

Globalization and Knowledge Transfer: A Case Study of Tuzla Canton Headteachers' Training

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Globalisation processes in education are, among others, reflected in the notion of 'policy borrowing' (Halpin and Troyna 1995) and knowledge transfer. These processes are often associated with the idea of 'developed' and 'undeveloped' countries. In this article, the author discusses the opportunities, potentials and threats of such transfers with respect to cultural and specifically educational contexts and traditions. The relationships and processes are often understood as 'one-way' processes between 'donors' and 'recipients'. The author questions such assumptions and argues that there is a mutual, reciprocal perplexing relationship of 'giving-receiving', of 'developing of all and for all' processes.

In this article, a case study of headteachers' training in Tuzla Canton, implemented by a group of Slovenian experts, is presented and the evaluation of the project with respect to addressing cultural traditions in education is discussed. SE European countries have been receiving aid, either financial or in terms of expertise, in order to 'access' or only 'approach' the European Union. Beside sources of financing and different 'sorts' of expertise, there is significant difference between 'donors' in terms of approaches and respect for local traditions and cultural contexts.

The author concludes that the success of the project/'the case' was grounded in understanding the intercultural practices, traditions and contexts.

GLOBALISATION AND EDUCATION

The globalisation of culture, economy and education is not a simple process (Apple 1995) and does not originate from one source only. It is a complex process that is related to information flow (Pal 1997) but is also broader than just interconnectedness. In education, it is often associated with the commodification of education and hence the marketisation of education (Kenway et al. 1994; 1996; Dehli 1996). The marketisation of

education is often held to embrace four processes: deregulation, devolution, dezoning and per capita funding (Kenway et al. 1996). It is based on the assumption that education is more a private good than a public good, although this is an unresolved dispute between protagonists (Tooley 1994) and opponents (Grace 1994). Trnavčević (2001) refers to Dehli (1996) in warning that binary oppositions do not contribute to solutions because the relation between them is complex and often contested. However, our perceptions and understanding of education shape processes such as the devolution of power and authority from state to local level. One of these processes is the decentralisation of education and the related question of schools' and teachers' autonomy. These disputes and questions reflect global discourses but are differently expressed in various cultural contexts either in national educational policies or in different ways of implementation.

Apple (1995) points to the globalisation of culture, economy and education and argues that it is not a straightforward process. In all its complexity it pervades every pore of social life. It is more than the mere fact of interconnectedness and as Pal (1997) argues it is also related to information 'flow'. Globalisation is often associated with homogenisation (Appadurai 1990; Smith 1990) and 'with the image of the globe as a single space, the generative frame of unity within which diversity can take place' (Featherstone 1990, 2). Featherstone (1990) discusses globalisation processes and global culture and points to cultural integration and disintegration processes.

It therefore may be possible to point to trans-societal cultural processes which take a variety of forms, some of which have preceded the inter-state relations into which nation-states can be regarded as being embedded, and processes which sustain the exchange and flow of goods, people, information, knowledge and images which give rise to communication processes which gain some autonomy on a global level (Featherstone 1990, 1).

He argues that there is no global culture if by global culture 'we mean something akin to the culture of the nation-state writ large' (p. 1). Appadurai (1990) discusses the new global cultural economy which

has to be understood as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models [...] nor it is susceptible to sim-

ple models of push and pull (in terms of migration theory) or of surpluses and deficits [...], or of consumers and producers [...]. The complexity of the current global economy has to do with certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics which we have barely begun to theorise (p. 296).

It seems that the globalisation of culture embraces all processes in social life. In a way, a new globe is emerging, or at least an image of a globe where simple juxtaposing positions cannot explain the flows. The images, as Appadurai (1990) discusses, create sort of 'imagined worlds' (p. 297), 'scapes', that point to the fluid and irregular shapes of these landscapes. He discusses ethnoscapas, technoscapas, finanscapas, mediascapas and ideoscapas, which are subject to translations in specific contexts. Stronach once indicated in a discussion at Brdo, that we could also talk about eduscapas. In all these 'scapes' terminological issues are part of the flow – the meaning that is assigned to them in a specific context. These images conjure of a 'globe' as a sort of unity, a frame limited by physical limits, where diversity take place – the diversity of cultures, nation-states, races and ethnicities. Such 'scapes' cannot function in isolation, they are interconnected, interrelated and in a way co-dependent.

This discussion on globalisation is relevant for the Slovenian context. In one way, the establishment of the nation-state was perceived essential in order to secure ethnic existence. Our own language and education needed to be preserved while in economic terms Slovenia might enter the European and world competitive market. It is an interesting disjuncture, the need to 'go global' but to keep everything national in one way while entering various international alliances – the European Union and the NATO, for example. In turn, the latter leads to 'adjusted' political, economic and eventually cultural spheres. Have we not heard this story already – being a part of Yugoslavia, having common or at least compatible legislation and then the need and problem how to 'maintain ourselves'?

The relationship between global and local, general and specific, small and large has shifted from one extreme to another. This relationship also applies to nation-states in relation to the global. Globalisation is often referred to economic terms. Brown and Lauder (1996), for example, discuss the creation of a global economy that 'has led to an intensification of economic competition between firms, regions and nation-states' (p. 1). They also argue that:

This globalisation of economic activity has called into question the future role of the nation-state and how it can secure economic growth and shared prosperity. At first sight this may appear to have little to do with educational policy; however, the quality of a nation's education and training system is seen to hold the key to future economic prosperity (Brown and Lauder 1996, 1).

Globalisation of the economy is multifaceted and also paradoxical. On the one hand, it crosses the borders and opens the space of national economy and production. It creates 'production without borders' (p. 1). On the other hand, it empowers nation-states by focusing on education as a national, common good that allegedly ensures global competitiveness. Green (1994) in his discussion about postmodernism and state education, points to Australia and to one of its theorists, Jane Kenway:

In Australia, Jane Kenway (1992) argues that cultural commodification, economic globalisation and the compression of time and space has attended the 'information revolution', all implying radical transformations in education; and that these are already prefigured in the 'commercialisation' of education and the shift away from institution-based learning, for which a paradigm case would be the development of full-fee, offshore distance education (p. 68).

GLOBAL AND LOCAL

Globalisation has brought about some changes in relationship between the local and the global. Education has some global characteristics and at the same time it seeks to preserve national values and identity. Smith (1990) argues 'though individual national cultures remain distinctive and vibrant, there are also broader European cultural patterns which transcend national cultural boundaries to create an overlapping 'family' of common components' (p. 187). In the area of education, Halpin and Troyna (1995) point to the specifics which they labelled 'policy borrowing'. It means that nation-states borrow some elements of educational policies from other countries, from other nation-states. Tradition and cultural embeddedness are somewhat neglected, which leads to a gap between the education system and its aim to preserve national values, identity, cultural embeddedness and tradition. Some elements borrowed

from the global can, for example, fit into national aims, but they are not necessarily congruent with tradition and cultural context. The conference on inclusion in Portorož 2001 showed that participants easily agreed about what inclusion and inclusive policy meant and what the aims were (locally accepted global tendency), but they differed in their views of its implementation (local aims not traditionally implemented) (Trtnik - Herlec 2002).

Contextual and traditional embeddedness and 'policy borrowing' (Halpin and Troyna 1995) can be further related to what Morris and Stronach (1994) define as 'policy hysteria'. Some parts of educational policies are borrowed from other traditions and cultures and are evaluated in short time periods. Heyneman (1997) writes about 'many international efforts to advise and assist the new European and Central Asian (ECA) countries on questions of fiscal stabilisation and privatisation of property' (p. 173). Similar attempts can be noted in the field of education. Miron (1993) discusses the reform in Sweden and observes that 'the Swedish government has initiated an experiment of great dimensions, which bears with it a number of unknown implications for the education system' (p. 2). He indicates that conclusions and assessment of the reform require time. It seems to me that the reform can be seen as a large-scale experiment. The results influence shifts in directions and modifications of policies regardless of the character of education's long-term oriented outcomes.

Coulby and Jones (1996) in their discussion of post-modernity, education and European identities point to post-modernism that 'has gone beyond cultural relativism to epistemological relativism (Feyerabend 1978). No truth system is seen as superior. Identity is no longer single and heroic but fractured and even indiscernible' (p. 174). There are intercultural differences between school systems embedded in cultural and traditional – local contexts (Stronach et al. 1999). The size of districts vary, and effectiveness correlations often offer prescriptions as if they were context-free and universalistic. Hence they are not to be naively read. For example, Slovenian experts discuss 'regionalism'. To support their own points of view they use arguments based on other countries and contexts, such as the appropriate size of a school district, which can be between 2000 and 200,000 pupils. Yet how can Slovenia have a district with 200 000 students if there are only 2 million inhabitants?

There is another issue emerging from this discussion. Autonomy is at the heart of many of these discussions (Whitty 1997; Garret 1998) and is

often referred to as 'policy autonomy' (Garret 1998, 2) which could not be reflected as 'de jure' autonomy. It means that we have the ideal of autonomy written in our policies, education policies, for example, but when it comes to practice, the ideal is not recognised any more nor it is transformed into any form of 'practical' autonomy – such as self-management of schools, thus any global image of autonomy is specifically reflected in local, nation-state contexts.

POLICY BORROWING

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It is important to be familiar with international experiences, especially because they are thoroughly dealt with in the literature and because they have become the leading topic of many conferences. But it would be a mistake to transfer these experiences to individual countries, which would uncritically employ them. If we start with such transfer we can face serious problems.

1. One can transfer some issues deeply embedded in the tradition of the 'model' country. The peculiarities relating to a particular country may lessen the possibility of effective transfer to another tradition, context or organisation.
2. Those who take decisions in the school system and those who oppose changes may selectively use evidence to support their prejudices. It is always possible to find and select a country which can serve as a supportive argument for their standpoints.
3. One can never be certain what stage of changes the country you imitate is at – it may be just at the point of abandoning the existing policy or practice.

Policy should therefore never depend simply on the professional expertise of comparisons. Even professionalism may fall into similar traps since professionals use common terminology. Numerous authors (Stronach 1999; Fidler 2000) argue that the practice of using common terminology can create an illusion of equal understanding regardless of the context. However, significant differences may be uncovered by a more precise analysis. The same terminology can be used to describe different activities in different countries (Fidler 2000).

An example of 'transfer' dilemmas is the Slovenian group who have introduced headteacher training. Despite or perhaps because of their deeper knowledge the transfer has lasted for several years. It has been a

long process of interaction between foreign knowledge and Slovene context. Stronach (1999) would say that the transfer has been successfully implemented through mediators which were able to transfer experiences and knowledge into the context of national education. It has also been proved that there are no shortcuts and that a period of time is needed for its implementation – also due to schools' and teachers' instinctive resistance towards foreign initiatives. Only after the initial trust has been built, could the improvements and training occur. It seems that there is some natural security measure in-built in systems that can protect them against internally or externally imposed changes. We could talk about it as a kind of inertia that is always there to help schools survive in times of political and other changes.

The danger of transferring the incompatible was much lower in the past because the information flow was slower. Nowadays it seems that everybody knows everything simultaneously. Therefore it is easier to succumb to temptation of immediate transfer.

However, I do not intend to say that we do not need sharing experiences and findings at international level. On the contrary, sharing is essential, but being aware of the danger is extremely useful and to summarise: we can transfer knowledge and experiences, but not models or solutions.

Another issue is equality in the process of sharing experiences, knowledge and solutions. Traditionally, international trends have been directed towards efforts in Anglo-Saxon and EU countries. The rest of the world (the majority of the participants at this conference) have somehow often found themselves in the role of consumers. The experiences from EU countries are undoubtedly valuable and so are the approaches developed there. However, it is essential to state the nature of the problem clearly: such consideration does not stem from bad experiences. On the contrary, the entire co-operation may be perceived to be correct, the purposes good, the understanding and benevolence high. It is not difficult for a careful transmitter to find some weaknesses related to these models. There are enough critical practitioners and theorists who are aware of the weaknesses and threats involved in the change process. However, this is only one side of the story. On the other hand, damage can be caused if the status quo is maintained. It is in this context that I consider sharing experiences to be a pivotal process.

A two-way flow will not just happen, especially not with mere surface understanding of the leading side. The change has to occur at our side,

too: by increasing awareness of our own peculiarities, by ascribing them a universal dimension, by greater affirmation and by breaking through the language barriers.

PROJECT CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE AREA OF EDUCATIONAL
MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP IN TUZLA CANTON

The project is grounded on the existing cooperation with Tuzla Canton – a pilot group of 20 head teachers who attended leadership licence program in Slovenia. So far the experiences have shown that head teachers felt the courses they have attended (the introductory module, theories of organisations and the head teacher as a pedagogical leader) were beneficial and relevant for their practice in their own cultural contexts. Their assignments have shown sufficient understanding of theories as well as high level of applicability to their practice. They have created portfolios, which have a potential to be reflected on and also to influence their practice throughout their future activities.

On this basis as well as on the theoretical assumptions and research on residential courses and capacity building through knowledge and skills we propose our future cooperation in two main areas:

1. to provide a Master degree for a group of 15 participants,
2. the establishment of Educational management and leadership Centre in Tuzla which has a potential to cross the borders of canton and become the Centre for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Overall aims of the project:

- To educate and train a group of 15 participants, which would result in acquiring a Master degree at the Manchester Metropolitan University and a specialist degree in Slovenia.
- To educate and train the group for implementation of systemic changes in Tuzla Canton and potentially in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- To provide training for head teachers – headship licence program.
- To build the capacity for leading the quality in schools and region.
- To bring Tuzla canton into international educational arena.

The project is in the phase of delivery and it is still not possible to collect the results. After the evaluation has been carried out through all stages of the project it will be possible to summarise the outcomes, most likely by the end of 2005.

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