PRACE KOMISJI EDUKACJI GEOGRAFICZNEJ
2014, t. 3, s. 13–30

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CURRICULUM THINKING, 'CAPABILITIES' AND THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE IN SCHOOLS*

INTRODUCTION

This article makes a case for teachers to adopt a 'capabilities approach' to their work in order to strengthen curriculum thinking in schools. Specifically, the paper is concerned with developing a productive and progressive means to secure 'knowledge-led' curriculum thinking in schools (Young 2013). By 'progressive' we signal an essential thread of the argument which is to stress the emancipatory power and purpose of education in initiating young people into forms and fields of specialised knowledge – without which they are deprived and restricted in their personal and intellectual growth into fully capable adults.

It was Basil Bernstein in his fifth and final volume of work (Bernstein 2000) who introduced the 'pedagogic rights' of young people to individual enhancement, social inclusion and political participation (McClean et al. 2011). These 'rights' are expressed as outcomes of educational processes and are strikingly similar to the notion of capabilities. For Bernstein, access to knowledge is the key educational contribution to fighting the *inequalities* implicit in his identification of pedagogic rights, or in other words *capabilities deprivation*. Michael Young (a student and colleague of Bernstein's) has since developed his helpful concept of 'powerful knowledge' (Young 2008). In direct opposition to those who urge a skills-based curriculum based on the development of generic 'competences' (often deemed especially appropriate to 'less academic' students), Young argues that as a matter of social equity all young people have the right to be introduced to powerful – or disciplinary – knowledge. This is a social realist

* A version of this paper is also published by the Japanese Educational Research Association for the Social Studies (JERASS).

position, usefully discussed by Roger Firth in the context of the curriculum in English schools (Firth 2011, 2013), which counters both the extreme relativist positioning of much 'progressive' skills-led thought in education *and* those who propose 'traditionalist' knowledge-led perspectives who see the contents of the school curriculum as a fairly fixed selection of the canon of 'core knowledge' (Hirsch 1987, 2007). The capabilities approach would say that any denial of pedagogic rights, whether by progressives or traditionalists, to powerful knowledge is tantamount to capabilities deprivation.

The debate which a capabilities perspective opens up, enquires about the ways in which geographical knowledge in the curriculum can be considered to be powerful knowledge; it is concerned with the essential contribution geographical knowledge makes to the education of all young people (or, put another way, how weak geographical knowledge acquisition in school may contribute in a particular way to the deprivation of individuals' capabilities).

THE TROUBLESOME IDEA OF 'CURRICULUM'

In the UK at least, curriculum thinking is a relatively recent phenomenon. Whilst geography has been taught in primary schools since the nineteenth century, and became embedded in secondary schools from the beginning of the twentieth century when state funded secondary education for all was introduced, there was virtually no curriculum thinking as we would understand the term today. Indeed, the idea of 'curriculum' is arguably one of very few powerful concepts genuinely to emerge from the practice and study of education in modern times. What I mean by this is that although it may be common sense that a *course of study* – or curriculum – would always need to be identified and then followed in formal schooling, theorizing the idea of curriculum has *followed* the practice of teaching. In this sense the very purpose of curriculum thinking has been to unsettle common sense and perhaps habitual traditional practices.

Norman Graves, one of the most influential voices in UK geography education in the last quarter of the twentieth century, introduced the idea of rational curriculum planning into professional discourse (Graves 1974) and helped theorise what is sometimes referred to as a golden age of curriculum development in the 1970s and 1980s in the UK (see Rawling 2001). He openly acknowledged that earlier in his career the curriculum problem (in short, the question of what should be taught) was never discussed. It was assumed that what was to be taught in schools was merely the selection of geographical

knowledge provided by the examination boards, and/or authoritative textbook writers. The purpose of this was unquestionably to provide an account to children of how people lived around the world. There were debates about how to teach this, but a regional approach to grasping areal differentiation was assumed for both practical and conceptual reasons to be appropriate to the task.

Drawing from emerging theories in educational studies both in the UK and elsewhere Graves sought to discuss the curriculum problem and the process of curriculum planning (Graves 1974, 1979). In essence, using the language of aims and objectives and perspectives far beyond merely the coverage of 'given' (and uncontested) geographical knowledge, he was able to show a much fuller and more complicated picture of rational curriculum planning. Thus for instance, the changing nature of geography itself had become a variable: if school geography were to reflect a selection of the best geographical knowledge available then there were alternatives emerging in the 1970s to the regional paradigm. Similarly, the cognitive and intellectual *development* of young people (more than the imparting of factual knowledge into their heads) was seen as a vital part of the modernisation of society in the context of the then nascent (but soon to become rampant) era of neo-liberal globalization. The pioneer modernizers such as R.J. Chorley and P. Haggett (1967), and at school level M.G. Bradford and W.A. Kent (1977) or at primary school level J.P. Cole and N.J. Beynon (1969), asserted that if geography were to contribute meaningfully to the modern world then it needed to become more analytical and reduce its default to repetitive and descriptive regional coverage. Finally, and especially with the raising of the school leaving age in England to 16 years in 1974 (and now to 18 years), the purposes of schooling came to be questioned, not least in the context of a range of social, economic and environmental challenges: if school geography were to be seen as 'relevant' then it should not be posited as an end in itself, but as a means to serve wider aims – or what Bill Marsden later described, not entirely in a positive light, as 'good causes' (Marsden 1997).

As D. Lambert and J. Morgan (2010) have shown such a mixture of internal (geographical) and external (social and economic) factors resulted in a break-down of consensus about what should be taught in school geography. J. Morgan (2013) is very effective in placing such difficulties in a contemporary context of profound economic change, political dispute and cultural fragmentation – and the widespread impacts of the postmodern turn in society and academia. The salient point for us here is simply to suggest that Graves' importation of curriculum thinking into geography education was more than a little timely: it was perhaps *inevitable* that attempts were made to systematize efforts to select

and organise the contents of the geography curriculum in a manner that was more sympathetic to a changing educational context.

However, the perspective afforded by the intervening years has begun to show the relative impotence of such thinking, especially in the face of the increased politicization of curriculum debates in the UK since the introduction of a national curriculum in 1988 and the tightening grip of performance-led accountability of teachers and schools. The idea of examiners, schoolteachers or text book authors freely selecting the contents of geographical education using a framework of 'rational planning' principles (which can be debated and agreed) does not so readily apply today. Curriculum thinking as distinct from 'pedagogy', summarized here as the science of teaching, is once again not prominent in teachers' minds. This is partly because (since the national curriculum was introduced in 1988) it is assumed to be something that is done elsewhere. It is assumed, for example, that the curriculum is devised and laid down in law by the government or its agencies: the teacher's job is to 'deliver' it as effectively as possible. What should be taught has taken an almost taken for granted status, or worse, is considered to be unimportant – to the extent that in one best-selling textbook for intending, pre-service teachers (Dillon and Maguire 2011) there is not a single chapter on curriculum theory and thought. There are discussions about 'beyond' the curriculum and 'across' the curriculum, but the curriculum itself, of central importance to teaching, is rather taken for granted.

More significant than the apparent oversights implied in the previous paragraph has been the impact of what A. Moore (2006) refers to as the 'Bourdieusean arbitrary' (p. 97) which means the widely communicated and now well entrenched view that curriculum selections are "not universal, 'natural' or 'God-given' ... they are culturally, historically and socially produced" (p. 98). Such a position is entirely consistent with the post-modernism of the late twentieth century. Furthermore, the idea that the contents of schooling are arbitrary is beguilingly helpful in apparently freeing teachers – and policy makers – from some of the hard thinking that otherwise must follow any attempt at seriously addressing the fundamental curriculum problem of deciding what to teach. If subjects and the knowledge contents of education have no rationale – they are arbitrary – then we simply teach what we want. The contents of lessons cannot really be judged better or worse, and the focus is averted – to matters of process (i.e. pedagogy, not curriculum). Thus, during the last two decades in the UK, and across many parts of the world in fact, the weakness of knowledge-led curriculum thinking has opened the door to flexible, skills-led solutions often following a competency model of education built on the beguiling idea of 'learning to learn'.

I will say a little more about this later in this paper when we come to examine briefly alternative curriculum futures. But for now I simply note that in England the apotheosis of skills-led curricula was the 2008 national curriculum reform which although retaining named subjects including geography (for these have been enshrined in law since 1988), submerged the diminished subject specific programmes of study under a complex superstructure of themes, dimensions and skills known as the curriculum 'big picture'. This was guided by three prominent curriculum aims [1] that were imprecise and agreeable, but weak in terms of guiding content selection. They were, as stated at the time (Rawling 2007, p. 10), little help in guiding localized curriculum-making by teachers. And yet the question of what to teach in geography had now, perhaps ironically, become a significant issue since much of the formerly prescribed content had been stripped away from the programme of study. The curriculum 'big picture' was in some ways the ultimate 'rational curriculum plan' but had become so far removed from the knowledge contents of school that for some (e.g. Whelan 2007) it risked undermining the purpose of schooling altogether: it was a 'corruption' of the curriculum: "Contemporary pedagogy has lost faith in the importance of knowledge and the search for truth ... (This) has profound implications for the way that the curriculum is perceived. If the meaning of the truth and the status of knowledge are negotiable, then so is the curriculum. Studying a subject or body of knowledge is (now) rarely perceived as a good thing in itself" (Furedi 2007).

In this paper, I am not tempted by Furedi to travel all the way with him to the self-evident truth that subjects are by definition good curriculum organisers. I am prepared to say, especially in the company of geographers, that the study of geographical knowledge is a good thing in itself, but I am also aware that in England the statement of faith in subjects does not trouble teachers and curriculum makers nearly enough (ironically, just like the grand aims of the 2008 'big picture'). It can – and often did in the past – lead to complacency so that if the children were bored, disconnected and uninterested it was deemed to be their fault: and for many children in the past schooling was indeed an exercise in 'deferred gratification'. A given and fixed selection of knowledge 'transmitted' from teacher to pupils is not necessarily 'a good thing in itself': what is taught can become stuck and dull, and students neither introduced to the disputes and debates within specialized knowledge domains, nor to the procedural knowledge of experts. Even if Furedi does not intend to evoke this redundant model of education, it is what can happen if we settle only on his final sentence.

[1] The three aims were to produce confident individuals, successful learners and responsible citizens.

However, his opening sentence is far more pertinent to my overall argument. Furedi is correct to point to the way knowledge has been leached out of contemporary pedagogy: contemporary aims-led curriculum thought has undermined the concern to introduce and engage children with the notion of 'better' knowledge (the 'search for truth'). The idea of *better* knowledge is of enormous importance in the digital age when it is often falsely assumed that knowledge is ubiquitous and obtained at the click of a mouse or computer screen. Knowledge is a human, or more correctly a *social* creation, meaning that it is conditioned by disciplined argument and procedure. Young people need to be introduced, or 'initiated' according to R.S. Peters (1963), to the subject disciplines because (as is not always fully appreciated by pedagogically adventurous teachers) *the social construction of disciplinary knowledge happens outside the direct experience of the student* – and indeed the teacher. Enquiry based classrooms, such as advocated by M. Roberts (2013) are essential to enable and deepen students' meaning making: however, it is a mistake to think that *all* the knowledge encountered by children in a course of study has to be constructed by them, in situ.

KNOWLEDGE AND THE CURRICULUM

Young people who do not have access to disciplinary knowledge and/or who are deemed to lack the intellectual capacities implied by a 'search for truth' as described in the previous section are, we can argue, deprived or diminished in certain aspects of their human potential. It is on this basis that Michael Young and others (Young 2008, Young and Muller 2010, Young and Lambert 2014) argue that access to knowledge is ultimately a matter of social justice. Knowledge deprivation, as I argue later in this paper, reduces individuals' *capabilities* as citizens and as human beings. If this sounds like an overreaching claim then compare for a moment with the case of Jeanne described touchingly in Sebastian Faulks' 2012 novel *A possible life*. Set in post-revolutionary France, she is introduced to us as 'the most ignorant person in the Limousin village where she had lived most of her life' (Faulks 2013, p. 170). She is honest, warm hearted and hard-working, but nevertheless the butt of jokes and unkindnesses, partly as a result of her lack of learning, for born into poverty and an orphan she had never been to school. It is interesting how Faulks depicts the deficiencies brought about by these circumstances on Jeanne's capacity to understand anything beyond her daily routine and encounters: 'She made no judgement on what she had seen in her life, but each experience affected her idea of what the world was' (Faulks 2013, p. 192). Even in those days, 200 hundred years ago,

education was seen as more than merely access to learning how to read and write. Jeanne could do neither, but also we learn that she: "… lived her life from one minute to the next, with no plan for the future and no sense that she would one day grow old or weak … Her time at the orphanage had given her a fierce sense of the supernatural … She understood so little of the material world – how water boiled, why a walnut fell from a tree – that she had had to take almost everything on trust" (Faulks 2013, p. 175–176).

In 21st century economically prosperous and technologically advanced societies where education is virtually universal, and information about how the material world works is freely available to anyone with electricity and access to a computer, we might argue that the conditions of ignorance that condemned Jeanne to such a closed existence – and to prey to those who would exploit her over-dependence on the supernatural to explain her world – no longer exist. We should not underestimate how many millions of people world-wide *are* still condemned in his way. However, the point I really wish to stress is equally important. The capable citizen is not simply a person armed with information and a marketable skill-set. After all, we could argue that even Jeanne possessed such basic attributes as these: she had a job and did it competently. What Faulks pointed to was Jeanne's lack of knowledge beyond her everyday life – what the British sociologist Michael Young calls 'powerful knowledge' (Young 2008, Young and Lambert 2014). This is knowledge that is derived in the disciplines. It is thus specialized knowledge and exists beyond the everyday experience of people: it is often abstract, being theoretical or conceptual, and it is enabling. It is argued that a sacred purpose of schooling is to provide access to powerful knowledge for all young people – precisely because like Jeanne, without it we are condemned to ignorance. In the 21st century, I would argue for example that a crucial aspect of powerful knowledge is to provide young people access to what the geographer D. Massey (2014) calls a 'sense of the global' not just in the everyday sense of mediated images through film, music and fashion but in the counterintuitive sense of the planet as a place, with its physical and human interdependencies.

If the knowledge-led curriculum I am advocating here has any single metaphorical tone it is 'engagement' not 'delivery'. The key outcome then is *not* to transfer into the heads of young people a list of facts. Likewise, the key attribute of an educated person in this day and age is *not* to recall such facts accurately in a quiz or test, for although this may well denote an impressive ability it does not necessarily provide much evidence of a person's capacity to think or reason. The knowledge led curriculum I have in mind therefore is not to be confused with some versions of knowledge such as E.D. Hirsch's (2007) well

known promotion of 'core knowledge' which does indeed seem to reduce geography to a list of 'essential facts'.

Just as we have to be careful not to confuse a knowledge-led curriculum with the *delivery* of predetermined, given facts, we also have to exercise some care with the idea of *engagement*. 'Learning by doing' has had a long history of thought and practice in western education systems and although clearly very difficult meaningfully to implement has reached the point of general orthodoxy at least amongst teacher educators and policy makers. Thus, today in the UK, teachers who are under scrutiny as never before are now often castigated for 'talking too much'; they are told that classrooms should be 'active'. What is assumed to be 'best practice' pedagogic technique is sought in classroom observations – to the extent to which the curriculum problem (what shall we teach?) has almost become totally disregarded. Pedagogy (how shall we teach this?) is therefore privileged to a degree which places it in an inappropriate relationship to curriculum, so that questions of 'fitness for purpose' don't even get asked. This is the apotheosis of what G.J.J. Biesta (2012, 2013) memorably calls the 'learnification' of education where the predominantly soft skills of 'learning to learn' become the vague and dangerously inadequate object of sending children to school.

My use of 'engagement' therefore is not meant to conjure images simply of busy classrooms. So we need to ask engagement of whom with whom, with what and for what purpose? A knowledge-led curriculum of engagement is one in which both teachers and students are interested (perhaps for different reasons) in notions of better knowledge. To create better knowledge is what the disciplines are for, and in saying this we can quickly acknowledge that such knowledge is always open to contest, is contingent on new findings or fresh theoretical developments. It is clearly always developing and is dynamic, and for this reason teachers need in some way to be 'engaged' with it.

But as we have acknowledged in the previous section, the postmodern turn, in which perspective is all and we are discouraged to think one viewpoint is any better or worse than another, has challenged notions of better knowledge. Those who say there is such a thing are routinely dismissed as traditionalist and elitist. In an educational climate which encourages us to think of 'best practice' in pedagogy it is to put it mildly a contradiction to be scornful of those who would claim that some understandings of the world and how it works are better than others. Furthermore, is it not an abrogation of the professional responsibility of the teacher to tacitly deny that they have, or can provide access to, better knowledge? Why else do we insist that teachers (at least in secondary schools)

have specialist degrees? Why else do we insist on specialist teaching?[2] It is to provide access to better knowledge that makes schools distinctive social settings (as distinct from hospitals, factories, shopping centres, families or even the World-Wide Web). If we accept that children and young people are highly unlikely in their daily lives to encounter sustained engagement with ideas, arguments and other intellectual processes that make up 'powerful knowledge' (which frequently is counter intuitive, abstract and requires some effort to grasp) rather than information to consume (which is often fragmented, accessed on demand and lacks 'systematicity' or a conceptual connectedness to 'what is known') then the question of what to teach in school needs to be answered with great care. Not least, care to distinguish the different, albeit very complementary emphases denoted by pedagogy and curriculum.

Thus, we have to be cautious about the particular contribution pupils' 'everyday knowledges' can make to the curriculum. Starting with where pupils are is of course wholly justified pedagogically, but in curriculum terms too heavy an emphasis on everyday relevance can undermine the significance of disciplinary knowledge. We have to be cautious about the *balance* between generic skills (including unanchored or free floating 'critical thinking skills') and specialized knowledge as the main building blocks of the curriculum (we need both of course, but not one without the other). We need to be cautious about the degree to which the 'social construction' of knowledge is adopted as a curriculum principle: again, in pedagogic terms it is highly justified to think in terms of providing opportunities and scaffolding (and the time and space) for children to make meaning from data of all kinds, and furthermore, to argue about meaning. But in curriculum terms it is distracting and misleading to imply that the *only* meaningful knowledge available to young people is that which is 'constructed' on site. To do so may unintentionally exclude them from disciplinary knowledge which has been created by a community of scholars: we may wish to ask why we would ever want to do that.

KNOWLEDGE AND THE FUTURE CURRICULUM

One of the difficulties of promoting, or even discussing knowledge as a curriculum principle is that it has to many ears a back-facing tone to it. Boring

[2] It is very well worth noting that if we do not insist on these things there may ultimately be no argument against those who would employ untrained teachers, such troops for teaching or even the so-called 'mums army' of recent years gone by.

lessons delivered by 'authoritative' teachers who talk too much; pedagogy dominated by copying down and rote learning; pupils characterized by disengagement and disillusion. I hope there is nothing in what I have written in this article to even suggest that 'back to the future' is what is implied by the knowledge-based curriculum advocated here. Michael Young's proposition of 'powerful knowledge' is helpful in establishing a distinction between what many teachers and educationists *fear* is implied by 'knowledge-led', and what is really at stake if we even unintentionally turn away from knowledge as the fundamental curriculum principle. The arguments are made in detail in M. Young and D. Lambert (2014) and they will not be repeated here, save to say just a little more on what is meant by powerful knowledge and stressing the vital point that access to it is an entitlement for all young people whoever they are and whatever their circumstances. Access to powerful knowledge is a matter of social justice; though well meant, it is wrong to be tempted into adapting curriculum principles to suit the perceived needs of pupils in particular social or cultural groupings as this risks limiting their access to opportunities – and indeed disputes and concerns – of wider society. Although I have been careful to distinguish the idea of powerful knowledge from the narrower Hirschian notion of core knowledge, we can acknowledge that in *Cultural literacy* (1987) Hirsch made a similar claim about the need for educational institutions to provide diverse groups in society access to their 'second' or national culture. Schools have a duty to induct young people into knowledge domains beyond their direct experience – or else settle for a curriculum risked being marginal, peripheral and powerless.

How can we characterize 'powerful knowledge'? In short it is knowledge that is created by specialist communities or disciplines: all knowledge is a human construction, but powerful knowledge is made in accordance with some rigorous and demanding procedures and practices, put in place to test knowledge claims potentially to destruction. These state of the art epistemic practices are established to ensure that knowledge created is reliable and truthful: indeed, that it is the best it can be. Thus, we can say that powerful knowledge is:

- evidence based,
- abstract and theoretical (conceptual),
- part of a system of thought,
- dynamic, evolving, changing – but reliable,
- testable and open to challenge,
- sometimes counter-intuitive,
- exists outside the direct experience of the teacher and the learner,
- discipline based (in domains that are not arbitrary or transient).

If we refer back to Faulks' fictional character Jeanne, we can see she had none of the above and was as a result condemned to live life entirely in the present. She was also prey to superstition, rumour and hearsay. To use B. Bernstein's (2000) defence of disciplinary knowledge, that it enables societies to think the 'unthinkable' and the 'yet-to-be-thought', we can see that the Jeannes of this world not only have no chance to contribute to society's thinking but they stand little chance of even understanding some of the conundrums and challenges that face people, nor any of the potential solutions that may be offered to address them. In this sense we can see that the acquisition of powerful know-ledge is not just a matter of passing examinations in high status subjects and thus gaining access to good universities and the professions as may be supposed. It is also a matter of ensuring maximum opportunities for people to participate in society and its processes including democratic processes that demand autonomous capacity to deliberate and reason. In a world facing pressing issues of food, energy and water security related to intense population pressures, extreme wealth inequalities and the localised impacts of global climate change, we may agree that there is an urgent need for people, including 'the Jeannes of this world', to have full and proper educational opportunities: this means access to the powerful knowledge produced by the sciences, arts and humanities. As we shall see in the next section, to disagree with such a sentiment, which is to condemn (at least some) people to ignorance and thus deny their full human potential, is a form of *capabilities* deprivation.

A capabilities approach may not at first glance suggest a knowledge-led curriculum. However, the following framework may help to make some distinctions to consolidate the place of knowledge in a *progressive*, future-facing curriculum.

The place of knowledge and three alternative curriculum 'futures':

F1 Subject 'delivery': this curriculum consists of knowledge for its own sake. It is organised by traditional subjects – as stable, enduring and 'given' bodies of core knowledge. This is under-socialised knowledge. It characterises 'schooling' in the popular imaginary and is indeed what many experience around the world to this day.

F2 Skills, competences and 'learning to learn': this curriculum considers knowledge as constructed and traditional subject divisions to be artificial and arbitrary; integrated themes or 'issues' are preferred content. This is experiential and over-socialised knowledge. This is frequently the contemporary vision of progressive education promoted by OECD, the EU and many national governments.

F3 Capabilities: A capabilities approach agrees that subjects are not 'given' (as in F1), but that they are not arbitrary either (as in F2) – knowledge development is led by '... the epistemic rules of specialist communities' to provide ways to understand the world and take pupils *beyond their everyday experience*. Excellent specialist teachers may always have achieved this. The capabilities approach may help the power of an F3 curriculum to be more explicit and more widely attainable by noting the significant of disciplinary knowledge in achieving laudable curriculum aims (adapted from Young and Muller 2010; see also Young and Lambert 2014).

A future 3 or F3 curriculum is one that can be realized through a capabilities approach, as we shall briefly explore in the following section.

CURRICULUM THINKING AND THE CAPABILITIES APPROACH

These days, as we have seen, statements about educational outcomes are frequently made in generic terms. Aims-led 'grand designs' of the curriculum often encourage this, thus promoting an F2 curriculum. Of course, such curriculum thinking was and is a response to the acknowledged deficiencies of F1, but unfortunately an inadequate one owing to its careless disregard for knowledge as a curriculum principle: akin to throwing the baby out with the bathwater. This section attempts to show briefly how a 'capabilities approach' to curriculum thinking has the potential to help 'bring knowledge back in' (Young 2008) and to develop a genuinely F3 curriculum future. The significance of the capabilities approach, derived from Amartya Sen's welfare economics and interest in human potentials and development, lies in its concern to extend the freedoms of young people to think: to discern, to select and to make informed and defensible choices. The key question is specifically how geographical knowledge and the capacity to 'think geographically' (Jackson 2006, Cresswell 2013) can contribute to such goals. The working hypothesis of the 'geocapabilities' project[3] is to explore and develop just this. The project aims to develop curriculum leadership skills with geography teachers through a knowledge-led process called curriculum making (see Lambert and Biddulph, forthcoming; Solem et al. 2013). The key, according to the project, is to identify the place of the subject discipline in curriculum making, or 'geocapabilities'.

[3] Geo-capabilities: teachers as curriculum leaders ["GeoCap2"] (539079-LLP-1-2013-1-UK-COMENIUS-CMP).

Capabilities are not the same as general competences or free-floating critical thinking skills. Recent writing on the transformative potential of a university education for example has shown that this is based on the individual's acquisition of disciplinary knowledge: there is some empirical evidence to indicate that students value greatly the way such knowledge development enables them to think more broadly about the world (McLean et al. 2011). It is argued that it is the induction into a discipline that may provide aspects of what Martha Nussbaum calls the capability of 'affiliation'. It is, according to M. Nussbaum (2000, p. 82), to 'behave in an incompletely human way' if a person thinks about the world and their place in it as if only their views and experience mattered: disciplines provide a way to enter complex forms of discourse and perspectives that have arisen in communities using procedures of argument and contestation. This includes abstract and theoretical knowledge which by definition is beyond the experience of the 'everyday'. As we are initiated into disciplines we gain access to some of the excitement – and the significance – of knowledge creation. We can become deeply committed to what it means to be, or to think like, a historian, scientist, musician ... or a geographer. Such 'initiation' into disciplenary thought is of great value and, as we argued in the previous section should be available to *all* young people (and not only those who go to university): all have the right to the capabilities offered through such 'epistemic ascent' (Winch 2013).

In the European project we explore the potential of the capabilities approach to express the 'power' of geography as a school subject. The study is unique in that this is the first attempt to apply the capabilities approach to school level subject teaching and curriculum development. In doing this we hope to provide a deeper theoretical basis for teachers' curriculum making, linking the geocapabilities approach to conceptual work on the curriculum and the part curriculum making should play in teachers' work.

Following M. Walker and A. Boni (2013), the project will therefore argue that the capabilities approach can expand and deepen the conceptual language of teaching and curriculum at high school level. In our study, we show that the notion of 'geo-capabilities' helps connect a progressive form of discipline-oriented geography teaching to the context of broad educational aims. In so doing it enables an F3 curriculum future.

CONCLUSION

D. Massey (2014, p. 202) has recently argued that geography is a discipline that helps us 'take on the world' by revealing the concept of the planet as a whole and the realization that every locality on Earth is connected to global processes. In a different way and in the context of understanding cities, A. Kirby (2014) also makes a case for geography providing powerful knowledge, this time based on an ideographic understanding of place contexts (in preference to the roughshod application of nomothetic principles and processes). The two approaches are reconcilable and the relational understanding that results forms a substantial element of what it means to 'think geographically'. Powerful knowledge in geography (as in any subject) cannot be itemised in a Hirschian list (although it may embrace the geography that appears on lists of things children 'need to know'). A summary of powerful knowledge in geography may reference geographical 'facts' (referred to by the Geographical Association as 'vocabulary': see Lambert 2011a, p. 251), but also the systematic conceptual knowledge of place, space and environment that makes up 'relational understanding' – geography's 'grammar'. It should also, crucially, include a third element which we could refer to as 'procedural knowledge'. This might include a range of skills used widely in geography such as the analysis of spatially referenced data and the use of maps for example but it does so self-consciously and critically, and within the intellectual context of searching for meaningful distinctions and applying defensible conclusions in real world contexts. Thus, we summarise powerful knowledge in geography consisting of:

– the acquisition and development of deep descriptive and explanatory 'world knowledge';

– the development of the relational thinking that underpins geographical thought;

– a propensity to apply analysis of alternative social, economic and environmental futures to particular place contexts (adapted from Lambert 2011a, 2011b, Solem et al. 2013).

Understanding geography in this way is not straightforward and it is not easily derived from everyday experience. If we think it is of value, then it is of value to all children and it needs to be taught. Again, this is not straightforward which is why we need specialist teachers who are engaged with geographic disciplinary thought and knowledge.

This paper has sought to show that the emergence of aims-led curriculum thinking was designed in part to unsettle what we have called the F1 curriculum.

Though laudable in intent it has had a negative backwash effect, which is to prioritise generic skills and transversal competences over specialist knowledge, a trend that is perhaps most extreme in social settings where young people are less amenable to 'deferred gratification' and where pressures for curriculum contents to be 'relevant' and 'bite-sized' are greater. Young's proposition of powerful knowledge is the basis of a possible F3 knowledge-led curriculum for all. It is a curriculum of engagement which requires a particular form of curriculum thinking which a capabilities approach can help underwrite: we refer to this as the practice of curriculum making (Lambert and Biddulph, forthcoming; Mitchell and Lambert, forthcoming). It seems unlikely that an F3 curriculum is achievable without the ground level curriculum leadership that the capabilities heuristic can provide, thus connecting specialized disciplinary knowledge to the broader notion of an aims-led curriculum.

Acknowledgment

This article is based upon work supported by: 1) The National Science Foundation under Grant No. BCS-1155255, and 2) The EU Comenius programme: 539079-LLP-1-2013-1-UK-COMENIUS-CMP.

Find more at http://www.aag.org/geocapabilities and www.geocapabilities.org

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CURRICULUM THINKING, 'CAPABILITIES' AND THE PLACE OF GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE IN SCHOOLS

Summary

This paper argues that curriculum thinking in education has been enormously influential on selecting what is taught and learned in geography classrooms. Although this may appear to be self-evident, we are reminded that in the UK at least the idea of curriculum only really emerged in geography educational thought in the last quarter of the twentieth century. During this time curriculum thinking in schools has managed to cement the importance of 'aims'. This paper argues that although beneficial in many ways, aims-led curriculum planning and development has arguably been somewhat careless with knowledge, and has even undermined the place of knowledge in the classroom. The paper argues for a re-emphasis on knowledge-led curriculum making, as one of the cornerstones of genuine progressive educational practice. It introduces the possibility of a capabilities approach as a heuristic to connect and reconcile aims-led and knowledge-led curriculum thought and action.

Key words: curriculum, curriculum making, powerful knowledge, capabilities.

MIEJSCE WIEDZY GEOGRAFICZNEJ I UMIEJĘTNOŚCI W TWORZENIU CURRICULUM

Streszczenie

Niniejsze opracowanie przedstawia pogląd, że rozważania na temat curriculum mają ogromny wpływ na to, czego nauczamy i czego uczymy się na lekcjach geografii. Może wydać się to oczywiste, ale należy przypomnieć, że idea curriculum w studiach nad edukacją geograficzną rozwinęła się w Zjednoczonym Królestwie w ostatnich dwu-

dziestu pięciu latach XX w. Od tego czasu w dyskursie naukowym wysoką pozycję nadaje się „celom". W opracowaniu postawiono tezę mówiącą, że curriculum budowane wokół celów okazało się w pewnym stopniu zaniedbywać i umniejszać rangę wiedzy w praktyce edukacyjnej. Postuluje się ponowne zaakcentowanie wiedzy jako podstawy budowania curriculum. Oparcie curriculum na zdolnościach wydaje się godzić koncepcje eksponujące cele oraz wiedzę zarówno w badaniach nad curriculum, jak i w praktyce edukacyjnej.

Słowa kluczowe: curriculum, tworzenie curriculum, wiedza, zdolności.