

## **Globalising Education and the Shaping of Global Childhoods**

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### **Introduction**

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Throughout the world, a common feature of children's lives is education. Most children today spend a very large part of their childhoods in school, and schooling is becoming a defining feature of childhood in most societies. We conclude this Reader with an abridged version of Nicola Ansell's discussion of four key sets of actors and processes that have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the globalisation of children's education. The issues that the author examines relate to many of the themes and topics in *Learning and Teaching Around the World*, such as the 'gold standard' of colonial education, gender and schooling, teacher training, Indigenous education, and international comparative assessments.

Education, as distinct from schooling, has always been a global phenomenon insofar as every society has sought to educate its young people. In the past, societies developed their own distinctive systems for raising young people and inculcating in them the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that were deemed appropriate to their context. Practices varied and in some instances this education would be delivered entirely through informal means: the family, kin, and community would teach children and youth in non-institutional settings, as and when they were seen to be ready for, or to require, particular knowledge or skills. In other societies these informal practices were combined with more formalised processes of education, which might take the form of regular attendance at school, madrasah, or a more concentrated preparation for initiation into adult life. In most societies education systems were not only distinctive but differentiated: the education provided for children differed by gender and by social class, delivering the learning that was perceived to be most appropriate for their anticipated adult lives.

Today, mobility and migration bring children from diverse national and cultural backgrounds together in schools, particularly in urban communities and, as Chapter 2 by Mendenhall and colleagues illustrates, in refugee education contexts. In the present chapter by Nicola Ansell, the emphasis is not on young people migrating for education but on the ways in which education itself moves around the world. The author skillfully traces the historical arc of the globalisation of children's education over the past two centuries, as schooling systems, practices, and ideas have been exported globally in the service of four broad agendas: missionary activity, colonialism, international development and neoliberal corporate capitalism. These are not distinct processes pursued by distinct actors; rather they are complex, changing, often contradictory, and strongly interrelated. As education has become increasingly globalised, increasingly uniform experiences are delivered to children worldwide. Through intersecting transnational processes, systems of education have been exported and become rooted in very varied social and cultural contexts. The globalisation of systems of education is therefore a prime means through which childhoods are shaped, children's lives produced, and in turn through which societies are transformed.

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### **Religious motives and colonial powers**

From the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, a similar form of schooling spread from Europe to most parts of the world. In many societies, a large proportion of children were drawn into an institution that had been unheard of among earlier generations. There were two key sets of actors and motivations behind the dissemination of this form of education: Christian missionaries, eager to win converts, and colonial authorities, with goals relating to politics and trade. The schools not only embodied their creators' intended motives but also their social values and expectations, and thereby impacted on everyday patterns of childhood and the capacities, ideas, and expectations of children.

Education has long been used by proselytising religions, most notably Islam and Christianity, as a means of winning religious converts. Over the course of more than 700 years, Koranic schools or madrasahs have been established across much of Asia

and Africa. These have served to assist in spreading Islam from its original Middle Eastern origins and continue to be used to win allegiance to the religion. By the thirteenth century, for instance, the presence of madrasahs had grown in Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, and India (Kong 2013). Today they are found globally, and while in some cases they retain a largely religious purpose, in other situations, they provide both spiritual and secular education. Christian missionaries have similarly established schools around the world in order to propagate Christianity. The European conquest of the Americas was accompanied by the establishment of mission schools. In eighteenth-century colonial northern Peru, for instance, the Catholic church established primary schools in Indigenous communities and boarding schools for Indigenous youth in the cities which were envisaged not only as a way of Christianising the young people but also as a means of turning rebellious subjects into dutiful and productive citizens (Ramirez 2008).

During the nineteenth century, education played a key role in spreading the Christian religion through Africa. Missionaries wanted people not only to hear about the new religion but also to be able to read the Bible. In India, Christian missionaries hoped that promulgating Western scholarship, saturated with Christian morals, would help them "prove" the falsehood of Indian religions (Bellenoit 2007). Most mission stations therefore included elementary schools, where children of Christian converts were taught basic literacy and church doctrine (Wolhuter 2007). The education that was introduced mirrored that provided to children of the lower classes in Europe, where school was increasingly viewed as the appropriate place for children (Ansell forthcoming).

The education of children in mission schools had significant effects on the structure of society. Gender relations, in particular, were reshaped through education. In many parts of the world, girls were a particular target for schooling. Christian missionaries played a key role in developing mass female schooling in India, for instance, and achieved better outcomes for girls than the secular education provided by colonial authorities (Lankina and Getachew 2013). In Korea, where women had been excluded from formal education, the first formal educational institution for women was established in 1886 by a Methodist missionary (Rowe and Byong-Suh 1997). In southeastern Nigeria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Church Missionary Society used schooling to convert Igbo young women. The emphasis of missionaries on girls'

education was not concerned with securing gender equality, however. Rather, it is argued, the focus on girls' schooling was more closely related to perceived male interests and needs. Leach (2008), for instance, suggests that early nineteenth-century missionaries in West Africa saw the education of girls as essential to the furtherance of Christianity. Educated girls, they believed, would provide moral and practical support to men in the new, monogamous family, raising their children as Christians. Missionary education also intervened in the construction and sustenance of racial hierarchies. In South Australia, for example, Presbyterian missionary education represented a system of disciplinary control over Indigenous bodies, minds, and souls and helped secure the racial order (Schultz 2011).

From the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, education was used as an instrument of European colonial policies to support economic and political agendas (Whitehead 2005a, b). Schooling was expected to make populations more governable and to create workers and consumers for the colonial economy (Wolhuter 2007). London (2002) reports how, in Trinidad and Tobago, the colonial curriculum and pedagogical practices were intended to promote attributes that would benefit the colonial state - notably habits of obedience, order, punctuality, and honesty and a willingness to occupy the lowest rungs on the occupational and social ladder. Colonial administrations in Africa provided education of just sufficient quantity and quality to train the clerical workers they required (Wolhuter 2007). Literacy widely became the basis for secular authority: written laws, treaties, and deeds needed to be accessible to at least part of the local population (Topping 1987). Schooling also served to incorporate populations into a monetary economy. Colonialists sought to create a pool of labor to produce goods for the colonial export market. Not only did education produce workers with the necessary skills and dispositions; it produced a demand for employment as wages allowed families to pay school fees in the hope that their offspring would secure higher status work in future years (Martin 1982).

Relations between colonialists and missionaries were often uneasy. An example of tensions may be seen in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). The first mission school was founded at Inyati in 1883, but until British colonial rule began in 1890, missions had little success in teaching or evangelising. With economic and political change in the 1890s, people embraced education. While the missionaries

established schools to enable people to read the Bible, the colonial state wanted cheap pliable labor and was not convinced that this required education. A member of the Rhodesian legislature in 1905 explained that an "uneducated native was the most honest, trustworthy and useful" (cited in Ansell forthcoming). Unable to prohibit missionary education, the state, from 1899, employed a system of grants-in-aid in order to control schools. In return for British government funding for teachers' salaries, mission schools were required to teach basic manual skills and diligence. Nonetheless, the government took over all urban schools in 1925 leaving the missions responsible for rural education. The white nationalist Rhodesia Front party, which came to power in 1962, sought further control over education. MP Andrew Skeen explained in a debate in 1969: "We in the Rhodesia Front Government are determined to control the rate of African political advancement by controlling their education. Moreover, we wish to retain the power to retard their educational development to ensure that the government remains in responsible hands" (cited in Ansell forthcoming). Primary education was subsequently reduced from 8 to 7 years, black access to secondary education seriously restricted, and the churches were forced to relinquish nearly 80 % of their schools (Ansell forthcoming).

Beyond reshaping gender relations and reinforcing racial hierarchies, education transformed the social order. New local elites emerged with different sets of values and expectations and the ability to read, write, and speak European languages. Such "civilized" people often became estranged from their own societies (Ofori-Attah 2006). Colonial administrators may have seen education as a means of social control, but Indigenous people saw it as a means of advancement. It quickly became a desirable (perhaps necessary) commodity and gained considerable status.

Due to the persistence of the association between education and elite status, the opposition of colonial authorities, and the willingness of missionaries to defend rights to education, education became a central demand in many independence struggles in the mid-twentieth century. This has generated a long-term legacy: it has proven very difficult to reform education provision in postcolonial societies where the status of those in power is shored up by their educational credentials and where colonial-style education is believed to represent a "gold standard" (Ofori-Attah 2006). Around the world, the form of education introduced in past

centuries by missionaries and colonial authorities has become an immovable standard. This resilience of colonial education and its embrace by the elite is problematic. In Africa it has, according to Nyamnjoh (2012, 129), led to "a devaluation of African creativity, agency and value systems, and an internalised sense of inadequacy."

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### **International Development and Neoliberalism**

During the nineteenth century in Latin America and the twentieth century across much of Asia and Africa, colonialism retreated. The significance of Christian missionaries also diminished with the increasing power of independent nation states. The mid-twentieth century gave birth to a new set of global institutions and practices which perpetuated the globalisation of education in new ways. Schooling came to be seen not merely as an instrument through which to propagate religious beliefs or to manage society but as a basic human right for children worldwide. The right to free and compulsory elementary education is enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (subsequently reinforced in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). Delivery of education was not to be left exclusively to national governments, but would be supported by a new set of global agencies. In particular, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was established with a mandate to promote international collaboration through education. UNESCO set the global educational agenda from 1950 to 1975, seeking to expand school enrolments across the world and improve quality through curriculum change and textbook development (Gould 1993).

Another global agency established in the 1940s that rapidly became involved in shaping education was the World Bank, which invested heavily in the sector from the 1960s, exercising influence in newly independent nations through project loans and program support. The World Bank saw education not as a human right but as fundamental to economic development and modernization. Although UNESCO had been the key agency in global education until the 1970s, the better endowed and more influential World Bank subsequently took on its mantle. In the 1980s, however, the Bank's influence on global education was far from benign. In response to the emerging debt crisis, it rescheduled many countries' debts,

conditional on their adoption of Structural Adjustment Programmes. These programs generally required severe cuts in public spending on the education sector and the introduction of school fees aimed at achieving a degree of "cost recovery" (Ansell 2015). The 1980s were consequently an era in which the expansion of school enrolment diminished and in some cases went into reverse. National governments lacked resources to invest in education (even if were they permitted to do so) and since the World Bank was the major investor, governments could do little but follow its prescriptions. As a result, education policy became much more uniform and regressive in indebted countries around the world (Gould 1993).

The 1990s witnessed renewed investment in education, in large part because the World Bank reverted to its earlier view that education is essential for global economic growth. Four distinct trends emerged: the role of multilateral organisations, especially the World Bank, increased; education was increasingly seen as central to development and poverty reduction; the demands of the "knowledge economy" gained renewed influence; and the global education agenda narrowed its focus, emphasising access to primary education and readily measurable outputs.

Directing international development finance to education has thus transformed childhoods around the world. Schooling now occupies a very large amount of time for most children worldwide. Experience of schooling is highly influential in shaping young people's identities. Young people who have attended school often see themselves differently and have different expectations of their future lives compared with those who have not attended school. But while attending school shapes children's lives in many ways, it does not necessarily provide them with the formal learning that is expected. The near-exclusive focus on enrolment has often resulted in crowded classrooms, insufficient qualified teachers, and a neglect of the form and content of education.

Approaches to enhancing learning in order to achieve improved educational outputs vary. UNICEF, for instance, recommends that in place of the traditional colonial-style education that remains particularly dominant in poorer countries, child-centered learning offers a means of democratising learning environments, while enhancing achievement and student retention (Sriprakash 2010). Social

constructivist approaches that privilege active, enquiry-based learning are also favored by development organisations. However, student-centered constructivist approaches are often resisted by teachers and viewed as Western impositions that are inappropriate to local contexts or cultural expectations. Kanu (2005), for instance, highlights challenges of cross-cultural knowledge transfer in Pakistan, where Western expatriates are involved in curriculum development. In Tanzania, efforts to shift from content-based to competency-based curricula and teacher-centered to student-centered pedagogy are confounded by the nature of exam systems, material infrastructure of classrooms, the length and quality of teacher education programs, and cuts to teacher education (Vavrus 2009).

Another response to the perceived failures of education in poorer countries has been to focus on "learning outcomes" and to employ international measures of performance. Instruments such as the **OECS's** Programme for International Student Assessment (**PISA**) and the International Association for the Evaluation of **Educa- tional** Achievement's Trends **in** International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) are now widely administered to 15 year olds in order to assess the level of skills in a workforce, as they are believed to relate more closely to economic outcomes than average schooling levels. In lower and middle income countries, with the exception of China and Vietnam, performance is consistently below the OECD average (OECD 2013). Donors therefore believe that as investment has not raised learning outcomes, they need to look beyond inputs, and even beyond the curriculum and pedagogy, to focus on the reform of national education systems.

The interventions of international agencies in global education over recent decades is in part inspired by the idea that education serves to promote "international development," understood in terms of human rights, gender equality, and poverty reduction. They may also be understood to serve a broader neoliberal agenda. There are two key aspects to this: first, education is increasingly geared to the demands of a global economy which is promoted directly and indirectly by the World Bank and many other donor agencies and second, education itself is becoming increasingly part of a corporate marketplace, with global corporations competing to make money from the sector in countries around the world. These two elements are not unrelated: global agencies are welcoming and facilitating private investment in education. Investment in education is founded in part on the idea that with globalisation, human capital has become much more significant in wealth accumulation



and economic growth. Expansion in the global economy is focused more on knowledge-based activities than material production and labour markets are increasingly flexible, unstable, and competitive. In this context, education is seen as crucial to gaining economic advantage.

The attributes required of labour in a neoliberal global economy are not only skills of literacy and numeracy, or the obedience, punctuality, discipline, and honesty that colonial education sought to instill. A knowledge economy demands flexibility, entrepreneurship, and a willingness to take responsibility for the self. Student-centered constructivist approaches to learning may be seen as contributing to the production of these values (Vavrus 2009 ). Numerous examples have been explored by children's geographers in the Global North. Cairns (2013), for instance, investigates a careers education program in Canada that encourages flexibility, mobility, and self-improvement, idealising the self-reliant, future-oriented person but also encouraging students to internalise uncertainty as insecurities that need to be managed individually. Gagen (2015) examines how the introduction of Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning to schools in England and Wales used the popularisation of neuroscientific understandings of emotions to encourage a view that it is possible for individuals to manage their own emotions as a form of self-government.

Neoliberal transformation of education is having a profound impact on education worldwide. Networks involving business, social enterprise, philanthropic individuals and organizations, education consultants, transnational advocacy networks, and policy entrepreneurs are now the key actors shaping education (Ball 2012). The role of the state in determining the shape of education, even in Europe and North America, is diminishing and is shifting from "government" to "governance" - from the production of policy and delivery of services to contracting other organisations to undertake both roles. Global education problems are identified (or discursively constructed) and solutions developed and disseminated globally by "edupreneurs" and "knowledge companies." Ultimately, education (and its diverse components) are not only commodified and sold but represent an offering for financial markets to invest in and profit from.

Globally, the economisation of education continues to be driven to a large degree by the international financial institutions. The International Monetary Fund, for instance, continues to push for a reduced role for the state, while the World Trade Organization

(WTO) views education as a service and is eager to create a free global market in education. Under the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), countries are required to open their "education markets" to private capital. Countries may be required to allow foreign operators to provide distance education, e-learning, teaching aids and examinations, to establish universities and colleges (directly or through franchising) or other forms of training within their borders in five education sectors from preschool and primary school through higher and adult education.

One "knowledge company" that has taken advantage of the growing global education market is the UK company Pearson, which also owns Penguin Books and sells a wide range of education services. It owns the examination board, Edexcel, whose school examinations are taken in 94 countries and which claims to have marked over 5.7 million scripts across the world in the 2010/2011 academic year (Pearson 2014). Although it may not dictate the content of curricula, this involvement in assessing students' learning undoubtedly gives it power over what is taught in many schools worldwide, and impacts on children's experiences of education.

Pearson also has more direct involvement in schooling in some countries. In 2010, it paid £326 million for Sistemas do Brasil SA. "Sistemas" are integrated learning systems that include curriculum design, teacher support and training, print and digital content, technology platforms, assessment, and other services. Pearson provides these systems to both government and private preschools and primary and secondary schools, serving more than 450,000 Brazilian students. It also offers undergraduate and graduate programs to 9,000 students, as well as distance learning courses, and directly operates 31 schools in the country (Pearson 2010). In Africa and Asia Pearson owns and operates chains of low-cost fee-paying schools. One of these, Bridge International Academies, has 130 schools in Kenya with over 50,000 students that charge \$5 a month. Bridge operates a standardised curriculum, and scripted lesson plans, delivered by tablet, detail what teachers should do and say at every moment of each class. The tablets are also used to monitor lesson pacing, record attendance, and track assessment (CEI 2014). Pearson also owns Omega schools, a chain of more than 20 for-profit schools in Ghana that serve 12,000 students from nursery to Junior High School. Students pay \$0.75 a day and, like Bridge, Omega operates a "school-in-a-box" approach with standardized operations manuals and teaching materials. Teachers

are senior high school graduates who receive 1 week of preservice training and 2-3 days per term of in-service training (CEI 2014). Both Bridge and Omega are among 22 private school chains supported by the Center for Education Innovations which is funded by the British government's Department for International Development (DFID) (CEI 2014).

Bilateral donor agencies, like the World Bank, increasingly favor the marketisation of education, and specifically the involvement of transnational corporations. Their education-related programs often facilitate the involvement of transnational capital in low-income countries around the world. DFID's Girls' Education Challenge, a £355 million program, is managed by Price Waterhouse Coopers and has Coca-Cola as one of its key partners (Curtis 2015). DFID and Coca-Cola have jointly invested in an education project in Nigeria that will promote "the economic empowerment of five million female entrepreneurs across the global Coca-Cola value chain" (cited by Curtis 2015, 8).

Educational restructuring in response to neoliberal agendas and the privatisation of school curricula are altering young people's experiences of growing up (see Jeffrey 2010). Worldwide, growing numbers of children have their education designed by companies based in Western countries and which are motivated by profit. In some respects the situation is a little different from that which prevailed 200 years ago, but today the speed of change is rapid and the uniformity of service provision is much **greater**.

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### **Questions**

1. Are you aware of national or international businesses, or international donor agencies, that are involved in education, in your own country or elsewhere? What kind of involvement is it?

2. Do you think large corporations are helpful where educational resources and infrastructure are lacking? What are the benefits and drawbacks?
  
3. What do you think are the positive or negative impacts on children of globalised educational experiences?

### **Further Reading**

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