



Geographical approaches to cultural understanding and diversity at KS3

“UK society is made up of many ethnicities, cultures, languages and religions, and it is constantly evolving. The UK has a rich heritage of cultural and ethnic diversity, stretching back over many centuries. However, so many of the people we talked to discussed the complexity of the world we live in and the many identities that children inhabit. There is a moral imperative to address issues of disparity and commonality and how we live together. It is crucial that all children and young people, through both the formal and informal curricula in schools, have a real understanding.”

[Diversity and Citizenship Review, DCSF Publication 2007]

As Geographers, we are in a key position to support the whole school delivery of a curriculum that has an increased focus on issues of identity and diversity and active community involvement. As the same report states:

*“Schools do not exist in a vacuum; teachers **must** be able to help pupils make sense of the world around them.”*

“What Geography can offer pupils is taking those experiences of the here and now and placing them in the context of where they live, what their communities are like, what their links are locally, and what their links are globally. It enhances their sense of identity in the here and now. Geography offers an amazing combination of being able to study your local area, relate it to your local experience and life knowledge and compare it with other areas and experiences, ideal for ‘schools linking up and sharing experiences’. This is where fieldwork becomes vitally important.”

[Dr Rita Gardiner, Royal Geographical Society]

Further reading on the background to this topic can be found in the **GTIP Think Piece - Teaching about Diversity**. In this article, **John Morgan**, Reader in Education at the University of London Institute of Education explores issues surrounding the teaching of diversity in geography. He argues that teacher educators need to promote awareness of the issues and encourage a thoughtful and reflective approach.

Link: <http://www.geography.org.uk/projects/gtip/thinkpieces/diversity/>

The new secondary curriculum offers geography teachers, for the first time for many years, a degree of flexibility in both content and approach. The Diversity and Citizenship Review recommended that *“All schools should be encouraged to audit their curriculum to establish what they currently teach that is meaningful for all pupils in relation to diversity and multiple identities.”* And this may well be a good place to start thinking about this theme as the new KS3 curriculum is rolled out over the period 2008-2011.



Who do we think we are?

Exploring citizenship from a geographical perspective

Born: 29/08/1988 Carshalton, **England**
Parents came to Britain from **Ghana**

Michael Bingham

Born: 13/04/1986 North Carolina, **USA**
British father and **American** mother

Studying the wide range of countries which participate in the Olympic competition could provide a good starting point for linking into the **Fundamental Principles of Olympism** which include “*The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.*” and “*Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.*”

Link: http://www.olympic.org/uk/games/index_uk.asp

Teachers looking to further develop this theme could link the resources in the Olympics 2012 teaching module with some work on the **Commonwealth Games** which have a particular relevance to many pupils in this country. The fact that the competition was known as The British Empire Games until 1950 and The British Empire and Commonwealth games until 1966 provides a background and context for looking at the countries which make up this important organisation.

Link: <http://www.thecgf.com/>



New India

The physical and human processes that are transforming India and its role in the world.



Africa: a continent of contrasts

Exploring Africa and its future.



China Today

Exploring the social, economic, environmental and political interdependence between China and the rest of the world.

These three teaching modules which have a **place** focus provide many different opportunities to incorporate the concept of **cultural understanding and diversity**.

The **China Today** module starts by asking the key questions “*Who lives there?*” and “*What is life like in China?*” in order to stimulate thought and discussion about China, challenge students’ already-held perceptions of China as well as building some initial background knowledge and understanding. If pupils are to understand the idea that “*The world is changing China and China is changing the world.*” Then it is vitally important that they develop some real understanding of the cultural differences between the UK and China as well as the commonalities that bind us increasingly together.

The **Africa: a continent of contrasts** module does provide some opportunity to deal with the all too frequent pupils' perception of 'Africa' as a pseudo-country but it concentrates mainly on the key idea that development as a concept covers a very wide range of situations and circumstances, and that the development process links inexorably to cultural differences and relationships at the local, national and international scales.

The **New India** module, like the other two modules, uses the idea of dealing with pupil perceptions as a starting point and it asks the questions "*What do we already know about India?*", "*How do we view India in the UK?*" and "*What are our connections in the UK with India?*". The unit goes on to focus on **diversity** in relation to the geography of India itself and emphasises the importance of understanding cultural diversity within countries outside the UK.



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Paradise lost

Tourism in contemporary Thailand.

The final teaching module that is highlighted is the Thailand tourism module. As with any work on tourism outside the UK, there are ample opportunities to focus part of the work on the concept of **cultural understanding and diversity**. The unit begins by looking at what attracts people from the UK to a tourist destination such as Thailand and one of the key reasons why Thailand is a popular and growing tourist destination has to be because of the **diversity** of both its physical and human characteristics. This is true of the country as a whole but is also true of the capital Bangkok which is a **diverse** place varying from very traditional to ultra modern.



Photo credit: **Alaskan dude** (CC Licence)

Another important aspect of this work is to look at the impact of different cultures on each other as they interact both within and between countries. As far as tourism is concerned, there is a growing awareness that there can be negative social impacts on **local cultures** brought by tourists but there are now more opportunities to be ethical, sustainable or responsible when travelling which means that tourists that can actually benefit even very poor communities directly. Examining this complex relationship via tourism can prove to be a very beneficial process in terms of getting pupils to develop a deeper understanding of the importance of respecting **cultural differences** and the impact that our everyday actions can have on other groups of people.



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