



**GLOBALISATION AND EDUCATION IN ASIA**

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Since the end of the twentieth century it has been commonplace to speak of globalisation, its causes, manifestations, consequences, promises and its discontents. Globalisation refers to ‘the accelerated movement of goods, services, capital, people and ideas across national borders’.

The accelerated spread of markets, migrations of peoples and the widespread diffusion of ideas across borders also characterised the earlier eras of imperialism and colonialism. While these were a form of globalisation, it is the most recent phase of globalisation, starting from the 1970s, that forms the main focus of this paper.

Globalisation of the 1970s was prompted by declining economic growth, oil shocks, rising inflation and pressures on public expenditures in many industrialised countries. Across the globe, monetarist policies designed to increase growth were introduced. Dubbed ‘Thatcherism’ and ‘Reaganomics’ these policies included the deregulation of finance sectors, the removal of fixed exchange rates, reductions in taxes, the privatisation of state-owned companies, and reductions in government spending. International finance institutions which had, through the 1960s and early 1970s, advocated poorer countries to substitute costly imports with home-grown food, goods and services – a strategy known as import substitution – were now advocating a shift towards economic and trade liberalisation. A new phase of global capitalism and a restructuring of the world economy had begun.

The relationship between globalisation and education is reciprocal. One can address it in at least two directions: ‘what is the impact of education on globalisation?’; and ‘what is the impact of globalisation on education?’. This paper addresses five questions.

1. What are the economic, technical, demographic and cultural characteristics of countries which appear to have engaged successfully with globalisation?
2. What are the educational characteristics of those countries which appear to have engaged successfully with globalisation?

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3. What is the impact of globalisation on education?
4. What are the some of the characteristics of countries that appear to have engaged less intensively with globalisation?
5. Finally, do the Sustainable Development Goals suggest new ways of conceptualising relations between globalisation and education?

**1. What are the economic, technical, demographic and cultural characteristics of countries which appear to have engaged successfully with globalisation?**

To examine this question I explore characteristics of the Republic of Korea (henceforth, Korea), Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, four of the so-called East Asian tigers, over the period when they integrated into the global economy, the period from 1960 to 1990. These countries captured world attention as countries whose economies grew quickly and where standards of living for most social groups rose. The World Bank referred to them as the East Asia 'miracle' countries, a miracle in which economic growth was sustained over long periods between 1960 and 1990, investment rates exceeded 20 per cent of GDP, incomes became more equal and human welfare for all sections of society improved (World Bank, 1993).

During the 1960s and 1970s the Tigers focused on the export of manufactured goods. Although Korea and Taiwan protected their domestic markets as they established their initial industrial base, significant growth came only when exports increased. Credit to selected industries was targeted and subsidised, export marketing institutions were developed, mandatory savings schemes established, and flexible labour markets promoted (World Bank, 1993). Over time these countries shifted their economies to higher value-added activities and from peripheral positions in the global economy to more central and competitive positions (Castells, 2000). None had to contend with the power of a rural landowning class, often seen as obstacles to development because 'of the usually speculative character of their investments, and because of their reluctance to embark on processes of modernization that would jeopardize their social and culture domination' (Castells, 2000: 280).

Among the Tigers landowning classes were either absent (Hong Kong and Singapore) or were removed through American-inspired land reforms implemented during the 1950s (Korea and Taiwan). Many former landowners became major industrialists and while the proportion of agriculture in the overall composition of GDP declined its productivity increased.

All the Tigers took advantage of technological upgrading and economic diversification and were able to take advantage of changing patterns in the global economy and expand markets.

Some attribute part of the Tigers success to the Confucian heritage and common Asian values which promote, inter alia, a stress on cooperation, harmony, team work and loyalty to the workgroup, a reliance on market networks, long termism in investment, a stress on market

share rather than short term profits and a tendency to save. However, cultural explanations run up against the charge that countries without Confucian values have also done well (for example Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand). Moreover Confucian values have been around for a long time when these economies did not excel, and were implicated by Western sociologists in the nineteenth century as barriers to rather than facilitators of economic development (Green, 2007). Clearly, like all the characteristics and dimensions mentioned here, none offers a sufficient explanation of the Asian miracle.

The political dimension is important and concerns the role of the state. A number of writers have underlined the importance of the East Asian 'developmental state' in driving forward economic growth, poverty reduction and the more equal sharing of the benefits of growth (Amsden, 1992, Wade 1990, Green, 2007).

It is often forgotten that each of these countries experienced considerable political turmoil in the years leading up to the globalisation period and the role of conflict in the creation of the developmental state. Prior to her expulsion from the Federation of Malaysia and the communist insurgency in peninsula Malaysia, Singapore had experienced race riots. In Taiwan, the Kuomintang, defeated by the Communists in mainland China, imposed martial law. The Korean war had led, in 1953, to a divided Korean nation and the creation of the First Republic of Korea. The economic survival of Hong Kong was threatened as it lost entrepôt role for Chinese trade in 1949 after the Chinese Revolution, faced possible decolonisation by the British, and received successive waves of political and economic migrants from the mainland (Castells, 2000: 284-285).

Manuel Castells describes how 'developmental states' were 'born of the need for political survival, and then grew on the basis of a nationalist project (Castells, 2000: 284). Economic development became the means of political survival, maintaining the legitimacy of the state.

The geopolitical position of the four Asian tigers was also important. All four countries are strategically located peninsular or island states, with long histories of maritime trading. Lacking substantial natural resources, their development strategies from the 1960s focused on manufacturing. A focus on skills and human capital required for economic growth positioned them well both as manufacturing economies and, subsequently, as service economies. Their geographical isolation contributed to a strong sense of national identity among its peoples.

These geopolitical features were also linked with international cooperation that brought substantial inward flows of finance. The end of the Second World War and the political tensions of the ensuing Cold War brought large scale inflows of aid from the USA to Korea and Taiwan while British military bases and US requisitioning for the Vietnam war brought huge inflows of finance to Singapore and the stimulation of economic growth (Green, 2007).

## **2. What are the educational characteristics of those countries which appear to have engaged successfully with globalisation?**

I move on to the education features that accompanied globalisation in these countries. Are there any common education features?

The ready availability of educated labour was a key factor in economic growth. In all countries high levels of basic education and literacy had been attained by both males and females prior to initial economic take-off. Basic education was considered a collective good for reasons of both efficiency and equity (Morris & Sweeting, 1995, Mingat 1998). Basic education contributed to more equitable income distribution, helped by an initial condition of low inequality and a virtuous circle in which education expansion reinforced low inequality, and a rapid demographic transition (World Bank, 1993). Gender equity in enrolment was high compared with the countries of South Asia, especially at the primary level but also at the secondary level and higher level (Tilak, 2001).

The expansion of secondary and tertiary education followed the expansion of primary education. This expansion occurred in parallel with shifts in the economy towards technology-dependent manufacturing and there was never a serious mismatch between skill shortages and surpluses (World Bank, 1993, Morris & Sweeting, 1995, Mingat, 1998, Tilak, 2001, McKay & Mills, 2004). While primary education and junior secondary education were given high priority in the early stages of economic growth, higher education was not overlooked. By the early 1990s the gross enrolment ratio in higher education was 60% in South Korea, 38% in Singapore and 22% in Hong Kong (Tilak, 2001). Education expenditures were equitable and the quantity (average duration of study of a cohort) and quality (high retention rates within cycles of study and high level of formal student learning) were high in relation to public finance (Mingat, 1998). Pupil-teacher ratios were much lower in the East Asian Tigers compared with the countries of South Asia (Tilak, 2001).

School systems in all four countries were open, competitive and largely meritocratic, offering all sections of society the prospect of upward social mobility (Morris & Sweeting, 1995, McKay & Mills, 2004). Moreover, education was used to maintain strong states through the creation of a distinctive sense of national solidarity and identity through, inter alia, the promotion of school curricula in Taiwan, Korea and Singapore that emphasized social cohesion, patriotism and national identity (Morris & Sweeting, 1995).

Skills creation programmes designed to increase the productivity of labour were frequently modified and upgraded. In the early stages of industrial development the simple skill demands of labour intensive industries were met by a literate labour force. Even so, these countries gained a competitive edge, partly because they made use of 'industrial learning', methods very different from those used in Europe or even North America in their early

industrial development – trying to catch up with more advanced countries by acquiring (often by copying), applying and improving already existing technology (McKay & Mills, 2004).

As time went on the needs of research and development for the high technology sectors were met by growth in science and technology education in all countries but to different degrees (Castells, 2000).

### **3. What is the impact of globalisation on education?**

To address this question I present a summary of recent research in Sri Lanka, a country with which Portugal had historical relations long ago (Little & Hettige, 2013). The Portuguese were the first European colonisers of Sri Lanka, known earlier as Ceylon – from 1505 to 1658. This was Portugal's period of maritime settlement of large parts of the world. During the Portuguese period in Sri Lanka, the state religion was Catholicism and the Portuguese established an extensive network of parish schools linked with the Catholic churches oriented to religious conversion. Indigenous Buddhist, Hindi and Muslim schools were discouraged.

In 1948 Sri Lanka became politically independent. Economically she followed the import substitution strategy from the mid 1950s to mid 1970s. She strove for economic self-reliance and nationalised agricultural and manufacturing production. In education she unified a diverse array of schools, including private schools into one state system, strengthened a national examination system and attempted to delink subject syllabi and curriculum texts from the former colonial power, Britain. But during the 1960s very low economic growth and very high rates of unemployment among educated youth led to widespread youth unrest and the downfall of the left leaning regime.

A change of government to the right in 1977 led to the introduction of the open economy policies of Export Oriented Liberalisation with the relaxation of exchange controls, the lifting of import restrictions, promotion of foreign investment and the establishment of free trade zones to promote export-oriented industries.

The impact of this shift in economic policy on education may be traced via two routes: The first examines the impact of liberalisation on the structure of the economy and employment, on changes in employers' demands for skills and, through them, the development of new forms of education and professional qualifications and courses. The second is more direct and examines the impact of liberalisation on the business of educational provision and cross border transactions in education.

Overall, our story of globalisation, employment and education in Sri Lanka is one of growth and disparity: of new opportunities and continuing and widening divisions.

- Growth (positive) aspects. Since economic liberalisation the growth of the economy has been unprecedented. Between 1980 and 2010 mean household incomes

increased more than 40 times. Between 1990 and 2010 rates of poverty decreased from 26 per cent to 9 per cent. Unemployment rates declined and educational participation rates increased at all levels of education.

- Average household incomes have increased, but their distribution has worsened.
- Unemployment rates have declined but among women they remain high and twice that for men.
- Young people are more likely to be employed rather than unemployed. They are more likely to be employed in manufacturing and services rather than in agriculture, and employed in the private sector, but they are also more likely to have casual rather than regular employment.
- Access to qualifications, both foreign and domestic, has increased among all social groups but it is the better-off that have greater access to the foreign-controlled examinations perceived to bring greater labour market returns.
- Young people's educational and occupation expectation levels are much higher than earlier but for many those expectations remain unfulfilled.
- The relationship between educational and occupation expectation levels and social class remains strong. But the relationship appears to have become stronger for occupational expectations. In other words, the gap between the occupational expectations of youth of higher and lower social classes in the pre-liberalisation and the post-liberalisation periods, has widened.
- Educational participation has increased at all levels for all social groups, but access to Science, Information Technology and English courses, and to the private sector post-secondary opportunities that provide pathways to the new jobs in the liberalised economy, is concentrated in urban areas.
- Finally, performance in many academic school subjects appears to be increasing, but significant disparities remain between schools of different types, different language media, different locations and between boys and girls, with girls outperforming boys in most subjects.

While many of these findings may not be unexpected and may appear elsewhere there are other aspects of the Sri Lankan story which might be unexpected.

Economic liberalisation policies are often promoted with the expectation that the private sector will become more involved in education (and other social sectors). In Sri Lanka we have seen an increase in the numbers enrolled in private schools, from just 2% 1978 to c 5% 2010. However, the percentage increase, from just 2-5% is tiny, compared with many other countries in the region.

Nearly forty years after the first wave of liberalisation in the 1970s, the vast majority of primary and secondary students attend fee-free state-provided education. The elite schools are

state-schools. Local universities that award degrees are exclusively government institutions. The reasons for this pattern of provision are historical. In the run up to independence in 1944 the Free Education Act abolished fees in all government schools. Since 1961 the establishment of new private schools has been prohibited by law. And politicians on both the left and the right continue to subscribe, rhetorically at least, to principles of equality of educational opportunity. Attempts to establish private Sri Lankan universities have been resisted time and again, especially by political groups on the far left. Had legal circumstance, longstanding political values and the effectiveness of state provision been different then Sri Lanka might, in the wake of liberalisation, have travelled much further down the path of private education than she has done. Any understanding of the links between globalisation and education must take into account the politics and history of education provision in particular contexts.

#### **4. What are the some of the characteristics of countries that appear to have engaged less intensively with globalisation?**

Here I continue the Sri Lankan case. Sri Lankans often recall that when Lee Kwan Yew visited Sri Lanka shortly after her independence in 1948 he averred that Sri Lanka provided a development model for Singapore to emulate (USAID Sri Lanka 2000, Sri Lankan MA). In 1950, far from lagging behind the Asian Tigers, Sri Lanka had been well out in front in both economic and social terms. Moreover, Sri Lanka's economy had already been 'globalised'. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries Sri Lanka's economy – albeit a colonial plantation economy based on tea and rubber - was export-led, integrated into world markets, par excellence. And her performance on education indicators was very strong indeed.

However, her wholesale pursuit of the economic policies of Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) from 1956-1977 reduced her ability to provide economic growth and increase her strong lead in human and social development. The volume and type of employment generated during this period was incommensurate with the volume and aspirations of qualified youth seeking employment. The economy was dominated by an inefficient public sector and by a privately run plantation sector that did not require skilled labour. Historically low levels of savings and investment and shortages of foreign exchange meant that Sri Lanka's early lead in economic performance was arrested. Her economic performance over the sixty five years since independence in 1948 is both surprising and disappointing, her promise and potential unfulfilled.

Educationally Sri Lanka has performed very well in relation to the Tigers, especially in primary and secondary education provision and in gender equity. Where she fell behind was in higher education and technical and vocational education. And, in marked contrast to the Tigers, her education failed to fulfil its potential in contributing to the creation of common national identities among her youth. Sri Lanka is a very diverse society, with a majority population of



Sinhalese and significant minorities of Tamils and Muslims. Shortly after independence, English was relegated from a medium of instruction in schools and universities to a subject of study. The education system became divided into two by the languages of Sinhala and Tamil. The programme of inward-oriented economic development failed to generate jobs for all educated youth who in turn had been socialised through a segregated education system to form strong ethnic identities. The Sinhala-nationalist programme of social development also saw changes made in the university admissions system that favoured Sinhala over Tamil youth. The extreme competition for higher education and for jobs was increasingly played out among youth with strong ethnic identities and weak national identities. Indeed it might be suggested that the segregation of Sinhala and Tamil youth through education contributed to (but was by no means the only factor) the bloody civil conflict that gripped the country between the late 1970s and 2009, when the war ended. Its onset coincided with the onset of the globalisation period in Sri Lanka. The war destroyed the lives of many families.

In a recent assessment of Sri Lanka's continuing inability to reap maximum benefit for her citizens from globalization de Silva (2007) acknowledges the deleterious impact of war but points a stern finger at poor governance, a lack of understanding of the policies, institutions and reforms required for globalization, endemic corruption and pervasive politicization.

The pervasive politicisation of most aspects of public life has crippled many of our institutions and eroded our freedoms...it has had a demotivating effect on qualified officials in the public service who are frustrated in their attempts to work towards desirable developmental goals and thereby gain job satisfaction (de Silva, 2007, p 8).

Which brings me to my final question.

##### **5. Do the Sustainable Development Goals suggest new ways of conceptualising relations between globalisation and education?**

Throughout this paper I have focussed mainly on the economic dimension of globalisation. Much of the literature on globalisation positions economic growth as its underlying goal. Over time increasing attention has been paid by the international community to the equity dimension. Successful globalisation came to be defined as economic growth with equitable outcomes for all members of society. In our work in London on the notion of 'successful globalisation' we introduced a third dimension – peace (Green et al, 2007). As mentioned already this stemmed mainly from the analysis of the globalisation process in Sri Lanka where growth and a degree of equity from the late 1970s were accompanied by a civil war that destroyed thousands of lives. How could we judge that a country had globalised 'successfully' when it was at war with itself? So for our team, successful globalisation became 'growth with equity and peace'.



However, the notions of sustainable growth and sustainable development, so current among the concerns of the international community, add a fourth dimension to our development aspirations (United Nations, 2015, Little & Green 2009).

Export-oriented growth strategies may not always conserve a country's natural resources for the production of food and water for domestic consumption, which must be considered the most basic resource of all for the survival of people both in the present and the future. Strategies for globalisation should not be considered to have been successfully implemented if they so deplete the world's natural and environmental resources that the needs of future generations are compromised, even if they appear to be equitable in the present.

So should our aspirations for 'globalisation' be redefined once more – should they be defined as 'Sustainable Growth with Sustainable Equity and Sustainable Peace'? And, if so, what education strategies might accompany such an aspiration? I leave you with that question.



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## GLOBALIZAÇÃO E EDUCAÇÃO NA ÁSIA

Desde o final do século XX tem sido comum falar de globalização, bem como das suas causas, manifestações, consequências, promessas e descontentamentos. A globalização refere-se ao ‘movimento acelerado de bens, serviços, capital, pessoas e ideias através de fronteiras nacionais’.

O alastramento acelerado dos mercados, migração de pessoas e difusão ampla de ideia através das fronteiras também caracterizaram as eras anteriores do imperialismo e colonialismo. Enquanto estas eram uma forma de globalização, é a fase mais recente deste processo, com início nos anos 1970’, que constitui o foco deste artigo.

A globalização dos anos 70’ foi desencadeada pelo declínio do crescimento económico, choques no preço do petróleo, aumento da inflação e pressões sobre as despesas públicas em muitos países industrializados. Através do globo, foram introduzidas políticas monetaristas desenhadas para aumentar o crescimento. Designadas de ‘Thatcherismo’ e ‘Reagonomics’, essas políticas incluíram a desregulação dos setores financeiros, a remoção de taxas de câmbio fixas, a privatização de companhias estatais, e a redução dos gastos governamentais. As instituições financeiras internacionais que, ao longo dos anos 60’ e 70’, tinham defendido que os países pobres substituíssem as importações dispendiosas com alimentos, bens e serviços produzidos localmente – uma estratégia conhecida como substituição de importações – advogavam agora uma viragem em direção à liberalização económica e mercantil. Uma nova fase do capitalismo global e uma reestruturação da economia mundial estavam a começar.

A relação entre globalização e educação é recíproca. Podemos abordá-la pelo menos em duas direções: ‘qual é o impacto da educação na globalização?’ e ‘qual é o impacto da globalização sobre a educação?’. Este artigo aborda cinco questões.

1. Quais são as características económicas, técnicas, demográficas e culturais dos países que parecem ter-se envolvido de forma bem-sucedida com a globalização?
2. Quais são as características educacionais desses países, que parecem ter-se envolvido de forma bem-sucedida com a globalização?
3. Qual é o impacto da globalização sobre a educação?
4. Quais são as características dos países que parecem ter-se envolvido menos intensivamente com a globalização?
5. Finalmente, as Metas para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável sugerem novas formas de conceptualizar a relação entre globalização e educação?

