

The Global Classroom

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Abstract

The nature of pedagogy and the collaboration between international parties in subject design ameliorates some of the more negative characteristics of globalized education. I argue that the nature of globalization is to be found in the small and ongoing practices that constitute collaboration between differing parties. In this way, what globalization means is in fact a constantly negotiated contingent and never settled. My argument is that reductive critiques of internationalization are far too simplistic. The example of EME 150 and the uptake through the Malaysian educational system of some of its components is an example not of 'imposition' or 'imperialism' but rather of a more negotiated and collaborative pedagogy that points to some of the benefits of cooperation, collaboration and by inference of globalization

The Global Classroom: Effective Subject and Pedagogy Design as Positive aspects of Globalization

Jan Aart Scholte argues that globalization is characterized by the 'transcendence of boundaries' (Scholte 1997). The discourse of globalization and internationalization is now a critical driver of global educational reform (Guehenno 1999; Plattner 1999; Sites 2000; Walby 2000). From marketization in Australian Universities through to reform in Malaysian Teaching Institutes, the forces of global competition, as well as the need to become competitive in an increasingly competitive and aggressive international economy are forces for change. On the one hand, educational reform needs to maintain national priorities as argued by Mansell and When (Mansell and Wehn 1998). On the other hand, the process of global competition and competitiveness necessitate a radical restructuring of priorities to entail the continued effectiveness of national goals.

The emergence of knowledge economies based on the structural requirement of the knowledge societies means that the structural role of education in such an environment is shifting. No longer, content with an educational system where elite knowledge was the privilege of a minority and many were consigned to work in a Fordist industrial economy, post-industrial work requires a far broader range of skills and abilities. The ongoing need for life long learning and ability to communicate and adapt to rapid change is putting pressure on curriculum pedagogy and the structure of schooling (Cogburn 1998). Keeping formal educational institutions relevant to the educational needs of citizens in a globalized world is of course a significant driver for educational reform.

Critics such as Bowers from a more conservative position and Giroux from a more radical position argue that globalization in education is in some measure aimed at creating consumers for a global capitalist order. The argument is that essentially the process of globalization is about marketization. The standardization of education to meet the growing and ever expanding needs of a global market is for these thinkers among the major characteristics of globalization. In this way, the relationship of globalization to education is a relationship of commodification and homogenization. Students in a globalized education system are enacted as consumers and the process of inculcating consumer consciousness into students and hence reacculturating them to the needs of a global capitalist order. Giroux argues that the 'learner' is 'simply a consumer of information' within the demands of educational globalization (Giroux 2000).

CA Bowers argues in a similar vein concerning the politics and economics of globalization but from a conservative position. This enables him to go a step further with relation to pedagogy. Bowers also argues that economic and cultural imperialism animate globalization, however he also contends that forms of progressive social constructivist pedagogy rather than being a way to counter and ameliorate aspects of globalization are in fact examples of its worst face. In other words, Bowers argument is that constructivist pedagogy such as the social constructivism of Vygotsky, Dewey and Freire are the Trojan Horse of Western imperialism (Bowers 2003; Bowers 2005; Sher and Flinders 2006).

Bowers' position is that social constructive pedagogy is in fact an extension of western values and in this sense undercuts non-western societies by subjecting them to an English curriculum and mode of instruction that devalues and inhibits students from maintaining and living their local cultures. According to Bowers, students learn in English in a system designed by Westerners and intergenerational local knowledge is lost. In this way, the very fact of teaching in English in constructivist pedagogy is an act of imperialism.