

***Globalization  
&  
Challenges Facing Education in Asia***

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# **Globalization and Challenges Facing Education in Asia**

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## **Introduction**

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an honor for me to give a presentation on "Globalization and Challenges Facing Education in Asia", and to share with you some views on this topic. Thanks to the Teacher Creativity Center for allowing me this opportunity.

Globalization is a complex phenomenon at the heart of which lies the concept of globalized economy. It is as much a political and ideological phenomenon as it is an economic one. It is a set of processes in which a wide variety of objects, experiences, and ideas spread worldwide, dominated by super national and multi-national corporate trade and banking institution that is not accountable to democratic processes or national government. It is an on-going scenario of accelerated events and changes designed, produced, and controlled by irreversible technological and economic forces, played on the world stage by a very few political and intellectual elites.

A revisit to Philip Coombs' Reports of 1968 and 1985 entitled "The World Crisis In Education" leaves no doubt that what has been asserted then is still valid in describing the challenges facing education in Asia and worldwide. The interrelations among three words-change, adaptation, and disparity-lay at the heart of the crisis, as is expressed in the following excerpt from the 1968 report:

Since 1945, all countries have undergone fantastically swift environmental changes, brought about by a number of concurrent worldwide revolutions- in science and technology, in economic and political affairs, in demographic and social structures. Educational systems have also grown and changed more rapidly than ever before. But

they have adapted all too slowly in relation to the faster pace of the move all around them. The consequent disparity – taking many forms- between educational systems and their environments is the essence of the worldwide crisis in education (Coombs, 1985, p.4)

The main disparities mentioned in the reports were:

1. The out-of date curriculum content in relation to the advancing state of knowledge and the realistic learning needs of students;
2. The misfit between education and the development needs of societies;
3. The growing imbalances between education and employment;
4. Educational inequalities among various social groups;
5. The growing gap between the rising costs of education and the available funds;

Coombs concluded his argument by stating that in a more complex, and dangerous world, unprecedented challenges for education of every kind and in every nation will continue (Coombs, 1985).

Nevertheless, the term "globalization" has not been mentioned at all in Coombs report of 1985. As a matter of curiosity, a quick computer search for related terms resulted in the following web entries

New World Order (NWO)	:16,500,000
NWO+ Education	: 9,770,000
Democracy+ Education	: 4,100,000
Globalization	: 3,000.000
Global Economy	: 9,280,000
Terrorism	: 9,620,000
Technology	: 166,000,000
Human Rights	: 11,400,000

## **Facts**

- Six of the world's ten largest countries are in Asia, the total population of which is 3.171 billions.
- Sixty-percent of the world's population belongs to Asia, 30% of whom are less than 15 yrs old.
- 900 million people live below the poverty line in Asia using the

standard one dollar a day criterion for measuring poverty. Almost two billion people are poor using the two dollars a day as poverty threshold.

■ In South Asia, 50% are still illiterate, in Indo-China fewer than 50% has access to safe drinking water.

■ Globalization Index

Thirteen indicators of global integration were used to construct the globalization index for (62) countries with available data from (3) sources: The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and International Telecommunications Union. According to the report:

- None of the Asian countries were among the top (15) countries except for Singapore. The top (25) countries included Malaysia and Israel. China was ranked (51), India (56), and Iran was at the bottom of the list. ( see the table).

- One of the (13) indicators of global integration was the Internet users as a share of total population.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Internet Users/ Population (2001)</b>	<b>Globalization Index (2003)</b>
Bangladesh	0.11%	54
Pakistan	0.35%	50
Iran	0.61%	62
India	0.68 %	46
China	2.56%	51
Singapore	58.13%	4
Korea, Rep.	50.59%	28

The inherent inertia of education systems, especially in Asia, causes them to respond too slowly and sluggishly in adapting their internal affairs to new external necessities, even when recourses have not been the main obstacle to adaptation.

**Observations**

- Growing demand on higher education coupled with reduced funding from governments, and decline in real incomes of middle and lower classes.

- Growing of business models and trade in educational services being defined by GATS as one of (16) service sectors similar to such services as banking and communications. Transnational education is defined as educational services in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. It takes the forms of:

Franchising, Branch Campus, Twinning or Program Articulation, Offshore Institutions, Corporate Universities, International Institutions, Virtual Universities.

- Introducing new school subjects, courses, and programs to fit in the market places;
- Growing expansion of national and international private schools and observations;
- Growing Interventions in the governance of national educational systems by the super power and world financing agencies (e.g. IMF, WB, ...);
- Growing interest and provisions in early childhood and non-formal education, adult education and training (Life-long learning);
- Progressive decline and public dissatisfaction with the quality of education provided by public schools and universities;
- Competition for students among schools, community colleges and universities; students are viewed as consumers and customers;
- Accumulation of computer hardware and software, networking technologies in the absence of national or regional strategic planning for the integration of technology in education.

The new world (disorder) or the new global order under the leadership of the United States coupled with the consequences of the black sept. 11, have created serious political changes, social instability and insecurity, and tensions at all levels and in all Asian countries particularly in the Middle east, central Asia, and south east of Asia.

## **Educational Challenges**

The challenges facing education in Asia may be classified into three categories:

1. Challenges from outside (External or Global);
2. Challenges from inside (Internal);
3. Challenges specific to countries or regions;

The challenges from outside, which we are very much concerned about, include the followings:

- 1.1. The processes of globalization and the interdependence of all nations, multi-culturalism;
- 1.2. The accelerated pace of scientific and technological progresses especially in the area of information and communications;
- 1.3. Radical transformations in the field of work and employment;
- 1.4. Terrorism, uncertainties in social life, feelings of insecurity and instability, social inequalities;

In reaction to the globalization pressures, most Asian countries have undertaken or adopted fragmented educational reform plans or initiatives to take one or more of the following dimensions:

- Relevance of education (Labor-oriented)
- Lifelong education (Labor-oriented)
- Basic education for all (UNESCO)
- Efficiency of education (market-oriented)
- Quality rather than Quantity (market-oriented)
- One size does not fit all (market-oriented)
- Access and Success (UNESCO)
- ICT in education (market-oriented)
- Curriculum enrichment modification (Political-oriented)

## **Technology Challenge**

People are fascinated with technology, and they expect it to make a difference in education. Teachers, students, education leadership, and parents are excited about today's technology: the computers and mobile phones, the internet and video conferencing, Robots and other electronic technologies.

Applications of these technologies in education represent a major shift in standards and traditional practices at all levels including the curriculum, all administration, pedagogy, economics of education, assessment, and the cadre professional development.

Chris Dede from George Mason University posed six questions for which the answers are required to outline a strategy for utilizing the full power of high performance computing and communications to improve and reshape educational institutions.

These questions include:

1. How can schools afford to purchase enough multimedia-capable, Internet connected computers so that a classroom machine is always available for every two or three students?
2. How can schools afford enough computers and telecommunications to sustain new models of teaching and learning?
3. How can many educators disinterested or phobic about computers and communications be induced to adopt new technology-based models of teaching and learning?
4. How do we prove to communities that new technology-based models of teaching and learning are better than current instructional approaches?
5. How can educational technology increase equity rather than widen current gaps between the "haves" and "have-nots"?
6. If we use technology well, what should we expect as "typical" student performance?

According to Dede we live in the "Dark Ages" of schooling because of the restraints of making rapid advance toward increased instruction effectiveness by outmoded ideas, ritual, and tradition.

**Some more questions that should be answered:**

- How much would be required to provide a minimal level of educational technology for schools and Universities?
- Should we think of schools and universities as sites for application of computers, software, and associated technologies, basically for the profit of the manufacturers and the market?

## Conclusion

Education is essentially a social process that should not be viewed as an end in itself or merely a means for employment. Literacy is one means to democracy, because being able to "read a word" means to being able to "read the world"; that is to analyze the political and social forces that have shaped the system and circumscribed people's lives.

Closely tied to this is Freire's statement that "a humanizing education is the path through which men and women can become conscious about their presence in the world.

Although his innovative critical pedagogy proved to be successful in Brasil, Freire said: "It is impossible to export pedagogical practice without reinventing them". (Senge et al,2000).

Also, it is impossible even in a modern market-dominated culture to eradicate completely the main goal of education which is to prepare future citizens for active membership of a democratic society.

The "Educational Banking System" still prevailing in most Asian countries, trends of inequality between and within countries, weak governance and political breakdown, current uncertainties and confusions surrounding education in most Asian countries, high rates of poverty, lack of transparency and accountability-all these put enormous pressure on formal education to become more like the consumer culture industries.

In the end, two main contradictory pressures are exerted by international bodies on Asian as well as other developing countries that need to be addressed. Otherwise these countries will remain as sites of struggle between international bodies over the direction of education policies and practices:

**First:** Is education and knowledge a commodity for economic goals, or a public good to facilitate cohesion?

The first pressure is advocated by the WB, WMF, GATS,... and the second is endorsed by UNESCO (learning to know, learning to be, learning to do, learning to live together).

**Second:** Globalization, in fact, comprises two entirely contradictory processes: "homogenization" and "differentiation" or a complex interaction between "localization" and "globalization". It is some sort of "glocalism". What does it mean and how to be achieved? (Kumar, 2000).

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