

Section 3 Teaching Geography

Know your subject: What is Geography?

Geography is the study of both human and physical environments and their spatial patterns. It is an integrated discipline that examines both physical and human, social processes over space and time. There are many branches of Geography. Physical Geography examines natural processes and features including the atmosphere, geomorphology, landforms, and ecosystems. Human Geography is concerned with the organisation of society over space and people's relationship with space. It also considers the activities and impacts of people on the Earth. The concept that unifies Geography is space. All geographical phenomena have a spatial dimension. Geographical concepts also operate in a continuously changing environment and they reflect the fluidity and dynamic nature of life on earth.

Aims of Geography

- Explaining and interpreting both physical and human geographical processes
- Describing and explaining the dynamic inter-relationship between the physical and human worlds
- Understanding the relationship between society, space and the environment
- Developing knowledge about where places are and the nature of a range of different places, at different scales
- Practising essential transferable skills – literacy, numeracy, oracy, graphicacy, mapwork
- Promoting the use of new technologies, such as Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Geographical Information Systems (GIS)
- Developing a commitment towards sustainable development
- Creating awareness of and sensitivity towards inequality in the world
- Fostering empathy, tolerance, and fairness
- To inform decisions and judgments about social and environmental issues.

Geography's four Big Ideas

Any topic in Geography can be explored by applying a conceptual framework that embraces Geography's four

Big Ideas.

- 1 Place
- 2 Spatial processes and society
- 3 Spatial distribution patterns
- 4 Human and environment interaction

These 'Big Ideas' are organising concepts that are central to geographical knowledge. Some topics in the curriculum focus on one of the Big Ideas. Other topics require several or all of the Big Ideas to be part of the enquiry. Including one or more of the Big Ideas in every enquiry ensures that the focus is essentially geographical.

Asking Geographical questions

The introduction to the Learner's Book (page 00) lists key questions which geographers can ask of all geographical phenomena and processes. These questions can be applied within each of the Big Ideas within Geography.

Geographical skills

The Geography curriculum aims to develop the following subject-specific skills:

- Using verbal, quantitative and symbolic data forms such as text, pictures, graphs tables, diagrams and maps;
- Practising field observation and mapping, interviewing people, interpreting sources, working with statistics;
- Applying communication, thinking, practical and social skills;
- Practising the following specific skills: identifying questions and issues collecting and structuring information processing, interpreting, and evaluating data making decisions and judgements deciding on a point of view suggesting solutions to problems working co-operatively and independently. Geographical education contributes also to the development of personal and social competence.

Attitudes and values

The Geography curriculum aims to foster the following values and attitudes in learners:

- A concern for the sustainable and fair use of resources for the benefit of all
- Recognising the significance of informed decision making
- The application of geographical knowledge and skills in learner' personal lives
- Respect for the rights of all people
- A sense of fairness, sustainability, and equality.

Teaching Geography effectively and planning lessons

Inclusivity and diversity

Inclusivity (inclusion) means including differentiated teaching and learning styles in the classroom to cater for learners varying needs (diversity). In planning Geography lessons, there are three issues that raise particular concern for inclusivity, for a variety of reasons. They are: language, controversy, assistive devices and fieldwork.

Language

Learners may be disadvantaged by the medium in which they are learning Geography. To counter this problem, learners should be given every opportunity to express their understanding of concepts and terms in discussions, through orals or one-on-one communication with the teacher. Translating geographical concepts and terms into the learners' home language is encouraged.

Controversial and sensitive issues

Controversial and sensitive issues, such as the origins of the Earth and its people, access to land, refugees in South Africa, environmental injustices, HIV/Aids and so on, are dealt with in the Geography class. Issues are introduced because they are likely to be relevant to learners and may add value and interest. Concepts and understanding are frequently illustrated through issues, which may be presented as case studies. However, while controversial issues are to be encouraged in the teaching and learning of Geography, they must be dealt with in a sensitive manner in which the rights of learners and those of their parents or guardians are respected. Many controversial issues can be dealt with by following an enquiry process in which bias, stereotyping and transparency are foregrounded in the search for multiple truths. They provide excellent opportunities for learners to explore their own values, to clarify these in relation to their peers and to reason logically despite an emotional response, which frequently goes hand in hand with the study of relevant issues.

Assistive devices

Geography introduces learners to a wide variety of visual sources such as topographical maps, aerial photos, orthophoto maps, pictures, photographs, videos, graphics and texts. These sources of information pose immense difficulties for the visually impaired. Learners who are hearing impaired may face difficulties when conducting interviews or in acquiring information through audio media. Learners who are wheelchair-bound will have difficulty undertaking certain fieldwork activities. Teachers need to be aware of these barriers and be creative in finding ways to include these learners in every possible way. Alternative methods of achieving the same intended outcomes should be considered where possible.

Fieldwork activities

Fieldwork activities are encouraged in Geography because they help learners to see the world around them and they cause learners to initiate enquiry. Learners can benefit a great deal from exploring the concepts they are learning in their own local environment. There are many opportunities for conducting fieldwork in the area surrounding the school or where learners live. While it is not envisaged that learners should travel any great distance from their schools, it is recognised that some meaningful learning activities could involve some cost, such as visiting the Sterkfontein or Cango Caves, Nature Conservation areas, and so on. These activities should never become prohibitive for learners because of the cost factor. Again through creative planning of the teacher, ways can be explored to make participation in these fieldwork activities a possibility for all learners. The use of rock samples, maps, models, media articles and case studies can bring the 'field' into the geography classroom. A Stevenson Screen can be set up on the school grounds to bring climate and weather to life and newspapers and the internet provide rich sources of data on a wide range of topics covered in Grade 10.

Inclusive teaching

Inclusive education refers to a classroom environment that promotes the full personal and academic development of all learners regardless of race, class, gender, disability, religion, sexual preference, learning styles and language.

Practical guidelines

- Use information regarding learners' background, strengths, special abilities, needs and barriers to inform lesson planning and it give a clearer focus.

IN SEARCH OF GEOGRAPHY

Teach learners about diversity and the unique value of each individual.

- Keep the content and material as relevant as possible.
- Break learning down into manageable and logical steps. Keep instructions clear and short. Plan your lessons carefully beforehand.
- Grade activities according to the different levels and abilities of learners. Try to ensure that learners remain challenged without creating stress.
- Set up pairs and groups of learners where members can have different tasks according to their strengths and abilities. Promote self-discipline skills and responsibility through the group roles and the types of tasks you set. This can be achieved by giving learners clear guidance on their specific group roles and through ensuring that the activities are set at the correct level. Encourage learners to help one another to ensure that all learners feel included and supported in the classroom.
- Motivate learners by praising their efforts and individual progress.
- Encourage questioning, reasoning, experimentation with ideas and risking opinions.
- Spend time on consolidating new learning by giving learners opportunities to demonstrate a combination of skills learnt in a meaningful way. Make time to go back to tasks so that learners can learn from their own and others' experiences.

Learners with barriers to learning

A barrier to learning is anything that prevents a learner from participating fully and learning effectively. This includes learners who were formerly disadvantaged and excluded from education because of the historical, political, cultural and health challenges facing South Africans. Some other examples of barriers to learning may be learners who are visually or hearing impaired; learners who are left handed or learners who are intellectually challenged. Barriers to learning cover a wide range of possibilities and learners may often experience more than one barrier. Some barriers, therefore, require more than one adaptation in the classroom and varying types and levels of support.

These learners may require and should be granted more time for:

- completing tasks
- acquiring thinking skills (own strategies)
- Assessment activities.

Teachers need to adapt the number of activities to be completed without interfering with the learners gaining the required language skills.

Some specific ways of assisting learners with barriers to learning:

Visually-impaired learners:

Visually-impaired learners can be placed at the front of the classroom to be able to focus on the teacher and on the board when necessary. All material can be provided to the learner in a larger font to enable them to be able to see the words clearly. Fonts used in the classroom should be simple, clear fonts to promote readability. Visual images can help to facilitate understanding. Braille may be necessary for learners with severe visual impairment. Teachers and fellow students should be prepared to spend extra time helping visually-impaired learners where needed. Visually impaired learners should be seated next to a helpful classmate.

Hearing-impaired learners:

Hearing-impaired learners should be placed at the front of the classroom to be able to hear the teacher's voice as

IN SEARCH OF GEOGRAPHY

clearly as possible. Written instructions should be given as often as possible to hearing impaired learners. Written instructions will be the clearest and most direct tool for teaching hearing impaired learners. A hearing impaired learner will learn most effectively through visual aids. These should be incorporated in every lesson to effectively engage hearing impaired learners. Teachers and fellow students should be prepared to spend extra time helping hearing impaired learners where it is needed. Hearing impaired learners should be seated next to a helpful classmate. Intellectually challenged learners: Intellectually challenged learners require close personal attention. Teachers and fellow students should be prepared to spend extra time helping intellectually challenged learners where it is needed, Intellectually challenged learners should be allowed extra time in order complete activities and assessment. Intellectually challenged learners should be seated next to a helpful classmate.

Diversity

Diversity can prove to be a challenge to learning if a teacher is not able to meet the needs of the variety of students in the class, including students of different genders, races, ages, ability levels and socio-economic backgrounds. The In Search of Geography Grade 11 Teacher's Guide embodies the CAPS principle of diversity. A diverse range of material is presented, in order to represent and cater for the heterogeneous South African society.

Integration

Each component in this series (Learner's Book, Teacher's Guide) does not work in isolation from the others, but rather they complement and build upon one another. Likewise, they are not independent from other subjects. The Teacher's Guide has been developed to foster integration across the content subjects. This integration is effective in eliminating contradictions or redundancy across subjects, in order to provide learners with effective and cohesive language teaching support materials.

Tools for classroom management

Large classes are a reality that many teachers face in South Africa. The challenges of large classes include:

- maintaining good discipline
- varying abilities and learning speeds of learners
- giving enough individual attention to learners
- lack of or shared resources.

Throughout the In Search of Geography Grade 11 course, guidance is given on how to manage the class. This guidance can be found in this Guide, in the sections called "Teaching guidelines" and "Guidelines for implementing the activities". Group work is one of the strategies that can be used effectively in large classes.

Learners help and learn from each other while you monitor groups, constantly giving encouragement, assessing needs and giving individual attention where necessary.

Group work strategies that can be used include:

- Mixed-ability groups where more able learners assist less able learners. During a shared reading activity you can pair stronger learners with learners who are struggling with word attack skills. The weaker learner will model the approach of the stronger reader who will help them sound the more difficult words out.
- Same-ability groups where some groups continue working by themselves while you spend more time with less able learners.
- Appointing group leaders who are able to help the less able learners.

OXFORD

IN SEARCH OF GEOGRAPHY

These group work strategies can be varied for different activities and circumstances. For example, if you have diagnosed a particular concept or skill that needs revisiting, you can give a more able group an extension activity and spend more time with groups that need support. Good discipline should be based on a Code of Conduct that is clear to learners and the teacher. The Code should explain that learners need to work quietly, are allowed to speak, albeit quietly, and what they may do when they have finished their work. Group leaders can assist in supporting good discipline, as well as collecting or handing out work. Some of the advantages of large classes are the variety of experiences and ideas that can be utilised in group projects and other activities, and developing teamwork and leadership skills.