Teaching geography for social transformation

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Abstract

This paper considers how higher education geography is a discipline that can make a significant contribution to addressing inequality and engaging with the agenda for social change. It adopts the view that the teaching of geography can promote social transformation through the development of knowledge, skills and values in students that encourage social justice and equity. The paper explores how teaching about social transformation is closely interlinked with teaching for social transformation and considers some of the pedagogical approaches that might be used to achieve these. It considers how the lack of diversity of higher education geography teachers impacts on these issues before moving on to consider how the nature of different higher education systems supports or constrains geographers' abilities to teach for social transformation. Finally, the paper ends by asking individuals and geography departments to consider their commitment to teaching for social transformation.

Key words: Teaching for social transformation, inequality, social change, geography curriculum

Introduction

This paper focuses on higher education geography as a discipline that can make a significant contribution towards teaching for social transformation. In arguing for a stronger commitment to the agenda for social change, the paper acknowledges that this is by no means new territory for academic geography. Geographers, have, for example, long been interested in issues of equity and social justice. However, for reasons referred to below, the time is now right for us to re-examine and strengthen our commitment to teaching for change. In so doing, this paper engages with questions such as 'What do we mean by social transformation?', 'What contextual constraints and opportunities do we face?' and 'What pedagogic approaches are most appropriate in teaching for transformation?'

It is recognized, of course, that the answers to these questions will depend, in broad terms, on what kind of social transformation is envisaged. There is inevitably a wide array of societal models and envisaged futures that could be considered as representing strategic, long-term ambitions. However, at the risk of considerable over-simplification, we suggest that the concept of teaching for social transformation can be interpreted in two principal ways:

1. teaching that aims to promote knowledge, skills and values amongst all students that, through critical thinking, encourages social justice and equity;
2. teaching that fosters conservative and neo-liberal goals such as the re-production of the labour force through vocationally oriented education.

The authors wish to make clear at the outset that this paper adopts the first position and is focused around issues of social justice and inclusivity. This reading of teaching for social transformation encompasses the multi-faceted nature of social justice, as described by Gewirtz&Cribb (2002), compared with the second and more utilitarian reading. It reflects a desire for curricula not only to address issues related to the distribution of economic, cultural and social resources, but also to recognize and draw from the plurality of cultural perspectives and knowledge, particularly of students and faculty. However, as Thrupp & Tomlinson (2005, p. 549) point out, "although social justice is a central concept in many academic discussions of education policy it tends to suffer from the charge of utopianism or idealism, as well as accusations of vagueness and oversimplification".

They also highlight that this vagueness and oversimplification "often just reflect the complexity and contestedness of achieving social justice in education" which "require more than liberal 'problem-solving' approaches, with their technicist and reductionist assumptions" (p. 549).

For many, the achievement of neo-liberal goals is negatively bound up with the 'new managerial' agendas in higher education (Riddell et al., 2005), which are associated with teaching audits and target setting, for example, requirements to include the development of transferable skills within the curricula to enhance students' employability. These issues are addressed elsewhere and readers are pointed in particular to Brown et al. (2004), Maguire & Guyer (2004), the (2001) special collection of Planet on Embedding Careers Education in the Curricula of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (http://www. gees.ac.uk/pubs/planet/index.htm) and others, which focus, for example, on promoting geographers' employability (see Rooney et al., 2006).

Why social transformation?
Our paper opens by highlighting the need for change in geographical education. In part, this is because of major developments in the world we study: in particular, the growing and increasingly complex forms of economic and social inequality at all scales of analysis (Kanbur & Venables, 2005). At the global level, 80% of the world's Gross Domestic Product is held by 1 billion people largely in the developed world and the remaining 20% is shared by 5 billion people living in developing countries (UN, 2005). At local and regional scales too there is a growing gap between the rich and the poor and an increasing differentiation between their economic situations, access to health and education and representation in legislation and judicial processes (UN, 2005). For example, whilst the proportion of the global population living in extreme poverty declined between 1981 and 2001, in sub-Saharan Africa the situation has worsened, exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic (UN, 2005). For geographers, exploration of these intense spatial and social contrasts provides both new opportunities for academic enquiry and important issues to be addressed within geographical curricula. They also give a renewed moral imperative to teaching for change in an increasingly divided world. Moreover, these issues of equity and justice are inter-generational as well as contemporary. The launch in January 2005 of the United Nations Decade for Sustainable Development raises major questions about resource use, climate change and species extinction, which require us all to think critically about long-term equity issues and meeting the needs of future generations.

Of course many geographical curricula already address issues of economic and social inequality within modules or courses. These provide students with an understanding of the issues resulting in inequality; however, teaching about social transformation develops the relationship between activism and the academy (Hay 2001a; Cloke, 2002). Previously the argument has been that solutions to societal problems lie in hands outside the classroom, such as government bodies. However, classrooms can be "a microcosm of the emancipatory societies we seek to encourage" (Hay 2001a, p. 170). bell hooks (1994, p. 12) argues that "the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy". Hay (2001b), while recognizing the danger of naïve idealism, believes that through changing classrooms we may change the world. Geography offers an opportunity "to include the voices of marginalised people in academic representations of their lives" (Cook, 2000, p. 13). It can provide a critical approach to addressing inequalities in power relations (Curran & Roberts, 2001). Bondi (2004) and Heyman (2000) argue that the geography classroom should be a site of political engagement and highlight the importance of students' examining the meaning of social justice and equity in their own lives. However, as Valentine (2005, p. 486) stresses, "this does not mean telling students what to think or value but rather giving them the skills to think through problems for themselves and to value argument". In addition, Merritt (2004, p. 95) argues that "geographers are particularly well suited to study and teach concepts related to social justice

because social injustice is caused by and expressed in such intrinsically geographical ways as ghettos, borders, margins, peripheries and regions at different scales".

The importance of re-focusing geography teaching in the directions outlined above is further reinforced by a number of trends and pressures affecting the health and status of our discipline and by its ability to recruit students. Arguably, we need to change not only to keep abreast of major global developments and problems but also to protect and enhance the welfare of our subject. Many recent surveys in a variety of different countries point to a decline in the subject's popularity at both school and university levels. The international evidence is generally not encouraging. Gerber (2001) surveyed the situation in 31 countries and found the position of geography a cause for concern. A recent European survey by Donert (2004) indicated that the subject is under serious threat in 38 per cent of school and 45 per cent of higher education systems. Similarly, in a survey of 14 countries, Rawling (2004, p. 168) identified the "uncertain place" of geography in both the primary and secondary school curriculum. In the UK, Gardner & Craig (2001) highlighted the declining popularity of school geography and the threat this poses to the discipline at higher education level. In the United States, Bednarz & Bednarz (2004, p. 210) have expressed the view that, faced with increasing competition from other disciplines, geography runs the risk of being left behind.

In the schools sector the position and role of disciplines within the curriculum is normally centrally controlled by governments. It seems that geographers have not been sufficiently active or successful in persuading politicians and education bureaucrats of the value of our subject (Rawlinson et al., 2004). Moreover, the difficulties facing geography in schools inevitably impact on the discipline's status and success at higher education level, although here the curriculum is generally less centrally controlled and more responsive to factors such as student demand. However, if fewer students take geography in schools this of itself is likely to reduce recruitment for degree courses. As a result in the UK, for example, some smaller and less well known geography departments have been forced to close (Gardner & Craig, 2001).

Although geography's position is by no means entirely negative, the current problems do provide a prompt for the discipline to review its relationship with government, with education policy-makers, with the public and with our students. There are, of course, many different ways of improving the discipline's position, particularly with regard to its impact on public policy (Martin, 2001; Massey, 2001; Lee, 2002; Dorling & Shaw, 2002; Murphy et al., 2005; Wong, 2005), but certainly one of these is to strengthen our engagement with the agenda for social change. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, writing in Murphy et al. (2005, p. 181) specifically addresses the role of scholar-activists and the production of geography and concludes that: "Geography is . . . so wide open for good use. Certainly the key words of the contemporary moment—globalization, racism, migration, war, new imperialism, environmental degradation, fundamentalism, human rights—bespeak and connect all kinds of complexities."

Geography must enable its students to play a part in engaging with these major questions and of contributing intelligently and knowledgeably to debates about social transformation and how to achieve it. However, it is acknowledged that for some geographers such a reorientation may be extremely difficult due to governmental and/or institutional opposition. Quinn & Stuart (2004) provide examples of the real threats faced by academics working in nations with oppressive regimes whose activities move beyond officially sanctioned limits. These can include arrest on false charges, trial and imprisonment, torture disappearance and death. Even within democracies, where academic freedom is highly valued, criticizing government policy and challenging public preconceptions can have negative impacts. Derek Gregory writing in Murphy et al. (2005) draws on examples from the 'war on terror' to urge geographers to counter the 'imaginative geographies' that reside in the public

arena, but identifies that such approaches face obstacles which are more than intellectual. He highlights how, in the United States, scholars of area studies and, in particular, Middle Eastern Studies have been adversely affected because their views do not conform to those of the Bush government.

Teaching about and for social transformation
Teaching social transformation has three aspects. These are: teaching about social transformation; teaching for social transformation and, finally, how to teach for social transformation. These three topics are closely interlinked. Teaching about social transformation can lead to teaching for social transformation as the students' views are affected through a wider understanding of society, both locally and globally. Likewise, teaching for social transformation inevitably leads to teaching about social transformation. In addition, both are influenced by the forms of pedagogy that are employed (as discussed later in the paper).

The aim of social transformation within the lens of higher education is, as we see it, to challenge students' preconceived perceptions of the economy, society, environment and politics constructed through social structures. By engaging with higher education, students develop the skills and knowledge to analyse critically their perceptions of the world around them, and its various national and cultural groups.

Geography can play an important role in extending beyond national and international stereotypes and in promoting cultural empathy. In some countries, students of geography are predominantly white and middle class. Through geographers teaching about social transformation, the distinction between 'us' and 'them' can be challenged (Cook, 2000). Teaching about social transformation challenges categories of the 'other', which in turn creates awareness of 'self' (Jackson, 2000). Raju (2004) discusses how she came to teach geographies of gender in India. She explains how teaching about the 'other', in contrast to traditional geography courses, was initially discouraged by her colleagues. However, she argues that her "teaching of gender, both pedagogically and conceptually, remains interlinked with the legacy of the discipline of geography in India that [she has] inherited" (p. 64). Teaching about the 'other' is important to achieve social transformation. Further examples of othering can be seen in the categories of gender (Oberhauser, 2002; Smith, 2004), race (Wall, 2001; Goudge, 2003), sexuality (Valentine, 1994), class (Ulrich, 2000), disability (Hall et al., 2002) and nationality (Scheyvens et al., 2002).

Geographers teaching *about* social transformation can also lead to teaching for social transformation. As Robinson (1988) illustrates, teaching about social transformation can deconstruct students' initial hostility, sympathy or paternalism towards the 'other' and move towards achieving what he terms "realistic empathy", that is "a willingness to accept another person as equal; an understanding of the context within which the other person lives (social, environmental, economic nd political); and an acceptance that the other person's value system and 'way of looking at things' is a valid alternative to one's own" (pp. 154–155). Geography as a subject can develop this view. Students are taught to build respect for the 'other'. Once students have learnt the value of the perspective of the 'other' within the discipline of geography, they can also transfer it to non-academic situations.

The increasing social diversity of students in higher education can assist and enrich the teaching of social transformation. In many countries the expansion of higher education is associated with the inclusion of a wider range of students in terms of factors such as class, age and ethnicity. This greater social mix will open up new opportunities for learning alongside and at first hand from people with very different social backgrounds. This kind of experience can sometimes produce deeper learning than that acquired simply through lectures and textbooks. A variety of students in

the classroom enables teachers to build upon and utilize the range of perspectives that are present (Cook, 2000).

Pedagogy for social transformation
In exploring the issue of how to teach for social transformation, our discussion begins with the concept of positionality. This is the notion that where an individual is located in the social structure as a whole and which institutions he/she is in affect how she/he understands the world. In higher education the positionality of both the teacher and the researcher needs to be acknowledged. First, the positionality of the teacher influences his/her knowledge and approach to social transformation. Second, teaching that acknowledges the positionality of the researcher is important in enabling students' full understanding of the research findings. For example, Besio (2003), in her work in Pakistan, explicitly discusses how her positionality as a researcher impacted on the data she collected, and hence the information she could teach to students. Due to her whiteness she was treated as a 'sahib'—a masculine, colonial subject position—by the villagers. Although in a privileged position, Besio was uncomfortable with this image as she could not participate in the 'goings-on' of the village. However, through this position she was given power over the villagers to talk to people that she would not have been able to if she was a woman of their ethnicity.

The positionality of the students impacts on the output of social transformation in higher education. Students need to "learn to trust their own, rather than solely the teacher's, interpretations of things" (Cook, 2000, p. 15). Through approaches such as active learning, the student's positionality is integral to the learning process. The views that students have are impacted through the structural position from which they have experienced the world. Angus et al. (2001) argue that students who take personally the issues they study draw these ideas into their everyday lives. The students' positionality is a part of their opinions, yet their studies enable them to analyse critically their views of the world at large.

The key question that we need to ask is whether our teaching reinforces the established order or helps to transform society. There is a danger that the role of teachers as 'professionals' places students in a situation of relative incompetence, where teaching could be seen as the exclusive domain of the teachers, in that the active participation of students is a challenge to teachers' professional practice. This approach limits feedback mechanisms that would challenge the students' and teachers' positionality. This absence of a 'co-evolution of teaching and learning' maintains the status quo, within both education and society.

Several attempts to establish dialogue between teachers and students have emerged, most notably Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, where teachers engage students in a process of 'conscientization' that reveals social reality with all its often oppressive manifestations. Although proven to be effective in social transformation, this approach raises problematic issues in that it is questionable whether students are able to develop their own understanding of social reality or are yet again provided with pre-formulated dogmas by the teaching profession. One can envisage how Freire's critical pedagogy could transform society from one oppressive established order to another. In this paper we steer away from prescribing in detail a particular pedagogical approach for social transformation, in that a prescribed approach can become "a blind spot when it evolves into practice lacking any manner of critical reflection being connected to it" (Ison, 2000).

If we want to establish a method of social transformation through critical reflective practice, we need to introduce a process of self-questioning that challenges our positionality as defined by our own value system and lays it open to the critique of all those who may be concerned. (The term 'we' is used in the generic sense, and should include the teachers, the students and the studied context/participants.) But challenging an individual's perspective is not enough. Most of our

teaching is based on a flawed assumption that learning is an individual process. Teaching for social transformation is aimed at changing society, and thus should be underpinned by a new paradigm based on learning as a social phenomenon. As Etienne Wenger writes: "learning is an issue of engaging in and contributing to the practices of [an individual's] communities" (Wenger, 1998, p. 7). He goes on to say that "what looks promising are inventive ways of engaging students in meaningful practices, of providing access to resources that enhance their participation, of opening their horizons so that they can put themselves on learning trajectories they can identify with, and involving them in actions, discussions and reflections that make a difference to the communities that they value" (1998, p. 10). At the core of a social process of learning is that learning should be underpinned by social interaction, collaboration and students working together (Brown et al., 1998). Co-learning, with students and staff engaging in inquiry-based learning (Le Heron et al., 2006) provides another potential opportunity to engage with social transformation.

Another form of learning that aligns particularly well with social transformation is learning linked to public scholarship and service to the community. In many universities students, in effect, withdraw from participating in society for the duration of their course rather than connecting to their communities. Public scholarship refers to the conceptualization and practice of knowledge that applies scholarship—the "discovery and creative performance generated by faculty and students in their teaching and learning, research and service—to the civic, cultural, artistic, social, economic, and educational well-being of the community" (Cohen & Yapa, 2003, pp. 5–6). Service learning is a pedagogy that integrates community service into an academic context. Essential elements of service learning that distinguish it from service projects include academic learning and reflection that occur before, during and after the actual experience. Service learning becomes public scholarship when issues of civic and social consequence are engaged in ways that both learn from and give back to the communities involved, and engagement with the community "becomes an integral part of how new knowledge is generated" (ibid., p. 6).

Geographers have incorporated community-based service learning into coursework covering introductory geography (Orf, 1998; Zeigler, 1999); urban geography (Bouman et al., 1998; Yapa, 2000; Downey, 2001; Veness, 2001); poverty/hunger issues (Jarosz et al., 1996; Yapa, 2000); community development (Kotval, 1998; Waddington, 2001; Dennis, 2003) land-use planning (Dorsey 2001); gender geography (Oberhauser, 2002); regional geography (Bein, 2002; Vender et al., 2002, Vender, 2004); field/research methods (Buckingham-Hatfield, 1995; Crump, 2002); geomorphology (McEwen, 1996); water resources (Fearn, 2001), GIS (Benhart, 1998; Dennis, 2003); and pre-service teacher education (Rice, 2003). Service learning may be incorporated as part of a singlesemester/ term course, or as a multi-course sequence covering several semesters/terms; the service component may be optional (e.g. as an alternative to a library-based research project) or a mandatory, integral part of the course.

Who will do the teaching?
In developing appropriate forms of pedagogy and in teaching for and about social transformation within geography, a major consideration has to be who the current and future teachers of geography in higher education are. Numerous surveys have shown that there is a lack of diversity within the higher education teaching faculty in general (see, for example, Sax et al., 1999 cited in Becher & Trowler, 2001, and HESA, 2003). Moreover, it is generally considered that diversity within geography faculty is less than for many other disciplines. This is illustrated by the fact that the INLT itself is so UK/USA dominated and Anglophone (Shepherd et al., 2000), as highlighted by the nationalities of the authors of this paper.

This has implications for the discipline in terms of the ability of faculty to teach for and about social transformation. Indeed, it might be questioned whether social transformation can be taught

effectively by faculty comprising mainly white, male, upper-middle-class academics. There are also questions about the extent to which the discipline can attract and recruit students from more diverse backgrounds. Haigh (2002, p. 53) highlights that many faculty have limited personal knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of many of their international students, and this is also true of those home students from cultural and ethnic groups different from their own. Oberhauser (2002) and Lee (1997) discuss how many geography faculty have lived only briefly, or not at all, as 'foreigners' or as 'social minorities' in other, usually non-European, regions. Lee (1997, p. 265) stresses the important point that "While the faculty remains relatively homogeneous, higher education has a limited capacity to offer majority students opportunities to learn about their culture from the perspectives of other cultures and groups" because as Johnson-Bailey & Cervero (1997) point out: "When learners and teachers enter classrooms they bring their positions in the hierarchies that order the worlds, including those based on race, gender, class, sexual orientation and disability."

Furthermore, the divergent nature of the sub-disciplines within geography, and particularly the human–physical schism, mean that faculty vary in their willingness to embrace, or even engage with, research and hence teach topics that are of social relevance. For physical geographers in particular, the drivers of the research funding bodies mean that they have to be pragmatic in ensuring that grant proposals meet the needs of funding bodies, and including elements that address issues of social transformation may be problematic. Even in human geography, there has been an insufficient focus on research and teaching for and about issues of social transformation. Cloke (2002, p. 591) reflects that "the self serving nature of contemporary research conditions is conspiring against the development of a sustained sense for the other". McDowell (1992) highlighted how the paucity of women in the discipline contributed to the lack of attention to gender issues in the curriculum and pedagogy in general. However, to some extent this situation has slowly started to be addressed and Monk (2000) explores some of these issues, highlighting how, in articles in the Journal of Geography in Higher Education, the most visible 'others' have been women, with a paucity of articles on development issues. The 2004 multi-country Symposium section of the Journal of Geography in Higher Education on gendered patterns of staff and student participation lends credence to this idea, though it highlights how the effects are dynamic and relate to specificities of context (Droogleever Fortuijn, 2004; Garcia-Ramon & Pujol, 2004; Monk et al., 2004; Timar & Jelenszkyne, 2004; Yeoh et al., 2004). In the same issume Mahtani (2004) highlights issues for women of colour in Britain, the US and Canada.

It is clear that as well as teaching for and about social transformation, geography faculty have to question how they can ensure that the discipline is attractive and relevant to people from all sectors of society in order that over time the diversity of both staff and students increases (Monk, 2000). If the social transformation agenda is to be addressed effectively, geography will need both a more diverse staffing mix and also professional support and development for those colleagues who wish to contribute to the agenda but who do not yet feel equipped to do so.

Higher education contexts
The nature of systems of higher education also has a substantial bearing on how we are constrained or supported in efforts to teach for social transformation. Some systems are nationally centralized, others decentralized, influencing the extent to which institutions and individuals within them have freedom to innovate. Furthermore, higher education has changed considerably over the past two decades and factors such as increased student numbers and changes in their demographic profile, changes in the nature of funding, greater demands for accountability, emphasis on the economic benefits of higher education, and increased variety in teaching and learning methods all are important issues that limit or provide opportunities for teaching for social transformation. Altbach and Davis (1999) provide a more detailed overview of the challenges and changes to higher

education and compare the international situation. The relative significance of these different issues is highly system specific and we illustrate this through a comparative look at three different cases.

Indiresan (2000) has identified the difficulties of instigating change in Indian higher education. In a society that has been highly diverse yet stratified in terms of caste, gender, religion, region and language, desires for social change have seen rapidly increasing demands for higher education over the last several decades. Progress is potentially facilitated but also constrained by the highly centralized system and the nature of decision making. Government policies have promoted diversity and advancement for those who have been excluded, especially members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. But there have been an array of legal challenges to national policies that attempt to set aside enrolment quotas for those who have been disadvantaged (Sharma, 2000). An emphasis on teaching for external examinations, coupled with the continuation of the colonial system whereby the curriculum and examinations of a high proportion of colleges are controlled by the universities of which they are 'affiliates', creates another set of obstacles. The prestige of English-language medium institutions and the inadequate preparation of disadvantaged students, including secondary education in local languages, present additional problems. Motivating change in institutions and populations that have been privileged by existing conditions, and also among teachers who have limited resources and who may not be inclined to take risks, remains a major challenge.

Social transformation through reshaping of the higher education system is also on the agenda in South Africa, presenting some of the same challenges that have been noted in the Indian case, such as dealing with language differences. Most obvious are the goals of redressing the disadvantages to African, Coloured and Indian students that were brought about by separation of educational institutions during the apartheid era (Badsha & Harper, 2000). Among key issues are the widening of participation without provision of the finance to support it; dealing with the legacy of failing to prepare non-white students in the schools; attracting students and staff to the historically Black institutions that are frequently in remote locations; and the historical divisions in curricular orientations that channelled Black students into arts, humanities and educational fields while they remained under-represented in scientific and technical areas.

Initially, it would seem as if the substantial decentralization and plurality of institutional types in American higher education (public/private; undergraduate/graduate; teaching oriented/research oriented) offer a significantly different model, with greater freedom for curricular innovation than in systems more subject to central public control. Cultural values support competing models of education: commitment to transmission of a core culture and reliance on 'classic' texts in some institutions; marked experimentation and more radical commitments in others; technical and vocational orientations in yet others. Cutting across institutional types is a distinctive national expectation that the bachelor's degree will include a substantial component of 'general education' in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, as well as preparation in written expression and quantitative skills. This expectation would suggest that openings exist for curricular innovations that promote teaching for social transformation. Funding for curriculum projects, not only from governmental agencies but from private sources, also adds to a climate of pluralism. In this setting, and in response to larger social pressures and local interest and leadership, over the last three or more decades innovations have been made in introducing ethnic studies (such as African-American, Chicano/a Mexican-American, Asian-American, and American Indian Studies) and women's, gender, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender studies, as well as initiatives to 'mainstream' multicultural or 'diversity' initiatives into other courses. Still, these initiatives are not immune from national governmental directions. More liberal governments have offered targeted funds for changes of particular kinds (such as projects to create materials in women's studies or 'mainstreaming' ethnic

studies). More conservative governments have made it very difficult to secure support for such undertakings.

We could expand the examples of systemic issues, but instead will conclude these comments by noting some international trends that are inhibiting teaching for 'progressive' social transformation in a number of contexts: declining budgets for higher education; increased external scrutiny of 'quality'; tuition fee increases; increasing casualization of the teaching staff; pressures on students to pursue technical education rather than undertake studies that promote critical thinking and exposure to alternative world-views (Arriaga Lemus, 2002). As we strive to pursue teaching for social transformation, it is important that we understand and develop strategies to work with and against the contexts as necessary.

Conclusions

As we move further into the twenty-first century, it is becoming increasingly clear that many of the world's major problems are strongly geographical in nature. The misuse of the earth's resources, environmental degradation, climate change, global inequality and intercultural relations are all central parts of geography's territory. While retaining its academic rigour and scholarship, geographical education has, we would argue, a duty to teach both about and for the kinds of changes that can help to create a world which is more equal and more sustainable. A more explicit focus on social transformation would enrich our students' education and also help to raise the discipline's status and profile. It would help to release us from the present paradoxical situation where our discipline appears in many countries to be faltering at the very moment when its knowledge, insights and skills have never been more needed.

In describing a vision of teaching for social justice, Bigelow et al. (1994) called for curriculum and classroom practice to have the following characteristics:
- grounded in the lives of students;
- critical and linked to real-world problems;
- multicultural, anti-racist and pro-justice;
- participatory and experiential;
- hopeful, joyful, kind and visionary;
- activist;
- academically rigorous;
- culturally sensitive;
- concerned with issues beyond the classroom walls.

In the years since Bigelow's paper the effects of globalization, climate change, increased geo-cultural tensions and rising inequality have made stronger still the case for geographical education to adopt these qualities. Given the variety of institutional, cultural and national contexts within which geography is taught, there are, of course, many different ways in which these principles can be turned into practice. However, they do provide a broad template against which both geography departments and individual academics can review and assess their own curriculum and their teaching methods. So, this paper ends with two challenging questions for both departments and individuals to consider. To what extent are you committed to teaching about/for social transformation? And in so far as social transformation is part of your vision and values, how far do your curriculum and teaching match up?

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