

GLOBALIZATION OF EDUCATION

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Abstract: In popular discourse, globalization is often synonymous with internationalization, referring to the growing interconnectedness and interdependence of people and institutions throughout the world. Internationalization is the less theorized term. Globalization, by contrast, has come to denote the complexities of interconnectedness, and scholars have produced a large body of literature to explain what appear to be ineluctable worldwide influences on local settings and responses to those influences.

Influences of a global scale touch aspects of everyday life. For example, structural adjustment policies and international trading charters, such as the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), reduce barriers to commerce, ostensibly promote jobs, and reduce the price of goods to consumers across nations. A massive spread of education and of Western oriented norms of learning at all levels in the twentieth century and the consequences of widely available schooling are a large part of the globalization process. With regard to the role of schools, globalization has become a major topic of study, especially in the field of comparative education, which applies historiography and social scientific theories and methods to international issues of education.

Key words: Origins of Globalization, Globalization Theory, The Role of Education, Characteristics of Globalization.

What are the Origins of Globalization?

Theoretically, a central dilemma is whether to place the origins of contemporary globalization around 1971-73, with the petroleum crisis that prompted several important technological and economic changes directed toward finding replacement sources for strategic raw materials and searching for new forms of production that would consume less energy and labor. Alternatively, one may, as some authors in this book have done, pinpoint the origins of globalization more than a century ago with changes in communication technologies, migration patterns, and capital flows (for instance, as these affected the process of colonization in the Third World).

An important question for many observers is whether we are facing a new historical epoch, the configuration of a new world system, or whether these changes are significant but not unprecedented, paralleled for example by similar changes in the late Middle Ages. But in our view this issue is not a matter of either/or. We are in a new historical epoch, a new global order in which the old forms are not dead but the new forms are not yet fully formed. Held has suggested in his *Democracy and Global Order*, for instance, that we are in a new "global Middle Ages," a period reflecting that while the nation-states still have vitality, they cannot control their borders and therefore are subject to all sorts of internal and external pressures. Furthermore, even if this new global order shows the end of the sovereignty of the nation-state, this situation nevertheless has differential impacts on states according to their position in the world order: states unified in regional alliances, such as NAFTA or the E.U.; emerging or intermediate states, such as Brazil, Korea, India, and China; less developed

states, such as Argentina, Hungary, Chile, and South Africa; developing states, including many in Latin America, Asia, and Africa; and underdeveloped states mired in an extreme state of dependency, such as Haiti, some Central American states, Mozambique, Angola, and Albania. Not only is the meaning and impact of "globalization" unsettled, it may operate differently in different parts of the world, and in some contexts have little impact at all. Here, again, globalization is not itself a unified, global phenomenon.

Hence while globalization may reflect a set of very definite technological, economic, and cultural changes, the shape of its significance and its future trends are far from determined. As we have just noted, the historical specificity of this process does not necessarily guarantee a symmetrical or homogeneous impact worldwide. This account of globalization is quite different from the neoliberal account, a discourse about progress and a rising tide that lifts all boats, a discourse that takes advantage of the historical processes of globalization in order to valorize particular economic prescriptions about how to operate the economy (through free trade, deregulation, and so on) -- and by implication, prescriptions about how to transform education, politics, and culture.

Globalization Theory:

Globalization is both a process and a theory. Roland Robertson, with whom globalization theory is most closely associated, views globalization as an accelerated compression of the contemporary world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a singular entity. Compression makes the world a single place by virtue of the power of a set of globally diffused ideas that render the uniqueness of societal and ethnic identities and traditions irrelevant except within local contexts and in scholarly discourse.

The notion of the world community being transformed into a global village, as introduced in 1960 by Marshall McLuhan in an influential book about the newly shared experience of mass media, was likely the first expression of the contemporary concept of globalization. Despite its entry into the common lexicon in the 1960s, globalization was not recognized as a significant concept until the 1980s, when the complexity and multidimensionality of the process began to be examined. Prior to the 1980s, accounts of globalization focused on a professed tendency of societies to converge in becoming modern, described initially by Clark Kerr and colleagues as the emergence of industrial man.

What makes globalization distinct in contemporary life is the broad reach and multidimensionality of interdependence, reflected initially in the monitored set of relations among nation-states that arose in the wake of World War I. It is a process that before the 1980s was akin to modernization, until modernization as a concept of linear progression from traditional to developing to developed—or from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft* as expressed by Ferdinand Tönnies—forms of society became viewed as too simplistic and one-dimensional to explain contemporary changes. Modernization theory emphasized the functional significance of the Protestant ethic in the evolution of modern societies, as affected by such objectively measured attributes as education, occupation, and wealth in stimulating a disciplined orientation to work and political participation.

The Role of Education:

As the major formal agency for conveying knowledge, the school features prominently in the process and theory of globalization. Early examples of educational globalization include the spread of global religions, especially Islam and Christianity, and colonialism, which often disrupted and displaced indigenous forms of schooling throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth century's. Postcolonial globalizing influences of education have taken on more subtle shapes. In globalization; it is not simply the times of economic exchange and political agreement that bind nations and societies, but also the shared consciousness of being part of a global system. That consciousness is conveyed through ever larger transnational movements of people and an array of different media, but most systematically through formal education.

Structural adjustment policies:

Much of the focus on the role of education in globalization has been in terms of the structural adjustment policies of the World Bank and other international lending organizations in low-income countries. These organizations push cuts in government expenditures, liberalization of trade practices, currency devaluations, reductions of price controls, shifts toward production for export, and user charges for and privatization of public services such as education. Consequently, change is increasingly driven largely by financial forces, government reliance on foreign capital to finance economic growth, and market ideology.

Democratization:

As part of the globalization process, the spread of education is widely viewed as contributing to democratization throughout the world. Schools prepare people for participation in the economy and polity, giving them the knowledge to make responsible judgments, the motivation to make appropriate contributions to the well-being of society, and a consciousness about the consequences of their behavior. National and international assistance organizations, such as the U. S. Agency for International Development and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), embrace these objectives. Along with mass provision of schools, technological advances have permitted distance education to convey Western concepts to the extreme margins of society, exposing new regions and populations to knowledge generated by culturally dominant groups and helping to absorb them into the consumer society. A policy of using schools as part of the democratization process often accompanies structural adjustment measures. However, encouraging user fees to help finance schooling has meant a reduced ability of people in some impoverished areas of the world to buy books and school materials and even attend school, thus enlarging the gap between rich and poor and impeding democracy. Even in areas displaying a rise in educational participation, observers have reported a reduction in civic participation. Increased emphasis on formalism in schooling could plausibly contribute to this result. An expansion of school civics programs could, for example, draw energy and resources away from active engagement in political affairs by youths, whether within or outside of schools. Increased privatization of education in the

name of capitalist democratization could invite greater participation of corporate entities, with the prospect of commercializing schools and reducing their service in behalf of the public interest.

Penetration of the periphery:

Perhaps the most important question in understanding how education contributes to globalization is, what is the power of schools to penetrate the cultural periphery? Why do non-Western people surrender to the acculturative pressure of Western forms of education? Evidence on the accommodation of people at the periphery to the dominant ideology embodied in Westernized schooling is thus not consistent. In all three societies he studied, globalization influences were abrupt and pervasive, but they were resisted most palpably not at the remote margins, but in the towns and places closer to the center, where the institutions representative of the mainstream—including law enforcement, employment and welfare agencies, medical facilities, and businesses—were newly prevalent and most powerfully challenged traditional community values. Epstein explained these findings by reasoning that it is easier for children living in more remote areas to accept myths taught by schools regarding the cultural mainstream. By contrast, children living closer to the mainstream cultural center—the more acculturated pupils—are more exposed to the realities of the mainstream way of life and, being worldlier, is more inclined to resist such myths. Schools in different areas do not teach different content; in all three societies, schools, whether located at the mainstream center or periphery, taught an equivalent set of myths, allegiances to national symbols, and dominant core values. Rather, schools at the margin are more effective in inculcating intended political cultural values and attitudes because they operate in an environment with fewer competing contrary stimuli. Children nearer the center, by contrast, having more actual exposure to the dominant culture, are better able to observe the disabilities of the dominant culture—its level of crime and corruption, its reduced family cohesion, and its heightened rates of drug and alcohol abuse, for example. That greater exposure counteracts the favorable images all schools convey about the cultural mainstream, and instead imbues realism—and cynicism—about the myths taught by schools. In other words, schools perform as a filter to sanitize reality, but their effectiveness is differential; their capacity to filter is larger the farther they move out into the periphery. As extra-school knowledge progressively competes with school-produced myths, the ability and inclination to oppose the dominant ideology promoted by schools as part of the globalization process should become stronger. This filter-effect theory could clarify the impact of schools as an instrument of globalization and invites corroboration.

What are the Crucial Characteristics of Globalization?

In light of these many debates, it could be extremely risky to advance a description of the characteristics of globalization that most closely affect education, but these seem to include, at the very least:

- In Economic Terms, a transition from Florist to Post-Florist forms of workplace organization; a rise in internationalized advertising and consumption patterns; a reduction in barriers to the free flow of goods, workers, and investments across national borders; and, correspondingly, new pressures on the roles of worker and consumer in society.

- In Political Terms, a certain loss of nation-state sovereignty, or at least the erosion of national autonomy; and, correspondingly, a weakening of the notion of the "citizen" as a unified and unifying concept, a concept that can be characterized by precise roles, rights, obligations, and status (see Canella, in this volume).
- In Cultural Terms, a tension between the ways in which globalization brings forth more standardization and cultural homogeneity, while also bringing more fragmentation through the rise of locally oriented movements. Benjamin Barber characterized this dichotomy in the title of his book, *Jihad vs. McWorld*; however, a third theoretical alternative identifies a more conflicted and dialectical situation, with both cultural homogeneity and cultural heterogeneity appearing simultaneously in the cultural landscape. (Sometimes this merger, and dialectical tension, between the global and the local is termed "the global.")

See also: International Education Agreements; International Education Statistics; Rural Education, subentry on International Context.

Conclusion:

We hope by now that the main purposes of this book have become clear: first, to identify, characterize, and clarify some of the debates surrounding the phenomenon of globalization; and second, to try to understand some of the multiple and complex effects of globalization on educational policy and policy formation. In summarizing some of the consequences of globalization for educational policy. Finally, global changes in culture deeply affect educational policies, practices, and institutions. Particularly in advanced industrial societies, for instance, the question of "multiculturalism" takes on a special meaning in a global context. What is the role of education in helping to shape the attitudes, values, and understandings of a multicultural democratic citizen who can be part of this increasingly cosmopolitan world? At least some of the manifestations of globalization as a historical process are here to stay. Even if the particular form of "globalization" presented by the neoliberal account can be regarded as an ideology that serves to justify policies serving particular interests but not others, the fact is that part of this account is based in real changes (and to be fair, real opportunities, at least for certain fortunate people). Public education today is at a crossroads. It can carry on as usual, as if none of these threats (and opportunities) existed, with the risk of becoming increasingly superseded by educational influences that are no longer accountable to public governance and control. In our view, nothing less is at stake today than the survival of the democratic form of governance and the role of public education in that enterprise.

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