Globalisation and the post-colonial world: New challenges for education

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DEDICATION

To my family for supporting me over all these years
Globalisation and the post-colonial world:
New challenges for education

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Introduction

In this lecture I have decided to focus on the African continent where much of my current research is based and to consider the main challenges facing education in the global era. I wish to do this, however, from a 'social justice' perspective. I will start by explaining what I mean by 'social justice'. I will then consider the nature and impact of economic, political and cultural globalisation on the continent and how the colonial legacy, including the legacy left by colonial education, has contributed to Africa's current marginalisation from the globalisation process. This will provide a basis for setting out what I consider to be some of the key contemporary challenges for education policy and practice. The lecture will end with a brief account of our on-going research into education quality in Africa that seeks to extend understanding of many of the issues raised.

Before commencing, however, it seems appropriate to offer one or two words about my own interest in this area and how it has evolved. (After all, I always demand of my doctoral students that they are suitably self-reflexive in their own work and so it would seem remiss if I failed to be so myself)! I was born in North London to a Scottish mother and a South African father of Indian heritage. Besides being excellent parents they were both politically active people. In my father's case, he was a member of the African National Congress and a political exile following his participation in anti-apartheid activities. It was very difficult for us children to visit South Africa although we grew up knowing many other exiles and their families. It is from my parents that I gained a deeply ingrained sense of social injustice in the world but also the idea, following Marx, that 'philosophers have often interpreted the world in many ways, the point however, is to change it'! Furthermore, because both my parents were teachers, they also gave me a sense of the importance of education in relation to social change.

Above: (left) Mum and Dad, (right) South Africa with my aunts
Once I had qualified as a science teacher and completed my probationary year I set off to Tanzania to work at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, a school for refugees from South Africa. The experience opened my eyes to the realities of teaching in Africa.

Above: My Form Two class at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College enjoying a relaxed moment.

I taught there for two years before returning to the UK for the birth of my first son, Callum. My master’s and doctoral studies, undertaken at the University of Glasgow, were on the topic of South African education policy and so I jumped at the offer to work at the Education Policy Unit (EPU) based in the University of the Witwatersrand. These were exciting times, coinciding as they did with the transition to democracy in South Africa and the EPU was involved in undertaking research to support new provincial and national policies. Outside of work, my wife, Ursilla, and I were involved in local politics including voter education in the run up to the first democratic elections. Our son, Samora, was born in 1994 one month after the first election.

Since returning to the UK I have taught many masters and doctoral students from all over the African continent first as a lecturer in international and comparative education at the University of Birmingham and subsequently as a lecturer, senior lecturer and professor at Bristol (my arrival at Bristol coincided with the birth of my daughter, Naimah, in 1998). I have had many excellent research students over the years and their work has often inspired...
and informed my own. I currently direct a Research Programme Consortium (RPC) in the area of Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries which is a collaboration between colleagues in Bristol and Bath as well as colleagues in Africa, Pakistan and Chile. I will discuss this programme in more detail later on. Prior to EdQual I have also worked on several research projects with an African focus and had the opportunity to work with many excellent collaborators over the years many of whom have become good friends as well as colleagues and some of whom are in the audience today. They have profoundly influenced my thinking on African education and I owe them along with my existing collaborators a huge debt of gratitude.

**Some starting points**

It is important to make explicit some of the underlying ideas and assumptions that have guided my work over the years even if time does not permit a full discussion. Much of my work is informed by what can be described as a ‘postcolonial perspective’. Put briefly what this entails is that we place centre stage the continuing implications of Europe’s expansion into Africa, Asia, Australasia and the Americas from the fifteenth century onwards, not only as a means to understand the subsequent histories of these parts of the world but as a defining moment in European history and in the formation of contemporary global markets (Hall, 1996). In order to understand Africa’s position in the global world and the implications of this for education we need to take seriously the changing economic realities of the continent since colonial times. We also need to enquire into the political legacy of colonialism including Africa’s changing relationship with the rest of the world and the role of indigenous elites in perpetuating inequalities along the grounds of class, race and gender. At a cultural level, we need to take account of issues relating to ethnicity and language and the role of cultural norms and values that impact heavily on education but are also deeply embedded in the colonial past. In order to delve into these areas we need to combine old and new forms of analysis and critique – from political economy as well as from the cultural turn in the social sciences. Stuart Hall’s idea that the colonial legacy has also ‘worked its way back’ to the ‘centre’ of empire, for example, in the form of immigration from the so-called ‘New Commonwealth’ has been influential in shaping my approach to my other major research interest, namely the achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic learners in the UK which unfortunately I do not have time to talk about today.

My work has also been informed by ideas about social justice, ideas which have become increasingly global in scope in recent years (Steger, 2005). There are a number of reasons for this including concerns about growing poverty and inequality in the world and about human rights and the basis of
international law in the context of the rise of various religious fundamentalisms and ongoing conflicts. They also include environmental issues such as global warming as well as concerns about the plight of specific groups of people including women and girls, indigenous peoples, migrants and so forth. Nancy Fraser provides a thought-provoking analysis of social justice in relation to globalisation that has relevance for Africa. She argues that ‘the acceleration of globalization has altered the scale of social interaction’ and that ‘questions of social justice need to be reframed’ (Fraser, 2006: 1). She highlights the limited applicability of the western state model as a framework for considering non-western contexts and that understanding issues of social justice requires taking account of the broader economic, political and social contexts. Fraser’s ideas have the following implications. Firstly, rather than assuming that issues of education and social justice will take a similar form to those in the west, it is important to base the argument on an analysis of the African context. Secondly, just as important as the issues themselves is an understanding of the process by which some voices get heard in educational debates whilst those of others remain marginalised.

Fraser usefully draws attention to three dimensions of social justice that I will refer back to later on. The first, ‘redistribution’ relates to issues concerned with access to resources. In our case this equates with access by all to a quality education and the potential outcomes that arise from this. Access to and ideas about what counts as a quality education, however, are contested in the context of neo-liberalism and the increasing marketisation of education as we will argue. The second dimension, that of ‘recognition’, means first identifying and then acknowledging the claims of historically marginalised groups. In the African context given the widespread nature of poverty and disadvantage it could be argued that this includes most learners! Some groups are however, more disadvantaged than others including women, rural dwellers, victims of HIV/AIDS orphans and vulnerable children refugees, cultural, linguistic, religious, racial and sexual minorities and indigenous groups. Issues of recognition concern the extent to which the needs of these groups are catered for in understandings of the quality of education including the formal and hidden curriculum and the way that schools are resourced. The third dimension, that of ‘participatory justice’ includes the rights of individuals and groups to have their voices heard in debates about education and to actively participate in decision making. Importantly, for Fraser and indeed for the argument developed here, this is a prerequisite for realising issues of redistribution and recognition. I will suggest that in the African context, given the scarcity of basic resources redistributive issues tend to predominate in the education debate over those of recognition and participation compared to similar debates in the west. I argue, however, that whilst issues of redistribution are clearly central, they are inseparable from those of recognition and participation.
Impact of globalisation on sub-Saharan Africa

Understanding globalisation

Along with a number of colleagues from Bristol and Tanzania I have recently undertaken a review of the literature on globalisation and education. In our report (Robertson, Novelli, Dale, Tikly, Dachi and Ndibalema, 2007) we provide a detailed account of the development of the term ‘globalisation’. Scholte (2002: 4) reports that the terms ‘globalize/globalise’ and ‘globalism’ first appeared in the 1940s, and that globalisation first entered the dictionary of American English in 1961. It became a key analytical tool within the academy from the early 1980s. Since then, equivalent terms have emerged in a range of countries and in almost all of the major languages. During the course of earlier research into Globalisation and Skills for Development in Rwanda and Tanzania (Tikly, Lowe, Crossley, Dachi, Garrett and Mukabarranga, 2003) we learned of a Swahili word, ‘Utandawazi’ that is commonly used to capture local conceptions of globalisation. This fuses two words that relate to the concepts of ‘network’ and ‘openness’. This indicates the increasing local significance of globalisation as a concept, but also the importance of the influence of language and context in shaping conceptualisations of globalisation itself. Thus when we spoke to senior government officials and donors they would tend to emphasise issues such as ‘attracting foreign direct investment’ or ‘promoting export-led growth’. When talking to subsistence farmers, tea, pickers and cattle herders deep in the rural areas, however, the emphasis was more on protecting their livelihoods from the threat posed by cheap imports, opening up regional markets for their own goods and providing a safety net for them and their families, for example through fixed prices and subsidies for basic commodities. All of the African respondents were concerned about the possibly negative affect on African traditions and values posed by the largely western content of the internet. Despite differences, however, the prevailing view, reflected too in regional and national policy initiatives is that globalisation is irreversible and that the key point is how to make it work in the interests of Africa and of the continent’s poor.

Put simply globalisation refers to the growing interconnectedness of the world and the extent to which, according to Giddens, ‘local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa’ (1990:64). For Held et al (1999) globalisation is best understood as an unfolding set of processes rather than a single ‘condition’. I will explore some of these and how they relate to Africa in more detail below. With respect to technology, for example, it has involved a revolutionary process associated with the invention of the micro-chip. This has led in turn to the advent of the computer, e-mail, mobile phones, the internet etc. which have profoundly affected people’s lives. It has also led to changes in the production process.
in the economy because it has enabled Trans-National Corporations (TNCs) to become more flexible in their production processes, outsourcing production to wherever in the world it is most profitable and the idea of ‘just in time’ production, facilitated at the push of a button. It has also facilitated the rapid movement of finance, goods and people around the world. These movements have happened in the context of the dominance of capitalism as a global system and of market driven, neo-liberal policies aimed at opening up borders and markets for goods and services. The problem for many African countries is that they lie at the periphery of these processes. Although there is variation with some countries such as South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Mauritius now classified as middle income countries, the overall economic picture is bleak.

A term often associated with these developments is that of the knowledge economy. Originally coined by Daniel Bell in 1973 to describe the shift from industrial to post-industrial societies, and more recently developed as an idea by Manuel Castells (1996) and his network society thesis. The core argument is that knowledge is a new factor of production that can be contrasted with traditional factors such as land (natural resources), labour (human effort) and capital goods (machinery) (Robertson et al, 2006). Of relevance for our purposes is that large sections of the globe, including Africa, are increasingly on the periphery of these processes. This is reflected, for example, in recent data on access to telephones and to the internet in different regions of the world which gives an indication of the spread of these technologies and the nature of the digital divide.

Figure one: Telephone (fixed line and mobile) and internet access per region (per 1000 people).

This knowledge divide has been exacerbated by the so-called ‘brain drain’ which has affected many low income countries including those of Africa. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Africa has already lost one third of its human capital and is continuing to lose its skilled personnel at an increasing rate, with an estimated 20,000 doctors, university lecturers, engineers and other professionals leaving the continent annually since 1990. There are currently over 300,000 highly qualified Africans in the Diaspora, 30,000 of which have PhDs (IDRC, 2004). The reasons for this brain drain are complex but include poor pay and conditions of service in Africa compared to wealthier countries as well as contextual factors like a higher standard of living and greater security and political stability and freedom of speech. One implication is dependence by African governments on outside ‘experts’. Africa spends US$4 billion per year (representing 35% of total official development aid to the continent) to employ some 100,000 Western experts performing functions generically described as technical assistance. For example, 90% of private firms in Gabon are managed by expatriates (IDRC, 2004).

For authors such as Castells (1993) and Amin (1997), the implication of the new technologies has been to consign much of sub-Saharan Africa to the so-called emerging ‘Fourth World’ and ‘from a structural position of exploitation [under colonialism] to a structural position of irrelevance [under globalisation]’ (Castells, 1993, p.37). During the colonial era Africa’s economic relationship with the industrialised countries was based principally on the export of raw materials including minerals and agricultural produce. Now, however, the development of new materials has undermined the market for primary commodities. Africa has also suffered because high income countries restrict the continent’s ability to sell its products in their countries. As a consequence, Africa’s share of world exports has dropped from more than 3.5 percent in 1970 to about 1.4 percent at the end of 2002 (World Bank 2005: xx) whilst its share of world trade has fallen from 6% to less than 2% the same period (CFA, 2005). African countries also find it difficult to attract foreign direct investment which is low in absolute terms compared to other low income regions and strongly focused on resource-based industries like diamonds and oil. A key barrier for investors is political instability and a poor infrastructure including transport and power (CFA, 2005). The upshot is that much of the manufacturing associated with the new forms of production is taking place in Asia and elsewhere in the world and the high levels of economic growth associated with financial deepening and the increased trade in new commodities and financial services have principally benefited western and newly industrialised nations who are integrated into these new global networks.
A further key dimension of economic globalisation has been the development and influence of the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank and the IMF and their role in promoting neo-liberal, market driven policies. During the 1980s, structural adjustment policies as they were known impacted heavily on many countries of sub-Saharan Africa (although in some instances such as South Africa, many aspects of structural adjustment have also been self-imposed (Marais, 1997)). The main ingredients of these policies are cuts in government expenditure, trade liberalisation policies, currency devaluation, reduction of price controls, a shift to export oriented policies, revised fiscal policies to increase government revenue, user charges for public services like education and increased privatisation. Structural adjustment policies relate to the new market principle because they are intended to make countries more competitive through lowering production costs (through cuts in social welfare and reduced unit costs) and through making Africa more attractive to foreign investors (by means of trade liberalisation, reduced tax and other macro-economic reforms).

For authors such as Hoogvelt (2001) and Chossudovsky (1997), however, the impact of structural adjustment has been economic catastrophe, the slowing down and even reversal of human development – in short what Chossudovsky has described as ‘the globalisation of poverty’ (2001, p. 34). In Hoogvelt’s analysis, structural adjustment policies served a dual function, namely, to enable the periphery of the world capitalist system to be ‘managed’ in the interest of the core countries; and, to more effectively extract an economic surplus from it. In this respect she argues that ‘structural adjustment has helped to tie the physical economic resources of the African region more tightly into servicing the global system, while at the same time oiling the financial machinery by which wealth can be transported out of Africa and into the global system’ (p. 171). More recently, the international financial institutions have been advocating ‘adjustment with a human face’. User fees for some services such as basic education and health have in many countries now been abolished. Through the impact of initiatives such as the Heavily Indebted Country Initiative (HIPC), countries are also being encouraged to pursue ‘pro-poor’ policies although there has to date been a negligible impact on levels of poverty on the continent. Figure two summarises some of the key facts and figures relating to Africa’s position in the global economy.
Integration of African countries in the global economy

- With 11 percent of the world’s population (700 million people), Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for only about 1 percent of the global gross domestic product (GDP) (World Bank 2005: xx).
- Africa has seen its share of world trade fall from 6% in 1980 to less than 2% in 2002. Africa has suffered because developed countries restrict Africa’s ability to sell its products in their countries as well as other ‘supply side’ barriers. (CFA, 2005).
- Share of world exports that dropped from more than 3.5 percent in 1970 to about 1.4 percent at the end of 2002 (World Bank 2005: xx).
- Flows to investment in Africa by foreign investors are average for all low-income countries if measured as a percentage of Africa’s income (2-3%) but are low in absolute terms. It is strongly focused on high value resource-based industries like oil and diamonds. (CFA, 2005).
- Large sums of money depart Africa in the form of capital flight estimated at $15 billion a year. About 40% of the stock of African savings is held outside the continent. (CFA, 2005).
- As a percentage of GDP, Africa’s share of remittances is higher than that of either the East Asia or Pacific region or the Europe or Central Asia region. However, in cash terms, Africa receives less in remittances than does any other low-income region. (CFA, 2005).
- Over the last few years, nearly half of all aid money to Africa has returned to the developed world in debt repayments; that is to say that for every dollar received in aid, nearly 50 cents has gone straight back to the developed world in debt payments. (CFA, 2005).
- Measured as a share of donor countries’ incomes, aid has halved since the 1960s. However, Africa now receives around 5% of its income from aid, which is a much bigger proportion than other low-income regions get. (CFA, 2005).

Inadequacy of growth on the continent

- The GDP per African has fallen by 13 percent, compared to 1981. (World Bank 2005: xx).
- Between 1980 and 2002, sub-Saharan Africa’s population grew from
238.3 to 689 million people – an increase of 80%. This population is moving into towns at a very rapid rate placing a huge strain on infrastructural investment for housing, water, supply and sanitation (CFA, 2005).

• Sub-Saharan Africa – needs an annual growth rate of income per capita of 5% for 10 years to achieve the MDG target of halving poverty. The actual growth rate since 2000 has been 1.6% (UNDP 2005: 66).
• Despite an overall gloomy picture, there is considerable diversity between African countries. 24 countries in sub-Saharan Africa had 5% or more economic growth in 2003 and falls in poverty are directly associated with growth (CFA, 2005).

Informalization of labour and unemployment

• Informal employment in Africa increased from 44% to 48% between 1980-89 and 1990-1999 (ILO 2004: 42).
• Open Unemployment increased from 13.7% in 1990 to 14.4% in 2002 (ILO, 2004: 42).

Inequality in Africa

• Thirty four of the world’s forty-eight poorest countries in the world and twenty-four of the thirty-two countries ranked lowest in human development are in Africa. (World Bank 2005: xx).
• Per capita income levels in sub-Saharan Africa decreased between 1980 and 2001 from 3.3 to 1.9 per cent (UN 2005a:47).
• Average per capita income is US$342 per person (excluding South Africa) but wide variance: $100 per head in Burundi to over $7000 in the Seychelles. (World Bank 2005: xx).
• Poverty and hunger are deepening in sub-Saharan Africa with the number of poor people expected to rise from 315 million in 1999 to 404 million by 2015. (CFA, 2005).
• Some 34% of the population are malnourished – almost double the figure in the rest of the low-income world and hunger kills more people than all of the continent’s infectious diseases put together. (CFA, 2005).
• Average life expectancy in Africa is only 46 years compared to 63 years
in South Asia and 69 in South East Asia. (CFA, 2005).
Whereas thirty years ago the average income in Africa was twice that of both East and South Asia the situation is reverse now and the average African income lags behind that of people in all other regions of the world. (CFA, 2005).

Implications for human development

• Sub-Saharan Africa – 25 million people are infected with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, out of a global total of 38 million (p. 26). Fewer than 4% of people in need of antiretroviral treatment for HIV are receiving drugs (UNESCO, 2005: p. 27).
• About 150,000 African children die per month as a result of malaria (World Bank 2005: xxi).
• Health expenditures averaged only $13 per head in sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa, and were below $10 per head in 16 countries (World Bank 2005: xxi).
• Illiteracy was 35 percent in 2003 (World Bank 2005: xxi).

Political instability and insecurity

• In 2000, 20 out of 45 sub-Saharan African countries were directly involved in armed conflict. (Obidegwu 2004:2).
• Of the 49 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, at least 19 of them (excluding Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe) have been involved in internal armed conflicts. (Obidegwu 2004:2).
• Over 800,000 people were killed in the genocide in Rwanda in three months in 1994 (Obidegwu 2004:2).
• 200,000 people were killed in Burundi since violence erupted in 1993 (Obidegwu 2004:2).
• Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), formerly Zaire, has witnessed the mother of all complex violent conflicts since the mid 1990s with an estimated 3.5 million lives lost in this continuing tragedy. (Obidegwu 2004:2).
• It is estimated in 2000 that about 14 million people have been uprooted from their homes by conflict in Africa. (Obidegwu 2004:2).

Adapted from Robertson et al (2006); Commission for Africa (2005)
Politically, globalisation has involved a transformation in the way that our world is governed. Since the end of the cold war we have witnessed the emergence of one true superpower - the United States of America. Since the end of the Second World War we have also seen the emergence of the multilateral organisations such as the World Bank, the IMF, the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations. With differing governance structures and mandates the UN and its agencies sometimes project alternative priorities to those of the financial institutions and countries are often caught between sometimes conflicting agendas. In relation to education policy, for example, whilst the World Bank and IMF have over the years tended to project an efficiency view of education, the UN and its agencies have projected a more rights based approach although there has been increasing convergence around the need to.

In September 2000, the United Nations (UN) held a Millennium Summit at which all the members of the United Nations made a commitment to work toward a world in which the elimination of poverty and sustained development had the highest priority. The Millennium Declaration was signed by 147 heads of state and passed unanimously by the members of the UN General Assembly. The resulting eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS as well as providing universal primary education, by the target date of 2015 – grew out of that declaration. The MDGs enjoy the support of all the multilateral agencies including the World Bank as well as governments and donors to education. The new consensus is also evident in the Fast Track Initiative which was originally established by the World Bank to fund the MDGs. Funding the MDGs, however, remains a cause for concern. As indicated in figure two, existing rates of growth are a fraction of those required if African governments were to fund the MDGs themselves whilst aid to African governments which has declined in proportion to the GDP of donor countries since the 1960s and has dropped by 8.4% in real terms in 2007 is currently insufficient for bridging the gap (CFA, 2005; UNESCO, 2008).

We have also witnessed the development of the regional level of governance including such influential bodies as the European Union, the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Association of East Asian Nations for example. In Africa this has included the newly formed African Union as well as sub-regional structures like the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA). These regional structures have facilitated processes of free trade at a regional level but also sought to project a distinctive regional identity. The New Partnership for African
Development (NEPAD) is the official programme of the African Union (AU). It promotes a vision of greater regional co-operation in promoting good governance and pro-poor growth. Also important in this regard is the concept of the Mbeki-introduced concept of the African Renaissance which seeks to reassert a positive African economic and cultural message onto the global stage after Africa’s marginalization and suppression during the colonial era. A range of specifically educational bodies and initiatives have also sprung up at a regional level and are having an ever-increasing influence on policy as our recent research has shown (Tikly and Dachi, 2008).

Globalisation has also brought about changes at the level of the nation state. Whilst some commentators have argued that the nation state has lost power and influence, others maintain that it is more a case of its role having changed in the global era. Given what Ankie Hoogvelt (2001) describes as the ‘new market discipline’ states are increasingly expected to play a key role in increasing a nation’s global competitiveness. This is achieved through measures such as attracting foreign direct investment, encouraging export-led growth and promoting free trade and commerce particularly in those areas in which the nation is perceived to have a competitive advantage. Becoming globally competitive has also meant becoming more ‘efficient’ in the way that the economy has managed, including cutting back on government subsidies and spending, privatising state enterprises, encouraging public private enterprises, decentralising services nearer to the point of service delivery etc. Education and skills are often considered key in a nation’s ability to become competitive as Blair’s assertion of ‘education, education, education’ following New Labour’s 1997 election victory exemplified. Interestingly in this regard, rather than relinquishing power to regional bodies, many countries have in fact tightened control over key areas of education including the school curriculum and assessment whilst at the same time decentralising control over other key areas to schools and governing local communities and introducing a quasi-market with the aim of making schools more efficient and accountable although this had mixed implications for both so-called parental ‘choice’ and equity. Roger Dale (1999) has provided a fascinating account of how these policies are spread at a global, regional and national level creating a degree of uniformity in the trajectory of national policies. States in different parts of the world are perceived to have been more or less successful in implementing these policies.

A key difficulty in the African context relates to the particular form of the state which grew out of the colonial era and was designed principally to serve colonial interests. In the post-colonial era it has variously been described as “personal rule,” “elite accommodation” and “belly politics” and as a “shadow” or “neo-patrimonial state” (Boas, 2003). As in other parts
of the world, the state has proved a key mechanism for accumulation both under colonialism and subsequently and the emergence of national and global elites as well as for the maintenance of the status quo through the state apparatus. Holders of positions of power can also use their position to demand goods, cash and labour without recourse to violence and can supplement their salaries with bribes (practices that also have their origins in colonial times). The resulting phenomenon of weak states but strong regimes provides a source of contradiction within the African state system. Although there have been strides towards greater democracy in recent years in many African countries, some of the contradictions of the post-colonial state remain resilient. Critically, the state often also lacks capacity to formulate and to implement policy in the national interest and this reinforces dependency on outside experts and advisors who may not have a clear grasp of local realities. One response to these realities has been for outside donors and multilateral agencies to promote the so-called ‘good governance’ agenda. Some also suggest, however, that “good governance” should not necessarily rely on Western models (Cheru, 2002; Ake, 1998). Cornwell (1998) argues that the greater accountability of African leaders ought to involve the creation of voluntary neighbourhood governments and rural grass roots movements that produce alternative institutions of decision making, drawing on customary notions of justice, fairness and political obligation (p. 14).

Related to this is the observation often made that globalisation is based on the dominance of western cultural norms and values. It is worth reflecting on this briefly. At the level of knowledge for instance, it is often argued that the Western episteme (or ground base of knowledge as it has developed in the various disciplines) predominates. In fact one commentator has gone so far as to suggest that ‘the real power of the West is not located in its economic muscle and technological might. Rather it resides in its power to define……(Sardar, 1999: 44). A key issue in this regard is the need to develop knowledge and ways of conducting research that are relevant for the African context and for solving Africa’s many problems (Ntuli, 1998). An example that Sardar gives is the extent to which so much of our Western thinking since the enlightenment is often premised on an individualistic and competitive view of human nature. He contrasts this with other, more collective/communal ways of thinking in other cultural traditions including Chinese and African traditions. A great deal of care is needed here lest we fall into simplistic stereotypes. Nonetheless, for Sardar these underlying assumptions profoundly shape the way we think in disciplines such as economics, politics and education and even inform our views of what it means to be ‘developed’ and what ‘progress’ entails. Other commentators have also commented on how the western view of human nature is also shaped by interactions and perceptions of non-Europeans during the
colonial encounter (Young, 2001). The kinds of ideologies that were used to justify European domination including forms of biological and cultural racism continue to cast a long shadow in today’s world and are reflected in western perceptions of Africans as being ‘under-developed’ or ‘backward’. They are also reflected in how immigrant communities are sometimes perceived and treated in many European countries. As many feminists have pointed out, the view of human nature in western thought has also often been one defined by men in their own image and to support their own interests. A key challenge implied by the African Renaissance idea is to project a view of African norms and values onto the world stage. For critics of the idea, however, the issue is whose norms and values exactly are we talking about here? Those of urban elites, or of rural dwellers, of men or of women, of indigenous groups or speakers of minority languages? Which norms and values are truly ‘African’ in this sense?

Globalisation, through the medium of the mass media including now the internet has also involved the spread of western consumer culture. As we have seen in relation to our study in Rwanda and Tanzania, the impact of this culture is sometimes resisted and modified. So-called ‘world music’ and computer games from East Asia are examples of how non-western cultural forms have also assumed a global currency although more limited in scope and in the case of world music on terms defined in the first place by the west. Key to the spread of western cultural forms has been the dominance of European languages such as English, Spanish, French and German. It is estimated that 80% of the world’s computer data is stored in English. English is also the language of much international business and diplomacy. As Mazrui has pointed out though, no country has successfully globalised in the post World War Two period without also developing their own language/s of mass communication so that they are capable of expressing the most sophisticated and abstract scientific concepts. This is true, for example, of Japan and some of the other so-called Asian tigers. Language rights are becoming ever more complex in the global era. Part of this complexity is to do with the way that colonial boundaries were drawn up more with the interests of colonisers in mind than in recognition of the realities of linguistic and ethnic diversity. For Phillipson (1999), the complexity is around the use and recognition of different dialects and forms of English, besides standard English. For Rassool (1999) it is about recognising language rights in trans-national settings, such as the language rights of refugees or migrants. Speakers of minority languages may be particularly disadvantaged by blanket language policies that promote either a global language or a local majority language (Brock-Utne et al, 2004; Trudell, 2005). They may perceive learning in these languages as a threat to their culture (Aikman, 1995) and certain ethnic groups, including pastoralists and nomads, find formal education alien and even hostile to their culture (e.g. Tshireletso, 1997; Dyer, 2001).
The above overview of what I consider to be the main contours of the globalisation debate draws attention to some overarching features of globalisation that are important for our discussion of Africa’s position. Firstly, the processes of globalisation do not represent a ‘level playing field’ in the sense that clearly there are winners and losers. Amongst the winners are the US and its allies in North America and Western Europe, the so-called Asian tigers and Australasia as well as more recently some provinces of China and some cities in India and other emerging economies. Integration into the core of the global economy for these regions, however, has had contradictory effects for poverty and inequality and for the environment (Wade, 2004). Large sections of the postcolonial world, however, including parts of South America, South Asia and Africa remain largely peripheral to globalisation processes and are increasingly being left behind by them (Scholte et al, 2006).

Secondly, as Held et al point out, the various processes themselves (economic, political, cultural etc) are partial and uneven in their effects. That is to say they do not apply uniformly across the whole globe and affect all people in the exactly the same way. As Held et al (1999) argue, ‘Political and economic elites in the world’s major metropolitan areas are much more tightly integrated into, and have much greater control over, global networks than do the subsistence farmers of Burundi’ (p.16). You only have to look at some of the inner city areas of Bristol or London or New York to see pockets of the so-called ‘Fourth World’ on our doorstep (Amin, 1997). Furthermore, dominant global economic interests are these days to a lesser extent identified with nation states or even with elites within nation states but are increasingly trans-national in their composition (Robinson, 2000). This emerging class is tied to TNCs and to global financial firms and funds although it is not of a piece and represents competing mercantilist interests linked to different sections of global capital, regional trading blocks and political interests (Hoogvelt, 2001).

According to the United Nations development Programme (UNDP) global income distribution resembles a champagne glass. At the top, where the glass is widest, the richest 20% of the population hold three-quarters of world income. At the bottom of the stem, where the glass is narrowest, the poorest 40% hold 5% of world income and the poorest 20% hold just 1.5%. The poorest 40% roughly corresponds to the 2 billion people living on less than $2 a day. We can see growing gaps between the wealthiest 20 countries and the poorest. The poorest countries in the World have stood still, while the richest have increased GDP per capita by over 300% (UNDP, 2005: 36).
Finally, dominant global forces and interests are contested. This is evident, for example in the relationship between some parts of the Islamic world and the global ‘war on terror’ which some commentators (naively in my view) have attributed to a fundamental ‘clash of civilisations’. It is also evident in the development of global civil society and in international campaigns against poverty and debt and around environmental issues and against corporate-led globalisation etc. Having considered Africa’s position in relation to globalisation I will now turn my attention to the role of education first of all in supporting the present status quo and subsequently as a potential means for realising social justice goals.

The colonial and anti-colonial legacy in African education in relation to globalisation

Formal education systems emerged in Africa as an aspect of the spread of global religions, especially Islam and Christianity. These brought with them systems of schools and universities. These interacted with and often disrupted and displaced indigenous forms of education, ceremonies, skills and crafts training. Formal schooling really developed and intensified, however, with the advent of European colonialism (Rodney, 1972). The significance of colonial education for our discussion is fourfold.

Firstly, it provided a key mechanism and template for the spread of contemporary forms of education. The form that colonial education systems
took in sub-Saharan Africa depended on the form of colonialism adopted, e.g. ‘classical’ or ‘internal’ colonialism (Altbach and Kelly, 1978) and on the nature of the educational programme of the colonising power (England, France, Belgium, Portugal, Germany etc.) which differed in some important respects (White, 1996). Nonetheless, colonial education spread a common structure of schooling throughout the region. It was bureaucratic in nature and characterised by highly teacher centred and authoritarian approaches to teaching and learning (including the widespread use of corporal punishment) with an emphasis on rote learning and examinations. In this respect, colonial forms of schooling and the pedagogies and forms of knowledge that they engendered have proved remarkably resistant to change. The picture below shows a typical primary school in Africa today. The teacher is standing at the front of rows of obedient children. The methods of teaching like the curriculum are formal and rigid. Discipline is enforced with the help of a rod held across the teachers knee.

Above: A primary school in Ghana

Secondly, because colonial education was generally limited to basic education and was never universal it provided only a limited human resource base upon which postcolonial governments could build their reconstruction efforts. Colonial education was also highly selective and elitist in the opportunities it offered for secondary and higher education and was, therefore, implicated in the formation of indigenous elites who in turn have become part of the emerging global elite. Thirdly, colonial education
has been instrumental in ensuring the dominance of western cultural norms and values at the expense of indigenous ones. The colonial curriculum with its roots in the Graeco-Roman tradition was often divorced from local realities and indigenous forms of knowledge. Further, colonial education was instrumental in the globalisation of English and other European languages. In undermining local languages and cultures, colonial education was complicit in a process of cultural bifurcation in which those who had access to such education often became disconnected and even sometimes looked down on their own cultural origins whilst never being fully accepted into European society. This phenomenon is described by Franz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Finally, however, colonial education has provided an important seedbed for local *resistance* to colonialism. Many leading intellectuals and revolutionaries during the heyday of national liberation struggles on the sub-continent were products of colonial education. Some Western intellectual traditions such as Marxism have also inspired and influenced African revolutionary thinking. In this respect, much of the critical edge within comparative education owes a debt to the thinking of anti-colonial and postcolonial scholars and activists over the years including the likes of Nelson Mandela, Julius Nyerere, Ngugu Wa Thingo, Mahatma Ghandi, Paulo Freire and many others. These thinkers have not only produced
devastating critiques of colonial education but have also provided a vision of how education, broadly conceived, can be a tool in the creation of a more socially just society within a post-colonial world order. Thabo Mbeki’s more recent calls for an ‘African renaissance’ as an alternative to western global hegemony build on and develop these and other intellectual currents.

**Social justice and the challenges for African education in the global era**

In this section I wish to draw out aspects of the above analysis for education and to relate the discussion to the discussion of social justice at the beginning of the lecture. In discussing each part I wish to draw attention to some of the issues that I have engaged with in my research in the area. Necessarily the ideas are partial and tentative rather than comprehensive. Like the research journey that has led me to this point, they are also written in a spirit of exploration rather than of closure or finality. They are intended as a contribution to an ongoing dialogue about education on the continent.

**Redistributive justice and a quality education for all**

Earlier I suggested that redistributive justice in education equates with access by all to a quality education and the potential outcomes that arise from this. On the one hand, education can contribute to economic growth through providing the skills required for African countries to become globally competitive. Basic education has been correlated with improved economic growth and productivity including agricultural productivity (Appleton and Balihuta, 1996) and individual economic welfare (Hannum & Buchmann, 2005). On the other hand it can also contribute to the creation of sustainable livelihoods in the fight against poverty and disease. Here Angeline Barrett and I along with other colleagues within the EdQual RPC have been working with Sen’s concept of ‘capabilities’ as a basis for understanding the range of cognitive (skills and acquired knowledge) and affective (emotional, attitudinal) outcomes that contribute to a person’s well being, i.e. that enable learners to become economically productive, healthy, secure and active citizens (Sen, 1999; Barrett and Tikly, 2008). In this sense education has a critical role to play within local communities through providing access to information that can support the feasibility and diversity of sustainable livelihoods and can give communities access to their rights (Lawrence and Tate, 1997). Unfortunately, the picture regarding participation in primary schooling remains bleak as figure four illustrates.
African has the lowest school life expectancy of any region. A child in Africa can expect to attend school (including primary, secondary and tertiary education) for 7.8 years compared to a world average of 10.5 and an average for all low income countries of 9.9 years (UNESCO, 2005: 38).

The Gross Enrolment Ration (GER) in pre-primary education is the lowest for any region at 5.6% compared to a global average of 48.6% and an average for low income countries of 34.3% (UNESCO, 2005: 302).

The region has the lowest GER in primary education of any region at 91% in 2002 with the largest number of children primary school age out of school children (40,370). Primary education on the continent has the highest drop out rate for any region (40.5% compared to 25.5% for all low income countries) and the lowest transition rate to secondary education (53.8% compared to 84.5% for all low income countries) (UNESCO, 2005: 44).

Africa also has the lowest GER for any region in secondary education at 28.4% and in 2002 compared to a global average of 65.2% and an average for all low income countries of 58.3% (UNESCO, 2005: 342). At 2.5% Africa has the lowest GER of any region in tertiary education. This compares with a global average of 21.2% and an average for low income countries of 11% (UNESCO, 2005: 350).

African governments have provided support for the Dakar framework and for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) relating to education, namely:

- Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling
- Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

According to the latest *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*, however, only four countries in sub-Saharan Africa have a high chance of achieving the first goal whilst sixteen have a low chance. Eight others are either at risk or at serious risk of not achieving the goal at all. All African countries missed the gender parity goal in 2005. In spite of promises to support basic education, aid commitments are stagnating and remain far short of what is required to achieve universal primary education (UNESCO, 2008).
Although lack of access is a general issue affecting hundreds of thousands of African children, the situation is worse for some groups than for others. For example, it is alarming that in Africa girls can expect to stay in school for only six years compared to eight years for boys (UNESCO, 2002). Poor educational outcomes and low participation rates become more pronounced at the secondary and tertiary levels and in vocational education. The focus of the MDGs on the access of girls and women to education is not only a question of equal rights. It also has wider benefits in relation to health and welfare including the fight against HIV/AIDS and greater control by women over their own fertility (see also DfID, 2000; Hannum & Buchmann, 2005; Lloyd et al, 2000; Benefo, 2005). Citing recent research (Abu-Ghaida and Klasen, 2004), the CFA, for example, argues that ‘Countries which are not on track to meet the gender parity MDG target in education (and nearly half of those are in Africa) will have child mortality rates one and a half per cent worse than countries with better education systems, and they will also have two and a half per cent more underweight children’ (CFA, 2005: 181). Educating women and girls can also contribute to their alleviation from poverty and can have wider economic benefits. It has a positive effect on overall labour supply through increasing the amount of time women work (UNESCO, 2003). Finally, educating mothers through adult literacy programmes has been linked with improving their children’s attendance and performance at school (UN Millennium Project, 2005).

Those with special education needs, including physical disabilities, are often excluded as already overstretched and under-resourced schools fail to meet their needs (UNESCO, 2005). Orphans (including AIDS orphans) and other vulnerable children are more likely to be excluded. A death of a parent has been related to a delay in starting primary education and lowered attendance of girls (Ainsworth et al., 2002).

The conflicts that have blighted the continent in recent years have had a big impact on issues of access and social justice (see Robertson et al, 2007). A recent UNDP (2005) report, for example, observed that half of all primary schools were closed or destroyed during Mozambique’s civil war between 1976 and 1992. Furthermore, the UNDP state that countries in conflict are likely to spend less on education, and parents are less likely to send girls to school for fear of violence (Kirk 2004). Similarly, poor children are far more likely to be deprived of education and affected by conflict than wealthier children (Seitz, 2004).

The debate however, is wider than access to primary education. Tackling youth and adult illiteracy through adult literacy programmes is also important for realising social justice goals (UNESCO, 2006). There is much debate in the literature over the precise meaning of literacy although there
is less dispute over its benefits. It is seen not only as a fundamental human right but as central to economic growth, sustainable development, individual and community empowerment and the fostering of democracy. Thus it is tragic that whereas in most other parts of the world the number of illiterates has declined, in Africa there has been an increase from 108 million in 1970 to 141 million in 2004 and that of the 30 countries most at risk of not achieving the target of having illiteracy by 2015, 21 of these are in Africa (UNESCO, 2006). Part of the reason for this is the relatively low priority accorded to literacy programmes and adult education in government and donor spending priorities.

Similarly there are pressures for increasing access to pre-primary education where the foundations for learning in later life are laid. Africa currently has the lowest enrolment in this sector of any region (see figure four). There are also growing demands for access to secondary and tertiary education given the role these levels can play in supporting sustainable development including the provision of middle and higher order skills. In the case of higher education the development of an indigenous capacity for research is considered essential for tackling Africa’s problems and breaking the chains of dependency on the West (AU, 2005, Tikly et al, 2003). Furthermore, as we have seen, globalisation has contributed to the informalisation of labour. In Africa, as Afenyadu et al (1999), Tikly et al (2003) and King and McGrath (2002) point out, a very significant proportion of school leavers are likely to enter into the jua kali informal sector which is the mainstay of many local economies. In this respect, these authors ask whether some basic vocational skills ought to be included under the heading ‘basic education’. Similar arguments are advanced about access of children and adult learners to basic agricultural and other livelihood skills such as various kinds of crafts. What emerges from this discussion is that a one size fits all approach to funding education does not work. Rather, given limited resources, defining funding priorities needs to be linked to an analysis of needs in different countries.

The issue of access, however, does not stop at getting learners into formal education. A key feature of social injustice in education on the continent is the poor quality of education that is experienced by many learners. As Ilon (1994) has argued, there is a growing gulf in educational opportunities between emerging global elites and the rest of the population. According to Ilon, ‘a national system of schooling is likely to give way to local systems for the poor and global systems for the rich’ (p. 99). Within this highly differentiated environment, a top tier will benefit from a private education that will make them globally competitive; a middle tier will receive a ‘good’ but not ‘world class’ education, whilst the majority, third tier, will have a local, state education that will make them ‘marginally competitive for low-
skill jobs’ (p. 102). EdQual’s School Effectiveness and Education Quality (SEEQ) project has identified huge variations in the quality of education not only between but within countries and it is likely that these will intensify as countries strive for universal primary education and already overstretched resources are stretched further (Yu, 2007). The quality of education is important for several reasons. For example, there is evidence from the wider literature that improvements in the quality and relevance of education can ultimately have a beneficial impact on enrolments and on continuation rates (Bergmann, 1996; Lloyd et al., 2000; UNESCO, 2005) as well as leading to improved cognitive and affective outcomes.

The poor quality of education is related to a range of factors chief amongst which are an under-qualified, poorly paid and motivated teaching force (which has also been depleted due to the impact of HIV/ AIDS) (CFA, 2005; AU, 2005 for example). There is also a crippling lack of basic resources in many schools including teaching materials and text books. This is exacerbated by the problem of large class sizes especially given recent growth in enrolments. Many schools have a poor infrastructure including a lack of electricity, water and basic sanitary facilities. In terms of teaching and learning, there is a perceived lack of relevance of the curriculum. Curricula are often irrelevant both in terms of local realities and needs but also with respect to meeting national needs. Thus whereas many countries are adapting curricula to promote generic skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and communication, many curricula in African countries remain locked in the colonial past. A perceived lack of relevance is compounded by the prevalence of teacher centred and authoritarian teaching. A key problem in implementing quality initiatives and bringing about change is a lack of capacity for leading and managing education throughout the system including a lack of leadership skills and low levels of community involvement at a local level. Issues of quality in higher education are further exacerbated by the brain drain and a poor research infrastructure.

At the regional level both NEPAD and the Blair-led Commission for Africa (CFA) make several recommendations to improve education quality (see CFA, 2005 for example). NEPAD, in particular, makes proposals to address the digital divide and there are several NEPAD initiatives in the area of ICTs as well as a range of similar initiatives. There is a growing consensus about the potential benefits of ICT use in supporting a more student centred, problem based and collaborative approaches to teaching and learning and to assessment (Haddard and Draxler, 2000; Hawkins, 2002; World Bank, 2004). However, to achieve these benefits and to transform learning, ICT use has to be integrated into national policy and into practice in schools. In this respect, according to UNESCO, most African countries are still at the
‘emerging’ stage of development (Farrell and Wachholz et al., 2003) and the upshot is that many learners continue to be denied access to even basic ICT skills.

Debates about access to quality education are bound up with the privatisation and marketisation of education on the continent. Privatization and marketisation has been a feature of education policy in low-income countries since the 1980s (Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998; Bullock and Thomas, 1997) although the degree of marketisation has varied considerably across the continent (Bennell, 1997). The increase in privatisation is related to the influence of neo-liberal ideas in contemporary globalisation. In most African countries, marketisation has involved encouraging the policy of charging user fees, a proliferation of private schools and universities and the development of a limited notion of ‘choice’ for some students in the urban areas.

Privatisation has major implications for social justice. For example, the introduction of user fees had disastrous consequences for primary and secondary school enrolments during the 1980s and early 1990s in many countries. The policy of encouraging private provision in secondary and tertiary education since the 1980s has led to increases in enrolments at these levels throughout sub-Saharan Africa (secondary school enrolment, for example has risen from 24% in 1999 to 32% in 2005, whereas tertiary enrolments have increased from 4.4 to 5.1% during the same period) (UNESCO, 2008). Enrolments lag significantly behind the rest of the world however. Private education has also been associated with growing educational inequality in countries such as Tanzania (Lassibille, Tan and Sutra, 1998) and the quality of private schools compared to government schools in Africa has been extremely variable (Kitaev, 1999). The African Union argues that the privatization of higher education poses risks for what it describes as the ‘fulfillment of the broad mission of a university, spanning critical thinking, knowledge generation, innovation, production of different skills, “an enlightened citizenry”, laying the foundation for democracy, nation building, and social cohesion’ (AU, 2005: viii).

The proposed marketisation of higher education through the introduction of a General Agreement on Trade in Services has proved controversial in many low income countries (see Tikly, 2003). The implication of African countries signing up to such an agreement would be to open up the provision of education to a range of international suppliers with western, industrialised countries having a distinct market advantage. The recently adopted ‘Accra Declaration on GATS and the Internationalization of Higher Education in Africa’ calls for an internationalization process that is mutually beneficial, and called on African governments to exercise caution on further
GATS commitments in higher education until a more informed position is arrived at on how tradable, trans-national education can best serve national and regional development priorities. In the same vein, higher education institutions, expressed concern (AAU, 2004) that market forces alone are inadequate to ensure that cross-border education contributes to the public good and by implication social justice.

**Recognising diversity in education**

Other issues relating to education quality are less widely recognised in the literature but are also important in relation to Fraser’s second dimension of social justice, namely the need to identify and then acknowledge the claims of historically marginalised groups. This is evident for example in relation to meeting the needs of girls and women in education. Some commentators have argued that the curriculum needs to become more girl friendly, for example by making some subjects more accessible to females (FAWE, 2003a,b). A key issue is the lack of women in senior positions within institutions and at a national policy making level. An important consideration for teenage girls is the availability of appropriate sanitary facilities (UNESCO, 2005). For organizations such the Federation of African Women in Education (FAWE) which champions the education of girls and women on the continent, gender issues need to be tackled in a holistic way and must be mainstreamed into all areas of policy and practice (FAWE, 2003b). Furthermore, girls and women are more likely to experience gendered abuse in African schools (FAWE, 2003a,b; Leach et al., 2003) and teenage girls may expose themselves to sexual risk in order to fund their education (Vavrus, 2003; Vavrus, 2005). Girls also face particular difficulties in accessing some areas of the curriculum, such as science and mathematics and technology education (Swainson, 1998). Children, who suffer abuse and neglect at home, may be especially vulnerable to bullying and abuse by teachers or fellow students at school (Leach et al, 2000).

Similar arguments are advanced in relation to support for Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC). For example, those living in remote rural areas are more likely to attend schools with a poor infrastructure. AIDS orphans are more likely to fall into this category as well as suffering, together with learners, who are HIV positive, the stigma attached to the disease. A growing area for curriculum reform is the development of life skills programmes which include the provision of HIV/AIDS education and the teaching of citizenship. The quality of education with respect to the practice and teaching of human rights and citizenship is particularly important for refugees and those living in contexts of violence. In relation to this last group, Bush and Saltarelli (2000) describe how education has two faces, and its negative side can promote rather than reduce the chances of violent
The authors argue that the negative face shows itself in the uneven distribution of education to create or preserve privilege, the use of education as a weapon of cultural repression, and the production or doctoring of textbooks to promote intolerance (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000: vii). Davies (2004) discusses the multiple ways that school systems might reproduce social inequalities, increase tension and be a catalyst for war. One example of this relationship is pointed out by the UNDP who highlight how school exclusion as a result of poverty contributed in Sierra Leone to young people joining the rebel armies.

Issues of education quality in Africa are intimately tied up with culture and language. For example, the CFA argues that ‘Education systems are often based on inherited curriculum content that is limited to conventional academic subjects…. Curricula should be designed with regional histories, cultures and languages in mind’ (CFA, 2005: 187). Elsewhere in the report there is a suggestion that development must be African-led and informed by African values. Whilst these ideas fit with some of the earlier perspectives outlined, as argued they need to be more adequately developed. Part of this relates to the question of participation which I discuss below and which voices are actually heard and recognised in the debate about values.

A key tension is around whether African-led development is best served by using indigenous or European languages as the medium of instruction (ADEA, 2005). On the one hand, the use of a global language as a medium of instruction can help to diffuse ethnic tensions through providing a lingua franca. Furthermore, the acquisition of English in particular is recognised by many as important for gaining access to power and prosperity. English as a medium of instruction is favoured by many parents as evidenced by the growth of English medium private schools. It is also cheaper to obtain suitable learning materials in English and is sometimes seen as a ‘neutral’ medium in a multilingual setting (ADEA, 2005: 1). On the other hand, no country has successfully advanced scientifically without significantly developing indigenous language/s. Examples here include global success stories such as Japan and Korea (Mazrui, 1999). Furthermore, there are pedagogical and psychological benefits to learning in one’s own language, especially in the early years. These advantages feed into more critical perspectives which see the spread of European languages as vehicles for western consumer culture and as an aspect of neo-colonialism (see Brocke-Utne, 2001; Brocke-Utne et al 2004; Phillipson, 1999; Pennycook, 1995; Watson, 1999, Moodley, 2000, for example).

Faced with conflicting perspectives and complexity, African countries are increasingly adopting a phased bilingual or even trilingual approach, favouring indigenous languages in the early years and global languages
such as English in the later years (Heugh, 2005). In some countries, such as South Africa, choice of languages for learning are left up to individual school communities within broad national guidelines. The Great Lakes Initiative has specifically identified overcoming the deep ethnic divisions caused in part by the legacy of the colonial language issue as fundamental to securing regional co-operation and peace. Many regional initiatives, including the CFA and NEPAD and the AU, are committed to developing and promoting African languages but shy away from detailed policy recommendations about how this commitment can be realised in practice. The problem is that the resources, training and political will required to support such a policy are often lacking (Brock-Utne et al, 2004) and schools often revert to English as the ‘default’ medium.

**Participatory justice**

The third aspect of social justice discussed here, namely, the right of different groups including those less powerful and historically marginalised to have a say in educational decision-making is a pre-requisite for the other two. It is also arguably the most complex to conceive of and to realise. In the wider literature issues of ‘participation’ are often framed in terms of community participation in schooling; the need to make leaders more accountable to the communities they serve; and, as a means to mobilise additional resources for education. A lack of participation is often identified in the literature as contributing to the poor quality of education (UNESCO, 2005). These aspects are undeniably important although I suggest that the existing debate around participation is somewhat limited given the nature of the colonial legacy and of the challenges posed by globalisation. In the context of the post-colonial state and in particular in relation to some post-colonial regimes that spring all to easily to mind, issues of accountability need not stop at the level of the school. For example, a more educated citizenry is better able to make leaders accountable to them. This could, arguably be a reason why some post-colonial regimes seem content to keep their populations in ignorance! In this sense participation is fundamentally a political issue about the need for popular involvement in decision making and which voices, including those of women, of the urban and rural poor, of linguistic and cultural minorities to have their voices heard and their rights acknowledged.

It is also an issue, however, that I argue goes right to the heart of the reform effort. This is on the one hand to acknowledge that many governments are increasingly committed to bringing about reforms to education that are aimed at benefiting the most disadvantaged sections of society, for example through implementing the MDGs or in some cases a more relevant curriculum. Sometimes as in the case of Tanzania after independence or the new South Africa, for instance, this is itself a result of popular pressure for
access to quality education which is seen as a means out of grinding poverty for many parents. It may also often be the result of pressure from the international community. Effecting change in these contexts requires taking seriously issues of participation because as Michael Fullan (1999) and other scholars of the change process remind us, reform requires both top down leadership and bottom up pressure and ownership if it is to succeed and the latter relies on participation. Implementation of change relies on detailed awareness by policy makers and planners of local contexts and realities that may either facilitate or provide barriers to change (see also Samoff et al, 2003). A lack of active ownership of the change process by those most closely affected by it denudes policy makers and planners of this knowledge. This observation is writ large in Africa where the change process from colonial times has been technicist, top down and bureaucratic in orientation relying heavily on outside expertise. Furthermore, many of the policies are themselves ‘borrowed’ from other, often high income countries. The history of reform in Africa is littered with examples of failed or stalled reforms, a good recent one being attempts to implement curriculum change in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent (Jansen, 2005; Chisholm, 2005). These efforts have usually involved a commitment to move away from authoritarian, teacher centred curricula, based on rote learning of facts to one that seeks to develop critical thinking, problem solving, communication and other generic skills that are considered important in the global era. They have often foundered, however, because policy makers have not fully understood the extent to which more traditional ways of teaching and learning and the underlying view of education itself have been so deeply entrenched since colonial times and the other value, practical, psychological and power barriers that may hinder implementation.

Findings from recent work on effective leadership in township and rural schools in South Africa undertaken by Thandi Ngcobo, University of Natal and myself provides a complex picture of both the processes and the benefits of participation at a local level (Ngcobo and Tikly, forthcoming). In our research we focused on schools that despite operating in contexts of extreme disadvantage were successful at raising the achievement of their learners even compared to well-resourced schools in the area. They had also proved effective in implementing change in the eyes of the communities they served and of local government officials. Issues of participation were critical for how these schools were run. In the contexts of South Africa’s transition to democracy many of the principals demonstrated a genuine commitment to involving teachers, learners and the community in decision making, partly in response to historic demands. They were, however, also not afraid to lead from the front in implementing the change agenda. Key here was the emphasis that these leaders placed on what we describe as ‘the
basics’, i.e. getting teachers and pupils to arrive on time, suitably prepared to teach and to learn; ensuring that the resources required for effective teaching and learning were in place; and, ensuring discipline. At times it required balancing participative ‘transformational’ approaches with more ‘transactional’, top down ones. Sometimes, in the context of ongoing urban warfare and high levels of drug taking and crime it involved getting involved in local politics to broker the safety of learners and teachers.

Mostly, however, it involved a ‘values led’ style of leadership in which the purpose of the reform and the underlying values were clearly communicated and understood. This often involved an educative effort, especially given sometimes high levels of illiteracy. Many of the principals emphasised ongoing professional learning for staff to equip them for change. They would spend long hours talking to parents about their role in preparing their children for school, ensuring that they are adequately nourished, that they have a place to do their homework and enough light to read their books. It also forms of distributed leadership – bringing out the leadership potential and efficacy in others to realise change including teachers, parents, learners and other members of the local community through harnessing the popular commitment to education. It is in this wider context that issues of accountability and resource mobilisation need to be understood. Principals would mobilise resources from the community in the form of voluntary contributions but were impeccable in the way that they accounted for these and this gained the trust of the community. In this and other respects, like working long hours and being punctual and so they ‘walked the talk’.

Researching African education in the global era: EdQual’s approach

EdQual’s research focus is on the processes of teaching and learning within classrooms and the processes of leadership and management within schools. Our work also needs to be understood in relation to that of two other DFID-funded RPCs running concurrently, one concerned with access and the other with outcomes. The consortium includes the universities of Bristol and Bath, Cape Coast (Ghana), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Kigali Institute of Education (Rwanda) and the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa). We also have associate partners including the University de la Frontera (Chile) and Aga Khan University (Pakistan). Our research foci have been chosen in relation to locally determined needs but also to the priorities identified above in the wider literature. The Bristol-led project on school effectiveness is based on a secondary analysis of data relating to education quality from fourteen countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The idea is to identify generic and contextually relevant indicators of quality that can feed into our more qualitatively based studies in our partner countries. The project on curriculum change in science and mathematics, is being led by South Africa with partners in Rwanda and Pakistan, Bristol and Bath is
seeking practical interventions that can assist teachers in realising the goals of outcomes based education including critical thinking, problem solving and argumentation. In a similar vein, the ICT in Basic Education project (Rwanda, South Africa, Bristol and Bath) is seeking to understand how limited ICT resources can be used more effectively to improve teaching of basic subjects in disadvantaged schools and in a way that allows them to become mainstreamed. Given the complexities of language policy on the continent, EdQual’s language and literacy project (Tanzania, Ghana, Bristol) will seek to develop new interventions to facilitate both mother tongue teaching and the transition from the mother tongue to a language of wider communication whilst the project on leadership and change (Ghana, Tanzania, Bath and Bristol) is interested in understanding the broader conditions for facilitating change locally. EdQual also has small scale projects in the areas of school buildings (Edinburgh, Ghana and South Africa) and inclusion (Bristol, Tanzania).

I have implied that understandings of education quality are deeply implicated in social justice and are never ‘neutral’ in this respect. Our approach in EdQual is to make our own value basis clear. This section is an attempt to lay out such a basis whilst recognising that constant self-reflexivity and dialogue between partners as well as responsivity to emerging findings means that our values are always subject to scrutiny and review. Our belief that a quality education should extend capabilities and empower individuals, institutions and groups has implications not only for how we understand substantive issues but how we conduct research (Barrett and Tikly, 2008). Hence, capacity building is a key feature of our programme and integral to all research activities. So far we have realised this principle through:

- Southern leadership of the majority of our research projects;
- creating professional development opportunities for less experienced researchers that enhance their contribution to institutional capacity;
- employing action research methodologies that recognise, develop and utilise the capacity of practitioners to innovate; and
- building relations with policy makers to enhance capacity to take up research findings.

Thirdly, we have asserted that a critical understanding of education quality must simultaneously be grounded in an analysis of local realities and related to analysis of how the broader historical, socio-economic, political and cultural context interacts with educational processes. This requires that learners are viewed as located within societies, communities, families and groups, which may face multiple forms of disadvantage resulting from the way that issues such as gender, rurality, ethnicity, economic and physical
vulnerability intersect. This principle has been enacted through the selection of research methodologies that demand dialogue with practitioners and learners together with the implementation of communications strategy that requires dialogue with policy makers from the outset. In this way we hope to ensure the ongoing relevance and flexibility of our approach and of the interventions we hope to develop.

**Some final thoughts**

As Fullan has noted, change is a journey rather than a blueprint. I have tried to explain my journey as a researcher and where I am at the moment. There is still a long way to go. Once again I am deeply indebted to my family and to the academic colleagues and students who have helped me along the way. I would like to extend a special note of thanks to the support staff including our two excellent administrators, Nikki Hicks and Ellie Tucker who make our work in EdQual manageable and even enjoyable and to Lucy Stephens, Valerie Aspin and Keren Durant who staff our excellent research office and have facilitated my research over the years. Lucy along with Charlotte Eve and Alison Calvert from Senate House and John Shapcott made this evenings event possible.

I have argued in this lecture that social justice concerns lie at the heart of the educational debate. I see them as a *sine qua non* for realising Mbeki’s vision of an African Renaissance that also seeks to build on the aspirations of generations of anti-colonial activists and thinkers who have placed issues of education and justice at the heart of their change agendas. The problems of realising change in Africa are certainly deep seated and at times appear intractable. I have, however, seen enough commitment, passion and dedication from practitioners, learners and parents to know that with the right leadership and support from the international community change is possible. I am reminded here of Antonio Gramsci’s advice that we must maintain simultaneously in our efforts both a pessimism of the intellect and an optimism of the will.
References


Footnotes

1 There is always a danger of treating Africa as if it is a single entity and not to
acknowledge the huge differences within and between African countries. I will try to
avoid doing this. In this lecture, the focus is on sub-Saharan Africa although even here
there is enormous variation in contexts as we shall see.

2 In particular I will draw (albeit implicitly) on political economy and in particular the
ideas of Antonio Gramsci whose open ended form of Marxism allows us to consider the
relationship between economic, political and cultural factors and the complexities
involved in challenging dominant (hegemonic) ways of thinking about the world and
affecting change. I also draw, however, on the ‘cultural turn’ in the social sciences and in
particular on the ideas of discourse developed by Michel Foucault. Of significance here is
understanding the constitutive role of language. For example I am interested in the way
that concepts such as ‘globalisation’ and of ‘development’ are constructed in academic
and everyday language and the material impact that these constructions have on social
reality.

3 The Framework was adopted by the World Education Forum Dakar, Senegal, 26-28
April 2000. It sets out global and regional frameworks for achieving a quality education

4 Following in the same vein, the CFA recommends that ‘in their national plans African
governments must identify measures to get girls as well as boys into school with proper
allocation of resources. Donors should meet these additional costs’ (CFA, 2005: 185).

5 Providing girls with one extra year of education has been estimated to boost their
eventual wages by 10 to 20 per cent (Dollar and Gatti, 1999).

6 The definition offered here is that adopted by the UNESCO GMR team (UNESCO,
2006: 30) ‘A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in
which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also
for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the
community’s development.’

7 The Commission for Africa was launched by British Prime Minister Tony Blair in
February 2004 with the aim of taking a fresh look at Africa’s past and present and the
international community’s role in its development path.

8 Besides the NEPAD e-school initiative there are several other initiatives: Catalyzing
Access to ICT in Africa (CATIA) (http://www.catia.ws); Global E-school and Community
Initiative (URL:http://www.usaid.gov/regions/afr/lelnad/).

9 Related to this point is that older, non-digital ICTs also have an important role to play
in supplementing teacher knowledge and providing increased opportunities for
disadvantaged learners. Whilst digital technologies might transform education in the
longer term, an exclusive focus on newer ICTs is likely to disproportionately benefit
elites who have access to them and have the effect of exacerbating the digital divide at
least in the short term.

10 A survey of ex-combatants in Sierra Leone found that an overwhelming majority of
those who joined the brutal rebellions were youths who had been living in difficult
conditions prior to the onset of the war and that half had left school because they could
not afford the fees or because the school had shut down (UNDP, 2005: 159).
Globalisation and the post-colonial world: New challenges for education
Professor Leon Tikly

Biography

Leon is Director of a DfID funded Research Programme Consortium (RPC) on Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries (EdQual, www.edqual.org). The consortium includes partners based in the UK, Africa, South Asia and Latin America.

His other current research interests include the impact of globalisation on education in low income countries and the achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic Learners in the UK. Leon started his career as a science teacher first in London comprehensives and then in a school for South African refugees in Tanzania. He completed his postgraduate studies at the University of Glasgow.

His PhD thesis is on *Education Policy in South Africa Since 1947*. Leon worked as a policy researcher at the Education Policy Unit, University of the Witwatersrand during the transition period between apartheid and democracy in South Africa where he helped to formulate education policy for the new provincial and national governments. On returning to the UK he took up a lectureship in International and Comparative Education at the University of Birmingham.

Since moving to Bristol in 1998 he has worked as a lecturer and then as a senior lecturer in Education Management and Policy before being made a Professor of Education in 2006.