2. GLOBALISATION AND GEOGRAPHICAL EDUCATION

ROD GERBER

Introduction: The Concept of Globalisation

Over the last quarter of the twentieth century we have come to appreciate the advent of the concept of globalisation – a concept that has come to be the basis for considerable ferment from an increasingly vocal section of our society. The wild protests that have occurred at international economic forums typify such vocal behaviour. It is a concept that tends to divide societies rather than unify them. It also tends to amass kindred industrial interests that often result in the development of massive corporations which have annual budgets larger than many countries. What is this force that has emerged on planet Earth to attract such attention?

Globalisation, according to Hudson (2000: 63), ‘refers to the processes which increase the scale of social life, and therefore increasingly involve processes which operate across borders at multiple scales.’ Initially, globalisation appeared in the economic sphere through the deregulation of financial markets, the rapid expansion of communications technologies, and the development of global financial markets that were hubbed in a limited number of financial centres. This has resulted in the depression of the economies in some industrialised countries and in developing countries that provide raw materials for industries (Delors 1996: 41). The economic focus for globalisation has since been expanded to include political, social, cultural and environmental dimensions. To use a maritime metaphor, the world is awash with the flows of money, goods, ideas, services, images, some diseases and pollants. The universalisation of telecommunications through the World Wide Web has accelerated the process of information transfer and exchange to the extent that even remote geographical regions have global access to information and ideas.

Burbules and Torres (2000: 14) have summarised the characteristics of globalisation that can be linked to education as follows:

- In Economic terms, there has been a transition from Fordist to post-Fordist forms of workplace organisation; a growth in internationalised advertising and consumption patterns; an increase in the free flow of goods, investments and workers across national and regional borders; and changes in the life roles of people, eg. producer, consumer, learner and worker.

- In Political terms, there has been a decline in national autonomy and a corresponding weakening of the concept of citizens in terms of their roles, rights, obligations and status.
• In *Cultural* terms, a tension has been created between the ways through which globalisation induces more standardisation and cultural homogeneity, while encouraging more fragmentation via the generation of more localised movements. This tension between the global and the local has been termed as ‘the glocal’ (Arnove and Torres 1999).

When these characteristics are linked to education they produce a variety of impacts that both threaten and stimulate our minds. These impacts may be summarised in the following way (pp. 20–21):

1. *Economically*, globalisation plays a major effect on employment. Since one of the key functions of education is the preparation of people for work, schools, colleges and universities have to reconsider how they are going to prepare people for work. This will involve the promotion of different forms of the common life roles of producer, consumer, worker, recreator and learner. What skills, knowledge and values will people require for different forms of work? How will the educational institutions accommodate the increased commercialisation of their learning environments? The changing job demands will be a reflection of the increasing global competitive labour pool. Therefore, educational institutions will need to place more emphasis on the shaping of consumer practices and attitudes than just thinking of producer roles that are evident in getting and holding down different jobs. These effects cause adjustments to economic policy that will be discussed later in this chapter.

2. *Politically*, transnational institutions, organizations and companies place constraints on the policies that are generated by countries. While international economic regulation and coordination is developed, governments are less well placed to deal with the international challenges that are posed by drug trafficking, the spread of diseases, armed conflicts, terrorism, the trade in refugees, and other crimes that are organised by international groups. Educational institutions around the world become very involved in the development of citizens for the future. They take on crucial roles of facilitating children’s understanding of these challenges, developing more critical approaches to strengthening communities, and engaging in preventive approaches through sound educational practices.

3. *Culturally*, societies are becoming more multicultural through the migration of people. Multicultural education is, therefore, a fundamental element in formal education these days in many countries. Educational institutions promote the development of fair, just and equitable social values amongst different cultural groups, and they focus on the development of a sense of interdependence. However, this should not be at the expense of local cultures in different countries. Education should be able to: improve the development of differing cultural identities; promote the development of anti-racist philosophies in curricula; and facilitate through modern communications technologies greater interaction amongst cultural groups across countries.
While there is a strong trend amongst governments, large organizations and corporate enterprises to promote globalisation as the way of the future, there is some evidence that there is resistance to this phenomenon. This is most evident in the local movements especially in developing countries which are seeking to consolidate or even regenerate cultures in local identities and practices. Education, in this case, is focussed on the transmission of skills and the implementation of local scale participatory community development projects that recognise the complexity of local cultural issues. The homogenisation of globalised societies is not seen by communities as the way forward and they are resisting the inevitable, even when international corporations are exploiting their forests and minerals.

**Geography’s Role in Understanding Globalisation**

Understanding globalisation is essential for the survival of humanity in the twenty-first century. Geography, with its foci being on human use of place and space at different scales, and the resulting interactions and modifications, is well placed to assist us to appreciate a new geography based on globalisation. The world economic map has been redrawn to highlight: new centres for world trade around the Pacific rim; a less clear cut North-South divide; science and technology networks that link up research centres to major business corporations around the world; and crime, especially through the illegal trade in drugs, arms, people and nuclear materials. Globalisation may, therefore, be seen as the attempt by markets to escape the restrictions imposed on them by States. Once geography focused on geopolitics. Now, it focuses on geoeconomics – the flows and exchanges of resources and ideas. The resulting financial globalisation is exemplified by watching the business programs on global television channels such as CNN. Here, global markets are projected on computer screens on a persistent basis. Globalisation is a very real phenomenon in the world of sport where competitions such as the World Cup in the game of football are organised on a global scale. Also, the investigation of global environmental problems, eg. global warming, involves the interaction of numerous human and physical dimensions on our planet.

A major role for geography will be to demonstrate the disjunction between the local and the global. This is crucial since the global corporations and movements pay little attention to national or state boundaries. Groups cannot rely on their government to protect them in the face of global challenges. They will become like the 500 Red Indian tribes in North America – decimated by international diseases and European greed for land and other resources. Geography has the opportunity to lead the way in education by demonstrating how the interactions between cultural groups, physical environments, governmental policies and the use of space can be for the good of groups of people instead of the good of corporate shareholders. The promotion of diversity amongst peoples should again be seen as a good thing in geographical education rather than being an outmoded approach.

A further contribution that geography can make toward harnessing globalisation is to emphasise the interdependence of people and environments, people with other people, and environments with environments. This is another key organising concept of geography that has been reduced in importance in recent decades. As Wilbanks *et al*
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