GeoCapabilities GLOSSARY

Capabilities Approach

The Capabilities Approach comes from Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's theory of human welfare economics. This sees human development as a process of enabling personal autonomy and freedom, both in thought and action.

When applied to education, the theory concerns human potential in terms of freedoms 'to be' and 'to do'. At a basic level this means being able to read and write.

Researchers use the capabilities approach to demonstrate the loss of human potential when, for example, women and girls are denied access to basic education.

- *Link to"GeoCapabilities – What do we mean by Capabilities?*

GeoCapabilities

In GeoCapabilities, nurturing human potential includes the ability to think and reason in specialist ways – with geographical knowledge and ideas.

GeoCapabilities clarifies the role that geographical knowledge and geographical thinking plays in the development of an educated person. This is a person with the capability to deliberate about the world from a disciplined perspective. Geographical knowledge helps us understand the world beyond our everyday experience of it.

This is why 'capabilities' are different from generic competencies and transferable skills such as teamwork, communication, and planning.

Like Amartya Sen, we do not wish to identify a list of 'capabilities' to be measured or assessed. Thinking geographically (or scientifically, or historically, or artistically …) cannot be reduced to a tick list.

But using geographical ideas and perspectives help us see the world in new ways. It provides particular, powerful insights. This contributes to human capabilities development because it enables sharper, critical reflection about the choices and decisions that govern one's life.

- *Link to GeoCapabilities –The Approach*

Curriculum Making

Curriculum making is the practical manifestation of curriculum thinking. One distinctive aspect of curriculum thinking is the appreciation of 'aims' or 'goals'. So, unlike lesson planning which is often steered by specific learning objectives and learning activities, curriculum making is concerned with longer term goals. It is more strategic than lesson planning. Over a course of study, the teacher enacts the curriculum in order to enable students to think geographically.

Curriculum making is, therefore, a professional 'balancing act'. The teacher needs to balance several competing priorities: the needs and interests of the students; the purposes and particular characteristics of the subject; general educational priorities; broader social purposes of school such as education for citizenship, healthy lifestyles.

Curriculum making is a construct from the Anglo-Saxon tradition of curriculum studies. GeoCapabilities reveals that it has similar connotations and motives to Subject Didactics in the Nordic and German tradition.

- *Link to Training Materials – Module2 – Getting Started*
- *Link to Training Materials – Module2 – Theory*

Curriculum Leadership

Curriculum leadership is linked to curriculum making. Teachers are curriculum leaders when they are engaged in curriculum thinking. The practical outcome of curriculum leadership is effective curriculum making.

In GeoCapabilities, teachers have a professional responsibility to be curriculum leaders. It is difficult to imagine developing powerful disciplinary knowledge (PDK) with children and young people where curriculum leadership is absent.

- *Link to Training Materials – Module 4 – Into Practice*

Curriculum Advocacy

Advocacy means: to show, publicly, support for a particular course or policy – and to make recommendations about how this course or policy can be achieved.

When teachers take on curriculum leadership they often need to explain their reasoning and their actions to colleagues, school leaders, parents and

students. This is curriculum advocacy. Perhaps the most powerful means for a teacher to be a curriculum advocate is through their professional actions.

- *Link to Training Materials - Module 3 – Into Practice*

Three Futures

Three Futures [Future 1, Future 2 and Future 3] is a heuristic device. It enables us to distinguish between three curriculum scenarios.

The three scenarios are in some ways 'caricatures'. But like most caricatures, they contain elements of truth:

Future 1 is a curriculum consisting of 'given' knowledge that is static and uncontested. The teacher delivers the 'facts'.

Future 2 is in many ways a response to the deficiencies of a curriculum of transmission. Subjects are relaxed, generic skills are brought to the forefront and learning how to learn becomes the overarching aim.

Future 3 restores the responsibilities of teachers (who are more than 'facilitators of learning'). But unlike Future 1, knowledge is contested, dynamic and subject to argument. Students are encouraged to think how 'better' knowledge can be distinguished.

GeoCapabilities supports a Future 3 curriculum, underpinned by 'powerful disciplinary knowledge'. This is a curriculum of engagement.

- *Link to GeoCapabilities – Curriculum of engagement*
- *Link to Training Materials – Module 1 - Theory*

Powerful Disciplinary Knowledge (PDK)

PDK is a form of knowledge, often abstract and theoretical, that enables a person to understand, interpret, and think about the world. It draws in ideas and concepts derived from academic disciplines. Specialist teachers, such as geography teachers, provide students with opportunities to learn how to use geographical knowledge to think, to explain, to predict and to envision alternative futures. Because of its specialized, conceptual, and often contested nature, PDK usually has to be taught by skilful and knowledgeable teachers, and is therefore unlikely to be learned informally by happenstance and everyday experience.

- *Link to Training Materials – Module 1 - Theory*

Vignette of PDK

A brief example of PDK in the context of a geography lesson. The geography lesson is described, and then analysed, in terms of questions:

'Where is the PDK?'

'How does PDK knowledge development take place?'

The wide array of PDK vignettes available on the GeoCapabilities teacher training website illustrate for teachers the value of identifying the powerful geographical knowledge - for thinking, interpreting, and understanding different topics and themes.

- *Link to Training Materials – Module 1 - Into Practice*

Curriculum Artefact

An important part of 'curriculum leadership' is being able to identify and create curriculum artefacts. A curriculum artefact is a learning material that has special significance.

It is a video, poem, text, image, diagram, map, graph (or ??) that has been selected because it is a rich source of data and because it can provoke a response from the students.

Almost always the curriculum artefact is just part of the whole 'ecology' of a sequence of lessons. But is a key, memorable part. We say a curriculum artefact is created or made, because it needs a knowledgeable and skilful teacher to see, and then exploit, the full potential of the material (the image, graph, text or whatever has been selected).

- *Link to Training Materials – Module 2 – Into Practice*

Subject Didactics

'Subject didactics' (or, 'subject-matter didactics', Fachdidaktik) explores teaching, studying and learning of specific school subjects. Geography didactics is thus interested in teaching, studying and learning of geography. The terms of 'didactics' and 'subject didactics' derive from German literature and are also widely used in Nordic countries. '

Subject didactics' is a way to connect the core ideas of the academic discipline with broader educational aims. Geography didactics thus

connects geography as a discipline with educational sciences. The emphasis is on understanding the geography as a subject and its special characteristics and then on applying its perspectives in practices of teaching.

- *Link to Training Materials – Module2 – Theory*

Additional reference

The differences between the Anglo Saxon and German/Nordic tradition with respect to 'didactics' is touched on here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Didactic_method

Thinking Geographically

Geographical thinking introduces young people to the Earth as an 'object of thought' rather than simply as a 'place of experience'. Thinking geographically helps us examine the many contexts of the world through systematic reference to the distinctive organising concepts of place, space and environment. The multitude of substantive concepts (the human and physical phenomena on the surface of the earth), are explored in terms of their relational connections at a range of scales, from the local to the global. Thinking geographically is enabled by a combination of 'deep' descriptive world knowledge, relational understanding and applied thinking

- *Link to Training Materials – Module 1 – Theory*

Additional reference

http://www.geography.org.uk/.../GA_GINCConsultation12ThinkingGeographically.pdf