

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF RAPID CULTURAL DYNAMISM IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD

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Abstract

In our rapidly shrinking world it will no longer be enough for people to simply be good citizens of nation states. People should increasingly become concerned citizens of a global community. Thus, the theory and practice of education of nation states is under pressure to meet the demands of the globalizing world. Education places a premium on the ability to think critically and ethically. It must develop in the students the capacity to effectively access, interpret, evaluate and apply information which is essential for facing a constantly changing global phenomena. The demands of educating learners for a globalizing world however pose certain challenges to Social Studies education, not only in Nigeria but the world over.

Key words: Culture, Cultural dynamism, Education and Globalization.

Introduction

We live in a much more economically competitive transnational world, a more multicultural world that demands the ability to learn from other

parts of the world either directly or indirectly in the very commodities and services we consume in our everyday lives.

Scholars from all fields including Physics are noticing that the whole universe and everything within it is in constant movement and flux. A genuine culture, if it is a living and breathing culture involves evolution and change. Cultural flows are intensifying all across the globe, more so in the global North or among the developed countries. Historically, of course, Europe exported its population to the rest of the world. Now migration flows are predominantly from the global South (developing countries) to the global North (developed countries); and as the modern world is changing at a faster rate and all societies need to adapt to catch up to develop or in order to be abreast with time. We can no longer afford to cling firmly into every custom, tradition, myth and taboo claiming that they were cultural practice bequeathed to us by our ancestors even if they stifle development and civilization.

Education is the primary and the most effective means so far evolved for transmitting practically useful knowledge from one generation to another. Thus, the structures of education of nation states, especially developing nations, are under pressure to meet the demands of rapid cultural dynamism in a globalizing world. It is essentially imperative that education develops in the students a certain level of global competence so as to understand the world in which they live, cope with several cultural challenges so as to fit into this world.

Culture and Cultural Dynamism

Culture are those historically created designs for living explicit and inexplicit, rational, irrational and non rational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behaviour of men (Kluckhohn & Kelly, 1945). Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another (Hofstede, 1984). Culture is learned and shared human patterns or models for living, a day-to-day living patterns. These patterns and models pervade all aspects of human social interaction. Culture is mankind primary adaptive mechanism (Damen, 1987). Culture is the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing and responding to

the social realities around them (Lederach, 1995). Each culture has its own personality. The fact that we are all human does not mean that we are the same. To ignore this would mean destroying God's own beautiful rainbow made from many colours of cultural diversity. Culture is learned. This is considered the most common attribute. Such learning does not take place through natural inheritance. It is not genetically transmitted. Rather, it takes place through a gradual process of absorption from the social environment or through deliberate instruction (Fridah, 1998).

Culture is the totality of the way of life of a group of people that has been developed, shaped and practiced over the years. The development of cultural norms and practices are shaped by the environment and the needs of the people. Over the years as societies develop and modernize, these cultural practices undergo changes to reflect the changing time to better serve the needs of the people. This means that culture is not static or stagnant. It is constantly undergoing evolution based on the changes in the environment in which it exists (Baffoe, 2005). Culture is never static but rather dynamic. Day in day out, we are being transformed. It changes exactly the same way as human beings. This transformation is gradual not sudden or abrupt (Fridah, 1998). Throughout time and space, culture changes and adapts rather than die. Demallie(1988) defines culture with consideration to its dynamic and fluid nature. He notes that both symbols and their associated meanings change over time and according to various outside and inside influences providing the dynamics that keeps human groups in constant flux. Such fluidity of culture is universal and natural.

Globalization

By its nature, globalization spans multitude of disciplines, communities and cultures. This, of course, allows for a variety of view points, be they economic, social, or political. In its simplest sense, globalization refers to the widening, deepening and speeding up of global interconnectedness (Held, 1999). Globalization describes the increased mobility of goods, services, labour, technology and capital throughout the world. Although globalization is not a new development, its pace has increased with the advent of new technologies, especially in the

area of telecommunications (Lindsey, 2002). Hirst and Thompson (1996) also note that globalization is not new phenomenon since large international flows of trade, portfolio and direct investment, as well as migration flows are nothing new.

Globalization refers to the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between the states and societies that make up the present world system. It describes the process by which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe (McGrew, 1992). According to Waters (1995) globalization is a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people are increasingly aware that they are receding. Globalization refers to the onset of the borderless world (Ohmae, 1992). It can as well be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa (Giddens, 1990).

Tremendous advances have been made by large segments of the world population in this age of globalization. Yet, there is a fear that globalization is exacerbating inequality, and perhaps even worsening the lot of the poor by eroding their incomes, increasing their vulnerability and adding to their disempowerment. This fear may not be universal but it does play a role in the public perception that cannot be ignored (World Bank, 2000).

Implications of Rapid Cultural Dynamism and Globalization for Education

In the earliest stages of development, land and minerals constituted the principal resources for development. Technology was rudimentary. Human beings were valued mainly for their physical labour. Today information and knowledge have become increasingly important inputs to the development process. All economic activities are becoming more knowledge intensive. Development is a matter not only of flow of capital and trade but also of access to knowledge. Increasingly, therefore, wealth is being re-defined in terms of knowledge-rich versus knowledge-poor countries. As a consequence, there is great demand on people to constantly up-date their

knowledge (Nuscheler, 2002).

Thus, as knowledge becomes a critical factor of production in an information-intensive global economy, the structures of education of nation states especially developing nations, are under pressure to meet the demands of this new knowledge. Rapid cultural dynamism and globalization require an education with a strong science and technology base, with computer literacy at its core. In this age of knowledge explosion and glut, education should focus more on developing the ability to creatively utilize sound science knowledge in everyday life, or in a career, to solve problems, make decisions and hence improve quality of life (Holbrook & Rannikmae, 2007).

The policy makers should consider mandating that science and technology education should move progressively towards real world, "context – based" approach to the teaching and learning at all levels of the school curriculum. This has been shown to promote students interest and raise the level of relevance of learning. Again the role of the teachers will inevitably have to change. Teachers need to become involved in facilitating changes of attitude and guiding students to gain values and access knowledge sources rather than merely teaching factual knowledge (Fensham, 2008).

In a globalised world of every changing culture, technology and rapidly increasing knowledge, education must focus more on developing the capacity to learn rather than teaching specific body of facts and skills. Education must place premium on the ability to think critically and ethically. The ability to effectively access, interpret, evaluate and apply information is essential for facing a constantly changing environment, continuing self education and for participation as ethical and responsible members of a global community. The global world is not only or one in which nations will network for mutual progress and prosperity, it will also paradoxically be characterised by increased international and dynamic competition among nations and individuals (Mansaray & Amosun, 2002).

In a world of information and knowledge explosion and glut, personal punditry and performance, the need for discerning intelligence, the ability to sift grains of knowledge from the chaff will become critical than ever. Finding effective solutions to environmental, economic and social challenges at all scales from global to the local

will require adept problem-solvers. These skills are important to all of us as members of the global community. WHO (1999) reiterates that education should develop abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

Human and environmental systems are inextricably connected like a web. Our decisions resonate throughout the single ecology (Locatelli, 2002). The biochemistry of the planet earth is affected by global warming, climate change, ozone depletion, desertification, deforestation, species extinction, pollution etc. The global environmental crisis affects every one of us. Nobody can escape the global consequences of these environmental realities. Their impact will continue to be felt by every human being and by every species with which we share this planet earth. New diseases ignore national boundaries and environmental destruction in one part of the world profoundly affect other parts of the world. Indeed, global environmental threats and challenges should be addressed through collective actions. Everyone should be committed to safe environmental practices and stewardship. In our shrinking world, it will no longer be enough for people to simply be good citizens of nation states. People, should increasingly become concerned citizens of a global community.

In an increasingly demographically diverse and dynamic globalizing world, intercultural literacy will be more imperative for personal, professional and political success. Intercultural literacy has many names in research literature: intercultural competence, intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural adaptation and intercultural effectiveness (Freebody,2007). Being culturally literate simply opens doors and opportunities for people and improves their understanding of everything going on around them, both of which are key components of the information and service economy (Picciano, 2007). Thus, in order to work co-operatively with individuals from vastly different backgrounds, students must appreciate and understand the beliefs and values that drive them. Cultural literacy enables students to understand the dangers of stereotyping and other biases. It enables them to be aware of and sensitive to issues of racism, prejudice and sometimes recognize

biased messages.

Rapid cultural contacts and dynamics in a globalizing world have some negative influences. Corruption underlines the potential benefits of globalization. Negative effects of globalization manifested most visibly in widespread poverty, rapid spread of HIV/AIDS, marginalization and exclusion. Globalization has also imposed materialistic values over everything else. A new value system is therefore needed that would help to shape globalization according to a normative yardstick of global well being. Education can play a significant role in this respect. The focus should be on contriving the kind of education which, while encouraging intercultural dialogue, would also protect the distinctiveness of cultures as historical and creative expressions of people (Mansaray & Amosun, 2002). However, because Social Studies Education occupies a strategic position towards meeting the challenges of rapid cultural contacts and dynamics in a globalizing world, there is the need to examine the challenges that Social Studies seems to be confronted with when attempts are made to teach discuss the educational implications of the rapid cultural dynamism and globalization.

The challenges for Social Studies Education

Social Studies is all encompassing. It is the holistic study of man. Social Studies is not doomed to failure or extinction from the school curriculum at least in the foreseeable future. The drive towards technological innovation and industrial efficiency will not reduce the need for social education. Social Studies Education remains the only dynamic discipline with concentric curriculum to accommodate, focus on and address human problems; hence, the challenges of rapid cultural dynamism and globalization on Social Studies education are enormous. The first and perhaps the biggest challenges is how to incorporate the vast emerging global issues and problems into the existing curriculum framework of Social Studies. These issues include: Population and Family Life Education, Gender, Good Governance, Peace and Conflict, Terrorism, Poverty Alleviation, AIDS Education, Drug use Education, Global Warming, Climate Change etc. The pertinent challenge is to what extent these and other topical emerging global issues are reflected in the Social Studies curriculum.

Another challenge for Social Studies is in contriving those teaching methods that would afford learners sufficient scope to develop their critical thinking and creative faculties, as well as those values of cooperation and team work that are so much required in a globalizing world. This because, it is imperative to emphasize students' active participation in learning, if Social Studies has to justify its nature as the study of the totality of human experiences in the society and a problem approach discipline (Akintola, 2001). There also appears to be consensus among Social Studies educators including Mkpá (1993) and Niyi (1998) that inquiry instructional technique is relatively more effective than expository approach to teaching of Social Studies. According to them, apart from students achieving more in cognitive terms from inquiry –oriented Social Studies instruction, this teaching approach contributes significantly to students' affective and psychomotor learning.

Anderson (2000) notes that technology offers many benefits to enhance education. Most importantly, technology integration has the potential to increase students' motivation; and in accordance with the opinion of Cassutto (2000), technology empowers students as it engages them learning process. The nature of the task shifts from teacher-centred to learner-centred. Consequently, Social Studies can become a more attractive subject when computers and internet are included as teaching tools.

Conclusion

In spite of the challenges posed by increasing cultural contacts, dynamism and globalization, they will remain dominant paradigms for the foreseeable future. Education which is the primary and the most effective means so far evolved for transmitting practically useful knowledge from one generation to another should be more pragmatic and proactive in theory and practice. Education should focus more at generation and transmission of cross cultural knowledge and information to students to ensure that students possess a certain level of global competence to understand the world they live in and how to fit well into the world.

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