

Preface

I am very pleased to have been asked by Rod Gerber to provide a preface to such a book. Not least because of the twenty-four chapters, eight are written by former students or colleagues with whom I have worked in the past and whom I still meet at conferences on geographical education. It is with a certain pride and joy that I note the progress which has been made in geographical education both in its day to day teaching and in research, in the twenty years following the end of my term of office as Chair of the Commission on Geographical Education of the International Geographical Union (CGEIUG). My successors, Joe Stoltman, Hartwig Haubrich, Rod Gerber and now Lea Houtsonen, have done much and are continuing to work hard, to foster the development of geographical education. This book is proof, if proof were needed, that the international collaboration in this field, is alive and well, with contributions coming from all the continents (except Antarctica!).

It would be a moribund subject that remained unaffected in one way or another by developments on the 'great world stage', as Fairgrieve (1926) would have put it. And, as Rod Gerber shows, the issues of globalisation, of cultural encounters, of differing value systems, of new technologies, of variable economic development and of environmental quality, all feature as topics which influence and are influenced by, geographical education. Neither are these issues separate from one another, as Manuela Ferreira indicates in her Chapter on New Cultures and Old Cultures in Geographical Education, they interact. The new communications technology affects economic development which in turn impacts on national incomes; this often results in raising the disparities between the incomes of different areas; this stimulates migration from poorer to richer areas; this leads to cultural encounters which may be fruitful but sometimes stressful; this raises the issues of the kind of values which motivate people in particular areas to behave in ways which may affect the quality of the environment. Geographers with their holistic view are well placed to help learners to come to grips with these issues. It would be a bold, not to say foolhardy, person who could claim to offer ready solutions to the problems arising from these interactions. But getting people to understand the nature of these issues is a step in the right direction; it is step towards understanding that there is no simple solution to the world's woes, that any action proposed will take time to have an effect, that patience and hard work will be necessary before results can be obtained. It is on these issues that **Section 2 International Trends** focuses.

Some of the problems facing geographical educators are not, however, of a global nature but very much related to the day-to-day work of teachers. I cannot forget that for many years, my immediate concerns were not with global warming or environmental quality, but with what I should teach; with how I should teach it; with what resources I had at my disposal to help students learn what I hoped they would learn; with how I could possibly motivate certain groups whose attitude to learning was anything but

positive. And these problems were immediate and required me to take rapid action. I did not have the luxury of spending much time reflecting on the optimum solutions. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the adoption of new technologies in the teaching of geography. I am old enough to remember my faltering footsteps in my early attempts to use the film projector; to master the stencil and then the spirit duplicator; to get to grips with the tape recorder and then the video recorder; to devise and project overhead projector transparencies; and last, but not least, to get to understand how to use the computer both for the obtaining of resources, reproducing them and perhaps getting the students to use it for their own learning. New communications technologies which are addressed in Lea Houtsonen's chapter, have the effect, for mature teachers, of making them feel inadequate even deskilled, until they have learnt to master the new media. The time available for acquiring new skills and understandings is often limited, yet time must be found if teachers are not to be left behind. The rewards are worth the effort.

Thus, it is salutary that **Section 3 Re-focussing Learning and Teaching**, **Section 4 Improving Curriculum Planning and Development** and **Section 5 Innovation and Change in Geographical Education**, address some of the problems faced by teachers in their daily work. They do so by examining carefully and thoughtfully some ongoing issues such as the nature of experience in the learning process (Margaret Robertson), the ways in which effective curriculum planning and development can take place (David Lambert), the integration of new media into geographical learning and the ways in which standards of achievement may be maintained or raised through the use of appropriate evaluation techniques (Philip Stimpson). Indeed, as Michael Williams shows in his review of research in geographical education, much of the individual research undertaken focuses on the immediate problems of teaching and learning geography. Yet such research need not be shallow. It requires deep thought as well as empirical investigations.

Indeed much of what can now be achieved in the learning of geography is the result of past research. **Section 6** indicates how this research in geographical education may be carried out, not just by special research projects but by teachers themselves in the course of their teaching activities (Graham Butt). It is interesting to note that, though in some cultures there is a tendency to disparage the nature of educational research, Frances Slater in her chapter demonstrates that in spite of this denigration, teachers are, in practice, influenced by educational research in their day-to-day teaching. There is a subtle way in which all of us as teachers absorb some of the findings of research in our understanding for example, of what concepts are meaningful to a 13 year-old, or of what skills s/he is capable of mastering.

Such a review of geographical education would be incomplete without an attempt at glancing into the future. **Section 7** does this in a selective fashion by indicating that geographical education should not stop when formal education ends, but should be lifelong (Cantell and Rikkinen), self-directed (Tammy Kwan), intercultural (Allahwerdi and Rikkinen) and use the benefits of information technology (Kent). In reading some of the work of Edward Said (1993,1999) and in noting world events, one becomes ever more conscious of the vital importance of cultural tolerance. Some geography textbook writers have, in the past, been guilty of excessive nationalism, religious intolerance and

racism. Textbook writers are today, much more conscious of the need to avoid jingoistic sentiments. But, attitudes in society are not always so tolerant and teachers of geography have a duty to combat such attitudes. It is therefore pleasing to record that in many countries there is a new emphasis on education for citizenship where the concept of being a citizen is not a narrow one, but encompasses the idea that the new generation will be not only citizens of their own nation, but citizens of broader alliances of nations and citizens of the global community (Lambert and Machon, 2001).

This book reflects the views of geography educators who have toiled for many years to improve the quality of geographical education. They record their endeavours, their concerns and their present conclusions, since all knowledge is provisional. They do in the spirit of international and intercultural cooperation long fostered by the International Geographical Union. It is this spirit that I commend this book to the reader.

Norman Graves
Professor Emeritus of Geography Education
Institute of Education University of London

References

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