

**NARRATIVES OF GLOBALISATION
AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

This paper begins by noting the way in which education as a disciplinary field is highly dependent on concepts that have their origins in other spheres of knowledge. It draws attention to the deployment by international agencies of terms that can be applied across a range of disciplines and to a growing tendency among developed countries to conceptualise their educational priorities in similar forms of discourse. However, it is also noted that pressures to converge are, to some extent, offset by local values and traditions which serve to maintain degrees of divergence. The paper then focuses more sharply on the various dimensions of globalisation which have implications for education, drawing attention to definitional problems and to the malleable character of the territory. This is followed by two contrasting sections, one looking at positive narratives of globalisation in education, the other taking a more critical perspective. It is concluded that while globalisation as a concept has some explanatory power, the purposes to which it is put by different agencies require careful interrogation. Furthermore, the time may come when its value in policy documents diminishes and new discursive forms may emerge. In the meantime, education professionals should seek to develop greater narrative agency in interpreting the language of globalisation.

KEY WORDS

Policy Discourse; Cultural Identity; Teacher Agency.



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INTRODUCTION

Education as a disciplinary field draws heavily on concepts and principles which have their origins in other forms of knowledge. Even concepts which might be regarded as central to education — such as curriculum, assessment and pedagogy — depend on understandings derived from other disciplines. Thus, for example, debates about the form and content of the curriculum are informed by insights from philosophy and sociology about the nature and structure of knowledge and the cultural value attached to a range of intellectual and practical skills. Again, decisions about the most appropriate forms of assessment are influenced by psychological evidence about learning processes and motivation, as well as by statistical techniques that can refine the way in which results are calculated and presented. And in the case of pedagogy, what happens in classroom exchanges between teachers and pupils has to take account of legal and ethical arguments about professional conduct, human rights and fair treatment. In each case, the educational response is framed within a wider context which introduces concepts whose explanatory value may derive from other spheres of activity.

When it comes to considering the broad aims of education, the contribution of ideas which have their origins in other fields is even more marked.

In recent years educational policy has invoked a number of concepts which have resonances across a wide range of social and political debates. These include social capital, citizenship, leadership and globalisation, all of which have featured as key principles in policy documents aimed at international audiences. Field (2003) has shown how organisations such as the World Bank invoke social capital in discussions about obtaining the best return for policies designed to alleviate poverty and improve educational outcomes. In the case of leadership, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has produced two influential policy documents (OECD, 2008a, 2008b) which recommend a particular approach to the management of schools. Again, the Eurydice Network of the European Commission has encouraged the promotion of education for citizenship across thirty-six countries (Eurydice, 2012).

The ways in which certain key terms come to dominate public debate and professional exchanges have been the focus of discourse analysis, a technique which seeks to illuminate the inter-relations between language, knowledge and power (Fairclough, 1989, 1992). Powerful forms of discourse are usually shaped into narratives, explanatory accounts that try to make sense of social, cultural and political developments. Given the complexity of the modern world, there are inevitably competing and conflicting narratives and some gain greater ascendancy than others. An important question to consider is what leads some accounts to be adopted as convincing versions of events while others are marginalised. Is it that the successful narratives have a stronger knowledge base and take more account of the evidence? Or is it because those promoting them have powerful voices and enjoy narrative privilege, and thus can write and speak with seemingly greater authority than the advocates of counter-narratives (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004)? And what are the lines of influence in the transmission of dominant narratives: do they invariably proceed from economic and political spheres of activity to shape thinking in public services, such as education?

These questions will arise again in later sections which examine positive and negative narratives of globalisation in education. An extended discussion of narrative *methods* lies outside the scope of this paper but much has been written about what has often been referred to as the “narrative turn” in social sciences (see, e.g., Andrews, Squire & Taboukou, 2013; Clough, 2002; Riessman, 2008). This has a number of notable features: a rejection of the notion that language is neutral and objective; an interest in the causes and

chronology of discursive shifts; and an interdisciplinary approach that does not draw on a single theoretical orientation.

The commonality of much policy discourse in education can itself be regarded as a form of globalisation. Pasi Sahlberg has referred to a Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) which seeks to steer countries with distinctive educational traditions in a common direction (Sahlberg, 2012). Its features include standardized curricula and performance standards, test-based accountability systems and the use of corporate management models. These tend to be reinforced by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) carried out periodically by the OECD, comparing results in different countries for reading, mathematics and science: sixty-five countries participated in the 2012 data collection, in which the best results were achieved by Shanghai, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea and Japan, with European countries doing less well. The publication of such information has political consequences, with governments seeking to improve their country's ranking by pursuing similar policies to those nations which shine. However, as Lingard and others have pointed out, cultural diversity means that it is not simply a matter of transplanting a winning formula into a different context: the specificities of particular nation-state responses also have to be taken into account (Lingard, 2008). For example, within the UK, both England and Scotland show up as middle-ranking performers in the PISA results and while both have employed some of the neo-liberal discourse associated with the Global Educational Reform Movement, the secondary education systems in the two countries are markedly different. Scotland has stuck with its all-through comprehensive system, first introduced in 1965, while England has encouraged much more diversification, promoting "free schools" and "academies" which are independent of local authority control. So the convergent pressures deriving from globalisation need to be set against localised divergent pressures which may have deep historical and cultural roots. As Anthony Kelly observes: "The growing international pressures of globalisation affect practitioners in unpredictable and different ways, so the development of national policy is tied to the process of translating global trends to local contexts" (Kelly, 2009, p. 51). This is sometimes referred to as "vernacular globalisation", a process that explains "the ways in which local sites and their histories, cultures, politics and pedagogies mediate to greater or lesser extents the effects of top-down globalisation" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 65).



Globalisation can be viewed as a “grand narrative”: that is, an attempt to offer a general explanation of diverse changes affecting many spheres of social action. However, the complexity and pace of the modern world means that traditional ideas of what constitutes a narrative are no longer adequate. Richard Sennett observes:

If the well-made plot has gone out of fashion in fiction, it is a rarity in ordinary life: life histories are seldom shapely. In ethnography, we are indeed less concerned with how coherent are the stories people tell us than with the effort of our subjects to make their experiences cohere. This is not a one-shot effort. Frequently a subject will retell and reorganize an event, sometimes taking apart a seemingly logical story into disconnected bits, in order to see what lies beneath the surface (Sennett, 2006, p. 188).

Sennett is here referring to individual life histories, personal narratives of everyday life covering family, work and community. When the insight is extended to narratives which seek to explain events on a larger scale, and show how they impact in many different contexts, the impossibility of producing a single story that covers all the forces at work becomes apparent. Globalisation emerges as a concept that has many different layers and dimensions, some of which point in different directions. That is why it is necessary, in Sennett’s terms, to look at the ‘disconnected bits’, to “reorganize” the constituent parts, and “retell” particular episodes. To adapt his analogy with fiction, the story of globalisation has many plots and sub-plots, a cast of characters that are not easily classified as heroes or villains, multiple thematic layers and many tangled narrative threads. It is not an easy read and the ending is left unresolved. As a starting point, it is necessary to identify some of the key components which can be used in the assembly of narrative constructions.

DEFINING THE TERRITORY

“Globalisation” is a term that has been appropriated by people working in many diverse fields, leading to a multiplicity of competing definitions. Fairclough offers a comparatively simple account when he defines it as “The contemporary tendency for economic, political and social processes and relations



to operate on an increasingly global scale” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 217). He adds a number of important qualifications: first, that the concept is contested; secondly, that some parts of the world remain marginalised; and, thirdly, that although the trend has intensified in recent years, it should be seen as part of a longer-term process involving a “re-scaling” of relations between global, regional, national and local levels of operation. These qualifications introduce complexities which are partly reflected in an alternative definition proposed by Steger, after reviewing a number of other attempts:

Globalisation refers to a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch and intensify social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant (Steger, 2003, p. 13).

One of the problems that arise from any attempt to offer a fully comprehensive definition, expressed at a high level of generality, is that its application to particular fields, such as education, may not be immediately apparent. For this reason, it will be useful to look briefly at a number of inter-related dimensions of globalisation whose relevance to education can be demonstrated.

Economic globalisation is often seen as the fundamental driver of the whole process. It refers to the various ways in which economic exchanges have been transformed by new models of conducting business, including: the speed of share dealings and banking transactions; international trade agreements; common currencies; the expansion of multinational companies; and the ease of transferring sites of production and recruiting cheaper labour forces (see Stiglitz, 2003, 2007). The biggest players, such as oil and information technology companies, can exert a degree of power and influence that is equal to, or sometimes greater than, nation states. Their loyalty is to the global market and its potential to generate profits, rather than to any particular country. Company headquarters can be moved quickly if there are taxation benefits to be gained. There are clear consequences for patterns of employment, demographic movements and national identity. Within the UK, for example, people living in Scotland (some of whom will have originated elsewhere) may think of themselves as Scottish, British, European, or even as World Citizens within a reconfigured global environment. Educational systems have to prepare learners for employment opportunities that are very different from



those available to earlier generations. As well as some understanding of the changed economic landscape, they are expected to acquire the kinds of skills valued by employers, such as flexibility and teamwork.

These trends have accelerated at a time when the old ideological divisions between capitalism and socialism were severely weakened following the collapse of the communist bloc in 1989. Market thinking quickly gained ascendancy and led to the application of private sector models to public sector institutions. This was evident in an increased emphasis on efficiency, measurable outputs and value for money, and the introduction of corporate approaches to the management of public organisations such as hospitals and schools. Even in “left-oriented” political parties, economic discourse became the “natural” way to describe the operations of agencies which had previously been described in welfare terms (see Fairclough, 2000).

Political globalisation refers to the growth in forms of political organisation above and beyond the nation state (Baylis, Smith & Owens, 2013). Examples include transnational agencies of a political, military, economic and environmental kind, such as the European Union (EU), the World Health Organisation (WHO), The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the United Nations (UN). Political globalisation raises difficult questions about democratic accountability and the location of power. Concerns have been expressed about decisions being made by a global elite without being subject to proper democratic scrutiny. Within the UK, for example, there are frequent arguments about the extent to which the parliament in London has ceded power to the EU in Brussels. Defenders of political globalisation would argue that international alliances enable more effective action to be taken in relation to problems that are not confined to one country. More controversially, they might also argue that political globalisation has the potential to bring some of the benefits of advanced democracies to nations ruled by undemocratic governments. An example might be the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which can put pressure on oppressive regimes to improve educational facilities and act against various forms of child exploitation.

Education has been affected by political globalisation in a number of ways. The influential role of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in setting cross-national agendas for education and developing performance indicators enabling international comparisons to be made has already been noted. In higher education, the Bologna Declaration, first signed

in 1999, now includes 47 countries committed to the creation of a European Higher Education Area facilitating academic exchange and seeking to ensure comparability of qualifications and standards. And as will be shown later, policy ideas in education have become tradeable commodities promoted by international alliances involving governments, private companies and ‘philanthropic’ organisations. Critics of these developments argue that they lead to bureaucratic conformity and diminish the distinctiveness of national educational traditions.

Cultural globalisation raises contentious issues about sameness and difference (Hopper, 2007). One interpretation emphasises a trend towards standardisation of taste, linked to consumer demand, in things like fashion, popular culture, music, film and television. This has been referred to as the “McDonaldization” of society (Ritzer, 2000), whereby similar products are available on a global scale. Critics see this as evidence of oppressive capitalism which squeezes out the richness and diversity of indigenous cultural forms. A more positive interpretation is that the process enables goods and services which had previously been available only to privileged groups in developed countries to be distributed more widely. It is also argued that increased opportunities for travel mean that people have access to, and can experience directly, greater variety in customs, attitudes and values. This has the potential to increase understanding of different belief systems and to free people from the constraints of their own culture. However, if the conclusion drawn is that all values are relative — that there is a “market” in belief systems as well as goods and services — it creates particular problems for schools, which have traditionally been expected to represent clear standards and transmit values that support a sense of national identity and tradition. The problem is further complicated by demographic movements which bring together youngsters who, initially at least, do not share a common language and represent different ethnic and religious backgrounds. How can a balance be struck between celebrating difference and sharing common aims?

Technological globalisation refers to the many changes brought about by the rapid development and use of information technology in its various forms. These have transformed the processes through which business is conducted and financial transactions are carried out. The internet has brought about major alterations in the way individuals conduct their lives, whether in



terms of the purchase of goods and services or in terms of their personal relationships. Technology can overcome the constraints of time and distance, thus accelerating the pace of modern life. Again, governments can use the internet to release information, promote policies and engage in propaganda exercises. Similarly, pressure groups can employ the new technology to share ideas, organise campaigns and set up websites to provide a forum for ideas that might not otherwise get into the public domain. As the sales of printed newspapers continue to fall, rapid electronic forms of communication become the principal source of news for many people.

The educational effects of technological globalisation are both positive and negative (Selwyn, 2012). Access to “information” is not the same as access to knowledge, and students need to learn to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources and to avoid the temptations of plagiarism. Conventional schools, colleges and universities which in the past had a virtual monopoly of knowledge, acting as its gatekeepers, now find that there are all sorts of other competitors straying into their territory. Part of the response has been the growth of online courses or, more commonly, the supplementing of conventional courses with access to online material. Many agencies other than schools, colleges and universities — e.g. public bodies and voluntary organisations — now see themselves as having an educational role. This raises interesting questions about knowledge generation and knowledge transmission and could, in the longer term, require a major reconfiguration of the way traditional educational establishments operate. If they fail to take sufficient account of the digital revolution outside their walls they could come to be regarded as archaic institutions, no longer fit for purpose.

Environmental globalisation covers a range of issues (Newell, 2012). These include the depletion of natural resources (oil, gas, coal) and the effects of increasing demand for energy consumption on global warming and environmental pollution. Fierce debates surround the merits of alternative sources of energy: wind farms, whether sited onshore or at sea, affect the landscape and meet only a small proportion of the total energy required; nuclear power carries high risks, as disasters in Russia and Japan have shown, and the disposal of waste presents huge, long-term problems. Environmental charities, such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, campaign for safe, sustainable forms of energy and draw attention to the effects of economic exploitation of the environment, such as the destruction of rainforests in South America by log-

ging companies. They argue for an approach that respects both the culture and lifestyle of indigenous populations and the habitat of animals, birds and insects. These arguments have direct relevance to patterns of living in developed countries, affecting such diverse issues as carbon emissions from cars and aeroplanes, the design of houses (to improve levels of insulation and reduce energy consumption), and approved models of farming (to limit the use of harmful chemicals and ensure land conservation).

Educational responses to these questions have proved controversial. Those who argue that the future of the planet is at stake, and that extreme weather is evidence of the hazards that a careless attitude toward the environment can cause, are accused by critics of being unduly alarmist. Environmental campaigners respond by saying that there has been a lack of political will (particularly by the major players, the United States and China) to address the scale of the problem. They also charge multinational companies with pursuing short-term profits at the expense of long-term environmental consequences. Such conflicting interpretations require delicate handling in a classroom context. It is certainly the case that they need to be addressed: young people are the generation who will have to respond to the environmental legacy left by their elders and it is only right that they should be made aware of the social, scientific and ethical arguments surrounding the disputes.

The overall effect of these various dimensions of globalisation is to create social disequilibrium. They accelerate the pace of change and destabilise traditional patterns of individual, institutional and governmental action. All of the forms of globalisation that have been described have the potential to impact on systems of education. It is not surprising, therefore, that the global dimension has come to feature prominently in educational discourse. But, given the political arguments surrounding many of the developments that have been described, the policy implications are far from straightforward. The evidence can be interpreted in various ways, leading to differing accounts of how schools should respond. In the sections that follow two alternative narratives of the educational globalisation will be offered, the first relatively positive, the second more critical. Thereafter, the explanatory value of globalisation as a concept which can inform educational policy will be assessed: will it continue to shape thinking and influence policies, or are we near the point at which it will be abandoned in favour of other conceptual tools?



POSITIVE NARRATIVES OF GLOBALISATION IN EDUCATION

Boyd (2008) refers to the global dimension of education as “the core of all learning, encompassing what it is to be human and to live, interdependently, with all other humans on the planet” (Boyd, 2008, p. 161). He goes on to list some of the subjects which should feature in a curriculum which reflects this: climate change and global warming; poverty in the developing world; war, terrorism and conflict resolution; fair trade and international development; environmental sustainability. The challenge for teachers, he suggests, is to establish meaningful links between local and global issues, showing that what happens at a “macro” level internationally can have repercussions for communities which, on the face of it, may seem to have little in common: in other words, the reach of globalisation is powerful and extensive, and we all have a responsibility to engage with it. Boyd also emphasises that, from an educational perspective, the process of engagement is just as important as the subject matter: how learners “deal with the evidence, how they evaluate sources of information, how they form judgements and how they develop their value positions (and accommodate others’)” (ibid., p. 173) are critical issues in determining the worth of the globalised curriculum.

Another positive reading of globalisation in education starts from the view that schools have traditionally operated as “closed systems”, dominated by professionals who have been resistant to outside influences. This inward-looking approach, it is implied, is no longer tenable, given the rapid economic, political and technological changes that have taken place outside schools (see Lingard, 2006). Technology in particular opens up opportunities for schools to create links which cross national boundaries. The best-known example of an attempt to reposition schools as ‘open’ institutions is the Global Classroom project, which started officially in 1996 and in its first eight years included schools from Australia, the Czech Republic, England, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Scotland, South Africa, Sweden and the USA. The project involved students as researchers, visiting schools in other countries for periods of four to six weeks, living with host families and keeping a diary of their experiences (see Macbeath & Sugimine, 2003). As might be anticipated, the experience was enlightening and challenging, requiring students to engage with unfamiliar attitudes, practices and cultural norms. Some prior assumptions had to be “unlearned” and their sense of identity was subject to adjustment. One of the key findings of the project, confirming the need for an outward-looking



approach, was that while schools matter, families and communities matter more. The major limitation of the project was that the experience of finding out about other parts of the world at first hand could only be offered to a restricted number of students.

International charities have also seen advantages in increased global awareness. Philanthropy has become globalised through public awareness of natural disasters and the human consequences of civil wars. Dramatic film reports and clips on social media sites give immediacy to such events as typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines or the fighting in Syria, strengthening appeals for aid to help the victims. The long-established UK charity Oxfam has been a leading campaigner in the promotion of global citizenship, producing a *A Guide for Schools* (Oxfam, 2006) which, among other aims, sees education as “a powerful tool for changing the world, especially in relation to such issues as poverty, denial of rights, and the inequitable and unsustainable use of resources” (Oxfam, 2006, p. 3). The document goes on to define the Global Citizen as someone who:

- Is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen.
 - Respects and values diversity.
 - Has an understanding of how the world works.
 - Is outraged by social injustice.
 - Participates in the community at a range of levels, from the local to the global.
 - Is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place.
 - Takes responsibility for their actions.
- (Oxfam, 2006, p. 3).

Critics of this approach come from two directions. Some would see it as over-politicising the curriculum by encouraging attitudes and actions which express an ideological position that not all parents would support. Others would say that what is needed is, in fact, a more committed attack on those aspects of globalisation which represent the spread of market capitalism, including the exploitation of cheap labour and the depletion of natural resources in poor countries. Certainly there is a robust debate within many of the leading international charities about the most effective position to adopt in pursuit of their philanthropic aims, ranging from a pragmatic



compromise with the forces of economic and political power to a strong ethical defence of liberal democratic principles. Supporters of the educational approach taken by Oxfam would argue that the teaching of controversial issues in the classroom is an essential part of the educational process and that, while it raises sensitive questions about the role of the teacher and the most appropriate teaching methods, it has the potential to engage the interest of learners in a way that a supposedly “neutral” curriculum cannot (see Cowan & Maitles, 2012).

What this debate does highlight, however, is that the economic and political dimensions of globalisation require educators to enter highly contested territory, which involves not only curriculum content but also policy formation and the role of teachers. With regard to curriculum, Dale (2007) has argued that the curricular implications of globalisation have received insufficient attention. He suggests that this may be because educationists tend to have an “internalist” view of the subject matter of learning which leads them to focus rather narrowly on relatively minor adjustments to traditional patterns and perhaps blinds them to the gradual impact of strong “externalist” pressures. He suggests that the Global Knowledge Economy, which sees learning in terms of its utility and commercial value, has caused a significant shift in favour of “competences” of various kinds at the expense of content knowledge. Similarly, Young (2012) regards the downgrading of traditional forms of knowledge as a source of serious concern.

The policy aspects will be explored in the next section. As far as teacher education and teacher development are concerned, a number of writers see possibilities in using globalisation to broaden the scope of pre-service and in-service courses. Shah and Brown state that “our understanding of a critical global thinker extends to teachers as much as it does to students” (2010, p. 40) and some research projects have focused specifically on how to support teachers in engaging with the conceptual issues and practical challenges which globalisation presents (see Wisely, Barr, Britton & King, 2010). This can be seen as an attempt to respond to the criticism advanced by Bottery and Wright (2000) who had claimed, referring to the challenges of globalisation, that schools did little to help teachers to cope with the changes or to gain a better understanding of the processes at work. Instead they encouraged teachers to focus on practical classroom issues (“How?” questions) and discouraged them from exploring deeper conceptual issues (“Why?” questions). This is one manifestation of a recurring debate about the relative

importance of intellectual understanding and craft skill in the formation of teachers (Sachs, 2003).

Finally, it should be noted that not all positive narratives of globalisation proceed from a desire to uphold liberal values or promote humanitarian concerns. A much more hard-headed approach, based on particular examples in different parts of the world, is taken by James Tooley, who accepts that they key drivers of globalisation are essentially economic and then goes on to pose the question *Could the globalisation of education benefit the poor?* (Tooley, 2004). He concludes that “the profit motive may be an important motivator to educational entrepreneurs to create schools in the first place” and that if this leads to the setting up of schools where none exist (or where state provision is inadequate), and that if some of the profits are invested in improved infrastructure, the results may be benign rather than sinister (*ibid.*, p. 24). A rather different view of private-sector investment emerges from the work of Stephen Ball (2012): this will be discussed in the next section.

CRITICAL NARRATIVES OF GLOBALISATION IN EDUCATION

Before focusing on the main line of attack by critics of globalisation — that is, the social and political consequences of the economic processes which underpin it — note should be taken of concerns about its impact on human identity. The relationship between the personal-individual and social-cultural components of identity is important (Jenkins, 1996) and it can be argued that the psychology of individuals and groups is being altered in fundamental ways by the global forces at work. Whereas in the past, identity for many people was defined in terms of place, social position and cultural norms, these “markers” are now much harder to specify. Developments in commerce, ready access to information and ideas through technology, and the possibilities of social and geographical mobility, tend to promote global similarities at the expense of local differences. Viewed positively, this can be construed as an enhanced opportunity for people to escape the limitations (in some cases the oppressions) of their local circumstances. But viewed negatively, it can be presented as the loss of rootedness, the removal of the very features which help individuals to make sense of who they are. For some, this can be a profoundly unsettling experience, particularly if they have had to flee from their country of origin because of civil war or political oppression. Castells (2010) has explored



the complex ways in which personal, cultural, religious and political identity inter-relate. At a political level, state-sponsored identity, defined in terms of citizenship, can either accommodate the diversity of cultural and religious affiliations, or seek to suppress them. Even in “democratic” societies, cultural variation — evident, for example, in minority languages — may be subject to conformist pressures. One effect of cultural globalisation is that certain languages (English, Chinese, Spanish, French) have come to dominate international communication while others have been marginalised or even risk extinction. Add to this the role of global media companies in saturating public consumption with what Steger calls “formulaic TV shows and mindless advertisements”, and the potential for reshaping “the structure of desires around the world” is considerable (Steger, 2003, p. 76).

The reshaping of identity that some aspects of globalisation bring about has significant consequences for education. Schools have traditionally been seen as important institutions within a community, providing safety and security for young people and giving them a sense of belonging. But if the influence of the local “community” (see Delanty, 2003) is weakened by the various dimensions of globalisation — not least the virtual ‘community’ of the internet — then that requires some re-thinking of what is entailed in the promotion of “personal development” as an educational aim. It is partly for this reason that notions of citizenship education now extend beyond political literacy and social activism within a single nation state to include awareness of global developments (Humes, 2002, 2008; Peters, Britton & Blee, 2009; QCA, 1998).

The main line of attack for many critics of globalisation is that it depends on a particular, neoliberal view of economic relations and wealth production. This, they argue, leads to the concentration of power and capital in the hands of an international elite, who control markets, shape laws, influence governments and exploit labour in ways that subvert democratic processes. Among the undesirable consequences are an increased divide between rich and poor (both within and between countries), unhealthy alliances between private companies, politicians and public officials, and the promotion of an oppressive uniformity in goods, services and cultural values. These concerns feature prominently in the arguments of the various strands of the anti-globalisation movement which champion democratic representation, human rights, fair trade and sustainable development. The most visible manifestations of anti-globalisation occur when protests are arranged to coincide with meetings of organisations which are perceived to be powerful engines of globalisa-

tion, such as the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The annual meeting of the World Economic Forum at Davos in Switzerland has also been a target. While these protests achieve a certain amount of publicity, they also demonstrate that the anti-globalisation movement is very diverse, with sub-groups pursuing different agendas: third world debt, environmentalism, child labour, anti-Americanisation and tax avoidance by multinational companies all feature in the discourse. Somewhat ironically, in planning and mounting their campaigns, the protesters make effective use of social media and the internet, the main instrument of technological globalisation.

Stephen Ball, in his analysis of international trends of educational policy (Ball, 2012), has introduced a further dimension to the critique of globalisation. His starting point is a definition of neoliberalism taken from Shamir:

[N]eoliberalism [is] a complex, often incoherent, unstable and even contradictory set of practices that are organized around a certain imagination of the “market” as a basis for the universalisation of market-based social relations, with the corresponding penetration in almost every single aspect of our lives of the discourse and/or practice of commodification, capital-accumulation and profit-making (Shamir, 2008, as cited in Ball, 2012, p. 3).

Ball argues that there are powerful cross-national networks consisting of businesses, philanthropists and governments which promote a particular vision of how education should be re-formed. Citing the work of Rizvi and Lingard (2010), he offers an interesting description of what is taking place:

New policy networks and communities are being established through which particular discourses and knowledge flow and gain legitimacy and credibility and “these processes are located within a global architecture of political relations that not only involves national governments but also [inter-governmental organisations], transnational corporations and [non-governmental organisations]. Policies are developed, enacted and evaluated in various global networks from where their authority is now partly derived” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 338). These are new policy assemblages with a diverse range of participants which exist in a new kind of policy space somewhere between multilateral agencies, national governments, [non-governmental organisations], think-tanks and advocacy groups, consultants, social entrepreneurs



and international business, in and beyond the traditional sites and circulations of policy-making (Ball, 2012, pp. 9-10).

He then elaborates his thesis by arguing that “Neo-liberalism is insinuating itself into almost every aspect of contemporary social life” (Ball, 2012, p. 145). Furthermore, “neo-liberalism is producing (...) new kinds of social actors, hybrid social subjects who are spatially mobile, ethically malleable, and able to speak the languages of public, private and philanthropic value” (ibid., p. 145). He draws attention to the operations of international “edu-businesses” such as Cambridge Education and Pearson Education, the world’s largest education company. The marketing of curriculum and assessment materials by western “knowledge companies”, to countries which are seeking to improve their educational provision, is now a significant source of revenue. But, Ball argues, the process goes much further than merely providing teaching and learning materials. It extends to the promotion of policy ideas, the selling of market “solutions” to problems of educational development and social inequality. This involves particular forms of discourse — such as quality assurance, inspection, leadership and accountability — which are said to guarantee “improvement”. Educational policy is thus treated as a marketable commodity, a product to be branded, packaged and sold in the same way as commercial goods. But, as the historical limitations of western educational systems themselves demonstrate, policy ideas cannot work in isolation. They depend on stable government, an efficient institutional infrastructure and a professional teaching force, conditions that may not apply in the countries on the receiving end of the policy advice.

Two particular features of Ball’s account invite comment: its significance for democratic decision making and the ethical issues which it raises. The more power policy entrepreneurs acquire — through their access to officials and politicians, their involvement in international networks and “think-tanks”, and their successful negotiation of lucrative contracts — the more traditional democratic processes of decision making within “independent” nation states are undermined. This is similar to, but potentially more sinister than, arguments about the loss of sovereignty involved in membership of the European Union. At least member states of the EU conduct elections to the European Parliament and there are established mechanisms of legal and financial accountability which are open to inspection. Not everyone is satisfied with these mechanisms — as the growth of the UK Independence Party

demonstrates — but they have a constitutional basis that is lacking in many of the global operations described by Ball. In this sense some aspects of educational globalisation can be seen as anti-democratic.

The second point arises from Ball's reference to the "ethically malleable" character of the "new kinds of social actors" produced by neoliberalism. A well-functioning democracy depends on an informed electorate who can rely on truth-seeking institutions. But the principal motivation of the "new kinds of social actors" is the commercial potential of international markets for educational materials and policy ideas, rather than any elevated notion of global enlightenment. Moreover, some of the existing agencies, such as universities, which could be expected to defend traditional notions of knowledge and truth when they might be seen to be under threat, have themselves been drawn into the neoliberal project. There is now a substantial body of literature which suggests that universities have been compromised by various forms of government control, by the way in which research is commissioned, funded and disseminated, and by the corporate culture embraced by university leaders (see Bailey & Freedman, 2011; Collini, 2012; Evans, 2004). Collini, in a provocative article entitled "Sold Out", castigates universities for the 'crazed market vision' which some university managers have adopted, leading them to value marketing more than teaching. He goes on to suggest that the true value of scholarly labour is being squeezed out in favour of the exchange-value of learning as a commodity. The political aim is to change the character of universities, "to make them conform to market ideology. Universities must be made into businesses, selling a product to customers" (Collini, 2013, p. 12). He also reports that one management consultancy firm has referred to the university sector as a "treasure island", implying that it is ripe for further exploitation.

The economic, political and social dimensions of globalisation are closely linked. What may at first seem like an issue that belongs to the grand stage of international politics and military power can be shown to pose significant challenges for the work of teachers. Andy Hargreaves (2003) has located education in the context of global insecurity, fuelled by disparities of wealth, ideological conflicts and the threat of terrorism. He cites Benjamin Barber who in his book *Jihad vs McWorld* argued that the future depended on a struggle between two opposing globalising forces, one representing the "bloody politics of identity", the other the "bloodless economics of profit" (Barber, 1995, pp. 6-7). The contrast could also be characterised as a contest between



fundamentalism, an unquestioning allegiance to the tribe, and consumerism, in which questions relating to the public good are submerged by the “logic” of market imperatives. Hargreaves observes:

The paradox of globalization (...) is that economic globalization and homogenization lead many of those who cannot share in its benefits to turn inwards to culture, religion and ethnicity as alternative sources of meaning and identity (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 31).

He concludes that globalisation is “suffering from a vast morality deficit” (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 33). This does not mean trying to resist all of its manifestations, some of which have produced significant benefits. What it does mean, he argues, is that international economic organisations need to be balanced by equally strong social and humanitarian ones, reminding us that “the failure to promote the human as well as the economic side of globalization can carry a terrible price” (ibid., p. 34).

This interpretation clearly has a number of implications for the aims of schooling and the social role of teachers. Teachers need to prepare youngsters for a future in which there are many possibilities, uncertainties and risks. The threat of terrorism is one that affects many countries. What kinds of representation should that have in the curriculum, particularly in contexts where the class may include members of different ethnic and religious groups? Are there some subjects that are simply too sensitive to address, where even an attempt to adopt “procedural neutrality” (Stenhouse, 1975) is likely to be hard to maintain? If that is the conclusion, it raises difficult questions about how meaningful the aspiration to produce informed citizens can be. Citizenship education, if it is to be effective, must be prepared to tackle contentious issues concerned with race, religion and gender. It has to promote understanding of the historical and cultural reasons for conflict, some of which may not reflect well on the host country. It takes a highly skilled teacher to treat issues such as these in ways that connect meaningfully with, for example, both children who have a parent serving in the armed forces and those who belong to an ethnic minority and subscribe to a religion which the majority would label “fundamentalist”.

What challenging cases like this highlight is the increasing complexity of the social role of teachers, partly brought about by globalisation in its various forms. No longer can teachers be regarded simply as agents of cultural

transmission from one generation to the next, passing on the accumulated wisdom of a particular educational tradition. Instead, they have to negotiate a hazardous landscape in which they are likely to encounter many areas of contestation. At the same time, they themselves are subject to political expectations which have been shaped by the dominant economic models of the age (see Maguire, 2002). Their work is described in terms of targets, outcomes and measurable results: they are expected to be increasingly accountable and subject to inspection regimes: their lessons have to be planned, monitored and evaluated (Bottery & Wright, 2000). There is a tension between the open-minded, exploratory forms of pedagogy which the teaching of controversial issues seems to require and the sharply defined, rather prescriptive approaches which now dominate many aspects of the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

This paper has contrasted two narratives of globalisation in education, one fairly positive, the other fairly negative. Neither is entirely consistent: there are tensions and competing interpretations within both. The difference between the two narratives is partly one of scale. For the most part, the positive narrative operates within a limited canvas, focusing on what can be done in schools and classrooms to address the challenges of globalisation. It is a pragmatic approach, acknowledging that there are powerful forces at work beyond the control of schools, but attempting to respond in ways that reflect some of the realities of what is happening and to raise awareness of their importance for learners, both now and in the future. Teachers, on this approach, act as mediators of the profound shifts that are taking place, trying to steer a constructive course through territory that no one fully comprehends.

The critical narrative focuses less on the day-to-day work of schools and classrooms. It attempts to address the big political and economic changes that are driving globalisation and asks fundamental questions about the motives behind the changes, how the process seems to be producing winners and losers, and the potentially sinister reconfiguration of conceptions of knowledge and truth. Teachers, on this interpretation, are placed in an uncomfortable position, expected to work in conditions that have been redefined by market models of their professional duties, which make it difficult for them to respond adequately to the curricular and pedagogic implications of



globalisation. Moreover, some policy developments are now taking place at a level beyond the nation state and are not subject to normal democratic processes which require consultation and partnership with a range of stakeholders. Schools and teachers are thus seen as relatively powerless players in a global process that traditional agencies cannot control. They will try to do their best for learners but the scope for genuine teacher agency is decidedly limited.

Fairclough (2003) has drawn attention to the different ways in which globalisation is represented in policy documents and statements by politicians. Sometimes it is presented as an inevitable development, at other times a project or a plan. In one of Tony Blair's speeches, analysed by Fairclough, it is seen as "a fact", a process "driven by people", and "a force for good" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 114). By contrast, critics see it as evidence of the march of international capitalism, a force for oppression, exploitation and injustice (see Rodrik, 2012). Does this mean that globalisation has become a fundamentally incoherent concept which should be abandoned altogether? Even if that were judged to be desirable, it cannot simply be willed. Powerful discursive forms, such as globalisation and global citizenship, have a life beyond the decisions of any individual or group. They are developed at a level of politics and ideology which can sweep aside academic or professional objections. What is likely, however, is that their utility value will have a limited shelf life and that they will eventually be superseded by other discursive forms. As Bauman has pointed out,

all vogue words tend to share a similar fate: the more experiences they pretend to make transparent, the more they themselves become opaque. The more numerous are the orthodox truths they elbow out and supplant, the faster they turn into no-questions-asked canons (...) "Globalization" is no exception to that rule (Bauman, 1998, p. 1).

Where does this leave us? The concept of globalisation has certainly had some value in explaining and interrogating inter-related developments in economics, politics, technology, culture and environment, all of which have had significance for education. But, as has been shown, it is capable of being used to construct quite different narratives of the benefits and dangers of the transformations that are taking place. This suggests that there may come a point, perhaps in the near future, when the concept will have outlived its usefulness and may need to be replaced with something that is felt to have greater explanatory power or, at least, gives a better account of the complexities at work.

Such a development would be consistent with accounts of the way discursive changes take place. Fairclough has detected “a significant shift in the social functioning of language” and has argued that “attempts to engineer the direction of change increasingly include attempts to change language practices” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 6). As the negative associations of globalisation become more pronounced, it can be anticipated that its value as a policy concept will be diminished and it might be replaced by something regarded as more neutral. An earlier example of such a discursive shift might be the gradual replacement of references to “social class” in educational policy documents by the term “social inclusion” which seeks to remove the divisive associations of the earlier term. However, while the term globalisation continues to have some utility value for policy makers, education professionals need to remain alert to the ways in which it is deployed. Sennett (2006) has argued for the importance of “narrative agency”, that is the active engagement of those affected by powerful global forces in interpreting what is happening to them. This involves questioning and challenging the official narratives with which they are presented, and the language used to describe their roles and functions. This is particularly important in professional fields, such as education, which provide an important public service, essential to the constructive functioning of democratic institutions and processes. The “grand narrative” of globalisation should not be passively accepted but should be subject to critical interrogation.

Furthermore, it would be a healthy development if the teaching profession managed to find the intellectual space, not only to question the dominant discourses which policy makers employ to try to shape their work, but also to return to the big questions which all the great educators, from Plato to Dewey, have explored in their writings: questions about the state and the individual, authority and freedom, identity and values, rights and responsibilities, democracy and justice. This would open up a much broader landscape than the one which has dominated recent policy debates, where economic metaphors have gained ascendancy over all others. It would also have the attraction of making it possible to re-establish productive links with some of those other disciplines which have been so important in the development of educational thinking and practice (philosophy, history, sociology, psychology). What happens in the classroom should be understood, explained and justified in terms of the recurring perplexities of the human condition, and informed by knowledge emerging from the latest research, rather than determined by the ideological limitations of a particular moment in history.



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