

A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION AND MULTINATIONAL
CORPORATIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF 21ST CENTURY SKILLS AND
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Hilda Bernal, and the struggle and sacrifice of all the Latina mothers who raise strong and independent women. Thank you for driving me to any and all public libraries in Los Angeles any time I needed a book for a school assignment. Your life would have been much easier if the Internet had been as accessible then as it is now.

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Abstract

In the highly competitive and rapidly changing world, many countries are finding a need to adapt to a global market. Costa Rica has developed rapidly over the last 30 years. Once a country that relied on agricultural exports, Costa Rica is now heavily influenced by high-tech foreign direct investment. The resulting growth of technology as a major export has given new direction and opportunity to Costa Rica, but it has also presented new challenges to its educational system. In the past few decades, the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education has charged the educational system with educating students that are technically literate and possess 21st century skills. Furthermore, multinational corporations have invested money and resources at all levels of the educational system in order to better develop students who are prepared for a global economy. Costa Rican schools and their leaders are facing pressure to ensure their students are prepared to be productive citizens by ensuring they have the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a labor market that demands a new set of skills, which most educational systems around the world are not providing their students. Despite having five national universities, 51 private universities, and a 95% literacy rate amongst its population, there remains a low secondary graduation rate, a low percentage of students pursuing higher education, and even fewer who are pursuing higher education in science or technology. In order to prepare Costa Rican students to be competitive in a high-tech global market, educational shifts are needed to ensure students possess twenty-first century skills. To make these educational shifts, leaders in government, industry, and education all need to play an active role. This case study uses Bolman and Deal's Four Frame Theory to understand what impact globalization and multi-national corporations have had on educational leadership, and it investigates to what extent government policy and investment by multinational

corporations have impacted the development of 21st century skills, as defined by Tony Wagner (2010), in Costa Rican students.

PREVIEW

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The idea globalization has a significant impact on education is not a new concept. As early as the 1970s, the education philosopher, Brameld (1970), advocated that schools focus on global education due to the growing interconnectedness of nations. Brameld (1970) called for the educational system to focus on a community of nations, arguing that in an interdependent world, economic, political, and social problems had to be addressed on a world scale. Forty years ago, perhaps it was difficult for the average person to conceptualize the interconnectedness to which Brameld (1970) alluded. Presently, however, this interconnectedness is more obvious to everyone at some minimal level. The more astute might be able to explain how political unrest between two factions in a particular world location ultimately affects the price of gas in the United States and consequently the profits for the tourism industry in Mexico. Others might conceptualize globalization as the outsourcing of jobs (Friedman, 2005). Still others' idea of globalization might be being able to consume Coca-Cola in every continent (Foster, 2008). Either way, very few can escape the presence of globalization.

During the last few decades, technological advances have compounded the effects of globalization by interconnecting the world in an unprecedented manner (Friedman, 2005). Friedman (2005) refers to this phenomenon as the “flattening” of the world, and concludes technology is a key factor in this transformation since it has expedited globalization's eradication of geographical borders and the creation of a global culture. This interconnectedness affects and spans across the political, social, and economic arenas (Spring, 2008).

Globalization has transformed the global economy into one that is knowledge-based, in which innovative ideas and technical expertise hold the keys to competitiveness (Ashton, Brown,

& Lauder, 2008). In a knowledge-based economy there is greater dependence on knowledge, information and high skill levels, such as problem solving and critical thinking (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2005). This shift, in turn, has required a rethinking of education's purpose, content, pedagogy, and assessment in order to meet new marketplace demands (Carnoy, 1999).

There is general consensus amongst scholars on the need for educational systems around the world to change in order to address demands of globalization on the workforce (Lipman, 2003). However, current research has no consensus on what students should learn or how educational systems should change in order to be globally competitive in the new economy, given the many divergent lists of essential skills (Hilton & Pellegrino, 2012). Nonetheless, globalization is a ubiquitous force that all educational systems must respond to or risk not adequately preparing their students to be competitive in this new knowledge-based global economy (Friedman, 2005; Wagner, 2010).

In order to be competitive and successful in the new global economy there are certain 21st century skills students must develop (Wagner, 2010). The ability to access, evaluate, and apply information is one such skill (CINDE, 2005a). According to Friedman (2005) this shift has resulted from recent technological advances. Technology now allows information to be gathered or constructed in one location and shared and studied within seconds with people around the globe (Friedman, 2005). Further, according to Jukes and McCain (2002), the amount of new technical information is growing faster, doubling every 72 hours. It is no longer possible to memorize all current and relevant information. Thus, accessing, evaluating, and applying information makes simple memorization of information an obsolete skill despite its popularity in traditional educational systems (CINDE, 2005a).

Another change in the workforce is people's ability to work with others from all over the world through teleconferencing, e-mail, Internet and telephones. A single company is able to have employees in different hemispheres collaborate on a common project without ever being in the same room. These characteristics alone demand individuals in the workforce have knowledge and skills that are vastly different than those held by previous generations of workers (Friedman, 2005). These examples highlight the need for workers to be able to collaborate with diverse groups of individuals, speak more than one language, and have excellent oral and written communication skills (Wagner, 2010).

In response to these and other changes brought about by globalization, many educational systems across the globe have committed to educating their youth for the 21st century (Moore, 2009). There are different ways to define 21st century skills, but for the purpose of this study Wagner's (2010) definition will be used. Following are the seven skills Wagner (2010) identifies as essential for preparing students to be productive global citizens:

- Critical thinking and problem solving;
- Collaboration and leading by influence;
- Agility and adaptability;
- Initiative and entrepreneurialism;
- Effective oral and written communication;
- Accessing and analyzing information;
- Curiosity and imagination.

The Costa Rican educational system is not exempt from the impact of globalization and changing workforce demands. There is abundant literature that indicates the advent of multi-national corporations (MNCs) resulting from globalization has played a significant role in recent

changes to the Costa Rican educational system (CINDE, 2005b; Monge-Naranjo, 2007; Ministerio de Educacion Publica, 2007). Once, Costa Rica's economy was primarily based on agriculture however, since the arrival of Intel in 1997, technology has become a major export and given Costa Rica new opportunities (Monge-Naranjo, 2007). This new direction and opportunity has changed the workforce demands on Costa Ricans; thus, the educational system has had to adjust or risk losing investments from multi-national corporations (Sandoval, 2005).

These adjustments began even before Intel moved into Costa Rica, since part of the agreement for Intel to invest in Costa Rica included the Costa Rican government accomplishing the following:

- Increasing the number of technical graduates;
- Creating a one year certificate program and a one year associate degree focused on semiconductor manufacturing and microelectronics at the Instituto Tecnico de Costa Rica (ItCr);
- Improving the quality of technical curricula in advanced microelectronics;
- Offering language training programs at ItCr;
- Increasing the level of skills in construction and project management by local contractors. (World Bank Group, 2006)

In response to these agreements, in 1994 the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education approved a new educational policy with the specific objective of transforming the Costa Rican educational system into one that met the needs of the 21st century (Ministerio de Educacion Publica, 2007). The aims and objectives of this policy were:

- Offer equal access to quality education at all schools regardless of location;
- Develop essential skills for international markets;

- Strengthen core values;
- Strengthen scientific and technical education;
- Raise awareness of the need for economic and social development in harmony with the environment. (Ministerio de Educacion Publica, 2007)

For close to two decades the Costa Rican educational system has been working on developing 21st century skills to meet the demands of globalization and multi-national corporations. Yet, minimal research exists analyzing the outcomes of these attempts. There is evidence to suggest a gap between the Costa Rican educational system's current state and where it envisions itself needing to be in order to meet the new workforce demands. Some of the hurdles include the relatively low graduation rates from secondary schools and the low number of graduates with a science, math, or technology degrees (Sandoval, 2005). However, before moving forward and developing a new plan for addressing these challenges, it is important to assess the impact of current and past endeavors to educate students for the 21st century, especially as other countries and schools around the world embark on similar endeavors and can learn from those who have traveled this road before them.

Thus, this study investigated how globalization and multi-national corporations have already influenced the Costa Rican educational system. This case study investigated to what extent 21st century skills are taught and developed in a Costa Rican elementary school affiliated to Intel. This case study also examined the educational leadership in the selected school using Bolman and Deal's Four Frame Theory (2003).

Statement of the Problem

Costa Rica has changed over the past few decades as a result of the fiscal crisis of the 1980s. Due to their developed educational system and increased cost of living, a new economic

strategic plan was implemented to attract hi-tech foreign direct investment (FDI) to compete in an evolving global market. The resulting growth of technology as a major export has given new direction and opportunity to this small Central American country. As more MNCs invest in Costa Rica, the school and university system's responsibility to help students develop technical and inquiry-based 21st century skills becomes an increasing challenge. Despite having five national universities, 51 private universities, and a 95% literacy rate amongst its population, Costa Rica continues to have both a low secondary graduation rate and low pursuit of higher education (Castro, 2010). As a result, Costa Rica lacks knowledge-ready workers prepared to take on the new job opportunities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the impact globalization and multinational corporations have had on educational leadership and the development of 21st century skills in Costa Rican schools and universities. The study identified the role school leaders have played in the development and implementation of policy changes seen in major national education initiatives. In addition, the study investigated if these initiatives in the educational system are producing greater numbers of knowledge-ready workers, building human capital capable of meeting Costa Rica's needs.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study:

1. What results of globalization and the presence of multinational corporations are seen in Costa Rica?
2. What results of globalization and the presence of multinational corporations are seen in schools and universities in Costa Rica?

3. How has educational leadership been affected directly by policy decisions that came about as a result of the influence of globalization and multinational corporations?

Importance of the Study

With globalization spreading rapidly around the world, more and more educational systems, in addition to Costa Rica's, are refocusing on developing 21st century skills to equip their citizens with the skills necessary to compete and succeed in the future marketplace. Take for example, the current shift to the Common Core Standards in the United States. The impetus behind this shift was research such as a *Nation at Risk* (1983) and the *Global Achievement Gap* (2010) indicating that the traditional American educational system is not adequately preparing students to compete in a global knowledge economy. Therefore, as countries such as the United States embark on the endeavor of educating students for the 21st century, it behooves them to learn from what other systems have already done, especially when they are facing similar challenges. For example, as in Costa Rica, low secondary graduation rates, inequities in access to quality education, and a relatively small number of students graduating with degrees in science, math and technology, are challenges that plague the United States (Denning, 1983). Thus, this case study is potentially beneficial not just for the participants and those indirectly working with them, but also for any educational system in the midst of transforming itself to educate students for the 21st century.

This study is most beneficial to the school site leadership, educators, and policy makers in Costa Rica who are directly or indirectly part of this study. This study offers a vehicle for school site leadership to analyze and evaluate their efforts, practices, organizational structure, and intended student outcomes in order to guide future decisions. The school site can use the

data and findings from this study to implement changes, or sustain policies and systems already in place, to better meet the school's goals and objectives.

This study is valuable to educators because it provides data and findings about curriculum, pedagogical practices, and classroom structures intended to develop 21st century skills. Thus, educators can gain insight to help them determine what curricular, instructional, and structural decisions to make when striving to maximize their efforts in developing 21st century skills. In addition, the study's findings can be used to assist policy makers in deciding what to fund and what to support.

Limitations

Limitations are circumstances beyond the control of the researcher (Simon & Goes, 2011). The limitations of this study are:

- Respondents' biases cannot be filtered when they answer interview or survey questions. However, triangulation was used in an attempt to minimize biases and increase the validity of the collected data (Merriam, 2009).
- The study was a snapshot in time, so events could change before or after the presence and interaction with the researcher.
- The analysis of the data may be subject to the researcher's biases and interpretations, but all attempts were made to be cognizant of biases and set them aside.

Delimitations

Delimitations are limitations the researcher chose to use (Simon & Goes, 2011).

Following are the delimitations for this study:

- This case study is one of 12 from a thematic dissertation group. Thus, this case study was subject to certain constraints set forth by the thematic group.

- The school used in this study was selected because it is an Intel school but also because it was one of the schools to which an executive at Intel gave access.
- A relatively small amount of data was collected since the study was conducted at a single elementary school, involving a limited number of participants. Therefore, it is not possible to say that the views captured in this study are the views of the majority of Costa Rican educators or school leaders.
- This case study was conducted in a school in Costa Rica. Meanwhile, the researcher lives in the United States, so access, time, and cultural differences are potential limitations.
- The study was conducted in a Spanish speaking country so there was constant translation between English and Spanish; nuances of meaning could have been unintentionally lost in translation.
- No consideration was given to socioeconomic status or race.

Assumptions

Certain assumptions have been made while conducting this research:

- Data collected from interviews, existing documents and survey responses reflects honest and accurate depictions of the experiences of the participants.
- During observations what was presented was not orchestrated to present a fictitious image of the school.
- Participants in the study are implementing strategies, structures, or policies to develop 21st century skills, as the Costa Rican Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educacion Publica, 2007) has articulated as one of the principal goals of the country's educational system.

Definition of Terms

Some terms frequently used in the study have connotations that may differ from those in the common domain. The following operational definitions are offered to provide clarity of meaning:

- *21st Century Skills* — These skills are a blend of content knowledge, specific skills, expertise and literacies. They are the new “basic skills” for work, learning, and citizenship in the 21st century (Wagner, 2010).
- *Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)* — FDI refers to an investment made to acquire lasting interest in enterprises operating outside of the investor’s economy. In the case of FDI, the investor’s purpose is to gain an effective voice in the management of the enterprise. The foreign entity that makes the investment is termed the “direct investor.” The enterprise in which direct investment is made is referred to as a “direct investment enterprise.” Some degree of equity ownership, typically 10%, is almost always considered to be associated with an effective voice in the management of an enterprise (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, n.d.).
- *Globalization* — Changes in economics that affect production, consumption and investments, which in turn affect larger segments of the world’s population. It has a direct effect on cultural, geopolitical, and social changes, of which schooling is a part (Spring 2008).
- *Human Capital* — The knowledge, skills, competencies and other attributes embodied in individuals or groups of individuals acquired during their life and used to produce goods, services or ideas in market circumstances (Westphalen, 1999).

- *Knowledge-Based Economy* — Knowledge-based economy refers to trends in the economy towards greater dependence on knowledge, information and high skill levels, and the increasing need for ready access to all of these by the business and public sectors (OECD, 2005).
- *Multinational Corporation (MNC)* — A multinational corporation or multinational enterprise (MNE) is a corporation that owns or controls production or service facilities outside the country in which it is based. MNCs may engage in various activities like exporting, importing, and/or manufacturing in different countries. Some distinctive characteristics of MNCs are: large size, worldwide operations, international management, and mobility of resources across geographical boundaries (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, n.d.)

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This case study explored the impact that globalization and the presence of multinational corporations have had on an elementary school in Costa Rica, which has a close affiliation with Intel, one of Costa Rica's most influential MNCs and an active proponent in transforming education to develop 21st century skills. It also explored how globalization, and by extension, the influence of a multinational corporation has manifested itself in the instruction and expectations for learning in an elementary school in Costa Rica. Finally, it examined how policy decisions guided by globalization and the presence of an MNC have affected educational leadership in Costa Rica.

Chapter 2 summarizes literature that explains the historical, political, and educational context that set the stage for multinational corporations to invest in Costa Rica. It also defines

globalization, 21st century skills, and educational leadership, and identifies the frameworks used to analyze this case study.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to conduct this case study and describes the tools that were used to collect and triangulate data in order to validate the findings. Also, it includes a description of the participants and the process used to analyze the data.

Chapter 4 identifies and describes the data results and identifies themes that surfaced in the data for each of the research questions.

Finally, Chapter 5 includes a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations. This final chapter also describes how this study contributes to the body of knowledge on the impact of globalization and multinational corporations for the educational system in Costa Rica, and potentially in other countries around the world. In conclusion, it identifies needs for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Globalization and the influence of multinational corporations (MNCs) have transformed the global economy into a knowledge-based one in which innovative ideas and technical expertise hold the key for workers to be competitive (Ashton, Brown, & Lauder, 2008). This transformation has required a rethinking of educational leadership, curriculum, and instruction to focus on developing 21st century skills (Carnoy, 1999). Globalization and MNCs demand and incite change in educational systems. However, current research has not come to any complete consensus on how exactly globalization and MNCs affect educational systems. Furthermore, there is ongoing debate on whether globalization has a positive or negative impact on educational systems (Wade, 2003). Regardless, globalization is a ubiquitous force that affects educational systems, and educational systems must respond to it or risk being left behind.

The country of Costa Rica has changed in the past few decades as a result of the presence of MNCs. Costa Rica was once primarily an agricultural economy, however the growth of technology as a major export has given the country new direction and opportunities (Monge-Naranjo, 2007). As more MNCs invest in Costa Rica, the school and university systems must refocus on developing 21st century skills in their students or risk becoming less attractive to MNCs; they must have a highly-skilled workforce prepared for a knowledge-based economy (Monge-Naranjo, 2007). However, before looking forward to how Costa Rica can adjust and respond to the demands of globalization and MNCs, it is essential to investigate how these two forces have already influenced the Costa Rican educational system.

The purpose of this study is to understand what impact globalization and multinational corporations have had on educational leadership and the development of 21st century skills in

Costa Rican schools. The study identifies what role school leaders have played in the development and implementation of policy changes seen in major national education initiatives. In addition, the study determines whether these initiatives are producing greater numbers of knowledge-ready workers in an educational system that builds human capital capable of meeting Costa Rica's needs. To this end, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What results of globalization and the presence of multinational corporations are seen in Costa Rica?
2. What results of globalization and the presence of multinational corporations are seen in schools and universities in Costa Rica?
3. How has educational leadership been affected directly by policy decisions that came about as a result of the influence of globalization and multinational corporations?

Based on the aforementioned research questions, this chapter provides an overview of the literature pertaining to: the historical context in which globalization and MNCs surfaced in Costa Rica, the impact of globalization and multinational corporations on the Costa Rican educational system, the development of 21st century skills as a result of globalization and the presence of MNCs, and the impact of globalization and MNCs on educational leadership.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section focuses on the history of Costa Rica and is subdivided into political, economic, and educational history. The second section defines globalization, describes the impact of globalization on Costa Rica, and identifies the theoretical framework for globalization used in this study. In the third section, educational leadership is defined and the leadership framework used for this study is described.

History of Costa Rica

Compared to many characterizations of other developing countries in Central America, Costa Rica stands out as exceptional. Unlike its neighbors, Costa Rica eliminated its army in 1949; its illiteracy and infant mortality rates are among the lowest in the region; it has a strong healthcare system; and it has a history of peace and stability (Sick, 1999). These characteristics have often resulted in Costa Rica being referred to as the Switzerland of Central America. This comparison seems even more apropos when considering that Costa Rica was the first country in the area to attract multi-national corporations and significant foreign direct investment (FDI) (Mirchandani & Condo, 2005). In this section, the political, economic and educational history of Costa Rica are traced in order to elucidate the factors that made this possible.

Political History

Spanish colonization in Costa Rica began in 1502 when Columbus visited its eastern coast and called it the “Rich Coast” (Florek & Conejo, 2007). Though many colonists visited Costa Rica in the early 1500s, the first permanent Spanish colony was not settled until 1524. The island’s remote location relative to the Spanish empire’s capital in Guatemala City, its lack of riches, and poor roads made Costa Rica less attractive to settlers than other parts of the empire (Augelli, 1987). Costa Rica remained part of the Spanish empire until 1821 when Central America gained independence from Spain. However, from 1821-1823, Costa Rica was part of Agustin de Iturbide’s Mexican empire. In 1823 it became a province of the Federal Republic of Central America until 1838 when it declared independence and declared itself a sovereign state. In 1848, Costa Rica finally became a republic (Veillette, 2005). Yet, despite Costa Rica’s lack of independence for over three centuries, in reality it functioned relatively independently since it remained fairly isolated, sparsely populated, and abandoned by its colonizers (Hall, 1985).

Costa Rica was one of the most democratic and peaceful countries in Latin America from its post-colonial period until its civil war in 1948 (Duff & McCamant, 1968; Johnson, 1976). However, the characterization of Costa Rica as democratic and peaceful does not signify that it was free of political unrest, especially in the early post-colonial years. Political coups were not uncommon, nor were attempts on the lives of early presidents and heads of state by parties with opposing views (Lehoucq, 2005). However, most coups were relatively brief and bloodless, compared to those in neighboring Central American countries (Lehoucq, 2005).

In 1825, Juan Mora Fernandez was the first head of state after Costa Rica gained independence, and he remained in power for eight years. However, from 1833 to 1848 there were twelve changes of head of state, with four of those changes resulting from coups or popular uprisings. In 1848 Costa Rica became a republic, but its first president was forced from office one year later by a small group of economically powerful and politically influential coffee magnates. For the following nineteen years, the Costa Rican presidency remained relatively stable, with all presidents completing their terms without any coups or uprisings. In 1868 this came to an end when Jose Castro Madriz, who was the first president of the republic and who had been reelected in 1866, was deposed by a coup. Instability in the presidency ensued until 1870 when Tomás Guardia assumed the Costa Rican presidency and governed by military rule. Between 1868 and 1870 the presidency changed hands five separate times.

Ironically, it was Tomás Guardia's military dictatorship that brought political stability. Additionally, despite Guardia's violation of constitutional and human rights, there were various developments under his leadership that positively affected Costa Rica in lasting ways and planted the seeds of a fledgling democracy (Lopez, 1996).