

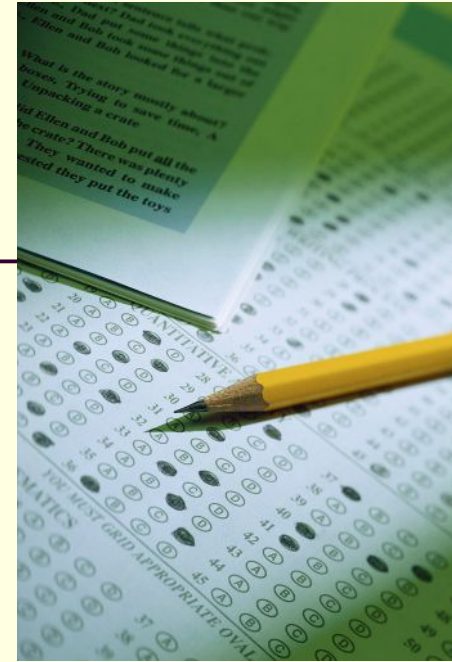


Innovation in the Assessment of Geography Education

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Introduction

- Decrease in candidate numbers taking geography GCSE (16) and AS/A Level (17/18)
- Debate over 14-19 curriculum Reform – Tomlinson Report (2004)
- What opportunities and/or threats face geography post 14?
- Pilot GCSE – an innovative way forward.



Context

- New Labour government since 1997 – maintenance of some ‘right of centre’ policies
- Partial dismantling of existing state comprehensive schools – Academies, Special, Beacon, Training, ‘Pathfinder’ schools
- Numeracy and Literacy Strategies, ICT, ‘teaching and learning’, AfL.



The examination system

- National subject criteria
- Reduction in numbers of syllabuses
- More uniform content, approach and methods of assessment – ‘narrowing’ of curriculum/ syllabus development
- Greater accountability of schools – assessment performance data used in ‘league tables’



- Geography regarded as outdated and not able to respond to the need for change (see Bell 2004, rejoinder by Lambert 2004)
- Since the mid 1990s numbers opting for geography GCSE have dropped by one third, and for A level by one fifth.



Pilot GCSE in geography

- QCA Geography and History Development Project



- OCR awarded contract to develop pilot specification + support from GA ('GeoVisions' working party), to 2009
- Sept 2003 = 18 'partner schools'
- Sept 2004 = 48 'partner schools'
- Sept 2006 = 80 'partner schools'

Specification for the pilot GCSE

- 5 key concepts:
 1. Uneven development
 2. Globalisation
 3. Sustainability
 4. Futures
 5. Interdependence
- 'Core', with 9 'optional' units. Candidates assessed on the core and 2 options.



Core and options

Core:

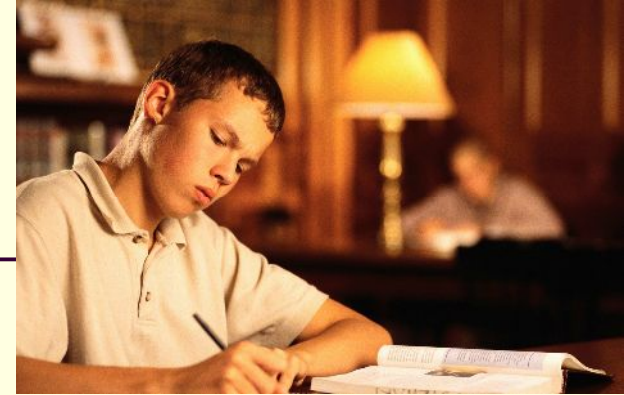
- My place
- An extreme environment
- People as consumers

Options:

- Coastal management
- GIS
- Geography in the news
- Travel and Tourism destinations
- Planning where we live
- Urban transport and sustainability
- Geography through fieldwork
- Living with floods
- Introducing cultural geography (+ teacher devised options)



Innovations



- Content
- View of the learner
- Student-centred
- Futures oriented
- Drawing on developments in academic geography
- Citizenship link (local to global)
- Vocational link (certain optional units)

Teacher support

- OCR
- Dedicated section of GA website
- VLE
- Traditional and virtual conferences
- Quarterly/termly, e-newsletter - 'The Pilot'
- Research into curriculum development to support pilot schools
- Evidence of use of websites by non pilot schools



Assessment

- Written exam of 1.5 hours (33%)
 - Internal assessment/core (17%)
 - Internal assessment/options (50%)
-
- Written exam – ‘Foundation’ or ‘Higher’ tier, based on common pre-released booklet
 - Features thematic and synoptic assessment
 - Internal assessments are marked by the teacher, with a sample moderated by an external assessor.
 - TA used (part based on candidate participation, oral presentations, formative assessments, groupwork)



Conclusions

- 'dated and uninspiring' geography GCSEs
- but, an innovative and inspiring Pilot GCSE
- There are now 'considerable hopes that this examination might form something of a template for future assessment in geography at the end of compulsory schooling' (Butt et al 2006, p.145)
- More relevant, interesting and motivational
- Fosters dynamic curriculum development