INTRODUCTION

TO THE OPEN FILE

Michel Carton and Sobhi Tawil

Globalization has now become a fashionable concept and a wide range of hopes and fears are continuously being expressed through the channels of the media, scientific reviews, and the statements of politicians, company directors and national governments regarding a phenomenon that is presented as being inevitable. Two authors, whose articles have recently been published in this same review, have largely launched the debate on globalization and educational policies. The first was L. Ratinoff with an excellent article devoted to the culture of globalization,1 while the second was E. Ottone with an article devoted to modernity and citizenship in the perspective of globalization.2

Concomitantly with the development of this phenomenon, however, schools continue to teach increasingly complex programmes, vocational training centres certify levels of skill competence, and adult education programmes attempt to address the training deficiencies of segments of the population that have been excluded from education and production systems. The round-table organized in

Original language: French

Michel Carton (Switzerland)
Ph.D in Education from the University of Geneva. He is presently Professor and Deputy-Director at the Graduate Institute of Development Studies in Geneva, and has been co-ordinator of the NORRAG network since 1992. His research and teaching deal mainly with education and training policies, management of vocational training programmes and the articulation between formal and non-formal education. His areas of geographical specialization include West and Central Africa, Indonesia, Laos, Lebanon and Viet Nam.

Sobhi Tawil (Switzerland)
Programme officer for NORRAG co-ordination at the Graduate Institute of Development Studies in Geneva. His current doctoral research focuses on the relative weight of cultural traditions and poverty in fashioning household educational strategies in Morocco.

Prospects, vol. XXVII, no. 1, March 1997
Geneva by the Northern Policy Research Review Advisory Group on Education and Training (NORRAG)\(^2\) in October 1994\(^3\) set the stage concerning the theoretical and strategic issues that globalization raises relative to educational and training policies. The discussions also emphasized the urgency of pursuing this analysis among those concerned by the future of education and training systems, if the challenges posed by globalization are to be adequately addressed.

The overall framework for this analysis, however, was defined by the recent UNESCO report on education in the twenty-first century, Learning: the treasure within.\(^1\) A number of these issues are taken up or further developed in the present collection of contributions. Needless to say, other axes of research deserve to be explored in order to go beyond the current binary vision in which the process of (economic) globalization is all too often depicted either as a panacea or as a threat. The study of education and training systems is consequently confined within the same binary vision.

In fact, globalization consists of a series of phenomena which are not at all new. Religions, institutionalized in the form of churches, for instance, which professed universal visions (at least in some cases) were born long before the emergence of transnational corporations. Also, the first universities that appeared in different continents attracted students and professors from a multitude of geographical and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, the Black Plague spread across the mediaeval world threatening human lives much in the same way as the AIDS epidemic does today. In addition, non-European regional economic zones were in interaction as early as 1250-1350, much before the birth of European capitalism. Furthermore, a greater proportion of the world's population was concerned by population movements across national borders in the nineteenth century than is the case today. Finally, periods of globalization ensuing the birth of empires were, until very recent epochs, often followed by periods of isolation. These events are either universal, worldwide or global phenomena.

Globalization therefore appears to be a set of planetary phenomena that have already affected the lives of numerous generations throughout the world. Viewed in such a way, globalization may be considered to be a component of the universal heritage of mankind. This, however, is not an entirely accurate perception particularly if the universal, worldwide and global aspects commonly associated with the phenomenon are taken into consideration. Although the term 'universal' clearly implies a whole, it is generally applied to the realm of ideas and values. The term 'worldwide', however, applies more directly to the interconnection between various regions of the world, as in the development of world trade dating back to the sixteenth century. Finally, the term 'global' suggests the idea of an entirety, be it economic or ecological.

The terms universal, worldwide and global, commonly used to qualify globalization, may thus be associated with institutions such as the church, the State and corporations. The impact that these three institutions have simultaneously had, and continue to have, on the lives of men and women varies in time and across societies. While churches often claimed to bear universal messages, States have a long tradi-

*Prospects*, vol. XXVII, no. 1, March 1997
tion of trade relations within an international context. Furthermore, associating the terms globalization and corporations helps to clarify the ways in which many firms are evolving today. Such trends are characterized by the waging of renewed economic wars on existing investment markets or those yet to be created. This is done in complete ignorance both of the underlying value systems, as well as of the political and social regulatory mechanisms that have, until now, been accepted by many States. The market, much like the ecosystem, has become a global concept. One is consequently tempted to reason in a linear fashion whereby the collapse of values, ideologies, policies and cultures is perceived as being unavoidable.

Although reality may be different, it remains ambiguous. It is important to remember that globalization has been promoted primarily by economic agents. Unlike churches and States that mobilized societies on the basis of projects defined through religions, nations and education, the economic agents behind globalization do not embody any new or mobilizing project. In the absence of any such projects in today's global world, the recourse to societal projects rooted in ideological and cultural traditions becomes both a tempting response, and a defence mechanism. Such responses have as powerful a mobilizing capacity today as they have had in the past, precisely because they are based on a variety of constituent elements of identity, such as ethnicity, culture, belief, language, class, history, family and so on. The recourse to such projects may be largely explained by the fact that the search for identity addresses the need for individual and collective security that globalization neglects. This neglect arises from the weakening of the role of governments in ensuring a set of norms and regulatory mechanisms that are now perceived as being both too expensive and counter-productive, in terms of the innovative and creative capacity required in risk-taking. The constituent components in the lives of individuals and societies have, consequently, been rendered permanently mobile and flexible. It is only by becoming risk-taking entrepreneurs that individuals and groups may define an uncertain position for themselves in today's global society. As Ratinoff rightly points out, insecurity is becoming the unique universal theme.

Education systems are thus confronted with a number of challenges resulting from the absence of societal projects inherent to the process of globalization. The dilemma regarding the role of education systems in the context of globalization may be formulated in the following terms: are education systems to provide support for social movements based on the reaffirmation of culturally-specific local or regional identities, or are they to help individuals become efficient entrepreneurs capable of ensuring their personal development and security? A plethora of intermediate scenarios do exist, but they must all take into consideration certain new trends imposed by the more recent form of globalization:

- Nations-States are, for the most part, no longer in a position to influence economic policies strongly, including financing, budgets and customs taxes. This also applies to educational policy formulation and explains why regional groupings have often presented themselves as the only viable alternative to reintroducing a necessary political actor in the functioning of markets.
- Not only have civil societies largely shouldered the consequences of the

Prospects, vol. XXVII, no. 1, March 1997
process of economic globalization in terms of changes in employment, incomes and security patterns, but they have also developed responses which can no longer be neglected. This is particularly true in the field of education. Despite the risk of seeing the establishment of corporate education systems that both reflect and reinforce social and economic inequalities, the wealth of responses observed may also set the stage for potentially interesting innovative solutions.

- The traditional organization of knowledge by disciplines is an example of how education systems have largely reproduced Taylor’s model of labour and production. This perception of the labour market, however, has undergone radical change. Stable employment is now becoming the exception to the rule (or even a privilege) in a labour market in which the driving forces are mobility, flexibility, adaptability and versatility. The implications of this change are that general transversal knowledge is becoming as important as specific types of knowledge, that the notion of individual and personal skills is becoming as important as qualifications transmitted and validated by institutions, and that on-going training is once again on the agenda.

- The resulting multiplicity of actors, delivery systems and combinations of educational and training processes have rendered the distinction between the world of education and that of production much less visible and more unstable. This trend is largely reflected in the development of human resources programmes that combine work, production and training activities.

- Globalization is also simultaneously contributing to increased exclusion, economic inequalities and educational disparities and knowledge gaps. It is also a contributing factor to the exacerbation of ethnic, religious and nationalist conflicts, the disruption of societies and States, and the weakening of bonds of solidarity that world culture is supposed to reinforce in the global village. Furthermore, some argue that the development of information and communication technologies in a globalizing world renders educational institutions useless if not dangerous. Education is consequently confronted with a dual challenge. One the one hand, education is to propose societal projects based on values, such as peace and solidarity, which have been significantly weakened by globalization. On the other hand, education is to contribute, in the short run, to the resolution of more pressing and urgent problems.

* * *

The variety of contributions in this issue of Prospects clearly illustrates the multitude of issues that are in question relative to education and training in a context of economic globalization. C. Comeliatu sets the stage by situating the general challenges that globalization poses in the search for a development process that is willingly chosen by individuals, groups and societies. He insists on the need to acquire the means to be in control of the expansion of the specific system of globalization. The political and intellectual implications of this task translate into an urgent need for the collective construction of a theoretical and conceptual framework that

*Prospects, vol. XXVII, no. 1, March 1997*
would allow us deal with the fundamental issues that globalization poses to the future of mankind.

Economic globalization is characterized by technological innovations and changes in production techniques. W. Haddad examines the impact of such changes on State policies regarding the acquisition, transmission and application of knowledge and skills. Indeed, governments can reap the benefits of economic globalization on condition that they succeed in setting up differential training policies adapted to their specific contexts. Such strategies imply a simultaneous reinforcement of both primary and secondary general education, the encouragement of enterprise-based training and skill formation, as well as an increase in the endogenous technological capacity produced at the tertiary level.

Based on the observation of profound economic and political changes associated with globalization, N. McGinn attempts to assess its impact on education. Through an examination of decentralization as a reform policy often associated with globalization, he shows how such policies have translated into little significant change in the content and operating mode of education systems.

It is perhaps at the level of transnational corporations then, that the impact on education and training systems must be sought. As crucial actors in the process of economic globalization, transnational corporations play an important role in human resource development. P. Mallampally examines the contribution of such corporations at different levels in the process of human capital formation in the developing world and identifies the potential implications for joint training policies between the public and private sectors.

After an overview of issues relative to the process of economic globalization and educational policies, the second section presents a regional perspective through an examination of various challenges posed to education systems in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Mediterranean region.

If African countries are to make an original contribution to the collective construction of a world system, education systems must provide the foundation for the mobilization of endogenous cultural resources. This is how M. Ndoye defines the major challenge that African education systems face in the context of globalization. This can only be guaranteed through participatory policies that promote cultural identity through the introduction of national languages in education and training programmes. Such an approach would allow for the formulation of adequate responses to overcome the obstacles resulting from the process of economic globalization characterized by the restricted vision of the social, cultural and human functions of education, the progressive dispossession of the responsibilities incumbent on national governments and the marginalization of Africa in an increasingly binary global society.

Structural adjustment is one of the reform packages that constitute an important component of the integration of national economies in a globalized world market. It is precisely the impact on the development of education of these adjustment programmes that J. Tilak examines in a number of Asian countries. By using a series of indicators to monitor the patterns of financing, output and quality, his compara-
tive study of adjusted and non-adjusted countries in Asia reveals a general pattern of decline in educational development that can be associated with adjustment programmes. The impact of these programmes, however, varies considerably from one case to another.

In an international context characterized by the hegemony of a global model of development, it is instructive to examine innovative endogenous models of education and training. C. de Moura Castro does so by looking into the original model of vocational education and training in Latin America. Indeed, in a region in which thinking on education remains largely polarized between European and American influences, the Latin American model of vocational training constitutes a notable exception of endogenous creation. Although there are few examples of South-South exchanges in the field of educational policies in Latin America, the basic model of SENAI is an illustrative and enriching example.

Finally, T. Mitri raises important questions as to the role of education, in an enlarged vision, as a means of supporting dialogue between Europe and the Arab world, as well as between Islam and Christianity in the Mediterranean region. This dialogue is crucial when placed within the paradox of globalization that is producing homogeneity and uniformity while exacerbating the need to (re)affirm cultural specificities. This dialogue constitutes the foundation of any pluricultural civilization project and requires the reconsideration of both our conception of progress and the objectives we ascribe to human action, as well as of our relation to the past.

Notes

3. NORRAG is a network of individual and associate members based in universities, public and private research centres, development agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) committed to improving interaction among research, policy and practice in the 'North' as a means of supporting education and training in the 'South'. The objectives and strategies of NORRAG are the following:
   (a) The collection, critical analysis and synthesis of research on policies and strategies in the North concerning education and training in the South.
   (b) The conduct of applied collaborative research relating to education and training policies.
   (c) The dissemination of information in the North and in the South.
   (d) Advocacy of education and training policies and strategies to governments, NGOs and other organizations in the North.
   (e) The provision of advisory services to governments, NGOs and other organizations in the North.
   (f) Co-operation with other networks in order to share information, carry out joint programmes, join efforts in advocacy and strengthen the research and advisory groups (RAGG) networks.

Prospects, vol. XXVII, no. 1, March 1997
NORRAG started in 1986, but several of its members have been involved with the original RRAG, funded by International Development Research Centre (Canada), since 1977. Today it is funded by Swedish SIDA, the Swiss Development Co-operation, and its own members.


6. Corporations may be viewed as a mode of organization of actors defending their specific interests in an entirely independent fashion from that of other categories of actors.