

Globalisation, Education and South African Responses

This paper discusses critical aspects of the impact of neo-liberal globalisation on the right to basic education in Africa. While the paper will briefly address issues of globalisation on Africa it will largely be devoted to the impact on South Africa. South Africa is used as an exemplar of how a relatively new state on the one hand facilitates implementation of neo-liberal economic and political policies, and on the other hand attempts to ameliorate some of the worst effects of these policies. I argue that given the political space and international goodwill South Africa had/has, and notwithstanding a plethora of policies and other institutional frameworks through and upon which a new education system could be built, much more could have been achieved by the democratic government. It is clear to those who will see or hear that, except for a small but politically important Black middle class and elite, only those with money can and do have access to a quality basic education. The net result is that although legislated apartheid has been struck off the statute books, the social and economic legacy of apartheid is firmly established. Every major study shows that poverty and inequality in the (in)famous South African axis of “race”, class and gender has solidified – and in some instances actually expanded. This paper concludes with a discussion of what South African social movements and critical educators are doing to invert/resist/oppose/ the commodification and ghettoisation of education by developing a counter-hegemonic language, theorising the ways in which schools and the education system reproduces social relations of oppression and exploitation, and have begun to collectively re-think and re-imagine the purposes of education and the ways in which knowledge is created and communicated.

Bio:

Brian Ramadiro has been active in student and youth politics. At present he is active in various social movements seeking alternatives to capitalist globalisation. He is a researcher in education policy at the University of the Witwatersrand's Education Policy Unit. Areas of interest include participatory action research studies with social movements, cultural studies and the development of indigenous South African languages, and the political economy of skills development.