

# How Global is Globalization?

Güzver Yıldırım

## Abstract

*This paper outlines the paradoxes in the rather fragmented process of globalization and the contradiction between the inclusiveness of the concept and its exclusive processes and practices aligned with the global power structure. One major assertion related to education is that we put more effort into screening vast majorities out of education and we intentionally limit the participation of certain individuals and groups from benefiting from the present state of epistemology and axiology. The paper concludes that for universal inclusion, we need a totally new frame that merits the name 'global' and allows the contribution of cherishing the contribution of each and every human being..*

*Keywords:* Globalization, education

Few terms of human conceptualization are as inclusive and unifying as that of globalization; yet few terms are capable of holding within their connotative boundaries the paradox of polarities and opposite actual practices. The contention of this presentation is that globalization has ended up being a concept of world economy based on capitalism, where international exchanges are toward the maximization of profit for the economically and thus politically powerful. The basic argument further states that this domain of exchange is devoid of a moral and ethical frame which is implied by the term, and thus is pregnant to other encompassing social and regional movements with unpredictable and unintended consequences, ironically for all.

For capital to accumulate there is a need for its movement. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) argues that economic capital is at the base of all types of social exchange. Susan Robertson, Xavier Banal, and Roger Dale (2002) argue that capital needs movement as well as points of fixity. They state, “ One of the characteristics of globalization is the enormously accelerated expansion of capital-especially of financial capital ... (p.229)

The key point here, of course, is that this fixity has typically been achieved at a nation-state level. However, it is also the case that while capital needs points of fixity, it is also driven by its own logic to minimize them, as they constitute obstacles to the free movement of goods and services, finance and labor. This is especially important in the present stage of globalization, where motion above all takes the form of free trade whose logic is to remove any barriers to its further expansion. (p. 230)

Who are the actors in this liberalization process towards a free market vision of the world trade of goods as well as of services, which threaten the autonomy of nation states? What are the regulatory bodies that facilitate the global organization of this neo-liberal free market vision of world exchange? For which bodies are these processes of liberalization deregulatory? The answer to these questions will hopefully point to the paradoxes in the rather fragmented process of globalization.

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*Güzver Yıldırım, Prof. Dr. Boğaziçi University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences, Istanbul, yildiran@boun.edu.tr*

After the Second World War, institutions that regulate international trade were formed. One of these, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), is a regulating body for negotiations of international trade. This weak body of optional codes was replaced in 1995 by the World Trade Organization (WTO), which has a capacity to enforce rules to its 140 members. The rules governing trade extend to many areas of domestic legislation with deregulatory orientations for state policies. In the Uruguay Round in 1994, GATT was expanded to become GATS, including the trade of services such as education, as well as Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). Article 19 of WTO, states that all members shall enter negotiations within a 10 year period, with reviews every five years, which will ensure a progressively higher level of liberalization.<sup>1</sup> Other regulatory bodies besides the WTO such as the IMF and the World Bank as well as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) are involved in the process of liberalization of state policies toward a free market orientation to world exchange. Although each of the 140 members of WTO have equal votes, the major actors in the decision making process are the United States, the European Union (EU), Japan, and Canada, who have large market shares. Decisions are made through consensus via informal meetings called the Green Room process by the agreement of these four players. Ironically, one of the main players if not the most dominant one, the United States, receives the most complaints to be settled in the Dispute Settlement Body from other member nations<sup>2</sup>.

Education is one of the services thought to be a transportable cross- boundary commercial global trade item, open to free market world economy with one trillion US dollars expended yearly, inclusive of 50 million teachers, one billion students, and hundreds of thousands of establishments globally<sup>3</sup>. One of the actors in the educational market is the United States, which provided 8.2 billion dollars of exports in education and training services in 1996, and had a trade surplus of 7 billion dollars. Another exporter of educational services to Asia is New Zealand, which earns more from educational trade than its wine industry<sup>4</sup>. There are other actors such as Canada, the United Kingdom (UK), and Switzerland. Educational export services are in both formal and non-formal education categories, including primary, secondary, and higher education as well as adult education, and a variety of other non-formal services such as language and other courses as well as a variety of summer school or professional certificate activities. Forty-two of the 140 WTO members made commitments for at least one sub-sector. One of these 42 members is the EU. The educational categories of trade include internet and distance education programs, which Robertson, Banal, and Dale call “cross-boarder supply”, education of foreign students, called “consumption abroad”, the presence of foreign investors in the host country, for example setting up

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wto.org>

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, Banal, and Dale (2002) p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ei.ie/pub/eng/epbeipsiwto/html> ‘The WTO and the Millennium Round: What Is at Stake for Public Education’. Education International, Brussels, 1999, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Robertson, Banal, and Dale (2002) p. 232.

foreign universities or courses, which the writers call “commercial presence”, and mobility for people in educational services called “presence of natural persons”<sup>5</sup>.

There is a logic behind the commoditization of education. According to Andy Green (1997), global capitalism involves competition, and knowledge based production, and services, with high levels of skill and the requirement of flexibility in the workforce. It must once more be emphasized that these skills are to be acquired and used in the service of the global free market economy and that these are mostly unilateral exchanges from the provider to the buyer, being more under the control of the provider. In fact, who better can provide these services than those who are the large share holders of this economy, not only because they know which skills are required for the continuity of global capitalism, but also because in the end it will help them to accrue more economic capital that ensures their present status and the longevity of the system.

The next question is related to who will be able to buy these educational services, what nation states, which individuals? One must pay attention to the following observation of Robertson, Banal, and Dale (2002), as they state, “In addition, discursive resources about meritocracy may lose their rhetorical power in a global educational marketplace where the purchasing power of individuals becomes a legitimate means of acquiring a high quality education.” p. 240

The way nation states yield territory in the area of self-determination, where state borders lose meaning is done through two mechanisms. One of these is the harmonizing of governing and legal arrangements to global economic bodies, as in the case of Turkey to the EU mandates, while the other is the facilitation of assimilation into the demands of these bodies through privatization. It must be noted that these processes are devoid of concerns for national determination of esteemed values or life styles, which may not fit with the above mentioned states of affairs.

There are emerging paradoxes in this picture. First, if globalization in its simplest form is the commoditization of goods and services, where profit is the key to operations, then those that produce the most attractive products, i.e. the highest quality for the least amount, should be the ones that make the largest profits, and this principle should hold universally, and not just for the most powerful nations. In fact the Chinese and the Indian emergence and infiltration into the world marketplace are examples for this situation. There is little evidence, however, that this situation is universally positively evaluated by the west. The reason is obvious. The emergence of China and India as competitors to the world market is an unintended by-product of a system conceived by the west and is thus rather threatening to the local interests of some.

The second paradox is the actualization of national interests within a global market model, where the economic and military power of a state determines how much international law it can override. The example of the US occupation of Iraq, despite international disagreement from legitimate bodies is an example to the point stated. This brings us to the concept of Hobbes in *Leviathan*, where the question arises of whether there are any moral concerns leading to ethical choices in a powerful state’s pursuit of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 236.

its own interests. Or is compliance to the rules of even neo-liberal world organizations the duty of smaller states, serving the national interests of the more powerful ones? How much does deregulation of laws governing major social fields of nation states help these states to have a voice in the formation of new global bodies that also further their interests or, give these less powerful states the possibility to contest the already existing policies?

This leads us to the next paradox, where nations who observe that they do not have the capacity to be a viable player in the world market become more nationalistic, with stricter legislations for national determination and protection. Though the case of Zimbabwe is an extreme example, it illustrates how stricter legislation annihilated the white land owners, almost overnight.

The final paradox is related to the levels of acceptance of globalization. There seems to be a relationship between distance to power and attitudes toward globalization, so that wealthier states controlling the world market economy tend to be more pro-globalization than smaller states. But this is not the only demarcation of views. There is also a division of attitudes within states. There are the hyperglobalizers, the protectionists, and the skeptics of globalization within the nation state itself. For some neo-conservatives for example in the US, represented by the Republican Party, profitably correct is also the politically correct; thus wherever profit lies is the direction to be taken. Therefore, if the Chinese work force is less expensive, the launching of factories in China, even if this might result in unemployment for pockets of US citizens, is a viable choice. The opposing attitudes of some Democrats that share the same national arena is that globalization is only desirable so long as it furthers national economy; otherwise legislative measures such as cottas and tariffs are to be implemented as protective measures of national interest. The skeptics, on the other hand, do not share the hopes of either side for a plethora of reasons.

A similar situation can be observed in Turkey, where the Justice and Progress party is involved in the harmonization procedures with the EU. Integration into larger international bodies seems to necessitate not only economic deregulation and liberalization, but also political compromises. Deregulatory processes of state control have enabled the government in Turkey to privatize many state monopolies and institutions and sell them to foreign interests. This has lead to intense arguments by opposition parties, which hold a more protectionist stand for state control. Some Turkish political parties in the opposition, such as the People's Republican Party and the Nationalist Movement Party as well as many individuals, envisage certain political conditions set by the EU to weaken state control to be detrimental to political autonomy and national unity. Thus, in Turkey, the division in attitudes toward globalization includes issues of national unity, one side accusing the EU for supporting legislations which might lead to dividing the nation, insisting that state control is necessary in order to avoid such a division. On the other hand, the Justice and Progress Party chooses not to respond to fears of loss of state autonomy, and independence. Rather as a major proponent of globalization, the party argues that privatization reduces the control of lethargic and inefficient bureaucracies and opens new avenues for innovative companies that can compete in the global market.

Thus the picture of globalization is fragmented, where fear of survival both for the members of powerful and smaller states (related to terrorism and invasion respectively), anxieties toward the direction and outcome of change, confusion about the role of nation states in relation to the expansion of neo-liberal world organizations and their infiltration into the national domain, and the anger of nations or groups who feel strongly that they are dominated by powers in whose legitimacy they have great doubts, define the contours of life on the globe. And if there is anything truly global encompassing all, it is this reality. This is indeed another dark picture in world history for a majority of world's population. Until the systems developed and devised are based first, on the moral frame of human dignity that is the birthright of every person born on this planet, and as importantly on equity of the just distribution of world resources, material and otherwise, the picture above will be more inclusive than it is today.

Whether perceived as an exchangeable commodity or not, I would now like to paint the present picture of the status of education in the world from the perspective of a Turkish academician, educated primarily in two countries, Turkey and the US.

If we look at the institution of education, we will not have to be geniuses to spot where we stand in the world. Yes, we screen for educational opportunities. We feel satisfied when our screening is valid and reliable. We make arrangements so that only the few who share the power structure of the status quo are able to surpass the screening. We ask the individual to be responsible to overcome the chance events of life in order to reach the opportunities, which guarantee satisfying levels of functionality and human dignity. We applaud those who, through some miraculous conglomeration of chance encounters, develop esteemed capacities. When children do not learn, we blame their genetic heritages and separate them into structures established in the dungeons of our hopes. In short, we put more effort into screening vast majorities out of education in the name of science than in enabling all human beings to perform at esteemed levels of functionality. Education as a universal human right seems to exist only on documents. That right is determined by the effect of chance events and our valid screening for the presence or absence of those events in the lives of human beings.

One look at the whole world will suffice for the validity of the above stated affairs. Many countries in Africa, Asia, Australia, South America, and the Middle East are not capable of providing education for all their children. Some provide just rudimentary education of no more than five years, which does not even encompass all. Other countries in Europe like Germany, the Netherlands, France and others, track children at early ages (grade four in Germany, first year of secondary school in the Netherlands, when children are about nine and twelve years of age respectively), which in the end defines life opportunities of who will live how. Other countries like the USA provide longer periods which are qualitatively different from setting to setting. I have had university level students in the USA who had reading difficulties and could not take percentages. In other countries like mine, there is a vast qualitative difference between the education given in selective institutions, public or private, and the regular state schools, even though the curricula are centralized. In other developed countries of Europe, as the educational level increases to higher education, the proportion of the

population from the lower SES levels represented falls drastically as in England, France, and Germany. What human right are we talking about anywhere in the world?

People and my colleagues will accuse me of being overenthusiastic about human capacities, and the assumption of the possibility of esteemed levels of functionality for every human being, sans exception. They may be correct in some cases. May be not all humans can develop exquisite talents. But we do not know that because we have not made structural arrangements to find this out. No structure exists for good education as a universal right, neither epistemologically, or institutionally.

I feel that the aims or goals of human societies have to be realized at the level of each and every individual life. The goals encompassing the concept of human decency and dignity as expressed in universal documents, as well as the dignity of all life on the planet yet to be expressed have to be delineated in accordance with the present status of epistemology and axiology. Furthermore, it is my belief that the definition of the goals of societies implicates the evaluation of the methods, the procedures, their organization or institutionalization, activated for the transformation and actualization of such goals. The profusion of the human search, present in the infinite volumes of its accumulation, seems only to foreshadow its proliferation into infinitely more volumes in the future. Somehow, I feel, this epistemological accumulation must become integrated and instrumental in the amelioration of the human condition. For unless knowledge and values have the common and universal aim of making a difference aligned with the concept of decency and dignity, our efforts will always be embedded in contradictions.

These contradictions between what we know and ought to value and what we do are pervasive in all domains of human life across all cultures. We act as human societies or as members of these societies as if the available knowledge is not present, and as if the concept of dignity cannot be generalized to certain specific conditions. Then we expend enormous resources into the delineation of these certain conditions for which either our knowledge or our universal values will not and should not hold. We define very deliberately which cultures, which individuals within those cultures, under what settings, in what time periods will or will not be treated with knowledge and dignity. In other words, we intentionally limit the participation of certain individuals and groups from profiting in the harmonious accordance of the present state of epistemology and axiology. Just one look at the world and at our institutions will illustrate the point.

We act in culturally biased ways in arrogance, with ethnocentric orientations that are devoid of justification. We use our know-how, our technical virtuosity in creating or deliberating the situations which do not have to include the concepts of decency and dignity for large pockets of human society. We create barriers so that vast numbers of human beings become excluded from the advantages of knowledge and dignity. After we create these barriers, we use our 'scientific' paradigm to calculate more specifically why these barriers had to be created in the first place.

In my mind, there is no human society which matches the level of what we know and what we all value. There is also no human institution which I would call advanced in terms of these criteria of epistemology and axiology. One look at our

political, legal, economic, and educational institutions would suffice for the validity of the above statements. Our world can feed everyone, can provide health for all, can educate all of its young well, and can do all of the above with a semblance of equity and justice for all, but does not.

Unfortunately the area in which I am working, education, is one of the more needy of all. There is no human society which has formulated a universal paradigm to develop talent in all human beings at the individual level, so that these humans can develop societies in which their young will also be able to develop at higher levels, commensurate with the status of the knowledge and ethics of their time. The more we cripple ourselves into modalities which show a virtuosity in exclusion, and the why's, when's, how's, and for whom's of this exclusion, the more we depart from what is possible for inclusion. And for universal inclusion, we need a totally new frame that merits the name 'global'.

This global frame can neither be for the profit of the West, the East, the North, or the South. It needs the wealth of all human thought and deed, which is and has been parallel to the concept of dignity of life. And that wealth can only be obtained from the contribution of each and every human being and their silent heritage. Until then, our lives and contributions will not merit the honor which includes in the concept of globalization, the totality of the coming generations.

I trust and believe in the actualization of such a possibility.

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## Küreselleşme ne denli Küresel?

### Özet

*Bu makale küreselleşme sürecine ilişkin bir dizi çelişkiyi ve bu çelişkiler çerçevesinde kavram olarak küreselliğin içerme gücü ile dünya güçlerinin desteklediği dışlayıcılığı ele almaktadır. Eğitimle ilgili görüşler çerçevesinde çoğunluğun eğitimin dışında kalmasına neden olan eleme süreçlerine daha çok çaba harcadığı ve belli kişi ve grupların dışlanarak eldeki bilgi yapısı ve değerler dizisinden mahrum bırakıldığı belirtilmektedir. “Küresel” kavramına yüklenen anlamı tam olarak yansıtabilmek için her bireyin deneyimini kapsamaya açık ve böylece insanlığın tüm yaşantı zenginliğini içerebilecek bir çerçeve önerilmektedir.*

*Anahtar sözcükler:* Küreselleşme, eğitim