


What is globalisation? A critical analysis.

The term globalisation has been in use from the early 20th century with the Oxford English Dictionary (2021) acknowledging its use from 1930. Popularity increased from around the late 1980's with people such as US President George Bush utilising it in speeches describing a new world order of integration and co-operation (Lechner & Boli 2019). However, there are a range of differing views and debates around what globalisation is and what it means. I will offer a critical analysis of some of the views outlined in 'The Globalisation Reader' (Lechner & Boli 2019) in conjunction with a lesson plan which will reflect an interdisciplinary approach by combining the disciplines of sociology, teaching, and other subjects I have undertaken, such as mindfulness. The lesson plan will incorporate a PowerPoint presentation that is aimed at access level learners, studying a social sciences subject, designed to engage them in a critical analysis of the meaning of globalisation, how it affects their education and other aspects of society. Some educational theories and concepts will also be included along with description about the design and delivery of the lesson. The lesson content will reflect on themes encountered during the global connections' module.


Utilising elements of the diamond nine lesson plan (Appendix) the learning session would begin with a starter question designed to stimulate thinking by posing a broad question, 'what is globalisation?'. This would help to gain some insight into what the students already know or think about this topic and reflects the ideology of Paulo Freire (1996) who states that a teacher needs to begin with what the learner already knows. There is a great deal of conjecture about what globalisation is and how to define it, with Robertson and White (2007) referring to it as a 'contested concept' and Scholte (2002) stating that a critical analysis of the term needs to be included in any approach to the subject. The term is utilised in different ways, often to suit the interests of specific groups or individuals, reflecting their field of operation or discipline. While some attempt to measure globalisation in purely monetary terms there are also social, spiritual and psychological factors that require consideration (Scholte 2002). As Scholte (2002) points out, there is no definitive definition of globalisation but suggests it is best described as a reduction in the barriers to social



contacts and that it overlaps other concepts such as westernisation, universality, and liberalisation.

The next step in the lesson plan will be to introduce learners to a bigger picture of how globalisation is linked to the real world and subject matter from previous lessons which then leads into a recap of previous learning. These lessons will have covered topics such as neoliberal capitalism and international organisations such as the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). This recap will assess students understanding of previous learning and provide an opportunity to address any gaps in knowledge. The rise of neoliberal ideology in the 1980's coincides with the popularisation of terminology around globalisation which appears to support arguments that globalisation is the spread of neoliberal capitalism by another name (Hamelick 2019). However, this presents a possible paradox between the message of integration and co-operation that globalisation is meant to represent and neoliberal ideology which is defined by individualism and competition (Lechner & Boli 2019, Harvey 2005). In the UK, like much of the Western world, the influence of neoliberal capitalism on many of the institutions of society (Harvey 2005), including education, is an issue of major importance and requires particular attention

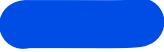
In order to further understand how transnational corporations wield power over the institutions of individual sovereign states it is important to understand the role of nationalism. Beck (2000) argues that in the search for increased profits corporations will seek to remove what they see as obstacles such as environmental concerns, trade unions and welfare. This is aided by governments which seek to open their economy to free markets without realising this is marginalising their own power and in response politicians can turn to populist nationalism to assert their authority. However, this further aids transnational corporations as nationalism undermines the ability of global institutions to impose regulatory frameworks which may limit the activities of transnational corporations (Hamelink 2019, Beck 2000). An example of the strategies employed by corporations to undermine sovereign institutions and avoid regulation is outlined in a study of the food and tobacco industry. Moodie et al. (2013) outlined four main strategies as, employing health professionals to produce research in their favour, misleading the public through partnerships with scientists,



lobbying politicians to oppose regulation, and utilising campaigns of advertising and misinformation to encourage the public to oppose regulation.

In relation to education the influence of neoliberal capitalist ideology is no less present. Kaufmann (2017) posits that the critical pedagogy posed by Freire (1996) when enhanced by contemplative practices, promotes critical thinking and activism which can encourage learners to strive for social change. Similarly, contemplative practices such as mindfulness also raise awareness of the worth of others and can lead to social activism. Comstock (2015) states that those who hold power and have an interest in maintaining the current social hegemony oppose manifestations of critical thinking in the wider population. Currie (1998) posits that critical thinking within universities is being repressed by neoliberal capitalism as organisations such as the World Bank impose greater pressures on governments and institutions to seek private investment which favours vocational courses over the more critical social sciences. Hamelink (2019) argues that university systems discourage the implementation of 'unconventional' assessment methods. At the University of Warwick, the Institute of Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL) offers students the opportunity to devise their own assessments, however, the university still demands that a more conventional piece of documentation must be provided to support any less traditional assessment piece. Other factors affecting education are the imposition of longer working hours and increased class sizes on teaching staff (Currie 1998).


The use of Freire's critical consciousness theory (Bates 2019) to influence the flavour of this lesson is as a response to the dominance of ideologies of the global north in academia (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2020) as Freire is described as an early epistemologist of the south (Darder 2015). Freire was born in Brazil and began teaching literacy skills to the poor in the 1950's which led to him being exiled in 1964 by the incoming military dictatorship (Goulet 2002). This led to Freire becoming a political voice representing the oppressed poor of the global south (Darder 2015). One of the main intentions of Freire's learning theory is to instigate social change by proposing that learning should promote social awareness and reflection on this then leads to action (Bates 2019, Goulet 2002). The issue of the dominance of global north thinking was highlighted by the presentation from Dr Nadeen Dakkak on



migration issues within the global south that have been largely excluded from wider discourses on migration. This reflects the reoccurring theme of the dominance of the global north/western world in the processes of globalisation (Hamelink 2019, Antonio 2007).


Some of these issues will be included in a PowerPoint presentation delivered to the students to provide scaffolding (Pritchard 2009) followed by a brief question and answer session prior to the next stage of learning. To encourage social awareness and critical thinking the lesson will involve organising learners into five groups and allocating each a chapter from the first section of Lechner and Boli's (2019) 'Globalization Reader'. The five chapters represent a range of views on what is globalisation with some arguing for, and others against, globalisation. After reading and discussing the chapters in their groups the learners will then be asked to provide feedback to the whole class. This will then lead to a discussion, defined as active learning within the diamond lesson plan, on the differences between the range of arguments put forward by the authors. I would then return to the PowerPoint presentation to summarise the main points covered in each chapter for clarity, asking questions to assess the knowledge gained by learners.

In the first chapter of the Globalization Reader, 'The Hidden Promise: Liberty Renewed' (Micklethwait & Wooldridge 2019), the authors argue in favour of globalisation from the basis of economic prosperity and even employ an interpretation of Marx stating he foretold the rise of globalisation under the direction of the bourgeoisie. However, Stiglitz (2002) points out that the imposition of global economics, by the US and IMF, had a negative effect on the previously state regulated Korean steel industry and the economy in general contrary to Micklethwait and Wooldridge's (2019) assertion that globalisation provides efficiency. And, even in their statement that globalisation brings wide-spread prosperity the authors admit there must be losers. In chapter two Sen (2019), another economist, argues against the view that globalisation is westernisation stating that it is a process that has been occurring for thousands of years with a flow of benefits from the East as well as the West. However, a recent example of Western dominance is evident in the secularisation of the Eastern philosophies behind 'mindfulness' which has been commodified by neoliberal capitalism to suit corporate interests (Hyland 2017).



A more balanced argument is presented by Hamelink (2019), an emeritus professor of media, in the third chapter. The author provides arguments from the perspective of supporters and sceptics of globalisation over a range of issues including economics, the disparity between the global south and global north, and global communications. In this last issue Hamelink (2019) posits that globalisation affects both integration and polarisation, promoting both positive and negative social movements such as human rights and racism. He refers to the global flow of information as being one of the driving factors behind these movements. However, this flow of information can be skewed in favour of vested interests as outlined by Giroux and Pollock (2010) who refer to the influence of the Disney corporation as a pedagogical marketing machine. Similarly Pina (2010) is critical of the way Disney misrepresents the environment and points out the disparity between their presentation of green credentials and actual carbon footprint, which can be described as 'greenwashing'. Conversely, Samuel Huntington (2019), the author of chapter four, argues that the main issue affecting the future of society will be neither ideological or economic but cultural in nature. Huntington (2019) posits that the West will increasingly need to learn to accept the differences inherent in other civilisations as the economies of non-western countries continues to grow in order to avoid conflict with them.

The fifth chapter is the UN (2019) Millennium Development Goals Report and might be perceived by some learners as representing a relatively unbiased viewpoint. However, as Huntington (2019) points out the UN security council is dominated by Western nations. The report outlines eight goals set by the UN in 2000 and states that while some progress has been made, resulting in lives being saved and living conditions improved, there are many inequalities and shortfalls that still need addressing. For example, the report states that many of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world have been left behind and many inequalities still exist. These are perhaps the 'losers' referred to by Micklethwait & Woodridge (2019). Climate change continues to be a growing problem, with increases in global carbon emissions, and undermines many of the gains made in other areas (UN 2019). The primary aim of the UN goals is that no-one is left behind which is not a position considered possible by the authors of the first two chapters.




One of the main purposes of the PowerPoint presentation is to outline some of the points covered by the five chapters from 'The Globalisation Reader' to ensure that all learners have the opportunity of a clear understanding of the information contained in them. The differences of opinions and views across the five chapters will provide learners with the opportunity to develop critical thinking as they represent a range of ideologies. The final point will be to highlight that the authors represent different disciplines and that this can explain some of the differences in their ideologies and interpretations of what globalisation represents. This will then link to the next lesson, serving as an introduction to the concept of interdisciplinarity.



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Appendix

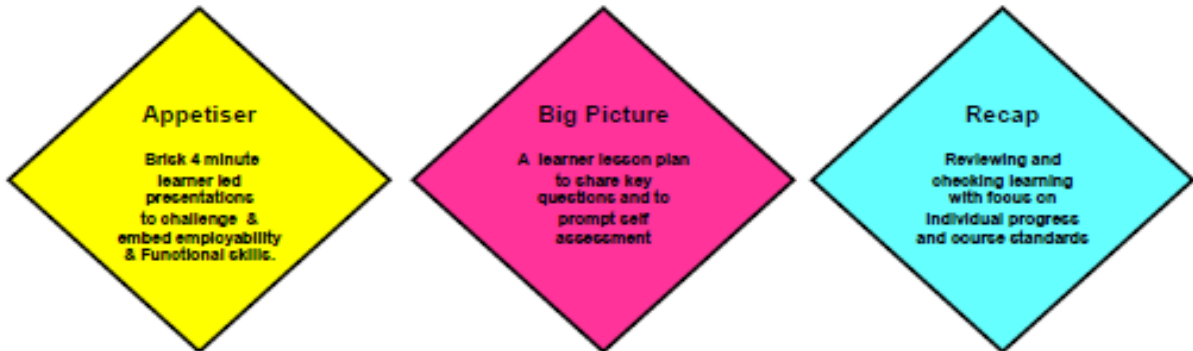


Diamond lesson plan

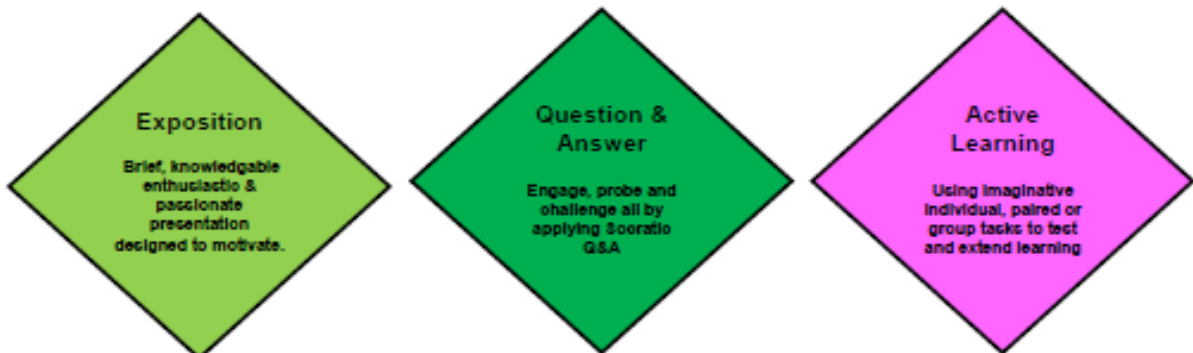




Lesson start



Lesson development



Lesson end



The Diamond lesson is not a fixed template but highlights in a memorable way nine key aspects of effective practice. Not all nine need appear in the same lesson plan or in the same order. They collectively present the ingredients of great lessons and will hopefully prompt your own creativity. Email bradley@collegenet.co.uk for further information.

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