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The Globalisation of Education and Culture

Lecture on a International Conference on Globalization at the University of Iceland 19th of October 2002

Biography of the author

Professor Einarsson is the former dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration at the University of Iceland. He obtained his PhD in Germany. He is the author of 6 books on microeconomics, business administration and cultural economics and over 50 journal articles and conference papers and over 400 shorter articles on economics, fisheries and politics in magazines, newspapers, and on websites. Professor Einarsson is a former Member of the Icelandic Parliament and Chairman of the Board of the Central Bank of Iceland and served as a delegate for Iceland at the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York.

Ladies and gentlemen

I divide my lecture into 6 parts.

Introduction and definitions

The relationship between concepts

The uneven education

Culture as a public good

When is education and culture global?

And, finally, some concluding remarks

1. Introduction and definitions

There is some magic in the world. Harry Potter is not the only person who uses magic. We too have some words of magic; words we use more frequently than others. I am going to speak about three of these words today: education, culture and globalisation. We often use these words and there is something promising about them. For young people these three words are

not only guidelines for a prosperous and peaceful future but they are also the frameworks of daily life.

The people in the world are getting older. Although about 40% of the population is under 15 years old in some countries, the proportion of younger people in the western world is falling. 29% of the population in OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, was under 15 years in 1960, but in 1999, 40 years later, it was only 21%. Nevertheless, young people will grow up and they will govern the world one day and there are some really tasks ahead.

The world has undergone a transformation in the space of a few decades, let alone two millennia. Today, the population of the earth is about 6 billion, as compared to 1.3 billion in the year 1900 and an estimated 300 million at the birth of Christ. 25 years from now, the inhabitants of this earth will be 8 billion. It does not take a sharp mind to see that these facts will completely change the problems we face and the ways in which we face them, and it will be up to the young people of today to solve those problems.

We have many definitions of education. We can regard education as a process designed to increase knowledge and improve abilities. Education has both economical benefits and spiritual benefits. The magic words of Rene Descartes “cogito ergo sum”, “I think, therefore I am” meaning that we can doubt everything except that human beings think. That, we cannot doubt. And it is this process, the process of thinking, which is the foundation of both education and culture.

We can define culture in various ways. We can regard culture as any human behaviour or activity passed from one generation to another, which describes, creates, preserves or transmits feelings or surroundings of human society, consisting of languages, beliefs, ideas, customs, arts or other related aspects.

We also have an economic definition of culture created by UNESCO for the purpose of international economic statistics in the Framework for Culture Statistics. UNESCO has divided the concept into nine categories: cultural heritage, printed matter and literature, music, performing arts, audio media, audiovisual media, social and cultural activities, sports and games and, finally, environment and nature.

One of the buzzwords of today is globalisation, which is variously regarded as a solution to all Mankind's problems or as the root of all Mankind's future problems.

The process of globalisation can be conceptualised in the context of three schools of thought. First, that people are living in a global marketplace where the influence of nation-states is diminishing. Second, that nation-states will remain powerful and there will be several regional blocs in the world. The third possibility is that societies and states will undergo a process of profound change in an uncertain world with an unpredictable outcome.

The current environment we are operating in is a turbulent one, which we from time to time call the "new economy", a reference to the rapid economic growth founded on technological progress, notably in information technology.

But profound changes have occurred before in the history of Mankind. The last one took place 250 years ago at the beginning of the industrial age in 1750, which started with the utilisation of the steam engine and contributed to the massive urbanisation that characterises our environment today.

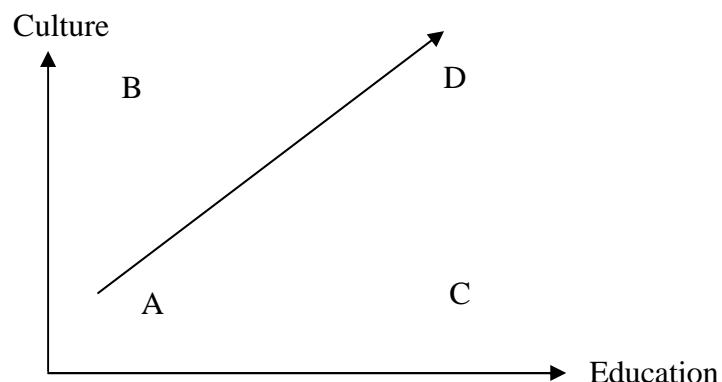
If we go further back in the history of Mankind there were great changes 500 years ago in 1500 when European countries conquered the Western World. Going back another 250 years to 1250 brings us to the beginning of the Renaissance, another time of profound change and discovery sometimes described as the

creation of a bridge spanning thousands of years back to classical times. Yet another 250 years bring us to the year 1000, the Age of the Vikings and vast migrations, which changed the face of Europe.

I am not proposing the thesis that all great changes occur every 250 years, but it is remarkable that all these changes, whatever their timing, involve building bridges across time and space and all of them are heavily dependent on communications and transportation. At all these great crossroads Man had to solve entirely "new" problems with entirely "new" solutions, but looking at them from our vantage point of the present we see things in sharper focus and deeper perspective.

2. The Relationship between Concepts

There is, of course, a close connection between education and culture in the world. This illustration shows a linear correlation between culture and education, meaning that increased culture means increased education and vice versa.



A, B, C and D are countries.

A represents underdeveloped and primitive regions or countries. These were widespread in older times

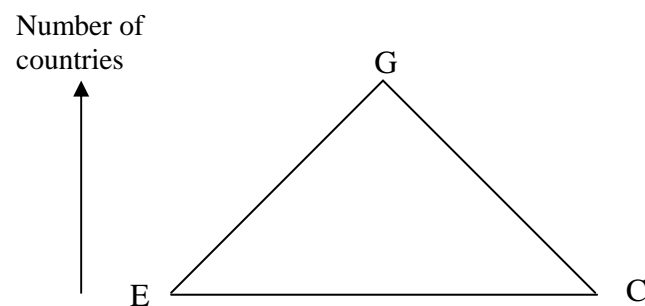
B represents specific culture areas marking the beginning of culture and civilisation and isolated areas of modern times, e.g. Greenland, Lapland, and areas populated by Indians in North and South America

C are “young” countries, which are not old enough to possess a long tradition, e.g. the United States of America

D are developed "old world" countries, such as the countries in Europe.

Countries are usually moving from group B to D, which means they have specific cultures and are improving the education of their subjects.

Education and culture are obviously closely related and we can form a triangle, a golden triangle, in the following picture, where G is globalisation, E is education and C is culture.

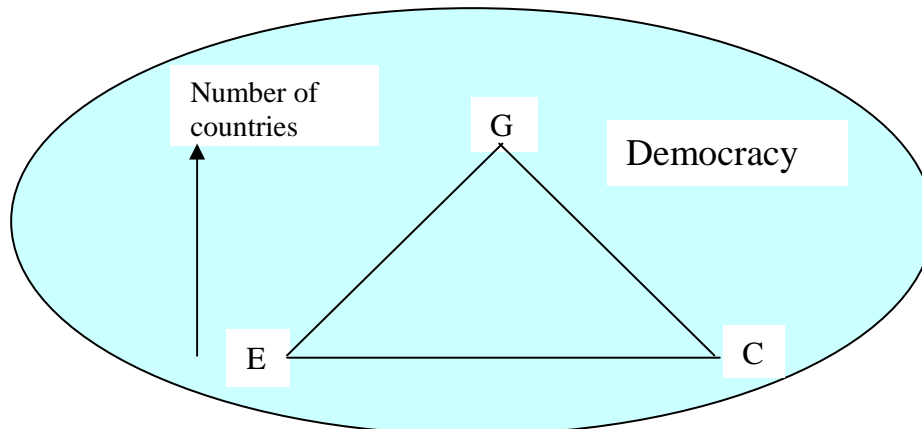


We speak about globalisation when education and culture within countries are more and more connected to the outer world.

Nowadays education is international and so will culture be too.

But we have to bear in mind the unequal distribution of education in the world. We are facing problems by the globalisation of education and culture. We have said before that education and culture are important factors for the well being of

humanity. Actually there is one more magic word, which is necessary for the success of this concept: democracy.



Democracy is the key to the successful implementation of education and to the creation of a successful environment for culture in the economic sense. One of the lessons of history is that democratic countries are more likely to have higher living standards, more education and more advanced cultures than countries where there is no democracy at all, weak democracy or political instability.

Education and culture increase well-being, but this comfort is not always measured in economic figures. If you listen to fine music and it makes you feel good, your enjoyment does not register in the gross national product, although it is quite possible that the productivity of your work will increase as a result of the music. Increased productivity leads to increased gross national product but we, the economists, are not yet able to measure the contribution of music to this increase in our statistics.

We have called this economic phenomenon "positive externalities". Positive externalities are when activities lead to increased well-being without inclusion in the gross national product. An example of negative externality is pollution, which decreases the gross national product in the long run.

In economics we differentiate between private goods and public goods. Private goods are more or less what we could call merchandise, e.g. food, clothes and cars. Public goods are e.g. traffic lights, peace, education and culture. Public authorities mostly provide public goods, and there are no traditional markets with demand and supply. Of course private enterprises play a big role in supplying both education and culture, but one of the characteristics of public goods is positive externality.

Globalisation is so important in this context that we speak about "global public goods" because increased trade between countries and increased communication have a great impact on public goods, such as education and culture.

The fight against poverty in this world is, for example, a global public good, because actions to reduce poverty benefit not only the poorest, but also the people engaged in the actions as well, because they want to live in a society with less poverty.

Public goods are supposed to improve the living standards of humans and the environment . They are mainly provided or supported by democratic authorities. Democracy is therefore very important, indeed essential in every society, if we want to succeed in raising living standards.

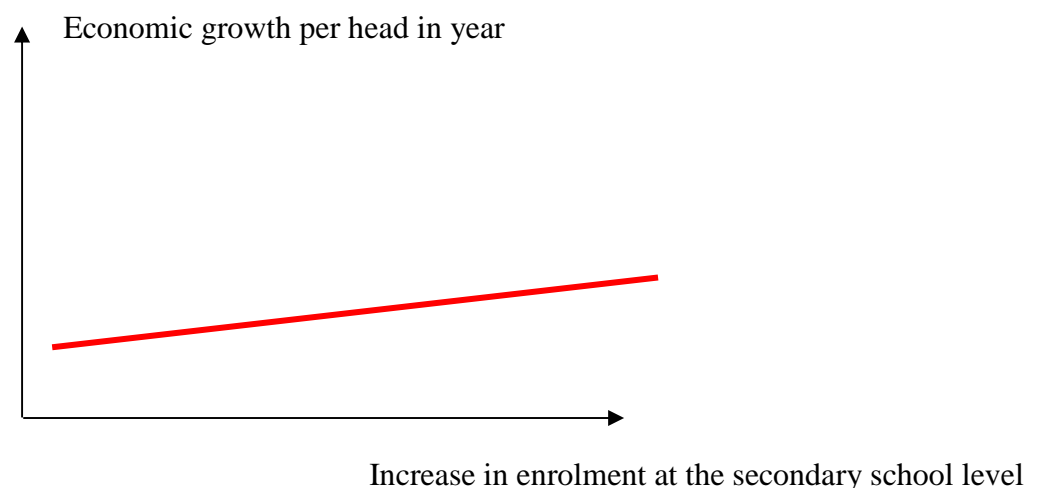
3. The Unequal Education

Education as a process of increasing knowledge, and improving their abilities is the main task of young people. The school is at the centre of most children's lives outside the home. I will not elaborate on education itself although, as you know, there are different opinions on education in modern societies. The globalisation of education means, among other things, that people can communicate more easily than the past generations.

The global education may be said to have one universal language: English, which make things simpler. There are 7,000 languages in the world although 300 languages are used by 95% of the world population. We should face the fact that we have more or less reached the time before the tower of Babel, with English as the dominant-language of global higher education,

We must avoid judging other countries by the standards we are used to from our western world, where only one third of world-population lives. The differences between nations and generations are so huge. Narrowing this gap is one of the most import tasks for the young people of today. That is not easy because the gap between rich nations and poor nations is, in fact, expanding, so is the differences between individual citizens and groups of citizens within almost every modern society.

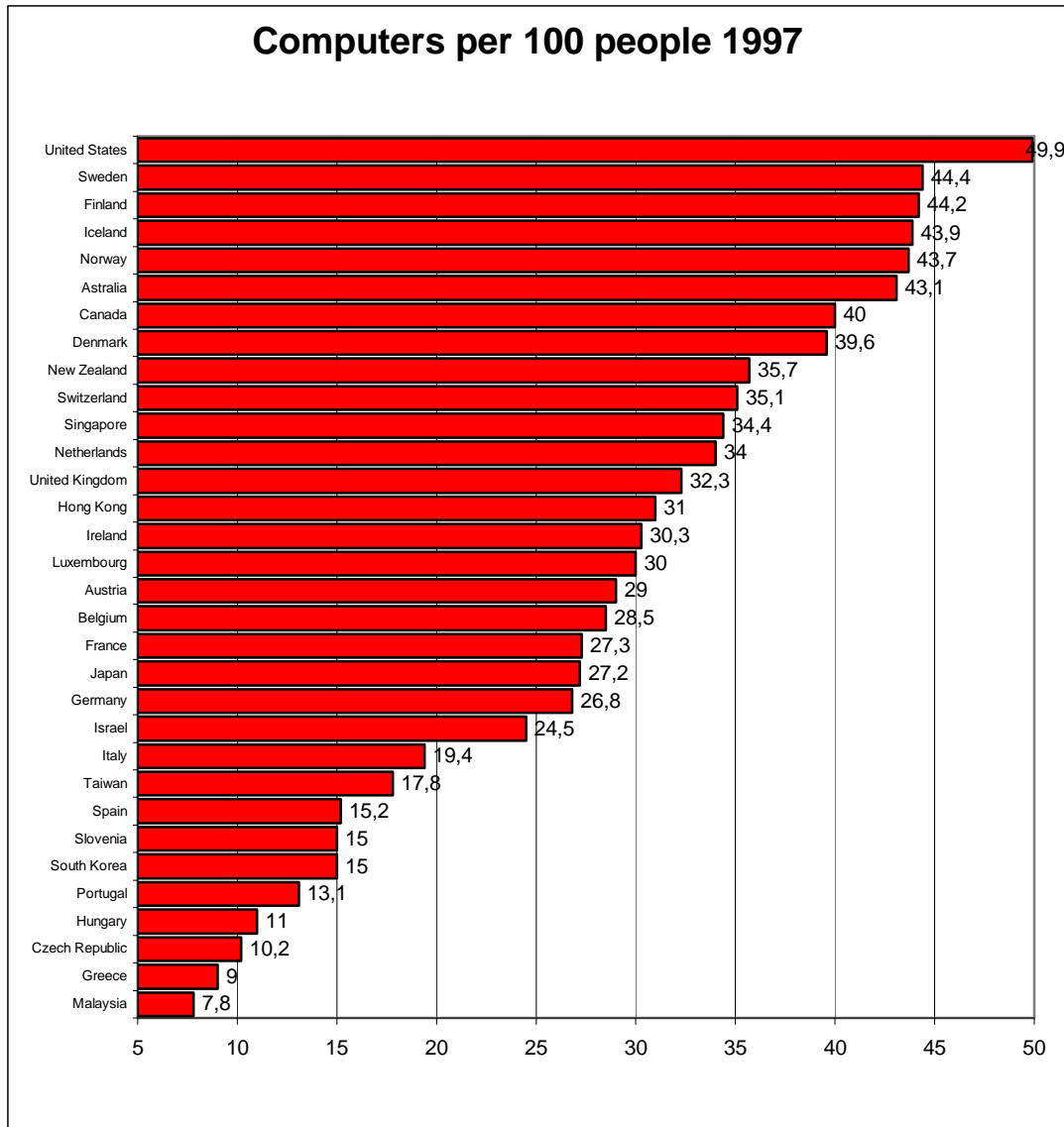
The best way to fight hunger and over-population is to increase and improve education. This is easy to say, but is it true? Yes. It is true. It has been scientifically proven that the best way to decrease the over-population in difficult areas is to improve the education of women.



There is a connection between education and economic growth, as this chart shows. Economists have also proved this; among them is a colleague of mine at the Faculty of Economics and

Business Administration at the University of Iceland. These scientists compared the relation between the proportion of the population completing the secondary level of education, that is pre-university education, and economic growth. They proved that a 30% increase in enrolment would translate into an economic growth per head of 1%. They looked at data from more than 150 countries. This conclusion supports the thesis that the best way forward in a global context is to strengthen education. This strategy is also the very best way enable the greatest possible number of people to take advantage of the opportunities of the new economy.

The tools for modern education, especially global education, are unevenly distributed.



We see in this picture the ownership of personal computers (PCs) in some countries. You see the difference is big, as the developing countries have only 1-3 computers per 1000 inhabitants.

Education today is lifelong learning. This is quite different from the time I attended school, which was not all that long ago. The OECD has pointed out five key features, which are important in my opinion.

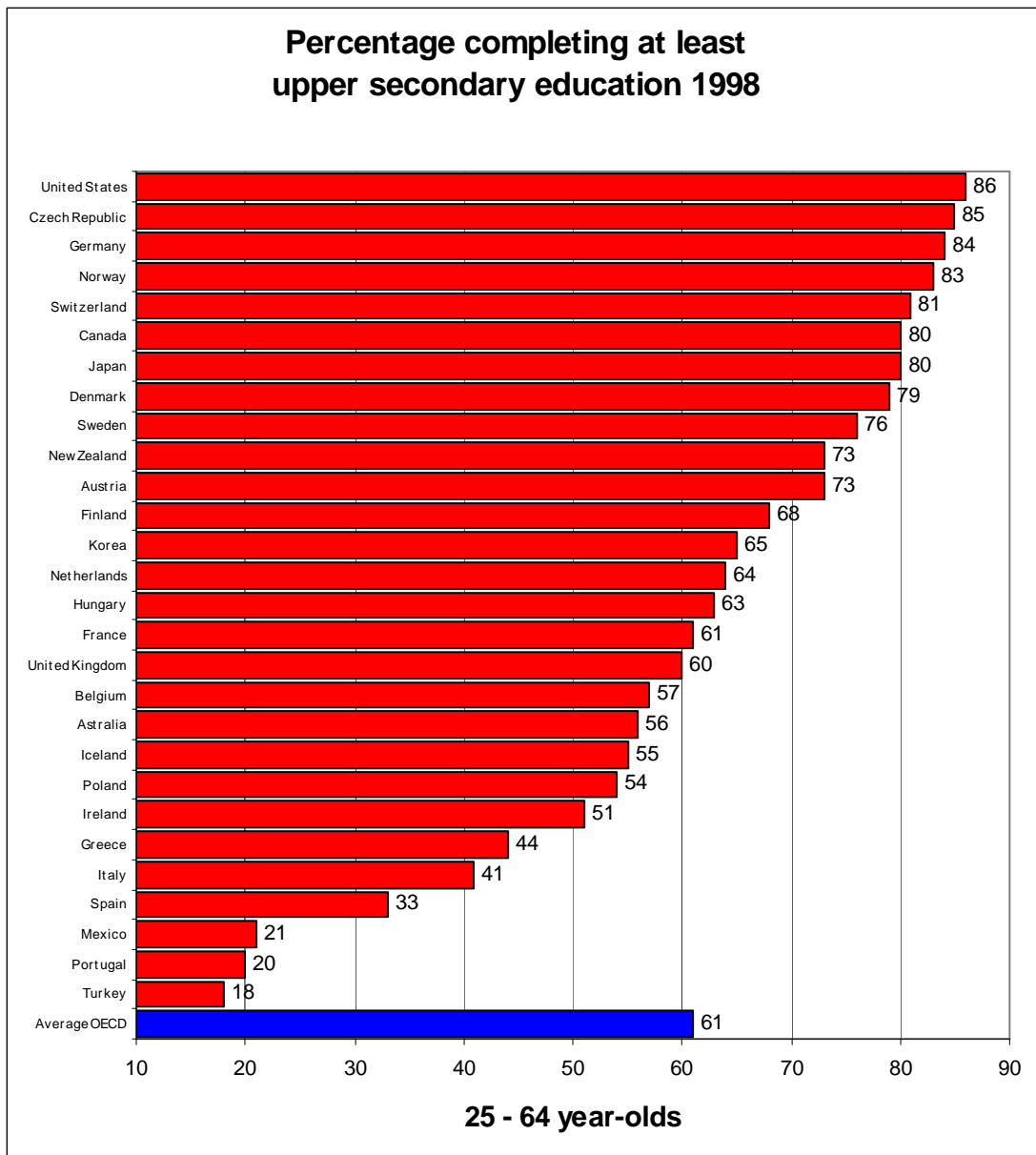
First, that all learning must be recognised, not only formal coursework. This is important, for example, with regard to the education of adults.

Second, that motivation is essential in education. This is important with regard to the economic inequality among the students of today

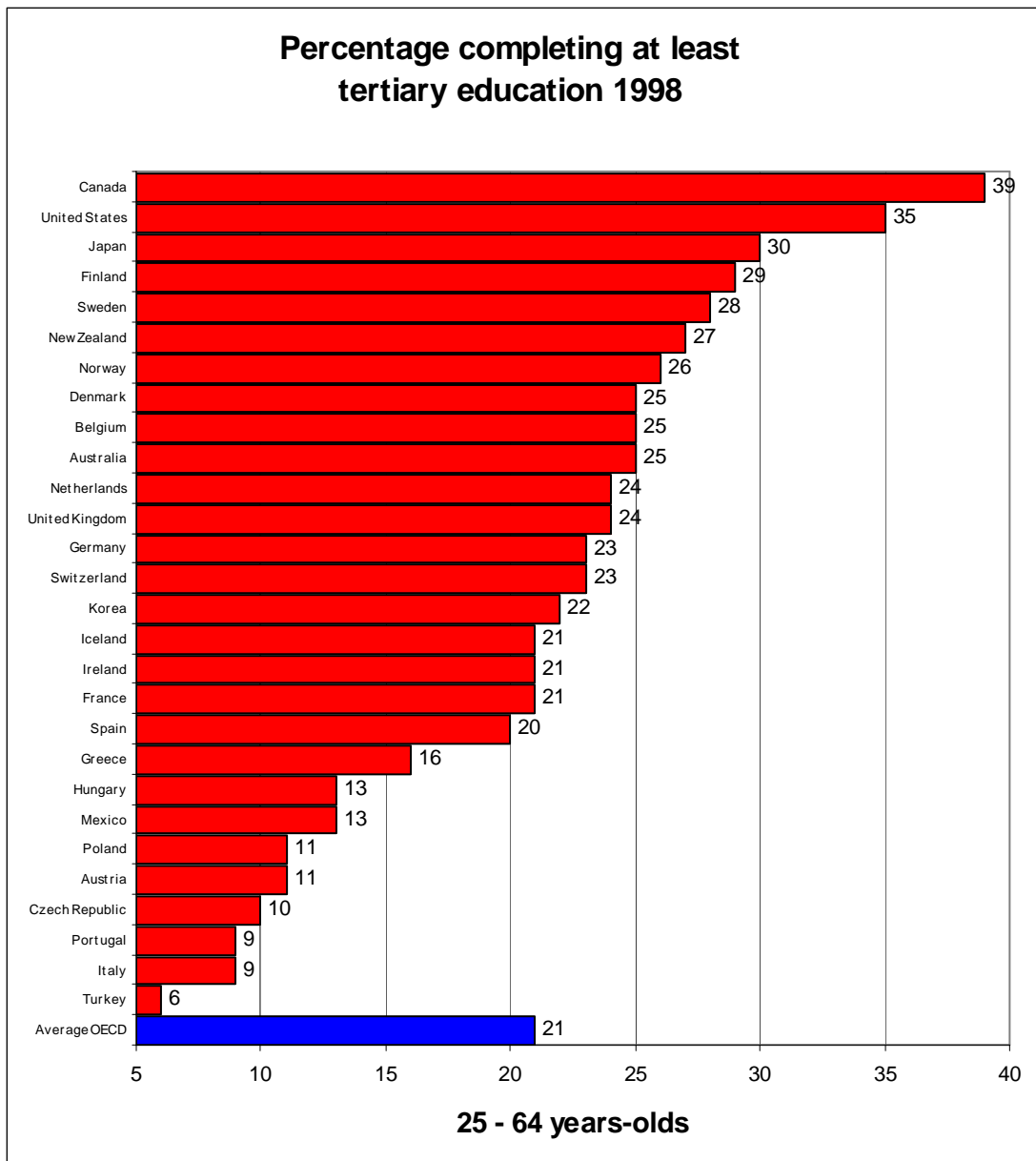
Third, that equitable access to education requires a new perspective of the lifecycle. It is important, e.g., to focus on pre-school children.

Fourth, that we need more financial resources for education all over the world. If we want to succeed we have to spend more money.

Fifth, the OECD points out that a single ministry cannot take responsibility for the concept of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is a complex task, which requires special efforts of public administration.



This chart illustrates the difference between countries in OECD as regards the percentage of 25 to 64 year-olds completing at least upper secondary education. USA is at the top and Turkey at the bottom. Such international comparison is of course difficult because there are differences in the school-systems in the countries, but in any case this gives a clear picture of some countries where improvements are needed.



This chart illustrates the difference between countries in OECD regarding the percentage of 25 to 64 year-olds completing at least tertiary education, which is in most cases some kind of university education. Here Canada is at the top and Turkey at the bottom. Although we do not want to generalise from such figures, we see that some countries need to improve their performance,

4. Culture is a Public Good

The increasing influence of globalisation is significant as regards culture. There is not yet any single scientific method of approaching the problems arising from the globalisation of culture. One way of analysing this is to point out the effect of five facts.

First, that the roots of the globalisation of culture and its influence on the economy are very deep. They lie many centuries back.

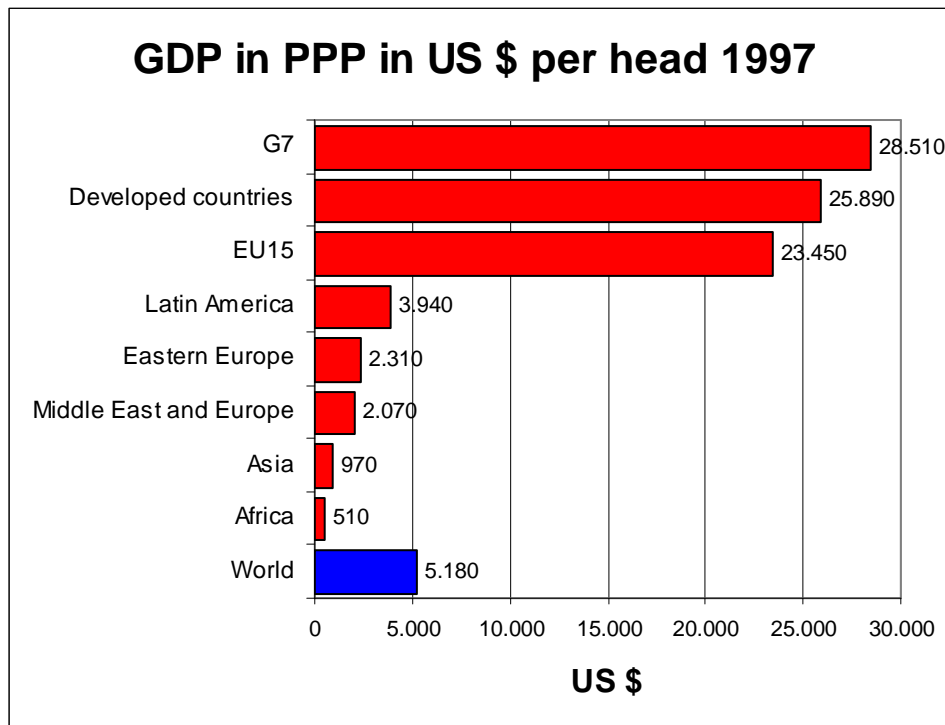
Second, that the development from the middle of the 18th century has been characterised by western ideas.

Third, that cultural progress for the past 200 years has been within nation-states and with national cultures

Fourth, that technological progress has changed the development profoundly and increased the distribution of culture enormously.

Fifth, that the diversity is so great that it is difficult to analyse the origins of the cultural ideas, which form the context of global culture.

The globalisation of culture is nothing else than a flow, which consists in building bridges across time and space and is characterised at each time by the intensity or volume of the flow or movements. Literature, music, art, law and philosophy all cross the world and the systems that enable their distribution are institutional and frequently, although by no means always, based on public supply.



This chart illustrates best of all the huge differences in the living standards among the people of this world. In the richest countries, the gross national product per head in PPP is 25,000 \$. In Asia this is less than 1,000 \$. PPP is the purchasing power parity and is used to adjust for cost of living in different countries. This method equalises the prices of a standard basket of goods and services.

TV sets per 1,000 people 1959 - 1992					
	1959	1969	1980	1988	1992
World	39	89	125	148	160
Africa	0,2	3	17	28	38
Asia			38	53	73
Europe	48	188	324	372	381
North America	287	397	661	790	800
South America	13	54	99	149	166
Oceania	43	175	296	411	375
Developed countries			416	485	498
Developing countries			24	44	61

This table illustrates the distribution of television sets in the World. The ownership of televisions has of course increased over 40 years, but there are huge differences between the developed countries and the developing countries. TV is a means of distribution of culture, but also education. TV is a modern tool, an important tool for an equal world. You can see from the table that there is much left to do.

5. When are Education and Culture Global?

If education and culture are global concepts, we have to define how global they are within the nation-states. We have here a threefold differentiation:

First, there is the view that global public goods, like education and culture, must reach more than one group of countries. We know that co-operation between nations has increased rapidly since the Second World War, as in the case of NATO, EU, EFTA, the Nordic Council etc. We require that global education and culture should not be seen as isolated in and limited to one or several countries.

Second, we require that global goods must reach a large majority of the inhabitants of any country. This is very important, bearing in mind how unequal the nation-states are as I mentioned earlier.

Third, we require that such public goods, such as education and culture, must reach more than one generation. They must meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This is nothing less than the classic definition of sustainable development, as we know it first from the Brundtland-report 1987.

We actually require that all countries, all people within these countries and all the generations, present and future, shall have access to education and culture. There is no isolation in this new world if we want to live in peace and prosperity together.

Globalisation means that we are not only talking about local education and local culture or culture or education on a national level. The positive externality can also be seen in global aid, which decreases the possibilities of war, or through global arts, which lead to broader perspectives, which increase the gross national product.

Globalisation involves not only co-operation between governments, but also co-operation between Non Governmental Organisations, which are playing an increasing role in international politics.

We know the dictum “No man is an island”. This is absolutely true nowadays.

6. Concluding remarks

The flow of culture and education around the world is nothing new. The Greek philosopher Heracleitos pointed out 2500 years ago “Everything flows”. He is also the author of the marvellous dictum that ”We can not step twice into the same river. By the second time neither we nor the river are the same.”

The challenge of today for young people is a tremendously important one. We saw what happened in the United States on the 11th of September this year. I am convinced the world will not be the same as before.

On the 6th of August 1945, an atomic bomb hit Hiroshima and more than 200,000 people died in a single minute. That event changed the world, even though atomic bombs have never been used against mankind since 1945.

Ladies and gentlemen

The solution for the future lies in more education and the globalisation of education and culture based on the idea of sustainable development and tolerance.

Once again in the history of mankind the future of the world lies in the hands of young people .

Thank you

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