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## **Globalization and Recent Shifts in Educational Policy in the Asia Pacific: An Overview of Some Critical Issues**

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An Overview of Some Critical Issues**

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## Abstract

The report discusses some of the ways in which a particular discourse of globalization is reshaping the discursive terrain within which educational policy is developed, articulated and enacted in the countries of the Asia Pacific. We explore various global policy priorities taken into account at the national level that suggest an underlying tension between two contrasting purposes of education: social efficiency and democratic equality. While the issues explored in the paper are not exhaustive of the ways in which globalization is re-casting the educational policy terrain, they do indicate major shifts that all countries of the Asia Pacific are experiencing, and are having to negotiate. We argue that central to these negotiations must be the need to find a better balance between various competing purposes of education, most notably, between a largely economic emphasis on social efficiency and a more cultural focus on democratic equality.

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## 1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, educational systems throughout the Asia Pacific have undergone significant changes. There is no indication moreover that programs of reform and restructuring have been concluded, as systems continue to struggle, in their various ways, to interpret and respond to the ever changing economic, social and political contexts within which education takes place. In countries as culturally and politically diverse as India, the Philippines and New Zealand, teachers and educational administrators continue to experience a sense of crisis. They work in systems in which not only have the structures of educational governance been reshaped but in which the very purposes of education are being re-thought.

The relentless pressure on educational systems to change has come from students, parents and employers alike. There has been a rapid growth in demand for access to education, but governments have neither been able nor willing to meet the costs of expansion. Changing class, gender and ethnic composition of students has created new pressures for changes in curriculum and pedagogy. As educational systems have become larger and more complex, new requirements of policy and governance have emerged. Parents, governments and employers alike have demanded greater accountability. Educational systems have been asked to produce a workforce adequately prepared to meet the challenges of globalization and the global economy.

Within the Asia Pacific, as elsewhere, the concept of globalization has been used widely in recent years to understand the imperatives driving educational change, even if it remains poorly understood and highly contested. Discussions of globalization are characterized by considerable conceptual confusion; they are often rhetorically hyperbolic, empirically inconsistent and normatively shallow. Yet, while little consensus exists about its meaning, the concept of globalization does appear to name some of the profound social changes that are currently taking place around the world. Many of these changes have been driven by recent developments in information and communication technologies, which have resulted in a world that is more interconnected and interdependent than ever before.

There is now greater mobility of capital, information and ideologies, and of people. This has transformed the nature of economic activity, creating new forms of global markets, global competition and global management. The global economy is characterized as informational, knowledge-based, post-industrial and service-orientated. It has created the need for new 'post-Fordist' regimes of labor management--and a new kind of worker that education must now produce.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, globalization has been associated with major changes in the political authority of the nation-state. Globalization has undermined, in significant ways, the autonomy of the state, as governance has become more multi-lateral, with international organizations (IGOs) playing a more important role in guiding nation-states towards policy preferences articulated by the IGOs. And finally, globalization has created conditions for a new cultural politics, with global pressures towards both cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity. These changes have led to increasing levels of cultural interaction, and have also created in people a profound awareness about the commonality of problems facing all of the world's inhabitants. At the same time, globalization has become an ideology with a range of powerful global interests becoming dominant, promoting a particular neo-liberal view of economic activity and of the relationship between the individual and the state.

Educational policies have been deeply affected by these developments, as national governments have sought to re-align their educational priorities to what they perceive to be the

imperatives of globalization. While the authority for the development of education policies remains with sovereign governments, it is also clear that governments now need to take global processes into account. However, the relationship between the global processes and policy production at the national level is highly complex, because governments do not simply have the freedom to pick and choose from a global menu of policies; rather, their deliberations are framed by the ideological discourses circulating around the world, often through international organizations such as UNESCO and the OECD. The political structures beyond the nation-states have thus become relevant to national policy deliberations, as has the contours of the globalizing cultural field within which education takes place.

In this paper, we explore some of the ways in which globalization is affecting the policy priorities of countries within the Asia Pacific region. We discuss key global drivers of policy change in education; and suggest that these drivers do not operate in the same way on all nation-states, and have differential impact, creating considerable disparity across the Asia Pacific, with some communities benefiting enormously from globalization, while others encountering major disruptions to their economic and cultural lives. We argue moreover that globalization has changed the discursive terrain within which educational policies are developed and enacted, and that this terrain is increasingly informed by a range of neo-liberal precepts that have transformed not only the ways in which issues of educational governance but also of education's basic purposes are considered and debated. We suggest that while in some countries of the Asia Pacific these precepts are being resisted, to some extent, they have nonetheless become hegemonic.

This paper provides an overview of some of the critical issues in education to which this hegemonic view of globalization has given rise, including issues of devolution and decentralization; of the balance between public and private funding of education; of access and equity and the education of girls; of curriculum particularly with respect to the teaching of English language and information and communication technologies; and of the global trade in education. These issues do not exhaust the ways in which globalization is re-casting the educational policy terrain, but they do indicate major shifts that all countries of the Asia Pacific are experiencing, and are having to negotiate. We argue that central to these negotiations must be the need to find a better balance between various competing purposes of education, most notably, between a largely economic emphasis on social efficiency and a more cultural focus on democratic equality.

## **2. The Asia Pacific**

The Asia Pacific region represents a land of enormous contrasts, spanning the island nations of the Pacific to the western-most Asian nations such as Turkey and Iran. It contains some of the richest nations of the world, such as Japan, and some of the poorest, such as Bangladesh. Any definition of the region is deeply problematic. As a recent report of the OECD states, 'The Asia Pacific region does not constitute a single political, economic or cultural entity. It is complex and diverse, and this adds to the difficulties always inherent in cross-country comparison in a globalizing setting'.<sup>2</sup>

The definition of the Asia Pacific region used in this paper begins with a list of 50 nations in accord with the UNESCO list of 'Asia and the Pacific' nations, with the additional inclusion of Singapore.<sup>3</sup> For purposes of analysis, we follow the OECD Report in dividing the 50 countries into the following geographic categories:

Table 1: Countries of the Asia Pacific.<sup>4</sup>

East Asia	Southeast Asia	The Pacific	South Asia	Central Asia
1. China	5. Brunei	17. Australia	34. Bangladesh	41. Afghanistan
2. Japan	Darussalam	18. Cook	35. Bhutan	42. Iran
3. Korea,	6. Cambodia	Islands	36. India	43. Kazakhstan
DPR	7. Indonesia	19. Fiji Islands	37. Maldives	44. Kyrgyz
4. Korea,	8. Lao PDR	20. Kiribati	38. Nepal	Republic
Rep. of	9. Macau, China	21. Marshall	39. Pakistan	45. Mongolia
	10. Malaysia	Islands	40. Sri Lanka	46. Russian
	11. Myanmar	22. Micronesia,		Federation
	12. Philippines	Federated		47. Tajikistan
	13. Singapore	States		48. Turkey
	14. Timor-Leste	23. Nauru		49. Turkmenistan
	15. Thailand	24. New		50. Uzbekistan
	16. Vietnam	Zealand		
		25. Niue		
		26. Palau		
		27. Papua New		
		Guinea		
		28. Samoa		
		29. Solomon		
		Islands		
		30. Tokelau		
		(assoc.		
		member)		
		31. Tonga		
		32. Tuvalu		
		33. Vanuatu		

While a detailed analysis of the specific nations within the region is beyond the scope of this paper, it might be helpful to look at a snapshot of the region, particularly at some of the economic and educational features that are germane to our discussion of the ways in which globalization is reshaping the educational policy terrain within the region.

First of all, it is important to note that East Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia have ‘well over half the world’s population’. Furthermore, as the OECD Report observes, ‘China and India are the two largest nations in the world, and Indonesia is fourth in terms of population. Ten of the world’s 16 cities with over the population of over 10 million are in the region, and three more will reach this size by 2015. Seoul and Bangkok are nearly as large’.<sup>5</sup> These cities occupy, as Sassen<sup>6</sup> has pointed out, a special place in the global economic division of labor, and operate as nodes of global circulation of capital, goods and people. Globalization has been a major driver of increased mobility of people from regional and rural areas to metropolitan centers where there are greater possibilities of employment. The requirements of urban life have always determined educational priorities of nation-states, but with cities of national significance becoming global, a new cultural geography has emerged, affecting all aspects of social and cultural life, including education.

In terms of economic development, the Asia Pacific region is quite diverse. The OECD Report describes the following categories that are useful for the present purposes:

- *Modernized and developed nations:* These are member nations of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Australia, Japan, Korea, and New Zealand. These nations ‘share robust export profiles, sophisticated financial systems, well-developed services sectors, high penetration of information and communication technology (ICT) and extensive education systems with levels of domestic participation on the whole above the OECD average and well above the rest of the Asia Pacific region’.
- *Strong economies and modernized societies:* These include: Singapore, Hong Kong SAR, Chinese Taipei, and Malaysia. These nations have ‘high levels of ICT penetration and strong R&D activity’ and ‘domestic education systems are of good quality’.
- *Developing countries:* ‘This group includes: the emerging global giant China, the largest site of unmet educational demand in the world; another global giant in India; Indonesia; other large nations including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and the Philippines; and many smaller ones’, including those in the Pacific. ‘This group includes Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, which along with the nations of South Asia and Papua New Guinea are the poorest countries in the Asia Pacific region in per capita terms’.<sup>7</sup>

Overall, during the last three decades, the Asia Pacific region has experienced unprecedented economic growth, for which, ‘the role of education expansion in this process has been well documented’ by bodies such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB).<sup>8</sup> For example, the nations in what is commonly called the ‘The East Asian Miracle’, the ‘four Asian Tigers’ (Korea; Singapore; Taiwan, China; Hong Kong SAR), as well as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand have nearly quadrupled their overall per capita income, cut absolute poverty by about two-thirds, dropped population growth rates, and dramatically improved health and education.<sup>9</sup> Naturally, within and across these nations there has been great disparity in the benefits of this ‘miracle’; nonetheless, until and even after the 1997 currency crisis, the economic transformation of these nations and the region has been profound.

This dramatic economic ‘miracle’ is in stark contrast to the lived reality of many in the rest of the Asia Pacific region. This contrast is evident in Table 2 from the United Nations Development Program showing that South Asia and East Asia and Pacific account for 66.7 percent of the world’s poverty.

Table 2: Global Distribution of Poverty.<sup>10</sup>

Area	Percentage of World’s Poor
South Asia	43.5%
Sub Saharan Africa	24.3%
East Asia and Pacific	23.2%
Latin America & the Caribbean	6.5%
Europe & Central Asia	2.0%
Middle East and North Africa	0.5%

Another consideration in any discussion of the Asia Pacific region is the wide range of educational participation. The OECD Report notes that in ‘most Asia Pacific countries, the OECD norm of near universal secondary education’ has yet to be reached. Those that have reached the goal include ‘seven of the eight most developed countries, plus Thailand’. It finds

a ‘middle-range participation group’, which includes China, most of Southeast Asia and South Asia, but most Pacific countries are in the low participation group.<sup>11</sup>

The Asia Development Bank’s report, ‘Key Indicators 2003’, also describes the levels of education participation in the region. It notes that South Asia and some developing member countries (DMCs) in Southeast Asia, ‘still have high rates of illiteracy and relatively low percentages of pupils who reach the fifth year of primary school. For these that the ADB report calls DMCs, the essential goals of universal basic education and literacy remain priorities’. The ADB report continues:

At the other end of the spectrum, the Central Asian republics and a number of East Asian and Southeast Asian DMCs have reached universal primary education, high percentages of the age group in secondary school, and even relatively high percentages of the age group in postsecondary education (with the significant exception of the PRC). For these DMCs, new priorities include increased enrollment and completion at secondary and tertiary levels and higher quality of education at all levels.<sup>12</sup>

Lastly, the ADB report describes the Pacific DMCs as a ‘group with often high levels of education development but limited needs for educated labor’.<sup>13</sup> The ADB report concludes that efforts to remedy this regional educational disparity are many; however, ‘despite considerable—but uneven— progress made in the last decades in expanding and improving education systems, and despite repeated national and international commitments, millions of children in the region are still out of school, millions of adults remain illiterate, and increased enrollment ratios often hide issues related to the quality of education’.<sup>14</sup>

A better sense of the diversity of the Asia Pacific region can be obtained from a summary of key demographic and performance data presented in Appendix 1. It might also be useful to take a closer look at some of its sub-regions.

#### *East Asia*

East Asia includes China, the Republic of Korea, the Democratic Peoples’ Republic (DPR) of Korea, and Japan. In this paper, we have already noted the enormous economic development of Korea, and have suggested despite Japan’s recent recession, its underlying economy remains strong. China’s economic growth over the past two decades has been remarkable, and on some projections, China is expected to produce 20 percent of world GDP within two generations’.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, Korea DPR, which, according to a recent UNESCO report, is one of the world’s ‘most closed and isolated countries’, faces ‘desperate economic conditions and is in its ninth year of food and energy shortages’. Despite ‘massive international food aid’ since 1995, its ‘population remains vulnerable to prolonged malnutrition and deteriorating living conditions’.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Southeast Asia*

These nations in Southeast Asia range from ‘Asian Miracle’ countries, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, to the rising economies of Vietnam and Philippines, to Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, which are among the ‘poorest countries in the Asia Pacific region in per capita terms’.<sup>17</sup> Economic prosperity in these nations is directly proportional to participation rates in education. Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Cambodia, some of the poorest nations in the sub-region, each has less than 50 percent of its students in secondary education, while in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, almost everyone now is now required to attend secondary school.<sup>18</sup>

### *The Pacific*

The Pacific sub-region includes Australia and New Zealand and a large number of 'DMCs'. They 'differ widely in their population sizes, income levels, customs and cultures, natural resource endowments, physical attributes, colonial heritages, languages, degrees of social cohesion, and economic and social policies'.<sup>19</sup> Overall, the region is characterized by small island nations such as Cook Islands whose population of 20,4071 is dispersed across '15 islands with a land area of 240 square kilometers, spread over 2.2 million square kilometers of sea'.<sup>20</sup> Some of these DMCs, 'such as Samoa, have high enrollment rates in secondary education, but others, such as Papua New Guinea, do not'.<sup>21</sup>

### *Central Asia*

For the purposes of analysis in this paper, Central Asia refers to what UNESCO typically describes as the five central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), together with Afghanistan, Iran, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, and Turkey. The five central Asian republics are 'landlocked countries, dominated by deserts and mountains, and with low densities of population'.<sup>22</sup> A 2004-05 United Nations report on these five nations tells us, 'Reflecting the universal coverage of education under the Soviet Union, the literacy rates remained high at over 99 percent in most countries in the sub-region'.<sup>23</sup>

According to this same UN report, this beneficial educational legacy of the Soviet era is not echoed in the economy, however:

In their transition to market-based economies since independence, Central Asian countries experienced sharp increases in poverty levels due to output contraction, high inflation, increase in income inequality and deterioration in social services and infrastructure. Annual GDP dropped as much as 50 percent in some countries following independence, with severe repercussions on poverty and employment.<sup>24</sup>

Another nation in this sub-region in transition is Afghanistan, where recent political turmoil has posed for it serious challenges ahead. As a recent UNESCO report notes, 'Two decades of war have left Afghanistan battered and impoverished, facing major problems of reconstruction. Among these is the scale of the country's educational needs where even to restore the education service to the state it was a decade ago would leave it miserably inadequate'.<sup>25</sup> Afghanistan's 'enrollment rates are currently the lowest in Asia', and by 2025, this nation will 'see its school-age population double'.<sup>26</sup>

### *South Asia*

The Asia Development Bank (ADB) notes in a 2003 report that, despite spectacular recent economic growth rates recorded by India, 'South Asia, with an estimated 37 percent of its population living below the \$1 a day poverty line, remains the poorest sub-region in the world after sub-Saharan Africa'.<sup>27</sup> Not surprisingly therefore 'much of the world's illiterate adults and children live and work in South Asia',<sup>28</sup> and, 'In the midst of the information age, these individuals are becoming more marginalized than before even in their own countries'. Over the past two decades, however, literacy rates have begun to rise steadily in South Asia, where secondary education has become more widely accessible, with 'gross enrollment rates of about 50%', with the exception of Sri Lanka with 72 percent.<sup>29</sup>

This overview indicates enormous diversity within the Asia Pacific region with respect to almost every conceivable indicator, from indicators of economic activity to indicators of social

capital, literacy and educational participation. The overview also suggests vast differences in the ways in which the countries in the region have interpreted and engaged with the processes of globalization, ranging from total integration into the emerging structures of the global economy, as in the case of Australia and New Zealand, to a cautious and pragmatic approach, as in the case of China and Vietnam; from active participation in the work of inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), as in the case of Japan and Korea, to deep suspicion of their work, as in the case of Myanmar and Korea DPR; from the acceptance of an emerging global culture, as in the case of Singapore and Hong Kong SAR to deep hostility towards its cultural encroachments, as in the case of Afghanistan and Iran. Whether positively or negatively inclined towards globalization's various forms, it appears however that no country has been able to simply ignore the policy changes it poses.

### **3. Interpreting Globalization**

In less than two decades, the idea of globalization has become ubiquitous, widely used around the world in both policy and popular discourses. It is used to describe the various ways in which the world is becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent, referring to a set of social processes that imply 'inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before-in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach round the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before'.<sup>30</sup> Such integration however is far from complete, and clearly benefits some countries more than others. As such, it is a highly contested notion, which articulates historically with a range of colonial practices, and socially with recent technological revolutions in transport, communication and data processing and with the emergence of the United States as the world's only super-power. These developments have clearly transformed the nature of economic activity, changing the modes of production and consumption. It has also altered the nature of international relations, and the work of intergovernmental political institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations. Culturally, globalization has propelled enormous increase in the movement of people and ideas, leading to the hybridization of cultural practices.

Harvey provides one of the best descriptions of economic globalization.<sup>31</sup> He argues that globalization describes 'an intense period of time-space compression that has had a disorientating and disruptive impact on political-economic practices, the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life'. (p. 8) In this new era, global capitalism has become fragmentary, as time and space are re-arranged by the dictates of multinational capital. Improved systems of communication and information flows and rationalization in the techniques of distribution have enabled capital and commodities to be moved through the global market with greater speed. At the same time, there has been a shift away from an emphasis on goods to greater trade in services, not only in business, educational and health services but also entertainment and life-style products. The rigidities of Fordism have been replaced by a new organizational ideology that celebrates flexibility as a fundamental value, expressed most explicitly in ideas of subcontracting, outsourcing, vertically disintegrated forms of administration, just-in-time delivery systems and the like. In the realm of commodity production, argues Harvey, the primary effect of this transformation has been an increased emphasis on instrumental values and the virtues of speed and instantaneity.

Castells characterizes the global economy as informational, networked, knowledge-based, post-industrial and service oriented.<sup>32</sup> He argues that cultural and political meanings are now under siege by global economic and technological restructuring. He speaks of an

‘informational mode of development’ through which global financial and informational linkages are accelerated, convert places into spaces and threaten to dominate local processes of cultural meanings. According to Castells, networks constitute ‘the new social morphology of our societies’; and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in the processes of production, experience, power and culture’. The new economy, he suggests, is ‘organized around global networks of capital, management, and information, whose access to technological know-how is at the roots of productivity and competitiveness’.<sup>33</sup> From these networks, capital is invested in all sectors of activity, from information and media industries to tourism, culture and entertainment, and of course, education, which is now, is best understood as an industry trapped within the networking logic of contemporary capitalism, subject to the same economic cycles, market upswings and downturns and segmented global competition.

The global economy has also led to a new conception of governance, requiring a radically revised view of the roles and responsibilities of national governments, minimizing the need for their policy intervention, with greater reliance on the market.<sup>34</sup> This interpretation of the declining role of the state in policy development dislodges one of the central tenets of the modern nation-state system—the claim to distinctive symmetry and correspondence between sovereignty, territory and legitimacy. While they fiercely protect their sovereignty, in the age of globalization, the exclusive link between territory and political power appears to have been broken. As Held and McGrew<sup>35</sup> argue, ‘the state has become a fragmented policy-making arena, permeated by transnational networks (governmental and non-governmental) as well as by domestic agencies and forces’. So, while the modern state retains some of its authority, it is increasingly unable to determine its own fate, and has to negotiate forces beyond its control—not only of international organizations and regimes but also transnational capital. This applies to educational policy as much as it does to economic policy, as the setting of educational priorities can no longer ignore global power systems.

Within the system of modern nation-states, considerable cultural importance was attached to education. It is educational systems that carried ideas and narratives of the nation. As Gellner points out, it is the mass educational systems that provided a common framework of understanding that enhanced the processes of state-coordinated modernization.<sup>36</sup> Through the diffusion of ideas, meanings, myths and rituals, citizens were able to imagine the nation, and filter their relations with others. Under the conditions of globalization, this understanding of discrete national cultural formations can no longer be taken for granted, as there is now an ever-increasing level of cultural interactions across national and ethnic communities. With the sheer scale, intensity, speed and volume of global cultural communication, the traditional link between territory and social identity has been broken, as people can more readily choose to detach identities from particular times, places and traditions. Not only the media but greater transnational mobility has had a ‘pluralizing’ impact on identity formation, producing a variety of hyphenated identities which are less ‘fixed or unified’.<sup>37</sup> This has led to the emergence of a ‘global consciousness’, which may represent the cultural basis of an ‘incipient civil society’.<sup>38</sup>

This suggests another way of interpreting globalization, which does not so much as highlight its descriptive aspects, as an objective set of social processes, but represent it instead as a subjective or phenomenological awareness by people and states of recent changes in global economy and culture. This view of globalization is reflected in the ‘values which take the real world of 5 billion people as the object of concern . . . everyone living as world citizens . . . with a common interest in collective action to solve global problems’.<sup>39</sup> Important here is our collective consciousness of the world as a single space in which our problems are seen to be

interconnected; involving a cosmopolitanism that requires us to recognize our interdependence. Cohen and Kennedy refer to this phenomenon as ‘globalism’, which they contrast with globalization which ‘mainly refers to a series of objective changes in the world that are partly outside us. Globalism, on the other hand, suggests a set of subjectively internalized ‘changes associated with globalization so that they are now incorporated into our emotions and our ways of thinking about everyday life’.<sup>40</sup>

The distinction between objective and subjective interpretations of globalization is perhaps too simplistic, for the ways in which we think about and imagine the world is linked necessarily to how it is described to us. One of the main problems with many of the recent theories of globalization is that their description draws attention ‘disproportionally upon the global economy, presenting it as ‘a pre-given “thing”, existing outside of thought’<sup>41</sup> whose developmental logic not only explains the development of policies but even determines the subjectivity of people, without ever interrogating them about what they are up to. As Smith notes that so long as such accounts of globalization give ‘scant attention to the discursive and material practices by which people create the regularized patterns that enable and constrain them, these discourses lack an effective theory of political agency, or any other kind of agency’.<sup>42</sup> They do not view interpretations of globalization as an ever-changing product of human practices but as expressions of the deeper logic of economic imperatives. They thus fail to come to terms with the ‘situatedness’ in the world of people and nations alike. In so doing, various aspects of globalization are conceived as historically inevitable, representing a juggernaut, with which people and nations simply have to come to terms, and negotiate as best as they can.

An increasing number of scholars and activists have thus begun to view globalization not as an inexorable historical process, but as an ideology serving a particular set of economic and political interests. It is interpreted as a deliberate, ideological project of economic liberalization that subjects states and individuals to more intense market forces (for example, Bourdieu<sup>43</sup>). This perspective, often referred to as ‘neo-liberal’, is based on a politics of meaning that seeks to accommodate people and nations to a certain taken-for-grantedness about the ways the global economy operates and the manner in which culture, crises, resources and power formations are filtered through its universal logic. It thus ‘ontologizes’ the global market mentality creating global subjects who view policy options through the conceptual prism within which its main precepts located. These precepts include an emphasis on market principles and production of profits; a minimalist role for the state; deregulated labor market; and flexible forms of governance. From this perspective, the term ‘globalization’ designates certain power relations, practices and technologies, playing a ‘hegemonic role in organizing and decoding the meaning of the world’.<sup>44</sup>

How has the hegemonic interpretation of globalization, underpinned by neo-liberal precepts, become dominant around the world is of course an empirically contingent matter. As we noted earlier, most of the countries of the Asia Pacific have pursued major programs of educational reform that presuppose at least some versions of neo-liberal interpretations of the so-called ‘global imperatives’ for change. What are the processes that have driven and sustained this ideology? In the next section, we discuss some of these processes and explore how they function to steer educational reform towards neo-liberal agendas, albeit in ways that vary greatly across the countries of the Asia Pacific.

#### 4. Global Drivers of Educational Change

Many of the neo-liberal proposals for educational reform throughout the Asia Pacific are located within the political dynamics of a particular nation-state. They are promoted in a country by its own local systems of communication, political parties and corporate interests. In some countries of the Asia Pacific these systems are robust, while in others they are weak, and are easily manipulated by outside forces. In some countries the need to reform education -- to align it to requirements of globalization -- is embraced enthusiastically, while in others, it is resisted. Whatever the interpretations of globalization, they take place against the political and historical backdrop, and can therefore be expected to have particular meaning and significance relevant to that country. However, this observation about the processes internal to the nation-state begs the question of how these are affected by the broader global pressures, and how they are articulated and refracted through the local specificities of the nation-state. This is an important question, which we need to tackle if we are to determine the extent to which resistance to the neo-liberal agenda in education is possible, and how alternatives that neither romanticize a social democratic past nor accept neo-liberalism as inevitable might be found.

It is mistaken to assert, as many do, that reforms are a structural outcome of globalization. To do so is to fail to understand the need to understand the link between global processes and the ways they are taken up at the level of the nation-state in a range of historically specific processes articulated through various power configurations, both global and local. These processes are inherently political and work in various locally contingent ways. The first of these processes relates to the global circulation of ideas and ideologies, increasingly powered by developments in transportation, information, and communication technologies. With these developments in transportation technologies, the international mobility of people has never been greater. This mobility has enabled ideas to be exchanged among policy makers and researchers coming together from different countries, even if this exchange is not symmetrical in its power configurations. So, for example, the ideas emanating from the Europe and the United States have a greater chance of becoming accepted, even if these ideas prove to be self-serving.

A new policy space has thus emerged that allows educational ideas and ideologies to be produced and distributed instantaneously. This space has often been sponsored by inter-governmental organizations such as the OECD, UNESCO and the European Union (EU). While these organizations often insist that they seek to provide forums for open and free exploration of educational ideas, they find it hard to hide their own positions committed to neo-liberal reforms in education. In recent years, for example, the OECD, which views itself as a site for the free exchange of ideas, has become a major carrier of neo-liberal policy thinking about higher education: it has become a policy actor in its own right.<sup>45</sup> The educational ideas it sponsors are distributed widely, and is often up by not only its members but also by other countries to which it provides policy advice.

The globalization theorist, Appudurai,<sup>46</sup> has written of 'ideoscapes' that are constituted as 'concatenations of images', which circulate throughout the world in an explicitly political fashion. This circulation is frequently affected by the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements opposed to them. Currently, it is the neo-liberal educational policies that appear to dominate within the ideoscapes, despite opposition from a wide variety of sources. The concatenation Appudurai speaks of is produced by policy borrowing, modeling transfer, diffusion, appropriation, and copying which occur across the boundaries of nation-states and which, as Halpin has argued, 'lead to universalizing tendencies in educational

reform'.<sup>47</sup> At conferences and in journals where educational ideas circulate, it is often difficult to determine the extent to which there has been free exchange of ideas or indeed if policy debates have already been constructed within the framework of the dominant neo-liberal ideology. But the point that needs to be emphasized here is that the circulation of educational ideologies is not a function of globalization per se but involves actual historical processes, human agents, organizations, and governments—with capacity to accept, resist, or reject them.

A second set of processes through which the neo-liberal ideologies of education have been globally disseminated relates to international conventions, embodying consensus between parties. These conventions have invariably led developing countries in particular to accept neo-liberal ideologies, even if there has been political opposition to them. Examples of such conventions include not only human rights and democratic elections but also modes of governance. The idea of 'good governance', for example, has become a major policy agenda around the world. Many of these conventions involve formal agreements and commitments that have exposed the domestic policy practices of nation-states to external scrutiny, thus reducing their autonomy. While conventions are supposedly entered into voluntarily, there is often a great deal of pressure on countries to conform to particular ideologies, producing neo-liberal consensus.

Perhaps the best known recent example of this is the Washington Consensus. The term, Washington Consensus, refers to 'the lowest common denominator of policy advice addressed by the Washington-based institutions to Latin American countries'.<sup>48</sup> According to Williamson, the Washington Consensus is a product of 'the intellectual convergence' which is designed to get most of the developing countries to accept a set of common assumptions about economic reform and institutional governance. George Soros calls these assumptions of 'market fundamentalism' and suggests that much of their acceptance worldwide is in no small measure due to the persuasive rhetoric of right-wing think tanks in the United States.<sup>49</sup> And even though the principles of the Washington Consensus no longer enjoy the appeal they once had, most development institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank, continue to sing from the same song sheet, preaching relentlessly the values of macroeconomic discipline, trade openness, market-friendly microeconomic policies, and the new public sector management. In the field of education, this implies fiscal discipline about funding, a redirection of public expenditure toward fields offering both high economic returns and the potential to improve income distribution, such as primary education, as well as privatization and deregulation.

A third set of processes relates not so much to the covert pressures of consensus and conventions but much more explicitly to coercive strategies, such as those represented by Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP). These programs are created ostensibly because developing countries are unable to meet the payment schedules on their debts to international banks, such as the World Bank. However, before these countries are permitted to renegotiate schedules of debt repayment, they are forced to meet a range of conditions in order to 'better manage their economy' and 'get their house in order'. And while these conditions are often assumed to have the status of contracts, they often are negotiated under coercive demands of the banks and require debtor countries to pursue the principles of neo-liberalism as a condition of loans. For developing countries, such as Papua New Guinea, the coercive SAP contracts represent a major dilemma. On the one hand, it is almost impossible for them to reject the offer of help, yet the conditions attached to the offer of help often involve implementing alienating and exploitative policies. Ultimately, SAPs require developing countries to concede some of their autonomy, and pursue policies designed to create conditions more conducive to

international investment than to the improvement of social conditions and educational opportunities.

Of course, it is not only the international lending agencies that demand neo-liberal restructuring of the educational systems, the transnational corporations (TNC) offering to invest in countries do as well. The relationship between TNCs and governments is a complex one, involving dynamics of both conflict and cooperation. Dicken<sup>50</sup> argues that sometimes governments and TNCs may be rivals, but they may collude with one another at the same time. In the global economy, the governments need TNCs to help them in the process of material wealth creation, while TNCs require the nation-states to 'provide the necessary supportive infrastructures, both physical and institutional, on the basis of which they can pursue their strategic objectives'.<sup>51</sup> TNCs and governments are often involved in a bargaining process as each tries to get maximum advantage from the other. As Dicken observes, 'states have become increasingly locked into a cut-throat competitive bidding process for investments, a process which provides TNCs with the opportunity to play off one bidder against another'. Some of this bargaining involves demands by TNCs that education be restructured along market lines, with policies more conducive to the creation of a human resource pool better to meet their labor needs. The rapid development of EPZs in developing countries, such as Vietnam, is in line with these demands.

And finally, a fourth set of processes involves multilateral cooperation among nations. Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) represents one such attempt to pursue multilateralism. While APEC has not yet been able to develop reform initiatives in education similar to those established in Europe such as the Bologna Declaration<sup>52</sup> and the highly successful European Union programs such as ERASMUS and SOCRATES, it has pledged itself to educational reforms, designed to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and employability of students within the global economy. Like the EU, it has also sought to develop a distinctively Asia Pacific system of quality assurance, and has committed itself to the elimination of all remaining barriers to student mobility. Now while these aspirations appear consensual, they are informed uniformly by a set of neo-liberal assumptions. As an ideology, this view barely hides its more fundamental economic rationale: its preference for the marketization of education. While APEC has completely supported liberalization and deregulation of education, its main objectives are informed by a market logic—the need for education in the Asia Pacific to become a more effective and efficient player in the highly competitive global market in education and employment. In its discussions, APEC accepts as unproblematic the global trend towards commodification, privatization, and commercialization of education, effectively sidelining education's traditional commitment to social and cultural development and the public good.

## **5. Shifting Purposes of Education**

In general, education can be viewed as either a public good (benefiting the general public) or a private good (providing benefits to the individual consumer). Though this distinction does not always hold, it allows for us to see how, under the conditions of globalization, education has become increasingly linked to the logic of the market. It is pertinent to note that viewing education as a public or private good can change the perspective of how education's role in society is conceptualized. A public good is a good that is non-rivalrous and non-excludable -- common examples are the military or the air we breathe. A private good is both excludable and rivalrous – common examples are private land or the membership of a country club. These ideas provide us with starkly contrasting views of how education works within a society. For

example, if education is viewed as a private good it is seen as providing an individual advantage over others. In other words, as a commodity, education can make the individual more marketable than someone without any education. Not only how much but even the type and place of education can be used to differentiate its economic value.

If, on the other hand, education is viewed as a public good it can be shared by all. In this sense, education can be viewed as expanding the general welfare of society, even if it does not bring any direct benefits to the individual. Of course, arguments can be made in support of both views, stating that ultimately society is better off when education is seen as either a public or private good. Moreover, it is possible to conceive of education as contributing to both kinds of goods. However, an emphasis on one or the other can make a huge difference to the constitution of social relations within a community. It can determine how educational institutions operate in society, and in framing economic relations. Within socially democratic societies, education has been considered a public good, and critics of neo-liberal globalization have argued that the balance has now shifted towards private benefits of education. It has become a private commodity, in which people are expected to invest and from which they can expect variable economic gains. While this claim is partially accurate, in what follows we provide a more complex view.

David Labaree<sup>53</sup> has observed that education has traditionally been thought to have three distinct, but sometimes, competing purposes: democratic equality; social mobility; and social efficiency. While these three purposes of education are not mutually exclusive, educational ideologies have often involves giving precedence to one over others. So, for example, in post-World War II social democracies, the idea of democratic equality became dominant in many parts of world, interpreted in some countries like Australia and New Zealand from a liberal perspective. In socialist countries, a very different form of equality was promoted. In other countries, social mobility and meritocracy were considered essential to the realization of the social goals of education. In many postcolonial countries, it became an ideological mantra in educational thinking, even if it was seldom realized. In recent years, under the conditions of globalization, it is social efficiency that appears to be more highly prized by many citizens, large corporations and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), as well as an increasing number of national governments.

For Labaree, the concept on democratic equality has long suggested the need for education to facilitate the development of democratic citizens, who can participate in democratic communities in a critically informed manner. It is a view central to John Dewey's philosophy of education.<sup>54</sup> Its focus is on equal access and equal treatment to all citizens, and on regarding education as a public good. This implies that maximum benefit to society can only be realized if every member of a community is educated equally to realize their full potential. The primary purpose of education is then the creation of productive citizens, and not necessarily efficient workers, able to maximize personal fulfillment. This is not to suggest a denial of the importance of vocational training, but to insist that such training must be located within the broader role education must play in the development of a socially cohesive democratic community. The purposes of education are thus more social and cultural than economic, focused more on community than on the individual.

If the democratic equity view of education focuses on its role in promoting public good, then the social mobility view gives precedence to education's role in providing individuals a range of private goods that they can exchange within the labor market for money, power and prestige. The social mobility view thus regards education as both inherently rivalrous and

desirably competitive, serving the function of allocating economic benefits and social status to individuals. It rewards both effort and intelligence; the market rewards those who work harder and have inherently superior skills and talent. The social mobility view denies any role for education in policies of social justice or economic redistribution, leaving processes of social formation to the market. In so far as this view is concerned with social equity, it is to ensure structures that enable everyone formal access to educational institutions. It suggests that education's main purpose is to provide students knowledge and skills they will require for finding an appropriate place within the labor market and for achieving social mobility.

A third view of the purposes of education highlights its role in achieving social efficiency. While the social mobility view focuses exclusively on individuals, the social efficiency view requires education to play a more important, instrumental, role in developing workers able to contribute to the economic productivity of nations and corporations alike. Its focus is not as much on the needs and development of individuals as on the efficiency with which the educational systems operate. The emphasis is on the system's capacity to make an adequate return on investment, assessed in terms of its contribution in producing workers with knowledge, skills and attitudes relevant to increasing productivity within the knowledge economy. In this way, education is viewed both as a public and a private good: public because it contributes to the economic well-being and social development of a community; and private because it serves individual interests within a competitive labor market. However, it is important to stress that the notion of the public good which the social efficiency view promotes is markedly different from the social democratic conceptions, which regards education as intrinsically good, and not linked instrumentally to organizational efficiency, economic outcomes and productivity.

Over the past two decades, the focus on social efficiency as a key goal of education appears to have become ubiquitous. Throughout the Asia Pacific, as elsewhere, much of what is now regarded as educational reform is based on the ideological belief that social and economic 'progress' can only be achieved through systems of education more geared towards fulfilling the needs of the market. It is also assumed that educational systems have for far too long been inefficient and ineffective in ways that prevent it from meeting its functional goals. Popular media and corporations have in particular propagated this opinion, and have called on governments to pursue reforms that are not only more socially and economically efficient but are also cognizant of the new 'realities' of the knowledge economy in an increasingly globalized world. This has required the purposes of education to be more instrumentally defined, in terms of its capacity to produce workers who have grounding in basic literacy and numeracy, are flexible, creative, and multi-skilled, have good knowledge of new information and communication technologies, and are able to work in culturally diverse environments.

Of course, this account of educational purposes does not imply that social efficiency has entirely displaced concerns for democratic equality and social mobility. In fact, both democratic equity and social mobility can be incorporated within the broader discourse of social efficiency. For example, it has been argued by international organizations such as the OECD that a focus on efficiency can in fact lead to greater equality and opportunities for social mobility. It is suggested that without workers who are able to perform effectively in the global labor market, the potential for social mobility is severely reduced; and that since the global economy requires appropriate social conditions for capital accumulation and economic growth, equity concerns cannot be overlooked by policymakers committed to social efficiency. As the OECD<sup>55</sup> has suggested:

A new focus for education and training policies is needed now, to develop capacities to realise the potential of the 'global information economy' and to contribute to employment, culture, democracy and, above all, social cohesion. Such policies will need to support the transition to 'learning societies' in which equal opportunities are available to all, access is open, and all individuals are encouraged and motivated to learn, in formal education as well as throughout life.

Ultimately, what this synthetic discourse suggests is that social efficiency must now be regarded as a 'meta-value', subsuming within its scope educational aspirations such as social equality, mobility and even cohesion.

This much is evident in the current popularity of the notions associated with education of life-long learning and social capital. Of course, the idea of life-long learning has existed in education for a long time, but in recent years it has been rethought and broadened. According to UNESCO, 'Not only must it adapt to changes in the nature of work, but it must also constitute a continuous process of forming whole human beings - their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and the ability to act'.<sup>56</sup> This envisaged, lifelong learning, is viewed to be promoted through a system-wide network of 'learning pathways' extending from early childhood through to all stages of adulthood in both formal and informal educational settings, fulfilling 'social and economic objectives simultaneously by providing long-term benefits for the individual, the enterprise, the economy and the society more generally'.<sup>57</sup> In this account, social mobility becomes a functional outcome of economic efficiency, and the egalitarian impulse is also largely collapsed. However, and in light of changing economic circumstances and the need to ensure community legitimation, there is also a determination to rework and rearticulate the traditional notion of equality, adding it the overriding goal relating to the development of human resources for the changing global economy.

The concept of social capital displays similar political logic. The concept has received a good deal of attention in recent years. Thomson<sup>58</sup> for example suggests that the interest in social capital stems from three impulses: a response to the dominant individualism underpinning the development of human capital for purposes of national competitiveness; a recognition that economic success requires a certain level of social cohesion, stability and trust; and a growing recognition that many people are de-coupling economic success from sense of well-being. In this way, social capital appears as a policy for managing economic marginalization, social exclusion and heightening levels of cultural differences within societies in order to enhance social cohesion. But such a view of social cohesion is couched within the social efficiency paradigm of economic liberalism and growth. It effectively represents a residual framing for social cohesion, not as a good in itself but essential for economic productivity. Educational purposes are thus assumed to be as one of the strategic tools for the management of change, in as much as exclusion is interpreted as a matter of failure to engage with the global economy, either through lack of appropriate skills or disposition or through lack of effective governance.

## **6. Governance of Education: Tensions of Centralization and Decentralization**

With an increasing focus on social efficiency, it is not surprising therefore that more attention is now paid throughout the Asia Pacific on how to make educational systems more efficient and effective than on the ethical and cultural purposes of education. There is now much rhetoric about 'good governance', which often masks substantial differences in educational ideology. Debated instead are issues concerning transparency of decision-making processes,

forms of devolution, technologies of measuring educational performance, international benchmarking, mechanisms of quality assurance, appropriate accountability regimes, sources of educational funding, effective uses of public resources and so on. Even this short list shows how each of these concerns relates to social efficiency, defined mostly in terms of the extent to which educational systems are responsive to the labor market needs of the global economy, by exemplifying good governance. In thinking about educational governance, various converging trends have emerged.

Central among these trends are the attempts by most nations across the Asia Pacific to decentralize their educational management systems, even if there is considerable variance in the ways to which the notion of decentralization is conceptualized. The term ‘decentralization’ is used differently in different nations, revealing their distinctive organizational histories. It is often used interchangeably with the idea of devolution. The OECD in its 1995 report, *Governance in transition: Public management reforms in OECD countries*,<sup>59</sup> uses the term devolution as ‘a catch-all term for the granting of greater decision-making authority and autonomy’ under specific conditions. It uses ‘devolution’ as a single term to avoid confusion over its meanings. However, in terms of our discussion, it might be more important to define three different modes of decentralization: devolution, functional decentralization, and fiscal decentralization. These variations are useful because they suggest the ideas about governance cannot be divorced from the assumptions about educational purpose they often embody. Table 3, for example, shows how the idea of devolution is more in line with democratic equality than are notions of functional and fiscal decentralization, which are implanted in order to achieve greater social efficiency.

Table 3: Forms of Devolution

Devolution	Major power shifts to local levels: Focus on democratic participation, local control, and community decision-making. supports: Democratic equality; Social mobility conflicts with: Social efficiency.
Functional Decentralization	Transfer of specific functions from central government to local or regional levels: Focus is on accountability, good governance, and public management. supports: Social efficiency conflicts with: Democratic equality
Fiscal Decentralization	Central body of government no longer collects and distributes funding sources. Local and regional levels control the collection and distribution of their own financial resources. supports: Social efficiency conflicts with: Democratic equality

The enhancement of democratic participation, local control, and community decision-making are major characteristics of devolution. This form of governance typically involves major power shifts in control from the central ministerial level down to the local community levels, promoting aims of democratic, equality and the public good. When decentralization of governance is viewed in functional terms, local institutions are not given the autonomy to govern, seeking to realize their own priorities, independent of the dictates of the central government. Rather, functional decentralization involves the transfer of specific functions of the central government to the local or regional level. Advocated in the name of social efficiency, functional decentralization is often linked to technologies of accountability and transparency as a part of the larger notion of public management or good governance. Local agencies are theoretically given increased flexibility to manage their affairs but these

nonetheless have to conform to the performance goals and targets set by the central government. Sometimes these goals and targets are linked to fiscal shifts within patterns of governance changes. Fiscal decentralization typifies the transfer of monies and control over funding sources to local institutions. To achieve greater social efficiency, the central government no longer collects and distributes funding, but allows local institutions to generate their financial resources, but does not relinquish control how these funds are spent. The use of locally generated funds is nonetheless audited not only to ensure transparency but also to ensure that funds are used for purposes specified by the central authorities, and are utilized to realize performance targets.

Indonesia is a country that exemplifies this push. For example, the Director-General of primary and secondary education in Indonesia argued that ‘decentralization is a must’, and also noted that, ‘What the [Asia financial] crisis has done is speed up the process’.<sup>60</sup> A large part of this push toward functional and fiscal decentralization is aligned to the goals of social efficiency. The focus is now on the balancing of locally-based educational management with national standards, while also responding to the needs of an open market economy. The two main emphases are accountability and decentralization as necessary for good educational governance. However, the extent to which local communities and institutions can make decisions based on community needs and regional historical, cultural, and linguistic traditions is limited. Decentralization under this form of educational governance requires local institutions to make decisions in alignment with both national goals and standards, which are increasingly linked to a broader global framework of educational objectives.

This pressure to decentralize in this way has come from a wide variety of sources, but is legitimated most profoundly by international policy organizations, such as OECD, UNESCO, and APEC, as part of a broader agenda of multilateralism in education. Nations are increasingly seeking to cooperate with organizations such as OECD, APEC, and UNESCO programs like APEID (Asia Pacific Program of Educational Innovation for Development), and APPEAL (Asia Pacific Program of Education For All) to align educational policies with each other. But the agenda of these organizations is itself increasingly converging around similar understanding of the forms of educational governance required for a globalizing world. As an example, from 2000, the attention of APEC’s Educational Ministries is placed on quality assurance and accountability as means of monitoring education. In APEC’s Joint Statement from the third APEC Education Ministerial Meeting in 2004, the top priorities include balancing local-site autonomy with national goals. The focus is placed on greater school-based management and autonomy, while also emphasizing increased standards of accountability to meet national goals and enhancing international cooperation of international benchmarking and quality assurance systems.

In contrast, many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have underlined the importance of devolution in achieving greater democracy and equality. As an example, in the Asia Pacific, the Asia Foundation is a non-profit, nongovernmental organization.<sup>61</sup> The Asia Foundation is an advocacy organization for increased community involvement and local decision-making authority. The organization advocates for local autonomy and devolution in its cooperative work with national and regional organizations. Its push for increased devolution has been designed to counter the alienating effects of market thinking in education by highlighting the need for an increase in community voice in the democratic process and the push. This push has demanded increased inclusion to involve women, low socio-economic populations, and other disadvantaged groups in voicing local community needs. However, the work of NGOs in this respect has often been compromised by limited funding, forcing their agendas to become

aligned to systems' requirements for increased accountability, flexibility, and transparency, good governance and efficiency. This has forced NGOs to work more closely with the intergovernmental organizations, such as UNESCO, who have greater resources to promote work on inclusive education. However, this has created problems of alignment between government agendas and those of civil society.

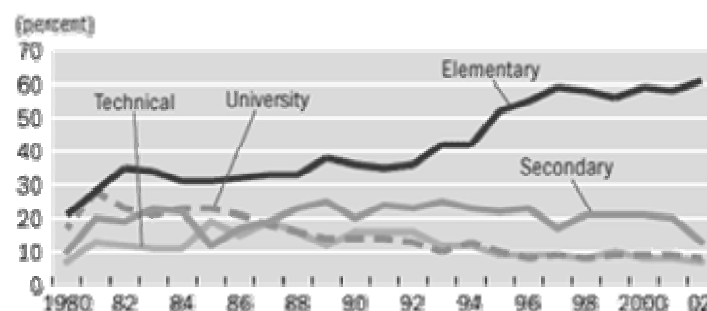
Not surprisingly therefore the democratic work of NGOs has had to take place mostly within the broader systemic framework of fiscal decentralization, as national governments re-think the ways in which public expenditure on education is allocated, distributed and monitored. Often allocation is based on generalized performance criteria that do not always take into account particular needs of the communities. This has a negatively impact on rural areas and lower income areas in particular. For example, fiscal decentralization may have increased regional disparities in China, given the limited financial resources and preparation for local governance.<sup>62</sup> In addition, fiscal decentralization throughout the Asia Pacific has created political conditions in which privatization is viewed as its logical outcome, as local and district level site management struggle to manage their own education programs, particularly those that cannot be easily accommodated within the broader national frameworks directing performance-based funding regimes.<sup>63</sup>

## 7. Public and Private Funding of Education

Across the Asia Pacific, the social efficiency logic, of which functional and fiscal decentralization is clearly a part, is also reconfiguring the ways governments approach the issues of funding of education. There are two general ways in which global processes are affecting thinking about public expenditure.

Over the past two decades, public expenditure on education in most countries of the Asia Pacific has been largely allocated to provide free compulsory education at the primary level, while education at higher levels is increasingly privatized. As an illustration, these two global trends can be seen clearly in the context of India, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: India's Change in Education Expenditures in Percentage<sup>64</sup>



Min Bing Wu, Venita Kaul, and Deepa Sankar illustrate the complexities facing public expenditure across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in India.<sup>65</sup> The authors argue that while the leading tertiary level institutions in India continue to produce some of the finest students in the sciences, without additional public funds, elementary education has undergone major changes. Bing Wu, Kaul, and Sankar argue that 'the expansion of primary education—driven by major policy changes along with higher demand for schooling stemming from

economic growth and globalization—took hold all across India’. To educate ‘the masses’, public expenditure at the primary level has undergone major changes over the decade from 1992 to 2002 while the percent change in funding for tertiary and technical education have steadily declined.

In addition, the example of India illustrates a broader issue of the mounting rhetoric at the global level that simply increasing public expenditures in education will not solve educational woes. Cohen and Bloom argue that money is only one of many obstacles in providing universal primary and secondary education.<sup>66</sup> They cite economic disincentives, competing demands, lack of information, political obstacles, cultural barriers, and historical context are just as, if not more, vital to education’s future when compared to the amount of public expenditures on education. This mode of reasoning has led to most IGOs, such as the Asia Development Bank, IMF, and UNESCO, to argue that their support is best directed at the level of universal primary education; and that since educational issues cannot be solved by financial means alone, it is more important to dictate local and national educational policy much deeper than simply suggesting how public expenditures in education are to be distributed. Their interest has shifted to marshalling the ways public expenditure on education is used to bring about a broader set of social and economic reforms.

As a result, there has been a steady increase in student enrollments at primary level, stemming largely from pressures on nations to make progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With greater number of students attending primary schools than ever before, issues of funding and financial resources have become central to governance throughout the Asia Pacific. However, the public expenditure to support this growth has not increased significantly. The levels of funding have remained relatively stagnant with slight deviations from 1990 to 2001, as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5: Public Expenditures as a Percentage of GDP at the Primary Level.<sup>67</sup>

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1999-2001</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>COUNTRY</b>			
Indonesia	1	1.3	0.3
Malaysia	5.2	7.9	2.7
Philippines	2.9	3.2	0.3
Republic of Korea	3.5	3.6	0.1
Thailand	3.5	5	1.5
Australia	5.1	4.6	-0.5
Fiji	4.6	5.5	0.9
New Zealand	6.2	6.6	0.4
Samoa	3.4	4.5	1.1
Russian Federation	8.3	3.1	-0.4
Bangladesh	9.7	2.3	0.8
Bhutan	4.3	5.2	-.9
Pakistan	1.5	1.8	-0.8

Without the adequate resources to support the increasing enrollments and rising costs, it is clear that the burden of meeting the MDGs has fallen on teachers or has required schools to raise their own funds.

At the tertiary level, government spending on public education has declined and in turn, there is an increase in privatization. While there are many forms of privatization at all levels of education, privatization at the tertiary level has mostly involved students meeting the costs of education themselves. National governments, IGOs and private industry alike have viewed this trend as not only inevitable but also desirable. Barr sums up the growing global paradigm well when he states, 'if it is unfair to ask graduates to pay more of the cost of higher education, it is even more unfair to ask non-graduate taxpayers to do so'.<sup>68</sup> The argument that public funding in higher education is regressive appears to have become orthodoxy throughout the Asia Pacific. These two major trends in public expenditure suggest that primary education is viewed more as a social investment, whereas tertiary education is an individual investment, linked to human capital development.

While the global push to educate all primary school age children has been accepted throughout the Asia Pacific, there is considerable variable in the extent to which this goal is being realized. For example, primary education has become a priority for India, with the total gross enrollment ratios in primary education rising during the 1990s from 82% to 95%, with the enrollment of girls rising 20% from 73% to 93%.<sup>69</sup> India is easily on track to meet the MDG of universal primary education, while other countries in the Asia Pacific such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea are a long way from attaining a 100% primary education completion rate by 2015.

The fundamental idea behind primary education is that it is a way of facing the major issues of development (poverty, hunger, disease) confronting developing countries in Asia Pacific. The text of MDG suggests, '[a] lack of education is a sentence to a life time of poverty.' It adds, 'an essential role of government is to ensure that every child in society ... has the opportunity to complete primary basic education'.<sup>70</sup> Although this rhetoric is easily stated, the fact still remains that education is expensive. Cohen estimates that if Universal Primary Education (UPE) is to be realized by 2015 it will cost the global community \$35 billion a year in addition to the \$82 billion already being spent by developing nations.<sup>71</sup> The MDG's call for increased access to primary education, along with the abolition of school fees at the primary level, thus requires substantial increase in public expenditures on education. Without this increase, developing countries will find it impossible to achieve the goals set forth by the global community in its support for the MDG. Lacking appropriate levels of funding both developed and developing countries have no other choice but to turn to privatization of education. Now, while it is possible for developed countries within the Asia Pacific like Australia and New Zealand, to reduce levels of public expenditure on education and retain participation rates, it is much more difficult for developing countries to enact such changes.

In developing countries of the Asia Pacific, the role of IGOs in funding education is highly significant. But these organizations often tie funding to particular principles that are inherently linked to social efficiency. Thus, accompanying loans and grants, the World Bank and IMF insist on a range of what they regard as principles of 'good governance'. These principles include notions of accountability and transparency, that have often very little to do with social and cultural concerns of education. The World Bank remains the leading external funding source of education in the Asia Pacific. In the developing countries of East Asia, Pacific, and South Asia, it has issued loans from the pre-primary level to tertiary level, including both vocational, adult, and pre-primary education a total of \$ US 12,345 millions from 1990-2004. A breakdown of these loans at the primary and tertiary levels in 1992 and 2003 can be found in Table 6.

Table 6: World Bank Loans for Education by Level in \$ US Millions (2004)<sup>72</sup>

<b>East Asia and Pacific Region</b>			
Level of education:	1992	1995	2003
Primary	75	107	172
Secondary	16	106	---
Tertiary	217	28	16
Total	391	277	226

<b>South Asia Region</b>			
Level of education:	1992	1995	2003
Primary	119	304	20
Secondary	---	3	---

With this level of intervention, the Bank can afford to insist on a range of conditions, linked to social efficiency, including those that encourage privatization of educational systems.

UNESCO too has become caught up in the ideological march towards social efficiency. It states, for example, that, 'ensuring that all children have the opportunity to complete a high quality primary school education is a key Millennium Development Goal. Achieving this goal requires efficiency and accountability in the use of educational resource'.<sup>73</sup> Teaming with the World Bank, UNESCO is working towards the promotion of Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys or PETS. PETS provides international organizations providing educational funding to developing countries an improved means to track how that funding is being spent and where leakages may be occurring. Programs such as PETS are thus intended to not only ensure financial accountability of loans and grants but also to provide examples of how national and local governments could abide with the principles of efficiency and effectiveness.

Linked to this emphasis on efficiency is the global trend towards privatization of education, which has gathered considerable pace over the past decade. Privatization can be noted in terms of the percentage of private enrollment shares at the primary and secondary levels, as illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7: Percent Change in Private Enrollment Share, at Primary Level.<sup>74</sup>

	1990	2001	Change
Australia	24.9	27.6	2.7
Bangladesh	15.2	38.67	23.47
Hong Kong, China	9.5	92.75	83.25
Indonesia	17.6	15.97	-1.63
Iran, Islamic Rep.	0.1	3.79	3.69
Korea, Rep.	1.4	1.41	0.01
Malaysia	0.3	3.84	3.54
New Zealand	2.5	2.05	-0.45
Papua New Guinea	2.4	1.39	-1.01
Philippines	6.7	7.09	0.39
Samoa	11.7	16.64	4.94
Thailand	9.6	13.63	4.03
Togo	24.9	40.87	15.97
Tonga	7.4	9.19	1.79
Turkey	0.6	1.65	1.05
Vanuatu	22.4	3.79	-18.61

From 1990 to 2001, there have been steady increases in Thailand, Iran, Malaysia, and Somoa in privately funded primary education, with even more substantial increases made in Togo (15.97% increase) and Bangladesh (23.47% increase). However, it is at the level of tertiary education that the growth in privatization has been most pronounced. This growth has been linked to the supposed demand for highly educated workers needed for the ‘knowledge economy’, as expressed in the following statement from the World Bank:

Knowledge and advanced skills are critical determinants of a country's economic growth and standard of living as learning outcomes are transformed into goods and services, greater institutional capacity, a more effective public sector, a stronger civil society, and a better investment climate. Good quality, merit-based, equitable, efficient tertiary education and research are essential parts this transformation. Both developing and industrial countries benefit from the dynamic of the knowledge economy.<sup>75</sup>

This understanding has led not only to tertiary education becoming ‘massified’ but also to the emergence of a global market of higher education.

The idea of ‘massification’, as Martin Trow has called it,<sup>76</sup> suggests that higher education is no longer the preserve of an elite few within a country, but has become a much more common phenomenon, crucial for good job prospects. The number of students enrolled in higher education in the countries of the Asia Pacific has more than doubled over the past decade, as illustrated in the following Table 8.

Table 8: Total Student Enrollment in Higher Education 1990 – 2002.<sup>77</sup>

<b>Countries</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2002</b>
Australia	485,075	1,012,210
Bangladesh	434,309	877,335
Cambodia	6,659	43,210
China	3,822,371	15,186,220
India	4,950,974	11,295,040
Indonesia	1,700,360	3,441,429
Japan	2,781,000	3,984,400
Korea, Rep.	1,691,429	3,210,142
New Zealand	111,504	184,808
Pakistan	347,000	401,056
Philippines	1,709,486	2,427,211
Vietnam	129,600	797,086

Each of these countries has experienced steep rise in student enrollment numbers. For example, Cambodia’s student enrollment numbers at the tertiary level have increased dramatically from 1990 to 2002, --- from 6,659 students in 1990 to 43,210 in 2002. China has experienced a growth nearly four times its student enrollment numbers in a little over a decade. The ‘massification’ of tertiary education systems globally has posed significant challenges for national governments, especially in light of their political determination to reduce levels of public expenditure. They have had to balance an increase in student demand without an increase in public funding.

As a result, many universities throughout the Asia Pacific have been moved to charge full or partial recovery tuition fees, even in the public institutions of higher education. For example, a World Bank report states that in the late 1980s, only 20 countries around the world charged fees for public higher education, which accounted for 10% of recurrent expenditures.<sup>78</sup> Bray uses the World Bank data to report that, fifteen years later, the average fee in 1995 had reached

25-30% of recurrent costs in China.<sup>79</sup> Increasing levels of tuition fees have thus become essential for the survival of public tertiary level education, as increasingly privatization is viewed as a practical solution to the problems of increased demand. The use of the rhetoric of privatization has thus become widespread across Asia, along with an emphasis on the notions of quality, efficiency, and productivity. With the scaling back of government funding igniting a rise in privatization, the role that the private sector in education has also grown, blurring the lines between government and private responsibilities over education. The number of private higher education institutions has grown rapidly. These developments have had major implications for education, as private interests increasingly have assumed a greater importance in policy development in education. This, as we have already noted, privatization leads toward tertiary education to be viewed more in terms of an individual investment, rather than a social investment.

In very broad terms, the idea of privatization refers to the transfer of services provided by the public sector to a range of private sector interests. As a political construct, the idea of privatization emerged in the 1970s as an attempt by a number of Western countries, like the United States, to separate decision-making in the areas of public policy from the provision of services. Three decades later, as we have noted, it has become globally pervasive, increasingly assumed to be the only way to ensure that public services, including education, are delivered efficiently and effectively. It has come to symbolize a new way of looking at public institutions and the role of the state in managing the affairs of its citizens. Under this broad policy orientation, many possible activities are construed as privatization, ranging from selling state-owned enterprises to contracting out public services to private contractors, be they individuals or corporations. According to Bray and Lee,<sup>80</sup> privatization of education takes at least three forms: transferring ownership of public institutions, shifting sectoral balance without redesignating existing institutions, and increasing government funding and support for private institutions. Bray might have added to this list contracting out functions and services. Indeed, contracting out and enterprise sales may perhaps be the most influential forms of privatization.

Just as privatization appears in several forms, so do the reasons governments and IGOs give in favor of privatization. Most of the reasons are couched in economic terms. It is argued that privatization leads to cost-effective delivery of public services, and that it enhances the productivity of government agencies. It is also suggested that the power of private property rights, market forces, and competition brings out the best in public sector employees. When public sector is forced to compete against private contractors then the service delivery is necessarily more efficient. When public institutions are thrust into market environments, they become much more organizationally agile and innovative, with greater commitment to reform. Economic arguments in favor of privatization also view it as necessary for growth, for meeting increasing levels of demand for particular services, including higher education. Such arguments necessarily assume the welfare state to be 'withering away', no longer capable of meeting the requirements both of society and individuals who are increasingly interested in managing their own affairs and do not trust the state to look after them.

Many of these arguments have become commonplace, even if most cannot be substantiated with any hard data. So, for example, that private contractors are more efficient and cost-effective in delivering services without compromising on quality is a contention that has repeatedly been shown to be both groundless and perhaps even unverifiable; yet this does not seem to stop advocates of privatization from asserting it repeatedly. The fact is that economic arguments alone cannot justify privatization. To try to do so is to grossly underestimate its political character, and to misunderstand its role as an ideology. In the end, the political context

in which privatization is promoted is inherently ideological. It is based on an assumption that the private sector is intrinsically more efficient and productive than the public sector.

The neo-liberal notion of efficiency is highly problematical, because it cannot be interpreted in some neutral fashion, without reference to the more fundamental moral and political criteria against which it might be measured. Nothing is efficient in its own right. We need to ask the more basic question, 'Efficiency in terms of what?' As the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre<sup>81</sup> points out, there are strong grounds for rejecting the claim that efficiency is a morally neutral concept. Rather, it is '... inseparable from a mode of existence in which the contrivance of means is in central part the manipulation of human beings into compliant patterns of behavior'.<sup>82</sup> In an organizational setting, efficiency drives always involve control over people, achieved through either sanctions or hegemonic compliance. What this brief discussion shows then is that to embrace the interpretation of the concepts of efficiency in neo-liberal terms is to accept a certain preferred mode of existence and of social relations, which, inevitably, has a range of consequences for other social and cultural aspects of our lives, including commitment to democratic equality. In the next two sections, we discuss some of the consequences the increasing global dominance of the social efficiency view of education has had on the issues of access and equality in education and on prospects for gender equality within the Asia Pacific.

## **8. Issues of Access and Equity**

Equality in education has long been a goal of many countries within the Asia Pacific. This is in line with Article 26 of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights signed in 1948 states, 'everyone has the right to education' and, 'education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stage'. The commitment has been reiterated by a number of subsequent declarations. Appendix 2 provides an overview of some of the declarations. The common thread in all of these declarations is that education is a fundamental right of every citizen on the planet; and governments have a responsibility to provide basic education and equality to all of its citizens. However, the ways in which countries have interpreted this responsibility has varied, as has been their ability to fund measures to work towards the goals of access and equality in education.

The production of social and human capital has often been cited as one of the main reasons for supporting the goal of access and equity in education. There is a great deal of creditable evidence to suggest that an investment in primary education provides enormous positive public as well as private benefits. An investment in education to achieve equality is thus viewed as advantageous to society. It is generally assumed that education has the power to benefit communities, both in the economic and the social realm. Over the past two decades, while there has been a major push for access to education in the area of primary schooling, there has also been an emphasis on access to education at both the secondary and tertiary levels, even if funding for post-primary education has been less than satisfactory. As a report to the OECD insists, countries must not only concentrate on primary education but must expand some resources in secondary and tertiary education if they want to maximize their benefits to education.<sup>83</sup>

Social equity and mobility are directly linked to equality in educational access at all levels of education. Access to education has a profound effect on all aspects of life, including economic well-being, health, employment, and productive citizenship, to name a few outcomes. Without access to education, chances of achieving social and economic equality are negligible. However, simple formal access to schools has never been sufficient, because unless families have an adequate economic base at home to support the students attending schools, the

students are unlikely to be able to take advantage of formal access. This of course complicates the issue of the relationship between access to schooling and equity outcomes. This is so because a commitment to formal access is entirely consistent with the idea of social efficiency, while it is not sufficient to achieve democratic equality. For equality to become a reality, attention must also be paid to the issues of instructional quality and of the resources that are necessary to support effective programs. For example, in the recent Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2003, the Asia Pacific countries' eighth-graders took the top five spots in the field of mathematics, while other Asia Pacific countries that participated in the TIMSS study ranked amongst the bottom.<sup>84</sup> This educational variability suggests that formal access to schooling does not always translate into effective equity outcomes.

Equity requires not only policy commitment but also effective programs in education designed to provide instruction appropriate to the local conditions and cultural traditions. Yet, in terms of policy commitment many countries within the Asia Pacific have been slow to act in providing free compulsory education to all. It is important to note that there is a distinction between free and compulsory education. Compulsory refers to the state mandating that all students attend school, while free education simply refers to the state providing education at no direct cost to the student. Unfortunately, a country's lack of economic resources does not completely explain this phenomenon. For example, Singapore, one of the most developed economies in the world, provided free education but did not require compulsory primary education of its citizens until 2003. If most transitional and developing countries of the Asia Pacific region wait until their economies develop as far as Singapore's to provide free compulsory primary education, then perhaps the UN's goal of universal primary education would never come to fruition. Appendix 1 provides a list of all Asia Pacific countries, their years of primary education and if the government requires compulsory education. Twenty one of fifty three countries reporting data for the year 2000 within the Asia Pacific region do not meet the call of the UN to provide universal primary education as a basic human right. However, the absence of free compulsory education does not necessarily directly determine the net enrolment ratios in primary education. One would expect to find a country such as Pakistan, which does not provide a legal guarantee to free primary education, to have a low net enrolment rate. However, Maldives and Malaysia, who also do not provide a free guarantee to primary education to their citizens, have close to 100% net enrolment in primary education. Table 9 illustrates the net enrollment ratios in primary education in 2001.

Table 9: Net enrollment ratio in Primary Education 2000/2001.<sup>85</sup>

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Net enrollment ratio 2000/2001</b>
Bangladesh	89
Cambodia	85
China	93
India	86
Indonesia	92
Iran	74
Lao PDR	81
Macao	85
Malaysia	98
Maldives	99
Myanmar	83
Nepal	72
Pakistan	60
Philippines	93
Sri Lanka	97
Thailand	85
Viet Nam	95

For the most part, countries of the Asia Pacific region have made significant progress towards achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goal for access to primary schools for all. Many Asia Pacific countries were performing very poorly in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but this has largely been reversed, not only in primary education but also in access to secondary and tertiary education. According to the 2001 World Development Indicators, the gross enrollment ratio in secondary and tertiary education grew in almost every Asia Pacific country.<sup>86</sup> Many countries in the Asia Pacific region saw substantial increases in secondary education enrollment from 1980 to 1997, for example, in Indonesia 29% to 56%, in Malaysia 48% to 64%, in China 26% to 70% and in Thailand 29% to 59%.<sup>87</sup>

However, the seemingly exclusive push for primary education has taken money away from other forms of education such as secondary and tertiary education. As noted earlier, both the OECD and UNESCO argue that, to compete successfully in the new global economy, an investment in secondary and tertiary education is necessary for developing countries. However, with limited resources and an ideological push towards privatization, the global push towards universal access to primary education has meant that students in most developing countries in the Asia Pacific have had to foot the bill for their post-primary education, where there is not the same pressure to provide free education. However, the fact that effective participation in the global economy requires higher level of education for a country to compete in the global community means that an educational policy emphasis on primary education alone is unlikely to help in the eradication of global economic inequalities. Despite this, the Asia Pacific region has seen significant progress in enrollment ratios in secondary education. As Table 10 indicates, between 1990 and 2000, there has been significant growth in secondary education enrollment not only in many transitional economies but also in developing economies of the Asia Pacific region. In Thailand and Vietnam, the growth has been spectacular. In only Pakistan, the enrollments have declined.

Table 10: Gross Enrollment Ratios in Secondary Education 1990 and 2000.<sup>88</sup>

Countries	1990*	2000
Bangladesh	20	46
China	47	68
India	44	49
Indonesia	45	57
Iran	59	78
Lao PDR	28	58
Malaysia	56	70
Myanmar	23	39
Pakistan	26	25
Thailand	32	82
Viet Nam	33	67

However, as we have noted, significant though this progress is, access alone is insufficient to the achievement of both social efficiency and democratic equality. Unless there is an appropriate level of quality and resources, access can be counter-productive, setting up expectations that are seldom realized. This has the potential to create considerable social alienation among those who have invested time and effort into education without the promised rewards. Without good teachers, who have adequate training and professional attitudes, access can never be a complete measure of equality. An externally determined and imposed curriculum, detached from local traditions and political conditions, can also endanger local cultures. As discussed above, global pressures have lead to universal quality measurements,

which in turn can lead to a generic prescription of what and how things are to be taught. At the level of primary education in particular, some autonomy for local communities to determine their own curriculum seems highly desirable. However, the global trend towards regarding social efficiency as the main goal of education undermines this educational objective. What is clear is that education appropriate to the community in which it takes place requires a more complex view of access and equity than is often suggested by governments and intergovernmental organizations. Education at all levels, but particularly at the primary level, has a whole range of purposes, that do not simply include producing efficient workers for the changing global economy. If this is so then social efficiency has to be reconciled with the broader cultural concerns of education, linked to issues of class, gender and ethnicity. In what follows, we develop further our argument that simple access is not sufficient for achieving equality in education by addressing issues relating to the education of girls.

## 9. Education of Girls

In recent years, issues of gender equity in education have occupied an important place within policy debates throughout Asia Pacific. This is because these issues are linked directly to the educational purposes of both social efficiency and democratic equality; and because gender equality in education is essential for achieving greater gender equality in society as a whole. Without an equal access to education, and equitable educational opportunities and outcomes, the ideal of gender equality in society lacks any real potential of being realized. It should be noted, however, that no country in the world has achieved complete gender equity; and that as a concept gender equity is interpreted differently in different religious and cultural traditions. Even so, gender equity remains an idealistic goal that has yet to be achieved in every tradition. Not surprisingly therefore, within the Asia Pacific region, there is considerable variance in the approaches to educational policies designed to promote gender equity. Nonetheless, the increase in attention given to gender issues has specific implications for both trends in the enrollment of females in education and the feminization of teaching.

In the Asia Pacific, as elsewhere throughout the world, huge strides have been taken in improving the gender gap since the early 1990s. Table 11 shows increases in gross and net enrollment rates for girl attending primary schools in most of the Asia Pacific.

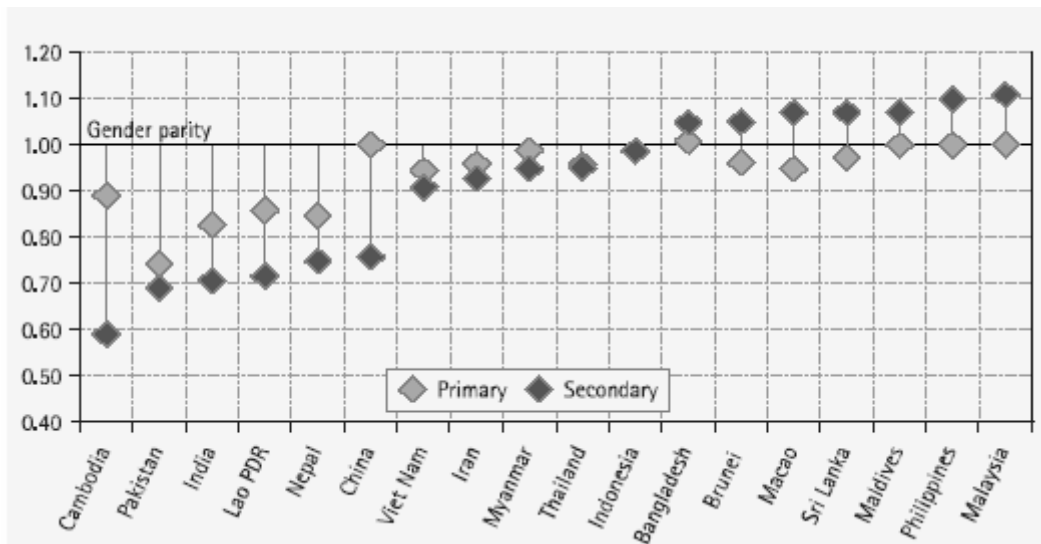
Table 11: Gross enrollment ratio (GER)<sup>89</sup>, net enrollment ratio (NER)<sup>90</sup>, and gender parity index (GPI)<sup>91</sup> in primary education, by region (1990 and 2000).<sup>92</sup>

	1990				2000				1990				2000			
	GER %			GPI	GER %			GPI	NER %			GPI	NER %			GPI
	Total	F	% F	F/M	Total	F	% F	F/M	Total	F	% F	F/M	Total	F	%F	F/M
World	99	105	93	.89	101	104	97	.93	82	87	77	.88	84	86	81	.94
Developing Countries	99	106	92	.87	101	105	96	.92	80	86	73	.86	82	85	79	.93
Developed Countries	103	103	102	.99	102	102	102	1.00	97	97	97	1.01	97	97	97	1.01
Transition Countries	95	95	94	.99	100	100	99	.99	88	88	88	1.00	90	89	91	1.02
Central Asia	85	86	85	.99	100	100	99	.99	81	82	81	.99	91	91	90	.99
East Asia and Pacific	117	120	114	.94	110	111	109	.99	96	98	94	.96	93	93	93	1.00
South and West Asia	92	104	79	.76	96	104	87	.84	73	87	58	.67	81	87	74	.85

Despite popular misconceptions about Muslim societies, Table 11 illustrates that South and West Asian countries have made great strides in enrollment ratios since 1990. However, these countries still rank as having the lowest gender parity in the world. It is within these countries that there is a great deal of work that still needs to be done to improve levels of access to even primary education for girls.

While it is true that great gains have been made in gender parity in primary education, with many countries achieving gender parity index close to 1.0, the participation of girls in secondary and tertiary education remains generally lower. Many countries are still lacking in educational equality between genders, especially at the higher education levels. Using educational parity, which is the gross enrolment ratio for girls divided by that of boys where a value below 1 indicates disparities in favor of boys, a value near 1 indicates equality, and a value larger than one shows disparities in favor of girls. We can see that a number of countries in the Asia Pacific region have very low gender parity in secondary education. Figure 1 also illustrates that several country's gender parity exceeds 1 in secondary education, suggesting that female enrollment is greater than males.

Figure 1: Gender parity indices in primary and secondary education, 2000/2001.<sup>93</sup>



The table above suggests that countries with very large populations such as China and India are doing very poorly in secondary education parity. For example, while China's gender parity is one in primary education it ranks amongst the Asia Pacific's worst in secondary educational parity.

Women's participation in tertiary education in the Asia Pacific has grown from 29% in 1982 to 43% in 2000. However, if gains are going to be made in female leadership and genuine equality achieved then access is not sufficient: there must also be a more equal distribution of gender among fields of study and employment. Table 12 shows major inequalities in this respect.

Table 12: Tertiary education: regional estimates of female participation by field of study (1982 and 2000).<sup>94</sup>

Region	Year	No. of countries	Total all fields	Education	Social Sciences, Humanities, Services	Natural Sciences and engineering	Agriculture	Health
Asia, incl. Arab States	1982	25	29	53	31	16	14	36
Asia, incl. Arab States	2000	13	43	61	49	23	35	61

The table shows that while women are well represented in the field of education, social sciences, humanities and even health services, their participation in the fields of the natural sciences and engineering is still far from gender parity. By nature, the global economy attaches growing importance to technological innovation and technical expertise. As such, this gender inequality is more significant than it might first appear given the implication that the growing access of women to tertiary education is in areas that do not enjoy the same high economic rewards, social status and prestige.

In recent years, IGOs such as the OECD, World Bank, and UNESCO have repeatedly emphasized the importance of gender equity in education, at all levels of education. But the arguments they have advanced for greater access are both interesting and revealing. Though the ideological stances of these three organizations differ, they are all using similar arguments in reference to gender equity in education, which view educational purposes largely in terms of social efficiency. According to the World Bank, ‘research has also shown that women and girls work harder than men, are more likely to invest their earning in their children, and are major producers as well as consumers’.<sup>95</sup> UNESCO states, ‘Educating girls’ yields the highest return in economic terms’.<sup>96</sup> Finally, the OECD urges that ‘Investing in women (with respect to education, health, family planning, access to land, etc.) not only directly reduces poverty, but also leads to higher productivity and a more efficient use of resources’.<sup>97</sup> Of the three, the World Bank takes the strongest position in relating gender equity to economic consumerism and efficiency. The instrumentalist logic of this argument is arguably sexist, in that it views women as means to certain economic ends, rather than as people who participate in education for a huge variety of reasons, some economic but also social and cultural.

What is clear here is that, given the stated benefits that greater gender equity is crucial to the economic expansion and social welfare, the global push for the education of women is simply not the result of altruism. Rather, gender equity can be seen as a calculated and efficient strategy to provide corporations with a cheaper source of labor for both local and transnational companies. The neo-liberal ideology is flush with the idea there is greater cost efficiency in educating women. For example, the World Bank states that ‘girls education is a top ranked social investment’, citing that the education of women reduces child mortality, raises per capita income at a greater rate than men, and reduces total fertility rate by .23 births.<sup>98</sup> Despite their value and notwithstanding the proposed commitment to decrease the gender parity in the Asia Pacific region, educated women continue to receive lower pay and tend to work longer hours than their male counterparts.

In many Asia Pacific countries the rate of return for educating women is higher than men. However, the rate of return to education differs between primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Table 13 shows the rates of returns to education by gender. Overall women fair better than men as an investment, but much of this gain is made in the secondary level.

Table 13: Returns to Education by Gender (percentage).<sup>99</sup>

<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Primary	20.1%	12.8%
Secondary	13.9%	18.4%
Higher	11.0%	10.8%
Overall	8.7%	9.8%

Generally returns to education are lower for women in primary education when compared to their male counterparts, but this increases significantly with secondary education, while the returns are fairly equal at the tertiary level.

An analysis of gender equality in education and globalization would not be complete without an examination of the important pressures many NGOs and powerful women have placed on governments and international organizations to improve gender equality. The growing mobility of people and information that globalization has provided can be seen as the catalyst of the mounting awareness concerning issues of gender equality in education. With very few exceptions, countries around the world have had to react to these growing demands for equality. However, the demands of the world community seem to be lagging in South Asia. The World Development Report 2003 places South Asia amongst the worst regions in the world when it comes to women's rights. By comparing indicators for literacy, health, economic activities, work burden, empowerment, and political participation, South Asia is among the lowest in the world.<sup>100</sup> Oxfam, a UK-based development organization, states 'research shows that despite three decades of activism by women's groups all over the world, and the issue of violence against women gaining attention in global policy debates as a health and human rights issue, the social crisis is growing'.<sup>101</sup> Global pressures are forcing governments to recognize and commit to alleviating gender inequality. However, the implementation at the local level seems to be inadequate throughout the developing countries within the Asia Pacific region. In South and Central Asia, while central governments have happily signed on to global conventions regarding gender equity, they have done little to develop programs that reach the isolated rural areas where traditions of treating women as second-class citizens persist.

Part of the problem in developing such programs lies with the lack of resources available to fund programs of educational reform, especially in the developing countries. As we have noted, level of educational funding in most Asia Pacific countries has remained fairly stable over the past decade. With declining public expenditure on education, families have often been forced to pay for the education of their children. But this privatization has disastrous implications for the education of girls, as parents having to make difficult choices, prefer to pay for the education of boys. Cultural traditions favoring the education of boys over girls re-assert themselves in such circumstances. So, while privatization might be efficient in some respects, as neo-liberal theorists suggest, it often has negative consequences for gender equity in education, and by implication, in society.

What the analysis in this section has shown is that, despite certain drawbacks, steady improvement, and sometimes even large gains, are being made in providing girls access to

education, especially at the primary level. IGOs have been at the forefront of the push to put gender equity at the center of their negotiations with governments. Organizations such as IMF and the World Bank are able to do this as a condition of loans and grants to developing countries, making gender equity improvement a stipulation in acceptance of these funds. Of course, this is not to argue that gender equality is a negative stipulation, only to bring to light that their commitment for greater equality for women is often couched in terms of economic gains and social efficiency. For gender equality is not only an issue for the local and national communities but also affects the transnational corporations that rely heavily on women's labor for work that has been 'out-sourced' to the developing countries. Of course, it is not only the IGOs who have promoted the goal of gender equity in education, various social movements and NGOs have as well, but with a very different conception of equity in mind, concerned less with economic gains and more with equity as a necessary component in the politics of human rights, democracy and social justice.

The global pressures faced by the countries of the Asia Pacific to promote gender equality in education are thus complex. Some of these pressures are limited to calls for access by girls to institutions that had previously catered only for boys, while others are more ambitious and demand a radical overhaul of the educational and social processes that perpetuate gender inequalities. This contrast is clearly linked to the different purposes of education, with the social efficiency view demanding better utilization of the human resources that women have, and the democratic equality view seeking a social transformation through which gender relations are totally re-configured. This latter goal highlights the importance of not only access and social inclusion, but underlines also the importance of re-thinking the terms of this inclusion, in societies that have potentially been economically, politically and socially transformed. This requires changes not only to the ways education is administered but changes also to curriculum and pedagogy, especially in the context of globalization, with its potential to re-shape patterns of both economic and social relations. And it is to a discussion of shifts in curriculum policy to which we now turn.

## **10. Shifts in Curriculum: Issues of Technology and the Digital Divide**

Any comprehensive overview of recent shifts in curriculum across the Asia Pacific region is clearly beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is perhaps accurate to assert that there has been more rhetoric about the need to re-think issues of curriculum in light of changes represented by globalization than actual changes in practice. Primary and secondary curriculum remains remarkably unaltered in most countries of the Asia Pacific, even if there has been significant changes in the ways in which pedagogy has been approached, especially at the primary level. For example, more child-centered and humanistic ways of thinking about and dealing with young children appear to have been institutionalized, not only in countries with liberal democratic traditions but elsewhere as well. There have also been significant changes in which students are assessed, and teachers are held accountable to educational systems. New technologies of accountability have been established not only at national level, but also transnationally. Practices of benchmarking and comparing achievements and educational performance, on a wide variety of indicators, have arguably become common across the Asia Pacific, as a result of increasing level of regional and international collaborations, much of which is driven by the international organizations such as the OECD and UNESCO. Programs like PISA<sup>102</sup> and TIMSS<sup>103</sup>, for example, have begun to provide a framework within which educational policy deliberations at the national level are now conducted.

Some of these developments have clearly been facilitated by the recent revolution in information and communication technologies (ICT)<sup>104</sup>, even if it is the technologies that have driven educational changes, rather than the changes driving the technologies. Either way, the need to understand the possibilities of ICT in order to develop more efficient and effective ways of governing education has become a major feature of contemporary educational thinking. Also significant have been the efforts to include ICT into the curriculum. Indeed, computer education and the teaching of English language represent perhaps two of the most important new initiatives in curriculum across the Asia Pacific—two clear examples of education responding to pressures of globalization. However, each initiative is problematic in its own way, and each raises a whole range of issues about the ways in which each is promoted by governments and IGOs. Perhaps more importantly, the increased emphasis on ICT and English language education raises fundamental questions about the basic purposes of education in the global era. In the next two sections we discuss some of these issues.

Since the early 1990s, educational policymakers have recognized the significance of computer technology, but the July 24, 2000 Group of Eight (G8) meeting in Okinawa, Japan might be said to mark the ‘first major summit to seriously address the challenges of ICT in education’,<sup>105</sup> yielding the Okinawa Charter on Global Information Society,<sup>106</sup> a document that describes ICT as ‘one of the most potent forces in shaping the twenty-first century’, and speaks idealistically of an ‘IT-driven economic and social transformation’ impacting ‘the way people live, learn and work’. The Charter calls for a ‘stronger partnership among developed and developing countries, civil society including private firms and NGOs, foundations and academic institutions, and international organizations’ to develop a ‘solid framework of IT-related policies and action’ aimed at insuring that IT serves a range of goals, including: fostering sustainable economic growth; enhancing the public welfare; fostering social cohesion; strengthening democracy; increasing transparency and accountability in governance; promoting human rights; enhancing cultural diversity; and fostering international peace and stability.

The Charter states its commitment to the principle of inclusion, mentions democratic values, human development, and respect for diversity, and the potential in ICT for social and economic opportunities worldwide. While these values are indeed laudable, it is less clear from the Charter how its political sentiments are to be translated into effective educational reforms that address each of these values, and not simply those sustaining economic growth. Even the section on ‘Bridging the Digital Divide’ calls for policies that lead to the development of human resources capable of responding to the demands [read economic demands] of the information society, a goal that is to be achieved by supporting effective programs in IT literacy and skills through education. The Charter’s characterization of the information society is based on range of neo-liberal assumptions about the global market, and the human resources needed to support it. The broader discourse of the inevitability of rapid economic and social change in the charter<sup>107</sup> is underpinned by what Ulrich Beck<sup>108</sup> refers to as the ‘ideology of rule by the world market’, reducing the ‘multidimensionality of globalization to a single, economic dimension’. In this view, participation in the global economy is regarded as a universal good, the requirements of which need to be understood and enacted by nation-states. It is assumed that all efforts to align education with the needs of the economy are necessarily beneficial to society. Indeed, it is suggested that to not radically transform education around ICT would be to exclude students from IT-driven economic and social transformation. Here, the notion of equity itself has been re-articulated in the language of the market.

Any cursory look at national educational policies around ICT in education across most of the Asia Pacific countries indicates widespread support of the Okinawa Charter, and the ‘ideology of the world market’ upon which it is based. For example, the Korean government insists that ICT education has a ‘pivotal role in enhancing a nation's international competitiveness in a knowledge information society’.<sup>109</sup> It treats the global marketplace as a largely apolitical driver of policy, which is assumed to be a largely technical matter of implementation, rather than an exploration of its political ramifications for societies. Nor does the ‘ideology of the world market’ consider seriously issues of inequalities, even if it is widely recognized by national and international organizations, such as G8 and the World Bank, that the ‘digital divide’ around the distribution of ICT ‘falls along old fault lines that have always segmented societies: gender, urban/rural and most of all, income’.<sup>110</sup>

There is an enormous disparity of access to ICT education within and across nations in the Asia Pacific region. There are some nations which, ‘not only have comprehensive policy frameworks, but also implementation strategies and mechanisms, measurement indicators, and have committed resources to such matters as infrastructure access and connectivity, training and learning software development’.<sup>111</sup> In contrast, there are other nations of the region, and also communities within nations, with little or no access to ICT education. Within the sub-regions of the Asia Pacific, East Asia enjoys a concentration of the region’s ICT resources and integration, particularly in educational infrastructure. South Asia is in the process of developing these resources to a great extent, but is having mixed results, reflecting profound intra-national disparity of access, best exemplified by India, where ICT resources are concentrated in a few large urban centers. The Pacific Island region, with the exception of Australia and New Zealand, is challenged by financial and infrastructure constraints, as in the case of the Federated States of Micronesia where only 37.6 percent of the schools even have electricity.<sup>112</sup> The Central Asian Republics, while using computers in schools to a modest degree, find the Internet ‘irrelevant to basic education’ because of low population density and limited telephone access.<sup>113</sup>

In addition to regional disparities, there are manifest issues of equity of access to ICT by girls and women, as well as students of poorer socio-economic backgrounds. There are also difference ‘between rural and urban areas, differences within urban areas and age groups, language barriers, caste differences, lack of access to electricity and lack of access to ICT infrastructure’.<sup>114</sup> For example, the ratio of urban and rural Internet users reveals an enormous divide:

In China the 15 least connected provinces, with 600 million people, have only 4 million Internet users—while Shanghai and Beijing, with 27 million people, have 5 million users. [ . . . ] And in Thailand 90% live in urban areas, which contain only 21% of the country’s population. Among India’s 1.4 million Internet connections, more than 1.3 million are in the five states of Delhi, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Mumbai.<sup>115</sup>

Taken together, these disparities constitute what is commonly referred to as the ‘Digital Divide’, which, despite policy commitment and considerable practical efforts, continues to persist in education to a large extent across and within nations in the Asia Pacific.

For example, the data on the number of computers in classrooms indicates an enormous disparity between those nations already integrated into the global economy and those at what Held calls ‘the margins of some of the central power structures’, where people suffer from

‘uneven access to the dominant organizations, institutions and processes of the new emerging global order’.<sup>116</sup> Table 14, developed from the World Bank Group data, shows, unsurprisingly, that in 2002 the highest number of computers are in Japan (2,292,000), the Republic of Korea (857,000), and Australia (672,000), nations that were already fully integrated in the global economy. As we will see below, the dramatic increase in the number of computers in education in China reflects the concerted effort on the part of the state, international organizations, and MNCs to integrate certain regions of China within this ‘emerging global order’. There can be no doubt that as China’s capitalist consumption and production prowess becomes more manifest, this nation will experience continued intensification of its ICT integration in education. The regional nature of China’s integration into the global economy, however, will perhaps have consequences for the equitable allocation of ICT in education resources across this nation.

Table 14: Computers in Education 1995, 2001<sup>117</sup>, & 2002<sup>118</sup>

Country	1995	2001	2002
1. Australia	-	-	672,471
2. China	315,400	2,092,100	3,555,157
3. Hong Kong SAR	22,600	166,400	173,161
4. India	236,000	2,387,000	347,801
5. Indonesia	22,100	58,500	58,593
6. Japan	1,182,000	2,172,000	2,292,417
7. Korea, Republic of	196,700	610,700	857,000
8. Malaysia	31,400	121,900	241,392
9. New Zealand	62,700	195,000	196,364
10. Philippines	32,200	77,400	125,055
11. Russian Federation	176,800	471,300	229,630
12. Singapore	22,700	150,700	136,000
13. Thailand	88,900	271,500	230,000
14. Turkey	42,300	123,900	123,907
15. Vietnam	7,700	27,000	29,516

As early as 1995, computers were already a fixture in Japanese and Korean education, whereas in 1995, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines combined did not match Korea’s 197,000 computers. Vietnam had only 7700 computers in education in 1995. Much of this is changing rapidly. This table reveals the extent of the change from 1995 to 2002, with an increase in personal computers in education in China of over 1000% (from 315,400 to 3,555,150) from 1995 to 2002. By comparison, Japan approximately doubled theirs; Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines roughly quadrupled theirs.

This comparison of computers in education in the period from 1995 to 2002 suggests two observations relevant to the discussion of ICT in education policy today. First, clearly the implementation of ICT in education for most in the Asia Pacific is still at an early stage; but a few East-Asian nations have already raced ahead and continue to do so with each passing year. For example, in the Philippines 81% of schools still have no Internet connectivity, as compared to the Republic of Korea, which, having recently completed a national policy initiative to link the entire nation with broadband capacity, is 100% connected.<sup>119</sup> The more developed countries in the region, like Japan, Hong Kong SAR, and Korea, already firmly integrated into the global economy, began integrating computers in education in relatively large numbers during the early 1990s, at a time when less affluent, less economically integrated nations like Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos had little access to the Internet. This disparity holds true for the Central Asian Republics. A UNESCO survey suggests that only four of the five Central Asian

nations--Kazakhstan (100%); Kyrgyzstan (66%); Tajikistan (11%); Turkmenistan (N/A) and Uzbekistan (46%)--had ‘schools with computer classroom[s]’. Relative to much of the Asia Pacific region, these nations have well-developed school systems; however, only one had Internet access, and that was only in 2 percent of its schools, and only Kazakhstan had more than 4% of the computers in its schools IBM or Apple compatible.<sup>120</sup>

The second observation highlights the intensification in the use of ICT in education among more developed nations since the mid 1990s. For example, in 2000, Korea distributed 431,981 new computers among 10,000 schools,<sup>121</sup> nearly three and a half times the total number of computers in all schools in the Philippines in 2003. Consider also Hong Kong SAR, which, in 1998 initiated its ‘Information Technology for Learning in a New Era: Five-year Strategy 1998/99 to 2002/03’. This initiative provided IT coordinators to 250 schools, enhanced technical ICT support, and provided for after-school ICT education. Hong Kong spent US\$391 million on computers, connectivity infrastructure, and teacher training. Another US\$125 million in recurring costs covered annual teacher training, software development, IT coordinator salaries, technical support and maintenance.<sup>122</sup> Such national efforts are in stark contrast to a nation such as Cambodia where a 2001 International Telecommunication Union report tells us: ‘The majority of schools do not have money for telephones, computers, and the Internet. Camtel [a local ISP] has offered free Internet to schools, but most [schools] cannot afford the telephone line, nor do they have electricity or the skills to use the Internet. Internet connectivity is not considered a high priority.’<sup>123</sup>

Table 15, below, derived from World Bank Group data, provides comparative data on the percentage of GDP on ICT infrastructure spent in a selected number of countries within the Asia Pacific region. This data is significant because, as we see in the Cambodia example above, the availability of ICT infrastructure nationwide is fundamentally linked to efforts at integrating ICT in education.

Table 15: Percentage of GDP on ICT, 1995 & 2001<sup>124</sup>

Country	1995 GDP%	2001 GDP%
China	2.9	5.7
India	2.1	3.9
Hong Kong SAR	6.1	8.7
Indonesia	2.1	2.2
Japan	5.3	9.6
Korea Rep.	4.7	7.4
Malaysia	5	6.6
New Zealand	8.4	14.4
Philippines	2.6	4.2
Russian Federation	1.8	3.3
Thailand	2.7	3.7
Turkey	1.6	3.6
Vietnam	3.6	6.7

Perhaps predictably, the table above shows significant policy commitment by Japan, Hong Kong SAR and Korea to invest in ICT infrastructure. However, it is interesting to note the growth in funding by China (2.9% to 5.7%) and Vietnam (3.6% to 6.7%), two nations considered “front runners” in a recent UNCTAD report for being “countries with high FDI potential and performance”.<sup>125</sup> Clearly, this investment indicates the desire by both China and Vietnam to become integrated further within the global economy, but it does not reveal ICT

integration within the nation, both in education and other policy areas. Much in accord with the G8's 'partnership approach', much of the investment in IT infrastructure in Vietnam and China is being financed by various IGOs, transnational corporations and various donor agencies,<sup>126</sup> and focuses largely on the cities and EPZs, which have been established in many transition economies to attract foreign investment. As mentioned above, this has exacerbated the social and economic divides between metropolitan centers and rural and regional areas, undermining further the goals of education for all. It has also revealed the extent to which investment in both IT infrastructure and education is motivated by perceptions concerning the needs of the global economy rather than of the people.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the World Bank Group data on ICT infrastructure in many nations in the Pacific, South Asia, and Central Asia is conspicuous by its absence. We get a better picture of very minimal ICT infrastructure in the Pacific Islands from a UNESCO report in 2002. It suggests that 'The heart of the issue for most Pacific Islands countries in 1999 was access. Two years on, the issue remains the same. With less than 25% of the population of most Pacific Islands having access to the Internet, it is perhaps not surprising that e-governance is not high on these countries' agendas'.<sup>127</sup> The same applies to the Central Asian Republics, who suffer from similar obstacles of expansive geography, dispersed populations, and limited economic resources.

Having access to ICT is, of course, one thing, however, the issue of its appropriate use in education is quite another. In terms of curriculum and instruction, ICT has the potential to dramatically transform approaches to education. And as with educational systems all over the world, many nations in the Asia Pacific face the challenge of moving beyond the stage of what Plomp et al. describe as "learning about ICT" (courses on computer literacy, computer science) to the stage of "learning through ICT" (computers as tool in *all* educational activities). According to Plomp et al., ICT education has the potential to 'break down the walls of the school to the outside world or in making learning happen independent of time and place'.<sup>128</sup> With respect to globalization, this profound sentiment has wider implications than are often realized as we begin to develop an awareness of the global interconnectedness of our problems, and of the need to build educational communities that cut across ethnic and national boundaries—both made possible by the developments in Internet and Communications Technology. The educational potential for ICT in a globalizing world is perhaps limited only by our imagination; however, when that imagination is limited to developing human capital resources for a global marketplace, we see a missed opportunity for education to engage the social and cultural links that span the world.

Two comprehensive reports (Plomp, et al.<sup>129</sup>; UNESCO Meta Survey<sup>130</sup>) detailing ICT integration in education in the Asia Pacific region tell us that 'more needs to be done before ICT can permeate throughout the teaching and learning processes at all levels and in all areas'.<sup>131</sup> At issue in particular is staff development with a focus, not on ICT skills only, but on 'the more important role of ICT use in the curriculum . . . to facilitate the realization and implementation of an emergent pedagogy'.<sup>132</sup> The role of the teacher in this emergent pedagogy needs to be re-imagined, 'from being an instructor to becoming a constructor, facilitator, coach, and creator of learning environments'.<sup>133</sup> All subjects are affected by this demand. Hong Kong SAR has recognized this, and has set a 'target of having 25% of the school curriculum taught with the support of IT'.<sup>134</sup> However, Plomp, et al. report that over 70 percent of teachers in their survey use computers for 'preparing teaching notes and course materials' only. They expressed an interest in learning to use the Internet to communicate with students, but were not 'keen to use the Internet for collaborative work with other schools'.<sup>135</sup>

What is true for Hong Kong SAR appears equally true for less-developed countries, such as Sri Lanka, where teacher training in ICT is characterized as, ‘crash programmes, which focus on computer literacy per se and do not enable teachers to return to their classrooms with the ability to use the computers in teaching their assigned subjects.’<sup>136</sup> In contrast, New Zealand and Singapore have both made systematic nation-wide efforts to develop a ‘learning through ICT’ approach, providing staff development for teachers in effective ICT educational practices and training principals in ‘leading the change process’ through which new ways of using ICT are imagined and enacted.<sup>137</sup>

However, much of this change remains located within the social efficiency view of educational purposes. ICT is viewed as an instrument for making education more efficient and effective, rather than challenge some of the deeply held assumptions about education and its role in supporting and sustaining the mechanisms of the global economy. Education is conceived as a means to achieve the G8 goal stated at the beginning of this section --the ‘development of human resources capable of responding to the demands of the information age’. It is considered necessary for participating in the age of globalization, but the concept of globalization itself is viewed narrowly, as linked to current economic transformations driven by a neo-liberal ideology which defines social relations in terms of competition between individuals and nations. So long as this view prevails, it is difficult to imagine how the ‘digital divide’ between communities and nations can ever be bridged, except on the edges, as developing countries continue to struggle to achieve a parity which, in a highly stratified world economic community, is often out of their reach. A UNESCO report has pointed out that ‘a vast majority of countries in the Asia Pacific region are still at an early stage in the process of adopting ICTs into their systems. For most students and teachers, using a computer to send an e-mail or surf the web is still in the future’.<sup>138</sup> While this is perfectly true, and this inequity is a serious problem worthy of the attention it receives, much ‘digital divide’ policy discourse is based in a neo-liberal analysis of the needs of the information economy. Far less attention appears to be paid to the broader purposes of ICT in education, and to the ways in which ICTs have the potential to fundamentally transform not only curriculum and pedagogy but also the debates about the very purposes of education in a world becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent.

## **11. Shifts in Curriculum Policy: The Rise of English**

Just as the interest in the integration of ICT in education has been framed within the social efficiency view of education--as contributing to the needs of the changing global economy--so too have been the arguments put forward in support of greater emphasis on the teaching of English across the Asia Pacific countries. The teaching of English is assumed to be crucial in any thoughtful response to the pressures of globalization. For example, a 2002 UNESCO report on curriculum changes in the Asia Pacific region notes that: ‘Facing the challenges of globalization trends, curriculum of countries in the region have paid special attention to foreign languages, first and foremost it is English’.<sup>139</sup> The report goes on to say that the choice of language in education policy is ‘largely driven by the demands of the international labor market, in particular in the field of ICTs and science’. A 2004 APEC document echoes the UNESCO sentiment above:

As English has become the most common medium for communication in a global world, it is the language that provides job opportunities, access to higher education and a broader flow of information, as well as facilitates diplomatic discussions and business negotiations. English has also become the primary medium for communication in science and technology.<sup>140</sup>

In this discourse, there is an almost unproblematic construction of and appeal to the demands of a global economy, which disregards what Tollefson describes as the very local impact of language policies on ‘access to economic resources, to policy-making institutions, and to political power’.<sup>141</sup> In transforming language use and language education into commodities for a global marketplace, such discourse takes a particular stance with regard to what Pennycook calls ‘the cultural, political, social and economic implications of language programs.’ For example, this stance seems unconcerned with the role English might play in perpetuating global inequalities, as well as globalization’s tendencies for homogenizing cultural traditions.<sup>142</sup>

Just the same, a focus on the teaching of English language appears to have become institutionalized in curriculum thinking throughout the Asia Pacific region, as, in most language policy statements, the ability to speak English has been linked to knowledge and skills necessary for economic competition, rendering it “as a type of human capital”.<sup>143</sup> There is, however, little reliable data on language-in-education policy and practice in the Asia Pacific region. Nunan reports, for example, that, ‘despite the apparent widespread perception of English as a global language, relatively little systematic information has been gathered on its impact’.<sup>144</sup> Similarly, Spolsky<sup>145</sup> argues that serious questions regarding language policy in the Asia Pacific region ‘cannot be tackled until we have built up a solid and accepted body of analysis of language policy as it actually occurs in the many different polities of the world’. Much of this report is based on recent research carried out by Nunan (2003)<sup>146</sup>, Kaplan and Baldauf (2003)<sup>147</sup>, and an important 2004 APEC report, “Strategic Plan for English Language/Foreign Language Learning”.<sup>148</sup> The scope of this report is however limited to the Pacific Islands and East Asia, and does not cover the Asia Pacific region as a whole. Nevertheless, the issues it addresses are substantively generalizable.

Looking first at the Pacific Island nations, we see immediately the challenges and issues emerging in the implementation of language policies aimed at increasing English education in non-English-dominant educational systems. The 2004 APEC report cited above suggest that ‘multilingualism is the norm in almost all Pacific countries,’ although, ‘if a continuum were drawn, Melanesian countries, which are more ‘multilingual, would be found at one end and Polynesian countries, which have far fewer languages and dialects, would be found at one end, with the Micronesian countries plotted in-between’.<sup>149</sup> In region, as linguistically diverse as the Pacific, there are a wide variety of language policies, as might be expected; however, the report states that most nations have had to grapple with tension between the view that the mother tongue is “indeed, the best medium for teaching a child” and the need for a “second language, the vehicle of modern development and participation in the world community”.<sup>150</sup> Lynch and Mugler<sup>151</sup> note that, in Melanesia and Polynesia, English has become the ‘predominant official medium of instruction in all the education systems of the region’. In Polynesia, a native language is the medium of instruction ‘alongside English, both in primary and (to a lesser extent) in secondary schools. English is generally introduced as a subject early, often in the first or second year of primary school’. In most of Melanesia, “English is the sole recognized medium of instruction” and in Fiji, Fijian and Hindi are mediums of instruction “for the first three years, but are entirely replaced by English afterwards”.

In spite of this official policy, however, Lynch and Mugler state that policy and practice ‘differ greatly in nearly all the classrooms of the South Pacific, especially at the primary level, and indigenous languages are used much more widely than official policy suggests’. While ‘it is among the highly educated elite in this regional context that the role of English as a lingua franca is the most important’, Lynch and Mugler predict that English is likely to ‘have an important place in education in the foreseeable future’ for all students, particularly because parents view it as a means of acquiring ‘good’ jobs. Although there is very little evidence to suggest a clear link between English and employment in the Pacific Islands, policy makers appear convinced that with the increased implementation of ICT in education and economic development in the region, English will become more important as a means of ‘internal cohesiveness and unity and external participation in the modern global community’.<sup>152</sup> Were the English language to assume these roles at the local, national and global levels, it is an open question whether the languages not so highly valued in the global economy could survive.

The 2004 APEC report indicates the following policy goals for East Asia and the Pacific region:

- Officially offering the teaching of English as a foreign language starting from the first to fifth grades.
- Enhancing the training programs for English teachers in elementary schools together with revision of curriculums and teaching materials to be more communicative in approach.
- Enhancing the teaching and learning [of] the four language skills of English through objective and efficient assessment.
- Reducing the elementary school class size to no more than 35 students.
- Connecting all elementary schools to the Internet by providing computers in all classrooms.

Each of these policy goals is directly linked to conceptions of how improving English language education will help meet the ‘challenges of the new era of information technology and knowledge economy’.<sup>153</sup> Significantly, they refer less to cultural and political issues inherent in English becoming a global language.

There has already been considerable progress made toward the first goal above, as the data contained in the Table 16 below indicates. The Philippines will also make English the medium of instruction for science beginning in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade; Lao PDR, which will begin English instruction by grade 3; and Cambodia and Mongolia by grade 5.<sup>154</sup> This trend is confirmed by Nunan, who notes that ‘the age at which English is a compulsory subject in most of the countries has shifted down in recent years, a shift that is predicated on the importance of English as a global language’.<sup>155</sup> He also reports that in Vietnam, English is introduced at the age of 11-12 and in Taiwan China at the age of 6-7. At present, Japan does not have a compulsory age of English instruction but has considered this option.<sup>156</sup>

Table 16: Non-English-dominant Economies' Starting Grade for English Instruction.<sup>157</sup>

Economy	Year
China	3
Hong Kong	1
Indonesia	7
Japan	7
Korea	3
Malaysia	1
Singapore	1
Chinese Taipei	5
Thailand	1
Average	4

While this data does not show a comparison across time, there is clearly a convergence around early exposure to English. Korea, for example, lowered the age at which English is taught from 12 to 9 in 1997, and China lowered it from 11 to 9 in 2001. Korea has focused more on oral communication in English compared to the previous emphasis on grammar,<sup>158</sup> a shift designed to reflect the trend toward the recognition of English as a global language.

Another indicator of this trend can be gleaned from Table 17, which shows the number of hours of English per week studied.

Table 17: Non-English-dominant Economies' Hours of English per Week and Grade Level<sup>159</sup>

Economy Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
China		4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Hong Kong SAR	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Indonesia							4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Japan							3	3	3				3
Korea			1	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	2.8
Malaysia	4	4	4	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.5
Singapore	8.5	8.5	7.5	6.5	7	7	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5			6.3
Chinese Taipei					1.5	1.5	3	4	4	4	4	4	3.3
<b>Average</b>	5.8	5.8	4.3	4	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.9	

Table 17 indicates a measure of difference between Hong Kong SAR, Malaysia, and Singapore and the rest. To a great extent, this reflects the colonial history of these nations. Malaysia is an interesting case-study in language policy, which involves a political struggle over colonial history, on the one hand, and its postcolonial nationalist aspirations, including the importance these attach to Bahasa Malaysia, on the other. Into this mix has been thrown Malaysia's desire to fully participate in the global economy as a developed country by 2020. It is in light of these tensions that it is possible to understand its recent reversal of medium of instruction in higher education, which reinstated English as the medium of instruction for science, engineering and medical courses.<sup>160</sup> The rationale for this policy shift was stated back in 1991 by Deputy Education Minister, Fong Chan Oon, who said, 'we have been worried about the decline of English for some time. The Government's chief concern is that declining standards of English could hinder Malaysia's progress toward achieving developed nation status'.<sup>161</sup> It is doubtful

that this concern over English ability has waned in recent years, and considering this, depending on student's facility with English in higher education, there will likely be greater pressure to introduce English as a medium of instruction in lower levels of education in those subjects related to technology and science.

In sum, there is a clear policy trend toward lowering the age of English instruction across the Asia Pacific countries, as well as an increase in those courses for which English would be the medium of instruction, particularly in science, technology, finance, and business. However, it is one thing to develop policies, it is quite another to provide adequate resources and qualified teachers to implement policy aspirations. This is especially a major problem in developing countries, which are struggling to find sufficient funds for other curriculum initiatives, such as the integration of ICT in education, as well. Policies demanding teaching in English raises not only issues of 'new pedagogical practices' but also of teachers' capability in their own command of English. The issue of teachers' instructional capability is thus complicated by the extent of the teacher's linguistic competency. In the case of Korea, for example, all elementary school teachers are required to take 'a minimum of 120 hours of in-service teacher's training, wherein teachers take a series of courses on English conversation, English language pedagogy, educational psychology, and educational philosophy'.<sup>162</sup> Yet, Butler cites a newspaper report in Korea stating that 'out of 9768 English teachers in Seoul, only 7.9% had a command of English sufficient to teach using English only'.<sup>163</sup> Whether that is an accurate number or not, it does indicate what Butler surmised, that 'elementary school teachers in Korea do not have an advanced level of English proficiency,' a problem shared by all non-English-dominant countries in the region seeking to enhance the English-speaking ability of its students.

What is an even more compelling indication of the qualifications of the teachers in Butler's study (Japan, Korea, and Taiwan) is their own perceived proficiency. Butler found that, 'The majority of elementary school teachers sampled in Korea, Taiwan, and Japan perceived their proficiency levels to be lower than the minimum levels they thought necessary to teach English under current policies'.<sup>164</sup> This raises the question of how English-proficient a teacher needs to be. In response to this question, Nunan recognizes the reality of the limited English competence of teachers and argues that both linguistic competence and instructional capability of teachers should be developed.<sup>165</sup> 'With the introduction of English at the primary school level, teachers need special training in the needs of younger learners. Curricula, teaching methods and materials should meet the needs of learners of different ages and at different stages.'<sup>166</sup>

Nunan notes that while nations in the region are allocating considerable resources to improve the English competence of students and teachers, in order to meet the demands of the global economy, these resources remain insufficient.<sup>167</sup> He argues moreover for an assessment of the actual language needs of learners, and for curriculum development around those needs. He also warns of the possibility that inequitable access to qualified teachers will "perpetuate or exacerbate the economic divide"<sup>168</sup> within nations, a problem easily identifiable also across nations, since only wealthier nations are able to attract 'native speaker' teachers from English-dominant nations. This inequitable access is something also made explicit in the differential access to the public and private institutions offering language education increasingly in tandem with a range of international providers, such as the British Council and others in the 'global ELT industry', trading in English 'programs, products, methodologies, [and] teacher training'.<sup>169</sup>

This discussion of English language in education policy clearly reveals what the 2004 APEC report calls the emerging regional ‘consensus that professional development of FL [foreign language] teachers is one of the most important and challenging issues that all economies face’.<sup>170</sup> However, it is also clear that in speaking of ‘economies’ and not societies or nations, the quote from the APEC report makes explicit how its neo-liberal assumptions, linked to human capital needs, are now driving the language policy shifts within the Asia Pacific region. The shifts are based on a reading of global processes as necessarily economic, articulated in ways that subordinate political and cultural concerns that have traditionally been given at least an equal emphasis in policy deliberations. An outcome of this economic reductionism is that it inherently perpetuates global inequalities, as English-speaking countries, those countries which can afford to develop levels of English proficiency, and those within countries with access to quality English education mark themselves out as better able to profit from the global economy. In this way, not only does the increasing use of English world-wide carry the risk of homogenizing local cultures and traditions, but it also becomes a marker of social and national differentiation.

## **12. Internationalization and the Global Trade in Higher Education**

We have noted in this paper that the concept of globalization is often associated with increasing levels of mobility, not only of capital, information and ideologies but also of people. The awareness of the changing nature of the global economy and of the global labor market, however imprecise and speculative, has created a growing demand for international education throughout the Asia Pacific region, especially at the tertiary level. Of course, the idea of international education, itself, is not new. There has always been international mobility of students and researchers in search of new knowledge, and training where this is not available within the nation. Higher education was only available to talented students in developing countries if they went abroad. The developed countries, on the other hand, provided scholarships to assist students from poorer countries, as part of programs of overseas aid and in line with the responsibilities they felt they had to help in the nation-building projects of the newly independent countries of Asia. An example of such a commitment was the Colombo Plan, developed in the 1950s. Designed primarily as a foreign aid program, it highlighted the commitment of the developed countries within the British Commonwealth to ameliorate economic distress in Asia and help create local elites needed to develop the social, administrative and economic infrastructure of the developing countries in Asia.<sup>171</sup> It was also linked to the strategic interests of the developed countries within the broader politics of the Cold War. Within this geo-political context, a large number of students were educated in the former USSR, while programs like the Colombo Plan provided financial aid to students in developing countries around the world to attend First World universities.

However, the educational rationale underlying international education on both sides of the political divide was largely concerned with the development of skills, attitudes and knowledge so that, upon their return, graduates can make a robust contribution to national development in the image of their sponsors. Purposes of international education were thus defined in terms of the need to increase intercultural knowledge, and to enhance the level of international cooperation. In this way, equal weight was given to the economic, political and cultural purposes of education. Even as late as the 1980s, IGOs like the OECD, through its Center for Educational Research and Innovation, sought to define the complex idea of internationalization by seeking to reconcile commercial and economic concerns of education with issues of cultural diversity and interpersonal dimensions of global relations.<sup>172</sup> It was suggested that internationalization was important to the development of universities because changes

represented by globalization demanded it. For individuals, on the other hand, internationalization reflected the emerging labor market stipulations, but significantly also social and cultural developments in general, which were heading towards the need for people to acquire multicultural and cosmopolitan sensitivities.

Over the past decade or more, there has emerged, however, a contrasting discourse of student mobility, which involves viewing international education more as a matter of global trade than as overseas aid. The discourse of internationalization of education has thus shifted in recent years, with the introduction of a set of market principles to guide its practices. It is now increasingly viewed as “an export industry”, driven by a growing demand for international education throughout the Asia Pacific, enabling countries like Australia and New Zealand to set themselves up as major suppliers. According to the OECD report on trade in higher education,<sup>173</sup> the growing demand for international education is simultaneously, ‘a cause, consequence and symptom of globalization’. It responds to the need of industries at the cutting edge of the knowledge economy, such as ICT, financial management, and science and engineering, in which the demand for globally mobile labor is growing at a rapid rate. Since most governments are unable to meet this through public funds, as we noted in Section 8, a global market in education has emerged. Those developed countries that have strong traditions of higher education have been a major beneficiary of this development. In countries like Australia, universities have seen international education as a major source of revenue to replace the declining levels of public funding.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, they have now become highly dependent on income generated from international students, and have developed complex marketing structures to sustain this source of revenue. Countries like Singapore, Malaysia, India and Japan are now seeking to follow the Australian example, and have developed a range of policy initiatives to enter this lucrative market.

Data on students flows in and out of the Asia Pacific countries for education shows spectacular patterns of growth. Within the region, Australia and Japan are the main providers of international education, while India and China are emerging as main source countries from where students go abroad for their higher education. Table 18 below shows how a large number of students from the Asia Pacific region go to the United States and Britain for education, while very few American and British students enroll in the universities in the Asia Pacific. The flow is thus largely one-directional.

Table 18: Principal exporters and importers of tertiary education, 2001<sup>175</sup>

OECD exporter nations	International students		Nations importing from OECD	International students	
	Number	Proportion of all students		Number	Proportion of all students
USA	475,169	3.5%	China	124,000	n.a.
UK	225,722	10.9%	Korea	70,523	2.3%
Germany	199,132	9.6%	India	61,179	n.a.
France	147,402	7.3%	Greece	55,074	11.4%
Australia	110,789	13.9%	Japan	55,041	1.4%
Japan	63,637	1.6%	Germany	54,489	2.6%
Canada	40,667	4.6%	France	47,587	2.0%
Spain	39,944	2.2%	Turkey	44,204	2.6%
Belgium	38,150	10.6%	Morocco	43,063	n.a.
Austria	31,682	12.0%	Italy	41,485	2.3%

The reasons for student demand of international education in the Asia Pacific region vary considerably, and include lack of opportunities for higher education in their own countries; particular national policies, such as affirmative action policies in Malaysia which favour Bumiputras and force many ethnic Chinese students to seek higher education abroad; as well as perceptions concerning the changing patterns of opportunities within the globally changing labour market. It is assumed, for example, that those with good English and international experience have a better chance of getting well-paying jobs, especially in transnational corporations. There is also a growing interest in cosmopolitan experiences, together with a sense that in a globally interconnected and interdependent world, those with intercultural skills and an international outlook are better equipped to benefit from the global knowledge-based economy. And finally, strong economic growth in both China and India over the past decades has created a strong middle class for whom international education has become a status marker and an object of desire.

Around such sentiments has emerged a powerful new discourse of internationalization, which seeks to re-define the ways in which universities need to engage with the emerging 'imperatives' of globalization. This discourse points to the commercial opportunities offered by the increasing movement of people, capital and ideas. It encourages a new kind of knowledge about international relations and programs based on a particular interpretation of the changing nature of the global economy, which is assumed to be knowledge-based and requires increased level of intercultural communication. Alongside, a new administrative technology of global marketing of education to recruit has emerged. As with other industries, this technology has its own rules of operation based on an expertise that incorporates knowledge of market segments and specificities as well as a language about the distinctive benefits of internationalization. Within universities, it involves the creation of highly specialized structures and functions responsible for international operations, for example, well developed advertising and marketing programs conducted not only through the media but also through educational Expos and market-orientated conferences at which education is bought and sold.

In promoting these discourses and practices, governments and IGOs play an important role. To manage global flows of students, governments throughout the Asia Pacific region have developed policies for regulating cross-border mobility of students, and have established programs designed to encourage international linkages, cooperation and trade. In the so-called exporter nations, such as Australia and New Zealand, the main policy objective has been to sustain the flow of income derived from international student fees, through not only targeted advertising but also by developing a national system of quality assurance, and even developing immigration programs designed to favor international graduates in particular fields of labor shortage. In contrast, the so-called importer countries have developed policies that have involved monitoring cross-border trade in education, in an attempt to protect consumers of international education. There has emerged also a complex web of bilateral and multilateral regional arrangements, between countries of Southeast Asia for example, that encourage student and staff mobility.

Despite these arrangements, international trade in education continues to be surrounded by a great deal of policy confusion, concerning not only issues of capacity, volume, commitment, balance, orientation and quality of international programs but also issues relating to the rules by which educational trade should be conducted. At the global level, many governments have seen the need of an international agreement governing its operations. This is the perception

upon which the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) within the World Trade Organization (WTO) is based.<sup>176</sup> GATS is designed to specify a range of conditions under which the global trade in education is to be pursued. These conditions include such matters as transparency of rules; liberalization of markets; elimination of practices acting as barriers to trade and student mobility; and the development of rules for resolving disputes. Now, while in one sense these rules appear perfectly sensible, from another perspective they serve a more ideological function, that of institutionalizing a particular way of looking at international education, defined in terms of the efficiency of the global markets in education, rather than its more political, social and cultural purposes.

The main assumption underlying GATS is that education is a commodified service, a trade which is not only possible but should be encouraged, like any other business. Especially in a globalized economy, it should not be subject to national restrictions. Jane Knight<sup>177</sup> has called this phenomenon a 'trade creep' in higher education, driven more generally by an increased emphasis on the market economy and the liberalization of rules governing trade in both goods and services. Of course, in an era of globalization, this emphasis is enmeshed with other market-orientated trends in higher education. Knight suggests that:

These trends include the growing number of private for-profit entities providing higher education opportunities domestically and internationally; the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) for domestic and cross-border delivery of programs; the increasing costs and tuition fees faced by students at public and private institutions; and the need for public institutions to seek alternate sources of funding, which sometime means engaging in for-profit activities or seeking private sector sources of financial support.<sup>178</sup>

These trends appear well entrenched in higher education systems in most of the countries of the Asia Pacific region, raising issues of social efficiency, such as modes of funding and student support, regulation of private and public cross-border providers, recognition and transferability of credits and quality assurance, ahead of some of the traditional concerns of education, such as access and equity. This policy shift has a number of important implications for education's more social and cultural purposes.

In broader terms, the heavily commercial character of international education serves only to produce the inequalities across the countries of the Asia Pacific. Under earlier programs of international education, such as the Colombo Plan, universities in the developed countries provided access to a large number of students from poorer, less-developed countries within the Asia Pacific. Under a market regime, the number of financially sponsored students has dwindled markedly, further widening the skills gap that now exists between the newly industrializing countries and poorer Pacific countries, whose economic prospects have steadily declined. This exemplifies the globally uneven and asymmetrical nature of student flows within the global market of international education. For example, Marginson<sup>179</sup> has noted the magnetic attraction of American higher education, and has argued that the UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand sit 'in the American slipstream, operating on a more entrepreneurial basis than American institutions. They gain the referred power as lesser English-language providers and sites for migration, often in a transitional stage in passage to the USA'. This raises a dilemma for universities in the Asia Pacific of how to deal with this global phenomenon of American dominance, and how to diversify their student base and provide opportunities to those talented students within its own region who are sidelined by commercialization. The issue is one of access and equity at the regional level, demanding

remedial actions to stop the economic and social haemorrhaging of poorer countries caused by the new global geometry of power.

This haemorrhaging is further perpetuated by the 'brain drain' of the highly talented international students who can make a significant contribution to the national development of their own countries but are seduced by the opportunities presented by the richer countries. In so far as government policies in developing countries have begun to view international students as potential immigrants in areas of skill shortage, they accelerate this pattern of 'brain drain'. It is estimated that more than 60 per cent of international students from developing countries qualify for immigration in a developed country and are granted permanent residence, even if they do not abandon their citizenship and plan instead to work in a transnational space<sup>180</sup>. This situation is further complicated by the fact that many students who do return to their own country either seek or are recruited into well-paying jobs within transnational corporations, depriving national institutions of their expertise. In these ways, international education has increasingly become a handmaiden to corporate globalization, providing the new global economy with the human resources it needs to expand into new markets rather than contribute to broader social and cultural goals.

### **13. Conclusion**

In this paper, we have discussed the ways in which globalization, or rather a particular construction of globalization, has, in recent years, re-configured the discursive terrain within which educational policy is developed, articulated and enacted in the countries of the Asia Pacific. We have argued that, as a region, the Asia Pacific includes some fifty countries, which are characterized by a great diversity of cultural and political traditions and considerable variance in economic performance and outlook. Not surprisingly therefore countries of the Asia Pacific have interpreted the requirements of globalization for re-thinking educational policies differently, from approaches ranging from enthusiastic celebration to cautious engagement to robust resistance. However, no country has been able to escape the consequences of the hegemonic dominance of a neo-liberal conception of globalization, which has greatly benefited some countries, while it has had disastrous consequences for others. As a result, inequalities across the Asia Pacific have increased, and the economic prospects of many countries have declined and their cultural traditions eroded.

In educational policy, globalization has had the consequence of making the social efficiency goals of education become dominant over its more traditional social and cultural concerns with the development of the individual and the needs of the community. This shift in policy orientation has occurred as a result of range of processes through which particular ideologies of educational purposes and governance have been promoted. These processes have included the circulation of neo-liberal ideas through the global media and institutions; the policy work of governments and intergovernmental organizations converging around a similar set of educational concepts and strategies for reform; the role of regional and international conventions written around neo-liberal consensus; the mechanisms of competition in education that have often required bilateral and multilateral cooperation; and the use of the potentially coercive power of international lending banks over developing countries.

While there is no sign that the social efficiency view of education, associated with globalization, may be in decline, it is also becoming clear that it has given rise to range of contradictions that cannot be ignored. For example, the promotion of functional and fiscal decentralization has left many educators and educational systems feeling disenfranchised,

especially when they are expected to conform to unrealistic accountability regimes, and deliver outcomes for which they have not been adequately funded or resourced. Their professionalism has been sapped of any real meaning, as they are required to become efficient and effective in contexts that are much more culturally, economically and politically complex than many governments and IGOs often assume. At the same time, the policy shift towards privatization has compromised the goals of access and equality and has widened inequalities not only across nations but also within the same communities. It has made the goals of gender equity more difficult to realize. The exclusive emphasis on efficiency, embodied in the regimes of new public administration of education, has resulted in greater focus on the operational requirements of the systems rather than upon the lives of the people and their communities.

Globalization has also demanded re-thinking of the curriculum. It has been argued that the global economy demands a new kind of worker who is multi-skilled, service-orientated, can easily adapt to changes in both the nature of work and the changing labor conditions, and can work in the global environment characterized by cultural diversity. The ability to work with new information and communication technologies has been highlighted. Yet, the global distribution of technologies across the Asia Pacific has at best been uneven, creating conditions for a digital divide, and has thus perpetuated social and economic inequalities. The increased focus on English language has had a similar outcome, and the ability to communicate in English has become a major source of differentiation between people and communities. Similarly, international education has also become a marker of social status in many countries. Yet, in the context of emerging policies and practices of global trade in education, international education has become increasingly dependent on the student's ability to pay for it, rather than on merit or educational excellence. International education, which was once defined in terms of political and intercultural terms, has now become thoroughly commercialized; and has perpetuated class and national distinctions that run counter to its cosmopolitan aspirations.

In the end, there is a fundamental tension between two contrasting purposes of education: one relating to social efficiency and the other underlining education's potential to create democratic communities committed to the goals of autonomy and social justice. Of course, these purposes are not mutually exclusive: it is possible both to promote democratic equality and to ensure that education is efficiently and effectively organized to serve the changing conditions in which it takes place. The balance however, as we have argued in this paper, has shifted decidedly towards the social efficiency view of education, based upon a set of neo-liberal assumptions that are assumed to be universally applicable. In the long run, this universalism, enhanced by various global processes, is not good for education because education is necessarily tied to local as well as global requirements. It is clear that there is no turning back from global processes driven partially by various developments in technology. But globalization need not necessarily be interpreted in neo-liberal terms. It must be possible to imagine and work with an alternative form of globalization, rooted much more in democratic traditions; a form that does not rely entirely on the logic of the market, and is able to tame its excesses. Such a view of globalization demands not ready-made technocratic solutions to problems of education but focuses instead on open dialogue across cultures and nations. It requires thinking and acting both locally and globally, simultaneously. It demands an education that teaches students to see our problems as inextricably linked to the problems of others. It requires them to develop both critical skills and an attitude that enables them to imagine our collective futures, for the humanity as a whole.



## Appendix 2: Examples of International Treaties in Education<sup>182</sup>

### **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) Ratified: 149 nations:**

Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all; Secondary education in its different forms, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means; Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all; Fundamental education shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible for those persons who have not received or completed the whole period of their primary education; The development of a system of schools at all levels shall be actively pursued; No part of this article shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions.

### **Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Ratified: 192 nations:**

A child has a right to make primary education compulsory and available free to all; Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education; Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means; Take measures to encourage regular attendance; Ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention; Promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education; Education shall aim to develop the child's personality, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, his or her own cultural identity, language and values.

### **World Conference on Education for All (1990) Ratified: 155 nations:**

Countries agreed to the: Expansion of early childhood care and developmental activities, including family and community interventions, especially for poor, disadvantaged and disabled children; Universal access to, and completion of, primary education; Improvement in learning achievement; Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate; Expansion of provisions of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults; Increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sound and sustainable development.

### **World Education Forum (2000) Ratified: 180 nations:**

Re-affirm the vision of the World Declaration on Education for All by expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education; Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality; Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met; Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015; Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, ; Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

### **Millennium Development Goals (2000) Ratified: 189 nations:**

Achieve universal primary education by 2015; Promote gender equality and empower women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

## Notes:

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