

# *Globalization and the Study of Education*

## Preface

Globalization is the type of phrase that Antonio Nóvoa (2002) has called planetspeak. It appears as an ubiquitous word that everyone “knows.” It appears daily in the newspapers about the promise of progress that once was spoken about through the worldwide Church’s redemption of the soul, or as the evil that will erode one’s senses of national belonging. It becomes the watchword of both good and evil, or what is right about the new world of this millennial and what needs to be corrected in this world.

In one sense, globalization is a floating signifier continually filled with excesses of meaning. Globalization is a word that floats across contemporary literature to name cultural and economic changes that cross national boundaries, and to describe and explain these changes. When discussed in policies relating to schooling and teacher education, those changes are often seen as unproblematic. In a European Study of Educational Governance and Social Exclusion, for example, globalization appears to suggest a fatalism about society and schooling; that is, globalization is presented as a fact of life to which schools must simply accommodate through revisions to their curriculum and expectations about who the child is and should be. The Thatcher government vigorously proposed the thesis of TINA (There Is No Alternative) to globalization.

This book changes and gives critical attention to this naturalization and fatalism of globalization and schooling by subjecting current and past schooling to systematic investigations. The chapters in this volume argue that globalization needs to be understood in terms of multiple social processes, each of which are historically constituted, politically implicated and culturally calibrated. This implies the importance of understanding global processes through specific positionalities and perspectives, as well as the need to be theoretically self-reflexive.

While we can talk about globalization as an issue of contemporary life and schooling, it is important to recognize that the phenomena of worldwide connectedness and relations are historical and that there is a

need to differentiate current processes from those that preceded them and to provide adequate interpretations about what are distinctive features, characteristics, and politics in the contemporary era. This book seeks to explore what these might be. For example, it might be argued that the current practices of globalization are driven by revolutionary changes brought about by new information and communication technologies, leading to a kind of time-space compression never witnessed before. Or indeed, it could be suggested that while the authority of nation-states has not entirely declined, the global architecture of the system of nation-states is transformed, and that there are new ways in which states now work in a manner that is globally networked. This clearly affects the ways in which educational policies are developed and allocated to forge particular kinds of subjectivities in and through schooling.

This book then does not take any particular pre-determined position with respect to the origins, forms and effects of globalization in education, but subjects various theoretical possibilities to critical scrutiny. It refuses to take for granted either a skeptical position or indeed the position of a global enthusiast. It accepts the view that globalization is a transformative phenomenon that has complex origins, and that it is re-shaping the world in a range of contingent and locally specific ways. This raises numerous issues about educational policy and the work of schools. In exploring these issues, this book has five key objectives.

First, the book engages the question about what is different and distinctive from the past about the current situation that produces concerns with globalization.

This engagement of the present with the past enables a consideration of schooling itself as an invention of early processes of globalization, raising the important question about how and why the current context of schools and nations is being conceptualized as something “new” and different from the past.

Second, the volume speaks to the political and ethical issues of cultural differentiation, social inclusion, and exclusion in education. This encompasses the dynamics of global networks and patterns of global communication that have led to the “diasporization” of communities, and new patterns and practices of intercultural communication and exchange.

Third, it examines the interrelated economics, politics and cultures in which the global and local are being assembled and connected, such as through international comparisons and ranking lists and the new technologies of the Internet. This exploration raises a number of issues

relating to new practices of educational governance, and to the ways in which the symbolic rhetoric of globalization is used to marketize and corporatize higher education in particular.

Fourth, it explores the politics of schooling embedded in its pedagogical practices and research, including the images and narratives of the teacher, the child, and education embodied in the pedagogy of schooling, such as how global images relate to educational imaginaries of children, politics, and the redemptive role of teachers.

Fifth, the volume examines the social locations and challenges of research in the study of education, such as intellectual and spatial locations of researchers in the context of globalization and post-national pressures.

Together, the chapters in this volume are largely exploratory, raising new questions about the historical origins of globalization and politics surrounding its re-shaping the study of education. Our goal is to open up discussion of globalization by challenging taken-for-granted assumptions and by re-framing issues so that a more productive response to it might become possible.

The contributors are among the leading international educational scholars to talk about the issues, dilemmas and problems in schooling that appear through the changing international contexts and social relations of the present. The volume brings educational studies into a conversation with different fields of studies to understand the changes occurring in contemporary life. The interdisciplinary qualities range from comparative and policy studies to visual culture, cultural sociology, post-colonial studies, economics and political economy, philosophy, and history, among others.

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#### REFERENCE

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