

## THE IMPACTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

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### Abstract

This article will examine how globalization challenges the ways we have traditionally conceptualize higher education curriculum and reviews how globalization may affect educational practices in higher education and its implications. The primary objective of this study was to identify the impacts of globalization on higher education curriculum and create awareness of the need for rethinking in educational practices in higher education curriculum. The information in this article was obtained through review of literature; articles published in peer review journals from the search engines and published books. Although there are many definitions of curriculum, here the focus is on the definition by Hass (1987) which states that curriculum is “all of the experiences that individual learners have in a program of education whose purpose is to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives, which is planned in terms of a framework of theory and research or past and present professional practice” (p.5). Findings reveal that globalization is complex system, involving a large number of integrated components operating together and characterized by constant changes. Although globalization is not a new phenomenon, current trends show that it is erupting every nation in a very high speed. Global issues challenge higher education every day and thus, education can no longer be seen in a strictly national context.

**Key words:** Curriculum, globalization, Information communication, Innovation, Technology.

### Introduction

This paper focuses on the impacts of globalization on higher education curriculum. It will examine how globalization challenges the ways we have traditionally conceptualize higher education curriculum.

The primary objective of this study was to identify the impacts of globalization on higher education curriculum and to create awareness of the need for rethinking in educational practices in higher education instructions. The researcher was inspired by the fact that globalization is imposing changes specifically in higher education towards global views. Two reasons for researching on this subject are the inadequacy of many studies on the direct and indirect impacts of globalizations on higher education curriculum and the increasing changes in trends of educational practices globally. The methodology used in this study was secondary data analysis with reference to current literature on globalization of economy, politics, culture, environment technology, and education. In Implications for educational practices are discussed towards the end.

### Globalization

Globalization is complex system, involving a large number of integrated components operating together and characterized by constant changes. Although globalization is not a new phenomenon, current trends show that it is erupting every nation in a very high speed. Global issues challenge higher education every day and thus, education can no longer be seen in a strictly national context. It is important to address the impacts of globalization on higher education curriculum.

Movius (2010) states that “Globalization has become a key research field in the social sciences and continues to be a hotly debated topic.” (p. 2). There is no commonly agreed upon definition of globalization. Sociologist Roland Robertson (1992), who is considered as a key founder of the concept of globalization, defines globalization as “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (p. 8). More broadly, globalization is defined as,

a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments



of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology. This process has effects on the environment, on culture, on political systems, on economic development and prosperity, and on human physical well-being in societies around the world. (Strasser, 2009, p. 1)

Globalization is characterized by computerization, miniaturization, digitization, satellite communication, optic fiber and Internet (Stibli, 2010; Lam, 2010). The emerging trends of socio-cultural, political, technological, and economic integration has resulted in related demands on the workforce that requires different approaches to education in order to enhance the students' access, adoption, and application of knowledge, promote their independent thinking and exercise of appropriate judgment and collaboration with others to make sense of different situations. Globalization of curriculum is the process of integrating intercultural dimensions into teaching, research, and service functions of the academia. The impact of globalisation on higher education curriculum creates a number of fundamental challenges, which requires a new and transnational governing context (Duderstadt, 2007; Lam, 2010). Globalization is a flow of politics, technology, economy, knowledge, people, Culture (values and ideas) and it is also known as mobility in many forms such as information, knowledge, people and their impacts on the environment and employment (Lam, 2010).

### **Economic Globalization**

According to (Bottery, 2004) the three different forces driving economic globalization are: the fast, mostly open global movement of finance, a practice which precludes countries from welfare agenda; the locking of nations into free market agreements by global organizations such as IMF, WTO, and the World Bank, which limit the activities of nations; and the transnational companies, who enforce on national government, through their abilities to relocate their companies, capital, and workforce around the world, resulting in competition. When first formed in 1945 IMF consisted of only 29 member states. Today, there are 188 members of the IMF, which shows how fast IMF has moved to promote global economic cooperation. The amalgamation of economic reorganization in the world economy and the dominant sociopolitical notions of how delivery of education needs to be reformed, spread by worldwide institutions as a result of the globalization pro-

cess, is having a substantial effect on international educational systems (Lancrin & Kärkkäinen, 2009; Damasio & Damasio, 2007).

According to Tefera and Greijn (2010), in the era of globalization, it has become a necessity that for economic success and competitiveness, nations need to develop a capacity of creating, developing, consuming, packaging, and spreading knowledge. The impact of globalization on the world economy is so tremendous. The reorientation of this global economy is caused by knowledge and information. (Lancrin & Kärkkäinen, 2009; Lafon, 2009). . Institutions of higher learning can respond strategically to economic globalization by promoting information and communication technologies, boosting innovative methods to teaching and learning, and strengthening research capacities.

### **Political Globalization**

The political aspects of globalization can be explained in terms of the emergence of democratic, multinational organizations, international laws and regimes, rule of laws, and civil society. The initial purpose of creation of the UN was to maintain international peace and security. Another important purpose was to promote universal human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) is now the global standard of human rights act together with the Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic and Social Rights make up the "International Bill of Rights" (Strasser, 2009; Bottery, 2004).

In the beginning (1942), UN constituted of only 26 states, and three years later in 1945 the membership grew to 51 nation states. Today, after 70 years, out of the 196 countries in the world, 193 are members of the UN, which is the clear indication of political globalization. The growth of treaty law has created international systems for many global issues, from the Law of the Sea to Human Rights and World Trade.

Global insecurity due to terrorism is increasing in cities, villages and schools, and has become the topic of headlines of news peppers and informal discussions everywhere. In the traditional curriculum setting, the formal discussions of these topics and other global concerns have been left out for natural, political and social scientists and students. It is a high time that the issues of globalizations be

integrated in all curricula and course delivery so that all citizens are aware of what is affecting them directly or indirectly in order to take safety precautions and safeguard themselves and their families.

### Educational Globalization

Globalization of education is not a new phenomenon. During the colonial era, globalization in education was geared towards nationalization of colonial education system in every country by the colonial powers. As a result, Western values and external economic forces affected all nations in the world. Consequently, “all nation-states in existence before 1945 had an education system whose goals, structures and contents were recognizably similar to those of all other nations” (McGinn, 1997, p. 44). Even after most of the colonial nations attained their independence, they continued expanding the colonial system of education with a little modification of the content. The introduction of technology is bringing new changes in the teaching practices. The traditional methods of delivering education to students are progressively giving way to a new form of electronic learning. More educational programs and teaching materials are becoming available in electronic form. Teachers are preparing materials in electronic form; and students are generating papers, assignments and projects in electronic form. Electronic materials such as video projection screens, books with more storage devices and CD ROMs as well as the emergence of e-learning and digital libraries are now substituting chalkboards. Even exams and grades are gradually becoming available through electronic means and notebooks are starting to give way to laptops. Similarly, technologies is enhancing computer managed systems of learning through which students can be examined and submit their lesson exercises online rather than on a paper (Chinnammai, 2005).

Educational globalization means wider and broader educational opportunities for citizens (Lam, 2010). Lam (2010) further suggests that globalization of education enhances the diversity of learning chances to people globally, regardless of the difficulty of measuring the content, quality, and reliability of higher education beyond national boundaries. Educators are experiencing that the world of education, the nature of learners and learning is changing dramatically because of the development and wide availability of the new technologies in this global world (Lam, 2010). The foundation for globalization is education and in turn,

globalization influences education significantly. It follows that the role of education in economic and social transformation and change is vital.

### Cultural Globalization

The occurrence of a particular set of standards and beliefs that are generally shared around the world is referred to as cultural globalization. Globalization has spread Western culture throughout the world. During the colonial era, education played important role in spreading western culture. The contemporary globalization is reshaping these cultural identities in new ways (Mansilla & Gardner, 2007). It can be argued that cultural globalization is enhanced by the globalization of media and communication (Movius, 2010; Bottery, 2004). Further, (Apple, Kenway, & Singh, 2005) noted that now a days media have become vital to cultural productions such that we operate within a globalized high-tech culture of being educated different ways of life including how to behave, to think, feel, believe, desire and act, as well as what not to do.

There are number of interconnectedness of people around the world in which beliefs, values, and standards of life are shared. Due to these interconnectedness, cultural changes in one part of the globe has a significant influence on another part regardless of geographical separation, religious, political, and cultural differences. As Mansilla and Gardner (2007) put it, although it may not be recognized clearly, both teachers and students experience cultural globalization. The idea of cultural globalization causes some sort of challenges to students. According to (Mansilla & Gardner, 2007), students may incline either to diminish cultural differences or to feel incapability by the fear of producing politically incongruous interpretation. Thus, Susmuth (2007, p. 201), suggest that

Beyond closing the educational gap, we also need to better understand the time invested by students and teachers can be optimized to equip young people with the tools they need to become active and productive members of our global society. Currently, basic educational goals do not make intercultural skills a priority.

It is high time that our educational policies and curricula promote the value placed on intercultural skills. The fact to be learned by global era



students is that people who are different from them in values, religions, cultural backgrounds, and ethnicities do not pose threat to their identities. They must also learn to adapt to multicultural settings and tolerate sociocultural diversity (Susmuth, 2007).

### **Environmental Globalization**

Environmental globalization is concerned with the ecology and interdependence of living things on the globe. Environmental globalization is not a new phenomenon. It dates back as early as 1350 BC when there was a smallpox outbreak in Egypt and its spread to china in AD 49, later to Europe and Australia (Bottery, 2004). Easy transport and communication of our time has contributed to the spread of trans-border diseases, such as HIV/AIDS.

Another area of worrying, pressing, and immediate concern of environmental globalization is global warming and global climatic changes, which are the largest threats to human welfare today. Strasser (2009) and Huwart and Loïc (2013) noted that changes in weather patterns and loss of certain species due to habitat loss continue to impose greater threat on human life. Excessive use of fossil fuels creates carbon dioxide emissions resulting in the deterioration of the ozone layer that speeds up global warming and threatens life. Growth from globalization, itself worsens climate change.

Huwart and Loïc (2013, p. 7) stated that “global warming isn’t the only environmental problem. Industry, mass consumption and the increased energy needs of a growing global population are partly responsible for pollution, resource depletion and species extinction”. Destruction of rain forests resulting into deforestation and desertification also threatens bio-diversity, with its potential to find new cures for human illnesses. Environmental pollution and pollution of the atmosphere and water supply directly affect human health and safety. These environmental issues cross national borders, and are no regard for national sovereignty (Bottery, 2004; Strasser, 2009; Huwart & Loïc, 2013).

### **Technology and Globalization**

The advances in information technology and knowledge explosion provide a broader spectrum of opportunities to be used in bridging the gap between the developed and developing countries. Tefera and Greijn, (2010), further noted that the speed of globalization has

been accelerated greatly by information and communication technology. The increase in global trade and productivity, facilitation of business and industry expansion, and enhancement of collaboration in education and research are attributed to information and communication technology

Globalization has been greatly enhanced by Information and communication technologies (ICTs). The World has witnessed increased world productivity and global trade, expedited business and industry growth, and enhanced education and research collaboration, which all can be attributed to the role of Information Communication Technologies. ICT has facilitated nation’s massive benefit of innovation, communication and access to global information (Tefera & Greijn, 2010). In sum, as Castells (1999), puts it, “The availability and use of information and communication technologies are a pre-requisite for economic and social development in our world. They are the functional equivalent of electricity in the industrial era.” (p. 11)

### **The Impacts of Globalization**

#### **The Learning Environment**

Globalization is imposing on nations uniform requirements for professional certification, and thus, standardization of curriculum offerings in higher education, in order to produce graduates who can compete in the world market. There is a radical turn within classroom and school pedagogical processes. The core knowledge and competencies that support self-learning and life-long learning have now a fundamental role in the student’s learning process. Institutions of higher learning are seeking ways of facilitating exchanges of staff, faculty, students and graduates across borders (McGinn, 1997; Frand, 2000; Tefera & Greign, 2010). Further, MacGinn (1997) and Tefera and Greign (2010) noted that some global activities such as videos, tourists and television broadcasts carried by satellites, operate independently of central authorities, by-passing central institutions and affecting local educational practices directly. These activities carry with them images and information which can transmit knowledge, attitude, skills and beliefs, just as teachers do in schools. Globalization is also affecting education in an indirect way by causing environmental changes in which education operates. In

the global era, institutions of higher learning cannot become the center of excellence without an integration of technology in their educational delivery and research (Tefera & Greign, 2010, Frand, 2000; Damasio & Damasio, 2007; Chinnammai, 2005).

In order to merge into the global economy, institutions of higher learning have to concentrate on evolving a system that is broad-based and quality-oriented in their curriculum planning in order to respond to a new paradigm shift in the global curricula, the emergence of new information communication technologies and many multidisciplinary subject areas, which has substantially increased the scope of education supply (Lam, 2010).

### Nature of Learners

In the past few decades, we have observed many new behaviors of learners that have several implications for curriculum development. Frand (2000) stated that,

Most students entering our colleges and universities today are younger than the micro computer, are more comfortable working on a keyboard than writing in a spiral notebook, and are happier reading from a computer screen than from paper in hand. For them, constant connectivity—being in touch with friends and family at any time and from any place—is of utmost importance. And they will be assuming responsibility in a world of incredibly rapid change. Many young people today are accustomed to watching TV, talking on the phone, doing homework, eating, and interacting with their parents all at the same time. (pp. 15, 18)

As globalization imposes significant changes on educational systems, including changes on the nature of learners, the shift from a localized factory model to one that prepares citizens to function in an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing globalized world will be the main challenge to education in the twenty-first century (Damasio & Damasio, 2007).

Susmuth (2007) argues that, globalization stresses on the learners of global era to deal with greater range of complex issues than the learners of the past generation. These changes are also imposing a new demand on our educational systems, which prepare the learners for the future. In the age of globalization, higher education is facing an absurdity. Given the global attitudes and behaviors—the information-age mindset learners are showing, if teachers continue to teach in the tradi-

tional way that they have always taught, there will be little value added from classroom and campus networks. This calls for a change in the nature of the educational relationships the classroom and at the institutional level. We need to think in terms of modifying the educational experience so that it is meaningful to the information-age learner (Frand, 2000). Thus, we need to make advancement to close the gap in the quality of education provided to the learners; and we need to develop a curricula and learning environment in which the learners optimally learn.

### The Learning Method

Frand (2000) and Tefera and Greign (2010) noted that globalization and information technology communication have brought about fundamental changes in the ways in which we teach and students learn. In the past the common method of learning and imparting the knowledge needed was from printed books and journals in libraries and from the lectures delivered in the classrooms. But, now students can log into virtual libraries, google through the internet, use virtual spaces for connection, collaboration and group work, participate in e-learning and m-learning courses, and join online networks that can cover the entire globe.

Interactive and collaborative learning has become a common exercise in the global era, and in this process the relations between learners and teachers have changed. Information communication technologies have shrunk the image of lecturers as being close to all-knowing, to a facilitator of learning and a fellow learner. This leads to a need for a paradigm shift in thinking about teaching and learning. Teaching in information technology communication era is less about transferring knowledge and more about facilitating a learning process, and it requires teachers who are able to use different methods of instruction and conversant with various technologies to support instruction (Susmuth, 2007; Damasio & Damasio, 2007; Frand, 2000; Tefera & Greign, 2010).

### Conclusion

Although it may not be possible to give a comprehensive picture of globalization as it relates to its impacts on higher education curriculum, the globalization issues discussed in this article; the



economic, political, educational, cultural, environmental, and technological globalizations have some direct or indirect implications for educational practices which should not be ignored. Therefore, there is an increasing need for lecturers to acquire global literacy- the recognition and understanding of interrelationships among international organizations, nation-states, public and private economic entities, sociocultural groups, and individuals across the globe.

The nature of learners coming to our class in this digital era is entirely different from those used to be, and is rapidly changing. The 21st century students are exposed to lifestyles, and events outside their local contexts and known cultural patterns. This will force us to understand the learners from global cultural contexts. Globalization has brought the need for teaching intercultural skills. In order to move at the same pace with the world, we must begin rather than turn our heads away from the idea of globalization and its impacts on higher education curriculum, and aim at how to produce citizens that fit in a global lifestyle. Thus, it is vital for lecturers to acquire and update their digital literacy regularly to meet the needs of students. Knowledge about what technology is, how it works, what purposes it can serve, and how it can be used efficiently and effectively to achieve specific goals is a paramount importance. Modern technology and know-how to access and use it influences person's abilities to seek out new opportunities in the global era.

Our educational delivery must integrate the concepts of globalization in classroom practices. People who are not products of an integrated curriculum are unlikely to fit and survive in an increasingly integrated world under the influence of globalization and digitalization. It is also important that curriculum policy responds to this reality by accepting and adopting the principles of globalization and integrate it into our educational practices.

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