

How is the “Flat World Concept” affecting China and its Role in Economic Affairs?

Sue Kenworthy

Biography

Sue Kenworthy has been with the Office of English Language Acquisition as an Educational Program Specialist since September 1998. After initially spending a year working with states in the Midwest, she was asked to assume the Pacific projects under Title VII and responsibility for oversight of OELA's “Outlying Areas” program. Currently as a program officer on the State Grant Formula Division, she is a member of the “Technical Assistance/Monitoring” team, working with ten states and the Virgin Islands. She has also worked directly with OELA's Assistant Deputy Secretary to develop guidance for state targets under Title III NCLB.

Prior to joining the U. S. Department of Education, Sue held an academic position with the State University of New York: Brockport, Dept. of Education Administration, where she conducted a study abroad program in New Zealand and developed several courses, including a course on “Multi-cultural Issues in Schools”. A long time resident of the Pacific (twenty-three years), Sue spent twelve years with the Hawaii Department of Education primarily as a school administrator. She also worked with the Community Colleges and taught under the Univ. of Hawaii College of Business. While at the University of Hawaii she wrote several faculty development grants and managed an international training project focused on increasing US training expertise in Asia. Her consultancy work has involved work in basic education, trade issues, and training in the Pacific/Asia and Africa (funded under the World Bank, Dept. of State and Interior), including the development of a ten-year educational master plan in the Marshall Islands.

In 1989 Sue received her Ed. D. degree from the University of Hawaii where she majored in educational administration and undertook a specialized course of study in international business. She has published articles dealing with various personal characteristics of leadership and how they affect school climate as well as the decentralization efforts of New Zealand's school system. She remains an active member of the Comparative International Education Society, a society comprised of researchers and practitioners interested in all aspects of development.

Background

Recent books by New York Times' journalist, Thomas L. Friedman, ([The World Is Flat](#) and [The Lexus and the Olive Tree](#)) have espoused both the virtues and challenges of globalization. Although “the world is flat” concept reflects a lowering of trade barriers, it really is a metaphor for the interconnectedness that most countries now feel and where through technology, all countries have equal opportunity for open competition and economic growth. For example, companies looking for new employees can find cheaper labor only a mouse-click away through “outsourcing”. Yet therein often lies the dichotomy: part of the world or portions of countries have splintered off with part identifying with advances in technology and finance, the Lexus, and part, identifying with the traditional way of life, the Olive Tree. This tension between the rise of the individual versus holding onto what traditionally has mattered is a recurring theme from Friedman's books. This session will explore these concepts using China as an example. Drawing upon the expertise and background of those within the group, we will examine China's role on the world economic stage as we explore the following together:

Discussions Questions

- Does the ‘flat world’ promote globalization of individuals or companies and institutions in China?
- What “systems” within China i.e. educational, social, political, and economic, will advance or impede the concept of China's growth and the ‘flat world’ concept?
- What is the role of government in advancing globalization?
- What will the ‘flat world’ mean for those from the poorest countries of the world? (those living in the Solomon Islands, Angola, etc.?)
- What cultural values are contributing to the West's loss of jobs, and excellence?