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Globalisation, geography education and the curriculum: what are the challenges for curriculum makers in geography?

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The forces of globalisation affect the lives of everybody on the planet – but defining the concept of globalisation, and its appropriate place within the school curriculum, still proves problematic. This article engages with three key issues: our understanding and conceptualisation of globalisation; the impacts of globalisation on education; and the place of globalisation in the geography curriculum. Globalisation influences education policy and practice worldwide, in turn creating concerns that national curricula, teaching and assessment are increasingly tending towards uniformity. The opportunities and challenges faced by young people growing up in our rapidly globalising world are considered in this article from the perspective of curriculum makers in geography.

Keywords: curriculum; curriculum making; geography education; globalisation

Introduction

Globalisation – a word which has achieved widespread usage since the economist Theodore Levitt popularised it in the early 1980s (Levitt 1983) – remains a concept which eschews close definition. In the ever-expanding literature on globalisation, interpretations and definitions abound, while the impacts of interrelated global processes are still regularly debated and contested. Many commentators focus on economic¹ aspects, while others choose to highlight a variety of social, political, cultural, ideological and technological drivers and consequences of globalisation. The importance of the concept is in part signified by the growth of an ‘anti-globalisation movement’ which attempts to counter, and indeed reverse, the increasing inequalities stimulated by global capitalism (Jeffrey 2002). This ‘movement’ has been described as a loose amalgam of anti-capitalist, anti-American, anarchist and anti-corporate individuals and groups focused on countering the economic, cultural and geopolitical dominance of the United States and the West (Giddens 2003).

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Such complexities create dilemmas for curriculum makers – not least for those involved in the development of geography curricula, whose aim is to help learners achieve a clearer appreciation of the concept of globalisation.

This article explores the meaning of the term globalisation, the impact of globalisation on education, and the response of curriculum makers to this concept. In particular it focuses on the place of globalisation in the school curriculum, with special reference to its location in geography education. At a time of acute global economic crisis the importance of young people understanding globalisation is especially significant. In a world where global income is in the region of \$31 trillion per year, but where 1.2 billion people earn less than \$1 each day – a situation similarly expressed by the fact that 80% of the world's population earn only 20% of global income – the tendency of globalisation to exacerbate the gap between rich and poor needs to be better understood (World Bank 2008).

What does globalisation mean?

'Globalisation' is an expansive term. It is a concept that is inherently difficult to pin down, for it encapsulates a wide variety of processes and issues. Anthony Giddens, in the introduction to his book *Runaway World*, comments on how the term has itself become globalised, noting that 'few quasi technical words... have achieved such wide currency' (2003, xi). Formulating a single, accepted definition of globalisation is impossible, not least because of the range of contemporary interpretations given to the term. As Amin points out:

Globalisation is [either] the triumph of capitalism on a world scale over national and local autonomy... [or] Less dramatically, it is nothing more than the intensification of exchange between distinct national social formations and, as such, still governable through the inter-state system. Somewhere in between, it symbolises the blurring of traditional territorial and social boundaries through the interpenetration of local and distant influences, therefore requiring hybrid and multi-polar solutions. (Amin 1997, 123–4)

Amin concludes that focusing on hybridised and multi-layered resolutions to the issues arising from globalisation 'might be more salient than asking whether globalisation represents the end of geography' (124) – a startling claim, which is of obvious concern to geographers and geography educators (see Hirst and Thompson 1996a, 1996b; Sinha 2002). Globalisation is therefore best conceptualised not as a single 'condition', but as a set of multi-dimensional processes (Held et al. 1999).

Users of the term 'globalisation' must be careful about its application, avoiding employing it as a description for *all* the global processes that

affect people. The dangers are obvious – Dicken (2004), for example, cites Susan Strange’s (1995) observation that ‘globalisation’ is a word often used by ‘woolly thinkers’ who lump together a variety of superficially converging trends, without making much attempt to distinguish the important from the trivial. By using the word to say everything, it says nothing. A similar point is made by those who argue for greater conceptual clarity to characterise the term, and for the employment of empirical research evidence to strengthen its application. When handling such complexity there are obvious dangers of seeking to apply definitions that are either too narrow and selective, or too broad and embracing.

Held et al. (1999) achieve a helpful theoretical delineation of the concept of globalisation from which empirical research can begin. This is reproduced here, in an abridged form, to outline the meaning of the term. Essentially globalisation refers to:

- A process (or processes), rather than a singular condition, which relates to the emergence of interregional networks, systems of interaction, and exchange.
- A set of complex webs and networks of relationships between communities, states, international institutions, non-governmental organisations and multinational corporations, which in turn make up the global order.
- Processes which affect all aspects of social life/social domains across the globe – be they cultural, economic, political, legal, military or environmental.
- A de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation of socio-economic and political space. By cutting across political frontiers (and ‘stretching’ across the globe) economic, social and political activities are no longer primarily organised by a territorial principle. This re-forming of ‘local’, ‘national’ and ‘continental’ space – such that it no longer matches with established legal and territorial boundaries – is a feature of globalisation. As globalisation intensifies this can result in a *re*-territorialisation of socio-economic activity into new economic zones (such as the EU), mechanisms of governance (such as the WTO), and cultural complexes (such as the Asian diaspora).
- An expansion of the scale and spatial reach within which power is organised and exercised. An increasingly interconnected global system means that the exercise of power through the decisions, actions or inactions of agencies on one continent can have significant consequences for nations, communities and households on other continents. Here the effects of globalisation can be experienced unevenly.

Whichever theorisations, definitions or conceptions of globalisation we favour, we must guard against the belief that globalisation is, in and of itself, a *causal* process (Dicken, Peck, and Tickell 1997; Hay and Marsh 2000; Dicken 2004). Both as a term and as a concept 'globalisation' has become entangled in a variety of different discourses which tend to mask underlying processes; it should therefore be employed as a term for the *re-description* of existing processes, rather than as a *prima facie explanation* of process (Hay and Marsh 2000). This difficulty in pinning down what globalisation really *is* stems from the fact that the term is regularly used to describe a wide range of processes which may have a rapid and significant impact in some places, but almost none in others. The temporal element is important, too – at certain times globalisation may cause considerable change, at other times not. We should also resist the simplistic notion that the effects of globalisation are inevitable, malignant and unidirectional, and as such incapable of moderation at either the local or national scales (see Malet 2007; Steger 2009).

John Holmwood (2007) has explored, from a sociologist's perspective, the challenge for social science researchers of embracing the concept of globalisation. Interestingly, he chooses three geographical phenomena to do so (the natural disasters of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean on 26 December 2004, the Kashmir earthquake of 8 October 2005, and Hurricane Katrina's impact on the southern coast of the USA on 25 August 2005). Holmwood argues that the global mass media's coverage of these events had 'the paradoxical effect of rendering others as both immediate and remote' (2007, 86). To illustrate this point he highlights the involvement of western (middle-class) holidaymakers in bringing the tragedy of the tsunami 'home', while acknowledging that reporting of the Pakistan earthquake emphasised the remoteness of both the region and its people (except in the eyes of the British Pakistani population – a group which might also be deemed 'remote' by some within British society). This conceptualisation contains elements of Amin's (1997) notion of 'out there – in here' connectivity. Holmwood also sees the reporting of Hurricane Katrina as emphasising the remoteness of its (largely) black victims in the American 'societal community'. Using these geographical examples he argues for a social science of connections to be employed when facing the challenge of understanding globalisation, with global social science being thought of as a series of local social sciences in dialogue with each other. Here we witness, according to Holmwood (2007), 'the need to break with certain universalising tendencies within social inquiry and to accept its "provincial" character; the global nature of social problems increasingly requires us to accept...the local character of social thought' (2007, 79). I will return to this assertion later.

Impacts of globalisation on education

Before exploring the location of globalisation as a theme in the school curriculum it is worthwhile to consider briefly its impact on the very process of education.

Anthony Kelly (2009), acknowledging the wealth of work recently produced by ‘disparate groups’ on the effects of globalisation on education, draws clear comparisons between commentators who either seek to challenge, or support, globalisation. In the former camp are those that identify the negative effects on schools of ‘competition, public sector downsizing and creeping privatisation’ (Kelly 2009, 51), while supporters tend to focus on the longer term gains of ‘bringing nations together through trade and greater efficiency in the provision of better public services’ (51). Kelly’s analysis tends to focus on the economic: he recognises the pressures on governments and nation-states constrained by the forces of globalisation, witnessing the impact on schools which have been ‘reduced merely to serving an economic good through a school curriculum driven by commercial considerations’ (51). In these circumstances governments have found themselves weakened, largely incapable of manipulating markets to the advantage of their citizens (Reid 2002). Here we witness the tensions faced by politicians and policy-makers as to whether they adopt a welfare or a *laissez-faire* approach to the forces of globalisation; between those who seek to manage the impact of globalisation in the democratic interest of their citizens, and those who believe that markets should be allowed to promote longer term prosperity. As a consequence of recognising such tensions, many educationists and education policy-makers have become very interested in the impacts of globalisation and have sought to identify its ideological and practical impacts on the act of educating (Lauder et al. 2006).

Burbules and Torres (2000), for example, note the effects of globalisation both on the adoption of education policies and on the reduction of state influence – with globalised policies often being used to justify greater performance management, deregulation of education services and the marketisation of school choice. Mark Smith (2002) also recognises how education policy-makers increasingly look to market solutions to problems, attracted by the ‘impact and pervasiveness’ of the forces of globalisation. Smith chooses to highlight the following dangers of globalised educational specialisation:

- commodification and the corporate takeover of education;
- the threat to the autonomy of national educational systems;
- de-localisation, often through the use of online technologies;
- re-orientations in educational programmes;
- branding, and ‘learning to be consumers’.

There is not space here to explore each of these fully, but key themes are: the marketisation of education (as neo-liberal economic policies remove state regulation, increasingly turning public services such as health and education into commercial activities); the rise of ‘managerialism’ in schools and universities; the application of business models to educational and welfare services (with students, parents and patients becoming ‘consumers’ or ‘clients’); and the refocusing of education as a private, rather than a public, good (Smith 2002). The privatisation of education in developed countries, recently through the direct involvement of large corporate interests, comes with the blessing of many policy-makers, who borrow ideas and policies from other developed countries and see education (particularly higher education) as providing a competitive edge for their nation in the global economy (Butt 2007). Within the globalised economic system, education is now charged with the responsibility of increasing international competitiveness and delivering economic growth. This can have a profound effect on the construction of school curricula, not least through a tendency towards the creation of uniformity. Here there is a direct link to governments investing in their nation’s human capital through education, specifically to produce highly skilled workers who will promote economic growth and competitiveness (Spring 2009). For Spring (2006, 2009), increasing global uniformity of educational practice has been achieved through trade in educational services, a factor exacerbated by the championing of instructional and assessment methods by agencies such as the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Many commentators on the impacts of globalisation on education note the growing influence of the global use of information technology. Such technology can have the effect of encouraging highly individualised forms of learning, often at great distance from other online learners and with little or no face-to-face contact with teachers. Like Klein (2001), Smith concentrates on the influence of multinational companies on the use of technology within schools:

Through the use of teaching packs, sponsored videos, advertisements on school computer screen savers and the like, large companies are able to bring their brand directly into the classroom. In so doing they are looking to gain a certain legitimacy . . . as well as raising general brand awareness. Schools also have the distinct advantage for corporates of organising their students along key demographics such as age and supposed academic ability – so it is possible to target advertising and marketing. (Smith 2002)

In this context Bottery (2006) discusses the notion of educational professionals being at an important crossroads with respect to their response to globalisation. He believes that many educators are retreating

from the influences of globalisation (towards the ‘parochial and insular’) rather than embracing and shaping its powerful forces. For Bottery, it is time for education professionals to accept their responsibility for helping others face the demands of the future and to realise that: ‘there can be no greater abnegation of such responsibility than to do others’ bidding without questioning whether this constitutes what they believe to be good education’ (2006, 111).

It seems appropriate in this brief analysis of the effects of globalisation on education to concentrate on the dominant influences of economic factors – here the connection with concepts of ‘knowledge economy’ and ‘intellectual capital’, and their relationship with training and education, come to the fore. Bottery (2006) highlights a paradox in that knowledge economies tend to emphasise the importance of flexibility of workforce and organisational structures, at a time when educational systems are becoming more standardised and inflexible – such that ‘educators [are] conditioned in ways which make them singularly ill-equipped to help their students deal with these challenges’ (2006, 104). Essentially, our view of the effects of globalisation on education relates to our personal values. Should state education be considered as a private or a public good? Should the increasing global uniformity of educational practices, caused by trade in educational services and policies, be a cause for concern? Should learning be considered a commodity to be invested in, or a basic human right?

Finding its place – locating globalisation within geography and geography education

As Peter Dicken argues:

‘Globalisation’ is a big problem in every sense of the term. It is, first and foremost, a problem in a *material* sense, insofar as its associated syndrome of processes creates highly uneven geographical and social outcomes. ‘Globalisation’ encapsulates many of the ‘big issues’ facing contemporary society, in both developed and developing countries. It is also a problem in the *rhetorical* or *discursive* sense, in that its meaning and significance are deeply and widely contested. (2004, 5; emphasis in original)

Globalisation is a term which is quintessentially geographical, in that the processes and outcomes associated with it have clear geographical expressions. But the concept of globalisation is arguably one with which geographers have largely failed to engage. Dicken (2004) believes that the intellectual and political debates about globalisation have bypassed geographers, evidenced by their modest scholarly contributions to its analysis. His investigation of the bibliographies of 40 books on globalisation written by non-geographers between 1990 and 2002 reveals

that one-third of the books carry no reference whatsoever to the work of geographers, with only 2% of the 14,000 references cited being written by a geographer of any stripe.

Why should this be? Geography, as a discipline, is surely well placed to offer understandings of how globalisation works. With their appreciation of the human and physical worlds, geographers should be capable of offering insights about contemporary spatial processes and global change. Geographers can help others to understand that the theories associated with globalisation are often partial, and western, being dominated by the thinking of those within leading economies and societies. As a 'big idea' the concept of globalisation surely demands dialogue between all branches within the discipline of geography, as well as acknowledging contributions from interdisciplinary debate. This dialogue should be reflected in school curricula, where the concept of globalisation needs to be addressed both within geography education, and beyond.

Geographers would agree with the observations of the sociologist John Holmwood that, 'we [also] need to understand how our actions have consequences in the lives of other people who may be remote from us in most respects, for example, spatially, or culturally' (2007, 80). Holmwood argues that, in the past, social scientists have considered the impact of western capitalism on the life chances of others, but that:

current discussions of globalisation stress the transfer of jobs from the UK, Europe and the US to India and China. Probably, it is this shift in perspective – that 'others' might now be the cause of 'our' private troubles – which explains why globalisation is seen as a new phenomenon. (2007, 81)

These are essentially geographical observations, which realise the impact of human actions on the lives of those in different places and spaces. Nevertheless, geographers would not easily accept Holmwood's assertion of a *recent* 'shift in perspective' – the study of such themes has always been central to the discipline of geography – although analysing events through the lens of globalisation may make them appear to be 'new' phenomena.

Globalisation: challenges and opportunities for curriculum making in geography

Because curriculum makers in geography lack a single, agreed, comprehensive definition of globalisation there is some sense in starting the process of curriculum construction by considering statements that seek to outline its broad components (while acknowledging that these statements are contestable). Below are six statements about globalisation, based on the work of non-geographers (Lauder et al. 2006), which

geography curriculum makers might employ to underpin the construction of a curriculum unit on the theme:

- that people and countries are becoming more interdependent globally, and as a consequence national and cultural boundaries are (for many) becoming less significant;
- that national and regional economies are generally declining in importance, compared to the influence of global trade and markets;
- that information technology (including the internet) has achieved greater connectivity between people globally;
- that travel (particularly cheap air travel) has achieved greater connectivity between people globally;
- that global networks (of money, goods, services, migrants, students, knowledge, information, music, ideas, technology, etc.) are growing, and the flow within these networks is increasing rapidly;
- that time and space are being compressed.

By listing such statements we are, of course, instantly faced with the omission of other components that certain geographers would deem essential for school students to achieve a more holistic understanding of globalisation – for example, considerations of environmental, political and ideological factors.² Given that understanding spatial processes is central to any geographer's appreciation of globalisation, it is also helpful to consider the theoretical delineations of globalisation outlined at the start of this article (see Held et al. 1999). In particular, the six statements above would arguably benefit from the inclusion of the concepts of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation of socio-economic and political space, and from consideration of the ways in which the spatial reach of different aspects of power has increased through globalisation.

The geography curriculum should therefore reflect the concepts and processes of globalisation, with some reference to aspects of economics, politics, culture, society, interdependence and the environment. It is certainly possible to take any of these themes and determine content that could be taught within the geography curriculum, with special reference to globalisation. Indeed, Gerber (2003) attempts such an overview:

Geography, with its foci being on human use of place and space at different scales, and the resulting interactions and modifications, is well placed to assist us to appreciate a new geography based on globalisation. The world economic map has been redrawn to highlight: new centres for world trade around the Pacific rim; a less clear cut North–South divide; science and technology networks that link up research centres to major business corporations around the world; and crime, especially through the illegal trade in drugs, arms, people and nuclear materials.... Once geography

focused on geopolitics. Now it focuses on geo-economics – the flows and exchanges of resources and ideas. (Gerber 2003, 23)

While this attempt to define geography's contribution to representing globalisation in the curriculum is laudable, it is also flawed. The focus here is (largely) economic, but the construction of an alternative listing of themes and content which would be equally (or more) acceptable to (other) geography curriculum makers is certainly possible. I would argue that employing lists of content as a foundation for the construction of a geography curriculum is ultimately unhelpful, particularly if these lists are dissociated from clear theoretical and conceptual frameworks. This is especially the case when one considers curriculum making with respect to the globalisation theme, where some combination of 'statements' and 'theoretical delineations' (as attempted above) appears a more fruitful way forward. Ultimately, content lists merely expand to cram the geography curriculum, particularly with such an expansive and inclusive concept as globalisation.

There is an urgency about the ways in which globalisation should be addressed in the school curriculum, for its effects are increasingly impacting on the lives of young people. John Morgan (2001) has argued that schools have only a relatively marginal influence on how youngsters position themselves as social agents compared to the greater influence of television, film, music, travel and consumption. These cultural influences are increasingly determined by global forces, such that although many young people may be: 'living in modest areas of their communities [they are simultaneously]...operating at a global level through their popular cultures via rapidly changing communications technologies' (Gerber 2003, 30).

We have witnessed how globalisation is a multi-faceted phenomenon, rather than a singular condition, which relates to patterns of growing global interconnectedness. Achieving an understanding of the dynamics and consequences of globalisation therefore requires some knowledge of patterns of global connections across a variety of thematic domains (Held et al. 1999).

The important issues of scale and inevitability

Doreen Massey has regularly argued for geographers and social scientists to embrace a 'global sense of place'. In Gerber's (2003) analysis of globalisation and geography education he refers to the study of relationships between communities at the local, national and global scales – challenging those who choose only to 'think locally' or 'think globally', and those who are unwilling to make connections between the various spatial scales. Gerber typifies the former as believing that globalisation is 'the problem' and localisation 'the solution', whereas the

latter prefer to see local ‘underdevelopment, backwardness and provincialism as the problems’ (2003, 32). Amin similarly argues against adopting a narrowly definitive, restrictive, spatial stance:

I have distanced myself from the *territorial* idea of sequestered spatial logics – local, national, continental and global – pitted against each other. Instead I have chosen to interpret globalisation in *relational* terms as the interdependence and intermingling of global, distant and local logics, resulting in the greater hybridisation and perforation of social, economic and political life. (1997, 133)

He believes that territorial theorisation (as evidenced in the work of Hirst and Thompson 1996a, 1996b) prioritises one spatial scale of organisation against another, seeking neat divisions between them, whereas relational approaches are more interested in how hybrid networks work to influence agency. Similarly, I find myself at odds with Holmwood’s (2007) spatial conceptions of globalisation, for he chooses, ‘not to argue for a recognition of the “local” in the context of the “global”, but more strongly for a recognition that the “global” is no more than the aggregation of the “local”’. Here Holmwood’s position becomes untenable for many geographers, particularly where he claims that the identification of the global is something indistinct from the local – for example, he believes that global analysis is guilty of, ‘exhibiting its own “logic” independent of local manifestations [which] is necessarily the privileging of some [local] perspectives over others’ (2007, 82). As a geographer, and geography educator, my view is that attempting such a severance of the local and global is flawed, particularly in the context of understanding globalisation.

However, raising awareness of the effects of globalisation at a range of spatial scales may not be the most important educational issue for curriculum makers to address. When developing the geography curriculum we must ensure that our programmes of study help learners resist the notion that the forces of globalisation are all-powerful, unstoppable, unidirectional and inevitable. On the contrary, such forces are often negligible and reversible. We may wish, as Amin provocatively asserts in his critique of Hirst and Thompson’s (1996a, 1996b) conceptualisation of globalisation, to convey the sense that ‘there is nothing new about globalisation’ (Amin 1997, 125). But perhaps this goes too far? Indeed, Amin himself cautions that such an approach can leave us with a dangerous sense of stability, when we should recognise significant changes in the world economic system that challenge national and global processes:

In their [Hirst and Thompson’s] zeal to allay alarmist fears associated with the ‘end of geography’ thesis, they leave us at the opposite pole with a comforting sense of ‘business as usual’. (Amin 1997, 126)

For young people, achieving a balanced (rather than an alarmist) appreciation of the effects of globalisation is important. Recognising that there are variations in the impacts of globalisation, both in space and time, is central to the geographer's analysis, while the belief that globalisation is a set of processes that only operate 'from the global, to the local' is surely an oversimplification. By only applying the global lens we ignore the interrelationships between the other spatial scales (regional, national, international) which are considered important by geographers, and others (Swyngedouw 2000). This complexity of processes cannot be ignored; we do not have a simple, linear, 'top-down' hierarchy of processes operating from global to local, but a melange of dynamic connections functioning across different scales and spaces (Marginson and Rhoades 2002; Vidovich 2007). The effects of globalisation are therefore not uniform around the world and are certainly open to moderation at the local, regional and national scales.

As Beck (2005) argues, the effects of globalisation may attract neo-liberal support for capitalism, or more critical readings that nonetheless see the possibilities of the creation of a cosmopolitan³ global civil society (see also Rizvi 2000). A balanced view of globalisation must be attempted by curriculum makers, one which takes account of its costs (for some) – unemployment, pollution, cultural change, loss of environment, resources and habitats, and poverty; but also its benefits (for others) – increasing employment opportunities, economic growth, greater exchange of goods and services, raising incomes and facilitating better access to products, services and cultures. The significance of identifying globalisation's 'winners' and 'losers', and their uneven spatial distribution, is of profound interest to geographers and geography educators. Theorisation which suggests that globalisation is always a force for either 'good' or 'evil' is flawed – geography teaching which promotes such views should therefore be avoided.

In many geography classrooms, lessons which address aspects of globalisation often demonise the actions of multinational corporations without achieving more nuanced appreciations of the diversity of their impacts. This is not to advocate any 'cover up' of human rights abuses, payment of low wages or the suppression of unions by multinationals – all of which should be taught about and rightly condemned – but there must also be a realisation that many governments, and indeed workers, in less economically developed countries see only opportunities associated with the attraction of these corporations (Shipman 2002; Norberg 2004). Indeed, while Giddens (2003) notes how globalisation has radically altered the ways in which nation-states relate to each other, he rejects the notion that corporations are now more powerful than states. When acting collaboratively states have greater influence, while corporations do not yet 'run the world'. The majority of nations still exercise control over their

own territories, and have the facility to establish laws and exercise sovereign military power, all of which exceed the influence of multinational companies.

Geography teaching in schools must move towards more balanced and sophisticated explanations of globalisation, rather than merely presenting its effects as inevitably reducing wages, worsening social conditions, destroying welfare states, degrading environments and weakening indigenous cultures. We must achieve more nuanced understandings of globalising processes. While it is undeniable that across the spectrum of labour employed in developed and developing countries employment pressures are rising – partly due to lower waged workers in developing countries forcing those in the developed world to experience more challenging employment prospects (such as lower wages, contracted work, poorer conditions of service, less job diversity) – this situation is neither uniform nor absolute. Here, again, we see the importance of adopting a frame of analysis which incorporates a range of spatial scales.

Conclusions

Are geographers and geography educators too possessive of the concept of globalisation? As long as globalisation is taught *somewhere* in the curriculum, why should they be concerned whether it is geography teachers, or others, who are the conduit? Peter Dicken (2004) expresses the views of many geographers:

Not only can we *not* afford to be centrally involved – recognisably so – in what is one of the biggest sets of issues of the day, but also we *should* be centrally involved – again, recognisably so – in such an important, and intrinsically geographical phenomenon. After all geography has traditionally claimed to be (and is popularly seen to be) the quintessential ‘world discipline’. (2004, 6; emphasis in the original)

Geography educators might similarly concur with Gerber’s view that ‘globalisation is much too complex for us to merely accept it as already established and beyond question’ (2003, 33), a situation which introduces the prospect for exciting curriculum-making opportunities.

Although globalisation should not be taught about in ways that distort the geographer’s unique disciplinary contribution to its understanding, it would be churlish to assume that *only* geographers have something meaningful to say about globalisation. As a complex set of processes that affect people and places, globalisation is profoundly geographical in scope – but not uniquely so. The significant challenges that still face those who seek to further conceptualise globalisation will, at the same time, present opportunities for curriculum makers in geography, and beyond. Unfortunately, in situations where geography educators have attempted

to introduce new conceptions of globalisation into the curriculum, particularly where these have questioned the forces of global capitalism, they have sometimes been ridiculed or wilfully misunderstood (see Clark 2001, with reference to the work of Ballin et al. 2001). Similar to the difficulties previously faced elsewhere by geography educators who have presented contested theories and ideas to young people living in a 'risky world' (see Lambert and Machon 2001), those who attempt to explore themes relating to globalisation have occasionally faced real challenges. Students are experiencing their lives in a 'supercomplex' world (Lambert 1999), where the factors of economic, social and cultural change which affect them are increasingly globalised. We are, therefore, not presented with a straightforward, curriculum-making proposition when we aim to teach about globalisation. As Gerber asserts:

Developing a geography curriculum that takes a purely global focus will be insufficient for it does not build a bridge between the learners' experience and the wider world. ... Globalisation that is studied in a geography curriculum should possess some relevance to these young minds. Otherwise, it will be discarded forever from their life-long learning. (2003, 27)

Notes

1. Such as the global effects of capitalism – including aspects of labour, capital, commodities, freedom of exchange of goods and capital, deregulation of markets, interconnection of markets, integration of national economies, transnational corporations, trade policy and international economic institutions.
2. Inevitably, those who write from different disciplinary backgrounds have their own particular 'take' on what is relevant here – see, for example, the range of themes addressed by Eric Hobsbawm (2008) in his analysis *Globalisation, Democracy and Terrorism*.
3. Holmwood (2007) points out that categories of 'cosmopolitan' thinking were first articulated in the West.

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