

Building Support for Development: Consultation

Royal
Geographical
Society
with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning

● Response from the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is the learned and professional body for geography working across schools and universities, with the public and policy makers. It is a charity, whose activities reach out to, and include, several million people each year, and which also draws on the expertise of its 15,000 Fellows and members. It promotes geographical knowledge and understanding about the world's people, places and environments and the interactions between them at the local, national and global scales.

The Society has active links with all British Higher Educational Institutions that provide geography and cognate courses, supports 28 academic research groups, publishes three leading international journals and runs Europe's largest academic conference for geographers. Each year the Society provides continuous professional development (CPD) training for 1,200+ teachers and face-to-face presentations to 25,000 pupils. It has developed a wide range of award winning online educational resources and has c.1000 actively involved school members.

Through the National Curriculum, the study of geography in English primary and secondary schools carries a statutory requirement for each pupil to study developing countries and issues up to the age of 14. Beyond this age there are significant opportunities to learn, in more depth and complexity, about development within GCSE and A Level geography courses. Each year 200,000 and 30,000 pupils, respectively, study these examination courses.

The Society has previously received DAF funding for the project Global Perspectives in Higher Education (2004-06) and has recently submitted the proposal Putting Development on the Map (November 2009). The Society is a member of the DEA. We welcome this opportunity to respond to this review.

General comments:

* We welcome DfID's focus on building support for development within future generations by engagement through the formal education system and creating opportunities for young people to get involved. We believe this is the right approach and we would further add that young people should be able to undertake such involvement on the basis of **sound understanding and accurate and up-to-date knowledge** about development and the wider world. We would urge DfID to include explicit reference to knowledge and understanding in its statements. This is to encourage informed debate and a knowledgeable and engaged audience. For example:

"As our White Paper, Building Our Common Future, stated, young people in particular need to be encouraged to think about development issues for themselves and come to their own conclusions. What children learn in school has an enduring influence and shapes their adult lives. So if we want young people to grow up caring about global poverty and supportive of government efforts to address this, we need schools to provide them with accurate knowledge and understanding of the world and the appropriate skills to be able to engage with global issues."

* An important issue underpinning successful education about development issues is the use of up-to-date academic research and understanding. We work actively to facilitate knowledge exchange at the higher education/schools interface on many geographical issues. We have extensive experience of linking the new academic geographical research (such as that produced by members of our Developing Areas Research Group) to the school classroom and believe that our experience could be shared more widely within the next stage of DfID's support for Development Awareness.

* Ensuring visibility for development issues within other educational agendas. We note DfID's desire that development issues become more embedded in wider policy agenda such as sustainable schools and community cohesion. We welcome this and again would highlight the Society's relevant experience. For example, we run the

DCSF supported programme *Who do we think we are? Week* (on behalf of four subject bodies and 35 stakeholders). This relates to DCSF's community cohesion activities and, through our work with the DEA and others, we have brought a global dimension to this project.

* DfIDs's aim of working strategically across national, regional and local structures to enhance work of schools and achieve visibility and impact for the programme itself. Once again, the Society welcomes this. A useful model for such work is the Society's DCSF supported work on the Action Plan for Geography (APG), which is run jointly with the GA. The work is national, regional and local in its scope, nesting each of these three scales effectively. This £4.8 million five year programme (2006 – 2011) has to date established a national ambassadors programme; established 30 regional CPD networks; provided CPD training to 2,000+ teachers; achieved over 650,000 'user sessions' of its online educational resources and provided presentations to c.50,000 pupils locally.

Specific comments

1. Phase out the EES programme and the DAF, replacing them with a new programme of support for global learning in England at regional / local levels, and separate programmes of support in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

We feel this integrated approach has much merit; it will bring coherence, and greater overall impact, while allowing for national, regional and local engagement tailored to specific needs. The Society notes the inconsistency of performance across the EES regions and the need for significant improvements in standards of monitoring and evaluation. The Society has a strong, and well deserved, track record of delivery and robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and believes these are essential in any programme of work. We welcome DfID's commitment to a competitive tender for this work.

The Society would be interested in submitting, in partnership with national and regional stakeholders, to the tender process. Our proven success with the APG illustrates our experience in the delivery of a programme of similar scale, with verifiable outcomes, and effectively at national, regional and local scales. We believe we can bring new perspectives that can successfully build on those of existing development education organisations.

2. Develop a global education strategy with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to promote global learning and sustainable international partnerships between schools.

There is a real need in our view for joined up thinking and action between DfID and DCSF, building on the best of existing work around sustainable schools and global learning, extending it to all schools, and making much more of the synergies between the two and of the opportunities offered by the curriculum.

The Society provides regular advice to DCSF, TDA, QCDA and OFSTED. Dr Rita Gardner, the Society's Director, has worked as a geography advisor to DCSF. We would be pleased to provide our advice and expertise to support DfID's proposed work with DCSF to promote global learning.

3. Develop relationships with the key statutory education bodies, with a view to taking concrete initiatives with them in the future, which we may fund. Focus our work in schools on the 7-14 year old age group and create more opportunities for the 14+s to get involved.

The Society strongly supports the proposed age range 7-14 but also recommends that the range is expanded to include those specific opportunities that exist across the 14-18 age range. For example, development issues are required areas of study in all geography GCSE and A Level courses. This provides an annual cohort of 230,000 pupils who (potentially) may lie outside DfID's interests in relation its proposed future support.

We also support the idea creating more opportunities for the 14+s to get involved. The Society believes young peoples' involvement should be rooted in an educational context that helps them enhance their understanding of the key issues. It should be for young people themselves to choose whether they take part in activist &/or campaigning activities and such activities should always be based in a solid understanding of the underlying issues.

Please do contact us if you have any queries or would like any further information about the Society.

Dr Rita Gardner Director
Steve Brace Head of Education
8.12.09