

VISIONARY EDUCATIONAL CONCEPTS FOR GLOBAL CHALLENGES: GLOBAL AND PEACE EDUCATION

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Abstract

The scientific problem of this research points to the fact that a paradigm change in the meaning of educational conceptions and philosophies can be noticed because of intense globalization processes. The analysis demonstrates that education systems which mainly concentrate on the needs of economic globalization can be seen as amplifiers of the globalization phenomenon. The relevance of the study is evident: The influence of the nation-state concerning educational issues gets increasingly lost in a time of globalization, being constantly handed over to private providers and international actors in the field of education. This research in the field of social science is based on an interdisciplinary conceptual framework concerning the fields of adult education; intercultural studies; peace, globalization, and development studies. The intention of the investigation is to describe alternative educational concepts which (are able to) react to the global challenges, as for example global and peace education. The main conclusion of this investigation shows that a reorientation concerning educational topics, which focuses on social cooperation, global solidarity, and a world-wide culture of peace, has to take place.

Key words: *peace education, global education, education policy.*

Introduction

The question of how to protect the global future is becoming important in educational sciences because global developments influence different educational fields as well as educational policies. Current globalization processes are characterized by contradictory themes and oppositional paradigms, like universalization versus individualization, diversity versus homogenization, integration versus exclusion, and internationalization versus regionalization. These developmental paradigms have without question considerable effects on cultures, life-styles and, above all, on identities. It is only through awareness of these phenomena that human beings are able to actualize sustainable and peaceful ways of living in a globalized society. The main concern of this essay is then to concentrate on a differentiated survey and reflexion of the conflict dimensions, ambivalences, and risks of globalization; on the possibilities to enhance and secure a sustainable and peaceful improvement of the life in the world community; and on the contribution of alternative educational concepts to these developments. The development of innovative educational conceptions, in addition to a critical educational theory, will be crucial to identify the significant key problems of the future. The methodology of the analysis is based on qualitative research methods: literature analysis and current debates at different levels of formality.

Effects of Globalization Phenomena

Due to the multiplicity of perspectives and viewpoints, no other term has ignited as many passionate debates, caused as many different explanations, and produced as many misunderstandings as 'globalization'. Globalization can be understood as part of a modernization and westernization process, with which a tendentious global transition from traditional to modern societies is carried out. However, the level of impact of globalization varies, depending on region and subject matter, and does not automatically lead to global homogeneity (Varwick, 2004, p. 159). Globalization is certainly not a new fact. Nevertheless, in comparison to earlier internationalization processes, new qualities have been applied to globalization (Steffens & Weiss, 2004, p. 15f.). Different current definitions of globalization agree on the fact that globalization can be considered a multidimensional and wide-ranging de-bordering concept with socio-economic, cultural, and political characteristics. Globalization can then be regarded as the boundless everyday performance in diverse dimensions of economy, technology, information sectors, ecology, transcultural conflicts or civil societies (ibid., p. 9). In consequence, globalization shapes new configurations, such as different types of realities and actors, which interact around the world (Muñoz, 2006, p. 275).

Globalization can be characterized by sets of tensions: the global and the local, the universal and the singular, the traditional and the modern, the spiritual and the rational. Other tensions lie in the expansion of knowledge, the concern for equal opportunities through co-operation and solidarity, and overall in the broadening of economic competition (Wulf & Merkel, 2002, p. 15f.). It is possible to observe that the gap between industrial nations and developing countries has become increasingly smaller as the examples of China and India demonstrate. However, the inequality within the countries is also rising dramatically and the societies are drifting more and more apart (Jung, 2007, p. 45). Especially in those states which have huge resources of oil, gas or precious metals, the social contrasts are particularly distinctive. Primarily, the elite of these states are not concerned about human rights, equality, property rights, and appropriate health or education systems. Thus, the will of "good governance", which can be described as a functioning political system with compulsory standards, rights, and obligations as well as strong public institutions and trade unions, is missing. Thus, it is not finances that are missing in the so called "Third World", but the rule of law (ibid., p. 48). There are arguments that a „cosmopolitan democracy" should be built up and that globalization processes should be exposed to the critical discourse of the citizens of the world. Global structural changes are then demanded, which support a cosmopolitan solidarity, a transnational formation of will power, an agreement of interests, a consense-oriented policy and global governance. At this time, there is little reason for an enthusiastic belief in change, because the questions about the implementation of global governance were, until now, accompanied by conceptional helplessness. The necessary implications of such a change would cover, for instance, the rearrangement of wealth, a fair production contest, the renouncement of a hedonistic consumer mentality, the development of new technologies, the change to alternative and ecological ways of living, etc. It is important to note that these changes will not be initiated by the governing elites, if the civil societies do not demand such a change in consciousness (Steffens & Weiss, 2004, p. 16ff.). However, one can observe that there is an increasing discrepancy between the conception of a privilege based upon imperial organization and the existing local realities. Besides, the movements of the political world is structured as thus, the globalization centres systematically fade out when the populations of the periphery become more and more socially mobilized and politically participating (ibid., p. 21).

Obviously, there are different opinions about the right strategies to improve the situation of the world in the future. Referring to justice in distribution, some scientists doubt the fundamental significance of international financial transfers and assistance, due to the fact that approximately two billion dollars has been invested in the countries of the South in the past decades, and it is often argued that there has been no substantial improvement. However, Jeffrey Sachs, economist and influential director of the New Yorker Earth Institute thinks that the realization of the "Millennium Development Goals", specified by the *United Nations Organization* (UNO), which are under the obligation to reduce the number of people starving, decrease the child mortality rate by more than two thirds, and to encourage school attendance of all children, by 2015 is an immense chance to advance the

current global situation. At the latest, by 2010, the G-8-countries want to spend at least 50 billion dollars annually to reach the Millennium Development Goals. Nevertheless, after an analysis of the present, it seems that this goal will be missed drastically (Jung, 2007, p. 56).

Educational Challenges in the Era of Globalization

Globalization processes increasingly challenge educational practices and politics. The security of humans against the rising risks of globalization processes, as well as, the qualification for global competition are both central to the current debate (Kessler, 2003, p. 33). Observably, due to the distancing from the ideal of humanistic personality and character formation, as well as towards the priming for international employability, a paradigm change in the meaning of education can be noticed. An increasing number of the previous actors in public control of education, science, and technology hand over their steering competences to supranational organizations, as well as, to trans-national groups and their foundations. In a similar pattern to the educational arena, one can observe in the economic sphere a massive loss of the nation-states' influence in shaping structures and policies (Laitko, 2005, p. 2ff.). Consequently, public goods become tradable services and due to privatizations or the opening of economic markets, they are increasingly abandoned to private providers. This pattern of behaviour has directly impacted educational practice, insofar as the legal and technical conditions for trading education like a good has already developed to a large extent (Steffens & Weiß, 2004, p. 19). It is in this context that with globalization influences, education degenerates more and more to a good or service which is dealt with on the private market and which becomes more cost intensive. It is clear that education systems appear as initiators and amplifiers of globalization processes and that standardized benchmark tests, as for example the PISA test, which is carried out by the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD), are one of the signals of the globalization of education. However, national education systems are still nationally organized, linguistically oriented toward the national mother-tongue, and as a result, they are still not adjusted to alternative educational conceptions (ibid., p. 27).

While previously the focus of the political and educational principles was the formation of national identity and the stabilization of social cooperation, there is currently a reorientation towards economic centred objectives and a demand for education reforms that respond to the intensification of international competition. As a result, one can observe the requirement to increase efficiency at all educational levels as the demand for shorter training periods and an increase in speed or output as well as the desire to form an economically educated elite shows. In order to positively confront the challenges of international discrepancies in education, in the sense of a readiness for a global reconciliation, institutional education lags far behind and thus, education currently does not fulfill the role that it could as a stabilizing global force. In consequence, the pedagogical discourse of education has to be rethought to enable education to be a formative agent of change (Steffens & Weiß, 2004, p. 25ff.).

The Austrian educational scientist Werner Lenz (1999) describes in this context that with regard to learning, adult and further education will develop as the social question of the next decades. Already the past has shown that institutions for adult and further education have already proved themselves as seismographs of these social problems. In the last few years, education institutions have changed themselves through incorporating measures of modernization processes in order to satisfy a global society, which is under the pressure of modernization necessities. The traditional request of adult education, namely to compensate education deficits, therefore moves into the background. Moreover, education for socially underprivileged and disadvantaged humans, which is personal and cost-intensive, is increasingly neglected. However, the task of adult education should be to strengthen and support the human being to be able to recognise social conditions and to cope with key social problems of the future and their consequences. Furthermore, the social objective should be, apart from the economic usability of learning and education contents, an education which concentrates on attributes which affect identity-strengthening processes. Therefore, the forthcoming position of points should be concerned with the promotion of self initiative, the development of capabilities, the formation of democratic and peaceful social graces, the development of intercultural competences, as well as, the implementation of solidarity-based thinking and action.

Implications on Education

Educational settings and goals have to recognize the relevant key problems of the future in order to be able to cope with the consequences that are being created through globalization. It is insufficient to define globalization processes in educational contexts only; moreover, it is necessary to examine the effects and consequences of globalization processes in relation to educational strategies in order to receive an overall picture about the problems, challenges, actuality, tasks, and possibilities. Due to the fact that globalization is of huge relevance in the global society, it is more than likely that this will develop into „the social question” of the next decades (Wintersteiner, 2004, p. 318).

In actuality, the topic of „educational justice“, to a large extent, is traced back to the increasing meaning of education for modernizing societies in the context of globalization. In particular in the politico-educational discourse, the future of the society in the global knowledge and information age is increasingly dependent on the future of education. Education is thereby regarded as one of the most important resources, which has to be accessible to all individuals in the same manner. The reflection on the relationship between education and justice from an educational-theoretical and educational-philosophical view refers then to current problems and discussions, as well as, to fundamental philosophical, societal-theoretical, and educational questions (Wimmer, Reichenbach & Pongratz, 2007, p. 7). The question is: How can a fair education and a fair world order look like in the global age, which concentrates on a „good life” for all human beings? The question concerning a „good life“ always contains the question of a „fair participation“ as well as a „fair distribution“. This matter is fundamental within the range of the education-theoretical and educational-political use of the expression educational justice. At present it is obvious that equal chances to enter the educational system do not inevitably entail social justice through education. Current socio-political discussions about educational justice refer to fundamental ethical-philosophical and education-theoretical problems and questions. The discourses concerning educational opportunities and the human right on education generate a close relationship between educational justice and the production of social justice through education; depending upon the context, one is regarded as condition for the other - and vice versa (Wimmer, Reichenbach & Pongratz, 2007, p. 8).

The development of new education cultures, which (are able to) react to global challenges, is an important task (Wintersteiner, 2004, p. 319). To guarantee a fair, sustainable and peaceful development of the world community, the following questions have then to be asked: Which are important educational issues and topics in a modern world society? Which strategies for global education processes have to be drafted? How should alternative cultures of learning and teaching be formulated and how can they be promoted?

Visionary Educational Concepts

The effects of globalization have changed present conditions of socialization and education processes in many ways. Human beings are confronted with the phenomena of biographical uncertainties, multiculturalism, a changed value of time, an intensity of interconnections through the increase of worldwide communication networks, etc. It is in this range that educational conceptions react theoretically and practically to these developments and call attention to alternative and innovative educational concepts to a greater extent (Steffens & Weiß, 2004, p. 25). At present, education systems have to adapt to certain global demands that ask people to interact and compete in global economics and politics as well as to fulfil the specific codes and needs of their respective society. Besides, individuals have to be educated to become critical and self-aware world-citizens and to act meaningfully as local actors in their surroundings. These requirements may appear to be contradictory, but they actually characterize the challenges which globalization presents for education processes worldwide (Adick, 2002, p. 52).

Wintersteiner (2004, p. 320ff.) holds the view that the development of a global consciousness as a universal key competence that prepares humans for living in the world community, should be in the centre of educational visions. However, simply to add the dimension of global awareness to previous dimensions of education is not enough. Education that claims to be actively responsible cannot be limited to merely providing contents of curricula. It needs to call forth the basic politi-

cal conditions that are essential to respond to global challenges. Hence, the goal lies in the ability of humans to dynamically participate in solving current global problems. This ambition requires global solidarity and the development of a world-wide culture of peace. Recent educational answers to the challenges of globalization refer to the development of alternative educational concepts such as: intercultural education, human rights education, education for sustainable development, global education, and peace education. As educational disciplines, it is unfortunate that these in particular mostly are neglected in the general educational canon.

Global and Peace Education

A visionary educational concept which refers to the challenges of globalization phenomena is that of „global education“. Global education can be understood as an open and developing concept of contemporary education. In general, active participation in the creation of a vital future, as well as, social developments in educational policy can be seen as central characteristics of global education. Furthermore, the training of social competences, the ability to change perspective, or the adherence of basic ethical principles for sustainable development are of high importance to the concept (Welthaus Graz, 2007). Global education practices and theories which call for a global consciousness and give new impulses for a cosmopolitan ethos, demand transnational solidarity, ecological thoughtfulness, multicultural competences, etc. (Steffens & Weiß, 2004, p. 29). Global education requires a holistic, participative, intercultural, interdisciplinary and action-oriented, methodical procedure. The central points of the pedagogy of global education are: acting in accordance with the goal of a fair world order, promoting an education that aims at the facilitation of good life opportunities and preserving a high quality of life for people worldwide (Wintersteiner, 2004, p. 320). The idea of global education should then be recognized as a human impulse founded upon the intent of interconnectedness and solidarity. However, the pedagogy of global education has to make every effort to outline a more precise description of the desired social conditions of the world (Steffens & Weiß, 2004, p. 29).

Another concept that increasingly moves from the edge of the educational discourse to the centre of educational reflection and educational practice, is peace education. The cause of this is due to the change of educational policy conditions and current requirements and challenges of educational practice. Peace education with its insistent criticism on structural, cultural, and direct violence and its turning towards the concept of a culture of peace can be described as an integrated concept. Peace education covers fields like global and intercultural education, conflict transformation, human rights education, and education for sustainable development. Thereupon, core characteristics of peace education are the reduction of cultural, structural, and direct violence; the promotion of peaceful living together of citizens; intercultural awareness raising; constructive conflict resolution; and the encouragement of global consciousness among people. Moreover, peace education analyzes complex connections, which underlie seemingly chaotic developments; it offers positive perspectives for future developments; and, in addition, it defines political action and political education on a global scale in order to establish new and innovative fields of action. The responsibility of peace education is to point out the increasing number of interrelations in the globalized world and to concentrate on the development of alternative conceptions and approaches with which to respond. The international, comparative, multi-polar, and global character of peace education is a central component of a future-oriented and sustainable educational system and practice. Peace education then can be considered as an important guiding principle for contemporary education and our global society (Wintersteiner 2004, p. 320ff.).

The Development of a Worthwhile Future

For Francisco A. Muñoz (2006, p. 280), a member of the *Instituto de la Paz y los Conflictos de la Universidad de Granada* in Spain, there is the necessity to take control of the future. This control should not be driven by our desires or a search for utopias, but through scientific methods of approach and evaluation. This is important to relate to all different possibilities and circumstances that the future represents for the construction of peace. A peaceful future should include solidarity towards future generations where justice and equity are supreme and conflicts are regulated by peaceful means and

seen as an opportunity to imagine and create new, desirable situations concurrent with the values of peace. A worthwhile future is open to both, old and new conflicts, and it is always in the process of regulating them peacefully. A lasting future includes the attitude, efforts, and resources which aim at acknowledging, dynamizing, and addressing diverse interests and conflicts of all humans. These interests and conflicts act as a motivating force to stimulate progressive growth with the goal and intention of becoming a source of creation and well-being. However, it is problematic when the pursuit of peace is driven by a desire or quest for a utopian society because the utopian goal is impossible to achieve. An unrealistic goal can lead to frustration or even to violence in its extremity, and this would be counterproductive to the pursuit of peace. Thus, peace should not be considered as „total” or „closed”, but rather it should utilize scientific methods of approach and evaluation that relate to the different circumstances the future presents in response to the construction of peace. It is in this context that the idea of „imperfect peace” can provide an intermediary path between „maximalist utopianism” and „conservative conformism”. The ambition is then to concentrate on a reality, which is based on the knowledge of human limitations, present scenarios, and on the desirable goal of “imperfect peace” (ibid., p. 280). In consequence, the future should be „desirable, lasting, just, peaceful, but also imperfect” (ibid., p. 137).

The German sociologist Wolfgang Sachs’ (2006, p. 223f.) opinion is that it is inaccurate „to think that the coherence of the world could be achieved by pushing ahead along a common path towards some distant promised future”. To conceive of a global politics which could shoulder the responsibility of acting for a diverse but coherent world, for Sachs three ideals emerge: „regeneration, unilateral self-restraint, and the dialogue of civilizations”. Sachs argues that there is no longer any ideal of progress and thus, the concept of development has missed its goal. In consequence, the search for a peaceful and sustainable coexistence puts the challenge of self-examination before each culture. Sachs claims that only a simultaneous process of confrontation and synthesis can lead to coherence. It is remarkable that in this context, in contrast to the faded era of development, the ideals suggested by the sociologist do not contain more universal truths and strong ideals which can be applied to „one mankind” in the “one world” (Echavarría Alvarez und Koppensteiner, 2006, p. 10).

Concluding Ideas

Globalization processes represent, theoretically as well as practically, a challenge for the educational sciences, and therefore must be addressed within the discourse of education (Steffens & Weiß, 2004, p. 25f.). However, it is not sufficient to inquire only about the meaning of globalization for education, learning, and teaching contents; it is necessary to reflect on the real effects and consequences of globalization processes as related to education in order to obtain an overall picture of their actuality, problems, challenges, tasks and possibilities (Wintersteiner, 2004, p. 318). The observable phenomena that appear in the course of globalization lead moreover to the question: Is there still space for educational concepts like emancipation, self-determination, equal opportunities, justice in distribution, democracy or common sense? Therefore, a differentiated reflection of globalization phenomena and consequences, an intensive analysis and disclosure of (global) conflict lines, the investigation of well-established concepts such as development, as well as, the formation/embodiment of liveable visions of the global future, and the articulation of adequate concepts of education are indispensable for the development of contemporary, equitable, education perspectives and the development of a critical educational philosophy.

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