

## **GLOBALIZATION AS A CATALYST FOR THE GROWTH OF WESTERN EDUCATION IN AFRICA: ITS EFFECTS ON TRADITIONAL EDUCATION**

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### **Abstract**

Before the sub-Saharan Africa and the American continent was discovered by the European explorers the known world was Europe, parts of Asia and parts of northern and eastern Africa. At that time globalization had already started but in a low scale. There had been contacts, trade and exchange of ideas cultures and religion among the tribes of Europe, parts of Asia and parts of northern and eastern Africa. With the discovery of the American continent and the sub-Saharan Africa a new phase of globalization kick-started, European culture, religion and world view were imported into the newly found territories through the use of education. The new form of education presented to Africans was designed to make them detest their cultural heritage; religion and world view and accept the foreign way of life without questioning. This situation coupled with the unfortunate historical events -slave trade and colonialism- made the ordinary African see himself as inferior to the European invaders. The implications are that the traditional education of the native African is relegated to the background. The product of education now becomes Africans who reject African religion, culture and world view and force themselves to be Europeans in ideas and world view while remaining Africans in blood and colour.

**Keywords** – Globalization, catalyst, growth of Western education, Africa, Effects, traditional education

### **Introduction**

Globalization can be defined as a process of international integration which occurs gradually as a result of interchange of world views, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture. Globalization attempts to describe the interplay across cultures of macro-social

forces like religion, politics, and economics. It has the ability to erode and universalize the characteristics of a local group. Progress and achievements experienced in transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, including the rise of the Internet, are major factors in globalization, generating further interdependence of economic and cultural activities.

Etymologically, the term globalization is coined from the word globalize, which has to do with the emergence of an international network of social and economic systems. One of the earliest known usages of the term as a noun was in 1930 in a publication entitled *Towards New Education* where it denoted a holistic view of human experience in education. *Corporate giants*, which somewhat is a related term was coined by Charles Taze Russell in 1897 to refer to the largely national trusts and other large enterprises of the time. By the 1960s, authors in economics and social science began to use both terms as meaning the same thing. Its usage became more pronounced in the latter half of the 1980s. From its beginning, globalization as a concept has inspired competing definitions and interpretations, with antecedents dating back to the great movements of trade and empire across Asia and the Indian Ocean from the 15th century onwards. Due to the complexity of the concept, research projects, articles, and discussions often remain focused on a single aspect of globalization.

Robertson (1999), became the first person to define globalization as "the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole." Giddens (2002) in his work *The Consequences of Modernity*, defined globalization thus: "Globalization can thus 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."

Larsson (2007) in his book *The Race to the Top: The Real Story of Globalization* opines that globalization is the process of world shrinkage, of distances getting shorter,

things moving closer. It pertains to the increasing ease with which somebody on one side of the world can interact, to mutual benefit, with somebody on the other side of the world.

Although many scholars interested in the subject assert that the origins of globalization are in modern times, others trace its history as far back as the European age of discovery and voyages to the New World. A number of authors try to trace the origins to the third millennium BC. However, since the beginning of the 20th century, the pace of globalization has proceeded at a rapid rate.

For thousands of years humans have interacted over long distances. The overland Silk Road that connected Europe Asia and parts of Africa (north and east Africa) is a good example of the transformative power of international exchange that existed in the ancient days. Philosophy, religion, arts, language, and many other aspects of culture interchange among the nations as nations exchanged products and ideas. In the 15th century, Europeans explorers opened up the New World of the Americas and the Sub Saharan Africa. Thus the transatlantic travels began which resulted in the increase in global movement of people, goods, and ideas in the following centuries. Early in the 19th century, the development of new forms of transportation (such as the steamship and railroads) and telecommunication that "compressed" time and space allowed for increased rate of global contact. By the 20th century road vehicles and airlines had developed and that made transportation faster. The introduction of electronic communications (mobile phones and the internet) connected billions of people in new ways leading into the 21st century.

## History of Globalization

The history of globalization can be divided into three major phases, viz; Ancient/medieval phase, the proto globalization, and the modern phase.

### Ancient/Medieval Phase of Globalization:

Scholars argue that a form of globalization began with the rise of trade links between Sumer and the Indus Valley Civilization in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. This archaic globalization existed during the Hellenistic Age, when commercialized urban centers enveloped the axis of Greek culture that reached from India to Spain to, including Alexandria and the other Alexandrine cities. Early on, the geographic position of Greece and the necessity of importing wheat forced the Greeks to engage in maritime trade. Trade in ancient Greece was largely unrestricted: the state controlled only the supply of grain.

There were trade links between the Roman Empire, the Parthian Empire, and the Han Dynasty. The increasing commercial links between these powers took form in the Silk Road, which began in western China, reached the boundaries of the Parthian empire, and continued to Rome. As many as three hundred Greek ships sailed each year between the Greco-Roman world and India. Annual trade volume may have reached 300,000 tons.

The Islamic Golden Age added another stage of globalization, when Radhanite (Jewish) and Muslim traders and explorers established trade routes, resulting in a globalization of agriculture, trade, knowledge and technology. Crops such as

sugar and cotton became widely cultivated across the Muslim world in this period, while widespread knowledge of Arabic and the Hajj created a cosmopolitan culture.

The advent of the Mongol Empire, though destabilizing to the commercial centers of the Middle East and China, greatly facilitated travel along the Silk Road. The Pax Mongolica of the thirteenth century included the first international postal service, as well as the rapid transmission of some epidemic diseases across Central Asia. Up to the sixteenth century, however, the largest systems of international exchange were limited to southern Eurasia (an area where the Balkans and Greece interact with Turkey, Egypt, the Levant, Persia and the Arabian Peninsula, continuing over the Arabian Sea to India). Many Chinese merchants chose to settle down in the Southeast Asian ports such as Cambodia, Sumatra, Java, and married the native women. Their children carried on the trade.

Italian city states embraced free trade and merchants established trade links with faraway places, giving birth to the Renaissance. Marco Polo was a merchant traveler from the Venetian Republic in modern-day Italy whose travels are recorded in *Il Milione*, a book that played a significant role in introducing Europeans to Central Asia and China. The pioneering journey of Marco Polo and the new heliocentric concept of the universe which presented the earth as spherical and not a flat surface and consequently not the centre of the universe inspired Christopher Columbus and other European explorers of the following centuries.

### **Proto-Globalization:**

In the 17th century, global trade developed further with the establishment of chartered companies like the British East India Company (founded in 1600) and the Dutch East India Company (founded in 1602, often described as the first multinational corporation in which stock was offered). The Age of Discovery added the "New World" to the equation, beginning in the late 15th century. Exploration far into the ocean was carried on by European explorers. The Horn of Africa and to the American continent was reached in 1492 by the Italian explorer Christopher Columbus. Global trade growth continued with the European Colonization of the American continent initiating the Columbian Exchange, the exchange of plants, animals, foods, human populations (including slaves and immigrants), communicable diseases, and culture between the Eastern and Western hemispheres. Trade further spread to the interior of the sub Saharan Africa through the West African and South African sea coasts. The trans-Atlantic slave trade boomed as more slaves were shipped from the coast of Africa to the New World in America. The European colonization of Africa further intensified European-African trade and exchange of culture, food and human population that really influenced the African world.

### **Modern Phase of Globalization**

With the development of steamships in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the cost of international transport was reduced significantly. In the same vein the development of and railroads made inland transport cheaper. Due to the transport revolution which occurred between

1820 and 1850, more nations embraced international trade; this increased the rate of exchange of culture, ideas and population. It has to be noted however, that globalization in this period was decisively shaped by nineteenth-century imperialism such as in Africa and Asia. Nevertheless, globalization took a big step backwards during the First World War, the Great Depression, and the Second World War. Integration of rich countries didn't recover to previous levels before the 1980s.

Within the 1970s, the cost of aviation reduced significantly which made it affordable to middle classes in developed countries. Open skies policies and low-cost carriers helped to bring competition to the market. In the 1990s, the growth of low cost communication networks cut the cost of communicating between different countries. More work can be performed using a computer without regard to location. This included accounting, software development, and engineering design. Of late however, much of the industrialized world entered into the *Great Recession*, which may have temporally slowed the process of globalization.

### **Aspects of Globalization**

As one may easily notice from the foregoing, globalization can be looked at from different aspects. These aspects are;

- a. Economic globalization
- b. Socio-cultural globalization
- c. Globalization in politics
- d. Globalization in information technology
- e. Health and globalization
- f. Sports and globalization

## **Economic Globalization**

With improvements in transportation and communication, international business grew rapidly after the beginning of the 20th century. International business includes all commercial transactions (private sales, investments, logistics, and transportation) that take place between two or more regions, countries and nations beyond their political boundary. Usually, private companies undertake such transactions for profit. Such business transactions involve economic resources such as capital, natural and human resources used for international production of physical goods and services such as finance, banking, insurance, construction and other productive activities.

Economic globalization has to do with the increasing economic interdependence of national economies across the world through a rapid increase in cross-border movement of goods, service, technology and capital. Whereas the globalization of business is centered on the diminution of international trade regulations as well as tariffs, taxes, and other impediments that suppresses global trade, economic globalization is the process of increasing economic integration between countries, leading to the emergence of a global marketplace or a single world market. Depending on the paradigm, economic globalization can be viewed as either a positive or a negative phenomenon.

Economic globalization comprises the globalization of production, markets, competition, technology, and corporations and industries. Current globalization trends can be largely accounted for by developed economies integrating with less developed economies, by means of foreign direct investment, the reduction of trade barriers as

well as other economic reforms and, in many cases, immigration.

## **Socio-Cultural Globalization:**

Socio-cultural globalization has increased cross-cultural contacts but may be accompanied by a decrease in the uniqueness of once-isolated communities. The contribution of globalization to the alienation of individuals from their traditions may be modest compared to the impact of modernity itself, as alleged by existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Globalization has expanded recreational opportunities by spreading pop culture, particularly via the Internet and satellite television. Religious movements were among the earliest cultural forces to globalize, spread by force. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism etc. have taken root and influenced endemic cultures in places far from their origins.

Through the process of globalization, cultural practices including traditional music can be lost and/or transformed into a fusion of traditions. Globalization can trigger a state of emergency for the preservation of musical heritage. While local musicians struggle for authenticity and to preserve local musical traditions some performers try to discard traditional instruments and music in favour of adopted foreign music cultures. Modern communication system gave support to the World Music phenomenon by allowing locally-recorded music to reach western audiences and search for new ideas and sounds. Musicians in other parts of the world have adopted many innovations that originated in other cultures. Anglo-American pop music spread across the world through MTV and other social media network. This phenomenon has

occasioned the loss of local musical identity in many parts of the world.

A report of UNESCO (2005) report showed that cultural exchange is becoming more frequent from Eastern Asia but Western countries are still the main exporters of cultural goods. In 2002, China was the third largest exporter of cultural goods, after the United Kingdom and United States of America. Between 1994 and 2002, both North America's and the European Union's shares of cultural exports declined, while Asia's cultural exports grew to surpass North America. Related factors are the fact that Asia's population and area are several times that of North America. Americanization related to a period of high political American clout and of significant growth of America's shops, markets and object being brought into other countries. So globalization, a much more diversified phenomenon, relates to a multilateral political world and to the increase of objects, markets and so on into each other's countries. The Indian experience particularly reveals the plurality of the impact of cultural globalization.

### **Globalization in Politics**

At the rate of the progress of globalization, it may ultimately reduce the importance of nation states. Sub-state and supra-state institutions such as the United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS, European Union, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the G8, otherwise known as the Group of Eight, (an assembly of world leaders who meet annually to discuss global issues) or the International Criminal Court, replace national functions with international agreements. Some writers have attributed the relative decline in United States power

to globalization, particularly due to the country's high trade deficit. This led to a global power shift towards Asian states, particularly China, which unleashed market forces and achieved tremendous growth rates. As of 2011, China was on track to overtake the United States by 2025. Also, non-governmental organizations are increasingly influencing public policy across national boundaries, including humanitarian aid and developmental efforts. Arab and Islamic resistance to foreign influence and culture is a response to globalization. But the movement is being met with stiff resistance by the powers that tend to gain more from globalization.

### **Globalization in Information Technology**

The Internet provides a broad area of services to business and individual users. Because the World Wide Web (WWW) can reach any Internet-connected computer in the world, the Internet is closely related to global information systems. A global information system is a data communication network that crosses national boundaries to access and process data in order to achieve corporate goals and strategic objectives.

Across companies and continents, information standards ensure desirable characteristics of products and services such as quality, environmental friendliness, safety, reliability, efficiency and interchangeability at an economical cost. For businesses, widespread adoption of international standards means that suppliers can develop and offer products and services meeting specifications that have wide international acceptance in their sectors. According to the International Standard Organization (ISO), businesses using their International Standards

are competitive in more markets around the world. The ISO develops standards by organizing technical committees of experts from the industrial, technical and business sectors who have asked for the standards and which subsequently put them to use. These experts may be joined by representatives of government agencies, testing laboratories, consumer associations, non-governmental organizations and academics.

### **Health and Globalization**

Due to advancement in transportation system international travel has increased tremendously. This development has occasioned the quick spread some of the deadliest infectious diseases. Modern modes of transportation allow more people and products to travel around the world at a faster pace, but they also open the routes to the transcontinental movement of infectious disease vectors. A good example of this is the quick spread of HIV/AIDS after its discovery in the United States of America. On the other hand, globalization has enabled a world collective effort in the fight of killer Diseases. The World Health Organization (WHO) has through many of its programmes helped to improve the world health condition.

### **Sports and Globalization**

Globalization to a great extent has increased international sporting activities. The Olympic Games which was originally an ancient Greek game which featured mainly athletic, combat and chariot racing events and which origin is shrouded in mystery and legend has in the 19<sup>th</sup> century turned to a world popular game competition. The FIFA World Cup is the world's most widely viewed sporting competition event; an estimated 8 million people watched the final

match of the 2014 FIFA World Cup held in Brazil, thanks to globalization.

### **Globalization and the Growth of Western Education**

As we have earlier discussed, scholars have argued that a form of globalization began with the rise of trade links between Sumer and the Indus Valley Civilization in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. This archaic globalization existed during the Hellenistic Age, when commercialized urban centers enveloped the axis of Greek culture that reached from India to Spain to, including Alexandria and the other Alexandrine cities. This rise of trade link was invariably accompanied by the spread of culture, civilization and of course education. The Greek involvement in maritime trade offered an opportunity for the easy spread of Greek culture and education across Europe. The geographic position of Greece made the spread of Greek education and culture through Europe and some part of Asia easy. Thus with time, the Greek culture and education began to gradually displace the traditional education and culture of European tribes.

With the discovery of Galileo and the consequent change of the concept of the universe from helio-centric to geo-centric which by implication presented the world as spherical and in motion, not a static flat surface, the age of exploration and discovery of the "New World" began at about late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Exploration far into the ocean which was hitherto not attempted because of the previous understanding that the world was a flat surface and thus one could get to the end of the earth and fall off was carried on by European explorers. The Sub-Saharan Africa was opened up and the American continent was reached in 1492 by the Italian explorer Christopher Columbus. This triggered off a number of Global events;

trade growth continued (including slave trade), colonization, the exchange of plants, animals, foods, human populations, communicable diseases, and more importantly patterns of education and culture between the Eastern and Western hemispheres.

The European colonization of Africa further intensified European-African exchange of culture, food and human population that greatly influenced the African world. With imperialism firmly established in the hub of Africa through the process of globalization the stage was set for a drastic erosion of African culture and ethno education. The benefits of globalization notwithstanding one need to understand also that globalization is a phenomenon that promotes the interests of the strong at the expense of the weak. In the case of Africa and Europe in the picture of globalization Africa has remained at the weaker end. In colonizing Africa the European policy on education was designed to make Africans discard their own world views and adopt that of their colonial masters (the English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese). From all indication the intended goal of the colonizing European in providing western education to the African was to recreate the African to become European in opinion, morals and intellect and African in mere colour. Lord Macaulay (a Briton) stated in his *Minutes of Education* as quoted by Ezeani (2013), that the goal of colonial education in the colonies was "to train at least a class of persons Indian (or African) in blood but English in opinion, morals, and intellect." The French colonies were worst off. The policy of *assimilation* overtly aimed at recreating persons who are Africans in blood but French in opinion, morals and intellect. Education for the colonizers became an effective instrument for the mission of Europeanization of the African.

The effect even to this day is that the ordinary African sees anything European as a symbol of education or sign of being civilized. Education is thus being associated with Europeanness (western knowledge and culture). The damage is such that even some one doing a civil service job or any white collar clean job is referred to as someone doing a white man's job. It is called "*Olu-oyibo*" in Igbo, "*Uto-mbakama*" in Efik, "*Tom u kuluke*" in Tiv, and "*Ukolo-enefu*" in Igalala, and they all translate to mean white man's job. What this denotes is that one has to be like the white man that is "civilized" before you can do such job. The contents of African traditional education, culture and values (ethno-education) are relegated to the background. In some quarters in Africa, identifying with African cultural values and world views are seen as a sign of backwardness and ignorance. But this is not to be so.

### **Decline of Ethno Education in Africa; a Consequence of Globalization**

As I have tried to show earlier, globalization leads to loss of cultural identity as Western ideas and cultures are always imposed upon African cultures. According to O'Connor (1975), education is the process by which societies through schools, colleges, universities and other institutions deliberately transmit their cultural heritage. If the above is accepted as factual, then one needs to ask whether education in many African nations fulfill that cultural heritage transmission function. Your guess is as good as mine. Due to the effect of globalization and on the footing by which formal education was introduced in Africa there is this lack of a symbiotic relationship between school and society, a situation that has produced somewhat social misfits as education products.



The negative impact of globalization on education in Africa is what Ezeani (2013) choose to call *de-Africanization* of Africa. It is a process which dispossessed the people of their culture, value, names, languages and human dignity; the respect and honour inherent in one because he or she is a human person. The obvious consequence of this is that the ordinary African feels inferior as an African and becomes mentally dependent on the western culture. He rejects his social values and becomes a European in black skin. In the long run what the educational institution end up producing are cultural freaks and social misfits, that is Africans who are queer and do not fit in their cultural environment.

The very contact with the white man and the events surrounding this contact (slave trade, colonialism, and racism) created in the mind of the ordinary African the feeling of inferiority. Thus he tries to do away with anything Africa and forces himself to be European in African skin. He throws away his name, his language, and his cultural values and teaches his children to do so. He carries his bias into the educational system which he mans and teaches the students to be whites even when they have black skins thereby adding more damage to the damage already done by colonialism. It is a common sight to see students in Nigeria for instance being punished for using vernacular in discussion. In some of my visits to my students on teaching practice I have come across schools that boldly write and paste on every available space on the walls; *“Speaking of Vernacular is prohibited. Speak English or remain silent.”* As if education itself abhors the African mother tongue.

Education should be a deliberate transmission of cultural values of a people from one generation to another. It is only

proper that this transmission which is deliberate is done in a language and manner that is native to the learner. As Ezeani (2013) put it; “It is important to realize that a form of education which fails to realize the emancipatory and dignity-enhancing potential dehumanizes its recipients.” For most Africans, instead of education being a means of growing in wisdom, integrity and skills, it became a new opportunity to acquire prestige and power, an education for academism. And in the abridgement of our humanity, we become an appendage to the colonizer. Before the contact with the white men a kind of traditional education exists among the native Africans. One would have reasoned that it was only proper that the African adopts the formal education but fill up the syllable with the content of the traditional education of the native African and thus develop an ethno education for the African.

## Conclusion

Undoubtedly, globalization has made the world an easier place to live. Through the process of globalization the world has shrunk to a global village. However, globalization on the other hand has its own negative effects on the life of the ordinary African. The three historical ills that have affected the African and still causes damage to the self-image of Africans (slave trade, colonialism, and racism) are all products of globalization. There is an imposition of western culture and a gradual erosion of cultural values of the African. Unfortunately, the tool used for this imposition and erosion is education. The replacement of traditional education with western education warps the spirit of Africans in the African and thus creates a condition of self-alienation. A journey of self-discovery in Africa can begin if the native content of traditional African

education is systematically built into the course content and syllables of formal education in Africa. By this a new formal

education that is by origin and content African is created; an ethno education that is completely African is invented.

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