Transnational Civil Society Networks and the Global Governance of Education

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Content

- Introduction to the research
- Strategically selective context: WTO/GATS
- Strategic action- Education International’s campaign
- Results & conclusions
About the research

-General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) promotes trade liberalization of education at a planetary scale

-Widely contested by education community

-Research question: “How this contestation matters?”

-Case study: Education International
Theoretical framework

- Global Governance and scales of political action:
  – A) Transnational advocacy networks (Kekk and Sikkink, 1998)
  – B) New complex multilateralism (O’Brien et al, 2000)
  – C) New transnational activism (Tarrow)
  – D) Global unionism (Herod)

- Social movements literature:
  – A) Frame analysis (Snow and Benford)
  – B) Political Opportunity Structures (McAdam, Tarrow)
WTO as an strategically selective context: 
*What do CSOs need to know?*

1. ‘Guidelines for arrangements on relations with Non-Governmental Organizations’
2. Trade Liberalisation as a core principle at the WTO system
3. Negotiation rationale: consequentialism, mercantilism,…
4. GATS negotiations architecture and procedure
## 1. Civil society in the WTO

<table>
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<th>Participation form</th>
<th>Devices and instruments permitted and entitled by the WTO</th>
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| Dialog                   | • NGOs can attend the Ministerial Conferences and the annual public symposium organized in the WTO headquarters.  
  • Other spaces: lunch dialogues, electronic forums, chats with WTO representatives, etc. |
| Advocacy                 | • The WTO permits NGOs to meet with country representatives to advise (or pressure) them, to retrieve information  
  • NGOs can distribute position papers over trade issues among the delegations and through the WTO website |
| Private funds mobilization| • Some NGOs mobilize private funds to help Southern countries delegations to face the negotiations or certain disputes |
| Information and learning | • NGOs can distribute papers that contain researches on trade issues between the delegations and through the WTO website  
  • The WTO organizes seminars, workshops and publishes an informative newsletter for civil society. |
| Operational Delivery     |                                                          |
2. Trade Liberalization principle

- WTO core objectives are “to help trade flow as freely as possible” and to “help producers of goods and services, exporters, and importers conduct their business” (WTO, 2001c: p. 9-10)
“While many NGOs are well informed and a good number have the expertise and the interest to be constructive commentators or advisors on WTO issues, others do not (...) Certainly, the Secretariat should be under no obligation to engage seriously with groups whose express objective is to undermine or destroy the WTO in its present form”

Source:
3. Trade negotiations rationale

“Anyone who has tried to make sense of international trade negotiations eventually realizes that they can only be understood by realizing that they are a game scored according to mercantilist rules, in which an increase in exports—no matter how expensive to produce in terms of other opportunities foregone—is a victory, and an increase in imports—no matter how many resources it releases for other uses—is a defeat” (Krugman, 1997)
Implications: education as a bargaining chip

We always perceive services as a bargaining chip; we could make concessions if we get something back. That is our basic logic for negotiating services. The premise that “liberalization is good” doesn’t work with us. We do not believe in this doctrine; in fact, this discourse sets my nerves on edge. Here, nobody believes it, not even their preachers [referring to the WTO staff] believe it. (Trade negotiator 01, Geneva, 2006)
• I always see the services area as an instrument of developed countries for opening new markets, which is totally legitimate... [However,] we are not going to improve our current services offer, which is actually a good offer, without receiving something in exchange, [and not just] receiving empty promises in agriculture. (Trade negotiator 15, Buenos Aires, 2006)

• Education? No, we don’t have any commitment at the WTO level. Neither have we received any demand on education. We will only commit education if we can receive something in exchange (...). In the end, we present an all unique list, we do a general balance and education is just one part. (Trade negotiator 07, Geneva, 2006)
4. GATS architecture and negotiation procedure

The importance of the state scale:

- Country positions are mainly defined at the national level
- National stakeholders / civil society can be called to consultations by the Trade Ministry
Teacher unions claims from the point of view of trade negotiators

“Teachers’ Unions? Yes, they talk about GATS, but they have not discussed the topic very deeply; they are confused, they are afraid… [T]hey are afraid that education could be privatized. But in our country there has been private education for the last 50 years. Whatever the government does to make education more efficient, they think that education will be privatized…”

(Trade negotiator 07, Geneva, 2006)
Teacher unions from the point of view of trade negotiators

“The unions make a lot of noise, but instead of protecting education they just want to protect their jobs. They want to prevent teachers coming from other countries from working in Chile”

(Interview Trade negotiator 03, Geneva, 2006)
Education International’s anti-GATS campaign

Constituted by 394 teacher unions from 171 countries representing nearly 30 million education workers
## EI’s GATS campaign
(Stage I: 1999-2003)

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<td>Education out of GATS</td>
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[http://www.ei-ie.org](http://www.ei-ie.org)
EI anti-GATS campaign (Stage II: 2003 - onwards)

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<td>Networking, broader initiatives</td>
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<td>To stop national governments from establishing liberalisation commitments</td>
<td>Activation of member unions to lobby at the national level</td>
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<td>motivation</td>
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<td>National unions main receptors of motivation frames</td>
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Ministros de Educación de Argentina y Brasil se comprometen a NO liberalizar la educación conforme se establece en el AGCS

La declaración fue suscrita por la dirigencia de la Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación de la República Argentina (CTERA) y de la Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación, de Brasil (CNTE). Jujara Dutra Vieta, presidenta de la CNTE y Hugo Yasky, secretario general de la CTERA, se comprometieron a promover la sensibilización y la movilización para sostener el principio de la educación como derecho y no como mercancía.

LA EDUCACIÓN ES UN DERECHO NO UNA MERCANCÍA.

Brasilia, 9 de noviembre de 2004
“The Ministry of Education replied to our consultation offer on the basis of a declaration signed by the Mercosur education ministries some years ago (...), emphasizing the state’s role in education. The Ministry said that this should be taken into account at the WTO meetings, in the sense of not treating education as a commodity. It also urged the parties involved not to establish commitments in this area”

(Interview Argentinean Trade negotiator 04, Buenos Aires, 2006)
Results (1)

• GATS has altered the cartography of the struggle against the privatization of education.

• EI has explicitly and critically reflected over this new scenario and has designed and implemented a political two-track campaign:
  • Introduce the GATS at the global public domain
  • Activate unions to stop GATS at the national level
The reverse boomerang effect
Results (2)

The WTO-EI relationship reflects more continuities than changes within the paradigm of multilateralism:

- First, the WTO (rules, principles, powerful members) is not conductive to the principal demands of EI
- Second, dialogue and advocacy (as offered by the WTO to CSOs) were not enough to achieve tangible outcomes
- Third, the more direct and fruitful political impacts of the GATS campaign have been mediated through the state scale (and through ‘force’ strategies).
However...

The EI anti-GATS **global campaign** has:

- introduced the topic in the agendas of the national unions
- introduced the topic in the global public domain; this has given ‘sense’ to the national campaigns against the GATS
- opened political opportunities at the national level for the unions acting at this level
So...

- Move away from framing the scalar discussion in dualistic terms, and acknowledge that the global and the local conform an analytical duality.

- What really ‘matters’, both for researchers and activists, is not ordering the political relevance of the scales of action, but capturing and understanding the scalar inter-play and its political implications.