

Richard P. Baine
Chair
CAG Education Committee

A Survey of the Status of Geography and Social Studies in Canadian Elementary and Secondary Schools

A Report prepared by the Education Committee of the Canadian Association of Geographers

Introduction

The Education Committee of the Canadian Association of Geographers was reconstituted in 1989 and given the following mandate:

The Education Committee should work, as a national voice, to enhance the quality of geographic education across Canada at all educational levels, elementary, secondary and post-secondary. In pursuing this goal the committee would recognize the work that is already being carried out by organizations at the sub-national level (provincial ministries, CAG divisions, teachers' associations, faculties of education, school boards, and so on), and would seek to support and collaborate with these organizations. Such collaboration would be in the interests of improving the quality of teaching, increasing the accessibility of up-to-date learning materials, and promoting the flow of geographic information.

In its early deliberations, the Committee decided that the best way to begin to carry out its mandate would be to ascertain the current status of geography and its cognate, social studies, in the elementary and secondary schools across Canada, with a view to identifying areas of concern and determining the directions it might take.

Education in Canada is a provincial responsibility. Accordingly, the Committee undertook a province-by-province investigation. In the last stage of the survey, the Curriculum Directors of the respective provinces and territories were contacted and they, or their designated officials, checked the data for errors or omissions. These data are up-to-date as of September 1991.

Summary of Findings

1. As of September 1991, there was a total of 55 ministry-listed courses in geography in all of Canada at the combined elementary and secondary levels. (The Collège D'Enseignement Général et Professionnel — "CEGEP" — courses in Québec are not counted in this total nor are locally-designed courses, in all likelihood not numerous, offered at the board or school level by special ministry permission. Courses taught in French — francophone or French Immersion — which parallel

or duplicate those taught in English, even though they may differ in terms of application and learning resources, were not counted separately. It is likely that in several jurisdictions in which the English and francophone programs are different, some French Immersion schools use the English program and some the francophone. The only jurisdiction to specify such an arrangement, however, was Nova Scotia.)

Ontario offers the greatest number of geography courses, 14 in all. Then follow Prince Edward Island with 13, Nova Scotia with eight, New Brunswick with five, Manitoba with four, Québec with three, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, and Alberta with two each, and British Columbia and Yukon Territory with one each. A clear-cut division is apparent between jurisdictions east of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border, with a total of 49 courses, and those to the west with a total of six.

In terms of the health of school geography, the data gathered are somewhat misleading. The picture looks better on paper than it is in actuality. In Ontario, to take one key example, an apparently strong situation turns out, with further investigation, to be disappointingly limited. The drop-off in geography enrolments at the end of grade 9/10 is precipitous. On average, the total enrolment in grades 11/12, where geography is optional, amounts to a mere 15% of the total in grade 9/10, where it is mandatory. In large measure, this is the result of very stiff competition from other subjects in the senior grades. Another symptom of poor health is the fact that across the country only 17 geography courses are mandatory and all of these are limited to the grade 7–10 range.

The question of what kinds of geography are offered and where, is answered in Table 1. Table 2 contains more detail; courses by province/territory and grade level.

2. There are no geography courses in Canada in the Kindergarten–grade 6 range. At these levels a mixture of courses is offered under the general

classification of "Social Studies." Often, the "widening horizons" curriculum is followed in which the focus broadens outward from a study of the family to studies of the neighborhood, the community, the province or region, the country and, in very general terms, the world. These mandatory courses are virtually the only vehicles through which any geographic subject matter or skills are taught.

In the grade 7–12 range, the chart indicates that the pattern in social studies is inconsistent. Information received from some jurisdictions was quite specific concerning course titles at certain levels (these titles appear on the chart in regular face, not in bold face as in the case for geography courses). Other jurisdictions simply indicated programmes in "Social Studies" with no further information supplied.

Finally, it is important to realize that, in terms of geographic content and methodology, the picture in social studies varies enormously. In every jurisdiction in the country there are classrooms in which geographic topics are given considerable emphasis and are well taught while in too many others, the reverse is true. (Teaching quality is, of course, a problem in every subject, certainly including geography.)

3. A mail survey of the 49 faculties of education in Canada revealed that geography holds a fairly important position in Curriculum and Instruction/Teaching Methods departments across the country. In those provinces west of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border, the picture is more encouraging at the faculties of education, in general, than in the schools (see Table 3, p11).

The survey questions (sent to the Dean of each institution) were:

- i Is your Curriculum and Instruction/Teaching Methods program in elementary education only, secondary education only, or both elementary and secondary education?
- ii Is Geography, as a separate discipline, taught anywhere in your Curriculum and Instruction/Teaching Methods program? If it is, what school

Table 1 / Tableau 1
Types of School Geography Courses by Province

* = Mandatory

Prov./Territory	No. of Courses	Grade of Course(s)	Total No. of Courses in Can.	
GEOGRAPHY OF THE REGION				
PE	2	9*	3	
PQ	1	9*		
GEOGRAPHY OF CANADA/CANADIAN GEOGRAPHY				
NF	1	9*	11	
PE	1	7*		
	2	10		
NS	2	11		
NB	1	10*		
	1	12		
ON	1	9/10*		
	1	OAC		
AB	1	11/12		
WORLD GEOGRAPHY/GLOBAL GEOGRAPHY				
NF	1	12		13
PE	4	11-12		
NS	1	12		
NB	1	12		
PQ	1	10/11		
ON	1	11/12		
	1	OAC		
MB	1	7*		
	1	12		
AB	1	11/12		
PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY				
PE	1	7*	7	
NB	1	11		
ON	1	7/8*		
	1	11/12		
MB	1	11		
BC	1	12		
YT	1	12		
ENVIRONMENTAL GEOGRAPHY				
NS	2	10		3
ON	1	11/12		
HUMAN GEOGRAPHY				
PE	1	8*	3	
ON	1	7/8*		
	1	11/12		
URBAN GEOGRAPHY				
ON	1	11/12	1	
AREA STUDIES OTHER THAN CANADA				
PE	1	8*	5	
	1	10		
NS	1	11		
ON	1	9/10		
MB	1	10*		
GENERAL GEOGRAPHY				
NS	1	7*	3	
NB	1	7*		
PQ	1	7*		
OTHER OR UNSPECIFIED				
NS	1	12	6	
ON	3	11/12		
SK	1	10		
	1	11/12		
TOTAL			55	

FOOTNOTE: OAC – Ontario Academic Course (formerly Grade 13)

- grades or levels is it related to?
- iii If Social Studies and/or Environmental Studies is taught, do the concepts, subject matter, and skills (e.g., map and globe skills, field study skills, chart and graph skills, photo and picture interpretation skills) of Geography
- form a strong component
 - form a fairly significant component
 - form a weak component in the program?

The general results of the survey were as follows:

There are 49 faculties of education in Canada; 32 responded to the survey.

Thirty faculties have Curriculum and Instruction/Teaching Methods programs in both elementary and secondary education. One has the program in elementary education only. One has the program in secondary education only.

Twenty-one faculties reported that Geography, as a separate discipline, is taught at some place in their programs. Eleven reported that Geography, as a separate discipline, is not taught anywhere in their programs.

Ten faculties reported that the concepts, etc., of geography form a strong component in their Social Studies programs; 12 reported that they formed a fairly significant component, eight reported that they formed a weak component, one omitted a response to the question, and one gave a mixed response.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the overall task was not an easy one. The facts have been elusive, the reports contradictory, and the patterns indistinct. There was no clear picture, on a national scale, with which to begin. The Committee believes that with the results of this survey we now have a clear, workable basis for keeping abreast of developments in geographic education in Canada, an instrument for informing educators of where the general strengths and weaknesses of geography in the schools lie, and for moving forward in the execution of its responsibilities.

The course titles shown in Table 2 represent teaching/learning opportunities. They are not, in and of themselves, necessarily indicative of the scope and sequence of the subject matter they represent.

continued on page 8

Table 2 / Tableau 2
Geography and Social Studies in Canadian Elementary and Secondary Curricula from Grade 7 Upward
 (M) = Mandatory; (OP) = Optional; Geography Courses in Bold

Province/ Territory	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Sec. School Beyond Grade 12
NF (Engl)	Grade 7 Social Studies (M)	Grade 8 Social Studies (M)	Grade 9 Canada: A New Geography (M)	Grade 10 Student must take a minimum of four Social Studies Courses	Grade 11 Cultural Heritage of NF & Lab Canadian Issues Consumer Studies	Grade 12 Democracy Canadian Economics Canadian Law World History to 18th C	World Geography (OP) World Problems World History: 18th C–Present
NF (Fr)	Same courses as above						
PE (Engl)	Foundations of Geography Physical Patterns (Global Scale) (M; 1/2 credit)	Human Patterns (M; 1/2 credit)	Maritime Studies (Regional Geography) (M; 1/2 credit)	Academic Canadian Geography (OP) Regular Canadian Geography (OP)	Academic Global Studies (OP) Regular World Geography (OP)	Academic Global Issues (OP) Regular Global Issues (OP)	
PE (Fr)	Géographie du Canada (M)	Géographie du L'Amérique du Nord (M)	L'Étude des Provinces Maritimes (M)	Géographie des Continents du Sud (OP)			
NS (Engl)	Social Studies (M)						
NS (Fr) ⁴	Academic Environmental Geography ¹ (OP) Non-Academic Environmental Geography (OP) Canadian Studies (OP)						
	Academic Canadian Geography ² (OP) Non-Academic Canadian Geography (OP) Geography of Asia (OP)						
	Academic Settlement Geography ³ (OP)						
	Canadian Studies (OP)						
	Global Geography ⁵ (OP)						

Notes
 1 Scheduled to be replaced by Canadian Physical Geography
 2 Scheduled to be replaced by Canadian Settlement Geography
 3 Scheduled to be replaced by Global Geography
 4 In the French Immersion strand, some schools use the francophone program and others the English program
 5 Being pilot-tested in 1991–92

(M) = Mandatory; (OP) = Optional; Geography Courses in Bold

Province/ Territory	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Sec. School Beyond Grade 12
------------------------	------------	------------	------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	--------------------------------

NB (Engl)	Social Studies (M)			Maritime Studies (M)	Physical Geography (OP)	Canadian Geography (OP)	
					World Issues (OP)		
NB (Fr)	Géographie Générale (M)			L'Étude des Provinces Maritimes (M)	Géographie du Canada (M)	Défis Géographiques du Monde Actuel (OP)	

PQ (Engl)	General Geography (M)		Geography of Québec and Canada (M)		World Issues (OP)		
-----------	-----------------------	--	---------------------------------------	--	-------------------	--	--

PQ (Fr) Same courses as above

PQ (CEGEP) In the CEGEP curriculum, a variety of optional courses is offered in the fields of regional geography, urban geography, world geography, physical and environmental geography, cultural geography, political geography, and the geography of Québec and the geography of tourism.

ON (Engl)	Patterns in Physical Geography (M)		Patterns in Human Geography (M)		B,G,A Geography of Canada (M)	B,G,A Physical Geography (OP)	OAC-Level World Issues (OP)
	Note: These two courses may be alternated				B,G,A Geography of Europe and Asia (OP)	B,G,A Human Geography (OP)	Canada: Environment and Economy (OP)

Note 1: These two courses may be taught in either Grade 9 or 10

Note 2: Ontario curricula, Grades 9–12, refer to three levels of difficulty

Basic (B) — courses of practical use in preparation for citizenship and work;

General (G) — courses in preparation for employment and further studies in non-degree-granting institutions;

Advanced (A) — courses for academic development and for entry into all post-secondary institutions

B,G,A Regional Geography (OP)

B,G,A Urban Studies (OP)

B,G,A Geographics (OP)

B,G World Development: Studies in Contrasts (OP)

B,G,A Environmental Studies (OP)

G,A Geology (OP)

Note: These courses may be taught in either Grade 11 or 12. Only one senior division (Grade 11–12) course from the whole field of Social Sciences (Geography, History, Economics, Family Studies, etc.) is required for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma

Table/Tableau 2 continued on page 10

Baine, Table/Tableau 2
continued from page 9

(M) = Mandatory; (OP) = Optional; Geography Courses in Bold

Province/ Territory	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Sec. School Beyond Grade 12
ON (Fr)	same courses as above						
MB (Engl)	World Geography ("Spaceship Earth") (M)			North America (M)	Physical Geography (OP)	World Geography (Human Perspective) (OP)	
	<p>Note: Courses Grade 10–12 offered at Academic & Non-Academic Levels</p> <p>World Issues (OP)</p>						
MB (Fr)	same courses as above						
SK (Engl)	Social Studies (M)			One of History or Social Studies (M)		One of History or Social Studies (M)	
	<p>Geography (OP, unspecified) is offered in the new curriculum as well as Social Studies</p>						
SK (Fr)	same courses as above						
AB (Engl)	Social Studies (M)			Local and Canadian Geography (OP)		World Geography (OP)	
	same courses as above						
AB (Fr)	same courses as above						
BC (Engl)	Social Studies (M)			Physical Geography and Environmental Management (OP)			
	same courses as above to end of Grade 10						
BC (Fr)	same courses as above to end of Grade 10						
YT (Engl)	Uses BC Social Studies Curriculum (M)			Physical Geography and Environmental Management (OP, same as BC, above)			
	same courses as above to end of Grade 10						
YT (Fr)	same courses as above to end of Grade 10						

(M) = Mandatory; (OP) = Optional; Geography Courses in Bold

Province/ Territory	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Sec. School Beyond Grade 12
NT (Engl)		Social Studies (M)					
NT (Fr)			Uses Alberta curriculum to end of Grade 9				
				Social Studies (M) using AB Curriculum			

Table 3 / Tableau 3
A Survey of the Status of Geography as a Curriculum and Instruction ('Teaching') Subject in Canadian Faculties of Education

Faculty of Education	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
NF (1/1)	Both	No	b
PE (1/1)	Both	No	a
NS (4/7)			
1	Both	No	b
2	Elem	No	c
3	Both	Yes — prim-9	b
4	Both	Yes — ?	a
NB (3/4)			
1	Both	?	c
2	Both	Yes — sec	c
3	Both	No	c
PQ (4/13)			
1	Both	Yes — elem	?
2	Both	Yes — sec	a
3	Sec only	Yes — sec	b
4	Both	No	c
ON (8/11)			
1	Both	Yes — 7-OAC	b
2	Both	Yes — 7-OAC	a
3	Both	Yes — sec	a/c — strong in one course; weak in all others
4	Both	Yes — 7-OAC	a
5	Both	Yes — 7-OAC	b
6	Both	Yes — 7-OAC	a
7	Both	Yes — 9-OAC	a
8	Both	Yes — 7-OAC	c
MB (3/4)			
1	Both	Yes — sec	b
2	Both	Yes — all levels	b
3	Both	Yes — sec	a
SK (2/2)			
1	Both	No	b
2	Both	No	c
AB (3/4)			
1	Both	Yes — ?	a
2	Both	Yes — elem & sec	b
3	Both	No	a
BC (3/3)			
1	Both	Yes — sec	b
2	Both	No	b
3	Both	Yes — 8-12	c

The CAG Education Committee

Richard Baine (Chair)

Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Education
University of Toronto, Toronto, ON

James Boxall

Kings-Edgehill School, Windsor, NS

Dr. Jules Dufour

géographe
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, Chicoutimi, PQ

Patricia Green-Milberg

Geoscience Department
CEGEP John Abbott College, Ste Anne de Bellevue, PQ

Dr. John Marshall

Department of Geography
York University, North York, ON

Margaret North

Department of Geography
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC

Dr. Hans Schlichtmann

Department of Geography
University of Regina, Regina, SK