Teaching powerful geographical knowledge – a matter of social justice: initial findings from the GeoCapabilities 3 project

M. Biddulph, T. Bèneker, D. Mitchell, M. Hanus, C. Leininger-Frézal, L. Zwartjes & K. Donert

Published online: 15 Apr 2020.

Submit your article to this journal ☐

Article views: 2763

View related articles ☐

View Crossmark data ☐

Citing articles: 8 View citing articles ☐

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Teaching powerful geographical knowledge – a matter of social justice: initial findings from the GeoCapabilities 3 project

M. Biddulph[a], T. Bèneker[b], D. Mitchell[c], M. Hanus[d], C. Leininger-Frézal[e], L. Zwartjes[f] and K. Donert[g]

[a]School of Education, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK; [b]Faculty of Geosciences, Department of Human Geography & Spatial Planning, Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands; [c]Institute of Education, University College London, London, UK; [d]Faculty of Science, Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Charles University, Prague, Czechia; [e]André Revuz Didactic Laboratory (LDAR), Université Paris Diderot, Paris, France; [f]Geography Department, Sint-Lodewijkscollege Brugge, Bruges, Belgium; [g]European Association of Geographers (EUROGEO), Brussels, Belgium

ABSTRACT

GeoCapabilities offers an approach for unlocking powerful disciplinary knowledge (PDK) for children. In phase three of the project, we are exploring how far GeoCapabilities 'works' for teachers serving communities in challenging socio-economic circumstances. We connect GeoCapabilities to social justice in education, theoretically. Then, using the topic of migration, we discuss initial empirical findings of how teachers understand PDK and their challenges for teaching PDK. Collaborative work between teachers and academics suggests that the social justice dimension of GeoCapabilities could be realised, with appropriate support for teachers. We conclude with a set of principles to inform the future work of GeoCapabilities.

Introduction

The GeoCapabilities project has sought to apply a Capability Approach to the school curriculum, specifically school geography, and in so doing, examine ways in which school geography contributes to developing the capabilities young people need to live a life that they value. It is a response to neoliberal, competitive schooling systems, which at a curriculum level, have tended to downplay subject knowledge in favour of more narrowly defined skills and competences (Solem, Lambert, & Tani, 2013). The focus of phases 1 and 2 of GeoCapabilities was geography teachers, their role as curriculum leaders and their understanding of and engagement with three key ideas: 1.

CONTACT M. Biddulph ✉ mary.biddulph@nottingham.ac.uk 🖃 School of Education, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, England.

'powerful disciplinary knowledge' (PDK); 2. 'curriculum making'; 3. a 'Future 3 curriculum' rooted in a social realist view of knowledge. Phase 3, which is referred to here as 'GeoCapabilities 3′ seeks to develop and extend this work by examining the practical application of a GeoCapabilities approach, specifically in schools labelled as 'challenging'.

Often situated in areas of socio-economic deprivation where traditional industries have declined, new sources of employment are limited, and individual aspirations are difficult to fulfil, schools identified as 'challenging' frequently carry damaging labels such as 'failing', 'unsatisfactory', 'inadequate' or 'underperforming', especially when judged against national benchmarks such as examination results (Beckett, 2014). Pupils are frequently described as having 'low aspirations', and local communities are judged as being 'uninterested' in education (Tomlinson, 1997). Levin (2006) argues that, in what he describes as 'high-need' communities, schools tend to emphasise the pastoral needs of students, often at the expense of their academic achievement. Yet, such schools also tend to experience high levels of external pressures to 'improve' (Chapman & Harris, 2004). As a consequence, teachers in challenging schools are generally subject to higher levels of scrutiny and surveillance than their 'more successful' counterparts, and they are also often constrained in their ability to enact a 'powerful' geography curriculum (see Mitchell, 2016).

The focus on challenging schools is deliberate. In welfare economics, social justice is an aspiration of the Capabilities Approach, and in the work of Michael Young and others, young peoples' access to powerful knowledge (as opposed to knowledge of the powerful) is also seen as a matter of social justice. GeoCapabilities 3 specifically aims to examine how young people, living in economically deprived communities and attending schools labelled as 'challenging' can, in real terms access powerful knowledge (from herein referred to as PDK, powerful disciplinary knowledge after GeoCapabilities 1 and 2) and the potential of the GeoCapabilities approach to achieve this.

In order to investigate the practical application of a GeoCapabilities approach, GeoCapabilities 3 is focusing on one specific aspect of the geography curriculum – migration. Migration is an area of curriculum commonality across participating partners[1], thus enabling comparisons across jurisdictions. In addition, migration is a value-laden contemporary issue dominating aspects of current social and political discourses in Europe and beyond, and as a field of enquiry it has strong social justice threads of its own. It is a broad field of research and development within academic geography, where concepts such as 'home' and 'identity' are emerging fields, and where more traditional concepts such as 'settlement' are being reframed by notions of 'mobility' by human geographers. In addition, migration is a personally relevant topic for many children. Some children are themselves refugees, they may be recent migrants or from second or third generation migrant movements. Some live in families who see themselves as disadvantaged by or competing with migrant communities for local services and opportunities. Thus, teaching about migration is likely to mean also teaching about social justice. This creates an additional dimensionto the project but without altering its fundamental aims.

It was agreed by the six participating institutes (plus one NGO, Eurogeo) that in the initial stages of GeoCapabilities 3 it was important to establish teachers' current

conceptions of teaching about migration in school geography before we could begin to consider the application of the GeoCapabilities approach. This paper presents the outcomes of interviews with participating geography teachers about their current conceptions of teaching about migration, which are then analysed using a framework comprising four concepts associated with social justice: agency; distributive justice; relational justice; and mutuality/misrecognition.

We start our discussions by situating GeoCapabilities 3 within broader conceptions of capabilities as they relate to education. We then present a brief outline of and rationale for our methodology, before then examining the outcomes of the teacher interviews using the social justice conceptual framework mentioned above. We conclude by looking forward and suggesting next steps in the project's activities.

Capabilities and education: situating GeoCapabilities 3

Conceived as an alternative to the human capital and human rights approaches to development, Capabilities, originating from the work of Amartya Sen (1995) and Martha Nussbaum (2011) in welfare economics is grounded in the study of human deprivation and unequal access to human needs; it is therefore rooted in social justice aspirations (Saito, 2003; Tikly & Barrett, 2011). Nussbaum (2011) argues that to 'function' fully, human beings must be safe, healthy, able to reason, able to live with others and so forth (Nussbaum, 2011). According to Lambert, Solem, and Tani (2015, p. 729), a person who is incapable of or unable to access human functions such as these, including education, could be deemed to experience "capability deprivation". Capabilities can therefore be described as "the freedom to enjoy valuable functionings" (Boni & Walker, 2013, p. 3), where freedom is the "empowerment" dimension of human development (Lambert et al., 2015, p. 2) and in which education has a key role.

Drèze and Sen (1995) agree that education is central to both building human capital, but more crucially, to broadening human capability. However, Flores-Crespo (2007) argues that it cannot be assumed that education is a natural precursor to the expansion of freedoms espoused by a capabilities approach in education, a view supported by Walker (2006) who suggests that education has the potential to either remove or maintain the obstacles to capabilities formation. Saito (2003) presents the Capability Approach in education as multi-layered, where the freedoms sought and enabled through a Capabilities Approach may be either for immediate effect, or to enable greater freedoms in the future. This conceptualisation of capabilities is helpful to GeoCapabilities 3 where teachers' professional agency in curriculum making in the short term is deemed significant to developing young people's geographic capabilities both for their present (immediate) and future (longer term) role as national and global citizens.

As mentioned in the 'Introduction', GeoCapabilities is framed by three key ideas, the practical application of which forms the basis of GeoCapabilities 3.

1. Powerful disciplinary knowledge (PDK) is produced in the 'academic' (university) disciplines, but it is re-produced (and re-constructed) in the classroom by

teachers (Young & Muller, 2010). PDK can allow children to think, analyse and "know" the world in ways they cannot through 'everyday' knowledge. A common theme (both within geography and education widely) is the transformative potential of PDK. This is particularly significant for the GeoCapabilities 3 project where we are exploring how far the transformative potential of PDK can be realised in challenging school contexts.

2. A 'Future 3 curriculum' (F3) (Young & Muller, 2010) considers how PDK fits into notions of curriculum purpose. F3 emphasises a "social realist" view of knowledge, which recognises the significance of disciplinary boundaries and at the same time acknowledges that all knowledge is constructed, and socially contingent, thus allowing knowledge to change as the subject discipline changes. Significantly, in GeoCapabilities 3 we are supporting teachers to develop a F3 curriculum. In practice, this means helping teachers to access recent research and developments in academic geography (by talking to academic geographers) while they also try to connect their teaching to their pupils' needs and the social issues of the times.

3. 'Curriculum making' (CM) which focuses on the teacher as curriculum maker at the scale of designing and enacting sequences of lessons. The process of making the curriculum at this scale requires the teacher to have clear educational aims and purposes and to balance attention to "students' experiences; the subject; teaching choices." (Lambert, 2009, p. 124).

These three key ideas are closely connected to social justice, first by an orientation to the future, and secondly by their relation to four key concepts of social justice that comprise the analytical framework of this paper. We unpack the four concepts in more detail in our analysis. However, it is important to rationalise each of the four concepts by exploring their relationship to GeoCapabilities.

The notion of distributive justice is embedded in GeoCapabilities in Young's (2008a) distinction between powerful knowledge – the emancipatory potential of disciplinary, university-based knowledge made accessible to a young person, and 'knowledge of the powerful' – a narrower, fixed school subject knowledge that is more exclusionary and divisive in society. We argue that only a F3 curriculum provides children with access to PDK as the antidote to the fixed and backward-looking subject knowledge of a Future 1 curriculum (Young & Muller, 2010). Thus, recognising and supporting teachers' agency to ensure PDK is accessible to the children they teach is a matter of social justice for teachers, and in the light of this it follows that teachers' autonomy in curriculum making is necessary to realise PDK is 'distributed' to all.

Relational justice (challenging dominant neoliberalism) and mutuality (recognising the interdependence of different groups) are connected to the three ideas of GeoCapabilities by the emphasis which GeoCapabilities places on meeting each child's individual needs. This act of 'teaching as care for individual needs', informed by the notion of PDK (geography and education) can act as a bulwark against the neoliberalism which reduces and flatten local contexts because a performativity agenda (teaching to the test and a narrowing of the teacher's curriculum role) dominates.

The dynamic nature of social justice as a concept can be seen, not just in temporal terms, but also at scale. What this means is that whilst there are "grand narratives",

or what Lyotard (1979 translated 1984) calls 'metanarratives' about society, justice, fairness and so forth, he also refers to 'little stories', namely the small-scale localised stories from the everyday that are also significant in any understanding of social justice. This paper is very much about 'little stories' – of teachers' attitudes, approaches and perceptions of teaching a curriculum topic that in itself is rooted in explicit and implicit social justice themes.

The methodology – interviews with teachers across jurisdictions

It was agreed by project partners that in order to develop an in-depth understanding of geography teachers' experiences of teaching migration, individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews would be appropriate to our research concerns. Such an interpretivist approach would allow project partners to probe and question teachers' thinking, in order to develop deeper insights into the conceptual and pedagogical challenges teachers were facing (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007).

A series of questions were agreed in advance to ensure consistency across project partners, whilst at the same time acknowledging the need for some flexibility, depending on teachers' responses. Alongside basic biographical information such as teachers' academic qualifications and length of time in the profession, we were specifically interested in:

1. The concepts and content of the schools' 'Migration' curricula;
2. How teachers developed their own subject knowledge for teaching migration;
3. Resource availability to support teaching;
4. Teachers' perceptions of students' responses to the curriculum as it is currently, including factors that influence these.

The schools for GeoCapabilities 3 were selected by the academic partners, based on pre-existing professional networks, for example, school-university partnerships for initial teacher training. As indicated in the introduction, participating schools served communities in areas of social-economic deprivation (comprising either high levels of unemployment, or high levels of low-paid employment), and were located in urban areas, but not necessarily areas of high rates of migration. The schools were called 'challenging' because the external circumstances such as low employment levels impacted internally on the schools in terms of low attendance rates in comparison to national averages, low-academic performance according to national benchmarks, and challenging behaviour on the part of some students. The schools varied in terms of their students' ethnicity, with some schools being very diverse and others being mainly white working-class.

Interviews were conducted by national partners and were held either in the participating schools or at the relevant Academic Institute. Twenty teachers participated in one-to-one or small group interviews. All partners provided summaries of the interviews in English, which were then collectively reviewed by the national partners, comparing teachers' responses to the questions asked, or what LeCompte (2000, p. 148) refers to as 'sifting and sorting'. This ensured we had an overview of the issues raised

by the teachers and we were able to examine these in the light of local contexts. Following this collective 'sifting' process, teachers' responses were then analysed using the four social justice concepts as a framework. The original data (transcripts) were then used to identify illustrative quotes. We recognise that the application of a framework in itself risks confirmatory bias in the selection of the content reported here. However, the sifting process identified above deliberately enabled us to question the data and build some familiarity with it prior to any further data analysis.

It is also acknowledged that the four concepts that underpinned our analysis are by no means an exhaustive list. We recognise that other social justice concepts, for example, 'legal justice' or 'critical social justice' could also have been utilised as part of the framework. However, in order to engage with the aims of GeoCapabilities 3, we agreed that the concepts identified in this paper, which relate to notions of social justice associated with the Capability Approach (such as agency), and also connect to broader notions of social justice such as distributive and relational justice, would best support the analysis of teachers' perspectives.

The outcomes of the interviews: presentation and discussion

In the following sections, we present the outcomes of the teacher interviews, utilising the conceptual framework as an analytic tool. Here we consider both implicit and explicit connections based on teachers' feedback.

Agency

Agency is a concept that is central to the Capability Approach and which underpins much of the thinking about what constitutes a socially just society (Sen, 1999; Walker, 2006). Sen defines agency as "someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well." (Sen, 1999, p. 19, cited in Wilson-Strydom, 2011, p. 408). Walker (2006, p. 166) agrees, summarising agency as "the ability to pursue goals that one values and that are important to the life an individual wishes to lead". The term 'agency' relates to both an individual and/or collective ability to act independently and exercise free choice.

Whilst GeoCapabilities 1 and 2 emphasises the importance of teacher agency in the construction of the geography curriculum, for the teachers working in challenging contexts, the performativity agenda of competitiveness, school league tables and national economic growth supersedes their curriculum agency. Despite curriculum differences between countries, it was clear that participating teachers felt that they face comparable pressures in terms of:

- performance pressures
- time to undertake the necessary curriculum development work
- time to ensure the quality of the work they do
- output pressures in terms of examination outcomes

The performativity agenda was felt across all jurisdictions and for some was exacerbated by the context in which they work. Many of the teachers argued that time to utilise their subject expertise and engage in curriculum making was hard to find. This often led to the use of resources such as textbooks that they felt were less than satisfactory in terms of developing students' geographical capabilities. One of the participating Dutch schools is under significant pressure because of very poor results in high stake exams at the end of secondary education. External pressure from the local media, plus internal pressure from new tracking systems all reduced teachers' motivation to develop the curriculum. As one of the teachers stated:

> "We use the textbook in a quite traditional way. There is a lot of pressure and lack of time to develop our own teaching materials. We really would like to do some more of that and link the teaching on migration better to the background of our students and their neighbourhoods."

Teachers were also concerned about how to deal with their own attitudes and values in the context of teaching a controversial topic such as migration. A British did not want to be seen to be indoctrinating students with her values, and felt the pressure to be balanced in the ideas she presented:

> "In your role as a teacher you have to be so politically neutral. The kids are always itching to know what you think and I think it's a very dicey situation to find yourself in … .".

Some teachers manage this difficulty by teaching more distant and possibly less contentious examples, such as migration from Mexico to the USA, or by choosing teaching strategies that avoid debate and discussion that might inflame opinions. Having said this, teachers also felt torn between a 'safe' curriculum and the need to help students break down the stereotypes they have of migrants and migration, which, they felt, come from a range of sources, especially from students' families. A Belgian teacher stated:

> "They seem rather right wing oriented and very negative about migration (informed by) home – sometimes they paraphrase their parents' expressions."

In the context of GeoCapabilities it could be argued that by resorting to less 'powerful pedagogies' (Roberts, 2017) in order to avoid discussion and debate, students are also being denied access to powerful disciplinary knowledge that might better enable them to reflect more critically on the values and attitudes they bring into school from elsewhere.

In the light of the discussion above, a key challenge raised by teachers was access to what they regarded as 'good information' that would better enable them to utilise reliable evidence to challenge students' views. One of the Czech teachers stated:

> "The biggest problem is in finding actual data and information on what is happening with migrant workers or temporary asylum seekers in the EU. What is the success of integration, what is the success rate of returning rejected asylum seekers? Students sometimes find it difficult to break down the basic stereotypes that come from families and the lack of specific information. Part of my teaching is more about disinformation and (its) function in society."

The implication here is that teachers themselves want to access PDK as defined by GeoCapabilities in order to be able to teach more reliable, but contestable knowledge

to their students. They remind us that 'curriculum agency' is difficult to exercise when teachers' own access to reliable, contestable knowledge is compromised because of professional circumstances. Access to 'better' knowledge in order to support teachers' professional agency raises questions about resource availability, access and distribution.

Distributive justice

Distributive justice describes a socially just society as one where material and non-material goods, including education, are distributed fairly to members of a society (Gewirtz, 1998). Within the context of capabilities, Sen argues that justice is less about individual resource possession (e.g., income, value of goods owned) and more about an individual's freedom to choose a life they value (Sen, 1992, cited in Walker, p. 206). This is a view supported by Walker (2006) writing about the capabilities approach in girls' education in South Africa. Resources, argues Robeyns (2004, cited in Walker, 2006, p. 166) can be seen as "capability inputs" and so the challenge is not just the opportunity to access resources, such as schools, but the capacity of each individual to convert available resources into capabilities he or she has reason to value. Walker goes on to argue that inequalities such as class, race and gender are fundamental considerations because "such differences affect our ability to convert the resources we have into capabilities to function" (Walker, 2006, p.166). Resource access can enable or hinder an individual's ability to convert their specific capabilities into real functioning, as Walker explains, "if a child refuses or is denied or restricted in his or her access to the goods of education, this will in turn reduce opportunities later in life" (2006, p. 165).

According to Dutch and British teachers, their students lack opportunities to access information other than that presented in school is an issue. One that is compounded by poor access *in school* to, for example, ICT to support more independent learning. A British teacher says:

> "I'd like them to be able to look more for themselves at sources, but the access to ICT makes it difficult, which is a bit annoying. Maths and business studies get the ICT rooms, and lots of the students don't have access to IT at home, so I can't always set it [independent work] as homework."

Dutch teachers confirm that they have to think carefully about what students can do at home and what their families can afford. The Belgian situation seems somewhat easier as more schools implement BYOD policy (bring your own device) and so plan for pupils using their smartphones and tablets for learning geography both at school and at home, assuming pupils can access such equipment.

In addition to lack of resources, the quality of resources is also identified as problematic. In the Netherlands, the participating teachers work in inner-city urban schools with a large majority of students who are second or third generation migrants. They are not confronted with the xenophobic and stereotype ideas that other schools report and because of the composition of their classes, they feel that they can discuss a lot of issues that would probably be much more problematic in 'white schools'. However, the teachers comment on how popular textbooks show in

pictures, figures and texts over-simplified messages about, in one teacher's words, "poor neighbourhoods, lack of safety, and lack of social cohesion in relation to its (migrant) inhabitants". Their students live in such neighbourhoods, and teachers recognise that such resources are likely to be offensive to students in presenting unhelpfully simplistic impressions of life in these places.

When teaching migration from a more quantitative approach (using data sources, diagrammatic representations etc), as is stipulated by the French curriculum, it was felt that migration as a topic becomes too abstract for some students to relate to. Other teachers observe that migration is so complex that some students struggle to understand even basic concepts, with one teacher speculating that possibly migration was a topic for "more academically able pupils". Such perceptions are problematic in the context of GeoCapabilities where PDK is central to developing *all* students' ability to 'think geographically', i.e., with concepts (see Jackson, 2006), and not just some.

Whilst teachers might see the lack of resources such as ICT or appropriate textbooks as a disadvantage, what the GeoCapabilities 3 project seeks to do is in effect redistribute knowledge as a resource, and better enable knowledge integration between school and academic geography. Academic geography becomes a resource to support the development of teachers' PDK in order for them to recontextualise (Bernstein, 2000) knowledge in ways they judge to be appropriate for their students. It is a point at which teacher agency as curriculum makers, and distributional justice in terms of resource availability start to intersect.

Seeing knowledge as a resource to be redistributed in this way takes us back to the origins of powerful knowledge (PK) and Young's (2008b) assertion that access to PK is a matter social justice. His argument being, and one on which GeoCapabilities has been built, that all young people should have access to PK, because such knowledge is more reliable, enables new ways of thinking, and "provides learners with a language for engaging in political, moral and other kinds of debates" (Young, 2008b, p. 14). We discuss teachers' concerns about students' attitudes in a later section, but here we can see that in the context of migration studies there is a real challenge for teachers in both accessing relevant resources as well as developing more appropriate pedagogies to support their students' learning.

Relational justice

Relational justice, as a dimension of a more general theory of social justice, is perceived as necessary to challenge the dominating individualism of many western societies (Raines, 1989). This individualism, argues Raines (1989, p. 129), emphasises difference and makes "it difficult for us to talk about what constitutes a good society".

In the context of capabilities, Giraud, Renouard, L'Huillier, de La Martinière, and Sutter (2013, p. 2) argue that "human relationships are at the core of human life" and so refer to 'relational capabilities'. As a concept, relational capabilities allow us to consider the significance of relationship-building in the context of teaching and learning about migration. This can operate on two levels, first, the relationship between teachers and their students, and secondly, students' relationships with migrants who

might be in their classrooms or who they know about through the media, through their local community, as well as through studying geography.

In the teacher interviews it became clear that whilst 'relational capabilities' might be desirable; in some instances, they are much more difficult to achieve. French and British teachers point out that students' individual attitudes present barriers to understanding migratory phenomena. A teacher from the London area comments on students' lack of appreciation for the interrelated and interconnected nature of lives:

> "A lot of our kids have very weak cultural capital. They don't have exposure to different groups of people and places, even the positive things about migration. We do one cultural event each year where we bring lots of different food and fashion, but apart from that they don't. And they have no awareness of how different cultures affect the music they listen to and their daily life, like Rap and grime which originate elsewhere."

In one of the Belgium schools, where the students were from a range of backgrounds, including from migrant backgrounds, the issue was how to deal with the stereotyping of migrants *in* a class with migrant students. The teacher reflected that

> "…based on the exam results: do they understand migration…Yes. Was I able to change them as a human to have another opinion … (I am) not sure".

These examples point to the need to build students' relational capabilities, and that teaching about migration in a relational context could develop students' levels of understanding and empathy with the complex choices and decisions many migrants are forced to make. As a Belgian teacher puts it:

> "Earth is like a spider's web, everything is connected to each other, in contact with each other. If you touch or disturb it somewhere, it also moves elsewhere".

It highlights the challenge in GeoCapabilities 3 to explore the kinds of pedagogies that might better enable 'relational capabilities'. This means that consideration needs to be given to the relationship between the knowledge that students bring to school and the demands of PDK, a view reinforced by Basil Bernstein (2000, cited in Lambert et al., 2015) who contends it is the relationships between disciplinary knowledge and everyday knowledge that is powerful in pedagogical terms.

Mutuality/mis/recognition

In the social justice literature "mutuality", is drawn from Etzioni's (2003, 2007) notion of communitarianism, and refers to the ways in which individuals and groups are mutually dependent on each other in a socially just society. It is a concept that seeks to balance the rights and responsibilities of the individual with the rights and responsibilities of communities, and in so doing ensure the participation of groups often most marginalised in society. It is linked to ideas of citizenship, participation, inclusion and social capital, and acknowledges the commonality of experience of different social groups (Gewirtz, 1998). In the context of schools, Arthur and Bailey (2014) contend that it is possible to develop students' sense of community and their appreciation of mutuality through the curriculum (such as teaching citizenship principles) and through more democratic school processes.

Whilst social justice for mutuality hinges on the interrelationship between the individual and the community, social justice for recognition is built on a commitment to "others and otherness" and recognising and respecting difference (Gewirtz, 1998: p. 476). Misrecognition highlights the challenges some individuals and groups face in being recognised for who and what they are. Taylor (1994, cited in Hopkins, Botterill, Sanghera, & Arshad, 2017) contends that misrecognition is a form of injustice that can do real harm to those on the receiving end because it can lead to social exclusion and isolation. Research with young people in Glasgow, including migrant young people concluded that misrecognition is commonplace in schools as well as other public spaces (Hopkins et al., 2017).

A Dutch teacher illustrates the challenge of misrecognition, explaining that the students in his classroom asked him "is their school is seen as a 'black' school?" As Vedder (2006) explains, many Dutch national parents think that a high immigrant population in a school reduces the quality of education children receive and so they exercise their right to choose and send their children to less ethnically diverse or all-white schools. This situation is exacerbated by the availability of affordable housing in some areas and academic selection criteria for different types of schools. For the students attending schools that are labelled as 'black', the concern is that assumptions (hence misrecognition) are made about who they are and what they are capable of, and the potential for greater inter-ethnic understanding, or mutuality, is limited.

In the context of this first phase of GeoCapabilities 3, British, Flemish and Czech teachers feel that a challenge to their teaching and thus a challenge to developing mutuality are the negative attitudes and values the students bring with them from home to school. A British teacher reports feeling shocked by students' views:

> "I've been really uncomfortable with some of the views the kids are expressing, even from those from recent migrant families themselves – it's bizarre and I don't get it, particularly as they live in London. I think they must be getting these views from their parents. Views like – 'there's not enough jobs, we should send them home … there's not enough hospital beds, we should send them home' and I'll ask, whose home is this?"

Clearly, the students struggle to see the contribution of migrants to their communities/lives, and their sense of mutuality is significantly limited. We would argue that ensuring young people access new ways of thinking about migration, perhaps that offered by developments in academic research, gives teachers the opportunity to challenge students' misconceptions (see Minton, 2014) and students the opportunity to begin to build a more critical understanding of migration.

Participating teachers experience a real tension between listening to their students and giving students a voice, (even if students express racist attitudes), whilst at the same time challenging students' values and attitudes. As a Flemish teacher explained, the challenge was "How not to dis-honour them for the sake of their opinion, you must be careful … when there are problems (prejudice): some pupils can be very aggressive when you confront them with other opinions." This experience is echoed by a Czech teacher, who encountered manifestations of racism and xenophobia when parents needed to be informed in advance about a migrant visiting lessons to talk to students.

In some respects, this takes us full circle and the overarching challenge teachers raise is how to teach a controversial issue in these challenging circumstances. Yet, in

the context of the GeoCapabilities 3 project, the focus on migration provides oppor-tunities to examine and challenge how school geography opens up discussions about 'others' and 'otherness' with young people, and in so doing develop a language and vocabulary to foster honest debate.

It is clear from the teachers' responses that they can see the potential of geography to help young people better understand the lives of migrants and so develop a more critical appreciation of the images and data about migration that confront them on a regular basis. However, participating teachers are frustrated by a range of factors, such as poor access to resources and grappling with externally imposed accountability agendas, whilst trying to mediate students' values and attitudes.

Conclusions: implications for GeoCapabilities and next steps

The work of GeoCapabilities 3 has allowed us to start to tell the 'little stories' of teachers experiences of teaching about migration in schools in challenging circum-stances. Four concepts related to social justice: agency; distributive justice; relational justice and mutuality/misrecognition, have provided a framework with which to ana-lyse the perspectives of participating teachers from different European contexts. These findings highlight significant challenges regardless of national context, such as student attitudes, resource availability, the 'othering' of migrants in the minds of school stu-dents, as well as the lack of teacher agency, as matters to grapple with if the ambi-tions of GeoCapabilities 3 are to be realised.

From this work, some principles have started to emerge, which will now form the basis for future work, and which reflect the intentions of GeoCapabilities 3. The teacher interviews have highlighted the need to develop teachers own PDK in order to support teacher agency in curriculum making. It is significant that teachers would turn to developments in the academic discipline in order to inform their own under-standing if they could find realistic ways of doing so. These insights have enabled us to consider practical ways forward to support the teachers. Currently underway is a collaborative approach to curriculum making whereby teachers work with academic geographers with expertise in migration studies, to develop, edit and refine the migra-tion aspect of the school geography curriculum. The purpose is to bridge the school-university divide (see Butt & Collins, 2018) in order to build a Future 3 curriculum, namely a curriculum that is rooted in PDK.

Access to developments in academic geography links to the tensions' teachers face in respecting students' values and attitude on one hand, and the need to challenge these values and attitudes in conceptually and pedagogically appropriate ways on the other. The interviews have revealed a tendency to resort to 'safe' curriculum content and 'safe' pedagogical approaches, even though this is unlikely to build more positive 'relational capabilities' between students and the migrants they learn about. Key here is access to appropriate resources to enhance teaching and learning and that could support teachers in bypassing inappropriate published material. Developments in aca-demic geography cannot only contribute to teachers own PDK development, but also enhance their access to current, relevant and challenging resources.

Already a group of London teachers have met to discuss how they might recognise and evaluate the PDK in their teaching of migration. The teachers had been planning sequences of lessons on migration (curriculum making) using a template encouraging them to reflect on PDK and the 'significance' of subject content for their students. They have started to devise and apply a practical planning tool which blends Klafki's (2000) questions about knowledge significance with Béneker's (2018) model of powerful knowledge in geography. Early indications are that these tools have the potential to enhance the teachers' capacities to make the PDK of migration more accessible to their pupils. Their approach illustrates how the social justice principles we have discussed through this paper translate into practical tools and actions. Teachers across the project are currently trialling these tools and other ways to teach and evaluate the PDK of migration in their local contexts. As they do so, we (the teacher educators in the project) can explore and develop the principles we have identified in this paper.

In GeoCapabilities 3, the teaching and evaluation of migration curricula across each jurisdiction is taking place in 2019–20, which will provide data for project researchers. The results and reflections of the teachers in the project will be shared through an online 'exhibition', which will include: lesson materials and sources; reflections on the PDK teachers and pupils learned (and PDK which remained inaccessible) and the process by which the teachers selected and developed the 'what, why and how' of a curriculum about migration. Longer term we hope to find evidence that a GeoCapabilities approach has enhanced this process to make PDK accessible to young people in challenging school contexts.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Note

1. Participating in the project are geography teacher educators from 5 academic institutes: Czechia, France, England (2 participants), the Netherlands, plus one school in Belgium working as a partner institute. Also, 12 schools (2 from each jurisdiction and 4 from the UK), plus one NGO (Eurogeo).

Funding

References

Arthur, J and Bailey, R. (2014). *Schools and Community: The Communitarian Agenda in Education*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Beckett, L. (2014). Raising teachers' voice on achievement in urban schools in England: An introduction. *The Urban Review*, *46*(5), 783–799.

Béneker, T. (2018). *Powerful knowledge in geography education: Inaugural lecture*. Utrecht: Utrecht University, Faculty of Geosciences.

Bernstein, B. (2000). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.

Boni, A., & Walker, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Human development and capabilities: Re-imagining the university of the twenty-first century*. London and New York, NY: Routledge.

Butt, G., & Collins, G. (2018). Understanding the gap between schools and universities. In M. Jones & D. Lambert (Eds.), *Debates in geography education* (2nd ed., pp. 263–274). Oxford: Routledge.

Chapman, C., & Harris, A. (2004). Improving schools in difficult and challenging contexts: Strategies for improvement. *Educational Research*, *46*(3), 219–228.

Drèze, J. and Sen, M. (1998). *Indian development: Selected regional perspective*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Etzioni, A. (2003). Communitarianism. In Christensen, K and Levinson, D. (Eds,), *Encyclopedia of community: From the village to the virtual world* (Vol. 1). Thousand Oakes, Calif: Sage Publications.

Etzioni, A. (2007). The community deficit. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *45*(1), 23–42.

Flores-Crespo, P. (2007). Situating education in the human capabilities approach. In M. Walker & E. Unterhalter (Eds.), *Amartya Sen's capability approach and social justice in education* (pp. 45–65). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gewirtz, S. (1998). Conceptualising social justice in education: Mapping the territory. *Journal of Education Policy*, *13*(4), 469–484.

Giraud, G., Renouard, C., L'Huillier, H., de La Martinière., & Sutter, C. (2013). *Relational capability: A multidimensional approach* (Working Paper 15.). Foundation Pour Les Études et Recherches sur le Développement International.

Hopkins, P., Botterill, K., Sanghera, G., & Arshad, R. (2017). Encountering misrecognition: Being mistaken for being Muslim. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *107*(4), 934–948.

Jackson, P. (2006). Thinking geographically, *Geography*, *91*(3), 199.

Klafki, W. (2000). Didaktik analysis as the core of preparation of instruction. In I. Westbury, S. Hopmann, & K. Riquarts (Eds.), *Teaching as a reflective practice: The German Didaktik tradition* (pp. 139–160). London: Routledge.

Lambert, D. (2009). A different view. *Geography*, *94*(2), 119–125.

Lambert, D., Solem, M., & Tani, S. (2015). Achieving human potential through geography education: A Capabilities Approach to curriculum making in schools. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *105*(4), 723–735.

LeCompte, M.D. (2000). Analysing qualitative data. *Theory into Practice*, *39*(3), 146–154.

Levin, B. (2006). Schools in challenging circumstances: A reflection on hat we know and what we need to know. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *17*(4), 399–407.

Lyotary, J.-F. (1979). The Postmodern Condition: A report on Knowledge. Translated Bennington, G. and Massumi, B. (1984) (Eds.), Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Minton, M. (2014). Challenging student misconceptions of immigration in the UK. *Teaching Geography*, *39*(3), 108–110.

Mitchell, D. (2016). Geography teachers and curriculum making in changing times. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, *25*(2), 121–133.

Nussbaum, M. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

Raines, J. C. (1989). Towards a relational theory of justice. *CrossCurrents*, *39*(2), 129–141.

Roberts, M. (2017). Geographical education is powerful if … . *Teaching Geography*, *42*(1), 6–9.

Saito, M. (2003). Amartya Sen's capability approach to education: A critical exploration. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *37*(1), 17–33.

Sen, A. (1995). *Inequality re-examined*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Solem, M., Lambert, D., & Tani, S. (2013). GeoCapabilities: Towards an international framework for researching the purpose and values of geography education. *Review of International Geographical Education Online*, *3*(2), 214–229.

Tikly, L., & Barrett, A. M. (2011). Social justice, capabilities and the quality of education in low income countries. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *31*(1), 3–14.

Tomlinson, S. (1997). Sociological perspectives on failing schools. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, *7*(1), 81–98.

Vedder, P. (2006). Black and white schools in the Netherlands. *European Education*, *38*(2), 36–49.

Walker, M. (2006). Towards a capability-based theory of social justice for education policy making. *Journal of Education Policy*, *21*(2), 163–185.

Wellington, J., & Szczerbinski, M. (2007). *Research methods for the social sciences*. London: Continuum.

Wilson-Strydom, M. (2011). University access for social justice: A capabilities perspective. *South African Journal of Education*, *31*(3), 407–418.

Young, M. (2008a). *Bringing knowledge back in: From social constructivism to social realism*, London: Routledge.

Young, M. (2008b). From constructivism to realism in the sociology of the curriculum. *Review of Research in Education*, *32*(1), 1–28.

Young, M., & Muller, J. (2010). Three educational scenarios for the future: Lessons from the sociology of knowledge. *European Journal of Education*, *45*(1), 11–26.