EDUCATION OF AFRICAN YOUTHS AND THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract

Some education analysts observe that the standard of education in Africa has dropped from what it used to be in 1970s and 80s. They argue that our recent graduates lack the requisite skills and competence needed for available jobs. This has worsened the already high rate of unemployment with its consequences such as high crime rate, poverty, political thuggery, kidnapping, rape, murder, terrorism and other forms of insecurity. Globalism has been identified as one of the challenges besetting the education of the African youth. This paper therefore focuses on the education of African youth and the challenges of globalization. The methodology adopted is the desk research method that involves theoretical and empirical review of previous researchers on this and related topics. The challenges identified include: brain drain, erosion of African culture and values, increased pressure for massive infrastructural and manpower development, massification and distortion of educational processes, revenue generation and quality assurance and the distraction of social media. It was concluded that African countries, in their bid to enjoy the rapid economy, political and educational transformations of globalization, have been pressured into a galloping pace of educational development which has done more harm than good. It is therefore recommended that there is need to get back to the drawing board and review the system of education in Africa.

One of the best gifts parents can give to their children is sound education. A well educated child is a blessing, not only to the parents, but also to the wider society. Hence, the state, communities, missions and a few rich individuals establish schools at different levels. Onukaogu (2012) in a lecture entitled "New Trends in Educational Administration and Development Inimical to the Proper Student Post Graduation Adjustment" notes that:

Pupils and students enjoyed one form of support or the other in the form of federal government scholarships, state or regional government scholarships, local council scholarships, oil companies scholarships, or international scholarships. Those who enjoyed none of these were given loans by various governments.

He further states that 'at whatever level anyone dropped from school, he had competencies and skills that he could put to use in the economy. Graduates from Trade and Technical schools fared even better. No university graduate was ever unemployed'. Unfortunately, in recent times, the state of education, as pictured above, seems to have changed drastically. Some education analysts suggest that the standard of education in Africa has dropped from what it used to be in the 1970s and 1980s. Some employers of labour complain that recent graduates lack the requisite skills and competences needed for available jobs. Hence, the high rate of unemployment and its attendant consequences – high crime rate, poverty, political thuggery, kidnapping, rape, ritual murder, terrorism and other forms of insecurity.

Globalization has been identified as one the problems besetting the education of African youths This paper therefore focuses on education of African youths and the challenges of globalization.

Concept of Education

Amah (2010) explains education as 'the long term learning activities aimed at preparing people for various roles in the society such as good citizens, family and group members, and workers. It refers to those activities that bring about a permanent change in behavior'. Generally, education is basically concerned with the acquisition of skills, knowledge and attitudes for services. It is provided by homes, the society, schools, colleges, universities, churches, mosques, etc. Educational psychologists posit that it is easier for youths to learn and entrench new habits than it is for older people. Most of the christians and moslems we have today who are 50 years and above were converted and educated in their youthful stages. The process of religious conversion is usually difficult for older people. Cueing from this analogy, one can infer that education is therefore most effective at the youthful stage.

Formal and Informal Education in Africa

The scope of education in Africa can be classified into informal and formal categories. The informal category covers indigenous and conventional educational systems that comprise traditional education, traditional wisdom, folk knowledge and traditional science usually passed from generation to generation, mostly orally or through cultural rituals. This form of education formed the background knowledge of people in agriculture, healthcare delivery, information dissemination, general education, environmental conservation and preservation, law and order, sociology, politics, public, and family administration, management sciences and all other activities that define the African environment.

The formal category comprises primary, secondary and tertiary education and aims at the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen. Formal education has overtaken informal education in recent times. This trend which started with colonialism, was deepened by civilization and has been entrenched by globalization. Traditional educational systems in many African countries have been overtaken by global perspectives and the aspiration to align with international policies and guidelines. In many parts of Africa, some of the cultural rituals that served as informal setting for education are now regarded as superstition and education is tilting towards the framework of the western societies. Okpara (2007) captures this aptly when he writes that 'the world has whole-heartedly and with open arms embraced the phenomenon of mechanized instruction that there appears to be no foreseeable limits …' Highlighting the benefits of technology-driven approach to education, Okpara further explains that audio-visual materials, instructional media, educational media, and instructional technology are 'associated with present day global educational advancement'.

Concept of Globalization

Globalization can be conceived simply as the process of evolving a more interconnected world. It can be best understood in terms of integration of societies, nations or states in terms of economic development, culture and information sharing. Put simply, globalization involves sharing, trading and information distribution. In the words of Cogburn (2014), 'globalization is about the monumental structural changes occurring in the process of production and distribution in the global economy'.

Globalization leads to a state where there is less limitation based on geographical location and the institution of requisite framework to justify the common cliché that the world is now a global village. A person or a country can choose people or organizations to do business with anywhere in the world. Goods can be distributed anywhere around the world, information can move in all directions in flit

seconds through the use of the internet and phones and there is a viable transportation network around the world.

Perhaps the greatest manifestation of globalization is the evolution of optoelectronics, which involves the fusion of photonics technologies (using photons) with micro-electronics (using electrons) to attain greater efficiency in data processing and transmission. Optoelectronics has evolved new developments in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and some of them include: the internet, world wide web, Integrated Systems Digital Network (ISDN), Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM), Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), etc. These developments have broken the boundaries of space and time and facilitated the exchange of knowledge, information, data, ideas and materials. In the area of educational research, for instance, the internet has facilitated the explosion of information in every field of study. Search engines such as *google.com* or *bing.com* have been developed to deliver results within seconds on any subject area.

Globalization in Africa has made a slow but steady progression. Highly industrialized countries and continents embraced globalization earlier and have become the pacesetters. These industrialized countries belong to the highly influential Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and their success in this area has been attributed largely to the synergy between public and private sectors in their respective countries. The implication of the scope and development trend of globalization in industrialized nations is that their precedence, even their errors, are gradually entrenched as the yardsticks for measuring growth and development in developing continents like Africa. Every year, there are global statistics on every important sector and accompanying rankings. Over the years, in Africa, globalization has brought about a mental shift and the focus has been largely to make it to the upper tier of world rankings in all fields. African countries now aspire to produce educational institutions, business moguls and corporations, and even religious leaders that will rank top ten according to global assessment criteria. *Whereas this competitive atmosphere has resulted in accelerated development in many African countries, it has also impacted negatively on certain aspects of the development of the continent, especially in the erosion of its culture and values for those of the Western world.*

Globalization has had both positive and negative effects on the African continent. It has assisted in improving the conditions of living because of the easy movement of materials across the globe. Medication, education, virtual learning, etc, have been made possible anywhere in the world. Online degree programmes have made education quite portable and convenient. There has been economic growth in some countries that used to be very poor as expertise can now move across the globe. On the flipside, globalization has led to many international conflicts that arise out of trade agreements and practices, unprecedented internationalization of problems that could have been managed locally as a result of the advent of new technology in information, proliferation of fraudulent practices among others. The negative impact of globalization on Africa, especially on the education of African youths is a discourse that has received wide attention and reactions from many African writers. In the field of African literature, for instance, writers and critics like Emmanuel Obiechina, Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o launched their protest to globalization by projecting the use of indigenous language in the education of Africans. Their argument was that there would be greater educational advancement in Africa if western influences were minimized and the fastest way to achieve this was to teach Africans in their indigenous languages.

Globalization Challenges to the Education of African Youths

The following aspects of globalization can be examined as challenges to the education of youths in Africa:

(i)   The Brain Drain

In many African countries, the educational institutions are not enough to meet the demand of the teeming population of youths desirous to patronize them and the course contents do not match those of highly industrialized nations. The implication of this is that many Africans migrate to other developed continents for educational needs. According to Linard in an essay entitled "The Brain Drain: Losing one's head":

Last year, Mr. Rossi, a senior representative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), noted that "each year between 1960 and 1975 some 1,800 highly qualified Africans left the continent. This figure rose to 4,000 for the period 1975 – 1984 and to 12,000 by 1990 and currently stands at 23,000". This means that around one third of Africa's intellectual resources now live elsewhere". He added that these figures do not include the students who fail to return home after they have completed their education…these flows are extensive enough to constitute a real brain drain.

The difficult living condition in Africa is another major cause of brain drain. Youths that were sponsored to travel out, acquire new skills and come home to apply those skills to the development of their continent end up staying back in those countries because of the difficult living conditions that await them in their home countries. Okanla (2014) as if to support the assertion above, captures the educational history of the Republic of Benin in an article entitled "Competitive Professionals". Tracing from the colonial period to the period after independence, he narrates as follows:

At the time, Benin's government decided that just anyone could qualify to teach at high school level. All that was needed was to complete a so-called "military and patriotic service"….Qualified educators went into self-imposed exile to work in a better scholarly environment. Expectedly, national education standards fell sharply, and by the late 1980s, the education system was near collapse and endless strikes made matters worse.

Onukaogu (2012), in highlighting the Nigerian situation is of the opinion that the problem with education in Nigeria started when government took over the management of educational institutions. What existed was a situation where the educational institutions were managed jointly by the state, communities, the Missions and a few rich individuals. He laments the poor conditions in Africa that facilitate brain drain:

Government has found it difficult to pay teachers' salaries, especially in States where they say education is free. Teachers are always out of the classrooms or they engage in other businesses to survive. The result is that the quality of teaching has gone down and pupils in government schools spend many years learning nothing and acquiring no skills.

Onukaogu summarizes the essay by advocating the take-over of educational institutions by churches and other stakeholders that will be more committed to achieving success. This framework may work in some parts of Nigeria, but definitely has its pitfalls. The ultimate target however remains for educational institutions in Africa to achieve parity with educational institutions of the western world. The projection is that if this parity is achieved, the rate of migration of African youths and intellectuals to Europe and America for greater educational opportunities will reduce.

(ii)   Erosion of African culture and values

Some critical perspectives suggest that globalization has aided the hegemony of educational growth pattern by the western

world. *It is widely held that African educational policy makers' adherence to global standards, in a bid to participate actively in global competition, has backfired and resulted in dearth in the projection of African culture and values.* Neubauer (2014) in an article entitled "Ten Globalization Challenges to Higher Education Quality and Quality Assurance", specifically in proposition six, states that 'globalization's stimulus for and embodiment of knowledge dynamics have created information singularity thereby eroding traditional sources of knowledge and standards, with consequences for teaching methodology and student responsibility'. Neubauer's assertion serves as a launch pad for the argument that globalization poses a great challenge for the complete educational advancement of the African youths. This is so because African youths cannot claim to have attained complete educational advancement when they spend more years studying Western concepts that are alien to their culture and context. The academic curricula used in many African nations are based on theories that are alien to African culture and values. Even the corporations that operate in African countries, when they advance educational support schemes, insist on the educational framework of the Western world on the grounds of compliance to global standards. Devjee (2014) in a review of a book entitled *African Education and Globalization: Critical Perspectives* by Ali A. Abdi, Korbla Puplampu and George Sefa Dei highlights the implication of western hegemony orchestrated by globalization on education and social development in Africa. He calls for 'a recasting of educational goals by adopting a counter hegemonic framework'. He submits as follows:

The colonizing process has erased African culture and has deprived the African people of their indigenous knowledges and continues to do so in the form of globalization and neocolonialism. This erasure has brought about a decline in employment, education, and social development, and an increase in poverty and personal risks to the African people. It is time to re-culture Africa, and re-indigenize African schooling, knowledge, and methodologies.

In many African educational institutions, we find various subjects that remain abstract to the African and the youths end up memorizing ideologies which may not impact positively on their educational development and the development of the African society. In the field of literature for instance, we find African students groping around subject areas like neoclassicism, romanticism and medieval literature which require familiarity with western culture in order to fully grasp the import of certain allusions that will facilitate understanding. Devjee here calls for 're-culturization' and 're-indigenization' of African schooling and educational methodologies.

(iii) Increased pressure for massive infrastructural and manpower development
Contemporary globalization involves massive infrastructural development in the educational sector. There is paucity of funds in many African nations to meet up with educational requirements. In many educational institutions in Africa, the technological apparatuses which they managed to acquire are for accreditation purposes. Many of the students that pass through these institutions cannot boast of the mastery of those devices after graduation because they were never granted access to them. Devjee further highlights the implication of this infrastructural challenge to education of African youths by noting that only 'few have access to the right equipment and connections to benefit from e-learning'. He argues that 'African tertiary institutions are not given the opportunity to participate in the delivery of these courses due to lack of infrastructure leaving the content devoid of African voices and contexts. The implication of this for the

African youths is that they are taught western concepts which will be difficult to absorb fully because of the contextual variations. Devjee has carefully linked this lack of reflection of the African context to lack of infrastructure that will enable Africa participate in the global framework design process. In an empirical review to determine the challenges of Information and Communications Technology, Adebayo (2011) establishes that, in Nigeria, (as in many African states), beyond lack of infrastructure, epileptic power supply and poor manpower skill level are factors that further portray the infrastructural challenge. He proposes that institutions should 'endeavour to have standby generator to minimize problems of power supply….' On the issue of manpower skill level, he suggests that relevant staff should be sent on 'workshops, seminars and conferences, or short-term courses to up-date their skills and to acquire modern skills in Information and Communications Technology. The issues raised by Devjee and Adebayo are rooted in the failure of African nations to actualize their aspiration to meet global educational standards. Perhaps a more realistic and progressive educational development framework will enable Africa attain sustainable educational advancement to the benefit of the African youths.

(iv)   The Issue of massification and access:
Massification is a concept that involves the unprecedented growth in the demand for educational institutions and the responses to this demand. It usually comes with unprecedented pressure to build more learning centres and equip them and has been linked to population growth and global competitiveness. To meet up with global standards and reduce attrition rate to developed nations, educational institutions in Africa are under constant pressure to increase access. They therefore engage in partnerships and linkages with affiliates in the form of satellite campuses. The implication of this is that there is a proliferation of highly differentiated institutions

and quality of learning is eroded. This is a challenge to education of youths in Africa. The pressures of global competitiveness in education usually culminate in a total distortion of educational processes and enthronement of forms of segregation and social inequality. This is true in African states where children from poor homes face the same competition with children from rich homes. Eventually, those families that have the means secure placement in these institutions. In many African nations, it has become increasingly difficult for youths to secure admission into institutions of higher learning as the institutions are not sufficient to serve the teeming population.

(v)   The challenge of revenue generation and quality assurance
Many educational institutions in Africa are funded by the government and the challenges with government funding as highlighted by Okanla and Onukaogu, range from the issue of non-payment of teachers' salaries to lack of infrastructure. Educational institutions in Africa therefore engage in consulting and other non-teaching activities to increase revenue and meet up with global specifications.

(vi.)   The distraction of social media, pornography and online games:
Globalization has introduced the social media which features networking channels like *facebook, twitter, YouTube*, etc and chatting platforms like *whatsapp, 2go, viber*, etc. These platforms require the users to be online real-time, 24 hours. Sometimes, obscene materials are shared, irrelevant topics are brought up for discussion and youths are glued to their computers and mobile gadgets for hours. Social media offers free pornographic pictures and videos as well as various online games. These innovations attract the youths and can distract them from focus on educational activities and objectives. Beyond the distraction, this innovation has resulted in high level of moral decadence among the youths as evident in the

spate of unwanted pregnancy among African female youths. The implication being that the number of African youths that drop out of school yearly will be on the increase if this tide is not checked. In contradistinction with African traditional educational systems that offered pristine values and upheld morality and seriousness, these new developments fraught by globalization can be said to have very grave negative effects on the education of African youths. A realistic censorship scheme that may require licensing under stiff conditions will reduce the impact of this issue. The effects of the distraction wrought by the social media are further evidenced by the reflection of conventional internet abbreviations like *Lol, l8tr, lwkmd, becos, 4fwd, 2mrw,* etc in serious academic discourses by African youths. Some African students who have become social media addicts usually have this challenge and use these expressions in serious discussions and papers. Despite the mammoth educational and information dissemination benefits, social media has posed a clog a great challenge to the advancement of the education of African youths. Strict restrictions have to be adopted by parents and educators to stem this tide.

Conclusion

Globalization is transforming the world economic, political and educational systems at a rapid rate. With the emergence of new global development framework, especially in highly industrialized nations, education takes on increasing importance. Nations therefore focus on the formulation of viable educational policies. Good educational policies lead to a knowledgeable, skilled and motivated workforce with a patriotic mindset. Globalization has brought about issues of academic quality, equity in access and efficiency as educational institutions make transitions to meet with the emerging realities. Globalization seems to continuously alter the goalpost of the education in Africa.

This paper has identified the following implications of globalization on the education of African youths:

➢ Global competition which has fostered the erosion of African models, adoption of un-African educational framework for African youths, pressure on educational institutions for the acquisition of massive infrastructure beyond the scope of many African nations, issue of massification and access as well as the challenge of revenue generation and quality assurance

➢ Technological revolution which has projected pornography, online games and social media with grave implications for the educational advancement of African youths

We therefore conclude that African nations have, in their bid to measure up with world standard, been pressurized into a galloping pace of educational development which has done more harm than good. There is more emphasis on meeting up with world standards than on the quality of education. The negative impacts of globalization on the education of African youths have been highlighted and are quite critical. Perhaps, there is need to get back to the drawing board and re-launch the system of education in Africa.

Recommendation

Having examined the challenges gains and flipsides of globalization to the education of African youths, we have come up with the following recommendations:

1. A more realistic and progressive educational development framework will enable Africa attain sustainable educational advancement to the benefit of the African youths. African educational growth will be more sustainable if nations develop at a reasonable pace (defined by their varying

socio-economic realities) and not under undue pressure to measure up to established nations.

2. A situation where every African youths aspire to pass through regular educational institutions in order to actualize global relevance will continue to stifle access to education. African nations should establish vocational training centres to decongest the pressure on standardized educational centres and achieve greater relevance to the African economy. A robust educational framework adjusted to accommodate economic viability is preferred to an unsustainable competition with world powers and leading globalized nations.

3. A realistic public/private sector synergy is advocated to solve the problem of funding in educational institutions. This will relieve the government of some pressure and facilitate efficiency and effectiveness. It will also enable capacity and manpower development as well as ensure adequate motivation geared towards excellence.

4. A realistic censorship scheme that may require licensing under stiff conditions will reduce the negative impact of social media on the education of African youths. The various relevant agencies in African countries, perhaps, in synergy with their various educational institutions can design applicable framework that will enable them have right of access to the internet and further grant the students access to only educational materials.

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