatively static and utilitarian vehicle for wider educational purposes (such as social and personal education, development of literacy, promotion of work-related skills)? In this respect, Stengel's work (1997) on the relationship between a school subject and an academic subject is useful. She identified three different models of this relationship:

- that academic disciplines and school subjects are essentially **continuous**, the school subject being a lower level or simpler version of the academic subject;
- that academic disciplines and school subjects are basically **discontinuous**, the factors influencing their formation being so different as to result in different forms;
- that academic disciplines and school subjects are related **by common aims and broad principles**, but develop in different ways as a result of different pressures. Stengel notes that they may be related in one of three ways - **either** the academic

discipline precedes the school subject **or** the school subject precedes the academic discipline **or** there is a dialectic relationship between the two.

Goodson (1987) seems to see geography as an example of the third model and of the situation in which the school subject precedes the academic discipline: "the story is not one of the translation of an academic discipline devised by ('dominant') groups of scholars in universities into a pedagogic version to be used as school subject. Rather the story unfolds in reverse order and can be seen as a drive from low status groups at school level to progressively colonise the university sector" (1987 p.78). Other commentators (e.g. Marsden 1997) agree on the third model but see the relationship as more of a dialectic one involving exchange and dialogue between the sectors. Other subjects such as Maths and Science may find that the first model of a continuous relationship fits more closely. Whatever particular description is given for geography, most respected geography researchers and commentators agree that active links between the two sectors have been crucial in the past to maintaining the identity, quality and status of geography (Haggett 1996; Johnson 2003; Walford 2001) and that separate development of school and university geography (i.e. Stengel's first model) is not a viable option.

If a school subject is perceived as boring and irrelevant by pupils or as insufficiently distinctive by policy-makers then it is likely to decline in importance and eventually to lose its place on school timetables. Research undertaken by Battersby and Biddulph (2002) analysed the views of teachers and pupils about continuity and progression in geography courses 11-19. Although this involved only a small sample of 8 schools, the findings indicated that many of the pupils found geography repetitive and unfocused. Some of the teachers agreed that it was repetitive, though some saw this as a strength in that it reinforced prior learning and prepared pupils for examinations. The dramatic decline in geography entries for GCSE and A level since 1996-98 may partly be blamed on KS4 timetabling problems, but many geography commentators are beginning to think that some of the problems lie with the outdated and repetitive nature of the courses offered (Butt and Foskett 2001).

Fewer pupils taking GCSE and A level will feed into lower numbers taking degree level geography, fewer recruits into teacher education and eventually fewer subject specialist teachers. Recent concerns about teacher supply and the closure of some geography departments may just be the first indicators of such unwelcome trends. An exploratory seminar by the RGS-IBG about teacher supply (Rawling 2000b) found that although recruitment problems were bound up with bigger issues of finance and public image, there was also a significant disincentive provided by the perception that school geography lacked status and opportunities for creative teaching. Thus the effects of subject decline and disengagement from its parent base appear to be cumulative.

Studies from the USA (Bednarz 2003) provide some hint of future dangers. The replacement of geography by social studies in the mid twentieth century led to a decline in school geography and the eventual removal of the subject from the top-

ranking universities. The whole geography education system suffered decline, which is only slowly being reversed as a result of a joint campaign by the subject associations (Clarke and Stoltman 2000). The relative ignorance displayed by US citizens about the wider world and environmental matters has been linked directly with the lack of geography education in schools (National Geographic Society, 1988).

Although it is difficult to obtain hard evidence about the qualitative relationship between the subject in school and in universities, it is possible to make an intelligent interpretation of the situation and for geography all the signs are that a revival in subject-based dialogue and subject-based professionalism across the sectors is an appropriate and necessary response to the current policy context (i.e. an attempt to re-construct Stengel's third model). Geographers have begun to implement such a strategy through subject association initiatives and the work of the Council of British Geography (see Rawling and Daugherty, 1996). Other subject practitioners may wish to consider the changing school/university relationship in the development of their own subject.

Key Messages:

For subject associations, subject researchers and national agencies

- The liveliness and relevance of the school subject can best be maintained by ensuring that subject experts (i.e. university academics and teacher educators) are involved in discussions about the development and revision of national frameworks and strategies for the school subject. The school subject need not follow every trend in the academic subject but there should be sufficient interaction and transference of ideas to retain common aims and purpose at a broad level.
- New mechanisms are needed to facilitate national curriculum development, in the sense of revising national subject frameworks - either for the National Curriculum or for GCSE and AS/A level. This is particularly crucial for subjects that are not the focus of national initiatives and so have no external stimulus to change. National frameworks need updating otherwise subject teachers will find them increasingly restrictive and constraining to good practice.
- The maintenance of a close relationship between the school subject and its parent academic base is necessary to ensure a clear public image and status for the school subject. Without this relationship, the school subject may be weakened and this may feed back into a decline in the subject's staffing, resourcing and quality in schools

V Learning lessons from curriculum history (Rawling 2001a chapter 9 pp 147-160)

Five phases of curriculum policy-making 1970-2000 were recognised in the full research study as relevant to school geography. These can be used to trace geography's curriculum history and they may well be applicable to other school subjects. Since the phases summarise trends and findings already explained, references will not be repeated; only significant new ones will be given.

1. The 1970-1980 phase of **Curriculum Development and Innovation** - during which education was seen as a major mechanism for social improvement. The geography curriculum projects (Schools Council) brought radical educational philosophy and new ideas from universities into schools (mainly secondary). Innovations were well supported by local education authorities and the Geographical Association. National government was not involved in curricular matters. The analysis highlights that, in this period, classroom teachers exercised considerable freedom, being seen as creative professionals participating in dialogue about the subject with colleagues at all levels of education and trusted to make decisions about curriculum and classroom matters.
2. The 1980-1987 phase was characterised by **Changing Discourse and Unresolved Dilemmas**. There was increasing central interest in the curriculum, a decline in funding for innovation and professional development, and a more polarised and politicised debate about the curriculum (Carr and Hartnett, 1996). Geography was poorly represented in this, partly because of failure by the subject community to evaluate the changes of the previous era in the context of political priorities. However, active campaigning by the Geographical Association helped ensure geography a place in the new 10-subject national curriculum (Bailey, 1989). Despite this success, by the late 1980s geography was barely present in primary schools and academic geographers were moving away to focus on their own developments and priorities (e.g. first research assessment exercise 1986). Although the character of the new National Curriculum was as yet unknown, many of the curriculum innovations of the previous period (e.g. enquiry learning, key ideas) were given recognition in the new GCSE syllabuses so encouraging teachers to feel that their professionalism was still required.
3. From 1987-1993, the national curriculum subject orders were established. Following the Education Reform Act of 1988, this period was characterised by **Strong Centralised Control** over curriculum content in which a traditional, rather backward looking and very prescriptive version of geography was imposed by the geography national curriculum. The influence of professional educators and academic subject specialists was marginalised in curriculum and assessment

matters. Despite the rise in national status consequent on geography being one of the ten NC subjects, research shows that teachers found the first national geography curriculum extremely difficult to implement due to its over-prescription and faulty structure. What is more the high degree of central control seemed to inhibit the teacher's role. Teachers felt de-skilled and de-professionalised by the apparent need to 'deliver' rather than interpret a detailed set of requirements.

4. The 1993-1997 phase was a period of **Pragmatic Accommodation and Negotiation** Because of the need to involve teachers more cooperatively in implementation, the national agencies encouraged subject associations and professional educators to participate more in policy-making and management. SCAA monitoring and further research showed that amendments and reductions to the national geography curriculum made implementation easier. However, subject teachers were cautious about using the increased flexibility, partly because textbook series had institutionalised the content and partly because technical changes to GCSE and A level requirements seemed to demand attention. Primary teachers still found the geography curriculum extremely difficult to translate. The subject community took steps to revive cross-sectoral dialogue. Despite these improvements at school and subject community level, declining numbers of candidates for GCSE became apparent after 1996, reflecting the subject's lower national status and, possibly, the lack of curriculum updating 14-19.
5. The final phase, 1997-2000+ was characterised by less ideology but more control, represented in New Labour's **Command Curriculum** (a term I derived from Hennessy's work (2000) on Blair's premiership). This was recognisable in the greater direction over outcomes (e.g. targets and performance measures) and implementation strategies (e.g. Literacy, Numeracy and KS3 Strategies). The Standards and Effectiveness Unit was established as a new national agency to lead on these more direct school and classroom interventions (Ball 1999; Rawling 2001b). Despite continuing improvements to the national curriculum (QCA review 1998-2000) and new quality initiatives from the subject community (projects, publications, websites), there were still issues about quality and standards and access to geography in schools, particularly, as explained, at primary level. Policy initiatives in the late 1990s (e.g. the introduction of citizenship) provided some new opportunities for subjects but also added to the competition for curriculum time. The 1998-2002 period saw a substantial decline in GCSE and A level candidature for geography (Westaway and Rawling 2001). Overall, the limited amount of research and analysis available about teachers' work suggests that teachers still perceive their curriculum development role to be a constrained rather than an open one.

Overall then, the research has allowed me to trace a clear 'geography story', highlighting the increasingly politicised context within which teachers have to work. How far is this story, or some parts of it, typical of other subjects? Can the five phases of curriculum policy-making provide a useful model or framework for analysing other school subjects?

The experience of geography also suggests that subject teachers need to be aware of three different but nested systems within which any school subject operates. At the heart of this is *the school curriculum system* where individual teachers and subject departments formerly had considerable autonomy but now have to implement nationally prescribed curricula and assessment approaches. Despite this central control, there is an increasing amount of flexibility becoming apparent in the school curriculum system. Beyond this lies the wider *subject education community*, including subject specialists at all levels of education and research from primary through to university. The geography experience shows how subject community links have weakened over the past twenty years and how this has been to the detriment of the subject's relevance, public image and identity. Finally, both these systems have to operate within the framework of *the national education system* where national policies, initiatives and the work of advisory and regulatory authorities increasingly control or frame the teacher's task. For geography, the fortunes of geography in one system have been intimately related to its well-being in the other two over the period studied and this is likely to be the case for subjects generally.

Key Messages:

For subject teachers

- Subject teachers need to be aware of the importance of the three different but interacting systems (school, subject community and national) within which their work takes place. If possible, they should maintain interest and involvement in developments at each level, possibly through local consortia or subject association activities.

For researchers and subject associations

- The experience of school geography 1970-2000 may have parallels in other subjects and so the five phases may be useful as a tool for other subject-based policy research.

For national agencies

- Educational policymakers should be aware of the inter-related nature of the school, subject community and national education systems. Policies designed for one purpose and level may have unintended consequences and impacts elsewhere in the system.

VI Conclusion

The increasing degree of central control extended over the school curriculum during the past twenty years resulted in disturbance to the processes by which curriculum development and change took place. Initially, as Kelly (1999) pointed out, it seemed as if the centre had taken all power to itself and that all other forms of change were arrested.

"Curriculum development is now no more than tinkering with content, attainment targets, profile components, levels and so on; the overall structure is set in stone."
Kelly 1999, p.101

However, the experience of school geography has shown that although there have been, and still are, some traumatic readjustments to make, central control need not rule out curriculum development

at the levels of the teacher, school and subject community. Indeed part of the function of central agencies might now be seen as facilitating such curriculum change within the broad framework of central subject requirements.

Harland *et al* (1999) suggested a useful way of considering the question of who controls the curriculum. They envisaged five different levels at which the curriculum operates. The *curriculum as specified* refers to the statutory requirements, agreed nationally and, as explained, now comprises a minimal framework, certainly as far as geography and other foundation subjects are concerned. The *curriculum as planned* describes the interpretation of the national frameworks by, for example, examination boards/awarding bodies, non-statutory guidance, textbook writers and subject associations. It also includes the work of schools and of subject departments within them, so there has been a tendency to overlook their freedom in this respect. This is a level into which the government and political appointees have moved significantly 1997-2000, not only to exemplify standards (e.g. web-based exemplification) but also to give an interpretation of the curriculum (e.g. Schemes of Work). The *curriculum as implemented* refers to the detailed course/lesson plans prepared by teachers and teaching approaches designed to suit their own context. The Labour government seems to have been moving into this area for core subjects, with its prescriptive Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. It seems that the Foundation subject strand of the KS3 Strategy will follow a more flexible route for content, though there is still substantial direction over teaching and learning strategies (DfES 2001). Two levels of curriculum operation which are less frequently considered are *curriculum as experienced* and *curriculum as retained*. These are levels in which the pupils' needs and experiences are apparent because they focus on classroom interactions and on the knowledge, skills and attitudes which pupils then take away. To some extent, the national tests and public examinations reach into this area, but only partially because the term 'what is

retained' suggests a far wider concern than the relatively narrow focused tests. For all subjects, there is probably scope for further research into *curriculum as experienced* and *curriculum as retained*, as a guide to improving the specifications and plans made at other levels. The work on formative assessment (Assessment Reform Group 1998) has this emphasis. For geography the thinking skills programme (e.g. Leat 1998 and 2001) is directly concerned with these classroom levels of operation and, so also, is much of the Geographical Association's GeoVisions curriculum development work.

This analysis is valuable because it can highlight the spaces for action by subject communities. The research has shown that for the geography national curriculum, there is now considerable potential for action, particularly at the levels of planning, implementation and classroom experience. Teachers do have, and should use, their power to develop the curriculum to suit their school and to reflect advances in the discipline. At the 14-19 level, the priority for geography teachers and the subject community is to influence awarding bodies and the national subject criteria to enable classroom change to take place. Overall, subject practitioners can claim and expand their role in school-based curriculum development to the benefit of their subject but this will involve reviving and extending notions of disciplinary-based professionalism. Ministers, political advisers and curriculum/assessment authorities are justifiably involved in decisions about the statutory specifications and to some extent in planning guidance. It may be suggested on the basis of geography's curriculum history, that they are less appropriately involved in the lower levels of curriculum operation. In addition, if the school curriculum is to fulfil the kind of aims outlined in the Education Reform Act, the National Curriculum handbooks and the recent consultation paper on Subject Specialism, then it is crucial that subject communities are also involved in monitoring, evaluation and forward thinking about the subject curriculum at national levels. If the mechanisms do not exist for this at present, it is for subject communities to try and ensure that they do in the future.

In the final chapter of his book, *Beyond the National Curriculum*, Lawton (1996) used the terms 'empowerment' and 'professionalism' against which to assess past, present and future opportunities for curriculum development by schools. I interpret 'empowerment' to mean the existence of an enabling, appropriate and integrated curriculum framework for the subject with clear opportunities for schools to participate in decision-making about curriculum content, pedagogy and assessment. 'Professionalism' refers to the extent to which the work of teachers, their role in planning and the status of the subject are valued within the education system. As the geography research has shown, policy changes over the past twenty years initially seemed to dis-empower and de-professionalise subject practitioners, but the research has also highlighted the potential in 2003 for both to be revived.

Summary of Key Messages for subject teachers and subject communities

- ***In terms of processes of curriculum change***

Although the imposition of central curriculum control has changed the processes of curriculum change at national level, this has not reduced the necessity for teachers to engage in creative subject-based planning and teaching at school level and for national agencies to draw on specialist subject advice about curriculum content.
 - ***In terms of school-based curriculum development***

The existence of centrally produced curriculum requirements has changed the nature of the subject teacher's task. However, teachers still need to exercise their professional judgement and skill in interpreting, modifying and developing a curriculum suitable for their pupils, school and community.
 - ***In terms of the teacher's professional role***

The teacher's professional role has changed but need not be diminished by the greater degree of central control over the curriculum. Subject-based professionalism still requires the teacher to work creatively with pupils, other teachers, the subject itself, subject colleagues in higher education, and national agencies.
 - ***In terms of supporting subject-based developments***

In a centrally controlled education system, subject communities can help to ensure high quality subject teaching and learning by:

 - Liaising with subject colleagues at all levels to identify the fundamental aspects of the subject which should be at the heart of any curriculum.
 - Reminding national agencies of the need for regular updating of subject content and approaches and assisting them in this task.
 - Helping to promote a clear and appropriate public image of the subject.
 - Monitoring the implementation of subject curricula at different levels and alerting national agencies to potential problems or issues.
 - Highlighting the contributions which a subject can make to wider educational and social purposes.
-

Summary of Key Messages for policy-makers

In order to move forward and to revive subject specialism as outlined in the 2003 consultation document, the research into geography teaching would suggest that policy-makers need to establish a clear national framework for the development and support of subjects and subject teachers, including:

- the recognition that subject communities are essential 'players' in the making and development of sound national policies for high quality subject teaching and learning - including finding ways of involving subject experts and researchers from teacher education and higher education;
- the appreciation that national subject frameworks should have the minimum detail required to ensure consistency and coherence across the school system. National frameworks should allow room for creative interpretation and development by subject professionals;
- the recognition that there is a need to establish mechanisms for subject curriculum development to take place. Subject content and approaches need regular review and updating to take account of changes and new trends in the subject as well as changes in pupils' and society's needs;
- the appreciation that subject teachers need frequent opportunities to update and renew their knowledge and enthusiasm in the subject, as well as to find out about teaching, learning and school management strategies; and
- a commitment to sufficient funding to ensure that the kind of curriculum and professional development approaches outlined above can take place.

Appendix 1 Background of School Geography 1980-2000

Why does geography make a good case study of the impact of curriculum policy?

Like many other school subjects, geography has experienced a substantial amount of curriculum change over the past twenty-five years, and particularly since the national curriculum was introduced. In 1991, the Statutory Order for the geography national curriculum was published. Although acceptance as a national curriculum subject gave geography national status and 'a place in the sun' (as Bailey called it 1991), from the beginning the new formulation for geography was controversial. It seemed to take geography back to the kind of informational/utilitarian tradition from which the subject community had tried so hard to break away (Goodson 1988; Rawling 1992) and it seemed to ignore features such as geographical enquiry and issue-based investigation, characteristic of the previous 20 years of curriculum development. So the story of school geography raises issues about 'who controls the subject curriculum?' and 'does it matter what ideological slant is given to a school subject?' There were similar debates in other subjects (e.g. history, see Phillips 1998; English see Ball 1994). Many commentators within (e.g. Lambert 1994) and outside the geography community (e.g. Ball, 1994) have argued that the resultant way in which geography has been seen as a mainly utilitarian subject has hindered its public image throughout the 1990s, and delayed its recognition as a contributor to broader initiatives such as citizenship and education for sustainable development.

"With its undertones of assimilation, nationalism and consensus around the regressive re-establishment of fictional past glories, restorationist national curriculum geography isolates students in time and space, cutting them off from the realities of the single European market, global economic dependencies and inequalities and the ecological crisis" (Ball, 1994 p.37)

The new national curriculum was also structurally complex and very prescriptive, providing an extremely difficult medium for teachers to work with in schools and classrooms. This was particularly the case in primary schools. The geography community has therefore had to invest considerable time and creative energy into campaigning for change but also in supporting teachers in a changed role. It is likely that other subjects have experienced a similar need for adjustment and adaptation as a result of implementing a centrally prescribed curriculum.

Despite geography's relatively protected position as a National Curriculum foundation subject since 1988, it is currently experiencing a number of problems and these may have parallels in other subjects. There are concerns about the quality of teaching and the lack of progress being made by pupils at key stages 1-3, but particularly in primary schools (Catling 2002, OfSTED 2002 and 2003, QCA 2002). In the 14-19 age range,

the main problem for geography is the declining examination entries at GCSE and A level with a 20% fall in entries for both GCSE and A level since the high point of 1996-98 (Walford 2000, Westaway and Rawling 2001). In addition, it is now recognised that there is a growing discontinuity or 'gap' between the content and approaches of the subject as taught in schools and in higher education (Goudie 1993; Bradford 1996; Brown and Smith 2001) with all the consequent issues this raises about relevance, dynamism and public image.

Geography's experience then raises questions about the extent to which the changing political context of education has affected the status and well-being of the subject or whether the difficulties may be traced back to the subject itself. Whilst the geography research highlights a number of specific reasons for the situation outlined at each key stage (for example, the initially over-complex geography national curriculum, the rundown of in-service opportunities, the increase in non-specialist teachers KS1-3; a perceived lack of continuity and progression in geography courses 11-19) my research also suggested that, overall, many of these problems are intimately linked with changes in national policies and specifically with policies that have led to a downgrading in time and status for the subject at national level. Significantly, too, it seems that these problems are not unique to geography. For example, OfSTED's 2002 Annual report refers especially to geography and design/technology as two subjects adversely affected by the government's policy of concentrating on literacy, numeracy and the core subjects. In secondary schools the declining examination entries for subjects like modern foreign languages, and geography reflect the difficulties for traditional foundation subjects of competing in the more complex 14-19 curriculum (restructured in 1995 after the Dearing Review of the National Curriculum). Also the content of many school subjects is beginning to look increasingly outdated because the original NC content requirements have been slimmed but not amended since the late 1980s - e.g. Science (Millar and Osborne 1998); Geography (Butt and Foskett 2001).

The issues raised may be of special relevance to subjects that, like geography, are foundation national curriculum subjects (e.g. history, art, music) rather than core subjects (e.g. English, mathematics, science) or priority aspects in government policy (e.g. ICT, citizenship). Geography, like other foundation subjects, is rarely the focus of a central initiative itself. More often it is included in non-subject specific initiatives (e.g. KS3 Strategy Foundation subject strand) or incidentally affected by more targeted policies (e.g. the dis-application of the primary geography programmes of study in 1998-2000 to accommodate the literacy and numeracy strategies). Overall then, some aspects of geography's experience may be similar to that of other school subjects.

Appendix 2 What was the full research study like?

The original research was undertaken in 1999-2000 with the help of a Leverhulme Research Fellowship. The research findings were published by the Geographical Association (2001a) in the form of a book entitled **Changing the Subject; the impact of national policy on school geography**.

Many books and articles about educational policy and its impacts on schools and teachers have been published over the past twenty years (e.g. some of the most relevant to this study are Ball 1990 and 1994; Bell 1999; Carr and Hartnett 1996; Dale, 1989; Power and Whitty 1999;). Individual school subjects have featured only occasionally in such policy studies (e.g. Black (1995) on national curriculum science, Phillips (1998) on national curriculum history and Evans and Penney (1999) on national curriculum PE). As far as I am aware, there has been no previous study that provides a full overview of the changing fortunes of one school subject and places it within the context of wider educational changes in the 1980-2000 period. The full research study attempted to do just that, focusing on the subject of geography. It followed an approach described as a curriculum policy case study, bringing together the traditions of curriculum change analysis (Goodson, 1983, 1987, 1988) with the newer perspectives gained from policy studies and policy sociology (Ball 1990, 1994; Bowe and Ball with Gold 1992). In one sense, it was a curriculum history of geography with the findings having particular resonance and meaning for the geography community. However, it was also a case study of the impact of national policies on school subjects in general, and it used geography to illustrate key points about changes in subject status, subject identity, the role of the subject teacher and the implications of these for future practice.

The methodology was one of qualitative historical analysis, drawing on a wide range of secondary source material including:

- policy documents and other official papers (e.g. National Curriculum Orders, statutory guidance);
- data about the impact of curriculum and assessment change at school and classroom level (e.g. OfSTED findings and QCA monitoring);
- research papers and methodological texts (e.g. journal articles, research papers, subject association guidance/support);
- interviews with key participants in the period studied; and
- my own personal notes, papers and diaries (My own position as a participant in, as well as writer of, the curriculum history of geography was identified clearly in the research and has been explored in a separate paper - Rawling, 2003 forthcoming).

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