

# The relationship between history and geography education essay



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Whilst geography and history are two discrete subjects within the National Curriculum (1999), Martin (2002) believes that it is possible to identify areas of similarity between them from looking at the importance of history and geography statements. Moreover, she points out that there are links between history and geography through the knowledge and understanding, skills, concepts and values and attitudes and therefore it is possible to incorporate cross-curricular links when teaching the subjects. However, before these links are explored it is important to provide an overview of both subjects in their own right.

Cooper et al (2006) state that geography is fundamental to children's understanding of the world they live in. They highlight that geography allows children to study people and develop a sense of place. Furthermore, they point out that geography fosters children's appreciation of the environment and helps them to understand why sustainability is important. Similarly, Catling and Willy (2009) suggest that primary geography allows children to develop a curiosity about the world through exploring people and the environment.

In the Importance of Geography statement the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (1999) emphasise that geography allows children to question the natural and human influences within the world and the statement draws upon the importance of using enquiry skills. The importance of geography as an enquiry subject is evident in the organisation of the geography National Curriculum. The National Curriculum (1999) for geography is divided into two sections; the knowledge, skills and understanding and the breadth of study. The knowledge, skills and

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understanding children acquire fall into four aspects: geographical enquiry and skills, knowledge and understanding of places, patterns and processes and environmental change and sustainable development. The breadth of study specifies the localities through which children are taught the four aspects

The National Curriculum (1999) for history incorporates two areas, knowledge, skills and understanding and breadth of study. The knowledge, skills and understanding identify the key concepts including chronological understanding, historical interpretation and enquiry. O' Hara and O' Hara (2001) argue that history is an important subject because history is not only about what happened in the past. They state " it's about why we are who we are and about what's next" (p. 9) and therefore history contributes to children's social and cultural development. Moreover, Cooper (2006) emphasises the value of history within the curriculum. She suggests that history is an enquiry based subject that allows children to develop an understanding of the past through interpreting evidence from sources. The skill of enquiry is evident in the importance of history statement where the DfEE (1999) point out that history should encourage children to weigh up evidence to reach conclusions.

Rowley and Cooper (2009) highlight the benefits of cross-curricular teaching and integration of subjects. They argue that finding links between history and geography makes learning relevant to children and offers a stimulating way to learn across inter-connected topics. They believe that crossing subject boundaries encourages children to improve their enquiry skills and show initiative. Moreover, Barnes (2007) advocates that teachers can make <https://assignbuster.com/the-relationship-between-history-and-geography-education-essay/>

curriculum expectations meaningful for children through cross-curricular planning. He argues that when subjects are integrated children can apply the knowledge, understanding and skills they acquire in one subject to another. Similarly, the Independent Review of the Primary curriculum carried out by Rose (2009) advocates the importance of cross-curricular teaching to enhance children's learning. The review states that subjects should be reformed into areas of learning with geography and history coming under the area of historical, geographical and social understanding.

Kimber et al (1995) argue that geography and history should allow children to develop positive attitudes and values of the world they live in. Martin (2002) builds upon this arguing that both subjects encompass common attitudes and values. She believes that these attitudes and values allow children to think about their rights and responsibilities in their immediate environment and the world, whilst developing an awareness of alternative viewpoints. Moreover, she points out that through studying geography and history children develop a respect of different lifestyles and cultures both in the past and at present.

Martin (2002) states that the knowledge and understanding of history and geography can be linked because both subjects focus on people in different places, at different times. This is supported by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2000) who found that the knowledge and understanding acquired in geography can be used in history. Whilst on school experience I was able to use the topic of ancient Egypt to develop children's knowledge and understanding in both history and geography.

Although ancient Egypt is an option under the world history study in the <https://assignbuster.com/the-relationship-between-history-and-geography-education-essay/>

history National Curriculum (1999), I integrated geographical elements by looking at the River Nile. This is because the River Nile has a deeply geographical focus within a historical context. This enabled the children to consider the connections between rivers, farming and industry whilst looking at the significance of the River Nile in providing food and trade for Egyptians. On this occasion the geographical understanding about rivers helped children to understand Egyptian history.

Hoodless (2009) argues that there is a similarity between the skills children are expected to acquire in history and geography. This is further emphasised by Catling (2006) who points out that both subjects incorporate enquiry skills where children have the opportunity to ask questions, observe, record information and interpret evidence. These enquiry skills are reflected in the National Curriculum (1999) for history (historical enquiry 4. a, 4. b) and for geography (geographical enquiry and skills 1. a-1. e).

Fraser and Donert (1996) and Hoodless (2009) argue that one way enquiry skills can be developed in the subjects is through examining a local area from a historical and geographical perspective. Moreover, Foley and Kanikoun (1996) suggest that a starting point for a local area enquiry study is to introduce key questions that children will find out the answer to. These enquiry questions include “ what is the place like?” (p. 11) which demonstrates a geographical focus for the enquiry and “ what was the place like in the past?” (p. 11) which emphasises the historical focus for the enquiry. Catling (2006) argues that in order for children to improve their knowledge of what a local area is currently like and what it was like in the past, they should collect evidence through field work, photographs and <https://assignbuster.com/the-relationship-between-history-and-geography-education-essay/>

maps. He highlights that through an enquiry children will have ideas about why an area develops and “ how it has come to be like it is” (p. 14). Although I have not had the opportunity to use a local area enquiry study in school, the humanities local area enquiry project gave me an in-depth understanding of how to plan a unit of work where children can see how the past has impacted on a present locality. Through exploring a range of primary and secondary sources and carrying out field work within my own enquiry I looked at the area from a geographical and historical perspective.

Turner-Bisset (2005) suggests that a good way to engage in a local area study is by using historical maps. This idea is evident in a sample cross-curricular history and geography local area unit by Hoodless (2009). He suggests historical maps can be used to find out what the area was like at a particular time in the past. This lesson incorporates the geographical skill of interpreting maps (geographical enquiry and skills 2. c) as well as the historical skill of interpreting sources (historical interpretation 3 and historical enquiry 4. b) and therefore the link between skills in both subjects is evident.

However, maps do not only provide a link between historical and geographical skills, Disney and Hammond (2002) argue that maps can highlight links between the concepts in both subjects. When considering the change of a local area they suggest that teachers should use new and historical maps which illustrate similarities and differences in a local area.

For example they explain that a map which shows an area before the introduction of the railway and a map that shows the area after the

introduction of the railway supports children’s development of the concept of  
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change. They argue that this is because children can see for themselves the significant changes that have occurred in the area. On school experience I was able to develop the children's concept of change within a cross-curricular geography and history lesson. However, instead of maps I used a range of photographs of the city of London from Victorian Britain until today. This enabled the children to use their interpretation skills to decide how London has changed and how it is still changing.

Martin (2002) further highlights that history and geography can be linked through the concepts of each subject. She points out that there are overlaps through the key concepts of change, chronology and similarity and difference. It is evident in the National Curriculum (1999) that the concept of change appears in both geography and history. In the National Curriculum (1999) for geography children are required to recognise how and why places change (knowledge and understanding of places 3. e) and in history children consider changes within and across different periods studied (knowledge and understanding events, people and changes in the past 2. d). However, whilst the over arching concept of change can take different forms in the two subjects, Hoodless (2009) argues that the concept of change can also be developed in a geographical and historical perspective through exploring the changes in a local area, discussed previously.

It is important to highlight how the links between both subjects can impact on the whole school curriculum. Owen and Ryan (2001) argue that a school must produce long term plans that meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum (2000). This is further emphasised by the Nuffield

Association (2009) who highlight that long term plans allow the school to <https://assignbuster.com/the-relationship-between-history-and-geography-education-essay/>

map out the curriculum. Despite a school's long term plans, Knight (1993) states that an integrated curriculum will only be of value if it is based upon a whole school approach. He argues that a long term commitment to effective integration requires " collaboration and agreement amongst a school's staff and shared ways of working" (p. 125).

From looking at the long term planning in school it was clear to see that the cross-curricular links between history and geography were clearly planned. Although the management were wholly responsible for the plans, both the history and geography co-ordinators input was required to ensure that the links between subjects were evident and not left to happen by chance within a lesson. The whole school approach to cross-curricular learning outlined in the long term plans ensured consistency and progression in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills within history and geography. Moreover, the whole school integrated curriculum meant that the teachers did not feel pressured to teach every subject discretely thus freeing up the timetable, an issue acknowledged by Rose (2009).

There are also implications for the teacher making links between the subjects and it will be important to consider these implications in my own teaching. Knight (1993) states that cross-curricular learning in history and geography " depends on realistic integration" (p. 125) and he states that teacher must be secure in their own subject knowledge of both subjects to recognise real links. Moreover, Turner-Bisset (2000) and The Nuffield Foundation (2009) warn that cross-curricular learning is unsuccessful when links between subjects are forced or tenuous links are made. Turner-Bisset (2000) suggests that teachers should choose areas where the links are <https://assignbuster.com/the-relationship-between-history-and-geography-education-essay/>



natural and not contrived because without these genuine links it is not possible for teachers to measure children's progress of learning in either subject.

Over my three school experiences I have seen strong examples of cross-curricular geography and history teaching such as integrating the impact of the water supply into Victorian Britain. However, Rowley and Cooper (2009) argue that cross-curricular planning raises issues for teachers because the links between subjects are based solely on their perceptions, there is no guarantee the connections between subjects will be made explicit to the children, nor will the connections make sense to the children. In order for children to understand their learning across subjects, Hoodless (2009) highlights that clear objectives are needed for both subjects and these objectives should be included in short term plans.

Whilst on school experience it became apparent to me the lack of resources available to support integrated history and geography lessons. When planning a unit around Victorian London, I was required to produce my own resources. This involved visiting

the archives at the Museum of London to collect photographs of the city of London in the Victorian era, as well as taking a trip into the central London to take photographs of the city. Although these resources were a beneficial aid to support children's learning, a great deal of time was spent collecting and putting the resources together. Knight (1993) acknowledges the lack of good quality resources to enable successful integration. He argues that this puts a burden upon teachers to produce resources.