

Conferences

Education and Globalisation: an attempt to bring order to the debate

Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences
of the University of Lisbon, on 14th June, 2007

BERNARD CHARLOT

The word Globalisation is now frequently used in arguments about education, sometimes positively – “in the globalisation era this has to be done...” – often negatively. Throughout history anything opposing education was deemed the Devil’s work; in the 1960s and 70s this was identified as Reproduction; today it is symbolised by Globalisation. I am not saying we should not pay attention to globalisation, let alone suggesting that it does not bring problems, but using the word in this context mixes up several processes. To understand the relations between Education and Globalisation one has to distinguish at least four phenomena, outlined below and subsequently analysed.

First phenomenon: the fact that education is viewed in a framework of economics, which actually occurred in the 1960s and 70s, in the epoch of the Developmentalist State, before globalisation.

Second phenomenon: the new socioeconomic logics, that came to the fore in the 1980s. The 60s and 70s led to a crisis. This “crisis”, which in truth was a structural change of worldwide capitalism, induced, on the one hand, new economic and social logics, and on the other an acceleration of international economic integration, called globalisation. The logics of quality, efficacy, and territorialisation appeared in the 80s, which was also the decade in which globalisation developed, but they were not born in this decade. They are not children of globalisation, but rather brothers or cousins of it. It is true that they can serve globalisation and neoliberalism, but they can also enhance a public service; in a broader sense, they are logics of modernisation.

Third phenomenon: globalisation itself, integration among economies, and therefore among societies of several countries. Until now, little effect has been noted on education, at least in countries such as France or Portugal; it has had effects in the southern countries, through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and

the World Bank. Meanwhile, it could cause an authentic revolution in school, including countries such as France and Portugal, if the ongoing liberalisation of services project in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), with the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), is concluded.

Finally, a fourth process must not be forgotten: the movement that accepts worldwide opening, but at the same time does not agree with the neoliberal logic of globalisation. This can be labelled as the movement for solidarity among the human species. It is a movement developed by the World Social Forums which originated in Porto Alegre, including the World Forum on Education, and in another form developed by the United Nations, with the Education for All and the Millennium Programme.

The dates of the processes may vary. In saying “this happened in the 60s or 80s” one is talking about time in the United States, Europe, Japan, emerging countries such as South Korea, but the dates may be others in others countries. What does not vary is the existence of those four phenomena or processes, which should not be confused, although they may be articulated in several ways.

THE 1960S AND 70S: EDUCATION VIEWED IN AN ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

The biggest change in school in the contemporary epoch occurred in the 1960s and 70s, and therefore predates globalisation. It consists of viewing school from an economic and social development perspective. Before the Second World War, the State, in its relation with education, remained an Educator State: it thought out education in terms of nation building, social peace and transmitting of values. From the 50s and especially in the 60s, it became the Developmentalist State: clearly (France, Japan, South Korea, Brazil, etc.) or in a disguised manner (United States), it piloted economic growth and placed

education at the service of development. This policy achieved ample social consensus. Development generated new skilled jobs, that longer schooling would prepare people for, and therefore satisfy the middle classes and raise the hopes of the popular classes.

As regards schooling, the ambition was to build the fundamental school, a nine-year school system that goes from six years of age to fifteen. Compulsory schooling became longer, the first segment of secondary schooling began and school became available to all, with effects of social reproduction, but also of democratisation. New material and financial problems appeared which were very difficult to overcome in the southern countries, to such an extent that in the poor countries the aim of fundamental schooling for all has not yet been achieved.

New pedagogical problems also arise as new kinds of pupils enrol into the fundamental schooling. However, care must be taken when discussing this issue. The idea was spread that school was opened to the people without the school having changed. In truth lots of things changed in the 70s. The pedagogical relationship was completely transformed: the way the pupils related with their teachers is completely different to the 1950s. Also, the teaching methods and textbooks have gradually changed. What remains the same is the so-called “school form”, i.e. the time and space of the school, the way pupils are separated into classes/age-groups, the basic processes of the teaching-learning act.

In that moment in History, when schooling began to be viewed as a social ladder, questions regarding school failure, social inequality in schooling and inside the school, and equal opportunities logically became the order of the day as the major topics of debate about schooling. The issue was now not about the quality of the school, but rather the justice of the school.

It was also at this time that perhaps the most important phenomenon, in my view, began to take shape: a change in the relationship between knowledge and school. Nowadays, why do children go to school? To “pass the year” and “get a good job later on”. This is realism to a certain extent. But there are more and more pupils who go to school *only* to pass the year and never view knowledge as meaning, an intellectual activity, a pleasure. The basic theory of human capital, that education is capital which brings benefits for one’s professional life, is not only an idea of the capitalists, it is also the dominant idea in the mind of journalists, politicians, from both left and right, parents and the pupils themselves. Therefore the gap gets ever wider between what the school supplies and what the pupils and parents expect of it, and hence the difficulties mount up for the teachers.

In that epoch, and still today, the talk is of “school crisis”. In truth, if it was a *crisis* the patient would have already died! It is something else: contemporary school is rife with structural contradictions. While the school

selects its pupils it remains relatively peaceful; when new public schools are opened, new social contradictions also enrol into it. Whenever there is a democratisation in one part of the school, this part falls into “crisis”. I myself prefer this “crisis” of a democratised school to the peace of an elitist school.

This socio-school set-up was not an effect of globalisation; it was born in a moment of economic growth piloted by a national Developmentalist State, a moment in which education and the school were also designed following development logic. In the 80s this State was replaced by the Regulatory State, which also incorporates economic logic, but different ideas to those of the 60s and 70s. This came about in the era of Quality and Globalisation.

FROM THE 80S UNTIL TODAY: NEW ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL LOGICS

At the end of the 60s indications of a crisis began to emerge, which became widespread and obvious at the end of the 70s. It led to a restructuring of the international capitalist system, called globalisation, and also new socioeconomic logics.

What are these new logics? First, logics of quality, efficacy and diversification. Given the competition in the internal and international markets, it is necessary to produce goods and services that are increasingly appealing owing to their quality and price, using ever more effective – and expensive – machines and processes. In other words, heavier and less secure investments are made, given that there is the risk that competitors put even better products on the market, and therefore devalue the investments made. The crisis is, before all else, a crisis of the profitability of capital, which constitutes the challenge of productivity. To protect its markets and conquer new ones, and to avoid spending money wastefully with products that are impossible to sell, the company should pay attention to the quality it produces and the efficacy of its production processes. To make its products more attractive it should also take into account the tastes of the customers, the wide range of demand, and therefore combine mass production (which leads to economies of scale) and diversification (which increases the chances of achieving a sale) in the product. This problem can be solved thanks to new technology.

Secondly, these new logics lead to the State taking more of a back seat. This retreat occurs because the competition between companies and the demand for wider markets induces phenomena of economic concentration and benefits multinationals, which are outside the power of the national states. The State recoils also because the new logics impose forms of decentralisation and territorialisation. In effect, there is now an awareness that improved quality, efficacy, productivity

and also the conquering of new markets requires “local” engagement. Nobody knows the multiple intricacies to be smoothed out to enhance the efficacy of the production processes and the quality of the products better than those who directly participate in the production. Nobody knows the tastes and demands of the customers better than those who sell the product. Therefore, the company head office should delegate the decision-making power with regard to production and commercialisation to the local branches, and focus solely on strategic decisions.

As the new socioeconomic logics come into play and direct State intervention in economic matters is reduced, import taxes diminish, borders open up, and integration among the different countries races forward. This integration is carried out in a neoliberal logic and is part of globalisation itself. The new logics are often viewed as neoliberal. There is no doubt that they are in accordance with neoliberal ideology, insofar as the focus on efficacy provides an argument in favour of generalised competition. Nevertheless, one cannot substantiate the idea that efficacy and quality are, in themselves, neoliberal requirements. They are also characteristic of a service whose users are served well, whether this service is commercial or public. When one visits the doctor one expects him/her to be effective and to supply quality medical care; when taking your children to school, one has the right to expect them to receive quality education. It is impossible to refuse the demands of efficacy and quality, especially in modern society. The problem to be debated is something else: what is understood by “efficacy” and “quality” and what are the criteria to assess them? Moreover, in establishing equivalence between these logics and neoliberalism, can one accept the idea that efficacy and quality do not exist outside neoliberalism, which, at the end of the day contributes to imposing the thesis that neoliberalism is the only possible model for modern society? In my opinion, efficacy, quality, concern for diversity and the local context leads us, above all else, to logics of modernisation, even though they can serve, and often serve, neoliberalism.

This thinking, implanted by companies, is adopted by the State itself. The State does not waver from its goal, which continues to be development, but it renounces direct economic action and dedicates itself to regulation of the fundamental rules and the maintenance of the basic social balances: The Regulatory State replaces the Developmentalist State. This change in the State has obvious effects on schooling, whether public or private.

Firstly, the new logics require better qualified and higher-skilled workers and consumers, both to produce the goods or services and to use them. It is not a question simply of developing new technical skills, but also of increasing the basic education of the population: self-service at banks and metro stations, Internet use, pur-

chase of electronic toys for children, even the choice of which hamburger out of a combination of several options or identification of a fax machine in an office full of electronic devices demand different methods of reasoning than in the past. As a consequence, it is necessary to lengthen the compulsory schooling of most of the population until the end of secondary school. Indeed, parents and pupils target this level and even higher education to enhance the youth’s position in the job market.

School therefore has to face up to a new challenge. Despite not having yet solved the problems involved in the generalisation of fundamental teaching, it should encompass children from the popular classes into what was the most elitist part of the school system: middle and higher education.

Secondly, the school should take into account new logics in its organisation. It will now be questioned as to its quality and repeatedly assessed. It should draw up projects, sign contracts, establish partnerships, increasingly collaborate with the local environment, etc. These new ideas crash through the traditional functioning of the school and the identity of its teachers. One can sum up the new challenge to be faced by the school and its teacher in the following statement. In the past, teachers were public workers, whose function was defined in official texts. They simply had to comply with the requirements of the texts, in particular when they were subject to inspection. If parents made a complaint, teachers could invoke the texts and surmise that they were complying with their obligations and doing their job. That time has finished. Today teachers are considered professionals. Their work is not, or at least is not only, complying with predefined tasks. It is, before all else, a question of solving problems. They can innovate, ask advice from whomever they wish, mobilise local resources, etc. The important thing is to find a way to solve the problems in their classroom and to deliver successful pupils.

Again I want to make it crystal clear that I am not denouncing this thinking. I want my children to have effective teachers, giving quality teaching, who know how to solve problems. The question to define is one of this efficacy, this quality and to determine what problems are to be solved. What are the quality criteria? To have good grades? To pass the year? To memorise the content without having understood it? To understand life, your relationship with others and with yourself? This is a debate which I believe is essential in discussing the quality of schooling, a debate that involves the perfecting of teaching and the modernisation of education of the young and the school itself. Unfortunately, nowadays the argument concerning the quality of school serves, above all, to justify the generalisation of competition in the initial years of fundamental education, and sometimes primary schooling. Hence, in speaking about the quality of school, the problem of social inequality in relation to

school and inside school is often forgotten. In this case, the logics of efficacy and quality hide neoliberal logics.

NEOLIBERAL GLOBALISATION AND ITS CURRENT AND VIRTUAL EFFECTS ON SCHOOL

What is globalisation? In analysing the process, without including in the definition its consequences or any judgements on it, globalisation is “the growing integration of economies and societies in the world, due to greater flows of goods, services, capital, technology and ideas” (David Dollar, Director of Development Policies at the World Bank). It is, above all else, an economic phenomenon.

Globalisation is defined firstly by the opening of borders. This is negotiated in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), where a country may propose reducing or even eliminating import duty if other countries grant similar agreements in the opposite direction.

This opening up leads to the reduction of the weight of the State. The drawing back of the state into the background is the consequence of three processes: the new empowerment of the local, analysed above, the opening up of borders within the framework of globalisation and the setting up of regional blocs, such as the European Union, NAFTA (Canada, Mexico, United States), Mercosul, the Andean Pact, APEC (Asia-Pacific). For Europeans, the setting up the European Union has had, up until now, more consequences in the area of education than globalisation, driven forward by the WTO.

Globalisation can also be defined as the circulation of flows and correlative development of multinational companies. These existed before globalisation but became more powerful with globalisation and the recoiling of the State.

Born out of an economic phenomenon, globalisation has also become a political phenomenon. In effect, it is grounded on the neoliberal ideology of the so-called “Washington Consensus”, formulated for the first time in 1989 by economists from the IMF, the World Bank and the Treasury Department of the United States, to define the policy to be applied in Latin America. The idea is that the intensification of international trade, in accordance with the law of the market, defined by supply and demand and therefore free from state regulations, is the source of development and wealth for all countries, and economic and social progress.

In truth, what has happened up until now? Europe, the United States, Japan and Southeast Asia have benefited from opening up their borders. Today, some neo-emerging countries are benefiting from it, such as China, India, and to some extent Russia and Brazil. But this is not the case of the Least Developed Countries, as the less economically advanced countries are today labelled. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the discrepancy between the rich-

est 20% of human beings and the poorest 20% of human beings multiplied by 2.5 between 1960 and 1997. From the economic point of view, the neoliberalism summarised in the Washington Consensus has benefited some countries but has done nothing for the poorest countries, and at times has actually harmed them.

How is all this related to school?

Thus far globalisation has had few effects on school. The effects have been chiefly the new logics of the 1980s and the ideological progression of neoliberalism. Meanwhile, globalisation had produced some dramatic effects in the southern countries, through the IMF and the World Bank. Finally, it may have important effects through ongoing negotiations in Doha with regard to the General Agreement on Trade of Services. I have already mentioned the new logics of the 80s. I now give some information touching on other matters.

Neoliberalism is progressing in the area of education, as shown by several phenomena.

In the United States a voucher system is being devised. Some local States or school districts now finance the school, giving a voucher (cheque or permit) to parents who use it to pay the school, whether private or public. The World Bank has expressed its interest in this system.

Also in the United States there are public school management companies. Private companies are contracted by the States to manage public schools, aimed at improving the efficacy of the schools.

Private school networks are also being set up in several countries. In Brazil, the middle class school their children in private schools. The children of public school teachers do not go to public schools – they go to private schools. The choice of school is based on their publicity and the *vestibular* results, the tests to enter into university. After releasing the results ribbons are hung on the entrance of certain buildings, congratulating X or Y for entering university, and of course showing the school s/he studied at. In Brazil and in other countries there is an authentic education marketplace.

Private courses to receive pupils after school are also on the up, especially in Japan and South Korea. Anybody who does not attend these courses has very little chance of enrolling into university.

Foreign language courses are also flourishing, especially those that teach English, or, as some linguistic specialists say, “globish”, i.e. the English used in international exchanges. Where I live in Aracaju, in northeast Brazil, it is interesting to compare the Alliance française and the English Culture. The Alliance française welcomes their pupils in an old building, with small traditional classrooms, little material, and a typical library. The English Culture welcomes them in a modern building, with large windows and is fully equipped with modern facilities. It is the difference between learning a language and enter-

ing an international competition. Having said that, if the Alliance française had modern facilities it would not automatically become neoliberal, it would simply provide its pupils with modern equipment to learn a language.

One also sees the incursion of the large multinationals in schools. Coca-Cola, for example, pays the school to provide a machine dispensing Coca-Cola. Nestlé sends free material about good eating habits and Colgate shows interest in dental hygiene. Adopting a clearly neutral pedagogical demeanour, of course... Twenty years ago it would have been impossible to imagine this. Today discussions are held in school debating if these are acceptable practices.

It is pointed out that this is not a question of globalisation, but of the advance of neoliberalism, even if currently the two phenomena are closely linked. Other phenomena are taking place, perhaps more dangerous as they are ambiguous. Hybrid forms between logics of public service and neoliberal logics. For example, in France competition is developing between public schools to send the weakest pupils to others schools and to receive the best ones. Also, inside the peripheral schools, there is often a separate class that will receive the few middle-class children that continue to attend that school.

To debate the effects of globalisation on education, one has to speak about the international organisations: OECD, IMF, World Bank and WTO. But beware: an international organisation, in truth, only has the power conferred to it by the States that fund it. Sometimes it is thought that international organisations make their own final decision. They make decisions, of course, but following the logic and often the interests of the countries that fund them. Behind the international organisations it is the power of international capital that is functioning. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) receives 25% of its budget from the United States. In the IMF, in 2005 the United States had 17% of the votes, France 5%, Saudi Arabia 3.2%, India 1.9%, Brazil 1.4%, and Indonesia 1%. Together, India, Brazil and Indonesia, comprising almost 500 million inhabitants, have less weight in the IMF than France, with a population of 60 million. In the World Bank the number of votes of each country depends on the capital that they put in the Bank. The most democratic organisation, despite being heavily criticised, is the WTO, where each country has one vote. The WTO does not have decision-making power. Its function is to organise the discussions among the different countries and it is the countries themselves that sign the contracts. However, the WTO has one important power: after a convention has been signed, the WTO arbitrates any disputes, and it has already decided in favour of the southern countries over the United States and Europe.

In the field of education the most important place for the rich countries is the OECD. It is the *think tank*, as

the Americans say, i.e. a bank of ideas. The OECD came up with the “modern mathematics reform”, the idea and the very expression “education quality”, and the ideas of “knowledge economy” and “life-long learning”. The OECD is the centre of neoliberal thinking as regards education. One should not be surprised about this when considering it was explicitly created to promote the market economy.

For the poorest countries the important organisations are the IMF and the World Bank. These are the so-called Bretton Woods organisations, in reference to the place where the world economic reorganisation was thought out, in 1944. The mission of the IMF is to avoid a similar crisis to that of 1929. To do so it yields short-term loans to countries with financial problems. To make sure these countries have suitable conditions to repay the loans and to help them create these conditions, the IMF establishes “structural adjustment plans”. These plans often entail cuts in health and education budgets, which are costs that do not bring short-term returns.

The mission of the World Bank is to fight long-term poverty. In truth, it is a group made up of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) plus four associated organisations. It is basically a bank whose function is to lend money to support development projects, especially in the area of education. In 2004 a total of 89 countries were running projects that were funded, at least partially, by the World Bank. However, this Bank does not lend money to just any project. It analyses the projects submitted to it, in accordance with its own criteria and gives advice to countries that intend to have projects funded. It has thus become the main consultant of southern countries in the area of education. The World Bank has an official doctrine. It believes that quality education is essential to fight against poverty, but public money is and will always be insufficient to develop quality education. Hence, the World Bank concluded that private money is necessary. It believes that the four or five years of primary education should be the responsibility of the State, but secondary and higher education should be paid by parents. It also thinks that in poor countries, especially African countries, it is necessary to reduce the salary of teachers, to reduce the difference between what they earn and the income of the workers on the land.

Looking to the future, the most important subject is that being discussed in the WTO. After the Second World War negotiations began, called GATT, to lower import duties and develop international trade. On 1 January 1995, the World Trade Organisation was created and the General Agreement on Trade of Services (GATS) was signed. The agreement aimed to liberalise services in January 2005, after ten years of discussions. However, negotiations broke down in Seattle (1999) and Cancun (2003). A new round of discussions sub-

sequently began in Doha, which are currently ongoing. The Seattle and Cancun meetings were hit with demonstrations from alter-globalisation and anti-globalisation protesters. However, this was not the cause of the breakdown of the negotiations; the differences centred on the issue of agriculture. The United States and the European Union had already liberalised a lot of industrial goods and some services (telecommunications, aviation, banking services) and advocated the further liberalisation of services, but continue to protect their agriculture with import duties and grants given to their farmers. Led by Brazil, India and South Africa, the poor or emerging countries, whose main exports are agricultural products, demand the liberalisation of agriculture in exchange for the liberalisation of services.

What would happen to education if the service was liberalised? It depends on the interpretation of the GATS and the results of the negotiations. The agreement includes education, one of the twelve outlined sectors. In principle, public services are protected when they are linked directly to the sovereignty of the State. In the case of the Armed Forces, the interpretation is clear; the situation, however, is different when dealing with education, given that private schools are already operating. A strict interpretation of the GATS could even forbid the State from granting public schools more favourable treatment to that granted to private schools. This interpretation would be a death sentence for the public schools: as it is impossible to fund all the private schools, the State would have to renounce their subsidising of public schools. However, this is only a hypothesis reality on the ground is less frightening. The requests for liberalisation made by the United States, Australia and New Zealand focus only on higher education, adult training, language courses and assessment services and do not encompass primary or secondary education. To sum up, there are potentially very big risks, but up until now primary and secondary schools have not been targeted for liberalisation. The sectors under threat are higher education and adult training institutions.

As mentioned above, globalisation is, above all else, a socioeconomic process. However, it also brings cultural consequences through the meeting of cultures and the appearance and spread of new forms of expression. One can point to the miscegenation of peoples due to increased migration, the worldwide dissemination of cultural products (films, books, television series, and music), the generalisation of the use of English or an international language based on it, instead of other languages. The cultural and even socio-cognitive consequences are phenomena that are difficult to assess, but there is no doubt that they constitute new challenges for schooling.

In addition to these cultural phenomena, one can also point out that globalisation raises the issue of a pos-

sible process of solidarity among human beings. This is the ideal for those who accept the opening of borders but refuse the neoliberal form of globalisation.

THE ALTER-GLOBALISATION MOVEMENT AND EDUCATION FOR ALL: THE CHALLENGE OF ENGENDERING SOLIDARITY AMONG HUMAN BEINGS

Marx thought that capitalism was progress in relation to feudalism. He did not intend to go back to feudalism, but to surpass capitalism and arrive at what he called communism. We can employ the same reasoning to globalisation. It is not a question of moving backwards, closing borders again. Firstly, it would be very difficult to do so and this would lead to a worldwide economic crisis. Secondly, because globalisation, despite all its negative aspects, has a positive effect: it tends to create interdependence among human beings, promote solidarity among the members of the human species and highlights the fact that the planet Earth is a single common good. It is not the opening of the borders that is a problem, but rather that this is fuelled by money and the strongest countries. The problem is not globalisation, but rather neoliberalism.

Today there are three stances towards globalisation.

First, the position of those who want to maintain the status quo. They defend their advantages, privileges and powers, or refuse to open borders because they do not accept migrants and in general 'the Other'. For these reasons the National Front, a far-right party in France, opposes globalisation vehemently.

The second position consists in adopting the current neoliberal globalisation, in the name of free initiative, efficacy, liberty, competition, etc.

The third position is the "alter-globalisation" movement (World Social Forum and World Education Forum, ATTAC, etc.), which rejects both the current world and neoliberal globalisation and argues that "another world is possible". The alter-globalisation movement advocates the idea of solidarity among human beings and between the human species and the planet Earth. The goals are to end hunger in the world, safeguard health and promote literacy and education for all human beings, as well as saving our planet from the growing dangers.

The alter-globalisation movement considers education as "a priority human right throughout a whole lifetime". This idea of a fundamental human right, an anthropological right of the human being, deserves to be highlighted. It is not enough to defend school as a public service, given that today public services are privatised. Only a quality public school, however, can guarantee the right of all to education. However, the alter-globalisation movement, at the same time, defends the public school against neoliberalism and privatisation and demands an in-depth transformation of this school, so that it becomes a place that provides direction, pleasure in

learning and construction of social equality. They believe school should value both the dignity of each human being and solidarity among men, and respect what can be called *homodiversity*, in reference to the expression “biodiversity”.

Also worthy of analysis is the international movement that led to the current “Millennium Movement”. In 1990, the Jomtien World Conference defined primary schooling and ending literacy by the year 2000 as a universal goal. But on that date the Dakar Forum stated that there were still 113 million children that did not attend primary school (60% of whom were girls) and a total of 880 million illiterate people in the world, the majority of whom were women. The ‘Education for All’ goal was reaffirmed, setting a target no later than 2015, which calls for a particular effort in the schooling of girls. In 2002 a United Nations Summit, defining the Millennium Objectives for Development, adopted the Dakar targets in relation to education. Meanwhile, it is known that at the current levels of investment these objectives cannot be achieved.

Whilst very different, the alter-globalisation movement and the United Nations programme both draw up a scenario of solidarity and respect for fundamental human rights. This logic opposes the logic of neoliberal globalisation. Meanwhile, both logics share a common conviction that the scenario of human history, from now onwards, is the world itself. Maybe this is the main event at the end of the 20th century, with numerous and profound consequences as regards the directions that culture and education will take.

CONCLUSION

Four challenges are facing school owing to the evolution of contemporary society.

Given that society has made economic and social development its overriding goal, which require a higher level of education of the population, school has to solve the problems deriving from the democratisation of education. Among these problems, particularly noteworthy is the new relationship with knowledge: there are more and more pupils that go to school only “to pass the year”, without obtaining any meaning or pleasure from it.

Given that contemporary society prioritises the logics of quality and efficacy, the school should satisfy the new demands. These in themselves are not abusive, but one has to ascertain what the words “quality” and “efficacy” mean when referring to school. This meaning may be very different depending on whether the focus is just on a diploma and competition, or on true education for all.

Given that contemporary society is involved in a neoliberal globalisation process, education tends to be considered just one more good among others, in a “free” market where the laws of supply, demand and competition prevail. In this situation the public school suffers numerous attacks, which could become worse when

the Doha negotiations on the application of the General Agreement on Trade of Services resolve the current impasse.

Given that the world today is more open and accessible in its various parts and cultures, school has to face new cultural and educational challenges, deriving from meetings among cultures, worldwide dissemination of information and images and the widespread diffusion of cultural products in the English language. Meanwhile, perhaps the challenge is deeper: the growing interdependence between men, generated by globalisation, and even more so, the ideal of solidarity among human beings and between the human species and the planet, permeating the alter-globalisation movement, requires a new dimension of education, which combines a universal awareness and respect for homodiversity.

These challenges must be faced by a school that maintains the same basic form that was established in the 17th century; a school whose content is based on the end of the 18th century and the start of the 20th century. The fact that the horizon today is the future of the human species, the planet Earth and the new technology of information dissemination, should lead to a redefinition of the content, ways of imparting it, and the way school is assessed and organised. It is not this, however, that is happening, but in fact just the opposite. The neoliberal logic of competition tends to reduce education to a school marketplace to be profited from in the market of jobs and social positions, and this leads to predominantly mechanical and superficial forms of learning, disconnected from the meaning of knowledge and true intellectual activity. Today there is a contradiction between the new anthropological and technical horizons of education on the one hand, and on the other its actual forms. Behind the social contradiction an historical contradiction is being developed: the globalised society treats knowledge as an economic resource, but requires educated, responsible and creative globalised men. Maybe this contradiction is one of the engines of History in the newly born century.

Lisbon, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Lisbon, 14th June 2007

BERNARD CHARLOT

Professor emeritus in Educational Sciences at the University of Paris 8, and currently Visiting Professor in the Post-Graduate Programme in Education of the Federal University of Sergipe (Aracaju, Brazil).

Translated by Thomas Kundert

Charlot, Bernard (2007). Education and Globalisation: an attempt to bring order to the debate. Conference given at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Lisbon, 14th June, 2007. *Sísifo. Educational Sciences Journal*, 04, pp. 127-134
Retrieved [month, year] from <http://sisifo.fpce.ul.pt>

