

School-University Transition: Where are we now?

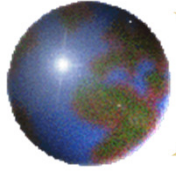
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Student transitions from school to university within GEES disciplines

Newcastle University, 25 January 2013

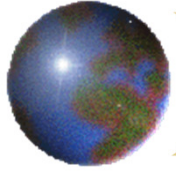


Presentation outline



1. Introducing the literature
2. Case study from geography
3. What might the future hold?
4. Questions to consider

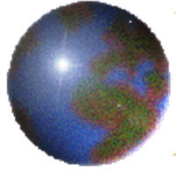




1. Introducing the literature



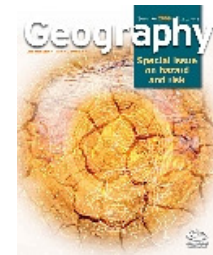
- language of a 'divide' commonplace in articles examining the nature of the discipline:
 - 'decoupled' (Rawling 1996)
 - 'dislocation' (Kent 2000)
 - 'divorce' (Stannard 2003)
- number of recent contributions:
 - nature/origins of the divide (Castree *et al.* 2007)
 - call for dialogue (Bonnett 2003; Stannard 2003)
 - bridging the divide (Bednarz *et al.* 2000; Yarwood & Davison 2007; Pykett & Smith 2009)

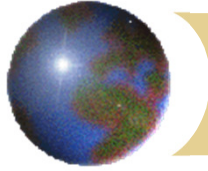


Forces creating the 'divide'

University sector:

- RAE altered balance between teaching and research (Sidaway & Johnston 2007):
 - Few research-active university academics submit articles to school-level journals
 - University geographers rarely input into pre-university curricula
- QAA assessments led to inward-looking examinations of pedagogy



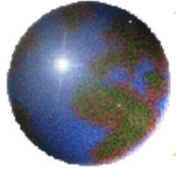


School sector:

- early Geography National Curricula resulted in KS3 geography that was centrally-controlled, content-heavy, performance-driven
- increased demands for accountability through teacher-assessment and reporting levels of attainment

Why important?

- ‘fossilisation’ of subject in schools ... can decrease university recruitment and retention (Castree 2011), and help to isolate geography from the public realm (Ward 2006)



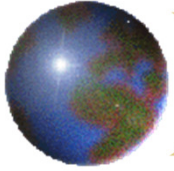
2. Case study from geography



Hill & Jones (2010)

- examined perceptions of secondary school geography teachers and university lecturers on nature of the divide
- identified their perceptions of how closer links can be forged between the two sectors
- suggested opportunities for further co-operation and collaboration

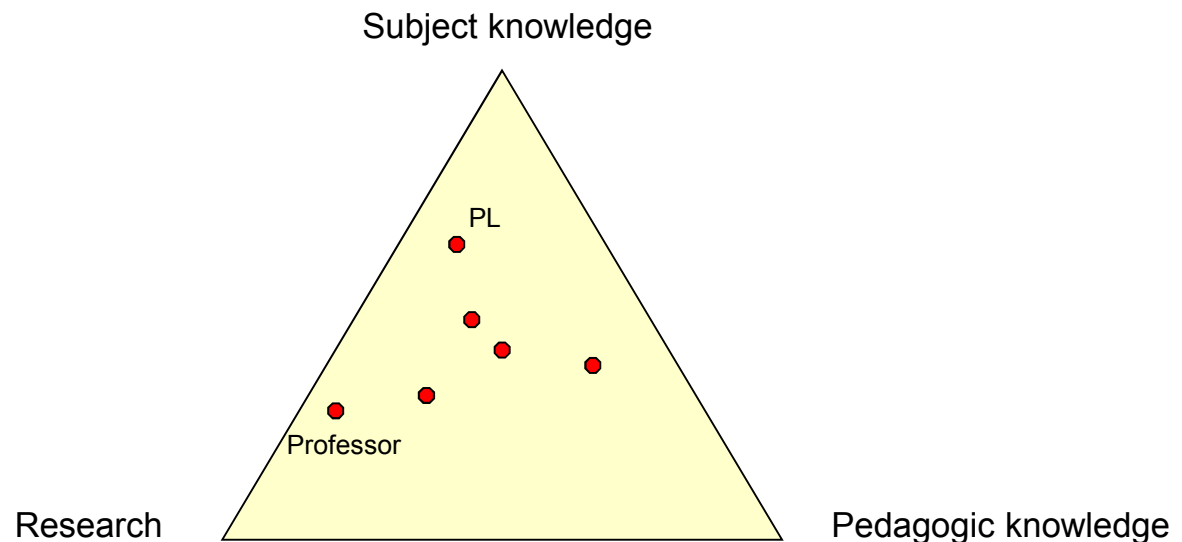


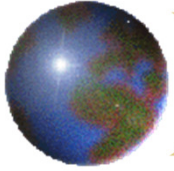


Research methods

1. Small scale primary data collection (questionnaire and focus group) undertaken with:

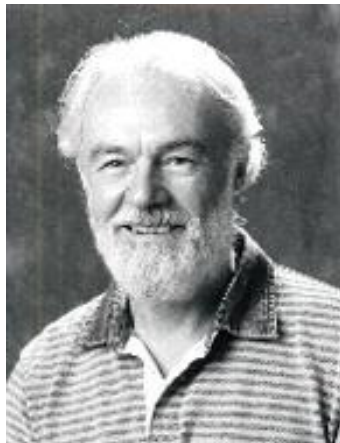
- six geography secondary school teachers from across the Bristol region
- six geography lecturers from UWE, Bristol:





Results - Perceived nature of the divide

- all lecturers and teachers perceived the existence of a divide between school-level and university-level geographies
- divisions were identified in relation to the 'who', 'what', 'how' and 'where' of geography teaching and learning



Who



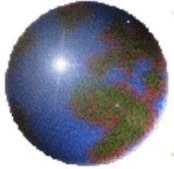
What



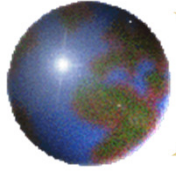
How



Where



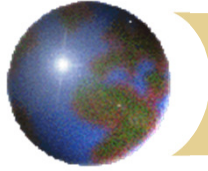
Nature of the divide	School environment	University environment
Who is teaching (teacher/lecturer identity)	Teacher as 'jack-of-all-trades'. Research re-active, with breadth of knowledge	Lecturer as expert. Research-active with depth of knowledge
What is taught (content of courses)	Dated and restricted content imposed by curricula and associated textbooks	Current and diverse content emanating from a research base
How teaching is delivered (pedagogy)	Restricted to rote learning or 'spoon-feeding'	Variety of means from cohort lectures to small group tutorials
How students learn (pedagogy)	Teacher-led (dependent/passive) learning. Amassing facts, describing. Issues-based.	Student-led (independent/active) learning. Critical and theoretical enquiry, exploration and discovery. Process-based.
How geography is presented (representation)	One view, one 'right' answer	Multiple views, partial representations, numerous answers
Where teaching and learning occurs (educational spaces)	Restricted spaces: predominantly classrooms and field sites	Varied spaces: lecture theatres, classrooms, computer and environmental laboratories, field sites



Who is teaching?

- teachers believed lecturers exercise ownership of their scholarship through research
- teachers described themselves generally as disenfranchised from discovery research

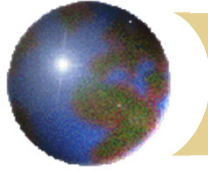
'Lecturers who have been there and done the research are then delivering lectures, rather than us relying on a 10 year old textbook that we may not be familiar with ourselves' (DJ)



What is taught?

- half the teachers believed university teaching was based on current research
- they did not think this permeated to school level:

‘University level is, from what I remember, concerned with current research topics. In school we often do not have enough time to keep up-to-date with current research issues’ (JP)



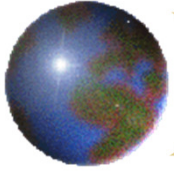
How is teaching delivered?

- different styles of teaching delivery was noted by five of the teachers and all lecturers:

'Delivery of lessons, from whole course lectures to small group tutorials, is very different from often 'spoon-fed' school-style delivery' (DJ)

How students learn?

- four lecturers perceived a relative inability of the school system to inculcate deep learning in students:
 - critical enquiry, numerical analysis, process studies

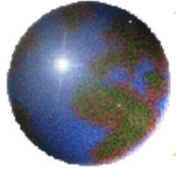


How is geography presented?

- 'how' teaching and learning takes place was related by the two sample groups to ways of looking at the world
- one lecturer noted that school textbooks and teachers:

'seem to give the answer, with little space for investigating/understanding variants. The university system [by contrast] offers questions, with no fixed answers' (DC)

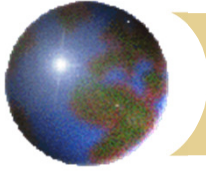




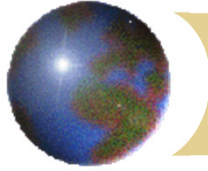
Results - Activities to connect school-university geographies

- all teachers expressed desire to experience closer links with university geography departments
- half the academics expressed a clear desire to forge further links with school geography departments
- remaining half of academics indicated they would be willing to build stronger links dependent upon:
 - time (constraints of workload models and curricula)
 - reward (build into promotion process)
 - budget (for schools to visit universities)



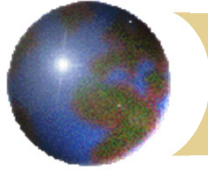


Current Activities undertaken	Future Activities that could be undertaken
<p><i>School teachers</i></p> <p>Attend GA branch lectures</p> <p>Attend A-level student conferences</p> <p>Attend school teacher conferences</p> <p>Attend widening participation activity days at university</p> <p>Use departmental newsletters in lessons</p> <p><i>University lecturers</i></p> <p>Sit on the local GA committee</p> <p>Deliver GA branch/conference lectures</p> <p>Provide A-level student conferences (at university or in schools)</p> <p>Provide widening participation activity days at university</p> <p>Emphasize the real world relevance of the subject</p> <p>Contribute to journals read by school students and teachers (e.g. <i>Geography Review</i>, <i>Geography</i>, <i>Teaching Geography</i>)</p>	<p><i>School teachers</i></p> <p>Organise university taster days (for years 9/10 and AS/A2 levels)</p> <p>Establish joint fieldwork opportunities</p> <p>Establish school curriculum link driven by the university</p> <p>Assign university student ambassadors (who visit schools or aid school fieldtrips)</p> <p>Assign university staff ambassadors (who visit schools to teach a particular aspect of geography)</p> <p>Use teaching resources provided by university academics (hard copy or via the web)</p> <p>Establish a buddy/mentor system between school and university students</p> <p><i>University lecturers</i></p> <p>Increase regular contact with local schools (by pro-active roadshows or <i>in situ</i> activities)</p> <p>Establish a curriculum link driven by the university</p> <p>Review provision of school resources on the departmental web site and utilise topical web sites for marketing (including social networking sites)</p> <p>Offer CPD activities for teachers</p> <p>Offer outreach activities to students pre A-level</p> <p>Lead field projects in areas local to schools</p>

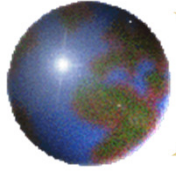


Discussion

- lack of academic research permeating school curricula is noted in the literature, particularly with respect to advances in human geography (Morgan 2008)
- recent revisions of A-level specifications and national curricula re-ignited debates about school-university transition
- can we break the control of Awarding Bodies and their set texts – offering singular perspectives?
- university academics seem reticent to get involved in re-working school curricula (*THE* articles)

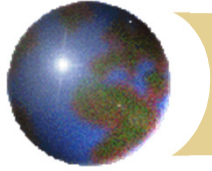


- gap noted between intellectual skills base developed in schools and what is required at university
- resonates with Keylock's (2006) work in physical geography
- principles for improving school-university transition:
 - demystify the university experience for prospective students through knowledge exchange
 - maintain continuity of taught themes from schools into HE by transferring research from universities to schools
 - highlight the relevance of the discipline through its focus on pertinent global issues and its development of skills



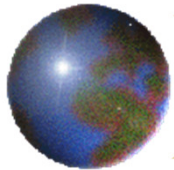
3. What might the future hold?

- **some** teachers and academics welcome initiatives to strengthen links between school and university geographies
- enthusiasm moderated by constraints of time, financial resources, appropriate recognition
- evolving financial and policy envs. might prompt greater interaction between school and university geographies:
 - UKRC research impact
 - heightened competition for students
 - employability agenda



- RCUK (June 2012) announced initiative worth £1.5million over three years to create and build partnerships between universities and secondary schools
- Hill *et al.* (forthcoming) note universities need to be pro-active in communicating how their courses develop knowledge, skills and competencies derived from school education
- latter includes digital learning – NUS Charter on Technology in HE
- graduate attributes & self-authorship

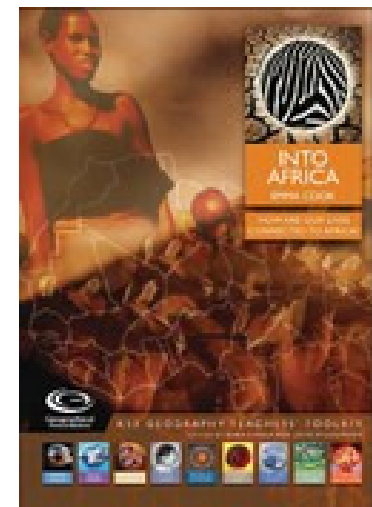
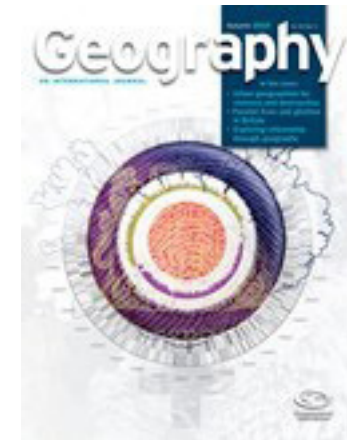


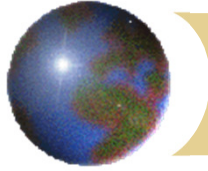


Enhancing transition ... discuss ...



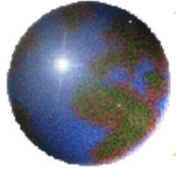
Action Plan
for Geography





4. Questions to consider

1. What mode(s) of collaboration should be adopted to ensure successful school-university transition?
 - local v regional v national?
 - hybrid curricula or extra-curricular exchange?
2. Who should be included in such partnerships and how do we ensure equitable power relations / reciprocal dialogue?
 - liminal borderland space?
3. Which transition issues should we prioritise?
4. How can we share best practice?
 - new modes of communication / new audiences?
5. What are our training needs to address transition issues?
 - do we have the skills for 'boundary crossing'?



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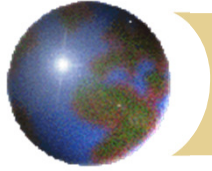
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