

Impact of globalization on education



“ Globalization” represents the progressive widening and strengthening of the world relations since the Second World War. It has now reached a stage where no one is untouched by the events happening outside its state boundaries. International events are now restricting any independent national action. Companies in the United States, Europe, and Japan can now produce a product in India or New Zealand, outsource clerical work to Ireland or Mexico, and sell worldwide without being concerned about the long distances or the variety of cultures involved (Martin Carnoy 2005).

According to Noel F. McGinn (1999), globalization involves the following flows which interact with each other:

- People within and across state borders as labour, refugees, and tourists.
- Information in the form of news, statistics, reports, etc.
- New technologies such as that of communication, production, etc. that raise the living standards of the people.
- Financial resources facilitated by the above mentioned factors.
- Ideas circulated through television networks, films, music, books, etc.

Globalization can be regarded as a direct result of the spread of the European culture around the world via colonisation. The current wave of globalization has had a profound effect on the economic and political structures of the world. Now, no nation has any control over the value of its currency or over the flow of capital in and out of the country. ‘ For the first time in human history, anything can be made anywhere and sold everywhere’ (Rui Yang 2003).

Education enriches human lives and raises the standard of human wellbeing. Education has always been an important input for the economic and social progress of the world. It not only affects the productivity of a country and consequently its ability to compete internationally, but it is also important to attract foreign capital. Education has become the key to global trading success. Other important elements for a successful economy, such as infrastructure, efficient government, health of the citizens, etc. are also related to education in one way or the other (Frances Stewart, 1996).

STANDPOINT PROPOSITION

Globalization is a phenomenon that has affected almost every sphere of the globe. The effects of globalization vary from being economical, social, political, cultural, and environmental. On one hand, globalization has shrunk the world, bringing people and nations closer to each other. On the other hand, it has strengthened the divisions by making the rich richer and the poor poorer. The magnitude of the effect of globalization is so huge that it has also affected the education all over the world. In my opinion, globalization is most likely to have an indirect effect on the world education systems by changing the environments in which these education systems work. Education, in modern times has become an industry. The focus has shifted from imparting knowledge and wisdom to making financial revenues. On one hand, globalization has increased the need and levels of education, on the other, it has also burdened many nations to provide sufficient quantity and quality of education. Globalization has made it possible for people from under privileged nations to access education even from their homes. But, at the same time has put up the pressure of information

technology on such section of people which demands high financial investments. It has at one end broadened the horizon for the flow of wisdom, on the other has made people a slave of technology. It is therefore; very hard to say whether the impacts of globalization are positive or negative.

HISTORY

The creation of the National Education Systems in Europe (and later in the United States) was the first major impact of globalization on education. Following was the imposition of such systems on other nations by the colonial powers. The world at that time had been hit by a wave of “westernization” and was dependent on the external economic forces. Before 1945, all independent nations had similar systems of education with common goals, structure and contents. Most nations that gained their independence after 1945, tried to expand the education systems set up by their colonial masters. However, in reality, they did not make any significant changes. A few nations, e. g. the United Republic of Tanzania, tried to construct a unique system but later reverted back to the European models (Noel F. McGinn, 1997).

EFFECTS ON EDUCATION

To meet with the global demands and conform to the international standards, higher education in the developing countries is now being integrated into the world community. The international nature of the “university” is expected to be affected strongly due to this transformation. Higher education has become a commercial commodity in which a global market is taking shape. The expansion of this market due to globalization is mainly motivated by economic factors. Managements believe that in order to

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survive and prosper in this globalized world, they must become customer-focused business entity. Very few people in the business of higher education identify the difference between globalization and internationalization of the systems (Rui Yang, 2003).

At various forums, experts have been talking about how the education systems must change in order to attain a more “ global” approach. Some emphasize on increasing the awareness about other cultures while others support the idea that knowledge and skill can make a nation “ globally competitive”.

THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS ON EDUCATION

A major impact of globalization on higher education is the use of economic standards as point of reference. Numbers (of graduates, grants, publications, etc.) are becoming sole indicators of the university achievements while educational values are being lost in the process. These tendencies have also created a divide among the more profitable subjects of applied sciences and technology, and those based on theoretical values, particularly of arts and humanities. It has also created institutional winners and losers, widening the gap between the very few elite universities and numerous ‘ mediocre’ institutes. Successful economies are being building up by the symbiotic partnerships of universities and industry. Courses being taught rely heavily on the number of students enrolled and the financial back-up provided by the industry. Often, courses are cancelled if enough students do not enrol. Conversely, if many students are interested, any absurd course can be taught. The ‘ classroom’ is losing its importance. Even the expectations of the students are changing. They expect lectures to be entertaining talk-

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shows rather than informative. Earlier, the professors professed, now they are just professionals, careerists, and entrepreneurs, as in the corporate sector. As Guy Neave puts it, “ education is less part of social policy but is increasingly viewed as a subsector of economic policy” (Rui Yang, 2003).

Globalization has had its impact on the secondary level of education as well, i. e. the schools. Stakeholders, who earlier had no say in academic decision-making, are now making unreasonable demands that the schools are not able to meet. Today every school in the world is trying to fix up its existing education system to meet the global demands (Noel F. McGill, 1999).

Students are now being exposed to latest technologies, such as the internet, at a very early age. Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise are the heroes for today’s youngsters instead of Abraham Lincoln or Mahatma Gandhi. School students spend more hours on computers or in front of televisions than they spend with their books. Parents also expect the use of hi-tech equipments in classrooms in return of the high fees they pay.

CRISIS OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Today, most governments are under a constant pressure of checking the growth of public spending on the education sector. They have to look for other resources to fund the expansion of their education systems. Despite the increase in the number of student enrolments, a general trend towards the reduction of the per capita funding to higher education under the impact of globalization has been observed. This has led to the current fiscal crisis of the education sector. The burden of funding this sector is being shifted on the shoulders of individuals. Many public universities and institutes are also depending upon non-governmental sources, such as student tuition and

other fees, donations from alumni, payment from industrial sources in return of services being provided by the universities. The privatisation of the education sector, running parallel to the financial cuts, favours those who can afford the high fees involved. These defects of the system are putting the fate of universities on stake by ignoring the calibre of the graduates produced and the quality and output of the academic staff (Rui Yang, 2003).

GLOBAL (ISED) LEARNING AND TEACHING

Without distinguishing the hype from the reality, today there is an international tendency to jump into the market for electronic delivery of education. The technology-delivered instruction is being promoted as convenient, self-paced, interactive, faster and cheaper, flexible with respect to time and space. Early in the 20th century, motion pictures were speculated to take place of textbooks as the mode of instruction. The revolution of the radio also sparked the drive to connect the rural areas to various universities. Video, satellite, and cable communication followed. In each case the learning opportunities for people, who might not otherwise have had them, expanded. However, the outcomes of such cutting-edge technologies were short-lived. The latest sensation is the on-line teaching and learning. Distance education, which relies heavily on these technologies, is fast becoming a convenient option for students all over the world.

Management pundit, Peter Drucker has predicted that the residential university campus would disappear within the next 30 years (Rui Yang, 2003).

The current system of globalised education depends on many economical, socio-political and technological reasons. These are related to the supposed

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benefits of the global student body- increased accessibility and flexibility, which is believed to overcome the rigidity of the traditional system of the universities: constraints on what constitute the academic calendar, where and how credits are allotted, and how the courses are modularised. Those who market the on-line education, often gloss the concept by ignoring the limitations of the technological capacity and literacy, as well as the different cultures, languages and learning styles across the world. The virtual campus may widen the opportunities for some by providing flexibility and ease, but not for those at the low end of the economic strata. Virtual space is infinite but it lacks the universality or equality. In fact, it can create a “ digital divide” between rich and poor within countries. On an international platform, this divide may leave the Third World countries, where telephone and electric services are unreliable and radio is considered a luxury, further behind the global economy (Rui Yang, 2003). However, we cannot underestimate the future use of such new technologies as it has the ability to link the students from even the most remote parts with the rest of the world. Globalized information networks may change the world culture (Martin Carnoy and Diana Rhoten, 2002).

Globalization of education is being centred on “ consumerism”. Learning is no longer about analysis, discussion and examination. It has become a product that can be bought and sold, is packed, advertised and marketed. The growing global competition is detrimental to the spirit of education. This is true particularly for the case of distance education. Globalization of education, though offers diversity of choices, this comes at an expense of promotion of national beliefs, skills and knowledge. This also spreads the

dominant ideologies, in a way bringing back the era of colonisation. Use of English language as the dominant language in globalised teaching and learning, annihilates the local cultural values of many nations. This also gives an advantage to the English language providers to monopolise the sector (Rui Yang, 2003).

Overseas student education is perhaps the largest market in today's world. It is now a multi-billion dollar business. The related industry of teaching English language, preparing students for a number of entrance examinations, assisting students with university applications and related formalities, has also gained a lot of importance. Many of these are unregulated and have added to the finances of the education business. Universities of developed nations are offering a number of “ off-shore” degrees. Glossy brochures and advertisements are being used to attract student dollars. Though some off-shore courses are provided by renowned universities, many worthless and unrecognised institutes have also been set up which sell certificates in return of money. Institutes are becoming “ degree mills” (Rui Yang, 2003).

POSITIVE ASPECTS

Teachers were earlier considered themselves as “ wise sages on the stage” who imparted information, knowledge and wisdom to the students whose minds were “ empty vessels” waiting to be filled. Globalization has created a demand for a workforce for whom the objective of education is to teach how to learn, problem-solve and make the old with the new. Education is no longer filling up the empty vessels by conveying information. It has enhanced the ability of the learners to access, assess, adopt and apply information. The transformed education system makes them think

independently but at the same time collaborate with others to complete a task. Globalization has infused into today's learners the ability to be more familiar and comfortable with abstract concepts and uncertain situations. In today's academic scenario, most of the students are presented with ready-made problems and then are required to solve them. This makes the students ready to face the problems of the work-place where they are required to seek out problems, gather necessary information and make informed decisions (Derrick L. Cogburn).

The revolution in the field of information technology has changed the role of teachers from “sages on the stage” to “guide on the side”. The use of internet, World Wide Web, printed, audio, video and other forms of media enables students to acquire and utilise knowledge in various forms around the world. Students are now required not only to work in teams physically but also learn to be a part of a larger global virtual network. International organisations are increasingly employing such virtual teams for research and development activities (Derrick L. Cogburn). Together, computer technology and telecommunications has made it possible for organizations to relocate their operations to any part of the planet that provides cost-competitive labour and infrastructure. Due to advances in information technology, money can be transferred across borders with just click of a button (Leon Tikly, 20001).

Earlier, production of primary commodities used to occur in the under-developed or developing countries while their conversion into manufactured products occurred in the developed parts. With the expansion of the

education sector, this process has changed, bringing with itself economic growth to the Third World countries (Leon Tikly, 2001).

Women's educational opportunities have been expanded due to the increased need for highly-educated, low-cost labours. Therefore, the countries which were earlier resistant to providing equal opportunities to women are also slowly and steadily changing their policies (Martin Carnoy and Diana Rhoten, 2002).

CONCLUSION

The effects of globalization are not the same everywhere in the world, nor are all of them negative.

Despite a few positive aspects, the globalization of education is ultimately driven by the international market thereby creating more challenges for the developing nations than opportunities. Quality control, information management, controlling the costs and benefits are amongst the most important challenges. Together, all these aspects endanger the true spirit of education, putting the future of universities at stake. However, not all hope is lost. The impact of globalization also depends upon the response of the people which is a reflection of the local conditions. Therefore, the relationship between the individual and the global scenario must be the core of any education reforms (Rui Yang, 2003).

Active responses are required within the public and private sectors at the regional, national, and international levels, in order to reap the opportunities created by globalization and simultaneously overcome its challenges. At the national level, as many people as possible should be allowed to be a part of

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an employment that enhances their quality of life. Also policies should be made to meet the increasing demands of global organisations working within the global economy (Derrick L. Cogburn).

Globalization is a very real phenomenon. It is changing the world in all possible aspects, knowledge and information being one of the most important elements. Tremendous cooperation is required between regional and global organisations in order to address the challenges created by globalization (Derrick L. Cogburn).

Governments are under pressure to attract foreign capital and are required to supply skilled labour. This gives rise to a pressure to increase the levels of skills and education of the labour force. In the past few years, there has been an increase in income inequality. The demand for universities increase with the increase in incomes of higher-educated labour force. This further raises the pressure on the governments to expand their education sectors (Martin Carnoy and Diana Rhoten, 2002).

The education sector is under an increasing pressure of meeting the demands of the new information-intensive global economy.

Globalization has changed the perception of knowledge and skills across the world. This has led to the establishment of a whole range of new industries.

Due to globalization, varied kinds of industries are emerging, such as biotechnology, material sciences, artificial intelligence, medical therapeutics, computing advances, etc. This creates a demand for highly specialized personnel. Research and development has become a critical component of

any industry. Therefore, knowledge and skill has become the key factor for production and economic growth (Derrick L. Cogburn).

The scientific world is being dominated by the research-producing countries, who are acting as the “ gatekeepers” of science. Statistics show that the majority of scientific journals are edited by the scholars of the major Western countries (Rui Yang, 2003).

Universities around the world are seeking to incorporate ‘ student exchange programs’ in order to promote cross-border education (Noel F. McGinn, 1997).