

Reflections on the World Today and Tomorrow and the Caribbean in it: training, education and learning responses

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Introduction

We seem to move from crises to crises, never ever "solving" any. Yet we continue an essentially non-purposive existence. Our governments act as if the only pair of choices is either to go along with the US government, or be against it. Relatedly, we have seen multilateralism, and its rules-based international system, further undermined by the supremacist actions of the USA. The world has become a dangerous and difficult place for small states (whether "rogue" or non-rogue) wanting to defend sovereignty and function fairly autonomously in the international system. It has also become a more dangerous and difficult place for countries such as Germany, France and Japan, while the so-called "rogue states" await, with no hope of real protection, in anger and frustration, the aggressive action of "shock and awe" that the USA may wish to visit upon them.

The states of the Caribbean have been feverishly engaged in the international domain trying to stave off the dire consequences and seek financial, trade, economic, cultural and political security. It becomes a matter of trying to re-situate the Caribbean, with a fair degree of credibility, in this US supremacist world. Is much of this doable or are we doomed to merely the response reflex?

This paper begins an ambitious task and represents only an early word on this question.

The US has been transforming global relations

No one should question the right of the Pentagon and Congress to set their own defence priorities and implement them. Nevertheless, the US, however mighty militarily, is only one of many countries in the world of states and it has an undoubted leadership role to play. Whatever it undertakes should be realistic and in its consequences genuinely promote human rights and democratic institutions within countries. It is not easy to achieve this when the majority of top policy makers have enduring ties to the companies that will benefit from increases in military spending (32 major Bush appointees!). In addition, since taking office, the President and Vice President have assembled a government peopled heavily with representatives from the oil culture (from which they themselves came).

The current administration obviously puts great faith on the ability of the military force to solve the problem of terrorist violence (FY 2003 military budget request was US\$396 billion versus US\$25 billion for international aid). It does not appear to be willing to acknowledge that foreign aid is a strategy that enriches poor and rich nations alike and hence is the real security strategy. The "real" "axis of evil" is a combination of poverty, desperation and disease.

"Forcible regime change", in Iraq, is already showing that the USA will need to deploy at least 100,000 soldiers for the next ten to twenty years (at a cost of billions of US dollars each year). How much better poor countries, and the poor in rich and poor countries, would be if such resources and those dedicated to making war and preparing to make war were available for poverty reduction and social development! But we must resist saying that such is the way of power

in the world and believe instead that a qualitatively different world order is possible and act to help bring it into being. President Bush and his collaborators will not be "in power" beyond a second term.

Liberal Globalisation and the Caribbean

It has become the practice to assert that Caribbean countries have been born globalised. It would be a truer picture to say that since Columbus (because there was an autonomous history before) these states were born into a global regionalisation of the world into the, sometimes, changing individual hegemony of European colonising states.

To be true to history, it must be recognized that, since the 15th century, there have been repeated waves in the rise and fall of liberalism. Some attribute special characteristics to current liberalization. Does it represent a new enveloping and un-retreating **systemic** reality? Much of the discourse in the literature and in common talk assumes that we are in a **permanent** change to this state.

If this is a permanent situation, there is every virtue in confronting the challenges immediately and with every national sinew. Indeed, even if this is not a permanent but merely a **long-lasting** phase, it would still be devastating not to make necessary adjustments conducive to Caribbean advantage (even if the reaction is not of total submission to its demands). The tactics of adjustment may be infinitely more selective but change and adaptation are necessary, especially with those aspects of the globalisation process which will still continue regardless of what happens to the **liberal** dimensions of globalisation.

This implies that there can be alternate types of globalisation processes other than the liberal. The intellectual and practical task is to separate the **permanent** from the **contingent** aspects and for Caribbean states to relate, with full commitment, to the permanent aspects while being more cautious (but engaging) with the contingent. Furthermore, our intellectual, diplomatic and practical action should be to supply the qualifying description of globalisation which offers positives outcomes for all the states in the world. The greatest problem that Caribbean governments and intellectuals face is that this task has not been **explicitly** undertaken to guide public and private policy and action.

A catalogue of speeded up processes, changes in production methodologies, information and trade linkages, application of technology that replaces whole categories of workers along with the emergence (somewhat slowly) of sufficient numbers of new types of work and workers, exist. These portend a vision that the world **cannot** be radically changed from this modal path.

This view can only be sustained if it is deliberately ignored **whom, which** firms and **what** countries, are deliberately gathering the bulk of the benefits. Those who already have real power -- military, industrial, cultural, religious, technological, and the like -- are the overwhelming beneficiaries. It does not have much to do with the laziness, corruption, cultural divisiveness, racial/ethnic strife, poor governance and ideological choices of poor countries. This is hardly concealed by the emergence of new players such as the Asian NICs, China, Sweden, Ireland, India and Brazil to name the most foregoing new entrants at this time. In most situations these new entrants replace countries which are on a downward slide and are not adding to the list of rich industrialized countries.

The Permanent features of Globalisation

Rich countries see a distinction between the **inexorable** aspects of globalization and those that are as **a result of policy**. These vary from country to country. The Caribbean should feel free to act on such distinctions.

The more inexorable features are said to reside in (i) the rapid pace of technological change and application to production; (ii) the impact of information technology on the provision of services, the production process and on the speed of financial transactions; and (iii) the logic of capital and its markets. The real peculiarity is that the very features that characterize each of these notions also exist in the absence of liberal trade -- that is under globalization and under retreat from globalization. Yet, these are the key features which many writers associate with the globalization phenomenon.

Our argument is that there is considerable scope for Caribbean governments to determine:

1. their different degrees of insertion in the world economy;
2. how to open or close the economy, when to enter markets and which markets; and
3. how to work for the universalising of equitable access and use of "technology".

Along with Hazel Henderson we should see technology and liberalization not as globalization but as *mainsprings* of its current manifestation. The Technology mainspring is easily perceived to be part of the permanent features of the contemporary world and generates a globalizing impulse. The second mainspring (liberalization) is what ideologues want to promote, also, as a permanent feature of contemporary globalization. It is in relation to this mainspring that social impacts are truly derived.

Describing the Future

The problem is how to describe the contemporary reality and possible immediate future. It could be described as the utter triumph of liberal globalization -- the end of the history of cycles between nationalism and liberalism. A major question is whether capitalism will progress uninterruptedly (notwithstanding rise and fall, again and again) in a cyclical manner or is it now manifesting a terminal systemic decline.

It is argued by some that in most fundamental ways, the contradictions of the capitalist system cannot be contained - hence terminal secular decline. Capitalism is entering a period of "chaos". Politically, anything is becoming possible. Each country or trading group or economic bloc is trying to grab the opportunity for repositioning and to seek for global hegemony.

In terms of social forces, a crude line-up could be:

1. those who wish to change everything in order that nothing changes; *versus*
2. those who seek to reconstruct the world so that it may become more democratic and more egalitarian.

Our view is that a new form of hierarchical system based on dominance by a few and on continued private accumulation could emerge over the next fifty years.

Another view, in opposition to this hierarchical system, is where the emergent world society would be under the democratic control of those who really produce the world's wealth and services. It could be based on a principle of collective self-emancipation through collective self-mobilisation. The combination of forces would be based on class, race, ethnicity, gender, and so on producing multiple economies but based on the decommodification of the world's economic processes. This would be based neither on ownership nor even economic control - decommodification would then emerge as a new socio-economic form.

There is also a liberal view, based on an idealized view of how the USA functions [Futurecast's] which is deserving of consideration and forms the basis of a "moral" reminder to the USA leadership. It argues that political governance will certainly change considerably and in unpredictable ways during the 21st century. National boundaries will expand, fragment and contract -- but peoples all over the world will still look to their national governments to take care of their essential national interests and to provide those essential and desired governmental services and benefits that are beyond the means of lower level governments. By the end of the 21st century, national governments will still retain the essential characteristics of sovereignty. The ultimate authority to tax and spend for national and international purposes, deploy military force, make and break international treaties, and make and enforce the law within national boundaries will remain with national governments.

According to the International Futurecast, capitalist markets are inexorable -- they always eventually win. The great material prosperity obtainable during the 21st century will be realized only by those nations that *adopt* and properly *adapt* to their own conditions the fundamental economic and political virtues of the American Way of Life. Besides the several examples of initial peaceful democratic exchanges of power, a wide variety of nations have continued to enact significant economic reforms, opening up their economic systems, and creating political, legal and economic

environments conducive to capitalist commerce.

This is evidently a forecast, based on idealised USA values, which fails to deal sufficiently with structural inequality in the society and the continued rapid accumulation of wealth by an extremely tiny number of persons in the USA, among other such factors.

How far has globalization proceeded in the Caribbean?

In today's world, globalization has not proceeded very far. The first major issue is that much of the world has been bypassed. Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Russia, all of the Middle East (except Israel) and large parts of Asia have been ignored. The same is true in relation to the degree of participation in globalization processes within individual countries. As Linda Weiss had pointed out, in 1991, 81 per cent of the world's stock of foreign direct investment was in higher wage countries on the North (USA, UK, Germany and Canada). Furthermore, as Kenneth Waltz demonstrated, in many ways the interdependence levels have not exceeded levels reached in 1910, in trade, and in capital flows as well as a percentage of GDP, as Hirst and Thompson also indicated. So it is probably only the money market that has become the economic sector truly globalized. Even so, financial markets are at least as integrated as they are now as they were in 1899/1901 (Waltz).

It is important to note, with Waltz, that the world **has not been homogenized**. The US depends on capital imports. Western Europe does not. Japan is a major capital exporter. There are many such other issues. So globalization is not a statement about the present but a probabilistic statement about the future.

Notwithstanding supremacist and unilateralist actions, the small, mini- and micro-states of the Greater Caribbean need to maintain their **sovereignty, capacity for self-determination, protection of human rights of their citizens**, and to **achieve sustainable and high quality livelihoods for all their peoples**. Ensuring these outcomes require social and political cohesion and legitimacy of the highest order and quality, **exceeding that which obtains in larger and more powerful states**. This level of social and political cohesion can effectively be achieved, at the national level, only under a new governance system based on reformed institutional structures in schools, churches, law courts, public and private bureaucracies, labour, political parties, and family, and, additionally, in attitudes and values of individuals.

This is a great transformation. The reform of self and adopting new ways of going about the world, region and the nation-state doing business will enable the small, mini and micro state to ward off most of the negative and exploitative impacts of the restructuring global order. These should permit the best choices to be made and the best practices to be undertaken. A reformed and revitalized governance system will help the Caribbean countries to achieve the greatest likelihood of success in this grand endeavour.

There have been, from time immemorial, cumulative technological developments that have served to contract our vista of the world and move us toward the global city. So the question may be asked: what is it about changing technology, free market ideology, increasing interdependence and competition in this conjuncture **which evoke a displacement of nationally-directed development by global centred forces**, to which nation-states have to accommodate without being able to conquer or consistently control?

Certainly, there is no single, grand, all-inclusive directive force propelling nation-states (weak and strong, near and far) with irresistible urgency, into the start of the new millennium. Differential and sometimes contradictory waves of change are at work at various levels of global society and in various action arenas. And all of this occurs against the seemingly unchanging structure of the world system -- such as the free flow of capital, interstate rivalry and uneven development. Nevertheless, current changes appear to be breaking out of a cyclical mold and that there may be developing a secular and persevering decline of capitalism. This provides a *fortuna* (a *kairos*) leading to an unprecedented opportunity in combination with similar forces in other countries to change the social face of the world.

The Caribbean is expected not to miss this moment as, regrettably, it missed the moment of the early 1970s (the New International Economic Order (NIEO), and the New World Information Order (NWIO) because of inadequate understanding of the process and weaknesses in Southern countries' strategic organisations. Recently, Prime Minister Patterson, on behalf of the Caribbean states, sought to help re-define a new mission for the Non-Aligned Movement in

this liberal globalising world. This task is in need of urgent and wide-ranging resolution and should be allowed to influence the post-LOME agreement with the European Union, the impending one on the Free trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and the Millennium Round of the WTO.

Globalisation, spurred by reduced transport costs and advances in communications and other technologies, has fostered greater interdependence and cross-border linkages between the countries of the world. Countries that seek to de-link, and opt instead for autochthony, risk paying a high price in not achieving future economic growth. In response to the trade and foreign investment opportunities resulting from globalization, a large and growing number of developing countries have embarked on the liberalization of their trade and foreign investment regimes, as well as the adaptation of their domestic economic structures and strengthening of their export capacity.

The Response from Academia

Given the permanent features of globalisation, these determine a more central role for knowledge, education and learning to meet the needs of citizens. These citizens are rapidly being seen as "world" citizens. They are emerging in symbiotic response to the fundamental changes wrought upon the structures of production and distribution within the world economy.

Regrettably, the prevailing and dominant education and learning paradigm in the Caribbean is not strategically placed to meet this demand for new knowledge and of the information-intensive global economy. While, to be sure, we must respond aggressively to this challenge and opportunity, we must be ever conscious to resist with all of our collective might **the dehumanization of knowledge, education and learning**. It is not just the economic dimension of this globalization to which a response is demanded.

Globalization is also social, political and cultural. The social, economic, technological, cultural and political aspects are fundamentally inter-linked and compartmentalization should be resisted at all cost. It is impossible to over-stress this point. It is especially important that knowledge and education should not be limited to a select few. Access must be universal from the very beginning of the herculean effort in which we are to be engaged. We are not as relevant as we should be to the emerging "knowledge societies".

There can be little doubt that we must actively re-shape our educational systems, at all levels. This, however, must be done in ways consistent with our national priorities.

The question is, have our leaders properly arrived at national priorities in meaningful consultation with educational authorities, opposition parties and the non-state sectors (business, labor, NGOs, service organizations, churches, etc.)? Getting over the hurdle is no easy task, even when all the speeches from our political leaders and educationalists acknowledge the importance of properly responding to the swiftly changing world.

Capacitation activities are needed by developing countries in the face of the massive changes, opportunities and challenges. One such could be the development of a National System of Innovation, which is intended to harness the resources of the public, private, academic and NGO sectors. Out of this process could come an agreement to use the emerging vehicle of Multimedia, Multipurpose, Community Information Centers, (MPCICs or telecenters).

In this the private sector must accept, at least, **three roles for itself**. One is the rethinking of education. The second is collaboration in training for the new economy. The third is the provision of educational services with a competitive edge based on flexibility, management style and information technology. This should occur, at least, from the secondary and tertiary levels, as well as in the fields of skill development and upgrading, and lifelong learning.

Interdisciplinary forums for the purpose of rethinking education are also needed. We must invest in the required hardware and software, and also the developmental software production processes. A good Internet infrastructure is expensive, (very), but when it is amortized per student over the years, it makes economic sense. Additionally, it is the cheapest way to provide superior quality education on a mass scale - quick and cost-effective. We must also pay for the services of the best quality assurance agencies in international education, which are globally accepted, not merely the University of the West Indies or the University of the Virgin Islands, to name a few. In producing the global

professional - an individual qualified to provide professional services in any country worldwide - this aspect is vital. Academic quality must be well-defined and articulated from one system to another. There is no time to lose.

Discussion and Conclusion

What this really means is that the social, political and cultural dimensions are absolutely important and if education, knowledge and learning are to contribute to meaningful existence, these aspects have to be deemed **more** significant and worthy of our attention. The research here is exceedingly limited and this deficiency has to be urgently corrected.

If Caribbean states are to survive as viable societies, cultural entities and distinct political arrangements, this research and knowledge become more compelling. Our nation states are at risk and a new education has to be called into existence to give individuals and collectivities the foundations for cultural, political, social, economic and technological resistance. Once again education, knowledge and learning is called upon to defend and strengthen nation-building and speak to moral and ethical concerns, as necessary resistance against an essentially eurocentric and rampant globalization. Educators, as always, have a vested interest in strengthening appropriate institutions of cultural transmission.

If we continue to implement a cosmopolitan (that is, globalized) modernizing mission in our universities, we may, unwittingly, contribute to Caribbean marginalization. Is it possible to both validate Caribbean personality and culture and participate effectively in the Information revolution and Information age? That is our fundamental challenge as Caribbean Educators in our primary, secondary, tertiary and university educational institutions.

In the face of globalization, we are being asked to reconstruct an educational system that should have been extensively repaired already - especially since most countries acquired independent status or autonomy! We all, as educators, operate on the principle that the education which we offer is benign and equitable in nature, in which there is a constant search for truth and knowledge. The real truth is that in content, it is not any of these things. That is because we have not truly examined its "socializing", "meritocracy" and "victim-blaming" functions. These in turn serve as justifications why, in our country, in which everyone is free and equal to one another, a relatively few persons are more free and equal than others.

We have somewhere along the line, in our preparation as educators, got caught up in the ideology, especially now in this period of speeded-up globalization, that our principal task is to prepare students to make productive contributions to profit-making enterprises -- and immediately! We have to resist, with all our might, this view of formal education, which indeed has little to do with knowledge and learning. This is not what education should be doing.

We have, somehow, against our better judgement, "bought into" what is called the **social order maintenance perspective**, which justifies why some persons will work and others will not; why some others are well-paid and others merely eke out an existence; and why some advance and others stagnate or even retreat.

The educational system is one of those instruments which make the failings and shortcomings of capital accumulation seem like the "natural" and "unchangeable" fundamental law of human society. We need to overhaul the educational system, **but not principally because of globalization's impact**.

Do we know for sure what constitutes **positive** education? If we knew, would we have continued an inherited and adopted educational system and continue to surrender to its historical dynamics?

We need to confront globalization through a clear strategic approach based on our own perspectives on positive education. This needs to obtain in all dimensions of the impact. To accept technologically and economically determined development is to manifestly take two bitter ideological pills at the same time. For one the technology being elevated is dehumanizing technology. In the second instance, the economic development that accompanies it is not people-centred.

The capitalism/globalization process is really a philosophical system that turns people into objects - objects as commodities. So even a focus on human development becomes reduced to the tradable commodity -- human resources

management (HRM) -- in order to maximize profits. We become "commodities" or "skills" which "determine our value". Beyond that we are "valueless". We starve because we are underdeveloped countries. We become "human capital" on the open market employment and use this to bargain with potential employees.

Business imperatives are becoming educational imperatives. Globalization's impact today is to make education less hypocritical than it ever was. **There will hardly be room for philosophers, poets, artists and critics of conventionality**, except in the high fee-paying schools and post-secondary institutions, which only the elite can afford. Some other students may be able to, only by mortgaging their future to paying back hefty student loans.

There is no doubt that the new technologies, when applied to knowledge, education and learning **could serve as "catalyst for deconstructing the introduced formalized nature of education systems and evolving more appropriate educational systems in developing countries."**

As Winters has indicated, education and learning can be designed to be culturally appropriate and reflect traditions while using contemporary techniques. Furthermore, the technology offers "the flexibility to accommodate to different learning styles as well as cultural differences. This then may allow accessibility, quality, equity and effective management, as well as for life-long learning.

Nevertheless, there still exists **an economic and political power structure**, which will resist the introduction of or insufficiently implement the required facilities and programs to democratize education. Burniske's reminder is apposite: "we ought to resist the fallacy that computer networks will inevitably integrate communities divided by race, ethnicity and culture". The same goes for social and economic class and regions. There is always the institutionalized tendency to "repress alternative voices, annihilating human diversity" coming from the hegemonic forces within our countries and universities. Let there be resistance and revolution instead.

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