
GLOBALIZATION AND EDUCATION: COMPLEXITIES AND CONTINGENCIES

Fazal Rizvi

Pro Vice-Chancellor (International)
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

Bob Lingard

Graduate School of Education
University of Queensland

GLOBALIZATION

The political rhetoric surrounding globalization these days is often virtuous in character, sometimes even inspired. It speaks of humanity's increasing "interconnectedness" across time and space and suggests that the means of instantaneous global communication and mass transportation have liberated us, creating new exciting opportunities.

Certainly, the movement of people, money, and information across national and cultural boundaries means that we now have access to markets, cultural practices, and products as never before. This access clearly has the potential for enriching our lives by providing lifestyle and employment options that were once beyond our reach. We have also benefited from greater contact across cultures. We make personal decisions under the assumption that geographical distance is no longer a constraint. The opportunities for travel have never been greater. We also learn about other cultures through the images beamed into our living rooms through mass media. Even the remotest cultural traditions are now readily accessible to us. The cultural Other is no longer remote, exotic, or mystical and beyond our reach. The Other is all around us. The ensuing cultural diversity has clearly enriched us — hybridity has almost become the cultural norm.

The rhetoric of globalization thus implies that the apparent shortening of distance, changes in the experience of time, the multiplying of global links, the proliferation of global flows of myriad kinds, and the deepening of interdependence has benefited us all. But has it? The mass demonstrations in Seattle and Washington D.C. over the past year against advocates of economic globalization such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank indicate growing disquiet about the effects of globalization on many communities. The demonstrators opposed economic globalization, which seeks to constitute a global economy where the political boundaries around nation-states are regarded as inhibitors and thus need to be made more porous.

Perhaps the most worrying of all concerns is the fact that the benefits of globalization are unevenly distributed. The global economy has created greater social stratification and more inequality in society. There is an emergent binary

divide between those who are able to enjoy the new cultural goods and services exchanged in the global market and those who are the victims of the global economy and the restructuring of work induced by new communication technologies and fast, footloose, nomadic capital. It is this hyper-mobility of capital that distinguishes the current phase of globalization from that of earlier eras.¹ Against this backdrop, the divide between the global rich and the regional and local poor has never been so great. The opportunity for real and virtual mobility has become another signifier of this inequality. No wonder the local backlash against this emergent world order is evident all around the globe. Local citizen movements and alternative institutions are springing up all over the world to meet basic economic needs, to struggle for human dignity, and to preserve local traditions, cultural life, and the treasures of the natural world. At the same time there are backlashes of a more recuperative kind, which work with a politics of resentment and attack past progressive gains in relation to women, as well as various ethnic, racial, and sexuality minority groups. These backlashes have occurred in a context where for the last couple of decades at least the politics of difference has had more political salience than redistributive politics.²

In addition to the negative fallout from economic globalization, there is also apprehension about the potential — some would say immanent — effects of cultural globalization. For some critics, globalization is simply another word for cultural homogenization — another form of colonialism in which American consumer values reign supreme. The emerging global culture, many fear, imposes the same cultural images, tastes, and attitudes on everyone, everywhere. This idea is encapsulated in the ironic phrase “McDonaldization of the World.”

Major concerns have also been expressed about the concentration of media and technology ownership and the dominance of the possessive individualism of global consumer capitalism. The latter has seen an emergent structure of feeling with the phenomenological experience of many individuals (within the privileged populations of the world) becoming now truly global. Further, new forms of governing the self have emerged — often in the form of the “entrepreneurial self” — which sets its sights on maximizing individual benefits, while often eschewing common good concerns.³

1. See John Hinkson, “Globalization: Political Economy and Beyond,” *Arena Journal* 12 (1998): 67-81.

2. See Nancy Fraser, “From Redistribution to Recognition: Dilemmas of Justice in a ‘Post-Socialist’ Society,” *New Left Review* (July-August 1995): 68-93. On contemporary resentment politics see Cameron McCarthy, *The Uses of Culture Education and the Limits of Ethnic Affiliation* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

3. See Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

FAZAL RIZVI is Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, La Trobe Street, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, Victoria 3001 Australia. His primary areas of scholarship are philosophy of education, cultural theory, and educational policy studies.

BOB LINGARD is Professor in the Graduate School of Education, The University of Queensland, Brisbane QLD 4072 Australia. His primary areas of scholarship are educational policy, the sociology of education, and educational reform.

This global context has also seen new state forms and structures, as the global economy has become almost decoupled from national political organization and effectiveness. Arjun Appadurai has suggested that in this situation of hybrid identities a *postnational politics* is emerging with the nation and state today often the project of the other.⁴ In this way there is a potential democratic deficit as the nation-state reframes its policy approach so as to ensure the competitiveness of the national economy in the face of globalization.

Education is affected by all of these changes associated with globalization: it is affected structurally, in policy terms, in practice terms, and in the experiences that young people bring with them to their education.

GLOBALIZATION AND EDUCATION

The essays included in this symposium examine the notions of globalization from the perspective of educational theory. They explore the ways in which the discourses, practices, and institutions of education have been affected by globalization, and the ways in which educational policies have both expressed and responded to the pressures of globalization. The authors are interested in the emergence of new global policymaking processes in education, which are often linked more to the interests of global capitalism than to the needs of particular societies and specific individuals, and in the ways globalization shapes perspectives on educational reform that may lead to the reproduction of social inequalities in and through education.

Central to each of the analyses presented here is the problematic nature of the notion of globalization itself. The authors accept that globalization is an essentially contested term that refers to diverse processes embracing political, social, technological, economic, and cultural changes. As Ian Clarke has argued,

they encapsulate the scope of the uniformity of political ideas and practices, the geographical extent of social interaction and reflectivity; the degree of interaction of economic activities; the diffusion of technologies (information, communication and transport) which overcome the significance of space; and the extent of dissemination of cultural symbols and significations.⁵

It is this diversity of references that makes it impossible to define globalization in any straightforward fashion. So while the term, "globalization" clearly refers to both the intensity and the extent of international interactions, it does not stipulate the ways in which these interactions occur, or indeed how an interaction acquires significance in some contexts but not in others. Further, there are multiple potential political readings and responses to the phenomena that these essays attempt to capture in relation to education. These seek to work against any "naturalization" of the directions the world is taking within globalization.⁶

4. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 160-61. On the role of university education in the production of a new "global imagination," see Fazal Rizvi, "International Education and the Production of Global Imagination," in *Globalization and Education: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Nicholas C. Burbules and Carlos A. Torres (New York: Routledge, 2000), 205-25.

5. Ian Clarke, *Globalization and Fragmentation: International Relations in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

6. Zygmunt Bauman, "The New Poor and the Rest of Us," *Arena Journal* 12 (1998): 61.

At times within contemporary political discourse, globalization is read as simply support for neoliberal policies, including a preference for the market over the state and for new thinned out state structures.⁷ Set against the growth of inequality, marginalization of some groups and the "marbling in" of poverty to edge cities and rural populations, this neoliberal political response to economic globalization leaves the socially vulnerable more so and provokes political opposition to the catch-all concept of globalization. Because the global economic, political, and cultural institutions are out of "synch," they often appear unresponsive and unaccountable. On the other hand, Anna Yeatman has suggested that the new neoliberal state form that has accompanied the dominance of neoliberal, post-Keynesian policy frameworks since the late seventies has been a structural response to the needs of the post-Cold War globalized economy.⁸ However, it does appear to be the case today that while the economy operates globally we still organize politically within nation-states, despite the emergence of some supranational political units such as the European Union, which itself is both an expression of globalization and a response to it.⁹ The neoliberal preference for the market over the state has also seen what Nikolas Rose has called the ellision of the social with the market, and related new forms of governmentality in the context of the thinned-out state.¹⁰ The latter is manifested in the entrepreneurial self and emergent forms of self-governance. Education now works in new ways in relation to both.

The essays in this symposium also demonstrate how emergent supranational policymaking bodies and policy communities affect educational policy production within nations and precipitate some convergence of broad educational policy frames around the globe.¹¹ They show quite elegantly how new state forms within nations, combined with the priority granted the market over the state, affect and deflect educational policy, its production processes, and the practices of education.

Within the context of educational policy studies, then, globalization raises many complex questions about the reconfiguration of political power in contemporary society. Chief among these questions is the capacity of states to govern in the interests of their citizen constituencies. Many theorists now argue that the right of most states to rule within defined boundaries — their sovereignty — has all but

7. See for example, Thomas S. Popkewitz, "Rethinking Decentralization and State/Civil Society Distinctions: The State as a Problematic of Governing," *Journal of Education Policy* 11, no. 1 (1996): 27-51.

8. Anna Yeatman, "Trends and Opportunities in the Public Sector: A Critical Assessment," *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 57, no. 4 (1999): 138-47.

9. For a very interesting and informative discussion on how the European Union has constituted a new educational policy space in Europe: see Antonio Novoa, "The Restructuring of the European Educational Space: Changing Relationships among States, Citizens, and Educational Communities," in *Educational Knowledge Changing Relationships between the State, Civil Society, and the Educational Community*, ed. Thomas S. Popkewitz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 31-57.

10. Nikolas Rose, "The Death of the Social? Refiguring the Territory of Government," *Economy and Society* 25, no. 3 (1996): 327-56.

11. See Miriam Henry, Bob Lingard, Fazal Rizvi, and Sandra Taylor, *The OECD, Globalization, and Education Policy* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, in press) for a detailed consideration of the emergent global policy community in education. Also see Leslie Sklair, "Conceptualizing and Researching the Transnational Capitalist Class in Australia," *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 32, no. 2 (1996).

vanished or at least been severely compromised. Contemporary processes of globalization are unprecedented, as governments everywhere adjust to a world in which there is no clear distinction between the local and the global, the internal and the external. In the wake of the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, there is now a massive realignment of societies, economies, and the institutions of government, including education. While talk of the end of the state is misleading, it is certainly the case that globalization has given rise to a new spectrum of policy processes that are filtered through multiple regional and global political networks.¹²

Nor are these networks defined solely by international relations. The power of transnational corporations has increased significantly. The emerging global order is spearheaded by a few hundred corporate giants, many bigger than most sovereign states. Some twenty years ago, transnational corporations exported their goods and services to many different countries and tailored their operations to local conditions. The new business enterprises have the technological means and strategies to demolish old limits — of time, space, language, custom, and ideology. The new technologies span the globe, enabling corporations to develop products that can be manufactured and sold anywhere, to spread credit around the world, and to penetrate markets that were once protected by national governments.

Increasingly, governments are reluctant to place limits on these operations of the global market. As a result they have difficulty demonstrating to their citizens their capacity to tame markets, promote growth, and keep social inequalities within reasonable limits. The financial markets now decide which are the right policies and which are not. Markets now define the parameters of politics as neoliberal economists exert an unprecedented amount of influence in shaping public policies, as countries everywhere look for ways to compete and increase their share of the global export market. In this way, globalization is redefining the role of the nation-state as an effective manager of the national economy, public policy, and national cultural development.

In recent years, the politics of globalization has revolved around a contraction of the public as it had been constituted by the Keynesian Welfare State in the post-WW II years, and a simultaneous expansion of the private whether defined as markets or the domestic sphere. These neoliberal governing practices have encouraged the globalization of economic activity, resulting in a new world order based on a radically different set of assumptions about the role of government and the rights of citizens. It places new demands on the state which involve maximizing exports, curtailing state regulation, reducing social spending, and empowering capital to reorganize national economies in order to become parts of a broader regime of transnational economic activity. There have been political attempts to bring state structures, including education, in line with the putative needs of transnational corporations and a global economy.¹³ Educational policy is now often conceptualized as a central

12. See, for example, Linda Weiss, "Globalization and the Powerless State," *New Left Review* 225 (1997): 3-27.

13. Yeatman, "Trends and Opportunities in the Public Sector."

plank of national economic planning — the skills of a nation's people being an important factor in attracting peripatetic capital to a specific place.¹⁴

Public policy is not the only arena altered by the pressures of globalization. Cultural practices are also affected, perhaps in ways that are even deeper than economics and politics. The globalization of culture has a long history because it is linked to the movement of people. The great world religions were mostly about changing the ideas and beliefs of people: they crossed the continents and transformed societies. However, there is something quite distinctive about the sheer scale, intensity, and speed of global cultural communication today. New technological innovations have transformed the nature of global cultural interaction. The globalization process today is marked not only by the accelerated pace of cultural change but also by its complexity. Technology is able to uncouple culture from its territorial base so that, unattached, it can reach through the airwaves to anyone with the means to receive its sentiments; the result is new hybridized cultural practices that can be packaged for consumption by those connected to the network society.

These developments and many others associated with globalization now define the space within which education takes place, and which must be taken into account when analyzing education policy. The essays in this symposium discuss the complex nature of this space in an attempt to show how globalization is reshaping both the form and content of educational policy.

In his essay, Roger Dale discusses how globalization might affect national educational policies and practices in the context of three key issues: appreciating the nature and force of extranational effects, specifying what may be affected, and exploring how that effect might occur. His interest is in developing a theory of the relation between globalization and education by examining two contrasting approaches to this question. One approach is that developed by John Meyer and his colleagues at Stanford University, which Dale refers to as the "Common World Educational Culture" approach;¹⁵ the other he calls the "Globally Structured Agenda for Education" thesis. The former attempts to demonstrate education as a world cultural institution whose structures and practices preceded the more recent globalization pressures. Dale argues that the "Globally Structured Agenda for Education" thesis has to acknowledge the contribution of Meyer and his colleagues, but that recent economic, political, and cultural processes of globalization have affected the shared (world) cultural resources upon which educational systems have drawn, as they seek to respond to common global agendas. This is a metatheoretical essay that

14. See Miriam Henry, Bob Lingard, Fazal Rizvi, and Sandra Taylor, "Working With/Against Globalization in Education," *Journal of Education Policy* 14, no. 1 (1999): 85-97.

15. See among others, John Meyer, David H. Kamens, and Aaron Benavot, eds., *School Knowledge for the Masses: World Models and Curricular Categories in the Twentieth Century* (London: Falmer, 1992); John Meyer and Michael T. Hannan, eds., *National Development and the World System* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); John Meyer and Francisco O. Ramirez, "The World Institutionalization of Education," in *Discourse and Comparative Education*, ed. Jürgen Schriewer (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999); and John Boli and George M. Thomas, eds., *Constructing World Culture: International Nongovernmental Organizations Since 1875* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

seeks to specify conditions under which global relations operate in education. In so doing it deals with supranational policy flows in education.

The second essay by Paige Porter and Lesley Vidovich focuses on issues of higher education. Beginning with a discussion of political and cultural forms of globalization, it suggests that the economic dimension of globalization has dominated the policy agenda of governments in the West as they have attempted to position themselves favorably in competitive global markets. Their analysis of the impact of globalization on higher education is not entirely negative, but seeks to find how globalization might produce dynamic new opportunities from which universities, with their already strong international links, might be able to steer into new and exciting directions.

Jill Blackmore's essay looks at the relation between education and globalization through the lenses of feminist theories. As such, it examines the consequences of globalization for gender equity work in education. In a sense her analysis turns on feminist theories' somewhat "schizophrenic" conception of the state, as on the one hand patriarchy writ large, and on the other a site for struggles to improve the conditions of women through legislation, funding, and the like. Blackmore argues that the restructuring of the state that flows from the neoliberal political response to globalization presents dangerous opportunities for feminist agendas in education.

The essay by Miriam Henry and Sandra Taylor is a case study of the ways in which political globalization, as expressed through the educational policy work of the OECD, has affected recent policy changes in vocational education and training in Australia.¹⁶ It thus analyzes the processes of globalization in a particular policy domain and argues that educational globalization does not necessarily imply policy homogenization, but rather precipitates tensions that both homogenize and differentiate the educational policy agenda.¹⁷ There is thus no surrendering of national sovereignty, but rather its reconstitution. There is, however, ample evidence to suggest that educational governance is increasingly polycentric in nature, with an emergent global policy community speeding up the flow of policy ideas around the globe.

The final essay, by Patrick Fitzsimons, looks at changing conceptions of the nature of globalization in education. It focuses on new electronic information technologies that, far from being an impetus for homogeneity, are producing a stimulus for a politics of difference. Cyborgs and cyberspace are emerging as discourses of disunity and difference. The essay argues for a form of critical localism as a challenge to the assumed unity and coherence of education within a rapidly globalizing world.

Globalization thus has no stipulative meaning; rather, it is a politically and theoretically contested concept with both positive and negative expressions and

16. For further reading on the OECD and educational policy development in the context of globalization see Henry, Lingard, Rizvi and Taylor, *The OECD, Globalization, and Education Policy*.

17. See also Bob Lingard and Fazal Rizvi, "Globalization and the Fear of Homogenization in Education," *Change Transformations in Education* 1, no. 1 (1998): 62-71.

responses. Picking up on the melange of homogenization and heterogenization associated with the flows of globalization, Appadurai speaks of an emergent tension between "context-generative" localized political and cultural responses to the top-down "context-productive" effects of globalization.¹⁸ The result is complexity and contingency, which are very much evident in contemporary education, as the essays in this *Educational Theory* so ably demonstrate.

18. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* and Bob Lingard, "It Is and It Isn't: Vernacular Globalization, Educational Policy, and Restructuring," in Burbules and Torres, *Globalization and Education*, 79-108.

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