

Who Needs Geography, Computers, Digital Cameras, Critical Thinking & A Job Anyway?

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So What Are the Future Prospects for Geography?

Geography won't just 'Go Away' because:

Constant of place/people discovery based on curiosity, need & spatial literacy & competencies.

Impacts of Post-Modernism & Neoliberalism e.g., re-naming & synergies epitomized by UCD & TCD.

Irish economy / Government support for Teacher Training in Geography e.g., SPD-DCU, MIC-UL.....Why?.....

Bridging role/knock-on affects: scientifically, academically, economically & socially due to demand.

Sample Case Studies of Courses

Aims: critical thinking, action & IT-support:

- SPD-DCU geography program, e.g., course associated projects &/or fieldtrips.
- Transferability of skills & experiences, e.g., infield & virtual T&L, digital competencies, & usage of moodle & PPT.

CASE STUDY 1: RURAL GEOGRAPHY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- For 2Y - 110 students in 2008, building on 1Y in-field & Moodle based course on SD.
- Task: personalised project e.g., farm or food / agri-business enterprise.
- Delivery: Report or PPT.

CASE STUDY 1: Results

- Originality.
- Use of multiple sources.
- Techniques: quantitative & qualitative.
- Computer & digital skills used.
- Scanning.
- Maps: original & variety of sources
- Photographs - personal digital camera use.
- Competencies of high level.

CASE STUDY 2:
REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY: MED. & MIDDLE
EAST/NORTH AFRICA (MENA)

-For 3Y - 112 students in 2008, building on 2 Y courses in cultural, economic & political geographies.

- Connecting: Transitions in Ireland in 1990s, Muslim linkages & migration into Ireland, Census 2006.

-Task: Seminar, students asked to prepare & enter material on MENA Moodle site for group & individual work, related to targeted questions.

-Delivery: Report or Essay.

CASE STUDY 2: Results

- Very limited official data available => students forced to be innovative in data creation.
- Research e.g., interviews, analyses of local schools / Muslim pupils, photos of new Muslim Irish cultural spaces.
- IT/Moodle usage e.g., forum work.
- Quality work – Reports / Essays with emerging socio-cultural strands.
- Competencies were illustrated.

CASE STUDY 3: IRISH LANDSCAPES & CULTURES

Pilot international course given in 2008 to 12 students selected.

- Combination of fieldtrip, landscape-reading, seminar & computer-based T&L.
- Aim: make course research & skills of use to student/teachers back in home countries.
- Task: Observation, analysis, personal research.
- Delivery: Computer-aided lesson with text, maps & photographs, essentially a PPT presentation & report.

CASE STUDY 3: Results

Student centred learning: sharing language, IT & digital skills, respective pedagogical approaches, critical ability cultural heritages.

- Evident in class PPT presentations, & how linkages were made between Ireland & home countries.
- Should course be run in 2008-09?
Response = 100%.

Contrasting Case Studies

- (A) Connecting critical thinking e.g., Environment, SD & food; MENA/Islam & Ireland / EU; Internationalization.
- (B) Skills: Integration of IT & digital T&L competencies using geographical material & themes central to ‘everyday lives’ of real places & people in a globalising world.
- (C) = A + B => Competencies central to employability based on necessary flexibility of workforce in a globalizing world, recognized by employers & policy makers, but embedded throughout the educational system.

So what?

Geography is:

- Constant in real terms; literally people don't try walking on water, they accept the logic of geographic literacy; however some Neoliberal fundamentalists may try building universities on shifting sands or swamps, if 'the price is right' at the time.
- There, in formal education despite Post Modernist & Neoliberal Revolutions.
- Meeting the needs of social, cultural & political-economy demands e.g., proof: Irish economy & positive Government Policy.