

# THE HONG KONG GEOGRAPHER

# 香港地理人

## Editors' Note

Since the publication of Issue 2 of Volume 20 last July, our Association has made remarkable progress in furthering the professional development of members and geography teachers. The present issue reports the major activities during this period, including the organisation of courses, seminars and conferences, fieldtrips and visits, an interview with a senior and highly respected recently retired academic (Dr. Philip Stimpson), and a seminar about the way forward for geographical education as we gear up for the implementation of the New Senior Secondary curriculum for the subject. It is hoped that you and all other members of the geography community, through the coming issues of the Hong Kong Geographer, can raise your concerns and contribute ideas to how the aims of this curriculum and assessment change can be implemented effectively. Your suggestions on the content and focus of the Hong Kong Geographer and contribution of articles to this publication are most welcome. May we make use of this opportunity to invite you to join our Association so that you can benefit in your professional development as well. Anyway, let's keep in contact via e-mail at [enquiry@hkga.org](mailto:enquiry@hkga.org).

With best wishes for a refreshing Easter vacation, and looking forward to your suggestions and participation,

Yours sincerely,  
H.T. Lai, H.Y., Lee, P.K. Yeung & P.M. Yeung  
Secondary Education Committee

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April 2007 • VOL 21 • ISSUE 1

香港地理學會

HONG KONG GEOGRAPHICAL ASSOCIATION





## Association News

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Our Association did have another period of active development and service for members and other professionals in the field of geography since the publication of the last issue in July 2006. The following is an outline of past, current and forthcoming activities. Please refer to our website [www.hkga.org](http://www.hkga.org) for details and for upcoming functions.

### **Beginning Teachers' Orientation Programme (August 2006)**

This annual event was held by the Hong Kong Teachers' Centre in conjunction with the Education and Manpower Bureau and a number of educational organisations. Three talks were given by members of the Secondary Education Committee to participants on Secondary and Advanced Level geography curricula, students' learning and assessment in the subject.

### **HKGA-HKIEd Secondary School Project Learning Competition (2006-07)**

Our Association and the Hong Kong Institute of Education are organising a project learning competition for Geography and Liberal Studies this academic year. The aims of this competition are three-fold:

1. develop students' ability to construct knowledge with the use of generic learning skills.
2. encourage students to become intrinsically motivated and promote their ability to investigate and solve problems of an academic or practical nature; and
3. promote cooperative learning amongst students and help them broaden and deepen their knowledge of geographical or Liberal Studies - related issues.

Announced to schools in mid-November 2006, the competition encourages students to conduct in-depth enquiry into geographical or Liberal Studies issues which they have learnt in their lessons and which are related to their everyday life. It is open to students in Form 1 to Form 4. Forty groups of students from 19 schools are now taking part after the application deadline in early January 2007. They have to submit project reports of not more than 30 pages together with all related information materials and a soft copy on or before 31st May. Details about this competition can be found by referring to our website and by contacting Dr. Irene N.Y. Cheng and Dr. P.M. Yeung, Hon. Secretary and Vice-chairman of the association. Dr. Chan Ka-ki of the Education and Manpower Bureau, Dr. Becky Loo of the School of Geography, HKU & Chair of HKGA, Professor John Lee Chi-kin of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Professor Gregory Thomas of the HK Institute of Education and Mr. Anthony Yeung Kam Chuen of Caritas Chan Chun Ha Field Studies Centre have agreed to serve as adjudicators. Entries will be judged according to the following criteria -- creativity and content (35%), enquiry method (35%), presentation (20%), originality (10%). Results will be announced in September. The prize-giving ceremony for the winning teams is scheduled on the Hong Kong Geography Day in mid-November this year.

### **Interview with Dr. Philip Stimpson**

As you may have known, Dr. Stimpson has retired from The University of Hong Kong after more than 24 years of working as a teacher educator and researcher in its Faculty of



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Education. An interview with him was held by the Secondary Education Committee before he took his retirement leave in February. A report of this interview is printed on pages 5 to 7 for your reference.

### **Seminar "Geography at the Crossroads"**

This seminar was held on 20th January at the Hong Kong Teachers' Centre in view of the need amongst geography teachers to prepare themselves for the challenges and new experience brought along by the Education Reform over the years and the implementation of the New Senior Senior Curriculum. Dr. Philip Stimpson of HKU was invited to share his wisdom and insights on geographical education, curriculum development, educational research and related areas in Hong Kong before his retirement. Twenty eight teachers participated, and they had the chance to reflect over the past and present and ponder about what should be done in school geography in the next few years. Photographs were taken as participants bid farewell to him and wished him and his family a pleasant life in the years to come. Dr. Irene Cheng was the moderator in this seminar.

### **HKGA Fund for Sponsoring Activities of Geography Societies**

The HKGA Tertiary Education and Research Committee has set up an award for geography societies in universities with regard to organising activities that can meet the criteria set by it for the promotion of tertiary education in geography. An amount of \$1,000 will be awarded for an approved programme each time.

### **Membership renewal for 2007**

The membership renewal exercise for 2007 is on. As you have known, our Association has been pro-active in stimulating research and education in geography in Hong Kong at all levels. Our activities since the beginning of 2006 for instance have included:

**\*Seminars** on "Fieldwork for the New Senior Secondary Curriculum in Geography" at the Hong Kong Teachers' Centre Conference on Curriculum Reform and Teaching (March), "How Geographers can Prepare Themselves to Work beyond the Teaching of Geography" in the AGM held in April last year, and "Geography and Education Reform: Dialogue between the Secondary & Tertiary Education Sectors" held at Hong Kong Baptist University in June 2006 as part of the Conference for its Anniversary.

**\*Course** on Urban Problems and Urban Planning in Hong Kong, held in April and May 2006 with talks given by a senior academic from the HKU Centre of Urban Planning and Environmental Management and by town planners from the Planning Department

**\*Field Trips** in January 2006 and in July 2006 to Sha Lo Tung, Tai Po for a "A Sustainable Development Study: The Balance between Economic Development and



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Environmental Conservation". The latter trip was preceded by a briefing session on "A Teaching Package for Issues-based Learning about the Conflict between Conservation and Development - A Case Study of Sha Lo Tung".

**\*Other activities** - including the AGM in April 2006, publication of the Hong Kong Geographer in July 2006, publication and sale of the "Geography Fieldwork Guide", and organisation of the Project Learning Competition on Geography and Liberal Studies (November 2006 - May 2007).

**Forthcoming events, amongst others, include**

- (a) a ferry and hiking trip on 21st April to be led by Dr. C. N. Ng of the HKU School of Geography and Prof. Bernhart Owen of the HKBU Department of Geography - this will feature the study of folding and sedimentary rock bedding along the coast of Lai Chi Chong, and conservation and development of Sham Chung and Yung Shue O. A certificate of participation for 8 CPD hours will be issued to participants. Those who have joined or renewed their membership will enjoy priority in registration and big discounts on their fieldtrip fees.
- (b) the publication of information and comments on geography and geographical education in the Hong Kong Education City website at their invitation - this will be done on with the aims of promoting the image of Geography to students, parents and the general public and arousing discussion on geographical issues. All members are welcome to contribute through the HKGA on topics that are of interest to teachers or students at the time.
- (c) the Annual General Meeting and a talk (on the use of surveys for the study of geographical issues) to be held on 28th April at the Hong Kong Teachers' Centre,
- (d) the production and sale of a field guide on river studies in Hong Kong (by September) - the guide will be available in both printed and CD formats and include a coloured key on fluvial landforms that can be readily used on the spot. It will include details on possible study sites, suggestions (i) to students for the methods of investigation, data analysis and report-writing, and (ii) to teachers about the assessment of field study projects in relation to the New Senior Secondary curriculum.
- (e) the Hong Kong Geography Day to be held in November 2007.

Details of past events and forthcoming activities can be found in the Hong Kong Geographer and News and Activities" of our website <http://www.hkga.org>. HKGA members of course enjoy registration priority and big discounts for participation in activities as well as big discounts in the purchase of publications. So don't hesitate to join us or renew your membership, as a life/full/corporate/joint/student member where appropriate. A copy of the application/renewal form can be downloaded from the said website.



## Interview with

# *Dr. Philip Stimpson*

**Editor's note:** As you may have known, Dr. Stimpson has retired from The University of Hong Kong this February after more than 24 years of working as a teacher educator and researcher in Hong Kong. The following is a report of the views which he raised in an interview with the Secondary Education Committee in December 2006. It is hoped that readers of this report can get some insights about the course of changes in geographical education in the past few decades and some directions for the future, especially as the implementation of the New Senior Secondary curriculum is now two academic years away.

**I :** Interviewers (H.Y. Lee and P.M. Yeung)

**S :** Dr. Stimpson

**I :** **First of all, could you recount why you decided to come to Hong Kong, and how you felt about the territory when you first arrived?**

**S :** Working as an academic in a college of education in Bristol in the early 1980s, my feeling was that Hong Kong was in need of major changes in teacher education and curriculum development following the massive expansion of senior secondary education in the late 1970s. I decided to take up this challenge instead of continuing with my academic career in England. It was quite a cultural shock when my wife and I took a bus trip in Western District on the day after arrival. Some historical buildings and the street landscape in the territory were reminiscent of those in my hometown in southwest England.

**I :** **What were your specific aims? How far were they achieved?**

**S :** Coming to Hong Kong for improving the quality of teacher education especially that for geography teachers, I was responsible for developing and teaching on the in-service and pre-service Postgraduate Certificate in Education programmes at The University of Hong Kong. The more notable achievements were that graduates of these courses could take up the production of high-quality teaching materials, and that many of them had succeeded in working as facilitators of learning in the classroom.



## Interview with

## *Dr. Philip Stimpson*

With regard to academic research and discourse, my colleagues and I at HKU hosted a conference in 1990 for the Commission for Geographical Education of the International Geographical Union. More than a hundred academics and geography educators from overseas came to the territory, and a collection of 34 abstracts and papers spanning six areas of research in the field was published.

For the development of geographical education at the postgraduate level then, progress was made through the offer of a social science education option and an environmental education option in the Master of Education programme at HKU in 1983 and 1991 respectively. In addition to the scores of teachers taking these two courses, two teachers have also completed their M.Phil. or PhD degree courses on geographical and environmental education under my supervision.

### **I : What are the difficulties for the education of geography teachers in Hong Kong?**

**S :** One obvious difficulty is the unstable supply of high-calibre and committed student-teachers, especially in times of economic boom when many graduates would be attracted to jobs in the business sector. Another one is that some teachers joining the profession after the early 1990s were less capable of and committed to the production of appropriate teaching materials possibly due to the availability of sets of comprehensive resources by textbook publishers. The implementation of Social Studies in the 1980s and Integrated Humanities earlier and in recent years has also diverted the attention of some teachers from seeking more advanced qualifications in geographical education.

### **I : How should we consider geography in the school curriculum map?**

**S :** Geography is by nature a cross-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary subject. Beginning with a spatial focus about the distribution of features, it soon branches out to examine the underlying natural and human factors which can lead to the resulting patterns. Looking at the nature of Central District as the central business district for instance will lead to an analysis of the social and economic dimensions and the history of Hong Kong. School geography should seek to maintain its strong spatial identity and the related conceptual base. These qualities, which are vital for the education of students, may not be promoted by integrating subjects like Integrated Humanities and Social Studies.



**I : What are the features of a good school geography then?**

- S :** Instead of being reductionist in focus, Geography should be integrative. It should aim at helping students make sense of the environment and landscape by looking into the underlying factors with a geographical perspective. Issues reported in the mass media, like people grasping for breadth as they take to the Qinghai-Tibet railway journey, can be used as a starting point for broadening students' understanding of atmospheric processes and cultures in distant landscapes. This approach should be complemented with a focus on local studies so that students can use familiar knowledge for learning in depth and breadth.

**I : What are the problems for improving the quality of geography teaching in Hong Kong schools?**

- S :** Classes in Hong Kong schools are surely too large by Western standards, making it difficult for teachers to teach in an inspiring way. The government is unwilling to invest more on education including teacher recruitment. Many teachers are not able to give sufficient attention and guidance to individual students especially those who have the greatest need. The promotion of data-based deep learning becomes difficult as the amount of teaching time is limited and there are tight syllabuses to cover. Moreover, as in many affluent societies, many teachers are working hard in the classroom but getting limited pay-off. They are finding it difficult to help their students to learn deeply and even engage their attention.

**I : What forms of help do geography teachers need?**

- S :** Courses that give ample chances for the sharing of experience in a problem-solving context should be offered. The focus should be on "how can teachers do" instead of "what they should do". Only by empowering teachers can they overcome difficulties about existing tasks and feel confident in dealing with new ones, such as the upcoming school-based assessment to be implemented by 2014. Unfortunately, many EMB documents are either too vague or too specific in offering advice to teachers. Making more travels overseas is one way for teachers to enrich their professional understanding of the subject. Taking part in academic and other activities run by professional associations can help them prepare for the challenges brought by curriculum changes. What is required after all is a wide repertoire of strategies and materials which teachers can use effectively according to the needs and abilities of classes and individual students, especially as fewer and fewer of whom are concerned with academic success these days.



## HKGA Seminar

# "Geography at the Crossroads"

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**(Writer's note:** This seminar was held on 20th January 2007 at the Hong Kong Teachers' Centre with Dr. Stimpson as the guest speaker. The aim was that teachers and HKGA members can have a direct chance of getting insights from his experience as a teacher educator, academic and researcher, and get some directions for how to teach geography effectively at the New Senior Secondary level. The following is a summary of his ideas expressed in the talk, whose exact title is "Geographical education in Hong Kong: A personal view").

"Crossroads" is a word that can carry positive as well as negative connotations. It raises the question of what choice we should make. This implication is especially relevant for geography teachers here although EMB statistics suggest that the subject is at a healthy position in terms of candidature and the numbers of schools offering it both at present and in the next few years when the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum is due to be implemented. The following remarks set the background for understanding his personal view about geographical education in Hong Kong schools and what we can do at the crossroads.

Dr. Stimpson came to Hong Kong in late December 1982 in search for a challenge after teaching geography in a "Band 1" boys school in Bristol for more than 15 years. His experience also included being taught about theoretical geography by renowned figures like Peter Haggett and Ron Johnston, and working on enquiry-based Schools Council projects.

When he started working at HKU, geography teachers were facing the challenges of the revolutionary 1981 Advanced Level curriculum. Like their colleagues in other subjects, they had to cope with the impact of mass education on student standards and a number of initiatives from the Education Department on cross-curricular areas like moral education, legal education, civic education and environmental education. Only the last in this list persisted among the fanfare as the bulk of teachers' attention inevitably had to be given to helping lower-achieving students admitted to senior secondary classes.

A feeling of discrepancy between personal ideal and market concerns came up when, writing a series of textbooks for the Certificate level, he was asked to carry fewer questions than answers. The line of thinking amongst publishers is that books should be comprehensive in terms of knowledge but this raises a problem of how current issues can be incorporated in a systematic way. There was a similar feeling about ideal and reality with regard to Advanced Level Geography. Whilst the curriculum is intended to promote the analysis of



landscapes, success in its achievement is hindered by the lack of case studies. Many of the questions set in the accompanying examination focus on models and theories instead of landscapes. A way out of this dilemma is to change both the exam content and paper structure, such as setting questions which can engender positive backwash effects for deep critical thinking and reflection on values. One notable example is the exam question set in a 1990s paper on the use of land in the Covent Garden redevelopment project.

The 1980s was a difficult time for geography teachers also because of the lack of suitable teaching materials. School-based curriculum development which focuses on the development of materials by teachers themselves can be a solution for this problem. Whilst it is gratifying to see that many teachers have a strong sense of professionalism and confidence, HKGA can offer help further by producing resources that are relevant to student needs and that are practical and easily manageable.

According to Dr. Stimpson, two signs of progress in professional development are the growing numbers of teachers who have obtained advanced degrees and the insight which they show in seminars and curriculum development committee meetings. This latter quality is especially valuable because it means that teachers' own views can be adequately reflected in the curriculum planning process. It is essential for ensuring that initiatives intended for senior students (like issues enquiry) can trickle down to produce a positive effect on the junior forms.

Whilst noting the notion "Change is the norm, the lack of change is abnormal", Dr. Stimpson highlighted four key issues for teachers to reflect on both at present and in the foreseeable future. The first of these is the takeover of Geography and some related subjects by Integrated Humanities (IH) in Secondary 1 to 3. While this is seen by some as a threat to the development of basic geographical concepts, in practice it need not be. How far teachers can harness and utilise the concepts of IH for the teaching of geography at the senior secondary level is more important than worrying instead. It is worthwhile for teachers to note the need to rely on a wider contextualised perspective when seeking to explain geographical patterns and distributions, and that an in-depth understanding of geography is essential for the learning of other subjects as well.

The position of geography in the NSS curriculum is another key issue with implications for many teachers, especially those who are employed on a contract basis, or who are teaching in schools at risk of cuts in the number of classes. The lack of a basis for long-term planning is a stumbling block for these teachers in achieving the aims of the new curriculum. For all reflective, professionally minded teachers, however, there is the question of how far the curriculum content is right for students. An over-arching paradigm with a geographical dimension is needed. Whether this paradigm is "landscapes", "issues-enquiry" or "people-



environment relationships" should be open to debate by teachers, although school curricula in reality are often selections of what the curriculum planners (i.e. EMB and HKEAA officials, academics and selected groups of teachers) have considered important. The role of HKGA should be to offer a platform and facilitate discussion among teachers in this connection, especially on how far the teaching of subject matter can serve the overall direction of the curriculum.

How to meet the needs and interests of all students is the third issue worthy of attention. The challenge for teachers of weaker-ability students is to select appropriate content and teach effectively within the usual time and resource constraints. Two sets of questions may be raised here to stimulate thinking:

- (a) Are there things like mapwork or geographical information systems (GIS) that are essential to the achievement of the geography curriculum? How far does GIS require the use of computers and technology? Can university-level GIS theories be simplified so that they can be taught effectively at the NSS level, where there will be a mix of lower-ability, medium-ability and higher-ability students in the same school or in the same class?
- (b) Should fieldwork be compulsory? How should it be taught so that the aims of the curriculum can be achieved? How and where can worthwhile fieldwork questions be set?

The preceding question about fieldwork leads to the fourth and a hotly debated issue, which is concerned with school-based assessment (SBA). Inside this issue, there are obvious questions like "Why is SBA needed?", "How can teachers carry it out smoothly and fairly?", "What help can the field study centres offer to teachers and students?", "Can SBA (i.e. fieldwork) projects be done by students independently?", and "Should the writing of fieldwork reports be done under examination conditions?". No quick answers can be given to any one of these. However, the solutions for teachers are to avoid jargons and to offer advice to students with an appropriate balance between reliability and fairness.

In concluding, Dr. Stimpson's advice for Hong Kong teachers is that they should be reflective about how they have taught both inside and outside the classroom and be eclectic in deciding how to help students improve their learning of the subject.



**Dr. Stimpson and participants in the seminar**



# 二零零六年地理科會考試題分析

黎海天(可風中學)

二零零六年是會考地理科採用新課程的第二年，這裏就今年卷一及卷二的題目作出分析，與大家分享。此外，我還列舉一些優點與缺點，希望考評局能多加留意。

表一 卷一試題分析

題號	有關的主要主題及/或議題	個案例子	技能
1	城市	香港	閱讀1:20000地形圖，列舉地圖證據
2	能源的抉擇	中國	閱讀圖表
3	水的煩惱	中國	閱讀圖表及照片
4	糧食與飢荒	全球	閱讀地圖及照片
5	工業	加州	閱讀地圖及照片
6	氣候	中國	閱讀圖表

- 1 今年每條題目大多只涉及一個主題或議題，跨越單一主題或議題的題目較少，不大符合課程的精神。
- 2 第五題(c)部分問及資訊科技工業如何能繼續在X區發展，筆者認為這問法含糊不清。相信許多考生都不清楚答題要求。筆者建議在題目前加入引文：「近年X區資訊科技工業面對不少困難，該工業如何能繼續在X區發展？」相信這種問法會較為清晰。
- 3 第六題問及的氣候種類有不在課程範圍之嫌。現時的會考課程氣候個案包括低緯度地區(熱帶濕潤氣候 - 馬來西亞，及熱帶乾旱氣候 - 索馬里)，和中高緯度地區(溫帶海洋性氣候 - 山東，及溫帶大陸性氣候 - 新疆)。X市(應是廣州)與課程個案不符。



卷二方面的分析如下：

表二 卷一試題分佈

主題及議題	題目數量
地圖閱讀 (1:5000地形圖)	10
農業及糧食與饑荒	6
氣候與氣候異常	7
工業及能源的抉擇	6
外營力作用及水的煩惱	7
內營力作用及自然災害	7
城市及可持續城市	7

- 1 從表中可見多項選擇題題目已覆蓋所有主題及議題，而分佈方面十分平均。
- 2 題目內使用圖表的數目約佔一半，十分平衡。
- 3 第12題的問題較大：題目問及建設性板塊邊緣的地形由哪些構造作用所形成。然而，圖中註釋不清楚，圖中較前位置垂直黑色部分代表什麼呢？若是代表岩漿或熔岩，為何地幔不是黑色呢？又為何圖中較後位置會有兩個黑色部分呢？按考評局2006年香港中學會考地理科考試報告及試題專輯(第100頁)顯示，只有22%考生能選取正確答案。筆者認為主因是該圖註釋不清楚，而不是考生對板塊構造的認知不足。

總括來說，本年的題目在深淺程度方面大致上屬於適中，較往年的題目來說是有進步(後者實在略為淺易)。