

## Educational social policy: part 8- Globalisation and educational policy

It is important to consider that **Britain has to compete with other countries around the world for trade, skilled workers and investment.** In other words, Britain does not act in isolation. The UK has a place on the world stage. **Education, to some extent, shapes our place on that global stage.**

At its simplest, **globalisation means that the world we live in now feels smaller and is more accessible than it was a decade ago because of developments in digital technology, especially the internet and social media.** People, ideas and businesses now move more freely across the world.

### The impact of globalisation on educational policy

Education in the UK is partly shaped by global factors in three main ways;

1. **The British economy operates in a global market. Skilled and qualified workers are required so that British companies can compete successfully with foreign businesses.** As we saw on the first guide on this topic, the **1870 Education Act came about because of international or global competition as other economies started to challenge the supremacy of the British economy.**

**Kelly (2009)** argues that, in the past 30 years, **British educational policy has become increasingly geared to global economic competitiveness.** Successive British Governments have argued that the UK needs to produce workers that are able to compete in the global economy by having **the flexible skills needed to adjust to an ever-changing global market.** Politicians often refer to the UK's position in various international league tables on literacy, numeracy, science and IT to justify claims that schools in the UK are **'under-performing'** compared with schools in **China and Singapore.**

This 'fear' of global under-performance has had a number of effects. Michael Gove, the Conservative Secretary of State for Education claimed in 2015 that his proposed changes to primary and secondary education combined the best of global educational practices from Hong Kong, the USA, Singapore and Finland. Ball (2012) has observed that many fee-paying British public schools, and also universities are increasingly marketing themselves in global markets. Such schools and universities have set up global branches in locations such as China, Russia and Singapore. Moreover British exam boards offer international GCSEs and A-levels to students in over 160 countries. British universities also attract hundreds of thousands of foreign students to study for degrees in the UK.

2. Britain has a **key advantage** in the global marketplace in that English is the main language used in Business. The internet too is dominated by English-

speaking sites. However, there is genuine concern that the UK is lagging behind the silicon pioneers of California, India and China with regard to computer programming.

3. **Education is also impacted by the global flow of ideas.** This has led to both a more **multicultural curriculum** (for example, the study of Cantonese and Mandarin at universities has significantly increased in reaction to the rapid rise in the influence of the Chinese economy and State). We have also seen the introduction of educational ideas and practices which have proved successful in other societies such as free schools.

## **Evaluation**

**Stephen Ball (2012)** is critical of the globalisation of educational services which he argues view and treat **education as a business rather than a human right to be enjoyed by all free of charge.** Ball argues students are increasingly seen as **commodities to be bought and sold for a profit.**

However **Martin Holborn (2016)** suggests that **globalisation may have some positive effects on the British educational system.** **Increased migration,** for example, has led to a more **multicultural curriculum.** This, he argues, has positively contributed a more **tolerant understanding of other cultures and religions.** It may also lead to an **increased emphasis on equality of opportunity as governments seek to capitalise on the talents of every individual to make the UK more competitive in the global marketplace.**