

# Questioning the internationalization agenda in foreign language education

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# Globalization: Dimensions

- an ongoing and ever-evolving process
- about the increasingly extended and intensified interconnectedness of economic, political, social and cultural phenomena.
- rapid change as a constant
- more about heterogeneity and diversity than homogeneity and uniformity
- characterized by time/space compression
- nation-state/global tensions
- traditional notions of citizenship and national identity are in question
- **strong affiliations to Social Democracy have given way to the capitalism of neoliberalism.**

# Steven Vertovec on (1) *internationalism* and (2) *transnationalism*



- (1) With regard to interactions between national governments (such as formal agreement's conflicts, diplomatic relations), or concerning the to-ing and fro-ing of items from one nation-state to another (such as people/ travel and goods/trade), we might best retain our description of these practices as 'inter-national'.
- (2) When referring to sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges among non-state actors based across national borders- businesses, non-government organizations, and individuals sharing the same interests (by way of criteria such as religious beliefs, common cultural and geographic regions)- we can differentiate these as 'transnational' practices and groups ...

(Vertovec, 2009: 3)

# What is internationalization in (higher) education?

Irrespective of contextual differences within and between countries, nearly all higher education institutions worldwide are engaged in international activities and are seeking to expand them. Engaging with the world is now considered part of the very definition of quality in education and research. (Egron-Polak, 2012; <http://globalhighered.wordpress.com/>)

# **The goals of internationalization at any given university might include:**

bringing general prestige to the institutions as  
‘internationalization’ sounds good

equipping the university with more cultural capital in the  
local university market

the educating (or making) of ‘global/cosmopolitan  
citizens’

enhancing the research knowhow of academic staff  
through contacts with more competent fellow researchers  
from foreign institutions

the generation of income through funded projects

generating increase tuition fee income: ‘international’  
students (often) pay more than ‘home’ students

# Typical internationalization activities in universities (Byram, 2012: 376)

- study abroad
- teaching languages and cultures
- preparation for work in a global economy
- staff mobility
- presence of foreign teaching staff
- teaching courses abroad/franchising courses
- presence of foreign students on courses
- courses with international comparative themes
- joint/double degree courses shared by 2+ institutions
- joint research projects in 2+ institutions.

# Means include:

Study abroad programmes in various forms

On-site branch campuses or partial replication of what goes on in x ('back home')

Distance learning programmes

Computer mediated networks of interaction

Creating international spaces locally



# The downside

Academic staff: Are they with the programme and up to the task?

Students: Are they with the programme and up to the task?

Costs

Quality control (internal and external)

Consequences for local culture and identity

Sincerity: Does it arise *organically* or is it just follow the leader?

Necessary and available infrastructure (human and material) to execute?

# John Airey (2011): salient EMI issues for Swedish university lecturers



- short notice before EMI experience
- the lack of training before EMI experience;
- preparation time for teaching (more than in Swedish)
- uneasiness about the quality of lectures: shallower and less precise?
- lack of flexibility in communicative repertoires (e.g. inability to do humour as they would in Swedish)
- overall lack of fluency in English (in contrast with Swedish)
- the lack of clarity regarding role as monitor of students' English

# **What kind of students?**

## **‘Global cosmopolitan citizens’**



### **David Held's (2002) ‘cultural cosmopolitanism’**

... the capacity to mediate between national cultures, communities ... and alternative styles of life. It encompasses the possibility of dialogue with traditions and discourses of others with the aim of expanding horizons of one's own framework of meaning and prejudice. (Held, 2002: 57-58)

**In applied language studies, see Byram, Zarate, Risager, Kramsch ... on intercultural communication**

# Karen Risager (2006): 'structuralist', 'cognitive' and 'semiotic' approaches to culture



- All culture can be thought of as a whole made up of symbolic systems, the highest-ranking of which are language, matrimonial rules, economic relations, art, science, and religion. (Levi-Strauss, 1966: XIX)
- A society's culture .... does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things that peoples have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them. (Goodenough, 1964: 36)
- Believing ... that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Geertz, 1973: 5)

# Michael Byram's intercultural speaker



As someone who possesses:

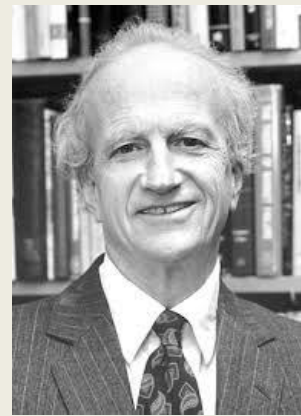
- intercultural communicative competence as a complex knowledge of intercultural relations
- knowledge about social groups and their practices in both home and target cultures
- the ability to interpret and relate knowledge
- discovery and interaction skills
- critical cultural awareness or the ability to evaluate perspectives, practices and artefacts of both home and target cultures

(based on Byram: 1997)

# The bigger picture: Neoliberalism and education

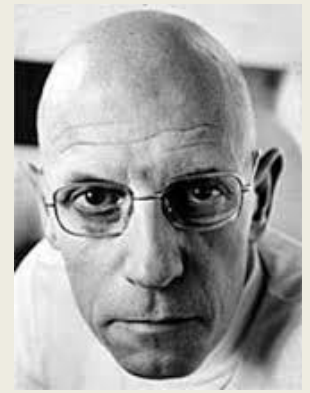
... the purpose of education from the neoliberal perspective is to service the economy through the production of human capital .... In other words, education is re-construed as ultimately being about the production of workers with the skills and the dispositions necessary to compete in the global economy. (Gray & Block, 2012: 120)

# The rise of Gary Becker's (1964/1992) 'human capital'



... individuals decide on their education, training, medical care, and other additions to knowledge and health by weighing the benefits and costs. Benefits include cultural and other non-monetary gains along with improvement in earnings and occupations, while costs usually depend mainly on the foregone value of the time spent on these investments. (Becker, 1992: 43)

# Michel Foucault on *homo economics*: lectures on 'biopolitics', Collège de France, 1978-79



The society regulated by reference to the market that the neo-liberals are thinking about is a society in which the regulatory principle should be not so much the exchange of commodities as the mechanisms of competition. ... Not a supermarket society, but an enterprise society. The homo economicus sought after is not the man of exchange or man the consumer; he is the man of enterprise and production. (Foucault 2008: 147)



# Wendy Brown (2005): The 'neoliberal citizen'



... neoliberalism normatively constructs and interpellates individuals as entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life ... [and i]t figures individuals as rational, calculating creatures whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for “self-care”—the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions’ (Brown, 2005: 43).

# Israel Kirzner's entrepreneur



Without knowing what to look for, without deploying any deliberate search technique, the entrepreneur is at all times scanning the horizon, as it were, ready to make discoveries (Kirzner, 1997: 72)

Making the “right” decision, therefore, calls for more than the correct mathematical calculation; it calls for a shrewd and wise assessment of the realities (both present and future) within the context of which the decision must be taken’ (Kirzner, 1980: 6–7)

# Rajoy presenta la futura Ley de Apoyo a Emprendedores, Madrid 11/06/13



El presidente del Gobierno, Mariano Rajoy, ha presidido en La Moncloa la presentación del Proyecto de Ley de Apoyo a Emprendedores a la que asisten el presidente del Congreso, Jesús Posada, la vicepresidenta, ministra de la Presidencia y portavoz del Gobierno, Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría, y los ministros de Hacienda y Administraciones Públicas, Cristóbal Montoro, de Empleo y Seguridad Social, Fátima Báñez, y de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad, Ana Mato.

# **The entrepreneur:**

Who can be an entrepreneur?

Entrepreneur of what?

‘Start-ups’?

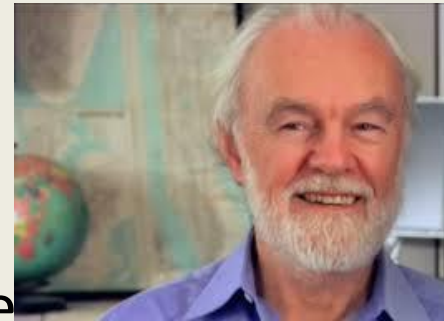
Short-termism vs long-termism?

Is this what education is about?

**Class warfare:** neoliberal policies from late 1970s onwards have constituted not only a point of conflict and struggle but an actual attack on the well-being and survival of the popular classes. (Block, 2017)

The shift from the 'social democratic compromise' to the 'neoliberal compromise' and the top 10% (1% + 9%) against the remaining 90%. (Dúmenil & Lévy, 2011, 2014)

'Accumulation by dispossession', or activity by governments and financial institutions which transfers wealth from the less well-off to the wealthy. Examples: privatisations, the sale of state-owned assets, dubious financial activities like Ponzi schemes, home evictions after mortgage defaults. (Harvey, 2010, 2014)



# The constellation of dimensions model of social class

**economic resources** (e.g. income, wealth, property, material possessions)

**social resources** (occupation, education, technological knowhow, societal and community status and prestige, social networking)

**behaviour** (consumption patterns, pass-times; symbolic presentation of self, mobility)

**life conditions** (type of dwelling, type of neighbourhood, quality of life, physical health)

(Block, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017)

# English and the class divide

Outside the core Anglophone world, the new 'good citizen' is understood to be someone who:

(1) has acquired English as well as 'intercultural communicative competence'

(2) self positions and is positioned by others as an 'international' or 'global' citizen

# Members of an emerging global middle/upper class who:

- share interests across nation-state and continental borders;
- share modes of behaviour and ways of thinking which take precedence over local behaviours and worldviews; and
- have the capacity to effect control over events independently of their nation-state affiliations.

As a result of these three characteristics, they come to see themselves as 'global cosmopolitans', perhaps with a greater loyalty and affiliation to their transnational lives than to their lives as strictly local and within their nation-states of origin.



## **But other languages can also come to mark an upper/middle class position**

Monica Heller (2006): changing conceptions of French and French immersion education in Canada

Deborah Palmer (2009): changing conceptions of Spanish and Spanish immersion education in the US

Adrienne Lo & Jenna Kim (2011): South Korean *deuramas*, in which cosmopolitan Seoulites speak Italian and other European languages.

EU policies: English + at least one other EU language

And in general, being 'ethnic' and speaking a 'non-national' language at home in increasingly multicultural societies.

# Conclusion

In far too many contexts, superficial, selective policy making is the norm

Policy making tends to be top down

Teachers are the key intermediaries between policy and praxis

The media often have access to too much information

Parents often have access to too much information

The bigger issue: what is education about?

What is foreign language education about?

# **Back to transnationalism, multiculturalism, interculturalism , multilingualism ...**

What realisations/versions of these phenomena exist in Danish schools?

How are they taken on board by the national curriculum?

How are they taken on board by the foreign languages curriculum?

How are they taken on board in the day to day practice of foreign language instruction?

A common scenario in educational systems across Europe today is one whereby ministries of education adopt and implement an *internationalization* agenda with a view to developing 'global citizens' who are better equipped and able than their predecessors to function in an increasingly globalized world. An integral part of such programs is foreign language education, as there is a recognition that the ability to communicate with people from different countries and cultures around the world is fundamental to living one's life 'globally' and not just locally. The ideal of plurilingual global citizen is all very well in and of itself; however, behind the scenes and in the implementation of internationalization policies, there are many unresolved issues which arise due to lack of clarity as regards the meaning of key notions. In this paper, I critically examine some of the key notions in foreign language education as part of internationalization agendas, from 'internationalization' itself to 'globalisation', 'global citizen', 'plurilingualism', 'intercultural communication', 'transnationalism' and 'cosmopolitanism'. I also relate the emergence of the plurilingual global citizen to socio-economic stratification and class politics and practices both within nation states and across nation states, examining the prospect that internationalization policies and practices in foreign language education may serve to exacerbate already growing inequality in European societies.