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HOW NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS RESPOND TO GLOBALIZATION: A CASE OF KOREA

ULUSAL EĞİTİM SİSTEMLERİ KÜRESELLEŞMEYİ NASIL KARŞILIYOR: GÜNEY KORE ÖRNEĞİ

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Abstract

Globalization influences everyday life of us as much as it does events happening on a world scale, from marriage and the family to global warming and educational systems. Therefore like it or not no one can ignore the globalization phenomena while it is being intensively discussed all around the world. Like any single concept, education as well was affected by the globalization's sudden popularity all around the world. After the strong effect of globalization; education and educational elements have become more important than before to compete with others and then governments have put educational reforms in their agenda not only in developed countries but also in the developing countries. South Korea is one of them and the government developed an educational project (The Brain Korea 21 Project) which seems so efficient and fruitful at least in short-term against globalization. In this paper impact of globalization on education and impact of education on globalization will be glanced and then respond of national education systems will be discussed by examining the case of Korea's Brain Korea 21 project.

Key Words: globalization, national education system, Brain Korea 21 Project, South Korea

Özet

Küreselleşme dünya çapında evlilik ve aileden küresel ısınma ve eğitim sistemlerine kadar birçok olayı etkilediği gibi bizim de günlük hayatımızı etkiliyor. Bu nedenle dünyanın her yerinde yoğun bir şekilde tartışılırken sevilsin sevilmesin küreselleşme olgusuna bigâne kalmak mümkün değildir. Küreselleşmenin ani şöhretinden her kavram gibi eğitim de etkilenmiştir. Küreselleşmenin güçlü etkisinin ardından, eğitim ve eğitim unsurları diğerleriyle rekabet edebilmek için hiç olmadığı kadar önem kazandı ve bu nedenle sadece gelişmiş ülkelerin değil gelişmekte olan ülkelerin hükümetleri eğitim reformunu gündemlerine aldılar. Her ülke kendi reform stratejisini geliştirdi. Güney Kore bunlardan biri ve hükümet Brain Korea 21 projesi adında küreselleşmeye karşı etkili ve en azından kısa vadede verimli görünen bir proje geliştirdi. Bu çalışmada küreselleşmenin eğitim üzerine ve eğitimin küreselleşme üzerindeki etkisine kısaca değinildikten sonra Güney Kore'nin Brain Korea 21 projesi örneğinden hareketle ulusal eğitim sistemlerinin küreselleşmeye verdiği cevap tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: küreselleşme, ulusal eğitim sistemleri, Brain Korea 21 Projesi, Güney Kore

Introduction

Whatever you name it; mondialisation, globalizacjon, globalisierung or globalization, it influences everyday life of us as much as it does events happening on a world scale, from marriage and the family to global warming and educational systems. Therefore like it or not no one can ignore the globalization phenomena while it is being intensively discussed all around the world. However we try to find out what globalization means to clearly see what its effects on our lives are. I used the word “try” as if the meaning of globalization is hidden because there is not any common definition for globalization. John Gray’s definition may give some ideas about globalization: “Globalization can mean many things, on the one hand, it is the worldwide spread of modern technologies of industrial production and communication of all kinds across frontiers – in trade, capital, production and information... globalization also implies that nearly all economies are networked with other economies throughout the world” (Gray, 1999: 55). However the definition is defective because it defines globalization “almost solely in economic terms. This is a mistake. Globalization is political, technological and cultural, as well as economic” (Giddens, 2003: 10). To escape this mistake we can use more than one definition for globalization:

“Globalization is the complex set of processes which result from social interaction on a world scale, such as the development of and increasingly integrated global economy and the explosion of worldwide telecommunications” (Giddens & Sklair, 1999: 321).

“Globalization is a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding” (Waters, 1995: 3).

“Globalization is about the transformation of time and space because of the emergence of instantaneous global communication and mass transportation” (Mok & Welch, 2003: 6).

As can be seen from varieties, the definition of globalization is not clear as well as an intellectual reaction about it. Different thinkers have different ideas about globalization. Some believe that globalization is “just talk. Whatever its benefits, its trials and tribulations, the global economy isn’t especially different from that which existed at previous periods. The world carries on much the same as it has done for many years” (Giddens, 2003: 8).

Some others who can be seen as a pro-globalization “argue that not only is globalization very real, but that its consequences can be felt everywhere... Nations have lost most of the sovereignty they once had and politicians have lost most of their capability to influence event... The era of the nation-state is over” (Giddens, 2003: 8).

However it seems that Cable takes the right position about globalization debates: “globalization – the international integration of communication and economics-

has become a recognized phenomenon; indeed a cliché. Nation-states are losing some traditional roles; control over flows of information and, perhaps, the definition of cultural values; many aspects of independent economic management; and the capacity significantly to shift the distribution of income and wealth. These trends are, however, exaggerated especially among both free market and Marxist ideologues, for which the creation of a truly global capitalist system represents the fulfilment of dreams or dire predictions. Reality is more complex.” (Cable, 1996: 133).

It is very difficult to define something or say something about whose effects cannot be seen now. However Giddens seems right when he is saying: “We shall never be able to become the masters of our own history, but we can and must find ways of bringing our runaway world to heel” (Giddens, 2003: 5). Time would talk.

In this paper impact of globalization on education and impact of education on globalization will be glanced and then respond of national education systems will be discussed by examining the case of Korea’s Brain Korea 21 project.

Impact of Globalization on Education

Like any single concept, education as well was affected by the globalization’s sudden popularity all around the world. We can list some of them in following way:

- The changes in labour markets and education systems due to the emerging demand for workforce capable of the production of high value-added consumer goods.
- The ensuing demand for additional resources for education in a policy environment hostile to the expansion of the role of the public sector.
- The consequences of increased decentralization and privatization, which are often considered as the most effective strategy for ensuring quality and flexibility in a globalized economy.
- The multiplication of cross-national measurement of education systems.
- The widespread adoption of information technology to extend educational opportunities to new target groups, and to improve educational quality through computer-supported instruction and access to the internet. This, by the way, can become a new area of globalization. One may wonder what the consequences are for university programmes in the South of the multiplication of educational and training opportunities which exist on the internet and which are developed by universities in a number of industrialized countries.
- The transformation of culture and the resulting “struggle over the meaning and value of knowledge” (Carnoy, 1999: 9).

After the strong effect of globalization; the importance of education and educational elements have become more important than before to compete with others and then governments have put educational reforms in their agenda not only in developed countries but also in the developing countries since “being local in a globalized world is a sign of social deprivation and degradation” (Bauman, 1998: 2).

Although every country has his own reform strategies, there are “some of the typical ones are as follows:

- the re-establishing of new aims and a national vision for education;
- the expansion and restructuring of education;
- the search for effective schools and quality education;
- the use of market forces and the balance between education equality and encouraging of competition to promote excellence;
- the privatization and diversification of education;
- the shift to decentralization and school-based management;
- the emphasis on the use of development planning and strategic management; parental and community involvement in school education;
- the use of information technology in learning and teaching;
- the development of new curricula and methods of learning and teaching;
- the changes in examination and evaluation practices;
- the search to enhance teacher quality;
- the need for continuous professional development for teachers and principals” (Mok& Welch, 2003: 18).

It is note-worthy that some notions -like “quality”, “excellence”, “privatization” continuous professional development”, “strategic management” and so on- are the centre of educational reform agenda. Even though they sound great, the main purpose of all to prepare their youth for the knowledge-based economy. It means people/governments/countries are not for economy because the pure will of knowledge but they are after knowledge because the pure will of economy. Therefore “state ministries and other public authorities are increasingly subjected to efficiency principles and made to compete as though they were private industries” (Mok& Welch, 2003: 16).

As a result “school principals and teachers, who need to undertake more paper work and administration, in order to convince the governing body that their schools are in good shape. The ever-increasing demands of externally imposed “quality” schemes mean that, instead of devoting more time to “quality teaching”, school administrators and teachers have to spend more and more time in preparing mission statements, vision building, testing for quality improvements among pupils (but without knowing that the quantitative test which are almost always used, are actually a good indicator of quality education, in any real sense and other management-related work” (Mok& Welch, 2003: 14).

It does not seem education anymore which students can learn the traditional behavior of their society and the common values of human being by seeing teachers as a role model because teachers are so busy with paper works and schools are supposed to teach students “learn to compete” by being a real exam-

ple for them. Otherwise they (school, teachers and students) cannot survive in such a competitive world. Moreover “since globalization in most developing countries is mainly articulated in the form of finance-driven decentralization reforms, its primary effect on their education system is to increase inequality of access and quality. By pressuring regions and municipalities to reduce teacher salaries in order to reduce costs, it creates conflict between the state and the very group needed to produce favorable educational change” (Carnoy, 1999: 60). We need to reconsider if globalization is for education or against it?

Impact of Education on Globalization

“Nation-states are becoming limited as direct economic actors and, as a result, are losing political legitimacy. But at the same time, nation-states, and regional and local governments, will depend increasingly for their legitimacy on their ability to create the conditions for economic and social development. In the new global economy, these conditions will depend increasingly on the way the state organizes the education system. Because knowledge is the most highly valued commodity in the global economy, nations have little choice but to increase their investments in education” (Carnoy, 1999: 82).

Imagine the situation. First of all demand for education has been raised because globalization has changed quantity and mostly quality of products and therefore the labour market has directly changed since to be the first about quantity and quality can only be happen by education. Moreover apart from quality and quantity, productivity and efficiency are the two which globalization has made them so important. To product more amount with good quality in shorter time and with lesser people than others. All of these cannot be happen without high-skill worker. Secondly when economy reaches the goals, which are aimed according to quality, quantity, productivity and efficiency, another important task waits: customer service. Because the quality of products can be reached, to be one of the chosen by customers, they want to have excellent service and good relation with company. It means costumer services need to improve until staffs make customer happy. There is another race starts which can be won just by education. By the way media relations should not be forgot otherwise anything might happen against the company: environment enemy, terrorist supporter or deceptive. Thirdly because companies do not trade domestic only or countries are not composed of one nation, companies have to be so sensitive about cultural features and priorities like avoid selling cow meat in Indian community or not to make underwear from flag in Turkish community. Furthermore companies should not miss the technological development or current issues at the same time. They need to establish or improve research and development unit. On the other hand there every time is a possibility to be out of class and therefore human resource unit should examine all staffs according to their productivity, efficiency, works and wages. Moreover they should make all staffs happy to improve their productivity. You can assume all these process for all organisations not just companies such as governments, schools, hospitals and so on. Because everything is going to be private, the main purpose of most organizations has become to make more profit or to be more powerful. It is current for schools and even for governments and all need education to do so. It seems good whatever the reason people need

more education however the course of education has been changed and moreover “there is no evidence that decentralization and privatizing the management of education per se will produce significant improvement in the quality of schooling”(Carnoy, 1999: 85).

Brain Korea 21 (as a strategy for dealing with globalization)

The Brain Korea (BK) 21 Project is a governmental funding project for enhancing the international competitiveness of Korean universities. The BK 21 project focuses on nurturing highly qualified R&D manpower through concentrating governmental funds on education and research activities at graduate schools. Specifically, the BK 21 project aims to develop world-class graduate schools by boosting research capabilities. It also aims to develop specialized regional universities and to increase collaboration between universities and industry. Finally this project aims to reform university system including admission system, faculty review system, and university management system (Lee, 2005).

Although about 1000 professors protest the project on June 15, 1999 in Pusan and three weeks later about 900 professors did the same protest meeting in Seoul, the project has been implemented since the spring of 1999. The first period of the project (1999-2005), which the government of Korea has invested \$ 1.2 billion for it, finished with success. According to Jin-Pyo Kim (The Minister of Education and Human Resources Development of Korea), Korea has become the world's 13th place in 2002, 2003 and 2004 in terms of publication quantity. Therefore the second phase of Brain Korea 21 has started from 2006 to 2012. Before to present the results of the first phase, the principles of the project will be given:

- “1) Allocating fund based on selection and concentration,
- 2) More financial support for advanced applied fields,
- 3) University reform as a prerequisite to funding,
- 4) Investing more than 50 percent of funding to graduate students, and
- 5) Strengthening the tie between universities and industry.” (Lee, 2005: 9).

Content of support

- Graduate students Master's and doctoral research activities
- New researchers Education and research activities of post-doctoral students and contract based Professors
- Program performance fees Expenses for material and equipment purchase, paper citation, patent application, and etc.
- International cooperation Short-to-long-term overseas training for graduate student teams, invitation of foreign scholars, and etc.

Major Achievements

- Korea's world ranking set by the number of articles in SCI-recognized journals rose from the 18th in 1998 to the 13th in 2004.

- The number of SCI-level articles produced by professors participating in BK21 science & technology programs nearly doubled over the period, from 3,765 articles in 1998 to 7,060 in 2004.
- In science & technology, the average impact factor (IF: measure of qualitative importance of scientific journals) per article increased from 1.70 in 1999 to 2.21 by 2004.
- Number of graduate beneficiaries: 73,883 students in six years
- Number of new researcher beneficiaries 3,765
- The number of students supported by BK21 from 1999 to 2004 totals 38,000 masters and 19,000 doctoral students.
- During 1999 to 2004, a total of 6,100 new researchers (2,400 contract-based professors and 3,700 post-doctoral students) received grants from BK21. (<http://english.moe.go.kr/html/search/?FD=99&QR=brain+korea>, viewed 02-06-2006)

Conclusion

BK21 is a first-time policy in terms of its scale and attempt to reform and develop Korean higher education. Supporters argue that past policies in higher education finance have focused on distributing of limited resources fairly among all colleges and departments. BK21 will change the focus to efficiency of investment rather than equality of opportunity in the distribution of research funds. Supporters of BK21 also claim that the project will create the intellectual foundation for Korean higher education and society. Furthermore, shifting the focus of higher education from undergraduate to graduate education will moderate the overheated competition for entering top universities.

The opposition to BK21 is based on concerns among many faculties about the possible negative impacts of the project. First, the opponents argue that most professors in Korea, except some in top universities, have always had trouble obtaining research funds. If the traditional top universities are selected and supported by BK21, the principle of "selection and concentration" will prevent most professors in non selected colleges and universities from getting their research funded. Furthermore, BK21 may be detrimental to fair competition among universities, reinforcing the traditional pecking order, which has long been perceived as an obstacle in the development of Korean higher education.

Second, most academics suspect that the government is trying to reform Korean higher education through the enforcement of BK21. The Ministry of Education requires a prerequisite for participation in the project: every selected university must undertake educational reforms such as reducing the number of undergraduate students, hiring professors who teach only at the graduate level, and improving university curricula under the direction of the Ministry of Education. Considering that most Korean colleges and universities have lacked autonomy in

many ways, the administrative devices of BK21 may further depress autonomy levels in Korean higher education.

Third, although the goal of BK21 was to strengthen research capacity in Korean higher education, critics argue that the project will seriously weaken research activities in the majority of colleges and universities because of insufficient numbers of graduate research assistants. Universities supported by BK21 will receive enough funds to support their graduate students and will thus have a great advantage in attracting well-qualified students to their programs. By contrast, most graduate schools in non selected universities may loose students due to a relative lack of research facilities and financial support for graduate students.

In fact, since the Ministry of Education announced the results of the selection process, many more undergraduate students have applied to graduate programs in the selected universities and academic fields supported by BK21 (Lee, 2000).

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