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Globalisation and its implications for early childhood education

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This paper explores different perspectives about globalisation and its implications for early childhood education. Globalisation has ushered vast historical change in terms of social relations, culture, politics and education. Globalisation is also responsible for the unprecedented mobilisation of people, drawing them into an economic, social, political and cultural centre. It is thus critical to understand this phenomenon and the transformations it has brought about.

Globalisation

Globalisation has become a salient feature of our age, coming to occupy a central place in contemporary social sciences and other disciplines of study. There are many explanations of this phenomenon that is affecting every aspect of daily life. However, the discourse related to the concept remains abstract and without clarity. According to Edwards (1995), globalisation is the "compression of the world and intensification of the consciousness of the world so that people, services and goods are available to each other across the globe through a variety of means… and ways" (p. 244). Giddens (2011) points out that we live in a globalised world that is being transformed at every level and is affecting every aspect of our life. According to O'Byrne and Hensby (2011), globalisation is "best defined as one particular form of contemporary global change" (p. 1). The authors argue, it is a process of becoming global, and can occur at multiple levels.

Explanations of globalisation interpret the concept in one of three ways: (a) as a culture based process, (b) as global capitalist development and (c) as a consequence of the growth of information technology. Globalisation as a cultural process has been seen as an extension of mass media and the consequent universalisation of western mores and culture (Brine, 1999; Hall, 1991; Morley & Robins, 1995; Olssen, Codd & O'Neill 2004). Those theorists who view globalisation as fundamentally an economic phenomenon argue that it is the outcome of global capitalist formation and consolidation of the capitalist world order (for example, Gill 1995; Robinson, 2011). The third interpretation sees globalisation as a part of the significant transformation taking place in information and communication technology. Technological innovations have annihilated geographical boundaries and promoted the penetration of Western commercial values into all spheres of life (Keohane & Nye, 2000; Morley & Robins, 1995). Emphasising the technological and cultural influences of globalisation, Giddens (2011) rightly points out how developments in communication systems dating back to 1960s have transformed our lives: "… the image of Nelson Mandela maybe more familiar to us than the face of our

next door neighbour, [suggesting] something has changed in the nature of our everyday experience" (p. 38). The three features of globalisation: cultural, economic and information technology will be discussed in the following sections.

An important facet of the global phenomenon is cultural globalisation. The most visible agent of cultural globalisation is hegemonic American cultural media, such as the Hollywood motion picture industry, mass advertising and the Internet (Brine, 1999; Hall, 1991; Morley & Robins, 1995; Olssen, Codd & O'Neil 2004; Ritzer, 1996). Western technology, the concentration of labour, and high tech skills are the driving force of this global mass culture. Cvetkovich and Kelner (1997) point out that this global culture promotes an individualist identity, and an associated lifestyle of consumption. The global expansion of cable television and satellite systems has further promoted an international commercial culture simultaneously, however, culture can provide forms of local identity, practices and modes of everyday life that could serve as a bulwark against the invasion of ideas and identities extraneous to the local context. Cvetkovich and Kellner (1997) further argue that culture is a complex terrain today, as global culture influences local ones and new configurations arise that enable both global homogenisation and the development of new hybrid local cultural forms and identities.

According to Waters (1995) globalisation creates a common culture through a continuous flow of electronically mediated ideas, information, differentiated values and tastes that can be easily accessible to individuals. Appadurai (1990) speaks of different fields or flows, which shape the global cultural economy. The flows include: ethnoscapes, the flow of individuals as tourists, migrants, refugees and others; technoscapes, the distribution of technology; financescapes, the distribution of capital; and mediascapes, the distribution of information and ideoscapes, the distribution of political ideas and values. Thus a major debate in cultural globalisation discourse is whether it leads to homogeneity or new forms of diversity. Earlier accounts emphasised the threat of uniformity in the forms of Americanisation, 'McDonaldisation', 'CocaColonisation' and cultural imperialism (Barber, 1995; Mattelart, 1983). Giddens (2011) acknowledges that American cultural expressions like Coca cola and McDonalds are visible everywhere, but he argues: "Globalisation is becoming increasingly decentred. Its effects are felt as much in Western countries as elsewhere" (p. 43).

A number of scholars have combined explanations about economic and technological features of globalisation. They focus on the hastened internationalisation of capital and technology. As a result of globalisation, the world is moving towards a situation in which various nations have been linked by the mutual influence of capital flows and technological exchange, bringing about a tightly integrated capitalist world (Gill, 1995; Robinson, 1996; Robinson, 2011). Even non-market structures are commodified or privatised by global capitalism, including education, health, prisons, and public infrastructures (Gill, 1995; O'Connor, 1994; Robinson, 1996). Globalisation thus promotes consumerist values, materialistic aspirations, and competitive individualism (Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006, as cited in Sanagavarapu, 2010).

Related to cultural and economic globalisation is the information revolution taking place today. In the nineteenth century, it was expensive to send telegrams across the Atlantic, and even in the 1970s ordinary people could not

afford to telephone trans-continentally. However, today, if one has access to a computer, the internet is almost free and international calls cost only a few cents per minute. Markets are reacting more quickly than before, due to rapid expansion in information technology, and "huge sums of capital can be moved at a moment's notice" (Keohane & Nye, 2000, p. 114). This shrinking of the world due to innovations in information and communication technology amounts to annihilation of space through time. The internet, for example has led to the growth of mass communication, which has made it easy to reach different parts of the planet (Olssen, Codd & O'Neill 2004), and producers of international culture such as CNN and Hollywood are tailoring their products to suit a global audience.

However, cultural messages, many of which emanate from the United States of America, are differently received and interpreted (Simon, 2009; Tomlinson, 1991), and national symbolic resources are in fact increasingly available for differentiated global interpretation and consumption (Robertson, 1995). This may be seen in the local adaptations or 'franchising' of American television game shows and talent contests.

According to Robinson (2004) as a "result of globalization, what happens in specific places can be deeply influenced by processes operating at a larger geographical scale" (p. 32). Thus globalisation is not a process that happens in isolation but also includes the local process or local response to the global. Therefore it is important when conceptualising globalisation to have a perspective about the universal versus the particular or the global versus local. The next section discusses the debate about global versus local.

Relating the Local to the Global

A growing debate in globalisation literature concerns the conflict between the global and the local or macro versus micro analyses of globalisation (Cvetkovich &Kellner 1997; Robertson, 1995; Simon, 2009). A number of theorists argue the need to focus on local discourses to define contemporary phenomena, shifting the focus from the totalising macro-theories to the particular and everyday experiences of life. This approach is compatible with post-modern and feminist theories that focus on difference, otherness, the marginal, and the particular over universal theories (Brine, 1999; Foucault, 1980).

Postmodern theories of power, for example, have stressed how power inhabits the local and the micro realms, and such theorists urge local and specific actions to intervene in pluralistic sites of power (Cvetkovich &Kellner 1997). Steven and Kellner (1991) likewise suggest that

> [t]he postmodern emphasis on disintegration and change in the present situation points to new openings and possibilities for social transformation and struggle. The postmodern celebration of plurality and multiplicity facilitates a more diverse, open and contextual politics that refuses to privilege any general recipe for social change or any particular group. The postmodern theory of decentred power also allows for the multiplication of possibilities for political struggle, no longer confined simply to the realm of production or the state (p. 286-7).

In contrast, some sociologists view globalisation as a very large-scale phenomenon and focus on macro sociological problems. These scholars refer to globalisation as the homogenising influence of Americanisation. According to Hall (1991) for example, the new kind of globalisation as distinct from earlier times is not English, it is American. Modern means of cultural production and its homogenising forms of cultural representations dominate global mass culture.

According to Cvetkovich and Kellner (1997), global culture is promoting lifestyle, consumption, products and identities. Transnational corporations are penetrating local markets and private cables and satellite system are aggressively promoting a commercial culture throughout the world. Today, global culture is invading local ones and new configurations are emerging that are creating global homogenisation and new local hybrid forms and identities. A number of scholars (Cvetkovich & Kellner, 1997; Hall, 1991; Simon, 2009) argue that the realm of culture is one of the most significant manifestations of globalisation. Global media, information systems and world capitalist consumer culture circulate products, images and ideas throughout the world. Popular American and Hollywood cult figures and films are distributed through global cultural distribution networks. Simon (2009) explores the localised meanings of consuming an American product like coffee at Starbucks, which represents a global American product, in Singapore. The author discusses how the youth in Singapore associate themselves with the larger cultural meanings and promises of American values by associating with an American product like Starbucks. To these youth, drinking a latte or frappuccino at Starbucks was to see themselves as being successful, and they could identify with western values of individualism.

Discussing the significance of the local in the globalisation process, Robinson (2004) points out how North American Multinational Companies (MNCs) producing cars and computers are transferring their manufacturing to countries like Mexico where the wage rates are far below those in the USA. Robinson notes that whenever a multinational retail company opens up another shop it affects the local people as it squeezes out local competition and leads to the rise of opposition of local grassroots groups.

Thus, it would be difficult to understand the global without understanding the local. Commenting on this problem, Robertson (1995) argues "we live in a world of local assertions against globalizing trends, a world in which the very idea of locality is sometimes cast as a form of opposition or resistance to hegemonically global…" (p. 29).

Nonetheless, as Cvetkovich and Kellner (1997) and Robertson (1995) point out, it would be a mistake to theorise the global as merely homogenising, universalising and abstract in opposition to the more heterogeneous, particularising and local sphere. Indeed, much of the talk about globalisation assumes that "it is a process which overrides locality" and "much of the promotion of locality is in fact from above or outside. Much of what is often declared to be local is in fact the local expressed in terms of generalised recipes of locality" (Robertson, 1995, p. 26). Commenting upon the problem of distinction between theory and reality, Robertson (1995) further points out that there is a need to attend "more directly to the question as to what is actually going on" (p. 28). As Simon (2009) points out "on the ground, however, global products like Starbucks coffee hold different meanings in different countries, but

even more they hold different meaning for different people WITHIN countries" (p. 327). For the teens in Singapore, drinking coffee at Starbucks was being trendy and it was the place to be and be seen. It represented their dreams and aspirations of success (Simon, 2009). The next section discusses the cultural, economic and technological influences of the phenomenon on education with special reference to early childhood education.

Globalisation and education

The homogenising representation of western culture is evident in the context of early childhood education. Pearson and Degotardi (2009) point out that world organisations such as the World Bank and UNESCO are encouraging the globalisation of early childhood education by encouraging individualistic Euro-American ideologies of child centred child development. However, these western ideologies conflict with traditional values or learning from community elders (Pearson & Degotardi, 2009). There is a great deal of interest and evidence in literature suggesting that western ideologies cannot be applied to all contexts (Kennedy, 2006; Pearson & Degotardi, 2009; Sanagavarapu, 2010). In many Asian cultures, early years are greatly influenced by others in the community and children's identity is construed in relationship and interactions with others (Kennedy, 2006; Pearson & Degotardi, 2009).

Research points out that behaviour and development are culture specific. For example, De Gioia's (2009) study showed that there could be different cultural practices associated with sleep and feeding habits. Some cultures do not use cutlery to eat at home when feeding children. A cross cultural study done by Schieffelin and Ochs (as cited in Fleer, 2006) found that among Kaluli families in Papua New Guinea, caregivers will not gaze into the eyes of babies, rather facing infants towards the social group. This is so that infants interact with the social group early in their lives as compared to other communities where infants first interact with the caregiver.

As Fleer (2006) points out, there are other cultural beliefs that guide expectations for child development that need to be considered. There is a need to further conceptualise these understandings of how society and culture influence the development of children. Indeed, one must look at specific local cultures present in our early childhood centres and move beyond the western pedagogy of child centred teaching and learning.

One of the major consequences of globalisation is increased migration of people to Western industrialised societies. These migrant families are exposed to different forms of multicultural life in a global world. Immigrant families respond to the cultural clash between their traditional values and the global cultural values either by integrating or assimilating into the dominant culture or by creating new hybrid forms of culture (Sanagavarapu, 2010). Guo (2004) has researched the childrearing practice and behaviours of Asian parents who have migrated to New Zealand, and has highlighted that particularly East and South East Asian educational programmes are clearly structured. Asian parents thus have specific educational expectations for their children when they place them in childcare centres. They expect their children to attain specific learning outcomes. They also expect their children in childcare to learn specific literacy skills and not spend time at play. Moreover, Asian parents want their children to

mingle with English speaking children so that they would learn English. They fear that monocultural social contact will mean their children may "never be able to able to know what the new society wants and will have trouble becoming a knowledgeable member of the mainstream cultural group" (Guo, 2004 p. 8).

Castles (2004) observes that increased global mobility, migration and diversity have significant implications for education. Ironically, these phenomena pose a dilemma for Western education policy-makers, between an overemphasis of the diversity aspect of multiculturalism and "… overemphasis of the social equality dimension of multiculturalism" (p. 31). Castles advocates a balanced recognition of cultural diversity and social equality (2004).

The consumerist and individualist values associated with globalisation privilege academic success and consequently increase the pressure to learn English as the global *lingua franca*. Relatedly, however, families and parents seek to construct new identities forged by their own personal desires that arise from the changes in the global socio-economic environment (Kennedy, 2006). For example, Kennedy notes the case of Singaporean parents who want their children to attend English-medium pre-school (2006).

A study conducted by Paik (2008) examines the macro-level globalisation discourses that have penetrated into daily lives of people in South Korea. Immense technological and global economic changes have led to the widespread growth of the English language in South Korean society in which English is perceived to be indispensable to survival in the global economy. Paik's study shows that Korean parents, especially mothers, aspire for their children to acquire English language. Consequently, parents prefer to send their children to institutes where English is taught by foreign native English speakers (Paik, 2008).

In developed societies like United Kingdom and New Zealand, early childhood centres reflect diverse cultures and languages. Policy-makers in these states have responded to this global movement of people by reformulating their early childhood curricula to include different cultures that are present in local contexts. Cederman (2008) draws attention to such recent policy changes and the complex socio-cultural age of change in which New Zealand and other western early childhood pedagogies exist. The new dynamics of information society, the knowledge economy and the age of technology are thus influencing education policies and knowledge.

As a result of globalisation, education has become a valuable resource in today's knowledge societies. According to the World Bank (2005) report, early intervention and investment into early childhood education are good investments. The report cites a return of $2–$5 for every $1 invested in early childhood education in developing countries. Early intervention and interest in Early Childhood Development (ECD) in developing nations is paralleled by greater interest in developed nations (World Bank, 2005). Early years is recognised as an essential foundation for learning. As a result, a number of developed countries are looking at regulating the early childhood sector. Moreover, as a result of recent changes in political and economic systems, there is a move towards decentralisation and diversity (Obehhuemer, 2005). Obehuemer further points out that "against a background of globalisation it seems that new economic, social and knowledge contexts are having

contradictory effects on education systems" (p. 33). On the one hand, governments all over the world are controlling education curriculum and other decisions related to teaching and learning. On the other hand, there is evidence of privatisation and decentralisation. Education systems and policies are taking on a new meaning in today's knowledge societies. The education system and curriculum in many countries are responding to the global economic agenda by emphasising competencies such as those related to school readiness (Obehuemer, 2005; Pearson & Degotardi, 2009).

Duhn (2008) draws attention to New Zealand's early childhood curriculum document, *Te Whāriki*, and critically examines the discourse of childhood in Aotearoa New Zealand and how neoliberalism produces particular versions of globalisation in the local context. According to Duhn, the ideal child of *Te Whāriki* is a product of global transformations of early childhood. The neoliberal philosophy of globalisation has brought in changes and one can observe particular versions of globalisation in local contexts. These changes can be seen in the contradictions and uncertainties that exist within homogenising discourses of globalisation (Duhn, 2008). In a later work, Duhn (2010) points out how early childhood is seen as maximising the child's potential and generating a skilled work force for the future (Duhn, 2010). Duhn emphasises and focuses on the bi-cultural nature of *Te Whāriki,* which is a reflection of Maori pedagogy. The child in *Te Whāriki* is thus an amalgamation of local and global western notions of governance. "The global child in *Te Whāriki* is not necessarily a smooth child". The child has the potential to challenge the discourse of the smooth neoliberal biculturalism (Duhn, 2008, p. 101).

Analysing New Zealand's innovations and policy changes in early childhood, Cederman (2008) interprets New Zealand's early childhood government documents, including *Te Whāriki*. She too points out that it reflects a neoliberal and consumerist system of exchange and communication. She explains how reciprocal pedagogies influenced by Maori values of *whāriki* (mat) is replaced by the "simulated virtual mat of consumerist technology" (Cederman, 2008, p. 128). She points out how techno-science, consumerism and a process of de-culturalisation are being propagated by the innovations and policy changes in New Zealand early childhood pedagogies. The overwhelming use of computers and other technology reflect a neoliberal and consumerist system of exchange and communication. The changes that result from a neoliberal philosophy of globalisation can thus be observed in local contexts.

I would like to conclude by emphasising the significance of understanding global phenomena associated with intense economic, cultural, technological and political changes. However, it is equally important to find out what is actually going on at the local level, i.e., how local cultures adapt or rework the global phenomena. There is thus a need to research the impact of these phenomena on specific local conditions, and particularly the implications of globalisation on early childhood education.

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Globalization and Its Impact on Education. Uploaded by. Sutrisno Spd. Â The process received a big boost from early nineties, when significant changes were introduced by abolishing licensing for domestic manufacturing for all but a few industries and private sector was allowed to enter areas hitherto reserved for the public sector. Further, import tariffs were drastically reduced (Parikh et. al., 2002).Â It has also far reaching implications for socio economic development and educational systems of countries all over the World. 2 B. The Concept and Ramifications of Globalization Globalization is a newly emerging phenomenon.