models and ‘object lessons’ in classrooms.

As geography became increasingly accepted in secondary schools, geography teachers continued to provide leadership in pedagogy and curriculum, developing fieldwork and sample studies, and assuming prominence in applications of information and communication technologies.

Rex Walford was a member of the government Working Group that wrote the National Curriculum in Geography for Schools following the UK Education Act of 1988, and he provides in this book an insider’s view of the tensions and struggles that accompanied the emergence of the geography curriculum.

This is a comprehensive story – written in an accessible style, well illustrated and enjoyable to read.

It is also an inspiring book. In challenging geography teachers to reinvigorate themselves at the start of the new century, Walford concludes by reminding us of tasks which we can take up on behalf of our students. We live in a ‘global village’ but we do not know our neighbours, he says.

His concluding words bear recording here: ‘Finding our “place” in this exciting but uncertain world is a daunting prospect and children need more than simply knowledge and understanding to do this; they need a survival kit.

As Geography teachers, we have a key responsibility in equipping pupils with the means to approach and participate in the future’.

Here is a book for the young person aspiring to be a geography teacher, and for the older classroom teacher looking for further reassurance of the important mission of geographical education.

Geoff Conolly, Chatswood NSW.


URL: http://www.publish.csiro.au/

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One of the defining features of Environmental Studies is the role people play in environmental problems and resource management.

This book is based on the premise that the human dimensions of natural resource management issues have too often been neglected in favour of technocratic, biophysical solutions.

It aims to analyse, by a series of case studies, how well social assessment is institutionalised in the western world. By institutions, the authors mean the ‘professional structures, standards, accreditation processes, training and reward systems’ needed to provide the field with its required level of professionalism.

The editors provide an introduction and a conclusion around case studies which address the institutionalising of social assessment at various levels: global, national, provincial, local and sector. Australasian, South African, USA examples are used, with most focussing on Australia.

Developments usually require some form of environmental impact assessment and that this should involve social impact (along with economic, ecological, and biophysical).

However, the case studies tend to suggest social impact assessment is less well entrenched, has fewer standard methods, has less rigour, has less acceptance in the professional community, and is perhaps less sophisticated than, for example, economic or ecological assessment.

One problem seems to be that consultants and others, who are poorly trained in social assessment, often undertake it in a perfunctory and unprofessional manner.

The case studies, however, do attempt to show some good examples of social assessment, even if they have not yet been institutionalised. The editors argue that social scientists should not use the biophysical frame of reference but instead should gain better understanding of the distribution of power in decision-making bodies.

The book would be a useful resource for Year 12 Environmental Science and Geography teachers and tertiary students for topics involving environmental planning. There are some good case studies which provide real life examples of successes (regional forest agreements) and failures (indigenous peoples in northern Australia) of institutionalising social assessment in resource management.

Professor Rob Wallis and Dr Anne Wallis Deakin University, School of Ecology & Environment, Warrnambool.