

A PROPOSAL FOR THE RESPONSE OF EDUCATION TO GLOBALIZATION ANCHORED ON THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS

Fenti Daniel

Abstract

Globalization is the trend whereby various types of global relations emerge, proliferate and expand. It tends to undermine the very concepts of national sovereignty. Less or loss of government control is a hallmark of globalization. Though the trend and its effects are usually considered with economic, political, environmental and cultural activities in mind, it nonetheless affects others areas of human endeavours. From (he perspective of the national educational goals, this paper proposed the general response education should make in order to ensure a balance between national interest (values) and the "global pull".

Introduction

The world has witnessed a rapid integration on many fronts in the last two decades than any time in history. This process was apparently accelerated dramatically largely due to advances in technology. Today, people's lives around the globe are linked more deeply, more intensely, more immediately than ever before. More interaction among people has been very obvious in economics, politics, culture and environment. This has opened many opportunities, giving power to good and bad.

Globalization, according to Rodrick (2000) quoted by Oroka (2003), has different dimensions, which encompass many different phenomena. It is a generic concept which has been used to describe a multiplicity of processes at the economic, social, political and cultural dimensions. Globalization forces and its effects are not however limited to these areas; it is felt in other sectors too. Its effects on education in this country have been seen and felt from the contents of the curriculum to the methods of instruction. Education being very dynamic appears to be receptive to changes. Often, changes in society affect education, and vice versa.

The constant worldwide flows of people, culture, ideas, information, money, technology, etc. do have their own effects on the nation's education. Given that globalization has become very conspicuous in recent times and may remain so for some time to come, a number of pertinent concerns come to the fore. What are the implications of a shrinking world on Nigerian education? Considering the goals of our education, how should the educational system respond to the apparent unstoppable forces of globalization at work? With particular focus on the latter question, this paper put forward a proposal for a general response to globalization in the educational system.

Concept of Globalization

The linkage globalization forges between people and between places is well acknowledged. Thus, one view of the phenomenon is that it is the term used by some to describe the growing worldwide interdependence of people and countries (Awake!, 2002). This definition alludes to the linkage and exchanges among people and countries for their needs. This process has been fostered by advances in technology especially in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). McGrew (1992), cited by Adesanya (2001), equally stresses this linkage when he described globalization as (he forging of multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between the state and societies, which make up the modern world.

Some definitions stress interdependence among the people of the world. For instance, Dembele (1999) conceives globalization as the growing interdependence of the world's people through shrinking space, shrinking time and disappearing borders. Modern communication technology has shortened distances and penetrated the boundaries of nations.

Globalization has been variously described by/with such terms as interdependence/ interrelation, linkage, inter-connection, etc. of people on a global scale. Globalization is the trend whereby these various kinds of global relations emerge, proliferate and expand. As a result of globalization, social geography acquires a global dimension; places come to mean more than local, provincial, national, regional and continental realms. Because globalization is about people and human societies,

it has direct or indirect bearing on virtually all spheres of man's activities such as economy, politics, culture, technology, health, crime and of course, education.

National Education Goals (Mission)

Over the years, society has deliberately set out to promote learning of its citizens and these elements and various others have evolved into a complex network generally referred to as the education system. This system is usually guided by a set of objectives that constitute the educational goals of that society.

Adopting Yoloje's (1998) general definition of mission as the special duty that someone is directed to perform, it will thus seem that the mission of education in Nigeria is the list of stated aims education is expected to help achieve. Apparently, the special duty of the educational system is actualizing of the aims of national education derived from Nigeria's philosophy of education. The National Policy on Education (1998: 8) outlines the following national educational aims and objectives:

1. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
2. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
4. The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society

These aims of education guide the operation of the educational system and the changes the system is expected to succumb or submit to. An acceptable response of education to globalization should of necessity take cognizance of the aims of education in order to continue to promote national development and preserve our national identity.

The first two educational objectives explore the realms of character while the last two broad objectives explore the realms of learning (Nwana, 1998). A classification of these educational aims and objectives into three broad behavioural categories of cognitive (i.e. knowing), affective (i.e. feeling) and psychomotor (i.e. doing), indicates that the first two objectives belong to the affective domain while the last two, that is, the third and the fourth aims respectively, fall into two domains -cognitive and affective, and cognitive and psychomotor. How should these educational aims and objectives serve to guide the response of education to the forces of globalization? In the next section, the general classes of response to globalization which education can draw from are examined.

Categories of General Response to Globalization

There are mainly four categories of responses that can be made to the forces of globalization. Although four general positions can be distinguished, in practice many people draw a mixture of these views or vacillate between them. The responses to globalization that have been identified include neo-liberalism, reformism, progressive radicalism and traditionalism (Scholte, 2002). These views though often used in connection with politics and economics, they nevertheless apply to all human activities or concerns, including education.

The first general response to globalization, neo-liberalism, builds on the tradition of laissez-faire economics and holds the view that globalization will yield maximum gains when its course is left to uninhibited market force. Implicit from this approach is the supposition that globalization is all-conquering and there is no reason trying to defend the weaker input into the globalization stream, especially given that it is for the global good. Neo-liberalism therefore prescribes that globalization should be approached with full-scale liberalization, official measures should be used to enable rather than to hinder the forces of globalization.

The second general response to globalization can be termed reformism. The reformist agrees with the neo-liberals that global trend can be for the overall social benefits, but argue that these benefits can only be secured with proactive public policies that steer and, where necessary, restrict global flows. In other words, reformism favours an approach that employs synthesis, which recognizes that one cannot ignore other values because they are still human products all the same.

There are many reformists who advocate official measures to protect certain areas and people from the potentially harmful effect of unrestricted globalization.

The third major approach can be called the progressive radicalism. This view rejects the structural foundations of contemporary globalization and seeks to reconstruct the process on a different basis. From another radical perspective, global postmodernists treat rationalism as incorrigibly flawed and promote an alternative globalization based on different kinds of knowledge and identity politics.

The fourth approach, known as traditionalism, a largely defensive position, supports the view that the influence of globalization trend must be resisted. This view point regards globalization as being inherently bad and also argues that globalization intrinsically undermines cultural heritage, democracy, culture, environment, health, economic well-being, social cohesion, etc. This group does not favour anything about the trend and therefore calls for its reversal.

No one single viewpoint may be sufficient as a response to the various challenges engendered by globalization. Scholte (2002) gave an account of how these viewpoints have influenced the response to globalization at different times.

A Proposal for General Response of Education to Globalization

Aluko (2003) describes the phenomenon of globalization as a two-edged sword. While some see globalization as the beginning of a new era of integration and development for all, others see it as the acceleration of an on-going process of global inequalities, especially in the economic sense. Some writers have commented on the effects and consequences of the phenomenon on various human activities: for instance, on curriculum development (Okoh, 2003); standards and quality of products of our educational systems (Nwagwu, 2003); on information technology and culture (Okoh, 2003). There are obviously other areas of the educational system and process not mentioned here that globalization has affected. However, the present concern is about, using the national education objectives as the fulcrum, how the educational system can appropriately respond to the forces of globalization.

The Federal Government has stated that for the benefit of all citizens, the country's educational goals shall be clearly set out in terms of their relevance to the needs of the individual and those of the society, in consonance with the realities of our environment and the modern world. With reference to the list of national educational goals in the NPE (1998; 8) earlier itemized, we will attempt to prescribe a general response the educational system can make to the challenges of globalization.

As have been observed, the first national educational goals dealt with the realm of character based on group culture, while the last two focused on learning in terms of knowledge and skills. Also the first two goals are rooted in the culture of the Nigerian society and the last two, often given attention in the school curriculum, are derived from the national goals for national development. Intellectual (thinking) and manipulative abilities are to a large extent universal, needing only to be adapted to the needs of a particular society. Culture, on the other hand, is limited to the confines of a geographical space (Otakpor, 2003).

As Nwagwu (2003) observed, the Nigerian educational system generally seems to emphasise domestication rather than liberation. In his view, an educational system with a domesticating characteristic dwells heavily on the acquisition of knowledge and skills to satisfy immediate or current and local needs. It does not prepare students for future challenging tasks.

For the purpose of national development, we should be open enough to globalization to derive maximal benefits from the idea. However, the influences of the idea should be guided by a proactive public policy that steer, and where necessary restrict, global flows for our maximum benefit. In line with reformism, there should be an official measure to protect our education system from the potentially harmful effects of unregulated globalization. Adopting an outright laissez-faire or defensive attitude in the response of the system to globalization will not augur well for the system. Either of the approaches will lead to total domination or failure to seize the opportunities therein and thus remain continually disadvantage*!. We must take the opportunity to fully integrate into the "global village"¹ to exploit the rapid development in science, technology and the ICT revolution.

It is perhaps in the area of cultural linkage that globalization has been held in suspect. Since education is the agent by which culture is perpetuated and transmitted, it is the sort of response made in the educational system that will determine the extent to which we allow ourselves to be dominated

culturally. The extent, speed, and direction of the effect of the "global" culture on us will all be directly related to the response we make in education.

Of course, globalization does not necessarily imply the end of other social or geographical space. However, some critics of globalization feel that it portends the domination of the totality over its parts (e.g. Otakpor, 2003; Babarinde, 2001). More fatally, Okoh (2003) equally believes that globalization can completely decimate and emasculate a people whose leadership is not committed to moral and intellectual values. This is why Adesanya (2001) considers the challenge of cultural identity as imminent to globalization. Otakpor (2003: 5) warns about the ills of unfettered globalization on our culture in the following words:

—Local character enables us find signification in our lives and helps sustain that sense of significance. Tradition and local attachments fetter us, not universalism or globalization. Without this sense of significance, we are nothing. Alienated from ourselves, and foreign to our environment, we grope in the dark in search of selfhood, authenticity and identity.

From the above perspective, one proposes that a largely defensive approach be adopted since culture is to a great extent stable. However, because culture is equally dynamic and changing, we should also be minimally open to the emerging "global" culture with a view of possibly integrating those that are possibly of value to us. The production of citizens with national values and signification will remain a worthwhile goal for our education.

Conclusion

Globalization is characterized by a complexity of ideas, hopes, doubts and challenges. We cannot wish away globalization. Therefore there is the need to get us prepared to rapidly respond to the challenges of globalization to the educational system. In all our attempts to effect transformation in our society which anchor on the educational system, we should never lose sight of the international dimension of our educational policies, programme and experiences.

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